

as that exhibited in the wild meetings of the *roués* of the Duke of Orleans. There had been formerly but one salon in France, that of the king; a thousand were now open to a society which, no longer occupied with religious questions, or with war, or the grave futilities of etiquette, felt that pleasure and change were necessities. The *Œdipe* of Voltaire and the *Lettres persanes* of Montesquieu opened the fire upon the old régime.

**Pestilence in Marseilles (1720).**—During these Saturnalia of the court a terrible scourge had desolated Provence, where the plague carried off 85,000 persons, and a famine succeeded the epidemic.

**Death of Dubois and the Duke of Orleans (1723).**—Louis XV. attained his majority February 13, 1723, being then thirteen years old. This terminated the regency of the Duke of Orleans. But the king was still to remain a long time under tutelage; the duke, in order to retain the power after resigning the regency, had in advance given Dubois the title of prime minister. At the death of the wretched Dubois he took the office himself, but held it only four months, dying of apoplexy in December, 1723. France had been eight years in his hands; the time had arrived for the outburst of the moral revolution prepared by the last years of Louis XIV.

## CHAPTER LVI.

## REIGN OF LOUIS XV.

(1723-1774 A.D.)

**Ministry of the Duke of Bourbon (1723-1726).**—The Duke of Bourbon, who became prime minister on the death of the regent, had scarcely better morals than those of his predecessor. But he manifested great harshness towards the Protestants and Jansenists. He renewed, he even aggravated, the severities of Louis XIV. Emigration recommenced, as at the time of the revocation of the edict of Nantes; and the government was constrained by the public outcry to mitigate some of its cruelties.

The English ministry had continued to Madame de Prie, mistress of the Duke of Bourbon, the pension which it had, it is believed, granted to Dubois, and therefore the duke kept France in alliance with England. The regent had recently drawn closer to the cabinet of Madrid, and had asked for Louis XV. the hand of an infanta. The young princess, only four years old, was taken to Paris to be brought up. Such a marriage was advantageous for the house of Orleans; for since it could not be solemnized for a long time, it would leave the throne long without an heir, and consequently open to the first prince of the blood. But the new minister wished the king to take a wife who should owe everything to the minister, and should show her gratitude for his favor. Stanislas Leszczynski, the exiled king of Poland, was then living at Weissenburg, on an income granted him by France. The prime minister chose for queen of France the daughter of Stanislas, the amiable and pious Marie Leszczynski, although she was seven years older than the king, very poor, without beauty, and already old in appearance. The infanta of Spain was sent home to her father: this was the second repudiation of the policy of Louis XIV. within ten years.

Philip V., indignant at the insult, hastened to conclude with Austria the treaty of Vienna (1725). The king of

Spain granted to the Austrian merchants of the Ostend Company privileges which extended to all the ports of his domains, and guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction by which Charles assured the succession to his daughter, contrary to the custom of the Austrian dominions. In return, the emperor engaged to assist Spain to recapture Gibraltar and Port Mahon; he renewed the promises made in 1720 respecting the duchies of Parma and Tuscany, and promised two archduchesses to the two infantes.

Meanwhile Fleury took the place of the Duke of Bourbon. This ambitious, prudent man was bishop of Fréjus when Louis XIV. appointed him preceptor to his grandson. The amiable and witty old man gained the entire confidence of his pupil, and could have been prime minister at once upon the death of the regent; but he did not wish to take the position immediately. Yet he neglected nothing which could render him dear and indispensable to the king. The duke, on the contrary, brought himself into discredit. The re-establishment of antiquated taxes, long unused, was disapproved of. There was dissatisfaction also at others of his measures, and especially at an attempt toward uniform taxation of land. This time it was not the people only, but the privileged classes who were threatened. There was such an outcry that the ministry went down before it. One day the king, on setting out for Rambouillet, said to the duke, in a gracious tone, "Cousin, do not keep me waiting at supper." The same evening a lieutenant of the body-guards conducted the duke to Chantilly (1726).

**Ministry of Fleury (1726-1743); Internal Affairs; the Convulsionnaires.** — Thus the septuagenarian bishop of Fréjus, who shortly after became cardinal, rose to power. He refused the title of prime minister, took only that of minister of State, and roused the king to declare that he would himself take charge of the government. But in fact, Louis contented himself with showing to the council board his handsome and perfectly impassive face. Beyond that, when he was neither gambling nor hunting, he made tapestry, turned snuff-boxes out of wood, or read with equal interest the secret correspondence which he maintained with his ambassadors, unknown to his ministers, or the scandalous anecdotes which the lieutenant of police sent him regularly each day. Fleury did the work of the government alone, but he did it modestly and quietly. He let

France repair her losses undisturbed, and enrich herself by an immense commerce, treating the State as a powerful and robust body which could take care of itself. The people were so tired of political and financial breaknecks, that this senile minister, this government which governed as little as possible, was almost popular, and lasted seventeen years. Fleury set up for his aim, peace and economy. He won the blessings of the people by certain reductions of taxation. He restored the public credit, re-established for the time the balance between receipts and expenditures, and constructed roads. Still, to leave industry and commerce to themselves, was a good policy only in case they were free; and besides, he allowed the French marine to go to ruin.

Nor was Fleury tolerant. He set again in operation the bull *Unigenitus*; he imprisoned several ecclesiastics who refused to sign it, removed the Jansenist professors of the Sorbonne, and cancelled a protest of the Parliament. Later, he exiled forty of its members, and soon after recalled them for fear of some disturbance (1730), so that Parliament, emboldened, allowed the spirit of opposition again to enter the sanctuary of the laws. In 1727 an ascetic Jansenist deacon died in the odor of sanctity. It was soon reported that he had worked miracles; persons who stretched themselves on the tomb of the deacon felt convulsions, or nervous tremblings, sometimes injurious, sometimes beneficial. There were scenes both extravagant and scandalous; but the government had the wisdom not to interfere.

**Foreign Affairs; Reconciliation with Spain (1726-1731).** — The Duke of Bourbon had bequeathed to his successor a quarrel with Spain, then allied to Austria, which obliged France to continue in alliance with England. Sir Robert Walpole, the principal counsellor of George II., agreed with Fleury in desiring peace. The war between the two leagues had had no other effect than a fruitless attack of the Spaniards upon Gibraltar in 1727. Fleury stopped it the same year. In 1731, at the death of the last Duke of Parma and Piacenza, the infante Don Carlos was put in possession of those states. The emperor withdrew his opposition only after the powers had accepted his Pragmatic Sanction. A good understanding was now re-established between the courts of Madrid and Vienna.

**War of the Polish Succession (1733-1735).** — The death of Augustus II., king of Poland, disturbed this peace. The

succession to him was claimed by Stanislas Leszczynski, and by the Elector of Saxony, whom the Russians and Austrians supported as candidate. Fleury would willingly have taken no part in this quarrel, but public opinion obliged him to sustain the father of the queen. He, however, was so slow in making his decision, that Augustus III., crowned at Cracow, forced Stanislas to take refuge in Danzig, where the Russians besieged him. Fleury sent fifteen hundred men to aid the candidate of France. They made brave efforts to raise the siege, but were finally forced to capitulate.

Public opinion forced Fleury to attempt retaliation for the treaties of Utrecht. He concluded with Spain and Savoy a treaty which promised to the king of Sardinia the Milanese, and to the Bourbons of Spain the kingdom of Naples for the infante Don Carlos. Securing the neutrality of England and Holland, he sent two armies, one to the Rhine, the other to Italy, commanded by the old marshals Berwick and Villars (1733). The first took Kehl, in spite of Prince Eugene, laid siege to Philippsburg, and was killed in battle. Villars, after two brilliant campaigns, died at Turin. His successors gained victories which delivered the Milanese into the hands of the French, and installed the infante on the throne of Naples and Sicily. This was a glorious revival for France; but the timidity of the cardinal hindered her from reaping the fruits of her victories. A complete renunciation of Italy could have been required of the emperor, and the independence of the peninsula could have been restored: but he was only compelled to give up the Two Sicilies, and compensated by the cession of Parma and Piacenza for himself and by having Tuscany given to his son-in-law in exchange for Lorraine. A supplementary clause assigned to Stanislas, as compensation for the throne of Poland, Lorraine and Bar, which, at his death, were to revert to France.

These conditions formed the treaty of Vienna (1735-1738). This was the most brilliant period of the ministry of Fleury. "After the peace of Vienna," says Frederick the Great, "France was the arbiter of Europe. Her armies had triumphed in Italy as well as in Germany. Her minister at Constantinople, the Count of Villeneuve, had concluded the peace of Belgrade, the last glorious treaty that Turkey ever signed, and which gave to her Servia, a part of Wallachia, and Belgrade."

**War of the Austrian Succession (1741-1748).** — In 1740 the emperor Charles VI. died. In order to assure his hereditary possessions to his daughter, Maria Theresa, he had obtained from all the European states, at great sacrifices, a solemn recognition of his Pragmatic Sanction, and he left to Maria Theresa an ample collection of parchments. "An army of two hundred thousand men," says Frederick II., "would have been more valuable." He had scarcely expired when five claimants came forward. The Elector of Bavaria, the king of Spain, the Elector of Saxony, claimed the entire heritage by right of blood; the king of Sardinia claimed the duchy of Milan, and the king of Prussia, Frederick II., four duchies in Silesia. Frederick II. had not a large kingdom, but his father had left him a rich treasury and a fine army, and nature had given him the rarest talents. He began by laying hold upon what he claimed. The battle of Mollwitz put him in possession of three-fourths of Silesia (1741).

**Alliance with Frederic II.** — The Count of Belle-Isle proposed in the French council an alliance with Prussia, and a plan which restricted Maria Theresa to Hungary, Lower Austria, and Belgium, and divided the rest among the claimants; the Elector of Bavaria was to be emperor. France took nothing for herself. It was thought that the abasement of Austria would be the elevation of France; and that by dividing Eastern Germany, France would be relieved of all anxiety on the Rhine. This plan was adopted in opposition to the opinion of Fleury, and the treaty of Nymphenburg was concluded upon this basis (1741).

**Bohemian Campaign; Defection of Frederick II.; Death of Fleury (1741-1743).** — France put into the field an army of only forty thousand men, and sent it into the heart of Bavaria. Capturing Linz, the principal barrier of Austria on the upper Danube, the Elector of Bavaria might have seized Vienna; but preferred to conquer Bohemia. Maria Theresa had time to arouse her faithful Hungarians; while the elector was being crowned emperor at Frankfort, the Austrians entered Munich (January, 1742). Frederick threatened Moravia, and defeated the Austrians at Chotusitz in Bohemia (May); but Maria Theresa was wise enough to make sacrifices in season: she gave up Silesia to him. Upon this condition, Frederick set aside the promise he had made to France.

This defection influenced others. The Elector of Saxony withdrew from the war; the king of Sardinia joined in it on the side of Austria. England, which had just overturned the pacific ministry of Walpole (February, 1742), and exacted a war against Spain because the latter refused to open her colonies to English trade, now loudly demanded war against France, whose commerce was increasing enormously. She promised Maria Theresa a subsidy of eight million francs, and fell upon the French ships everywhere. France had taken up arms for the benefit of others, and now the whole weight of the contest was about to fall upon her alone.

The French army in Bohemia had already been cut off by the Austrians; they even besieged it in Prague. Fleury spoiled everything by his timidity. Maillebois was operating in Franconia, but he could do nothing for the deliverance of Prague except to seize upon Eger. Along the line of retreat thus afforded, Belle-Isle, leaving Prague with fourteen thousand men, made, through the ice, the snow, and the enemy, a glorious but painful retreat. Soon after, Fleury died at the age of eighty-nine. Two new ministers — in the war department, the Count of Argenson (1743); in the department of finance, De Machault (1745) — conducted with wisdom the affairs committed to their charge.

**Dettingen (1743); Defection of Bavaria (1745).** — England had joined the contest; fifty thousand English and Germans arrived in the valley of the Main; Marshal Noailles hemmed them in at Dettingen, but the foolish impetuosity of the Duke of Gramont frustrated these skilful combinations, and there was only a bloody defeat instead of a victory. De Broglie, who commanded the army of the Danube, was forced to fall back before the Austrians as far as the Rhine, and Noailles was compelled also to retreat (1743). In order to retrieve their fortunes, it was considered necessary to put the king at the head of the armies. A new favorite, the Duchess of Châteauroux, an energetic and ambitious woman, endeavored to arouse him from his torpor. A serious illness detained him at Metz. At the news of his recovery the churches rendered thanks to God for having restored "Louis the Well-beloved" (1744). How easy was the task for a royalty which was still so popular!

Meanwhile the king of Prussia, alarmed at the progress of Austria and her alliance with Russia, again took up

arms, and penetrated into Bohemia as far as Prague. This diversion disengaged the line of the Rhine. The emperor Charles VII. returned to his electorate, but only to die. His son made a treaty with Maria Theresa, and renounced all pretension to the Austrian succession (1745).

**Marshal Saxe; Fontenoy (1745).** — France had no longer any object in the war; but it was necessary to conquer peace. She sought it in the Netherlands. Marshal Saxe, a natural son of the king of Poland, invested Tournai; fifty-five thousand English and Dutch, under the command of the Duke of Cumberland, approached the town. The marshal decided to offer a defensive battle. He took up a strong position at Fontenoy. At the beginning of the battle (May 11, 1745) the English and Dutch attacks were repulsed; then the Duke of Cumberland massed his infantry in single column so as to pierce the centre of the French line. The English advanced slowly, as if upon parade. They outflanked Fontenoy. Ten regiments successively charged against this long column, immovable on account of its mass and its bravery, but were repulsed. The battle seemed endangered; the marshal prepared to retreat, but seeing the English column halt for a moment, he ordered a general attack on its flank. The column, surrounded, bent under the shock, opened, shivered; from that moment its strength was broken. The severed battalions fled hastily to the reserve. The allies had lost twelve thousand or fourteen thousand men; the French, more than seven thousand. This was a great victory, and had important results. Tournai, Ghent, the general depot of the enemy, Oudenarde, Brussels, Dendermonde, and Ostend capitulated. At the beginning of the following year the French entered Brussels.

**Second Defection of Prussia; Reverses in Italy (1745-1746).** — The victories of Hohenfriedberg and Kesseldorf having thrown Saxony and Dresden open to the king of Prussia, he signed at Dresden a new treaty with Maria Theresa, which confirmed the cession of Silesia. This defection left the French without an ally in Germany; the defeat of the Pretender, Charles Stuart, at Culloden (1746), prevented a revolution in England. Maria Theresa and George II., freed from all anxiety, the one with regard to Prussia, the other on account of the Jacobites, infused renewed vigor into the hostilities. Maria Theresa sought to indemnify herself in Italy. The French and Spanish army had been

gaining some successes there, but now the victory of Piacenza (1746) and the defection of Spain gave to the Imperialists all the northern part of the peninsula. The English, Austrians, and Sardinians attempted an invasion of Provence, but were compelled by Belle-Isle to retreat.

**Raucoux and Lawfeld (1746-1747).**—In the south, accordingly, France did nothing but defend her frontier; but in the north she had brilliant success. The battle of Raucoux, won by Marshal Saxe, marked the year 1746. Louis, after each victory, demanded nothing but peace, "not wishing," he said, "to negotiate like a merchant, but like a king." This unusual disinterestedness was suspected, and Holland, alarmed at seeing the French at her gates, re-established the stadtholderate as in 1672. The czarina Elizabeth (1747) placed at the disposal of the enemies of France fifty Russian ships and thirty-seven thousand men, who set out for the Rhine. France alone, facing all obstacles, was still advancing in the Netherlands, peace in one hand, and the sword in the other. Marshal Saxe won the battle of Lawfeld (1747), and the "impregnable" Bergen-op-Zoom was taken. Holland was invaded. In 1748 Saxe invested Maastricht.

**Naval Operations; La Bourdonnais and Dupleix.**—The naval war between England and France had begun in 1744, with an indecisive action at Toulon. Brest and Toulon were blockaded by the English, and Antibes bombarded. France could not, with thirty-five ships-of-the-line, cope with one hundred and ten. Her chiefs of squadrons at least made defeat honorable by their heroic courage. "In this war," says an English historian, "England owed her victories only to the number of her vessels." In America, the English captured Louisburg and Cape Breton (1745).

In the Indies, France had two distinguished leaders,—La Bourdonnais and Dupleix; if they could have acted in concert, and if they had been properly supported, they would have won Hindustan for France. The first had established everything in Bourbon (Réunion) and the Isle de France (Mauritius), of which he was governor for the India Company,—cultivation, arsenals, fortifications. An engineer, a general, and a sailor, he stopped at nothing; and from Mauritius, which, with its excellent harbor, had become the key to the Indian Ocean, he sailed about over that sea and drove the English from it. Dupleix endeavored to drive them

from the mainland of Asia; but the two quarrelled, and La Bourdonnais, recalled to France, was, on his arrival, shut up in the Bastille. Dupleix made a gallant defence of Pondicherry and gave the English a blow which was felt even in Europe. Peace was then for France as inopportune in India as in the Netherlands; but her navy was reduced to two vessels, and her debt had increased by 1,200,000,000 livres.

**Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748).**—The peace signed at Aix-la-Chapelle in April, 1748, stipulated for mutual restitution of conquests. England recovered for four years the *asiento* (the right to import negroes into the Spanish colonies), and limited rights of trade with them; Austria ceded Parma and Piacenza to the infante Don Philip, Silesia to the king of Prussia, and several places in the Milanese to the king of Sardinia. France gave up Madras, and recovered possession of Cape Breton; but she kept nothing in the Netherlands, almost all of which she had occupied, and agreed to expel the Pretender from France. Marshal Saxe survived this treaty only a short time.

**Commercial Prosperity.**—The eight years which followed this peace formed the most prosperous period of French commerce in the eighteenth century. Lorient, which in 1726 was only a small market-town, had, in 1733, had imports to the value of eighteen millions. Bourbon became a great agricultural colony. Dupleix sought to establish in India a vast colonial empire. Guadeloupe, Martinique, and especially San Domingo, reached a degree of prosperity which was reflected upon all the merchant towns of the mother country, upon Nantes, Bordeaux, and Marseilles, which had in addition all the trade of the Levant. The sugar and coffee of the French Antilles drove out from the European market the similar products of the English colonies, and Louisiana began to flourish.

The last maritime war had only suspended this movement; as soon as the war was over it resumed its course with an energy which was seconded by the government itself; for in spite of the inactivity of Louis XV., and the wretched influence of Madame de Pompadour, the increasing strength of public opinion forced upon the government certain men and certain tendencies. The Marquis of Argenson had been called, in 1744, to the ministry of foreign affairs, and that of marine was given to Rouillé and De Machault, who made praiseworthy efforts to re-establish a navy. England, though