

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### CHARLES VI. AND THE POLISH WAR.

FROM 1727 TO 1735.

CARDINAL FLEURY.—THE EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA URGES THE PRAGMATIC SANCTION.—HE PROMISES HIS TWO DAUGHTERS TO THE TWO SONS OF THE QUEEN OF SPAIN.—FRANCE, ENGLAND AND SPAIN UNITE AGAINST AUSTRIA.—CHARLES VI. ISSUES ORDERS TO PREPARE FOR WAR.—HIS PERPLEXITIES.—SECRET OVERTURES TO ENGLAND.—THE CROWN OF POLAND.—MEETING OF THE POLISH CONGRESS.—STANISLAUS GOES TO POLAND.—AUGUSTUS III. CROWNED.—WAR.—CHARLES SENDS AN ARMY TO LOMBARDY.—DIFFICULTIES OF PRINCE EUGENE.—CHARLES'S DISPLEASURE WITH ENGLAND.—LETTER TO COUNT KINSKY.—HOSTILITIES RENEWED.

THE young King of France, Louis XV., from amidst the orgies of his court which rivaled Babylon in corruption, was now seventeen years of age, and was beginning to shake off the trammels of guardianship and to take some ambitious part in government. The infamous regent, the Duke of Orleans, died suddenly of apoplexy in 1723. Gradually the king's preceptor, Fleury, obtained the entire ascendancy over the mind of his pupil, and became the chief director of affairs. He saw the policy of reuniting the Bourbons of France and Spain for the support of each other. The policy was consequently adopted of cultivating friendly relations between the two kingdoms. Cardinal Fleury was much disposed to thwart the plans of the emperor. A congress of the leading powers had been assembled at Soissons in June, 1728, to settle some diplomatic questions. The favorite object of the emperor now was, to obtain from the European powers the formal guarantee to support his decree of succession which conveyed the crown of Austria to his daughters, in preference to those of his brother Joseph.

The emperor urged the Pragmatic Sanction strongly upon the congress, as the basis upon which he would enter into friendly relations with all the powers. Fleury opposed it, and with such influence over the other plenipotentiaries as to secure its rejection. The emperor was much irritated, and intimated war. France and England retorted defiance. Spain was becoming alienated from the emperor, who had abandoned her cause, and was again entering into alliance with France. The emperor had promised his eldest daughter, Maria Theresa, to Carlos, son of the Queen of Spain, and a second daughter to the next son, Philip. These were as brilliant matches as an ambitious mother could desire. But while the emperor was making secret and solemn promises to the Queen of Spain, that these marriages should be consummated, which would secure to the son of the queen the Austrian, as well as the Spanish crown, he was declaring to the courts of Europe that he had no such plans in contemplation.

The Spanish queen, at length, annoyed, and goaded on by France and England, sent an ambassador to Vienna, and demanded of the emperor a written promise that Maria Theresa was to be the bride of Carlos. The emperor was now brought to the end of his intrigues. He had been careful heretofore to give only verbal promises, through his ministers. After his reiterated public denials that any such alliance was anticipated, he did not dare commit himself by giving the required document. An apologetic, equivocal answer was returned which so roused the ire of the queen, that, breaking off from Austria, she at once entered into a treaty of cordial union with England and France.

It will readily be seen that all these wars and intrigues had but little reference to the welfare of the masses of the people. They were hardly more thought of than the cattle and the poultry. The only purpose they served was, by unintermitted toil, to raise the wealth which supported the castle and the palace, and to march to the field to fight battles, in which

they had no earthly interest. The written history of Europe is only the history of kings and nobles—their ambitions, intrigues and war. The unwritten history of the dumb, toiling millions, defrauded of their rights, doomed to poverty and ignorance, is only recorded in the book of God's remembrance. When that page shall be read, every ear that hears it will tingle.

The frail connection between Austria and Spain was now terminated. England, France and Spain entered into an alliance to make vigorous war against Charles VI. if he manifested any hostility to any of the articles of the treaty into which they had entered. The Queen of Spain, in her spite, forbade the subjects of the emperor from trading at all with Spain, and granted to her new allies the exclusive right to the Spanish trade. She went so far in her reconciliation with England as to assure the king that he was quite welcome to retain the rock of Gibraltar which he held with so tenacious a grasp.

In this treaty, with studied neglect, even the name of the emperor was not mentioned; and yet the allies, as if to provoke a quarrel, sent Charles VI. a copy, peremptorily demanding assent to the treaty without his having taken any part whatever in the negotiation.

This insulting demand fell like a bomb-shell in the palace at Vienna. Emperor, ministers, courtiers, all were aroused to a frenzy of indignation. "So insulting a message," said Count Zinzendorf, "is unparalleled, even in the annals of savages." The emperor condescended to make no reply, but very spiritedly issued orders to all parts of the empire, for his troops to hold themselves in readiness for war.

And yet Charles was overwhelmed with anxiety, and was almost in despair. It was a terrible humiliation for the emperor to be compelled to submit, unavenged, to such an insult. But how could the emperor alone, venture to meet in battle England, France, Spain and all the other powers whom three such kingdoms could, either by persuasion or compulsion,

bring into their alliance? He plead with his natural allies. Russia had not been insulted, and was unwilling to engage in so distant a war. Prussia had no hope of gaining any thing, and declined the contest. Sardinia sent a polite message to the emperor that it was more for her interest to enter into an alliance with her nearer neighbors, France, Spain and England, and that she had accordingly done so. The treasury of Charles was exhausted; his States were impoverished by constant and desolating wars. And his troops manifested but little zeal to enter the field against so fearful a superiority of force. The emperor, tortured almost beyond endurance by chagrin, was yet compelled to submit.

The allies were quite willing to provoke a war with the emperor; but as he received their insults so meekly, and made no movement against them, they were rather disposed to march against him. Spain wanted Parma and Tuscany, but France was not willing to have Spain make so great an accession to her Italian power. France wished to extend her area north, through the States of the Netherlands. But England was unwilling to see the French power thus aggrandized. England had her aspirations, to which both France and Spain were opposed. Thus the allies operated as a check upon each other.

The emperor found some little consolation in this growing disunion, and did all in his power to foment it. Wishing to humble the Bourbons of France and Spain, he made secret overtures to England. The offers of the emperor were of such a nature, that England eagerly accepted them, returned to friendly relations with the emperor, and, to his extreme joy, pledged herself to support the Pragmatic Sanction.

It seems to have been the great object of the emperor's life to secure the crown of Austria for his daughters. It was an exceedingly disgraceful act. There was no single respectable reason to be brought forward why his daughters should crowd from the throne the daughters of his elder deceased

brother, the Emperor Joseph. Charles was so aware of the gross injustice of the deed, and that the ordinary integrity of humanity would rise against him, that he felt the necessity of exhausting all the arts of diplomacy to secure for his daughters the pledged support of the surrounding thrones. He had now by intrigues of many years obtained the guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction from Russia, Prussia, Holland, Spain and England. France still refused her pledge, as did also many of the minor States of the empire. The emperor, encouraged by the success he had thus far met with, pushed his efforts with renewed vigor, and in January, 1732, exulted that he had gained the guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction from all the Germanic body, with the exception of Bavaria, Palatine and Saxony.

And now a new difficulty arose to embroil Europe in trouble. When Charles XII., like a thunderbolt of war, burst upon Poland, he drove Augustus II. from the throne, and placed upon it Stanislaus Leczinski, a Polish noble, whom he had picked up by the way, and whose heroic character secured the admiration of this semi-insane monarch. Augustus, utterly crushed, was compelled by his eccentric victor to send the crown jewels and the archives, with a letter of congratulation, to Stanislaus. This was in the year 1706. Three years after this, in 1709, Charles XII. suffered a memorable defeat at Pultowa. Augustus II., then at the head of an army, regained his kingdom, and Stanislaus fled in disguise. After numerous adventures and fearful afflictions, the court of France offered him a retreat in Wissembourg in Alsace. Here the ex-king remained for six years, when his beautiful daughter Mary was selected to take the place of the rejected Mary of Spain, as the wife of the young dauphin, Louis XV.

In the year 1733 Augustus II. died. In anticipation of this event Austria had been very busy, hoping to secure the elective crown of Poland for the son of Augustus who had inherited his father's name, and who had promised to support the

Pragmatic Sanction. France was equally busy in the endeavor to place the scepter of Poland in the hand of Stanislaus, father of the queen. From the time of the marriage of his daughter with Louis XV., Stanislaus received a handsome pension from the French treasury, maintained a court of regal splendor, and received all the honors due to a sovereign. All the energies of the French court were now aroused to secure the crown for Stanislaus. Russia, Prussia and Austria were in natural sympathy. They wished to secure the alliance of Poland, and were also both anxious to destroy the republican principle of *electing* rulers, and to introduce hereditary descent of the crown in all the kingdoms of Europe. But an election by the nobles was now indispensable, and the rival powers were, with all the arts known in courts, pushing the claims of their several candidates. It was an important question, for upon it depended whether warlike Poland was to be the ally of the Austrian or of the French party. Poland was also becoming quite republican in its tendencies, and had adopted a constitution which greatly limited the power of the crown. Augustus would be but a tool in the hands of Russia, Prussia and Austria, and would coöperate with them in crushing the spirit of liberty in Poland. These three great northern powers became so roused upon the subject, that they put their troops in motion, threatening to exclude Stanislaus by force.

This language of menace and display of arms roused France. The king, while inundating Poland with agents, and lavishing the treasure of France in bribes to secure the election of Stanislaus, assumed an air of virtuous indignation in view of the interference of the Austrian party, and declared that no foreign power should interfere in any way with the freedom of the election. This led the emperor to issue a counter-memorial inveighing against the intermeddling of France.

In the midst of these turmoils the congress of Polish nobles met to choose their king. It was immediately apparent that there was a very powerful party organized in favor of Stanis-

laus. The emperor was for marching directly into the kingdom with an army which he had already assembled in Silesia for this purpose, and with the bayonet make up for any deficiency which his party might want in votes. Though Prussia demurred, he put his troops in motion, and the imperial and Russian ambassadors at Warsaw informed the marshal of the diet that Catharine, who was now Empress of Russia, and Charles, had decided to exclude Stanislaus from Poland by force.

These threats produced their natural effect upon the bold warrior barons of Poland. Exasperated rather than intimidated, they assembled, many thousands in number, on the great plain of Wola, but a few miles from Warsaw, and with great unanimity chose Stanislaus their king. This was the 12th of September, 1733. Stanislaus, anticipating the result, had left France in disguise, accompanied by a single attendant, to undertake the bold enterprise of traversing the heart of Germany, eluding all the vigilance of the emperor, and of entering Poland notwithstanding all the efforts of Austria, Russia and Prussia to keep him away. It was a very hazardous adventure, for his arrest would have proved his ruin. Though he encountered innumerable dangers, with marvelous sagacity and heroism he succeeded, and reached Warsaw on the 9th of September, just three days before the election. In regal splendor he rode, as soon as informed of his election, to the tented field where the nobles were convened. He was received with the clashing of weapons, the explosions of artillery, and the acclamations of thousands.

But the Poles were not sufficiently enlightened fully to comprehend the virtue and the sacredness of the ballot-box. The Russian army was now hastening to the gates of Warsaw. The small minority of Polish nobles opposed to the election of Stanislaus seceded from the diet, mounted their horses, crossed the Vistula, and joined the invading army to make war upon the sovereign whom the majority had chosen. The ret-

ribution for such folly and wickedness has come. There is no longer any Poland. They who despise the authority of the ballot-box inevitably usher in the bayonets of despotism. Under the protection of this army the minority held another diet at Kamien (on the 5th of October), a village just outside the suburbs of Warsaw, and chose as the sovereign of Poland Augustus, son of the deceased king. The minority, aided by the Russian and imperial armies, were too strong for the majority. They took possession of Warsaw, and crowned their candidate king, with the title of Augustus III. Stanislaus, pressed by an overpowering force, retreated to Dantzie, at the mouth of the Vistula, about two hundred miles from Warsaw. Here he was surrounded by the Russian troops and held in close siege, while Augustus III. took possession of Poland. France could do nothing. A weary march of more than a thousand miles separated Paris from Warsaw, and the French troops would be compelled to fight their way through the very heart of the German empire, and at the end of the journey to meet the united armies of Russia, Prussia, Austria and Poland under her king, now in possession of all the fortresses.

Though Louis XV. could make no effectual resistance, it was not in human nature but that he should seek revenge. When shepherds quarrel, they kill each other's flocks. When kings quarrel, they kill the poor peasants in each other's territories, and burn their homes. France succeeded in enlisting in her behalf Spain and Sardinia. Austria and Russia were upon the other side. Prussia, jealous of the emperor's greatness, declined any active participation. Most of the other powers of Europe also remained neutral. France had now no hope of placing Stanislaus upon the throne; she only sought revenge, determined to humble the house of Austria. The mercenary King of Sardinia, Charles Emanuel, was willing to serve the one who would pay the most. He first offered himself to the emperor, but upon terms too exorbitant to be accepted. France and Spain immediately offered him terms even

more advantageous than those he had demanded of the emperor. The contract was settled, and the Sardinian army marched into the allied camp.

The King of Sardinia, who was as ready to employ guile as force in warfare, so thoroughly deceived the emperor as to lead him to believe that he had accepted the emperor's terms, and that Sardinia was to be allied with Austria, even when the whole contract was settled with France and Spain, and the plan of the campaign was matured. So utterly was the emperor deluded by a fraud so contemptible, in the view of every honorable mind, that he sent great convoys of grain, and a large supply of shot, shells and artillery from the arsenals of Milan into the Sardinian camp. Charles Emanuel, dead to all sense of magnanimity, rubbed his hands with delight in the successful perpetration of such fraud, exclaiming, "*An virtus an dolos, quis ab hoste requirat?*"

So cunningly was this stratagem carried on, that the emperor was not undeceived until his own artillery, which he had sent to Charles Emanuel, were thundering at the gates of the city of Milan, and the shot and shells which he had so unsuspectingly furnished were mowing down the imperial troops. So sudden was the attack, so unprepared was Austrian Lombardy to meet it, that in twelve weeks the Sardinian troops overran the whole territory, seized every city and magazine, with all their treasures, leaving the fortress of Mantua alone in the possession of the imperial troops. It was the policy of Louis XV. to attack Austria in the remote portions of her widely-extended dominions, and to cut off province by province. He also made special and successful efforts to detach the interests of the German empire from those of Austria, so that the princes of the empire might claim neutrality. It was against the possessions of Charles VI., not against the independent States of the empire, that Louis XV. urged war.

The storms of winter were now at hand, and both parties were compelled to abandon the field until spring. But during

the winter every nerve was strained by the combatants in preparation for the strife which the returning sun would introduce. The emperor established strong defenses along the banks of the Rhine to prevent the passage of the French; he also sent agents to all the princes of the empire to enlist them in his cause, and succeeded, notwithstanding the remonstrances of many who claimed neutrality, in obtaining a vote from a diet which he assembled, for a large sum of money, and for an army of one hundred and twenty thousand men.

The loss of Lombardy troubled Charles exceedingly, for it threatened the loss of all his Italian possessions. Notwithstanding the severity of the winter he sent to Mantua all the troops he could raise from his hereditary domains; and ordered every possible effort to be made to be prepared to undertake the offensive in the spring, and to drive the Sardinians from Lombardy. In the beginning of May the emperor had assembled within and around Mantua, sixty thousand men, under the command of Count Merci. The hostile forces soon met, and battle after battle thundered over the Italian plains. On the 29th of June the two armies encountered each other in the vicinity of Parma, in such numbers as to give promise of a decisive battle. For ten hours the demoniac storm raged unintermitted. Ten thousand of the dead covered the ground. Neither party had taken a single standard or a single prisoner, an event almost unparalleled in the history of battles. From the utter exhaustion of both parties the strife ceased. The Sardinians and French, mangled and bleeding, retired within the walls of Parma. The Austrians, equally bruised and bloody, having lost their leader, retired to Reggio. Three hundred and forty of the Austrian officers were either killed or wounded.

The King of Sardinia was absent during this engagement, having gone to Turin to visit his wife, who was sick. The morning after the battle, however, he joined the army, and succeeded in cutting off an Austrian division of twelve hundred men, whom he took prisoners. Both parties now waited

for a time to heal their wounds, repair their shattered weapons, get rested and receive reinforcements. Ten thousand poor peasants, who had not the slightest interest in the quarrel, had now met with a bloody death, and other thousands were now to be brought forward and offered as victims on this altar of kingly ambition. By the middle of July they were again prepared to take the field. Both parties struggled with almost superhuman energies in the work of mutual destruction; villages were burned, cities stormed, fields crimsoned with blood and strewn with the slain, while no decisive advantage was gained. In the desperation of the strife the hostile battalions were hurled against each other until the beginning of January. They waded morasses, slept in drenching storms, and were swept by freezing blasts. Sickness entered the camp, and was even more fatal than the bullet of the foe. Thousands moaned and died in their misery, upon pallets of straw, where no sister, wife or mother could soothe the dying anguish. Another winter only afforded the combatants opportunity to nurse their strength that they might deal still heavier blows in another campaign.

While the imperial troops were struggling against Sardinia and France on the plains of Lombardy, a Spanish squadron landed a strong military force of French and Spaniards upon the peninsula of southern Italy, and meeting with no force sufficiently powerful to oppose them, speedily overran Naples and Sicily. The Spanish troops silenced the forts which defended the city of Naples, and taking the garrison prisoners, entered the metropolis in triumphal array, greeted by the acclamations of the populace, who hated the Austrians. After many battles, in which thousands were slain, the Austrians were driven out of all the Neapolitan States, and Carlos, the oldest son of Philip V. of Spain, was crowned King of Naples, with the title of Charles III. The island of Sicily was speedily subjugated and also attached to the Neapolitan crown.

These losses the emperor felt most keenly. Upon the

Rhine he had made great preparations, strengthening fortresses and collecting troops, which he placed under the command of his veteran general, Prince Eugene. He was quite sanguine that here he would be abundantly able to repel the assaults of his foes. But here again he was doomed to bitter disappointment. The emperor found a vast disproportion between promise and performance. The diet had voted him one hundred and twenty thousand troops; they furnished twelve thousand. They voted abundant supplies; they furnished almost none at all.

The campaign opened the 9th of April, 1734, the French crossing the Rhine near Truerbuch, in three strong columns, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Austrians to resist them. Prince Eugene, by birth a Frenchman, reluctantly assumed the command. He had remonstrated with the emperor against any forcible interference in the Polish election, assuring him that he would thus expose himself, almost without allies, to all the power of France. Eugene did not hesitate openly to express his disapprobation of the war. "I can take no interest in this war," he said; "the question at issue is not important enough to authorize the death of a chicken."

Eugene, upon his arrival from Vienna, at the Austrian camp, found but twenty-five thousand men. They were composed of a motley assemblage from different States, undisciplined, unaccustomed to act together and with no confidence in each other. The commanders of the various corps were quarreling for the precedence in rank, and there was no unity or subordination in the army. They were retreating before the French, who, in numbers, in discipline, and in the materiel of war, were vastly in the superiority. Eugene saw at once that it would be folly to risk a battle, and that all he could hope to accomplish was to throw such embarrassments as he might in the path of the victors.

The young officers, ignorant, impetuous and reckless, were for giving battle, which would inevitably have resulted in the

destruction of the army. They were so vexed by the wise caution of Eugene, which they regarded as pusillanimity, that they complained to the emperor that the veteran general was in his dotage, that he was broken both in body and mind, and quite unfit to command the army. These representations induced the emperor to send a spy to watch the conduct of Eugene. Though deeply wounded by these suspicions, the experienced general could not be provoked to hazard an engagement. He retreated from post to post, merely checking the progress of the enemy, till the campaign was over, and the ice and snow of a German winter drove all to winter quarters.

While recruiting for the campaign of 1735, Prince Eugene wrote a series of most earnest letters to his confidential agent in London, which letters were laid before George II., urging England to come to the help of the emperor in his great extremity. Though George was eager to put the fleet and army of England in motion, the British cabinet wisely refused to plunge the nation into war for such a cause, and the emperor was left to reap the bitter fruit of his despotism and folly. The emperor endeavored to frighten England by saying that he was reduced to such an extremity that if the British cabinet did not give him aid, he should be compelled to seek peace by giving his daughter, with Austria in her hand as her dowry, to Carlos, now King of Naples and heir apparent to the crown of Spain. He well knew that to prevent such an acquisition of power on the part of the Spanish monarch, who was also in intimate alliance with France, England would be ready to expend any amount of blood and treasure.

Charles VI. waited with great impatience to see the result of this menace, hardly doubting that it would bring England immediately to terms. Bitter was his disappointment and his despair when he received from the court of St. James the calm reply, that England could not possibly take a part in this war, and that in view of the great embarrassments in which the emperor was involved, England would take no offense in case

of the marriage of the emperor's second daughter to Carlos, England then advised the emperor to make peace by surrendering the Netherlands.

The emperor was now greatly enraged, and inveighed bitterly against England as guilty of the grossest perfidy. He declared that England had been as deeply interested as he was in excluding Stanislaus from the throne of Poland; that it was more important for England than for Austria to curb the exorbitant power of France; that in every step he had taken against Stanislaus, he had consulted England, and had acted in accordance with her counsel; that England was reaping the benefit of having the father-in-law of the French king expelled from the Polish throne; that England had solemnly promised to support him in these measures, and now having derived all the advantage, basely abandoned him. There were bitter charges, and it has never been denied that they were mainly true. The emperor, in his indignation, threatened to tell the whole story to the *people* of England. It is strange that the emperor had found out that there were *people* in England. In no other part of Europe was there any thing but *nobles* and *peasants*.

In this extraordinary letter, addressed to Count Kinsky, the imperial ambassador in London, the emperor wrote:

"On the death of Augustus II., King of Poland, my first care was to communicate to the King of England the principles on which I acted. I followed, in every instance, his advice. \* \* \* England has never failed to give me promises, both before and since the commencement of the war, but instead of fulfilling those promises, she has even favored my enemies. \* \* \* Let the king know that I never will consent to the plan of pacification now in agitation; that I had rather suffer the worst of extremities than accede to such disadvantageous proposals, and that even if I should not be able to prevent them, I will justify my honor and my dignity, by publishing a circumstantial account of all the transaction, together

with all the documents which I have now in possession. \* \* \* If these representations fail, means must be taken to publish and circulate throughout England our answer to the proposal of good offices which was not made till after the expiration of nine months. Should the court of London proceed so far as to make such propositions of peace as are supposed to be in agitation, you will not delay a moment to circulate throughout England a memorial, containing a recapitulation of all negotiations which have taken place since 1710, together with the authentic documents, detailing my just complaints, and reclaiming, in the most solemn manner, the execution of the guaranties."

One more effort the emperor made, and it was indeed a desperate one. He dispatched a secret agent, an English Roman Catholic, by the name of Strickland, to London, to endeavor to overthrow the ministry and bring in a cabinet in favor of him. In this, of course, he failed entirely. Nothing now remained for him but to submit, with the best grace he could, to the terms exacted by his foes. In the general pacification great interests were at stake, and all the leading powers of Europe demanded a voice in the proceedings. For many months the negotiations were protracted. England and France became involved in an angry dispute. Each power was endeavoring to grasp all it could, while at the same time it was striving to check the rapacity of every other power. There was a general armistice while these negotiations were pending. It was, however, found exceedingly difficult to reconcile all conflicting interests. New parties were formed; new combinations entered into, and all parties began to aim for a renewal of the strife. England, exasperated against France, in menace made an imposing display of her fleet and navy. The emperor was delighted, and, trusting to gain new allies, exerted his skill of diplomacy to involve the contracting parties in confusion and discord.

Thus encouraged, the emperor refused to accede to the

terms demanded. He was required to give up the Netherlands, and all his foreign possessions, and to retire to his hereditary dominions. "What a severe sentence," exclaimed Count Zinzendorf, the emperor's ambassador, "have you passed on the emperor. No malefactor was ever carried with so hard a doom to the gibbet."

The armies again took the field. Eugene, again, though with great reluctance, assumed the command of the imperial forces. France had assembled one hundred thousand men upon the Rhine. Eugene had but thirty thousand men to meet them. He assured the emperor that with such a force he could not successfully carry on the war. Jealous of his reputation, he said, sadly, "to find myself in the same condition as last year, will be only exposing myself to the censure of the world, which judges by appearance, as if I were less capable, in my old age, to support the reputation of my former successes." With consummate generalship, this small force held the whole French army in check.