

She took advantage of religious fanaticism, and represented, through all the Catholic courts of Europe, that there was a league of the two heretical powers, England and Prussia, against the faithful children of the Church. Jeanette Poisson, Marchioness of Pompadour, who now controlled the destinies of France, raised, for the service of Maria Theresa, an army of one hundred and five thousand men, paid all the expenses of ten thousand Bavarian troops, and promised the queen an annual subsidy of twelve millions of imperial florins. The emperor, regarding the invasion of Saxony as an insult to the empire, roused the States of Germany to coöperate with the queen. Europe was again ablaze with war.

It was indeed a fearful combination now prepared to make a rush upon the King of Prussia. France had assembled eighty thousand men on the Rhine. The Swedes were rallying in great numbers on the frontiers of Pomerania. The Russians had concentrated an army sixty thousand strong on the borders of Livonia. And the Queen of Austria had one hundred and fifty thousand men on the march, through Hungary and Bohemia, to the frontiers of Silesia. Frederic, with an eagle eye, was watching all these movements, and was employing all his amazing energies to meet the crisis. He resolved to have the advantage of striking the first blow, and adopted the bold measure of marching directly into the heart of the Austrian States. To deceive the allies he pretended to be very much frightened, and by breaking down bridges and establishing fortresses seemed intent upon merely presenting a desperate defense behind his ramparts.

Suddenly, in three strong, dense columns, Frederic burst into Bohemia and advanced, with rapid and resistless strides, towards Prague. The unprepared Austrian bands were driven before these impetuous assailants as chaff is dispersed by the whirlwind. With great precipitation the Austrian troops, from all quarters, fled to the city of Prague and rallied beneath its walls. Seventy thousand men were soon collected

strongly intrenched behind ramparts, thrown up outside of the city, from which ramparts, in case of disaster, they could retire behind the walls and into the citadel.

The king, with his army, came rushing on like the sweep of the tornado, and plunged, as a thunderbolt of war, into the camp of the Austrians. For a few hours the battle blazed as if it were a strife of demons—hell in high carnival. Eighteen thousand Prussians were mowed down by the Austrian batteries, before the fierce assailants could scale the ramparts. Then, with cimeter and bayonet, they took a bloody revenge. Eight thousand Austrians were speedily weltering in blood. The shriek of the battle penetrated all the dwellings in Prague, appalling every ear, like a wail from the world of woe. The routed Austrians, leaving nine thousand prisoners in the hands of Frederic, rushed through the gates into the city, while a storm of shot from the batteries on the walls drove back the pursuing Prussians.

Prague, with the broken army thus driven within its walls, now contained one hundred thousand inhabitants. The city was totally unprepared for a siege. All supplies of food being cut off, the inhabitants were soon reduced to extreme suffering. The queen was exceedingly anxious that the city should hold out until she could hasten to its relief. She succeeded in sending a message to the besieged army, by a captain of grenadiers, who contrived to evade the vigilance of the besiegers and to gain entrance to the city.

"I am concerned," said the empress, "that so many generals, with so considerable a force, must remain besieged in Prague, but I augur favorably for the event. I can not too strongly impress upon your minds that the troops will incur everlasting disgrace should they not effect what the French in the last war performed with far inferior numbers. The honor of the whole nation, as well as that of the imperial arms, is interested in their present behavior. The security of Bohemia, of my other hereditary dominions, and of the Ger



mar empire itself, depends on a gallant defense and the preservation of Prague.

"The army under the command of Marshal Daun is daily strengthening, and will soon be in a condition to raise the siege. The French are approaching with all diligence. The Swedes are marching to my assistance. In a short space of time affairs will, under divine Providence, wear a better aspect."

The scene in Prague was awful. Famine strode through all the streets, covering the pavements with the emaciated corpses of the dead. An incessant bombardment was kept up from the Prussian batteries, and shot and shell were falling incessantly, by day and by night, in every portion of the city. Conflagrations were continually blazing; there was no possible place of safety; shells exploded in parlors, in chambers, in cellars, tearing limb from limb, and burying the mutilated dead beneath the ruins of their dwellings. The booming of the cannon, from the distant batteries, was answered by the thunder of the guns from the citadel and the walls, and blended with all this uproar rose the uninterrupted shrieks of the wounded and the dying. The cannonade from the Prussian batteries was so destructive, that in a few days one quarter of the entire city was demolished.

Count Daun, with sixty thousand men, was soon advancing rapidly towards Prague. Frederic, leaving a small force to continue the blockade of the city, marched with the remainder of his troops to assail the Austrian general. They soon met, and fought for some hours as fiercely as mortals can fight. The slaughter on both sides was awful. At length the fortune of war turned in favor of the Austrians, though they laid down nine thousand husbands, fathers, sons, in bloody death, as the price of the victory. Frederic was almost frantic with grief and rage as he saw his proud battalions melting away before the batteries of the foe. Six times his cavalry charged with the utmost impetuosity, and six times

they were as fiercely repulsed. Frederic was finally compelled to withdraw, leaving fourteen thousand of his troops either slain or prisoners. Twenty-two Prussian standards and forty-three pieces of artillery were taken by the Austrians.

The tidings of this victory elated Maria Theresa almost to delirium. Feasts were given, medals struck, presents given, and the whole empire blazed with illuminations, and rang with all the voices of joy. The queen even condescended to call in person upon the Countess Daun to congratulate her upon the great victory attained by her husband. She instituted, on the occasion, a new military order of merit, called the order of Maria Theresa. Count Daun and his most illustrious officers were honored with the first positions in this new order of knighthood.

The Prussians were compelled to raise the siege of Prague, and to retreat with precipitation. Bohemia was speedily evacuated by the Prussian troops. The queen was now determined to crush Frederic entirely, so that he might never rise again. His kingdom was to be taken from him, carved up, and apportioned out between Austria, Sweden, Poland and Russia.

The Prussians retreated, in a broken band of but twenty-five thousand men, into the heart of Silesia, to Breslau, its beautiful and strongly fortified capital. This city, situated upon the Oder, at its junction with the Ohlau, contained a population of nearly eighty thousand. The fugitive troops sought refuge behind its walls, protected as they were by batteries of the heaviest artillery. The Austrians, strengthened by the French, with an army now amounting to ninety thousand, followed closely on, and with their siege artillery commenced the cannonade of the city. An awful scene of carnage ensued, in which the Austrians lost eight thousand men and the Prussians five thousand, when the remnant of the Prussian garrison, retreating by night through a remote gate, left the city in the hands of the Austrians.



It was now mid-winter. But the iron-nerved Frederic, undismayed by these terrible reverses, collected the scattered fragments of his army, and, finding himself at the head of thirty thousand men, advanced to Breslau in the desperate attempt to regain his capital. His force was so inconsiderable as to excite the ridicule of the Austrians. Upon the approach of Frederic, Prince Charles, disdainful to hide behind the ramparts of the city on the defensive, against a foe thus insulting him with inferior numbers, marched to meet the Prussians. The interview between Prince Charles and Frederic was short but very decisive, lasting only from the hour of dinner to the going down of a December's sun. The twilight of the wintry day had not yet come when seven thousand Austrians were lying mangled in death on the blood-stained snow. Twenty thousand were made prisoners. All the baggage of the Austrian army, the military chest, one hundred and thirty-four pieces of cannon, and fifty-nine standards fell into the hands of the victors. For this victory Frederic paid the price of five thousand lives; but *life* to the poor Prussian soldier must have been a joyless scene, and death must have been a relief.

Frederic now, with triumphant banners, approached the city. It immediately capitulated, surrendering nearly eighteen thousand soldiers, six hundred and eighty-six officers and thirteen generals as prisoners of war. In this one storm of battle, protracted through but a few days, Maria Theresa lost fifty thousand men. Frederic then turned upon the Russians, and drove them out of Silesia. The same doom awaited the Swedes, and they fled precipitately to winter quarters behind the cannon of Stralsund. Thus terminated the memorable campaign of 1757, the most memorable of the Seven Years' War. The Austrian army was almost annihilated; but the spirit of the strife was not subdued in any breast.

The returning sun of spring was but the harbinger of new woes for war-stricken Europe. England, being essentially a

maritime power, could render Frederic but little assistance in troops; but the cabinet of St. James was lavish in voting money. Encouraged by the vigor Frederic had shown, the British cabinet, with enthusiasm, voted him an annual subsidy of three million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Austria was so exhausted in means and in men, that notwithstanding the most herculean efforts of the queen, it was not until April of the year 1758 that she was able to concentrate fifty thousand men in the field, with the expensive equipments which war demands. Frederic, aided by the gold of England, was early on the move, and had already opened the campaign by the invasion of Moravia, and by besieging Olmutz.

The summer was passed in a series of incessant battles, sweeping all over Germany, with the usual vicissitudes of war. In the great battle of Hockkirchen Frederic encountered a woful defeat. The battle took place on the 14th of October, and lasted five hours. Eight thousand Austrians and nine thousand Prussians were stretched lifeless upon the plain. Frederic was at last compelled to retreat, abandoning his tents, his baggage, one hundred and one cannon, and thirty standards. Nearly every Prussian general was wounded. The king himself was grazed by a ball; his horse was shot from under him, and two pages were killed at his side.

Again Vienna blazed with illuminations and rang with rejoicing, and the queen liberally dispensed her gifts and her congratulations. Still nothing effectual was accomplished by all this enormous expenditure of treasure, this carnage and woe; and again the exhausted combatants retired to seek shelter from the storms of winter. Thus terminated the third year of this cruel and wasting war.

The spring of 1759 opened brightly for Maria Theresa. Her army, flushed by the victory of the last autumn, was in high health and spirits. All the allies of Austria redoubled their exertions; and the Catholic States of Germany with re



ligious zeal rallied against the two heretical kingdoms of Prussia and England. The armies of France, Austria, Sweden and Russia were now marching upon Prussia, and it seemed impossible that the king could withstand such adversaries. More fiercely than ever the storm of war raged. Frederic, at the head of forty thousand men, early in June met eighty thousand Russians and Austrians upon the banks of the Oder, near Frankfort. For seven hours the action lasted, and the allies were routed with enormous slaughter; but the king, pursuing his victory too far with his exhausted troops, was turned upon by the foe, and was routed himself in turn, with the slaughter of one half of his whole army. Twenty-four thousand of the allies and twenty thousand Prussians perished on that bloody day.

Frederic exposed his person with the utmost recklessness. Two horses were shot beneath him; several musket balls pierced his clothes; he was slightly wounded, and was rescued from the foe only by the almost superhuman exertions of his hussars. In the darkness of the night the Prussians secured their retreat.

We have mentioned that at first Frederic seemed to have gained the victory. So sanguine was he then of success that he dispatched a courier from the field, with the following billet to the queen at Berlin:—

“We have driven the enemy from their intrenchments; in two hours expect to hear of a glorious victory.”

Hardly two hours had elapsed ere another courier was sent to the queen with the following appalling message:—

“Remove from Berlin with the royal family. Let the archives be carried to Potsdam, and the capital make conditions with the enemy.”

In this terrible battle the enemy lost so fearfully that no effort was made to pursue Frederic. Disaster never disheartened the Prussian king. It seemed but to rouse anew his energies. With amazing vigor he rallied his scattered forces,

and called in reinforcements. The gold of England was at his disposal; he dismantled distant fortresses and brought their cannon into the field, and in a few days was at the head of twenty-eight thousand men, beneath the walls of his capital, ready again to face the foe.

The thunderings of battle continued week after week, in unintermitted roar throughout nearly all of Germany. Winter again came. Frederic had suffered awfully during the campaign, but was still unsubdued. The warfare was protracted even into the middle of the winter. The soldiers, in the fields, wading through snow a foot deep, suffered more from famine, frost and sickness than from the bullet of the foe. In the Austrian army four thousand died, in sixteen days of December, from the inclemency of the weather. Thus terminated the campaign of 1759.