

himself on a sofa, contemptuously cast his eye on all present, stretched out his leg, and entangled his spur in the vizier's robe; which insult the magnanimous Turk affected to consider an accident.

After the defeat of Peter on the banks of the Pruth, he devoted himself with renewed energy to the improvement of his country. He embellished St. Petersburg, his new capital, with palaces, churches, and arsenals. He increased his army and navy, strengthened himself by new victories, and became gradually master of both sides of the Gulf of Finland, by which his vast empire was protected from invasion.

He now reached the exalted height to which he had long aspired. He assumed the title of *emperor*, and his title was universally acknowledged. He then meditated a second tour of Europe, with a view to study the political constitutions of the various states. Thirteen years had elapsed, since, as a young enthusiast, he had visited Amsterdam and London. He now travelled, a second time, with the additional glory of a great name, and in the full maturity of his mind. He visited Hamburg, Stockholm, Lubeck, Amsterdam, and Paris. At this latter place he was much noticed. Wherever he went, his course was a triumphal procession. But he disdained flattery, and was wearied with pompous ceremonies. He could not be flattered out of his simplicity, or the zeal of acquiring useful knowledge. He visited all the works of art, and was particularly struck with the Gobelin tapestries and the tomb of Richelieu. "Great man," said he, apostrophizing his image, "I would give half of my kingdom to learn of thee how to govern the other half." His residence in Paris inspired all classes with profound respect; and from Paris he went to Berlin. There he found sympathy with Frederic William, who tastes and character somewhat resembled his own; and from him he learned many useful notions in the art of government. But he was suddenly recalled from Berlin by the bad conduct of his son Alexis, who was the heir to his throne. He was tried, condemned, disgraced, humiliated, and disinherited. He probably would have been executed by his hard and rigorous father, had he not died in prison. He was hostile to his father's plans of reform, and indelicately expressed a wish for his death. The conduct of Peter

towards him is generally considered harsh and unfeeling; but it has many palliations, if the good of his subjects and the peace of the realm are more to be desired than the life of an ignominious prince.

Peter prosecuted his wars and his reforms. The treaty of Neustadt secured to Russia, after twenty years of unbroken war, a vast increase of territory, and placed her at the head of the northern powers. The emperor also enriched his country by opening new branches of trade, constructing canals, rewarding industry, suppressing gambling and mendicity, introducing iron and steel manufacture, building cities, and establishing a vigorous police.

After having settled the finances and trade of his empire, subdued his enemies at home and abroad, and compelled all the nobles and clergy to swear fealty to the person whom he should select as his successor, he appointed his wife, Catharine; and she was solemnly crowned empress in 1724, he himself, at her inauguration, walking on foot, as captain of her guard. He could not have made a better choice, as she was, in all substantial respects, worthy of the exalted position to which she was raised.

In about a year after, he died, leaving behind him his principles and a mighty name. Other kings have been greater generals; but few have derived from war greater success. Some have commanded larger armies; but he created those which he commanded. Many have destroyed; but he reconstructed. He was a despot, but ruled for the benefit of his country. He was disgraced by violent passions, his cruelty was sanguinary, and his tastes were brutal; but his passions did not destroy his judgment, nor his appetites make him luxurious. He was incessantly active and vigilant, his prejudices were few, and his views tolerant and enlightened. He was only cruel when his authority was impeached. His best portraiture is in his acts. He found a country semi-barbarous, convulsed by disorders, a prey to petty tyrannies, weak from dissension, and trembling before powerful neighbors. He left it a first-class power, freed in a measure from its barbarous customs, improved in social life, in arts, in science, and, perhaps, in morals. He left a large and disciplined army, a considerable navy, and numerous institutions for the civilization of the people. He left

more — the moral effect of a great example, of a man in the possession of unbounded riches and power, making great personal sacrifices to improve himself in the art of governing for the welfare of the millions over whom he was called to rule. These virtues and these acts have justly won for him the title of Peter the Great — a title which the world has bestowed upon but few of the great heroes of ancient or modern times.

The reign of Charles XII. is intimately connected with that of Peter the Great; these monarchs being contemporaries and rivals, both reigning in northern countries of great extent and comparative barbarism. The reign of Peter was not so exclusively military as that of Charles, with whom war was a passion and a profession. The interest attached to Charles arises more from his eccentricities and brilliant military qualities, than from any extraordinary greatness of mind or heart. He was barbarous in his manners, and savage in his resentments; a stranger to the pleasures of society, obstinate, revengeful, unsympathetic, and indifferent to friendship and hatred. But he was brave, temperate, generous, intrepid in danger, and firm in misfortune.

Before his singular career can be presented, attention must be directed to the country over which he reigned, and which will be noticed in connection with Denmark; these two countries forming a greater part of the ancient Scandinavia, from which our Teutonic ancestors migrated, the land of Odin, and Freya, and Thor, those half-fabulous deities, concerning whom there are still divided opinions; some supposing that they were heroes, and others, impersonations of virtues, or elements and wonders of nature. The mythology of Greece does not more fully abound with gods and goddesses, than that of the old Scandinavia with rude deities, — dwarfs, and elves, and mountain spirits. It was in these northern regions that the Normans acquired their wild enthusiasm, their supernatural daring, and their magnificent superstitions. It was from these regions that the Saxons brought their love of liberty, their spirit of enterprise, and their restless passion for the sea. The ancient Scandinavians were heroic, adventurous, and

chivalrous robbers, holding their women in great respect, and profoundly reverential in their notions of a supreme power. They were poor in silver, in gold, in the fruits of the earth, in luxuries, and in palaces, but rich in poetic sentiments and in religious ideas. Their chief vices were those of gluttony and intemperance, and their great pleasures were those of hunting and gambling.

Fabulous as are most of their legends as to descent, still Scandinavia was probably peopled with hardy races before authentic history commences. Under different names, and at different times, they invaded the Roman empire. In the fifth century, they had settled in its desolated provinces — the Saxons in England, the Goths in Spain and Italy, the Vandals in Africa, the Burgundians in France, and the Lombards in Italy.

Among the most celebrated of these northern Teutonic nations were the pirates who invaded England and France, under the name of *Northmen*. They came from Denmark, and some of their chieftains won a great name in their generation, such as Harold, Canute, Sweyn, and Rollo.

Christianity was probably planted in Sweden about the middle of the ninth century. St. Anscar, a Westphalian monk, was the first successful missionary, and he was made Archbishop of Hamburg, and primate of the north.

The early history of the Swedes and Danes resembles that of England under the Saxon princes, and they were disgraced by the same great national vices. During the Middle Ages, no great character appeared worthy of especial notice. Some of the more powerful kings, such as Valdemar I. and II., and Canute VI., had quarrels with the Emperors of Germany, and invaded some provinces of their empire. Some of these princes were warriors, some cruel tyrants, none very powerful, and all characterized by the vices of their age — treachery, hypocrisy, murder, drunkenness, and brutal revenge.

The most powerful of these kings was Christian I., who founded the dynasty of Oldenburgh, and who united under his sway the kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. He reigned from 1448 to 1481; and in his family the crown of Sweden remained until the revolution effected by Gustavus Vasa, in 1525, and by which revolution Sweden was made independent of Denmark.

Gustavus Vasa was a nobleman descended from the ancient kings of Sweden, and who, from the oppression to which his country was subjected by Christian and the Archbishop of Upsal, was forced to seek refuge amid the forests of Dalecarlia. When Stockholm was pillaged and her noblest citizens massacred by the cruel tyrant of the country, Gustavus headed an insurrection, defeated the king's forces, and was made king himself by the Diet. He, perceiving that the Catholic clergy were opposed to the liberties and the great interests of his country, seized their fortresses and lands, became a convert to the doctrine of the reformers, and introduced Lutheranism into the kingdom, which has ever since been the established religion of Sweden. He was despotic in his government, but ruled for the good of his subjects, and was distinguished for many noble qualities.

The celebrated Gustavus Adolphus was his descendant, and was more absolute and powerful than even Gustavus Vasa. But he is chiefly memorable as the great hero of the Thirty Years' War, and as the greatest general of his age. Under his sway, Sweden was the most powerful of the northern kingdoms.

He was succeeded by his daughter Christina, a woman of most extraordinary qualities; a woman of genius, of taste, and of culture; a woman who, at twenty-seven, became wearied of the world, and of the enjoyment of unlimited power, and who changed her religion, retired from her country, and abdicated her throne, that she might, unmolested, enjoy the elegant pleasures of Rome, and be solaced by the literature, religion, and art of that splendid capital. It was in the society of men of genius that she spent most of her time, and was the life of the most intellectual circle which then existed in Europe.

She was succeeded by her cousin, who was elected King of Sweden, by the title of *Charles Gustavus X.*, and he was succeeded by Charles XI., the father of Charles XII.

Charles XII. was fifteen years of age when he came to the throne, in the year 1697, and found his country strong in resources, and his army the best disciplined in Europe. His territories were one third larger than those of France when ruled by Louis XIV., though not so thickly populated.

The young monarch, at first, gave but few indications of the

remarkable qualities which afterwards distinguished him. He was idle, dissipated, haughty, and luxurious. When he came to the council chamber, he was absent and indifferent, and generally sat with both legs thrown across the table.

But his lethargy and indifference did not last long. Three great monarchs had conspired to ruin him, and dismember his kingdom. These were the Czar Peter, Frederic IV. of Denmark, and Frederic Augustus, King of Poland, and also Elector of Saxony; and their hostile armies were on the point of invading his country.

The greatness of the danger brought to light his great qualities. He vigorously prepared for war. His whole character changed. Quintus Curtius became his text-book, and Alexander his model. He spent no time in sports or magnificence. He clothed himself like a common soldier, whose hardships he resolved henceforth to share. He forswore the society and the influence of woman. He relinquished wine and all the pleasures of the table. Love of glory became his passion, and continued through life; and this ever afterwards made him insensible to reproach, danger, toil, fear, hunger, and pain. Never was a more complete change effected in a man's moral character; and never was an improved moral character consecrated to a worse end. He was not devoted to the true interests of his country, but to a selfish, base, and vain passion for military fame.

But his conduct, at first, called forth universal admiration. His glorious and successful defence against enemies apparently overwhelming gave him a great military reputation, and secured for him the sympathies of Christendom. Had he died when he had repelled the Russian, the Danish, and the Polish armies, he would have secured as honorable an immortality as that of Gustavus Adolphus. But he was not permitted to die prematurely, as was his great ancestor. He lived long enough to become intoxicated with success, to make great political blunders, and to suffer the most fatal and mortifying misfortunes.

The commencement of his military career was beautifully heroic. "Gentlemen," said the young monarch of eighteen to his counsellors, when he meditated desperate resistance, "I am resolved never to begin an unjust war, and never to finish a just one but with the destruction of my enemies."

In six weeks he finished, after he had begun, the Danish war having completely humbled his enemy, and succored his brother-in-law, the Duke of Holstein.

His conflict with Peter has been presented, when with twenty thousand men he attacked and defeated sixty thousand Russians in their intrenchments, took one hundred and fifty pieces of cannon, and killed eighteen thousand men. The victory of Narva astonished all Europe, and was the most brilliant which had then been gained in the annals of modern warfare.

Charles was equally successful against Frederic Augustus. He routed his Saxon troops, and then resolved to dethrone him, as King of Poland. And he succeeded so far as to induce the Polish Diet to proclaim the throne vacant. Augustus was obliged to fly, and Stanislaus Leczinski was chosen king in his stead, at the nomination of the Swedish conqueror. The country was subjugated, and Frederic Augustus became a fugitive.

But Charles was not satisfied with expelling him from Poland. He resolved to attack him also in Saxony itself. Saxony was then, next to Austria, the most powerful of the German states. Nevertheless, Saxony could not arrest the victorious career of Charles. The Saxons fled as he approached. He penetrated to the heart of the electorate, and the unfortunate Frederic Augustus was obliged to sue for peace, which was only granted on the most humiliating terms; which were, that the elector should acknowledge Stanislaus as king of Poland; that he should break all his treaties with Russia, and should deliver to the King of Sweden all the men who had deserted from his army. The humbled elector sought a personal interview with Charles, after he had signed the conditions of peace, with the hope of securing better terms. He found Charles in his jack boots, with a piece of black taffeta round his neck for a cravat, and clothed in a coarse blue coat with brass buttons. His conversation turned wholly on his jack boots; and this trifling subject was the only one on which he would deign to converse with one of the most accomplished monarchs of his age.

Charles had now humbled and defeated all his enemies. He should now have returned to Sweden, and have cultivated the arts of peace. But peace, and civilization were far from his thoughts. The subjugation of all the northern powers became the dream of

his life. He invaded Russia, resolved on driving Peter from his throne.

He was eminently successful in defensive war, and eminently unsuccessful in aggressive war. Providence benevolently but singularly comes to the aid of all his children in distress and despair. Men are gloriously strong in defending their rights; but weak, in all their strength, when they assail the rights of others. So signal is this fact, that it blazes upon all the pages of history, and is illustrated in common life as well as in the affairs of nations.

When Charles turned as an assailant of the rights of his enemies, his unfortunate reverses commenced. At the head of forty-three thousand veterans, loaded with the spoils of Poland and Saxony, he commenced his march towards Russia. He had another army in Poland of twenty thousand, and another in Finland of fifteen thousand. With these he expected to dethrone the czar.

His mistakes and infatuation have been noticed, and his final defeat at Pultowa, a village at the eastern extremity of the Ukraine. This battle was more decisive than that of Narva; for in the latter the career of Peter was only arrested, but in the former the strength of Charles was annihilated. And so would have been his hopes, had he been an ordinary man. But he was a madman, and still dreamed of victory, with only eighteen hundred men to follow his fortunes into Turkey, which country he succeeded in reaching.

His conduct in Turkey was infamous and extraordinary. No reasonings can explain it. It was both ridiculous and provoking. At first, he employed himself in fomenting quarrels, and devising schemes to embark the sultan in his cause. Vizier after vizier was flattered and assailed. He rejected every overture for his peaceable return. He lingered five years in endless intrigues and negotiations, in order to realize the great dream of his life — the dethronement of the czar. He lived recklessly on the bounty of the sultan, taking no hints that even imperial hospitality might be abused and exhausted. At last, his inflexible obstinacy and dangerous intrigues so disgusted his generous host, that he was urged to return, with the offer of a suitable escort, and a large sum of

Treatment of the Turks.
 money. He accepted and spent the twelve hundred purses, and still refused to return. The displeasure of the Sultan Achmet was now fairly excited. It was resolved upon by the Porte that he should be removed by force, since he would not be persuaded. But Charles resisted the troops of the sultan who were ordered to remove him. With sixty servants he desperately defended himself against an army of janizaries, and killed twenty of them with his own hand; and it was not until completely overwhelmed and prostrated that he hurled his sword into the air. He was now a prisoner of war, and not a guest; but still he was treated with the courtesy and dignity due to a king, and conducted in a chariot covered with gold and scarlet to Adrianople. From thence he was removed to Demotica, where he renewed his intrigues, and zealously kept his bed, under pretence of sickness, for ten months.

While he remained in captivity, Frederic Augustus recovered the crown of Poland, King Stanislaus was taken by the Turks, and Peter continued his conquest of Ingria, Livonia, and Finland, provinces belonging to Sweden. The King of Prussia also invaded Pomerania, and Frederic IV. of Denmark claimed Bremen, Holstein, and Scania. The Swedes were divested of all their conquests, and one hundred and fifty thousand of them became prisoners in foreign lands.

Such were the reverses of a man who had resolved to play the part of Alexander, but who, so long as he contented himself with defending his country against superior forces, was successful, and won a fame so great, that his misfortunes could never reduce him to contempt.

Desire of Charles.
 When all was lost, he signified to the Turkish vizier his desire to return to Sweden. The vizier neglected no means to rid his master of so troublesome a person. Charles returned to his country impoverished, but not discouraged. The charm of his name was broken. His soldiers were as brave and devoted as ever, but his resources were exhausted. He succeeded, however, in raising thirty-five thousand men, in order to continue his desperate game of conquest, not of defence. Europe beheld the extraordinary spectacle of this infatuated hero passing, in the depth of a northern winter, over the frozen hills and ice-bound rocks of Norway, with his devoted army, in order to conquer that hyperborean region.

So inured was he to cold and fatigue, that he slept in the open air on a bed of straw, covered only with his cloak, while his soldier dropped down dead at their posts from cold. In the month of December, 1718, he commenced the siege of Fredericshall, a place of great strength and importance, but, having exposed himself unnecessarily, was killed by a ball from the fortress. Many, however, suppose that he was assassinated by his own officers who were wearied with endless war, from which they saw nothing but disaster to their exhausted country.

State of Sweden.
 His death was considered as a signal for the general cessation of arms; but Sweden never recovered from the mad enterprises of Charles XII. It has never since been a first class power. The national finances were disordered, the population decimated, and the provinces dismembered. Peter the Great gained what his rival lost. We cannot but compassionate a nation that has the misfortune to be ruled by such an absolute and infatuated monarch as was Charles XII. He did nothing for the civilization of his subjects, or to ameliorate the evils he caused. He was, like Alaric or Attila, a scourge of the Almighty, sent on earth for some mysterious purpose, to desolate and to destroy. But he died unlamented and unhonored. No great warrior in modern times has received so little sympathy from historians, since he was not exalted by any great moral qualities of affection or generosity, and unscrupulously sacrificed both friends and enemies to gratify a selfish and a depraved passion.

REFERENCES. — Voltaire's History of Russia, a very attractive book, on account of its lively style. Voltaire's Life of Charles XII., also, is equally fascinating. There are tolerable histories of both Russia and Sweden in Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia; also in the Family Library. See, also, a History of Russia and Sweden in the Universal History. Russell's Modern Europe.