CHAPTER XXX.

MARIA THERESA.

From 1759 to 1780.

Desolations of War.—Disasters of Prussia.—Despondency of Frederic.—Death of the Empress Elizabeth.—Accession of Paul III.—Assassination of Paul III.—Accession of Catharine.—Discomfiture of the Austrians.—Treaty of Peace.—Election of Joseph to the Throne of the Empire.—Death of Francis.—Character of Francis.—Anecdotes.—Energy of Maria Theresa.—Poniatowski.—Partition of Poland.—Maria Theresa as a Mother.—War with Bavaria.—Peace.—Death of Maria Theresa.—Family of the Empress.—Accesssion of Joseph II.—His Character.

THE spring of 1760 found all parties eager for the renewal of the strife, but none more so than Maria Theresa. The King of Prussia was, however, in a deplorable condition. The veteran army, in which he had taken so much pride, was now annihilated. With despotic power he had assembled a new army; but it was composed of peasants, raw recruits, but poorly prepared to encounter the horrors of war. The allies were marching against him with two hundred and fifty thousand men. Frederic, with his utmost efforts, could muster but seventy-five thousand, who, to use his own language, "were half peasants, half deserters from the enemy, soldiers no longer fit for service, but only for show."

Month after month passed away, during which the whole of Prussia presented the aspect of one wide field of battle. Frederic fought with the energies of desperation. Villages were everywhere blazing, squadrons charging, and the thunders of an incessant cannonade deafened the ear by night and by day. On the whole the campaign terminated in favor of Frederic the allies being thwarted in all their endeavors to crush him. In one battle Maria Theresa lost twenty thousand men.

During the ensuing winter all the continental powers were again preparing for the resumption of hostilities in the spring, when the British people, weary of the enormous expenditures of the war, began to be clamorous for peace. The French treasury was also utterly exhausted. France made overtures to England for a cessation of hostilities; and these two powers, with peaceful overtures, addressed Maria Theresa. The queen, though fully resolved to prosecute the war until she should attain her object, thought it not prudent to reject outright such proposals, but consented to the assembling of a congress at Augsburg. Hostilities were not suspended during the meeting of the congress, and the Austrian queen was sanguine in the hope of being speedily able to crush her Prussian rival. Every general in the field had experienced such terrible disasters, and the fortune of war seemed so fickle, now lighting upon one banner and now upon another, that all parties were wary, practicing the extreme of caution, and disposed rather to act upon the defensive. Though not a single pitched battle was fought, the allies, outnumbering the Prussians, three to one, continually gained fortresses, intrenchments and positions, until the spirit even of Frederic was broken by calamities, and he yielded to despair. He no longer hoped to be able to preserve his empire, but proudly resolved to bury himself beneath its ruins. His despondency could not be concealed from his army, and his bravest troops declared that they could fight no longer.

Maria Theresa was elated beyond measure. England was withdrawing from Prussia. Frederic was utterly exhausted both as to money and men; one campaign more would finish the work, and Prussia would lie helpless at the feet of Maria Theresa, and her most sanguine anticipations would be realized. But the deepest laid plans of man are often thwarted by apparently the most trivial events. One single individual chanced to be taken sick and die. That individual was Elizabeth, the Empress of Russia. On the 5th of January, 1762,

she was lying upon her bed an emaciate suffering woman, gasping in death. The departure of her last breath changed the fate of Europe.

Paul III., her nephew, who succeeded the empress, detested Maria Theresa, and often inveighed bitterly against her haughtiness and her ambition. On the contrary, he admired the King of Prussia. He had visited the court of Berlin, where he had been received with marked attention; and Frederic was his model of a hero. He had watched with enthusiastic admiration the fortitude and military prowess of the Prussian king, and had even sent to him many messages of sympathy, and had communicated to him secrets of the cabinet and their plans of operation. Now, enthroned as Emperor of Russia, without reserve he avowed his attachment to Frederic, and ordered his troops to abstain from hostilities, and to quit the Austrian army. At the same time he sent a minister to Berlin to conclude an alliance with the hero he so greatly admired. He even asked for himself a position in the Prussian army as lieutenant under Frederic.

The Swedish court was so intimately allied with that of St. Petersburg, that the cabinet of Stockholm also withdrew from the Austrian alliance, and thus Maria Theresa, at a blow, lost two of her most efficient allies. The King of Prussia rose immediately from his despondency, and the whole kingdom shared in his exultation and his joy. The Prussian troops, in conjunction with the Russians, were now superior to the Austrians, and were prepared to assume the offensive. But again Providence interposed. A conspiracy was formed against the Russian emperor, headed by his wife whom he had treated with great brutality, and Paul III. lost both his crown and his life, in July 1762, after a reign of less than six months.

Catharine II., wife of Paul III., with a bloody hand took the crown from the brow of her murdered husband and placed it upon her own head. She immediately dissolved the

Prussian alliance, declared Frederic an enemy to the Prussian name, and ordered her troops, in coöperation with those of Austria, to resume hostilities against Frederic. It was an instantaneous change, confounding all the projects of man. The energetic Prussian king, before the Russian troops had time so to change their positions as to coöperate with the Austrians, assailed the troops of Maria Theresa with such impetuosity as to drive them out of Silesia. Pursuing his advantage Frederic overran Saxony, and then turning into Bohemia, drove the Austrians before him to the walls of Prague. Influenced by these disasters and other considerations, Catharine decided to retire from the contest. At the same time the Turks, excited by Frederic, commenced anew their invasion of Hungary. Maria Theresa was in dismay Her money was gone. Her allies were dropping from her. The Turks were advancing triumphantly up the Danube, and Frederic was enriching himself with the spoils of Saxony and Bohemia. Influenced by these considerations she made overtures for peace, consenting to renounce Silesia, for the recovery of which province she had in vain caused Europe to be desolated with blood for so many years. A treaty of peace was soon signed, Frederic agreeing to evacuate Saxony; and thus terminated the bloody Seven Years' War.

Maria Theresa's eldest son Joseph was now twenty-three years of age. Her influence and that of the Emperor Francis was such, that they secured his election to succeed to the throne of the empire upon the death of his father. The emperor elect received the title of King of the Romans. The important election took place at Frankfort, on the 27th of May, 1764. The health of the Emperor Francis I., had for some time been precarious, he being threatened with apoplexy. Three months after the election of his son to succeed him upon the imperial throne, Francis was at Inspruck in the Tyrol, to attend the nuptials of his second son Leopold, with Maria Louisa, infanta of Spain. He was feeble and dejected, and

longed to return to his home in Vienna. He imagined that the bracing air of the Tyrol did not agree with his health, and looking out upon the summits which tower around Inspruck exclaimed,

"Oh! if I could but once quit these mountains of the Tyrol."

On the morning of the 18th of August, his symptoms assumed so threatening a form, that his friends urged him to be bled. The emperor declined, saying,

"I am engaged this evening to sup with Joseph, and I will not disappoint him; but I will be blooded to-morrow."

The evening came, and as he was preparing to go and sup with his son, he dropped instantly dead upon the floor. Fifty-eight years was his allotted pilgrimage—a pilgimage of care and toil and sorrow. Even when elevated to the imperial throne, his position was humiliating, being ever overshadowed by the grandeur of his wife. At times he felt this most keenly, and could not refrain from giving imprudent utterance to his mortification. Being at one time present at a levee, which the empress was giving to her subjects, he retired, in chagrin, from the imperial circle into a corner of the saloon, and took his seat near two ladies of the court. They immediately, in accordance with regal etiquette, rose.

"Do not regard me," said the emperor bitterly, and yet with an attempt at playfulness, "for I shall remain here until the *court* has retired, and shall then amuse myself in contemplating the crowd."

One of the ladies replied, "As long as your imperial majesty is present the court will be here."

"You are mistaken," rejoined the emperor, with a forced smile; "the empress and my children are the court. I am here only as a private individual."

Francis I., though an impotent emperor, would have made a very good exchange broker. He seemed to be fond of mercantile life, establishing manufactories, and letting out money on bond and mortgage. When the queen was greatly pressed for funds he would sometimes accept her paper, always taking care to obtain the most unexceptionable security. He engaged in a partnership with two very efficient men for farming the revenues of Saxony. He even entered into a contract to supply the *Prussian* army with forage, when that army was expending all its energies, during the Seven Years' War, against the troops of Maria Theresa. He judged that his wife was capable of taking care of herself. And she was. Notwithstanding these traits of character, he was an exceedingly amiable and charitable man, distributing annually five hundred thousand dollars for the relief of distress. Many anecdotes are related illustrative of the emperor's utter fearlessness of danger, and of the kindness of his heart. There was a terrible conflagration in Vienna. A saltpeter magazine was in flames, and the operatives exposed to great danger. An explosion was momentarily expected, and the firemen, in dismay, ventured but little aid. The emperor, regardless of peril, approached near the fire to give directions. His attendants urged him not thus to expose his person.

"Do not be alarmed for me," said the emperor, "think only of those poor creatures who are in such danger of perishing."

At another time a fearful inundation swept the valley of the Danube. Many houses were submerged in isolated positions, all but their roofs. In several cases the families had taken refuge on the tops of the houses, and had remained three days and three nights without food. Immense blocks of ice, swept down by the flood, seemed to render it impossible to convey relief to the sufferers. The most intrepid boatmen of the Danube dared not venture into the boiling surge. The emperor threw himself into a boat, seized the oars, and saying, "My example may at least influence others," pushed out into the flood and successfully rowed to one of the houses. The boatmen were shamed into heroism, and the imperiled people were saved.

Maria Theresa does not appear to have been very deeply afflicted by the death of her husband; or we should, perhaps, rather say that her grief assumed the character which one would anticipate from a person of her peculiar frame of mind. The emperor had not been faithful to his kingly spouse, and she was well acquainted with his numerous infidelities. Still she seems affectionately to have cherished the memory of his gentle virtues. With her own hands she prepared his shroud, and she never after laid aside her weeds of mourning. She often descended into the vault where his remains were deposited, and passed hours in prayer by the side of his coffin

Joseph, of course, having been preëlected, immediately assumed the imperial crown. Maria Theresa had but little time to devote to grief. She had lost Silesia, and that was a calamity apparently far heavier than the death of her husband. Millions of treasure, and countless thousands of lives had been expended, and all in vain, for the recovery of that province. She now began to look around for territory she could grasp in compensation for her loss. Poland was surrounded by Austria, Russia and Prussia. The population consisted of two classes—the nobles who possessed all the power, and the *people* who were in a state of the most abject feudal vassalage. By the laws of Poland every person was a noble who was not engaged in any industrial occupation and who owned any land, or who had descended from those who ever had held any land. The government was what may perhaps be called an aristocratic republic. The masses were mere slaves. The nobles were in a state of political equality. They chose a chieftain whom they called *king*, but whose power was a mere shadow. At this time Poland was in a state of anarchy. Civil war desolated the kingdom, the nobles being divided into numerous factions, and fighting fiercely against each other. Catharine, the Empress of Russia, espoused the cause of her favorite, Count Poniatowski, who was one of the candidates for the crown of Poland, and by the influence of her money

and her armies placed him upon the throne and maintained him there. Poland thus, under the influence of the Russian queen, became, as it were, a mere province of the Russian empire.

Poniatowski, a proud man, soon felt galled by the chains which Catharine threw around him. Frederic of Prussia united with Catharine in the endeavor to make Poniatowski subservient to their wishes. Maria Theresa eagerly put in her claim for influence in Poland. Thus the whole realm became a confused scene of bloodshed and devastation. Frederic of Prussia, the great regal highwayman, now proposed to Austria and Russia that they should settle all the difficulty by just dividing Poland between them. To their united armies Poland could present no resistance. Maria Theresa sent her dutiful son Joseph, the emperor, to Silesia, to confer with Frederic upon this subject. The interview took place at Neiss, on the 25th of August, 1769. The two sovereigns vied with each other in the interchange of courtesies, and parted most excellent friends. Soon after, they held another interview at Neustadt, in Moravia, when the long rivalry between the houses of Hapsburg and Brandenburg seemed to melt down into most cordial union. The map of Poland was placed before the two sovereigns, and they marked out the portion of booty to be assigned to each of the three imperial highwaymen. The troops of Russia, Austria and Prussia were already in Poland. The matter being thus settled between Prussia and Austria, the Prussian king immediately conferred with Catharine at St. Petersburg. This ambitious and unprincipled woman snatched at the bait presented, and the infamous partition was agreed to. Maria Theresa was very greedy, and demanded nearly half of Poland as her share. This exorbitant claim, which she with much pertinacity adhered to, so offended the two other sovereigns that they came near fighting about the division of the spoil. The queen was at length compelled to lower her pretensions

The final treaty was signed between the three powers on the 5th of August, 1772.

The three armies were immediately put in motion, and each took possession of that portion of the Polish territory which was assigned to its sovereign. In a few days the deed was done. By this act Austria received an accession of twenty-seven thousand square miles of the richest of the Polish territory, containing a population of two million five hundred thousand souls. Russia received a more inhospitable region, embracing forty-two thousand square miles, and a population of one million five hundred thousand. The share of Frederic amounted to thirteen thousand three hundred and seventy-five square miles, and eight hundred and sixty thousand souls.

Notwithstanding this cruel dismemberment, there was still a feeble Poland left, upon which the three powers were continually gnawing, each watching the others, and snarling at them lest they should get more than their share. After twenty years of jealous watchings the three powers decided to finish their infamous work, and Poland was blotted from the map of Europe. In the two divisions Austria received forty-five thousand square miles and five million of inhabitants. Maria Theresa was now upon the highest pinnacle of her glory and her power. She had a highly disciplined army of two hundred thousand men; her treasury was replenished, and her wide-spread realms were in the enjoyment of peace. Life had been to her, thus far, but a stormy sea, and weary of toil and care, she now hoped to close her days in tranquillity.

The queen was a stern and stately mother. While pressed by all these cares of state, sufficient to have crushed any ordinary mind, she had given birth to sixteen children. But as each child was born it was placed in the hands of careful nurses, and received but little of parental caressings. It was seldom that she saw her children more than once a week.

Absorbed by high political interests, she contented herself with receiving a daily report from the nursery. Every morning her physician, Van Swieter, visited the young imperial family, and then presented a formal statement of their condition to the strong-minded mother. Yet the empress was very desirous of having it understood that she was the most faithful of parents. Whenever any foreign ambassador arrived at Vienna, the empress would contrive to have an interview, as it were by accident, when she had collected around her her interesting family. As the illustrious stranger retired the children also retired to their nursery.

One of the daughters, Josepha, was betrothed to the King of Naples. A few days before she was to leave Vienna the queen required her, in obedience to long established etiquette, to descend into the tomb of her ancestors and offer up a prayer. The sister-in-law, the Emperor Joseph's wife, had just died of the small-pox, and her remains, disfigured by that awful disease, had but recently been deposited in the tomb. The timid maiden was horror-stricken at the requirement, and regarded it as her death doom. But an order from Maria Theresa no one was to disobey. With tears filling her eyes, she took her younger sister, Maria Antoinette, upon her knee, and said,

"I am about to leave you, Maria, not for Naples, but to die. I must visit the tomb of our ancestors, and I am sure that I shall take the small-pox, and shall soon be buried there." Her fears were verified. The disease, in its most virulent form, seized her, and in a few days her remains were also consigned to the tomb.

In May, 1770, Maria Antoinette, then but fifteen years of age, and marvelously beautiful, was married to the young dauphin of France, subsequently the unhappy Louis XVI. As she left Vienna, for that throne from which she was to descend to the guillotine, her mother sent by her hand the following letter to her husband:

"Your bride, dear dauphin, is separated from me. As she has ever been my delight so will she be your happiness. For this purpose have I educated her; for I have long been aware that she was to be the companion of your life. I have enjoined upon her, as among her highest duties, the most tender attachment to your person, the greatest attention to every thing that can please or make you happy. Above all, I have recommended to her humility towards God, because I am convinced that it is impossible for us to contribute to the happiness of the subjects confided to us, without love to Him who breaks the scepters and crushes the thrones of kings according to His own will."

In December, 1777, the Duke of Bavaria died without male issue. Many claimants instantly rose, ambitious of so princely an inheritance. Maria Theresa could not resist the temptation to put in her claim. With her accustomed promptness, she immediately ordered her troops in motion, and, descending from Bohemia, entered the electorate. Maria Theresa had no one to fear but Frederic of Prussia, who vehemently remonstrated against such an accession of power to the empire of Austria. After an earnest correspondence the queen proposed that Bavaria should be divided between them as they had partitioned Poland. Still they could not agree, and the question was submitted to the cruel arbitrament of battle. The young Emperor Joseph was much pleased with this issue, for he was thirsting for military fame, and was proud to contend with so renowned an antagonist. The death of hundreds of thousands of men in the game of war, was of little more moment to him than the loss of a few pieces in a game of chess.

The Emperor Joseph was soon at the head of one hundred thousand men. The King of Prussia, with nearly an equal force, marched to meet him. Both commanders were exceedingly wary, and the whole campaign was passed in maneuvers and marchings, with a few unimportant battles. The

queen was weary of war, and often spoke, with tears in her eyes, of the commencement of hostilities. Without the knowledge of her son, who rejoiced in the opening strife, she entered into a private correspondence with Frederic, in which she wrote, by her secret messenger, M. Thugut:

"I regret exceedingly that the King of Prussia and myself, in our advanced years, are about to tear the gray hairs from each other's heads. My age, and my earnest desire to maintain peace are well known. My maternal heart is alarmed for the safety of my sons who are in the army. I take this step without the knowledge of my son the emperor, and I entreat that you will not divulge it. I conjure you to unite your efforts with mine to reëstablish harmony."

The reply of Frederic was courteous and beautiful. "Baron Thugut," he wrote, "has delivered me your majesty's letter, and no one is, or shall be acquainted with his arrival. It was worthy of your majesty to give such proofs of moderation, after having so heroically maintained the inheritance of your ancestors. The tender attachment you display for your son the emperor, and the princes of your blood, deserves the applause of every heart, and augments, if possible, the high consideration I entertain for your majesty. I have added some articles to the propositions of M. Thugut, most of which have been allowed, and others which, I hope, will meet with little difficulty. He will immediately depart for Vienna, and will be able to return in five or six days, during which time I will act with such caution that your imperial majesty may have no cause of apprehension for the safety of any part of your family, and particularly of the emperor, whom I love and esteem, although our opinions differ in regard to the affairs of Germany."

But the Emperor Joseph was bitterly opposed to peace, and thwarted his mother's benevolent intentions in every possible way. Still the empress succeeded, and the articles were signed at Teschen, the 13th day of May, 1779. The queen

was overjoyed at the result, and was often heard to say that no act of her administration had given her such heartfelt joy When she received the news she exclaimed,

"My happiness is full. I am not partial to Frederic, but I must do him the justice to confess that he has acted nobly and honorably. He promised me to make peace on reasonable terms, and he has kept his word. I am inexpressibly happy to spare the effusion of so much blood."

The hour was now approaching when Maria Theresa was to die. She had for some time been failing from a disease of the lungs, and she was now rapidly declining. Her sufferings, as she took her chamber and her bed, became very severe; but the stoicism of her character remained unshaken. In one of her seasons of acute agony she exclaimed,

"God grant that these sufferings may soon terminate, for, otherwise, I know not if I can much longer endure them."

Her son Maximilian stood by her bed-side. She raised her eyes to him and said,

"I have been enabled thus far to bear these pangs with firmness and constancy. Pray to God, my son, that I may preserve my tranquillity to the last."

The dying hour, long sighed for, came. She partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and then, assembling her family around her, addressed to them her last words.

"I have received the sacraments," said she, "and feel that I am now to die." Then addressing the emperor, she continued, "My son, all my possessions after my death revert to you. To your care I commend my children. Be to them a father. I shall die contented, you giving me that promise." Then looking to the other children she added, "Regard the emperor as your sovereign. Obey him, respect him, confide in him, and follow his advice in all things, and you will secure his friendship and protection."

Her mind continued active and intensely occupied with the affairs of her family and of her kingdom, until the very last

moment. During the night succeeding her final interview with her children, though suffering from repeated fits of suffocation, she held a long interview with the emperor upon affairs of state. Her son, distressed by her evident exhaustion, entreated her to take some repose; but she replied,

"In a few hours I shall appear before the judgment-seat of God; and would you have me lose my time in sleep?"

Expressing solicitude in behalf of the numerous persons dependent upon her, who, after her death, might be left friendless, she remarked,

"I could wish for immortality on earth, for no other reason than for the power of relieving the distressed."

She died on the 29th of November, 1780, in the sixty-fourth year of her age and the forty-first of her reign.

This illustrious woman had given birth to six sons and ten daughters. Nine of these children survived her. Joseph already emperor, succeeded her upon the throne of Austria. and dying childless, surrendered the crown to his next brother Leopold. Ferdinand, the third son, became governor of Austrian Lombardy. Upon Maximilian was conferred the electorate of Cologne. Mary Anne became abbess of a nunnery. Christina married the Duke of Saxony. Elizabeth entered a convent and became abbess. Caroline married the King of Naples, and was an infamous woman. Her sister Joanna, was first betrothed to the king, but she died of small-pox; Josepha was then destined to supply her place; but she also fell a victim to that terrible disease. Thus the situation was vacant for Caroline. Maria Antoinette married Louis the dauphin, and the story of her woes has filled the world.

The Emperor Joseph II., who now inherited the crown of Austria, was forty years of age, a man of strong mind, educated by observation and travel, rather than by books. He was anxious to elevate and educate his subjects, declaring that it was his great ambition to rule over freemen. He had many noble traits of character, and innumerable anecdotes are re

lated illustrative of his energy and humanity. In war he was ambitious of taking his full share of hardship, sleeping on the bare ground and partaking of the soldiers' homely fare. He was exceedingly popular at the time of his accession to the throne, and great anticipations were cherished of a golden age about to dawn upon Austria. "His toilet," writes one of his eulogists, "is that of a common soldier, his wardrobe that of a sergeant, business his recreation, and his life perpetual motion."

The Austrian monarchy now embraced one hundred and eighty thousand square miles, containing twenty-four millions of inhabitants. It was indeed a heterogeneous realm, composed of a vast number of distinct nations and provinces, differing in language, religion, government, laws, customs and civilization. In most of these countries the feudal system existed in all its direful oppression. Many of the provinces of the Austrian empire, like the Netherlands, Lombardy and Suabia, were separated by many leagues from the great central empire. The Roman Catholic religion was dominant in nearly all the States, and the clergy possessed enormous wealth and power. The masses of the people were sunk in the lowest depths of poverty and ignorance. The aristocratic few rejoiced in luxury and splendor.

CHAPTER XXXI.

JOSEPH II. AND LEOPOLD, II.

From 1780 to 1792.

Accession of Joseph II.—His Plans of Reform.—Pius VI.—Emancipation of the Serfs.—Joseph's Visit to his Sister, Maria Antoinette.—Ambitious Designs.—The Imperial Sleigh Ride.—Barges on the Dneister.—Excursion to the Crimea.—War with Turkey.—Defeat of the Austrians.—Great Successes.—Death of Joseph.—His Character.—Accession of Leopold II.—His Efforts to confirm Despotism.—The French Revolution.—European Coalition.—Death of Leopold.—His Profligacy.—Accession of Francis II.—Present Extent and Power of Austria.—Its Army.—Policy of the Government.

WHEN Joseph ascended the throne there were ten languages, besides several dialects, spoken in Austria—the German, Hungarian, Sclavonian, Latin, Wallachian, Turkish, modern Greek, Italian, Flemish and French. The new king formed the desperate resolve to fuse the discordant kingdom into one homogeneous mass, obliterating all distinctions of laws, religion, language and manners. It was a benevolent design, but one which far surpassed the power of man to execute. He first attempted to obliterate all the old national landmarks, and divided the kingdom into thirteen States, in each of which he instituted the same code of laws. He ordered the German language alone to be used in public documents and offices; declared the Roman Catholic religion to be dominant. There were two thousand convents in Austria. He reduced them to seven hundred, and cut down the number of thirty-two thousand idle monks to twenty-seven hundred; and nobly issued an edict of toleration, granting to all men