

was able to force his way through these defiles and enter Silesia. The Prussians, not aware of their danger, were reposing in their cantonments. Neuperg hoped to take them by surprise and cut them off in detail. Indeed Frederic, who, by chance, was at Jagerndorf inspecting a fortress, was nearly surrounded by a party of Austrian hussars, and very narrowly escaped capture. The ground was still covered with snow as the Austrian troops toiled painfully through the mountains to penetrate the Silesian plains. Frederic rapidly concentrated his scattered troops to meet the foe. The warlike character of the Prussian king was as yet undeveloped, and Neuperg, unconscious of the tremendous energies he was to encounter, and supposing that the Prussian garrisons would fly in dismay before him, was giving his troops, after their exhausting march, a few days of repose in the vicinity of Molnitz.

On the 8th of April there was a thick fall of snow, filling the air and covering the fields. Frederic availed himself of the storm, which curtained him from all observation, to urge forward his troops, that he might overwhelm the Austrians by a fierce surprise. While Neuperg was thus resting, all unconscious of danger, twenty-seven battalions, consisting of sixteen thousand men, and twenty-nine squadrons of horse, amounting to six thousand, were, in the smothering snow, taking their positions for battle. On the morning of the 10th the snow ceased to fall, the clouds broke, and the sun came out clear and bright, when Neuperg saw that another and a far more fearful storm had gathered, and that its thunderbolts were about to be hurled into the midst of his camp.

The Prussian batteries opened their fire, spreading death through the ranks of the Austrians, even while they were hastily forming in line of battle. Still the Austrian veterans, accustomed to all the vicissitudes of war, undismayed, rapidly threw themselves into columns and rushed upon the foe. Fiercely the battle raged hour after hour until the middle of the afternoon, when the field was covered with the dead and

crimsoned with blood. The Austrians, having lost three thousand in slain and two thousand in prisoners, retired in confusion, surrendering the field, with several guns and banners, to the victors. This memorable battle gave Silesia to Prussia, and opened the war of the Austrian succession.

The Duke of Lorraine was greatly alarmed by the threatening attitude which affairs now assumed. It was evident that France, Prussia, Bavaria and many other powers were combining against Austria, to rob her of her provinces, and perhaps to dismember the kingdom entirely. Not a single court as yet had manifested any disposition to assist Maria Theresa. England urged the Austrian court to buy the peace of Prussia at almost any price. Francis, Duke of Lorraine, was earnestly for yielding, and intreated his wife to surrender a part for the sake of retaining the rest. "We had better," he said, "surrender Silesia to Prussia, and thus purchase peace with Frederic, than meet the chances of so general a war as now threatens Austria."

But Maria Theresa was as imperial in character and as indomitable in spirit as Frederic of Prussia. With indignation she rejected all such counsel, declaring that she would never cede one inch of her territories to any claimant, and that, even if her allies all abandoned her, she would throw herself upon her subjects and upon her armies, and perish, if need be, in defense of the integrity of Austria.

Frederic now established his court and cabinet at the camp of Molnitz. Couriers were ever coming and going. Envoys from France and Bavaria were in constant secret conference with him. France, jealous of the power of Austria, was plotting its dismemberment, even while protesting friendship. Bavaria was willing to unite with Prussia in seizing the empire and in dividing the spoil. These courts seemed to lay no claim to any higher morality than that of ordinary highwaymen. The doom of Maria Theresa was apparently sealed. Austria was to be plundered. Other parties now began to

rush in with their claims, that they might share in the booty. Philip V. of Spain put in his claim for the Austrian crown as the lineal descendant of the Emperor Charles V. Augustus, King of Poland, urged the right of his wife Maria, eldest daughter of Joseph. And even Charles Emanuel, King of Sardinia, hunted up an obsolete claim, through the line of the second daughter of Philip II.

At the camp of Molnitz the plan was matured of giving Bohemia and Upper Austria to the Duke of Bavaria. Frederic of Prussia was to receive Upper Silesia and Glatz. Augustus of Poland was to annex to his kingdom Moravia and Upper Silesia. Lombardy was assigned to Spain. Sardinia was to receive some compensation not yet fully decided upon. The whole transaction was a piece of as unmitigated villainy as ever transpired. One can not but feel a little sympathy for Austria which had thus fallen among thieves, and was stripped and bleeding. Our sympathies are, however, somewhat alleviated by the reflection that Austria was just as eager as any of the other powers for any such piratic expedition, and that, soon after, she united with Russia and Prussia in plundering Poland. And when Poland was dismembered by a trio of regal robbers, she only incurred the same doom which she was now eager to inflict upon Austria. When pirates and robbers plunder each other, the victims are not entitled to much sympathy. To the masses of the people it made but little difference whether their life's blood was wrung from them by Russian, Prussian or Austrian despots. Under whatever rule they lived, they were alike doomed to toil as beasts of burden in the field, or to perish amidst the hardships and the carnage of the camp.

These plans were all revealed to Maria Theresa, and with such a combination of foes so powerful, it seemed as if no earthly wisdom could avert her doom. But her lofty spirit remained unyielding, and she refused all offers of accommodation based upon the surrender of any portion of her territo-

ries. England endeavored to induce Frederic to consent to take the duchy of Glogau alone, suggesting that thus his Prussian majesty had it in his power to conclude an honorable peace, and to show his magnanimity by restoring tranquillity to Europe.

"At the beginning of the war," Frederic replied, "I might perhaps have been contented with this proposal. At present I must have four duchies. But do not," he exclaimed, impatiently, "talk to me of *magnanimity*. A prince must consult his own interests. I am not averse to peace; but I want four duchies, and I will have them."

Frederic of Prussia was no hypocrite. He was a highway robber and did not profess to be any thing else. His power was such that instead of demanding of the helpless traveler his watch, he could demand of powerful nations their revenues. If they did not yield to his demands he shot them down without compunction, and left them in their blood. The British minister ventured to ask what four duchies Frederic intended to take. No reply could be obtained to this question. By the four duchies he simply meant that he intended to extend the area of Prussia over every inch of territory he could possibly acquire, either by fair means or by foul.

England, alarmed by these combinations, which it was evident that France was sagaciously forming and guiding, and from the successful prosecution of which plans it was certain that France would secure some immense accession of power, granted to Austria a subsidy of one million five hundred thousand dollars, to aid her in repelling her foes. Still the danger from the grand confederacy became so imminent, that the Duke of Lorraine and all the Austrian ministry united with the British ambassador, in entreating Maria Theresa to try to break up the confederacy and purchase peace with Prussia by offering Frederic the duchy of Glogau. With extreme reluctance the queen at length yielded to these importunities, and consented that an envoy should take the proposal to the Prus-

sian camp at Molnitz. As the envoy was about to leave he expressed some apprehension that the Prussian king might reject the proffer.

"I wish he may reject it," exclaimed the queen, passionately. "It would be a relief to my conscience. God only knows how I can answer to my subjects for the cession of the duchy, having sworn to them never to alienate any part of our country."

Mr. Robinson, the British ambassador, as mediator, took these terms to the Prussian camp. In the endeavor to make as good a bargain as possible, he was first to offer Austrian Guelderland. If that failed he was then to offer Limburg, a province of the Netherlands, containing sixteen hundred square miles, and if this was not accepted, he was authorized, as the ultimatum, to consent to the cession of the duchy of Glogau. The Prussian king received the ambassadors, on the 5th of August, in a large tent, in his camp at Molnitz. The king was a blunt, uncourtly man, and the interview was attended with none of the amenities of polished life. After a few desultory remarks, the British ambassador opened the business by saying that he was authorized by the Queen of Austria to offer, as the basis of peace, the cession to Prussia of Austrian Guelderland.

"What a beggarly offer," exclaimed the king. "This is extremely impertinent. What! nothing but a paltry town for all my just pretensions in Silesia!"

In this tirade of passion, either affected or real, he continued for some time. Mr. Robinson waited patiently until this outburst was exhausted, and then hesitatingly remarked that the queen was so anxious to secure the peace of Europe, that if tranquillity could not be restored on other terms she was even willing to cede to Prussia, in addition, the province of Limburg.

"Indeed!" said the ill-bred, clownish king, contemptuously. "And how can the queen think of violating her solemn

oath which renders every inch of the Low Countries inalienable I have no desire to obtain distant territory which will be useless to me; much less do I wish to expend money in new fortification. Neither the French nor the Dutch have offended me; and I do not wish to offend them, by acquiring territory in the vicinity of their realms. If I should accept Limburg, what security could I have that I should be permitted to retain it?"

The ambassador replied, "England, Russia and Saxony, will give their guaranty."

"Guaranties," rejoined the king, sneeringly. "Who, in these times, pays any regard to pledges? Have not both England and France pledged themselves to support the Pragmatic Sanction? Why do they not keep their promises? The conduct of these powers is ridiculous. They only do what is for their own interests. As for me, I am at the head of an invincible army. I want Silesia. I have taken it, and I intend to keep it. What kind of a reputation should I have if I should abandon the first enterprise of my reign? No! I will sooner be crushed with my whole army, than renounce my rights in Silesia. Let those who want peace grant me my demands. If they prefer to fight again, they can do so, and again be beaten."

Mr. Robinson ventured to offer a few soothing words to calm the ferocious brute, and then proposed to give to him Glogau, a small but rich duchy of about six hundred square miles, near the frontiers of Prussia.

Frederic rose in a rage, and with loud voice and threatening gestures, exclaimed,

"If the queen does not, within six weeks, yield to my demands, I will double them. Return with this answer to Vienna. They who want peace with me, will not oppose my wishes. I am sick of ultimatums; I will hear no more of them. I demand Silesia. This is my final answer. I will give no other."

Then turning upon his heel, with an air of towering indignation, he retired behind the inner curtain of his tent. Such was the man to whom Providence, in its inscrutable wisdom, had assigned a throne, and a highly disciplined army of seventy-five thousand men. To northern Europe he proved an awful scourge, inflicting woes, which no tongue can adequately tell.

And now the storm of war seemed to commence in earnest. The Duke of Bavaria issued a manifesto, declaring his right to the whole Austrian inheritance, and pronouncing Maria Theresa a usurper. He immediately marched an army into one of the provinces of Austria. At the same time, two French armies were preparing to cross the Rhine to coöperate with the Bavarian troops. The King of Prussia was also on the march, extending his conquests. Still Maria Theresa remained inflexible, refusing to purchase peace with Prussia by the surrender of Silesia.

"The resolution of the queen is taken," she said. "If the House of Austria must perish, it is indifferent whether it perishes by an Elector of Bavaria, or by an Elector of Brandenburg."

While these all important matters were under discussion, the queen, on the 13th of March, gave birth to a son, the Archduke Joseph. This event strengthened the queen's resolution, to preserve, not only for herself, but for her son and heir, the Austrian empire in its integrity. From her infancy she had imbibed the most exalted ideas of the dignity and grandeur of the house of Hapsburg. She had also been taught that her inheritance was a solemn trust which she was religiously bound to preserve. Thus religious principle, family pride and maternal love all now combined to increase the inflexibility of a will which by nature was indomitable.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MARIA THERESA.

FROM 1741 TO 1743.

CHARACTER OF FRANCIS, DUKE OF LORRAINE.—POLICY OF EUROPEAN COURTS.—PLAN OF THE ALLIES.—SIEGE OF PRAGUE.—DESPERATE CONDITION OF THE QUEEN.—HER CORONATION IN HUNGARY.—ENTHUSIASM OF THE BARONS.—SPEECH OF MARIA THERESA.—PEACE WITH FREDERIC OF PRUSSIA.—HIS DUPLICITY.—MILITARY MOVEMENT OF THE DUKE OF LORRAINE.—BATTLE OF CHAZLEAU.—SECOND TREATY WITH FREDERIC.—DESPONDENCY OF THE DUKE OF BAVARIA.—MARCH OF MALLEBOIS.—EXTRAORDINARY RETREAT OF BELLEISLE.—RECOVERY OF PRAGUE BY THE QUEEN.

MARIA Theresa, as imperial in spirit as in position, was unwilling to share the crown, even with her husband. Francis officiated as her chief minister, giving audience to foreign ambassadors, and attending to many of the details of government, yet he had but little influence in the direction of affairs. Though a very handsome man, of polished address, and well cultivated understanding, he was not a man of either brilliant or commanding intellect. Maria Theresa, as a woman, could not aspire to the imperial throne; but all the energies of her ambitious nature were roused to secure that dignity for her husband. Francis was very anxious to secure for himself the electoral vote of Prussia, and he, consequently, was accused of being willing to cede Austrian territory to Frederic to purchase his support. This deprived him of all influence whenever he avowed sentiments contrary to those of the queen.

England, jealous of the vast continental power of France, was anxious to strengthen Austria, as a means of holding