by no means the case, he intreated him on no account to think of the surrender of the city. To add to the chagrin of the count, he also ascertained, at the same time, that the Turks were in such a deplorable condition that they were just on the point of retreating, and would gladly have purchased peace at almost any sacrifice. A little more diplomatic skill might have wrested from the Turks even a larger extent of territory than the emperor had so foolishly surrendered to them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MARIA THERESA.

From 1739 to 1741.

Anguish of the King.—Letter to the Queen of Russia.—The imperial Circular.—Deplorable Condition of Austria.—Death of Charles VI.—Accession of Maria Theresa.—Vigorous Measures of the Queen.—Claim of the Duke of Bavaria.—Responses from the Courts.—Coldness of the French Court.—Frederic of Prussia.—His Invasion of Silesia.—March of the Austrians.—Battle of Molnitz.—Firmness of Maria Theresa.—Proposed Division of Plunder.—Villainy of Frederic.—Interview with the King.—Character of Frederic.—Commencement of the general Invasion.

EVERY intelligent man in Austria felt degraded by the peace which had been made with the Turks. The tidings were received throughout the ranks of the army with a general outburst of grief and indignation. The troops intreated their officers to lead them against the foe, declaring that they would speedily drive the Turks from Belgrade, which had been so ignominiously surrendered. The populace of Vienna rose in insurrection, and would have torn down the houses of the ministers who had recommended the peace but for the interposition of the military. The emperor was almost beside himself with anguish. He could not appease the clamors of the nation. He was also in alliance with Russia, and knew not how to meet the reproaches of the court of St. Petersburg for having so needlessly surrendered the most important fortress on the Turkish frontier. In an interview which he held with the Russian ambassador his embarrassment was painful to witness. To the Queen of Russia he wrote in terms expressive of the extreme agony of his mind, and, with characteristic want of magnanimity cast the blame of the very measures he

had ordered upon the agents who had merely executed his will.

"While I am writing this letter," he said, "to your imperial majesty, my heart is filled with the most excessive grief. I was much less touched with the advantages gained by the enemy and the raws of the siege of Belgrade, than with the advice I have received concerning the shameful preliminary articles concluded by Count Neuperg.

"The history of past ages exhibits no vestiges of such an event. I was on the point of preventing the fatal and too hasty execution of these preliminaries, when I heard that they were already partly executed, even before the design had been communicated to me. Thus I see my hands tied by those who ought to glory in obeying me. All who have approached me since that fatal day, are so many witnesses of the excess of my grief. Although I have many times experienced adversity, I never was so much afflicted as by this event. Your majesty has a right to complain of some who ought to have obeyed my orders; but I had no part in what they have done. Though all the forces of the Ottoman empire were turned against me I was not disheartened, but still did all in my power for the common cause. I shall not, however, fail to perform in due time what avenging justice requires. In this dismal series of misfortunes I have still one comfort left, which is that the fault can not be thrown upon me. It lies entirely on such of my officers as ratified the disgraceful preliminaries without my knowledge, against my consent, and even contrary to my express orders."

This apologetic letter was followed by a circular to all the imperial ambassadors in the various courts of Europe, which circular was filled with the bitterest denunciation of Count Neuperg and Marshal Wallis. It declared that the emperor was not in any way implicated in the shameful surrender of Belgrade. The marshal and the count, thus assailed and held up to the scorn and execration of Europe, ventured to reply

that they had strictly conformed to their instructions. The common sense of the community taught them that, in so rigorous and punctilious a court as that of Vienna, no agent of the emperor would dare to act contrary to his received instructions. Thus the infamous attempts of Charles to brand his officers with ignominy did but rebound upon himself. The almost universal voice condemned the emperor and acquitted the plenipotentiaries.

While the emperor was thus filling all the courts of Europe with his clamor against Count Neuperg, declaring that he had exceeded his powers and that he deserved to be hung, he at the same time, with almost idiotic fatuity, sent the same Count Neuperg back to the Turkish camp to settle some items which yet required adjustment. This proved, to every mind, the insincerity of Charles. The Russians, thus forsaken by Austria, also made peace with the Turks. They consented to demolish their fortress of Azof, to relinquish all pretensions to the right of navigating the Black sea, and to allow a vast extent of territory upon its northern shores to remain an uninhabited desert, as a barrier between Russia and Turkey. The treaty being definitively settled, both Marshal Wallis and Count Neuperg were arrested and sent to prison, where they were detained until the death of Charles VI.

Care and sorrow were now hurrying the emperor to the grave. Wan and haggard he moved about his palace, mourning his doom, and complaining that it was his destiny to be disappointed in every cherished plan of his life. All his affairs were in inextricable confusion, and his empire seemed crumbling to decay. A cotemporary writer thus describes the situation of the court and the nation:

"Every thing in this court is running into the last confusion and ruin; where there are as visible signs of folly and madness, as ever were inflicted upon a people whom Heaven is determined to destroy, no less by domestic divisions, than by the more public calamities of repeated defeats, defenselessness, poverty and plagues."

Early in October, 1740, the emperor, restless, and feverish in body and mind, repaired to one of his country palaces a few miles distant from Vienna. The season was prematurely cold and gloomy, with frost and storms of sleet. In consequence of a chill the enfeebled monarch was seized with an attack of the gout, which was followed by a very severe fit of the colic. The night of the 10th of October he writhed in pain upon his bed, while repeated vomitings weakened his already exhausted frame. The next day he was conveyed to Vienna, but in such extreme debility that he fainted several times in his carriage by the way. Almost in a state of insensibility he was carried to the retired palace of La Favourite in the vicinity of Vienna, and placed in his bed. It was soon evident that his stormy life was now drawing near to its close. Patiently he bore his severe sufferings, and as his physicians were unable to agree respecting the nature of his disease, he said to them, calmly,

"Cease your disputes. I shall soon be dead. You can then open my body and ascertain the cause of my death."

Priests were admitted to his chamber who performed the last offices of the Church for the dying. With perfect composure, he made all the arrangements relative to the succession to the throne. One after another the members of his family were introduced, and he affectionately bade them adieu, giving to each appropriate words of counsel. To his daughter, Maria Theresa, who was not present, and who was to succeed him, he sent his earnest blessing. With the Duke of Lorraine, her husband, he had a private interview of two hours. On the 20th of October, 1740, at two o'clock in the morning, he died, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and the thirtieth of his reign. Weary of the world, he willingly retired to the anticipated repose of the grave.

"To die,—to sleep;—
To sleep! perchance to dream;—ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause."

By the death of Charles VI. the male line of the house of Hapsburg became extinct, after having continued in uninterrupted succession for over four hundred years. His eldest daughter, Maria Theresa, who now succeeded to the crown of Austria, was twenty-four years of age. Her figure was tall, graceful and commanding. Her features were beautiful, and her smile sweet and winning. She was born to command, combining in her character woman's power of fascination with man's energy. Though so far advanced in pregnancy that she was not permitted to see her dying father, the very day after his death she so rallied her energies as to give an audience to the minister of state, and to assume the government with that marvelous vigor which characterized her whole reign.

Seldom has a kingdom been in a more deplorable condition than was Austria on the morning when the scepter passed into the hands of Maria Theresa. There were not forty thousand dollars in the treasury; the state was enormously in debt; the whole army did not amount to more than thirty thousand men, widely dispersed, clamoring for want of pay, and almost entirely destitute of the materials for war. The vintage had been cut off by the frost, producing great distress in the country. There was a famine in Vienna, and many were starving for want of food. The peasants, in the neighborhood of the metropolis, were rising in insurrection, ravaging the fields in search of game; while rumors were industriously circulated that the government was dissolved, that the succession was disputed, and that the Duke of Bavaria was on the march, with an army, to claim the crown. The distant provinces were anxious to shake off the Austrian yoke. Bohemia was agitated; and the restless barons of Hungary were upon the point of grasping their arms, and, under the protection of Turkey, of claiming their ancestral hereditary rights. Notwithstanding the untiring endeavors of the emperor to obtain the assent of Europe to the Pragmatic Sanction, many influential courts refused to recognize the right of Maria Theresa to the

crown. The ministers were desponding, irresolute and incapable. Maria Theresa was young, quite inexperienced and in delicate health, being upon the eve of her confinement. The English ambassador, describing the state of affairs in Vienna as they appeared to him at this time, wrote:

"To the ministers, the Turks seem to be already in Hungary; the Hungarians in insurrection; the Bohemians in open revolt; the Duke of Bavaria, with his army, at the gates of Vienna; and France the soul of all these movements. The ministers were not only in despair, but that despair even was not capable of rousing them to any desperate exertions."

Maria Theresa immediately dispatched couriers to inform the northern powers of her accession to the crown, and troops were forwarded to the frontiers to prevent any hostile invasion from Bavaria. The Duke of Bavaria claimed the Austrian crown in virtue of the will of Ferdinand I., which, he affirmed, devised the crown to his daughters and their descendants in case of the failure of the male line. As the male line was now extinct, by this decree the scepter would pass to the Duke of Bavaria. Charles VI. had foreseen this claim, and endeavored to set it aside by the declaration that the clause referred to in the will of Ferdinand I. had reference to *legitimate heirs*, not *male* merely, and that, consequently, it did not set aside female descendants. In proof of this, Maria Theresa had the will exhibited to all the leading officers of state, and to the foreign ambassadors. It appeared that *legitimate heirs* was the phrase. And now the question hinged upon the point, whether females were *legitimate heirs*. In some kingdoms of Europe they were; in others they were not. In Austria the custom had been variable. Here was a nicely-balanced question, sufficiently momentous to divide Europe, and which might put all the armies of the continent in motion. There were also other claimants for the crown, but none who could present so plausible a plea as that of the Duke of Bavaria.

Maria Theresa now waited with great anxiety for the reply

she should receive from the foreign powers whom she had notified of her accession. The Duke of Bavaria was equally active and solicitous, and it was quite uncertain whose claim would be supported by the surrounding courts. The first response came from Prussia. The king sent his congratulations, and acknowledged the title of Maria Theresa. This was followed by a letter from Augustus of Poland, containing the same friendly recognition. Russia then sent in assurances of cordial support. The King of England returned a friendly answer, promising coöperation. All this was cheering. But France was then the great power on the continent, and could carry with her one half of Europe in almost any cause. The response was looked for from France with great anxiety. Day after day, week after week passed, and no response came. At length the French Secretary of State gave a cautious and merely verbal declaration of the friendly disposition of the French court. Cardinal Fleury, the illustrious French Secretary of State, was cold, formal and excessively polite. Maria Theresa at once inferred that France withheld her acknowledgment, merely waiting for a favorable opportunity to recognize the claims of the Duke of Bavaria.

While matters were in this state, to the surprise of all, Frederic, King of Prussia, drew his sword, and demanded large and indefinite portions of Austria to be annexed to his territories. Disdaining all appeal to any documentary evidence, and scorning to reply to any questionings as to his right, he demanded vast provinces, as a highwayman demands one's purse, with the pistol at his breast. This fiery young prince, inheriting the most magnificent army in Europe, considering its discipline and equipments, was determined to display his gallantry as a fighter, with Europe for the arena. As he was looking about to find some suitable foe against which he could hurl his seventy-five thousand men, the defenseless yet large and opulent duchy of Silesia presented itself as a glittering prize worth the claiming by a royal highwayman.

The Austrian province of Silesia bordered a portion of Prussia While treacherously professing friendship with the court of Vienna, with great secrecy and sagacity Frederic assembled a large force of his best troops in the vicinity of Berlin, and in mid-winter, when the snow lay deep upon the plains, made a sudden rush into Silesia, and, crushing at a blow all opposition, took possession of the whole duchy. Having accomplished this feat, he still pretended great friendship for Maria Theresa, and sent an ambassador to inform her that he was afraid that some of the foreign powers, now conspiring against her, might seize the duchy, and thus wrest it from her; that he had accordingly taken it to hold it in safety; and that since it was so very important, for the tranquillity of nis kingdom, that Silesia should not fall into the hands of an enemy, he hoped that Maria Theresa would allow him to retain the duchy as an indemnity for the expense he had been at in taking it."

This most extraordinary and impertinent message was accompanied by a threat. The ambassador of the Prussian king, a man haughty and semi-barbaric in his demeanor, gave his message in a private interview with the queen's husband, Francis, the Duke of Lorraine. In conclusion, the ambassador added, "No one is more firm in his resolutions than the King of Prussia. He must and will take Silesia. If not secured by the immediate cession of that province, his troops and money will be offered to the Duke of Bavaria."

"Go tell your master," the Duke of Lorraine replied with dignity, "that while he has a single soldier in Silesia, we will rather perish than enter into any discussion. If he will evacuate the duchy, we will treat with him at Berlin. For my part, not for the imperial crown, nor even for the whole world, will I sacrifice one inch of the queen's lawful possessions."

While these negotiations were pending, the king himself made an ostentatious entry into Silesia. The majority of the

Silesians were Protestants. The King of Prussia, who had discarded religion of all kinds, had of course discarded that of Rome, and was thus nominally a Protestant. The Protestants, who had suffered so much from the persecutions of the Catholic church, had less to fear from the infidelity of Berlin than from the fanaticism of Rome. Frederic was consequently generally received with rejoicings. The duchy of Silesia was indeed a desirable prize. Spreading over a region of more than fifteen thousand square miles, and containing a population of more than a million and a half, it presented to its feudal lord an ample revenue and the means of raising a large army. Breslau, the capital of the duchy, upon the Oder, contained a population of over eighty thousand. Built upon several islands of that beautiful stream, its situation was attractive, while in its palaces and its ornamental squares, it vied with the finest capitals of Europe.

Frederic entered the city in triumph in January, 1741. The small Austrian garrison, consisting of but three thousand men, retired before him into Moravia. The Prussian monarch took possession of the revenues of the duchy, organized the government under his own officers, garrisoned the fortresses and returned to Berlin. Maria Theresa appealed to friendly courts for aid. Most of them were lavish in promises, but she waited in vain for any fulfillment. Neither money, arms nor men were sent to her. Maria Theresa, thus abandoned and thrown upon her own unaided energies, collected a small army in Moravia, on the confines of Silesia, and intrusted the command to Count Neuperg, whom she liberated from the prison to which her father had so unjustly consigned him. But it was mid-winter. The roads were almost impassable. The treasury of the Austrian court was so empty that but meager supplies could be provided for the troops. A ridge of mountains, whose defiles were blocked up with snow, spread between Silesia and Moravia.

It was not until the close of March that Marshal Neuperg