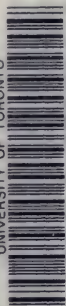


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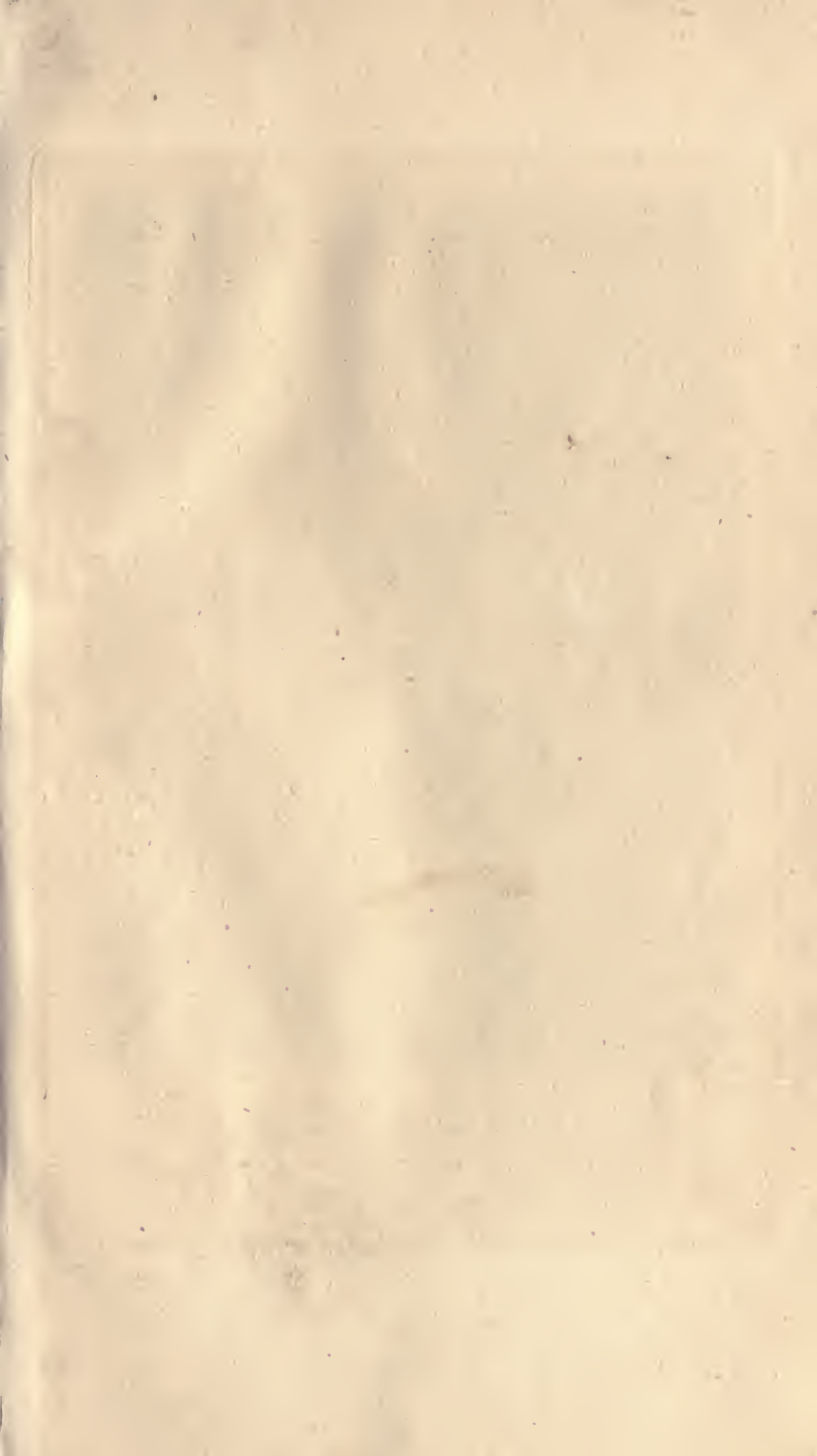


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**THE LIFE OF  
FREDERICK THE GREAT**









*Emery Walker Del. sc.*

*Frederick the Great*  
*From an engraving of a portrait by E. F. Cunningham*

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# THE LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

BY  
NORWOOD YOUNG



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## PREFACE

IN the last fifty years, and especially in the later part of that period, a great amount of work has been done on the life of Frederick the Great, in Germany, France, and Austria. The literature has reached enormous dimensions, second only in bulk to that which has been inspired by Napoleon.

The most important of recent publications have been two voluminous collections which were still in course of production when the Five Years' War, of 1756-1763, brought them to a standstill—perhaps to an end. They were: 1. The *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen*, thirty-six volumes, 1763-1765. This immense collection of historical documents of the first significance closes with April 1763. 2. *The Military Histories of the Austrian and German General Staffs*. The Austrian Staff issued, in 1763 and subsequent years, an elaborate history of the Silesian Wars, in eight volumes. The German Staff, in 1763-1765, dealt with the same subject in six volumes; and in 1765-1766 with the Seven Years' War, in twelve volumes, ending with 1763.

These recent works are indispensable guides for a true appraisal of Frederick's political and military career.

In this book all the quoted writings of Frederick are taken either from the *Politische Correspondenz*, or from the *Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand*.

I desire to express my hearty thanks to Mr. C. Grant Robertson, M.A., C.V.O., for the advice he has kindly given me, which has been of great value to my work.

NORWOOD YOUNG.



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# THE LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

## CHAPTER I

### THE RISE OF THE HOHENZOLLERNS

THE castle of Hohenzollern stands above the town of Zollern, in the Swabian Alps, between the Black Forest and the Lake of Constance. The name suggests that the Counts of Hohenzollern were descended from the collector of customs at Zollern, the place where duties were paid. However that may be, they prospered. Members of the family became Burgraves of Nuremberg, of Anspach, and of Culmbach. They made profitable marriages and they lent out money. Frederick II., Burgrave of Nuremberg, made an advance, in the year 1411, to the Margrave and Elector Sigismund of Brandenburg, and gave him other valuable assistance in obtaining election as Emperor. In return, Emperor Sigismund sent him to administer his Margravate of Brandenburg.

Brandenburg was an inhospitable district of sand and marsh on the Elbe, inhabited by a people of Slavonic origin, the Wends. A large part of its original population had journeyed south at the time of the great Völkerwanderung, migration of peoples, in the fourth century and onwards. As they marched towards Rome their places had been taken by others from north and east—Wends, Huns, Czechs, Letts, and others. These tribes remained in a condition of barbarism. The influence of Rome was never strong in the districts west of the Elbe; to the east of that river, Roman conquest and civilisation never penetrated at all.

When the Hohenzollern, Frederick II. of Nuremberg, arrived in 1412, he found the Margravate in the hands of

## 2 THE LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

a number of turbulent nobles who disputed his authority. He attacked their fortresses with cannon, among them a large piece nick-named *Die faule Greta*, lazy Greta: the name indicated the slowness of the loading owing to the unusual size of the gun. With this superior machinery Frederick battered down the walls, captured the fortresses, and overcame the opposition of the nobility. Having thus established his position, he obtained from the Emperor investiture as Margrave and Elector of Brandenburg, and in return cancelled the Emperor's debt. The Princes who at that time elected each Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire were seven in number: Mainz, Trier, Cologne, Saxony, Pfalz (Palatinate), Bohemia, and Brandenburg. With Kurfürst Friedrich I. begins the Hohenzollern dynasty of Brandenburg.

His son, Albert Achilles, made a Disposition in 1473, by which the Mark or March of Brandenburg was to devolve upon the eldest son in each generation, and under no circumstances was to be divided. This disposition has been one of the chief causes of the rise of the Hohenzollern dynasty. While other German ruling families were constantly at feud among themselves, with divided powers, the head of the Hohenzollern was always a powerful Prince. The *Dispositio Achillea* increased the Hohenzollern supremacy in the Mark and gave an established influence abroad. The danger of a divided inheritance was shown on the death of the Elector John George, in 1598. He had one son by his first wife, and other sons by his second and third wives. The third wife induced him to make a will giving to her eldest son a portion of the Mark. But Joachim Frederick, the eldest son by the first wife, invoked the *Dispositio Achillea*, and, with the support of the Emperor, succeeded in obtaining from the Landtag an annulment of his father's will, and the inheritance of the whole of the Mark of Brandenburg. The principle of primogeniture in Brandenburg was reaffirmed at the same time by the compact known as the *Gera Bund*.

The Reformation further strengthened the position of the Elector. The people of Brandenburg followed Luther.

Elector Joachim II., perceiving that the downfall of the Pope must be to the advantage of the secular power, and as Frederick the Great remarked, that a Protestant King had more independence than a Catholic, also accepted the reformed religion. He dissolved the monasteries and confiscated their property, which was converted into Electoral domains. The Elector became the chief landowner with absolute ownership of a considerable part of the State. The Church never had the power in these non-Roman lands of the north that it obtained nearer the fountainhead. The Margraves were, from the beginning, but little under ecclesiastical influence, and the Reformation freed them still further.

At the close of the Crusades, the Knights of the Teutonic Order of Crusaders migrated to the Polish Province of East Prussia on the Baltic; they subdued the savage inhabitants and converted them to Christianity. Their sway gradually extended over the Baltic lands of Prussia east and west. But with prosperity came decay. In 1466 a revolt, supported by Poland, took from the Teutonic Knights the Province of West Prussia, and forced them to do homage to Poland for East Prussia. In 1512 the Knights elected as their Grandmaster, Albert, a Hohenzollern of the younger line. Albert put an end to the religious nature of the order. He became Duke of East Prussia, a secular prince of a hereditary duchy. He died in 1568, and was succeeded by his son Albert Frederick; when he died without issue in 1618, the reigning Elector of Brandenburg, John Sigismund, succeeded in obtaining the succession. The family had now advanced from Counts of Hohenzollern to Burgraves of Nuremberg, Margraves and Electors of Brandenburg, and Dukes of East Prussia.

John Sigismund adopted for his family the Calvinist form of Protestantism. His Brandenburg subjects remained Lutheran. This difference of belief between Prince and people still further emancipated the Elector from Church influence, and it gave the enormous privilege of religious toleration to Brandenburg at a time when



#### 4 . THE LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

persecution in matters of faith was tearing the world asunder.

His son, the Elector George William, endeavoured, while Germany was on fire from end to end during the Thirty Years' War, to maintain a policy of neutrality in the very heart of the furnace. Brandenburg was swept by the armed forces of Catholics and Protestants in turn, and suffered terrible devastation. The atrocities committed by Germans in the Thirty Years' War have never been equalled in the history of civilised nations. When the war ended at last in 1648, the population of Brandenburg had been reduced by more than one-half. George William died in 1640, and was succeeded by the first Hohenzollern of note, Frederick William, the Great Elector.

By the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, Catholics and Protestants were granted equality before the law. In practice, some princes continued to discriminate against the heretics among their subjects. The Brandenburg Elector, Frederick William, gave a real religious freedom. Himself a Calvinist in a Lutheran population, religious toleration was a necessity for him as much as for his people.

The Peace of Westphalia reduced the power of the Emperor to little more than a name. A number of petty German princes obtained practical independence of their suzerain, in foreign as well as in domestic affairs. They were given the liberty to make their own treaties of alliance, and could no longer be called upon to fight for the Emperor without the Empire's express consent.

Freed from imperial control, Frederick William determined to centralise the administration of his disjointed possessions in his own person. He spoke of them as 'the members of one head,' a conception which the inhabitants were slow to accept. The spirit of particularism has always been prevalent among the Germans. It is the ultimate outcome of an uncontrolled personal vanity and jealousy. From the individual it affects the aggregate unit of village or town, of district or principality, of kingdom or empire. It was the task of the Hohenzollerns to suppress local independence by imposing the

unifying influence of their own supremacy. Frederick William was the first to work systematically towards the establishment of the Elector's domination. He asserted, hypocritically, that he was labouring not for his own private advantage, but for the benefit of his people, a pretence which may cover the most tyrannical designs.

The struggle with the local parliaments was, in each case, severe, but all the Landtags were in the end overcome by fraud or by violence. In the Mark the Elector obtained from the Landtag, after repeated prorogation, the money votes that he demanded. They were given upon certain conditions to which the Elector gave his express consent, but which he did not hesitate to repudiate at the first opportunity. He demanded increased supplies, and when they were refused he levied requisitions by force, declaring that he considered himself justified in doing so for the defence of the country, even contrary to the will of the Landtag. No effective opposition was given to this despotic act.

In East Prussia the Elector's Calvinism was much disliked and the Province lay far distant, a large district of Poland separating it from Brandenburg. The Hohenzollern was an alien, whose authority was recent and who was a vassal of Poland. Resistance here threatened to become revolution. Frederick William seized one of the Prussian leaders named Roth, and imprisoned him without trial. Roth remained incarcerated for sixteen years, until his death. Kalkstein, a Prussian Junker of the landed aristocracy, was accused of treason, tried by legal process and condemned to imprisonment for life, but the sentence was commuted by the Elector to a heavy fine, and to detention on his property until the money was paid. Without complying with the condition as to payment of the fine, Kalkstein escaped to Warsaw. The Brandenburg representative in Poland, named Brandt, demanded extradition, but the request was refused. Frederick William instructed Brandt to seize Kalkstein in Polish territory. The order was carried out. Kalkstein was captured and taken to East Prussia. Poland protested

against the breach of territorial rights. The Elector disavowed the act of his representative and went through the form of punishing him, but he kept Kalkstein in his hands. He was tortured, tried by a special commission, contrary to the law, condemned to death and executed. Thus was the spirit of liberty quenched in East Prussia, as in Brandenburg, by fraud, illegality and violence.

The tyranny of the Elector was exercised through a Secret Council of State, the members nominated by himself to carry out his orders. Through that body he centralised the administration over all his dominions in his own person at Berlin.

A tyrant requires an army under his unfettered control. The local militias were semi-independent. Frederick William needed a force answering to himself alone, over which the provincial diets could exert no influence. He sent out agents to obtain recruits at a specified fee per head. The impressment was conducted, often by violence and fraud, among the least respectable members of the population. The subjects of neighbouring princes formed a considerable proportion of the whole. There was no reciprocity, foreign recruiters being excluded from the Elector's dominions, and it was made a penal offence for his people to enlist under a foreign flag. By these methods he obtained an army which in the later years of his reign numbered twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand men, an enormous force, in proportion to population, to be maintained in time of peace. The Elector's standing army, the first of its kind in Europe, enabled him to exercise a tyranny at home, and to obtain abroad an influence far in excess of that to which he would otherwise have been entitled.

He used the army to draw from his people the money required for its maintenance. He levied requisitions by force. He taxed his subjects unmercifully, extracting from them, in their impoverished condition, a revenue far greater in proportion to population, as well as to wealth, than other princes were able or willing to extort. He minted coins which were not worth their nominal value,



and subsequently compelled his subjects to sell them back to him at their real worth, a proceeding which amounted to confiscation by means of fraud. All this, he protested, was done, not for his own advantage, but solely from concern for the welfare of his people. Thereby he earned the admiration and imitation of his greatest successors, King Frederick William I. and King Frederick the Great.

The foreign policy of Frederick William was directed to two main objects, the acquisition of Western Pomerania from Sweden, and the abolition of the suzerainty of Poland over East Prussia. When Charles Gustavus, King of Sweden, attacked Poland in 1655, the opportunity came to offer the Brandenburg Elector's assistance first to one side and then to the other, to sell it to the highest bidder. Charles Gustavus inflicted a defeat upon the Poles and threatened the Elector's territory of East Prussia. Frederick William made terms with the victor. By the Treaty of Königsberg, 17th January 1656, he agreed to accept the King of Sweden as his overlord for East Prussia; he was promised in return a small addition to the Duchy. In June he concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with Sweden against Poland. He joined his forces with those of Charles Gustavus, and the allies inflicted upon the Poles a severe defeat at the battle of Warsaw, 28th-30th July 1656. On the 20th November 1656 Frederick William made another treaty of alliance with Sweden, by which he obtained Swedish recognition of his unfettered sovereignty in East Prussia. This engagement did not prevent him from negotiating for imperial support, in return for a promise that he would not attack Poland, nor give his ally, Sweden, any real assistance. At this point Denmark intervened on behalf of the Poles, and the King of Sweden retired to attack the Danes. The Hohenzollern took advantage of the absence of the Swedes, his allies, to come to terms with Poland. He entered into a treaty of alliance with Poland, receiving in return the abandonment of Polish suzerainty over East Prussia. The ally of Sweden against Poland and



## ⑧ THE LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

of Poland against Sweden, his task now was to postpone as long as possible a rupture with Charles Gustavus. He sent the King a falsified copy of the new treaty, with letters of excuse and explanation, and proposed a renewal of the old alliance ; but Charles Gustavus declined even to receive the perfidious Elector's emissaries. The position had become perilous for Brandenburg.

The Imperial election following the death of the Emperor Ferdinand, enabled the Elector to sell his vote to Leopold, in return for a promise of assistance on his becoming Emperor. Supported then by Imperial, Polish and Danish troops, Frederick William turned against his former ally, Sweden, and succeeded in conquering the greater part of Swedish Pomerania. But France intervened on behalf of Sweden and forced upon the victorious allies the Peace of Oliva, 3rd May 1660. The Elector was forced to give back Swedish Pomerania, but he obtained a recognition of the freedom of East Prussia from vassalage to Poland.

Twelve years of peace followed. In 1672 France attacked the United Provinces. On the 6th May Frederick William entered into an alliance with Holland, on the 23rd June with Austria. But treaties were with the Elector mere tricks to deceive. A treaty with France followed, on the 21st June 1673. The Elector promised to give no assistance to the enemies of France, that is, to Austria and Holland, his allies by treaty. The treaty with France was followed, in December, by a convention with Sweden. The Elector had now made treaties with Holland and Austria and with their antagonists, Sweden and France ; he had engagements of alliance with each one of the four belligerents. By the latest treaties he was making friends with his natural enemy on the north and assisting France to invade Germany. Other German princes could not regard with the Hohenzollern's indifference the advance of French troops into their country. The Empire declared war upon France. Frederick William turned again. He rejoined his original allies Holland and Austria in a Coalition which included also Spain and the Empire.

On the 18th June 1675, he defeated the Swedes at Fehrbellin. This was the first Brandenburg victory, singlehanded, against an enemy of reputation. From that date Frederick William was given, by his subjects, the title of the Great Elector. He followed up his success by forcing Stettin to capitulate in December 1677, and Stralsund in October 1678. Swedish Pomerania was captured. But the jealousies of rival German princes, especially of the Electors of Saxony and Bavaria and the Duke of Hanover, the hostility of Poland and France, the unfriendly attitude of Holland and Austria, all aroused as much by his treachery as by his military success, left the Great Elector without a friend. The provision in the treaty of alliance, made at his own suggestion, by which separate treaties were expressly permitted, was used against him. Holland, Spain and Austria made separate treaties of peace with France. The Great Elector had for some time been endeavouring to obtain a separate treaty for himself with France; he had even promised his vote at the next Imperial election to the French candidate. In spite of these negotiations and of all his past treacheries, he raised accusations of perfidy against his allies, who had succeeded in doing what he had attempted in vain. Louis XIV. declined to dishonour his alliance with Sweden; he insisted that the Elector of Brandenburg should return Swedish Pomerania to Sweden. Surrounded by jealous rivals, or by princes whom he had cheated in the past, the Great Elector was obliged to comply. By the Treaty of St. Germain, 29th June 1691, he restored his conquests to the hated Swedes.

He made approaches to the Power that had dealt him this heavy blow. A secret treaty of alliance with France was concluded on the 25th October 1679, and it was followed by other treaties of the same nature. The subservience to France lasted nominally for six years. Relations had already become less cordial when Louis XIV., in an evil hour for France, was persuaded to return to the policy of religious persecution, by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 17th October 1685.

Frederick William replied by the Edict of Potsdam, 8th November 1685, declaring his readiness to receive Huguenot refugees and to give them assistance on arrival with freedom from taxation for six years. Large numbers took advantage of the invitation, much to the advantage of Berlin and Brandenburg.

In spite of his alliance with France, the Great Elector, on the 1st April 1686, entered into a definite alliance with Austria. The Elector was to receive an annual subsidy and to obtain the cancellation of debts. He abandoned certain claims he had made in Silesia, and received as compensation the small territory of Schwiebus, on the Polish border. The treaty states that the Elector 'renounces in perpetuity, for himself, his heirs and successors, in *genere* and in *specie*, all pretensions that have been or may be made to the Duchies of Jägerndorf, Liegnitz, Brieg and Wohlau.' Unknown to him, his eldest son, Frederick, had already, on the 10th March, promised to return Schwiebus, on his succession to the Electorate.

After the death of his first wife, mother of the Electoral Prince Frederick, the Great Elector married a lady by whom he had other sons. Under her influence he made dispositions by will in their behalf against the interests of the Electoral Prince, and contrary to the law of primogeniture established for the family by the *Dispositio Achillea* and the *Gera Bund*. The Emperor Leopold was named executor of the Great Elector's will. These circumstances explain, if they cannot excuse, the Electoral Prince Frederick's compact with the Emperor by which, unknown to his father, he promised to give back Schwiebus in return for immediate monetary assistance and a promise of the Emperor's good offices in cancelling the Great Elector's dispositions in favour of his sons by his second wife.

The Silesian claims which the Great Elector bartered for the small territory of Schwiebus, were evidently regarded by him as of very small value. They were, in fact, absurd and derisory. They concerned the Duchies of Jägerndorf, Liegnitz, Brieg and Wohlau, in Silesia.



The Duke of Jägerndorf, who died in 1603 without children, left the Duchy by will to a distant Hohenzollern kinsman, the Elector Joachim Frederick of Brandenburg. The Emperor Rudolf II. refused to acknowledge the succession of the Brandenburg prince; but the Prince obtained possession, and on his death in 1608 his second son, John George, inherited the Duchy under his father's will. John George joined the Elector Palatine in war against the Emperor. Defeated at the battle of the White Mountain, he was proscribed by the Empire, and the Duchy fell into the Empire according to law.<sup>1</sup> That, in spite of all this, the Hohenzollerns should have asserted a claim to Jägerndorf is enough to throw a preliminary suspicion against them in all similar matters. 160

The claim on the Duchies of Liegnitz-Brieg-Wohlau was of the same worthless nature. It was based upon an Erbverbrüderung, or compact of inheritance, made in 1537 between Duke Frederick of Liegnitz and Joachim II., Elector of Brandenburg. By this agreement, if the male Brandenburg line failed, the Bohemian properties of the Hohenzollerns would go to Liegnitz, and if the Liegnitz line failed the Silesian Duchies would go to Brandenburg. The Silesian Prince was a Protestant, and it was to preserve his Duchies under a Protestant ruler that he made the agreement. The Erbverbrüderung was an attempt to evade the law of the Empire, by which, in case of a failure of male heirs, the Liegnitz territory would lapse to the overlord. The Emperor Charles V. entered a formal protest. His successor, Ferdinand I., in 1546, cancelled the compact and obtained the consent of the Liegnitz Duke to the cancellation, but not of the Brandenburg Elector. In 1675 there was a failure of heirs in the Liegnitz family, and the Duchies lapsed, by law, to the Emperor and King of Bohemia, as overlord.

The Great Elector made it a principle throughout his life to formulate demands of the utmost extravagance, in the hope that at least something might be gained. At

<sup>1</sup> *Preussische Staatsschriften aus der Regierungszeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, i. p. 43.

the Congress of Westphalia he astonished and shocked the plenipotentiaries by the outrageous nature of his claims. The Silesian pretensions were advanced on the same plan, and they obtained for Brandenburg the small property of Schwiebus, little enough, but more than they were worth, which was nothing.

A knowledge of the outlines of the career of the Great Elector is essential for a proper understanding of the life of Frederick the Great and of the growth of Prussia. The Great Elector laid the foundations. He established the despotism of the Hohenzollerns over their subjects, in small affairs and in great, pretending that it was all for their own good, and that it entailed great labour and self-sacrifice upon the Prince ; he inaugurated a centralised bureaucracy for his scattered dominions ; he created the first standing army of modern times ; in time of war his army was far the largest in Europe, in proportion to population ; he gained a victory over the Swedes, at that time the most renowned fighters in Europe ; to pay for the army he taxed his subjects heavily and issued a debased coinage, at their expense ; he made religious toleration a reality in his dominions ; he made it a principle to advance preposterous claims at every opportunity in the expectation that some gain might result ; he exhibited a perfidy and treachery to friends and foes, a contempt for treaty engagements, a disregard of all honour, which have seldom been equalled. His great grandson, Frederick the Great, studied his career and followed his example, especially in the shameless use of hypocrisy and deceit. The two Hohenzollern princes, upon whom the appellation of Great has been conferred by their admiring subjects, take rank among the criminal princes of history, in the matter of dishonour.

## CHAPTER II

### FREDERICK WILLIAM I

ON the death of the Great Elector, 9th May 1688, the Emperor Leopold, carrying out his promise, cancelled the testamentary dispositions in favour of the sons by the second marriage, and thus secured for the Electoral Prince Frederick the inheritance of the whole of his father's territories. The service thus rendered to the house of Hohenzollern was of the utmost value, for if their lands had become divided, the authority and power of the head of the house would have been vitally diminished.

In accordance with his promise as Electoral Prince, Frederick had now to restore Schwiebus. He showed no inclination to carry out his part of the bargain. He proposed to keep what the Emperor had given him and withhold what he had promised in return. For six years he contrived to hold on to Schwiebus, but Imperial pressure at last compelled him to fulfil his bargain. He made a great virtue of this elementary duty. 'I must and will keep my word,' he said. 'I leave it to my successors to obtain justice with regard to Silesia.' He admitted that he was bound by treaty to give up Schwiebus (for value received), and yet maintained that his doing so revived claims which had never had any legal force, and had been expressly abandoned by his father by a formal treaty.

The Elector Frederick married Sophia Charlotte, sister of George, Elector of Hanover, afterwards George I. of England. The prestige acquired by the Great Elector, and the brilliance of the Elector Frederick's wife and her family, inspired the desire for an enhanced dignity. Frederick had seen a Dutchman become King of England, Hanover raised to an Electorate that its Prince might become King of England, and the Elector of Saxony



chosen King of Poland, as Augustus II. He longed for a similar elevation, and by plying the Emperor Leopold with persistent petitions, at last obtained a promise of the much coveted honour. He was to be a king, like his Hanoverian and Saxon neighbours, of a province outside the German Empire. The remote, barren, and barbarous domain of East Prussia was to be his kingdom. Contemptible compared with either England or Poland, at least it gave him a nominal equality to his neighbours, and a precedence over other German princes.

Prince Eugène opposed the concession. He told the Emperor that he was making a mistake in thus stimulating the Brandenburg ambitions. Leopold I. pointed to the insignificance of the new kingdom, and the almost contemptible title of 'König in Preussen,' King in Prussia. But that was precisely an incentive to struggle for a further Hohenzollern promotion. As Frederick the Great said, years afterwards, the Crown was the seed of ambition for the House. In return for the gift the Emperor obtained a treaty, 16th November 1700, renewing the Treaty of 1686, by which the Great Elector had renounced all claims to the Silesian Duchies; and Frederick engaged also to furnish the Empire with an army of eight thousand men in certain contingencies, and to support the Habsburg candidate whenever an Emperor was about to be elected.

Frederick made a triumphal progress from Berlin to East Prussia, a coronation procession all the way. On the 18th January 1701, he crowned himself, with all possible gorgeous ceremony, at Königsberg. He was a King in Prussia, not in Brandenburg.

The English connection was continued by the marriage, on the 28th November 1706, of the new king's son, Frederick William, now a Crown Prince, to the daughter of George I., Sophia Dorothea, his first cousin.

Two sons were born to the Crown Prince, but neither of them lived. The third child, born on the 3rd July 1709, a girl, survived, and was named Frederica Sophia Wilhelmina. On the 24th January 1712, a third son was



born, and this boy was healthy and inspired the greatest hopes. Being born in the Coronation month of January, his grandfather insisted that the christening should take place in the same month, and that the child should be given his own name, Frederick, which had brought such good fortune to the family. This boy was destined to make the name famous.

On the death of Frederick I. in 1713, his son, Frederick William I., gave him a magnificent funeral; that pious duty fulfilled, he set about the task of reducing expenditure in every direction. The gorgeous Frederick left behind him heavy debts, and quantities of jewellery; his son sold the precious stones to liquidate the debts. He proceeded to dismiss the Master of the Ceremonies, the Herald-at-Arms, and most of the ornamental Court functionaries. All display was dispensed with. The coronation of Frederick I. cost six million thalers, that of his son two thousand five hundred.

Frederick William I. cut down the civil list in the same merciless fashion, reducing the expense to one-fifth of what it had been. He regulated the expenditure in his own household in a spirit which went beyond economy, to parsimony. There was not always a reasonable supply of food for the household on his own table. Many of his retrenchments were mean and unworthy, and earned for him the character of a miser, but though the reaction from his father's extravagance was excessive, the general principle was wise, and the State derived great benefit from the frugality which was forced upon all whom the King could reach.

He devoted himself to the business of his kingdom. He worked harder than any monarch of the time. It was not for the sake of his people, who were merely a part of the material of which he made use, similar to cattle and sheep, and other property. He regarded himself as the manager of the estate and its workpeople, on behalf of 'the King in Prussia.' He said that in Brandenburg his position was that of an official, placed by divine grace in the employment of that Potentate, for whom he had to

exert all his energies, early and late. He set an example which has influenced even the most self-indulgent of his successors. A high standard of work has, on the whole, been maintained on the Prussian throne. To Frederick William I. much of the credit may justly be given.

He kept under his own control the whole machinery of the State, supervising, examining, directing all the officials ; and he also made his influence felt in every household in the land. The prestige of the Crown enabled Frederick William I. to rule as an absolute autocrat, without any consideration for the feelings or desires of his subjects. He declared openly that he intended to be obeyed implicitly by all, and would tolerate no arguments or objections. He spoke of his supreme sovereignty as a Rock of Bronze. Every State in Germany had its Landstände, parliaments of a kind, which had some power, except Prussia. The submissiveness of the subject and paternal dictatorship of the King, which are so long characteristic of Prussia, began with the Great Elector Frederick William, and the masterful King, his namesake and descendant.

The methods of agriculture were improved, waste lands were brought into cultivation, swamps were drained, canals cut, and roads made. Churches and schools were built, and attendance at school was made compulsory, long before the value of education was recognised to the same extent in other countries. The net receipts from the Crown lands were nearly doubled, the national revenue trebled, during the reign of Frederick William I.

These improvements in the State enabled the King to indulge in the creation of a large army. His father left him a nominal 30,000 men. By the end of his reign Frederick William I. had raised the peace army to the enormous figure of 90,000, out of a population of no more than 2,250,000 persons. That is four times the proportion of the German Empire at the outbreak of the war of 1914. In the time of Frederick William I., when the proportion of soldiers to population in all other countries was very small compared with what it has since become, the Prussian army was regarded

as an almost incredible portent, the eccentric fancy of a madman. More than half of the soldiers were recruited outside Prussia; but that consideration, while explaining the possibility of the existence of such an army, did not increase the world's opinion of the sanity of its creator. The Great Elector was the first to maintain a standing army, but the military power of Prussia was the work of King Frederick William I. He was the first King to prefer a military uniform to Court robes.

He treasured his soldiers with the feelings of a miser. He loved to look upon them on parade, and observe their numbers. He would not expend them; rather would he submit to insult and wrong. With an army at his back superior to that of the Austrian Empire, and second only to that of France, the chief military nation of the world, his conduct in times of crisis was pusillanimous, even cowardly.

He had a strange passion for big soldiers. As a boy he collected a band of tall youths in the Wusterhausen hunting district, and played the drill-sergeant to them. On his accession to the throne he formed a whole regiment of giants, all of them above six feet in height. Officers were sent out to search the whole of Germany, and even foreign countries. The King's passion soon became a real mania. He even allowed his foreign policy, his alliances, and questions of peace and war, to become subservient to his collection of tall men. His father loved jewels and flunkys, while the son cut down all such luxuries and lived a cheese-paring existence in order to indulge in his weakness for big soldiers. This passion cost him almost as much as the diamonds of Frederick I.; and it brought upon him serious quarrels with his neighbours, due to his forcible seizure of foreign recruits. The first two Prussian kings were obvious *parvenus*, each in his own way, in their delight in show and display.

Frederick William I. instituted a sort of informal Parliament of his friends, who met every afternoon and drank beer and smoked pipes together. There was a large bare table in the centre of the hall, with a jug of beer, a glass



and a clay pipe, placed by the side of each chair ; baskets filled with coarse tobacco were on the table. Every guest had to drink and smoke, whether he liked it or not. The company sat for hours, many becoming gradually heated with their liquor ; a noisy violence marked the later stages of the meeting. Vulgar jokes were made, and rude remarks passed. The King would invite respectable and learned men, ply them with liquor and play practical jokes upon them. To be drunk was no disgrace, rather the contrary. The King, indeed, suspected of sinister designs, or at least of unfriendly coldness, those who kept their senses. He broached before these companions the most important questions of State, hoping in such an informal meeting to elicit genuine opinions and unguarded remarks. But the guests were under no illusions, and the crafty among them watched closely the King, contrived to remain stealthily sober, and to surprise their master into hasty revelations. At the Tabaks Collegium or Tabagie, public matters came up for discussion, and great decisions were taken. Those who attended regularly became, by that fact alone, the most important men in the country.

With all his eccentricities the position of Frederick William I. in history is secure, for he was the creator of the Prussian system, which was destined to dominate the whole German Empire.

## CHAPTER III

### FATHER AND SON

GEORGE I. contrived to spend some months of every year at his fine palace of Herrenhausen, Hanover. In the autumn of 1723 he was visited there by his daughter, Sophia Dorothea, the wife of Frederick William I. She had set her heart upon a double marriage between the two families, Brunswick and Brandenburg. Wilhelmina, Princess of Prussia, was to marry Frederick, eldest son of the Prince of Wales, and Frederick, Prussian Crown Prince—afterwards Frederick the Great—was to marry Princess Amelia, the second daughter of the Prince of Wales. The two chief Protestant houses, already closely related, were to be still further conjoined. The Brandenburg parents were first cousins, and it was proposed that the children also should marry their first cousins. King George returned the visit. On the 8th October 1723, he arrived at Charlottenburg, the palace built by Sophia Charlotte, wife of Frederick I., in the suburbs of Berlin. There he was shown the young people. Arriving in the evening he took a candle from the table and held it close to Wilhelmina, to have a good look at her, a candidate for the position of Queen of England in the future; the only remark he made was that she was big for her age. Frederick, aged eleven, he caressed and played with. The children were delighted with the proposals, which meant promotion for the house of Brandenburg. They acquired grand ideas, and learned to despise their plain Prussian father and his homely Court.

In this they were encouraged by their mother, who contrasted the frugality and meanness of all her surroundings with the Court festivities, the elegance and refinement to which she had been accustomed at Hanover.



She was not proud of her rude, uncouth husband, who smoked tobacco in pipes, and was often intoxicated, who could talk of nothing but drilling soldiers, shooting animals, and saving money, and who could not express himself, even in his own language, in any but crude and vulgar terms. French was the language used by the Queen and her children, except in the presence of the King. French literature, manners, dress, were ostentatiously preferred against all the King's desires and inclinations. The Queen taught her children, especially the two eldest, Wilhelmina and Frederick, to despise their German father, to regard him and his boon companions as objects of derision. Wilhelmina early acquired superior airs and graces, and a habit of caustic comment on everything Prussian. Frederick, growing up in this unhealthy atmosphere, learned to be supercilious and underhand.

The King was determined that every individual in his dominions, his wife and children as much as the common people, should bend to his will. Physical blows, applied often with a cane, were his chief arguments. His eldest son received many. On a cold day Frederick wore gloves ; he was caned for his effeminacy. He preferred the French three-pronged fork to the German two-pronged—another beating. Though he was now a major in the Potsdam Life Guards he wore his hair long, in the French fashion, contrary to the Prussian military regulations. His father sent for the Court barber, and ordered the flowing locks to be cut off, in his presence.

Seckendorf, an Austrian agent who became one of the King's trusted advisers, reported to Prince Eugène, on the 27th June 1725. After referring to the continual drilling that went on from morning till night, the incessant activity of the King, his heavy eating and drinking, and his heated and excited condition, he went on : ' The Crown Prince, although he is only in his fourteenth year, must accommodate himself to this way of life, and although the King loves him tenderly, he fatigues him with early rising and similar hardships all the day long, so that already in his young years he looks old

and stiff, and walks as if he had gone through many campaigns.

‘The expectation of the King is that the Prince should by his own inclinations prefer the soldier’s career to all scientific accomplishments, that he should acquire thrift and frugality, and should enjoy no ease or pleasure except what the King himself appreciates. It is, however, quite noticeable that this way of life is against the Crown Prince’s inclination, and consequently will in time produce just the contrary effect.’

That was what happened. The tastes of the Crown Prince Frederick were influenced primarily by opposition to his father. He made fun of religion and of the teachers given him by the King; he delighted in playing the flute; he arrayed himself in an ornamental dressing-gown of gorgeous colours; he spoke of his military uniform as a shroud; he was neither God-fearing nor military, but an effeminate diletante and fop. His father now openly showed his dislike of his eldest son, and ostentatiously caressed and praised his second son William, who was still only a child of tender age. The King allowed it to be seen that he would have preferred William for his successor.

Frederick was very unhappy. He had come to the most sensitive age, when the child is done with and the first tentative and exciting steps are being taken, from the boy to the young man. His father was in a chronic state of fury, or sullen rage, so that the son’s life became unbearable, and his look of ‘black melancholy’ was observed by all. He wrote to a friend, Lieutenant von Boreke, who was ill, apologising for being such poor company to him. ‘I need amusement myself to dissipate my gloom.’ He begged von Boreke not to die. ‘Death is the thing that I dread most for my friends, and least for myself.’

Great problems of foreign politics now came to estrange still further the King from the Crown Prince.

The Emperor Charles VI. had no son, his eldest surviving child being a daughter, Maria Theresa, born at Vienna,

13th May 1717. His elder brother, the Emperor Joseph I., who died in 1711, left two daughters: the eldest, Maria Josepha, was married to the Elector of Saxony, the younger, Maria Amelia, to the Elector of Bavaria. To set at rest any claims that his nieces might have on the succession to the Habsburg dominions, Charles VI. executed a solemn deed, known as a Pragmatic Sanction, by which his daughter, Maria Theresa, was made his heiress. The deed was published in 1720. But Charles's father, the Emperor Leopold I., had already, in 1703, in default of male heirs either to himself or to his eldest son Joseph, settled the inheritance in favour of the eldest daughter of Joseph, Maria Josepha, with reversion to the second daughter Maria Amelia. Therefore it became necessary for Charles VI., in order to ensure the carrying out of his will, to obtain the formal recognition of the Pragmatic Sanction by all interested parties. The new law was duly accepted and proclaimed throughout the Habsburg dominions. The two elder claimants, Maria Josepha and Maria Amelia, were both forced to resign their claims. All Austrian opposition being removed, it became henceforth the chief aim of the Emperor's diplomacy to obtain guarantees of the Pragmatic Sanction from Foreign Powers.

Spain was the first to be won over, in 1725. But the Maritime Powers held aloof. The Ostend East India Company, founded by Charles VI. in 1722, was a cause of offence. England and Holland formed a League, which France joined, against the Empire. The adhesion of Prussia was invited to this League. Frederick William I. had two principal desires, the reversion to the Duchies of Jülich and Berg, to which he had a claim on the death of the Elector Palatine; and an agreement about the English marriages. He was satisfied on both hands. By the Treaty of Herrenhausen, 3rd September 1725, he joined the League; the good offices of England, France, and Holland were promised, by a secret clause, to obtain Jülich and Berg for him; and though no contract was signed with regard to the English marriages, George I.



gave satisfactory verbal assurances to his nephew of his interest in the matter.

On the 12th October 1726 this treaty was followed by another, signed at Wusterhausen, between Prussia and Austria. Prussia engaged to support the Pragmatic Sanction, and to defend the Emperor if attacked; the Emperor promised his influence to obtain for Prussia the Duchy of Berg on the death of the Elector Palatine, if the rival claimant, Theodore of Sulzbach, could be made content with Jülich. This treaty was affirmed and its provisions repeated by the Treaty of Berlin, 23rd December 1728. The agreement with Austria, made at the time when Austrian relations with England were strained, augured ill for the marriage schemes of the Queen, Wilhelmina, and Frederick. They were bitterly disappointed, and did not cease to conspire together to upset the plans of the King. He had to face in his own home a sullen, pertinacious opposition, an English Hanoverian party. Frederick, Prince of Wales, sent messages from Hanover to Wilhelmina, and Frederick, Prussian Crown Prince, wrote secretly to Queen Caroline, declaring that he would never marry any but the English Princess Amelia. Queen Sophia Dorothea wrote to Caroline in the same sense. The King learned what was going on, and there were constant scenes.

Frederick was subjected to blows and other humiliations. At table he was not allowed to sit in his proper place, but was sent lower down, and his father would help all the children and the guests, before him; sometimes, indeed, the Crown Prince's plate was returned empty to the attendant, and the Queen had to contrive some secret method of sending her son a box of cold meat, after the meal.

At the autumn visit to Wusterhausen this year, Frederick was as miserable as ever. He wrote again his melancholy letters to von Borcke. 'The King continues in a bad temper; he scolds everybody, is pleased with none, not even with himself. He is still terribly angry with me.' . . . 'To-morrow I am obliged to hunt, the next day is

Sunday, and on Monday I am obliged to hunt again.' . . . 'I got up at five o'clock this morning, and it is now midnight. I am so weary of all I see, that I should like to efface it from my memory, as though it had never been.' . . . 'One learns at last, by the lapse of time, to become indifferent. I have reached that stage now, and in spite of all that may happen to me, I play the flute, read, and love my friends better than myself.' These are sad revelations of what the boy of sixteen was suffering. 'We have accursed scenes every day; I am so tired of them that I had rather beg my bread than live any longer on this footing.' The whole tone of the Society was hateful. 'We have here,' writes Frederick, 'the most idiotic collection of people of all sorts and kinds, and ill-assorted, for neither the tempers, nor the ages, nor the inclinations of those who compose it agree, which utterly prevents any connected conversation.'<sup>1</sup>

In desperation he wrote to his father :

' WUSTERHAUSEN,  
' *Saturday, the 11th Sept. 1728.*

' MY DEAR PAPA,—I have for some time not been able to take the resolution to go to my dear Papa, partly because I was dissuaded, but principally because I had reason to fear an even worse reception than usual; and from fear that my present prayer would vex my dear Papa more, have preferred to send it in writing. I beg therefore, my dear Papa, to be gracious to me, and I can after long reflection assert that my conscience has not accused me in the slightest degree of anything as to which I should reproach myself; but if I should, against my will and intention, have done anything to vex my dear Papa, I herewith most submissively beg for forgiveness, and I hope that my dear Papa will drive away that cruel hate which I have had sufficient cause to notice in all his treatment of me. I could not otherwise bear it, as I have hitherto always supposed I had a gracious father and now I should have to consider the contrary. I hold then

<sup>1</sup> Lavissee, E., *La Jeunesse de Frédéric*, p. 198.



the completest confidence and hope that my dear Papa will reflect upon all this and be gracious to me again ; meanwhile I assure him that I will not willingly let my time be wasted, and in spite of his disfavour I remain, with the most submissive and filial respect, my dear Papa's most obedient servant and son,

‘ FRIDERICH.’

The reply was cold and severe :

‘ That self-willed evil disposition, which does not love its father, for when one does everything required and especially loves one's father, one does what he wishes not only when he is present, but when he does not see what is done ; which besides knows well that I can tolerate no effeminate fellow who has no manly inclinations, who, to his shame, can neither ride nor shoot, and at the same time is uncleanly in person, has his hair long and curled like a fool. All this I have a thousand times reprimanded, but all in vain, and there is no improvement in anything. Besides, haughty, proud as an upstart, speaking to none but a few persons, and is not popular or affable, and makes grimaces with his face as if he were a fool, and does nothing according to my wishes until he is driven by force, nothing from love, and has no pleasure in anything save following his own way, as nothing else is of any value. This is the answer.

‘ FR. W.’<sup>1</sup>

The King had good cause for dissatisfaction with his son. His own ideal was that of a God-fearing prince, manly and soldierlike, hardworking, economical, plainly dressed and cleanly in person, and entirely devoted to the welfare of the State. His son scoffed at religion, shirked soldiering, fell into debt, was foppish in dress and of dissolute habits ; he could not ride with any comfort, disliked shooting, and cared only for playing the flute, and reading French books ; he kept himself to an exclusive small set, treating with contempt his father's friends and, indeed, everything German. Here was very real

<sup>1</sup> Förster, F., *Friedrich Wilhelm I.*, pp. 362-3.

cause for anxiety with regard to the future, and it seemed that Frederick William's life work was to be scattered to the winds, and the Prussian kingdom brought to ruin by an effeminate, dissolute, irreligious French trifler. The King became so enraged, and indulged in such violence towards all who came near him, that it was thought he would go mad, and there was talk, in anti-Austrian circles, now known as 'the Crown Prince's party,' of a Regency. The King retaliated by threatening the Queen with imprisonment in the fortress of Spandau, the Princess Royal with a poor marriage, and the Crown Prince with disinheritance.

The Tobacco Parliament went with the King to Wusterhausen, and Frederick was compelled to join the party. He was offended by the manners, the speech, the pipe-smoking, the drunkenness, the whole tone of the society which his father enjoyed. He passed the time in the Tabagie, he tells Borcke, by 'cracking nuts, an occupation worthy of the place we are in.'

He longed to escape from the area of the King's influence. He wished to travel, to see something of the world. At least he thought he might be allowed to pay a visit to Dresden. One day, at the tobacco meeting, Frederick, being seated next to the Saxon Minister, Suhm, begged for his assistance in the project. To show his willing subjection to his father's tastes, Frederick set himself deliberately to get drunk, and began to assert in a loud voice that he loved the King. 'What does he say?' asked Frederick William. Suhm replied that the Prince was drunk. 'Nonsense,' said the King, 'he is pretending. But what does he say?' Suhm answered, 'The Prince says that although the King forces him to drink too much, he loves him very dearly.' 'He is pretending,' repeated the King. Suhm gave his word of honour that the Prince was really and truly drunk. 'I have just pinched him, and he felt nothing,' he reported. Frederick had sufficient self-control to go up to the King, kiss his hands, and protest that he loved him. 'Good,' said Frederick William. 'Let him only be a man of honour.'

At this affecting scene there was much weeping, as the Prince was helped away to bed.<sup>1</sup>

The King was delighted at this exhibition of his power, and pleased that Frederick had it in him to get drunk, but he mistrusted the affair; he feared that Frederick had been pretending, that he really had no wish to be intoxicated, and had kept his head throughout.

The King wrote to Frederick's tutors that they were to point out that 'all effeminate, lascivious, and womanly occupations are highly unsuitable to a man; they are all very well for coxcombs and puppies. The Prince minces in his walk, in his laugh, and in his language. He does not sit upright on his horse; he drops his head and is not firm in his saddle. He is haughty, he must be taught to be polite and obliging to everybody, to have a sincere and open nature; he is to obey pleasantly, of his own free will, not with a disagreeable face.'<sup>2</sup> All this severity produced merely obstinate opposition, and made the young man so miserable, that he fell an easy victim to the temptations that were thrust upon him. One of the King's pages, named Keith, was Frederick's assistant and companion in these excesses.

In June 1730 the King took his son with him on a visit to Saxony. An army of thirty thousand men had been collected at the camp of Mühlberg, for reviews and sham fights. At this camp Frederick William behaved in the most outrageous manner to his son, dealing him repeated blows, in public, with his cane, pulling his hair, and sending him to take part in a military review in a dishevelled condition. He added taunts to his blows. 'Had I been treated thus by my father,' he said, 'I should have killed myself, but it makes no difference to you; you will put up with anything.' He tried to induce his son to renounce his right of succession to the throne.

Frederick, aged eighteen and a half, was suffering more than any man could be expected to bear. To be so maltreated and scoffed at, in the presence of German princes gathered together for grand festivities, was humiliation

<sup>1</sup> Lavissee, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Lavissee, p. 203.



beyond human endurance. He began to make plans for escape, either to France or to England. There was some unreality about the scheme, for no serious effort was made to conceal it. It seems probable that Frederick intended to make a protest, but not an actual escape. He approached Guy Dickens, the British Attaché, asking for the protection of England. The King had arranged to make a tour to the south of Germany and thence to Wesel. Frederick told Dickens that if he went with his father he would escape to Strassburg, and thence through France to England. Dickens reported this conversation; the answer from George II. was, that he would pay the Prince's debts if he would promise to abandon his project. Frederick accepted the money, asking for fifteen thousand thalers, though his debts were not more than seven thousand, but confined himself to a promise that if his father did not take him on the journey, and left him behind at Potsdam, he would not move from there. His most pressing need was to be relieved of the society of his father, to have a little liberty, and be spared ill-treatment.

The King hesitated for some time about taking his son on the journey. He knew that Frederick talked of escape. At length he decided it would be safer to have him by his side, rather than free to follow his own inclination at Potsdam, but he was to be carefully watched. Colonel Rochow, the Prince's tutor, was to be assisted by General Buddenbrock and Colonel Waldau, who were given strict orders never to let the Prince out of their sight.

The 15th July was fixed for the day of departure. On the evening of the 14th Frederick had a secret meeting with his friend, Lieutenant Katte, in the garden of the palace at Potsdam. Katte was to get leave, to collect money for expenses, and to join him at a place which would be named later.

On the 15th July the royal party left Potsdam, travelling south as far as Augsburg, and then west. At Feuchtwang they dined with the Dowager Margravine of Anspach. Frederick had the misfortune to drop his fork on the floor, and was immediately subjected to violent insults by the

King. The former taunts were repeated. 'If my father had treated me as I treat you,' said Frederick William, 'I should have made my escape a thousand times over, but you have no courage and are a coward.' Frederick wrote to Katte that there had been a scene at Feuchtwang, and that he could stand it no longer. Katte was to go to the Hague, and await the arrival of Count d'Aberville, the name, taken from a novel, which Frederick proposed to adopt. He also wrote to Keith, now a lieutenant, telling him to make for the Hague, from Wesel. He showed himself to Rochow in a new red cloak of French design, which had been made secretly for him. He knew that Rochow was watching him, and that his appearance in this highly coloured garment, of an unusual shape in Germany, would attract observation, and would be reported to the King. A man who is bent upon secret flight would hardly prepare conspicuous clothing and exhibit himself in it to those whose duty it was to guard him.

At Steinfurth Frederick spoke to a page, and arranged that two of the pages' horses should be ready early in the following morning. Steinfurth was some three hours' ride from Speyer, where the Rhine could be crossed, and in another two hours the French frontier would be reached. The page at once warned Rochow. Frederick made no attempt to win over his valet, Gummersbach, who had been appointed to his post by Rochow, with express instructions to watch and report.

At 2.30 A.M. of the 5th August Frederick was up and dressed; he declined all answer to the valet's request for orders, but made no attempt to bind him to secrecy. He put on his flaming red cloak, and went out to wait for the page with the horses. Gummersbach informed Colonel Rochow that the Prince was up; Rochow arrived before the horses, and found Frederick standing about, in his red cloak. He went up to him and said, 'Guten morgen, Ihro Königliche Hoheit'—'Good morning, Your Royal Highness.' Frederick returned the greeting, and then went indoors. When the page arrived with the horses,



Rochow ordered him to take them back to the stables. Buddenbrock and Waldau now appeared, and Seckendorf emerged from the King's quarters. Frederick came out again. Rochow said to Seckendorf, 'How do you like His Royal Highness in his red coat?' Frederick saw that it would be advisable to put away that symbol of revolt. He returned to his room and took off the cloak. Then the page went to the King and confessed all. The King sent for Rochow, and told him that he, Buddenbrock and Waldau should all have to answer for it with their heads if the Crown Prince was not delivered to him in due course, dead or alive, at Wesel, where the return journey to Berlin was to commence. Rochow assured the King that the Prince could not have escaped. The valet was to be trusted, and he had taken all needful precautions.

At Wesel the King sent for his son. He demanded his reason for attempting to desert. 'Because you do not treat me as your son, but like a slave.' 'You are a cowardly deserter, you have no honour.' 'I have as much as you,' answered Frederick; 'I have only done what, as you have told me a hundred times, you would have done in my place.' The King is said thereupon to have drawn his sword with the intention of killing his son, but General Mosel, who was present, interposed his own person until the King had recovered from the mad impulse.

Frederick was sent to Cüstrin, sixty miles east of Berlin. He was kept in solitary confinement, in a prisoner's cell containing the absolute minimum of furniture. His uniform was taken away, and a brown prison dress substituted; his food was limited to a cost of sixpence for dinner and fourpence for supper; it was cut small for him, as he was not allowed a knife. He was not permitted to leave the room on any pretext; three times a day an attendant entered, remaining not more than four minutes on each occasion; two captains were to be present to see that no words passed, no remarks of any kind being permitted; no books were allowed, nor writing materials. The conditions were very severe for a young man not

yet aged nineteen. After some days, in the hope of being allowed a little communication with human life, he asked to take the Communion, but the request was refused, and complete silence settled once more upon him.

The King gave forth terrible threats, spoke of most bloody vengeance on all who had been adherents of the Crown Prince, including even the Queen and Wilhelmina. He wished more than ever for the death or abdication of his son ; but he found himself confronted by grave difficulties. As heir to the Elector of Brandenburg, the Crown Prince held a high place in the Empire. To put him to death without consulting the Emperor, would endanger the good relations established by the Treaties of Wusterhausen and Berlin. A renunciation of the succession might be obtained under a threat of imprisonment for life, but the consent of the Empire would be necessary, and grave difficulties would arise when the throne became vacant. There might be a disputed succession which, in so young a kingdom, would be disastrous for the country and dangerous for the dynasty. In the end the King sent Keith, Katte, and the Crown Prince before a court-martial.<sup>1</sup>

The affair of Keith was simple. He had fled from Wesel to the Hague, and thence to England. He had deserted and was condemned to death, the penalty prescribed by law ; but as he was out of reach he could only be hanged in effigy.

Katte had not deserted, but he had contemplated doing so, and he had given the Crown Prince active assistance in the preliminaries of his scheme. The sentence of the court was imprisonment for life. With regard to the Crown Prince, the court declared itself incompetent to decide. The members avoided the word desertion, speaking of an intention to 'retire,' or to 'absent himself,' and evidently did not consider the Prince merited any very severe punishment.

The King's vengeance was turned against Katte,

<sup>1</sup> Danneil, J. F., *Vollständige Protokolle des Köpenicks Kriegsgerichts*, 1861.

through whom he could touch his son. He overruled the sentence of the court-martial and ordered Katte to be beheaded.

The first intimation of Katte's impending fate was taken to Frederick on the morning fixed for the execution, 5th November 1730. He was awaked with the news that Katte had been brought to Cüstrin, and arrangements had been made for the execution to take place under his windows.

He became much agitated, declared that to save Katte he would renounce the crown, consent to perpetual imprisonment, even give his own life; he implored his attendants to send a messenger to the King with these offers, but no such request could be complied with, as he must have known. There is indeed a suspicion that, though genuinely distressed at Katte's fate, and conscious of his own responsibility in the matter, Frederick was not blind to the value, for himself, of a very demonstrative exhibition of sorrow. His misery and humiliation were great; he desired that the King should know it.

The last scene of tragedy was really too much for him. When Katte came forward between his guards, and looked up, Frederick was intensely moved, kissed his hand towards his friend, and cried out, in an agonised tone, 'Mon cher Katte, je vous demande pardon mille fois.' Katte bowed and replied, 'Monseigneur, n'en pensez pas, je vous prie.' At this the Prince fainted, or collapsed with closed eyes, that he might not see the actual beheading. Later in the day he came again to the window, and looked where Katte's body still lay, by express order of the King, covered by a black cloth. He saw it removed for burial at 2 P.M.

The King received intercessions on behalf of the Crown Prince from the Courts of England, Holland, Sweden and Russia, and, more important than all, an autograph letter of intercession from the hand of the Emperor himself. These representations were inspired by motives of humanity. The life of the Crown Prince was of no value to any one of these Powers. The Emperor, indeed, had



reason to regard the young man as anything but a friend, and his minister, Bartenstein, protested against the Imperial intercession on behalf of a Prince, whose leanings were anti-Austrian. The return that Frederick made for the Emperor's friendly interference was, as we shall see, a treacherous attack at the first opportunity. But it is an exaggeration to assert, as some have done, that the Emperor saved Frederick's life. Frederick William I. was forced by public opinion, by consideration of his popularity both at home and abroad, to abandon his cruel impulse. He pretended that he had done so only out of deference for his Emperor.

Frederick had achieved his aim. He had protested, by the only means in his power, against being beaten like a slave. His father never struck him again. But he had still to undergo a long ordeal of severe discipline. His punishment had scarcely begun.

## CHAPTER IV

### MARRIAGE FOR FREEDOM

THE Crown Prince was given a stool in the office of the Audit of Accounts for the Departments of War and Agriculture, at Cüstrin. He was glad to do a junior clerk's work, because he thereby escaped the society of his father, and brought to an end the tension of the past weeks. His relief was shown in a gay and sprightly demeanour. He supposed that his trials would soon be over.

He lived in a small house under the care of Hofmarschall von Wolden, with two chamberlains, von Natzmer and von Rohwedel. He was given his sword, but not his uniform, and was compelled to wear a grey, civilian suit. He was not, at first, allowed any other society, nor any books, least of all his flute.

Von Wolden in one of his reports to the King, remarked that the Prince adhered to the predestination heresy. The King sent a furious letter. 'If he wishes to go to the devil, let him go! I have nothing to reproach myself with.' . . . 'After a time you will come to know that saint, my son, better and better. You will see that he has no good in him, except his tongue. Oh, against his tongue I have nothing to say. The scoundrel declines to be shaved.' . . . 'He walks on the tips of his toes. He does not plant his feet firmly on the ground. He walks bent double.' . . . 'He never looks an honest man straight in the face.' No doubt this far from attractive portrait of Frederick was accurate; he was, now and ever after, shifty, false, endowed with a caustic tongue; he was never of the upstanding, straightforward kind, either mentally or physically.

A sum of £22, 5s. per month was allowed him for all his expenses, including the pay of three footmen and a



cook, and for rent, food, light, and fire. He had to keep exact accounts, for his father examined every item. In the summer Frederick asked for a thinner suit of clothes. 'It is not the fashion either in Prussia or Brandenburg, it is a French fashion,' was the forbidding reply.

He was not allowed any amusement. When the office work was finished, he went to his small house, and passed the rest of the day, as best he could, in the society of his three companions. They soon became heartily sick of each other. Frederick was bored and dispirited, and his health suffered. The officers complained also. Wolden wrote to Grumkow, 'We in this convent will all collapse if this sort of existence continues for some time.'<sup>1</sup> The King was pleased with these reports, for he desired to be assured that his son was feeling the effects of his anger.

Hille, Director of the Finance Department at Cüstrin, gave Frederick, among his lessons in finance, one which may have had its influence upon subsequent events. He showed how the trade of the River Oder, which passed through the King's dominions in Pomerania, was controlled by the merchants of Silesia. 'There is no hope of successful commerce for Brandenburg, as long as the Silesians are not deprived of their immediate commerce. How is that to be brought about? We must leave to others, higher and cleverer than ourselves, the settlement of that question.'<sup>2</sup> Thus early was Frederick's attention directed to the value of Silesia.

One of his companions, von Natzmer, obtained leave of absence. Frederick wrote him in February 1731, a letter in which he observed that the territories of the King were separated, and surrounded by enemies. It was essential, for mere defence, to have friends and allies among the neighbours. 'The plan which is the natural outcome from this foundation should be to obtain more and more the aggrandisement of the House.' He proposed the acquisition of West Prussia, Hithev, Pomerania, Mecklenburg, and Jülich-Berg, 'which it is absolutely necessary to acquire for aggrandisement on that side,

<sup>1</sup> Förster, iii. p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Lavissee, p. 343.

so as not to leave these unfortunate countries of Cleves, the Mark, etc., solitary and without companions.' These Cleves countries could produce an army of thirty thousand men. He did not propose to discuss questions of right, nor how these projects were to be carried out. 'I desire merely to prove the political necessity, from the situation of the Prussian territories, of acquiring the provinces I have mentioned. I think that must be the plan upon which any wise and faithful minister of the House should work, leaving always the lesser object to obtain the greater.' At the age of nineteen Frederick had already made up his mind that his career as King was to be one of conquest.

The Cüstrin existence became more and more depressing. A letter was sent to General Grumkow, who was in the confidence of the King, signed by Wolden, Natzmer and Rohwedel, which said that the Prince was ready to make a declaration that he had abandoned the English marriage, and was willing to consider a marriage with the house of Austria, provided he was not asked to change his religion, which no consideration of whatever importance would induce him to do. The reply of Grumkow was disappointing. He said that the King had 'very sinister ideas as to the character of the Prince,' as he had fully stated to him (Grumkow) only the day before. '(1) He considers the Prince a dissimulator in a superlative degree. (2) He is persuaded that the Prince has never loved him, but much the contrary, even something more. (3) He is as pleased as a King at Cüstrin, simply because he is not in the society of his father, hating whatever implies fatigue and work. (4) He believes that it suffices for something to give him pleasure for it to give dislike to the Prince.'<sup>1</sup> The King understood his son.

His companions also had no illusions. Hille wrote to Grumkow that, upon a question of accounts the Crown Prince had said 'that it was very extraordinary that a gentleman should be obliged to render an account to a bourgeois.' 'Upon that,' says Hille, 'I could not restrain

<sup>1</sup> Förster, p. 23.

myself from saying that indeed everything seemed reversed in the world, and that it was never more visible than when one reflected that princes who had no common sense or were amused by nothing but trifles, were in command of reasonable people. It remained at that. If he is annoyed I have enjoyed the pleasure of telling him the truth, which he will not hear every day.' <sup>1</sup> Wolden wrote to the King, 'The Prince has all the qualities of a Grand Seigneur.' The attendants disliked his airs, his contempt for all who were not of noble birth; and they thought him a trifler. The King continued displeased. He wrote:—'You must tell my son that he should drive out of his head French and English customs, and consider none but the Prussian, he must be faithful to his father and lord, and keep a German heart, drive from his heart all French foppishness, and damnable political falseness.'

In the end Frederick succeeded in satisfying his father of his complete submission. On the 15th August, the King's birthday, he was admitted into the presence of his father; he wept, fell on his knees, and kissed the King's feet, and the word of pardon was pronounced.

There followed some alleviation of the rigours of Cüstrin. The Prince was to visit the estates whose finances he had been examining, and to consider what improvements might be practicable. He was to make himself familiar with husbandry in all its branches, agriculture, grazing, forestry, brewing, in short everything. He might invite two guests to dinner, and dine out twice a week. He was not to be allowed any female society, nor French books, nor worldly German books, nor any music. He was to be encouraged to ride and drive, to shoot stags, and game, and to clean his own guns.

Frederick adopted from this time forward a very humble style in addressing his father. Three days after the interview of pardon he wrote:

*'CÜSTRIN, the 18th August 1731.*

*'MOST GRACIOUS KING AND FATHER,—I thank God a thousand times for having turned the heart of my most*

<sup>1</sup> Förster, p. 41.



gracious father towards me, so that the grave faults I have committed have been dissolved by pardon. Had I not recognition of the undeserved nature of such pardon, I should not deserve to be called a man. And, to show my most gracious father, how you have in that way won my heart, that it has become impossible to keep anything secret from you, I must declare that you have extended to me a greater pardon than you realised. Yes, I must with rue and shame admit that I have been much more guilty than you have suspected, and have acted very seriously against you.' [Then follows a confession of the correspondence with Queen Caroline about the English marriages.] 'I beg you by the grace of the wounds of Christ, to forgive me also this, and I swear to you that for the rest of my days I will think no more of an English Princess and these intrigues, and will endeavour by my entire submission, my complete obedience and sincere faithfulness in all things, to repair my bad conduct. I lay myself wholly at my most gracious father's disposal. You know best what is good for me. In the meantime I beg you, most humbly, to be assured that with most humble respect and everlasting thankfulness and childlike submission, I remain,—of my most gracious King and Father,—the most faithful and obedient servant and son,

'FRIDRICH.'

Frederick was now nineteen and a half years of age. He continued to write to the most gracious of all fathers, in the same tone of servility, until the moment when the King's death released him, nine years later. Practice indeed helped him to an increased perfection of abjectness. The letters written when he was a married man in control of a separate establishment of his own, continued to be thick with expressions of abasement.

Wilhelmina for some time persisted in her demand for the English marriage. When she had been confined to her apartments for a year, she was told that unless she resigned her fate entirely to the King she would be imprisoned for life, but if she surrendered she would be



released, and the lot of her brother would also be alleviated. Under this pressure she gave up the English throne, which had so long been an ambitious dream, and accepted, at the King's command, the Margrave of Baireuth for her husband. She was then permitted to throw herself at the feet of the King, who began by abusing her, and concluded with embraces. Her betrothal was officially celebrated on the 1st June 1731.

Frederick's demeanour had now become so satisfactory to his father that, on the 30th November 1731, he was allowed to appear in uniform at a grand dinner given by Seckendorf, at which the King and the chief officials were present. As Colonel-designate of the Goltz Regiment of infantry at Ruppín, he went to reside at that place on the 29th February 1732.

He had to accept a wife chosen for him by the King. Austrian influence put forward the Princess Elizabeth Christina of Brunswick-Bevern, a niece of the Empress, after whom she was named, and first cousin of Maria Theresa, the heiress to the Habsburg dominions. Frederick desired a marriage with no less a person than Maria Theresa herself. He still entertained high ambitions. The Bevern match was a great disappointment, after his English hopes and Austrian visions. He and Wilhelmina were being well punished for their pretensions.

Hille reported that the Prince on being asked whether, if the Princess proved to be ugly and silly, he would be able to love her and live well with her, replied, 'Certainly not. I should put her aside, as soon as I was the master. I must be excused for getting over the trouble as best I can.' He said the same to Count Schulenburg. 'If the King insists upon my marrying I will obey; having done that I will put aside my wife and live as I please.'<sup>1</sup> Schulenburg said that the King would take his daughter-in-law's part, to which Frederick rejoined that he would see to it that she did not venture to complain. Schulenburg remarked upon the immorality of such conduct, but Frederick declared that he was determined to enjoy

<sup>1</sup> Förster, iii. p. 68.

himself in his own way. He was young and intended to profit by his youth.

He was disturbed at what had been told him about Elizabeth Christina. He wrote to Grumkow, 11th February 1732, that he could not endure a stupid woman who would enrage him with her ineptitude, and whom he would be ashamed to produce in public. On the 19th he talked of suicide: 'I have still some resources, and a pistol shot would deliver me from my sorrows and of my life. I believe that the good God would not condemn me, and taking pity upon me, will in exchange for a life of misery accord me salvation.'

Frederick feared, above everything, to be connected with the German plainness and piety which were ridiculed by the French leaders of fashion. He was morbidly sensitive to French criticism in all matters of behaviour and taste. He understood that Elizabeth Christina was a typical German Princess, who was easily embarrassed, and did not venture to join in conversation amongst her elders. His father approved of her. He described her to Frederick as 'well brought-up, modest and retiring, as women should be'; and she was 'godfearing.' These were the very qualities which Frederick dreaded.

On the same day that he wrote in this despairing strain to Grumkow, he sent to his father a letter of complete submissiveness, in the usual abject terms:—

‘CÜSTRIN, the 19th February 1732.

‘MOST GRACIOUS KING AND FATHER,—I have to-day had the honour to receive the letter of my most gracious father, and I am glad that my most gracious father is pleased with the Princess. Whatever it may be, I will live in conformity with the command of my most gracious father; and nothing is so near to my heart as to have the opportunity to exhibit my blind obedience to my most gracious father, and I await in the humblest submissiveness all the further commands of my most gracious father. I can swear that I should be really delighted to have the honour to be allowed to see again my most

gracious father, as I feel for him the most genuine love and respect. For the rest I beg for the continued graciousness of my most gracious father, and assure him that nothing in the world can turn me away from him, as I remain to the end of my life with the most humble respect and submissiveness,' etc.

The King must have smiled when he found his son swearing that he longed for the society of his father, for it was notorious that he feared nothing in the world more, and that he was prepared to bind himself for life to any woman, in order that by the status of marriage he should be free to remain away from his father. The most powerful threat which the King employed, to force him to an uncongenial marriage, was precisely that of being summoned, in case of disobedience, to undergo an interminable dose of his father's society.

Frederick was summoned to Potsdam, where he was introduced to his Princess. He continued to complain of his father's choice, but he was not as dissatisfied with his fiancée as he averred. In conversation with Wilhelmina he said, 'We are alone, and I have no secrets from you. I will tell you how matters stand. I do not dislike the Princess as much as I pretend; I affect to be unable to tolerate her, in order to give great prominence to my obedience to the King.' After a long delay, due to the King's hesitation, the marriage took place on the 12th June 1733.

The King would not give his son a reasonable allowance, with the result that Frederick was obliged to borrow money. One large item in his expenditure was incurred in the purchase of the giant recruits whom he sent as propitiatory offerings to his father. He told Guy Dickens that the furnishing of these monsters was a heavy tax upon him, but that, since his disgrace, it was the only means he had of paying court to his father and obtaining a quiet life. Seckendorf, on behalf of the Emperor Charles VI., advanced special sums for this definite object; we have records of 2000 florins for one batch of giants and 1300



ducats for another. The Emperor accorded in addition an annual allowance of 2500 ducats. George II. also sent money to his nephew, who begged and borrowed in all directions. He obtained from Seckendorf a pension for his old tutor, Duhan, who was still in disgrace ; and he also induced the Emperor to supply Wilhelmina with a little much-needed pocket money. It was made quite plain that the Emperor expected friendship and attachment to the Austrian Court in return for all this assistance. Seckendorf wrote on the 13th April 1733 : ' I will not fail to make a faithful report to His Imperial Majesty of the expressions of gratitude which Your Royal Highness uses in your gracious letter, for the attention which H.I.M. has for some time given to all which concerns the welfare of Y.R.H. The union and perfect understanding between the houses of Austria and Brandenburg has produced reciprocal advantages for more than ten years past. H.I.M. will be pleased to see Y.R.H. continue in the principles which are so salutary for the public good ; and as H.M. the King, your father, has now for some years given practical evidence of his friendship for the Emperor, H.I.M. would be glad to know that Y.R.H. desires to enter into the same views.'

Frederick took the money, when he had need of it, on these conditions, and subsequently repudiated the moral obligation at the first opportunity.



## CHAPTER V

### THE RHEINSBERG PHILOSOPHER

AT Ruppín, where the Crown Prince was quartered, there was no suitable accommodation for his wife. The King bought for his son the castle of Rheinsberg, situated twelve miles to the north of Ruppín. At Frederick's desire extensive alterations were made in the house. These were spread over so long a period, that Elizabeth Christina was not installed at Rheinsberg with her husband till the summer of 1736, three years after her marriage. In the meantime Frederick lived at Ruppín, and his wife at her palace of Schönhausen, near Berlin; they met only three or four times a year, when Frederick came to Berlin.

He was still under the suspicious and jealous control of his father. He was compelled to give much time to his military duties as commander of the Ruppín garrison. He wrote to Grumkow, 'I have drilled, I drill, I shall drill, that is all my news.' But in spite of his dislike for all occupations that his father forced him to adopt, he came to take an interest in his work. When war threatened he wrote to Grumkôw, 'I shall be delighted, for I fear that otherwise the strength of my arm may decay in repose. At present I have still time to become a military student. At thirty one has no longer the disposition for learning, and such a business as that of war deserves something better than the application of old age. The soldier must be reared and nourished, and practical experience, rather premature than late, should be his teacher. War outside our confines and limits can but be useful and necessary, it corrects luxury and ostentation, teaches sobriety and abstinence, it makes the body capable of supporting fatigues and uproots all that is effeminate.' He approves

and desires war, so long as it is conducted in the enemy's territory.

Frederick's prospect of seeing something of warfare was due to the death of Augustus II., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. Augustus before his death had been endeavouring to ensure the election to the Polish kingdom of his son, also named Augustus. He hoped to make it hereditary in his family. He was prepared to give Courland to Russia, West Prussia to Frederick William, and a small territory, the County of Zips, to Austria, with a guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction. If this scheme had been carried out Poland, though reduced in area, would have survived as a separate State, escaping the complete partition which was her ultimate fate. Poland would have been to Saxony what East Prussia was to Brandenburg, the source of kingship. But the plan had no friends. None of Poland's neighbours, save Saxony, desired the anarchy in the country to come to an end, least of all that Poland should be defended against their designs by a strong German State. Prussia, Russia and Austria all looked forward to a partition. Augustus might have succeeded in overcoming this opposition, but before the plan had reached the practical stage, he died, 1st February 1733. The story is that Grumkow, sent by Frederick William to find out the maximum that Augustus was prepared to give for Prussian support, engaged with him in a drinking contest, in the hope of surprising the secret. Augustus accepted the challenge, confident of his powers, expecting to be able to outwit Grumkow and discover what Frederick William would accept. The future of Poland was decided in this glorious battle. Neither of the combatants revealed their secrets, but Augustus died within three weeks, and Grumkow never quite recovered the effects of the debauch. His training at the *Tabagie* enabled him to survive. Thus the last hope of Poland was drowned in wine.

Against the young Augustus, France put forward as candidate for election, Stanislaus Leczinski, the father-in-law of Louis xv. He was elected King by the Diet of

Warsaw, on the 6th September 1733. Russia immediately sent troops into Warsaw to upset the election. Stanislaus fled, and the Diet was forced to rescind the first vote and proceed to the election of Augustus III., 5th October 1733. The reply of France was to send troops into Lorraine. The Imperial Diet then voted for war.

On the 7th June 1734, the Prussian soldiers joined the Imperial army, under Eugène, on the Rhine. The French were besieging Philipsburg, and the Imperialists were endeavouring to break up the siege. Frederick reached the Imperial camp on the 7th July, and was introduced to Eugène on the same day. He stood much in awe of the hero, and spoke of him with the utmost respect; but he remarked, in a letter to his father, that he had found it difficult to reach him through the crowd of generals by whom he was surrounded. In a letter to de Camas, of the 11th September, he observed that the present campaign was a school for useful observation of 'the confusion and disorder which reign in this army.' He thought that if prompt and vigorous measures had been taken, the siege might have been raised. The poor opinion he obtained of the Austrian organisation and command on this occasion had much to do with the fateful decision to rob Maria Theresa of Silesia.

In the autumn of this year the King was attacked by serious illness. The Crown Prince wrote to him letters in which he expressed his despair at the grave reports, and his trust in God's grace to prolong his father's existence. But, at the same time he was writing to Wilhelmina in a very different strain: 'The news we have of the King is very bad; he is in a sad way, and is not expected to live long. I have taken the resolution to console myself for what may happen; for, after all, I am quite persuaded that as long as he lives, I shall not have any sort of good time, and I think I shall find a hundred reasons against one which shall make you forget him fast enough, for what gives you tenderness for him is, my very dear sister, that you have not seen him for a very long time; but if



you were to see him again, I think you would leave him to repose in peace without regret. Let us then console ourselves together.' Soon afterwards he was writing to the King that he would willingly give his life for his.

On the 12th October, Frederick was received at Potsdam with tenderness by his father, who called him Fritzchen. The King was suffering from dropsy, his legs and body were enormously swollen, and he had difficulty in breathing. He was himself convinced that his illness would be fatal. He had no confidence in Frederick, and said to him: 'If you do not manage well, and everything goes topsy-turvy, I shall laugh at you from the grave.' Frederick gave way to copious weeping, much to the admiration of the household; 'he cried the eyes out of his head,' an attendant reported, but we know what his sentiments were.

Expecting his father's early death, Frederick fell into the temptation which has so often been the undoing of an over-eager heir. He acted as if he was already in command. He gave Grumkow advice, which sounded very like a command, to suspend the negotiations for peace. He approached La Chétardie, the French Ambassador, and urged him to prevent any final agreement from being reached, pending the expected event. He suggested that it would be to the advantage of France to obtain his support against Russia and the Empire. On the other hand, he could exercise pressure against France. Stanislaus was at Königsberg, in the power of the King of Prussia. Frederick would not think of violating his asylum, which would be sacred, he would never commit such a disgraceful act, but, after all, Stanislaus *was* in his hands, and it was only right that he should make profit from that fact, on behalf of the country over which God had made him master, that he might give due attention to its needs. This pronouncement is typically Prussian. Frederick begins, as is customary, with the moral flourish; having established his own high character, he proceeds to remark that for



the sake of his people he may be obliged to perpetrate the infamy. He went on to announce that his own plans were made, and to suggest to La Chétardie that he should induce his Government to give instant attention to the proposals, without waiting for the last moment, so that there should be no delay in immediate action when the time came. If there was one thing in the world he loved it was the French nation. He wished to give free course to his affection. 'So long as my country's advantage is served, you may lead me as far as you like.'

If his father had died at this time, Frederick would have marched troops secretly and swiftly into either Jülich-Berg or Silesia. He would have solicited and obtained a French alliance. His action when King, in marching into Silesia and inducing France to join him, is foreshadowed.

The King heard of his eldest son's intrigues and ordered him back to Ruppin, much to the young man's annoyance. He wrote from Ruppin to Wilhelmina: 'Just imagine, the King has conceived the idea of sending me here, while he is in the last agonies. All the doctors agree in giving him no more than a fortnight of life.' But a greater trial was in store. After some months of desperate struggle the King definitely recovered, though his health was never quite re-established. Frederick's feelings were bitter. He wrote to Wilhelmina: 'You may consider, my very dear sister, that thanks to God, he has the constitution of a Turk, and that he will survive his posterity, if he so desires and if he takes care of himself.' . . . 'Disgusted with the world in every direction as I am, I give myself to reflections, which make me realise more and more that no stable and permanent happiness is to be found here below, and that the more one knows the world, the more one is disgusted with it, finding more vexation and unhappiness than matter for joy and happiness.' This was indeed a disappointing world. The tears had been wasted.

The war of the Polish Succession ended in the discomfiture of Austria, and the aggrandisement of her enemies.

Spain captured the two Sicilies, France kept Lorraine, giving in return an approval of the Pragmatic Sanction. Francis, Duke of Lorraine, obtained Tuscany in exchange, and the hand of Maria Theresa, heiress to the Austrian dominions. Prussia obtained nothing.

In the summer of 1736, Frederick and Elizabeth Christina went to live at Rheinsberg. They were now for the first time closely associated; and the four years spent together at Rheinsberg were the happiest in the lives of both of them. Frederick was at last free from the immediate interference of his father. He was under orders to look after the troops in his command, and to report on the welfare of the district, and he had to carry out these duties in a thorough and conscientious manner, but he was no longer expected to give an account of his every thought and act, throughout the day. He could choose his own friends, and spend most of his time entirely as he pleased. He was summoned to Berlin for the great reviews in the spring, and he had to accompany his father on tours of inspection. He dreaded the approach of these duties, and returned to Rheinsberg with relief. On one of these occasions he wrote to a friend that, arrived safely at Rheinsberg, he was breathing deep draughts of liberty.

No children came to the young couple. The relations between a Prussian king and his eldest son could never be satisfactory to both parties; but a younger brother was an even more undesirable successor. Prince William, now aged fourteen, had always been ostentatiously preferred by his father, with the inevitable result that the brothers disliked each other. Frederick desired a son, whom he could train himself, and who would keep off a fraternal rival.<sup>1</sup>

Frederick chose for his companions at Rheinsberg men who had a taste for literature or art. He installed as pastor one Deschamps, the son of a French refugee, whose

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon, after Marengo, said that he had feared being killed because that event would have enabled one of his brothers to step into his place.

merit in Frederick's eyes was that he had translated into French Wolf's treatise on logic. Keiserling, whom he nicknamed Césarion, could write in Latin, Greek, French and German, and he was a capable musician and composer. He was Frederick's most intimate friend, though fourteen years the senior. Jordan, the son of a French Protestant refugee, had travelled in Holland, France and England, and published a small book about his experiences. He had been received by Voltaire. Frederick made him his librarian and literary assistant; he was called upon sometimes to revise and correct Frederick's prose or verse. Bielfeld was introduced to Frederick when he was paying a visit with his father to the Prince of Orange at the Hague, in 1738. The conversation at table turned upon freemasonry, which Frederick William immediately denounced in his savage manner. The spirit of opposition to his father had become an instinct with Frederick. He determined to become a freemason. The ceremony of initiation was performed at Brunswick, on the return journey. Bielfeld took a prominent part, and thereby earned his place at Rheinsberg. Frederick as King gave freemasonry his patronage and protection. Others in the Rheinsberg circle were the Baron de la Motte Fouqué, a French officer named Chasot, who gave the latest French tone; and Stille, an officer who subsequently rose to distinction: his *Campagnes du roi de Prusse* became a well-known book.

All these were men of intelligence, with inclinations for knowledge, literature and art. Frederick had for them genuine feelings of friendship. Etiquette and rank were not allowed to interfere. Conversation was free and untrammelled and wandered on to all subjects.

The Bayard Order of Rheinsberg consisted of twelve knights who adopted symbolical names. Frederick called himself 'The Constant,' his brother William, aged fourteen, 'The Sober,' Fouqué, 'The Chaste,' the Duke of Bevern, 'The Chevalier of the Golden Quiver.' The sign of the Order was a sword resting upon a laurel wreath, with the words, 'Sans peur et sans reproche.' Each knight wore



a ring, with a sword engraved upon it, and the words, 'Vivent les sans quartiers,' to indicate the pitiless warfare the knights were to wage. When it came to real fighting King Frederick commanded that no quarter was to be given. The Bayard Order was not dissolved by the promotion of its founder to the throne. In 1745 Prince Henry became one of the knights, with the title of 'The Jovial.' Many years later the deserted Queen Elizabeth Christina signed herself in the Preface to a book of religious meditations, 'Constance.'

Frederick rose early and worked all the morning in the room in the tower, which he called his 'Holy of Holies.' All the suite were present at the midday meal; after it coffee was taken in the Crown Princess's room. Frederick would sometimes fish in the lake. He was fond of boating; water parties were formed. In the evening there was music. Frederick played the flute; Graun, a noted tenor, sang; and the chapel musicians, fifteen in number, assisted. Quantz, the flute player at the Saxon Court, obtained permission to pay visits to Rheinsberg, where he gave Frederick lessons on his instrument and also instructed him in composition. Occasionally there was dancing, in the apartments of the Crown Princess. Theatrical performances were given, in which Frederick took a part.

Frederick spent much of his time in writing indifferent French verse, a habit which continued throughout his life. It was a fashionable amusement. He was also a prolific writer of letters. His chief correspondents during the Rheinsberg period were, Jordan, his librarian; Duhan de Jaudun, his old tutor; de Suhm, representative of Saxony at Berlin; de Camas, a Prussian officer; Mantouffell, a retired Saxon official who lived at Berlin, and was, unknown to Frederick, a spy; Frederick's sister Wilhelmina; and Voltaire.

The writing was neat and clear, the spelling uncertain, the punctuation careless. The signature was 'Frédéric,' until April 1732; then 'Frederic' (without accents) up to June 1737; from that time forward to his death, 'Federic.' He said there were too many letters *r* in the



German language ; obliged to retain the two r's in Friedrich, he cut out one from the French form of his name.

French was the language of all his private correspondence. It was, at best, Huguenot French, a little out of date ; and it was adulterated with Germanisms, as Frederick knew and admitted. He never had the French type of mind, in spite of all his efforts at imitation. He was always a German trying to be French. He said of his countrymen : ' The Germans are not deficient in intellect. Good sense is their portion ; they are rather like the English. The Germans are laborious and profound ; when once they have become seized of an affair they labour it. Their books are of an appalling diffuseness. If their heaviness could be corrected and they could be familiarised a little with the graces, I should not despair of my nation producing great men. France and England are the only two States in which the arts are in much consideration. It is in these countries that other nations should obtain their instruction. Those who are unable to make the journey in person can at least draw understanding and light from the writings of their most celebrated authors.' But Frederick never learned English.

It was fashionable to have no illusions about oneself. Good breeding demanded that a man should be ready at all moments with self-depreciations, to be on guard against exhibiting what Frederick in a letter to de Suhm describes as, ' that foolish vanity which makes a man entertain a marvellous idea of himself.' For idleness he had a positive loathing. After an attack of illness he wrote : ' The doctor, more cruel than the malady itself, condemns me to take daily exercise, time which I am obliged to take from my hours of study. These charlatans wish to interdict my self-instruction ; soon they will be saying that I must give up thinking. But, when everything is considered and taken into account, I prefer to be sick in body than to be crippled in mind.'

He used to date his final repudiation of the Christian religion, from the year 1736, when he went to Rheinsberg, but the break had really occurred much earlier. The

comparative safety at Rheinsberg, the freedom from his father's interference, enabled him to exhibit his opinions without fear. He had been led to them originally by the excess of religious instruction to which he had been subjected, by revolt against all that his father tried to force upon him, and by a refusal to submit to any form of personal surrender. Then came the decision that, when he was King, he would not submit to be controlled, as his father had been, by the ministers of the Church ; and, finally, he believed that the Christian religion forbade the career of conquest and aggression that he had planned for himself.

He wrote, in August 1736, a long letter to Voltaire, and received in reply a letter of compliments. A regular correspondence ensued. Frederick praised Voltaire as a poet, a thinker, a lover of truth and of the human race. Voltaire replied by describing Frederick as a unique prince, whose existence was a guarantee for the welfare of his people, and an example to all princes for all time. Frederick sympathised with Voltaire for the persecution his writings had brought upon him, denounced these efforts at preventing the spread of truth, and offered Voltaire all the assistance in his power. Verses were exchanged. Frederick begged Voltaire to correct his, which Voltaire, after repeated pressure, ultimately did. For example he pointed out that '*trompette* does not rhyme with *tête*, for *tête* is long and *pette* is short, and rhyme is for the ear and not for the eyes. *Défaites*, for the same reason, does not rhyme with *conquêtes*.' . . . '*Je n'eus point reçu l'existence*, you should say *je n'eusse* : and for *la sagesse avait pourvue*, you should say *pourvu*.' . . . 'May it please Y. R. H. do not write *opinion* with a *g*, and deign to give this word the four syllables of which it is composed ; in such matters great princes and great geniuses must yield to the pedants. All the greatness of your genius can do nothing against syllables, and you are not the master to put a *g* where it does not exist. While I am on syllables I would beg also Y. R. H. to write *vice* with a *c* and not with *ss*. With attention to

these small matters, you may be of the *Académie française* when you please, and, Prince apart, you would do it honour : few of the Academicians express themselves with as much force as my Prince, the great reason being, that he thinks more than they do.'

In the contest of compliments Frederick had less ability but more sincerity. Voltaire sent letters to Keiserling and Jordan. Frederick replied, 'Your two letters have produced very different effects upon those to whom I have given them. Césarion' (Keiserling) 'who had the gout has been cured by joy, and Jordan, who was quite well, was threatened with apoplexy from the same emotion, thus may the same cause produce very different results.' . . . 'Nothing is wanting at Rheinsberg but a Voltaire to make us perfectly happy ; in spite of your absence, your person is, so to speak, inherent in us. You are always with us. Your portrait presides in my library ; it hangs above the cupboard which preserves our golden fleece ; it is placed just above your works, and facing the position which I take, so that I have it always before my eyes.' To this Voltaire replied, 'There were once, according to the tales of antiquity, people who had genii who helped them in their great enterprises. My genius is at Rheinsberg. Ah ! Monseigneur, in spite of the three hundred leagues, I feel my heart pressed quite close to that of Y. R. H.'

Frederick gained much from this correspondence. Apart from the improvement in his French, his mind was nourished and stimulated. He was twenty-four, Voltaire was forty. The elder man took great pains with his pupil, writing often, and at considerable length. Voltaire also derived advantage. It was something in those days, even for an immortal, to be accepted by a Crown Prince as his friend.

Aware that he had a sympathetic listener, Frederick indulged in abuse of the Church and its ministers. 'As for the theologians,' he wrote, 'it seems they resemble each other, to whatever religion or nation they may belong ; their aim always is to arrogate to themselves despotic



authority over the conscience. That suffices to make them jealous.'

Under the influence of the Church, inquiries into natural phenomena were regarded as irreligious and unbecoming. It required some courage and independence of spirit for a man of fashion to confess to an interest in science. Frederick wrote of Lord Baltimore, who had been introduced at Rheinsberg: 'This Lord is a very sensible man, who is well informed, and who considers, with us, that a knowledge of the sciences is not derogatory to the nobility, and does not degrade an illustrious rank.' In this spirit Frederick criticised Madame du Châtelet's theory of the origin of fire, and discussed with her the phenomenon of the creation of ice in the summer. He made experiments with a pneumatic machine on the nature of a vacuum. He put a watch wound up, and a pea buried in earth, inside the vacuum, to see what would happen. He puzzled over the theory of a vacuum in space: and he tried to explain the causes of wind, and why there was more wind in the winter solstice.

He plied Voltaire with philosophical speculations. Voltaire wrote to him: 'All metaphysics, in my opinion, consists of two things: the first, what all men of sense know; the second, what they never will know.' Frederick replied: 'I give up to you willingly divine Aristotle, divine Plato, and all the heroes of scholastic philosophy. They were men who had recourse to words to hide their ignorance. Their followers believed in them on account of their reputation, and through whole centuries men have been content to repeat, without understanding, what they said. It is no longer permissible, in our days, to use words in other than their proper meaning.'

He believed in predestination: 'I found all I have to say to you upon the providence, the wisdom, and the prescience of God. Either God is wise or he is not. If he is wise, he cannot leave anything to chance; he must propose some object, an end in all that he does, and thence we deduce his prescience, his providence and the doctrine of irrevocable destiny.'



He did not believe in free-will, because it must come from God, which is a contradiction. Another argument against free-will he found in the laws of gravity, of attraction, of movement, and in the subjection of such vast bodies as the stars to the immutable laws of nature. 'If the whole universe is subjected to fixed and permanent laws, how is it that Messrs. Clarke and Newton come and tell me that man, that creature so small, so imperceptible in comparison with the vast universe, what am I saying, that miserable reptile who himself crawls on the surface of this world which is but a point in the universe, that this miserable creature alone should have the privilege of being able to act as he chooses, not governed by any law, and in despite of his Creator?' . . . 'Since without God the world could not have been created and, since, as I have proved, man is not free, it follows that since there is a God, there must be an absolute necessity, and since there is an absolute necessity, man must as result be subjected to it and cannot have liberty.'

Frederick put the guilt for all crime upon God. 'Neither free-will nor absolute fate absolves or exculpates the Divinity from being a participator in crime; for whether God gives us the liberty to do wrong, or pushes us straight to crime, comes to much the same thing; it is only a little more or less. If you seek for the origin of evil you cannot avoid attributing it to God.'

He made real efforts to understand the subject. He read and re-read Wolf's *Metaphysics*, which was translated from the German into French for him by de Suhm. In the end he found it impossible to believe definitely in the immortality of the soul, nor in man's complete freedom of action. He wrote to Voltaire, 3rd February 1739: 'What thinks in us is assuredly an effect or result of the mechanism of our living machine.'

With some arrogance there was yet, when in the presence of men of ability, an engaging modesty in this Prince. He earnestly desired to fit himself for the society of the foremost men of the day, as poet, philosopher, student of natural phenomena. His voluminous corre-

spondence with Voltaire is a proof of his sincerity in these praiseworthy aims. While other princes thought only of fine manners and self-indulgences, the Prussian was bent upon the cultivation of the mental qualities. He had also a genuine curiosity about the world, a desire to understand men and things. There is no evidence of exceptional ability, but the aspiration after excellence is such that a career of prominence and success may confidently be predicted.

His father, in the meantime, was being subjected to humiliations. He made war with his mouth only, and thus earned both enmity and derision. Grasping in his demands, he neglected to give them any courageous support. The Emperor treated him with disdain. He did not think it necessary to inform his ally that preliminaries of peace had been signed at Vienna, in October 1735. Nor did he take the trouble to announce to the Elector of Brandenburg the marriage of Maria Theresa, the heiress to the Austrian dominions, to Duke Francis of Lorraine, in February 1736. The Emperor went on to unfriendly acts. He issued an order that no more Prussian recruiting should be permitted in his dominions.

Frederick William I. was stirred to the depth by this treatment. He wrote to his son: 'That is the return for the contributed ten thousand men and all the deference I have shown the Emperor, and you can conclude that it helps nothing even to sacrifice oneself for him. So long as they have need of one they flatter, but as soon as they think they no longer require one's assistance they remove the mask and ignore all acknowledgment. The reflections which must occur to you will enable you to be careful to avoid similar occurrences.' When the Crown Prince came to Potsdam, 2nd May 1736, the King, before his Court, and in his son's presence, indulged in violent abuse of the Emperor. Turning at last to his son he said, with tears in his eyes, 'Here stands one who will avenge me.' He wrote to Seckendorf, 'After my death the house of Brandenburg will abandon the Emperor for another party, because it has been too treacherously

handled.' He dictated an account of his diplomatic fortunes. 'That it may be a warning to my son, the Crown Prince, that he may be on his guard in the future against being played with as I myself have been hitherto.'<sup>1</sup>

Frederick William had no friends, and the Prussian claim on the Jülich-Berg Duchies had no supporters. Austria regretted the bestowal of a crown upon the Hohenzollerns, who were an aggressive and ungrateful race. France did not desire a Prussian extension on the Rhine. Both these Catholic powers preferred the Catholic claimant, Theodore of Sulzbach. George II. regarded every extension of Prussian strength as a threat to Hanover. Holland also objected to a Prussian advance in her direction. Frederick William's huge army could only be considered as a threat to the security of all the neighbouring countries. The Sulzbach prince had no similar powers for mischief; yet, while the mere existence of the Prussian army constituted a menace, the Prussian King, irresolute and timid, was despised. In January 1737 France and Austria agreed with England and Holland to adjudicate upon the Jülich-Berg succession. This meant that Prussia had small chance of making good her claim.

Frederick's comments on the situation are to be found in his letters to Grumkow. On the 14th February 1737 he wrote: 'What I should do in this case, and what I suppose that the King will do, would be to establish above everything good relations with the Emperor; to make the Dutch believe that I have need of their negotiations, but not to engage myself in any way with them, and in the meantime to advance all the forty squadrons of dragoons with those of the hussars towards the Cleves country, to leave two regiments of cavalry with the garrisons in the towns of Prussia, and to collect all the infantry and the rest of the heavy cavalry in the marches, so that on the instant that anybody showed any intention of opposing my design, I should be ready to fall upon him; and the forty squadrons should have orders at the proper time to march into Jülich and Berg, and to

<sup>1</sup> Lavissee, *Le Grand Frédéric*, p. 222.



take possession of the *two* Duchies. Then if negotiations ensued, all that could be done would be to make us give up Jülich and we should keep Berg, whereas if we invade Berg only, we should still have to give up the half. You may perhaps be in a position to make use of my reflections ; if you find them good you may appropriate them. The most important thing to remember is, to send off the dragoons without delay and before the event has occurred, for if we are not ready at the moment of the death of the Elector, our chance is gone. Would it not perhaps be possible to gain over some of the Palatinate officers who are in quarters with their regiments in the Duchies, so that they might deliver up the towns to us as soon as the occasion has come ? ' <sup>1</sup>

Later on in the year, when the hostility to Prussia was still more marked, Frederick wrote to Grumkow, 9th November 1737, ' God knows that I desire a long life for the King : but if the case of the succession ' (of Jülich-Berg) ' does not arise in his lifetime, it will be seen that there will be no ground for accusing me of sacrificing my interests to other Powers. I am afraid rather that I may be reproached for too much temerity and vivacity. It seems that Heaven has destined the King to make every preparation that wisdom and prudence require to be made before commencing a war. Who knows if Providence does not reserve me to make a glorious use of these preparations, and to employ them for the accomplishment of designs for which the foresight of the King has destined them ? ' <sup>2</sup>

On the 10th February 1738 France, Austria, England and Holland presented identical notes in Berlin, proposing a conference for adjudicating upon the Jülich-Berg succession, giving the provisional possession to the Sulzbach claimant, and demanding a Prussian promise to abstain from interference for two years. Frederick William's reply was a demand for fuller information as to the provisional arrangement. Frederick was dis-

<sup>1</sup> Max Duncker, *Aus der Zeit Friedrichs des Grossen*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

gusted with his father's conduct. He wrote to Grumkow, 4th March 1738: 'I must confess that the reply to the mediators seems to me a conflict between grandness and unworthiness with which I am not in accord. The reply is like that of a man who does not wish to fight, but pretends that he is eager to do so; there were only two possible courses: either to reply with a noble pride and decline to stoop to petty negotiations whose real value would soon be exposed, or to bow under the shameful yoke which it is intended to impose. I am not in politics so fine that I can bring in accord the contrast of threats and submissions, I am young, I should be led perhaps by the impetuosity of my temperament, in any case I should not do things by halves. . . . While prudence is very suitable for preserving what one possesses, boldness alone can make acquisitions.'<sup>1</sup>

These letters exhibit the Frederick of history. He was intensely hurt by the discomfiture and weakness of his father. His own policy would be daring. He would place a force of cavalry and infantry on the Jülich-Berg border, and take the precaution of winning over (by bribery) the Palatine officers. On the death of the Elector he would instantly rush in his cavalry, and with the connivance of the bought officers, obtain control over the two Duchies. If superior force was threatened against him he would bargain, and would probably be able to retain Berg, which was really all that he could expect.

As he was unable to act, Frederick sat down to write out his views on the political situation. On the 19th April 1738 he announced to Voltaire the despatch to him of his *Considérations sur l'état présent du corps politique de l'Europe*. He hoped to have it published anonymously in London; he begged Voltaire to keep the authorship secret.

'It is a permanent principle among Princes,' says Frederick, 'to aggrandise themselves as much as they can.' With that aim Austria has created the Pragmatic

<sup>1</sup> Duncker, pp. 41-42.

Sanction, and obtained the assent to it of the various Courts, the object being to make the Empire hereditary in the house of Habsburg, to get rid of the right of election, and to make Germany subject to an arbitrary monarch. France aimed at conquests in Flanders, Luxemburg, Trêves, and Liège. 'I foresee further, so far as France is concerned, projects still greater and more vast; and the moment that Providence has marked down for execution of these grand designs seems to be that of the death of His Imperial Majesty. What more suitable moment for giving the law to Europe?' These prognostications were not happy, nor had they at the time any adequate justification. There was no sign of the existence of any such designs on the part either of France or of Austria. Frederick's own mind was bent upon schemes of conquest, and he thought, or pretended to think, that others were making schemes which he would have to counter.

Voltaire, when acknowledging the receipt of Frederick's political essay, protested that France and Austria had no such aggressive designs; he suggested that H.R.H. was indulging in pleasantries, but Frederick replied that he was quite serious.

Frederick observes that, 'It is an established principle in the policy of invasion, that the first step in the conquest of a country is to obtain a position there, and this is what is most difficult.' He speaks of the 'insupportable haughtiness which the Imperial Court affects, not only towards its inferiors but to its equals.' He concludes, 'In one word, it is a disgrace and an ignominy for a Prince to lose his estates; and it is an injustice and a criminal rapacity to conquer those over which one has no legitimate right.' Prussia must defend herself against the ambitions of France and Austria. Frederick considered that his honest, and weak, father was being bullied and cheated by unscrupulous and powerful neighbours. They appeared to be inspired by the doctrines contained in Machiavelli's *Prince*. He resolved to write a repudiation of Machiavelli's principles.



Basing his argument upon the essential wickedness of mankind, Machiavelli contended that for so great an object as the founding of a powerful Italian State, it was necessary for a Prince to make use of fraud and force without scruple. No considerations of any sort should be allowed to interfere. Some examples of his teaching may be given.

In Chapter xv. he says that there is so much 'difference between how we live and how we ought to live, that he who leaves that which is done for that which ought to be done, studies his ruin rather than his safety : because a man who should profess to be honest in all his dealings would necessarily come to ruin among so many that are dishonest. Whence it behoves every Prince, desirous of maintaining his powers to learn how to be dishonest, and to make use or not of this knowledge according to circumstances. Let him be heedless of the risk of infamy for such vices, without which it is hardly possible for him to save his State.' <sup>1</sup>

In Chapter xvii., Machiavelli says : 'In general it is certainly far better to be considered merciful ; nevertheless mercy must not be badly employed. Cæsar Borgia was esteemed a cruel man ; nevertheless that cruelty of his set Romagna to rights, united it and brought it to a state of peace and good faith. And, in fact, he was more merciful than the Florentines who, in order to avoid cruelty, allowed Pistoja to be destroyed by factions. It would be better, were it possible, to be loved and feared at the same time ; but as that is not possible, it is better to be feared, when you have to choose the alternative.' <sup>2</sup>

Chapter xviii. is headed : 'How far a Prince is obliged by his Promise.' It begins, 'How honourable it is for a Prince to keep his word, and act rather with integrity than collusion I suppose everybody understands ; nevertheless experience has proved in our own times that the

<sup>1</sup> *Il Principe*, Burd's ed., chap. xv. pp. 283, 288. Where available I have adopted Madame Villari's excellent translation, *The Life and Times of Machiavelli*, by Pasquale Villari, vol. ii. p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> *Il Principe*, chap. xvii. p. 290. Villari, vol. ii. p. 104.

Princes who have achieved great deeds, are those who have held good faith of small account, and have known how to bewilder men's brains by cunning, and in the end have succeeded better than those whose actions have been ruled by honour.' . . . 'A Prince should know how to assume the beast nature of both the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot defend himself against snares, nor the fox against wolves.' . . . 'Therefore a prudent lord neither could nor should observe faith, when such observance might be to his injury, and when the motives that caused him to promise it are at an end. Were all men good this precept would not be good; but since men are bad and would not keep faith with you, you are not bound to keep faith with them.' . . . 'It is necessary to give a good colouring to your nature and be a great dissembler and dissimulator, because men then readily allow themselves to be deceived.' 'A Prince may be obliged, for the maintenance of his State, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion.' He should take care that 'in his aspect as in his words he may seem all piety, faith, humanity, integrity, and religion,' but 'I will dare to say that it is to his injury to possess and always to act upon them, while it is useful for him to appear them.'<sup>1</sup>

Many efforts have been made to soften and extenuate the plain words of Machiavelli. Some have contended that, as he was impelled to write by the chaotic condition of the Italian States, his remarks must be regarded as applicable only to the time and place with which he was dealing. But the basis of his reasoning was his belief in the unalterable wickedness of man; and if he had been speaking only of an exceptional case, he would have made that evident. Machiavelli has also been copiously and indiscriminately abused, and not without excuse, for his doctrines are contrary to the ideals of civilisation, and their adoption by a king and a nation can only bring upon them the hostility of all civilised peoples. The mere fact that, while many princes have in the past acted in

<sup>1</sup> *Il Principe*, chap. xviii. p. 297 et seq. Villari, vol. ii. pp. 184-6.

accordance with the Machiavellian principles, not one of them has been willing to admit that construction upon his conduct, is sufficient proof of the universal abhorrence they arouse. But Machiavelli was an honest man, as his open advocacy of dishonesty attests. We do not expect cheats and hypocrites to applaud him publicly.

Though Frederick may not have realised it, the candour of the Italian was the real cause of his own disapproval. The Crown Prince had not yet been in a position to make use of force, but for fraud he had already shown much readiness and capacity. His father had made frequent references to his son's 'wiles,' and Grumkow's prophecy, 'Junior will cheat them all,' was based upon intimate acquaintance. Frederick was impelled to embark upon a refutation of the doctrine that a Prince may make use of fraud, in order to conceal his own inclinations and intentions. So we find him belabouring Machiavelli with opprobrious epithets. He is an infamous corrupter, a monster, sophist of crime, doctor of crime, charlatan of crime, tiger, infamous criminal, unworthy of his creation, the most wicked, the most criminal of men, a demon of hell, a monster whom hell itself could hardly produce, he makes one shudder with horror and indignation,—and so on. Voltaire at last objected. 'When you have abused Machiavelli soundly, it might be well, after that, to restrict yourself to argument,' he wrote. Frederick protested too much. He betrayed his anxiety lest those who knew him should suspect the reality of his disapproval.

The *Réfutation* is wordy and rambling, half as long again as the literary masterpiece which it attacked. Voltaire wrote to Frederick, 20th February 1740: 'I like and admire the whole tone of the work, and from that standpoint, I go on to say with hardihood to Your Royal Highness, that some of the chapters are rather long.' With Frederick's permission, Voltaire cut out many abusive epithets, most of the passages that might give offence to reigning princes, and some of the irrelevant matter, reducing the whole from 136 to 101 pages. The amended and shortened version was published under



the style of *L'Anti-Machiavel, ou Examen du Prince de Machiavel*. The original title was *Réfutation du Prince de Machiavel*. From this latter work our extracts are taken.

Frederick begins by asserting that 'The maxims of Machiavelli are as contrary to good morals as the system of Descartes to that of Newton'; but nowhere does he stop to explain how or why Machiavelli's maxims are contrary to 'good morals,' nor does he say what he understands by these words.

He complains that, 'Interest is everything with Machiavelli. According to his way of thinking, actions the most unjust and atrocious become legitimate, when they have interest or ambition for their object.' 'I speak not with him,' says Frederick scornfully, 'of religion, nor of morals, but merely of interest; that will suffice to confound him.' So the refutation aims at nothing more than the demonstration that in practice unjust and atrocious actions do not pay. 'Must one discuss, must one argue to demonstrate the advantages of virtue over vice, of beneficence over the desire to do injuries, of generosity over treachery? I think that every reasonable man knows well enough his interests to realise which is the most profitable of the two, and to abhor the man who, without feeling doubt or hesitation, decides in favour of crime.' Thus interest is everything with Frederick as with Machiavelli, and the question of ethics is abandoned. 'Virtue should be the sole begetter of our actions, for who says virtue says reason; they are inseparable things and will always be so, for those who wish their conduct to be consecutive. Let us then be reasonable, since a little reason is all that distinguishes us from the beasts, and it is only goodness which can liken us to that Being infinitely good, from whom we derive our existence.' Frederick does not realise that 'virtue,' should be defined: nor has he perceived that Machiavelli also bases his idea of political 'virtue' upon reason. This was pointed out to him by Voltaire, who wrote, 23rd February 1740, 'It seems to me that sometimes Machiavelli retrenches

himself in one territory and Y.R.H. beats him in another.'

Basing himself then on utility and success, Frederick proceeds to observe that the Prince should make his people happy, because 'A contented people will not think of revolt, a happy people fears more to lose its Prince, who is also their benefactor, than the Sovereign himself can have cause to apprehend the diminution of his power.' In these remarks Frederick is thinking of his father, whose tyranny was resented by his people as well as by his eldest son. He has not noticed that Machiavelli insists, several times, that the Prince must 'preserve the affections of his people.'

Frederick says that in the time of Machiavelli 'when the arts were in their infancy' (such is his knowledge of the cinquecento) 'the baleful glory of the conqueror, with the great and striking actions which impose a certain respect by their grandeur, were preferred to kindness, equity, clemency, and all the virtues. Machiavelli might therefore say that, in his time, it was natural to desire to make conquests, and that a conqueror could not fail to acquire glory; we reply to-day that it is natural to man to desire to preserve his estate and to enlarge it by legitimate means, but that envy is not natural to any but souls born bad, and that the desire to aggrandise oneself with the spoils of another will not present itself so readily to the mind of an honest man, nor to those who desire the esteem of the world.' Frederick does not show how the natural desire to enlarge an estate can be gratified without despoiling anybody; and as the desirer is to be his own judge of what constitutes 'legitimate means,' naked conquest may be justified whenever desired.

'I ask what could induce a man to aggrandise himself, for what reason he could form the design of raising his power upon the misery and destruction of other men, and how he can believe that he will make himself illustrious by creating miseries.' This is beside the mark, because Machiavelli does not advocate the conquest of

strange lands. He proposes the precise opposite, a rebellion against foreign oppression and the unification of a number of small domains in the hands of a powerful native Prince, governing a united people.

Frederick makes a remark upon which his own career throws a curious light :—‘ The new conquests of a Sovereign do not make the estates which he already possesses more opulent or more rich, his people obtain no advantage, and he deceives himself if he imagines that such conquests will bring him happiness. His ambition will not be satisfied with the first conquest, he will become insatiable, and in consequence always dissatisfied with himself.’

These references to the nefariousness of all designs upon one’s neighbour’s property are so inconsistent with Frederick’s policy, both before and after the date of the essay, that the charge of hypocrisy inevitably arises. In the letter to Natzmer, of February 1731, Frederick discussed how Prussia could acquire neighbouring territories, West Prussia, and the Jülich-Berg Duchies. In the letter to Grumkow, he proposed an attack without warning upon the Duchies. In the *Considérations* he observed how natural it was that every Prince should desire aggrandisement. It is difficult to believe that while he was denouncing Machiavelli’s supposed advocacy of foreign conquest, Frederick had shut out of his mind his own fixed and declared intention to despoil his neighbours at the first opportunity.

He writes : ‘ There are only three legitimate ways of becoming master of a country ; either by succession, or by the election of the people who have the power, or when, by a war justly undertaken, one conquers some province from the enemy.’ After justifying purely defensive wars he says, ‘ The wars which sovereigns undertake for the maintenance of certain rights or of certain claims which are disputed, are not less just than the first.’ He is thinking of Prussian claims upon Jülich-Berg or any other lands. These sentences bring down the whole peaceful edifice, for the Prince may conquer a neighbour whenever he desires, by pleading ‘ just undertaking,’



or 'claims.' All wars of aggression, including those of Frederick himself, have been excused by the use of such expressions.

With regard to Machiavelli's advocacy of cruelty in certain conditions, and his desire that his Prince should be feared more than loved, Frederick declares, 'that any King whose policy has no other aim but to make himself feared, will be reigning over slaves; that he will not be able to expect great actions from his subjects, for what is done out of fear or timidity has always shown marks of the same qualities; that a Prince with the gift of making himself loved will reign over hearts, because his subjects will find it agreeable to have him for their master, and that there are a great many examples in history of great and fine actions done out of love and fidelity.' . . . 'I conclude then that a cruel Prince exposes himself to be betrayed more than one who is good-natured, for cruelty is insupportable, and one is soon tired of being in fear, and kindness is always lovable and one does not tire of loving it.' The last paragraph contains a reference to the King's treatment of his eldest son.

The doctrine of being loved rather than feared Frederick would not apply to the army. 'I admit that an army cannot continue without severity, for how would it be possible to keep to their duty, libertines, debauchees, criminals, poltroons, cowards, men of gross, mechanical, and animal nature, if they were not to some extent controlled by the fear of punishment?' The soldiers are the only people who are under the complete control of the King. Frederick agreed with his father that they should be made to fear their officers more than the enemy, regardless of the spirit of love, which begets 'great and fine actions,' and forgetting his assertion that fear makes cowards.

'The world is like a game of cards, in which are engaged some honest men and some thieves who cheat. In order that a Prince, who has to join in the game, should not be cheated, he must know how cheating at cards is done, not that he may ever practise what he has discovered

from such lessons, but that he may not be the dupe of the others.' . . . 'In one word, no consideration should be strong enough to permit an honest man to be false to his obligation.' . . . 'Princes should not employ ruse and *finesse* except to discover the designs of their enemies. For if they make a sincere profession of probity, they will unfailingly obtain the confidence of Europe; they will be fortunate without cheating, and powerful by their virtue alone.'

Very good: but then we have this: 'Cheating is even a defect in politics, when it is carried too far.' This gives the whole case away; for it appears that the high moral principles which have been so proudly displayed do not refer to 'politics,' the chief business of a Prince. In 'politics' cheating is admissible, but care should be taken that it should not go 'too far.' What that means Frederick illustrates by an anecdote of a French official, who protested against being employed to cheat in a trumpery affair, 'It is known that I am an honest man, reserve therefore my character for probity for some occasion when the welfare of France is at stake.' The inference is, as Frederick observes, that one can cheat only once. To make a second attempt while the first is still remembered, that is going 'too far.'

'I admit, besides, that there are annoying necessities when a Prince cannot avoid breaking his treaties and his alliances; yet he should do this in a proper manner, acquainting his allies in good time, and only when the welfare of his people and a very great necessity compel him.' Frederick the Great found these 'annoying necessities' recur with frequency, and he always forgot to acquaint his ally in good time.

Much of the *Réfutation* is devoted to the assertion of copy-book maxims. 'We should always remember not to do to others what we would not wish them to do to us.' It was for Frederick a matter of importance, that he should affirm and reaffirm his own personal endorsement of the accepted moral precepts. Having proclaimed, over and over again, and in loud tones, his irre-

vocable attachment to justice and kindness, having bestowed resounding abuse on the man who had depreciated the practical value of those qualities, having thus, at small cost and without discussion, proved his own 'virtue,' the Prussian was then at liberty to act as the exigencies of the moment might seem to him to require. Necessity, claims, just undertakings, discovery of hostile machinations, self-defence, might be alleged as excuse for any injustice or unkindness, any cruelties or treacheries, that might hold out a prospect of gain.

Frederick's study of Machiavelli confirmed him in his opinions. He was a secret and furtive Machiavelli. The Italian was honest: the real opinions and intentions of the Prussian have to be discovered by close examination of his words. It is strange that their meaning has been so long misunderstood. They reveal the future. It can be foreseen that when the Crown Prince becomes a King he will attack his neighbours in order to annex their territory, and will shrink from no fraud or violence to attain his object, alleging, if challenged, just claims and powerful necessities.



## CHAPTER VI

### BORN TO BE A KING

IN the autumn of 1739 Frederick William was again seriously ill, suffering from dropsy and other ailments ; before the year was out it had become evident that this time there would be no recovery. When all hope had been abandoned, he sent for Frederick and instructed him as to the state of public affairs. On the 9th February 1740 he wrote to Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, ' I expect and prepare myself for death, and have spoken openly to my eldest son in all necessary matters.' The King was confirmed, by this discussion with Frederick, in the conviction that had been growing upon him, that his successor would after all do him credit. He perceived at least that Frederick would be as despotic as himself, and the thought gave him pleasure ; a mild, easy-going rule by the son would have cast odium on the memory of the father. The King said to Frederick, ' There is a Frederick William in thee,' meaning that his son would be a hard, domineering master, like his father.

The death of the King occurred on the 31st May 1740. At the age of twenty-eight Frederick obtained the coveted place. He was the first of the Hohenzollerns born to be a King. As he said, later on, ' Frederick I., in elevating Prussia to a Kingdom, had by that vanity for grandeur placed a germ of ambition in his posterity, which would sooner or later bring forth fruit.' In the first born Royalty the germ was bound to be exceptionally vigorous.

The difference between a King and an Elector was not one of degree but of quality. A King was anointed ; he was of divine essence, the agent and partner of God ; while an Elector was no more than the local magnate who owed feudal obligations to the Emperor. Once a King,

always and everywhere a King. The Brandenburg subjects of the Elector were designated Prussians, not Brandenburgers, to emphasise the kingship of the Elector. When Louis xv. called Frederick scornfully the 'Marquis de Brandebourg,' he challenged the Royal status in Germany of the Elector. George i. did not call his Electoral troops in Hanover Englishmen, but Hanoverians. The Hohenzollern despot made the most of his kingship. In Brandenburg he was the only Prussian; the name was dynastic, not national. It was through the army that it was forced upon the Electorate. The King being Prussian his soldiers were Prussians. So the name derived from a barbarous and distant territory spread ultimately over a large part of Germany.

One of Frederick's early acts as King was to mitigate the use of torture. He remembered what he had suffered, in prison at Cüstrin, from the fear of being put upon the rack. He knew that he was not of the stuff to endure such a trial with credit, and could not bear the thought of the agonies inflicted upon prisoners. But he made exceptions in cases of wholesale murder, or of conspiracy, or 'bei dem Crimen laesae Majestatis und Landes-verratherei,' for the crimes of *lèse-majesté* and high treason. Offences against the King's Majesty and against the State stood in a separate category, as the greatest of all crimes. Terrible cruelties continued to be practised during his reign on criminals who were about to be executed. Flogging in the army was never so frequent and so severe as in Frederick's time.

The death of Frederick William i. proved a terrible misfortune for the new Queen. Frederick wrote at once to his wife: 'Madame, God has just taken away the King at half-past three this afternoon. He thought of you' (he had dictated an affectionate letter to his daughter-in-law on the day of his death) 'and drew from us all tears of real compassion. You cannot imagine with what firmness he met death. You will come, if you please, on Wednesday or Thursday to Berlin. Knobelsdorff should repair thither at once. We will lodge in our old house. As

soon as you have arrived you must begin by paying your respects to the Queen, and then you will come to Charlottenburg, if I am there. I have not time for more. Adieu.'

This letter indicates the existence of good relations, and it is in accord with the intimate and even affectionate spirit of Frederick's previous letters to his wife. But his mother now intervened with disastrous effect. She had fought pertinaciously for a British connection, and had never forgiven Elizabeth Christina for not being a British Princess. She had also always been jealous of her daughter-in-law. When Elizabeth received a letter from Frederick, his mother expected one also. 'Madame,' wrote Frederick to his wife, 10th August 1739, 'Please do not let it be known that I am writing to you, as I am not writing also to the Queen.' To this insistent jealousy was now added the knowledge that the new Queen took precedence over her, and the fear that she might undergo the total eclipse which Queen-Dowagers often experience. She was on the spot at Berlin, while her rival was still at Rheinsberg. She took advantage of her influence over her son, to remind him that he had been married by compulsion, and that, while submitting to the unavoidable, he had declared that he would not have anything to do with his bride. Frederick had almost forgotten that, in the happy days at Rheinsberg. He had been attracted, in spite of himself, by his wife's charming person and her sweet and lovable nature. But now he returned to his original feelings; he would avenge his father's tyranny upon his wife. On the 1st June he wrote to her from Berlin :

'MADAME,—When you have arrived you will go at once to the Queen, to show your respect, and you will endeavour to do so more markedly than hitherto; then you may remain here, your presence being necessary, until I write to you. Receive few people, or none at all. To-morrow I will decide upon the mourning for the ladies, and I will send you the result. Adieu; I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again in good health.' Insistence is now laid on the wife's submission to her mother-



in-law, and there is no reference to the meeting at Charlottenburg, or in their former Berlin house. The old rancour against the forced subjection to his father's will was revived.

Frederick never lived with his wife again. He seldom admitted her into his presence. He scarcely ever wrote to her, and then in the coldest and most formal terms. As she had no children, it was made plain to her that her existence was a nuisance. He never visited her at her Palace of Schönhausen, nor did he ever invite her to Sans Souci, which she never saw. Formal meetings took place, at long intervals, at Berlin. In Frederick's voluminous correspondence there is scarcely a single mention of her, in his poems none at all.

When her brother was killed fighting for Prussia, at the battle of Soor, Frederick sent her this cruel letter: 'Madame,—You may have heard what happened yesterday. I lament and regret the dead; my brothers and Ferdinand are well. They say Prince Louis' (another brother of the Queen's, who was fighting on the Austrian side) 'is wounded. I am, with much esteem,' etc. On this occasion the Queen of Prussia gave expression to the only complaint from her of which we have any knowledge. She wrote to her brother Ferdinand: 'I am accustomed to his ways, but I am none the less affected by them, above all on such an occasion, where one of my brothers has lost his life in his service; it is too cruel to behave in such a way. Patience, I have nothing to reproach myself, and I do my duty; the good God will help me to bear this with many other things.' A few days later Frederick sent a few sentences intended for condolence, but he added coldly that it was her brother's own fault, that he would not accept advice, and that he was surprised that he had not been killed long before.

When Prince William died, Elizabeth Christina sent her husband a long, warm-hearted letter of sympathy for the loss of his brother. When Frederick departed for the Seven Years' War, she wrote him a tender letter of affection. 'God preserve you, and give us soon peace and

tranquillity, and crown with glory and happiness all your laudable enterprises, and may it all develop to your satisfaction. These are the very sincere wishes which emanate from a heart totally attached and devoted to you, and full of a tender and sincere affection, but also quite penetrated with sorrow and affliction when I think that perhaps we are seeing you confront danger once more ; I cannot think of it without great pain.' Frederick's acknowledgment was forbidding and unmannerly : ' Madame, The multitude of business has prevented me from writing to you before this. It is to take leave of you that I address to you this letter, desiring for you health and contentment in the troubles which are about to arise, I am, etc.'

This must surely be reckoned the blackest of all the black spots on the memory of Frederick the Great. He would have derived great advantage from a continuation of the Rheinsberg relations. He lived henceforth a lonely life, into which no feminine influence entered, for even his mother was kept away as much as possible. He might have been happy with a wife and other women about him. He had to admit his wife's amiability. ' Madame,' he wrote on one occasion, ' those who know you cannot avoid loving you, and the goodness of your heart deserves appreciation.' But the past tyranny of his father, the present jealousy of his mother, the lack of children, and his own stony heart combined to prevent him from enjoying the benefit of her sweet presence.

On the 1st June 1740, the day after his father's death, the new King expounded the theory of his Government to his ministers. He said, ' You have hitherto made a difference between the interests of the master and those of his people ; you thought you were doing your duty by applying yourselves only to the first without troubling about the rest. I do not blame you, knowing that the late King had his reasons for not disapproving, but I have mine for thinking differently on the matter. I consider the interests of my Estates are mine, and I have none which are contrary to theirs. Therefore do not adhere

to that separation of interests, and be warned once for all that I regard as my interest only that which may contribute to the comfort and happiness of my people.' These were mere words. Frederick was more despotic than his father. While pretending, like his ancestor, the Great Elector, that he worked solely for the good of his people, his first thought always was of himself and the Hohenzollern dynasty. His father had been honest; he was a hypocrite.

There was to be real freedom of conscience. 'All religions,' wrote Frederick, 'must be tolerated, for each one must seek salvation in his own way.' This was no innovation; it was the traditional Hohenzollern policy; but Frederick's father, under the influence of the Church, had banished the philosopher Wolf, closed the Academy of Science, and suppressed, as far as in him lay, all intellectual inquiries. Frederick's freedom from subservience to the clergy enabled him to give the Academy of Science new life, to send for Wolf, Maupertuis, and other men of note in philosophy, science, and the arts. Voltaire himself was induced ultimately to accept the King's pressing invitation.

The Tabagie, or Tobacco Parliament, was, of course, abolished; the pipe smoking, the drunkenness, the unseemly familiarities, were revolting to Frederick, for whom such scenes were impossible. The Court fools were dismissed. The boars and stags and other game in the royal preserves were killed, and the establishments broken up. Frederick took no interest in the killing of game, which had been one of his father's chief occupations. The giant grenadiers were dismissed. They had been a useless expense and a cause of ridicule. The regiment continued to be noted for tall men, but all the unwieldy knock-kneed monstrosities were cut out. The money thus saved was spent in forming new regiments.

Voltaire urged the publication of the refutation of Machiavelli. When he heard that Frederick William was dying he wrote to Frederick, on the 10th March 1740: 'The more you are about to refute Machiavelli by your



conduct, the more I hope that you will allow the antidote prepared by your pen to be printed.' Frederick replied, 26th April, 'I abandon you my work, persuaded that it will be improved in your hands.' But when he became King, a short experience of the Prussian system of Government, coupled with his new sense of responsibility, changed his intentions. On the 23rd June he wrote to Voltaire, 'For the love of God buy up the whole edition of the *Anti-Machiavel*.' De Camas told Voltaire that Frederick's objection was, that there were one or two passages which might displease certain Powers. These were accordingly softened, but there had never been any real ground for apprehension on that head. Frederick's real objection to publication was that it might bring upon him the charge of hypocrisy. 'The work is not yet worthy of publication,' he said; 'one must chew and chew at a work of that nature, that it may not appear in an incongruous manner before the eyes of a public always inclined to be satirical.' Immediately on his accession Frederick plunged eagerly into the fray of international politics, making use of dissimulation for the purpose of aggrandisement. It was too 'incongruous' that the world should be informed that as Crown Prince he had denounced what was now his policy. But it was too late to withdraw. In spite of Voltaire's efforts to prevent it, the Dutch printer to whom he had sent the manuscript, brought out an edition in September. Voltaire's edition, in which he cast doubts on the authenticity of the Dutchman's, appeared soon after. Frederick received a copy on the 17th October. He was dissatisfied with it and talked of issuing an authentic and corrected version, but by that time he had other things of more importance to think about.

The long-hoped-for meeting with Voltaire took place on the 11th September, at Castle Moyland, near Cleves. Frederick was suffering from quatern ague, and asked Voltaire, who was at Brussels, to visit him. Voltaire arrived in the evening, and remained at the castle till the 14th. They were both very satisfied with this meeting.

Frederick wrote to Jordan, from Potsdam, 24th September : ' I have seen this Voltaire, whom I was so curious to know ; but when I saw him I had my Quartern fever, and my mind was as weak as my body. Indeed, in the society of men of his stamp one must not be ill ; one should even be in very good health, better than usual, if that can be managed. He has the eloquence of Cicero, the sweetness of Pliny, and the wisdom of Agrippa ; he combines, in fact, the virtues and talents of three of the greatest men of antiquity. His mind is always at work ; every drop of ink from his pen bears evidence of his intellect. He declaimed to us Mahomet 1., an admirable tragedy he has produced ; he transported us out of ourselves, and I could only admire him and be silent.'

That Voltaire in his turn was delighted with Frederick is evident from two letters which he wrote to private friends. To Ciderville, 18th October, ' I have seen one of the most amiable of men, a man who would be the charm of society, who would be sought everywhere, if he was not a King, a philosopher without austerity, full of sweetness, complaisance, pleasantness, forgetting that he is a King as soon as he is with his friends, and forgetting it so completely that he almost made me forget it also, and that I had to make an effort to remember that I saw seated at the foot of my bed a Sovereign who possessed an army of 100,000 men.' To Hénault he wrote, 31st October : ' I do not know precisely whether there have been greater Kings, but there has never been a more amiable man. It is a miracle of nature that the son of a crowned ogre, brought up among beasts, has fathomed, in the desert, all that refinement and all those natural graces which at Paris only a small number of persons possess, and which nevertheless make the reputation of Paris.' These letters were not written, like some others of Voltaire's, in the hope of their being seen by Frederick. They express the real admiration felt by Voltaire for the character and accomplishments of Frederick, which were so far superior to the general average among Kings.

The reference to the 100,000 men is significant. Nobody ever thought of Frederick William I. as the master of a large army, because it was so plain that his soldiers were collected merely for purposes of parade and display. Voltaire already perceived that the refuter of Machiavelli intended to make his army give him a position among the Great Powers.

To the already enormous army left him by his father, Frederick added sixteen new infantry battalions. They were for use, not ornament ; for war, not the drill ground. This was the great change that came with the new reign. Frederick intended to make his army fight. He was, indeed, impatient for the opportunity, ready to pick a quarrel on a slight pretext. He was determined that his reign should be marked by an aggressive war.

Two events would furnish the opportunity,—the death of the Elector Palatine, and the death of the Emperor. Charles VI. was only fifty-five years of age and apparently in good health, while the Elector Palatine was seventy, and had long been ailing. To be ready for the more likely event, Frederick prepared a large entrenched camp at Wesel. He intended, in accordance with the plan revealed to Grumkow, to be in a position to throw a large force into Jülich-Berg at the shortest notice. He expected opposition from England, Holland, France and Austria, but hoped, when once in possession of the Duchies, to obtain at least a cession of part of them, believing that the jealousies of the Powers would prevent any determined opposition.

The death of the Emperor would suit him better. Nothing stood between him and Silesia, except the military force of Austria, for which he had small respect, and the Pragmatic Sanction, which he supposed that no Power would adhere to. Except from Austria, he expected no serious objection to a Prussian conquest of Silesia. Bavaria had already denounced the Pragmatic Sanction, and France was Bavaria's old ally and Austria's old enemy. Spain and Sardinia also had anti-Austrian ambitions. If the Emperor died a splendid opportunity



would arise for the Prussian King, whose army was always ready, and would be the first in the field.

On the 25th October 1740 the news arrived that the Emperor Charles vi. had died at Vienna five days earlier.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST SILESIAN WAR

#### 1. THE IRRUPTION INTO SILESIA

ON the 26th October, the day after he received the news of the death of the Emperor Charles VI., Frederick wrote to Voltaire : ' This is the occasion for a complete change in the old system of politics ; this is the loosened stone rolling on to the image of the four metals, which Nebuchadnezzar saw, and which destroyed them all.' To Algarotti he wrote : ' All has been foreseen, all arrangements made. So it is merely a question of carrying out plans which I have long had in my head.' Orders were at once issued for the instant, swift preparation of the army, with the utmost secrecy, for an immediate advance into Silesia. On the 28th occurred the death of the Czarina Anne, the friend and ally of Austria, an event which further encouraged Frederick in his designs.

The Elector of Bavaria raised a formal protest against the inheritance by Maria Theresa of the domains of her father, the Emperor Charles VI. The Elector put forward a worthless claim of his own through his ancestress Anna, daughter of Ferdinand I. All the other Powers who had guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction, Prussia included, sent friendly assurances to Vienna.

On the 10th November Frederick wrote to Guy Dickens, the British Ambassador at Berlin, that in reply to inquiries from the Dutch Government as to his intentions, he had answered that, ' before receiving the assurance of a firm concert between Great Britain and the Republic, I could not declare myself, but that that *liaison* having been formed, and seeing that the Republic intended to make an actual increase of its troops, all will go well.

You perceive what this means, and you will consider, no doubt, that my reply has been just in the situation in which we are. For the rest I shall never be false to the sentiments of friendship which I entertain, and which I owe to His Majesty the King Your Master.—I am, Your very affectionate  
‘FEDERIC.’

‘*P.S.*—It rests with you at present to profit from all that I am doing for you, and if I do it without being bound as an ally, what may it not become when we are in alliance?’<sup>1</sup>

The postscript was in the King’s handwriting.

This letter is artfully worded. It was intended, without making any binding statement, to give the impression that Frederick was on the side of England and Holland, in support of Maria Theresa, and that he desired to enter into a formal alliance with those Powers on her behalf. It was received in that sense, the treacherous character of the new King not having yet been exposed.

At Vienna it was feared that France, the hereditary enemy, would encourage Bavaria to dispute the accession of Maria Theresa. But there was every confidence in England and Prussia. England stood by her word. Lord Harington wrote to Mr. Robinson, the British Minister at Vienna: ‘England and Holland will remain in strict alliance with Austria. The King cannot doubt of taking the most effectual means to secure the concurrence of the King of Prussia.’ Robinson reported, 9th November 1740, ‘The King of Prussia has already answered and in a manner, as I am told, to the entire satisfaction of the Great Duke.’ On the 16th: ‘His Prussian Majesty has been expeditious in giving repeated marks of his good intentions for this Court.’ The Grand Duke Francis, husband of Maria Theresa, said to de Borcke, the Prussian Ambassador, ‘There is nothing but his Prussian Majesty and the King of Great Britain, that I can rely on.’ On the 5th December Robinson wrote of ‘the most generous

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, vol. xlviii. p. 93.



offers made by his Prussian Majesty of his friendship.' And on the 10th, he reported that the Grand Duke had said, that 'persuaded as he was that the King of Prussia was the Prince in the world *qui se piquait le plus d'honneur*, he could have no bad intentions against the Queen.' <sup>1</sup>

At Berlin Guy Dickens was witness of the military preparations ; the troop movements made it evident that an advance into Silesia was in prospect. He reported, on the 3rd December 1740 : 'After the declarations made by His Prussian Majesty at Vienna, London, and at the Hague, and after the letter he wrote me, on the tenth of last month, one would almost think it was impossible for a Prince who had the least regard to honour, truth and justice, to act the part he is going to do ; but it is plain his only view was to deceive us, and to conceal, for a while, his ambitious and mischievous designs.' <sup>2</sup> The fraud perpetrated by the encouraging letter of the 10th November had become revealed.

On the 3rd December Frederick sent an official letter of explanation to George II. In a postscript he added, in his own handwriting : 'The expedition which I am about to undertake is risky, but it is the only means to save Germany, which the Court of Vienna is ready to seize in conjunction with France.' He had the strange audacity to assert that he was acting in defence of Germany against the rapacious ambition of a young woman, who was still uncertain of her own position.

On the 4th December the troops left Berlin. On the 6th Guy Dickens obtained an audience with the King, which he reported as follows : 'His Prussian Majesty asking me with some vivacity what I meant by the Indivisibility of the Austrian Succession, I answered, "the Pragmatick Sanction." "Do you intend then," said he, "to support it ? I hope not, for it is not my intention." I told His Prussian Majesty, that according to our engagements, we were obliged to do it, and so was he too, to which he replied, That he had no such engagements,

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Germany (Empire.)*

<sup>2</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, vol. xlvi.

and if his Father had, he was not obliged by them, nor would he stick to any which he had not himself contracted and ratified; observing this young Prince closer, I put him in mind of the letter he had been pleased to honour me with, of the tenth of last month, after which, and the Declaration made by his Majesty's order in England, and at the Hague, I did not doubt the King our Master as well as Holland, would be greatly surprised to hear of the military preparations carrying on here, without any concert and communication with them, especially as they were Powers with whom he had so lately shown a desire to contract a close friendship and alliance, and though I could have no orders to speak to his Prussian Majesty upon these matters, yet I should be glad if he would be so kind as to let me know in what manner I was to write about these motions, which would draw the attention of all the Powers in Europe, as soon as they should be acquainted with them. When I mentioned this, His Prussian Majesty grew red in the face, and said, that he knew I could yet have no instructions to ask him that question, and if I had done it by order, he had an answer ready for me, That we had no right to inquire into his designs, and that he had never asked us any questions about our armaments at sea, and that all he did was to wish that we may not be beaten by the Spaniards.' <sup>1</sup>

When the details of this conversation reached Vienna, Robinson reported, 14th December: 'This Court finds its heaviest reproach of the King of Prussia as who, upon Mr. Guy Dickens' having mentioned the guaranty given by the late King of Prussia of the Pragmatic Sanction, should have answered that he did not think himself bound by any of his father's engagements.' The Chancellor said to Robinson, 'He denies his being bound to his father's treaties, while he talked of nothing to Mr. Botta' (the Austrian Ambassador at Berlin) 'but of his friendship for this Court, and his good intentions which time would discover.' Borceke told the credulous Robinson that he had been instructed 'to assure this Court of

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, vol. xlviii. p. 122.

His Prussian Majesty's most absolute and entire friendship, to conjure the Queen and His Highness not to be alarmed, that time would show the extent of the goodness of His Majesty's intentions. That his entrance into Silesia was inevitable, nay necessary, for the balance of Europe, for the preservation of the very constitution of the Empire, and for the safety of the House of Austria in particular.' The simple Robinson reported, 5th December, that Frederick's 'professions of friendship had, to my knowledge, such marks of sincerity, that it was not possible to believe he made them only to put a quite opposite conduct the better into execution, that there would be something so black in such a proceeding as made it incredible . . . in a word, if I was not the most mistaken man in the world, there was not a Prince besides the King my master, upon whose true intentions I could at present so much rely as those of the young King of Prussia, whose only fault, if he had one, was to have expressed too much zeal at first, for the service of this Court, to be digested by everybody here.' <sup>1</sup>

To the French Ambassador, the Marquis de Beauvau, Frederick intimated that he was playing a game from which France would benefit, for if he obtained the aces he would share them.

To the Austrian, Marchese Botta, Frederick said: 'I am going to Silesia, but, you understand, as a good friend; not so much to establish any rights I may have, as to defend the hereditary rights of the Queen against all her enemies, especially Saxony and Bavaria, who are ready to attack her. I want to place the Imperial Crown on the head of the Grand Duke.' Botta replied, 'I must beg your Majesty to observe that neither Saxony nor Bavaria makes any sign of attacking us, and should they think of doing so, my sovereign is able to defend herself, if Your Majesty will only be content with looking on, especially as those two Powers would find it difficult to act in concert.' Saxony had given explicit support to the Pragmatic Sanction.

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Germany (Empire.)*



The extent and variety of the falsehoods is amazing. They began with such expressions of friendship at Vienna, that the Grand Duke told the Prussian Ambassador that he could rely only upon Prussia and England. This was followed by assurance of a close concord with Holland and England in their support of Maria Theresa. Behind these deceitful assertions the attack on Austria was prepared. Then came the shameless explanation in the letter to George II., describing the onslaught on Maria Theresa as the only means to save Germany from her aggressive rapacity, supported by France. This did not prevent Frederick from assuring the French Ambassador that he would divide the spoils with France. He even had the extraordinary impertinence to tell the Austrian Ambassador that he was attacking Maria Theresa by way of defending her hereditary rights, and in order to place the Imperial Crown on the head of her husband.

Frederick has left behind him clear statements, both in contemporary documents and in subsequent writings, as to the motives by which he was influenced.

To Podewils, his secretary, he wrote, on the 1st November: 'I give you a problem to solve. When one has the advantage should one exploit it or not? I am ready with my troops and everything; if I do not turn that position to account, I am holding in my hands a possession of which I do not know how to make use; if I exploit it, it will be said that I had the ability to make use of the advantage I have over my neighbours.'

Podewils was disturbed as to the justice of the case. He ventured to reply to the King on the 7th November: 'On the question of right, I am obliged to say with profound respect to Your Majesty that, whatever well founded pretensions the House of Brandenburg may have had formerly upon the Duchies of Liegnitz, Brieg and Wohlau, on Ratibor and Oppeln, on the Principality of Jägerndorf and the circle of Schwiebus, in Silesia, there exist solemn treaties which the House of Austria will bring forward, by which the House of Brandenburg has let itself be induced, although fraudulently, to renounce these con-

tempt

fraudulently

siderable pretensions in exchange for trifles.' Frederick's note in reply was : ' As for the question of right that is for the ministers, for you ; it is time to work at it in secret, as the orders have been given to the troops. As for the question of actuality, you may rely upon me for that.'

In the *Histoire de Mon Temps*, Frederick writes of ' the desire for glory, with which the King ' (Frederick) ' was animated,' and that ' motives not less powerful urged him to give at the beginning of his reign, evidence of vigour and firmness, to make the nation respected in Europe. All good citizens had their feelings ulcerated by the lack of consideration which the Powers showed for the late King, especially in the last years of his reign, and the disgrace attached by the world to the name of Prussian. To include everything that could animate the liveliness of a young Prince arrived at the position of power, let us add that Frederick I., in elevating Prussia to a Kingdom, had by that vanity for grandeur, placed a germ of ambition in his posterity, which would, sooner or later, bring forth fruit. The Kingdom which he had left to his descendants was, if the expression may be allowed, a sort of hermaphrodite, which had in it more of an Electorate than of a Kingdom. There was some glory to be obtained in clearing up this situation, and this sentiment was assuredly one of those which fortified the King in the grand enterprises to which so many motives called him. Then he sets out the weakness of Austria, the confusion in Russia, the certainty of obtaining support either from France or England, and, as compared with Jülich-Berg, the greater size and importance of Silesia, and its continuity to his own dominions. ' Add to these reasons an army quite ready for action, the money all found, and perhaps the desire to make a name. These were the causes of the war which the King declared against Maria Theresa of Austria, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia.' It is not pretended that he was actuated by concern for the welfare of his people. He was out for personal glory. He wrote to Jordan, 3rd March 1741 : ' My age, the fire of the

passions, the desire of glory, even curiosity, to hide nothing from you, in fine, a secret instinct, have dragged me from the sweetness of the repose which I was enjoying, and the satisfaction of seeing my name in the Gazettes, and thereafter in history, has seduced me.' To Voltaire, 23rd December : ' Such are my occupations ' (war labours) ' which I should give up willingly to another, if that phantom called glory did not so often appear before me. In truth, it is a great folly, but a folly of which it is very difficult to be rid, when once one has been infected.' The desire for ' glory ' was stimulated by his position as the first Hohenzollern born a Royal Prince ; it was also inspired by a determination that he should not be regarded as a negligible coward and fool, like his father.

Frederick left Berlin on the 13th December 1740, joined his troops at Crossen next day, and led them, 21,000 strong, into the north of Silesia on the 16th. Two days later, his special envoy, Gotter, demanded an audience with the Grand Duke Francis. Gotter was instructed to offer, in return for Silesia, the Imperial Crown, and an alliance with Prussia, Russia, England and Holland. ' As it was to be expected,' writes Frederick in the *Histoire de Mon Temps*, ' that these offers would be rejected, in such an event Count Gotter was authorised to declare war upon the Queen of Hungary. The army had been more diligent than the embassy ; it entered Silesia two days before the arrival of Count Gotter at Vienna.' The Grand Duke was thus confronted with a *fait accompli*. His reply was, as Frederick had foreseen, a refusal. ' While he ' (Frederick) ' has a man in Silesia, we have not a word to say to him. We will perish first, or save ourselves at any risk or hazard ; but if either he is not entered and will abstain from entering, or if entering, will return, we will immediately treat with him at Berlin.' ' There are means of gratifying the King, without his pressing to extort from us what is not in our power to grant.' The reference is to the Duchies of Jülich and Berg, one of which Frederick might have obtained. But he wanted Silesia and the glory of a victorious war.



On entering Silesia, Frederick sent to Foreign Courts the following statement :

‘The King, when making his troops enter Silesia, has not been influenced in that proceeding by any evil intentions against the Court of Vienna ; and still less by any desire to trouble the repose of the Empire.

‘His Majesty considered himself indispensably obliged to have recourse, without delay, to this means of vindicating the incontestable rights of his house upon that Duchy, founded upon ancient family and confraternity agreements between the Electors of Brandenburg and the Princes of Silesia, as well as upon other respectable titles.

‘The present circumstances, and the reasonable fear of seeing himself forestalled by those who formulate pretensions upon the succession of the late Emperor, have demanded promptitude in this enterprise and vigour in its execution.

‘But if these reasons have not permitted the King to enter into explanations beforehand with the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, they will never prevent His Majesty from always taking the interests of the house of Austria strongly to heart, and from being that house’s firmest support and help under any circumstances that may arise.’<sup>1</sup> He was taking the interests of Maria Theresa strongly to his own heart.

Frederick speaks of the rights of his house upon the Duchy of Silesia. There never had been any such claim. The only territories that had ever been demanded by any of his ancestors, were certain small Duchies which together formed about one-third of Silesia.

## 2. FREDERICK’S FIRST BATTLE

The Prussian army in December 1740 numbered 100,000 men. It had a better weapon than its Continental rivals. Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau pro-

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, vol. xlv. p. 139.

vided the grenadiers of his regiment with iron ramrods in 1698, and in 1699 gave them to the whole regiment. The iron ramrod could be handled energetically, while the wooden ramrod was liable to break under such treatment, and had to be used with leisurely care, the result being that the iron ramrod enabled the musket to be fired three times as fast as could be achieved with the wooden. Frederick William I. supplied the whole Prussian army, infantry and cavalry, with iron ramrods in 1718 and 1719. George I. introduced them into the British army in 1726. Forty-two years after iron ramrods had been supplied by Prince Leopold to his regiment, twenty-two years after they had been given to the whole Prussian army, fourteen years after they had been adopted in England, Austria still continued to use the obviously inferior wooden ramrod. The Prussian military authorities were in earnest. The iron ramrod typifies the spirit that permeated the whole Prussian army, from top to bottom; it gave assurance of victory whenever the conditions were approximately equal.

The artillery consisted of 3, 6, 12, and 24 pound cannons, 18 pound howitzers, 50 and 75 pound mortars. The lighter pieces had an effective range of 1600 yards with shot, of 400 to 500 yards with grape.

The cavalry were treated as mounted infantry, most of the corps being officially designated, 'Regiments on horseback.' They were taught to regard the carbine as their chief weapon. The horses, being regarded merely as the carriers of men trained in musketry, were given little care, and did not last long.

One of the weak points of the Prussian army was that more than half of the men were non-Prussians, recruited from other German States or from foreign countries. The population of the Prussian territories was two and a half millions, of the Austrian thirteen millions, but that disparity was of little military significance, the Prussian army being drawn from all parts of the German Empire, including Austria itself. The result of the Prussian system was that desertion was rife, chiefly owing to

the severity of the discipline.] There was no patriotic sentiment in a Prussian army. It was a professional, mercenary force, given to pillage and to merciless methods.

The strength of the Prussian army lay in its general discipline, and in particular, the drill-perfection of the infantry, with the consequent ease of movement, which no other army could imitate; and the iron ramrods and other useful and practical equipment, which no other army could equal.

The Austrians numbered 108,000 men, but owing to the necessity of keeping substantial garrisons in the Netherlands and Italy the army for operations in Silesia and Bohemia was smaller than that which Frederick could put into that field. The Austrian infantry was inferior in discipline and in equipment to the Prussian. The Austrian cavalry had a great and deserved reputation. They were true horsemen; they charged straight, discharged their pistols at twenty yards, and then used the sabre.

The King's plan was to take firm possession of the greater part of Silesia with all possible speed, before any organised resistance could be offered, and then to defend it against Austrian attack and bargain for a legal cession. Siege material was collected, and forwarded by the river Oder, for use against Glogau and Breslau. The Great Elector had himself prepared to enforce his claim upon Silesia in this way, and Frederick had carefully studied his plan.

Leaving a force to invest Glogau, Frederick went on with the main body towards Breslau, the capital of Silesia. Breslau was a free town. Its citizens were proud of the fact that they had upheld the independence of their town throughout the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War, and they expected to come out of the present troubles with equal credit. They had already refused to admit the troops which the Austrian Commander, General Browne, wished to place as a garrison in the city. When Frederick arrived, on the 1st January 1741, he, likewise, was refused



admittance, although Breslau was Protestant, and Frederick represented himself as the protector of Protestants against the tyranny of the Catholic Austrians.

He sent in assurances that he would respect the neutrality of the city; he asked only that he should be allowed to enter, with a personal bodyguard of 30 men. At the same time, he seized several of the gates of the city, and pushed forward a force of 400 men, who obtained admission into the Dom-Insel, or Cathedral Island, on the right bank of the river Oder. These combined arguments prevailed and, on condition that the Prussian army kept outside the walls, Frederick was permitted, on the 3rd January, to enter the city with his bodyguard. He drove out the Austrian officials, replacing them with Prussians, took over the post-office, opening the letters to obtain information of Austrian movements, and while technically respecting the privileges of a free town, made himself master of the city. The Dom-Insel was within the walls, but being separated by the river Oder from the larger part of the city, Frederick made that an excuse for retaining his troops there, in defiance of his promise. The neutrality engagements were made in order to be broken. Frederick wrote to Podewils, 2nd January 1741, 'Breslau from to-day belongs to me.'

He was meeting with scarcely any opposition in Silesia. On the 9th January Ohlau was captured, on the 13th Ottmachau. Neisse was too strong; the bombardment of the 19th to 21st January failed. On the 25th Frederick left his troops to return to Berlin. In six weeks he had overrun the whole of Silesia, with the exception of the fortresses Glogau, Brieg, and Neisse, which were all three invested. The secrecy of his preparations, and the dishonest exhibition of friendship by which they had been covered, had enabled him to take the Austrians unawares.

Frederick renewed his offer to Maria Theresa, of support against all rivals, and the Imperial Crown for her husband, in exchange for 'a good part' of Silesia. He seems to have expected that Maria Theresa, being a woman, would be cowed and disheartened by his easy triumph, and

would accept his offer. If she had done so he would have tricked her over the bargain, for he refused to explain what he meant by 'a good part' of Silesia. To his surprise these proposals were rejected with scorn. He had not expected a determined opposition. When he found himself obliged to fight in earnest to retain the booty he had seized, he gave up, and never again repeated the talk of 'glory.'

Diplomatic exchanges were active during the winter. Frederick wrote to Cardinal Fleury, the Minister of Louis xv., proposing an alliance, and he offered the Elector of Bavaria the Imperial Crown and the acquisition of Bohemia. Fleury declared that France's guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction could not prejudice the rights of third parties, Bavaria to wit. On the other side, George II. declined to repudiate his guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction. Lord Harington wrote to Robinson, 27th February 1741, 'The King disapproves the King of Prussia's behaviour, and will fulfil his engagements, as soon as a plan of operations can be agreed on.'<sup>1</sup>

The Austrian army was placed under the command of General Neipperg, aged fifty-seven, twice Frederick's age. At the end of March, Neipperg advanced from Olmütz and pressed across the Moravian mountains, still deep in snow. His object was to relieve Neisse and Brieg, and capture the Prussian park of artillery at Ohlau. Frederick was on his right flank, at Jägersdorf. By the 3rd April Neipperg had advanced to within a day's march of Neisse, while Frederick, still at Jägersdorf, with an inferior force, was twenty miles on his right rear. Neipperg might have tried a dash at his enemy, but he preferred to march on in a dignified and leisurely manner. Frederick, at last aware of his danger, retreated quickly, collecting detachments as he went. On the 8th April, Neipperg was at Grottkau, and Frederick about twelve miles to the N.E., between him and Brieg. The King decided to attack next day.

With the prospect of his first battle very much in mind,

<sup>1</sup> *Newcastle Papers.* Add. MSS. 33807, p. 307.

he wrote two curious and interesting letters. To his brother and heir, Prince William, he wrote :

‘POGARELL, 8th April 1741.

‘MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—The enemy has just entered Silesia. We are separated by no more than a mile. To-morrow should decide our fortunes. If I die, do not forget a brother who has always loved you very tenderly. Dying, I recommend you to my very dear mother, my domestics, and my first battalion. I have informed Eichel and Schumacher of all my wishes. Always remember me, but console yourself for my loss ; the glory of the Prussian arms and the honour of the House inspire my actions, and will guide me up to my death. You are my sole heir ; dying, I recommend to you those I have loved most during my life, Keyserling,’ etc., ‘you know, better than I can say it, the tenderness and all the feelings of the most inviolable friendship with which I am ever, My very dear brother, your faithful brother and servant till death,  
‘FEDERIC.’

The frequent reference to approaching death is remarkable. To Jordan, Frederick wrote in the same lugubrious strain :

‘POGARELL, 8th April 1741.

‘MY DEAR JORDAN,—There will be a battle to-morrow. Thou knowest the chances of war ; the life of Kings is not more respected than that of private persons. I cannot tell what may happen to me. If my destiny is ended, remember a friend who loves thee tenderly always ; if Heaven prolongs my days, I will write to thee from to-morrow, and thou wilt learn of our victory.

‘Farewell, dear friend ; I will love thee till death.’

These are strange confidences. We are not surprised to learn that the writer of these letters could not sleep at night, from anxiety about the danger of the coming battle. His thoughts ran upon death, he was kept awake by the fear of it.



Frederick's tepid ardour was further cooled by the snow which began to fall on the morning of the 9th. He declined to move. Neipperg, though no longer young, was not afraid of snow; he marched on and by evening was within three miles of Brieg, and six miles of Ohlau, and lay right across his enemy's line of communication. He and his troops conceived a certain contempt for their enemy. Frederick was now compelled to attack; he had only one day's reserve of supplies for his troops, and Neipperg barred his only road of retreat. Necessity forced him to give orders for the attack next morning, 10th April 1741. His fears and anxieties were such that for the second night in succession he could get no sleep.

The rival forces at the battle of Mollwitz were as follows :

	Prussian.	Austrian.
Infantry	16,800	8,600
Cavalry	4,600	6,800
Guns.		
Light	37	17
Heavy	16	2
Artillerymen	350	100
	<u>21,750</u>	<u>15,500</u>

The Prussians had a superiority in infantry of two to one in numbers, and their iron ramrods enabled them to fire three shots to the enemy's one; their infantry fire was thus six to the Austrian one. They had a superiority of two to one in light guns, and eight to one in heavy guns. The Austrians had a superiority in cavalry of 50 per cent., but the total Prussian excess in all arms was nearly as much.

At 10 A.M. the Prussian army began its march upon the Austrians, who were posted in and about the village of Mollwitz. Frederick disposed his army in the regulation two lines, each line having the infantry in the centre and cavalry on the flanks. The heavy guns were in

advance of the first line, and the regimental guns close in front of each regiment. Two grenadier battalions of infantry were placed between the squadrons of cavalry on the right flank, in support of the inferior arm. The length of the front was a little more than two miles. It was found that there was not nearly that amount of distance between the village and wood of Hermsdorf on the right, and the village of Neudorf and a marshy brook on the left. The miscalculation was so serious that a substantial reduction of the front had to be made. Two grenadier battalions were retired from the first line, and placed between the two lines on the right flank; a musketry battalion was moved to the rear line; another musketry battalion placed between the two lines, and the cavalry of the left flank was pushed across the brook on the left. The excessive original length of the front was due to the orders of Frederick, but in his account of the battle, he put the blame upon General Schulenburg, who was in command of the cavalry on the right. Frederick accused him of pressing unduly on his left, a mistake which would soon have been rectified, if the King had allowed him space on his right. Schulenburg fell in the battle while leading a gallant charge. It was easy for Frederick to place upon the dead man the blame for what was the result of the King's own act.

The constriction of the front having forced out the cavalry from the left flank, and produced some disorder there, the left did not advance at the same rate as the cavalry on the right. The left was thus refused, while the right projected towards the enemy.

At 1.30 P.M. the Prussian guns moved out and opened fire upon a body of Austrian cavalry on the enemy's left, which was covering the Austrian deployment. Neipperg gave strict orders that no attack was to be made until the whole of his troops was in line, but the cavalry under Römer were suffering under the fire; and they galloped forth upon the cavalry and grenadiers of the protruding Prussian right flank. Schulenburg's 14 squadrons were inevitably overpowered by the Austrian 36 squadrons.

The Prussian cavalry was swept away ; some of the horse-men made for safety through the opening on the right between the lines of infantry, and some fled across the front of the first line, and were prevented from breaking through it only by their own infantry, who fired upon them. Frederick himself was among this last body of fugitives. This was to be the glory of which he had dreamed. He was flying before the enemy, and was prevented from reaching safety behind his troops by their own fire upon the panic-stricken mob to which he belonged. It was lucky that no Prussian bullet hit him. He galloped on to the left until he had reached the extreme end of the line, whence he obtained admittance between the two lines of infantry.

Schulenburg, though severely wounded by a sword cut in the face, had not fled, and was making a desperate effort to retrieve the day. He succeeded in rallying a couple of squadrons, and with this handful led a hopeless charge, in which he met a gallant soldier's death.

The Austrian cavalry had now only the Prussian infantry to deal with, but they proved a stubborn foe. The point of the attack, the Prussian right flank, was especially strong, with its stiffening of five extra regiments, two of them facing right, so that three sides of a square were formed. Though the Prussians suffered heavily, their fire, discipline, and tenacity prevented any breakdown. Some of the Austrian horsemen succeeded in forcing their way between the two lines, where they drew the fire of the infantry of the second line ; others penetrated behind the second line and charged back, but the men faced about and beat them off. The horsemen then galloped to pillage the Prussian camp, half a mile further to the rear. The Austrian cavalry of the right met with similar success, charging and dispersing the cavalry of the Prussian left. It was now 3.30 P.M. Seeing the success of his cavalry, Neipperg ordered a general advance of his infantry.

Frederick had by this time found shelter between the two lines of unbroken Prussian infantry. He believed the battle to be lost, and although his experienced adviser,



General Schwerin, thought that the infantry would still win the day, the King either himself suggested, or readily accepted from Schwerin the suggestion, that he should not remain, to endanger a life so valuable to the State. It is not likely that Schwerin would have approved of such a proposal, and supported it, unless he had convinced himself that it was desired. He must have perceived that Frederick was in the frame of mind when such advice would be welcome. On receiving it the King acted with eager promptitude. Sending a message to Prince Leopold of Dessau that the battle was lost, he galloped from the field.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after Frederick's hasty retirement, the Prussian preponderance in infantry and artillery made itself felt, as Schwerin had anticipated. The Austrians could not withstand the superior gun and musket fire of the enemy. Schwerin in his turn ordered an advance, to which no effective opposition could be given; and the inevitable defeat, which Römer's cavalry had merely postponed, had to be accepted. At 7 P.M. Neipperg gave orders for retreat. He was not followed, or molested, though there were fresh Prussian forces in a position to attack him. In the course of the night he reached Grottkau, and so brought his army safely back to Neisse.

The losses of the Austrians were 4550 killed, wounded, prisoners, and missing; of the Prussians 4850, of whom 7 officers and 770 men were missing—desertions in all probability.

The facts with regard to the numbers engaged at Mollwitz have long been misrepresented. It was given out at the time that the forces were equal, and that the Prussian army created by Frederick William I. had given proof of its mettle. It was supposed that the new Prussian drill, which had been scoffed at as fit only for the show ground, had proved its worth on the battlefield. Such is the influence of success that to the victor all virtue is ascribed.

<sup>1</sup> At the battle of Dettingen, George II. was given similar advice by the Duc d'Aremberg. His reply was, 'What do you think I came here for? To be a poltroon?' *The Life of William Pitt*, by Basil Williams.

The Prussian cavalry had made no stand against the Austrian. The Prussian infantry had proved stubborn under cavalry attack, and the value of their iron ramrods in giving increased rapidity of fire, had been demonstrated ; but infantry and artillery had been in such superior numbers that no real test of their fighting efficiency had been provided. The world was misinformed. The victory was regarded as proof of that superiority of the Prussian army, which was to be witnessed in due course, but had not yet been demonstrated. Thus the moral effect of the battle was immense, although the issue of it should never have been in doubt. The credit for the victory was given to that seeming madman, the dead King, Frederick William I.

For his son the experiences of the day were bitter. Frederick rode off the field, accompanied by a sparse following, towards Oppeln ; it was in that direction that his army, if defeated, would have to make its retreat. But without the army's protection, the course taken by the fugitives exposed them to the danger of being attacked by some of the numerous parties of Austrian light cavalry which swarmed all over the district. It would have been much safer to have remained with the army, as Schwerin himself afterwards remarked. He knew it at the time, but was obliged to bow to Frederick's urgent anxieties, and to take upon himself the blame.

About an hour after the King's departure, Schwerin sent a squadron of mounted men after him with the news of the Austrian discomfiture, but Frederick rode too fast for them. He reached Oppeln in the night, expecting to find a Prussian garrison, but the town had been occupied that morning by Austrian troops, and his demand for admission was answered by shots. A body of fifty hussars was sent out from the fort, and they succeeded in making prisoners of most of the King's attendants, who exposed themselves to save their master. Frederick had the best horse, and succeeded in escaping, with two followers. He galloped straight back towards the spot where last he had been among friends, the field of Mollwitz. At 2 A.M,

he reached the village of Löwen, near the battlefield. He found shelter in a mill-house. It is said that here he broke down, uttering wild ejaculations of despair. He sent forward one of his followers, and thus obtained the news that he had won a great victory. He rejoined his troops at Mollwitz in the morning of the 11th April, having covered at least sixty miles in his flight. The army had not learned of his absence. To conceal it further he drew a plan of the battle, and caused it to be distributed among the officers, and he issued a description of the fight.

Writing again to Prince Leopold of Dessau, with an account of the victory, Frederick excused his first letter, in which he had announced the loss of the battle, by the remark that for two days he had not slept or eaten, an admission that his flight had been due to loss of nerve.

There must be few, if any, examples in history of a commander escaping from the field while he still has a superiority of nearly two to one in unbroken infantry, and of three or four to one in artillery. The flight of the commander, leaving an army much superior in resources, and unshaken, and his return as soon as he is assured that his troops have gained a victory, in his absence, must surely be a unique event.

### 3. THE KLEIN-SCHNELLENDORF TRICK

The treacherous attack upon Austria, and the hypocritical pretences by which it was accompanied, received the immediate condemnation of Europe, and elicited protests even in Prussia itself. Frederick's own ministers were aghast. We have seen how Podewils tried to dissuade him from his project. The British Ambassador at Vienna summed up the attitude of Frederick's representatives at Vienna, as follows: 'In a word,' reports Robinson, 'nothing is omitted by the two ministers, Borceke and Gotter, to show the King all the rashness, the injustice, and ill consequences, both to himself and all Europe, of his present attempt.'<sup>1</sup> But after the

<sup>1</sup> F. von. Raumer, *König Friedrich und seine Zeit*, p. 72.



battle of Mollwitz, when the outrage appeared destined to end in triumph, little further was said against it. Indeed certain Powers did not hesitate to join in the scramble for the dominions which Maria Theresa seemed unable to defend. Saxony, Sardinia, Spain and France, all now showed hostile intentions, though all, like Prussia, had pledged themselves—for value received, in each case—to support the Pragmatic Sanction, and had accepted the accession of Maria Theresa without demur. England alone adhered to her pledge.

Cardinal Fleury, on receiving Frederick's proposal for an alliance, hesitated for a time. In a discussion with Marshal Belleisle, the Cardinal spoke of the dangers of the war, and especially of any alliance with the King of Prussia. 'What a character!' exclaimed Fleury. 'What he is doing in Silesia cannot be excused; there is nothing to justify it. How can any confidence be placed in such a man! He makes all sorts of advances, and plies me with flatteries, but these false caresses only put me on my guard. And what motive can be alleged for casting aside the obligations of the Pragmatic Sanction?'<sup>1</sup> Valori, the French Minister at the Prussian Court, wrote: 'The King of Prussia does not answer as he ought to do; I am for turning to the other side, and no longer being the dupe of a Prince who opens negotiations everywhere, and thinks he can work miracles by coming to conclusions nowhere.' . . . 'As I can speak quite plainly to you, Sir, I am not afraid to say that levity, pride, and presumption form the basis of his character, and you may pity me for having to steer clear through all this.'

Frederick, for his part, always suspected France of harbouring sinister designs. To join him against Austria and thereby encounter the hostility of England, for no other purpose save the wresting of the Imperial Crown from the House of Habsburg, seemed incredible folly. He suspected that France aimed at perpetuating the dissensions of the German States, and the aggrandisement of Bavaria as a rival to Prussia.

<sup>1</sup> Duc de Broglie, *Frédéric II. et Marie Thérèse*, i. p. 134.

The war party in France overcame the reluctance of Fleury. The Cardinal sent Belleisle to Frederick's camp to discuss the proposed French intervention. Frederick was negotiating with England, Austria, and France. He wrote to his Minister, Podewils, 12th May 1741, from the camp at Mollwitz: 'To go on playing the part of an honest man, among knaves, is perilous; to be nice with deceivers is a desperate business, and of doubtful success. What then is to be done? War and negotiation: that is precisely what your very humble servant and his ministers are doing. If there is anything to be gained by being honest we will be so, and if it is advisable to deceive, let us be cheats.' Frederick was putting forth the common excuse of all criminals, that he did wrong in self-defence, to anticipate the wrong-doing of others. The most shameful acts are justified in that way. The only test is success. If anything is to be gained by honesty that principle may be employed, but on no other condition.

On the 18th May France entered into an engagement to assist Bavaria against Maria Theresa. On the 28th an alliance was made between Spain and Bavaria. Spain put forward claims on Lombardy and Bavaria on Bohemia. On the 5th June France concluded a treaty with Prussia, by which Frederick was promised Breslau and Lower Silesia, and in return abandoned his claim on Jülich-Berg, and promised his vote for the Elector of Bavaria in the coming imperial election. The hereditary enemy of Germany was thus encouraged to invade that country, by the Prussian King.

Two French armies crossed the Rhine. The 'Army of Bohemia,' under Marshal Belleisle, consisting of 42,000 men, crossed at Strassburg on the 15th August, and advanced to the assistance of Bavaria. The 'Army of Westphalia,' under Marshal Maillebois, 36,000 strong, crossed a few weeks later into Westphalia, where it threatened both Holland and Hanover, if any attempt should be made by Holland or George II. to help Maria Theresa.

The accession of Maria Theresa raised no immediate

enthusiasm in her dominions. The Grand Duke Francis, her husband, was not popular, and it was feared that he would exercise a controlling influence over the destinies of the country. But Maria Theresa, apart from the attraction of her youth, her beauty, and her sex, was endowed with considerable abilities, a strong character, a sweet nature, a charming and gracious personality. She soon found her way to the hearts of her subjects. When enemies arose on every side the loyalty towards her, of Hungarians especially, became ever more warm and enthusiastic.

On the 13th March 1741 she gave birth to a son and heir, the future Emperor Joseph. On the 25th June she was crowned Queen of Hungary, at Presburg. After the ceremony, with the crown shining on her head, and mounted on a fine black horse, she galloped up the Königshügel hill, and, in accordance with the traditions of her House, when arrived at the top, she drew her sword and waved it to the four quarters of the earth, as token that she would defend her country against all enemies whence-soever they might come. Robinson reported: 'The Queen is grace itself; when she raised her sword and bade defiance to the four quarters of the world, it was easy to see that she needed neither that weapon, nor any other, to make a conquest of those who approach her.' When Robinson met Frederick, he spoke with enthusiasm of Maria Theresa. Frederick had only contempt for such feelings. He said to Valori, the French Ambassador, 'Will you believe, he' (Robinson) 'said to me, if I could only see her, I should fall in love with her, and would be thinking of giving her crowns, rather than depriving her of them!' The English nation was enthusiastic for Maria Theresa. Subscriptions were raised in England to assist her against her enemies, and there was a clamour for active intervention on her behalf.

Frederick ordered Schwerin to take possession of Breslau, in defiance of his guarantee to the town of its independence and neutrality. On the 18th August Schwerin, carrying out the scheme which Frederick had confided



to him, introduced a regiment into the town on the pretence that it was only going to march through, to defend the region on the other side from an expected Austrian attack. Other troops were collected at the gates, and bread wagons were sent forward to block gates and drawbridges, while the soldiers slipped past, to join the first regiment, which had quietly taken possession of the ramparts and strong positions in its neighbourhood. The town thus found itself under the control of the Prussian soldiers before any resistance could be organised. The syndics and aldermen who were known, though Protestants, to be anti-Prussian, had been invited to witness a military display at Frederick's camp, so that no strong protests should be raised in the city. By this characteristic trickery did Frederick break his word, and obtain possession of Breslau. He was so pleased with his cunning that he explains, with obvious self-satisfaction, how it was done, in the *Histoire de Mon Temps*.

With so large a part of Europe against her, Maria Theresa was obliged to open negotiations for peace. She offered Luxemburg to France, and other portions of her dominions to Bavaria and Spain, on the condition that her husband Francis should be given the Imperial Crown. To Prussia she offered Lower Silesia, in return for Frederick's assistance with 10,000 men, and his vote on behalf of her husband. Fleury and Frederick communicated to each other these proposals, and each assured his ally that they had been rejected as a matter of course. Fleury's answer to Maria Theresa conveyed the refusal with all customary politeness. Frederick rejected the Austrian overtures in a rough, bullying manner. Robinson, who was conducting the negotiations on behalf of Maria Theresa, was told that his presence was no longer agreeable. 'Drive away that rascal of a negotiator,' wrote the King to Podewils. 'I cannot tolerate him. It would be infamous in me to enter into negotiations with Austria and England, and besides I should be risking a good deal.'

But a few days later, on the 9th September, Lord Hynd-

ford, now the British Ambassador to Prussia, received through Goltz, Frederick's representative, categorical proposals for a peace on the basis of the cession of Lower Silesia. 'In return we will go no further. We will lay siege to Neisse *pro forma*; the commander shall surrender and depart. We will go quietly into winter quarters, and they may take their army where they like.' Goltz read these conditions to Hyndford, and then tore up the paper into small pieces. He said that the King would not appear himself in the matter, and that if it was discovered, both the King and he would deny it.

To deceive his allies, and particularly Valori, who was in his camp at the time, Frederick wrote to Hyndford:—

'CAMP NEAR NEISSE, 14th September 1741.

'MY LORD,—I have received the new project of alliance which the indefatigable Robinson has sent you. I consider it as chimerical as the first, and you can only reply to the court of Vienna that the Elector of Bavaria will be the Emperor, and that my engagements with the very Christian King and the Elector of Bavaria are so solemn, so indissoluble, and so inviolable, that I shall not abandon those faithful allies to enter into a *liaison* with a Court which cannot be, and will never be, anything but irreconcilable towards me; that nothing now can help them, and that they must resign themselves to endure all the rigour of their destiny. Are these people fools, my Lord, that they should imagine that I should commit the treason of turning my arms in their favour against my friends, and do you not see yourself how gross is the bait which is offered me?

'I beg you not to trouble me any more with propositions of that sort, and to believe that I am enough of an honest man to decline to violate my engagements. FEDERIC.'

This letter is cunningly worded. To conceal his treachery and avoid the most naked falsehood, Frederick declares that he does not intend to enter into a *liaison* with Austria, or turn his arms against his friends, or violate his

engagements. In the most literal sense this was not incorrect. He refused the 'bait' of an offensive alliance with Austria against his present allies; and by the proposed truce, he was not violating his engagement not to make a *peace* without the consent of his allies. So he was 'an honest man.'

On the 15th September Frederick wrote to the Elector of Bavaria, sending a copy of Hyndford's proposals, and his reply, and saying: 'Your Electoral Highness will see by the enclosed, which I am sending him, how useless are the artifices of our enemies, and to what extent I am faithful to him.' In spite of these assurances, on the very next day he wrote to Podewils to inform Lord Hyndford that if he would go to the camp at Neisse 'it would not only be a constant satisfaction to have him, but that it would confer a pleasure upon His Royal Majesty if he could travel to him at once, as His Royal Majesty had a particular desire to see him.' Other urgent messages were sent to Hyndford requesting him to start at once.

Having sent for Lord Hyndford to assist him in coming to an agreement with Austria, Frederick on the same day, the 16th September, wrote to Baron Schmettau, for the information of the Elector of Bavaria, that the efforts of Hyndford would not change his 'constant and unshakeable friendship for His Electoral Highness, and that no effort nor intrigues would ever succeed in making me desert him.' On the 20th September he wrote that 'from love for his Electoral Highness, and an attachment to his interests and a friendship perhaps without example' he had 'refused the advantageous proposal which the court of Vienna had made through Lord Hyndford.' On the 22nd he wrote to the Elector himself, to the same effect, protesting that his heart was inseparable from that of the Elector, that he could never have a friend more entirely to his taste; he regarded the connection between them as 'indissoluble and eternal.' . . . 'The Austrians do not desist from their negotiations, but Your Electoral Highness may rest assured that they will not make any greater progress than in the past, . . . my engagements are



too sacred that I should break them, in all my life.' But only four days before he had sent Major Goltz to Neipperg to inquire what authority had been received from Vienna, and had instructed Goltz to tell Neipperg that though the King could not at present promise Austria more than a benevolent neutrality; in the spring he might be able to give active assistance, as he could not tolerate that France and Bavaria should bring about the grave injury to Austria which they contemplated. On the 28th Frederick wrote to Hyndford that the proposed agreement must be kept an inviolable secret; on the 2nd October he wrote to Cardinal Fleury that: 'The King may rest assured that I shall never make bad use of his confidence, and will behave towards him with all possible sincerity and fidelity.' As for the Austrian proposals through Lord Hyndford: 'I have been constant in refusing to enter into such engagements, and will always behave in the same way.'

A week later the bargaining with Austria, which he took such pains to deny, came to the desired conclusion. The Austrian situation was desperate. On the 14th September a Franco-Bavarian army, under the command of the Elector of Bavaria, captured Linz, and held Vienna at its mercy. On the 19th Saxony joined Prussia, France, and Bavaria, in return for a promise of the whole of Moravia. Russia protested, but her hands were full, Sweden having declared war and invaded Finland at the instigation of France. The danger to Hanover from the French army at Düsseldorf and the Prussians at Magdeburg, made George II. give a promise of neutrality. Maria Theresa was forced to consent to Frederick's proposals.

A meeting between Frederick and the representatives of Austria and England was arranged, for the conclusion of a separate agreement, at a house in the village of Klein-Schnellendorf. Before setting forth for the betrayal of his allies, Frederick had the hardihood to sit down and write to Marshal Belleisle a letter in which he expressed his admiration for 'the great part played by the King of France in supporting the Elector, and confounding the evil designs of the King of England,' and concluded: 'I am

with all imaginable esteem and friendship, My dear Marshal, Your very faithful friend, Federic.' It is not easy to understand how any man can have written such a letter at such a moment. He had been writing similar false letters, and was to write many more. But that he should compose an unnecessary letter, merely in order to enjoy the consciousness of his treacherous cunning, surely gives evidence of a most abnormal love of deception.

The very faithful friend went forth to a secret meeting, at which were present, for Prussia, himself and Major Goltz, for Austria, Marshal Neipperg and General Lentulus, and for England Lord Hyndford. A Protocol had been drawn up by Lord Hyndford, embodying Frederick's proposals. Neisse was, after a sham siege of fifteen days, to capitulate, the garrison being permitted to depart with all military honours, wagons being provided for them up to the border of Moravia. 'Article 5. After the capture of the town of Neisse His Majesty the King of Prussia will not make any offensive movements against Her Majesty the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, nor against the King of England as Elector of Hanover, nor against any other of the Queen's present allies, until the general peace. Article 6. The King of Prussia will never demand anything more from Her Majesty the Queen of Hungary, than Lower Silesia with the town of Neisse. Article 7. An endeavour will be made to make a definitive treaty towards the end of the coming month of December.' By the treaty to be then made the Queen of Hungary would cede to His Prussian Majesty all Lower Silesia as far as the River Neisse, including the town of Neisse, and on the other side of the Oder, as far as the limits of the Duchy of Oppeln. On the 16th October Neipperg would retire his army towards Moravia, and thence where he might please. A part of the Prussian army would take up winter quarters in Upper Silesia, until April 1742. 'Article 18. These articles which have been agreed upon shall be kept as an inviolable secret, which I, the undersigned, Count Hyndford, Marshal Count Neipperg and Major General Lentulus, have pro-

mitted on our word of honour to the King of Prussia, on the demand of His Majesty.' The Prussians made no promises of secrecy.

The Protocol was signed by Hyndford only; it was expressly stated that this signature bound both Prussia and Austria. Frederick refused to sign, because he intended to repudiate all knowledge of the affair, and to denounce it, if published, as the malicious invention of his enemies.

In various letters written to his ministers and to his allies before the Klein-Schnellendorf treachery, Frederick declared that any such agreement on his part would be *infâme*, such as no man of honour would enter into. Afterwards, in the *Histoire de Mon Temps*, he attempted some excuse. 'This is a delicate affair. The conduct of the King was shady (*scabreux*); it is necessary to explain its most secret motives.' Frederick had thus applied to his own conduct the severe French epithets *infâme* and *scabreux*. His explanation consisted in a statement of what he gained by his treachery; he elaborated the subject at some length. Incidentally, he remarked that France was meditating a similar treachery towards him—the common excuse of criminals.

Frederick had been standing motionless for six months. The recollection of Mollwitz made him fear to attack, though he had a superiority over Neipperg of more than two to one. He resorted to trickery. He got rid of Neipperg, and acquired Lower Silesia, with Neisse, by an agreement which, by means of the secrecy clause he intended to deny to his allies, and to repudiate whenever he chose.

Neipperg withdrew fifteen hundred of the best troops of the garrison of Neisse, and informed the commander that he was to capitulate fourteen days after being attacked. He abandoned his camp on the 14th, and Frederick made a show of following, but gave orders that no attacks were to be made. Neipperg issued similar instructions. These curious proceedings aroused suspicions. Belleisle wrote to Paris, on the 17th October: 'The King of Prussia has



gone into winter quarters without following up Neipperg. He could do no greater injury to the Elector of Bavaria and to the common cause.' . . . 'If it were possible to admit suspicions of the honesty and uprightness of the King they would arise on every side.'<sup>1</sup> The sham siege of Neisse began on the 19th October, and the stipulated capitulation, after the exchange of a few shots, followed on the 31st. It was plain to all observers, especially to the soldiers on both sides, that the affair had not been conducted on warlike lines. There was a widespread conviction that an arrangement of some sort must have been come to.

Frederick denied it with his usual superabundant facility. He wrote to the Elector of Bavaria on the 14th, 22nd, and 28th October. He said that he was about to give Neipperg a good beating, and in the meantime was his very faithful friend. He sent similar letters to Belleisle and Valori. He expected Neisse to hold out several weeks, he said, having encountered greater difficulties than he had expected. To Cardinal Fleury he wrote on the 29th, that 'the crafty and perfidious Court of Vienna' had made him certain proposals, which he described as ridiculous; that he was 'inviolably attached' to the Cardinal's interests; 'the alliance of the King, your master, is for me the most flattering period of my life; there is nothing that I will shrink from to cultivate it assiduously.' On the 2nd November he brought his honour to bear. He wrote to the Elector of Bavaria: 'I can assure him positively and upon my honour, that I have not made peace with the Austrians, and that I will never make it until Your Electoral Highness is satisfied'; he was his 'very faithful friend, cousin and brother.' It is true that Frederick had not yet concluded a definitive treaty of peace, but he had agreed to make such a treaty, and he had already urged Hyndford to have the peace treaty drawn up and signed as soon as possible. This did not prevent him from entering into treaties, on the 1st November, with Saxony and Bavaria, in which

<sup>1</sup> Broglie, ii. p. 287.

a partition of the Austrian dominions was agreed upon. On the 4th November he sent to his Ambassadors categorical instructions to deny all rumours of a compact with the Austrian Court. On the 8th he wrote to the Elector of Saxony and also to Belleisle, indignantly denouncing the reports, and adding that he would always observe the engagements he had made with his faithful allies and friends.

Frederick knew that the truce with Austria could not be kept secret. In the *Histoire de Mon Temps*, he says, 'a truce gave the King the means for recovering breath, and he was sure to be able to break it whenever he might find it desirable, because the policy of the Court of Vienna would force it to divulge the mystery.' . . . 'The King was quite certain that it could not fail to happen.' The revelation would not be to the advantage of Austria. Strict injunctions were issued from the Austrian side, that the secret was to be rigorously kept. But, in spite of them, there were leakages which gave Frederick the excuse he wanted. If necessary, he would have contrived to spread the news himself, in some underhand manner. The equivocal military movements led to inquiries which the Austrians failed to repudiate with sufficient vehemence. This was all that Frederick wanted, as it enabled him, having obtained Neisse and the withdrawal of Neipperg, to turn against Austria once more whenever a good opportunity should offer, without having to admit the intervening treachery to his allies. In this way he tricked both sides. Maria Theresa was cheated out of the stronghold of Neisse, and Neipperg's army was let loose upon his allies. Frederick would then come to their assistance, and wrest further territories from Maria Theresa.

He made no secret of his contempt for treaties. Hyndford reports, Jan. 9th, 1742: 'Upon all occasions he declares his disregard of treaties and guarantees, and the opinion that no faith or ties should bind a Prince any longer, when he is in a condition to break them to his advantage.' On the 17th May Hyndford writes: 'What

dependence is to be had upon a Prince who has neither truth, honour, nor religion? Who looks upon treaties as upon matrimony, to bind fools, and who turns into ridicule the most sacred things?’

Frederick left the army in possession of Neisse on the 2nd November. On the 7th he received the formal homage of his new subjects at Breslau. He was now in acknowledged possession of Lower Silesia and the Neisse fortress, and had obtained all that had been promised him by the Klein-Schnellendorf agreement. He returned to Berlin on the 11th, and awaited there the moment for an advantageous repudiation of his compact.

On the 26th November a combined force of French, Saxons, and Bavarians attacked, and carried by storm the fortress of Prague. This success had a great influence upon the attitude of hesitating Princes. It encouraged Spain and Savoy; it ensured the election of Charles Albert of Bavaria to the Imperial dignity; it brought Prussia back at once to the side of its former allies. When the news reached Frederick he drank the health of Charles Albert, the new ‘King of Bohemia,’ and gave orders that troops were to be sent to the assistance of his allies. Proposals being received from Austria for the definite conclusion of the peace of Klein-Schnellendorf, accompanied by a suggestion that the terms should include a promise of the Brandenburg vote for the Grand Duke Francis in the Imperial election, Frederick replied that he did not intend to proceed with the peace agreement. He said to Hyndford: ‘If they’ (the Austrians) ‘had kept the secret, as they ought to have done for their own interest, I could have preserved for them Moravia and the two Austrias, but it was certainly not my interest to let them keep Bohemia or Upper Silesia, for sooner or later they would have been very troublesome neighbours to me. But as to Moravia, they could not have had so easy access from thence. They have had a double view in divulging the secret; first, to make me suspected by my allies; and next, by keeping some of the Electors in suspense, they had conceived hopes of the Imperial dignity, which neither



France nor I could ever consent to. You see, my lord, I speak openly to you. They have been guilty of another folly in suffering Prague to be taken under their nose, without risking a battle. If they had been successful I do not know what I should have done. But now we have 130,000 men against 70,000 of theirs.'

Frederick here admits that the stipulation in the Klein-Schnellendorf agreement, that he would never demand more than Lower Silesia and Neisse, was one of the many frauds of which he was guilty; for he tells Hyndford that while he would have kept Moravia (which he had promised to Saxony) and the two Austrias for Maria Theresa, he never intended to leave her in possession of Bohemia or Upper Silesia. Frederick also makes it plain that it was the Austrian discomfiture at Prague, not the failure to keep the secret, that determined his conduct.

A *coup d'État* in Russia gave him further encouragement. The Regent Anne, though German in birth and breeding, and served by ministers of German origin, had become a Russian in spirit. Sweden having attacked Russia at the instance of France, Anne and her anti-French adviser Oestermann, pursued a policy of friendship towards Austria and England, the enemies of France and of her ally Prussia. On the 6th December 1741, the Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of Peter the Great, overthrew, with the help of the Guard, the government of the Regent Anne. The infant Czar Ivan was, with his mother, kept under guard, and Elizabeth was proclaimed Czarina. Frederick supposed, mistakenly, that the change would enure to his advantage. The daughter of Peter the Great was to prove herself the bitterest of all his enemies. In the meantime it seemed that, with the disappearance of Anne and Oestermann, he had nothing to fear from Russia.

#### 4. THE PEACE OF Breslau

Frederick's second unprovoked and treacherous attack upon Maria Theresa began with the sudden seizure of the

fortress of Olmütz, in Moravia. The Austrians, relying upon the Klein-Schnellendorf pledge, had prepared no defence, and the Prussians under Schwerin entered the place on the 27th December 1741. Though this was an act of war Frederick pretended, with unnecessary hypocrisy, in a letter to Voltaire, 3rd January 1742, that he was taking up once more his crook and lyre, never to lay them down again.

Austria had improved her position, and was about to attack the Franco-Bavarians, with good hopes of success. Frederick received appeals for assistance from both France and Bavaria. He was asked for only a small force, under a Prussian general, for it was supposed that, having obtained Lower Silesia, he had little inducement to re-enter the fray. His designs upon Upper Silesia, and his desire for a great personal triumph, were not understood. Frederick's reply to the modest requests of his allies was that he would command the troops himself. He pressed his personal assistance to an embarrassing extent. On the 19th January, at Dresden, he explained to a council of the allies, collected to hear him, how he proposed to defeat the Austrians. It was expected that he would lead his troops to the assistance of the allies in Bohemia. His objections to that course were many, though they could not all be avowed. He had a personal dislike for the French Commander, Broglie, and he did not desire intimate relations with the French, believing that they distrusted him owing to the Klein-Schnellendorf treachery. He was not disposed to accept any form of co-operation with an independent commander. He wrote to Belleisle that a King of Prussia could not serve under another; which meant that there could be no junction of his troops with any others unless he was placed in command of the united forces.

Frederick proposed to lead a Prussian force from Olmütz into the heart of Moravia. The Saxon army, with a French contingent, would advance from Bohemia and capture Iglau, while he moved on Brünn. There Saxons and French would join him, and would fall under his command.

That was the attraction of the scheme. He was to be accepted as the natural commander of Saxon, and even of French troops. His prestige would be enhanced, and if he succeeded in reaching Vienna a great personal triumph would be achieved. All this would be obtained without exposing his own country—which throughout the Silesian wars remained in absolute safety—or his newly-acquired Silesian province, or even any substantial part of his army. He proposed to use the minimum of Prussian troops, making the Saxons bear the brunt of the fighting. Their losses would, he considered, be his gain. If the Saxon army was destroyed, his own power would be increased.

In the *Histoire de Mon Temps* Frederick says: 'The expedition into Moravia was the only one that the circumstances permitted to be undertaken, because it made the King more indispensable, and placed him in the position of being equally sought by both parties; the King decided upon it, but quite determined at the same time not to employ upon it more than the smallest possible number of his troops, and the greatest quantity that his allies could be induced to give him.' There was also the consideration that if he joined Broglie and the others, it would be difficult to obtain Upper Silesia for himself by a separate peace with Austria. It would be dangerous to betray his allies while his troops were mingled with theirs.

The Council at Dresden,—Augustus, Valori, Count Maurice de Saxe, and others—heard these proposals with dismay. French and Saxons felt some natural hesitation about placing any of their troops under the control of a Prince who had already betrayed them, and might do so again. Frederick threatened to withdraw his assistance altogether unless his plan was accepted. Under this pressure it was agreed that the Saxons, with French support, should move upon Iglau, but no promise was given of any further advance.

These decisions came too late to save the town of Linz. Ségur, the French commander, was forced to capitulate to the Austrian General Khevenhüller on the 24th January 1742. On the same day, Charles Albert, Elector of



Bavaria, was elected Emperor <sup>at</sup> of Frankfort, taking the title of Charles VII. To obtain the vote of the Elector Palatine, Frederick had given up his claim to Jülich-Berg. The new Emperor was crowned with all the customary ornate ceremonies at Frankfort on the 12th February. On that day his capital, Munich, capitulated to the Austrians. The humiliating position of the Holy Roman Emperor, poor in troops and in money, his capital in the hands of his enemy, gave rise to bitter jests. In Frankfort itself a medal was struck, having on one side the head of the Grand Duke Francis, with the legend 'Aut Caesar aut nihil'; on the other side appeared the Emperor Charles VII., with the words, 'Et Caesar et nihil.'

Frederick reached Olmütz on the 20th January. That the allies had good reason to distrust him, is shown by the approach he made to Hyndford on the 30th, with regard to a possible accommodation with Austria. On the 4th February, an Austrian emissary brought proposals from Vienna, which Frederick would neither accept nor reject. These dealings with the enemy became known to the allies, and increased their disinclination to place their troops under Frederick's control. However, they went forward, in accordance with the Dresden compact, and captured Iglau on the 15th February. The French then retired. The Saxons were about to do the same, but Frederick appealed to the Elector Augustus, who consented to allow his army to advance with the Prussians as far as Znaim. The combined force under Frederick was now within a few days' march of Vienna. The danger to the capital drew back the bulk of the Austrian forces from their favourable position in Bohemia. Frederick's incursion into Moravia had relieved the pressure upon Broglie and the Bavarians.

Schwerin advised the King to advance, in spite of the growing Austrian strength, and deal a blow, if not on Vienna, then on Presburg, further east. But he was still timid, not having recovered from the Mollwitz shock. Taking the Saxons with him he retired to Brünn and laid siege to the fortress. Maria Theresa appealed again

to her Hungarians, who responded nobly. Irregular bands harassed the Prussian troops and interfered with their communications, and the Moravian peasants joined in the guerilla warfare against the invaders. Frederick retaliated with savage ferocity, burning and looting, and killing even women, but the effect was to increase the stubborn defiance of the people; his position became precarious, as his men were cut off in small parties, and the difficulty of obtaining supplies was serious. Schwerin advised an attempt to capture Brünn by storm, but Frederick would not run the risk of failure. He asserted that Brünn could not be taken without siege guns, and put the blame upon the Saxons for his want of them. He remained in front of Brünn, where his influence upon events could be but small. The Austrians renewed their march into Bohemia, advancing so far that they threatened Prague. The Saxons now had every reason to feel anxious about their communications and the safety of their country, denuded of troops. Broglie sent a formal demand for the assistance of the Saxon army, which Frederick could not refuse. He dismissed the Saxons, who went back into their own country. He had to admit that his Moravian enterprise had failed. He retired from Moravia to Chrudim, where he could either move on Prague or fall back further into Silesia, by way of Glatz and Neisse.

In public he placed the failure of the Moravian enterprise upon his allies. In private he gave a truer explanation. Writing to Jordan, on the 5th May 1742, he said, 'Moravia, which is a very bad country, could not be held for want of provisions, and the town of Brünn could not be taken because the Saxons had no cannons.' The real blame lay entirely with himself. He had been warned of the obstacles an army would encounter in the Moravian mountains, and the difficulty of obtaining supplies. He insisted on that enterprise from motives of personal ambition and vanity, and in order to spare his own troops while making use of those of his allies. If he had contributed a larger Prussian force the enterprise should have succeeded. It was his own fault that no siege guns were

taken for the attack on Brünn. These military blunders might have been retrieved but for the recoil upon himself of his past treachery. Saxons and French had good cause to distrust the man who had already betrayed both friend and foe, and was at this very time in full negotiation with the enemy.

The failure of Frederick's scheme gave such encouragement to Maria Theresa that she refused all the overtures which he continued to send her. After each rejection he lowered his terms, but he declined her final offer of the whole of Silesia, in return for his active support against France and Bavaria.

The command of the Austrian troops in Moravia was confided to Prince Charles of Lorraine, brother-in-law of Maria Theresa. He followed the retreating Prussians and regained Olmütz on the 23rd April 1742. Moving with the greatest deliberation, in spite of the impatient messages sent to him from Vienna, he came upon the main Prussian army under Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau near Chotusitz, on the 16th May. Frederick with a vanguard had overshot the line of the Austrian march, thus giving his enemy the opportunity to attack Prince Leopold before the King could hasten back to his assistance.

This Prince Charles attempted to do. He ordered a night attack on the army of Prince Leopold. At 8 P.M. the march commenced; it was a clear night with a full moon, and the enemy lay, unconscious of his danger, not more than seven miles distant. By midnight the army should have reached the position for attack, but at 5 A.M. it was still a mile short, and at that hour Prince Leopold himself saw the Austrian troops on the move. The Prussians were soon under arms. The Austrians marching forward in dignified deliberation did not come into contact with the enemy till 7.30 A.M. At that hour Frederick's contingent returned from Kuttenberg. The enemy was now united and ready. Thus, owing to the slowness of Prince Charles, the only effect of the night march had been to deprive the Austrian soldier of his repose, just before a great battle.



The numbers at the battle of Chotusitz, 17th May 1742, were as follows :

	Prussians.	Austrians.
Infantry . . . .	18,400	15,450
Heavy Cavalry . . . .	8,600	7,200
Hussars . . . .	1,000	3,000
Croats . . . .		2,500
	<hr/> 28,000 <hr/>	<hr/> 28,150 <hr/>

Guns.	Prussians.	Austrians.
Light . . . .	78	35
Heavy . . . .	4	<i>nil</i>

In infantry and heavy cavalry the Prussians had an excess of 4350, in artillery a preponderance of more than two to one. Against this the Austrian superiority of 4500 in light troops afforded no adequate compensation. The Prussians had the advantage.

Both armies formed in two lines, the infantry in the centre, and cavalry on the flanks. The Prussians were divided into two parts, the village of Chotusitz separating the right, which was the larger portion under the immediate command of the King, from the left under Prince Leopold.

The battle began with a Prussian cannonade of the Austrian left and centre, which was followed by an impetuous charge of cavalry on the Austrian cavalry opposed to them. Frederick had not forgotten the Austrian cavalry charge at Mollwitz—he would never forget it—and resolved to forestall it. He had given great attention to the mounted arm since that fight, and his troopers were eager to retrieve their laurels. The first shock drove back the Austrians, but the combat becoming a confused hand-to-hand fighting, not approved by Prussian theories of discipline, the Prussian troopers were, as their drill had taught them to expect, ordered to uncloze and reform, in preparation for another charge. This respite enabled the Austrians to recover ; before the Prussians could repeat

the charge they were attacked on their extreme right flank by two regiments of Hussars, and while they were dealing with this diversion, they were assaulted in front by the reformed enemy cavalry. They gave way, and, once beaten, were driven right off the field of battle. But lack of discipline then redressed the balance. The victorious Austrian cavalry had penetrated behind the Prussian line ; seeing the Prussian camp unprotected before them, they rushed on to indulge in pillage. In this way they nullified their triumph, being lost to Prince Charles's fighting force, just as much as if they had fled before their enemies. The cavalry of the Austrian right attacked the horsemen of the Prussian left, beat them, and then went on to pillage the Prussian camp on that side. Thus the bulk of the cavalry of both sides, victors and vanquished, was eliminated from the contest, and the issue was left to the infantry and artillery, in which Prussia had the advantage.

Refusing their left, the Austrian centre and right advanced against the weaker of the enemy formations, under Prince Leopold. The Prussians fought well, but by 9 A.M. the village of Chotusitz was in Austrian hands. Still, the infantry of Prince Leopold continued a tenacious resistance in spite of heavy losses. For three hours Frederick, with more than half the army, watched the outnumbered force under Prince Leopold waging an unequal conflict. The King was still afraid of the Mollwitz cavalry. It was not until he had assured himself that those terrible horsemen were no longer fighting, that he gave orders for an advance to the assistance of Leopold's badly mauled infantry. The troops under the King's command were then permitted to abandon their long-held defensive. At 11 A.M. they began to fire on the Austrian left flank. To these fresh forces, with their overwhelming numbers, and enfilading fire, no effective resistance could be offered. The Austrian left was crushed, and a general retreat followed. Frederick made no attempt to interfere, though he had the whole Austrian army at his mercy. His fresh infantry, the greater part of his whole army, stood spectators of the retirement of their defeated enemy.

There was no thought of pursuit. The Prussians camped, at once, on the field of battle.

The Austrian loss was 3000 killed and wounded, and 3350 missing, of whom 1200 were prisoners. They lost 17 cannon.<sup>1</sup> The Prussian casualties were over 4000 in killed and wounded, and 700 missing, most of them prisoners. The victors suffered most in the fighting. Half their loss was sustained by the cavalry. Of the remainder practically the whole fell on Leopold's infantry; the troops with the King, though twice as numerous, lost only 270 men.

Frederick's inaction, while his cavalry was being driven off the field and the infantry under Prince Leopold was being severely handled, suggests not merely caution but even timidity. He allowed the enemy cavalry to sweep past his flanks and plunder the camp in his rear, without offering any opposition. To prevent a cavalry attack on his right flank he had placed three grenadier battalions there, to close the entrance between his first and second lines, but these troops, with the whole of his right flank and his centre, were never under fire. On his extreme left, in the front line, the Bevern regiment lost 42 men, in the second line the Groeben lost 48, and the Prince Ferdinand 125. Of the total of 270 casualties for the whole of the infantry under his immediate control, 215 were sustained by these three regiments, while the remainder, forming one-half of the infantry in his army, lost only 55 men. By keeping his own force inactive, Frederick gave the Austrians the opportunity to attack the Prussian left with an overwhelming superiority, destroy it, and then treat his own corps in the same manner. This would have happened, but for the failure of the Austrians to concentrate a sufficient force for the attack. Frederick was exposing his army to a terrible risk. If he had made early use of the large force of excellent infantry under his immediate command, which comprised, with two battalions of the Guard and five of Grenadiers, the best

<sup>1</sup> Oesterreichische General Stabswerk. *Der oesterreichische Erbfolgekrieg*, vol. iii. p. 682.



troops in his army, it is probable that the Austrians would have been not merely defeated, but with marshy pools at their backs, would have sustained a very severe disaster. Even as it was, they were entirely in his power when the retreat began, and he would not allow his men to follow up their success.

Podewils urged Frederick to follow energetically, to destroy his enemy once for all, but the King was unwilling to take any risks that might be avoided by negotiation. He renewed his proposals for a separate peace with Austria. Maria Theresa would have preferred a peace with France, which might have enabled her to wrest back Silesia from Prussia. France had obtained nothing from the war, save the Imperial Crown for her Bavarian ally, and the humiliation of her Austrian enemy. There was little prospect of any further return for the expenditure of treasure and troops. But Fleury would not desert his allies, and Maria Theresa had no alternative but to accept the peace offered. She gave Lord Hyndford full power to enter into negotiations with Podewils, offering Lower Silesia and, if necessary and in the ultimate resort, Upper Silesia also.

In the meantime, Prince Charles had forced Broglie to make a hasty retreat to Prague. Frederick became alarmed. Judging others by himself he expected Fleury would conclude a separate peace, and he feared that after their Klein-Schnellendorf experience, the Austrians might regard his proposal with suspicion. His own past treachery made him distrust Fleury, and expect to be distrusted himself. In this disagreeable situation he saw the Austrians pressing his allies, and threatening a substantial triumph.

He wrote to Podewils a letter of panic, ordering him to conclude an immediate peace. Assuming that Maria Theresa would cede Lower Silesia, the strip on the further side of the Neisse, and the town and country of Glatz, Podewils was to obtain as much more as he could, but in any case, within half a day, or twelve hours, to sign and have signed, the preliminaries of peace on the above

basis. There was to be no delay, to obtain the King's approval. 'I sleep in repose,' he wrote, 'assured that Captain Sydow' (who took the letter) 'will bring me back the preliminaries signed.' Frederick's alarm and anxiety were extreme. Fortunately for him Podewils kept his head, and proved too cunning for Hyndford. The Englishman was most anxious for a cessation of the war between Prussia and Austria. Podewils, without revealing his lowest terms or his master's fears, extracted from the easy Hyndford the whole Austrian offer, which was more than Frederick, in his panic, had been willing to accept. The preliminaries were signed by Podewils and Hyndford at Breslau on the 11th June 1742. Frederick was to obtain the whole of Silesia, with some small exceptions; he was also to have the town and county of Glatz. Always expecting acts of dishonour, Frederick was now tormented with the fear that Maria Theresa, on learning of the retreat of the French, would repudiate the agreement, in spite of the complete authority given to Hyndford. He was relieved when the Queen ratified what she could not in honour disavow. He expressed his delight to Podewils, 23rd June: 'I have received with great joy the treaty of peace.' The final treaty was concluded at Berlin on the 28th July 1742.

Frederick communicated to his allies the separate peace that he had made. He would have preferred silence but, as he wrote to Podewils, 'I have not been able to conceal the peace, there are such preparations to be made with regard to the march of the troops, the transport of the sick, the sale of the magazines, the armistice.' So he had to write explanatory letters. To Charles VII., he said that he did so in the bitterness of his heart. His plea was that the military position was hopeless, defeat certain, and he had to save himself. Charles VII. knew, of course, —what even the civilian Podewils had perceived—that, after the battle of Chotusitz, Frederick had Austria in his power; by following up the victory he could have ended the war, but, as he said to Podewils more than once, a separate peace suited him better than a general one. His

object was to obtain for himself Silesia and peace, while leaving France and Bavaria still at war with Austria. 'Seeing myself thus brought to a situation in which my sword could be of no further assistance to His Majesty,' (Charles VII.) 'I assure Him that my pen will always be at his service; my heart will never deny itself to Your Imperial Majesty, and if there are things which impossibility alone prevents me from accomplishing, Your Majesty will find me always the same in all that depends upon my faculties, yielding only to necessity, but firm in my engagements,'—and much more of the same sort of hypocrisy.

To Cardinal Fleury Frederick wrote in the same strain: 'It is known to you,' he begins, 'that from the moment that we made mutual engagements, I have done all that lay in me to second with an inviolable fidelity the arms of the King your master.' (Of course it was known to Fleury that Frederick had betrayed the King his master at Klein-Schnellendorf, and again by the treaty now in question.) 'Even when, to disturb my resolution, the Queen on several occasions made me the most advantageous offers, no reason of interest could avail to persuade me, much less to arrest the operations which I was resolved to undertake solely for the advantage of my allies.' (This is just a hardy falsehood, for he had done precisely what he here denies, as all the world knew.) 'I was compelled, though in the bitterness of my heart, to save myself from an inevitable shipwreck and to gain port as best I might. Necessity and powerlessness alone can conquer me; nobody is blamed for not doing the impossible. In all that is possible, you will find in me an invariable fidelity.' . . . 'The events of this war form, so to say, a tissue of the marks of loyal friendship, which I have exhibited towards my allies.' Fleury returned a cold answer.

Before finally deciding upon this particular treachery, Frederick had written out two papers, an 'Exposition of the reasons I may have for remaining in the alliance with France,' and an 'Exposition of the reasons I might have to make peace with the Queen of Hungary.' He began



the former with the remark, 'It is not well to violate one's word without cause; up to the present time I have had no ground for complaint against France or my allies. One obtains the reputation of being a changeable and unreliable man, if one does not carry out a project one has made, and if one passes often from one side to the other.' Among the reasons for making peace with Austria, we find, 'The treaty which I have made with my allies bears nothing more than a simple guarantee, without any stipulation as to the number of troops.' . . . 'A fortunate end to this war would make France the arbiter of the universe.' . . . He feared 'Reverses of fortune which might take from me all that I have gained, and a general war which might perhaps, in the direction of Hanover, extend into my country.'

Frederick perceived that it was better not to 'violate one's word without cause,' he realised that his reputation might suffer if he passed 'often' from one side to the other. But in practice such considerations always proved of inferior potency, when opposed to more material interests. He observed that a treaty of alliance, without stipulation as to details of assistance, was worthless. He repeated that contention in the *Lettre de M. le Comte de \* \* \**<sup>1</sup>

To Jordan Frederick explained himself clearly, 15th June 1742: 'It will not be you who will condemn me, but those stoics whose dry temperament and hot brain incline them to rigid morality. I reply to them that they will do well to follow their maxims, but that the field of romance is more adapted to such severe practice than the continent which we inhabit, and that, after all, a private person has quite other reasons for being honest to those of a sovereign. In the case of a private person, there is nothing in question save the interest of an individual; he must always sacrifice it for the good of society. Thus the strict observation of moral law is in him a duty, the rule being, "It is better that one man should suffer than that a whole nation should perish." In the case

<sup>1</sup> *Preussische Staatsschriften*, i. p. 335.

of a sovereign, the interest of a great nation is in his care, it is his duty to forward it ; to succeed he must sacrifice himself, all the more his engagements, when they begin to become contrary to the welfare of his people.'

The reference to self-sacrifice is hypocritical. Frederick enjoyed cheating. He laid down the doctrine that a sovereign is above all law. He has only to deal with other sovereigns, and they are to be overcome by fraud and violence. That was always the Hohenzollern principle.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SECOND SILESIAN WAR

#### 1. THE BOHEMIAN FAILURE

AFTER the defection of Prussia affairs went badly with France and Bavaria. Prince Charles regained Prague, though Belleisle cleverly succeeded in withdrawing the French troops. The whole of Bohemia fell once more into Austrian hands. In the following spring, on the 12th May 1743, Maria Theresa was crowned Queen of Bohemia in Prague. Bavaria, the Kaiser's own dominion, was overrun by Austrian forces. On the 9th June Munich, Charles VII.'s capital, was again entered by Austrian troops. On the 27th a force of British and Hanoverians, commanded by King George II. in person, obtained a victory over the French at the battle of Dettingen. Sardinia and Saxony entered into treaties with Austria.

Frederick decided to intervene. To his minister, Mardefeld, at Moscow, he wrote: 'I have no reason to doubt that as soon as the Queen of Hungary has finished her war against France, she intends to fall with all her forces, and perhaps those of her allies, upon me.' In a private note he wrote: 'The war, therefore, which the King of Prussia should make, is a war forced upon him, to circumvent the evil designs of his enemies . . ., and so a virtue must be made of necessity.'

'Necessity' gave him the excuse for breaking one more treaty, and attacking Austria for the third time. By the first assault he repudiated the Prussian guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction; by the second he cheated over the Klein-Schnellendorf bargain, by which he had obtained Lower Silesia; now he violated the Treaty of Breslau, which gave him Upper Silesia, in order to extract further territory from Maria Theresa.



Pretending that he was spurred to action by the necessity of preventing the humiliation of the Emperor, he formed the Union of Frankfort, which was joined by Bavaria, the Elector Palatine, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, and other Princes. Then, regardless of the interests of Germany, he entered into a secret alliance with France, by a treaty signed on the 5th June 1744. Prussia was to obtain the portions of Silesia excepted by the Treaty of Breslau, and further substantial gains in Bohemia, while France was to acquire certain portions of the Netherlands. He endeavoured to obtain complete secrecy for this treaty in order, as he wrote to Rothenburg, at Paris, that the French alliance 'may not appear as the reason for my action, but the pretext for my operations should rather be the treaty for confederal union which I am about to conclude with the Emperor, and with other States of the Empire for the support of the Emperor, for the re-establishment of the repose of the Empire and the pacification of Germany.' He insisted upon the importance of concealing the French alliance, writing to the Duc de Noailles, 'you cannot imagine the harm it will do me in Germany.' He issued a manifesto, which concluded with the words: 'In short, the King demands nothing for himself, and his own personal interests are not in question; but his Majesty has recourse to arms for no purpose but to recover liberty for the Empire, the dignity of the Emperor, and the repose of Europe.' This was for the public, but there are several passages in his writings in which he lays it down as an axiom that war should never be entered upon without the promise of gain. He wrote to Eichel at Potsdam, 'How can they' (his allies) 'make such difficulties about the cession of three miserable circles in Bohemia, and the towns of Pardubitz and Kolin?' The object of the new attack is here revealed.

He could not shake off the fear that France might pay him out in his own coin, by making a separate peace with Austria. He knew that the French could not trust him, and supposed that they would wish to punish him for his treachery, while obtaining themselves the advantages

of peace. France had little to gain by prosecuting the war, and in the position of Louis xv. Frederick would undoubtedly have been guilty of further treachery. Although he must have known what France and the world thought of his conduct and his character, he had the cool hardihood, when writing to the Duc de Noailles, to remark that he was sure that Louis xv. would know better than to make a peace 'which would for ever deprive him of the confidence of all the Princes of Europe.'

He demanded and, through the intervention of the Emperor Charles vii., obtained free passage for his troops through Saxony. Joined by a column from Silesia he appeared before Prague on the 2nd September with an army of 72,000 men, with 182 field guns, and 56 heavy guns, for the attack upon the fortress. After a bombardment of several days Prague was captured on the 16th September.

Frederick then took the venturesome step of marching south. On the 30th September his advanced guard captured Budweis, and on the 4th October his main body was within a day's march of that town. Here he stood between the Austrians under Prince Charles and Vienna. He expected great successes from this movement. He wrote to Podewils that the enemy 'would be obliged either to retreat to Austria, or see himself cut off from Austrian territory.' But, if he stood between the Austrians and Vienna, it was all the easier for them to place themselves between him and his base. Prince Charles, acting under the advice of a capable Austrian, General Traun, recrossed the Rhine, and by forced marches reached Miroitz, on the 4th October, where he was directly in the rear of the Prussians. Saxony had now joined Austria, and a Saxon force of 20,000 men was in the field, marching to a junction with Prince Charles and Traun.

Frederick found himself in an untenable position, with both Austrians and Saxons threatening his communications. He turned back and marched straight at his enemy in the hope of obtaining a battle, but Traun could always find a strong defensive position among the hills, woods, and

swamps of the wild Bohemian country, where Frederick could not attack him with any hope of success. Nor could the King afford to remain standing, for he was suffering continual heavy losses, owing to the breakdown of his commissariat, the hostility of the people, and the swarms of Hungarian irregulars who had responded to Maria Theresa's call, and harassed the Prussians at every step. Small parties of his men were daily cut off, wagons were captured, and his army lost large numbers from sickness and desertion. He was outmanœuvred by Traun, who threatened to cut off his only avenue of retreat, by way of Königgrätz, into Silesia. He was compelled to make for the crossings over the Elbe at his best speed. Traun followed, forced a passage across the Elbe at Teltschitz, on the 19th November 1744, and drove the Prussians before him. Early in December the Austrians entered Glatz and burst into Silesia at several points.

Frederick had achieved a failure even worse than the Moravian expedition. From this time the 'levity' which had been noticed in him began to disappear. When he returned to Berlin it was observed that he had taken on a less flippant and conceited demeanour; he had now a serious air. He had become sobered in the severe school of failure.

## 2. THE VICTORIES OF HOHENFRIEDBERG AND SOOR

Frederick affected to regard the Austrian pursuit of his army into Silesia as a wanton and treacherous repudiation of the Treaty of Breslau. He pretended that he might make war on Maria Theresa when and where he chose, but that she, when attacked, was bound to confine herself to the defensive. He had the strange audacity to bring such absurd contentions to the notice of the guarantors of the Silesian treaties, and to demand their assistance. He declared that unless England changed sides at once, he would consider himself absolved from the obligation of making the payments stipulated by those



treaties, referring to certain Silesian loans he had undertaken to repay to the English lenders.

An event now occurred which changed completely the situation of affairs—the death of the Emperor Charles VII., on the 20th January 1745. This put an end to Frederick's excuse for the war, from the consequences of which it now became his one desire to escape. He made further desperate efforts to induce one or other of the Powers engaged to give sympathetic hearing to his demand for peace. He even hinted that, if it would help him out of the war, his vote might be given for Maria Theresa's husband, the Grand Duke Francis, at the coming Imperial election.<sup>1</sup> This proposal to betray his French ally came to the ears of the French Court, and Frederick had to make some lame efforts to exculpate himself.

The new Elector of Bavaria, son of the Emperor Charles VII., was too young to hope for the Imperial Crown. By the Treaty of Füssen, 22nd April 1745, he guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction, promised his vote for the Grand Duke Francis, and received back his hereditary domains. Hesse-Cassel and Wurtemberg became parties to the agreement. The death of Charles VII. loosened the ties which had bound the minor German States to the cause of Bavaria and her Prussian and French allies.

Frederick fell easily into the vein of tragic determination. He wrote to Podewils, 'We will keep our hold on Silesia, or you will see nothing again of us save our bones.' (6th April) . . . 'The military arm will do its duty; not one of us but will break his back rather than lose one inch of this land by our supineness.' (17th April) . . . 'If we must fight, we will do so as desperate men; in fact, never has there been a greater crisis than mine; it must be left to time to dissipate the smoke, and to destiny, if there is such a thing, to decide the event. I work myself

<sup>1</sup> 'This may seem to be an impossible scheme of treachery,' says the American author, Tuttle. 'Yet it was so far from being impossible that it actually formed one part, and the large part, of Frederick's diplomacy for several weeks to come.' *History of Prussia under Frederick the Great*, i. p. 291.

into a fever, and the game I am playing is so serious that it is impossible to look forward calmly to the issue. Good-bye ; for greater security write to me in future in cypher. Offer up some prayers for the succour of my happy star. If the Saxons set foot in Silesia, my troops at Magdeburg must put all Saxony to fire and sword ; there must be no further consideration, I shall either perish or keep what I hold.' (19th April) . . . 'If all my resources, all my negotiations, in a word, all combinations declare against me, I prefer to perish with honour rather than be deprived for the rest of my life of all glory and reputation. I have regarded it as an honour to have contributed more than any other to the aggrandisement of my house ; I have played a distinguished part among the crowned heads of Europe ; these are so many personal engagements that I have taken, and which I am quite resolved to sustain even at the cost of my fortune and my life.'

This was written by the man who fled from his first battlefield, and exhibited timidity on the second occasion. It was mere vulgar boasting, for he knew that there was no excuse for the tragic pose. He wrote to Podewils (8th May), 'We have great reason to hope that we have arrived at the moment for the humiliation of the Queen of Hungary and of the Saxons.' On the 18th, 'As for the Austrians, we have nothing to fear from those fellows. . . . If the Saxons do not join in, the Austrians are less than nothing, and if they come together—we do not fear them.' When the decisive battle was imminent he wrote (26th May), 'I have, in truth, no fear for the event.'

In the meantime the French obtained, under Marshal Saxe, a signal victory over a combined force of Dutch, English and Hanoverians under the Duke of Cumberland, at Fontenoy, on the 11th May 1745. This success helped Frederick, but far more important for him was the landing of Prince Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, in Scotland on the 25th July 1745. The Stuart danger, more than the non-success at Fontenoy, brought about the

recall of the British troops. France had now an easy task in the conquest of Flanders.

A still greater advantage was derived by Frederick from the impending Imperial election. To ensure the choice of her husband the Grand Duke Francis, Maria Theresa sent her most capable general, Traun, to Frankfurt with a substantial army. These troops, and their commander, would have been of more military value to the Austrian cause, either against Marshal Saxe in Flanders or against Frederick in Silesia. In the latter direction they might have achieved great results, for the defeat of the Prussians would have regained Silesia, and obtained the Imperial Crown at the same time. The relegation of the capable Traun to an army of demonstration, and the confiding to the feeble Prince Charles of an army of action, was a remarkable folly.

Joined by a Saxon contingent, Prince Charles advanced with the main Austrian army over the mountains into Silesia. Frederick lay in wait for him, and just as the Austrians began to descend from the hills, he attacked them, near the village of Hohenfriedberg, on the 4th June 1745.

The numbers engaged in the battle were :

	Prussian.	Austrian.	Saxon.	Allies.
Infantry .	38,600	24,700	12,800	37,500
Cavalry .	19,900	11,900	6,400	18,300
	<u>58,500</u>	<u>36,600</u>	<u>19,200</u>	<u>55,800</u>

Guns.	Prussian.	Austrian.	Saxon.	Allies.
Three pounders	138	45	36	81
Heavy guns .	54	24	16	40
	<u>192</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>121</u>

These figures do not include the artillerymen, of whom the Prussians, with their preponderance in guns, must have had the larger number. The Prussians had, in all



arms, about 3000 men more than the Allies, and a great superiority in guns.<sup>1</sup>

The General Orders issued by Frederick before the battle are printed in the 1746 and 1775 editions of the *Histoire de Mon Temps*. In Par. 8 of the 1746 edition we find, 'the cavalry will give no quarter in the heat of the action': the 1775 edition says, 'the cavalry will make no prisoners in the heat of the action.' One may assume that the 1746 edition gives the original order, and that the criticism it evoked, induced Frederick to issue a false version, by which it should appear that the order was merely that the cavalry should not stop in their pursuit, for the sake of making prisoners. The real order was, that they were to give no quarter, which means that they were to kill all, wounded and unwounded, who might fall into their power.

The Saxons were in an advanced position, separated from the Austrian main body. Frederick sent against them a superior force. At 5 A.M. the battle opened with a cavalry combat which ended in a Prussian victory. This was followed by an infantry and artillery attack in overwhelming strength, which soon overcame all resistance. In accordance with Frederick's order no quarter was given. At 7 A.M. the whole Saxon army, with its Austrian supports, was in full retreat, followed by the Prussians.

The Austrians were slow in preparing for battle. It was not till 7 A.M., just as the Saxon defence had collapsed, that the Austrian cavalry came into contact with the Prussian cavalry; after an obstinate struggle of about an hour, the Prussians definitely gained the upper hand. The infantry now became hotly engaged in a fire contest, supported by artillery. The Prussians, as always, proved superior; on both flanks the Austrians, after an hour's fighting, began to give way. In the centre they more than

<sup>1</sup> G. Keibel, *Die Schlacht von Hohenfriedberg*, pp. 111, 123, 141, 151. German General Staff, *Die Kriege Friedrichs des Grossen*, vol. vi. p. 218. Austrian General Staff, *Oesterreichische Erbfolge Krieg*, vol. vii. pp. 438, 454, 462, 478 : Appendix xxxviii.

held their own, for by an error in the Prussian deployment, a large gap, sufficient for two whole battalions, had been left in the Prussian centre, with the result that a brigade, under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, completely exposed on its left to a concentrated Austrian fire, suffered heavily ; the Hacke regiment lost half its total strength, the Bevern regiment over a third. The Baireuth Dragoons had not taken part in the cavalry fight, and stood just behind the gap in the Prussian infantry. Seeing both Austrian flanks in disorder, General von Gessler and the regiment's commander, Colonel Schwerin, led the Baireuth troopers in an impetuous charge through the gap, straight at the Austrian centre. They were met at twenty paces by a salvo of fire, but rode on, and succeeded in breaking up the infantry of the first and second Austrian lines. It was now 8.30 A.M., and the whole Austrian army was in retreat.

The losses in the battle were as follows :—<sup>1</sup>

			Killed.	Wounded.	Prisoners and Missing.	Total.
Prussians	.	.	905	3775	71	<u>4,751</u>
Austrians	.	.	1800	2830	5655	10,285
Saxons	.	.	1320	920	1210	<u>3,450</u>
						<u>13,735</u>

The Allies lost 66 cannons (chiefly regimental guns), 6 howitzers, 76 flags, and 7 standards.

The Prussians lost 7 per cent. of their number, the Austrians 28 per cent., the Saxons 18 per cent. The chief Austrian loss was in prisoners, while the chief Saxon was in killed. The proportion of killed to wounded were, Prussians 1 to 4, Austrians 1 to 1½, Saxons 1½ to 1. These extraordinary Austrian and Saxon figures were the result of Frederick's express order that the cavalry were to give no quarter, and his known desire that small mercy was to be given by any of his soldiers to the Austrians, and

<sup>1</sup> Keibel, pp. 424, 438, 441.

none to the Saxons. It is plain that, in accordance with Frederick's wish and command, many of the Austrian wounded, and a large proportion of the Saxon, were deliberately murdered. Natzmer says: 'Our fellows were beside themselves with joy over the rumoured order to give no pardon to the Saxons.' Stille remarks, 'It was rare to see them given quarter, and the officers had all the difficulty in the world to save some unfortunates. I had that experience myself, at my own risk.'

By attacking Saxons first and Austrians afterwards, Frederick fought two separate battles. The victory would have been easier if he had used a portion of his army twice over. Some of the regiments sent against the Saxons might, when that enemy was in retreat, have been drawn back to join in the fight against the Austrians. The ten battalions which, with a fifty per cent. preponderance in numbers, and supported by cavalry and artillery, were engaged in murdering the Saxon grenadiers, sustained a total loss of only twenty-three men. They were being wasted in such work.

Frederick was so delighted with this victory that he burst out into praise of God. He said to his officers: 'I thank God from my heart for the gift of victory, may He always vouchsafe the same.' And to Valori he said: 'My dear friend, God has taken me specially under His protection, and has afflicted my enemies with blindness.' Valori's comment, in his *Memoirs*, is 'See how they are mistaken who say that he does not believe in God.' But Frederick's Deity was the God of war.

He did nothing to press his advantage. Prince Charles was allowed several days in which to make good an unhurried retreat, and it was not until he was well out of reach that the Prussians followed. Prince Charles reached Königgrätz on the 20th June, and Frederick was not in that neighbourhood until the 28th. Both armies took up strong positions, and remained stationary, watching each other. Thus the victory of Hohenfriedberg, which might have been utilised to end the war, achieved nothing more than the clearance of Silesia from the enemy.



As the days went by without any response being received to Frederick's overtures for peace, it became evident that the Prussians could not maintain their position. The populace was hostile, the Austrian pandours and other light troops almost surrounded the Prussian camp, and made the receipt of supplies precarious. Meanwhile Prince Charles had been reinforced. Having done nothing for two months, Frederick broke up his camp on the 23rd August, and began the retreat towards Silesia.

The Scottish rising under Prince Charles Edward prevented England from taking any further active part in the war, and made the Ministers of George II. more than ever anxious to bring about a peace on the Continent. Frederick's desires were in the same direction. On the 26th August, by the preliminaries of the Convention of Hanover, he abandoned his ally, France, once again. George II. and Frederick II. agreed to restore the *status quo* (including Saxony); they guaranteed each other's possessions; and Frederick promised his vote for the Grand Duke Francis in the coming Imperial election, provided Austria first agreed to these terms of peace. England urged Maria Theresa to join, but she expected to become Empress without the Prussian vote, and would not accept defeat. Her husband Francis was elected Emperor at Frankfort, on the 13th September 1745.

For three months after Hohenfriedberg Prince Charles remained stationary in the neighbourhood of Königgrätz. Explicit orders reached him to advance and attack the Prussians. On the 29th September, accordingly, he marched forward, crossed the Elbe, and reached with his vanguard a strong position on the Grauer Koppe, near Burghersdorf, while the main army lay between that outpost and the village of Soor. The Prussian camp was almost within gunshot. From the Grauer Koppe, Prince Charles commanded Frederick's path of retreat to Silesia through Trautenau; and he was also in a good position for attacking the Prussians on their right flank. The country was hilly and heavily wooded. The Grauer Koppe

afforded the only good point of view. Frederick had not yet discovered his danger.

Prince Charles had 25,700 infantry, 12,700 cavalry, 38,400 in all, against Frederick's 16,000 infantry and 6500 cavalry, a total of 22,500. Conscious of his strength and of his favourable position, it was the intention of Prince Charles, in accordance with the spirit of Maria Theresa's commands, to attack the Prussians early on the morning of the 30th. But a large part of his army, which formed his right flank, had not reached, on the previous evening, a sufficiently advanced position to be able to co-operate instantly with the left on the Grauer Koppe, and the centre in front of Burghersdorf. This would not have deterred an enterprising commander, but Charles's advisers, Generals Lobkowitz and Königsegg, put forward objections. They argued that the enemy was caught in an unfavourable position, and would be forced to retreat, without a battle. The orthodox military opinion of the day regarded a battle accepted as a confession of defeat in the art of manœuvre. In a letter to his brother, of the 27th September, Prince Charles complained, 'I do not find a single one who desires a battle; I say this to you alone, whose good wishes for us I know, but I must confess that this makes me furious.'<sup>1</sup> The result was that the early surprise attack on the Prussian right, which could hardly have failed, was abandoned, and the Austrians waited for the Prussians to break camp and retreat.

Frederick had once more been outmanœuvred. He had not expected Prince Charles to advance, and when he heard that a move had been made he mistook its direction. He remained at Staudentz from the 19th to the 30th September, with a small army, in a weak position, and did not take the necessary precaution of placing a force in possession of the dominating Grauer Koppe. Owing to these grave mistakes he found himself faced by an army of great numerical preponderance, in a strong tactical position, while the only practical road of retreat was under the complete command of the enemy. Much has been

<sup>1</sup> *Austrian General Staff, op. cit.*, vol. vii. p. 579.

written in praise of his decision to attack, as a sign of his remarkable ability. In truth it was not until he became convinced that retreat was impossible, that he gave orders for the attack.<sup>1</sup> That it should have been directed on the Grauer Koppe has also been cited as an example of marvellous perception, although the importance of that position was so obvious that no commander, even of the most ordinary calibre, could have failed to make it the chief point of his attack. The Austrian right being refused owing to its late arrival on the previous evening, Frederick naturally left it unmolested, glad to be rid so cheaply of the Austrian superiority in numbers.

The Austrians had on the Grauer Koppe ten battalions and fifteen grenadier companies of infantry, five regiments of cuirassiers and dragoons, and fifteen companies of mounted grenadiers and carabineers. These troops were crowded on a narrow space, where they could not manœuvre. They were supported below the Grauer Koppe on their right by the Saxon contingent of some 5000 men, and by the Austrian centre, of infantry in two lines, with a battery of heavy guns in front. The infantry of the Austrian right, with cavalry on the extreme flank, took no part in the early, and important, stages of the battle, and had suffered few casualties when the fighting ceased.

It was not until 5 A.M. that the presence of the Austrians was discovered, and some further time elapsed before Frederick became aware of his desperate situation. Then the order was given to attack the Grauer Koppe. Soon after 8 A.M. the Prussian cavalry attacked the Austrian mounted grenadiers and carabineers on the lower slopes. The Austrians, demoralised by their Hohenfriedberg experience, gave way; in their flight they carried confusion into the ranks of the cuirassiers and dragoons, who were then easily broken, and this mass of cavalry, twenty-seven squadrons, took no further part in the battle.

The Prussian infantry then attacked, but they were met by a fire of artillery and infantry which broke their first attempt, with heavy loss, and five regimental guns

<sup>1</sup> *Austrian General Staff*, vol. vii. p. 597.



were left in the hands of the enemy. If Prince Charles had utilised some of his large supply of fresh regiments to press at once upon the shattered Prussian ranks, the battle was won, but the difficulties of the ground, with the small space for manœuvring, were obstacles that he did not attempt to overcome. It was easier for Frederick to reinforce his right, with five battalions. The victorious Austrian infantry followed their retiring foes until they stood in front of their own guns, which had to desist from firing. The Austrian artillery being thus out of action, the fresh Prussian regiments advanced to the attack. They succeeded, after desperate fighting, in driving the Austrians before them, until the whole hill was cleared and in their possession.

In the centre, where the Austrians had more elbow room, the result was for some time in doubt. Finally, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick in person led the Guard to the attack, and the Austrians were driven back at 11 A.M. By 1 P.M. they had retired altogether from the field of battle. In the evening they reached the Elbe again, at Königinhof and Jaromer.

The losses were :

	Killed.	Wounded.	Prisoners and Missing.	Total.
Austrian . . .	801	2,774	3,102	6,677
Saxon . . .	281	475		756
Prussian . . .	886	2,721	304	3,911

Before the battle Frederick again gave orders that no quarter was to be given to the Saxons. The result is seen in the large proportion of Saxon killed to wounded, and the absence of Saxon prisoners.

The battle of Soor was another triumph for the Prussian soldier, who had established a great moral ascendancy over his enemy. Frederick had placed his army in a position so desperate, that nothing but a desperate remedy was left. In the *Histoire de Mon Temps*, he says (iii. p. 141), 'The fortune of Prussia consisted in the valour of her troops which repaired the faults of their chief, and

punished the enemy for theirs.' In his *General Principles of War*, he says, 'I should have deserved to be beaten at Soor, if the ability of my General and the bravery of my troops had not preserved me from such misfortune.' The General was Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, who commanded in the centre, and had more influence than the King upon the fate of the day.

Frederick did not follow up his victory. He supposed that it would suffice to force Maria Theresa to agree to terms of peace, and when, on the 9th October, he received the English ratification of the Treaty of Hanover, he regarded the war as over. He withdrew into Silesia, quartered his troops in Landshut and Rohnstock, and on the 30th October left for Berlin, fully assured that, with England's support, the peace he so ardently desired would be obtained.

### 3. THE PEACE OF DRESDEN

On the 8th November 1745, Frederick learned that an ambitious scheme for a combined offensive had been arranged between Saxons and Austrians. Instead of retiring into winter quarters, Prince Charles was to advance by way of Görlitz into Saxony, where he would be joined by a Saxon army for an attack upon Frederick's own dominions, their objective Berlin itself. This news brought the King almost to the verge of despair. 'This is not living,' he wrote to Podewils, 'but dying a thousand times every day, thus spending one's life in anxieties and in a crisis that has lasted eighteen months.' It was very distressing that his rupture of the Treaty of Breslau, and his unprovoked attack upon Maria Theresa, should have been so long resisted.

He was in great anxiety about finance, his resources being virtually at an end. He tried to obtain a loan from England, without success, and even stooped to apply to France, his deserted ally. He was, as usual, busy making excuses for his treachery. On the 15th November 1745, he wrote to Louis xv., that the Convention of Hanover

(by which he had deserted his ally and made peace with England) was really, if understood aright, designed for the advantage of France, conducing to a satisfactory peace between France and England. The letter contained the usual complaints that France was doing nothing while he was fighting solely on behalf of France, to which were added the customary half-veiled threats of joining France's enemies, followed by appeals for French assistance, to which no response was given.

It was the policy of Russia to support Saxony-Poland against Prussia. A Russian army of 60,000 men had been moved into Courland, threatening East Prussia. The Russian Ambassador at Berlin delivered to Podewils a note which stated that Russia would come to the assistance of Augustus of Saxony-Poland, if he was attacked in his Saxon dominions. It seemed to Frederick that the plan by which the Austrians were to join Saxons in Saxony for an advance into Brandenburg, had been designed with the object of embroiling Prussia with Russia. He gave an evasive reply to the Russian note. He even pretended that he could not understand it because it was in the German language. He wrote to Podewils : ' That is very well, as far as I can understand it ; but the German is so unintelligible to me that it is impossible for me to adjudicate.'

On the 16th November he left Berlin to join his army in Silesia. He gave old Prince Leopold the command of an army at Halle, with strict orders that as soon as he heard of any Austrian advance into Lusatia, which would establish the concerted plan of Austrians and Saxons, he was to ' fall upon the neck ' of the latter. He himself would not be implicated in any attack upon the Saxons if he could avoid it. If challenged by Russia he would throw the blame upon his subordinate.

Prince Charles and his staff, and the whole Austrian army, were so disheartened by their successive defeats that they were most unwilling to risk another battle ; but peremptory orders arrived from Vienna for an advance upon Dresden, to obtain touch with the main Saxon army.



Prince Charles moved forward with his thoroughly cowed army, and arrived in the neighbourhood of Pirna, one day's march south-east from Dresden, on the evening of the 12th December. About five miles north-west of Dresden was the Saxon army of 32,000 to 35,000 men, under Rutowski. It was so strongly posted that Rutowski assumed he would not be attacked. About a mile and a half beyond his right flank was an Austrian corps under Grünne, consisting of 5 battalions of infantry, with 1000 Croats, and 20 heavy guns. Rutowski declined the support of this detachment, the relations between the allies being disturbed by jealousies and mutual reproaches. Prince Leopold, with 30,000 men, was advancing; he had the most peremptory orders from Frederick to attack the Saxons at all costs, and to persist until he had driven them from their formidable position.

On the 13th, at 4 A.M., Prince Charles rode into Dresden in order to consult his Saxon colleagues, who suggested that he should bring his army into Dresden that day, but he preferred to give his men a day's rest. They marched into Dresden early on the 14th, while Prince Leopold advanced on the same day to within striking distance of the Saxons; on the 15th he would attack them. At 3 A.M. of the 15th Prince Charles received warning from Rutowski that Prince Leopold appeared to intend an attack upon him; at 7.30 came the definite news that an attack was certain. His distance from Rutowski was not more than six miles; but he had no wish for any more fighting; he gave the order to advance, but welcomed every pretext for delay. When Rutowski, finding himself hard pressed, begged for assistance, Prince Charles replied that his troops could not reach the battlefield until 5 P.M.; by that time it would be dark.

The Saxons were vigorously attacked by Prince Leopold, and after an obstinate contest, were defeated. The Austrian detachment under Grünne, within easy reach of the battlefield, made no move to assist their allies. The Prussians lost in killed and wounded 5000 men, while the Saxon casualties were only 3800, but the beaten army

shed a number of prisoners. The old Dessauer, whose experience of war had been with Marlborough and Eugène, did not follow his King in ordering a massacre of defenceless prisoners.

Dresden capitulated, and was entered by Frederick on the 18th December. In spite of his victories Frederick's situation was uncomfortable. He was at the end of his resources in money ; he could hope for no support from France, the ally whom he had deserted ; a fresh Austrian force under Traun threatened hostilities, and the army under Prince Charles was still in the field. More serious still was the threatening aspect of Russia. He had nothing to gain by continuing the war, which he was no longer in a position to sustain without serious drain upon his country. Austria was in better case, but the army was discouraged by its series of defeats, and Flanders was in the hands of the French. England could not tolerate a French conquest of the coast on the North Sea, and George II. feared a French advance upon Hanover. England pressed Maria Theresa to make peace with Prussia, and so release her troops for the defence of Flanders. The Empress finally gave way, placing the responsibility upon the English influence ; and consoling herself with the reflection that she could now hope for gains from France, or in Italy, which might counterbalance her loss of Silesia. By the Treaty of Dresden, 25th December 1745, Saxony paid Prussia a small indemnity, Austria ceded Silesia, and Prussia formally recognised the Emperor Francis.

For Prussia this was the end of the war. Frederick returned to Berlin, which he reached on the 28th December. He was received with delight by his subjects, who already began to give him the appellation of Frederick the Great. The title was not yet accorded in other lands, save by Voltaire in one of his letters of flattery. Frederick had captured Silesia, but of greatness in ability he had given no evidence.

## CHAPTER IX

### SANS SOUCI AND VOLTAIRE

COMPARED to Vienna, Paris, or London, Berlin was a village, and there was nothing attractive in its situation on the banks of the small river Spree, in the midst of a plain of sand. In the centre of the town, on the island of Coelln, stood the Schloss, the official residence of the Elector and King. The Great Elector built another Schloss, originally not much better than a large farmhouse, at Potsdam, sixteen miles from Berlin. Potsdam, with its hills and woods and lakes, an oasis in the sand, was the favourite abode of the Hohenzollern princes. It was there that Frederick William I. kept his giants, and made them march up and down in front of the Schloss. He laid out a garden; in his practical spirit, contemptuous of beauty, he used it for the growth of fruit and vegetables, and yet, with the instincts of a *parvenu*, he called it Marly, after the famous garden of Louis XIV.

His son Frederick, though equally desirous of emulating the French King, had artistic tastes; he planned a large ornamental garden, which ultimately grew to a mile in length. It was designed in the rococo style of the day, the acme of all that is unnatural in gardening. There were trees trained in the shapes of men, beasts, sausages; there were fountains and busts, statues in niches of laurel or bay, artificial Roman ruins, a Neptune grotto, and a marble colonnade.

On a slope leading up from the garden Frederick constructed terraces in the vineyard formation. When finished there were six terraces, each ten feet high, planted with vines, peaches and apricots, under glass. Above the terraces he built a single-story house. He spoke of this property as his 'vigne,' or vineyard, and he christened



it Sans Souci; the name may have been suggested by the title of his Rheinsberg acquaintance Manteuffel, who was 'Juncker von Kummerfrei'—Squire of Carefree. The house was commenced in 1744, and occupied for the first time on the 19th May 1747. The inner decorations were not finished until 1748.

The chief attraction of Sans Souci is the situation; French windows open on to a large space above the terraces, whence there are delightful views of the gardens stretching out below. In a niche among laurels on the east, there is a prone figure of Flora, with Cupids. Frederick declared that he desired to be buried at that spot.

He rose very early; in the summer at five. He was attended only by his valet, who dressed him in the uniform of the 1st Battalion Life Guards. In his youth Frederick had devoted much attention to his appearance, which he wished to be elegant and rich, in the French fashion. The campaigning of the Silesian Wars put an end to foppery, and he became as indifferent as he had been particular. His uniform he wore till it was almost threadbare: a blue coat with red facings, silver buttons and epaulette, and the star of the Order of the Black Eagle; leather breeches; high boots which by express order were never blacked, and carried no spurs; a cocked hat with ostrich feather, but no lace. It was often worn indoors. On the left hand were two rings, each holding one diamond, on the right was a ring containing a Silesian chrysoprase. The garments were habitually spattered with snuff. In his later years Frederick gave up shaving, and merely clipped at his beard with scissors. He was not cleanly or nice in his personal habits. He seldom washed any part of his person, not even the hands and face. One of his valets concluded from his master's dislike of water, that he was afflicted with a kind of hydrophobia. In this peculiarity he was very different from his father, who used soap and water freely himself, and complained of his eldest son's dirtiness. The health of Frederick was good, on the whole, though he suffered from attacks of gout and fits of ague.

His height has been variously stated, the extreme ranges being 5 ft. 4 and 5 ft. 7½. Schöning, a valet, said he was 5 ft. 5-6 inches. He was neither thin nor fat, and was well proportioned. He carried his head a little to the left side. The gait was negligent but at the same time proud, and rapid. The nose was long and well shaped, the lips thin, the chin firm and roundish, the jaws prominent, the forehead receding. The eyes were a grey blue. A curious example of the inaccuracy of observers of eye colour is furnished by an elaborate description of Frederick's person, written in 1741, by Baron von Schichelt, in which it is asserted that Frederick's eyes were 'more black than brown.' The eyes were said to be large and piercing, but that also is disputed; the portraits certainly exaggerated the eyes. The face was tanned to a leathery tint; seldom washed, it was sometimes touched up with red paint. The voice was pleasant, liquid, clear and strong; gesticulation was used to emphasise remarks.

Frederick gave from one to two hours early in the day to the affairs of his Kingdom. Reports were brought to him from the heads of the departments of State, and he dictated, or wrote notes for, the orders to be sent; he kept three secretaries at work. Later in the day he signed the orders. The heads of the departments were seldom admitted into his presence. The practical result was, that in the civil administration of the Kingdom the heads of offices were left without control, save for the occasional inroads of an imperfectly informed despot. Frederick made no changes of importance in the organisation of the Civil Service, which remained as Frederick William I. had reformed it, until the year 1806. He obtained credit for many things which he inherited from his father.

When the King had dealt with his morning correspondence, he reviewed his Guards, a duty carefully and punctiliously performed. Then came dinner, a somewhat formal meal, at which the Princes and commanders, and sometimes high civilian functionaries were present. The afternoon was usually devoted to the writing of French verse

or French prose. At seven there was music. By daily practice Frederick became a very capable player of the flute. In the evening he sat down to a convivial supper among chosen companions. No ladies and no priests entered Sans Souci. It was a monastery, without religion. Frederick despised women and disliked men. His feelings were expressed afterwards by Schopenhauer, in the remark, 'The more I know men the more I like dogs.' The two Prussians derived their experience from their own countrymen. Frederick was devoted to his greyhounds, who were the recipients of a solicitude and affection which he bestowed upon no other living creatures. He declared that he wished to be buried with his dogs.

The King imported from France the chief members of his Court. Maupertuis came from St. Malo. A man of scientific pretensions, he had made a journey to Arctic regions in order to establish by actual measurements the flattening of the earth at the Pole. He was made President for life of the Berlin Academy of Sciences. His position was to be that of a 'Pope of the Academy,' or a Commander-in-Chief, whom all Generals and Princes must obey—a characteristic Prussian conception of the dragooning of the intellect. Another Frenchman was the Marquis d'Argens, from Provence; he had written books which people had read, the *Lettres juives*, and *Philosophie du bon sens*. Darget was the King's French reader and secretary, a position which he was glad to resign, returning to Paris in 1752. La Mettrie, like Maupertuis, from St. Malo, had obtained a doctor's degree at Rheims. He was the author of several medical works, of which the best known was *L'homme machine*. Chasot had been one of the Rheinsberg circle. Besides these Frenchmen there was a Venetian, Algarotti, author of *Il Newtonianismo per le donne*; he was a man of the world, well-mannered and agreeable. The brothers Keith were Scotch Jacobites, who had been driven out of their country. The elder, George, had been the Earl Marshal of Scotland; Frederick sent him in August 1757 to Paris as his Ambassador. The younger, James, had been in the Russian service,



and was now a Major-General in the Prussian army. Lord Tyrconnel, an Irish Jacobite, now the French Ambassador at Berlin, was often a guest at Frederick's table. There were two Germans, Baron Pöllnitz, the needy adventurer of the Rheinsberg circle, and Fredersdorff, the personal attendant, who ultimately acquired a position of power, one of the few men whose influence with the King was worth having.

These men were not quite the nonentities that they have been described. They had some acquirements, and were capable of conducting a conversation on serious questions. They were religious sceptics. They had much to put up with at the hands of their employer. Frederick enjoyed giving pain. When he had discovered a man's weakness he played upon it with relish. Darget, Chasot, and Algarotti left him, glad to escape from his malicious pleasantries. La Mettrie died. D'Argens and Pöllnitz remained because they could not afford to go. A typical specimen of Frederick's handling of those of his circle who could neither complain nor depart, was exhibited when he gave D'Argens a house at Potsdam, and adorned the walls with indecent pictures relating to humiliating incidents in the Frenchman's life. D'Argens, though a religious sceptic, was superstitious; Frederick therefore spilt salt at his place at table, and invited him to the thirteenth seat, on a Friday. D'Argens feared death; Frederick, hearing that his victim was unwell, went to his room disguised as a priest, taking with him the sacred vessels stolen from the church, and accompanied by acolytes, and gave him extreme unction. All who could afford to do so avoided personal attendance upon a despot who delighted in humiliating his hired companions. The Potsdam garrison suffered terrible boredom. The officers complained that almost their sole occupation consisted in conjugating the verb *ennuyer*. The King perceived that his service was unpopular. Every request for a holiday he looked upon as an excuse for escape. Thus he was in the condition of a man with money, chronically on the look out for the purchase of a slave. When it was a woman

he desired, he carried out a Sabine rape. His soldiers seized at Venice, and abducted to Berlin, a famous dancer, Barberina Campanini, whom Frederick installed, at a very high salary, at the Berlin Opera House. When it was a man flattery and promises were used, and persisted in. After prolonged wooing in this manner Frederick at last captured a very great man. In the summer of 1750 the circle at Sans Souci was joined by Voltaire.

King and poet had already met four times. The first meeting, in September 1740, has already been related. The second occurred soon after the death of the Emperor Charles VI. Voltaire had an informal commission from Cardinal Fleury to try and discover Frederick's intentions. He was received at Rheinsberg on the 20th November 1740, and remained there six days, but Frederick kept the conversation away from political questions. He pretended to be so keenly desirous of making the most of his opportunity for discussions upon literature and philosophy, that he could not spare any of the precious minutes for talk on public affairs. Voltaire's persistent efforts to obtain information finally became disagreeable, and he was not encouraged to prolong his stay. He expected his expenses to be paid. When his visitor had gone Frederick wrote to Jordan, on the 28th November, 'Thy miser shall drink to the lees of his insatiable desire to enrich himself. His appearance for six days will cost me 550 crowns a day. That is paying high for a fool ; never had any Court fool such wages.'

Voltaire's feeling of failure is shown in the lines he sent to Frederick, on the 2nd December :—

' Non, malgré vos vertus, non, malgré vos appas,  
 Mon âme n'est point satisfaite ;  
 Non, vous n'êtes qu'une coquette,  
 Qui subjuguiez les cœurs, et ne vous donnez pas.'

Frederick replied :—

' Mon âme sent le prix de vos divins appas ;  
 Mais ne présumez pas qu'elle soit satisfaite,  
 Traître, vous me quittez pour suivre une coquette ;  
 Moi, je ne vous quitterai pas.'

The coquette here is Madame du Châtelet, with whom Voltaire was living. This unsatisfactory visit left a soreness on both sides.

The next meeting was at Aix-la-Chapelle in September 1742. Voltaire again had a commission from Fleury, to inquire into the intentions of the King, who had just perpetrated one of his betrayals of an ally, by his treaty with Austria. Frederick desired to propitiate France, and was polite and effusive to Voltaire. He repeated the invitation he had already several times given, that Voltaire should make a permanent stay at Berlin, but Madame du Châtelet was not included, and Voltaire would not go without her.

In the autumn of 1743 Voltaire went once more to Berlin as an unofficial negotiator. His mission was, as on the previous visit, to induce Frederick to return to the alliance with France against Austria. A new treaty was indeed signed in June of the following year, but Frederick wrote in the *Histoire de Mon Temps*, that Voltaire's negotiations had been a mere pleasantry.

Frederick on this occasion played a mean trick on the man whom he wished to capture for his Court. Voltaire had written some verses in which he cast ridicule on the Bishop of Mirepoix, a member of the French Government; he had sent them to Frederick. The King took advantage of Voltaire's confidence in order to betray him. He wrote to Rothenburg at Paris, on the 17th August: 'Here is part of a letter from Voltaire, which I beg you to get shown to the Bishop of Mirepoix by a secret channel, so that neither you nor I appear in the affair. My intention is to embroil Voltaire so effectively in France that he will have no alternative but to come to me.' He repeated the statement in a letter of 27th August: 'I desire to embroil him for ever with France; that will be the means of having him at Berlin.' The scheme was as foolish as it was treacherous, for the French Government could not afford to make an enemy of Voltaire while he was in Berlin on Government business. Mirepoix revealed to Voltaire the King's trickery. Voltaire wrote to a friend, on



the 5th October : ' I have always refused to live at the Prussian Court. Unable to win me in any other way the King thinks he can get hold of me by ruining me in France ; but I swear to you that I would rather live in a Swiss village than enjoy at that price the dangerous favour of a King who is capable of imparting treason even into friendship.' Frederick learned of Voltaire's indignation. He wrote to Rothenburg, 14th October : ' Voltaire has discovered, I know not how, the little treason we practised upon him, and he is extremely offended ; he will recover, I hope.' He offered Voltaire a house and ample provision for all needs. Voltaire had been gratified at his flattering reception by the King, the Queen-Mother, and the Royal Princes and Princesses. He was tempted, but finally declined to desert Madame du Châtelet.

To Princess Ulrica, afterwards Queen of Sweden, he sent a few lines, which deserve to be reprinted once more :—

'Souvent un peu de vérité  
Se mêle au plus grossier mensonge.  
Cette nuit, dans l'erreur d'un songe,  
Au rang des rois j'étais monté ;  
Je vous aimais, princesse, et j'osais vous le dire,  
Les dieux à mon réveil ne m'ont pas tout ôté ;  
Je n'ai perdu que mon empire.'

In reply Voltaire received verses of poor quality, composed by Frederick on behalf of his sister. The King did not conceal his annoyance at the audacity of Voltaire in dreaming of love for a Prussian Princess.

Frederick became more and more impatient to *posséder* Voltaire. He wrote to him on 10th June 1749 : ' Listen, I am mad to see you ; it would be treason not to lend yourself to satisfy this phantasy.' . . . ' You will do what pleases you ; but I shall not be duped, I shall see clearly whether you do seriously love me, or whether all that you say is nothing but a verbiage of tragedy.' But Voltaire was not duped either ; he knew that Frederick really desired to have him at Berlin, but he knew also that the King was in the habit of slandering his courtiers behind their backs, while professing to them his most sincere

admiration. Voltaire showed to friends two extracts from Frederick's writings, one praising Crébillon for his *Catilina*, the other finding fault with the merits he had just praised. When Frederick learned that Voltaire had committed this unfriendly act, he wrote to Algarotti, 12th September 1749: 'Voltaire has just done an unworthy thing. It is a great pity that a soul so base should be united to a genius so fine. He has the pretty tricks, and the maliciousness of a monkey. I will tell you about it when I see you; in the meantime I will say nothing, as I have need of him for the study of French expression. One may learn good things from a criminal. I desire to learn his French; what need I care about his morality?'

Just at this time Madame du Châtelet died, on the 10th September 1749. The obstacle being removed, Frederick renewed his solicitations, and Voltaire at last promised to go to Berlin in the following summer. Before setting out he made it clear to the King that he expected ample financial recompense for his service. He put the expense of the journey at four thousand rix dollars, an exorbitant sum; he remarked that he was well off—not a suppliant—but, in short, he would not move until he had the money. Frederick, though taken aback at this cool demand, sent the amount, with the remark that he considered he was making a good bargain. Not until he had received a bill of exchange which would enable him to travel in grand style, and if necessary to return, did Voltaire begin the journey.

He had been preceded by a young French poet, Baculard d'Arnaud, who had also received an invitation from Frederick. The King wrote to d'Arnaud certain complimentary verses in which he said that the young man would soon equal Voltaire, who was in his decadence—

‘Déjà l'Apollon de la France  
S'achemine à sa decadence.’

These lines were shown to Voltaire. He wrote to the King an indignant letter, in verse, in which he complained

that he was being scratched with one hand, and caressed with the other.

‘Grand homme, est-il donc bien honnête  
De dépouiller mes cheveux blancs  
De quelques feuilles négligées,  
Que déjà l’Envie et le Temps  
Ont, de leurs détestables dents,  
Sur ma tête à demi rongées.

‘Quel diable de Marc-Antonin !  
Et quelle malice est la vôtre !  
Vous égratignez d’une main,  
Lorsque vous caressez de l’autre.’

These preliminary clouds seemed to have passed away when, on the 10th July 1750, Voltaire arrived, and was graciously received by the King, at Potsdam. He was made a Chamberlain to the King, with a salary of £800 a year, a house and a table, and given the Order of Merit. A few weeks after his arrival a magnificent fête took place at Berlin, Charlottenburg and Potsdam, on the three days, 25th, 26th, and 27th August, in imitation of the Carrousel of Louis XIV. Voltaire’s reception by the King and Royal family, and by the public, was flattering, and gave him great satisfaction.

It seemed that there was to be a mutual gain. Frederick had at his Court the greatest writer of the day, who had come to teach him the secrets of his genius, and whose presence testified the liberal tolerance of the King, the protection he gave to artists who were persecuted by less enlightened princes. Voltaire had a safe refuge, the intimate society of a King, ‘which is always a great seduction,’ he admitted, ‘such is the weakness of human nature’; and he would be in a position to save money. But if either of the two men expected a prolonged association—which may be doubted—there was no ground for such a hope. Voltaire, at least, in his letters to his friends in France, spoke only of a temporary visit. His niece Madame Denis had warned him before he went that ‘the King of Prussia would worry him to death’; and she



wrote afterwards, 'My uncle is not suited to live with Kings, his character is too hasty, too indiscreet, too self-willed.' Buffon, the naturalist, foresaw another danger. He wrote to a friend, 'Between ourselves, I think the presence of Voltaire will be less pleasing to Maupertuis than to any other ; these two men are not suited to remain together in the same room.'

At first Voltaire was delighted with everything. He enjoyed the suppers at Sans Souci. 'The suppers,' he wrote in his *Memoirs*, 'were very agreeable. I do not know if I am mistaken, it seems to me that there was much wit ; the King had it and made others have it.' He had never felt so much at ease in any society. The King was one who enjoyed the things of the spirit, whose presence raised the tone of conversation. Much freedom was allowed, even encouraged ; all subjects were broached ; nothing was sacred ; there was complete liberty to speak, entire toleration, and a genuine desire for discussion, for intelligent examination of all possible conceptions, though the talk was always of a sceptical nature.

It was not long, however, before Voltaire became disturbed by Frederick's insincerities, and his malicious provocations. 'The suppers of the King are delicious,' he wrote on the 6th November to Madame Denis, 'our talk has sense, and wit, and we discuss science ; liberty reigns ; he is the soul of it all ; no ill-humour, no clouds, at least no tempests. My time is free and occupied ; but, but.' . . . So the letter went on, concluding each expression of satisfaction with 'but.' . . . On the 17th November 1750, he explained one of the buts. 'I have seen a letter, touching, pathetic, even quite Christian, which the King deigned to write to Darget upon the death of his wife. I have learned that on the same day His Majesty wrote an epigram against the deceased ; that gives something to think about. We are here three or four strangers in an abbey. Let us hope that the father abbot contents himself with mocking us. And there is here a sufficient dose "*di questa rabbia detta gelosia*"' (of that madness called jealousy). All Kings, he said, were coquettes,

and this King was so in an especial degree. Frederick enjoyed his power to arouse jealousy among his followers.

Soon after his arrival Voltaire complained to Frederick of the presence of d'Arnaud, who gave himself insufferable airs. Frederick dismissed the young man, but he was not pleased that Voltaire should have interfered with his choice of his companions. There was friction also over an election to the Academy of Science. The Abbé Raynal was elected through Voltaire's influence, against the candidate put forward by the President. It was a victory which increased the enmity of Maupertuis and strained the friendship of Frederick. An explosion came when Voltaire engaged in dubious business transactions with one Hirsch, a Jew.

The affair had its origin in a clause in the Treaty of Dresden, 25th December 1745, whereby Saxon bank notes if presented by Prussians were to be accepted by the Saxon Government at their face value, although they had depreciated by about one-third in the open market. The clause was intended to apply only to such notes as were at that time in Prussian hands. Frederick took advantage of an ambiguity in the wording, to assert that all notes which might at any time thereafter come into the possession of a Prussian were to be bought by Saxony at their face value. This characteristic trickery led to an extensive traffic in the notes, which were bought in Saxony at their depreciated value, transferred into Prussian hands, and then presented for full payment. Saxony made repeated protests, but it was only after three years, when large profits had been made by his subjects at the cost of the Saxon exchequer, that Frederick at last issued an order, forbidding the importation of the notes. An honest man would have made the traffic impossible by abrogating the right which had so long been abused, but Frederick desired only to silence the complaints. He knew that the notes would be smuggled in, to the advantage of his subjects.

Ever on the look out for a profitable speculation, Voltaire authorised Hirsch to go to Dresden, buy Saxon

notes for two-thirds of their face value, bring them across the border, and then take them back for the payment in full. He declared afterwards that he had at first been ignorant of Frederick's order, and that as soon as it was brought to his knowledge, he withdrew the authority from Hirsch. However that may be—he was capable of falsehood in such a matter—the transaction was not pursued. Unpleasant rumours circulated with regard to the King's Chamberlain. To put himself right Voltaire brought an action against Hirsch with regard to a transaction in certain diamonds, which he alleged that Hirsch had over-valued. He won his case, but in the course of it, suspicion was aroused with regard to a document which Hirsch asserted that Voltaire had altered, after it had been signed. There is no way of substantiating such a statement; the document contained alterations, but it could not be proved that they were made after signature.

The whole affair was unsavoury and discreditable, and Frederick had every right to be angry. Besides the disgrace it brought upon his Court, there was the exposure to the world of his baseness towards Saxony, his trickery with regard to the treaty agreement concerning Saxon notes in the hands of Prussian subjects. He wrote to his sister Wilhelmina: 'It is the affair of a rogue who tried to steal from a pickpocket.' To Voltaire he wrote: 'I was glad to receive you in my house; I esteemed your mind, your talent, your attainments; and I had a right to believe that a man of your age' (Voltaire was fifty-four) 'weary of duelling with authors, and of being exposed to tempests, came here to find refuge in a tranquil port.' . . . 'You have had a most villainous business with a Jew. You have kicked up a terrible row in the whole town. The affair of the Saxon notes is so well known in Saxony that they sent me grievous complaints. For my part I kept the peace in my household until your arrival; and I warn you that if you have a passion for intrigue and cabal you have come to the wrong quarter. I like people who are gentle and peaceable, who do not put into their conduct the violent passions of tragedy. If you can bring your-



self to live philosophically, I shall be glad to see you ; but if you abandon yourself to every gust of passion, and desire to quarrel with everybody, you will do me no favour by coming here' (to Potsdam), 'and you may as well remain at Berlin.' Voltaire wrote humble letters. 'Sire, when all is soberly considered, I committed a grave fault in having a lawsuit with a Jew, and I ask pardon of Y.M., of your philosophy and your goodness.' He received his pardon, and was given a villa to reside in at Potsdam for the summer.

Voltaire spent one to two hours every day with the King, correcting his French work, in verse and prose ; he finished at Potsdam his *Siècle de Louis XIV.* : he wrote articles for the *Philosophical Dictionary*. At the King's request, he wrote a poem on 'natural religion,' in which he spoke of the innate consciousness of a difference between right and wrong, and expressed his conviction that God had not created him in order to torture him after death. Frederick disputed the sufficiency of our sense of right and wrong. Voltaire replied, with his customary flattery : 'It is difficult to define virtue, but you make its existence felt. You have it, therefore it exists ; now, you do not derive it from religion—therefore you have it from nature, just as you obtain from her your rare mind, which suffices for all things, and before which my soul prostrates itself.' Sometimes he allowed himself a half-hidden sneer. 'Sire, how do you manage it ? I have been patching up one hundred and fifty verses for the last week, in *Rome sauvée*, while Y.M. has perhaps produced four or five hundred.' The difference between quality and quantity is hinted at.

In the autumn of 1751 an incident occurred which made a painful impression upon Voltaire. La Mettrie told him that the King said to him, in reference to the jealousy aroused by the favours extended to Voltaire : 'I shall have need of him for another year at most ; when the orange has been squeezed the skin is thrown away.' Writing to Madame Denis, 2nd September 1751, Voltaire reported this speech. He observed that the King had written verses addressed to the painter, Pesne, beginning,

‘Dear Pesne, your pencil places you among the gods,’ but that he had in fact a poor opinion of Pesne. ‘It may be the same with me. Perhaps in all that he writes his mind directs, but his heart is not affected. Perhaps all these letters, in which he poured upon me such warm and touching appreciation, meant nothing at all.’ Not long afterwards, on receiving some of Frederick’s verses to correct, Voltaire exclaimed: ‘How much longer must I go on washing his dirty linen?’ This remark was carried by Maupertuis to the King. One would have expected that the supper parties would thenceforth have become constrained, indeed intolerable to both parties; that they did not is evidence of the artificiality of their relations from the first; it cost little effort to keep up civilities which had never meant much.

From this time Voltaire began to think of leaving, but he did not make up his mind until the summer of 1752. Then he wrote to Madame Denis, on the 24th July, that the King had opened all the letters that passed between them, so that every petulant phrase had become known. ‘I am quietly setting my affairs in order,’ he concluded. He had first to place his funds in security, and then to obtain a release from the King.

On the question of finance he wrote to Madame Denis, 9th September 1752: ‘I begin, my dear child, to feel that I have one foot outside of the castle of Alcina. I am placing in the hands of the Duke of Würtemberg the funds which I had sent for to Berlin; he will give us an annuity on our two lives. We have a first mortgage, and we shall not be paid with a *for such is our good pleasure*. The sad thing about this good stroke of business is that I cannot settle it for some months.’ . . . ‘You may count upon the solidity of this affair, and upon my departure. I shall make sail from the isle of Calypso as soon as my cargo is ready.’

Feeling safe with regard to his finances, Voltaire embarked upon an adventure on behalf of truth. He made a fierce attack upon the President of the Berlin Academy, and incidentally upon the King, for their action in suppress-

ing an honest expression of opinion upon a matter of scientific speculation.

The librarian to the Princess of Orange in Holland was a young Swiss, named Koenig, a member of the Berlin Academy, whom Voltaire had known at Cirey as the mathematical tutor to Madame du Châtelet. Koenig wrote a mild criticism of the great discovery of Maupertuis, known as 'the principle of least action,' in nature. He showed the essay to Maupertuis, who saw nothing objectionable in it, and agreed that it should be forwarded for publication in the *Leipzige Acta Eruditorum*, where it appeared in March 1751. On reading it in print Maupertuis found, what apparently he had not before noticed, that Koenig quoted from a letter written by Leibnitz to the mathematician Jacob Hermann, in which he had stated the principle of which Maupertuis declared himself the first discoverer, and had corrected or qualified it. Maupertuis had taken to habits of intemperance, and was in a chronically inflamed condition. He became furious; he wrote to Koenig demanding particulars with regard to the Leibnitz letter. Koenig replied that his authority was a copy given him by one Henzy, of Berne, now deceased. Maupertuis induced the King to instruct his agent in Switzerland to make search among what remained of Henzy's papers; with the result that no copy of the Leibnitz letter was found. Then the President, Frederick's 'Pope of the Academy,' obtained from the members, at a sitting of the 13th April 1752, a declaration that Koenig had been guilty of forgery. This inexcusable act of injustice and tyranny would never have been perpetrated but for the support of the philosopher King, who posed as a searcher for truth in any and all shapes, as a supporter of freedom of thought against the persecutions of bigots and inquisitors. When his own position was attacked, through the President of his Academy, he was as ruthless a suppressor of truth as any monarch of his day. He had abolished the perpetrating of torture in his dominions, save only for the crime for which there could be no mercy—*lèse-majesté*. A man might express any opinion on any



subject, and abuse any established institution in any country, provided he did not attack the opinions and the institutions of the Hohenzollerns. Ignorance and falsehood were to be forced upon the world, by torture if necessary, for the sake of the Prussian dynasty.

Koenig defended himself in an 'Appeal to the Public,' moderate, straightforward, and convincing, in which he showed, beyond possibility of question, that the words he quoted had really been written by Leibnitz; he added that, having submitted his essay to Maupertuis, he had never imagined that the President would take umbrage at it. On reading the appeal Voltaire perceived at once that a wrong had been done, and he determined to protest. It was an affair which aroused his best spirit. His greatest work was that of fighting against the suppression of opinion. His influence in freeing the human mind from the dungeon and chains of despotic tyranny, has been enormous. One of his first battles was with the Prussian dragon, Frederick the Great. He wrote a letter which he called, 'Reply of an Academician of Berlin to an Academician of Paris,' dated 18th September 1752. It begins: 'Mr. Moreau de Maupertuis, in a treatise entitled *Essai de Cosmologie*, asserted that the only proof of the existence of God is AR+nRB, which should be a *minimum*.' After stating the facts of the Koenig case, and observing that Maupertuis had written to the Princess of Orange to prejudice her against her librarian, he proceeded: 'So Mr. Moreau de Maupertuis has been convicted, in the face of the savants of Europe, not only of plagiarism and of error, but of having abused his position to deprive men of letters of their liberty, and to persecute an honest man whose only crime was that his opinion did not agree with his. Several members of the Berlin Academy have protested against conduct so abominable, and would leave the Academy which Mr. Maupertuis dominates and dishonours if they did not fear to displease the King who is its protector.'

This brought a reply from Frederick. He called it, in imitation of Voltaire, *Letter of an Academician of Berlin to*

*an Academician of Paris.* The pamphlet was marked on the title-page with the Prussian eagle, crown and sceptre. It was the official reply of the King to the traducer of the President of his Academy. Frederick refused to read Koenig's Appeal; he cared nothing for the merits of the case, or the rights of the injured. His essay enters into no discussions; it merely praises Maupertuis and abuses Voltaire. Frederick does not shrink from describing Maupertuis as a second Homer. He declares roundly that it is the duty of every member of the Academy to protect their President from any sort of criticism. He denounces the author of the *Reply* (known to be Voltaire), as a 'wretch' who has published 'an infamous libel . . . just as a man without judgment might speak of an obscure person, as the most audacious impostors are in the habit of calumniating virtue.' He is 'a libeller without genius,' 'a contemptible enemy' of 'sterile imagination,' whose 'crime' is not only 'revolting' but 'the lowest depth of infamy.' 'I pity,' says he, 'those unhappy writers who abandon themselves to the indulgence of their insensate passions, and whose wickedness blinds them to such an extent that they betray their frivolity, their criminality and their ignorance.' . . . 'Has there ever been seen an action more malicious, more shameful, more infamous?' . . . 'Should one not regard as perturbators of the public good, as the most dangerous of assassins, those who attempt to ravish from great men the glory which they have justly acquired?' The President of my Academy has spoken: those who dare differ from his conclusions on a disputable proposition of science are criminals and assassins—guilty of *lèse-majesté*.

Voltaire was astonished. 'Would you believe,' he wrote to Madame Denis, 'that the King takes the part of this philosopher tyrant?' . . . 'Here is something without example, and which will never be imitated; here is something which is unique. The King of Prussia, without having read a word of the reply of Koenig, without listening, without consulting anybody, has written and printed a pamphlet against Koenig, against me, against all those

who have desired to vindicate the innocence of that professor so cruelly condemned. He denounces all Koenig's supporters as men of envy, folly and dishonesty. I enclose this singular pamphlet: it is a King who has written it! . . . I have to contend against self-love, and despotic power, two very dangerous things. I have also every reason to think that my deal with the Duke of Würtemberg has given displeasure. It has been discovered, and I have been made to understand that it has been discovered.'

Being now completely embroiled with the King—though the flatteries continued at the supper-table—Voltaire gave himself to the enjoyment of the combat. Maupertuis just at this time published a book containing *Letters*, in which some extraordinary suggestions were made. He proposed that a hole should be dug right through the earth: that a town should be set apart, in which no language but Latin should be spoken: that an expedition should be sent to Patagonia to dissect the brains of living giants: that a colony of babies should be segregated in order to discover what language they would learn to speak: that power to foretell the future should be acquired by swallowing large doses of opium: that a man's life should be made to last for hundreds of years by blocking the exhalations from the body. Some twenty years before this, Maupertuis had been attacked by a temporary mental failure of some kind. Voltaire at first thought he had become quite insane, but the President's intemperate habits had made him merely foolish. Voltaire attacked the letters with inimitable wit and power in the *Diatribes du docteur Akakia*. He makes the guileless doctor Akakia assume that the *Letters* are too nonsensical to have been written by the President of the Berlin Academy, and then proceeds to comment upon their absurdity. It is impossible to read *Akakia* without laughing. It must surely be the wittiest thing of the kind ever written. Frederick, a shuffler and traitor by nature, consoled with Maupertuis, writing to him that he had 'well washed the head' of Voltaire, and had



threatened him on the side of the purse, which had produced a good effect: 'I know his base spirit, incapable of the feeling of honour.' At the same time he was speaking to Voltaire of Maupertuis with contempt, and when Voltaire showed him the *Akakia*, he roared with laughter. But he insisted that it should not be published, and Voltaire in his presence thrust the manuscript in the fire.

He had played a trick upon the King. He could not get anything printed without the King's permission. He had obtained that permission for a pamphlet upon Lord Bolingbroke, which he sent to the King's printer at Potsdam; having received the first pages of proof he sent for the manuscript to be returned to him, on the pretence that he wished to correct it, and then forwarded the *Akakia*, which the printer supposed was a part of the Bolingbroke work, and put into type accordingly. When he ostentatiously burned the *Akakia* manuscript in the King's presence, Voltaire knew that the printed work was about to be issued at Potsdam, and that two copies had already been sent outside the King's dominions. When he learned of the existence of the Potsdam issue, Frederick ordered the whole edition to be destroyed. He wrote to Voltaire, 'Your effrontery astounds me. After what you have done, which is as clear as day, you persist, instead of admitting your culpability.' Voltaire sent a very humble reply. But an edition was printed at Leipzig from one of the copies he had sent out, and in December 1752 the work was on sale at Berlin. On the 24th December copies were, by the King's order, publicly burned in the chief open places in Berlin, by the official executioner.

On the 18th December Voltaire had written to Madame Denis, to inform her that the business of the annuity had been settled with the Duke of Würtemberg. 'I see,' he added, 'that the orange has been squeezed; we must try and save the skin. I am making, for my own instruction, a little dictionary to be used in the society of Kings. *My friend* means *my slave*. *My dear friend* means *you are utterly indifferent to me*. Understand by *I will make you happy*; *I will put up with you as long as I have need*

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of you. *Take supper with me this evening* signifies *I will make fun of you this evening.*' On the 1st January 1753, after the public burning of *Akakia*, he sent to the King his Chamberlain's key, and his cross and ribbon of the Order of Merit. He wrote, however, that in his feeble state of health, it would be hard to have to travel at that season of the year. Frederick did not desire that it should seem that he had driven out of his service the foremost writer of the age, for having championed the cause of freedom of opinion in the Prussian Kingdom. Public opinion was already against the King and his tyrannical Academy, and all the world was laughing with Voltaire at the silly conceits of the President. Frederick refused to accept the resignation. In March, when the warmer weather was approaching, Voltaire applied for leave to take the waters at Plombières, for the sake of his health. Frederick protested that it was not necessary to go so far, as there were suitable resorts much nearer to Berlin, but Voltaire persisted. The King became annoyed. He dictated a letter: 'You can leave my service when you wish; but, before departing, send me back the contract of your engagement, the key, the cross, and the volume of poems which I have confided to you.' The reference is to the *Œuvres du Philosophe de Sans Souci*, 1752, one volume. But the request for permission to resign having been declined, Voltaire intended to keep, if he could, the key and the cross; and the volume of poems, having been given to him by Frederick, belonged to him, and he was under no obligation to return it. He sent back none of the things demanded, for to do so would have been to accept dismissal. He requested leave of absence. Finding that he was determined to go, the King preferred that it should seem that the separation was temporary; he did not insist on the return of the above articles. To give the impression that he had graciously pardoned his servant, he invited Voltaire to Potsdam, where he was admitted, for his last week, to the Royal presence. Then on the 26th March Voltaire departed. He reached Leipzig, in Saxon territory, next day.

Now out of the control of the Prussian King, Voltaire returned at once to the attacks upon the President of the Berlin Academy. Large editions of the *Akakia* were being sold everywhere except in the Prussian dominions. The sense of freedom, and the consciousness of triumph, tempted Voltaire to write, under the title *Le Traité de Paix*, another malicious and amusing diatribe against Maupertuis. That inebriated and foolish man wrote to Voltaire, threatening him with personal violence. The reply was of an absolutely crushing character, witty and deadly. It drove Maupertuis from Berlin, where the pompous official had become an object of ridicule. He went to hide his head in Paris, and did not return to the scene of his humiliation until more than a year had passed.

After three weeks at Leipzig, and more than a month at Gotha, Voltaire went on to Frankfort, where he arrived on the 30th May 1773.<sup>53</sup> In the morning of the 1st June he was visited by one Freytag, the Resident of the King of Prussia, who demanded the key, the cross and the volume of poems. Frankfort was a 'free' city, but not so free as Saxon Leipzig. It had no army, and the King of Prussia could, and did, do what he chose there. His instructions to Freytag were that he was to obtain the articles by force, if necessary, and that Voltaire was to be kept under arrest until they were forthcoming. The key and cross were at once given up, but the book had been left in a trunk which was now either at Leipzig or at Hamburg. Until it was forthcoming, Voltaire was kept under arrest at his hotel. On the 10th June he was joined by his niece, Madame Denis, who was also interned, by Freytag's order. The trunk did not reach Frankfort till the 18th June. The book being then tendered, Voltaire imagined that he would now be allowed to go, but Freytag had received a letter from Berlin, saying that the King was expected to return on the 15th from his visit to East Prussia, and that the travellers were to be detained until the King's pleasure was known. The officials at Berlin knew that the King was incensed with



Voltaire, and did not dare to relax the severity of the Prussian system. Frederick reached Berlin on the 15th; next day he sent an express order to let Voltaire go. It arrived at Frankfort on the 19th, but its tenor was not at once revealed. Having complied with all the King's demands, Voltaire began to fear that he was being detained for some further and more serious punishment. Early on the 20th he made an effort to escape, although he had solemnly promised Freytag that he would not do so. If he had waited a few hours he would, in accordance with the King's order, have been released. But now Freytag detained him and also Madame Denis, until this fresh offence, the breaking parole had been reported to Berlin and new orders received. On the 25th June an explicit command to release the prisoners arrived. Still Freytag kept them, because the order had been sent from Berlin before the King had received news of the attempted escape. On the 5th July a peremptory order to release both prisoners instantly, came from the King. Even now, Freytag felt that he would be pleasing his royal master by demanding from Voltaire an extravagant sum of money for the expenses incidental to the unlawful and inexcusable detention. At last, on the 7th July, Voltaire was allowed to quit the free city of Frankfort.

He had been detained eighteen days, because he did not happen to carry about with him on his travels a certain book which was his private property. Then he was closely guarded for another seventeen days because he attempted, ignoring his parole, it is true, to escape. The original order was indefensible. The key, cross, and book could easily have been obtained without rudeness; an emissary could have been sent from Berlin, who would have returned with the precious articles. But Frederick desired to make Voltaire feel his power; he was to be humbled; to be subjected to force. When, after all was over, the whole of the facts were reported to him, Frederick sent a letter to Freytag endorsing everything he had done from beginning to end. He approved of the violence used towards the greatest man of the day,

and to a woman, both of them innocent of any crime. A Prussian official could rely upon his master's support of all rough abuses of authority, in defiance of elementary decency, and of common justice.

Voltaire ultimately settled at Ferney, on the lake of Geneva. His opinion of Frederick is sufficiently exposed by the name he gave him. Habitually, in letters and conversation he called him 'Luc,' after a mischievous monkey he kept in his garden. Frederick expressed precisely the same view of Voltaire, whom he likened also to a monkey. The Potsdam visit had but confirmed feelings which already existed, and its violent conclusion left the situation almost unchanged. The correspondence therefore, after an interval, was resumed, and did not cease till the death of Voltaire. The first letter was written by him in March 1754, when he protested to Frederick, that the scurrilous pamphlet, *Idée de la personne, de la manière de vivre et de la cour du roi de Prusse*, was not by him. Frederick replied that he had never supposed Voltaire was the author.<sup>1</sup> A few years later, while the usual complimentary letters were being exchanged, Voltaire wrote a very hostile criticism of his 'Luc,' in the piece published after his death as *Mémoires pour servir à la vie de M. Voltaire*.<sup>2</sup> Voltaire forbade the publication during his lifetime; he destroyed the manuscript, having first ascertained that his secretary had made two copies.

Frederick and Voltaire were men of widely different character. If Frederick had not been a King, Voltaire could not have tolerated him. Voltaire believed in human nature, while Frederick despised it. 'I congratulate you,' wrote the King, 'in the good opinion you have of humanity. . . . It is very difficult to make the human species good, and to tame that animal, the most savage of all.' When Sulzer, the inspector of education, said to the King that the old belief in the incurable wickedness of man had given way to more generous opinions,

<sup>1</sup> The authorship is now attributed to La Beaumelle.

<sup>2</sup> *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, 1883, vol. i.



with gentler methods in the schools, Frederick exclaimed, 'I see, my dear Sulzer, that you do not know, as I do, the accursed race to which we belong.' In that remark we have the spirit of Prussia and of Hohenzollernism, which had its origin in the belief in the universal permanence of sin, which can be met only by the retaliations of necessity. Man must be brutally treated because he is a brute.

'Superstition,' wrote Frederick to Voltaire, 'is a weakness of mankind; it is inherent in that being; it always has been, it always will be.' He would do nothing to combat superstition, rather would he use it to assist his own supremacy. When Voltaire wrote to him describing his efforts to obtain justice for oppressed persons, sufferers from tyrannical superstition, for the families of Calas, Serven, Lally, Barré, Frederick wrote him cold letters of mild approval. In the case of Barré, who had been tortured and executed for certain not very serious omissions of respect towards the ceremonials of religion, Frederick was frankly unsympathetic. 'You will not deny,' he wrote to Voltaire, 'that every citizen should conform to the laws of his country; there are punishments decreed by legislators against those who disturb the beliefs adopted by the nation.' The terrible fate of the young man who, as he dragged his mutilated body to the scaffold, said to the priest, 'I did not believe a young gentleman could be put to death for so little a thing'—that harrowing event aroused no sympathy in Frederick. He thought only of the respect due to authority. 'It is a pitiable thing,' he wrote to Voltaire, 'to quash verdicts and sentences when the victims have perished.'

Voltaire devoted the remainder of his life to a crusade against despotism of all kinds, and particularly against the crushing of independence of thought, and against what we now call militarism. He was inspired by feelings of which Frederick had no trace, by belief in and sympathy for human beings. He undertook a crusade of compassion, and in doing so grew himself into a nobler man. He worked for three years on behalf of the widow and



descendants of the judicially murdered Calas. 'During that time,' he said, in words which should not be forgotten, 'not a smile escaped me without my reproaching myself for it as for a crime.' But the Calas family were to Frederick merely members of the accursed race of mankind, savage animals, who could not be improved. As for superstition, he rather approved of it in so far as it helped his own dominance, provided he himself was not subjected to any influence hostile to his prerogatives. And the huge armies, and the military spirit, which Voltaire abhorred and denounced, were Frederick's chief weapons of tyranny. In all this Frederick was, in spite of all his affectation of enlightenment, out of touch with his own age. He believed in the eternal wickedness of man, and therefore in the necessity of war and tyranny, at the very time when the most sanguine hopes were being entertained. On the eve of the French Revolution he remained chief of the mediæval scoffers, while Voltaire was carving out the path of progress, inspired by sympathy for humanity and belief in human virtue.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

#### 1. THE MAKER OF THE WAR

THE Treaty of Dresden, 25th December 1745, brought the war for Silesia to an end, but it left England, Holland, Austria and Sardinia still fighting against France and Spain. Neither group of combatants obtained complete success. England wrested from France in North America the island of Cape Breton with the port of Louisburg, and Austria was victorious in Italy, but, on the other hand, France conquered the Austrian Netherlands. The Czarina Elizabeth, baulked of her intervention against Prussia in the Silesian War by the speed with which Frederick concluded the Treaty of Dresden, was now in time; in return for English subsidies she engaged to send troops to the Rhine. This threat brought France to reason. Louis xv. agreed to a peace with the mutual restitution of conquests. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was concluded between England, Holland and France on the 14th October 1748; Spain acceded on the 20th October, Austria on the 8th November. France recovered her American territory and evacuated the Netherlands, England giving up her American conquests in order to keep France from the Flemish seaboard.

Maria Theresa blamed her ally England for the losses Austria had sustained. She began to think of making friends with France, her traditional enemy. On the 7th March 1749, she summoned a conference of high personages, demanding of each of them a written statement as to the foreign policy to be adopted in future. Every member of the conference reported in favour of the old system, save one, Count Kaunitz, the youngest among them.

Kaunitz said that Austria had three allies, England, Holland and Russia, and three enemies, France, Prussia and Turkey. England had been of small assistance in the war, Holland still less, Russian support was uncertain, depending upon the life of the Czarina Elizabeth. The allies named having failed to save Austria in the past, it was vitally necessary to convert an enemy into a friend. France alone could turn the scale. The historic causes of the long dispute with France had solved themselves. Kaunitz advocated an alliance with France. The idea was revolutionary, but it accorded with the inclinations of Maria Theresa. She sent Kaunitz as her Ambassador to Paris, with definite instructions to work for a French alliance.

The treaties of 1741 and 1744 still bound France to Prussia. Frederick set himself to prevent a French agreement with Austria. He asserted that, though Maria Theresa declared she had no intention of disturbing the peace, she was preparing for war, with the hope of regaining Silesia. He wrote to Podewils, his envoy at Vienna, on the 18th October 1749, 'If this Court' (of Vienna) 'is amassing funds in coin and is taking trouble to place its troops on a better footing, it is in order to prepare for playing, in the course of time, a better rôle against me.' Upon this theme he insisted in despatch after despatch to his Ambassadors at Vienna and Paris, and in harangues to the French Ambassador at Berlin, urging France to prepare at once for a war which Austria was determined to make upon himself and his ally. When these arguments failed to arouse the Government of France to warlike preparations, Frederick spoke with great contempt of the nation.

The contrast between the manners of Frederick and of Maria Theresa has given rise to certain legends, of no historical basis, which have survived to this day. When Voltaire, soon after his arrival at Potsdam in the summer of 1750, informed Frederick that Madame de Pompadour desired her respects to be presented to His Majesty, Frederick replied, 'Je ne la connais pas.' This remark



has been regarded as the chief cause of the French alliance with Austria against Prussia. But Madame de Pompadour continued for six years after the incident to support the alliance with Prussia; and there is no reason to suppose that she ever learned what Frederick had said. Voltaire concealed it, writing to her that Achilles sent compliments to Venus. It had been a hasty interjection, which Frederick explained afterwards by saying that Madame de Pompadour had been guilty of presumption. Far from administering snubs, he instructed his successive Ambassadors to pay special court to her, and to do so in his name.

Another legend asserts that Maria Theresa bought the assistance of France, by writing letters to Madame de Pompadour, addressing her as '*ma cousine*.' No letter of any kind from the Empress to Madame de Pompadour has ever been discovered, nor is there any evidence to show that any such letter ever existed. Maria Theresa indignantly declared that she had never written to the King's mistress. The tale emanated from Prussian circles, and its genesis can therefore be surmised. Frederick himself had thought of writing personally to Madame de Pompadour,<sup>1</sup> but his pride interfered. He then conceived the idea of asserting that Maria Theresa had done what he alone had at one time contemplated.

Madame de Pompadour desired peace above everything. She thought that war would loosen her hold on the King. France also was in need of the continuance of peace, and the Government feared that, as Frederick so vociferously insisted, Maria Theresa was bent on war. Kaunitz found that while he was received with every mark of cordial encouragement by Louis xv., by Madame de Pompadour, and by the Government, he obtained no results. After a sojourn in Paris of over two years, he returned to Vienna early in 1753, acknowledging that his mission had failed.

A defensive alliance between Austria and Russia was concluded at St. Petersburg on the 2nd June 1746. Each Power guaranteed the possessions of the other against

<sup>1</sup> *Pol. Corr.*, xii. p. 164.

attack. Of the secret clauses the fourth only was of importance. 'The Empress Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, declares that she will observe religiously and in good faith the peace concluded between Her and His Majesty the King of Prussia at Dresden, the 25th December 1745, and that She will not be the first to depart from the renunciation She has made of Her rights to the ceded portions of the Duchy of Silesia and the County of Glatz. But if, contrary to all expectations and to the general wish, the King of Prussia were to be the first to abandon that treaty of peace by a hostile attack either on Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia or her heirs and successors, or on Her Majesty the Empress of Russia, or upon the Republic of Poland, in all such cases the rights of Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, upon the ceded part of Silesia and the County of Glatz, and also the guarantees renewed in the second and third article on the part of Her Majesty the Empress of Russia, will arise anew and will resume their full effect: the two high contracting parties have expressly agreed that in this unexpected case, but not before, the said guarantee will be fulfilled in its entirety and without loss of time, and they promise each other solemnly that, to defeat the danger, common to them, of such a hostile aggression, they will take counsel together,' etc. Then followed stipulations as to the number of troops each party would provide.

Augustus of Saxony-Poland was invited to adhere to this treaty, but although he expressed his agreement with the view that it was desirable for Prussia's neighbours to be united against a renewed Prussian attack, he excused himself from entering into a formal compact, pointing to his exposed position and the feebleness of his power to resist a sudden attack, which might be made before succour could reach him.

Frederick endeavoured to counter the alliance between Russia and Austria by alternating bribes with blows. He authorised his Ambassador to offer the Russian Chancellor, Bestusheff, 100,000 crowns—an overture which was

rejected with contempt—and he entered into an alliance with Sweden and cultivated the friendship of Turkey, both enemies of Russia. He sent propitiatory messages to the Czarina—and he spoke of her openly with coarse vulgarity, and treated her Ambassador with such rudeness, that he had to be withdrawn from Berlin. The result of this combination of caresses and cuffs was that Elizabeth and Bestusheff became more and more convinced that the reduction of Frederick's power was necessary for the welfare of Russia. Frederick's tactless conduct inflamed the personal animosity of the Czarina, who called him 'the Nadir Shah of Berlin'; and confirmed Bestusheff in his determination to 'clip his wings.'

Frederick received Legge, British Ambassador in 1748, in the most cordial manner, and talked of an alliance with England, but his actions were far from friendly. He refused to pay off the Silesian loans. English merchants had lent money to the Emperor Charles VI. who mortgaged the Silesian Duchies as guarantee for repayment. When Frederick obtained Silesia, he engaged, by the Treaties of Breslau and Berlin, and by other repeated assurances, to undertake the repayment of these loans. He procrastinated and evaded the payment, while insisting over and over again, on his honour, that he would fulfil the obligation. Then he utilised the complaints of Prussian shipowners with regard to the seizure of their vessels by British privateers, and declared that by way of reprisal, he refused to make the due payments. The English Government rejoined that the money was due to private merchants, whereas the reprisal was made against the Government, but that argument had no force in Prussia. The whole subject of the right of capture of enemy goods in neutral vessels, of contraband and prize, came up for dispute, and at times it seemed that war might result. From 1751 to 1756, relations were so bitter that the British Government would not send an Ambassador to Berlin. The dispute was not settled until Frederick began to desire an alliance with England.



Then he paid off the remainder of the original loan of £250,000 with interest, and received a counter credit for £20,000 on account of shipping losses.<sup>1</sup>

Until the change of policy Frederick continued his unfriendly conduct. He opposed the British project of electing the eldest son of Maria Theresa King of the Romans. He sent to Paris as his representative Keith, the Earl Marshal of Scotland, a refugee Jacobite, and received at Berlin as French Ambassador Tyrconnel, another Jacobite. The official English view of Frederick was expressed by the Duke of Bedford in a letter to the British Ambassador at Paris: 'The endeavours of the King of Prussia for infusing into the French Court groundless jealousy and suspicion, against his Majesty and his allies, have been so frequently repeated, and with so much rancour and malice,' etc. It was Frederick's policy, said Yorke in a despatch from Paris, 'to foment disputes and widen breaches.' France, his only ally, suspected him of trying to make use of her for further aggressive designs, and the French Minister thought it necessary to state with emphasis, that he would 'be the first to put a stop to it.' Frederick's past record was enough to turn every hand against him. Now, in time of peace, his threatening demeanour, insulting hypocrisy, and treacherous attempts to create quarrels, left him outside the pale of decent society.

His views on the foreign situation are contained in the '*testament politique*,' dated 27th August 1752, which he prepared for the guidance of his brother and heir, Prince William.

This instrument has never been published in full. Extracts have been revealed by Droysen, Ranke, Koser, Lehmann, Naudé, and these have been formed into a connected whole by Küntzel, *Politisches Testament Friedrichs des Grossen von 1752*, 1911. Max Lehmann, Professor at the University of Göttingen, endeavoured to obtain permission to publish the whole will, as a political document of primary historical importance. In the preface

<sup>1</sup> *The Silesian Loan and Frederick the Great*, Sir Ernest Satow, 1915.

to his work on the origin of the Seven Years' War,<sup>1</sup> he wrote: 'More than a hundred years have passed since the death of Frederick the Great, and yet an examination of his career on scientific lines has scarcely yet begun.' Lehmann speaks of the 'glorified myth of the personality of the Prussian King,' and complains that whoever expressed heretical views about Frederick was treated as no good Prussian, and that even Hans Delbrück, the greatest of those who ventured to speak with freedom, has had his works condemned to a sort of *auto-da-fé*. He continues, 'The lasting power of the legend has revealed itself to me during my efforts to collect the material for this work. I have indeed been received in the offices of the archives of the Prussian State, with the friendliness of which proof has so often been given, and I have to express my special thanks for the kindness shown to me, a foreigner, by the chiefs and the officials of the Vienna archives (House, Court, and State archives, War archives, and archives of the Minister of the Interior). But as soon as I endeavoured to penetrate to the most secret and most important documentary records of Frederick, I encountered difficulties. As is known, the King, following the excellent custom of his House, wrote political testaments in 1752 and in 1768, which, strange to say, are kept not in the Secret State archives but in the Royal House archives. It must be denounced as inconceivable that these fundamental sources for the history of Prussia, of which the first is now nearly 150 years old, have not yet been published in their full text, but only in isolated fragments; they are excluded both from the official edition of the works of the King, and from the *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen*. It seems that lately the office of House archives planned the publication, but that the Foreign Office prevented it.' Lehmann obtained from the Royal House Ministry the permission to copy, but the Foreign Office intervened, so that 'nearly three-fourths was cut out and kept back.' 'As

<sup>1</sup> *Friedrich der Grosse und der Ursprung des Siebenjährigen Krieges*, Max Lehmann, 1894.

my intention was none other than to portray Frederick from genuine sources, I would much have preferred to depart entirely from the ungenuine Frederick of orthodoxy. This, however, proved to be incapable of fulfilment . . . we must not allow ourselves to be beholden for the overthrow of pseudo-history, to the foreigner.'

Lehmann proceeded to show that Frederick's policy was directed to the conquest of Saxony. He was defended by the famous Berlin professor, Hans Delbrück, who described Lehmann's book as 'epoch-making.'<sup>1</sup> Lehmann and Delbrück were attacked by Koser and the orthodox party. A fierce and prolonged polemic ensued.

The testament, in so far as we are allowed to know it, treats mainly of the strengthening of the army and of the finances, in preparation for a war of aggression. The 'principal point' is 'never to spend all the revenue of the year, so that the royal and the public treasury shall be always well filled, to be able to sustain a war for at least four years.' . . . 'It is necessary that Princes should have ambition, but it should be wise, prudent and guided by reason. If the desire for aggrandisement does not bring acquisitions to a Prince, at least it sustains his power, because the same measures which he prepares for action in the offensive are always at service for the defence of the State, in case such defence should be necessary, and that he should find himself obliged to sustain it. Aggrandisement may be obtained in two ways, by rich inheritances or by conquests.' Then follow details, which have been reserved from publication, with regard to expectations in Anspach, Baireuth and Mecklenburg, and explanations concerning the conquests to be aimed at in Saxony, West Prussia, and Swedish Pomerania. We are allowed to know that Frederick wrote: 'After the overthrow of Saxony make at once a most resolute attack upon Moravia; as soon as a great decisive battle has been fought in Moravia, the war will approach the enemy's capital. Then in the second year an uprising

<sup>1</sup> 'Der Ursprung des Siebenjährigen Krieges,' Hans Delbrück. *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. lxxix. Feb. 1895; vol. lxxxiv. April 1896.



of the Hungarians and occupation of defenceless Bohemia with the troops drawn from Saxony.' If the design against Saxony failed it would not matter, said Frederick, provided the plan had been kept secret. As for West Prussia, 'This land it may be better not to conquer by arms, but to absorb during peace, as an artichoke, leaf by leaf, just in the way that the King of Sardinia is obtaining possession of the Duchy of Milan. The election of a King of Poland will give the opportunity. Prussia should offer for sale its neutrality in the Polish disturbance.' We see here the origin of the Seven Years' War, and also of the Partition of Poland.

'France is one of our most powerful allies. In spite of all abuses France is the most powerful kingdom in Europe . . . but States are only what they are made by the men who govern them. . . . France looks for aggrandisement to an extension of her limits to the Rhine.' Frederick considered this a reasonable ambition. He thought the Rhine should be the boundary between France and Germany. In the *Histoire de Mon Temps*, edition of 1746, there is an interesting passage which has been cut out from the official *Œuvres*. 'You have only to take in the hand a geographical map to be convinced that the natural boundary of this monarchy seems to extend to the Rhine, whose course seems to be formed expressly to separate France from Germany, to mark their limits, and set a bound to their domination.'<sup>1</sup>

Then follow details as to war preparations, the recruitings, manœuvres, fortresses, magazines, armament, uniforms, commissariat, staff, etc., which conclude with 'Speculations for the future.' 'If the opportunity arises for increasing the army, what should be the new levies? According to the country that has been conquered. If it is Saxony, you may obtain there forty battalions and forty squadrons; if it is Polish Prussia, you may levy there two or three regiments of hussars; if it is Mecklenburg you may have there ten battalions and ten squadrons

<sup>1</sup> *Publikationen aus den Königlichen Preussischen Staatsarchiven*, iv, p. 206.

of dragoons.' . . . 'No conquests in the barbarous and deserted provinces under the domination of the Czarina. To conquer them for ourselves would be folly ; to conquer them for others would be purposeless.'

The Prussian army was already a monstrous portent, when compared with that of any other nation at that time.<sup>1</sup> Frederick's testament was concerned chiefly with the plans for a huge increase of that already swollen force. His conception of Hohenzollern policy is, that its principal aim should be the conquest of neighbouring territory, in order that such conquest should provide means for still further aggrandisement. The greatest secrecy and subterfuge are to be employed to conceal these designs ; then, if they fail, all may still be well if they have not been discovered.

To assist him in his scheme against Saxony, Frederick sent Winterfeldt on a spying expedition. The nature of the General's report indicates the instructions he must have received. He wrote to the King, 14th August 1754, that the position at Pirna, south of Dresden, which had been prepared for defence, was naturally strong ; but that the Saxon army was not large enough to hold it properly, and that the difficulty of provisioning the garrison would compel it to capitulate, from hunger, in ten days ; then 20,000 Saxons could be obtained for the Prussian army, and a great quantity of money. Winterfeldt then described the best route of advance from Saxony into Bohemia, and gave details about the condition of the Austrian army.<sup>2</sup> The plan here outlined was carried out by Frederick two years later ; it was prepared before the outbreak of the Anglo-French conflict, at a time when there was no excuse for any act of aggression on the Continent.

Frederick was a soldier who desired and enjoyed war. He was seldom out of uniform ; his companions were officers ; he took the part of the military against civilians.

<sup>1</sup> See H. Prutz, *Preussische Geschichte*, iv. p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> 'Winterfeldt und der Ursprung des Siebenjährigen Krieges,' M. Lehmann, *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. lxxiii., 1890.

In deceit he had always been, as his father had complained, an expert. 'Unless I bribe myself my designs cannot possibly be discovered,' was a saying of his. He said to Lord Hyndford, that if he thought that his shirt or his hat knew what his intentions were he would tear them up.

A Prince of that character would, in case of a dispute, be the first to draw the sword, and he would busy himself, in peace as in war, in schemes for deceiving his neighbours and in discovering their secrets. He succeeded in corrupting Weingarten, the secretary to the Austrian Legation in Berlin. Through him he obtained access to Austrian documents. In 1752 his Ambassador at Dresden, Maltzahn, in accordance with the King's express command, approached and seduced Menzel, a clerk in the Saxon Foreign Office. Through Menzel a model was obtained of the key required to open the most important cupboards: a copy of the key was made in Berlin at Frederick's command.

In January 1755 Menzel produced, by means of this key, a copy of the fourth secret article (cited already) of the Treaty of 1746, between Austria and Russia, and he also made copies of the correspondence of the Saxon Chief Minister, Count Brühl, known to be a personal enemy of the King of Prussia. Frederick afterwards made great play with the Menzel documents, but they revealed nothing that was not already known. It was notorious that Austria and Russia had entered upon a defensive treaty; they had proclaimed it. That Saxony wished to join them, but feared to give offence to Prussia, was no secret. It followed, that if Frederick was guilty of aggression against his neighbours and they were forced to take up arms in self-defence, and succeeded in the course of the war in reconquering Silesia, they would not give it back. Russia and Saxony would also in such case obtain compensation from the vanquished aggressor. Frederick pretended that this was a terrible scheme to dismember Prussia, thereby accusing himself of an intention to attack one of his neighbours.



There were, indeed, constant alarms. In 1749 and again in 1753 there were serious fears of a renewed Prussian aggression. At one time it was Sweden, at another Hanover that was menaced. Small neighbours, Saxony and Mecklenburg, were treated almost as conquered countries. Frederick desired a general war, and did his best to influence passions. By the year 1755 the increase in his army, and the accumulations of war treasure, had reached satisfactory dimensions. The outbreak in Canada of hostilities between English and French colonists, supported by the home Governments, gave him the opportunity for still further fomenting strife. He hoped to prevent the localisation of the colonial war, and to see it spread to the Continent.<sup>1</sup> He was persistent in attempts to stiffen France against England. To La Touche, the French Ambassador at Berlin, he said that if he were the King of France, he would march a large army into Westphalia, and thence attack Hanover. This being reported, the reply from Paris was to suggest that Frederick himself, the ally of France, should conquer and annex Hanover. But Frederick wished to see France and England properly at grips before making his own move. He instructed Knyphausen, his envoy at Paris, to reply in vague but polite and friendly terms ; he was also to touch, very adroitly and in the most delicate manner, upon the failure of France to assist him in 1745, when he found himself 'abandoned,' in spite of the 1744 treaty of alliance. The effrontery of this reference is remarkable. In spite of his express agreement to make no treaty without France, and of his repeated assurances that he would never desert his ally, Frederick, as will be remembered, concluded a separate treaty of peace with Austria in 1742, and with England in 1745. It was he who had deserted his ally, not France.

He continued to incite France to attack the Austrian Netherlands, or to enter Germany for the conquest of

<sup>1</sup> 'Nobody has made even an attempt to deny that throughout the year 1755 Frederick was working to set alight a general war.' Delbrück, *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. lxxxiv. p. 49.

Hanover. But neither England nor France desired their colonial quarrel to be carried on to the Continent.<sup>1</sup> Austria, as Frederick knew, had no wish to be drawn in. He wrote to Klinggräffen, his Ambassador at Vienna, 15th July 1755, 'I do not doubt that the Empress-Queen is most unwilling to be involved in the approaching war between France and England.' If he could induce France to attack the Austrian Netherlands, Maria Theresa would be obliged to reply, and if the attack were on Hanover, she should be dragged in on the side of England. Then Frederick, in the guise of a loyal ally fulfilling his obligation to France, would attack Austria through Saxony.

George II., anxious for Hanover, sought the assistance of Russia. An alliance was proposed to combat, in the words of Holdernes, the King of Prussia's 'ambitious, dangerous, and long-concerted schemes of aggrandisement.' A convention was signed on the 30th September 1755, whereby in return for an English subsidy, Russia was to keep in readiness a corps of 55,000 men, to overawe Prussia.

Frederick feared Russia above all the Powers. The French alliance would not suffice to counteract England and Russia, and it would interfere with his designs upon Saxony. The Queen of France was a Polish Princess and the Dauphine was a daughter of the Elector-King of Saxony-Poland.

Frederick had already interfered to prevent France from paying Saxony a subsidy for the increase of the army. Saxony was to be kept weak and powerless, an easy prey. The projected conquest of Saxony would infallibly alienate France. England was therefore a more desirable ally, especially in view of the cordial relations existing between England and Russia. To England Frederick now turned. He was busy negotiating the terms of an alliance with England in the winter of 1755-6.

<sup>1</sup> 'The French had the greatest desire to confine the colonial war with England to a contest upon the sea. That could well have been done, and the Continent would then, as in 1778-83, have been spared the fire of war. Frederick took the greatest pains to prevent that result.' Delbrück, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

The Prussian treaties with France, of 1741 and 1744, would both terminate in 1756. The French Government decided to send the Duc de Nivernais to Berlin, to arrange the terms of a renewal, but the French emissary's departure was constantly postponed. Frederick was most anxious that the English alliance should be concluded unknown to France, and before the arrival of Nivernais. On receiving inquiries from the French Government with regard to the rumours prevalent of an Anglo-Prussian agreement he replied with his customary falsehood. He told Knyphausen to inform de Rouillé, the minister of Louis xv., that these reports were 'absolutely nothing but malign insinuations invented by my enemies, who aimed at nothing more than to disunite me from France, but in which there was not a word of truth' (2nd December 1755). Louis xv. and the ministers were taken in by this deceit, and accepted the explanation with pleasure.

On the 4th January 1756, the terms of the Anglo-Prussian alliance being settled, Frederick wrote to his Ambassador at London, authorising him to sign, and urging despatch as the Duc de Nivernais was expected at Berlin any day. On the 12th Nivernais at last reached Berlin; he was received by the King on the 14th. Frederick admitted that he was negotiating with England, but he concealed the fact that he had already authorised the signature of the treaty of alliance. He pretended that conditions were still to be arranged and that nothing was in contemplation that would be repugnant to his engagements with France. Thus reassured, Nivernais entered upon plans of the operations to be conducted, with Prussian assistance, and exposed the most secret details of French resources and preparations. Two days later, on the 16th January, the 'Treaty of Westminster' was signed in London by the Prussian representative. On the 25th January the courier arrived in Berlin with the signed treaty. On the 27th Frederick informed Nivernais of the fact. 'When giving me this news,' wrote the disillusioned envoy of France, 'there seemed to me to be some embarrassment in his manner, and he told me that he had not



expected the English ministers to take him so promptly at his word.' Nivernais replied that 'he hoped very sincerely that His Majesty had taken the course most in accordance with his glory and his interest.' Frederick poured out protestations of fidelity and friendship, and affected to be humiliated at the doubts felt of his good faith.<sup>1</sup>

By the Treaty of Westminster, 16th January 1756, England and Prussia guaranteed each other's possessions on the Continent, and agreed to oppose by force any invasion of any part of the German Empire. The Austrian Netherlands were expressly excluded. The English expectation was, that the treaty would safeguard Hanover, and thus prevent the Anglo-French colonial quarrel from spreading to the Continent. Frederick intended to take advantage of it, for bringing about the Continental war which England and France wished to avoid. Russia, he thought, was now a friend. He hoped to keep France, but was prepared to do without the French alliance, and expected that France, at the worst, would be neutral. Thus the way seemed clear for the capture of Saxony.

The storm of anger that his abandonment of his ally aroused in France Frederick had not expected. It was the hypocrisy and the falsehood, the protestations of eternal friendship that accompanied the desertion, which aroused so much resentment. Complete faith had been shown in the King of Prussia, even to the extent of revealing to him important French military secrets. He had listened and had returned expressions of extreme cordiality, while he had already ordered the conclusion of an alliance with the chief enemy of France. When it is remembered that he had already twice, in 1742 and 1745, behaved towards France in precisely the same treacherous manner, it is no wonder that the resentment of Louis xv. was strong against the false, hypocritical *parvenu* among kings. Frederick's incurable preference for trickery and deceit brought many misfortunes upon him. By candid and honourable conduct towards his

<sup>1</sup> Waddington, *Louis XV. et le renversement des Alliances*, p. 255.

ally, he could have obtained a renewal of the defensive treaty of alliance. Any man of upright mental habits could perceive that. His Ambassador at Paris, Knyp-hausen,—kept unaware that the convention of West-minster had already been signed—wrote on the 21st January, urging the King not to sign it secretly, without the knowledge of France. Knyphausen pointed out that the inclinations of the French Government were pacific; that Madame de Pompadour feared that war might distract the attention of Louis and loosen her influence; that there was no intention of attacking Hanover; that it was the desire both of France and of England to prevent their quarrel from spreading to the Continent; and that if that aim could be realised, it would be easier for both of them to find a solution of their differences. 'It would be therefore quite easy to obtain the consent of France to the neutrality of Germany, if Your Majesty goes about it in the manner I have indicated; but it will be difficult to calm this Court, and to preserve its confidence, if Your Majesty negotiates secretly with England, and does not reveal the treaty until it has been concluded.' Frederick paid no attention to this wise advice. He was constitutionally incapable of acting honourably; his instincts were for deceit; he was incapable of understanding how candour and loyalty could ever, under any circumstances, be profitable.

France now began to receive the Austrian overtures with cordiality. But Louis xv. did not desire the abasement of Prussia, and viewed with disfavour the Russian projects of aggrandisement. He refused to encourage any offensive action against Prussia. A defensive agreement was all that he would accept. By the Treaty of Versailles, 1st May 1757, each Power, France and Austria, agreed to provide a force of 24,000 men to defend the European possessions of the other, if attacked.

The Treaty of Westminster put an end to the strained relations that had so long existed between England and Prussia. The last English Ambassador had left Berlin in 1751. On the 8th May 1757, Andrew Mitchell arrived



there to represent the new ally. On the 11th and 12th he was received by Frederick, at Potsdam. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles had been received from Knyphausen on the same day. Frederick told Mitchell that he did not expect any early disturbance of the peace of Germany, 'he said nothing will happen this year, I can answer for it with my head, but I do not pretend to say what may happen the next. Are you sure of the Russians?' . . . 'With regard to the war in America, he said he could not help wondering at the absurdity of both nations to exhaust their strength and wealth for an object that did not appear to him to be worth the while, that he was persuaded by next year both nations would be sick of it, and remove the seat of war into Europe, unless a peace could be made before that time.'<sup>1</sup> Frederick had no conception of the value of a colony; his mind ran entirely on conquests of territory in Europe for the recruitment of his army, which could then be used for further gains. Besides, he desired to see the Anglo-French quarrel extend to the Continent.

On the 17th May 1756 England declared war upon France. [Frederick was convinced, as his correspondence indicates, that France and Austria would never be able to act in accord, and that Russia could do nothing without English subsidies.] Being now confident that the conquest of Saxony could be achieved without interference from France or Russia he made, on the 17th June, the first move in preparation for war. Men on the regimental lists, under the age of twenty, were warned to be in readiness. Two days later he wrote to Knyphausen at Paris, that he was persuaded that the Court of France would do its utmost to avoid a Continental war; and to Klinggræffen at Vienna, that Russia could obtain no subsidies and would not move without them, that it was certain that France would do nothing this year in Germany, and that the object of Madame de Pompadour and those who arranged the Treaty of Versailles was 'to avoid a land war, and to have nothing more to fear on the Con-

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, vol. lxxv.



tinent, not only in the present conjunction, but even after the pacification of the present troubles.'

Later on the same day, the 19th June, he received reports of a movement of Russian troops towards East Prussia. In Russia there were conflicting forces at work. The Grand Duke Peter was a fanatical pro-Prussian, and both he and the Grand Duchess Catherine favoured friendship with England. Against them was the Czarina Elizabeth, and the Conference of high Russian officials. The Russian party carried the day. An attempt of the Conference to denounce the convention with England was defeated by Peter and Catherine, but the Conference, supported by the Czarina, decided to take measures 'to reduce the King of Prussia within proper limits, and, in a word, to make him no longer a danger to the Empire.' An offensive alliance was proposed to Austria for the dismemberment of Prussia. Silesia was to be returned to Austria; Poland was to have East Prussia in exchange for Courland, which would be Russia's reward; Saxony would be given Magdeburg and district; and Sweden would regain East Pomerania. To this impetuous overture Kaunitz replied on the 22nd May, urging delay until the assistance of France had been secured. On the receipt of this message the Russian troops were ordered to halt.

Their advance had given Frederick the excuse he desired. He sent orders, on the 19th June, to the commanders at Breslau, Ratibor, Hamm, Bielefeld, Minden to be ready to march in six or eight weeks. He wrote to Maltzahn at Dresden, demanding information as to the Saxon intentions. On the 21st he wrote to Finckenstein at Berlin, that Austria was preparing to attack him through Saxony. He had received no evidence of a pending Austrian attack either through Saxony or in any other direction. He told Finckenstein to point out to Mitchell for the information of the British Government, that this invented attack was brought upon him by his treaty with England—another fabrication.

Frederick now prepared openly for war. On the 23rd June and following days, he sent out the equivalent

of modern mobilisation orders. Mitchell reported on the 24th, that 'in a fortnight's time he will be ready to act. His troops, I am informed, are complete, and the artillery in excellent order.' <sup>1</sup>

Frederick asserted that Austrian camps were being prepared in Bohemia and Moravia, but there was no truth in the statement, and the only evidence before him consisted of vague rumours, which were originally set afloat by himself.<sup>2</sup> On the 29th June he received news of the Russian retirement, but went on with his preparations. On the 9th July, Mitchell reported: 'The motion of the King's troops has occasioned a great alarm all over Germany, and Count Puebla' (the Austrian Ambassador) 'takes every opportunity to declare that there was no intention to attack him nor to disturb the public peace.' <sup>3</sup>

All this time the Austrians, who required many weeks of time in which to attain even to the normal peace state of Prussian preparedness, had done nothing. On the 8th July, three weeks after the Prussian orders were issued, Maria Theresa summoned a commission to report on the measures to be adopted in reply. Keith, the British Ambassador at Vienna, reported great military preparations on the 14th July. 'At the same time this Court declares, in the most positive terms, that they have no intention to begin a war, and that they certainly will not be the aggressor; but they say, the extraordinary preparations making by the King of Prussia oblige them to take every measure that may be necessary for their security and to prevent being surprised, and that, in that view they will endeavour to proportion the preparation on their side to those they shall learn His Prussian Majesty makes on his.' <sup>4</sup>

On the 18th July Frederick took a step which he intended should lead to war. He instructed Klinggræffen at Vienna, 'to demand a special audience of the Empress,'

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Delbrück, *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. lxxxiv. p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

and to report that 'I demanded the Empress to say if this arming was designed for an attack upon me.' Whatever the answer this question would inevitably stir up bellicose feelings in Vienna, and occasion military preparations which would then be treated as if inspired by aggressive designs. On the 20th July Frederick received Mitchell, the British Ambassador, who 'urged that perhaps the motions of his troops here' might have 'alarmed the Court of Vienna,'<sup>1</sup> which was, in fact, precisely what Frederick had intended. His preparations, like Klinggraeffen's threatening question, were designed to excite counter military demonstrations, which would be made the pretext for war.

Podewils ventured to protest against his master's policy. Writing to secretary Eichel, for the King's information, he said that His Majesty had spoken to him of his decision and of the Austrian preparations. 'I could answer nothing but that I was bound to suppose that this news was authentic, and was not derived from fly sheets, and did not originate in mere suspicions and conjectures in the present crisis. Whereupon His Kingly Majesty seemed to take fire to some extent, as if I were too incredulous, that what His Highest Majesty propounded to me upon solid grounds I should give credence to. I ventured upon the freedom once again with respectful frankness, to put forward to His Kingly Majesty all the inconveniences and terrible consequences which may result if on our side we act aggressively, and push France and Russia at the same time against the wall, so as to compel them to fulfil their engagements of guarantee and defence, though both of them would otherwise have no desire to do anything this year; and I drew attention to the terrible embarrassments which at one time might fall upon His Kingly Majesty, without any as yet pressing necessity, if he had to resist three such mighty Powers, when he might have the benefit of time, with ten months from now to any future operations, which might give His Majesty the opportunity to strengthen his position both

<sup>1</sup> *State Papers, Foreign, Prussia*, p. 65.



within and without the Empire.' . . . 'But all this was entirely cast aside, was judged the effect of too great timidity, and I was at length rather coldly dismissed with the words, "Adieu, Monsieur de la timide politique." I have, meanwhile, the consolation of having on two occasions said what was due from a true and faithful servant, and finally take upon myself the freedom to say, that it is not to be doubted that the first achievements and successes may be perhaps brilliant, but that the number of enemies at a time when the King is isolated and deprived of all foreign assistance, a thing which has never happened to him before, at least when we consider the diversions which were made in his favour in the two preceding wars, will perhaps some day make him remember what I have taken the respectful liberty of representing to him for the last time.' These were prophetic words.

The successor of Podewils, Hertzberg, was of the same opinion. Scholl, in the *Histoire abrégée des traités de paix*, says, 'M. de Hertzberg, in a memoir read before the Berlin Academy in 1787, admits that these projects' [for an attack upon Prussia] 'were only in the future, and supposed the prior condition that the King of Prussia brought about a war; that it was very possible that these projects might never be executed, and problematic whether it would have been more dangerous to await them, or to anticipate them by exciting a war which nearly ruined Prussia, and brought her to within an ace of destruction.' Similar views were held by the King's brothers, Princes William and Henry, and by many leading Prussians. It was plain to all, in Prussia and outside of it, that Frederick was forcing a war which would otherwise never have occurred.

The Silesian conquest had filled the King with conceit and arrogance. He was confident that by a sudden and treacherous march into Saxony, he would capture the Saxon army and force the Saxon soldiers to serve in his army; then a rapid advance before Austria was ready—in spite of the much-talked-of preparations—would enable him to dictate peace at Vienna. Neither Russia

nor France would be in time to interfere. His terms of peace would show that he desired nothing but security. He would declare that it was necessary, in order to prevent renewed threats against him, that he should annex Saxony, but the Elector would be recompensed by the possession of Bohemia, to be taken from—the cause of all the unrest—Maria Theresa.<sup>1</sup>

England endeavoured to dissuade Frederick from his project, and abstained from any promise of support. Valori, the French Ambassador, told the King he would pawn his head the Empress-Queen had no design to attack him. By the order of his Government he presented a written communication, which said that if Prussia attacked Austria, France would assist the Empress. Frederick's reply was that he would not be dictated to. When Mitchell remarked 'the intention of the Austrians might be to make him strike the first blow, and thereby to entitle themselves to call for the succour from Russia and France, in case Maria Theresa was attacked in her possessions, he answered me abruptly and with some emotion, and looking me full in the face, "Now, Sir, what do you see in my face? Do you think that my nose is made to receive fillips? By Heaven, I would not put up with them."'

He was confident of victory, and treated all opposition as an offence against his honour.

The design upon Saxony had been so effectually concealed that no suspicions had been awakened. England proposed, as France had done, to subsidise the Saxons, for the improvement of their army, and did not understand why Frederick persisted in opposing the scheme. The King was watching Saxon movements. When he heard that Saxon troops were retiring from the frontier towards Dresden he wrote to Maltzahn, his envoy at the Saxon Court, to obtain particulars of their new quarters. On the 24th July Maltzahn reported that the Saxons

<sup>1</sup> Hans Delbrück, *op. cit.*, p. 33, says: 'With clear sight the King perceived the necessity of further acquisitions and had that aim always before him. . . . His goal, the conquest of Saxony and removal of the dynasty to Bohemia.'

were forming a camp at Pirna, south of Dresden. He sent a copy, obtained by the Saxon traitor Menzel, of a despatch received by Count Brühl from Flemming, the Saxon Ambassador at Vienna. Flemming told Brühl that the King of Prussia was wrong in ascribing to the Court of Vienna any other than purely defensive measures, and still less had it made any agreement with France and Russia to attack him. If there had been any such design, and the Saxons were, as Frederick alleged, in the League, the Saxon minister at Vienna could not have written in these terms. Frederick had therefore to pretend, as he did in a letter to Maltzahn, that the Saxons were kept in ignorance by the Russians and Austrians, 'who do not confide to them anything but what they think the world may know.' Receiving a report that the Saxons thought of retiring from their country and saving themselves in Bohemia, he demanded of Maltzahn 'whence they have again acquired this terror. These knaves cry more than all others against me, as much at Vienna and Petersburg as in France, and never cease to breathe against me.'

On the 27th July Klinggræffen reported that the Empress-Queen's reply to the King's question was, 'That affairs in general being in a state of crisis, she had thought it advisable to take measures for her own security and for that of her allies, which did not tend to the prejudice of anybody.' It was the object of Kaunitz to delay matters so that Austria might recover some of the lost time in regard to military preparations; and he desired that the first blow should be struck by Prussia, for on no other condition could Austria call upon France for assistance. In this policy Kaunitz obtained a complete success, forcing Frederick to play his game.

On receipt of Maria Theresa's reply, Frederick ordered Klinggræffen to inform the Empress that he had reliable information of an offensive alliance between herself and the Czarina Elizabeth, for the purpose of attacking him next spring; he considered himself 'entitled to demand from the Empress a formal and categorical declaration, consisting in an assurance, either verbal or in writing,



that she has no intention of attacking me, either this year or the year that is coming.'

Mitchell reported, 'The King of Prussia declared to me that he saw the Empress-Queen was resolved to have war, and there was no help for it, but that upon reflection (as this was about the beginning of August) that Hanover was quite *dégarni* of troops, if he marched on any expedition so early in the season (and he said he was ready) the French might be tempted to come into Germany and take up their winter quarters in Germany. He would therefore delay for some weeks his expedition in order to deceive them (having ordered his minister at Paris to communicate the steps he had taken at Vienna).'<sup>1</sup> Frederick did not believe that France would assist Austria with more than the 24,000 men stipulated by the Treaty of Versailles. To escape the attentions of even that small contingent he intended to postpone his attack until the end of August—a very hazardous decision which, in the event, ruined his schemes.

On the 15th August Frederick received a letter from Klinggraeffen, in which he said that for his second message a written statement had been desired at Vienna, and that he had not felt himself authorised to give it. Frederick wrote him an order to give the written memoir. He pretended to be very annoyed with the delay but, as we have seen, he did not intend to move till the end of August. When, on the 20th August, Klinggraeffen presented the written memoir to Maria Theresa, he was given a written reply in which the Empress-Queen denied the existence of any offensive treaty against Prussia. To the overbearing and preposterous demand no detailed assurance could be, or was, expected.

Frederick received this reply on the 25th August 1756. He wrote next day to Maltzahn to inform the Court at Dresden, that the dangerous designs of the Court of Vienna placed him, to his great regret, in the distressing necessity of entering into Saxony to march thence into Bohemia.

<sup>1</sup> British Museum, Add. MSS. 6870, p. 41.

By way of answer to the Empress-Queen, Frederick sent to London, on the 27th August, his *Remarques sur la réponse de la Cour de Vienne*. In a 'Péroration,' he says that the Court of Vienna 'intends to violate with impunity all that which is most sacred among men, to overthrow the German Empire,' an odious project which he is resolved to oppose. He 'declares that the liberties of the Germanic body will be buried only in the same tomb with Prussia.' His Majesty 'calls Heaven to witness that after having employed all suitable means for the preservation of Germany and of his own States from the scourge of war, by which they were menaced, he has been forced to take up arms to oppose a conspiracy plotted against his kingdom, that after having exhausted every means of conciliation, even to the extent of making the Empress-Queen the arbiter of peace or war, he now sets aside his usual moderation, only because it ceases to be a virtue when it is a question of defending his honour, his independence, his country and his crown.' The pose of being forced to act not only in his own defence, but to protect the liberties of Germany was intended to conciliate the various princes of the Empire, but they were not so easily deceived, as will appear later. The attack upon Saxony exposed the hypocrisy of these fine words.

## 2. THE FATE OF SAXONY

'The policy of invasion has established as a principle that the first step for the conquest of a country is to have a footing there, and that is what is the most difficult; the rest is decided by the fate of War and the right of the strongest.' Thus wrote Crown Prince Frederick in 1730, in the *Considérations sur l'état présent de l'Europe*. Acting on that principle, the King marched across the frontier into Saxony on the 29th August 1756.

Before his departure from Berlin he received Mitchell. 'When I asked,' writes Mitchell, 'whether he had previously demanded a passage for his troops through Saxony,

he answered he had not, that he was afraid the Saxons might have called in the Austrians, and thereby have disappointed the scheme he had laid, that nothing but the absolute necessity of his affairs made him take this step. After his troops are assembled at Pirna—for he does not seem to expect opposition from the Saxons—he will, without loss of time, pass the mountains into Bohemia . . . he does not think that the Austrians will be soon ready to attack him'—a remark which exposes the hypocrisy of the complaint of Austrian preparations.

On entering Saxony, Frederick issued a manifesto, in which, after the usual reference to the designs of his enemies, and to the action of Saxony in 1744, he says : ' His Majesty declares in the most emphatic manner to his Polish Majesty' (who was also Elector of Saxony), ' and in the face of all Europe, that he has no offensive designs against the King of Poland nor against his Estates, and that he does not enter them as an enemy, but solely for his own security ; that he will make his troops maintain the strictest order and the severest discipline, and that though obliged to yield to the most pressing considerations, he awaits with impatience the happy hour when the same considerations will permit him to return to his Polish Majesty his Electoral Estates, held as a deposit which will always be acknowledged by him.'<sup>1</sup> A few days later another manifesto appeared, the *Exposé des motifs qui ont obligé sa Majesté le roi de Prusse à prévenir les desseins de la cour de Vienne*, which repeated the excuses already so widely disseminated—that Austria had planned to attack him through Saxony, and he was obliged to counter-attack in self defence.

On the approach of the Prussians, the Saxon army of 20,000 men concentrated at Pirna, south of Dresden. The Elector-King Augustus III., of Saxony-Poland, went with the troops, while the Queen remained at Dresden. It was resolved to stand a siege in the strong Pirna position until Austrian assistance arrived ; but the simple precaution of providing food for more than a few weeks was neglected.

<sup>1</sup> *Preussische Staatsschriften*, iii. p. 125.



Frederick advanced into Saxony at the head of 67,000 men. With Schwerin's 27,000 in Silesia he had a total of 94,000 for the Bohemian adventure. In Pomerania and East Prussia there were 30,000, which raised the armies actually in the field to 124,000 men. In addition 30,000 were in garrison, the total Prussian force being 154,000 men, with 122 heavy guns. The Prussian figures were swollen by *Uebercomplete*, above the establishment. Thus the actual numbers were greater than the enemy would expect.

The Austrian army had been reorganised since the close of the Silesian wars, but it was still inferior to the Prussian in discipline, equipment and mobility. The artillery had been strengthened by Field-Marshal Prince Lichtenstein, but the mobilisation arrangements were so imperfect that late in August not a single gun was with the field force. The establishment reached a nominal total of 177,000 men, but the actual figures were much lower. Field-Marshal Daun reported in 1755 a deficiency of 38,000 men, whereby the total was reduced to 139,000, and of these, considerable contingents were stationed in the Netherlands, in Italy, and in home garrisons.

On the 29th August, the day when the Prussians crossed the border, Maltzahn, the Prussian envoy at Dresden, demanded, in a personal audience with Augustus III., free passage, *transitus innoxius*, for the army. This was immediately accorded, without demur. Augustus wrote to Frederick to that effect, and sent Lieut.-General Meagher to confer with the King in regard to the details of the arrangements to be made. Meagher was received by Frederick, and took back with him a letter written by the King, which concluded with the following declaration: 'I have throughout my life made profession of probity and honour, and by that character, which is dearer to me than the title of King, which I hold only from the chance of birth, I assure Your Majesty, that even if at times, especially in the beginning, appearances may be against me, He will, in case it should be impossible to arrive at a reconciliation, find that His interests are sacred to me,

and He will find in my proceedings more consideration of His interests and those of His family, than are insinuated by persons who are too much beneath me for me to name them.'

To this revolting hypocrisy Augustus replied that in spite of the King's proclamation that he did not come as an enemy, his troops had made exactions, seized the treasure, demolished part of his fortress of Wittenberg, and arrested all Saxon officers whom they encountered. He begged that Prussian troops should evacuate his country, and proposed to enter into a treaty of neutrality with Frederick. He received, in reply, a letter of polite expressions, with a refusal to evacuate Saxony.

Appeals for assistance were sent to Vienna, Paris and St. Petersburg. Augustus wrote to Maria Theresa: 'The King of Prussia, without declaring war upon me, on the contrary, filling me with protestations of friendship, is ruining my country totally, and is acting there worse than it is the custom to do in an enemy country . . . this cruel enemy has not only taken possession of all my country, but of all my revenue without exception, and is behaving as an absolute autocrat, without pity or mercy for my subjects.' Augustus enclosed a report from Brühl, which spoke of the incredible quantity of rations demanded, of the cattle and horses seized and the recruits impressed. The King of Prussia had taken all the cash in the country, and everything that could be used for the army, and compelled all duties, excise, and taxes of every kind to be paid to him. This had been done without waiting for a reply to the demand for *transitus innoxius*. Lieut.-General Meagher, who had been sent as emissary by the Elector-King, had been treated as a prisoner of war; the Prince of Saxe-Gotha, a Saxon Lieut.-General, had been seized as a prisoner of war on the 30th August, the day after the irruption. The King of Prussia had threatened that if the Saxon army retired into Bohemia he would destroy the Electoral Palace at Dresden.

On the 10th September, by Frederick's order, the secret official archives at Dresden were opened with keys obtained

by threats from the Electress-Queen. Breaking into archives is permissible only against an avowed enemy in war. Saxony was not at war with Prussia; Frederick declared incessantly that he came as a friend. The act therefore is indefensible. The object was to obtain the originals of the documents which had been copied by Menzel. When obtained they were published, with notes prepared by Hertzberg and corrected by Frederick, in the *Mémoire raisonné sur la conduite des cours de Vienne et de Saxe, et sur leurs desseins dangereux contre sa Majesté le Roi de Prusse, avec les pièces impériales et justificatives qui en fournissent les preuves.* As already observed, the Menzel documents proved merely that Austria and Russia were bound by treaty to assist each other if Prussia attacked either of them. Saxony was in the confidence of both Powers, but was not a party to the treaty. These arrangements being purely defensive, afforded no excuse for the Prussian attack. Frederick thought that his mere assertion that he had discovered hostile machinations would suffice to put him right in the eyes of Europe. He thought that the people of foreign countries could be as easily deceived as his own slaves. He was mistaken. The breaking into the archives of a neutral Power, the rudeness shown to the Electress-Queen, mother of the Dauphine, were among the causes which brought France into the war.

On the 10th September the Saxon army, with the Elector-King Augustus III. and his chief minister Count Brühl, was surrounded at Pirna, and its supplies cut off. On the 12th Augustus wrote to Frederick proposing that if he would evacuate the rest of Saxony he should have for his surety the fortresses of Wittenberg, Torgau, and Pirna, and certain hostages. Frederick replied in his shameless manner, 'I repeat again, and I assure Your Majesty upon my honour, which is dearer to me than life, that I have no designs against him nor against the interest of his Family, but that in the present situation his fate must be united to mine, and I assure him, by all that is most sacred, that if fortune favours me in this war that he will have no



reason to wish me ill, but that if misfortune comes Saxony will have the same fate as Prussia and the rest of my domains.'

On the 15th Frederick explained to General Arnim, who had been sent to him by Augustus, that the Saxon soldiers would have to swear fealty to him and be incorporated in his own army, a demand which put an end to the Elector's attempts at an accommodation. Augustus wrote, however, on the 16th, complaining that the Palace at Dresden, where the Electress-Queen and family were in residence, was occupied by Prussian troops. 'Even in the most sanguinary wars consideration is given to Royal persons, and their residences are not occupied. The King of Sweden came as an enemy into Saxony in the time of the late King my father, but he never permitted a soldier to enter the residence.' Augustus concluded with a request that his correspondence with the Electress-Queen at Dresden should not be interrupted and demanded a free passage for himself and Count Brühl to his Kingdom of Poland, but the answer was that he must first agree to the demands with regard to his army.

The Saxon army was closely invested, the intention being to force a capitulation by hunger. But Winterfeldt had already reported in 1754 that the fortified camp at Pirna was too large for the Saxon army. He repeated to the King his opinion that it could be carried by assault. Napoleon (*Correspondance*, vol. xxxii. p. 164) says that 'the attack could not have failed.' Time was pressing; the whole scheme of conquest, the campaign, even the result of the war, depended on a prompt advance into Bohemia, before the Austrians were ready. Frederick ruined his future by this inaction before Pirna. It was the most serious mistake in all his military career. He should either have attacked at once, or should have accepted the proposals of Augustus for neutrality with guarantees; then he could have advanced without delay to the walls of Vienna. The Austrians had not expected the Prussian breach of the neutrality of Saxony, and had not divined Frederick's ambitious project of annexing that prosperous

country. They were surprised at the respite now afforded them.

Field-Marshal Browne had 32,000 men at Kolin, but without artillery. When the guns arrived Browne advanced with the intention of setting free the Saxons. Frederick detached from Pirna a force which came in contact with the Austrians on the 30th September. On the 1st October 1756 was fought at Lobositz the first battle of the Seven Years' War. The Prussians had 28,000 men and 98 guns, the Austrians 31,000 with 94 guns. The Prussians were the strongest in cavalry, the Austrians in infantry.

The King sent forward a body of cavalry to attack the Austrian left, but it was unable to withstand the Austrian fire of artillery and infantry, and retired defeated; a second attack, in which the greater part of the large Prussian force of cavalry took part, also failed. The Prussian left was attacked, and Frederick thought the battle lost. He rode off the field to the village of Bilinka, over a mile to the rear, leaving the command to Marshal Keith, with instructions to retire. He sent for the Guard and the Gendarmes to escort him. This was at 1 P.M.

Prince William tells the story in his *Relations et Anecdotes*; it is confirmed by Prince Henry, in the *Relation de la campagne de 1756*.<sup>1</sup> According to Prince William, Frederick said to him: 'My brother, things are going badly for us, we are beginning to run short of munitions, the enemy is reinforcing the attack upon our left, and you see the line of infantry upon the height behind the village' (Sulowitz). 'If he attacks us on our right, which he should do, we shall be broken on both flanks, and it will be finished. The Marshal' (Keith) 'considers the battle lost beyond hope of recovery, and I do not intend to risk being taken prisoner; so it is time for me to retire at present; come with me, we will depart.' Prince William answered, 'I think, my dear brother, that matters are not yet so desperate, and I hope our people will stand firm,

<sup>1</sup> See also *Forschungen zur Brandenburgischen und Preussischen Geschichte*, vol. iv., 1891.

and before it is quite decided it would be better to remain here than to depart.' Frederick replied, 'But I do not want to be taken a prisoner, and the Marshal agrees with me that if I remain longer and the confusion increases I shall not be able to retire, and what, then, would you have me do?' The Prince gave the King the advice to hold out at least till nightfall, but Frederick said to Keith: 'Get out of this, as best you can.' The Prince then retired with the King. He ventured, 'If I might speak, but I dare not.' The King said, 'Speak, speak.' 'Do you remember, my brother, the battle of Mollwitz, and the adventure of Oppeln?' The King answered, 'But that cannot happen again.' 'At this moment,' wrote Prince William, 'Major Oelnitz, adjutant to the King, arrives with the news of the victorious attack of Bevern with the left wing.'

Frederick the Great at Lobositz, as at Mollwitz, showed the white feather, retiring from the field to escape capture, although his army had not been defeated. He was more experienced on the second occasion; instead of galloping away almost unattended, for a wild flight during the night, he departed early and took a substantial escort as protection.

In his absence the Prussian left overcame the Austrian right, and took possession of the village of Lobositz. At 5 P.M. the fighting came to an end. The losses on both sides were about 3000. The armies remained within striking distance. Next morning Browne retired, unmolested, to Budin. The Austrians, now provided with iron ramrods and an adequate artillery, had fought better than in the Silesian wars.

In order to ascribe his failure to beat the enemy to their superiority in men and guns, Frederick wrote: 'With twenty-four battalions we drove off seventy-two, and, if you like, 700 guns.' Napoleon's bulletins, notorious for their falsehood, never reached such an extreme of fantastic invention. Frederick issued an order thanking his troops for their 'extraordinary bravery,' and wrote to Schwerin, 'Since I have had the honour to command them I have



never seen them exhibit such prodigies of valour, both cavalry and infantry.' To speak thus of the cavalry who had been swept off the field, and nearly involved the infantry in their own disorder, and of an army which failed to defeat an enemy of practically equal strength, is extravagant and absurd. To conceal his departure from the field Frederick drew a sketch of the battle and sent it to Schwerin, with express injunctions to show it to other officers. He used the same trick, it will be remembered, to cover up his flight from Mollwitz.

The battle of Lobositz did not put an end to Browne's effort to succour the Saxons. He left Budin with a relieving force of 8000 men on the 8th October, passed by the Prussians unobserved, and on the 11th was at Mitteldorf, nearly six miles from the Saxon left at Königstein. There he waited, as had been agreed, for signs of a Saxon movement. But the Saxons bungled their plans, giving the enemy ample time to prepare, and when they finally crossed the Elbe at Königstein, on the 13th, they found the Prussians in such force, and so strongly posted, that it was impossible to advance further. Browne could do nothing to help them with his small force; he retired to Budin on the 14th.

On the 16th the Saxons capitulated. The Elector, attended by Brühl, retired to Warsaw. The Saxon troops, numbering 18,000 men, became prisoners of war. They were separated from their officers, the oath of allegiance to the King of Prussia was read to them, and they were induced to hold up their hands as a sign of their willingness to enter the Prussian service. The Guard, some Grenadier battalions, and the artillery, refused to desert their Prince; they were forcibly incorporated into Prussian regiments. The other troops were kept together to form Prussian regiments under Prussian officers. These regiments proved of very little service to Prussia; some of them contrived to desert *en masse*, all shed large numbers by desertion.

Frederick's treacherous seizure of Silesia in 1740, his efforts in years of peace to cause dissensions between

the Powers, his threatening gestures, his incessant intrigues to alight a general war, and finally his unprovoked attack upon Saxony, convinced his neighbours that it was necessary to make a united stand against the Prussian bully with his formidable army of mercenaries. On the 22nd January 1757 Russia entered into a convention with Austria; each Power engaged to furnish 80,000 men, Austria agreeing to pay Russia a subsidy of a million roubles a year. Sweden entered the league against Prussia on the 21st March 1757. On the 1st May, by the second Treaty of Versailles, France promised Austria great military assistance, receiving in return the ports of Ostend and Nieuport. On the 17th January 1757 the Reichstag, or Imperial Diet, ordered the mobilisation of the troops of the Empire, to resist the Prussian aggressor. Hanover, Brunswick and Hesse-Cassel seceded, but the other States furnished contingents which formed the army of the Empire. Thus a grand alliance was formed of Austria, Saxony, Russia, France, Sweden, and the majority of the Princes of the Empire, who feared for the safety of their own territories. In spite of their bitter rivalries and animosities this collection of States, comprising the greater part of the civilised world, were held together through long years of war by a common sense of insecurity.

This unwieldy alliance could not have been formed in time for any effective opposition, but for the obliging delays of the Prussian King. The long interval between his first preparations on the 17th June, the first threatening demand upon Maria Theresa of the 18th July, and the first act of war on the 26th August, was all to the advantage of his neighbours Saxony and Austria; and he frittered away further invaluable time in overcoming the resistance of Saxony. Thus Austria was saved, and the imprudent as well as criminal enterprise was deprived of its only chance of success.

## 3. DEFEAT AT KOLIN

For the campaign of 1757 Austria put into the field, with the contingents from the Netherlands and North Italy, an active army of 118,000 men. Prince Charles of Lorraine, who had proved his incapacity in the Silesian wars, was once more given the command. The Emperor Francis pressed his brother's claim, and the partiality and affection of Maria Theresa made the choice inevitable. Almost any senior officer would have been preferable to the easy-going, careless man, who was not even an Austrian by birth. Of what use all the diplomacy of Kaunitz, all the accumulation of men, munitions and money, if the army was to be placed in the hands of an incompetent leader ?

The Prussian total strength, including the Saxons, and excluding garrisons, was 152,000 men. Of these 10,000 were placed at Wesel to watch the French, 20,000 were sent to face the Russians, and 5000 were in scattered positions. This left 117,000 men in Saxony and Silesia for the campaign against an equal Austrian army.

French pressure would not be felt on the Rhine until April at earliest, and the Russians would not have to be considered until the summer. The Austrians being the only enemy actually in the field, Schwerin and Winterfeldt, the two generals whose opinions Frederick valued, urged upon him a policy of attack. He hesitated. Many letters passed, in March 1757, in which the generals put forward plans for the offensive, which the King received with compliments but also with objections. He sent General von der Goltz to consult with them. On his return with the report of the advice he had received, Frederick decided to attack the nearest enemy.

On the 18th April the Prussians advanced into Bohemia, their objective being the capital, Prague. The Austrian army under Prince Charles, with Browne as his adviser, lay in and about Prague. A contingent under Serbelloni failed to join the main body. Serbelloni was dismissed



and Daun given the command of the force, but he was unable to reach Prague before the Prussians.

On the 5th May Frederick sent a corps under Keith to invest Prague on the west, while with his main army he attacked Prince Charles on the east. He had 64,000 men, consisting of 47,000 infantry and 17,000 cavalry. The Austrians were nominally 60,000, 47,500 infantry and 12,500 cavalry, but owing to mistakes in the orders given, many men did not join their companies in time to take part in the fight. Prince Charles asserted that in consequence, he had no more than 55,000.<sup>1</sup> It was especially in cavalry, his weak arm, that there were these deficiencies. The Prussians at the battle of Prague were nominally 4000 in excess of the Austrians, actually somewhat more. They had a preponderance of nearly three to two in cavalry.

The Austrian left, resting on Prague, was too strong to be attacked. Schwerin, in command of the Prussian centre and left, was ordered to march round to the Austrian right, and assault the flank. The King retained the right under his own hand in reserve. When Schwerin's design became apparent, Browne moved troops from the left to the threatened right; thus the main assault when it came was frontal, on what had been the flank.

The attack began at 10 A.M. with a cavalry combat, which ended in the defeat of the Austrians, who fled. The Prussian cavalry then committed the same error that had been so fatal to the Austrians at Mollwitz and Chotusitz; they wasted themselves in despoiling the Austrian camp. Thus the Prussian superiority in cavalry was nullified, and the issue of the battle was left to infantry and artillery. Prince Charles, while endeavouring to rally the fugitive Austrian cavalry, was seized by illness and had to leave the field.

When Schwerin sent his infantry against the Austrian right they were met with a fire from cannon and musket which they could not endure. Schwerin himself seized a

<sup>1</sup> *German General Staff, Der Siebenjährige Krieg*, vol. ii. pp. 122, 124, 126; vol. iii. p. 206; vol. vi. p. 24.

standard and attempted to lead his troops once more to the assault, but he was killed, and the officer who succeeded him with the standard was also shot. The Prussians retired in disorder, leaving twelve guns in the hands of the Austrians. But Browne was now severely wounded, and that loss more than made up for the death of Schwerin, for Browne was the soul of the Austrian defence, and the Austrians were left without a leader.

The King had not intended that his troops of the right should engage, but General Manstein in that quarter pushed his men forward, and another advance being made on the left, the whole line became involved. The issue was stubbornly contested. The Prussian infantry in this battle was the finest force that Frederick ever led into the field. Eventually the Austrians gave way; to cover the retreat the cavalry of their left made a vigorous charge, which enabled the bulk of the defeated army to obtain shelter in Prague. The remainder, some 15,000 men, fled south and east, and ultimately succeeded in joining Daun.

In killed and wounded the Austrians lost 9000 only, compared with the Prussian 12,500, but the Austrian prisoners and missing were 4300, the Prussian only 1800. The Prussian infantry lost in this severe battle many of their best officers and men, who could not be replaced.

The Prussians surrounded Prague. Frederick was confident that he would capture the town, with the original garrison, the army of Prince Charles, and the Prince himself; and that the collapse of Austria and a general peace would follow. He described the victory he had just won as his 'Pharsalus.'

Prague contained a civil population of 70,000 persons, and the garrison was now raised to a total of 46,000 men. Frederick wrote to the Duke of Brunswick: 'Only a bombardment can help us; it will depend upon the chance whether some bombs fall upon what remains of their stores, and sets them on fire.' The siege guns did not arrive till the 28th May. From that date fifty mortars and heavy guns kept up an incessant fire upon the town. No attempt

was made to breach the walls. The cathedral was made a special mark, and suffered serious injury. Fifteen hundred houses were destroyed or damaged. Prince Charles complained that the enemy was doing his utmost to destroy the town, making war upon the poor inhabitants more than on the troops, who had suffered little.<sup>1</sup> The guns fired day and night, until the supply of shot came to an end.

The army under Daun meanwhile had been reinforced. Maria Theresa sent the Austrian general peremptory orders to advance and raise the siege of Prague. She wrote herself: 'I give you my word as Empress and Queen that in case of success your great service will be received with all thanks and recognition, and that unsuccess will never be brought up against you.' On the 12th June Daun at last made a move forward. Frederick decided to attack him, but he took from Prague only four regiments of infantry and one of cavalry. With troops collected from other directions he obtained a total force of 36,000 men, of whom 22,000 were infantry and 14,000 cavalry, with 90 guns. Daun had 54,000 men: 35,000 infantry and 19,000 cavalry, with 150 guns, but 6000 infantry and 9000 cavalry—a large proportion of the whole—were light troops, Croats and Hussars.

Daun took position on raised ground overlooking the Kaiser-Strasse, or Imperial highway, from Planian to Kolin. When, on the morning of the 18th June, Frederick saw Daun's army on the heights above him, he perceived that the Austrian left and centre were impregnable. He did not reconnoitre their right, contenting himself with the view he obtained from the upper rooms of the hotel at Slati Slunze, opposite the Austrian centre. He said afterwards that this neglect left him with the mistaken belief that the Austrian right was narrow and incapable of expansion, and he regarded this error as the only one for which he had to reproach himself.<sup>2</sup> But in his frame of mind at the time, bent upon victory and despising

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresia's*, vol. v. pp. 193, 502.

<sup>2</sup> *Œuvres*, xxvii. (3) p. 274, 'Raisons de ma conduite militaire.'



the foe, it is questionable whether an examination of the ground would have altered his decision to attack.

He gave orders that the army was to march along the Kaiser-Strasse road, in full view of the enemy, towards Kolin; the furthest troops, having reached a point beyond Kreczor, were to turn right and storm the village, while the cavalry were to go further round to take the enemy in flank. The tactics were similar to those employed at Prague; but the Prussians on this occasion were in inferior force, and they had much stronger artillery to face.

The Prussian army was early on the move. By 10 A.M. it had marched from the Planian encampment a distance of nine miles and was resting, in view of the Austrians, opposite their centre. The day was hot and the troops were tired; a halt for nearly two hours was made. Daun employed the leisure in moving part of his reserve from the unthreatened left towards the right.

At 1 P.M. the Prussian march was resumed. Daun sent further reinforcements to his right; he gave particular attention to the placing of the guns. The Prussian vanguard under Huelsen having reached their objective, turned right and stormed up against the Austrian right; they were met by a terrible fire of musket and cannon, but with great gallantry continued to advance, and succeeded in throwing back the Austrians and in capturing some of their guns. At the same time Ziethen's cavalry overthrew the horsemen of Nadasdy on the flank. Daun, cautious to excess, began already to speak to his staff of the measures that might have to be taken for retreat; but he continued to strengthen his right. Huelsen made no progress; and then Ziethen was driven off by infantry and artillery fire.

Huelsen's vanguard had been followed in the line marching along the Kaiser-Strasse by troops under Prince Maurice of Anhalt-Dessau, after whom came Manstein with four battalions; in the rear, the Prussian right, Bevern had eight battalions, with a proportion of cavalry. Bevern was instructed to stand firm and abstain from embarking upon hostilities. It was hoped that his few soldiers would,



# BATTLE OF KOLIN 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 1757



Planjan

Kaiser

Strasse

BEVERN

PRUSSIANS

Road to  
Kolin

AUSTRIANS

PRUSSIANS

MANSTEIN

PRINCE MAURICE

HUELSEN

AUSTRIANS

PRUSSIANS

ZIETHEN

NADASDY

AUSTRIANS

PRUSSIANS AUSTRIANS

Infantry  
Cavalry

SCALE

0 1 Mile



without exposing their weakness, neutralise the whole of the Austrian left and left centre.

Prince Maurice was marching forward, followed by Manstein, when the King rode up and gave him the order to turn to the front. Maurice is said to have expostulated, observing that, according to the plan already fixed and in operation, he should go on until he was in a position to support Huelsen's attack. Frederick lost his temper, shouted, 'Will he do as he is bid?' and drew his sword, threatening personal violence. This story, like everything else that casts discredit upon Frederick, has been controverted, with copious elaborations, and the truth can no longer be discovered. The tale was current in the Prussian army immediately after the fight. Though not incredible—the army knew its King—the evidence is insufficient.

Prince Maurice undoubtedly fronted sooner than had been intended. It is said that the King rode up a second time, and ordered him to turn half left and continue on the original course, before making his attack. That, at any rate, was what was done, and the left of Prince Maurice's force ultimately stormed up against the Austrians at the desired point, protecting Huelsen's right flank. The premature fronting, whatever its cause, did not interfere with Prince Maurice's attack in any serious degree.

On Manstein, following Maurice, it had an unfortunate effect. The whole of the Prussian line was, during the march, exposed to the musketry fire of Croat skirmishers. Daun sent instructions to his left to attack Bevern, and do all that was possible to interfere with the Prussian movement. Manstein in particular was molested. He sent out parties to drive off the Croats, but without effect. Then seeing Maurice turn against the Austrian front, he moved his four battalions in the same direction, and brushing away the Croat skirmishers, launched a bold, but hopeless attack upon the Austrian centre. After severe fighting, he was totally defeated, with heavy loss.

Thus by 4 P.M. all the Prussian attacks, of infantry and cavalry, had been repulsed. Frederick sent forward the reserve cavalry under Pennavaire, but they would not

face the enemy's fire. Seydlitz then led another charge with such vigour that the Austrians were beginning to waver, when four regiments of Saxon dragoons were let loose upon them. The Saxon troopers charged with fury, swept away Seydlitz, and penetrated even the infantry squares hastily adopted in defence. The battle was now definitely lost to the Prussians, who gave way on every side. Frederick made efforts to rally his defeated troops. It is said that he shouted, 'Rogues, would you live for ever?' but the story is denied. Probably he said something of the sort, for the tale can hardly have been invented, and the remark is one which Frederick was the man to make. It would have been characteristic of him to speak to his soldiers as if their lives belonged to him, and they were snatching them from him.

He placed himself at the head of a few horsemen for a final effort, but he had not gone far when an aide-de-camp, Major Grant, who was at his side, perceiving that they were not followed, asked, 'Does Your Majesty intend that we two should take the battery?' Frederick stopped his horse, examined the enemy through his spy-glass, and perceiving that they were still in strength on the hill, and that his own troops were discouraged, he turned his horse, ordered a retreat, and rode off the field. The German books relate the story to prove the desperate valour of the King, but if, when he stopped, he had to use his glass to discover the enemy's position, he cannot have advanced far.

The Prussian loss was 14,000, of whom 4500 were prisoners, and 45 guns. The Austrian casualties were 8000.

In letters written immediately after the battle, to Keith, to George II., and to General Lehwaldt, Frederick gave the true causes of the loss of the battle, namely, his paucity in infantry and the tremendous fire of the Austrian artillery. To Mitchell he said in conversation that 'he had too few infantry, and it was not the enemy's soldiers, but their artillery, upwards of 250 guns well posted, that made him retire.' Mitchell reports on the 23rd June: 'The desire of the King to give immediate succours

in Lower Silesia, his impetuosity of temper, and, above all, the contempt he has conceived of the enemy, have been the causes of his defeat. He might have had more infantry with him, and there was no necessity to attack the enemy so posted.' In short, the blame for the defeat rests upon Frederick alone, as he admitted at the time. Later he endeavoured to put the responsibility upon Manstein and Prince Maurice, which was ungenerous and dishonourable.

He tried to make even Podewils at Berlin share the blame. He wrote on the 11th July 1757: 'Between ourselves, you yourself contributed to my having been rather too precipitate in giving battle to Daun, as you pressed me so much to send detachments towards Hanover and Hesse.' Victories were to be solely his, defeats were to be ascribed to the weaknesses of subordinates. Frederick even praised Daun, in order to lessen the blow to his own reputation.

The moral effect of the battle was great. It showed that the Prussians, even when led by their King, could be defeated. It ensured an Austrian persistence in the war until all hope of final triumph was gone. To commemorate the victory the Empress-Queen instituted the Order of Maria Theresa, which has ever since been highly prized in the Austrian army. Daun was the first Grand-master of the Order. He was also given the title 'Protector Patriae.' Kolin encouraged the allies. The States of the Empire no longer hesitated; Sweden, Russia, France were stimulated to action. Frederick saw all his enemies converging upon him, while he retreated with his defeated troops.

Frederick's brothers, who were with the army before Prague, expressed themselves with uncompromising plainness with regard to his conduct of the campaign. Prince William spoke openly to Keith, in the presence of the staff, of his brother's errors and his own anxiety.<sup>1</sup> Prince Henry wrote to the Princess of Prussia, his sister-in-law,

<sup>1</sup> F. A. Retzow, *Charakteristik der wichtigsten Ereignisse des Siebenjährigen Krieges*, i. p. 142.



'So now Phaeton is fallen, and we do not know what will become of us. The eighteenth will for all eternity be for Brandenburg an inauspicious day. Phaeton took care of his own person, and retired before the end of the battle was quite decided.' Prince Ferdinand wrote to his sister Princess Amelia, 'This is the consequence, and the price paid for decisions taken in haste, without deference to the counsels of men of experience.'<sup>1</sup>

Prince Henry's remark gives a very different account of Frederick's conduct on the field to that of the German historians. Knowing what we do of Frederick's record in previous battles, his flight at Mollwitz, his 'retirement' at Lobositz, the comment of his brother is convincing; of no Prince who had given evidence of a readiness to expose himself to danger would such things be said.

There was much dissatisfaction with the King's conduct of the war. It was said that, by the enormous losses he had brought upon the Prussian infantry at Prague and Kolin, Frederick had in six weeks destroyed the work of thirty years. He replied to these strictures in two papers: *Raisons de ma Conduite militaire* and *Apologie de ma Conduite politique*. The military explanations have already been referred to. The political paper he called an *Apology*, for in it he admitted that he had not anticipated the coalition against him. He had not believed that either Russia or France would assist Austria.

From Kolin Frederick galloped to Prague, by way of Nimburg. On alighting from his horse on the outskirts of Prague, he nearly collapsed from fatigue and grief. To Prince Henry he spoke of his own death as the probable result of his defeat. He ordered Keith to raise the siege of Prague and retire to Leitmeritz; then he returned to Nimburg. He was in a nervous condition. On meeting the Guards battalion he gave way to tears.<sup>2</sup>

Frederick fell easily into the melodramatic pose of the toiling hero who longs for death to put an end to his miseries. He wrote to D'Argens: 'If I had been killed

<sup>1</sup> R. Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, i. p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> *German General Staff*, iii. p. 98.

at Kolin, I should be in a port where I should have no more tempests to face. I must navigate still on this tempestuous sea, until a small corner of earth gives me the boon that I have not been able to find in this world. Adieu, my dear friend, I wish you health and all sorts of happiness, which are denied to me.'

Even before the battle of Kolin Frederick was watched closely by England for signs of a treacherous arrangement with France, while France expected to hear of attempts to make peace with Austria. His character was now so well known that all the combatants, friends and foes, were on the look-out for knavery of some sort. Their suspicions were justified. Frederick wrote to his sister Wilhelmina, Margravine of Baireuth, 25th June: 'After the misfortune we sustained on the 18th, I have no resource but to try and make peace by the means of France.' He asked her to try and discover what terms could be obtained. He wrote again on the 28th June and the 7th July. On the latter date he proposed an offer of 500,000 écus (about £120,000) to Madame de Pompadour, adding the caution, 'You know what care is necessary in this affair, and how important it is that my name should not be introduced, the smallest breath in England of my complicity might spoil everything.' Five days later, on the 30th June, Mitchell reported that the King 'renewed to me his firm resolution to hearken to no terms of peace without His Majesty's (King George's) privity and approbation.' Treachery being natural to Frederick, he expected that England would make a separate peace with France. He said to Mitchell, 'I wish we could make peace, and if the King does, I hope I shall not be sacrificed.' This was the chronic condition with Frederick; he was always negotiating for a secret treaty with each enemy, and suspecting each ally of playing the same trick upon him.

He wrote out a curious paper, which he headed, *Abstract of the arguments that an Austrian Minister in London might employ to obtain subsidies from England, in the year 1763.* In this he gives the excuses—not unlike those he

was accustomed to offer when guilty of the abandonment of an ally—which Austria might make for a treacherous desertion of France in order to obtain subsidies from England.<sup>1</sup>

At the interview with Mitchell of the 28th June, Frederick with great reluctance forced himself to ask for a British subsidy. 'I must observe,' reports Mitchell, 'that it is the first time I ever saw His Prussian Majesty abashed, and this was the only conversation I have had with him which seemed to give him pain.' The very large subsidy of £670,000 a year was demanded. At a later date, when Mitchell had received his instructions, he reported, 30th August: 'I took the liberty to observe that this subsidy was larger than England had ever given in one year to any foreign power whatever; that the nation, engaged in a most expensive war with France, might find a difficulty in raising so great a sum.'<sup>2</sup>

It is amusing to observe Frederick's moral indignation at the conduct of his enemies. 'I am in the position,' he wrote to Wilhelmina, 'of a traveller who finds himself surrounded and about to be assassinated by a band of criminals who intend to divide his goods among themselves.' . . . 'It is shocking and a disgrace to humanity and to good morals. What! Sovereigns who compel the observance of the laws of justice in their dominions give so odious an example to their subjects. What! Those whose duty it is to legislate for the world teach, by their examples, the commission of crime. Oh time! Oh manners! It would not be worse, in truth, to live among tigers, leopards, wolves, than to find oneself, in an age which passes for refined, among these assassins, these brigands, and these perfidious men who govern this poor world.' When one of them was attacked the others had gone to his assistance.

On the 1st July Frederick received news of the death of his mother the Queen-Dowager, Sophia Dorothea. Although she had been in poor health for some time, the

<sup>1</sup> The original of this paper, in Frederick's handwriting, is in the British Museum, Add. MSS. 6845.

<sup>2</sup> Bisset, *Memoirs of Sir Andrew Mitchell*, i. p. 271.



event, coming on the top of the other misfortunes, was acutely felt. Frederick had from childhood loved and admired his mother; he had adopted her French manner; he had been supported by her in his struggle with his father. Her presence had been precious to him in his womanless life.

The remnant of the Kolin army retreated from Nimburg to Jung-Bunzlau. Frederick sent his brother and heir, Prince William, to take command of the defeated troops. By the 1st July the army had been reinforced, and counted 38,000 men. To this army was confided the defence of the approaches to Silesia and Lusatia. The troops from Prague, under the command of the King, retired upon Leitmeritz, where they covered Dresden, and watched the movements of the French. This force also consisted of 38,000 men.

Daun's victorious troops joined the Prague force, and the combined armies came under the command of the still unavoidable Prince Charles. The Emperor Francis declared that he would regard the supercession of his brother as a personal affront, and that ended the matter, for the time, to Frederick's great advantage.

Prince Charles had now a total force a little superior in numbers to Frederick's two armies, but it contained a large number of light troops. If Frederick had been willing to risk another battle, and had concentrated his armies, his chances were more favourable than at Kolin. He had beaten Prince Charles so often that it is probable he would have done so again. Even without a battle his combined force would have been strong enough to block an Austrian advance. The excuse he gave for the separation of his forces was that he was obliged to watch the advance of the French on one side, and hold back the Austrians on the other. His real reasons were that he was unwilling to present himself before the troops he had led to disaster—they were given to Prince William—and that he was afraid of the effect that another lost battle would have on his reputation and authority. To spare his own vanity he gave Prince Charles and Daun the opportunity,

which might easily have been denied them, of choosing which of the separated enemies they should overwhelm with the combined Kolin and Prague armies. They decided to move against Prince William, to drive him back, and thus open the road either into Saxony, threatening Brandenburg, or into Silesia for the reconquest of the lost province.

The Austrians moved with their usual deliberation. They might have crushed Prince William by a sudden attack, but were incapable of such an effort. Not till the 3rd July did they cross the Elbe. Prince William, in obedience to Frederick's commands, retreated to Hirschberg, thus drawing nearer to the King. Frederick wrote to his brother that the two forces would join and fight the enemy, but he made no movement himself, no preparation for the talked-of battle. His anxiety to avoid such an event is again shown in a letter to the Margravine of Baireuth, 13th July 1757: 'The position is so critical that an unfortunate quarter of an hour might establish for ever in the Empire the tyrannical domination of the house of Austria.'

Frederick's instructions to his brother began with orders to retire upon Hirschberg, and then upon Neuschloss, in order to be in a position to join his own force; he expected an attack by the Austrian main army, and gave a rendezvous near his own camp, in that event; he told the Prince to guard against an attempt by the enemy to pass between them, towards Tetschen. He told him on no account to retreat further, but if he did so the King would send him assistance; he would find no provisions in Saxony, the only possible direction of his retreat. Prince William sent him, on the 8th, a request for a positive order, to say whether he was to cover Silesia or Zittau. He wrote again, on the 11th: 'I ask you to be so gracious as to give me positive orders as to what you order me to do.' . . . 'All our news confirms that the Grand Army, after passing the Iser at Münchengratz, is camped at Niemes,' that is, it was on Prince William's left front. Ignoring this information, Frederick insisted that Prince William

should prepare to move to his right to assist the King. Prince William wrote once more for precise instructions : ' I demand your decision whether I should take a post in advance, at the risk of losing communication with Zittau, or whether I should camp near Gabel, which is not far from here, and covers the road to Zittau.' Frederick gave no countenance to the sensible suggestion of a move to Gabel. His answer, on the 14th, was : ' If you keep retiring, you will be at Berlin within four weeks.' He added, still anxious for himself, the erroneous statement : ' Daun is at Neuschloss, we have heard his guns. I see that you are imposed upon by rumours, and that all enemy forces are exaggerated to you.' . . . ' When you have counted it all up you will see that they exaggerate to you the number of the enemy in your neighbourhood.'

But it was Frederick who was imagining hosts of enemies about him, where there were only detachments, while his brother had to face the main force. The King wrote on the 10th : ' Since yesterday evening, we have had a large enemy corps in front of us, camped between Wegstädtl and Zahorzan. I cannot say whether it is the whole of the enemy's army, or what it is. They have sent a large detachment towards Ausche, which I compute at 4000 men. As far as I can guess, their intention is merely to take Tetschen. You are in a position to fall on the rear of these detachments, which I cannot do from here. So it is desirable and even very necessary that you should detach a corps of six to seven thousand men, to drive off the enemy and make his plan fail.' The corps in question had been sent by Prince Charles to watch the King, and it should have been his business to deal with it. It was near his camp, and far from that of his brother. Frederick was demanding assistance from Prince William against the skirmishers on his own front. The Prince wrote on the 13th, on receipt of this letter, that in accordance with the King's desire Winterfeldt was marching with seven battalions and ten squadrons, to cut off the troops supposed to be marching upon Tetschen.

On the 13th July Frederick was at last convinced that he



had been mistaken throughout, that he had in front of him only the light troops of Nadasdy, and that his brother had, as he had long since asserted, the main army in front of him. The king wrote to Prince William that he must cover Lusatia and Silesia, as best he may. But Prince William's whole army was only one-half that which he had to face under Prince Charles, and at a critical moment he had sent away a substantial detachment, on a wild-goose chase, which encountered no enemy, in order to allay Frederick's alarms for his own unthreatened position. The result was that Prince William was obliged to retire.

Frederick now wrote bitter, insulting letters to his brother. On the 14th: 'You follow timid counsels which will lose all, the State and myself. You will make me pay dear for the confidence I have shown you.' On the 18th: 'After this it is impossible for me to confide to you the command of an army.' On the 19th: 'You will never be other than a pitiable General. You may command a seraglio of filles d'honneur, certainly, but as long as I live, I shall not give you command of six men. When I am dead, you may do all the follies you please, they will be to your own account, but as long as I live, you will not commit any to the prejudice of the State.'

These are inexcusable letters. The situation of Prince William was brought about by Frederick's anxiety for his own army and his own reputation. The King imagined that every pandour was the forerunner of the Austrian army, and kept his brother incessantly warned to be ready to assist him against these imaginary hosts; when he learned that the main Austrian army was threatening Prince William, he made no offer to assist him in his turn, but remained fixed at Leitmeritz, doing nothing, from the 25th June to the 20th July. It is evident from the correspondence that but for the King's fears, Prince William would have been at Gabel before the Austrians; even so, he could not have offered any permanent resistance to the enemy, whose numbers would have overwhelmed him, while his brother looked on.

Prince William fell back upon Bautzen, which was

reached on the 27th July. Frederick began retirement on the 20th, and reached Bautzen on the 29th. Prince William, with his staff, rode forward to meet the King. When Frederick saw them he turned his horse, dismounted, and sat down with his back to the approaching cavaliers, who perforce dismounted also, and waited for a message. Winterfeldt and Goltz, Prince William's generals, were sent for. Presently Goltz returned and gave the words of the King. 'Go and tell my brother and all his generals that if I did what was right I should have all their heads cut off.' When Prince William gave Frederick his reports, the King took them without a word and turned his back. The Prince wrote to him :

'MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,—The letters which you have written to me, and the reception you gave me yesterday, show only too plainly that I have lost all honour and reputation with you. This saddens and grieves me, but does not overcome me, for I have no self-reproach to make.' . . . 'My health being much upset by fatigues, but still more by vexation, I have lodged in the town in the hope of re-establishing it.

'I have asked the Duke of Bevern to send you the reports of the army ; he is prepared to give you accounts of everything.'

Frederick's answer began : 'You have by your bad conduct put my affairs in a desperate position ; it is not my enemies who ruin me, but the bad measures you have taken.' Then he spoke of his own death as the probable consequence. Frederick was never tired of threatening that climax of misfortune. 'I tell you the truth. He who has but a moment to live, has nothing to conceal. I hope you will have more happiness than I have had. The misfortune which I foresee has been caused in part by your faults. You and your children will suffer for it more than I.' Certainly Prince William suffered most. His brother indulged in melodramatic prophecies as to his own fate ; Prince William paid the full penalty. He died, 12th June 1758, of a broken heart.



Frederick fastened upon his brother the blame for the retirement of both armies, with the intention of diverting attention from his own failure at Kolin, and of concealing the fact that the discomfiture of Prince William was the inevitable result of the King's own alarms, false news, and mistaken orders, and his inaction at Leitimertitz, while the whole enemy force advanced against his brother. It was the act of a blackguard to cause his brother to be disgraced in order to preserve his own reputation.<sup>1</sup>

The behaviour of Frederick towards Prince William increased the discontent among the Prussian princes and generals. They considered that he was responsible for the war and for its disasters, and perceived that while he was bringing his country to ruin, he took every opportunity to cast the blame upon one of themselves. Prince Henry was particularly bitter. 'It is he who is responsible for this unhappy war,' he said of the King. Henry agitated for immediate peace, even if it meant territorial loss. He told Frederick that he saw no sense in driving matters to an extreme. He would not be the first Prince who had been obliged to cede a province. Steadfastness in misfortune did not consist in persevering in a lost cause, but in making use of the best method for avoiding complete ruin.

For Frederick it was a question of personal reputation. The brutal and treacherous conquest of Silesia was his work; if it had to be abandoned the only excuse, namely success, would be gone, and he would stand convicted of disgraceful conduct for which the punishment had followed. Such a humiliation was not to be endured. Frederick would let his country be devastated, rather than submit his own past to condemnation by a present failure.

He continued to write to his friends in heroic strain :

<sup>1</sup> See Retzow, *Charakteristik der wichtigsten Ereignisse des Siebenjährigen Krieges*, i. p. 116 *et seq.* Retzow was at the time with the army of the King. When the correspondence between Frederick and Prince William was first published (*Œuvres*, xxvi.) in 1855, some of the letters were suppressed; they were printed in 1887, in the *Politische Correspondenz*, xv. p. 249 *et seq.*



To Keith, 30th July : ' Either I will remedy things, or I will perish.' To the Margravine of Baireuth, 12th August : ' My lot is hard ; I would a hundred times rather be dead than live for another year in my present situation, but I shall continue to resist beyond what seems possible, and my last consolation will be to have sold dear my life and my liberty.' Hitherto he had avoided all risk to his life in battle.

He spoke of attacking the Austrians. To Winterfeldt, 5th August : ' If the enemy declines to move out of Zittau, I am already compelled to attack him wherever I find him. I can admit no alternative.' On the 15th August he advanced, with 50,000 men, to Zittau. But he found Prince Charles and Daun, with a great superiority of force, strongly posted. He did not venture to attack. On the 20th August he retreated, and lost many men from desertion in the process. In spite of his proud language he had done nothing. He brought back his army to much the position it held when he took the command from Prince William.

At this time it seemed that Frederick must inevitably be overcome by the forces advancing against him. Russia at last was on the move. The command of the Russian troops was entrusted to Field-Marshal Apraksin, a Court favourite, an indolent *bon viveur*, who had never exhibited any military abilities. His disinclination for action of any sort earned for him the name of ' the pacific Field-Marshal.' Russia, so dreaded by Frederick, early exhibited the lumbering slowness, the incompetence of her generals, and the system of directing military operations from St. Petersburg, which made her so unreliable an ally. Apraksin set his forces in motion on the 17th May 1757. His progress was slow ; not until the 1st August did he enter East Prussia. On the 30th he was attacked, at Gross-Jägersdorff, by the Prussians under Lehwaldt. Frederick had ordered Lehwaldt to risk the battle, though the Prussians were only 25,000 men against 44,000 regulars, and a contingent of light troops. It is not known where Apraksin hid himself during the battle ; he took no part

in it. The Russian soldiers stood like a rock; inexperienced, uneducated, poorly equipped, abandoned by the general, and inefficiently guided by the divisional commanders, their stolid refusal to accept defeat brought them an ultimate victory. Lehwaldt was obliged to draw off his force.

To the universal amazement Apraksin, instead of following his beaten and inferior foe, turned round and retreated. He did not stop till he had reached Memel, in the extreme north of East Prussia, on the 18th October 1757, abandoning the whole province which was already in his grasp. The retrograde move was attributed to bad news with regard to the health of the Czarina. Rumours of that kind were never wanting. Apraksin had difficulty in obtaining provisions and equipment for his army, and there was much loss from sickness and desertion in his force; but the chief cause of the retirement would seem to have been the Russian commander's aversion to anything in the nature of actual warfare. He dreaded the exchange of real blows, and went home to his Czarina, pretending that he was anxious about her health.

The news of the retreat excited scorn and anger in Paris, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. Elizabeth sent the cowardly general before a court-martial. The Russian army, urged on afresh by the Czarina, advanced again, and in the absence of all opposition, Lehwaldt having been sent for to assist Frederick, obtained control over the whole of East Prussia. That Province remained thenceforth in the Russian possession, until the end of the war.

In Sweden attempts had been made by the Court party, inspired by Queen Ulrica, Frederick's sister, to introduce the Prussian system of despotic government. They had been defeated, and Sweden, subsidised by France, joined the allies against Prussia. In September 1757 a force of 17,000 Swedes was landed in Pomerania. No opposition being offered, the Swedes were able to overrun the whole of Prussian Pomerania, with the exception of the fortress of Stettin. Lehwaldt, retiring from East Prussia after

Gross-Jägersdorff, had no difficulty in clearing the Swedes out of Prussian Pomerania, and driving them into the fortress of Stralsund.

Sweden's part in the war was thenceforth nominal. There were times when nothing stood between the Swedes and Berlin, but no aggressive action was taken beyond an occasional raid into Brandenburg to make requisitions and earn the French subsidies. The historic animosity towards Russia, and the influence of Queen Ulrica and the Court party, sufficed to prevent Sweden from exerting any influence upon the course of the war.

The Anglo-French war was going badly for England. The French captured Minorca in June 1756. There were great hopes of defeating England by the conquest of Hanover. A French army under Marshal d'Estrées seized Wesel on the Rhine, on the 9th April 1757. Advancing further the French defeated a body of Hanoverians, Brunswickers, and Hessians, under the command of the Duke of Cumberland, second son of George II., at Hastenbeck, on the 26th July. Cumberland retreated as far as the fortress of Stade at the mouth of the Elbe. The whole of Brunswick and a large part of Hanover fell into the hands of the French, now under the command of Richelieu. George II. was overwhelmed with anxiety for his beloved Electorate. Unknown to his British ministers, he sent to his son, the Duke of Cumberland, full authority to treat with Richelieu, either for an armistice or a separate peace for Hanover, or a neutralisation of Hanover; but there was to be no agreement for disarmament. Cumberland thereupon concluded with Richelieu the Convention of Klosterseven, 8th September 1757. His army was to be disbanded, but there was no stipulation as to disarmament.

Although Cumberland had insisted upon a convention, which required ratification, and not a capitulation, which would have been binding on both belligerents, Richelieu acted as if the ratification had been already obtained. He retired towards Magdeburg, threatening a siege of that fortress. Cumberland then sent the Hessians on the



march to their homes. Richelieu now objected that he could not allow a force of armed Hessians to take position in his rear. The dispersal of the troops was in consequence stopped, pending the receipt of instructions. In the end neither Louis xv. nor George II. ratified the Convention.

Frederick's one hope was an early peace, or at least an armistice. Before Kolin there had been no talk of peace. After that defeat, which put an end to all hope of conquests, and reduced Prussia to the permanent defensive, Frederick busied himself without ceasing in efforts to obtain a peace with one or all of his enemies, either openly and in accord with England, or secretly and for himself alone; protesting all the while to the British Government that he would never make a separate peace. One or other of his enemies might in a fit of depression, or of pique with its allies, accept profitable terms. The mere talk of peace would act as a sedative, and produce a condition of virtual armistice. He wrote to Finckenstein, 24th September 1757: 'Even if there is no result, I shall at least obtain the advantage of retarding the French operations, and I shall gain time.' He took care that each enemy should know that he was talking peace to the others, in the hope of causing dissensions among them.

He wrote to Richelieu, on the 6th September 1757, that he was 'persuaded that the nephew of the great Cardinal Richelieu' was 'as apt for signing treaties as for giving battles.' The letter concluded with a promise of reward. It was known that the French Marshal was not incorruptible. When Richelieu replied that he had to consult his Court, Frederick burst into extravagant phrases of love and affection for France, declaring that he had refused advantageous offers of peace from other Powers; 'by a convinced predilection for France, we prefer to come to an accord with her; with regard to a peace, whether separate or general, we await the propositions that may be made.' There was no truth in the assertion that he had been offered terms by any of the allies.

Frederick's desperation was such that he made an

attempt to bribe Madame de Pompadour with the Principality of Neuchâtel. Meeting with no sign of response, he turned round and declared that Madame had herself asked for Neuchâtel, and that his contemptuous refusal had embittered her against him.

He succeeded with Richelieu. A French advance upon Magdeburg would have compelled Frederick to retire from Saxony, and might have ended the war. But the French aim was merely the conquest of Hanover for the defeat of England. The humiliation of Prussia for the advantage of Austria and Russia, by an Austrian reconquest of Silesia, and a Russian retention of East Prussia, was considered to be contrary to the interests of France. The most powerful member of the Coalition viewed with disfavour the designs of her Allies. Already there was not merely disunion, but an actual antagonism of ambitions. Richelieu was well aware of the feeling in Paris. By a judicious application of flattery and bribery, Frederick induced the French courtier to agree to an armistice. In this way Frederick escaped the destruction which a loyal and energetic French commander could, after Kolin, have inflicted. Louis xv. afterwards put an end to the armistice, but in the meantime it had saved Prussia from ruin.

Frederick continued to use the gloomiest expressions in his correspondence. To Prince Henry : 'What a time ! What a year ! Happy, my brother, are the dead.' To Finckenstein, in October : 'I regard our affairs as desperate, or to say truth, lost. I have no further resources, and we must expect from day to day an increase of our misfortunes. Heaven is witness that it is not my fault ; but I have been badly served. There has been in addition much ill-luck, and I have had the whole of Europe against me.' To Wilhelmina, 12th October : 'In short, my dear sister, it seems to be a settled thing ; destiny, or a demon, has resolved upon the downfall of Prussia ; alliances contrary to nature, hatreds for which no cause has been given, secondary influences and real bad luck. I declare to you that my faculties are so overcome, the facts are so insistent, that all my efforts are powerless to dissipate such

strong and cruel impressions.' . . . 'I am in a cruel situation, of which the end can only be appalling and tragic.'

There was little to justify these expressions. Russia could do nothing more in the year of 1757, and if all Russian commanders were like Apraksin there was nothing to fear; besides, the Empress Elizabeth was not expected to live many months, and with her death the whole coalition would collapse. Sweden was negligible. The armistice concluded with Richelieu, just at the moment when the French commander had the ball at his feet, showed that France was not in earnest. For the remainder of the year 1757 Frederick had only to face Austria and the Imperial contingents, supported by a French detachment.

When, in consequence of Frederick's seizure of Silesia, the young Queen Maria Theresa was confronted by much greater dangers, when she had against her Prussia, France, Bavaria, Saxony, and Spain, she showed a more manly spirit than that which the greatest of the Hohenzollerns was now exhibiting. She gave way to no wallowing in dejection.

#### 4. VICTORIES AT ROSSBACH AND LEUTHEN

The Imperial Diet decided by a decree, of the 17th January 1757, that the States of Germany should furnish contingents to form an Imperial Army. Hanover, Brunswick, and Hesse-Cassel refused compliance, and joined their forces to assist Prussia. The troops of the other States formed an army of 29,000 men which, by the middle of August, had collected at Erfurt under the command of the Duke of Saxe-Hildburghausen. These contingents proved of small fighting value. The small States had little direct interest in the quarrel; none of them could gain anything, however victorious. Catholics, as well as Protestants, were unwilling allies of France, the hereditary enemy. The troops were miserably equipped, they had differing systems of drill, and no experience of movements in mass. Their princes hired them out in return for sub-



sides, and spent the proceeds in self-indulgence. The Imperial Army gave the moral support of the Empire to the enemies of Prussia. Its value as a fighting force was small.

Attached to it was a French corps under Soubise. The French army deteriorated during the reign of Louis xv. This had already become evident in the Silesian wars. The process of demoralisation continued, and had reached an advanced stage when the Seven Years' War broke out. From the highest to the lowest, officers and men were alike affected. The Commander of an army was surrounded by numerous generals, who were an impediment to his judgment and a danger to his authority. The officers were lacking in respect for those above them, and unable to obtain it from the men below them. They showed no interest in their calling, and thought only of the self-indulgences that their certificates of nobility might enable them to obtain. Many of the colonels were young men who owed their promotion to birth or money. St. Germain wrote of them: 'Young men, for the most part with the morals of the grisette.' . . . 'Ignorance, frivolity, negligence, pusillanimity are substituted for the masculine and heroic virtues.' Of the men he wrote: 'I lead a band of thieves, of assassins fit to be broken on the wheel, who will show their heels at the first musket shot, and are in a chronic state of incipient mutiny. There has never been anything like them. The King has the worst infantry in the world, and the most indisciplined, and there is nothing to be done with such troops.'<sup>1</sup> Their value was still further reduced by the association with the Imperialists.

Frederick's chief concern at this time was the restoration of his damaged reputation. With that preoccupation in mind he sent Bevern, with half the available Prussian force, to face the more formidable of his enemies, the large and triumphant Austrian army, while he himself with the remaining half operated against the comparatively harmless Soubise-Hildburghausen combination. He

<sup>1</sup> *German General Staff, Der Siebenjährige Krieg*, v. pp. 58-9.

talked of attacking the Austrians but made no move to that end. Through August and September, and the first half of October, he remained inactive in Saxony, hoping that Hildburghausen would give him the chance of obtaining an easy victory.

He spent some of his time in writing heroic letters. To Finckenstein, 16th September: 'We must see whether the future may not furnish me some opportunity for shedding my blood for the country.' 21st September: 'I shall obtain death in battle if that is possible, at the first opportunity.' 1st October: We are done, but I shall perish sword in hand.' To Wilhelmina: 17th September: 'I shall bless Heaven for its kindness if it accords me the favour of perishing sword in hand.' . . . 'How can a Prince survive his State, the glory of his nation, his own reputation?' . . . 'Never, my dear sister, can I consent to such ignominy. Honour has inspired me to expose my life in war a hundred times, has enabled me to confront death for lesser objects than this.' (He had not once exposed himself nor confronted death.)

'If I had followed my own inclination only, I should have hastened my end after the unfortunate battle which I lost; but I felt that that would be weakness, and that it was my duty to retrieve the misfortune that had come.' . . . 'I made it a point of honour to repair the disorder, in which I succeeded on the last occasion in Lusatia; but scarcely have I hastened in this direction to oppose new enemies when Winterfeldt is defeated and killed near Görlitz, the French enter into the heart of my State, and the Swedes blockade Stettin.' (He had achieved nothing in Lusatia: he marched up to the Austrians at Zittau, breathing vengeance, and marched back again, without a battle. The French had not yet entered Brandenburg, nor had the Swedes commenced to blockade Stettin.) 'As for you, my incomparable sister, I have not the heart to turn you from your resolution.' (Wilhelmina had written to him: 'Your fate will decide mine. I will not survive either your misfortunes or those of my

house.') . . . 'If you take the resolution which I have taken, we will finish together our unhappiness and misfortune, and it will be for those who remain in the world to take over the cares which will fall upon them, and to carry the load which we have sustained so long.' On the 28th he wrote to her: 'On the same day we will both perish.' . . . 'I demand nothing but death; the manner of it that I should prefer seems to escape me.' The death he is speaking of is 'sword in hand.' He could have that whenever he was willing.

He sent to Voltaire the verses he had written, proposing suicide, in the *Epistle to the Marquis d'Argens*. Voltaire replied, 'Nobody will regard you as the martyr of liberty. The situation should be faced; you know in how many Courts it is obstinately held that your entry into Saxony was an infraction of the law of nations. What would they say in those Courts? That you had avenged upon yourself that invasion, that you had not been able to sustain the annoyance of having failed in your attempt. They will accuse you of a premature despair, when they learn that you took that fatal resolution at Erfurt, when you were still master of Silesia and Saxony.' Premature despair was, after Kolin, the chronic condition of Frederick, throughout the Seven Years' War.

News arrived that an Austrian force of 3500 light troops, under Hadik, was marching towards Berlin. Frederick detached 8000 men under Prince Maurice to meet this danger, but they arrived too late. On the 16th October the Austrians broke down one of the gates of Berlin, overcame the garrison, and entered the capital of their enemy. The approach of Prince Maurice made their stay short. With a forced requisition of 200,000 thalers, Hadik left Berlin on the 17th, the day following his entry.

Prince Charles, with his large Austrian army, was left free to advance in any direction, having only the force of Bevern to overcome. It was difficult to get him to move. His brother the Emperor Francis wrote to him, 31st July 1757: 'We must not think of the conquest of territory,



but only—*N.B.—N.B. of the destruction of his army*, for if we can ruin his army the territory will of itself fall into our hands; therefore for the present you should have that alone before your eyes and as your unique aim, and you will easily understand that if we can reduce his army until it is so feeble that it embarrasses more than it helps him, you understand, I say, that if in that way we force him to a peace, the rest will fall of itself without other operation, whereas if we allow him to restore his army, it will always be the same thing and we shall gain nothing.’<sup>1</sup> On the 17th August: ‘Search for a favourable opportunity for falling upon him.’ But Maria Theresa added, at the end of her husband’s letter, a request not to come to any immediate decision. ‘You will say that this is from a woman whose advice is that of a poltroon: I admit it, when it is a question of human blood I tremble.’ Maria Theresa imagined that after Kolin Prussia was definitely defeated, and she shrank from taking upon herself the responsibility for further bloodshed. It was one of Frederick’s great advantages, that he had a man on his side and women against him. He was loyally supported by Pitt in his contest with the Czarina, the Empress-Queen and the Pompadour, three women who were liable to moments of weakness, and were never free from jealousies.

To counteract his wife’s influence upon her brother, the Emperor wrote to Prince Charles, 30th August: ‘The King’ [of Prussia] ‘must suppose that you have orders not to move, or he may consider that he has imposed on you to such an extent that he need not fear you will dare to advance.’ Again, 20th September, ‘I cannot impress upon you too strongly how necessary it is for us that all your operations should be directed against the Prussian army, and that you should make the utmost efforts to weaken it, and even to attack it as often as possible, that being the surest means for finishing the war gloriously

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, v. p. 504. The Emperor’s spelling is quaint: ‘Nous devons pas pance a la conquest de pei’; ‘ci on luy les refer son arme’: ‘on ni ganieura rien.’

and putting it out of the King's power to trouble the peace; that therefore should be your unique aim.' <sup>1</sup>

These sound ideas, which contained in them the sure road to success, were objectionable to the professional soldier who attended Prince Charles as his adviser. Daun conceived of war as an affair of manœuvres for position. It was the main duty of a general to find strong defensive positions for his army, where he could not be attacked with impunity. Battle in any other conditions was permissible only in order to provide escape from a situation which was too bad to be relieved in any other way.

The Austrian objective should have been the Prussian army under the command of the King in Saxony. In that direction assistance could have been obtained from the Soubise-Hildburghausen combination, and ultimately from the large French army threatening Magdeburg. The deliverance of Saxony could have been achieved, as the French Government urged. It would have helped the French armies, and would have taken from Frederick his valuable Saxon source of supply in men, money and material. But the French were capable of achieving that result themselves. They wished the Austrians to take the risks in Saxony, and disliked the idea of an Austrian gain in Silesia. In the same selfish spirit the Court at Vienna thought only of a purely Austrian advantage. It was for Silesia that Austria was fighting, and in that direction the Austrian effort was to be made, leaving the French and Imperialists to free Saxony if they could.

Urged on by the Emperor Francis, who was supported by Kaunitz, Prince Charles at last made a move forward, on the 2nd September, towards Breslau, the chief city of Silesia. By the 2nd October the Austrians stood in front of that town, which was protected by the Prussian army under Bevern. An immediate attack with the superior forces at disposal would probably have driven off the Prussians, and obtained the surrender of Breslau, but Prince Charles and Daun preferred to allow Bevern to

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, v. pp. 509, 510.

fortify his position, while a part of their army marched to besiege the fortress of Schweidnitz; until that operation was concluded the main Austrian army was relegated to inaction.

Frederick continued to talk of attacking the Austrians, but he lingered. At length news reached him that Hildburghausen was advancing. Hoping for a battle, Frederick ordered a concentration at Leipzig. By the 28th October he had collected there a force of 22,000 men.

Hildburghausen was urged from Vienna to drive the Prussians out of Saxony. He replied that even if his army were doubled or trebled, he would still not be able to attack even one Prussian brigade without being beaten, for the army was incapable of manœuvring; but he lost patience at last, and on the 6th October advanced with 11,000 Imperial troops. On the 30th he was at Weissenfels; and there he was joined by Soubise with 30,000 French. The combined force of 41,000 men was inferior in fighting value to the French alone, for the presence of the Imperialists, whose indiscipline was worse even than that of the French, demoralised the larger army. French and Germans, Catholics and Protestants, could not make comrades in arms. The hereditary enemies of the fatherland were invading it, the persecutors of Protestants were entering the churches to desecrate and destroy. A body of 41,000 undisciplined soldiers, hostile to each other, under commanders who were in violent disagreement, could not be regarded as an army fit to take the field. Frederick's 22,000 Prussians were amply sufficient to deal with them.

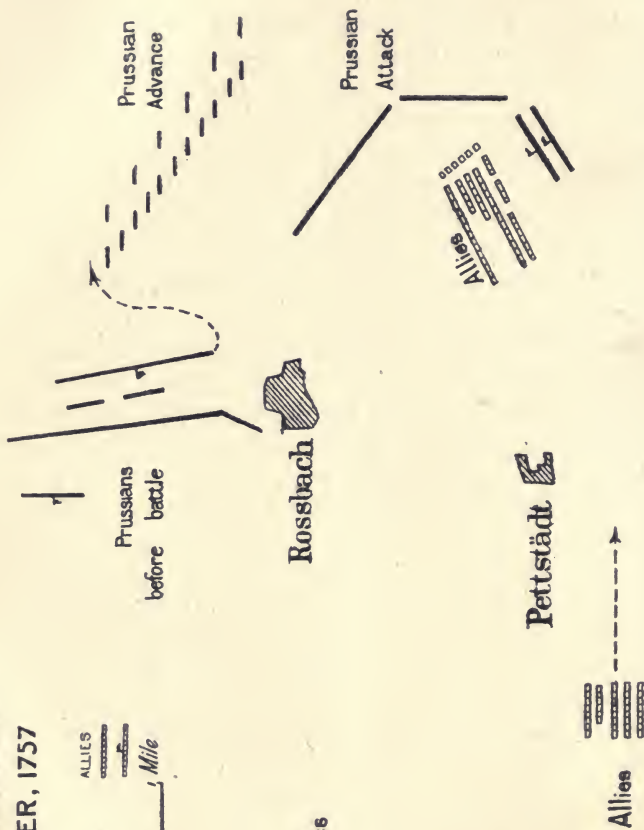
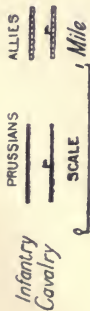
On the morning of the 5th November 1757, Soubise and Hildburghausen conceived the idea of a march to attack the enemy's left flank and rear at and behind the village of Roszbach. The army of the allies began its march, after much confusion and delay, not earlier than 11.30 A.M. The advance was made in five columns. The left column was headed by 16 squadrons of German cavalry, followed by 16 battalions of French infantry and 12 squadrons of French cavalry. The French





# BATTLE OF ROSSBACH

5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 1757



reserve artillery formed the second column. On their right was the French reserve. The fourth column was led by 17 squadrons of German cavalry, followed by 16 battalions of French infantry. The fifth column, on the right flank, consisted of German infantry followed by German artillery. There was no advance guard, and no protection on either flank while on the march.

The five columns at 2 P.M. came into the view of the Prussian outposts. Orders were instantly given by Frederick to place the army in line facing south, behind the Janus hill. In that position the Prussian movements could not be discerned by the allies. A French officer sent forward to reconnoitre, came back with the report that the Prussian army had struck its tents and was in retreat. This information spurred on the allies, who hurried forward in careless confidence, fearing only that the enemy might succeed in escaping. Meanwhile the Prussians had taken position behind the Janus hill, with a battery of 18 heavy guns on the summit, and 38 squadrons of cavalry on the left flank. Frederick was well inspired to give the command of the cavalry to Seydlitz, the youngest of his generals, only thirty-five years of age.

Allied cavalry, with a French battery of 8 heavy guns, advanced believing that they had to deal only with a rearguard. The Prussian guns on the Janus hill opened fire upon them at 3.15; the French gunners replied, but they were at a disadvantage firing up hill. At 3.30 P.M. Seydlitz led his men over the slopes, and then down upon the advancing allied horsemen. He had superiority in numbers over the German and French cavalry combined. The German cuirassiers, who were leading, had little time to form, but they made a vigorous resistance, until they were attacked on both flanks by Seydlitz's reserves. The French cavalry, as it came up, was defeated in the same manner. By 4 P.M. the allied troopers were flying in disorder towards the main army, which was still in its five columns. An attempt was made to form front, but before the manœuvre had been com-



pleted the Prussian infantry attacked. The Prussians came over the Janus hill in echelon of battalions, at intervals of fifty paces, the left in advance. This formation was adopted by Frederick in order to refuse his right, to prevent a premature engagement on that side, and so keep his right as a reserve. Eight battalions on the left were ordered to step out, the centre and right marking time; the left thus came at a diagonal on the heads of the five enemy columns, while they were attempting to form front, at 4 P.M. The fire of the Prussian left was supported by that of the heavy artillery, which had come down from its position on the Janus hill, and by another battery on the enemy's left flank. The allies, taken by surprise, were in a cramped, crowded formation, in which they could make little reply. A few infantry salvos sufficed to disorder their ranks; every cannon shot inflicted wide injuries in the solid mass. The French artillery added to the confusion by the efforts it made to break out from the columns of infantry; and when at last the guns had emerged into the open, they were overpowered by the Prussian artillery.

By 4.30 P.M. the allies were in disorder. Seydlitz had kept his cavalry in hand, preventing them from indulging in the usual wild gallop after their retreating foes. Perceiving his opportunity, Seydlitz attacked the enemy's right flank, where the Imperial infantry was posted. These untrustworthy troops had already suffered from the musketry of the Prussian left. They collapsed. A cry of 'We are betrayed,' spread among the French, and a general stampede followed. All semblance of discipline was lost; the men flung away their arms, and fled they knew not where.

The affair had lasted, from the first shot at 3.15, to the collapse of all resistance at 5.30, little more than two hours. The only sharp fighting had been that between the horsemen at the beginning. Of the Prussian infantry only the eight battalions on the left came into contact with the enemy; they fired a few salvos and received some shots in reply. The rear troops of the allies were never

engaged. They were swept away by the fugitives from the front.

The Prussians lost only 170 men killed and 380 wounded, 550 casualties, most of them sustained in the cavalry fight. The losses of the allies were from 8000 to 10,000, prisoners forming the majority, of whom many were in reality deserters, ready to join the Prussian army. The Prussians captured 72 guns and 21 standards. The remnants of the French army retired to Freyburg, of the Imperialists to Naumburg. Frederick did not follow. Soubise reported that his army could not have survived a swift pursuit.

The Imperial troops were consoled for their defeat by the blow that their allies had received. The French, for their part, wisely decided never again to mix forces with the Imperialists. Alone they would, in spite of all their deficiencies, have made a much better fight.

Frederick's conduct of the affair—it can hardly be called a battle—restored his reputation. He had enticed the enemy to attack, and then, from a concealed position, had fallen swiftly upon him, while he was on the march in column. The ease and the extent of his victory were due to the incompetence of his enemies, but the credit for a remarkable triumph must not be withheld.

Frederick now turned against the Austrians. He left Leipzig on the 13th November 1757, with 14,000 men, to assist Bevern. On the previous day, Schweidnitz capitulated to the Austrians, the garrison of 6000 men becoming prisoners of war. The fortress had been built in 1747, in accordance with Frederick's plans. The investing troops from Schweidnitz joined Prince Charles and Daun before Breslau, raising the Austrian force to a strength of 72,000 men. Bevern's original 42,000 had, chiefly from desertion, fallen to some 30,000. Prince Charles and Daun had now no excuse for inaction. It was obviously their duty to drive off Bevern, and besiege Breslau, before Frederick could bring his troops upon the scene. A letter from Maria Theresa made it impossible to delay any longer. The Empress-Queen wrote to Prince Charles,

giving him the peremptory command of the Emperor and herself to attack the Prussians.

Bevern had utilised his time in fortifying his position with formidable works of defence. The Austrians advanced to the attack on the 22nd November in two divisions; 45,000 regulars formed the centre and left, while Nadasdy on the right had 28,500 regulars (of whom Bavarians and Wurtembergers of doubtful allegiance formed 9000), and 10,500 light troops. Nadasdy's corps, weakened by its lukewarm elements, did little, but the main body of the Austrians attacked with courage, and after an obstinate struggle overcame Bevern's resistance. On the 23rd Bevern retreated through the town of Breslau, leaving there a garrison of 5000 men, to the further side of the Oder river. On the 24th, during a reconnaissance, when he had no officer with him, he was taken prisoner. It was suspected that he had purposely contrived this method of escape from the indignation of his master. Frederick had sent him the most stringent orders to attack the enemy, and had told him in several letters that he would answer with his head for neglect to do so. The threat was much used by Frederick to give expression to his strictest and most peremptory commands. Bevern's head was safe enough, but he shrank from the reproaches, insults, and disgrace which were to be apprehended.

Breslau capitulated on the 24th. The greater part of the garrison, Silesians or Saxons, went over to the Austrians. Bevern's defeated army, now under the command of General Kyau, retired north towards Glogau, dropping many deserters on the way. Silesia was reconquered; after seventeen years of Prussian rule the people welcomed the Austrians as deliverers.

Leaving Leipzig on the 13th, the King reached Parchwitz, two marches from Breslau, on the 28th, having travelled at an average speed of twelve miles a day. On hearing of the fall of Breslau and retreat of the army to Glogau, Frederick ordered Ziethen to take command of the remnants of Bevern's army and to bring it to Parchwitz. On the 2nd December Ziethen arrived,



raising Frederick's force to 40,000 men, with 78 heavy guns, ten of them from the fortress of Glogau.

After Kolin, and during the subsequent retreats and hesitations, desertion was rampant in Frederick's armies. Frederick himself was regarded as the author of their misfortunes ; it was believed that the experienced Prussian generals had from the first disapproved of his management. His situation seemed now to be desperate, and both officers and men were discouraged. All knew that against the triumphant Kolin army they could not hope for any such easy success as that of Rossbach. The heavy desertions had, however, eliminated the weakest elements. The bulk of the remaining troops consisted of loyal adherents of the Hohenzollern dynasty. Frederick perceived that they still were in need of stiffening, and, on the 3rd December 1757, he addressed to his chief officers a stirring speech.

After referring to the loss of Schweidnitz and Breslau, he announced that he intended to attack the enemy. 'When you remember that you are Prussians, you will doubtless do nothing unworthy of that prerogative ; but if there be any one among you who is afraid to share all the dangers with me, he can at once to-day have leave to depart without the smallest reproach from me.' He paused as if to give an interval for cowards to depart ; then, as none moved, he continued : 'I was convinced beforehand that none of you would leave me ; I am confident now of your true help and of an assured victory. Should I not return, and be unable to thank you for your services, the fatherland will do it for me. Now go to the camp and repeat to your regiments what you have heard from me. The cavalry regiment which does not, the instant it receives the order, charge the enemy irrepressibly, I shall immediately after the battle unhorse and turn into a garrison regiment. The infantry battalion that, in any circumstances whatever, begins even to hesitate, will lose its colours and swords, and I will have the lace cut off the uniforms. Now farewell, gentlemen ; before long we shall have beaten the enemy, or we shall

never see each other again.' <sup>1</sup> The officers were reminded of their Prussian 'prerogative,' but the men were told that any faltering on their part would be severely punished.

Contemporary observers were impressed by the fact that while Frederick's harshness made him detested by both officers and men, they fought heroically for him. The Bevern incident, and the daily desertions, showed that all would gladly have escaped; yet in the day of battle, he could rely on complete obedience and the utmost self-sacrifice. But his hard-hearted severity and ingratitude interfered with the strategy of a campaign, for it bred desertions on the march.

Frederick's inclination for melodrama made him almost garrulous on the subject of death, when about to engage in battle. He wrote a paper of instructions for Finckenstein: *Instructions as to what should be done in case I am killed.*

'I have issued orders to my Generals on all matters, regarding what must be done after the battle, in case of good or of evil fortune. For the rest, in what concerns me, I wish to be buried at Sans Souci, without display, without pomp, and at night; I desire that my body should not be opened, but that I should be taken there without demonstration, and be buried by night.

'With regard to public affairs, the first thing should be an order to all the Commanders to swear allegiance to my brother; if the battle is won, my brother must nevertheless send a messenger to France with the announcement, and to negotiate, at the same time, with full powers, the terms of peace. My will must be opened, and I discharge my brother of all the money legacies in it, because the sad state of his finances prevents him from fulfilling them. I recommend to him my aides-de-camp, especially Wobersnow, Krusemarck, Oppen and Lentulus. This must be accepted as a military testament. I recommend to his care all my domestics.—Done the 28th November 1757.

FEDERIC.'

<sup>1</sup> Retzow, *op. cit.*, i. pp. 240-2.

On the Austrian side, when it was ascertained that the Prussians were at Parchwitz, a Council of War was held. Daun was in favour of remaining on the defensive, in a strong position in front of Breslau. There was wisdom in the suggestion. Frederick was obliged to attack, and the Austrians had fortified a naturally strong position. General Lucchese, in command of the cavalry, urged an advance to attack the Prussians. Prince Charles agreed, and his decision was fortified by the receipt of a letter from Maria Theresa, recommending an advance to succour the garrison of Liegnitz. On the 4th December the Austrians moved out of their fortifications ; in the evening they rested near the village of Leuthen. Frederick was delighted to learn that the Austrians had abandoned the advantage of position, for a fight in the open. He caused the news to be spread among his troops, with the comment, 'The fox has come out of his hole ; I will punish his temerity.'

By 6 A.M. of the 5th December 1757, the Prussian army was on the march. The vanguard consisted of 50 squadrons of cavalry, followed by  $12\frac{1}{2}$  battalions of infantry with 10 twelve-pounders. The main army followed in 4 columns, 2 of infantry in the centre, and 1 of cavalry on each wing. The remainder of the heavy guns was in the rear. A force of enemy light horse was surprised, in the foggy morning, near the village of Borne, and driven off with the loss of 600 prisoners.

The King rode forward, with an escort of hussars, to the summit of the Schönberg hill, whence he obtained a view of the whole of the enemy's position, with the exception of the right flank.

The Austrians had 60,000 men, including the light troops, and 65 heavy guns, against the Prussian 40,000 and 78 heavy guns. Prince Charles, who had seen little of the fighting at Prague, and had not been present at Kolin, had not realised the importance of artillery ; he left at Breslau some of the field guns of his army, and ignored the presence there of heavy garrison guns of the kind that Frederick had brought from Glogau.

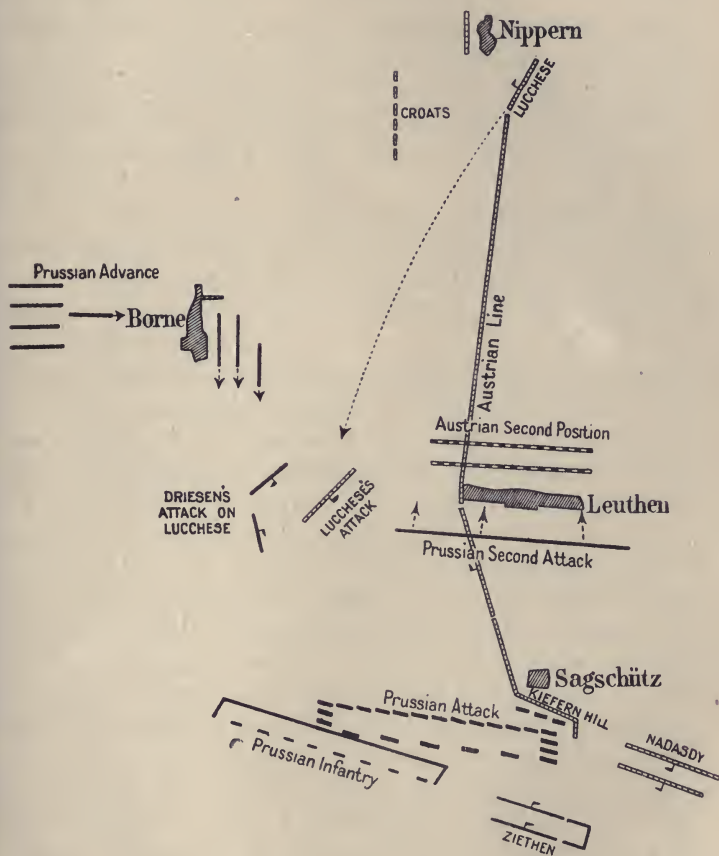


With the heavy guns from Breslau he would probably have obtained a victory more decisive even than that of Kolin. Whether Daun would have been altogether overjoyed at such a result is problematical. He knew that the guns had given him the Kolin triumph ; it is not recorded that he advised Prince Charles to bring them from Breslau. He was not free from professional jealousy.

The Austrian army was drawn up in the customary formation, in two lines, infantry in the centre and cavalry on each wing. The line extended from the village of Nippern on the right, to Frobeltwitz and Leuthen in the centre, and Sagschütz on the left. The total length was nearly six miles, which was too extensive for the numbers at disposal. In the Nippern direction there were woods and marshes, which made the right flank strong against attack. The left was defended by Nadasdy's corps, with cavalry beyond Sagschütz ; the village itself was occupied by fourteen battalions of Wurtembergers in the front line, ten of Bavarians and a contingent of Hungarians in the second. The Wurtemberg troops were Lutherans, whose sympathies were with the King of Prussia. They had attempted to mutiny, and until shortly before the battle had not been entrusted with ammunition. The unreliability of these troops was so notorious, that Prince Charles told Nadasdy to put them in the second line behind Austrian soldiers, but Nadasdy ignored the injunction. The Bavarians regarded the Austrians as their hereditary enemies, and were not much more reliable than the Wurtembergers.

Frederick may have known that the enemy's left contained the disaffected troops ; he saw from the Schönberg hill that it was, as regards position, the weaker of the two flanks. He began with a feint towards the enemy's right, sending cavalry forward as if to attack on that side. The manœuvre succeeded beyond expectation. General Lucchese, in command of the cavalry of the Austrian right, sent message after message to Prince Charles, that the Prussian army was advancing against him, and that he was in urgent need of reinforcements.

# BATTLE OF LEUTHEN, 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 1757



PRUSSIANS	AUSTRIANS
Infantry	
Cavalry	
SCALE	Mile





Prince Charles, after some characteristic hesitation which would have been serious if the Prussians had really intended to attack the right, sent Lucchese the whole of his reserve infantry, eight battalions, and also Serbelloni's cavalry from the left.

Having thus deprived the Austrian left of its reserve, Frederick ordered an attack on that flank. His army advanced in two columns, with the heavy guns and the advanced guard protecting the side nearest the enemy, in a direction parallel to the enemy's front. It was now 10.30 A.M.

Prince Charles, from his position on the high ground near Leuthen, could not see more than that the Prussians were marching south. It was concluded that they were retiring. 'Let them go,' said Daun. No change of dispositions was made.

When the Prussians had arrived opposite the extreme left of the enemy they halted. They stood now, in two lines, enfilading the Austrian position. On the Prussian right, overlapping the extreme point of the Austrian flank, were two lines of cavalry under Ziethen; and Frederick had placed on the right of this cavalry six battalions of infantry, two in the front line, two in the second, and two facing east between the lines, to protect the interval between the lines. He had now succeeded in placing the whole of his army, except a cavalry detachment, in the position to attack with overpowering force the weakest part of the enemy's line, and from an enfilading angle.

At 1 P.M. the Prussian infantry advanced under the eyes of their King, who saw that his orders were executed with exactness. The battalion on the extreme right marched straight at the foe stationed on the Kiepern hill and in the village of Sagschütz: when it had made fifty paces the second battalion stepped out, and so down the whole line. The object of this manœuvre was, as at Rossbach, to prevent a premature engagement of the whole force; the left was refused and thus acted as a reserve.

When the Prussians appeared at the Kiepern hill, eleven

of the fourteen battalions of Wurtemburgers fled, or allowed themselves to be taken prisoner. The Bavarians, in the second line, offered no resistance. The Hungarians fought well, but they were soon overpowered. The village of Sagschütz was taken, and the Austrian left was broken, the fugitives falling back towards Leuthen and the centre, throwing the remainder of the line into confusion. During this infantry combat Nadasdy attacked Ziethen, at first with success, but his squadrons were put in disorder by the musketry fire of the six infantry battalions so providently placed by Frederick. Ziethen's horsemen recovered and, in the end, drove Nadasdy's cavalry off the field of battle.

Prince Charles, having, after mature deliberation, sent his infantry reserve to the extreme right, was slow to believe that its proper place was the extreme left. But at length he ordered the change of position, and the reserve, with other supports, came at the double from Nipporn, in time to take position on the outskirts of the village of Leuthen. They held their ground long enough to enable the Austrian centre and left to alter front behind Leuthen, to face the Prussian attack; but this manœuvre was extremely difficult in the circumstances, with fugitives falling back upon the centre and spreading disorder. The confusion was such that in one part a hundred men stood one behind the other.

The fight for Leuthen village, begun at 3 P.M., was for a time stubborn, but the Austrians had lost some of their guns, captured by the enemy at Sagschütz, and had to withstand a concentrated fire of artillery. At 3.30 they were driven out of Leuthen, but obstinately continued the fight. The Austrian artillery being now collected on the height above the village, the attack was at one time beaten back with such energy that the Prussian infantry became demoralised. Six regiments were seized with panic and retreated.<sup>1</sup> The officers had great difficulty in inducing their men to face the enemy again. It was

<sup>1</sup> Retzow was an eyewitness and participated in the task of restoring order, vol. i. p. 250.

now past 4 o'clock ; and the winter darkness was approaching. It seemed that no decision could be obtained that day. The Prussian attack had been repulsed.

The unfortunate General Lucchese, who had already done so much to wreck the Austrian cause, now intervened with fatal results. He brought forward his cavalry to charge the left flank of the Prussian infantry, at this time somewhat discouraged. The idea was good ; but Lucchese had not discovered a Prussian force of cavalry under Driesen behind the village of Radaxdorf on the Prussian left. The advance of Lucchese's squadrons was observed by Driesen ; with admirable promptitude and celerity, he charged instantly, catching the Austrian cavalry in flank and rear, just as they were on the point of breaking in upon the wavering Prussian infantry. Driesen's blow was timed to perfection, the Austrian cavalry was routed, and the Prussian horse continued their victorious career right into the ranks of the Austrian infantry. The Prussian infantry, thus encouraged, advanced once more, and this time the Austrian resistance was broken. In the crowded state of the ranks a panic resulted. The battle was won, just as darkness was closing in, at 5 P.M.

The Austrian loss was severe ; 1750 dead, 5000 wounded, 13,350 prisoners ; total 20,100 men, with 46 flags, 9 standards, and 131 regimental and heavy guns. The Prussian loss was 1200 killed, 5200 wounded, altogether 6400. In the actual fighting the losses were about equal, but the rout of the Austrians was such that they lost over 13,000 prisoners.

Prince Charles retreated, in the night of the 5th to 6th December, towards Breslau. Leaving many fugitives and wounded in the fortress, he led the remnant of his army back to Schweidnitz, which was reached on the 9th December, and thence by Landeshut and Trautenau to winter quarters outside Silesia. Breslau capitulated to Frederick on the 20th, the garrison of 11,000 effectives and 6000 sick and wounded being made prisoners of war. On the 28th Liegnitz surrendered. The strong



fortress of Schweidnitz, closely invested, was the only remnant of Silesia left in Austrian hands. Of the great Austrian army, some 80,000 strong, which had entered the province, scarcely 30,000 returned.

The victory of Leuthen was meritorious, but it has been over-praised. The Austrian army, with its twenty-four battalions of worthless Wurtembergers and Bavarians, and its light troops, was not, in spite of its excess in numbers, equal to the Prussian in fighting value. It was led by a general who had been often defeated by Frederick, and was notoriously unfit for his position. Frederick, with his superiority in guns and in discipline, had the best weapon. He made use of what came to be known as the 'oblique attack.' He had been led to this by his experience in former combats. At Prague he concentrated nearly the whole of his force for an attack on the enemy's right flank, but the enemy had been given time to change direction, with the result that the attack became frontal. At Kolin he attacked the flank with a smaller proportion of his force, and he again gave the enemy time to strengthen the threatened point; owing to these blunders and to his inferiority in numbers he was defeated. At Rossbach the enemy presented himself in columns to receive the blow which was bound to come from an enfilading angle. (Profiting from these experiences, Frederick prepared at Leuthen an attack on an extreme flank in echelon of battalions, whereby the rear battalions came into action as a reserve. In this way he got the most out of each battalion, and brought an ever-increasing pressure on the enemy. He utilised nearly the whole of his force of infantry in an attack upon the enemy's weakest flank. A necessary condition for success was that the direction of the coming blow should be concealed; surprise was essential, to prevent the enemy from changing front and receiving the attack in line, or delivering a counter against the attacker's flank.)

The fame of the 'oblique attack' is a remarkable example of the undeserved reputation that mere victory may bestow. The manœuvre was used once only. The

experience then obtained convinced its inventor that it was too risky. He never ventured it again; indeed he exhibited thenceforth a reluctance to attempt any attack upon an Austrian army. In 1757 he attacked the Austrians three times; after Leuthen he attacked them once only, at Torgau, in the course of five whole campaigns. If the manœuvre at Leuthen was so brilliant why did Frederick never repeat it, and how was it he became so unwilling to attack the Austrians again? The oblique attack was dangerous against an active and resolute enemy; and Frederick knew, what his enthusiastic admirers have ignored, that Leuthen was very nearly a Prussian repulse.

The *German General Staff*, vol. vi. p. 29, says of the oblique attack at Leuthen: 'It was the first and only time it was carried through against the enemy.' The last words should be noted. As a war measure the oblique attack was dropped, but in peace time, when there was no enemy to face, it was frequently exhibited on the parade ground at Potsdam, with intricate combinations and variations, to the delight of the King's admiring subjects, and the astonishment of the gullible stranger.<sup>1</sup> It was a piece of chicane on the part of Frederick, who deceived all the world, including his own officers and soldiers. The Prussian army was encouraged to believe that their King's method had been the chief cause of their success. Thus did Frederick retain his hold upon his own people, perpetuate his fame, and lead his country to Jena.

##### 5. REPULSE AT ZORNDORF AND DEFEAT AT HOCHKIRCH

Frederick expected that Leuthen would end the war. He wrote to Wilhelmina, 'I venture to give you the assurance that this battle will give us a peace'; to Prince Henry, 'There is every reason to expect from the demoralisation of the Austrians, that we shall have peace in the

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon's opinion: 'The oblique order of the parades of Potsdam served no purpose but to make the reputations of certain adjutants.' Bonnal, p. 29.

spring.' He misunderstood the feeling of the Austrian Court. It was in France that, for a time, the idea of peace was being considered. Wilhelmina was made the channel for unofficial French suggestions which she forwarded to her brother. He replied, 'My treaty with England is of a nature which does not permit a separate peace; it is now less than ever proper for me to negotiate secretly, but I should like to make them' (the French) 'open themselves from time to time, in order to be informed of their way of thinking, and to arrange for myself a way out, in case of some great misfortune.' While protesting that a separate peace would be improper, and therefore not to be considered, he desired to be in a position to commit the impropriety in case of disaster. He expected proposals, but would offer none himself.

Louis xv. would not consent to supplicate. Madame de Pompadour wrote to Starhemberg, the French Ambassador at Vienna, 'I hate the victor more than ever. . . . Let us make good preparations, let us pulverise the Attila of the North, and you will see me as pleased as I am now in bad humour.' Frederick was often spoken of as an Attila. 'Cet Attila de L'Allemagne,' is the expression used in a letter of the time.<sup>1</sup>

The failure of his endeavours to obtain peace was disheartening. With Russia now in possession of the whole of East Prussia, France occupying the Cleves territory, and the Prussian armies reduced by casualties, infectious diseases, and desertions to one-half of their original strength, Frederick became quite sentimental about the loss of life which war entails. 'What a sacrifice of men!' he wrote to Wilhelmina. 'What a shocking butchery! I shudder to think of it. Whatever one's feelings one must steel one's heart and prepare oneself for the murder and the carnage which prejudice has made heroic, but which is shocking when seen from near at hand.'

Frederick made use of every possible expedient for repairing his losses in men. Besides what he could obtain

<sup>1</sup> *A Journal of the Seven Years' War*, by H. St. Paul, edited by J. S. Butler, 1914.



from his own territories and from Poland, he secured by force recruits from various German States which were also supplying contingents to fight with the Imperial troops against him; from Swedish Pomerania, from Mecklenberg and from Saxony—all of them enemy territories. Prisoners also, French, Russian and Austrian, were compelled to serve against their own countrymen. These alien elements were held together by the rigid Prussian discipline, which was so severe that the Prussian army was likened to a 'travelling prison.'

In the end Frederick succeeded in collecting for the 1758 campaign, 96,000 men in Silesia, 22,000 in Pomerania, and 22,000 in Saxony, besides the garrison of Magdeburg and detachments in other towns. The total field force was 140,000, not much less than in 1757. The artillery was increased to 200 heavy guns. Artillery had proved its value in the recent fighting. Frederick found that his men were afraid of the gun fire. He promised money rewards for the capture of enemy guns. He remarked to his reader de Catt, that he would wager to win nearly every battle, but for the artillery.

The annual cost of the army in peace time was 6,300,000 thalers; from the 1st August 1756, to the end of the year 1757, it was 8,800,000 thalers. The war expenses up to the end of 1757 were 22,500,000, making a total army outlay of 31,300,000 thalers. The war chest of 13 million thalers collected in the years of peace has become reduced to 1,300,000 thalers by the end of 1757. Frederick began the year 1758 with that and other sums, which gave him a total of 1,750,000 thalers in cash. He had to find new sources of income. He would not inflict increased taxation upon his own territories, fearing hostility to himself and his war policy. But Silesia, though it had now been under Prussian domination for seventeen years, was still regarded as an enemy country in military occupation. From Breslau in 1757 he exacted 300,000 thalers, from the churches and the Jesuit establishments 500,000 thalers. These were not permanent charges. For annual receipts Frederick extorted from the Catholic clergy one-tenth

of their emoluments, which brought in 120,000 thalers a year. From unhappy Saxony he took no less a sum than 6,900,000 thalers; and from the small Principality of Mecklenberg 1,000,000 thalers. The British subsidy of £670,000, which was paid in gold, was worth in Prussian coin 5,300,000 thalers. This sum, added to the exactions from Silesia, Saxony, and Mecklenberg, produced a total of 13,300,000 thalers, which, with 1,750,000 in cash, gave a little over 15,000,000 for the year 1758. The extraordinary war expenses of the army for 1758 were put at 20,000,000 thalers, leaving an anticipated deficit of 5,000,000 thalers.

More important to Frederick than the British subsidy was the British assistance against France on the Continent. Pitt agreed, by the Treaty of the 11th April 1758, to bear the expense of 55,000 German troops, to send a division to make a descent upon the French coast, and to land a British regiment to garrison the port of Emden. These promised succours were, in fact, much exceeded. British troops were sent to fight with the Germans under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, Frederick's brother-in-law. The whole cost of that army, which at one time numbered 100,000 men, was borne by England at an expense of over £1,000,000 a year. The entire might of France was taken off Frederick's shoulders. But for this British assistance, he would infallibly have been overcome. France being fully engaged by England and Hanover, and Sweden doing nothing, Frederick had only Russia, the Empire and Austria to face. Russia would not have to be considered till after midsummer. The Empire troops numbered nominally 27,000 men, in effectives much less. Ultimately they formed a part of Serbelloni's Austrian corps, but as yet they stood alone and were negligible.

Austria was slow to recover from the heavy losses of 1757. In March 1758 the army in Bohemia had only 37,000 infantry and 1500 cavalry, 52,000 men altogether. The Prussian superiority in numbers made an immediate attack upon the weak and unready Austrians, before

the Russians could arrive, an urgent necessity. Leaving Prince Henry in command of a detachment in Saxony, Frederick led the main body of his army into Moravia for the siege of Olmütz. That fortress captured, he would advance towards Vienna, while Prince Henry would take Prague and become master of Bohemia.

On the 4th May Frederick had reached a point within a day's march of Olmütz, but his siege guns did not arrive till the 20th. Then he sent Keith with a small force of 8000 men to conduct the siege, while he himself with some 40,000 to 50,000 men remained inactive, awaiting an Austrian effort at rescue.

The clamour against Prince Charles, both in the Austrian dominions and among the allies, compelled the supersession of that incompetent general. Daun was given the command. He advanced to the relief of Olmütz, and by the 24th May was in touch with the Prussians. No progress had been made with the siege of Olmütz, as Keith's force was totally inadequate. His 8000 men and 116 guns could make no impression upon the garrison of over 8000, with 324 guns of various calibres. Frederick's premature march, without siege guns, had given the Austrians sixteen days' notice of his intentions. Then his refusal to give Keith enough men to obtain a valid success against the fortress ruined the whole plan of campaign. He kept a large force under his own hand doing nothing for seven weeks, from the 4th May to the 1st July. Daun had defeated him at Kolin, and in spite of his victory at Leuthen, he was afraid of the loss to his reputation that another reverse might produce. He would not risk another attack upon Daun, nor would he diminish his own force in order to hasten the capture of the fortress. This was Frederick's greatest sin as a commander, that he allowed his personal vanity to interfere with military necessities. Daun, for his part, though urged from Vienna, not to allow Olmütz to be taken without a battle, postponed aggressive action; his force of some 50,000 men was increasing daily in numbers and improving rapidly in discipline. Time was on his side.



The Olmütz garrison was never completely invested. Frederick was so inactive, even negligent, that, on the 21st June, he allowed a detachment of 1400 men, sent by Daun, to pass within three miles of the Prussian camp into Olmütz to reinforce the garrison. Minor reliefs went in frequently.<sup>1</sup>

The progress of the siege depended on the safe arrival of convoys, which came over the mountains from Neisse and Troppau. A single convoy intercepted would cause the failure of the whole campaign. The anxiety in the Prussian army on this point, the misgivings of the officers at the inadequate consideration given by the King to this all-important matter, are shown by a passage in one of Mitchell's reports to Lord Holdernes. He writes, 10th June, 'A convoy of 7000 wagons has just passed the mountains untouched and unattempted. This greatly encourages all our officers, and occasions reflections which I need not suggest.' Mitchell hints that the enemy had it in his power to attack the convoy with good hopes of success. Frederick would not detach strong escorts from his own army.

A large train of wagons was expected at the end of June. Daun determined to attack it. He sent Loudon with a strong detachment, which Frederick allowed to pass him on his right, and Siskwics with another force, which passed the Prussian left, while the King remained stationary, with his eyes fixed upon his conqueror at Kolin. Loudon, reaching the convoy first, attacked without hesitation, and though beaten off, he delayed its progress until Siskwics was in position. On the 30th June, in the neighbourhood of Domstädtl, Loudon attacked the escort on its right and Siskwics on its left, with the result that the escort was destroyed, and the bulk of the wagons captured. The Prussians lost 2500 men killed, wounded and prisoners, 12 cannons and 3000 wagons,

<sup>1</sup> 'At the siege of Olmütz, the King neglected every precaution; insomuch that the place was never properly invested, and of course the besieged several times received succours of various kinds unperceived.' Lloyd, *History of the Late War in Germany*, vol. iii. p. 66.

at a cost to the Austrians of 600 casualties. Only 100 wagons, at the head of the convoy, succeeded in getting through.

On the same day Daun completely outwitted Frederick on his own front. He had been again urged from Vienna to relieve Olmütz by giving battle to the main Prussian army. He made movements in advance which seemed to be the prelude to an attack upon the immovable Frederick, and under cover of them executed a long forced march of twenty-five miles, which brought him to Frederick's left rear at Gross Teinitz, where he obtained touch with the garrison of Olmütz. The fortress was thus relieved, and Frederick decided to retreat. The roads by Troppau being in the hands of the Austrians, he had to retire through Bohemia.

He received news on the 19th June of the death of his brother Prince William, on the 12th June, at Oranienburg. He wrote to Prince Henry, who had been Prince William's favourite brother, 'I have received very sad and unpleasant news, the death of my brother, which I had not in the least expected. I am all the more afflicted because I always loved him tenderly, and have regarded all the annoyance which he caused me as the consequence of his weakness in following bad advice, and as a result of his choleric temperament, of which he was not always the master; and remembering his good heart and his other good qualities, I suffered with kindness many things in his conduct which were very irregular, and by which he failed to give me the respect which he owed me.' Even now, he continued to blame the dead man. Prince Henry replied, 'I bewailed the occurrence of the misunderstanding which existed between you and my brother; the reminder you send me aggravates my sorrow; but respect and sorrow impose silence upon me, and I can make no answer in the subject. My suffering will continue, while my brother reposes secure from misfortune; if he still lived I would willingly cut down my own days to efface those in which you found fault with him, but it is now too late. I will endure my sorrow with patience, but though

fortitude may enable a man to control his acts it may not stifle one's feelings, and while it is possible to give up the idea of happiness or pleasure in life, one feels all the time that it is hard to be deprived of them, and, moreover, there is no merit in being indifferent to everything.

'My sister of Baireuth has been in extreme danger, she has no longer the power of writing; I fear that she will not recover from this illness. She is still in ignorance of the death of my brother, and there is too much reason to fear that this news will dissipate such little hope as may remain of her recovery.'

In this bitter letter, Prince Henry hints that Frederick's unfeeling conduct had been the cause of their brother's death, and threatened now the life of their sister Wilhelmina. Frederick replied, 3rd August, 'We have enough foreign enemies without fighting in our own family. I hope you do my feelings justice, and do not regard me as an unnatural brother or relation. The business in hand, my dear brother, is to preserve the State, and to make use of all imaginable means to defend ourselves against our enemies.'

After every reverse Frederick indulged in melancholy; the failure in Moravia, the death of Prince William, and the precarious condition of Wilhelmina, for whom he had feelings of warm affection, gave ample occasion for sad reflections. To Prince Henry he wrote, 20th July 1758, 'Sometimes I forget in work our misfortunes; but all of a sudden, when it comes back upon me, my heart bleeds, and I am seized with a horrible melancholy.' To Wilhelmina, 18th September, 'Great God, what times are these! I suffer continual and severe losses, and I tremble for all that is most precious to me. Is this the best of all worlds? then what would be the worst? In truth, my dear sister, all these reflections give me a great disgust for life, and I feel inclined to spit in the face of those who come wishing me a long career.' To Prince Henry, 19th September, 'In what a time do we live, my dear brother! The proscriptions of the triumvirs, and the Thirty Years' War furnished nothing more frightful, more cruel than the



war we have to sustain. They force our relatives, what do I say ? our very blood to declare against us ' (Baireuth had to send troops to join the forces of the Empire); ' the wickedness of our enemies has filled the measure ; when shall we see the end of the perfidies, horrors, treasons, murders, conflagrations, devastations and cruelties ? ' Frederick was being made to feel some of the suffering which he and his Prussians had inflicted on others ; he was shocked at the barbarity of the people who, on being betrayed, beaten, and robbed, their houses and churches destroyed, dared to hit back. If the Baireuth troops fought for the German Empire against Prussia, did not Prussia force French and Austrian prisoners to fight against their own countrymen ?

Leaving Olmütz on the 1st July, Frederick reached Landeshut in Silesia on the 9th. Two days later he marched north to meet the Russians.

In 1756 the nominal strength of the Russian army was 360,000 men, but after deducting the Imperial Guard, which remained at St. Petersburg, the garrisons, the troops in distant provinces, and the numbers wanting in every regiment, the total for warfare in Europe was not more than 130,000, while the actual field army for offensive operations never reached anything like that figure. The regular army was recruited in the ten Governments of Great Russia, the only part of the Empire which became actively engaged in the war. All the soldiers were slaves furnished by their owners at the demand of the Czarina. They were chosen at the will of their owners and went most unwillingly ; many had to be taken to the depôts chained to a cart, in handcuffs and irons. There were no foreigners in the ranks, because the pay and ration of the Russian soldier did not tempt adventurers. Desertion was unknown. The Russian soldier, accustomed to obey his master, was amenable to discipline and inured to hardship. In battle he was obstinate and enduring, continuing to resist in spite of the heaviest losses. In that respect the Russian infantry was superior to the Prussian, but the cavalry was deficient both in

quality and in quantity. The Russian army of operations in 1757 contained no more than 7000 regular cavalry. Frederick had made his cavalry the strongest part of his army, sacrificing for it, to some extent, both infantry and artillery.

The Russian soldiers were regarded in the West as barbarians. In East Prussia they committed excesses, the irregulars being especially brutal. But East Prussia escaped lightly compared with Saxony. The systematic terrorism and spoliation conducted by the cultured King of Prussia entailed far more extensive suffering.

For a campaign in Germany the Russians suffered under the disadvantage of great distance from their sources of supply. Partly for this reason, and also on account of the privileges of the officers, a Russian army carried an enormous amount of baggage. An officer might have thirty carts for his own wants; even a Captain was allowed ten orderlies. Nearly a third of an army would be employed in transport duties or as orderlies.

The Commander of a Russian army had less control over the plan of campaign than even an Austrian general. He received his orders from a Conference of Generals and Civil Dignitaries, sitting in conclave at St. Petersburg, from whom he was sometimes as much as 1000 miles distant. They could not have exact knowledge of his position, and yet they forced their decisions upon him. Thus it was mere chance whether a Russian army would do the right thing, at any given moment. The short campaigning season, for an army resting upon a base in Russia, still further reduced the practical value of the Russian influence upon the fortunes of a campaign in Germany.

Political considerations interfered disastrously with the Russian plan of campaign. From the East Prussian base the natural line of advance was by way of Danzig and the Baltic, to conquer Prussian Pomerania, join hands with the Swedes and then march south on Berlin. East Prussia would thus be covered, and a line of communication established by sea, to assist the transport by land,

a matter of the first importance. A Russo-Swedish attack upon the enemy's northern flank, while the Austrians threatened the southern, would compel a division of the Prussian forces into two armies, one in the extreme north, the other in the extreme south, which would have been too far apart to assist each other. This reasonable plan was objectionable to each one of the allies. Augustus, of Saxony-Poland, could not tolerate a Russian occupation of Danzig, the capital of a Polish Province. To Sweden the appearance of Russia in Pomerania would revive old feuds. Louis xv., the ally of Sweden and friend of Poland, and jealous of Russian aggrandisement, regarded the project with grave distrust. Austria regretted the Russian acquisition of East Prussia, fearing that a Russian retention of that province would prejudice her own claim upon Silesia, when peace terms came to be discussed.

The Austrian desire, pressed by Kaunitz upon the Czarina, was for a combined Russian and Austrian campaign in the south for the recovery of Silesia. The Russian objections to this scheme were that it would leave East Prussia exposed, would increase the serious difficulty of the Russian communications, and would make the Russian army merely a branch of the Austrian. Bitter letters passed between St. Petersburg and Vienna. The Czarina at one time threatened to make a separate peace with Frederick.

The northern and southern lines of advance being thus excluded, the only course left was to threaten Berlin by way of Posen and Frankfort-on-the-Oder. East Prussia would not be left exposed, and contact could be obtained either with Swedes on the north, or with Austrians on the south. The defects of the plan were, that it was found impracticable to keep up the supplies in the Frankfort direction, and that the centre attack suited the Prussian defence, enabling a force to be dispatched either from north or centre or south without abandoning either Saxony or Silesia. Effective Russian participation in the war depended upon the ability of sustaining a Russian army



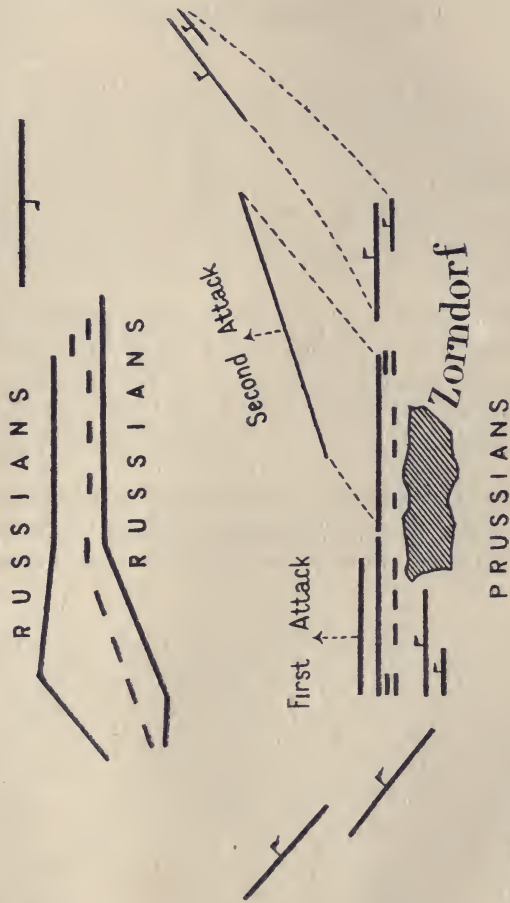
far from its bases of supplies during the winter, in order that an advance into enemy territory should be made in the spring. This could not be accomplished so long as the allies forbade the use of Pomeranian or Polish ports on the Baltic. An advance in that direction might even have caused the diversion of a part of the British fleet to the Baltic, and might thus have assisted the French fight for Canada. Experience showed that the central attack, by way of Frankfort, effected nothing, for the Russian army, whether defeated or victorious—even when Berlin was occupied—was forced on the approach of winter to retire to Poland and East Prussia, in order to replenish stores. The spring of every year was occupied in the slow advance, the autumn in a long retreat. The summer alone remained for active operations against the enemy. Thus the great power of Russia, which might so easily have been utilised to bring Frederick to his knees, was frittered away in short annual incursions which achieved nothing more than a temporary relief of the pressure on Austria.

The Russians under Fermor, the successor of Apraksin, reached Cüstrin, near Frankfort, in August. On the 15th Fermor bombarded Cüstrin. Frederick, with a small force of 15,000 men, travelling from Landeshut at the rate of fifteen miles a day, reached Frankfort on the 10th. He picked up a detachment under Ziethen, and also the whole of Dohna's force, which was withdrawn from the siege of Stralsund.

The bombardment of Cüstrin set the town on fire, and destroyed a large stock of wheat ; the reply by the garrison burned out the suburb occupied by the Russians. These operations came to an end on the arrival of the King. Fermor retired to a position near Zorndorf, sending his baggage forward to Klein-Kammin on the Wartha river.

Frederick affected to despise the Russians as a mere horde of undisciplined barbarians. When Keith, who had commanded them in the time of the Czarina Anne, said they were brave troops, who defended themselves well but were badly led, Frederick replied, ' You will soon hear

# BATTLE OF ZORNDORF, 25<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 1758



Infantry  
Cavalry  
0 SCALE 1 Mile





that I have attacked these rogues, and that at the first blow I have put them to flight.' <sup>1</sup>

Having decided to attack, he wrote a letter of instructions to Prince Henry, in case of his death, and on the 22nd he issued, in German, an 'Order to my Generals of this army, how they should conduct matters if I should be shot dead':

'Should the battle against the Russians be won, as we all hope, the enemy must be followed with all vigour.' . . .

'Immediately after my death the army must take the oath to my nephew, and as my brother Henry is his guardian with unlimited authority, the whole army must respect his commands, as if they came from the reigning Lord.

'It is my will that after my death no formal ceremonies shall be made with me. I am not to be cut open, but quietly to be taken to Sans Souci and buried in my garden.

'This is my last Will, and I hope all my Generals and the army will observe it strictly. FRIDERICH.

'*N.B.*—Should the battle be lost, the army must place itself behind Cüstrin, draw succours from all other armies and, the sooner the better, seize the enemy again by the throat.'

The Russian position was defended on the north by thick woods and by the Mietzel stream, with affluents and marshes. Frederick was obliged to make a wide flanking move to get into position for attack on the south. In the course of this manœuvre he passed close to the lager of the Russian heavy baggage, which had a guard of 4000 men with eight guns. He could have captured it, and thus compelled Fermor to abandon his strong post and attempt a retirement under difficult conditions, but the King's impatient temper and contempt for the enemy made him ignore the favourable opportunity. He intended to show that the Russians could not face his troops. Orders were issued by the King, that no quarter

<sup>1</sup> Catt, *Unterhaltungen*, p. 147.

was to be given.<sup>1</sup> The Russians were not merely to be forced to retire but to be destroyed.

The forces at the battle of Zorndorf were as follows :—

		Prussian.		Russian.
Infantry	. .	25,000	} 38,000	34,000
Cavalry	. .	12,000		3,000
Gunners	. .	1,000		1,500
Guns.				
Light	. .	76	} 193	111
Heavy	. .	117		84

The Prussian superiority in cavalry and heavy guns, the two most powerful battle weapons, at least compensated for the Russian preponderance in infantry and light guns. The forces were practically equal.

Having brought his army right round the Russian position until he could approach it from the south, Frederick ordered his left to attack the Russian right. The guns were pushed forward, and their fire created terrible havoc in the enemy's lines. For two hours, from 9 to 11 A.M., the Russian infantry stoically endured the fire, closing in their ranks as the men fell, and bringing up files from the second line. Then the Prussian infantry attacked. Dust obscured them at first, but when the Russians at last saw them, forty yards distant, they counter-attacked with the bayonet, and, assisted by a charge of cavalry, completely broke the enemy. 'Now no more stand was made; in wild flight all streamed off to Zorndorf and Wilkersdorf, followed by the Russian infantry and cavalry.'<sup>2</sup> The Prussian guns of the left wing were captured. Frederick himself seized a standard and endeavoured to rally the fugitives, but they would not face the Russian bayonet, and retired definitely from the field.

Seydlitz was in command of the powerful cavalry of the left wing. When the Russian infantry had spread out in pursuit of the fleeing Prussian infantry, Seydlitz launched upon them fifty-six squadrons, the largest force

<sup>1</sup> Retzow, i. pp. 315, 328.

<sup>2</sup> *German General Staff*, viii. p. 136.

that up to that time had been used in a charge. The Russian soldiers defended themselves with extraordinary valour, replying with the bayonet to the attack of horse and sabre. The Grenadiers especially fought with an obstinacy, a contempt of wounds and an indifference to death, that can but seldom have been equalled in the annals of war. The slaughter was terrible. Some of the Russians decamped to the rear, broke into the stores of spirit, and in a state of alcoholic frenzy, killed some of their own officers. But the bulk of the infantry held firm, and their astonishing obstinacy in the end beat off the attack. Seydlitz's cavalry retired discomfited, leaving with the Russians the lost twenty-six guns. 'God in his mercy spare us,' said the King, as he rode off to his right. 'But Prince Maurice in face of the misfortune that had occurred, and perceiving the consequence, perhaps not too pleased with the exclamation of the King, takes off his hat, throws it in the air, and in a decided tone and sonorous voice shouts, "Long live the King, the battle is won!" The line shouts, "Long live the King!" His Majesty appears to smile for an instant. Prince Maurice and General Bülow make speeches to the troops, "Comrades, the men you see retiring over there are Russian prisoners who are being taken away; forward, long live the King, march!"' <sup>1</sup>

The attack by the Prussian left having ended in failure, the right was now ordered to advance against the Russian left. The Russian infantry, as on the other wing, held fast under artillery fire for two hours; at 3 P.M. they were relieved by a cavalry charge which captured the Prussian guns, made prisoners of the whole battalion whose function had been to protect the guns, and carried disorder into the ranks of the first line of infantry. The Prussian cavalry again came to the rescue, driving back the Russian cavalry, recapturing the lost guns, and setting free the captured battalion; but they could make no impression upon the Russian infantry, and retired at 3.30 P.M.

The Prussian infantry of the right at 4 P.M. advanced

<sup>1</sup> Catt, pp. 159-60.



to the attack. They were defeated, as happened on the left, by the Russian bayonet. The cavalry from the left wing now came to the assistance of the right ; they forced back the Russians with great slaughter ; a confused mêlée of hand-to-hand fighting went on ; in the end the Prussian horsemen were again compelled to retire, at 6 P.M. They had been severely handled and took no further part in the fighting. Frederick tried to collect troops for one more attack, but as the Prussians approached the enemy they were met with gun and musket fire and a cavalry charge, and a disordered panic ensued. Darkness put an end to the bloodiest battle of the war. The Prussian killed and wounded amounted to 11,000 men, nearly one-third of the total force ; the Russian casualties were 20,000, more than one half of the army.

In a plan of the battle which Frederick drew and gave to Catt, he placed the Prussian army, when the fight began, at an angle of forty-five degrees with the Russian line, the point of contact being the extreme Russian right and tip of the Prussian left. This is a curious example of the unreliability of his statements. After the war, in November 1768, he expressed the results of his experiences in a 'military testament.' He said, 'On the flat you should never attack with lines against the enemy's lines because that is to risk all, and because if you are beaten there are none to cover your débris. The reserves are of the last importance.' . . . 'The army is to be formed in line, with the attacking wing nearer the enemy than the wing which is refused. If the attack is defeated the wing will retire upon the main army ; that body, with the cavalry, will be sufficient to favour a good retreat.'<sup>1</sup> The attack here described does not follow the drawing made for Catt. What occurred was, as the cited passage would indicate, a frontal attack by a wing while the remainder of the army watched the combat. Then, when his left wing was defeated Frederick, after waiting some hours, and giving the Russians time to re-form, sent his

<sup>1</sup> A. von Taysen, *Das militärische Testament Friedrichs des Grossen*, pp. 27, 28.

right against their left. This was a second battle, and it left Frederick with no reserve. By attacking first on the left and, when that conflict had come to a disastrous end, then on the right, he fought two separate battles, and gave the enemy the time and opportunity for strengthening each threatened wing in turn, from the centre. Whether, when writing in 1768, he had discovered his tactical blunder at Zorndorf may be doubted. In any case, it is clear that at Zorndorf he made no attempt to repeat the Leuthen manœuvre; he returned to the tactics of Hohenfriedberg in the Silesian war, making two battles out of one.

Of his personal courage on this occasion there is no question. Mitchell, who was present, saw the King expose himself in the effort to rally the fleeing infantry of the left wing in the morning.

In the night of the 25th August the two armies lay almost in contact, the Prussians on the east edge of the battlefield, the Russians on the west. Mitchell writes in his diary, 'The field of battle, during this night of the 25th, was occupied by the dead and the artillery of both sides only. It was happy for us the Russians were ignorant of our situation, that our infantry was gone, and we wanted ammunition: if they had attacked, either in the night or early next morning, they would have had a very easy conquest.' Mitchell says that a small party of Cossacks, early on the 26th, 'alarmed the King's quarters; if they had ventured to attack, they would have thrown everything into confusion.' The Russians on the 26th were, he said, in very good order, and very compact; 'it was not till eight o'clock that our fugitive infantry were brought back and drawn out in order of battle.'

On the 26th both armies sang songs of victory, but neither ventured to attack the other. The Russian commander proposed a truce for burying the dead. Frederick seized upon the offer to make public claim of victory; he replied that the Prussians being in possession of the battlefield—which was not the case—would carry out the duty. Each army buried the dead in its vicinity.

The Prussians, who complained loudly of the barbarism of their enemy, buried many of the Russian wounded alive, regardless of their cries ; no similar charge of outrageous inhumanity is brought against the Russian burying parties.

Two days after the battle, Frederick wrote an account of it, which he sent to Finckenstein at Berlin, to be published, and he ordered that copies should be sent to King George II., Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, and the Prussian Ambassadors at neutral and friendly courts. There is scarcely a word of truth in it. After a succession of fantastic falsehoods he says : ' Night prevented us from pursuing the enemy further.' He puts his losses at 1600 killed and wounded, just one-eighth of the true figures. Frederick's real opinion of the fortunes of the day, and of the resulting situation, is to be found in his correspondence. Writing to the Margrave Charles on the 26th, he says : ' I wrote to you yesterday that the Russians had been beaten. I must, however, hereby inform you that it was very difficult to drive them from their position, which these people still hold. I hope, however, that the want of bread, with other considerations, may induce them to withdraw. They were in such strength that we could not make the battle as decisive as was desired. I announce these circumstances that you may make arrangements accordingly, until it is shown whether this battle will derange the design of the enemy or not.' It is unusual for a victor to remain uncertain whether his triumph will have any effect upon the enemy's designs or not, and to be unable to influence them by any action on his own part.

In the morning of the 27th, Fermor marched past the Prussian camp, unmolested, to Klein-Kammin. On the 31st, he retired with his baggage to Landsberg. The two armies had remained in touch until the sixth day after the battle, without any renewal of hostilities.

Frederick's published ' relation ' of the battle, concluded with a complaint of Russian barbarity, ending with the words, ' They commit cruelties which are revolt-



ing to human nature.' In the original draft, instead of that sentence he had written, 'That made so great an impression upon our soldiers that, to avenge so many cruelties, in spite of the efforts of the officers who tried to prevent it, they gave almost no quarter to any.' Conscious of having himself (as before at Hohenfriedberg) issued the order that no quarter was to be given, on second thoughts he considered it better to say nothing about that example of Prussian humanity. A French soldier fighting in the Russian ranks cast himself at the feet of Lieutenant Hogan, begging his protection. Hogan with encouraging words held out his hand to raise him, when a non-commissioned officer thrust the Frenchman through the body. 'This swift deed,' says Retzow, 'enraged Hogan, but he did not venture to punish it, because the order had gone forth that no quarter was to be given. Colonel Waknitz, who in this same battle took under his protection a Russian officer who had given himself up to him, was less compliant; he shot a soldier of the Guard who gave the accepted prisoner a mortal blow. Although the indignation of this brave man was justified; although his conduct is excusable, in consideration of its humane feeling; yet to his humane feeling is to be attributed the disgrace into which he fell with the King. He who was worthy to repair the great loss of a Seydlitz, saw himself compelled to leave the Prussian army.'<sup>1</sup>

It appears, then, that when Frederick wrote that the Prussian officers in vain endeavoured to prevent the soldiers from murdering the prisoners, he was guilty of the most disgusting hypocrisy; the truth being that having himself given the express order that no quarter was to be given, he visited with disgrace and professional ruin any officer who dared to act in the manner he pretended to approve.

The consideration to be given to Frederick's complaints of Russian atrocities may be judged from the indignation he expressed at the devastation produced in Cüstrin by the Russian bombardment, and the silence about the

<sup>1</sup> Retzow, i. pp. 328-9.

destruction of the suburb by the Prussian guns ; moreover Frederick in the previous year bombarded Prague with the deliberate intention of setting it on fire, and made the Cathedral a special mark. Catt, in spite of his Prussian sympathies, relates an event, ' which caused me indignation in the highest degree.' ' They had brought to His Majesty's quarters a Kalmuck, who had been taken ; a General ' (Prussian), ' on seeing him, came forward and began to abuse the poor devil, in terms which he could not understand. Perceiving that the Kalmuck had the image of a saint on his breast, the General made to touch it with his cane. The prisoner, believing that an attempt was being made to take away his saint, covered it with his hands. Then the General dealt furious blows of his stick upon the hands, with such violence that they swelled and turned black. As the Kalmuck stood firm and protected his saint, looking sorrowfully at the General who was striking him in this cruel manner, the latter turned the blows upon his face, which became covered with blood. At this sight the blood rushed to my head, and I said to the General, that if they rated Kalmucks and Cossacks as barbarians, there were other people who could be accused of still greater barbarity.' <sup>1</sup> The Prussian treatment of prisoners was already notorious for inhumanity.

When Frederick hurried north to attack the Russians, he left behind a force of 33,000 men under the Margrave Charles of Schwedt, at Landeshut, to watch the Austrians under Daun, and a force of 30,000 under Prince Henry in the neighbourhood of Dresden, to oppose 45,000 Austrians and Imperialists under the Duke of Zweibrücken. The latter force took the place of the combined French and Imperial army, that had been beaten so disastrously at Rossbach. The situation demanded prompt action on the part of Daun, either to follow Frederick and help the Russians, or to take advantage of the weakness of his enemies in Saxony and Silesia during the absence of the King. Quickness and energy at this moment would have produced great results, at least a

<sup>1</sup> Catt, pp. 153-4.

successful issue to the campaign of 1758, perhaps even a triumphant conclusion of the war. The issue rested with Daun.

He left Jaromitz on the 10th August, anticipating by one day Frederick's departure for the north, but did not arrive at Görlitz till the 20th. The march had been at just one-half the pace of Frederick's troops, who had reached Frankfort by the 20th August. At Görlitz Daun wasted six days. He decided at last to move upon Dresden. Travelling at his usual leisurely pace he reached Dresden, on its north, on the 1st September. Zweibrücken, faced by Prince Henry of Prussia, was south of the town. Daun's plan was to attack Prince Henry in rear while the Imperialists pressed him in front. The two armies had a combined superiority over the Prussians of nearly three to one. But news arrived, through Prussian sources, that the Russians had been utterly destroyed at Zorndorf. Daun allowed himself to be deceived by Frederick's bluff, concluded that he had not time to settle with Prince Henry before the return of the King, abandoned the projected attack upon Dresden, and retired to a strong defensive position east of Dresden, at Stolpen. Prince Henry, on the 3rd September, had written to Finckenstein that he was 'in a most critical and embarrassing situation,' as he was 'surrounded by enemies much superior in force.' Borce, the Prussian administrator in Saxony, wrote to Finckenstein, 'It seems a miracle that so formidable an army, with 62 battalions and 92 squadrons, should stand for a week with its arms crossed without attempting anything for its own profit, or to our disadvantage, although it had opportunities which made me tremble.' Mitchell used the same expression when writing to Holder-nesse, on the 13th September. 'It is a miracle that Prince Henry and his little army have not been devoured ; but it is very happy that Marshal Daun, with his numerous host, has not profited more of the King of Prussia's absence.'

Daun could not be stirred even by the strong letter he received from Vienna on the 11th September. He was told that 'it would be in the highest degree advantageous,



even indispensable, to hasten your blow against Henry and the town of Dresden, and, if it is possible, to bring this enterprise to conclusion before the King hurries back into Saxony to bring succour to his brother, and to interrupt your operations.' <sup>1</sup> But the inertia of Daun could not be overcome. Complaining that he could not rely upon Zweibrücken he remained motionless at Stolpen.

Leaving Dohna with 17,000 men to watch the Russians, Frederick hurried south, with 15 battalions and 38 squadrons. By the 19th September Fermor's army had grown to the figure of 50,000 men. He could not remain at Landsberg, his supplies being exhausted, but there was nothing to prevent him from attacking and destroying Dohna's force, which alone stood between him and Berlin. He preferred to retire, and took no further part in the campaign. The Swedes, released by Dohna's departure for Zorndorf, advanced south in a hesitating manner. As winter approached they too retired, having accomplished nothing, though there had been no opposition. Meanwhile Daun, with his powerful Austrian army, stood on the defensive. It is not necessary to go further for an explanation of the long duration of the war. Russia had fought a very severe battle, and was entitled to expect assistance, but no ally offered any. All the difficulties of exterior lines, of divided commands, and of long lines of communications could have been overcome, if the allies had exhibited towards Russia the loyal goodwill that England was bestowing upon Prussia. The coalition was defeated by its dissensions, the worst blunder being the failure to support and to propitiate Russia. England and Prussia survived because Pitt was a staunch and honourable friend to Frederick.

Marching for eight days, at an average speed of fifteen miles a day, the King brought a part of his Zorndorf army to the outskirts of Dresden on the 11th September. He had saved Dresden, but was not strong enough to attack Daun. In his prompt and clever retreat from Olmütz,

<sup>1</sup> Waddington, ii. pp. 290-2.

the swift advance against the Russian, and the quick return to Dresden, Frederick had exhibited an admirable decision and celerity. But his failure to defeat 'those rogues' at Zorndorf, and the realisation of the formidable fighting capacity of the Russian army, brought him to despair. He wrote to Prince Henry, 1st October 1758: 'I assure you that if it was not for the point of honour I should long ago have carried out the plan of which I spoke to you often last year. In fact, Job and I are obliged to exercise our patience; meanwhile life passes away and, having seen and considered it all, it has been nothing but annoyance, suffering, anxiety and affliction. Was it worth while to be born?' The reference is to suicide by poison, which he talked of without any intention of converting melodrama into reality.

At length the difficulty of obtaining supplies compelled Daun to move. On the 3rd October he left his entrenched position at Stolpen and marched towards Görlitz, on the way to Silesia. To defend the threatened province Frederick followed, but he was unable to pass Daun. The Austrian army had moved with some celerity, owing to the excellent arrangements made by Daun's Quartermaster, General Lacy. At Hochkirch, reached by Frederick on the 10th, his progress was barred by the Austrian army, while a Prussian advanced detachment under Retzow was faced by an Austrian force under Durlach, at Reichenberg. On the 11th Frederick received the news that an Austrian army, under Harsch, was besieging Neisse; with that fortress the whole of Upper Silesia would be lost. The advance to Görlitz, and thence to Neisse, had become urgent. Frederick habitually spoke with contempt of Daun, whom he named 'Maximus,' or the 'great Fabius,' a poor imitator of Fabius Cunctator Maximus. But since Kolin, he had no desire to attack him. He had refrained already at Zittau, Olmütz, and Stolpen. He would not even begin his flank move until he had personally reconnoitred, and had made every preparation, though time was pressing, and Neisse might fall meanwhile. He gave out afterwards that the delay at Hoch-

kirch was caused by the necessity of waiting for the bread wagons from Bautzen. He wrote at the time, to Prince Henry on the 11th, 'I will see on which side I can turn the enemy without, however, giving to chance more than prudence will permit.' . . . 'I cannot attack the enemy on every height on which he stands. Nothing remains but to turn them, to gain a position which will cut them off from Görlitz; that is what I shall have to carry out the day after to-morrow.' The movement was put off another day, to the night of the 14th to 15th October. Before it could commence, 'Maximus' had attacked him.

The Austrian line faced the Prussian in a nearly parallel direction. A valley separated the armies, but the Austrians had the higher position, looking down upon the Prussian camp. Thick woods, on rising ground, protected the Austrian left, which was separated from the Prussian right at Hochkirch by a narrow valley. Hochkirch was the strongest part of the Prussian position, but it was within musket-shot of the woods, and if taken the whole Prussian position would be compromised. Retzow was separated from Frederick's army, and Durlach's contingent could be brought up from Reichenberg to hold him and prevent a junction with the Prussian main body. Daun with a great superiority of force was in a favourable position for attack. He had only to capture the battery at Hochkirch, and then enfilade the Prussian position from the woods on his left.

Keith ventured to remark to the King, 'If the Austrians leave us here unmolested, they deserve to be hanged.' Frederick replied, 'We must hope that the Austrians fear us more than the gallows.'<sup>1</sup> Both Lacy and Loudon urged prompt action. Daun required little persuading, for the conditions satisfied his principles. In his report to Vienna he said three circumstances decided him: the eagerness of his army for battle; the carelessness of the enemy; and finally, the certainty of victory.<sup>2</sup> He decided to make a night attack on Hochkirch from the woods. Frederick believed the forest was too thick to

<sup>1</sup> Retzow, i. p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Arneth, v. p. 420.



be used, but Daun had tracks cut in it for the passage of guns and men. The timber was employed in making elaborate fortifications in the centre of the line, in view of the enemy, as if there was no thought of anything but defence. Frederick, as at Olmütz, was again outwitted by Daun, whom he considered incapable of any attack under any conditions, however favourable.

The excellent staff work of Lacy enabled the concentration of a large Austrian force, in the woods and their neighbourhood, in the night of the 13th to 14th October 1758. Loudon was ready to pass round Hochkirch and fall upon the enemy in rear. When Hochkirch was taken, the Austrian centre and right were to attack. Durlach was to come up from Reichenberg and hold Retzow.

The Austrians numbered some 70,000, but Daun did not succeed in bringing much more than a half of them into action. Frederick had 30,000 troops, and Retzow 10,000 more. Frederick's men, who did nearly all the fighting on the Prussian side, were the *élite* of the army. The infantry consisted of three battalions of the Guard, ten Grenadier battalions, with the excellent Brandenburg, Pomerania, and Magdeburg regiments. Only seven of these battalions had been subjected to the severe experiences of Zorndorf, while the greater part of the cavalry had gained credit and confidence in that battle.<sup>1</sup>

The morning of the 14th October was misty. When the church clock struck five, Austrian infantry passed across the valley in the darkness, and swarmed up the slope. No outposts had been placed,<sup>2</sup> and the sentries were close in. The attack came as a complete surprise, the hill was won and the nearest part of the camp captured before the alarm could be given. As the morning lightened Austrian guns from the west enfiladed the whole Prussian position.

<sup>1</sup> *German General Staff*, vol. viii. p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> 'This obvious precaution was totally neglected,' says Lodge, who was present at the battle. *History of the War in Germany*, vol. ii, p. 110.

Frederick was up early, in accordance with his custom, and heard the first shots, but he supposed it was nothing but the usual pandour mischievousness. When the cannon shot began to fall and the adjutants came with the news that a big attack was in progress, he jumped on his horse and rode to Hochkirch, having first ordered Retzow to come to his assistance at once; and he sent for reinforcements from the centre. His cavalry, meanwhile, had charged the enemy, but had made no lasting impression. Field-Marshal Keith brought forward his men, only to be himself killed by cannon shot, and his regiment was swept away. Prince Francis of Brunswick, brother of Queen Elizabeth Christina, was killed while leading his brigade; Prince Maurice of Anhalt-Dessau was severely wounded, and fell into the hands of the enemy. The King's horse was wounded. Austrian cavalry, under O'Donnell, charging in on the rear were in turn attacked by Prussian horsemen, and worsted, with the loss of three standards; but Lacy brought other cavalry, and Loudon's light horsemen thrust in, and the balance was more than redressed, the Prussians being forced to give way. At 7.30 Hochkirch was in Austrian hands. Frederick withdrew his troops to a new position of defence, on higher ground in rear. The Austrians did not follow, but kept up artillery fire on the defeated enemy.

The attack of the Austrian right did not begin till 7 A.M., the Prussian left being given ample time to prepare; but it had been weakened by the departure of reinforcements for Hochkirch, and was unable to withstand the pressure. A battery of heavy guns was lost and the infantry thrown into disorder, many prisoners being taken. Only against Retzow did the Austrian plan fail. Durlach sent forward a small force to assist the Austrian right. He attacked Retzow's left flank with no more than six battalions, while he kept back some 10,000 men who took no part in the fighting. By this grave neglect of his duty Durlach permitted Retzow to retire practically unmolested, and thus to protect Frederick's broken army from destruction. The combined Prussian

forces then retreated to Doberschütz, where a strong position was taken. Daun forbade all pursuit. In the afternoon he had his army back in its camp, leaving only an infantry brigade and the Grenadier and Carabineer corps in possession of the battlefield.

The Prussian loss may be put at 10,000, of whom nearly a quarter were prisoners, the Austrian at 7500. The Prussians lost 101 guns, 28 flags and 2 standards, the Austrians 1 flag and 3 standards.

Owing to the surprise, the mist and darkness at first, the confusion in a crowded area, it was a soldier's battle. The Austrians, confident of victory, fought well; but the Prussians, the pick of their army, gave evidence once more of superior discipline and steadfast courage. The escape of the army from complete destruction on this occasion is creditable to the spirit of the defence. The position was so bad, that if Durlach had pressed Retzow the whole of Frederick's army would have been at the mercy of their antagonists.

The blame for the mishap rests upon Frederick, who placed his army in a position so dangerous, that even his admiring slaves ventured to protest, and the most unenterprising of all his adversaries was forced, for very shame, to take prompt advantage of it. An attempt has been made to shift the responsibility upon Retzow for his neglect to seize a strong point, the Stromberg hill. But Frederick knew that post was in Austrian hands, and the blame still rests upon his shoulders for keeping his army, insufficiently guarded against surprise, in a situation in which an attack upon it could not fail to succeed.

Frederick wrote to his wife the cold letter already cited, announcing the death of her brother Prince Francis. He felt the loss of Keith. The body of the Field-Marshal was buried with military honours on the 15th. In January 1759 Frederick had it transported to Berlin, where it was placed in the crypt of the garrison church. In 1776 Keith's distant cousin, Robert Murray Keith, the British Ambassador in Vienna, caused a memorial, an urn of white marble, with a Latin inscription, to be



placed in the Hochkirch church. On the 5th May 1786, shortly before Frederick's death, a monument, since replaced by a statue, was erected in Berlin to the memory of his Scots friend.

In the afternoon of this day Catt was summoned to the King. He relates that Frederick exhibited considerable emotion, the tears flowing down his cheeks. After expressing his detestation of the business of war, Frederick said, "But I have that about me with which I can end the play when it becomes insupportable." He opens his collar, and takes out from under his shirt a ribbon to which was attached an oval-shaped gold box, which had rested on his breast. "There, my friend, there is all that is needed to put an end to the tragedy." He opens the box, which contained eighteen pills, which we counted. "These pills," he said, "are of opium, the dose is amply sufficient to send one to the sombre shore whence there is no return." . . . "I tell you roundly that if another misfortune comes, I shall certainly not survive the ruin and desolation of my country. That is my way of thinking; do not suppose that I propose to take for model a Sertorius or a Cato; the State, not glory, will decide; and then, my dear friend, if I had the cruel misfortune to be taken prisoner in a battle, would you wish me to survive such an abominable humiliation?" . . . "Just imagine," he said in a conversation next day, "me a prisoner of these people and at their mercy, how horrible! No, I am not made to submit to dishonour and outrage." Frederick showed Catt what he had written the previous year, in the dejection after Kolin, on the permissibility of suicide in time of misfortune, '*Si on ne peut pas se donner la mort dans ses malheurs.*'<sup>1</sup>

On the day of Hochkirch, 14th October 1758, Frederick's favourite sister, Wilhelmina, died. He had seen little of her for many years, and there had been a period of estrangement, owing to Wilhelmina's neglect to follow her brother's advice with regard to certain members of her Court. Except during that interval, their correspondence had

<sup>1</sup> Catt, *Unterhaltungen*, p. 375.

been continuous. Frederick felt severely the loss of a correspondent to whom he could open himself with a certainty of receiving sympathy, and of a sister who recalled tender memories of his childhood and youth.

He made no effort to master his grief ; it would almost seem that he enjoyed it. He wept freely and spoke much to Catt on the subject of his loss, sobbing the while ; he kissed his reader, who felt the King's tears fall on his cheek. He began an Ode to Wilhelmina, which occupied him for years. There is some affectation about this demonstration of a sorrow which was genuine enough.

After two days of rest and rejoicing, Daun followed the retiring enemy and took post opposite the Prussian camp at Doberschütz. While he spent his time in digging trenches and fortifying his position, Frederick, in the night of the 24th to 25th October, left his camp and resumed the march to Görlitz, which the defeat at Hochkirch should have prevented. Daun allowed him to slip past. The hopeless nature of the allied cause, with Daun the only possible Austrian commander, is revealed. Defeat meant an Austrian collapse for the duration of the campaign ; victory nothing more than the postponement of defeat. To this strange result the characters of Frederick and of Daun both contributed. The French attaché, Montazet, reported to Belleisle ; ' In truth this is a very remarkable sequel to the gaining of a battle. It is not that I consider the King of Prussia understands war much better than another. It is very easy to criticise him ; but he has an army which permits him to make fault after fault, because it is always ready to retrieve a reverse. That is his strength, and what makes him redoubtable to Europe, for, surprised at Hochkirch, and beaten at 8 in the morning, having lost nearly all his artillery, and abandoned his camp still standing, his army makes the finest of retreats, and halts only four miles from the field of the lost battle ; it takes there an imposing position which sets us to fortifying with redoubts and makes us return to the defensive four days after our victory.' . . . ' That is not all. The enemy, not content

with this piece of audacity, follows his project of anticipating us at Görlitz ; he has the appearance of having forgotten the battle he has lost, and pays no attention to our superiority.' The Russians meanwhile were occupied with the siege of Kolberg on the Baltic. Their commander, Fermor, received a letter from Daun, written after Hochkirch, urging him to cross the Oder and join the Austrians in winter quarters in Silesia. But Fermor was anxious for his communications, and considered that he had done enough for the common cause at Zorndorf. Finding himself unable to capture Kolberg, he decided to retire. The siege of Kolberg was raised, and the Russians departed for home in November 1758.

While Frederick was marching into Silesia to raise the siege of Neisse, Daun returned to the Dresden project. The Imperial army, under Zweibrücken, was still at Pirna, near Dresden, faced by a small force under Major-General Finck. Daun proposed that Zweibrücken should march round to Freiberg and Nossen, west of Dresden, with the idea of capturing Torgau and Leipzig, while the Austrian army would deal with the small force of Prussians under Finck, and the forts of Dresden under Commandant Schmettau. Frederick ordered Dohna and Wedell to hurry south for the defence of the threatened places. They reached Torgau in time to prevent the Imperialists from achieving anything. Daun, on arriving in front of Dresden, found Finck in a strong position defending the western approach. He attacked Dresden, on the 8th, on the south, and made some progress. On the 10th Schmettau set fire to a suburb which had impeded the gunnery of the defenders. Daun protested against an act which he said was contrary to the laws of war, and said that he would hold Schmettau personally responsible, to which Schmettau replied that he would defend the town by every means in his power. The destruction of the houses increased the difficulty of a storm of the ramparts. A regular siege was the alternative, and for that there was not time, and the presence of the Royal Family in the town was a deterrent.



Frederick meanwhile, marching rapidly, arrived within two days of Neisse on the 5th of November. The Austrian Commander, Harsch, at once raised the siege and retired to Königgrätz. Silesia thus cleared without a blow, Frederick returned to look after Daun. By the 16th November he was back at Görlitz. His rapid movements in this campaign, from one enemy to another, deserve all praise. On hearing of his approach, Daun abandoned the attempt on Dresden, which he had conducted in a half-hearted manner, and retired into Bohemia.

Thus the campaign of 1758, which included Frederick's failure at Olmütz, his repulse with serious loss at Zorn-dorf, and his defeat at Hochkirch, ended with the geographical position much what it had been at the end of 1757. The allies, Austria and Russia, had failed to obtain advantage from their military successes. The Austrian moral had recovered from the Leuthen disaster, and Russia had proved the fighting ability of her soldiers. France had experienced misfortunes. The army under Prince Ferdinand had defeated the French at Crefeld on the 23rd June, and the British captured Louisburg, Cape Breton, on the 26th July. These events would not have affected the issue upon the Continent if the Russian and Austrian commanders had been able to work loyally together in a policy of aggressive action. That was found to be impossible, owing chiefly to the jealous nature and the pusillanimous spirit of the Austrian commander, Daun.

#### 6. DEFEAT AT KUNERSDORF

France was being impoverished by the war. Besides incurring heavy expenditure on the operations in India, Canada, at sea, and on the Continent, France was paying large subsidies to her allies, Sweden, Austria and the German States. A peace on reasonable terms would have been welcome. The French minister, Bernis, made advances to England, but the reply of Pitt was that he would agree to no peace that did not include Prussia. When, in a

debate in the House of Commons, 4th December 1758, a member expressed the hope that no British minister would ever give back Louisburg to France, Pitt rose and said that he did not consider it would accord with the dignity of the nation that any British conquests should be retained, which might jeopardise the prospects of her allies. He was prepared to give back Louisburg if necessary, in order to save Prussia. The proposal of Bernis was that Prussia should give up Saxony, and Russia restore East Prussia. He threw over Austria by suggesting that Silesia should be guaranteed to Prussia, a solution which Maria Theresa was not yet willing to entertain. The failure of these overtures was fatal to Bernis. Louis xv. appointed Choiseul in his place.

Frederick continued his efforts to embroil his enemies. He wrote to George II., suggesting that in order to disunite their enemies 'secret emissaries' should be sent from England to stir up troubles in Sweden, Russia, Bavaria and Wurtemberg. It may be assumed that agents were already at work in enemy countries on his behalf.

The treaty between England and Prussia was renewed, on the 7th December 1758, whereby England agreed to continue the subsidy of £670,000 a year. Frederick wrote with his own hand to Pitt a letter of acknowledgment, which he ordered Knyphausen to deliver. 'I cannot resist, Sir, expressing to you my recognition of the manner in which you have again lately explained yourself in Parliament with regard to myself. I learn from so many directions of the trouble you give yourself in my interests, that I have not been able to refuse myself the satisfaction of thanking you myself.'

But Pitt would not bind the Government to guarantee the treaty of alliance with Turkey, which Frederick was desirous of obtaining. The Grand Vizier insisted upon a British participation in the treaty; Pitt objected that it would offend Spain and Naples, and make bad feeling between England and Russia. Frederick then suggested, in his unscrupulous way, that the British guarantee should

be kept secret, and if necessary denied, or that the blame should be put on Mr. Porter, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, but Pitt could not take part in, or condone, such characteristic Prussian tricks. Frederick's intrigues with the Porte aroused alarm in Spain and Naples, and increased Russian hostility. They led also to an estrangement with England. Frederick told Mitchell, on the 4th April 1759, that he would not be governed by Pitt; and he complained to the British Ambassador that Pitt desired not to hurt France.

Frederick's cruelty to Saxony brought protests from his ally. The Queen-Electress was treated with indignity; she died on the 17th November 1757, doubtless, as she herself said, of a broken heart. Pitt proposed a treaty of peace between Saxony and Prussia, but Frederick rejected it. George II. interceded for the Electoral Prince and Princess, asking permission for them to leave Dresden for Munich or Warsaw. The Elector of Bavaria supported the request. Frederick replied, through Mitchell, that the presence of the Royal Family in Dresden was necessary, in order to protect the town from an Austrian attack, that 'the suffering the Royal and Electoral family to depart at this time would in effect be giving up the ramparts of that capital.'

Frederick's conduct towards Saxony estranged his friends and embittered his enemies. When he entered the country, being granted by Augustus the *transitus innoxius* which he demanded, he was profuse in his declarations that he came as a friend both to the Royal Family personally and to the country. Complaints being made of his severity, he issued, in 1756, a *Mémoire contre les imputations à la charge des troupes prussiennes en Saxe*, in which he repeated what he had so often said: 'The King of Prussia is not the enemy of Saxony, and does not treat her as an enemy. It will not be long before she is convinced of it, and good patriots have already that conviction.'<sup>1</sup> That was mere hypocrisy. The Sedlitz Park was devastated under the eyes of the King. The Great

<sup>1</sup> *Preussische Staatsschriften*, iii. p. 400.



Garden was spared owing to the measures taken by Field-Marshal Keith. Brühl's house was sacked by order of the King, and in his presence. Frederick struck with his cane the hall-porter whom he encountered on the stairs, saving a clock. Perceiving in the distance another country house, belonging to Brühl, he ordered it to be burned.<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, though an admirer and friend of Frederick, wrote to Holdernessee, 1st November 1757, 'I am sorry to tell your lordship that Count Brühl's house at Groschwitz, near Herzberg, was plundered, as it is said, by the King of Prussia's orders; at least, he lodged in the house and was present when it was done. Acts of private vengeance are always dishonourable, unjust and impolite.'

Of the severe exactions Mitchell repeatedly complained. Writing from Leipzig, 1st November 1757, he says: 'His Prussian Majesty has made new demands upon this town, which are indeed hard.' On the 3rd January 1761: 'Private and most secret. The very harsh manner in which the country of Saxony is treated fills me with horror, though there is now the fatal plea of necessity for adopting measures which were practised before that necessity existed.' On the 7th January: 'Leipzig. I am informed that the King of Prussia has made a demand of two millions of crowns upon this town, a sum much exceeding their force, as many of the richest merchants are retired from this place; and the day before yesterday fifty or sixty merchants were arrested and carried to the town-house, where they still are, for nothing is yet agreed upon. This affair cannot fail to make a great noise all over Europe, as the merchants were arrested four days after the fair was opened, notwithstanding a solemn declaration made for their protection, and the immunity of the fair.'

The King's reader, Catt, ventured a mild remonstrance. 'On my saying to him that Saxony was very much ruined, and that it would be in a desperate condition if the war continued: "Yes, it is so, and it will be still more so this

<sup>1</sup> Vitzthum, *Geheimnisse des Sachsischen Cabinets*, ii. p. 336.

year. I have not spared it ; I have been severe, I acknowledge ; but if these people had been quieter, if they had not taken it into their heads to inform the enemy of my business, I should not have demanded so much, I assure you. It is true that they are very unfortunate.”<sup>1</sup> When the Prussian troops were driven out of Saxony and the Austrians entered, Frederick raised a great outcry, declaring that the ruinous state of the country was due to this irruption of Saxony's friends.

Mitchell again, 16th Jan. 1761: ‘Leipzig. Private. The demands of contribution of all sorts made by the Prussians in Saxony are most exorbitant, and far exceeding the abilities of the country to comply with, so that many of the subjects are now actually under military execution, equally ruinous to the country, and to the officers employed upon that service, who, when they have once tasted the sweets of plunder, cease to be soldiers, . . . facts that I cannot think of without horror.’ ‘21st Jan. 1761. Leipzig. Another report prevails here, which I shall be very sorry to be able to confirm in my next; viz., that Hubertsburg, a hunting seat of the King of Poland's, distant five miles from hence, has been plundered by the King of Prussia's order.’ Once more: ‘Leipzig. 5th February 1761. The premeditated and deliberate plundering of Hubertsburg has been attended with circumstances of meanness, that I am really ashamed to narrate them, yet they are too public to be concealed. I therefore leave them to the pens of the injured and outraged Saxons; such of his’ (Frederick's) ‘ministers as have any virtue mourn in secret for what has been done, and for what may further happen.’ . . . ‘I took occasion from the paper inclosed in Mr. Keith's letter to throw in a hint of the effects that reports only of our transactions here had had at the court of Russia. At first he reddened, then favoured the discussion; but it will have no effect, for ferocity has seized his mind, and cruelty has seized his heart.’

These reports, coming from a friend and admirer, would

<sup>1</sup> Catt, *Unterhaltungen*, ii. p. 230.

carry conviction even if there were no corroborating evidence. In Frederick's correspondence there are repeated orders to his subordinates to proceed with greater severity in Saxony: the reluctance of Prince Henry to carry out the King's harsh commands brought upon him letters of complaint, and was one of the causes of the estrangement between the brothers.

Mecklenburg suffered the same fate as Saxony. The Duke had voted with the majority of the German States for war by the Empire against Prussia. Frederick wrote many severe letters to his officers in command in that district, complaining of their gentleness towards the inhabitants. He wrote to Dohna, for instance, that he was 'peremptorily ordered' to obtain the recruits from Mecklenburg, 'without arguing, nor will I consider either objections or difficulties': he was 'promptly to bring to an end the business of obtaining stores, recruits, horses, and money.' In one of his letters Frederick complained that the officers made the soldiers deliver to them all booty, for the formation of a collection which was then not equitably divided among all ranks; that this regulation took away from the soldier the incentive to exertion. The King issued strict orders that each soldier was to be allowed to retain whatever booty he succeeded in capturing.

Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz wrote to Frederick a letter of intercession. After describing the former happy condition of the land, well cultivated and prosperous, she continued: 'But what a change now from the pleasant scene! I am not accustomed to partisan writing, still less am I capable, by fanciful descriptions, of exaggerating the horrible devastation. I can only say that even warriors who have nobility and feeling in their hearts, would be brought to tears by the spectacle of these scenes. The whole land, my dear Fatherland, lies there a desert. Agriculture and the farming of stock have come to an end. The husbandmen and the shepherd have become soldiers, and in the towns there are none to be seen but old men, women and children; perhaps here and there a young man, who from wounds received



is a cripple, and who relates to the small boys who surround him, the story of each wound in so pathetic yet heroic a tone, that their hearts are drawn to follow the drum before they are fit to join the troops.' . . . 'You, Sire, will listen to my prayer, for the honour of your own reputation you will remove the oppression and hardships, which are contrary to all humanity, and in conflict with military discipline.'

In consequence of this letter, and of other complaints, George III. ordered Bute to write to Mitchell, 27th November 1760, with instructions to express to Frederick the hope that the 'ravages complained of by the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin' might be stopped. Princess Charlotte was shortly afterwards betrothed to King George. Frederick then found it to his interest to relax his severity in Mecklenburg.

When the war began Frederick remarked that the last thaler would win it. When it ended he ascribed his success to his superior financial endurance. Among the methods he employed for obtaining money from his people, and also from his enemies, without their consent or understanding, was the debasement of the Prussian coinage. He gave a contract to certain Jews, Ephraim, Isaac and Itzig, to issue coins of a value at the rate of  $19\frac{3}{4}$  thalers for every 14 thalers of good money. The profit to the State was 6,500,000 thalers per annum. It was taxation by means of the cheating that Frederick loved. The English subsidy of £670,000 was used for conversion into the debased coins, producing 5,300,000 thalers. From these two sources Frederick obtained nearly one-half of the cost of the war. Merciless exactions from Saxony and Mecklenburg, a still greater debasement of the coinage, and the English gold, enabled Frederick to pay his way throughout the war.

In the winter of 1758-9, the Prussian forces were recruited in the customary manner, in friendly, neutral and hostile territories. The impressment was severest in the conquered countries, Saxony and Mecklenburg, but the whole of Germany was explored, not excepting the States

which had armies in the field fighting against Prussia. Prisoners were forced to fight against their countrymen. The only human material for which Frederick had no desire consisted of the soldiers who had lost a necessary limb while fighting for him. His utter callousness, and lack of ordinary humanity, may be judged from the order he gave to the surgeons that life was not to be saved by an amputation, if the result of the operation would be to leave him with a maimed man to whom a pension would have to be paid. His desire was that the surgeons should deliberately leave such a man to die.

For the campaign of 1759 he collected the following armies.

					Men to a heavy gun.
The King	44,500	men with	143	heavy guns	311
Fouqué	18,200	„ „	36	„ „	505
Prince Henry	37,000	„ „	63	„ „	587
	<u>99,700</u>		<u>242</u>		<u>413</u>

To watch Swedes and Russians Dohna had a force of 23,000, with 56 heavy guns. In addition, there were in garrison in Silesia and Saxony some 25,000 men. These troops being stationed in the invaded countries were part of the fighting force. The garrisons in France, Russia and Austria were so far distant from the scene of conflict that they cannot be regarded, like the Prussian garrisons, as combatants for the current campaigns. Frederick had thus 125,000 fighting men in Saxony and Silesia, with 242 heavy guns for the field force, and at least an equal number of heavy fortress guns, which could be utilised in case of need, for field warfare.

In 1756 Frederick began the campaign with only 120 heavy guns; he had now, including 56 with Dohna, altogether 298 in the field and a large number in the fortresses. He was quick to learn from his enemies. The defeat of his cavalry by the Austrians at Mollwitz had been followed by reforms which made the Prussian horsemen the best on the Continent. The superiority

of the Austrian guns, first revealed at Kolin, was replied to by the powerful artillery with which Frederick now took the field in 1759. The heavy fortress guns from Glogau, which had proved so valuable at Leuthen, required twelve horses, but the Austrians had a middle-weighted twelve-pounder, which Frederick copied, and which went under the name of 'Austrians' in his army. This gun required only eight horses. At Zorndorf Frederick noticed that light Russian guns, drawn by ridden horses, were able to keep with the cavalry. He adopted the idea of horse artillery, creating 1 battery of light six-pounders, with a personnel of 1 officer, 3 non-commissioned officers and 42 men.<sup>1</sup> In 1759 the Prussian corps of artillery numbered 4000 officers and men.

It was hoped that the increased artillery would compensate for the shaken resolution of the infantry. While the Austrian moral had improved, the Prussian had deteriorated. Already after Prague, where the infantry suffered so heavily, it had been found necessary to change the old proud order that in attack there should be no shooting, reliance being placed upon the bayonet. Winterfeldt warned the King that success could no longer be expected with the bayonet alone. The individual soldier had lost much of his eager courage. He had now to be driven forward, and to be supported by guns. Frederick wrote to Prince Henry: 'I consider it necessary to tell you to keep your infantry under severe discipline, to make them *N.B.* respect the stick, and to take with your army all the guns, of every calibre, which you have time to collect.' He wrote to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, 21st April 1759, 'The only thing I have to repeat to your army, and about which I advise you to think seriously, is the big gun. In this cursed war, it is impossible to succeed without having a great train of heavy artillery, and of projectiles.' . . . 'We must tempt fortune once more under more favourable auspices and with big guns.' . . . 'Do not forget your dogs of big guns which are

<sup>1</sup> Frederick has long been credited with the discovery of horse artillery. He was an imitator, not an inventor.



the most to be respected arguments of the rights of Kings.' To Prince Ferdinand again, 3rd May, 'I cannot refrain from repeating once more what I have already so often recommended to you for your advantage, that is, to augment your artillery, without which you will have no success in your enterprises.'

It was characteristic of this mean man that, being himself the arbiter as to the allotment of this indispensable weapon, he should have taken one heavy gun for every 311 men in his own force, and given to Fouqué one gun to each 505 men, and to Prince Henry one gun to each 598 men. He took for himself nearly a double proportion of the most important war material.

A new treaty between France and Austria was signed at Versailles on the 30th March 1759. It differed from the Treaty of Versailles of the 1st May 1757, by the omission of the stipulation that France would continue the war until Silesia was regained for Austria; this was modified into an undertaking by Louis xv. to do his best to obtain the recovery of Silesia; per contra, the new treaty said nothing of the cession to France of any towns in the Netherlands.

The Austrians put into the field in 1759 a force of 120,000 men with 136 heavy guns; the proportion of heavy guns was very small, only one-third of what Frederick had with his own army. The combined Austrian and Imperialist force at Erfurt and Gotha numbered 35,000 men and 44 heavy guns. At Stralsund and Rügen there were about 12,000 Swedes. The allies, without the Swedes, had 155,000 men with 180 heavy guns, against the Prussian 148,000 with 298 heavy guns. Considering the large proportion of light troops in the Austrian armies—there were 25,000 Croats—the inefficiency and tepidity of both Swedes and Imperialists, the Prussian interior lines, single command, and great superiority in artillery, the allies would have been altogether outmatched but for the Russian succour. Beyond the Vistula the Russians had a field force of 60,000 men, but these troops would not come into action until late in the summer, and then only

for a campaign of three months. The French were faced by the Anglo-Hanoverian army under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, which in this year obtained a strength of 72,000 men in the field, excluding garrisons. De Broglie defeated Ferdinand at Bergen on the 13th April 1759, but the event exercised no direct influence upon the situation of Frederick. France was eliminated from his calculations. For nine months of the year he had no serious opponent save Austria, against whom he was in a position to bring a preponderance of strength in men as well as guns. For three months he had to contend with the forces of Austria and Russia, which together exceeded his own, and under their protection the Imperialists gave some feeble signs of life. In these conditions the Napoleonic plan would have been to attack the Austrian main army before the Russians arrived, but Frederick awaited events, leaving the strategic initiative to his enemies.

The allies were left free to make arrangements for a junction of their forces. The vital necessity of concerting measures for some unity of aim had at last forced itself upon them. After much discussion, conducted with long delays between Vienna and St. Petersburg, a plan was agreed upon which it was hoped would lead to closer co-operation than in the previous campaign. At the end of June the Russian main army would advance from Posen, and the Austrians from their Bohemian quarters, in order to effect a junction of the two forces on the river Oder for a combined campaign in Silesia. A second Russian force would enter Eastern Pomerania and lay siege to Kolberg. To meet the Russians Dohna would have to abandon his position before Stralsund; the released Swedes would emerge from the fortress and pounce upon Stettin. Only goodwill and loyalty were required to bring this scheme to a successful issue.

Daun's failure in the campaign of 1758 raised very general expressions of discontent, to which the Marshal replied by offering to resign, but he received such warm protests of confidence from Maria Theresa and from Kaunitz, that he was induced to abandon the idea. The

story that he received a sword and a hat from Pope Clement XIII., though believed in by Frederick, who made fun of Daun as 'the man with the Papal bonnet,' or as 'this blessed creature,' was officially denied in Vienna in August 1759, and is now discredited.<sup>1</sup>

The plan agreed upon gave Daun the excuse he desired, for doing nothing in the spring and early summer. Though Kaunitz tried to spur him to action, pointing out that an attack upon the King of Prussia would at least give him the valuable advantage of the initiative, and would weaken his enemy, Daun declined to stir until the Russians were ready.

Then it appeared that the place of meeting on the Oder could not be agreed upon between Daun and Fermor. The principle of union had been established at Vienna and St. Petersburg, but neither of the commanders would endanger his own line of communications in order to meet the other. Fermor refused to cross the Oder. Daun then wrote to Maria Theresa, that co-operation with the Russians should be abandoned, and that the only course left was to lay siege to Neisse or Glatz, but he said there was small hope of success even in these operations. He could see nothing but difficulties. The two Empresses had to overcome the pusillanimity of their generals. Maria Theresa begged Daun not to be afraid of the Prussian King, nor to shrink from a battle, for even a defeat would not ruin their cause, while a victory might bring the war to a happy ending. She would not hold Daun responsible in case of defeat. The Empress Elizabeth supported the St. Petersburg Conference in ordering Fermor to cross the Oder if necessary. But Fermor had become impervious to St. Petersburg influence; he was therefore removed from the command, and Soltikoff appointed. The choice aroused astonishment, for Soltikoff had no military experience, and had given no evidence of ability of any sort.

The Russian concentration at Posen proceeded slowly; by the 29th June 1759 it was accomplished. At the same

<sup>1</sup> *German General Staff*, ix. p. 245.



time Daun, urged on from Vienna, advanced towards Lusatia. Frederick retired before him. On the 6th July both armies halted, facing each other, waiting for news of the Russians.

Soltikoff at Posen was watched by Dohna. On the 8th July the Russians advanced towards the Oder river, unperceived by Dohna, who hurried after them, and succeeded in stopping further progress by barring the route at Kay, close to the Oder, on the 21st July. Frederick blamed Dohna and sent Wedell to supersede him. He gave Wedell written instructions to attack the enemy. He was to 'cashier officers who lament and make dispirited remarks: disgrace those who at every opportunity attribute to the enemy a strength greater than he has; send at once before a court-martial any officers who have been guilty of cowardice.' Wedell accordingly attacked at Kay, on the 23rd July 1759, with 28,000 men, against the Russian 40,000 to 45,000. As was to be expected, he was soundly beaten, with a loss of 7000 men.

Frederick himself never attempted to give such odds. He might have strengthened his subordinate without risk, but although he expected that Wedell would be defeated, he would not weaken his own force, with its disproportionate collection of heavy guns. He was pre-occupied with fears for his prestige. 'Do you imagine,' he wrote to Voltaire, 'that there is any pleasure in this dog's life, in seeing and procuring the killing of individuals personally unknown to me, in losing acquaintances and friends daily, in seeing one's reputation incessantly exposed to the caprices of fortune?'

Frederick received news of the defeat of Wedell on the 24th July. He remarked that it was what he had expected. It was now incumbent upon him to oppose the Russians in person. He waited until the 30th, and then spurred his men to make what he described in a letter to Finckenstein as 'cruel and terrible marches.' Daun heard the news of Soltikoff's victory on the 26th. He sent forward Loudon with 18,000 men, and Hadik with 17,000 men and the heavy baggage, with instructions to march with

the utmost speed to join the Russians. Soltikoff's vanguard entered Frankfort-on-the-Oder on the 31st; the main body reached the town on the 3rd August. On that day Loudon also arrived. Hadik, less resolute, and encumbered by the baggage, was forestalled by the Prussian advanced troops.

Cheered by the news of the victory of the Anglo-Hanoverian army, under Prince Ferdinand, over the French at Minden, Frederick crossed the Oder on the 10th and 11th August, and on the 12th he led his army to attack the enemy. He had 53,000 men with 154 heavy guns, 6 horse guns, and 106 regimental guns. The Russians numbered 40,000 regulars, and 10,000 light troops, with 201 field-guns, many of them of light weight, 142 regimental guns, and 16 horse guns. The Austrians under Loudon numbered 18,000, of whom 6000 were Croats—with 10 heavy guns. In regulars the allies had 52,000 against 53,000; their 16,000 light troops were not worth much for battle fighting; in guns they had a great superiority of the lighter sorts.

The Russians and Austrians were entrenched on a spur of hills, cut into by ravines, running east from Frankfort to Kunersdorf. The rear, to the north, was protected by marshy ground, and by the steep gradient of the hill; on the right front were thick woods and the river Oder; the left rested on the Mühlberg, a small hill with ravines beyond and behind it. The southern slopes in front of the centre were less steep than those in the rear. This was the most accessible part of the Russian position.

In accordance with his custom, Frederick decided to attack one flank with half of his army, keeping the other half in reserve. He sent an advance guard under Finck to attack the enemy's left on the Mühlberg. Batteries were placed upon hills to the north and west of the Mühlberg, whence they enfiladed the Russian position. At 11.30 they opened fire; they soon obtained an ascendancy over the Russian guns, and dealt great havoc in the lines of the defenders. At 12 the infantry of the advanced guard moved forward to the assault and carried the Mühl-

# BATTLE OF KUNERSDORF 12<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 1759

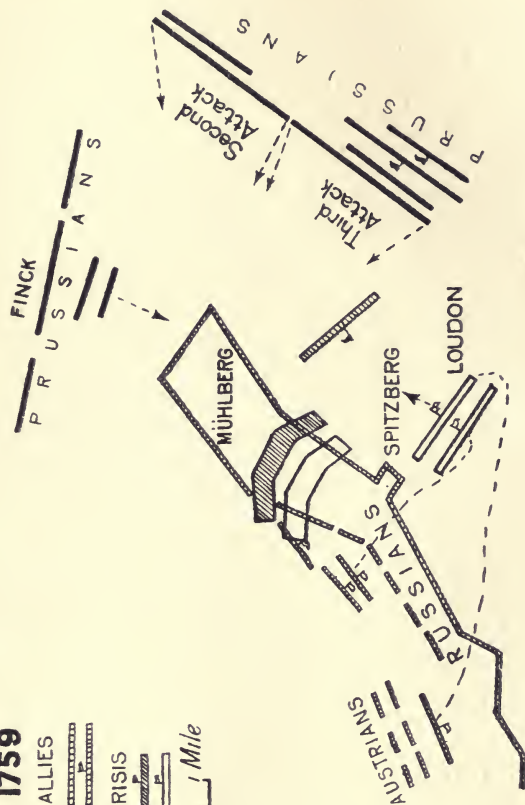
PRUSSIANS  
Infantry  
Cavalry

ALLIES

POSITION AT CRISIS

Prussians  
Allies

SCALE 0 1 Mile







berg without much difficulty, capturing prisoners and guns. Some time elapsed before the Prussian guns could be brought forward into range once more. The interval was utilised by Soltikoff to bring round fresh battalions from his centre and right, while Frederick still kept his left as a reserve. If that part of his force had been sent forward to menace the Russian centre and right, it would have prevented the strengthening of the Russian line at the point of attack; but it would have been out of the control of the King. Frederick's method of piecemeal attack enabled him to superintend the whole of the fighting area.

The Prussian right was now sent forward to assist Finck; the combined force advanced in deep formation on a narrow front. The Russian guns did terrible execution upon the solid target. The attackers carried the nearest ridge, but their losses were so severe that some of the King's advisers proposed a cessation of the attack, arguing that the enemy would be obliged to retreat in the evening. The wisdom of the proposal may be doubted; the Russians had shown no disposition to retire, and would have been given time to reorganise their defence. Frederick dreaded another inconclusive and costly Zorndorf. Always pitiless in the demands he made upon his soldiers, and incapable of staying his hand, he decided for a resumption of the attack. At last he made use of his left, but in order to keep the fighting under his own control, he utilised that reserve to reinforce Finck and the right, where there was already a congestion of troops. If he had even now sent it against the Russian centre or right the day might have been won. Safe now from all anxiety with regard to the centre and right, Soltikoff and Loudon brought thence more reinforcements, and a concentration of guns of all calibres was made on the Spitzberg hill. Against the murderous fire of shot, grape, and musketry, the Prussians were definitely beaten back. Frederick ordered Seydlitz to charge, but the cavalry could do nothing against the Russian batteries, and were repulsed, Seydlitz himself being severely wounded. Loudon at

this point intervened with decisive effect. He led a charge of Austrian cavalry, followed by a second line of Russian cavalry, against the Prussian horsemen; after a sharp but short struggle the Prussians were totally defeated; they fled from the field of battle. Loudon, keeping his men in hand, then charged the infantry with complete success. The King at this point made a desperate attempt to obtain another effort from his infantry. He seized a standard and advanced into the thick of the fight; two horses were hit under him, and a bullet struck a small gold box in a pocket. He had demanded of his men more than they could give. Soltikoff had still fresh regiments which he brought from his right; they charged, drove the Prussians before them, recaptured the Mühlberg and the lost cannon, released the prisoners, and following on, swept away all resistance. Loudon charged again, and a complete rout ensued, at about 7 P.M.

The Prussians threw down their arms and fled in wild confusion. 'All had only one object, to get out of the reach of the enemy as fast as possible.' An eye-witness, Tempelhof, writes: 'Never have I seen a Prussian army in such a condition.'<sup>1</sup> Austrian and Russian horsemen pursued for a short distance, until darkness set in. As a fighting force, Frederick's army was for a time dispersed.

The losses on both sides were heavy. The Prussians lost 19,000 men in killed, wounded and prisoners. The immediate loss was greater, for only 28,000 were with the colours at Madlitz four days after the battle, leaving 25,000 unaccounted for. The Russians captured 26 flags, 2 standards, and 172 cannons. The Russian casualties were 14,000, the Austrian 2500, making a total allied loss of 16,500. 'Your Imperial Majesty must not be surprised at our serious casualties,' wrote Soltikoff to the Empress Elizabeth, 'for you know that the King of Prussia always sells victory dearly. Another such victory, Your Majesty, and I shall be obliged to plod,

<sup>1</sup> *German General Staff*, x. p. 282.



staff in hand, myself to St. Petersburg with the joyful news, for want of messengers.' <sup>1</sup>

Frederick's conduct of the battle is open to criticism. It was a mistake to send forward his men in solid, congested ranks against the enemy's left, while his own left was unoccupied and the enemy's right and centre were unmolested.<sup>2</sup> He should not have permitted the enemy to bring reinforcements in men and guns from an unthreatened centre and right to the point of danger. He made the same tactical blunder as at Zorndorf. The prestige of the Russian victories at Gross-Jägersdorff and Kay, and the far-spread renown of the unconquerable Russian valour at Zorndorf, had much to do with the Prussian discouragement at Kunersdorf. The men who had just come from the defeat at Kay had no desire for further exchanges with their conquerors. After the final repulse, it was fear of the pursuing Cossacks that caused the wild panic when once defeat had been accepted.

'Prittwitz, ich bin verloren,'—'I am lost,' said Frederick to one of his officers as he rode off the field. With a small band of fugitives he made for Göritz, where he had crossed the river on the previous day. He sent off a letter to Finckenstein :

' 12.

'I attacked the enemy this morning at 11 o'clock. We drove them back as far as the cemetery of the Jews close to Frankfort. All my troops exhibited and did prodigies of valour, but that cemetery caused us prodigious losses. Our people were thrown into confusion, I rallied them three times, at last I feared being captured myself, and I was obliged to abandon the field of battle. My coat is riddled with bullets, I have had two horses killed, my misfortune it is to live still. Our losses are very considerable: of an army of 48,000 I have not 3000 left. As I write, everybody is fleeing, and I am no longer master of my people. At Berlin you must look to your safety.'

<sup>1</sup> Bain, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> This is also the opinion of the German General Staff. Vol. x. p. 318.

‘It is a cruel reverse. I will not survive it; the consequences of the affair will be worse than the affair itself. I have no further resources, and, not to lie to you, I consider that all is lost; I will not survive the loss of my country.—Farewell for ever !  
FEDERIC.’

Next day, 13th August, Frederick crossed the Oder with the remnant of his army, and halted at Reitwein. He sent for Lieutenant-General Finck, and to him gave up the command, in the following letters, in his own handwriting, written in German :

‘Being attacked by severe illness, I give over the Command of my army, during my illness, until my recovery to General Finck, and I can in case of necessity also give him the Corps of General Kleist’ (facing the Swedes), ‘according as circumstances may demand; also the magazines in Stettin, Berlin, Küstrin and Magdeburg.  
FRIEDRICH.’

He gave Finck the following instructions :—

‘General Finck is given a difficult commission. The unfortunate army which I give over to him, is no longer in a condition to beat the Russians. Hadik will hasten to Berlin, perhaps Loudon also. If General Finck follows those two the Russians will attack him in the back; if he remains stationary on the Oder, he will have Hadik upon him on this side. However, I believe that if Loudon tried for Berlin, he could be attacked and beaten on the way. Such a plan, if it goes well, would raise a stand against misfortune and delay matters. Time won is very much in these desperate circumstances.

‘The reports from Torgau and Dresden will be given to him by Coeper, my secretary. He must send all information to my brother, whom I have declared Commander-in-Chief of the army. To recover entirely from this misfortune is not possible; in the meantime what my brother orders must be carried out. The army must take the oath to my nephew.

‘ This is the only advice that in these unfortunate circumstances I am in a position to give ; if I had still any resources I would have continued in charge.

‘ FRIEDRICH.’

The talk of suicide means nothing more than that to avoid capture by the enemy he would, at the last moment, swallow poison. The reference to ill-health is not convincing. There is no hint as to the nature of the complaint ; this is the only occasion in Frederick's career when he alleged incapacity, from a physical ailment ; and the pose is abandoned by the remark that if he had had any resources he would have continued in charge. That is a plain admission that when matters became desperate he had not the grit to stick to his post. The illness was in the spirit. Even the secretary, Coeper, had more pluck. Writing to Finckenstein on the 15th, after remarking that ‘ His Majesty is in a condition of dejection which can but cause infinite pain to those who have the honour to approach him,’ he proceeds : ‘ I do not think affairs are at such a crisis as may be supposed, or that the Austrians and the Russians did so much on the 12th. Yet, His Majesty regards them as desperate and acts accordingly.’ Only a faint heart could behave as if the end had already come.

The resignation of the command afforded the King a means of escape from the reproaches of his people. He wrote to Finckenstein, ‘ To conceal nothing, I must tell you that I fear my troops more than the enemy.’ He abused his unfortunate troops in private letters, with offensive epithets ; but he was alarmed and anxious as to their demeanour towards himself, their King, who had driven them to a profitless slaughter. A disaffected and demoralised army terrified him. He cursed it in private and fled from it in public. After Kolin, he had given the defeated troops to his brother, Prince William. On the present occasion, while casting the responsibility upon Finck, the King did not, in reality, abandon his supervision. The resignation was partly craven, partly



a deceit, a dodge for shirking blame. When the military reports came in on the 13th, Frederick sent them to Finck, but accompanied by an order to come and confer with him about them. On the 14th he wrote to Schmettau, the commander at Dresden, that if he was attacked and defence became impossible, he should try to obtain a favourable capitulation. Next day, the 15th August, he had recovered from his fears; the enemy had not pursued, and his own men were collecting round him. The invalid was able to resume the command after a moral illness of three days' duration.

The forces of the allies, on the 13th August, the day after the battle, were distributed as follows :

Daun	at Priebus	had	23,000 men.
Beck	at Somerfeld	had	9,000 men.
Hadik	at Gaben	had	15,000 men.
Loudon	at Kunersdorf	had	13,000 men.
Soltikoff	at Kunersdorf	had (say)	30,000 men.
			<hr/> 90,000 men. <hr/>

No organised enemy stood between this great collection of men and Berlin. On Daun's right flank was the army of 40,000 under Prince Henry, but there were Austrian detachments under Buccow, Maguire, and de Ville, amounting altogether to a similar figure, which could have been used to disturb Prince Henry's communications. In Saxony the Imperial army under Zweibrücken threatened Dresden.

In this condition of affairs, what Frederick and most observers expected was an advance by the greater part of the 90,000 Austrians and Russians to prevent the Prussian fugitives from reassembling, and to capture Berlin. To the general astonishment, no move was made, save a leisurely advance on the part of Daun for a few miles. There was no attempt to disturb the gathering of the Kunersdorf remnants. By the 18th August, six days after the battle, Frederick had again an army of 28,000 men at Madlitz. On the 19th he was at Fürsten-

walde with 33,000 men, in a position to oppose any advance upon Berlin. For the gross failure to take advantage of the Prussian defeat Daun was to blame. He sent Lacy, his Quartermaster-General, to the Russian camp with a proposal that Soltikoff and Loudon, supported by Hadik, should take the initiative. The Russian had fought and won two severe battles at great cost in men and munitions, and he was very far from his bases of supply, while the bulk of the Austrian troops had done no serious fighting, and they had stores and strong places to fall back upon in case of defeat. There was justification for Soltikoff's feeling that it was now Daun's turn to do something. The extraordinary pusillanimity exhibited by Daun in the previous autumn, when the way had been opened for him by the great Russian effort at Zorndorf, left a suspicion that he desired to let the Russians bleed and to avoid danger himself. Disloyalty, jealousy, selfishness, and pusillanimity seemed to be the chief features of his character. When he pointed out to Soltikoff that Berlin would be an easy capture, and that both booty and glory would be obtained by the conqueror of the Prussian capital, the Russian replied that he was quite willing to leave these rewards to his ally who had fresh troops in large numbers, more fit to undertake the adventure than his diminished and battered force. But Daun declined to move, pleading that Prince Henry might cut his communications, and that Berlin, when captured, could not be held during the winter. The same argument applied with much stronger force to the Russian, who was so far from his bases of supply.

The French Ambassador at Vienna reported to Choiseul that the Empress-Queen, on receipt of the news of the Kunersdorf victory, said that the King of Prussia was the common enemy, it should be their chief aim to overcome him personally; 'when a tree has been cut down by the root the branches are soon obtained.' Her husband, the Emperor Francis, had already expressed himself to Daun in that sense. Kaunitz, however, favoured an attack upon Silesia; Choiseul desired the deliverance of Saxony;

and Daun was always on the side of inaction and delay. The Austrian and Russian commanders met at Gaben on the 22nd August, and the result of their consultation was an agreement, that they should do nothing until the Imperialists under Zweibrücken had captured Dresden; then they would march together to invade Silesia. Accordingly, on the 28th August, Soltikoff, Loudon, and Hadik moved south, and Daun began a retirement on the 29th. The victors abandoned the field, leaving the King of Prussia, with his cowed and disorganised little army, in command of Frankfort and all the territory from which he had been driven.

When he learned of the retrograde movement of the allies, Frederick wrote to Prince Henry on the 1st September: 'I announce to you the miracle of the house of Brandenburg; when the enemy had passed the Oder, and by risking a second battle he had it in his power to finish the war, he marched from Mühlrose to Lieberose.' To Finckenstein he wrote: 'The Russians and the Austrians have turned in the direction of Lusatia. As you doubtless imagine, my astonishment can only be great, especially as while I thought they would march upon Berlin, they take a quite contrary direction. They have just abandoned Frankfort, they seem now to intend to make themselves masters of Dresden! I cannot conceive any reason other than the importunity of the King of Poland, that could make them go there.' It was not the King of Poland, as we know. When Frederick had discovered the real cause of his deliverance, he wrote to Voltaire, 22nd September: 'I have to do with such stupid people that it necessarily follows that in the end I shall get the better of them.'

The allies were in such overwhelming strength, that no amount of bickering and bungling could prevent them from obtaining some successes. On the 4th September Dresden capitulated to the Imperialists under Zweibrücken. Acting upon the advice sent him by Frederick after Kunersdorf, the Prussian commander, Schmettau, felt justified in giving up the city on the terms approved



beforehand by the King, whereby the garrison was allowed to march out. Schmettau was disgraced for following his master's commands, although Frederick expressed to other correspondents his satisfaction that the garrison had not been taken prisoners of war. To Schmettau's explanation that the enemy had brought up seventy heavy guns, Frederick replied that the enemy would not fire upon Dresden. He believed that the presence of the Royal Family, upon which he had insisted, would prevent an Austrian bombardment; but, if so, why did he write to Schmettau anticipating surrender? A characteristic detail is that Frederick ordered the garrison, once free, to break the agreed terms of the capitulation, which accordingly was done; he alleged, of course, that the enemy had done the same, but gave no particulars.

The capital of Saxony and a large part of the Electorate being recovered, Maria Theresa desired the Russians to join the Austrian forces for an immediate campaign in Silesia, the capture of some of the fortresses—Glogau, Schweidnitz, Glatz, or Neisse,—and a Russian occupation of one of these places during the winter. Then early in the following spring the allies could unite for the reconquest of the whole of Silesia. Whatever chance the scheme may have had broke down owing to the natural Russian suspicion of Daun. The Austrian commander had been in Lusatia and neighbourhood with a powerful army at his back for several months; he had shifted his position a little from time to time, but he had avoided all contact with the enemy. Soltikoff was justified in declining any co-operation with a *fainéant*. After hanging about for some time he retired, crossed the Vistula, and went into winter quarters. Loudon was in command of a substantial force which marched with the Russians. Seeing an opportunity for making a dash at the enemy, Loudon proposed that he should leave Soltikoff, join Daun, and make a bid for victory. Daun refused the permission, his real reason being jealousy. Loudon was obliged to keep with Soltikoff until they were both far

beyond the scene of hostilities. Then it was difficult to bring back his force in the heart of the winter.

Frederick and Prince Henry had now only Daun and Zweibrücken to deal with. The King sent forward Finck with a small force, on an extremely hazardous enterprise, to cut the enemy's communications. Daun succeeded in surrounding the Prussians at Maxen, south of Dresden, with overwhelming numbers, and an unconditional capitulation was the inevitable result. Finck and 12,000 men became prisoners. Always ungenerous to his subordinates, Frederick described Finck's conduct as disgraceful; and he declared that Schmettau had taken a bribe. Both officers had merely carried out the King's commands. After the war, Finck was sent before a court-martial and condemned to a year's imprisonment.

The Austrian success at Maxen had its unfortunate side, for the pressing necessity for the allies was to be rid of Daun, and Maria Theresa was now fortified in the confidence she felt in him. The Austrian commander was not easily to be removed. Loudon was junior to all the higher-placed officers; professional jealousy and the traditions of the army made it very doubtful whether the seniors would be willing to serve under him. This difficulty the Empress-Queen, supported by the Emperor and Kaunitz, could have overcome; but Maria Theresa believed in the victor of Kolin; her confidence once given could not be withdrawn. The ultimate failure of the allies was, therefore, as Frederick remarked, inevitable.

## 7. VICTORIES AT LIEGNITZ AND TORGAU

Frederick continued his efforts to obtain discussions about peace, 'if only,' he wrote to George II., 'to sow distrust and dissension among our enemies.' In a letter to his uncle, dated 20th June 1759, he proposed a peace congress. 'My brother, in spite of the efforts we have made to break the league of our enemies, it seems that their animosity and their ardour have only increased. We have acted with all possible vigour; our successes,

far from giving them pacific sentiments, have only strengthened the ties that unite them, and have driven them to make still greater efforts. If Your Majesty will permit me to speak to him confidentially and openly, I think that the attachment we owe to our people, and that humanity and the welfare of the human race demand that we should not continue, with excessive fury, an onerous and bloody war; and that it would not be contrary to our dignity nor contrary to our honour, to take advantage of the early successes of this campaign, to declare conjointly to the enemy Powers that we are prepared, at London and at Berlin, for the opening of a congress in which might be considered the means best adapted for establishing a peace honourable and expedient for all the belligerents.' The successes referred to were English, not Prussian.

The serious reverses sustained by France in the colonial and naval war with England gave Frederick the hope that Louis xv. might be willing to make peace with England. He wrote to Knyphausen at London, 1st September 1759, that he hoped the English successes and 'the honest and disinterested views' of Pitt would 'save us from a certain collapse.' He wrote to Finckenstein, 12th October 1759: 'The only means left to us for a profitable peace is to embroil our enemies. They will never become more embroiled than when France makes the first proposals of peace. From that instant they will no longer harp upon the same string, and consequently we may more easily obtain our advantage, etc.' Frederick believed that France was on bad terms with her allies Austria and Russia, that she was ready to abandon them, and unable to refuse Pitt's terms. He expected that a general peace would result, and in that case, as he wrote to Knyphausen, he hoped to retain Saxony, for which he would give up East Prussia to Russia and his possessions on the Rhine to France. An attempt was made to make use of the former friendly relations between England and Russia in order to obtain a peace between Prussia and Russia, England not being at war with the latter Power. While Keith, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, was



busy in that direction, Frederick was considering whether he could not obtain some ecclesiastical territories in Germany, and the reversion to Polish Prussia after the death of the King of Poland.

All this he now hoped to obtain in consequence of the English victories, and through the loyalty of Pitt. At the same time he continued his efforts to induce Turkey to attack Russia or Austria, but the Grand Vizier desired peace and the Sultan was irresolute.

To help Frederick, Pitt agreed to the conference he desired. The English and Prussian Governments issued a joint Declaration of their desire for a conference between the belligerents, for the purpose of discussing possible terms of peace. The document was delivered, at the Hague, to the ministers of the Courts of Versailles, Vienna and St. Petersburg, on the 25th November 1759. But the victories at Maxen and Kunersdorf stiffened the resolution of the two Empresses. Maria Theresa would not consider any peace proposals which did not include the restoration of Silesia. Elizabeth said to Esterhazy, the Austrian Ambassador, 'I mean to continue this war, in conjunction with my allies, even if I am forced to sell all my diamonds and half my clothes.' Thus no progress could be made with the Congress project.

The military disasters of 1759 reduced Frederick to a condition of the deepest dejection. He wrote to Prince Henry, 1st January 1760, 'I am heart-broken with sorrow, and what discourages me most is that I am at an end of all my means, and can find no further resources. I ought not to sadden you on the day of the new year, but rather hide from you this dismal picture, which, however, is so obvious to all eyes that it cannot be concealed. In short, my dear brother, the past, the present and the future appear to me equally distressing, and I do not cease to repeat to myself that being a man I must submit to the lot of human beings.' Prince Henry replied in the same hopeless strain: 'I cannot deny that I regard the present condition of things and the future with the eye which you have deigned to confide in me is your own ;

if peace is not concluded in the spring I believe with you, my very dear brother, that the catastrophe will be, at least judging according to human probability—inevitable.' . . . 'You have sustained the war for four years; whatever peace you may make will never be dishonouring, and even if it is disadvantageous, it will be vanity rather than honour that is hurt.'

Frederick was now so depressed that he was brought to consider the possibility of making, or at least offering, some concession to his enemies. He wrote to Finckenstein, 4th January 1760: 'I feel and agree that we must regulate our pretensions by our success in arms, and I admit that we shall be very fortunate if by a peace we are able to put things where they were before the war.' That letter contained his real feeling. When writing to Knyphausen, 20th and 23rd January, he expressed his official minimum when he said that he would evacuate Saxony, but give up no territory that belonged to him before the war. To compensate Saxony for the damage sustained in the war, he proposed that Erfurt and contiguous territory should be taken from its owner, the Elector of Mainz, and given to the Elector of Saxony. If France obtained acquisitions in the Austrian Netherlands, Maria Theresa might be given in return the reversion to the Electorate of Bavaria, the Elector having no heir. To Finckenstein Frederick wrote, 6th February: 'This is what I have been working at up to the present, to lead matters only to the point when there is a commencement of talking together, of explanations and entry into details so that at least we may see what are the pretensions of each of the parties.' He adds, *Soli et secret*. If in the meantime, the peace with France makes no progress, or if chance does not favour us with some other fortunate occurrence, the prospect is rather terrifying for us.' When Frederick found that his peace talk was producing no results, he gave a hint of a possible promise of compensation. He wrote to Knyphausen, 16th February: 'In this situation, distressing as it is, I will never take a dishonouring step, make no cession, nor

anything whatever. Money, I might be compelled to promise, but as for paying, I defy all Europe to make me do so, unless the sum is quite inconsiderable.' Here he admits that he might be forced to promise an indemnity, but adds that he would not keep his word. His frequent assertion that he would make no cession does not carry conviction. Writing to Knyphausen on the 30th March, he says, 'If, in the meanwhile, peace should be made between France and England and I am included, without concessions on my part, or onerous conditions for me, I should be very pleased, and I should subscribe to it in good heart and with good faith.' When it was proposed that he should give up Wesel and Cleves to France, he did not indignantly repudiate the idea, but proceeded to consider what advantage France would gain. In spite of his protestations Frederick would, at this time, have promised a concession of territory, or a sum of money, in order to be freed of the weight of France. Ready to repudiate the bargain at the earliest favourable opportunity, hoping to evade all actual transfer of property, he would for a definite, immediate gain have made promises which he had no intention of carrying out.

France desired peace. Wolfe's victory at Quebec on the 13th September 1759, followed by the capture of the town; Hawke's defeat of the French fleet off Quiberon Bay on the 20th November, whereby the fear of a French invasion was brought to an end; the successes of Clive in India; the defeat of the French at Minden, on the 1st August 1759, by the Anglo-Hanoverian forces under Prince Ferdinand; and the exhaustion of the French finances, all joined to make Court and ministers eager for peace on any reasonable terms. But the negotiations broke down upon the refusal of Pitt to abandon Frederick.

France would have come to an agreement with England with regard to Canada, the fisheries, the West Indies, and India, provided that for her great losses in those directions, she obtained some compensation on the Continent. The peace she desired would have to include besides England, also Hanover, Brunswick and Hesse,



leaving France in a position to turn all her Continental armies, hitherto fully occupied by Prince Ferdinand, against Prussia. If Silesia could be wrested from Prussia, France would obtain compensation from the Habsburg dominions. But Pitt would make no peace, however advantageous to England, which would leave his Protestant ally at the mercy of his enemies. Thus the negotiations came to an end. England, though in a position to obtain all she desired, continued the war to save Prussia from destruction. Pitt being obdurate, the honour of Louis xv. revived. He in turn declined to abandon his ally Austria, to whom he was bound by treaty, as Kaunitz took care to point out. The death of Ferdinand vi. of Spain and accession of Don Carlos of Naples, an enemy of England, was an auspicious event. If Spain could be brought in on the Bourbon side, the naval war might, after all, be made to turn against England.

On the 3rd April 1760, the French reply to the Anglo-Prussian declaration of the 25th November 1759, was delivered at the Hague. It said that while France was ready to make a separate peace with England, the war against Prussia, being entirely distinct from that quarrel, could only be ended by a Congress in which France, Austria, Russia, Sweden and Saxony were all represented. This brought to an end the Congress project, because Pitt would not desert Prussia.

Frederick's appreciation of the stand Pitt had made on his behalf is expressed frequently in his letters. 'I count upon the firmness and honesty of Pitt,' he wrote to Finckenstein, 20th August 1759, in the depression after Kunersdorf. 'It is upon him alone that we can, at this moment, found some hope.' On the 10th October, 'I am glad that I have not been deceived in my estimate of the character of Pitt. He is a man on whom one may rely.' To Mitchell he said, 'It must be admitted that England has been long in labour, and that she has suffered much in producing Mr. Pitt, but in the end she has brought forth a man.' To Von der Hellen at the Hague, 'I am quite confident that England will never separate herself from

me, and that her sentiments are too upright, too just and of too good a faith, that I should fail to be quite easy on that matter.' On the 22nd April 1760, to Knyphausen : 'I am so charmed and edified by this upright conduct of Mr. Pitt, that you must make him on my behalf the most unctuous and most polite compliments that you can think of, in expressing to him my infinite acknowledgment of the evidence of his attachment toward me.'

For the campaign of 1760 Frederick succeeded in collecting a field force of 110,000 men. The guns lost at Kunersdorf and Maxen had been replaced from the foundries at Berlin and Breslau. In addition there were some 40,000 men in garrisons, 20,000 of them in Silesian fortresses. The losses had been made good from the Brandenburg territory, from Saxony and Mecklenburg, from the hostile States of the German Empire, from prisoners, convalescent wounded, and immature lads. Some of the officers were so young that they played among each other the games of school. One source of supply was cut off when the allies, relying upon their superior reserves of man-power, declined any further exchange of prisoners. The Austrian force with Daun and Lacy amounted, with its light troops, to 76,000 men, while Loudon at Frankenstein had 40,000. The Austrian total was 116,000 against Frederick's 110,000. The Russians in the late summer brought upon the scene about 75,000 men, including irregulars. Until they appeared Frederick had nothing to fear. France with 130,000 men was occupied in her duel with Prince Ferdinand, who had now an establishment of 100,000 men. Sweden and the Imperialists were negligible.

The financial budget of Prussia for 1760 was as follows :

	Thalers
From Brandenburg . . . .	10,500,000
Profit on debasement of coinage . .	8,500,000
English subsidy : in debased coinage . .	5,300,000
Silesia, balance . . . .	1,000,000
Saxony, contributions . . . .	2,000,000
	<hr/> 27,300,000

The expenditure was estimated at 27,400,000 thalers.

The receipts were placed too low. The further debasement of the coinage furnished an additional 1,000,000 thalers from the English subsidy, and from Saxony as much as 3,700,000 thalers was extracted in addition to the 2,000,000 mentioned above. Prussian capacity to pay for the war was insured by cheating Prussian subjects over the coinage, by squeezing Saxony dry, and by the receipt of the English subsidy.

The prospects of the allies depended upon the possibility of loyal co-operation between Austrians and Russians. To Daun's Quarter-Master-General Lacy was entrusted the task of preparing an Austrian plan of campaign. Lacy proposed that the main Austrian army under Daun, in the neighbourhood of Dresden, should do nothing until the Russians had reached Silesia and captured Breslau. Daun, of course, approved any scheme which put the duty of active operations on any commander but himself. He was supported, from personal feelings of affection and admiration, by Maria Theresa. Kaunitz did not agree with her. He declared that the campaign of 1760 promised to be decisive of the war. France was anxious for peace ; Russia, with East Prussia in hand and guaranteed to her by the Austro-Russian Treaty of 7th March 1760, had gained all she desired ; and Austria, having raised taxation to the highest possible extent in 1759, was hard put to it to find the means for the campaign of 1760, and had a bleak prospect if the war were to be carried into 1761. It seemed that the resources of England and Prussia might outlast those of the Continental Coalition. Kaunitz therefore urged that it was absolutely necessary to attack and destroy the army of the King of Prussia. In this he was ardently supported by Loudon, who insisted that the King of Prussia's one hope was to last out to the end of the year without disaster, and therefore that unless he was attacked the campaign must end in his favour. He pointed out that the Russians were half-hearted mainly because they concluded, from the inert Austrian policy, that it was intended that they should do all the



fighting. From these divergent views the usual unsatisfactory compromise ensued. Daun and Lacy would wait for the Russians. Loudon was to attempt the reconquest of Silesia. Loudon's promotion to an independent command increased the jealousy of Daun and Lacy. Maria Theresa was convinced by the representations of Daun, that Loudon would embark upon some hazardous adventure. She awaited the sequel with anxiety.

Loudon left Königgrätz on the 30th May, driving before him a small Prussian force under Fouqué. Frederick sent Fouqué a letter of violent reproach, with a positive command to return and face the enemy. Fouqué accordingly marched back as far as Landeshut, and there, on the 23rd June, he was attacked by Loudon and his force destroyed. Of 11,500 men only 1300, chiefly cavalry, escaped, 1900 being killed and 8300 made prisoners. Fouqué himself was taken prisoner. The Austrian loss was nearly 3000 in killed and wounded. The disaster of Landeshut was due to the rash and impulsive orders of Frederick, who was influenced, to some extent, by a wild belief that Loudon was being pressed by Turkish forces. He wrote to Fouqué, 11th June, that he believed that the Turks were causing Loudon anxiety. This is an example of the weakness, noted by Mitchell, which made the King believe that which he desired.

Loudon's success stirred Daun to movement. On the 2nd July he broke up his camp and began a march which was intended to lead to Breslau. Loudon left Landeshut on the 4th July, the delay of three weeks after the success against Fouqué being due to a disagreement with Daun. On the 9th Loudon was at Liegnitz; on the 10th Daun had reached Marienburg. They had given Frederick the slip, and the King, after following for a few days, suddenly decided on the 8th July to return and capture Dresden. On the 13th he invested the Saxon capital. The place was in a good state of defence, with a garrison of 13,000 men under Maguire; and a combined force amounting to 30,000 men, composed of Imperialists under Zweibrücken and Austrians under Lacy, was stationed at

Pirna, near the capital. This army, energetically led, might have interfered seriously with the siege operations, but it remained a passive spectator of the attack.

Frederick believed that Dresden would fall in two or three days, but his bombardment achieved nothing save the burning of a large part of the town. He declared that he had given his gunners express orders to fire on the walls only, and to spare the town, but that they disobeyed; he added that four small guns having been placed by the enemy in the tower of the Kreuzkirche, he was obliged to destroy it, and that when it fell it set fire to the town. When it was pointed out that small guns in the church tower would have been useless, for they would not carry as far as the besiegers' lines, a variant of this invention was issued. It was said that the tower was used for signalling. Montazet, who was present, reported to Choiseul that 'the fire of the enemy was directed as by design, to cause a conflagration in the best built quarters of the city.' Eichel, writing to Finckenstein on this subject, draws significant attention to the Austrian excesses in the capture of Landeshut, evidently in order to excuse what the Prussians were now doing. Catt reports that the King said to him: 'What ravages we will commit, if these Dresden people do not surrender! what miseries we will visit upon this Saxony!' Frederick did not reprove his gunners for the disobedience which he pretends they committed. The destruction was carried out in accordance with his wishes. His excuses were hypocritical falsehoods.<sup>1</sup>

On learning that the King had retired to attack Dresden, Daun, after several days of hesitation, finally decided to relieve the town. Moving much faster than was his custom, he arrived before the suburbs on the 18th, and joined hands with the garrison the same day. Dresden could not now be taken. The bombardment, which could now serve no purpose save destruction, was continued with combustible material, as if the King had determined to reduce the whole town to ashes.<sup>2</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Arneth, vi. pp. 125, 128.

continued until the garrison, assisted by a part of Daun's force, made a successful sortie, on the 22nd July, capturing a number of Prussian guns. Frederick was compelled to desist, and to abandon all further pretence of a siege. His position was precarious, with Daun on one side, and Zweibrücken and Lacy on the other, but the pusillanimous allies allowed him to escape.

On the 25th Loudon captured the important fortress of Glatz, with its garrison of 2500 men. Then he marched towards Breslau. The Russians under Soltikoff left Posen on the 26th July, and announced that they would appear before Breslau on the 6th August. Loudon reached Breslau on the 31st, and at once began a bombardment, but he had to desist on hearing that Prince Henry was coming from the north. On the 4th August he retired towards the Katzbach. On the 6th Prince Henry, having outmarched the Russians, arrived before Breslau. Frederick's attempt at Dresden had proved a waste of time ; but for Prince Henry, Loudon and Soltikoff would have captured Breslau in the King's absence.

Daun began once more to march towards Silesia. He had at last learned to move with celerity, so that Frederick had at first great difficulty in keeping pace with him, and did not succeed in getting in front, between the Austrians and Silesia, until Liegnitz had been reached. There he found Loudon barring the way. On the 15th August, Daun received a letter from Vienna, couched in terms that he could not ignore. 'I give you,' wrote Maria Theresa, 'the categorical order not only to neglect no opportunity for giving battle, even if the advantages on the two sides are only equal in the balance, but to seek it in every possible way. If the enemy avoids the encounter or makes it impossible, I order you to carry out, with the greatest energy possible, offensive operations in every other way, and to facilitate a junction with the Imperial Russian army.'<sup>1</sup> Daun was compelled to make a plan for an attack.

The position was favourable. Frederick, with some

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, v. p. 139. Waddington, iv. p. 57.



31,000 men at Liegnitz, had Lacy on his right, Daun in front, and Loudon on his left; and there was a Russian force of 20,000 men, under Tschernitcheff, sent by Soltikoff, in his rear. The Austrian armies alone were in a superiority of nearly three to one. A night attack was decided upon, to begin at 4 A.M. on the 15th August. The well-known characters of Lacy, Daun, and Loudon, would lead to the expectation that Loudon would attack in accordance with the agreement, and that Lacy and Daun would find excuses for doing nothing. That is precisely what happened.

A deserter having brought news to the Prussian camp that a general attack was arranged for the 15th August, Frederick moved his camp at 8 P.M. of the 14th. Leaving the fires burning to deceive Daun, he began a march towards a junction with Prince Henry. He believed that he had given the Austrians the slip, and was surprised when Loudon attacked alone. If Daun had intended an energetic fulfilment of his part in the programme he would assuredly have discovered at once that he had lost touch with his enemy. Even when he did learn it, a little before 3 A.M., he did not warn Loudon, nor did he hurry forward to regain contact and carry out his part of the agreed plan. He left Loudon to make the attack, and then the sound of the guns, which would have urged forward any ordinary man, retarded his progress until further information had been obtained; then he learned, about 5 A.M., that Loudon had been beaten back with loss, news which gave him the excuse he desired for a retirement.

Loudon, with 24,000 men, had come upon the enemy sooner than he expected, at 3.30 A.M., and Frederick also was taken by surprise. The Prussian soldiers, of whom only 16,000 became involved in the actual fighting, proved that they were still superior to the Austrians. After some preliminary successes the attackers were forced to retire, with a loss of 3700 killed and wounded, 4700 taken prisoner, 28 flags and 80 guns. The Prussians suffered 3400 casualties, and they lost 10 flags. Frederick then,

on the same day, advanced unmolested to a junction with Prince Henry. The Russians under Tschernitcheff heard the firing, but, receiving no orders, did nothing; and on learning of Loudon's repulse they retired over the Oder.

This was the last great opportunity the allies ever had of dealing their enemy a mortal blow. As Kaunitz said in a letter to Loudon of the 10th August, 'What is not done in this campaign, will never be done.' The complaints against Daun were loud and bitter. Those who had prophesied, from the beginning, that Prussia would never be brought down so long as Daun was in command of the Austrian armies, were being justified by the course of events. Loudon, however, had been beaten, and his enemies, Daun and Lacy at the head of them, said that his rashness had received its merited rebuff. Maria Theresa was convinced of this by a letter from Daun, which condemned Loudon's conduct.

In the mortification of defeat, Loudon at first declared that he had been betrayed, but when Kaunitz wrote to him a sympathetic and encouraging letter, in which he said that it was a mistake to suppose that there had been any design to desert him, and that 'indecision was the sole cause' of Daun's inaction, Loudon replied, 31st August 1760: 'Your Excellency may be assured that with regard to the affair of the 15th, all and everything that affects me personally is forgotten, for I believe that indecision and hesitation, more than any design to injure me, have been the cause of the unfortunate result of the affair.'

Keeping at a respectful distance, Daun followed the Prussians, in the hope of driving them against the inferior Russian force under Tschernitcheff. When the Russians retired, the great Austrian army did the same. The Russians had too much reason to believe that they were expected to do all the fighting. That belief, thoroughly justified, sterilised the whole power of Russia. After Kunersdorf, the Russians declined all serious battle. Frederick, at whose approach all, save Loudon, beat swift

retirement, marched to Breslau, where he formed a junction with Prince Henry on the 18th August.

Leaving a small corps of 12,000 men under Goltz to watch the whole might of Russia, Frederick left Breslau on the 30th August, with his own army and the remainder of Prince Henry's, a total force of some 50,000 men. His object was to separate Daun from Schweidnitz. On the 3rd September he reached a camp between Bunzelwitz and Striegau. He expected an attack from Daun, but although the Austrian commander was urged to action by Loudon, by Kaunitz, and by Maria Theresa, and received from the Empress the oft-repeated declaration, that she would not blame him for defeat, he replied that nothing could take from him the responsibility for the lives lost in a battle. A man who will not risk the lives of his soldiers is obviously unfit for a military command. The Prussian King had an enormous advantage in his freedom from such paralysing squeamishness.

The Russians and Austrians were in such great superiority over the forces of Frederick and Prince Henry, and the season was still so early, that it would have been a scandal if no further effort of any sort had been made. The Russians proposed a raid on Berlin in conjunction with an Austrian force under Loudon. In order to make a show of doing something, Daun agreed, but he gave the Austrian force to Lacy—in itself a proof of pettiness and jealousy, when the Russians had asked for Loudon in whom they had confidence. They distrusted Lacy as much as Daun himself. A Russian force under Todtleben reached Berlin on the 3rd October, and made an instant attack, which was repulsed by the garrison. On the 4th Prince Eugène of Würtemberg, who had been facing the Swedes, and had marched at great speed, reinforced the garrison with 6000 men. The Swedes took no advantage of his absence. Lacy advanced with 15,000 Austrians, covering 170 miles in ten days, a rate which even the Prussians could not surpass. Troops hastened to Berlin, from both sides. Hülsen arrived from Saxony to assist the defenders, raising their numbers to 16,000 men, Tschernitcheff and Panin



brought the Austro-Russian force to a total of more than double, perhaps 35,000 men altogether. Judging effectual defence hopeless against such superiority, the Prussians under Würtemberg and Hülsen marched off towards Spandau, in the evening of the 8th, and the commander of the Berlin garrison, Rochow, capitulated on the 9th. Some 3000 men were made prisoners of war. Lacy's unsuitability for co-operation with the Russians may be judged from his letter to Daun; 'It is shameful that Tschernitcheff, with so great a superiority, did not occupy all the roads and prevent the enemy from escaping. But whenever there are blows to give or receive, the Russians will step aside, and it is only to pillage and booty that they do not hesitate to apply themselves.' The Russians had proved themselves at Zorndorf, Kay, and Kunersdorf to be the most stubborn and courageous soldiers on the Continent, far more willing to give and receive blows than were the Austrians under Lacy and Daun. The ungenerous sentiments of the Austrian higher command made all useful co-operation impossible.

According to the terms of the capitulation, the public property of the State was to be at the disposal of the conqueror, but private property was to be respected, in return for a contribution of 1,700,000 thalers. Frederick had taken more than that from the comparatively small and poor town of Leipzig. No injury was done to the Royal palaces at Berlin and Potsdam or to Sans Souci, but the palace of Charlottenburg was sacked by Austrian and Saxon hussars, and Schönhausen by Russians. An account of these proceedings, much exaggerated, was published by Frederick's order, in French, German and English. The Saxon reply, to which no such effective publicity was given, pointed to the brutal Prussian treatment of Dresden and the whole of Saxony. The cannon foundry and the gunpowder stores were destroyed, but so much war and government material was left undamaged that suspicion at once attached to Todtleben, who had the duty of carrying out these military measures. Todtleben was a Thuringian, who entered the Russian

service on the outbreak of the war as a leader of irregular bands. There is reason to suppose that his culpable leniency at Berlin was bought. It is known that soon afterwards he was a traitor and spy, in receipt of bribes from the Prussian King.

On the 11th October news reached Berlin that the King was marching to the succour of his capital. On the evening of the 12th the allies retired after an occupation of four days. The Russians joined the main army under Soltikoff. Early in November they retired to their winter quarters beyond the Vistula.

The Russian treatment of enemy territory was so gentle that Choiseul complained to the Chancellor, Vorontsov, that unless greater severity was used 'the King of Prussia can go on warring for ever.' Frederick ruined all enemy country that came into his hands. Vorontsov replied, 'It is not for us to imitate, in this respect, the bad example of his Prussian Majesty.'<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime Zweibrücken, with an Imperial army of 25,000 men, had captured Torgau and Leipzig, and had reconquered the whole of Saxony. Frederick turned back from his march on Berlin, on hearing that the capital had been evacuated; he reached Wittenburg on the 23rd October, and Dessau on the 26th. During his absence Daun made a cautious advance across Saxony to a meeting with Lacy at Torgau, which place he reached on the 24th October. Daun had hoped for concerted operations with the Imperialists, but on the return of Frederick, Zweibrücken beat a hasty retreat and took no further part in the campaign. Daun would doubtless have retired also, leaving the greater part of Saxony once more in Prussian hands, had he not received a stiff letter from Maria Theresa. The Empress insisted upon the grave influence that the loss of Saxony would have upon her allies, who might force upon her an ignominious peace, as they had already informed her that if she could not keep Saxony, she must expect no further assistance from them. At whatever cost it was essential to show that

<sup>1</sup> Bain, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

every possible effort had been made. Rather than abandon Leipzig and Torgau Daun was to give battle, even if the prospects might be doubtful. He was to try and obtain support from the Imperialists under Zweibrücken and the detachment of Wurtembergers, but these troops were not to be placed in posts of danger in a battle. Their behaviour at Leuthen had not been forgotten.

These instructions compelled Daun to hold his ground, and receive the attack which Frederick was known to be preparing. He took position on the heights above the village of Suptitz, his eastern flank, held by Lacy's corps, resting upon Torgau. The position on the south was strong for defence ; on the north the slopes were gentler, and a wood gave an enemy shelter for an approach. The greater part of Daun's main army of 33,000 men was posted to defend the weaker position on the north ; with Lacy's corps of 17,000, the total Austrian force numbered 50,000, with many guns of various calibres ; 400 is the number usually given. Frederick approached from the south. On the 3rd November 1760, he divided his 44,000 men, with 256 guns, into two bodies ; the larger, consisting of 26,000, he led round the western enemy flank, to attack the weaker northern position, while he entrusted Ziethen with 18,000 men to attack on the south. The Austrians had a slight superiority in numbers, and a large preponderance in artillery.

It was Frederick's intention that the two Prussian armies should attack Daun's force at the same hour, his own on the north and Ziethen's on the south. But Ziethen mistook his objective, directing his advance against the enemy at his right, which proved to be Lacy's corps. Frederick had intended to ignore Lacy. Ziethen, however, attacked him, and was beaten back with loss.

In the meantime Frederick's 26,000 men were marching in three columns, the first two composed of infantry, the third chiefly of cavalry. Having reached the desired position, on the north of Daun's force, Frederick ordered the attack, in his customary manner, by successive



columns. The first was sent to the attack at 2 P.M. and was heavily repulsed. Certain Austrian regiments, elated by their success, left their posts to follow the retiring enemy, and were severely handled by a Prussian cavalry brigade. Then Frederick sent forward the second column, but Daun had brought up reserves and the Prussians were again beaten back; a cavalry assault was also defeated. Both commanders, at about 4.30 P.M., were wounded. Frederick received a contusion on the chest from a piece of case shot; he retired from the field. Daun was more seriously hurt, on the foot, but he remained on horseback till 5.30, when, weak from loss of blood, he was obliged to dismount and lie on the ground. All attacks having been repulsed and darkness setting in, the battle appeared to be won. At 6.30 Daun was carried to Torgau. He sent a message to Vienna announcing a victory.

But Ziethen was not yet done with. At 3.50 P.M. he had turned away from Lacy, who did not interfere with his departure, and attacked the southern face of Daun's position, which Frederick had designated from the beginning. The attack was defeated; it was renewed and defeated again, until darkness set in. The Austrians, believing the battle finished, lost their formations, and a good deal of confusion ensued. Ziethen, with admirable pertinacity, made one more advance, and this time, quite taken by surprise, and having lost their commander, the Austrians offered only a distracted resistance. A renewed attack from the north decided the event. By 8 P.M. the Austrians were cleared from the western part of the Suptitz position. Daun was informed, and he gave the order for retreat. In the course of the night the army passed through Torgau and crossed the Elbe.

The losses were about equal, some 14,000 to 16,000 on each side. The Prussians captured 30 flags, 40 guns, and about 5000 prisoners; the Austrians 27 flags and 3000 prisoners.

If Daun had not been wounded, it is probable that the Austrian discipline would not have failed in the end. If

Lacy, after his brush with Ziethen, had brought his 17,000 men into the fight the Prussians would doubtless have remained defeated, but he left Daun with 33,000 men to face the attack of over 40,000 Prussians. Daun's wound, Lacy's culpable inaction, and the Prussian pertinacity, even in the absence of their leader, were the causes that turned defeat into victory.

By the battle of Torgau the greater part of Saxony was won back for the Prussians. Dresden and the southern portion alone remained in Austrian hands. The territorial situation in Saxony was the same at the end of the campaign of 1760 as at the beginning. Loudon had captured Glatz, and with it the Austrians had obtained a footing in Silesia. Frederick had won two battles, and the Prussian spirit had recovered from the depression of the defeats of 1759. Daun had declined battle except under the peremptory commands of Maria Theresa. The Russians had raided Berlin, but ostentatiously refused to do any serious fighting. All the belligerents were utterly weary of the war, and longed for peace.

#### 8. DEATH OF THE CZARINA ELIZABETH

In the winter of 1760-1761 renewed efforts were made to bring the war to an end. The death of George II., aged seventy-seven, on the 25th October 1760, was an event favourable to peace, for his grandson and successor, George III., and Bute, the new King's closest friend, were most anxious for the termination of the war. The operations in Germany were becoming increasingly unpopular. England was providing a substantial body of troops, supplying the cost of the whole of Prince Ferdinand's army, and paying the King of Prussia a large subsidy. These sacrifices obtained no positive results on the Continent, while England's only enemy, France, was soundly beaten at sea and in the colonies. A glorious peace might be wrung from France, but for the Prussian complication. It was believed that the old King's absorption in

the welfare of Hanover had been the chief cause of the British participation in the Continental war. When George III. in his first speech from the throne on the opening of Parliament, on the 18th November 1760, 'gloried in the name of Britain,' the phrase, inserted by himself, meant that the interests of Hanover would have to give way to the requirements of Britain. The feeling of the country was with the young King. People asked whether they were bound to continue a costly war for ever in order to save the King of Prussia from the loss of some trifle of territory, such as the Glatz district, only recently a Prussian conquest. It seemed intolerable that England should be forced to ruin herself in a war from which she could obtain no further advantage, merely in order that the King of Prussia might be able to say that he had not given up an inch of territory. Frederick was no longer acclaimed a 'Protestant Hero.' The annual subsidy to Prussia was voted in the House of Commons on the 22nd December 1760, but the tone of the House was unsympathetic.

On the 19th December 1760, Frederick sent a despatch to Knyphausen, with instructions to read it to Pitt, in which he said: 'I confide in the word of a King and in the firm, noble and generous sentiments of which his ministers have given me so many proofs in the course of this war, and in the good faith of a nation which may be reproached rather with having made too great efforts in favour of its allies, than of having ever abandoned or betrayed them.'

But Frederick's proud spirit made his dependence upon England a galling humiliation. He wrote bitter things about the English in his *Œuvres du philosophe de Sans Souci*, and in the *Poésies diverses*, and indulged his rancour by having them published at the very time when he was overflowing with warm acknowledgments to Pitt and to the spirit of England. After the war he never ceased to rail at the nation which had saved him from destruction, a service which touched his pride, and gave him feelings of virulent hatred towards his benefactor.



At Frederick's urgent entreaty, Pitt endeavoured to obtain a separate peace between England and France, as preliminary to a general pacification. Frederick proposed that France should restore her Westphalian conquests and withdraw her armies from Germany, limiting her assistance to Austria to the 24,000 men stipulated by the Treaty of Versailles; that the Hanoverian, Brunswick and Hesse troops under Prince Ferdinand, should continue to assist Prussia against Austria; and that England should pay for their maintenance. With these ideas in his mind Frederick sent a despatch to Knyphausen, in which the inveterate habit of trickery once more obtrudes. He spoke, for instance, of his 'readiness to fall in with the views of England,' implying, as Mitchell was instructed to point out to him, 'that England had first thought of peace, and that his Prussian Majesty had only yielded or acceded to their views.' . . . 'I acquainted his Prussian Majesty,' Mitchell reported, 'that I had orders from the King my master, to put him in mind that every pacific overture whatsoever, during the course of the present war, had arisen from the King of Prussia himself, and had been listened to on the part of England, on account of the difficulties the King of Prussia had to struggle with, and the necessity he had represented himself to be under of endeavouring to dissolve by negotiation a league which it was hardly possible for him, King of Prussia, to resist. That the imminent danger to which the King of Prussia was exposed had first induced the late King, and since His present Majesty, to give ear at all to the notion of a separate peace as a means of extricating the King of Prussia from difficulties otherwise insuperable.'

Mitchell then 'proceeded to point out to him another phrase in the same paper, thought to be exceptionable, where the succour the King may be induced to give His Prussian Majesty is called a *compensation d'un traité séparé entre la Grande-Bretagne et la France*, and I took notice that the word *compensation* was certainly improper, as the first and every step towards peace had been taken at his request and for his advantage. The King of Prussia

replied that, perhaps, another word might have been more proper, that it was a dispute about words, and said laughing to me: "You are now becoming a great critic." I answered that I still thought the remark well founded.'

Frederick's object, in the use of these equivocal expressions, was to make it appear that England had originated the negotiations for peace, and owed him compensation for his readiness to support the English desire. If England had allowed these words to pass without protest, he would have made use of that indulgence as confirmation of the view he desired to propagate.

'I then pointed out to His Prussian Majesty another passage in the same paper, viz., *que le Roi voulait s'engager à fournir toutes les troupes allemandes qui se trouveraient à l'armée alliée*, which, I said, did not agree with the *précis* of the 12th December 1760' (of the British despatch, which had been delivered to Frederick) 'where the words are *pour vous aider à entretenir les troupes allemandes qui pourront passer à votre solde*. His Prussian Majesty answered that the word *toutes* had been inserted in that paper, because his ministers in England had, again and again, assured him that it was the King's intention he should have the whole German troops.' (There was no foundation for this statement.) 'To this,' says Mitchell, 'I replied that I was now authorised to say that it never was His Majesty's intention that all or any of the foreign troops which compose the King's army in Germany should remain, after a peace with France, in the pay of England, and act as an army of England . . . that the true intent of the *précis* is absolutely confined to a *secours pécuniaire y compris le subside actuel* . . . that the words in the *précis* were *pour vous aider à entretenir les troupes*, etc.'

England was prepared, in case of a separate peace with France, to make a payment to Frederick (in addition to the annual subsidy) which would enable him to maintain a corps of soldiers drawn from Hanover, Brunswick, and Hesse. Frederick tried to make it appear that England had agreed to make herself responsible for the addition

to his forces of an army provided, paid, and equipped by her. It was a mean trick towards a generous ally who was continuing the war chiefly to save him.

France desired peace more than ever. Choiseul wrote to Vienna, calling attention to the desperate financial situation, and remarking that after five campaigns the only advantages obtained against the King of Prussia were the captures of East Prussia, Dresden and Glatz. He declared that France could obtain a satisfactory peace with England but for her engagements to Austria. Choiseul concluded by suggesting that the Empress-Queen should make up her mind to a peace with Prussia, if France came to terms with England. Maria Theresa received this communication with ill-humour; she said to the French Ambassador that, in case of necessity, she might be forced to make an alliance with the King of Prussia, and when he rejoined that fire and water were certainly less incompatible, the Empress repeated that she might be compelled to take that course. But after the battle of Torgau Maria Theresa became more conciliatory. She consulted Daun and, in the end, his weak-spirited fears, his insistence that the war now held no prospects of victory, that the Austrian resources were approaching exhaustion, and no useful assistance could be hoped for from Russia, while France was bent on peace, wrought in her hitherto proud and determined spirit a deplorable change. Under Daun's influence, she believed that the conquest of Silesia was impossible, that it would be difficult even to retain Glatz; and she declared herself an advocate of an immediate peace on the basis of the *status quo ante bellum*, as far as Europe was concerned. To excuse her altered feelings she claimed the privileges of her sex. 'People may be surprised,' she said, 'to see me under the influence of such sentiments to-day; I thought differently three months ago. It is the way with women.'

The Czarina Elizabeth, whose health had again given way, also began to think of peace. She had been hitherto the most determined of all the allies. But the campaign



of 1760 showed that no effective co-operation between the Austrian and Russian forces was to be expected; this distressing but unavoidable conclusion combined with her own physical weakness to shake her resolution. The discouragements of 1760 affected Court, ministers and the army. Elizabeth entered into discussions with her allies, and an agreement was finally reached. Russia was not at war with England. Prince Galitzin was in London as Russian Ambassador. On the 31st March 1761 he presented to the British Government two documents. The first proposed, on behalf of Russia, Austria, France, Sweden and Saxony, a congress with England and Prussia, to discuss peace terms; Augsburg was suggested as the place of meeting. The second was a proposal by France for a separate peace with England, on the general principle of *uti possidetis*, each nation retaining its conquests. The proposal for a congress was immediately accepted by the two secretaries, Pitt and Bute (who had replaced Holdernes as Secretary for the Northern Province). It was hoped, before the Congress assembled, to obtain a preliminary understanding between France and England.

To facilitate the exchange of views, Pitt sent Stanley as special envoy to Paris, and Choiseul sent Bussy to London. It was learned that France was prepared to give up Canada and accept the actual conditions in India, and that there were no difficulties with regard to the West Indies. The Newfoundland fishery question was more thorny, but Pitt finally was prevailed upon to give way.

There remained the problems of the conquests by the allies of Prussian territories on the Rhine, in East Prussia, and the county of Glatz, and the degree of assistance that England and Hanover might give to Prussia and France might give to Austria. Upon these questions no agreement was reached. France desired to bargain the Wesel-Cleves conquests for compensations from England in the colonies, and Pitt was willing to make the sacrifice for the sake of Prussia. But Austria insisted that the

Rhine conquests from Prussia should be counted to her credit, and pointed to the corroborative fact that they were already, with French approval, under Austrian administration. Kaunitz drew attention to the Franco-Austrian treaty of 30th December 1758, where it was laid down, Article 13, that no separate treaty was to be made by either party. He insisted upon the Austrian claim to these territories. When Pitt declared that he would make no peace until they were returned to Prussia, Louis xv. replied that he had made engagements to his ally which he could not, in honour, repudiate.

There was a strong feeling in England that it was unreasonable of Frederick to expect that England should give compensation to France in order that he should regain his Rhine lands, while he was not to be asked to give Austria even such small compensation as the Glatz county, which would have ensured a general peace. Pitt gave expression to this view when, in an audience with Knyphausen, he asked him to inquire whether the King his master was prepared to make any concession. Frederick, however, grew stiffer with the growth of peace talk. He knew that France was prepared to meet the English terms, that Russia desired peace, and that the Czarina could not live long. Time was at last on his side. His reply to Knyphausen was, that nothing would ever induce him to submit to 'any indemnities and still less cessions.' The phrase suggests, what a previous letter had expressly stated, that he might promise an indemnity, but, as we know, he had already said that all Europe would not compel him to fulfil the obligation. He would find no difficulty in inventing some excuse, some plea of reprisal, as he had already done in the case of the Silesian loan obligations.

Frederick wrote to Pitt, 3rd July 1761, that he was convinced that Knyphausen had misunderstood the English suggestion. 'I called to mind the conduct Great Britain has maintained towards her allies in the past, and I have not been able to find a single example of infidelity to her engagements.' He mentioned the

Peace of Utrecht, and said of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, that 'the English sacrificed their own interests for those of the Queen of Hungary, and gave up Fort Louis to the French in order that they should restore Flanders' (to her ally). After referring to 'the maxims by which Rome was sustained against Hannibal after the battle of Cannae, and by which your great Queen Elizabeth was sustained against Philip II. and the invincible fleet,' and remarking that 'the English nation has assisted me generously during this war,' he concluded: 'I am confident, Sir, that you think as I do; the whole course of your ministry has been but a chain of noble and generous actions, and those whom Heaven has created of that temper never fall below themselves.'

Before this letter had been received, Pitt and Bute had informed the French envoy, Bussy, that 'the King of Prussia would not cede an inch of territory, and that England was in complete accord with him on that point.' When this was reported to Frederick he wrote to Knyphausen, 16th July 1761: 'You will not be in any doubt that I am very satisfied with all the declarations which the ministers have made to M. Bussy with regard to my affairs. I am very sensible of them, and you will not fail to make them the kindest compliments on my behalf.' On the 7th August 1761, he wrote to Knyphausen: 'What I cannot enough admire and applaud is the firmness with which the English ministers have behaved on this occasion, and the noble and energetic manner in which they have replied to the French and to the Russian minister. I am veritably touched and impressed by the striking evidence they have given me in this conjunction of their good faith and their sincerity.' But Pitt could not uphold Frederick's pretension that he might negotiate with what he retained of Saxony against his loss of Glatz, for the plain reason that the Saxon territory would have to be returned to the Elector Augustus. Pitt told Knyphausen that he hoped Prussia would obtain a victory, and make some conquest which would serve as an equivalent to exchange against the county of Glatz.



Frederick gave Pitt a little lecture on his honest methods, which were not in accord with Prussian ideas. He wrote to Knyphausen that he 'could wish that England was a little more sharp with regard to the conquests made from France, making it appear that we intended to keep them all, and that it was only from motives of generosity and from her desire to bring to an end the calamities of war that she was induced to return some of them to France.'

Choiseul continued the peace negotiations, but his hope lay now in the disputes between England and Spain with regard to the capture of Spanish ships by English privateers. The naval successes of England and the growth of English sea trade were viewed with alarm in Spain. Choiseul took advantage of this resentment, and of the close personal ties of relationship between the two Catholic Courts, to obtain a formal alliance. By the Family Compact of the 15th August 1761, the two Powers were to be regarded almost as one, the enemies of one being treated as enemies of the other, and no peace was to be made until the aims of both had been achieved. By secret clauses Spain undertook to declare war on England if peace had not been concluded by the 1st May 1762.

The British Government obtained early knowledge of the terms of this treaty, with its secret clauses. Pitt proposed immediate war against Spain, to anticipate the attack which was known to be in preparation, but he did not carry the Cabinet with him. On the 5th October 1761 he resigned. Bute became the head of the new Government.

Frederick spent the winter at Leipzig, treating the unfortunate town to the cruellest exactions in money, supplies and recruits. Raiding expeditions were made for the capture of human material; one of them came back with 4000 slaves.<sup>1</sup> The vital importance of these extraneous supplies may be judged from the fact that they formed two-thirds of his army. Without them he could not have held out any longer. By the end of

<sup>1</sup> 'Necessity knows no law; the King paid no attention to excuses.' Koser, ii. p. 285.

March 1761, he had collected once more an army of more than 100,000 men, not reckoning the garrisons.

The Austrian armies in the field numbered 115,000 men. Daun was still in chief command. He proposed to keep the main army on the defensive in Saxony, while Loudon with a small force would operate in Silesia. This characteristic scheme was upset by Kaunitz, who perceived that it meant another wasted campaign. Loudon would be exposed to peril while Daun did nothing. Under the influence of Kaunitz the greater part of the Austrian strength was taken from Daun and given to Loudon for an aggressive campaign in Silesia, in combination with the Russians; but Maria Theresa feared that Loudon would rush into some wild adventure, and to allay her anxiety he was given strict orders not to take any risks until the arrival of the Russians. Daun's contingent, supported by the Imperialists, was to guard Saxony and prevent Prince Henry from sending succour to the King, who took the bulk of the Prussian force to face Loudon in Silesia.

The Russian plan was to send a detachment into Pomerania for another attempt to capture the port of Kolberg, while the main body, under a new commander, Buturlin, would march to a junction with Loudon, in Silesia. Frederick was informed of these arrangements by Todtleben. He received no further information from that source after the 23rd June, the traitor being arrested on the 28th June. After a dilatory examination he was condemned to death in 1763, but the sentence was commuted by the Empress Catherine to banishment. Frederick had given him, as the price of his treason, an estate in Pomerania, to which he retired. The Grand Duke Peter, the heir to the Russian throne, also sent secret messages to Frederick, informing him of the plans decided upon in the St. Petersburg Council.

The Russians, whose appearance was to be the signal for the opening of the campaign, did not reach the neighbourhood of Breslau before the 5th August 1761. It should have been Frederick's object to prevent a junction

of Russians and Austrians. He had 60,000 men against rather more under Loudon and rather less under Buturlin. His correspondence contains letters in which he expressed his fixed determination to attack Loudon, for if Loudon were defeated the Russians would at once retire. He advanced unimpeachable strategic reasons for his resolve, against Prince Henry's arguments that he could not afford to lose a battle, but the King seems to have been merely bragging. He did not attack Loudon nor exhibit any anxiety to do so; nor did he succeed in preventing a junction of his enemies. They were in contact on the 19th August at Liegnitz, and in close co-operation at Striegau on the 27th. Frederick took up a strong defensive position at Bunzelwitz, where he was in touch with the fortress of Schweidnitz. He had some 400 guns well placed. Loudon urged upon Buturlin the advisability of an immediate attack before the post had been made impregnable by trenches and fortifications, but the Russian would not consent to risk his whole army. He agreed to furnish a contingent of 20,000 men for the attack, but when the time arrived he made excuses for delay, until it became evident that he would do nothing to help the Austrian commander. The Czarina's serious state of health was well known. Buturlin was unwilling to attack the future Czar's Prussian idol. Loudon, if supported, would have made an attempt to storm. Success would have meant the destruction of the Prussian main army, perhaps the capture of the King. If Buturlin had helped with the whole of his army the allied force of 120,000 men might have gained the day and thus brought the war to a triumphant conclusion. Their losses would have been heavy. It needed a stout heart to attempt so formidable a position, defended by 60,000 men and 400 guns. Buturlin, a drunkard, was full of bellicose daring in the evening, and proportionately timid next morning. He had not the courage for so severe an ordeal, and though confidence was felt in Loudon, there was still an unwillingness in the Russian army to co-operate with the Austrians. The persistent efforts of Daun to make



use of the Russians for pulling the chestnuts out of the fire, could not be forgotten.

Supplies running short, Buturlin, on the 9th September, began a retreat to the Oder, leaving 20,000 Russians with Loudon as a proof of good-will. Frederick remained stationary at Bunzelwitz for over a fortnight. On the 26th September he marched towards his magazines at Neisse, leaving Loudon unmolested. On the 30th September Loudon pounced upon Schweidnitz; in the early morning of the 1st October he carried the place by escalade, a remarkable performance. With Schweidnitz went a large part of Silesia. Frederick had saved it from Loudon and Buturlin combined, and then allowed Loudon alone to capture it. If he had carried out his boasts about attacking Loudon, either before the arrival of the Russians or after their departure, this daring feat could not have been attempted.

The Russians obtained a success later in the year. On the 16th December the long siege of Kolberg came to an end with the capture of that useful seaport. With it went Pomerania. The Russian armies could now be supplied by sea from the magazine at Pillau. To add to Frederick's misfortunes the English ministers who had rejected Pitt's advice to attack Spain, were after all obliged to accept a Spanish war. On the 5th January 1762, England declared war upon Spain. The English supremacy at sea was now challenged, and it was feared that English troops might have to be withdrawn from Germany for the defence of Portugal.

The Prussian recruiting area was restricted by the Russian capture of Kolberg and the Austrian of Schweidnitz. Frederick expected, however, to place in the field for the campaign of 1762, 80,000 men under his own command in Silesia and 50,000 under Prince Henry in Saxony. In finance he was outlasting his enemies. For the sake of economy Austria reduced her forces in the field by 20,000 men. When Frederick first heard the news he could hardly credit it. He wrote to Prince Henry, 9th December 1761: 'It does not seem probable

that a Power such as she is would make a reduction of her troops at the crisis of the war ; it would be an example without an example.' Under the influence of Daun, Maria Theresa had practically thrown up the sponge. An excuse might be found in the presence of 20,000 Russians under Tschernitcheff who would fill the gap. The plan of making use of Russian assistance in order to save Austrians had long been followed.

The Prussian situation, though serious, was far from desperate. The continued existence of Daun and the approaching death of Elizabeth, held out good prospects of a successful defence against the timid Austrians, to be followed by a victorious attack with the assistance of the Grand Duke Peter, on his succession to the Russian throne. But Frederick gave way to his usual indulgence in dejection. He behaved as if the end for Prussia had already come. He wrote to Finckenstein, 10th December 1761 : ' I do not see how we can put off our destruction.' He foresees a Russian advance upon Berlin, while Daun throws back Prince Henry over the Elbe. ' All this is very real ; these are not the prognostics of a hypochondriac or misanthropic spirit, but unhappily these are the necessary results of the measures which our enemies have already prepared to that effect. If things do not change in Europe, we can offer no resistance.' . . . ' I call your attention to these sad truths in the bitterness of my heart, but such is the true picture of our horrible situation ; there is nothing for us now but the abyss of misfortune or the summit of prosperity. I await on all this the decision of viziers and pachas, semi-barbarous, at least unenlightened, and what may resolve the Tartar, who seems to wish for nothing but war.' Without the assistance of Turks and Tartars it was all over, he declared, a singular combination of hallucinations. Much was still to be hoped from Daun and from the ill-health of Elizabeth, nothing from either Turk or Tartar.

In a letter of the 6th January 1762 to Finckenstein, Frederick hinted at his own disappearance, whether by abdication or suicide is not made clear : ' Supposing that

the hopes the Turks give me should vanish, the unfortunate situation in which we find ourselves preventing us in that case from hoping that by our valour and the exercise of our own forces any prospect remained of restoring our affairs, nor even of holding out in the approaching campaign, it seems to me that we must consider how we can preserve for my nephew by means of negotiations what of my débris can be snatched from the avidity of my enemies. You will consider therefore whether in such cases you should enter upon negotiation with England, or whether the pressing necessity of the conditions should oblige you to address yourself in preference either to France or to the Court of Vienna, or to that of St. Petersburg.' . . . 'Be assured that if I saw any light by which, at the risk of the greatest peril, we might re-establish the State upon its old foundations, I would not use this language to you ; but physical and moral causes demonstrate to me the impossibility and the only service—in the abandonment in which I should find myself without Turkish assistance—the only service which remains for me to render to the State is to indicate to you the feeble resource which I suggest to you.' He returned several times to this suggestion. On the 7th he wrote to Finckenstein, 'I have already instructed you as to what remained for you to do in case my negotiation at Constantinople were to fail.' On the 10th he repeated to Finckenstein, 'I have already told you beforehand what I consider remains to be done on your part if we do not succeed with the Turks.'

This recalls the abdication after Kunersdorf, when affairs looked hopeless. Then he put the responsibility upon Finck, now upon Finckenstein. The King who had talked so loudly of giving the last drop of his blood for his country, had already once abandoned his army, and now abandoned army and country too. Finckenstein was to make approaches for peace, on behalf of Prince William, the heir to the throne. It was impossible to avoid some cession of territory. With Finckenstein should rest the decision whether it would be better to



negotiate through England, or whether 'pressing necessity' might not compel him to address France, Austria or Russia. Thus Frederick himself would escape the humiliation of accepting defeat. That, then, is all that he meant when he said so often that he would never cede an inch of territory, nor make a dishonourable peace. He would order his chief minister to take upon himself the responsibility. It may be assumed that when Finckenstein had carried out his unpleasant task, Frederick with his customary cruelty and ingratitude, would have disgraced the unfortunate official, and reassumed the control of affairs. As for suicide, there had been no talk of that for some time, and he had never meant more than that he would not survive the indignity of being made prisoner. Whether he would have made use of his pills even then is doubtful. It is to be remembered that after his imprisonment at Cüstrin, he continued for years to write his father the most abject letters.

His British ally did not fail him. Bute announced his intention of continuing the payment of the subsidy, but he declined to renew the Convention which forbade a separate peace. He would continue to give Prussia all the support that Pitt had bestowed, but he did not intend to refuse an advantageous peace in order to make interminable war on behalf of Prussia. Pitt had shown that he also would have declined to commit England to a quixotic and unheard-of sacrifice, after six years of war.

Bute sought a rapprochement with Austria. On the 8th January 1762, Prince Louis of Brunswick, Frederick's brother-in-law, was commissioned to sound the Austrian Court, and to suggest that Austria should return to the old anti-Bourbon system, whereby she might expect to obtain the expulsion of the Bourbons from Italy, and the acquisition of their territory. This proposal implied an alliance between England, Prussia and Austria against France. On the same day Bute wrote to Mitchell, instructing him to inform the King of Prussia that the subsidy would be paid, and to suggest that Frederick should himself open negotiations with Vienna for peace.

Before any answers had been received to these overtures the Czarina Elizabeth died, on the 5th January 1762. The news reached Frederick at Breslau on the 19th.

## 9. THE PEACE OF HUBERTSBURG

'*Morta la bestia, morto il veneno,*' wrote Frederick to Knyphausen. The death of the beast is the death of the poison.

The heir to the Russian throne, the Grand Duke Peter, was the son of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp and Anna, daughter of Peter the Great. He had been educated in Germany, and was married to a German wife, a Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, who had been put forward by Frederick as the bride of the Grand Duke. On her marriage she took the name of Catherine. With the accession of Peter III., the German party became paramount at the Russian Court. Peter had claims against Denmark with regard to the Duchies of Holstein-Gottorp and Schleswig. His one ambition was to make them good. He cared little for Russian interests in comparison. He hoped to obtain the Duchies with the assistance of Prussia. He was an ardent admirer of Frederick and of everything Prussian. On the day after his aunt's death, he ordered his armies to cease hostilities, and instructed Tschernitcheff to abandon his allies, and return to Russia with his 20,000 men.

Now Frederick had already, in the winter of 1759-60, offered to guarantee the Holstein and Schleswig Duchies to Denmark in return for a Danish alliance; but he had obtained no response. So recently as the 7th January 1762, he had returned to the idea, writing to Finckenstein, 'to propose ministerially that I offered the King of Denmark the guarantee of Schleswig and of Holstein which he desired to unite with his possessions, on condition that he assists me with his fleet to blockade and retake my city of Kolberg, and assists me besides with his forces against the Russians and against the Swedes.' He repeated these instructions on the 14th January.

On the accession of Peter he turned completely round, and did so with his customary hypocrisy. On the 7th February he sent Baron Goltz to St. Petersburg, with instructions to declare to 'the Holstein favourites, or the Empress, or better still, if occasion offers, the Emperor himself, that I have as yet been careful to decline the proposals which Denmark has made me, as the Emperor desired me to do at the commencement of the war, and that I hoped that was agreeable to him.' The audacity of the falsehood would be startling in any other person. Instead of holding Denmark off for the sake of Peter and to his own loss, as he had the hardihood to assert, Frederick had made repeated efforts to urge Denmark to despoil the Grand Duke. It was not to the interest either of Prussia or of her ally England that the Czar should possess the Schleswig and Holstein Duchies, but Frederick cared nothing for the welfare of his ally, and his own situation now demanded propitiation of the Czar. He instructed Goltz to offer Peter a guarantee of Holstein, on condition that the Russian troops evacuated Pomerania and East Prussia. Goltz was, if desired, to sign an act of neutrality in the event of a Russian war against Denmark, but he was to demand that the provision in the treaty to that effect should be held most secret, *secretissime*, and he was to beg the Emperor to conceal it even from the British Ambassador Keith. As for the Turks, the duty of self-preservation had obliged the King to enter upon a treaty with them, but they were only to have made a diversion into Hungary. The Tartars might perhaps endeavour to make an incursion into the territory of the Russian Cossacks, but he would try to accommodate the affair, provided the Emperor insinuated secretly to the Turks that he would not interfere with any enterprises they might undertake against Hungary.

Peter was bent on a Prussian alliance and readily overlooked the advances Frederick had made to Danes, Turks, and Tartars, the Czar's enemies. His desire for an accommodation with Prussia was encouraged by England. It was through Mitchell that Goltz obtained a passport for



St. Petersburg. Keith was a loyal ally to Frederick. All Frederick's Russian news came from Keith. 'As yet,' wrote Frederick on the 17th February, 'I have had no regular Russian correspondence, and all that I have learned has come to me through the English ministers.' To Mitchell the King expressed his thanks in a letter of the 17th February, 'I am under great obligations to Mr. Keith for the trouble he is taking in advancing my interests at the Russian Court and for the information he sends me. I beg you to express to him my recognition.' Keith warned Frederick that the Empress Catherine was not well disposed towards him. The King wrote to Mitchell, 10th March, 'I am much indebted to Mr. Keith for the secret advice he has been good enough to send me with regard to the Empress of Russia.' In spite of these services Frederick repeated to Goltz, in a letter of the 20th March, his previous caution, to be very circumspect with Keith, to sound him as to his instructions, and to act towards him with a certain restriction and reserve. Goltz was to be introduced by Keith, and to take—as he did—every advantage from Keith's favoured position at the Russian Court; he was to pretend that he was acting throughout in concert with Keith, but was to keep the real nature of his proposals absolutely secret from the British Ambassador.

On the 12th March 1762, more than a month after he had instructed Goltz to work for a separate and secret peace, Frederick wrote to George III., 'The new Emperor is entirely disposed for peace, the labours of Mr. Keith have contributed greatly to that advantageous disposition. I have sent Baron Goltz to St. Petersburg, charged with full powers to sign a peace if the Emperor is willing. This negotiation passes through the hands of Mr. Keith; England has not been at war with Russia and the interests of Your Majesty cannot suffer from this peace.' These were falsehoods, for not only was the proposal with regard to Holstein concealed, because it was contrary to the interests of England, but the negotiations were throughout conducted in secrecy, both Frederick

Secret  
Catherine  
Russia  
Bohemia

Hypoc.  
The end  
justified  
the means

and Peter showing a determination to prevent Keith from learning anything about them. Frequent expostulations at this concealment came from London, only to be met by Frederick's usual assertion of the instinctive attachment to his honour which would never permit him to act in the way in which he was, in fact, acting. For instance he wrote to Knyphausen, 3rd March, 'As often as my enemies try to inspire in the ministers of Great Britain suspicions that I may have entered into some secret or separate negotiation with enemy Powers, to make my peace without the knowledge of England, you may always give a firm denial in view of the firm and unchangeable resolution I have made to live always in close union and harmony with England, and that I am too honest a man not to acknowledge all the real marks of her friendship, and of the assistance she has given me in present circumstances, in short, that I shall never be capable of undertaking anything contrary to her interests.' To Finckenstein he wrote, for the information of Mitchell, 'Firmly resolved, as I am, to do nothing on this subject without communicating with England and to remain for ever her faithful ally, and too honest a man to repay with ingratitude all her friendship and the assistance she has given me in these circumstances.' Only the most hardened criminals are capable of sustaining this hypocritical pose.

Before the intentions of the new Czar had become known in England a conversation took place, on the 4th February 1762, between Bute and the Russian Ambassador, Prince Galitzin. Bute wrote an account of what occurred, to the Duke of Newcastle, on the afternoon of the same day: 'I have seen Galitzin, who did not hesitate to tell me that his Court would never part with Prussia' (East Prussia), 'that they desired nothing in the Empire, but that' (East Prussia) 'was a favourite object and could not be departed from; he would not allow their army was recalled; and pressed me strongly to add in my instructions to Keith some plan of peace, which I told him was impossible till we knew the new Emperor's ideas; that though we wished

peace, and had pressed the King of Prussia to turn his thoughts seriously to it, even at the expense of some sacrifice, yet, neither justice nor honour would suffer us to force him to a measure that would divide almost the whole of his dominions; that if we were mean enough to consent to it, he never would till forced by the sword. He felt the force of this, but urged the impossibility of the Czar's giving up so long-wished-for a conquest; assured me he would do everything in his power to promote peace at Paris and at Petersburg; but doubted the success of his endeavours without Prussia was, in short, circumscribed to Brandenburg. I send Your Grace copies of the Despatches I have wrote by the King's order to Keith and Mitchell; I hope I have kept to the ideas we opened together on the subject of peace.'

The despatch to Keith says that George III. 'earnestly wishes for a speedy restoration of the public tranquillity, and cannot doubt of finding the same humane and benevolent dispositions in the hearts of their Imperial Majesties, with whom he is ready and desirous to concert such measures as may be most likely to contribute to that salutary object.' Bute had this despatch on the table during his interview with Galitzin, and referred to it in the course of the conversation. If he had gone beyond its general terms in his remarks to the Russian Ambassador, he would have said so in his letter to Newcastle. His statement to Galitzin was in accord with the known policy of the Government.

Galitzin was an opponent of the King of Prussia. He did not know what the policy of Czar Peter would be. In order to stiffen the Czar's resolution, and also to cause dissension between England and Prussia, he fabricated <sup>1</sup> an account to suit his views, and sent it as his official report to St. Petersburg. He concealed from the Czar the fact that he had told Bute that Russia would not give up East Prussia. He declared that Bute had ex-

<sup>1</sup> 'Fabrizierte obigen Bericht,' says Von Ruville, the chief German authority. *Die Auflösung des Preussisch-Englischen Bundnisses im Jahre 1762*, p. 23.



pressed the wish that the Czar would keep up the pressure in order to force the King of Prussia to make cessions to Maria Theresa ; and that Bute desired the Czar to adhere to the cause of Austria. This was the opposite of what Bute had actually said. The Galitzin report was concealed by the Czar from Bute ; when it ultimately came to his knowledge, he replied that in the conversation to which it referred, he had expressed 'the King's particular pleasure and satisfaction in the order given to those troops to advance no further, to abstain from all hostilities, and even to accept of an armistice if offered.' . . . 'You see, then, besides my own assertion to the contrary, how totally improbable it is, that I should hold a language to the Russian minister, I do not say so different, but so absolutely contradictory to the orders which I had just sent from his Majesty to his own minister at the Court ; and that, with those very orders in my hand, I should declare or even insinuate to Prince Galitzin that His Majesty's real sentiments were just the reverse of them.' In explanation of the deliberate falsification of Bute's remarks, it should be remembered that the Russian officials of that day were not of high probity ; most of them were willing to accept bribes ; they were men of few scruples, ready to perpetrate frauds.

The Galitzin fabrication was followed by a mistaken declaration on the part of Prince Louis of Brunswick. On his arrival at Vienna charged with Bute's proposal for an anti-Bourbon alliance, he delivered his message to Kaunitz, but added to it a suggestion—for which he had no authority—that England would help Austria to deprive her ally, Prussia, of a part of Silesia. Kaunitz looked upon the overture with suspicion. On the 3rd March he returned a cold and haughty refusal. If he had accepted Bute's proposal the whole of the Continent, with England, would have united against France, a combination which could have ended the war to the advantage of Austria, while obtaining for Prussia a satisfactory settlement.

The Galitzin report was sent secretly by the Czar to

Frederick, and received by him on the 23rd March 1762. He obtained also information of Bute's approach to Kaunitz and of the Silesian proposal made by Prince Louis. He fastened upon these incidents, due to the dishonesty of Galitzin and the recklessness of Prince Louis, to cover up his own previous treachery. His bad faith is further revealed by his concealment of the fact that he had obtained a copy of Galitzin's report. When, more than a month later, Mitchell, acting in accordance with instructions received from England, complained that the ally of Prussia was still kept in the dark as to the nature and course of the Prussian negotiations with Russia, Frederick replied by vague statements referring to the Galitzin report and the Prince Louis offer, but he refused to reveal the nature of his information, or to say on what it was founded. Mitchell pleaded that 'it was but justice due to the King's ministers to let them know what had been laid to their charge. To this the King of Prussia made no answer.' Frederick could have had no reason for concealing the accusation, save the belief that it was unfounded. If he had believed in it he would have published it for his own justification. He knew that Galitzin was an enemy to Prussia, who desired to cause dissension between England and Prussia; and he suspected, as he hinted to Mitchell, that Prince Louis had been drawn on by Kaunitz, with the same purpose of embroiling the Protestant Powers. Carefully concealing the details of his complaint, Frederick declared that he had received information of English treachery which compelled him to make secret advances to Russia. But the Goltz mission to St. Petersburg, with the insistence on secrecy even from the British Ambassador, had been launched on the 7th February, and the false news which he alleged as exoneration for his hypocrisy and treachery did not reach him till the 23rd March. It was to cover his own wrongdoing that Frederick raised the clamour against Bute which has not yet died out. Even outside of Prussia it is still believed that Frederick was betrayed by England, whereas in fact, when English loyal self-

sacrifice had saved Frederick from destruction, the shameless Hohenzollern betrayed his ally by a secret, separate treaty with Russia.<sup>1</sup>

A copy of the instructions given to Prince Louis, which showed that his Silesian suggestion had emanated from himself alone, was handed to Frederick as soon as it was learned that he complained of what Prince Louis had said. On receiving this complete exoneration of the English Government from responsibility, Frederick wrote to George III., 2nd May 1762, 'I cannot, however, conceal from Your Majesty that it is not the usual custom among allies to open negotiations without the knowledge of their confederates, and to treat of their interests without consulting them.' This was precisely what Frederick had done himself. Bute had proposed to open negotiations with Austria, which would have concluded to the advantage of his ally. Frederick had not merely proposed, but had carried through in obstinate secrecy negotiations which contained articles contrary to the interests of his ally. 'At least it should not be forgotten,' continued this shameless man, 'that I was dragged into this war on account of the hostility evoked by the alliance I had contracted with the King your grandfather.' The assertion that the war, which he himself created, was brought upon his innocent head by his alliance with George II. is merely one more brazen falsehood.

The Czar Peter III. issued a Declaration, dated 23rd February 1762, in which he said, 'His Majesty hopes to bring peace to his Empire, for which it is so necessary and so precious, and at the same time to contribute as much as he can to its re-establishment in the whole of Europe. With that object His Imperial Majesty is ready to sacrifice the conquests made by Russian arms in this

<sup>1</sup> Ruville, *William Pitt, Graf von Chatham*, iii. p. 44 (English translation), says that Frederick 'created the tradition which has descended to us.' In the *Auflösung*, p. 40, he says 'Frederick was, as has been shown, well aware of the incorrectness of his conduct towards his ally.' In his *William Pitt und Graf Bute*, 1895, Ruville vindicates the character of Bute. 'The King of Prussia's deep distrust of Bute must be pronounced unfounded,' he says.



war, in the hope that on their part all the allied courts will also prefer the return of repose and tranquillity to any advantages they might expect from the war, and which they cannot obtain save by pouring out still more human blood.' <sup>1</sup> To give a good example and prove his sincerity in the policy of 'no annexations,' he gave up to Frederick—without demanding any compensation—the conquered provinces of Prussian Pomerania and East Prussia. Frederick admitted afterwards that if Peter had insisted upon a Prussian cession of territory the demand could not have been refused, a statement which exposes the hollowness of his repeated assertion that he would never give up any Prussian lands. These Russian concessions were embodied in the Treaty with Prussia of the 5th May 1762. On the 22nd May Sweden and Prussia also made a treaty on the principle of 'no annexations,' Sweden giving back Rügen and Stralsund.

The other Powers declined to abandon the advantages they had obtained. Peter joined Frederick to enforce a general peace, preparatory to the attack upon Denmark. On the 20th June, Russia and Prussia engaged in an offensive and defensive alliance. Silesia and Glatz were guaranteed to Prussia, and Frederick guaranteed to Peter the whole of Holstein and Schleswig and promised to furnish a force of 20,000 men for the war against Denmark. Frederick insisted that the negotiations, the terms, and the conclusion of this treaty should be kept absolutely secret, otherwise, as he wrote to Goltz, he would be 'extremely compromised with several Powers.'

In accordance with the treaty, Tschernitcheff, with his 20,000 men, joined the Prussians on the 30th June. The prospects for the campaign of 1762 were favourable. Frederick could recall from Mecklenburg and Pomerania the forces which had been facing Swedes and Russians; he could now obtain recruits from East Prussia; and the Czar sent him back all the Prussian prisoners taken in the war. Even without these resources he had in Silesia an army, including the Russians, of 100,000 men, and another

<sup>1</sup> Waddington, v. p. 321.

of 50,000 under Prince Henry in Saxony. The Austrians had 90,000 men in Silesia, and Serbelloni commanded in Saxony a combined force of 50,000 Austrians and Imperialists.

The main Austrian army was once more under the command of Daun. Loudon's brilliant capture of Schweidnitz gave him the chief command during the winter, but his experience then made him decline the responsibility for the campaign of 1762. He could not rely upon receiving the necessary support from the senior officers; and Daun, at the head of the War Council at Vienna, could have made things very difficult for him. The Austrian situation was not promising, but the energetic offensive for which Loudon had given his opinion might have led to a victory over Frederick, or to another and more serious capture of Berlin, events which might have had great influence over the weak and impressionable Czar Peter. Daun's defensive warfare would give time for England to deal with Spain, and to make peace with France, and for Russia to bring her strength to bear, now against Austria. The reserves of power were no longer with the Catholic Powers. Daun's inaction suited Frederick, who wrote to Prince Henry that his motto now was *Festina lente*, that decisive battles were to be avoided, and that the aim should be to accumulate small advantages.

Daun took up a defensive position on the Burghersdorf heights, covering Schweidnitz. Frederick endeavoured to manœuvre him out of it, but without success. He decided to attack, and was making his preparations when, on the 17th July, he received news of a revolution in Russia. Peter III. had made himself impossible. He had confiscated the possessions of the Church, and treated the clergy with contempt; he alienated the army by cutting the uniforms to the Prussian pattern, and inflicting upon all, even upon the Guards, the severest Prussian discipline; and the army was deprived of its conquest, East Prussia, and expected to make a campaign in Germany, in alliance with the Prussian enemy, for an attack upon Denmark.

To give up East Prussia, a legitimate object of Russian ambition, for a doubtful war to obtain a distant German Duchy for the Czar, was in the highest degree unpopular. Peter had shown himself a German, who surrounded himself with Germans, subjected his policy to the control of a German sovereign, and ostentatiously exhibited his indifference to Russian interests. Small wonder that he was deposed.

His wife Catherine, fearing that he would carry out his threats against her life or her freedom, placed herself at the head of the discontent. She obtained the support of the Guards. On the 9th July, Peter meekly accepted the order to abdicate. Catherine was proclaimed Czarina. The ex-Czar, after a week's imprisonment, was murdered by Catherine's lover, Orloff.

Catherine's first impulse was to renew the war against Prussia. She issued a proclamation, in which she said : 'The glory of Russia, carried to the highest point by the victories of her arms, and at the price of her blood, has been trampled underfoot by the peace recently concluded with her most cruel enemy.' Later in the same day she issued a modified version, in which for 'most cruel enemy' was inserted 'enemies themselves.' The German influences at Court may have intervened to soften the proclamation. Catherine sent orders to Tschernitcheff to separate himself from the Prussian forces ; if any attempt were made to restrain him he was to break away and join the Austrians. On the 18th July, Tschernitcheff revealed to Frederick the receipt of the command ; he also told him that the Empress authorised him to declare that she intended to adhere to the treaty of peace concluded between Peter and Frederick. Catherine had not yet decided upon her policy. Her position on the throne was still insecure, and her chief desire was to free her troops from Prussian influence, that they might not be prevented from returning to St. Petersburg, for the protection of her person.

Frederick succeeded in inducing Tschernitcheff to postpone his departure for three days. The mere presence



of the Russian troops would occupy the attention of a part of the Austrian army, while the King attacked the remainder. On the 20th, Daun was attacked and his line pierced at one point, with the result that he retired his whole front, thus baring Schweidnitz to the assaults of the enemy. Then Tschernitcheff took off his 20,000 Russians, carrying with him presents from Frederick,—a purse of money and a sword decorated with diamonds.

Frederick laid siege to Schweidnitz. It was a branch of warfare in which he did not excel. The first trenches were not opened till the 7th August. The garrison of 10,000 men made a vigorous defence. Daun was weary of the war, and expressed publicly, as well as in his reports to Vienna, the opinion that no successes for the Austrian arms could be expected. With such a leader the spirit of the army declined, and desertion became common. An order came from Vienna that an attempt must be made to relieve Schweidnitz. On the 16th August, Daun accordingly sent a detachment to attack a section of the enemy's force. The assault did not begin till 5 P.M.; at 7.30 it was beaten off, with the loss of a few hundred men on each side. That was Daun's last effort in the war.

Schweidnitz held out well against Frederick's inefficient measures of siege. The capitulation did not take place until the 9th October, and by that time it was too late in the season for Frederick to attempt the capture of Dresden, which he had expected to accomplish before the end of the campaign. On the 29th October Prince Henry obtained a brilliant victory over the Austrians and Imperialists at Freiburg. On the 1st November, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick captured Cassel.

By this time the Empress Catherine had come to the conclusion that her fellow-countryman in Germany might be of use to her in her insecure position. She decided upon a policy of neutrality. The withdrawal of Russia compelled France and Austria to consider terms of peace. By the Treaty of Westminster, England had guaranteed

the possessions of Prussia. Bute therefore insisted that the French troops should evacuate the Prussian possessions on the Rhine. Choiseul, on the other hand, was bound by the Treaty of Versailles to deliver them to Austria. On all other questions Bute and Choiseul came to agreement. In view of Frederick's treachery, Bute did not renew the annual convention for payment of a subsidy to Prussia. He offered the money, but on the condition that it was to be used 'for the procurement of peace,' and received no response. His refusal of the subsidy on any other condition was amply justified. Apart from the lapse of all obligation to a traitor, England had a new enemy, Spain, and Prussia had one enemy the less, Russia. England could have now, and could long since have had, an advantageous peace, but for the obstinacy of her ally. Frederick would have refused to pay the subsidy if he had been in Bute's place. In the year 1770 he was paying a subsidy to Russia for her war with Turkey, in accordance with treaty. He wrote to Prince Henry, who was at that time in St. Petersburg as his emissary, that as the Turks desired peace, 'If the Russians will not give any adherence of any kind, I shall consider myself authorised, in accordance with the accepted usage of all the Powers, to refuse to pay the subsidies.'

In pursuance of the French desire to bring the Continental war to an end, orders were given for the retirement of French troops from their advanced positions in Germany. Prince Ferdinand's Anglo-Hanoverian forces were thus freed, and there was reason to expect that they would come under the control of Frederick, who would use them for the furtherance of his aggressive designs. Prussia, after the secret and separate peace with Russia, contrary to British interests, could no longer be regarded as an ally, but rather as an enemy. Frederick had even instructed his Ambassador Knyphausen to work secretly in England against Bute, and had sent a memoir of complaints which Knyphausen was to distribute in England. The Prussian Ambassador became a fomenter of underhand intrigue against the chief minister of the Court to

which he was accredited. This hostile attitude of Prussia justified Bute in the effort he now made to induce Choiseul to recall the retiring French troops, and to turn them back to face Prince Ferdinand. The act has been stigmatised as treacherous, but against a Power which, whatever its theoretical position, had behaved and was behaving like an enemy, Bute's action was legitimate. The intention was to lower the Prussian ambitions and thus facilitate a peace honourable to all; and the move did contribute to that desirable end.

Frederick expected England to assist him not merely now to preserve his own territories, but to further his aggrandisement by the annexation of Saxony. Pitt would not have helped him in that ambition; nor would Pitt have obtained better peace terms than those which were eventually arranged. When they came up for consideration in Parliament, Pitt made an opposition speech, in which he asserted that England was giving up more than was necessary, and he denounced 'the desertion of the King of Prussia,' which he stigmatised as 'insidious, tricky, base and treacherous.' There was no ground for these accusations. It was the King of Prussia who had been guilty of the desertion and treachery by his secret treaty with Russia, and who made his Ambassador take advantage of his privileged position, in order to try and upset the King of England's Government. Knyphausen's bribes and intrigues produced a considerable effect upon public opinion. Pitt had been invited to assist Knyphausen. He declined to make use of Prussian influence against Bute, but he gave wide publicity to the charge of an English 'desertion' of her ally. The great successes of the war in the colonies and at sea had been due to the energy, ability and inspiration of Pitt. When his policy was opposed by the Cabinet he resigned, believing that he had become indispensable, and would soon be back in power, with absolute discretion to finish the war with the glorious peace which he had made obtainable. When he found himself permanently in opposition, and saw his rival plucking the fruit which he himself had brought



within reach, he allowed his patriotism to give way to his feelings of personal chagrin, and made charges against the Government which were devoid of foundation. The good name of England has suffered because the great peace was made by Bute and not by Pitt.

The preliminaries of peace between England, France and Spain were signed on the 3rd November 1762, at Fontainebleau, and the Peace of Paris followed on the 10th February. England obtained great acquisitions in Canada and India, but restored some of her conquests, and abandoned the Newfoundland Fisheries claim. Bute endangered his country's prospects by insisting that the French troops were to retire from all the Prussian territory in their hands, a condition which his firmness compelled France to accept. Frederick, in his curmudgeonly spirit, declined to acknowledge Bute's exertion on his behalf. He preferred to attribute the loyal attitude of England to the influence of George III. He wrote to Knyphausen, 26th January 1763, that he regarded this provision in the treaty as 'a mark of the friendship of His Britannic Majesty, to which he was very sensible.' He wrote to Mitchell, on the 30th, 'A proof so unequivocal of the friendship of His Britannic Majesty has not failed to give me the liveliest satisfaction. I have at once charged my ministers in London, to thank His Britannic Majesty on my behalf, in the strongest and most emphatic terms. You will oblige me by renewing to your Court these proofs of my recognition.' Bute is carefully excluded. Thanks to two men of widely different nature, Frederick and Pitt, the legend still lives that Bute made England desert and betray the Prussian, who had, in fact, himself perpetrated those infamies on his loyal ally.

After the Fontainebleau agreement of November 3rd, peace between Austria and Prussia had become inevitable. Frederick strove hard to obtain Saxony, but he encountered opposition both in Russia and England, and had to abandon the object for which he had plunged Europe into war. On the 15th February Austria and

Prussia signed a treaty at Hubertsburg, whereby all conquests on both sides were restored. Frederick promised his vote for the Austrian candidate at the next Imperial election. In all other respects the Seven Years' War ended, on the Continent, with a return to the *status quo ante bellum*.

#### 10. THE PROTESTANT HERO

The Seven Years' War ended without any territorial changes in Europe; but it was followed by two Revolutions. The cost of the war, and the humiliations it brought upon the chief military Power on the Continent, were among the causes which led to the French Revolution. The attempt of England to reimburse herself for the enormous expense of the war by taxing the American Colonies, led to the American Revolution. Saxony was ruined for many years. Prussia, the aggressor and creator of the war, emerged impoverished and depopulated, but triumphant. The long and successful defence against numerically superior forces, raised Prussia to a place among the Great Powers, and gave her a reputation among German States, which led to the acquiescence of the German nation in the dominance of Prussia; and thus ultimately to the Prussianising of Germany, with consequences of the gravest import to the whole world. The prestige of the King was raised to an idolatrous height. The appellation of 'the Great,' hitherto given him only by his subjects, was now accorded in foreign countries also.

It was the spirit of evil that had triumphed. The Hohenzollern principles that might is right, that a King should have neither honour nor humanity, that the tenets of Machiavelli should be his guide, were given a renewed and extended acceptance. The notion that a man may, indeed must, do on behalf of the State what would be dishonourable in him as a private individual, has been—and still is—widely disseminated. The example and the success of Frederick the Great did much to spread it.

The Hohenzollern theory was that a Sovereign is sent by God to guide the people entrusted to his charge. The Prince is responsible only to God. He is an absolute despot, carrying out God's decrees, imparted to him alone, for the good of the nation. The personal sanctity of the King, inspired as he is by the divine spirit, is a necessary corollary. Frederick abolished torture—except for *lèse-majesté*, an attack upon the King.

In England he was, in the early part of the war, acclaimed a 'Protestant Hero,' though he was neither a Protestant nor a hero. He led Protestant soldiers, in alliance with a Protestant nation, against Catholic countries, but he was not himself a Christian of any denomination. A burglar who is caught by the police and struggles violently is not usually designated a hero.

For his demeanour on the battlefield it is enough to recall the cowardly flight from Mollwitz, the 'retirement' at Lobositz, the hurried retreat from Kolin, the pusillanimous conduct at Torgau. These exhibitions cannot be forgotten, even though we acknowledge personal exposure at Zorndorf and Kunersdorf—the only examples, in all Frederick's career, of an intentional advance into danger. It was the custom at that time for the commander of an army to associate himself visibly with the welfare of his troops. The Hohenzollern system thought more of the Prince and less of the men, who were driven forward from the rear. Compared with other commanders of his day, Frederick was over-careful of his person, keeping well out of danger as a rule.

The indulgence in tears was abnormal. After Kolin Frederick wept freely and often. After Kolin his correspondence is full of expressions of utter despair, which continued throughout four and a half years; he longs for death; he has no further resources and the end is near. He fell easily into dismal talk of his own approaching end. Before a battle and after a defeat he expanded upon the subject. His one overpowering desire was to perish sword in hand—but he did nothing to bring about the longed-for result. This empty bragging casts suspicion upon his



loud assertions that, in case of final defeat, he would swallow the poison pills which he carried on his person. Whether he would ever have used them, even in case of capture, can only be a matter of opinion. In our judgment he would have continued to live.

All this talk of his approaching death, of selling his life dearly for his country, of never being taken alive, is of the kind that raises doubts. One is not surprised that the same man should collapse and abdicate after defeat, preferring not to perish either by sword or pill, but merely to resign and leave a subordinate to bear the responsibility. The King who in a time of difficulty abandons his post, and resumes it when the prospects have improved, is very far indeed from a hero; the opposite indeed. Dante would have put him with Pope Celestine—who abdicated—in the lowest of the nether regions.

In treachery and falsehood it would be hard to find his equal, save perhaps in the other Hohenzollern of whom Prussia is so proud, the Great Elector; in hypocrisy Frederick outdid his ancestor. His father, Frederick William I., had described him as an 'effeminate fellow who has no manly inclinations.' . . . 'The Prince minces in his walk, in his laugh, and in his language.' . . . 'After a time you will come to know that saint, my son, better and better. Oh, against his tongue I have nothing to say. He walks on the tips of his toes. He does not plant his feet firmly on the ground. He walks bent double. He never looks an honest man straight in the face.' Grumkow reported that the King had 'very sinister ideas as to the character of the Prince. He considers the Prince a dissimulator in a superlative degree.' Grumkow himself said, 'Junior will cheat them all.' In his public career Frederick exhibited these qualities, observed in him as a young man.

Besides his falsehoods, treacheries, and hypocrisies, which were notorious, he was accused also of barbarism and cruelty. His treatment of Saxony brought forth protests from friends as well as foes, from his brother Prince Henry, from his admirer and ally Mitchell, and

from his flatterer, Voltaire. Mitchell declared that he was 'filled with horror' by what he saw. The Empress Catherine, herself a German, who owed her splendid marriage to Frederick's influence, and had suffered nothing at his hands, described him as a 'cruel enemy.' The same phrase was used by the unfortunate Elector of Saxony. Madame de Pompadour styled him the 'Attila of the North'; and he was likened also by others, less concerned, to Attila. He ordered and superintended the destruction of Brühl's estates; he sent officers with explicit commands to loot the palace of the Elector. He was brutal and hard to the Electress, and tried to save Dresden from bombardment by keeping there the Electoral family. It is the principle of placing in front of your army as a protection, hostages, preferably women and children. The complaints of Frederick's brutality to prisoners, and of his want of faith in carrying out agreements with regard to them, were too numerous to be without foundation. He ordered his men to give no quarter to the Saxons in the second Silesian War. He repeated the order in the Seven Years' War with regard to the Russians; he cashiered an officer who tried to save them, and then issued a statement deploring the inability of his officers to prevent the soldiers from murdering the wounded and the prisoners. Similar hypocrisy was shown when he bombarded the residential quarters of a besieged town, and made a particular mark of the Cathedral; and then issued a statement that he had given the most stringent command that the guns should aim at the fortifications only, but that the Cathedral tower had to be attacked, owing to its use by the enemy as an observation post. Throughout his career Frederick attributed every harsh act, from the making of war to the treatment of a prisoner, to necessity, to the need of anticipating or of retaliating upon, his enemies. He made war upon civilians in a manner that was repugnant to the practice of the time, burning and looting their houses, and forcing them to fight in the ranks of their enemies. Loudon became so incensed that he took the unusual step

of sending the King a letter, charging him with 'war methods' which were 'barbarous and contrary to all the customs of nations.' Frederick described this communication as an 'impertinence,' and said his answer would be with the sword, not the pen. The order to his surgeons not to save a soldier's life by the amputation of a limb, but to let him die, rather than burden the King with the payment of a pension to a maimed man—is a sufficient evidence of Frederick's callous inhumanity. A similar order was issued that a wounded prisoner was not to be tended if he could not be restored to a condition of efficiency. No wounded prisoner received medical care unless he promised to serve in the Prussian army when healed.<sup>1</sup>

A man is not repeatedly referred to as a 'cruel enemy,' and stigmatised an 'Attila,' chief of the Huns, without cause.

In the Seven Years' War, the odds against Prussia appeared to be much greater than they were. Her opponents included France, Sweden, the German States (with the exception of Hanover, Brunswick and Hesse-Cassel), Russia and Austria—a formidable total, comprising a large part of Continental Europe. But the attention of France was occupied by the Anglo-Hanoverian forces maintained by England; Sweden, whose Queen was a sister of Frederick, landed soldiers in Pomerania, but they did very little fighting, and were almost negligible; the German States were lukewarm, and their troops were of the lowest fighting value, never facing any enemy in battle after the collapse at Rossbach; Russia appeared upon the scene for about three months of the year, but it was only in 1758 and 1759 that she gave Austria real assistance. Except in the short campaigns of those two years the only serious enemy Frederick had to face was Austria. For his resources he had not to rely upon his own territories alone. Saxony and Mecklenburg were drained of men, money and materials; besides these States the Prussian recruiting area included the whole

<sup>1</sup> *War Journal of Count St. Paul*, edited by G. G. Butler, p. 144.



of Germany, and also Poland. Frederick had thus a very large source of supply. With interior lines, and the best drilled army in the world, there is nothing particularly meritorious in his successful defence against Austria and her fitful Russian supporter.

In finance, which proved so important in the end, Prussia outlasted her enemies. Frederick controlled all expenditure and used the most pitiless economy; he obtained a large subsidy from England; he extracted great contributions, in money and materials, from Saxony and Mecklenburg; and he debased the coinage, a measure which, in an indirect manner, and unperceived during the course of the war, levied from his subjects one-third of their wealth. Alone of the combatants he raised no taxes and incurred no debt; but his refusal, when the war was over, to buy back the war coins at their face value was practically the repudiation of a forced loan.

In the Silesian wars, despite his four victories, Frederick had given no evidence of military abilities. In strategy he had been outwitted, in tactics he had relied upon the superior fighting quality of his troops. Was the Frederick of the Seven Years' War a different personality?

When he attacked Saxony in 1756 he had certain extraordinary advantages. He was in the prime of life, aged forty-four. The three men who made reputations in the war were all younger. His brother Prince Henry was thirty when the war began, his brother-in-law Prince Ferdinand was thirty-five, Loudon was forty. All the failures, except Prince Charles of Lorraine, who was forty-four, Frederick's age, were older men. It was the opinion of Napoleon that after fifty a man was past his best for the command of troops. Frederick had not reached that age.

He began the Seven Years' War with an experience in command which no other man could equal, and only one, Prince Charles, could even approach. None of the other generals who led armies in the war had any previous knowledge of the difficulties of the chief command. Frederick knew that the war was coming, for he intended

to make it. In the interval between the Silesian Wars and the Seven Years' War, he studied the art of directing troops in war with particular reference to the kind of campaign that he was about to commence. No other soldier prepared himself for the war, or knew in what direction it would occur, or expected to be in charge of the forces that would have to meet the onslaught.

Frederick enjoyed, throughout the whole course of the conflict, an independence, a freedom from interference, which no other commander, among friends or enemies, ever obtained. He alone could act according to his own judgment. The value of this prerogative it would be difficult to overrate. Napoleon's opinion upon that point is decisive. He said, 'One bad General is better than two good ones.'<sup>1</sup> A Prussian King should have had little difficulty in defeating Councils seated at Vienna and St. Petersburg. Frederick perceived this himself. He said, 'When a leader cannot act on his own account, he cannot hope for any great success.' This was not the whole extent of the gain. He could command the unquestioning obedience of the whole of his army from the private soldier to the general. No other leader could say the same. If Browne had been able to threaten Serbelloni as Frederick did Schwerin, Serbelloni's force would, like Schwerin's, have reached Prague in time for the battle, and an Austrian victory would probably have resulted. If Lacy had been as amenable to the influence of Daun as Ziethen was to that of Frederick, he would have assisted Daun at Torgau, and by holding off Ziethen would have given the Austrians the victory.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, the army under Frederick's command was much superior in fighting quality to the Austrian.

This extraordinary aggregate of advantages over all rivals should have sufficed, alone, to give the King an

<sup>1</sup> In a public speech made in 1918, M. Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, quoted the remark of a French general: 'Since I have seen the difficulty of conducting war with armies under independent commanders, I have lost much of my admiration for Napoleon.'

easy triumph over opponents who were, with the exception of Loudon, past their prime, who were all without experience, surprised by the outbreak of the war, deceived as to the direction it would take, hampered by distant councils, divided in authority, and furnished with inferior fighting instruments. Frederick's Prussian admirers called him 'Der Einzige,' the only one, the unique. Certainly he stood alone in his prerogatives. Any average man in his place would have obtained some successes.

The Prussian army under Frederick was organised and exercised on lines already established by his predecessors. Frederick improved the cavalry and increased the artillery. He inherited the most effective army in the world, and he enlarged and strengthened it. An army conscious of its superiority chafes at inaction. The resources of Prussia were not proportionate to the size of the army. It followed that for Prussia a war should be short, and that the offensive should be adopted in order to bring matters quickly to an end. This readiness for battle was not shared by contemporaries. Marshal Saxe called battles 'the resource of ignorant generals; when they do not know what to do they give battle.' It was held that by taking judicious positions victory might be obtained without fighting. The extreme attitude was that of Marshal Daun, who refused to attack, on the ground that he was responsible for the lives of his soldiers. The Hohenzollerns, on the other hand, treated their men as material to be used for the advancement of the dynasty. Their attitude is summed up in Frederick's angry exclamation, 'Rogues, would you live for ever?' when his troops wavered before the enemy's fire. His arrogant and despotic nature, and his indifference to the lives of his soldier-slaves, gave him an impatience of the defensive in war. Personal vanity assisted. He admitted that he risked attacks in battle because even if he gained only twice in ten times, he would be secure of immortality. Only a King could lose a battle without forfeiting a command or ruining a career. Even his personal conduct on the field was immune from criticism. What commander



save a King would have survived the flight from Mollwitz? The origin of the spirit of attack which Frederick exhibited in the early part of his career is thus easy to comprehend. One of his enemies had it also, in spite of the adverse conditions of his training and environment. Loudon, if given an absolutely uncontrolled command, free from all personal anxieties, would have utilised the superior resources of the allies to attack Frederick until he was worn down. But the supposed conditions were unattainable for any man save a despotic sovereign.

It has been said that Frederick alone of his time aimed at decisive battles, perceiving that when once the enemy force was rendered impotent the campaign was won. But if the destruction of the enemy's army had been his object he would have followed up a victory, and that he never did. He recommended it, in his *Pensées et Règles Générales pour la Guerre*, where he says: 'Every battle which is not aimed at terminating the war becomes an effusion of blood, without advantage to the State.' If you have succeeded in putting the enemy into confusion, 'you should pursue the enemy for some days, especially on the day of battle.' But he did not put his theories into practice. Even the small amount of pursuit indicated was not ordered. After every victory he expected, as his letters show, an overture of peace from the Sovereign of the defeated country. He considered that he was engaged in a duel of Princes, with soldiers as the weapons. A wounded Prince was expected to say *touché*, and to give in honourably, to the accompaniment of polite remarks on both sides. War was, in Frederick's eyes, a dynastic tournament. Princes fought, not nations. Napoleon's relentless pursuits derived much from the national spirit of his troops, who desired the complete destruction of their enemies. In the time of Frederick there were no national wars, and little spirit of nationality, on the Continent of Europe.

The spirit of attack was not retained by Frederick throughout his career. Though army and officers continued to be confident and aggressive, their commander's

constitutional timidity, and his preoccupation with anxiety for his reputation, gave him, after his first defeats, a fear of the loss of a battle. He had never been as venturesome as some of his advisers desired to make him. What modern admirers have termed the wise caution of a balanced genius was considered by some of the Prussian generals at his side as nothing less than nervous apprehension. In any case it is clear that, as the war went on, Frederick became a convert to the defensive warfare which he had at first derided.

In the 'military testament' of November 1768, he wrote: 'One must be prepared to confine oneself to a war of positions against the Austrians.' . . . 'I should make my camp secure; I should fortify it with all the necessary care, and I should direct all my attention to beating thoroughly the detachments of the enemy, because by destroying one of his detached corps you spread consternation in his army, because it is easier to destroy fifteen thousand men, than to defeat eighty thousand, and that by risking less you achieve almost the same result. To multiply small successes is precisely to amass a treasure by successive additions. After a time one finds oneself rich without having noticed how that had come about.' This is just that theory of the defensive, in the manner of Daun, which Frederick's admirers believed he was the first to break away from. He was not expressing a merely academic opinion. The war of positions, depending upon a strong post, whence excursions were to be made to cut off detachments, was that to which he fell in the war of the Bavarian Succession, in 1778-9. The defeat at Kolin and the narrow margin by which success was obtained at Leuthen, made a great impression upon him. After Leuthen he attacked the Austrians only once in the five campaigns of 1758, 1759, 1760, 1761, and 1778. He attacked the Russians twice, in 1758 and 1759, because he believed they were an undisciplined horde of savages, but being repulsed in 1758 and defeated in 1759, he became thenceforward an advocate and exponent of the Fabian tactics which he had despised as long as he was victorious.

The earlier commentators of the nineteenth century knew nothing of the military testament of 1768, which was not published until 1878; and they were misinformed with regard to the disparity of the forces on the battlefield, believing that Frederick was always at a great disadvantage. That was not the case. He fought ten battles in the Seven Years' War. On four occasions the forces were practically equal; he won twice and failed to win twice. On the remaining six occasions, he was outnumbered, winning three times and being defeated three times. But in these six battles, the enemy's excess consisted in light troops who were not intended to take a place in the line, or in unreliable allies—Bavarians and Wurtembergers. To obtain a just comparison in fighting strengths, these troops cannot be regarded as the equivalent of regulars. If they were eliminated from the account, Frederick would be left with only one victory against odds, and in that encounter, at Rossbach, owing to conditions of a very abnormal kind he met with scarcely any resistance. Only in recent years have these facts come to light. The false assertion that in his battles he was always contending against substantially superior forces of trained troops was spread by Frederick himself; it became part of the legend that he helped to create. It was his lieutenants who had to face the heavy odds. Lehwaldt at Gross-Jägersdorff, Bevern at Breslau, Dohna at Kay, Finck at Maxen, Fouqué at Landeshut, were driven by their King to give battle under conditions in which he would never have risked his own reputation. They were indeed outnumbered, sometimes by two to one, never by much less; and Frederick took care to give these unfortunate commanders his least reliable forces, keeping under his own hand his best troops, with the greatest proportion of artillery and the most complete equipment.

With a superior army, a unique independence and a despotic power, Frederick's battle record is not remarkable. Except at Rossbach, the only troops he defeated were the Austrians, who have such a long tradition of



military failure. He did not shine in the siege of a fortress, owing chiefly to his dislike of frontal assaults, and his preference for bombardment, to terrorise the civilians, rather than a cannonade for breaching the walls. He wasted valuable time before Pirna; failed before Prague, Olmütz and Dresden; and spent three months before Schweidnitz, which Loudon had captured by escalade in a day.

If that were all, we should have to conclude that the very ordinary Commander of the Silesian Wars had reappeared, without change, in the Seven Years' War. But in the interval between 1745 and 1756, Frederick had given much time to the study of military operations, and it is evident that he had profited. His general conduct of the campaign of 1757, save for the blunder at Kolin, and some hesitation afterwards, is deserving of praise; and the manner in which success was obtained at Leuthen was meritorious. In 1758, shaken by the recollection of the dangers survived in 1757, he showed timidity at Olmütz, but recovered himself, with rapid movements to Zorndorf and back to Dresden; and then ignored, with admirable fortitude, the defeat at Hochkirch; but that defeat was due to his faulty dispositions, and the failure to win at Zorndorf was the result of his method of piecemeal attack. Throughout his career he was an opportunist, waiting for events, and confining himself to the needs of the moment. His constant aim was to deceive the enemy as to his intentions, and the charge of capriciousness which was brought against him was one with which he was well satisfied; it meant that the enemy could not foretell his movements. If after Leuthen he attacked only three times, the Austro-Russians, with superior resources, attacked only twice in the whole war. If he was timid in the later campaigns his enemies were more so, and when it came to a contest in mere demonstrations he easily held his own. His attitude was so menacing, that at his approach all enemies, including even the Russians after their fruitless victory at Kunersdorf, beat a retreat. Indeed his prestige was such that

it could have been utilised to keep Russians and Austrians permanently apart, by hunting each enemy in turn home to his base.

The military abilities of Frederick the Great have been exaggerated, owing to the success which always leads to over-appreciation, to his own fertile misrepresentations, and to the ignorance of the capable critics with regard to important facts. With his unique privileges and his superior army he was at all times a formidable antagonist. In the early part of the Seven Years' War he had the spirit of attack, which was unusual in his day.

The faults of his enemies were numerous and deadly. They were not merely disunited, but mutually jealous, suspicious, even hostile. Each one wished to make the other do most of the fighting, and thought only of his own immediate advantage. Russia was bent upon retaining East Prussia, Austria insisted upon campaigning for Silesia, France persisted in the attempt to conquer Hanover. Being in superior force aggression was the plainest duty, but the Austrian commander Daun proposed to wear out Frederick by a defensive 'war of attrition.' The result of these colossal errors was that Prussia was able to produce a fighting army, and to finance the war, for a sixth campaign. The end came when, owing to a change of Government, Russia deserted her allies.

## CHAPTER XI

### RECUPERATION

AFTER a visit to Silesia to examine the damage sustained in the province by the war, Frederick returned to his capital. He had not seen Berlin since he left it for the conquest of Saxony on the 29th August 1756. His people made great preparations for a loyal and enthusiastic welcome. A large crowd collected in the open place in front of the palace at Berlin, and waited patiently all day ; when darkness came they lighted torches. For they believed what they had been told, that Prussia had been attacked by Powers who were jealous of her prosperity, and that their King had, single-handed, beaten off the whole of Europe. Frederick's feelings may be imagined. He knew that his ambition to conquer Saxony had been the cause of the war, that he had failed to obtain any profit from the adventure, and that he had reduced his country to a condition of misery. He shrank from the effusive demonstrations of his deluded and impoverished people. The state coach with horses and postilions waited for him in vain. In his travelling carriage, by an unfrequented path, he reached a side door of the palace, in the darkness, after 8 P.M. Not as a conquering hero, but as a baulked highwayman, did he return, slinking back into his palace, to escape observation. His bitter disappointment, in spite of the military renown he had gained, was expressed when, in answer to congratulations, and to the remark that the day of signing the Treaty of Peace, with its glorious termination of the war, would be the happiest of his life, he replied, ' The happiest day of a man's life is the day upon which he quits it.'

To examine the state of the country, he visited, with one exception, every part of his dominions. East Prussia,



the cradle of the Kingdom, was not graced by the presence of the Sovereign, because it had been for five years administered as a part of the Russian Empire. The luckless East Prussians were condemned to ostracism because the first servant of the State was touched in his pride.

The population of Frederick's dominions had been 4,100,000 in 1756; the total net loss during the war may be put at 400,000 persons. The recovery was rapid, much of it due to immigration. In ten years the population was fully restored. A decrease of ten per cent. in six and a half years of war was followed by an increase of ten per cent. in ten years of peace.

[In finance, the Prussian Government suffered less from the war than France, Austria, or even England. There had been no borrowing, and no increased taxation, and when the war ended there was a sum equivalent to £4,000,000 in the Prussian treasury, more than enough to pay for another campaign, while the necessary military stores of all kinds were already with the army.] This large amount of cash was not drawn upon for the restoration of the civilian losses; it was allocated to military purposes. Half of it was placed in the war chest, the remainder went to form a mobilisation fund, and to provide a new equipment for the army, in uniform, guns, ammunition, carts, etc. The civilian population obtained from the army the loan for ploughing of the horses which had been taken from them for cavalry and artillery; and the superfluous commissariat supplies were distributed among the poorest of the people. [The King made considerable advances in all parts of his territories—including East Prussia—for rebuilding houses, and for the purchase of stock and of agricultural seed.] He formed a land bank to assist him in carrying out this important business.

By a Royal edict the debased coins for which the King's subjects had been compelled to pay three times their value, were, after a near date, to be no longer legal tender. They could be sold for one-third of their face value.

New coins, for which the full price had to be paid, were issued. A similar repudiation by the Prince of his own coinage had been perpetrated by the Great Elector. It is a characteristically Prussian expedient, for it wipes out a Government debt, at the expense of the people, in an indirect manner. The people are cheated but they have no redress.

Mitchell wrote to a friend: [ 'His Prussian Majesty affirms that he has laid no taxes whatever upon his subjects, though at the same time it is evident that by the alteration and diminution of the coin, his subjects have, since the beginning of the war, lost two-thirds of their personal estate, being paid at the rate of thirty-three per hundred. ] . . . 'Commerce has been thrown into the greatest confusion, and the poor and middling sort of people have been reduced to the greatest extremity, and rendered almost incapable of purchasing the bare necessities of life.' . . . 'Nothing the King ever did has so much disgusted and alienated the affections of his people as the rash and inconsiderate steps he has taken with regard to the coin: the people want bread, and having long felt the calamities of war, are grown<sup>63</sup> mutinous, and almost outrageous.' In the summer of 1753 there was an epidemic of bankruptcies, some large banking and commercial houses closing their doors.

While his people were thus being cheated and impoverished, Frederick indulged himself in the construction of a huge new palace at Potsdam. It had been long under consideration, and the plans had been already prepared in 1755, before the war. In May 1763 work was begun. In the summer of 1768 Frederick lived in the new palace for a short time, but he never made much use of it. The expenditure, which amounted to £450,000, might well have been postponed until the country had recovered from the losses of the war. Frederick admitted that the building of a palace which he had no intention of occupying was inspired by bravado, by the desire to show the world that he had still some resources. This display of self-indulgence and vanity, in a half-ruined

land, had a very bad effect upon the feelings of the King's subjects towards him.

Another characteristic trickery was employed for obtaining more money from his subjects without new taxes. [The simple expedient was to increase the old taxes, and to enforce the payments in a rigorous manner, for under the old system there had been considerable laxity in the collection.] French officials were now employed to act as buffers between the indignation of the taxpayers and their King. To complete the chicanery, when the Frenchmen proposed taxes on food, Frederick adopted the fine pose of protector of the poor. He wrote to De Launay, the head of the imported French officials, that he was '*l'avocat du pauvre*,' and declared that bread, beer and meat, the necessities of the poor, should be exempt from taxation. Having thus exhibited the nobility of his sentiments, his conscience was at ease, and he proceeded to support the French proposal that bread should be taxed, and that the rates upon beer, brandy, and meat should be increased. When the protest of a high Prussian official against these increases in the necessities of life was placed before him, Frederick referred with scorn and anger to such 'erroneous and highly dangerous financial principles.' He said that the revenues of the State depended for their safety and certainty upon the first necessities of man. In other words, people must eat, and therefore the only tax which cannot be evaded is that upon food. That was the doctrine carried into practice of the King who adopted the hypocritical pose of a protector of the poor, who protested against the taxes upon food, because they touched the poor man; and then when they had been substantially increased, with his connivance, flatly refused to lower them.

The excise was increased upon all articles of home produce, but not upon imports—another result of the employment of French officials, and of the support they obtained from Frederick. It was remarked that the French had been beaten by the Prussians once, at Rossbach, and in return the Prussians were now being beaten



in every city, and on every day, by the French. The French system was very costly, owing to the elaborate precautions that had to be taken against smuggling, and the large number of inspectors that had to be employed. It caused immense annoyance and discontent in every household, for the inspectors searched the houses for contraband goods. 'The new projects of excise,' wrote Mitchell in a despatch to the British Government, 'have really alienated the affections of the people from their sovereign to a degree hardly to be described.' An increased revenue was obtained, but in the most expensive and disturbing manner; and some authorities asserted at the time that, owing to the rapid growth of prosperity, the old scale of taxes would, without French interference, have produced nearly as much as the new.

The excuse put forward publicly for the collection of a large revenue was characteristically Prussian. It was said to be necessary, in order to make adequate preparation to prepare against another attack by the enemies of the country. The proceeds of the increased taxation were earmarked, to provide for a still further enlargement of the already enormous military establishment. The army was increased to 200,000 men, on a peace footing. That figure is, in proportion to population, five times the force maintained by the German Empire in 1914. In Frederick's day the Prussian army was, compared with the establishments of the other Continental Powers, a monstrous portent. Its mere existence was a threat to the peace and security of Prussia's neighbours.

In connection with the excise were the monopolies which Frederick sold to contractors, for the supply of tobacco, coffee, salt, steel, silk and many other articles. Even the postal receipts were farmed out. The system is notoriously bad for the people and good for the King. The monopolists produced inferior articles and charged high prices. The King obtained a certain and regular cash receipt. By these indirect methods, working through officials upon whom the responsibility could be cast, Frederick obtained from his poor and frugal people an

immense army and an enormous war treasure, which had attained by the end of his reign the figure of £8,000,000.

Sir James Harris (afterwards Lord Malmesbury), the successor of Sir Andrew Mitchell at the Prussian Court, wrote from Berlin, 18th March 1776: 'The King of Prussia never can be taught to believe that a large treasure laying dormant in his coffers impoverishes his kingdom; that riches increase by circulation; that trade cannot subsist without reciprocal profit; that monopolies and exclusive grants put a stop to emulation, and, of course, to industry; and, in short, that the real wealth of a sovereign consists in the ease and affluence of his subjects. These errors, however capital they are, have rather served to augment the misery of these subjects, than impede the progress of his own grandeur.' . . . 'The basis of his conduct, from the time he mounted the throne, to this day, seems to have been the considering mankind in general, and particularly those over whom he was destined to reign, as beings conducive to the carrying into execution whatever might tend to augment his power, and extend his dominions.'

The complaints of his subjects Frederick regarded with unconcern. On one occasion he saw a crowd of persons looking at a picture posted on a wall in the street. He sent forward an attendant, who returned with the report that it was a caricature of the King grinding coffee beans. Frederick sent the man back with the order to hang the picture lower, that it might be better seen. What the public thought about him he cared not at all, so long as his prestige remained high with the soldiers, and he had a large army and a big war treasure in hand. He became, with good cause, the most unpopular monarch that Prussia ever had, and was content that it should be so.

An example of Frederick's despotism, of his hostility to civilians, and his hypocrisy, is provided by the famous miller Arnold lawsuit. Arnold's mill was worked by the flow of a small river. His landlord was a Count von Schmettau, to whom he paid a small annual rent. Above the mill Baron von Gersdorf, the sub-prefect of the district,

made in the stream a pond for fish. Arnold said that the flow of water was so much reduced by the construction of the fish pond, that he could not work the mill. He paid no rent; after five years the landlord obtained an order from the local court for the sale of the mill. It was bought, through an intermediary, by von Gersdorf. Arnold appealed to the county court, and lost his case. The two courts agreed that the law gave von Gersdorf the right to use the water without making compensation for the loss that might be sustained by other persons.

Arnold appealed to the King. Frederick adopted the pose of *l'avocat du pauvre*, the advocate of the poor man who was being defrauded by influential persons through the instrumentality of rascally lawyers. He sent a colonel to make a personal report; with the colonel was associated a member of the local government. The two men consulted the inspector of dykes, who gave it as his opinion that the fish pond did in fact reduce the flow of water, but he did not think it his duty—in face of the King's humour—to inquire whether such reduction was enough to interfere with the working of the mill. The colonel informed his colleague that he intended to report in favour of Arnold, and he warned him that the King had made up his mind, and that it might go hard with a civilian, as well as a soldier, who dared to thwart His Majesty. The local official, however, had come to the conclusion that the judges were right, and he was prepared to undergo the King's resentment, in support of his opinion. The Cüstrin justices, to whom he sent his report, agreed with it; they supported the decisions of the two lower courts, against Arnold. With this verdict the King received the colonel's personal report. He sent the case to the High Court of Berlin, with a peremptory order to do justice, that is, to quash the judgments of the three courts below. Six judges of the High Court, with the Chancellor at their head, decided unanimously that the three lower courts were right. In spite of the King's plain threats they rejected Arnold's appeal.

The King sent for the Chancellor and three of the judges,



and made them stand in a row before him. To the Chancellor, the head of the judiciary of his kingdom, he said : ' Depart, your successor is appointed.' The judges he packed off to prison. By the King's command the judgments of the four legal tribunals were annulled, and the miller given back his mill with money compensation, which had to be paid by the prefect Gersdorf, and by the justices of the lower courts.

Every official concerned, from the Chancellor, and the prefect Gersdorf, to the justices of the lower courts, was dismissed from office. Zedlitz, the Chief of the Criminal Department of the High Court, was ordered to issue a sentence of imprisonment for a year in a fortress, on the whole pack of officials. He refused ; he said that it was not in his competence to over-ride the decision of the law courts. Frederick therefore issued the order himself. He took no steps to ascertain whether any of these persons had been inspired by the desire to defraud a poor man : whether, for instance, prefect von Gersdorf made his fish pond with the object of damaging the poor man's mill : whether any legal offence, or any moral wrong, had been perpetrated. He committed an act of despotic injustice in dismissing from their posts and imprisoning presumably innocent persons.

On the day following the dismissal of the Chancellor, the King saw from his window at the Berlin palace a string of carriages, making for the residence of the late chief of the judiciary of the kingdom, taking him messages of sympathy. A crowd of a different kind collected under the windows of the palace, poor people, holding petitions in their hands. They believed that they had only to present a case to the King in order to obtain whatever legal decision they might desire ; that the King would quash all the judgments of the law courts which had been given against a poor man. They went away disappointed.

Frederick regarded the nation as an army, in which every man is subjected, in every thought and action of his life, to the control of the Commander and King. Civilians were, in his view, mere feeders of the army. Lawyers

he detested especially, because they dared to think for themselves, and because they presumed to decide disputes among his subjects according to principles of their own making. It was to reduce their power and enhance his own supremacy, that he made the Chancellor prepare a Code of Laws, which should be known as the Friderician Code. His action in the Arnold case was inspired by the determination to suppress all forms of independence, all influences which did not emanate immediately from himself.

After the King's death an inquiry was, as a matter of course, opened into the Arnold case. It was found that the miller had not suffered from scarcity of water. A saw-mill, working at a point in the stream between the fish pond and Arnold's mill, had not experienced any diminished supply of water; this fact cannot have remained unknown, for the Arnold case attracted wide publicity. Nobody dared to tell the King that he had been deceived by Arnold, nor would Frederick have made restitution for his blunder if he had been informed. To have done so would have been to follow an act of despotism by a public confession of folly. If he had ever had any desire that, though legal justice might be against Arnold, at least in equity he should be compensated for loss, he would first have ascertained that such loss had actually been sustained. No sufficient inquiry into that elementary point was made, because the King was bent, not upon justice or equity but upon military execution upon a body of civilians who dared to stand up for their principles. It was only after his death that justice could be done, by the ejection of Arnold, and the restoration of the various officials to their offices.

## CHAPTER XII

### ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM

His new leisure gave the King time to attend to the affairs of the Berlin Academy of Science. Maupertuis, the President, left Berlin in 1756 and died, at Basle, in 1759. Euler, the Swiss mathematician, became acting President. He went to St. Petersburg in 1766, and was succeeded at Berlin by Lagrange, from Turin. Lambert, a mathematician from Mulhouse, became a prominent member of the Academy. Frederick would not employ any Germans. Lessing, though well known to him as Voltaire's secretary in Berlin, was left to seek patrons in other parts of Germany. Kant remained at Königsberg. Goethe, Herder, Wieland, found a home at Weimar. Winckelmann went to Rome. Klopstock was pensioned by the King of Denmark. Haydn and Gluck remained at Vienna. Bach visited the King at Potsdam in 1747, but he was allowed to return to Leipzig.

Of the eminent Frenchmen who were Frederick's contemporaries, the only one, besides Voltaire and Maupertuis, whom he attempted to obtain was D'Alembert. The first invitation was sent to D'Alembert in 1752, with an offer of five hundred pounds a year, a house and table, and the reversion to the Presidency of the Academy on the death of Maupertuis. D'Alembert declined the post of understudy with no certainty of ultimate promotion. He was induced to visit the King, in June 1763, and was received with open arms. In his letters to Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, he gave an attractive account of his experience.<sup>1</sup> He said that the King talked on literature and philosophy and on nothing else, and that he talked well. He enjoyed

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Historique*, vol. xxvi., September 1884.



the visit, which lasted till the middle of August, but was glad to get away, as he had been made ill by the rich and spiced dishes at Frederick's table. It was not the cooking which made D'Alembert decline all the King's offers; it was the recollection of what had happened to Voltaire. D'Alembert perceived that Frederick had the instincts of a tyrant, that all men in his employ, D'Alembert like Voltaire, would be treated as slaves. While pretending to be a humble pupil, Frederick contrived to use his kingship for the humiliation of the teacher. Germans being excluded, and the only Frenchmen of note whom he tried to 'possess' declining the honour, his range of choice was small. Nevertheless the Berlin Academy did good work, and acquired an acknowledged position among the learned societies of Europe. French was the official language, all contributions in German being translated into French before presentation. Frederick himself wrote several papers which were read before the Academy.

He continued to write to Voltaire, and he kept up a steady exchange of letters with D'Alembert. The long correspondence with the two great Frenchmen is one of Frederick's titles to fame. He discussed with them literature and philosophy. His taste in literature was confined to the classic period of the seventeenth century. Voltaire he esteemed because 'he recalls the age of Louis XIV., to which ours makes no approach.' To Voltaire he wrote: 'Whatever may happen, at least I have been your contemporary.' Frederick repeated often that he was fortunate in having been born early enough to be able to say that he belonged to the age of Louis XIV., for he had known Voltaire. After Voltaire's death he still clung to his connection with the great man, and through him with the Golden Age. Writing to D'Alembert, 22nd June 1780, he says, 'I offer to him every morning my prayer. I say to him, "Divin Voltaire, ora pro nobis."'

With the literature of his own time Frederick had little sympathy. Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* was published in 1748. Frederick wrote in imitation and also by way of criticism, a feeble essay, the *Dissertation sur les raisons*

*d'établir ou d'abroger les lois*, which was read before the Academy on the 22nd January 1754. For Rousseau he had nothing but dislike and contempt. In reply to the *Discours* of 1750 and 1753, the *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1760), the *Contrat Social*, and *Émile* (both 1762), Frederick wrote a *Discours de l'utilité des sciences et des arts dans un état*, which was read before the Academy on the 27th January 1772. Sentiment, passion, the natural feelings of the heart, found no sympathy with the King, whose nature was hard and cold, who prided himself upon his aristocratic and fashionable accomplishments in the artificially polite society of the *ancien régime*. Frederick spoke often of *l'esprit*, sometimes of *l'âme*, never with Rousseau of *le cœur humain*.

In November 1780 he published an essay, *De la littérature allemande*. He began by saying that German was a 'semi-barbarous and a brutal language, that as yet *belles-lettres* have not prospered on our soil.' He concluded by announcing that 'if the sovereigns take an interest in letters, if they encourage those who apply themselves to that study, we shall have our classic authors.' The literary achievements of a nation depended upon the taste and influence of their sovereign. To do his part in forming a national literature he devoted a considerable part of his essay to the great writers of Greece, Rome and the age of Louis XIV. It was only by following the immortals of the classic periods that a German could hope to achieve any work of merit. At that time, in 1780, German immortals, unobserved by Frederick, had already produced some great works. Lessing's *Laocoon* was already fourteen years old; Klopstock's *Messiah* had been published thirty-two years; Kant's *Über das Gefühl des Schönen* appeared in 1765, his *Träume eines Geistersehers* in 1766; Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen* in 1773, *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* in 1774. Winckelmann, Wieland, Herder, Bürger, Heyne, had produced literature which Frederick should have noticed. He mentioned Leibnitz and Guericke (of the pneumatic pump); he claimed as German, Erasmus the Dutchman, Coper-

nicus the Pole, Haller the Swiss; he spoke of Melanchthon and forgot Luther; he thought Thomasius was an historian. (He ascribed the *Leviathan* to John Toland.) His capacity as a critic of German literature may be judged from the fact that he considered *Der Postzug*, a comedy by a certain Ayrenhoff, to be equal to Molière. The only other German work to which he referred in his essay was *Goetz von Berlichingen*, which he considered as worthless as anything in Shakespeare. 'To convince yourself,' said Frederick, 'of the want of taste which, up to the present time, has reigned in Germany, you have only to repair to the public shows. You will see represented the abominable plays of Shakespeare, translated into our language, and all the audience fainting with delight when listening to these ridiculous farces, worthy of the savages of Canada.' The plays to which he alluded were, *Othello*, presented at Berlin in 1755, *Hamlet* in 1777, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* in 1778. He continued: 'Put there also a *Goetz von Berlichingen* appears upon the scene, a detestable imitation of these bad English plays; and the pit applauds and demands with enthusiasm a repetition of these disgusting platitudes.' Yet Frederick believed he conferred a benefit upon his country by publishing his literary opinions.

The tyranny of his father and the opposition it bred towards everything his father sought to force upon him, gave him from his youth a desire for mental liberty. His anti-Christian opinions were a repercussion from the excessive piety of Frederick William I. Thus the son became a rationalist, a supporter of the movement towards enlightenment, in Germany called the *Aufklärung*, which had its origin in France. But he never looked upon it from any but a personal standpoint. He was an *Aufklärer* for himself, to escape his father's influence, to avoid the control of the Church, and to obtain a position among the foremost intellects of the day. An aristocrat of the *ancien régime*, he did not believe in the possibility of a general enlightenment. Only kings and philosophers, beings of superior birth or endowed with other gifts,



were capable of using their minds. Even as early as 1738, in the Rheinsberg days, he was dissuading Voltaire from giving his *Histoire de Louis XIV.* to the world. 'I advise you, as a friend, not to print it.' . . . 'This history, written with truth and in a philosophic spirit, should not pass beyond the sphere of philosophers. No, it is not suited to people who do not know how to reason.' This attitude of contempt for mankind grew ever more marked. The terrible experiences of the Seven Years' War increased the cynicism and hardness of his nature. After 1763 he cared for nothing but the recovery of Prussia from the losses of the war. He declared that moral conduct, by which he meant discipline, sacrifice, submission to his will, outweighed in importance the acquisition of knowledge; he looked with suspicion upon all projects for encouraging independence of mind. The only hope for the State was the maintenance of a large army, the collection of a substantial war treasure, and the complete surrender by the people to their King, of all liberty in act or in thought. His view was, as he wrote to Voltaire, that 'the bulk of our species is foolish and bad. Every man has in him a ferocious brute; few succeed in chaining him, the majority give him a free hand whenever the terror of the law does not restrain them.' To D'Alembert he said that man, 'that animal with two legs but no wings,' as he liked to call him, would always be dominated by superstition; he agreed with Fontenelle who declared that if he had his hand full of truths he would not open it for the public, as it would be useless to do so. To this D'Alembert replied, that 'the multitude would not feed upon superstition if it was offered anything else; if to the ignorant multitude were presented on the one side absurdities, and on the other reason and good sense, does Your Majesty believe that the reason would not be preferred? I say more; reason, even if it arrives late upon the field, has only to persevere in order to triumph in the end, and drive away its rival.' Frederick answered, 'O my dear Anaxogoras! man is an incorrigible animal, more capable of feeling than of reasoning.' Supersti-

tion being ineradicable in mankind all that could be done was 'to enlighten the men in power who have influence upon the Governments.' The King, his family, and perhaps some of the higher nobles, were alone fit to receive the gift of knowledge. With increasing years Frederick grew ever more despotic and aristocratic. He became totally alienated from the French tendencies of thought.

The philosophical opinions of his youth underwent no permanent change. In 1739 he wrote to Voltaire, that thought comes from the mechanism of our machine; in 1775, thirty-six years later, he wrote to the same correspondent that he regarded himself as 'a material animal, living and organised, who thinks; whence I conclude that living matter can think, hence that it has the property of being electric.' As Crown Prince he could not believe in free will; on this subject his views fluctuated, for, when he was at the height of his power, in 1764, he wrote to the Electress Maria of Saxony, 'I incline to think that man is free, and even very free, because that conforms to the small portion of reason which has fallen to my share'; but in his old age, when his energy was waning, he returned to the belief in predestination; 'we are,' he wrote to the Electress Maria in 1778, 'but marionettes moved by divine hands.' He wrote to Voltaire in 1749, that he did not appreciate geometry nor metaphysic, and again in 1777, twenty-eight years later, to the same correspondent, to the same effect. The crude nature of his prejudices may be judged from his indignation with Linnæus for joining men and horses together in the class of mammals. Save for a brief excursion into science, inspired by Madame du Châtelet in the Rheinsberg days, he confined himself to philosophical speculation and to *belles-lettres*.

Frederick's opposition to the Church had from the first given encouragement to the rationalism of the Encyclopædists, but when, in their zeal for liberty of thought, they went on from attacks upon the Church to attacks upon Royalty, when they assailed despotism in all its forms, he turned against them. In 1769 appeared Hol-

bach's *Essai sur les préjugés*, and in 1770, his *Système de la nature*. Frederick replied by the *Examen de l'essai sur les préjugés*, of which he sent a copy to D'Alembert on the 17th May 1769, and another to Voltaire on the 24th; and by the *Examen critique du système de la nature*, of which he sent copies to D'Alembert and Voltaire on the 7th July 1770.

The spirit which inspired the Encyclopædists was belief in human nature. Frederick's whole mentality, policy, and character, were based upon the opposite view, that mankind is incurably wicked—hence the Hohenzollern Prussian principle of the necessity for deceits and repressions and wars. In his reply to Holbach we find: 'The author represents to himself a world somewhat like the republic which Plato imagined, capable of virtue, of happiness and of all the perfections. I venture to assure him that it is not so in the world which I inhabit. He affirms in a magisterial manner that truth is made for man, and that it should be told him on all occasions.' These views Frederick attempted to combat by pointing to the prevalence of error even in the speculations of the ablest men—which is no answer unless the conclusion is asserted that no improvement in knowledge is possible. That was in reality Frederick's belief. 'Convinced of the feebleness of human understanding and struck by the errors of the celebrated philosophers, I exclaim: Vanity of vanities, vanity of philosophy!' . . . 'In seeking the cause of these errors, we find it in the elements of man himself. Prejudices are the reasoning of the people.' Philosophers are now included, with the people, among the incurables.

The only class left was that to which Frederick himself belonged. When Holbach attacked Royalty the King's indignation was expressed in strong terms. He sent to his sister the Dowager Queen of Sweden, a set of verses beginning with the lines:

'Allez, vils artisans de fraude et de mensonge  
Répandre sur les rois tout le fiel qui vous ronge;  
Vos efforts insensés sont désormais perdus'.



He wrote to D'Alembert, 8th June 1770, that 'if the author of the *System of Nature* were by chance to be found out in France, the least that could happen to him would be to pass the remainder of his life in the Bastille. I do not understand how there can be any authors so foolish as to publish such works, which expose them to very real danger.' Far indeed had Frederick moved from the spirit of the *Aufklärung*. In his reply to Holbach he defended not only Kings, but all established institutions, including the prerogatives of both aristocracy and clergy. 'When, with a violent rage and in the manner of the bitterest satire, he calumniates his King and the Government of his country, he seems to be a madman who has escaped from his chains, and is a prey to the most violent transports of his rage. What! Mr. Philosopher, protector of morals and virtue, do you not know that a good citizen should respect the form of the Government under which he lives? Do you not know that it is improper for a private individual to insult those in power?' 'Here is another declamation against the ambition of Princes. Our author is beside himself, he does not mince his words; he accuses sovereigns of being the butchers of their people and of sending them to be murdered in a war, in order to divert their *ennui*.' 'There are many cases,' said Frederick, 'in which war has been necessary, inevitable and just,' and he proceeded to remark that republics also make wars, obvious truths which do not touch the matter in hand. To Holbach's contention that Kings sometimes make war from personal motives he offered no answer. 'The author informs us that, in his opinion, subjects should enjoy the right of deposing the sovereigns with whom they are discontented. It is to bring things to that point that he cries out against the large armies which might offer some obstacle to his desire.' Frederick proceeded to defend the hereditary principle in a monarchy, and the necessity and value of a large standing army.

In one direction only, in religious toleration, was he in accord with the best spirit of the age, and here his example had good results. Both Louis XVI. and the

Emperor Joseph II. made efforts to imitate him by enlarging the rights of the Protestants in their dominions. Frederick's toleration was no novelty in Brandenburg; it had long been the Hohenzollern policy. Its origin was the desire for immigrants. Brandenburg was in need of population, and all the Hohenzollerns encouraged the persecuted in other lands to find homes in their dominions. It has been computed that at the time of Frederick's death at least a fifth of the Prussian population consisted of immigrants and their descendants. The Hohenzollerns assisted the influx of colonists, in order to obtain the sinews of war, the financial and human material required for the purpose of military conquest. Frederick II. followed the family tradition. He even received the Jesuits when they were being driven out of other countries. But his religious toleration was half-hearted. Neither Jews nor Catholics had the freedom and the rights of Protestants.

D'Alembert in a letter to the King, 14th February 1774, said: 'Our age, I agree again with Your Majesty, does not equal the age of Louis XIV., in genius nor in taste; but in my opinion it is superior in enlightenment, in detestation of superstition and fanaticism, in appreciation of useful knowledge; and this merit, it seems to me, is fully equal to any other.' Here in a few words is exposed the chasm which lay between the age in which Frederick lived, and the past to which mentally he belonged.

On his accession Frederick took the earliest opportunity of announcing that, unlike his father, he regarded the interests of the nation to be his own, and considered the two to be inseparable. He spoke often of himself as 'the first servant,' or 'the first magistrate' of the State. In 1777, in the *Essai sur les formes de Gouvernement*, he said: 'If perverse people succeed in persuading the sovereign that his interests are different from those of his subjects, then he becomes the enemy of his people, without understanding how that has come about; he becomes hard, severe, inhuman by misunderstanding; for the principle being false, the consequences must necessarily be harmful.' . . .



'The sovereign represents the State; he and the people form one body, which cannot flourish unless concord unites them. The Prince is to the Society that he governs what the head is to the body.' This position was not of celestial origin, and gave no divine right; it was based upon an agreement originally made with the nation by the founder of the dynasty, one of the conditions being succession by inheritance. The King so chosen was irremovable, and entrusted with despotic power. In return he owed a duty to the State; he was not to use his position for self-indulgence, but to regard it as a sacred trust. Hard work, conscientious strivings and plans for the improvement and welfare of the State, were expected. The King should feel any misfortune suffered by the State as a personal disgrace, and should not rest until he had retrieved it.

In this, as in so much else, Frederick was following the traditions of his house, and was also imitating Louis XIV. The Great Elector often declared that he toiled solely for the welfare of his people. Frederick William I. was the first to describe the King as 'the first servant of the State.' The King of France was in 1722 officially styled by the Parliament of Paris, the 'first and sovereign magistrate in this State.' Louis XIV. said, 'The interest of the State must always be preferred to the personal inclination of the King.' . . . 'We are born for the good of the public.' . . . 'It is our bounden duty to work for the public welfare.' The real difference between Frederick and Louis XIV. was that Frederick pretended to be what he was not. He did not spend money on dress and ceremonial display, on an expensive court, on women. He seemed therefore to be a model of self-denial; but he spent far more, and brought terrible misfortunes on his country, by indulging his ambition for foreign conquest, from which, as he himself said, his people could derive no benefit. 'The new conquests of a sovereign,' he wrote in the *Anti-Machiavel*, 'do not make the estates which he already possesses more opulent or more rich, his people obtain no advantage.' Per-



sonal ambition, Frederick admitted at the time, was the motive of his march into Silesia in 1740. In 1756 he was older and more wary; he pretended that his attack upon Saxony was forced upon him in self-defence. As we have seen, it was a long-premeditated aggression for the purpose of conquest. In neither case, whether Silesia or Saxony, were the interests of his people considered. It was not in the character of 'first servant of the State' that he sent them to make conquests for the Hohenzollerns in Silesia and Saxony. His refusal to give up even the small county of Glatz, by which he might have obtained peace, was contrary to the interests of his people, who had to endure the continued miseries of war in order to save the personal reputation of their King. Mitchell, who knew Frederick well, said that vanity was his chief weakness. He showed it frequently in the Seven Years' War, jeopardising the success of a campaign by thinking more of his personal prestige, than of defeating the enemy.

Frederick desired a place among the sun-Kings; he bled his people ruthlessly in order to gratify that personal vanity. A heartless and callous man, he cared nothing for the welfare of his subjects, save in so far as it ministered to his weakness for power and prestige on the European stage. He was a benevolent despot like Louis XIV., but with less benevolence and more despotism—save only in one direction, that of religion. With that exception there was more liberty in France than in the Prussian dominions. Frederick carried out forcible impressments for his army, which Louis XIV. had neither the power nor the desire to inflict upon his people, and he interfered with their liberty in many other ways, to a degree that was impossible for any monarch save the Prussian. Public opinion was a power in France, in Prussia it could not live. The unity of prince and people consisted in the submission of the people to the will of the prince.

It was the contrast between the idle self-indulgence of Louis XV. and the conscientious application of Frederick, between the military disasters and grave colonial losses of France and the successes and conquests of Prussia,

that gave the Prussian King his high position in the estimation of the world. His Kingship raised Prussia while that of Louis xv. lowered France. The triumphs of Frederick brought imitators. He had shown that by the concentration of all the resources of a State in the hands of the King a small Power might become a great one. Other princes studied his methods and attempted to apply them. The young Emperor, Joseph II., was an early convert. Many of the minor German princes endeavoured to emulate the Hohenzollern policy. The principle was accepted that a King owes a duty to the State, that he should work for the improvement of his country by means of a despotism which should at least seem to be benevolent. Frederick's example also stirred the Czarina Catherine as well as the Emperor Joseph to a policy of aggression. It was held that it devolved upon every sovereign to enlarge his dominions, and that all means were legitimate that produced territorial expansion.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PARTITION OF POLAND

ON the 15th February 1763, the day of the peace of Hubertsburg, Frederick set in motion the intrigues which were to end with the partition of Poland. He wrote to the Empress Catherine announcing the signature of the treaty of peace, and he went on to propose that, the health of King Augustus III. of Poland being precarious, an agreement should be come to at once as to his successor ; provided no Austrian was chosen, he left the selection to the Empress.

The experiences of the late war had been so terrible for Prussia, that Frederick was determined to obtain a prolonged peace. For that purpose a Russian alliance was necessary. He could no longer count upon the English support which had saved him in the past. [France and Austria remained hostile to him, and both these powers were now on bad terms with their former Russian ally. In Vienna especially, very bitter Anti-Muscovite feelings were entertained. While Russia was thus the only possible friend, she was also, in the Prussian mind, the most formidable of potential enemies.] Frederick feared Russia. 'It is a terrible Power,' he wrote to Prince Henry, 8th March 1769, 'which in half a century will make all Europe tremble.' These considerations made an agreement with Russia most necessary, and there was the further advantage that it might be used to advance Prussian designs upon Poland.

That country was in a condition which invited outside interference. In the sixteenth century Poland extended over an area as large as that of modern Germany. It included Great Poland, Little Poland, Livonia, Lithuania, Pomerelia, Prussia, Courland, Moldavia, Wallachia and



Bessarabia. This large area was administered by a King, in confederation of States. Poland at that time was the principal Slav State of the world.

The power of the King was progressively encroached upon by the nobility and country gentry, who owned all the land, and were the only electors and legislators. Among the privileges which the nobles acquired was the right of each member of the Diet to veto any proposal. All decisions had to be unanimous. The spirit of equality—that is to say, the passion of jealousy—was so strong, that no noble would submit to be directed by his fellows. How this absurd situation arose—whether from a Slav racial tendency, or from the custom of subdivision of estates, in striking contrast to the Brandenburg law of primogeniture—it is difficult to say. The *liberum veto*, freedom to denounce, was a gradually acquired custom. Its worst development was the power ultimately given to a member to explode the Diet; to protest effectively against all the decisions of Parliament, which then became null and void. These abuses grew with time, and ultimately destroyed Poland. Many efforts were made to abolish the *liberum veto*, but there were always Poles who preferred their own independence to the welfare of their country, and prevented the necessary reform. They exploded the Diet regularly.<sup>1</sup>

From 1386 to 1572 the Jagiello family furnished Poland with kings. The Jagiello kings contrived to maintain a stable form of government, in spite of the defects of the Constitution. Unhappily the dynasty became extinct. On the death of Sigismund II., without heirs, the throne was put up for sale, under the form of an election. Each candidate was obliged to accept certain prescribed conditions which limited the powers of the King. The electors were tempted to sell their votes to the highest

<sup>1</sup> 'An unreasonable, incurable suspicion of the Crown, and all the executive instruments of the Crown, is the characteristic, or rather the mania of every Polish Diet. For their country as a State the Squires had no thought at all. So long as every Squire was lord paramount in his own parish, he cared little for anything beyond it.' *Slavonic Europe*, by Nisbet Bain, p. 146.

bidders without any regard for the welfare of their country. A Polish candidate was handicapped by the local jealousies, which brought on a civil war at every election, and no Pole could command the show of military force to terrorise the voters, and the supply of money that was required to buy votes, and to provide a suitable allowance for the elected King. The Polish magnates, having secured for themselves complete freedom from taxation, declined to make any provision for their King. Thus every election became an international contest. France obtained the first victory with the election of Henry of Valois in 1573. He was crowned at Cracow, 31st February 1574, but soon afterwards he inherited the throne of France, and abandoned his Polish crown. The Polish Senate, under Austrian influence, elected the Emperor Maximilian; the Polish Lower House, or Diet, elected Stephen Bathory, Prince of Transylvania, who had the support of Turkey. War would have followed between Austria and Turkey, but for the sudden death of Maximilian, which gave the Turkish candidate the election. After Bathory came three Swedish kings, who were succeeded by a famous Polish General, John Sobieski. On his death in 1696, Peter the Great obtained the election of Augustus II., Elector of Saxony. Russian influence was thenceforward paramount. On the death of Augustus in 1733, the Poles endeavoured, with French assistance, to obtain a Pole, Stanislaus Leczinski, for their King, but a Russian army entered Warsaw and forced the election of the son of the late King, Augustus III., Elector of Saxony. Now, in 1763, the illness of Augustus III. threatened another convulsion.

It is surprising that Poland should have survived so long. Its Saxon kings seldom visited the country. The Legislature met only to be 'exploded.' All public officials were irremovable, and therefore under no shadow of control. No justice was to be obtained in the law courts, for while the judges decided in favour of the highest bidder, they had no power to enforce their decrees. The whole country remained for many years in a state of anarchy.

In these abnormal conditions, Poland being unable to defend herself, her neighbours began to discuss schemes of partition. The Emperor Maximilian in 1573 proposed to take Poland proper, and to give the Czar Lithuania. Other schemes were put forward by Charles XI. of Sweden in 1667, by Frederick I. of Brandenburg-Prussia in conjunction with Peter the Great in 1710, by Augustus II., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, in 1733. John Casimir, the last of the Swedish kings of Poland, predicted, as early as 1661, the partition which ultimately took place, between Prussia, Russia and Austria.

When it became known, in February 1763, that Prussia and Russia were in negotiation with regard to Polish affairs, the rumour spread that a partition was being prepared. Frederick denied it several times, and he induced the Czarina Catherine also to issue a public denial. On the 5th October 1763, Augustus III. died. Prussia and Russia agreed to obtain the election of a Pole, the Czarina's choice falling upon Stanislaus Poniatowski, whose feeble character she knew well, for he had been her lover. She was persuaded by Frederick to accept a formal alliance, by the treaty of the 11th April 1764, which was to remain in force for eight years. By this agreement Stanislaus Poniatowski was to be elected King of Poland; the Polish Dissidents from the Roman Catholic Church (Lutherans or Greeks), who already had religious toleration, were to obtain political rights; the *liberum veto* and the elective monarchy, the two weakest points in the Polish Constitution, were to be retained. If Prussia became involved in war on the Rhine, or Russia in Turkey or the Crimea, the ally would assist with 10,000 men, or a money subsidy of 400,000 roubles in the one case, and 480,000 thalers in the other. This agreement was followed by the election of Poniatowski under Russian influence, on the 7th September 1764.

On the 15th November the new King wrote to Catherine, begging her assistance in the abolition of the *liberum veto*. Panin, the Russian Foreign Minister, supported the appeal. He desired a 'Northern Accord' of Russia, Prussia,



Sweden, Saxony and Poland against France and Austria. Poland should be strong, while remaining under Russian influence. This scheme was objectionable to Frederick. It would have given protection to Saxony and Poland, weak neighbours, whom he regarded as his natural prey. He set himself to combat the views of the Russian Minister. He ordered Solms, his envoy at St. Petersburg, to raise objections. Panin, in reply to Solms, said that he could not admit 'that it should be taken as a general rule that it was to the interest of the Powers never to allow the Poles to make an alteration in their form of government.' . . . 'As in the present case it was not necessary to make a change in laws, but it was a question merely of modifying a liberty which had been used to excess, it seemed to him that it would be rather hard to prevent the Poles from emerging from the sort of barbarism in which they find themselves owing to the abuse of this liberty.' To this Frederick answered, in a letter to Catherine, that with the abolition of the *liberum veto*, 'Poland might become a Power dangerous to her neighbours.' He represented the tardy attempt of the unfortunate Poles to obtain a rational form of government, as a scheme on the part of the King and his family to free themselves from the control of Parliament, in order to establish a hereditary and despotic monarchy. While keeping his Prussian subjects under his personal control, he desired complete independence for every Pole. If Poland adopted an autocratic government of the Prussian kind Frederick's scheme of partition would have to be abandoned. Panin was not affected by the Prussian arguments, but they took effect upon the German Czarina. On the 6th December 1764, Frederick was able to make the following boast: 'My remonstrances sent to the Empress of Russia have influenced her to declare to Count Panin that she will listen to nothing more about any change in the constitution and the form of government of Poland, but that she intends that things in Poland shall remain upon their present footing.'

But Catherine protested against some of Frederick's

harsh actions. In order to provide the King of Poland with an establishment befitting his rank, an increase of ten per cent. in the general customs duties was ordered. Pretending that this was an invasion of Prussian 'rights,' Frederick 'by way of reprisal,' established a custom-house at Marienwerder on the Vistula, to levy toll on Polish vessels on their way to and from Danzig. If the ships attempted evasion by hugging the opposite shore, the Prussian officials were ordered to cross over to the Polish side of the river and bring the ships, by force, to the Prussian bank at Marienwerder, where the toll was forcibly taken from them. A large revenue was derived from this source, and the trade of Danzig was threatened with ruin. When complaint of the robbery was made, Frederick proposed to buy off opposition by an annual payment to the King, and a 'corruption' to his supporters, 'for,' he remarked in a letter to Benoit, his representative at Warsaw, 'as you are aware, with money one can do everything in Poland.' But the injury to Polish trade was so serious that, when appealed to by Poniatowski, the Czarina interfered. 'So rigorous a reprisal,' she wrote to Frederick, 'can only alarm everybody in the whole of Poland, and make an impression very contrary to our veritable way of thinking, and to the principle of our alliance. . . . I cannot refrain from remarking to Your Majesty, that in truth our new King is more to be commiserated than blamed.' Frederick's reply was so worded as to give the impression that he would at once abolish the Marienwerder toll, but in spite of persistent representations the obstruction and robbery continued.

In accordance with his custom, Frederick intrigued against his ally. In the summer of 1765, Panin discovered that Rexin, the Prussian Ambassador at Constantinople, had proposed a Prussian alliance with Turkey against Russia. When this was brought to Frederick's notice he replied that, to prove his loyalty to Russia, he would at once recall Rexin; but he delayed the act for some time, let it be understood that he was inspired only by the desire to maintain good relations with Russia, and expressed no

reproof to Rexin in the letter of recall. Well might Catherine declare that Frederick was 'a disloyal scoundrel,' and Panin say he had been guilty of a 'low trick.'

Frederick's approaches to the Porte were intended to arouse anxiety in Russia, and to force Catherine to agree to his demand for a forward policy in Poland. They had the desired effect. Russian troops entered Warsaw, and the Diet was compelled by force to accept the Russian terms. Opposition was overcome by the seizure and deportation of recalcitrant members. The Diet, on the 19th November 1767, voted in accordance with the Russian demands, and on the 24th February 1768, a treaty was signed between Poland and Russia. The Dissidents were given political equality, the *liberum veto* and the elective monarchy were retained as fixed laws, and the integrity of the Republican Constitution was guaranteed by Russia.

The surrender to Russia by the Polish Government produced a revolt, of small dimensions in itself, which had important results. A body of Catholic nobles formed the Confederation of Bar, in Podolia. Among the strange political customs of Poland was the habit of 'confederating' to protest against the Government. The charm of a confederation was that it was not fettered by any *liberum veto*, the decision of a majority being accepted, but inasmuch as the acts of a confederation were not binding without the approval of the Diet, in which the *liberum veto* was retained, a confederation was nothing more than a symptom of disapproval of the Government. In the present case, the confederates of Bar proceeded to acts of violence. They attacked and murdered the Dissidents. The contagion of revolt spread through the whole of Poland, many confederations were formed, and there was a general uprising against the Russian domination. Russian troops advanced into the country, in which a terrible civil war was raging. In the general disorder and confusion, a party of Russian soldiers followed certain Dissidents on to Turkish territory, and killed a few Turks. The Porte, unable to accept without protest a Russian



occupation of Poland, demanded the withdrawal of the Russian armies. The request being ignored, war followed between Turkey and Russia in October 1768.

When reports reached Frederick that both in France and England it was believed that he had worked to bring about the war in order to concert measures with Russia for a partition of Poland, he declared that the idea was a 'gross and utterly ridiculous error,' and that everybody knew that it was France who had egged on Turkey. But his Ambassador at Constantinople had worked to inflame the Porte against Russia; and the effect of the war was in fact to give Frederick the opportunity he desired.

He insisted that if he paid the subsidy stipulated by the treaty with Russia, he would be incurring all the obligation of the Russian alliance without any of the benefit—a characteristic pronouncement. He asserted that if he carried out his part of the bargain he would be a loser, and used that argument for demanding a renewal of the treaty on more favourable terms. He wrote to Finckenstein at Berlin, 2nd November 1768: 'We must take advantage of the situation of Russia at the present time, and of the need she has of our alliance, to prolong the treaty for at least ten years, and, that we may have equal advantages, we must have guaranteed to us the succession to the principalities of Baireuth and Anspach, or at least an equivalent of the same value, and if we can come to an agreement in that direction the alliance with Russia will be advantageous to me, and we may expect that she will on some future occasion give us the assistance we are obliged to provide at present.' It was to be 'a condition *sine qua non* that Russia should enter into no *liaison* with Saxony of any kind.' . . . 'No Saxons, or I regard our alliance broken from that moment. These are sacramental words.' . . . 'This is a matter of the greatest importance.' The Empress Catherine had said with regard to Saxony that 'the high contracting parties should observe rigorously every regard and consideration for the weaker Powers,' a principle of chivalry which seemed mere folly to Frederick. He was quite

determined that on no consideration should Saxony obtain the protection of any of the great Powers. He revised at this time the *Testament Politique*, written in 1752, in which he insisted that Prussia's chief aim should be the conquest of Saxony.

In the meantime he prepared to utilise the Russo-Turkish War for obtaining improved conditions in the Russian alliance, and also for advancing his designs upon Poland. On the 16th November 1768, he wrote to Solms, at St. Petersburg, reminding him of 'the declaration that Russia made at the commencement of the troubles in Poland, and which gave assurances as to the intentions of conquest which might be attributed to her, and which made it clear that she had absolutely no pretensions upon Polish territory. I desire to know whether she retains, at present, the same sentiments, or if, on the contrary, were matters to come to a definite rupture, which could not fail to occasion an immense outlay, it might not be necessary for her to obtain a proportionate recompense from the Republic of Poland.' Frederick omitted to recall that he had joined publicly in the Empress's repudiations of all designs upon Poland, at the time of the election, in 1763 and 1764.

This proposal that Russia should begin the spoliation of Poland, in order that Frederick might take a share, was not well received. Solms replied, on the 6th December 1768, that Russia had no designs of conquest in any direction, that at St. Petersburg 'they have always been sincerely well-intentioned towards Poland, and that, far from desiring her decadence, they have, on the contrary, desired to see her flourishing and happy in accord with her constitution and with her relations with her neighbours. They do not wish to weaken her.' In spite of this repulse, Frederick persisted in his efforts to push Russia to agree to a partition of Poland. On the 2nd February 1789, he sent to Solms a project of partition, which had been suggested by Count Lynar. Austria should take the county of Zips, Prussia should have West Prussia and a protectorate over Danzig, and Russia should

take as much of Poland as she desired; then the three Powers would fall upon Turkey, and so bring the war to an end. 'This plan,' said Frederick, 'has attracted attention; it seems alluring.' Solms replied that the preservation of Poland was really held at heart at the Russian Court, that the Government desired to inspire confidence in the word of Russia, and to accustom Europe to have confidence in Russian disinterestedness, and that it would change neither its conduct nor its principles, at the risk of losing the reputation it hoped to gain.

Foiled for the moment in that direction, Frederick turned to Austria. Maria Theresa was firmly opposed to every partition scheme. As early as 9th November 1763, she had written to Catherine proposing that the two Courts should act together, provided that she was 'completely reassured, conjointly with Your Majesty, who has the same interest in it as myself, against all idea of a dismemberment of Poland either in the present or the future.'<sup>1</sup> But her eldest son, Joseph, was ambitious and aggressive, and hoped to enlarge the Austrian dominions. On the death of his father, the Emperor Francis, on the 18th August 1765, Joseph had been elected Emperor. He divided the Government with his mother. Frederick hoped to obtain influence over the young man, and invited him to a meeting, but Maria Theresa disapproved, fearing Frederick's influence, and unwilling to give France any cause of offence. Joseph gave way to her wishes, but he showed that he intended to obtain a meeting with Frederick at some later date. Frederick spoke to Mitchell upon the subject on the 12th July 1766. The British Ambassador said in his report, 'I could easily perceive he was hurt with the disappointment, though he endeavoured to conceal it from me.'

The disorders in Poland, and the Turkish support of the revolt, obliged Russia to send large forces into the country. Prussia also advanced troops across the Polish frontier. Austria kept an army in readiness. Some of the Polish confederates took refuge in the county of Zips,

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Beer, *Die Erste Theilung Polens. Documente*, p. 81.



on the Hungarian-Polish frontier. King Poniatowski, in an evil hour for his country, invited the Austrian Government to send troops into the district. The Crown of Hungary pretended to the existence of 'ancient rights' over Zips, which had been mortgaged to Poland in the year 1412, and never redeemed. Frederick's approval of the Lynar project, in which the acquisition of Zips by Austria was suggested, gave assurance of Prussian encouragement. In the spring of 1769 the district, which geographically might be said to belong to Hungary, was occupied by Austrian troops.

The long projected meeting between King Frederick and Emperor Joseph took place at Neisse, on the 25th August 1769. Joseph was well primed by Kaunitz, and warned to be on his guard and to say as little as possible. He behaved with great circumspection. On neither side were any definite proposals made, the meeting being accepted as a token of reconciliation, but, as yet, nothing more.

Frederick insisted that complete secrecy should be maintained with regard to the meeting, his object being to make it appear that important negotiations had been entered upon which could not be avowed. Confident that he had in this way alarmed the Russian Court, he returned to his proposals for a renewal of the Russian treaty, and found that his scheme had done what he desired. His terms were now accepted without demur. On the 23rd October 1769, the Prusso-Russian alliance was renewed till 1780, with a Russian guarantee to Frederick of the succession to Anspach and Baireuth.

On the 6th May 1770, the Austrian Ambassador, Nugent, whose term of office had come to an end, was received by Frederick in a valedictory audience. The King expressed himself in the most fulsome terms towards everything Austrian. 'The young Emperor,' he said, 'possesses all the qualities which go to make a very great man, he has a store of that noble ambition which leads to great enterprises; he holds back as yet; but wait a little while and you will see how he will shine. The policy of Prince

Kaunitz is simple, but it is very profound; he is the greatest statesman that Europe has seen for a long time.' . . . 'The army is now such as the House of Austria has never yet had. Order is being established in the finances, you are paying your debts, you have a good combination of ministers. All that, put together, makes me perceive that the power of the House of Austria is at the present time more solidly established than it has ever been.' Frederick then turned the conversation to the acquisitions that Austria might hope for, beginning with Bavaria on the death of the reigning Elector. Having encouraged the Austrian pretensions in that direction, 'he returned again,' Nugent reported, 'to the provinces which have in the past belonged to the House of Austria, and, in speaking of Lorraine and of Alsace, he formed a plan of military operations for the conquest of both provinces, asserting that it would be a question of two campaigns. To the objections I offered to his plan, he replied by entering with warmth into circumstantial details as to the preparations to be made with regard to the project.' Some years later, in 1775, in his *Réflexions sur les projets de campagne*, he worked out a plan for the conquest of Alsace and Lorraine from France by the combined forces of Prussia and Austria.

These flattering suggestions with regard to the possible acquisitions of Austria, were designed to encourage a reciprocal generosity on the part of the Austrian Ambassador. In effect, Nugent did reply in the same tone of polite compliment, remarking that nothing was easier than to round off one's property if the owners of adjoining lands, and their neighbours, did not object. Prussia, for instance, would be more compact if she could acquire West Prussia from Poland. To this remark, made in the spirit of pleasantry, Frederick affected to attach great importance, remaining silent and thoughtful for some time after it was made.

A second meeting between Frederick and Joseph was arranged for the autumn. All these advances to Joseph and Kaunitz, and the flattering remarks as to the power

of Austria and her legitimate hopes of aggrandisement, were designed to encourage Joseph's ambitious inclinations, to counteract the opposition of Maria Theresa to the partition of Poland, and to arouse anxiety in Russia as to a possible agreement between Prussia and Austria. They succeeded in their aim. To draw closer to Prussia, the Czarina Catherine invited Prince Henry of Prussia to St. Petersburg. Frederick readily gave his permission to the visit. It is probable that Frederick told his brother to urge the Czarina to agree to the partition of Poland. We know that Frederick had long been working with that object, and that he had already made overtures at St. Petersburg in that direction; but there is no direct reference to the partition of Poland in such of the instructions given by the King to his brother as have been published. If, as is probable, such instructions existed, they have been destroyed or concealed.

Before Prince Henry's arrival at St. Petersburg, the second meeting between King Frederick and Emperor Joseph took place, on the 3rd September 1770 and subsequent days, at Neustadt in Moravia. Kaunitz on this occasion accompanied the Emperor, and it was with him that Frederick discussed public affairs. On the 4th, the day after the first meeting, both Frederick and Joseph received from Turkey a demand for mediation in the Russian war. The Turks had suffered a series of reverses, and it had now become a question whether the Russian indemnification for the cost of the war should be made by Turkey on the Danube, or elsewhere. Kaunitz told Frederick that Austria could not tolerate a Russian advance across the Danube. Kaunitz spoke slightly of the Austrian alliance with France, while Frederick for his part declared that Russia (his ally) was the natural and most dangerous enemy of both Prussia and Austria. Save for these friendly confidences and the agreement that Prussia should mediate with Russia for a peace, while Austria performed the same office with Turkey, the meeting had little ostensible result.

In Poland, the civil war, the terrible atrocities com-



mitted by both sides, and the absence of all order or government of any kind, brought about conditions of misery which led to an outbreak of the plague. Frederick made that the excuse for sending forward his troops further into Polish territory, to form a cordon against the infection. They advanced until the whole of West Prussia was surrounded. This encroachment had the effect which he desired, of forcing the hands of Austria. Although Kaunitz was obliged to admit, in a letter to the Empress-Queen, that the Austrian occupation of Zips, was more in the nature of a conquest than the assertion of a right, and Maria Theresa added in the margin of the letter, 'I have a very poor opinion of our rights,'<sup>1</sup> nevertheless the Zips territory was formally annexed to the crown of Hungary, on the 9th December 1770. That aggression was precisely what Frederick had worked for. In a letter to Rohde, his representative at Vienna, he said, 14th January 1771, that it was his extended cordon that had inspired the Austrians. He used the Austrian advance as an argument to convince the Czarina that Austria was bellicose and dangerous, that Catherine must lower her demands on Turkey if she desired to avoid a war with Austria, and that the easiest way of obtaining a recompense for the cost of the Turkish war was to come to an agreement with Prussia, with regard to acquisitions from Poland, to offset the Zips territory annexed by Austria. Panin remained opposed to the partition, but Frederick and Prince Henry between them were making steady progress in the conversion of their countrywoman on the Muscovite throne.

On the 27th November 1770, Prince Henry wrote to Frederick from St. Petersburg, 'If you could aggrandise yourself in Germany, they would here dispose of West Prussia to the Princes who had been obliged to contribute to your aggrandisement, and I hope that I should bring that about without difficulty. But it would not be the same if the territory for your aggrandisement were taken from Poland. I have reason to believe that they

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, viii. p. 588.

would be very difficult on that head.' But Catherine, who had first agreed with Panin that it was better for Russia to retain her hold over a semi-independent and undivided Poland than to agree to a partition which would take some portions out of Russian control, began to be influenced by the actual acquisitions of Austria, and the readiness of Prussia to follow that example. Prince Henry wrote on the 8th January, that the Empress had said to him, as if in jest, 'But, as Austria has begun, why should not everybody take something?' I replied, wrote Prince Henry, 'that although you had, my very dear brother, drawn a cordon in Poland, you had not occupied territory. "But," said the Empress, laughing, "why not occupy?" A moment afterwards Count Tschernitcheff approached me and spoke on the same subject, adding, "But why not take possession of the Bishopric of Ermeland, for, after all, each one should have something." Although all this was said in a vein of pleasantry, it is certain it was not for nothing, and I do not doubt that it would be quite possible to turn it to your advantage.' Frederick replied to Prince Henry that Ermeland was not worth taking any risks about, adding that if Russia and Austria were to 'exhaust themselves in conflict, one against the other, I think that the Power that remains neutral will gain more than the belligerents.'

Panin, when spoken to by Solms about the Austrian encroachment, said that it was not a matter for imitation, and should cause Prussia to join Russia in trying to prevent its becoming effective. But Frederick wrote to Rohde at Vienna, on the 17th February 1771, 'The parcels which the Austrian Court has taken in Poland are so small that the affair does not appear to me to be of any great consequence. They will be returned perhaps when peace is made, but if an effective conquest is intended, the neighbouring Powers might well follow the example and endeavour in the same way to revive some ancient pretensions in Poland and make them good in their turn.'

The remark of the Czarina, made, doubtless, with intention though by way of pleasantry, envisaged a Prussian encroachment similar to that of Austria. The Duchy of Ermeland, for instance, which was nearly surrounded by Prussian territory, would correspond to the 'small parcels' annexed by Austria. Russia, as Solms reported on the 8th January, would take a district of Polish Livonia. There was as yet no Russian intention that any substantial amount of territory should be taken from Poland.

But the Hohenzollern brothers gradually succeeded in obtaining from Catherine a qualified encouragement of their designs. She insisted that any scheme should be sent from Berlin, that it should not appear that Russia was the responsible agent. Prince Henry returned to Berlin from St. Petersburg on the 18th February 1771. On the 20th Frederick sent to Solms a definite partition proposal. He said now that what the Austrians had taken was substantial, that it was necessary to obtain a balancing advantage, and that he proposed to advance ancient rights to an equivalent territory. He repeated this suggestion on the 27th February, adding that Russia doubtless would find that she also had ancient rights to any portion of Poland that might suit her.

When Solms put this proposal before Panin, he found that the principle of a Prussian acquisition to counterbalance the Austrian, was now accepted, but that it was difficult for Russia, who had guaranteed the integrity of Poland by formal treaties, to assist in anything approaching to a dismemberment of the Republic. These objections were, by Frederick's pertinacious representations, gradually overcome. The King played upon Catherine with the threat of a Prussian accord with Austria for a partition, regardless of Russia's interests; he asserted that Russia could obtain no compensation on the Danube without war with Austria; he insisted that the 'pacification' of Poland by dismemberment was the only plan which would enable Russia to indemnify herself for the cost of the Turkish war. If Prussia and Russia acted in agreement what could Austria do? He wrote to Solms,



14th June 1771, 'This affair requires only a bold countenance and some firmness, and I will answer for success, all the more because those who might wish to oppose it—the Austrians—would have two Powers against them and no ally to give them support. So we have nothing to fear with regard to the project of acquisitions in Poland.' On the same date Frederick sent to St. Petersburg the draft of a convention between Prussia and Russia, 'to second each other in the design they have formed to take advantage of the present conditions, to enter their claim to the districts of Poland upon which they have ancient rights.' After some delay, owing to Frederick's endeavours to obtain Danzig and Thorn, which Russian opposition compelled him to abandon, the Treaty of Partition was at length signed at St. Petersburg, on the 17th February 1772.

As Frederick had foreseen, the agreement between Prussia and Russia forced the hands of Austria. Maria Theresa declared that to preserve the integrity of Poland, she would withdraw from the occupation of Zips, but Frederick did not desire an Austrian renunciation. 'If Austria obtains no part of Poland,' he wrote to Solms on the 16th February 1772, 'and we alone take some districts from the Poles, all the hatred of the Poles will be turned against us; they will then look upon the Austrians as their sole protectors, and the latter will gain so much credit and influence, that they will obtain thousands and thousands of opportunities for all sorts of intrigues in that country. All that would certainly happen if their acquisitions are made in the Hungarian direction without touching Poland, whereas if they have equally with us their share in the dismemberment of that Kingdom, there is no reason to suppose that they will have more partisans there than Russia and myself.' Frederick cared little for the hatred of the Poles or the censure of Europe, provided Austria and Poland did not combine to form a centre of active hostility, with the support of Turkey and France.

At the Austrian Court there were hesitations and dis-

sensions. Joseph was eager for aggrandisement and felt no scruples about Poland. Kaunitz endeavoured, by devious machinations, to obtain an advantage for Austria alone, but Frederick was more than his match, and held all the cards. In face of the agreement between Prussia and Russia, Kaunitz gave way, in January 1772. Maria Theresa, with whom the ultimate responsibility rested, was distracted by conflicting emotions. For some time she clung to the hope that an equivalent for Austria might be obtained elsewhere, either in Silesia, in Bosnia and Servia, or in Italy. When she found that the choice lay between a portion of Poland and nothing, she was very much distressed. She wrote to Joseph, on the 25th January 1772, 'The too threatening tone with the Russians, and the mystery imparted into our conduct, both towards our allies and our adversaries, all that has been the result of the policy of trying to profit from the war between the Porte and Russia, in order to extend our frontiers and obtain advantages that we had no thought of before that war. We tried to act *à la Prussienne*, while desiring at the same time to retain the appearance of honest conduct. . . . From the commencement of my unfortunate reign we endeavoured at least to exhibit at all times a line of conduct true and equitable and of good faith, of moderation, of fidelity to our engagements. That obtained for us the confidence, I may even say the admiration of Europe, the respect and veneration of our enemies ; for a year now all that has been lost. I admit I can hardly bear it, nothing in the world has hurt me more than the loss of our good name.'<sup>1</sup> In a note she wrote, 'I must admit that I find it difficult to decide upon a course which I have no assurance is just, even if it were profitable. The easiest course would be to accept the partition of Poland which is offered us, but by what right can we despoil an innocent Power whom we have always pretended to defend and support? The mere reason of convenience, that we should not remain alone

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, *Maria Theresia und Joseph II. : ihre Correspondenz*, vol. i. p. 362.

between the two other Powers without obtaining any advantages does not appear to me sufficient, nor even an honourable pretext, to join in two unjust usurpations, with the view to despoil without any right, a third. I do not understand the political system which permits that when two make use of their superiority to oppress an innocent party, a third may, and should, by reason of mere precaution for the future and of convenience for the present, imitate and execute the same injustice; that appears to me untenable. . . . I must admit that would be a formal denial of all that has been done in the thirty years of my reign. Let us rather endeavour to diminish the pretensions of others, than think of sharing with them in unequal portions; let us rather be weak than dishonest.' She sent a copy of this note to Kaunitz, describing it as a 'Jeremiad.' She read it to her son Joseph, 'who did not appear to be in agreement with it,' and she concluded her letter to Kaunitz by saying, 'Let us not, for the sake of a small gain, lose our reputation nor our upright character before God and man.' But events were too strong for her. On 19th February, she gave her signature to a declaration, signed also by Joseph, agreeing to the partition, in principle. Her Jeremiads continued. The terrible thing was that the unscrupulous hypocrite and traitor in Prussia should have succeeded in making his honourable opponent join him as a fellow-conspirator. 'We have placed ourselves,' declared the heart-broken woman, 'in the position of seeing ourselves accused, with reason, of falseness and duplicity by the King of Prussia himself; we find ourselves brought to the distressing necessity of having to concur in the aggrandisement of two Powers who are our rivals and enemies, and of receiving almost as a gift from them what they have no right to dispose of, and on our side we have no right to acquire.' <sup>1</sup>

Once the decision was made, Maria Theresa insisted, on the principle that it was better to be hanged for a sheep than a lamb, that the share of Austria should be

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresia's*, vol. viii. pp. 595, 602.



equal to that of Russia or Prussia. When the Austrian Ambassador, Van Swieten, revealed to Frederick the demands of his Court, on the 19th April 1772, the King said, 'Well, you have designated your portion; for a little more or less I will not dispute with you. But permit me to say,' he added, smiling, 'that you have a good appetite.' He said maliciously of Maria Theresa, 'She weeps—but she takes.'

The Treaty of Partition between the three Powers was signed at St. Petersburg on the 5th August 1772. Manifestoes of explanation were issued by each Power, and a joint declaration by all three. The Polish Diet was summoned, and subjected to a combination of bribery and force. One of the most effective arguments was the threat of a still greater dismemberment if consent was withheld. Kaunitz said that 'perhaps not a single Polish noble would be found who did not prefer his own particular interest to that of his country.' Only those had to be won over whose estates lay in the annexed districts. These were abandoned by their fellows in order to safeguard their own threatened portions. On the 18th September 1773, the *liberum veto* having been expressly abrogated for the occasion at the order of the three Powers, the Diet voted the dismemberment of its country.

Russia extended her western border into Polish Livonia, Witebsk and Polock, acquiring an area of 108,000 square kilometres, and a population of 1,800,000. Prussia obtained West Prussia, without Danzig and Thorn, an area of 34,000 square kilometres and population of 416,000. Austria acquired parts of Cracow, Sandomir and Galicia, with an area of 70,000 square kilometres and population of 2,700,000.<sup>1</sup> The Russian share was the most extensive, the Prussian the most politically important, the Austrian the most populous. Poland lost more than a fourth of her area and 5,000,000 people; and there was already reason to fear a further dismemberment. Ultimately the whole of Poland was partitioned. In 1793 Prussia and Russia took portions, and what was

<sup>1</sup> Nisbet Bain, *Slavonic Europe*, p. 396.

left was divided by Prussia, Russia and Austria in 1795.

Poland was extinguished as an independent State, owing to the selfishness and the corruptibility of the governing class ; each noble refused to abrogate his complete liberty of action ; he was to be free from all control. This liberty for each one to do as he liked, untrammelled by laws, or any sort of consideration for the welfare of the community, ended in the servitude of all to foreign Powers. Each Province was obsessed by the same jealous refusal to submit to the central Government.

Prince Henry desired that the part he had taken should be officially recognised. At his request the Czarina wrote to him, 27th August 1772, ' Your Royal Highness was the first to broach this great affair which will mark an epoch, and we owe him the most sincere thanks ' ; and on the 24th September 1772, she wrote of ' the trouble Your Royal Highness has been good enough to take over this great affair, of which he may be regarded as the prime mover.' Frederick gave Prince Henry an annuity of 12,000 thalers from the acquired province of West Prussia, in recognition of his services.<sup>1</sup>

But Frederick was, of course, the prime mover. By what he himself described as ' negotiations and intrigues ' he tempted Catherine, who was originally averse to the proposal, and then dragged in Maria Theresa, who gave way to the impetuosity of her son, against her judgment and her honourable repulsion. But for Frederick there would have been no partition. The young man and the two women fell victims to his evil whisperings. He conquered souls as well as territory.

<sup>1</sup> *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Hauses Hohenzollern*, vol. viii. pp. 96, 104.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HABSBURG AND HOHENZOLLERN

MAXIMILIAN JOSEPH, Elector of Bavaria, was childless, and his heir Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine, had no legitimate children. It was known that Austria intended, on the death of the Elector of Bavaria, to put forward a claim to Lower Bavaria. Frederick instructed Solms, at St. Petersburg, to inform the Russian Court of the Austrian designs. On the 12th October 1769 he wrote to his envoy that the Elector of Bavaria desired the succession of the rightful heir to be guaranteed by France and Russia, a proposal to which he gave no support. His view was, as he wrote on the 5th December, that Prussia should obtain a share. When, in order to hasten the partition of Poland, he was bringing pressure upon his Russian ally by making ostentatious advances to Austria, he encouraged the Austrian Ambassador Nugent, on the 5th May 1770, with the prospect of Prussian support for the Austrian claim. 'Bavaria would suit you very well,' he said; 'that would round off your situation, and that House is about to die out.' Nugent replied that on the extinction of the House of Bavaria certain fiefs would fall by legitimate right to Austria. 'Oh, as for those,' said Frederick, 'nobody will dispute your possession.' Two years later, 13th September 1772, he proposed to Austria and Russia a Triple Alliance; Joseph was to be guaranteed the succession to Bavaria, and Frederick the succession to Baireuth and Anspach. The suggestion came to nothing, but it showed that Frederick was prepared to acquiesce in an Austrian acquisition in Bavaria, provided he obtained an equivalent.

On the 30th December 1777 the Elector of Bavaria died, without issue. Joseph and Kaunitz were at the



time already negotiating with the heir, Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine, for the abandonment of his succession to Lower Bavaria. They pressed forward the project and obtained, on the 3rd January 1778, the signature of Charles Theodore to a treaty whereby he gave up Lower Bavaria in return for financial assistance on behalf of his illegitimate children. He cared more for their interests than for the possession of Lower Bavaria. On the 14th January he ratified the treaty, at Munich. On the 15th Austrian troops began to advance into the ceded territory. The ambitious Joseph, by prompt action, had stolen a march upon Frederick. The Austrian gain appeared to be assured, while no corresponding advantage was offered to the Prussian King.

Frederick's views on the aspirations of Prussia are contained in the *Exposé du Gouvernement Prussien*, written in 1776. He says that the war treasure that had then been accumulated would last for only four campaigns, 'which makes it a necessity to take possession of Saxony,' in the event of a war. 'As regards the acquisitions which are desirable, the States of Saxony are without doubt the most to be desired. It is difficult to see how this acquisition could be made. The surest method would be to conquer Bohemia and Moravia, and to exchange them for Saxony. That acquisition is an indispensable necessity to give to this State the consistence which it lacks. Above all, one should be careful not to join in a war from which there can be no gain.' This opinion he had long held. He began the Seven Years' War in the hope of conquering Bohemia and Moravia, and exchanging them for Saxony. Conquest, in his opinion, alone justified war. 'It is all very well to indulge in grand sentiments; every war which does not lead to conquests weakens the victor and demoralises the State. One should never engage in hostilities unless there are the best hopes of making conquests.'

In the present case Frederick perceived that, besides acquiring Saxony or other equivalent, he might, by posing as the defender of German States against spoliation,

obtain the acknowledged primacy in Germany, which still remained with Austria in spite of the prestige acquired by Prussia in the Seven Years' War. The Hohenzollern would challenge the Habsburg supremacy in Germany.

[Frederick had never yet made war without an ally, save in the opening stage of the attack upon Silesia in 1740. Looking around for supporters, he found that Russia would not help him. England at this time was absorbed in her quarrel with the American colonists.] Conscious of the fact that England had saved him from total destruction in the Seven Years' War, Frederick's feelings towards his former protector took the form of mean and jealous hatred. He had already, in an under-hand manner, urged France to assist the Americans, and had received Lee, their representative, with cordiality. But now, to obtain an Anglo-Hanoverian neutrality, which was the most that he could expect, he told Elliot, the British Ambassador, that he would not countenance the Americans, nor interfere with Hanover. He applied to France for assistance against France's ally Austria. France rejected the proposal, but refused to respond to Austrian appeals, declining to admit that the case came under the conditions of her treaty of alliance. France had already recognised the independence of the American States, and was about to give them active support. None of the great Powers would help Frederick.

[He had no longer the energy and eagerness of youth. He was sixty-six, and felt older. The terrible experiences of the past war had shaken his self-confidence. He could not gain in military reputation, but might lose.] This was a consideration of the utmost importance to a man whose chief weakness was vanity. He hoped to obtain what he desired by diplomacy, with a mere show of force.

His first act was to obtain a repudiation of Charles Theodore's treaty with Austria, by his heir, the Duke of Zweibrücken. Then he pressed Saxony to put forward a claim on the Bavarian inheritance, and succeeded in obtaining a Saxon alliance. Saxony had more to fear from Prussia than from Austria. The Elector felt con-

strained to make friends with the most dangerous of his neighbours, whose ruthless cruelty his Electorate had already experienced.

Then, on the 16th March, Frederick appealed to the Diet of the Empire. He protested that, 'If claims of obsolete date are, in the first instance, to be decided by the law of arms, there can be no security for the weaker members of the Empire, whose territories may unfortunately be situated in the neighbourhood of powerful Princes.'<sup>1</sup> That contention applies with greater force to Frederick's treacherous seizure of Silesia in 1740. In this case Joseph had acquired the legal ownership of Lower Bavaria by purchase and signed contract with the proprietor. Frederick endeavoured to form a League of German Princes. The Protestants were with him, but the Catholics, though secretly hostile to an Imperial aggrandisement at the expense of a Catholic State, would not openly side with Protestant Prussia against Catholic Austria. Frederick posed as the defender of small States, while his chief aim was to despoil one of them himself.

Desirous of avoiding hostilities, he was so dilatory in setting his forces in motion that he gave his backward enemy time to prepare. To prolong the period of indecision Joseph wrote to him, on the 13th April, with suggestions for an accommodation. Anspach and Baireuth were offered, but Frederick declared his rights there were incontestable, and could not be made the subject of barter. He said that the question was, whether an Emperor could dispose at will of the fiefs of the Empire, that he felt bound to sustain the immunities, liberties and rights of the Germanic Body. To this Joseph replied, that it was not as Emperor but as Elector of Bohemia, that he had made an agreement with the Elector Palatine; that it was the right of each State to negotiate with its neighbours without interference by a third. Joseph wrote to his mother, 19th April 1778, 'I think the King expected to obtain the whole of Lusatia.' To his brother Leopold, 'The King of Prussia desires a part of Saxony

<sup>1</sup> Temperley, *Frederick the Great and Kaiser Joseph*, p. 105.



or Lusatia, which he does not specify, and that we should be the first to make the proposal, which we shall not do.'

The season for military operations was far advanced when, on the 5th July 1777, Frederick led his troops across the Silesian frontier, at Nachod, into Bohemia. On the 12th, Maria Theresa, fearing defeat, and anxious for the safety of Joseph, who was with the army, wrote to Frederick without consulting her son. She proposed that Austria should retain a portion of Bavaria, and that Saxony should be indemnified in some way to be arranged. To this Frederick replied with the definite demand that Lusatia should be transferred to him, and that Saxony in exchange should acquire his rights to the succession to Anspach and Baireuth. He remarked that this arrangement would encounter no difficulties, which means that he felt confident that he would be able to force Saxony, his ally, to the unwelcome transfer. Lusatia was to be his at once, while Saxony would obtain only the reversion to Anspach and Baireuth, which might never fructify. Joseph's hostility to a Prussian extension on the Bohemian border put an end to the scheme, and Frederick found himself obliged to contemplate actual hostilities.

He had 80,000 men with him on the Silesian-Bohemian border, and he allotted to Prince Henry an equal force, including the Saxons, with instructions to advance from Dresden into Western Bohemia and threaten Prague. The Austrians were divided in a corresponding manner. The Emperor Joseph had 80,000 men strongly posted to defend the line of the upper Elbe against Frederick, while Loudon was in command of 60,000 to oppose Prince Henry. Frederick's hesitation had given Joseph time to collect forces, and to prepare strong defensive positions, but the Austrians were still inferior both in men and in guns to the combined Prussian and Saxon armies.

Though he was in superior force, Frederick desired to avoid any risk to his reputation. He intended that Prince Henry should be saddled with the responsibility for active operations. Henry began well; he made a feint of advancing by the easiest route across the moun-

tains to Aussig and Leitmeritz, where Loudon was waiting for him, and then pushed through the more difficult passes on the Lusatian side, and emerged on Loudon's right flank. Loudon retired with precipitation behind the Iser, to a position in which he could obtain support from Joseph's army. The two Austrian armies held interior lines, with the power to send prompt assistance from one to the other. A reinforcement of 10,000 men was sent from Joseph's army to Loudon's threatened force. Frederick was not able to strengthen Prince Henry within a reasonable space of time, and he had never been in the habit of weakening himself to assist a lieutenant. Although the army in front of him had been weakened by 10,000 men he remained motionless, while he urged his brother to advance. There were, he wrote, difficulties which made it impossible for him to cross the Elbe, but there was nothing to stop Prince Henry. Experience had taught the Prince that he could not rely upon the loyal co-operation of the King; he made no secret of the fact that he feared his brother's treachery. Perceiving that he was to be made the scapegoat for any failure in the campaign—he had never forgotten Frederick's treatment of Prince William—he declined to take any further risks. The Prussian invasion came to a halt. Soon it became evident that the Prussians would have to retire owing to their enormous losses from disease and desertion, to the serious mortality among the horses which threatened to immobilise both cavalry and artillery, and to the chronic difficulty of obtaining supplies. The inactive force under the King lost 18,000 men,<sup>1</sup> and that of Prince Henry 7000.<sup>2</sup> The wastage in horses was about 10,000. The distress of the Austrians was not nearly so serious; there was very little desertion, only a moderate loss from disease, and no intolerable difficulty about food. Thus when Prince Henry began the retirement on the 29th August, and Frederick followed a few days later, the

<sup>1</sup> *Von Rossbach bis Jena*, by von der Goltz, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> 'Report of Sir John Stepney, British Minister at Dresden, Temperley, p. 245.

Austrians were in better fighting condition than the invaders.

We have some evidence of the Prussian behaviour in the occupied territory. Prince Albert says in his memoirs : ' The condition in which we found all the villages in the neighbourhood of the camp which the enemy had abandoned is incredible ; but it was especially the village in which the King had his quarters which carried the chief marks of destruction. The enemy had not confined himself to pillage from top to bottom, but had removed nearly every roof, carried away the beams, broken doors and windows of the houses, and some houses had even been entirely destroyed. The aspect of the camp the enemy had occupied was not more agreeable. The uncleanness that reigned, and the number of dead horses that were found in the outskirts, and to some extent in the camp itself, exhaled a horrible stench.' <sup>1</sup> Joseph wrote to his mother : ' I have been in the enemy's camp ; he has ravaged in a terrible manner ; he destroyed the houses and used the wood for fire in the kitchens and for making barracks. It is pitiful to see, and the Tartars could not have done worse.' <sup>2</sup> What was thought of Frederick's methods in war is further revealed in Joseph's correspondence with his mother, which gives details with regard to certain agents who had been bribed, by order of Frederick, to poison wells and spread infectious diseases in the Austrian camp. According to rumour the Prussian army had been provided with guns of unique and extraordinary power. Barbarity as of Tartars, the use of poison, reliance upon novel and wonderful engines of destruction, were the recognised characteristics of the Prussian in war.

With the Prussian retirement the operations came to an end. They have been given the name of ' The war of the Bavarian succession.' The popular designation, ' The potato war,' is more in consonance with the facts. That Frederick the Great should have challenged, advanced,

<sup>1</sup> Arneth, *Geschichte*, x. p. 813.

<sup>2</sup> Arneth, *Maria Theresia und Joseph II.*, iii. p. 51.



and then, though in command of superior forces, retired without striking a blow was an event very damaging to Prussian prestige. The Prussians retired in a dejected and demoralised condition, blaming their King, who in his anger lashed out in words of contempt and ill-humour against his assistants. He wrote to Prince Henry: 'I am not one of those men who remain with their arms crossed, who prefer a soft and useless repose to useful activity. I do all that depends upon me in order to make our affairs prosper, and if success is not obtained the blame will not be put upon me, but it will perhaps be thought that I have been badly seconded.' To this characteristic falsehood and meanness Henry replied with a request to be allowed to resign. He was mollified by a letter containing some compliments, but the reproaches being continued, he repeated his request, demanding 'the most profound retirement, in which I shall await death without desiring it or fearing it'—an obvious reference to the fate of his brother Prince William. Frederick wrote a soothing reply, but soon recommenced nagging at his brother, sending him military maxims of a commonplace kind with regard to the necessity of 'action' in war, the object being to obscure the fact that while he himself had remained motionless, the only 'action' had been undertaken by Prince Henry. In his *Memoirs* Frederick put the whole blame for the failure of the campaign upon his brother, just as he had done with Prince William after Kolin, but even the Prussian eulogists of the King have declined to endorse that false and ungenerous verdict.

The spirit of the Prussian army crumbled away, because Frederick the Great would not risk his reputation. If he is to be excused on account of age, his previous successes must be ascribed to his youth. There can be little doubt that the Frederick, aged twenty-eight, of the Silesian War, and the Frederick, aged forty-four, when he burst into Saxony in 1756, would in 1778 have attacked the Austrians. Joseph was now the owner of precious youth, and to him went the laurels of the war.

In the following spring the affair came to an end by the intervention of the Czarina Catherine in favour of Prussia. By the Peace of Tetschen, 13th May 1779, Bavaria gave Austria the small district of Burghausen and Saxony obtained a sum of money. Frederick had prevented any substantial Austrian aggrandisement, and he had posed as the protector of small German States. But he had not obtained the territorial advantage which he considered to be the only justification for embarking upon war, and he had lost heavily in military reputation. His rage at the latter result was plain to all who came near him. He expressed it in a letter to Prince Henry: 'I am so exasperated against all this Austrian brood that I would give my life with pleasure if I could only obtain a good revenge.' On balance, as Frederick knew, the advantage lay with the Habsburgs. Joseph had withstood and driven out of Bohemia the renowned Prussian army, supported by Saxony, and commanded by Frederick the Great. He had obtained some revenge for the discomfiture of his mother in the Seven Years' War.

That lovable but unfortunate woman died on the 29th November 1780. In her youth, during the first Silesian War, she had exhibited great courage in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty, her own position among her people being at first far from secure. She gained their admiration and love, and stimulated their patriotism. Towards the end of her life, and even sometimes during the Seven Years' War, Maria Theresa showed signs of a faltering resolution. Her character of probity and honour in a world of trickery, her steadfastness in the early years, her affectionate and loyal nature, will long be remembered.

The Seven Years' War brought Russia as well as Prussia to the front. Russian armies acquired a great and a deserved reputation; alone of the combatants Russia had not lost a battle. After the war Russia expanded in the West and the South. The Czarina Catherine virtually prescribed the Tetschen terms of peace between Prussia and Austria. She was dominant in Poland, and was sought in alliance by both Prussia and Austria. Catherine



was inspired by the example of Frederick to embark upon schemes of conquest. The theory that it was the duty as well as the advantage of a sovereign to enlarge the national dominions had no more convinced adherent. Catherine II. aimed at nothing less than the destruction of Turkey. The nearer provinces were to become part of Russia, and a Christian kingdom under Russian protection was to be established at Constantinople. For this policy an agreement with Austria was necessary, and a corresponding change had to be made in the relations with Prussia. Frederick could not view the Russian designs upon Turkey with indifference. At the same time his treatment of Danzig and Thorn was evidently intended to force another partition of Poland, against the wishes of Catherine. She desired, as before the first partition, to keep Poland under her protection and in her power. Frederick pursued the former policy of encouraging Turkey against both Russia and Austria, in the hope that a war might result, which would give him the opportunity to make his alliance worth buying; while he fomented Russian fears of Austria and Austrian anxiety about Russia. The basis of his policy was the alliance with Russia, which lasted from 1764 to 1780, but when it elapsed Catherine declined to renew it. The Emperor Joseph II. became the favoured suitor. He went to Russia to visit the Czarina, in 1780, and the result was an agreement for mutual assistance against Turkey for the sake of territorial acquisitions. Frederick made repeated efforts to obtain an alliance with France, but he had nothing to offer, and his past conduct could not be forgotten. England feared his designs on Danzig, which threatened her trade with that port. Thus he stood alone, a result due not merely to his aggressive intentions, but perhaps even more to the hypocrisies and treacheries of his career.

The ambitious schemes of Joseph and Catherine against Turkey had to be modified. Catherine had to be satisfied with the Crimea and the Kuban, and Joseph obtained the opening of the Danube. Joseph returned to his great plan of exchanging Bavaria for the Low Countries, but



it was not popular with the subjects whose allegiance was to be transferred from one Prince to another without their consent; and it broke down when, as had happened in 1778, the Duke of Zweibrücken, the Bavarian Elector's heir, refused his consent to the exchange. The Princes of the Empire had good reason to view with alarm the aggressive spirit of the Emperor Joseph, who seemed determined to restore the supremacy of the Empire in Germany, as it had been before the Peace of Westphalia. Unable to find an ally elsewhere, Frederick seized upon the discontent to strengthen his position in Germany. He set about the formation of a league 'to sustain,' as he wrote to Finckenstein, 'the rights and immunities of the Princes of Germany, without distinction of religion.' No idea of federation was included,—'it is not intended to form a Union of States': the object was to create an alliance for defence against the restless ambition of the Emperor Joseph. The three principal States, Hanover, Saxony and Prussia, joined in an agreement for mutual defence, dated the 23rd July 1785; most of the smaller States adhered. The Fürstenbund so formed led to nothing of importance at the time, but it was remembered later on.

In the autumn of 1785, Frederick exposed himself during a review to a drenching from rain. A severe chill followed, from which he never recovered, though he held out for nearly a year. The end came on the 17th August 1786, at the age of seventy-four. He had reigned for forty-six years.

Mirabeau, who had been received by Frederick on the 17th April 1786, wrote from Berlin on the day of the King's death: 'There is gloom everywhere, but no sorrow; there is preoccupation but no affliction. Not a face that does not express relief and hope; not a regret, not a sigh, not a word of praise. That then is the end of so many battles won and so much glory, of a reign of half a century, filled with such high achievements. Everybody longed for its conclusion, everybody rejoices that it has come.' 'The people,' he wrote later, 'have been so oppressed, so worried, so ground down, that they cannot but feel relieved.'

## CHAPTER XV

### CONCLUSION

FREDERICK II. was the contemporary, in childhood or old age, of Louis XIV., Peter I., Catherine II., and the young Napoleon. He deserved to share, in that company, the title of 'The Great.' Excluding Popes, the appellation has been reserved for sovereigns who have enlarged their dominions by means of military conquests. Five of the select few who have been so acclaimed in the history of the world, flourished within a period of a hundred years which nearly coincides with the eighteenth century. It was a time of royal despotisms and aggressions. The first Hohenzollern to be born the heir to a crown, Frederick was inspired by the ambition to win for himself a place among the successful kings. As his father had said, Brandenburg-Prussia, with its scattered territories, was either too large or too small. But Frederick William I. had not the courage, nor perhaps the opportunity, to risk what he had in order to obtain more. He created a large army and collected a large war treasure, and left his son to make use of them. This Frederick did so well, that, by the conquest of Silesia and the military triumphs of the Seven Years' War, he obtained for himself a prominent position among Continental princes, and for Prussia a rank among the chief Powers. The prestige which Frederick acquired for Prussia was an influence with which Napoleon had to contend in the War of Liberation; and it was the cement which united the component parts of the new German Empire. The King who achieved so much may well be called 'The Great.'

Other princes attempted to follow his example. The Emperor Joseph II., the Czarina Catherine II., and a

number of minor German princes, were led by Frederick's achievements to adopt principles of government which, when exhibited by his predecessors, they had ignored. The Hohenzollern theory of a King's responsibility for the welfare of his country, the Hohenzollern policy of religious toleration, the Hohenzollern practice of scheming for foreign acquisitions, obtained a wide approval when Frederick defeated his enemies on the battlefield. In drill and equipment the Hohenzollern army became the model for all princes, but the concentration of all the power of the State in the military organisation found no favour. In Prussia the nation did not possess an army but the army possessed a nation; the soldier took the position of precedence held in other States by the priest. The logical conclusion that foreign conquests being desired the whole of the resources of the State, in men and money, should be prepared for aggressive war, remained exclusively Prussian. Ambitious princes expected to obtain Prussian results without the preparation and the sacrifices that the Prussian system demanded. It would have been necessary to recast the State, and make even the Church an appanage of the army. No prince could carry out that programme unless he had absolute power, and was himself free from Church influence. Frederick II. alone possessed the necessary qualities. The Emperor Joseph II. strove to follow him, but he was met with an opposition which he was powerless to overcome. Prussia had been prepared for Frederick by his predecessors, and it was impossible to create another Prussia by a stroke of the pen.

Thus it happened that because Frederick achieved triumphs with the army, certain civilian principles, traditional in the Hohenzollern family, were imitated by contemporary princes; and his name has become associated with theories of government which he did not invent, and in some cases did not carry into practice. A marvellous legend has grown of a King quite unlike the reality. Frederick was himself an adept at chicane, and he has had willing assistants who have ascribed to

misleading



him virtues which he did not possess. Some instances may be recalled.

In describing himself as 'the first servant of the State,' Frederick was copying a phrase used by his father and expressing a policy which had already been announced by the Great Elector and by Louis XIV. It is true that he made more display of the sentiment than they had done; that he insisted upon the duties and responsibilities of a King; that he never spared himself; and that many princes, comparing the industrious apprentice in Prussia with the idle apprentice in France, reduced their expenditure in personal indulgence, paid their debts, and endeavoured to promote the welfare of their people. It is equally true that whenever the interests of his people came in conflict with his own, Frederick considered himself only. In war, for example, he thought more of his reputation than of beating the enemy, declining risks for himself which he forced other commanders to face, with disastrous results. He used his people, regardless of their welfare, for the purpose of obtaining a personal 'glory' from which they could derive no advantage. Then, he spoke of himself as the *avocat du pauvre*, and *chef des gueux*, but he put a tax on food for the express reason that it was the only one that could not be evaded, leaving it to his successor, Frederick William II., to relieve the distresses of the poor. The tax was for army and treasure, to be used to enhance the reputation of the King. Frederick deplored in moving terms the institution of slavery, but he took the part of the landed aristocracy against their dependents. The caste system, which made a rise to a superior station impossible, was rigidly enforced by the King. He professed a desire for the spread of enlightenment, but "did little for the spiritual life of his people,"<sup>1</sup> believing mankind to be wicked and foolish and incapable of improvement. He welcomed Maupertuis and other men of science, for his own delectation. His Academy of Science he treated as an appanage of the Court; he would not permit any criticism of its

<sup>1</sup> H. Prutz, *Preussische Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 224.

decisions. His religious toleration was a Hohenzollern tradition, originating in a desire for immigrants. It was imperfect; Catholics and Jews had not the rights nor the freedom of Protestants. Though he became the ablest commander of his day, Frederick's military reputation was in excess of his deserts, owing to misrepresentations made by himself or by others on his behalf. The odds against him, both in potential resources, and on the day of battle, were much less than he pretended. The famous 'oblique attack' was used once only; even the spirit of attack was not sustained throughout his career, giving way in the end to Fabian tactics. Frederick acquired a character for iron determination, but during his wars he lived in a chronic state of 'premature despair' (Voltaire's expression) and indulged freely in tears; after defeat at Kunersdorf he resigned the command; on the battlefield he gave several exhibitions of cowardice. When matters were going against him he bewailed the cruelty of war, but he ordered the refusal of quarter, treated prisoners and wounded with inhumanity, bombarded cathedrals and cut down fruit trees; and earned from his contemporaries the name of the 'Attila of the North.' Throughout his career he pretended that every aggression and every harsh act was forced upon him by necessity; he had to retaliate against his enemies for what they had already done, or was obliged to anticipate what they were about to do. In his writings he expressed principles of conduct, with regard to military plans and civilian policy, which in practice he ignored. Hypocrisy and fraud were outstanding features in the character of Frederick the Great.

Of his domestic life there is little favourable to be said. For his mother, Sophia Dorothea, and his sister, Wilhelmina, the companion of his youth, his feelings were affectionate. But the death of his brother and heir, Prince William, was due to Frederick's self-seeking hardness. His brother Prince Henry was also scurvily handled but, not being the heir, he escaped the worst indignities, and survived. The cold heartlessness of Frederick to his wife,



Elizabeth Christina, is unforgivable. He enjoyed hurting the feelings of those who were in attendance upon him, by the malicious probing of sensitive spots. He indulged sometimes in physical assaults, not with the honest brutality of his father, who flourished a cane that all could see, but by kicks on the shins. He was dirty in person, seldom touching water, and wearing old and soiled clothing. In his old age he took to painting his face.

Voltaire said of him, '*Il a de l'esprit et des grâces.*' He was a man of culture; he was interested in the affairs of the mind; he was a good and inspiring conversationalist; his manners were polite and gracious. He played the flute with much skill, but his musical compositions were never admired. He wrote poor French verse, in a mechanical manner, not waiting for or expecting inspiration, sitting down to his task as to a chess problem. His philosophical speculations were of a commonplace character. In literature he admired nothing after the age of Louis XIV. Frederick II. could not take a place among the great writers, critics, thinkers of his day—a King could hardly be expected to rise to such a level, but in range of accomplishments and in cultivated tastes he had few equals. Compared with the great he was an amateur, but among contemporary kings he stood alone. As a man he was merely versatile; as a king pre-eminent.

He had no moral code. His principle was that a King should have no honour, that he should do for the State what would not be permissible in an individual. Force was the influence which regulated the conduct of private persons. There was no similar force to control the State; therefore the State, through its head, not being liable to compulsion, was outside the range of any limitations, and was entitled to use all means for the furtherance of its objects. Morality rested not upon virtuous inclinations, but solely upon fear of punishment. Frederick was not the first nor the last head of a State to adopt these principles. They may be modified by the influence of world opinion, or by an international league to apply the argument of force.



On hearing of the death of the Empress Maria Theresa, Frederick wrote to D'Alembert : ' She did honour to her throne and to her sex ; I made war upon her, but I was never her enemy.' The polite highwayman disclaimed all personal animosity towards a Sister Sovereign. With one hand he took off his hat, while with the other he seized his victim's purse. Maria Theresa used to speak of Frederick as *ein böser Mann*. He was more ; he was not merely mischievous and dangerous ; he was what we call ' a bad man.'

## APPENDIX <sup>1</sup>

### THE PRUSSIAN BOMBARDMENT OF DRESDEN, JULY 1760

COUNT MARANVILLE, French attaché to the Imperial army, wrote to Marshal Belleisle, 22nd July 1760: 'The arrival of the Imperial army saved the new town, and it was then that the King of Prussia resolved to burn the old town, perceiving that there was no longer any hope of becoming master of it.' 21st July: 'By red-hot shot and shells charged with inflammatory material, the old town is nearly destroyed: yesterday the King, having pillaged Frederickstadt, caused it to be set on fire with torches.' These actions 'substantiate what has long since been said of the blackness of heart of this Prince. Such conduct is in accord neither with military principles nor with humanity.' 3rd August: 'He ordered the demolition down to the foundations of the walls which enclosed the Great Royal Garden. On the evening before his departure, he ordered the carpenters of his army to cut down all the trees in the alleys, and also those which formed what is certainly the finest mall in Europe. At the beginning of the war a quantity of beautiful marble statues, highly valued, had been placed under cover in the pavilions; they have been taken out and smashed to pieces. The same treatment has been extended to the fine trellises which were in the garden, and even to the Orangery, all has been cut into small pieces. I could not have believed in such infamies if I had not seen them, so incredible must they seem.' (Chuquet A. *De Frédéric II. à Guillaume II.* 1915.)

<sup>1</sup> See p. 307.

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