"This," writes Wilhelmina, "put the king quite in a fury; but all his anger fell on my brother and me. He first threw a plate at my brother's head, who ducked out of the way. He then let fly another at me, which I avoided in like manner. He then rose into a passion against the queen, reproaching her with the bad training which she gave her children.

"We rose from the table. As we had to pass near him in going out, he aimed a great blow at me with his crutch, which, if I had not jerked away from it, would have ended me. He chased me for a while in his wheel-chair; but the people drawing it gave me time to escape to the queen's chamber."

While the king's peculiarly irascible nature was thus stimulated by the pangs of the gout, he was incessantly venting his rage upon his wife and children.

"We were obliged," writes Wilhelmina, "to appear at nine o'clock in the morning in his room. We dined there, and did not dare to leave it, even for a moment. Every day was passed by the king in invectives against my brother and myself. He no longer called me any thing but the *English blackguard:* my brother was named the *rascal Fritz.* He obliged us to eat and drink the things for which we had an aversion. Every day was marked by some sinister event. It was impossible to raise one's eyes without seeing some unhappy people tormented in one way or another. The king's restlessness did not allow him to remain in bed: he had placed himself in a chair on rollers, and was thus dragged all over the place. His two arms rested upon crutches, which supported them. We always followed this triumphal car, like unhappy captives who are about to undergo their sentence."

CHAPTER II.

FRITZ, AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS REIGN.

As we have mentioned, Fritz was very fond of music. A teacher from Dresden, by the name of Quantz, was secretly instructing him on the flute. His mother, in sympathy with her child, aided him in this gratification. They both knew full well, that, should the king detect him with a flute in his hand, the instrument would instantly be broken over the poor boy's head. Fritz resided with his regiment at Potsdam. He never knew when his father would make his appearance.

Whenever Fritz was with his music-teacher, an intimate friend, Lieut. Katte, was placed on the lookout. His mother also, at Berlin, kept a vigilant watch, ready to despatch a courier to her son whenever she suspected that the king was about to visit Potsdam.

One day, the prince, luxuriating in a rich French dressing-gown, was in the height of his clandestine enjoyment with his flute, when he was terrified by Katte's bursting into the room with the announcement that his wily and ever-suspicious father was already at the door. Katte and Quantz seized flute and music-books, and rushed into a wood-closet. Fritz threw off his dressing-gown, and, hurrying on his military coat, sat down at the

table as if engaged in some abstruse mathematical problem. The father burst into the room, frowning like a thunder-cloud. A French barber had dressed Fritz's hair in the most approved Parisian style. The sight of his frizzled curls called down upon the head of the prince the most astonishing storms of vituperative epithets.

Just then, the king caught sight of the dressing-gown. With a new outburst of rage, he crammed it into the fire. Hating every thing that was French, he searched the room, and collected every book he could find in that language, of which Fritz had quite a library. Sending for a neighboring bookseller, he ordered him to take them away, and sell them for what they would bring Had he chanced to open the door of the wood-closet, Katte and Quantz would have been terribly beaten, even had they escaped the headsman's block.

"The king," writes Wilhelmina, "almost caused my brother and myself to die of hunger. He always acted as carver, and served everybody except us. When, by chance, there remained any thing in the dish, he spit into it to prevent our eating of it. I was abused with insults and invectives all day long, in every possible manner, and before everybody.

"The queen contrived in her bedroom a labyrinth of screens, so that I could escape without being seen, should the king suddenly enter. One day, he surprised us. In attempting to escape, several of the screens fell. The king was at my heels, and tried to catch hold of me and beat me. He overwhelmed me with abuse, and endeavored to seize me by the hair. I fell upon the floor, near the fire. The scene would have had a tragical end had it continued, as my clothes were actually beginning to take fire. The king, fatigued with crying

out and with his passion, at length put an end to it, and went his way."

Again Wilhelmina writes, "This dear brother passed his afternoons with me. We read and wrote together, and occupied ourselves in cultivating our minds. The king now never saw my brother without threatening him with the cane."

The following occurrence is recorded by Wilhelmina, as related to her by Fritz: "As I entered the king's room this morning, he first seized me by the hair, and then threw me on the floor; along which, after having exercised the vigor of his arm upon my person, he dragged me, in spite of all my resistance, to a neighboring window. His object, apparently, was to perform the office of the mutes of the seraglio; for, seizing the cord belonging to the curtain, he placed it around my neck. I seized both of his hands, and began to cry out. A servant came to my assistance, and delivered me from his hands."

In view of this event, Fritz wrote to his mother, "I am in despair. The king has forgotten that I am his son. This morning, at first sight of me, he seized me by the collar, and struck me a shower of cruel blows with his ratan. He was almost beside himself with rage. I am driven to extremity. I have too much honor to endure such treatment, and I am resolved to put an end to it one way or another."

In June, 1730, the King of Poland held a magnificent review at Mühlberg. Frederick William attended, taking his son with him. Fritz was exposed to every mortification which his unnatural parent could inflict upon him. In the presence of the monarch, the lords and ladies, he was treated by his father with the grossest

insults. The king even openly flogged him with a ratan. Adding mockery to his cruelty, he said, —

"Had I been so treated by my father, I would have blown my brains out. But this fellow has no honor: he takes all that comes."

Fritz, goaded to madness, attempted, with the aid of a friend (Lieut. Katte), to escape to England. He was arrested. The king, in his rage, seized him by the collar, hustled him about, tore out handfuls of his hair, and smote him on the face with his cane, causing the blood to gush from his nose.

"Never before," exclaimed the unhappy prince, "did a Brandenburg face suffer the like of this. I cannot endure the treatment which I receive from my father, — his abuse and blows. I am so miserable, that I care but little for my own life."

The king assumed that his son, being an officer in the army, was a deserter, and merited death. He imprisoned him in a strong fortress to await his trial as a deserter. He assailed Wilhelmina with the utmost ferocity because she was in sympathy with her brother.

"He no sooner noticed me," writes Wilhelmina, "that rage and fury took possession of him. He became black in the face, his eyes sparkling fire, his mouth foaming. 'Infamous wretch,' said he, 'go keep your scoundrel brother company!'

"So saying, he seized me with one hand, striking me several blows in the face with the other fist. One of the blows struck me on the temple. I lay on the floor without consciousness. The king, in his frenzy, proceeded to kick me out of the window, which opened to the floor. The queen and my sisters ran between, preventing him. My head was swollen with the blows

which I had received. They threw water upon my face to bring me to life; which care I lamentably reproached them with, death being a thousand times better in the pass things had come to. The king's face was so disfigured with rage, that it was frightful to look upon.

"'I hope,' said he, 'to have evidence to convict the rascal Fritz and the wretch Wilhelmina, and to cut their heads off. As for Fritz, he will always, if he lives, be a worthless fellow. I have three other sons, who will all turn out better than he has done.'"

Wilhelmina was imprisoned in her room. Two sentinels were placed at the door. She was fed upon the coarsest prison-fare. A court-martial was convened. By order of the king, Fritz was condemned to die. Lieut. Katte, the friend of Fritz, was accused of being privy of the attempt of Fritz to escape, and of not making it known. He was condemned to two years', some say to life-long, imprisonment. The king was exasperated by the leniency of the verdict.

"Katte," he exclaimed, "is guilty of high treason! He shall die by the sword of the headsman!"

A scaffold was erected in the yard of the castle where Fritz, then a slender, fragile boy of eighteen, was imprisoned. Katte was taken to the scaffold on the death-cart. Four grenadiers held Fritz at the window to compel him to see his friend beheaded. Fritz fainted as Katte's head rolled upon the scaffold. The Emperor of Germany interfered in behalf of the prince, whom his father intended to have also beheaded. The kings of Poland and Sweden also interfered. Thus the life of Fritz was saved.

Such were the influences under which the character of Frederick the Great was formed. On the 20th of

November, 1731, Wilhelmina was, by moral compulsion, married to the Marquis of Baireuth. The king gradually became so far reconciled to his son as to treat him with ordinary courtesy. By a similar compulsion, on the 8th of January, 1733, Fritz was married to Elizabeth, daughter of the Duke of Brunswick. Elizabeth was beautiful, amiable, and accomplished, and of irreproachable integrity of character.

But the Crown Prince of Prussia was cold, severe, unloving. With undisguised reluctance, he took the hand of his innocent bride; while, then and ever after, he treated her with the most cruel neglect. Soon after the ceremony of marriage was performed, he caused, by previous arrangement, a false alarm of fire to be raised. Frederick rushed from the apartment of his bride, and did not return. He had often declared that he never would receive the princess as his wife.

Frederick ever recognized the legal tie of their marriage. On state occasions, he gave Elizabeth the position of queen, and treated her with that stately courtesy with which he addressed other ladies of the court who were entitled to his respect. Such was the only recognition Elizabeth ever received as his wife.

On the 31st of May, 1740, Frederick William, after a long and painful sickness, found himself dying. That dread hour had come to him, which, sooner or later, comes to all. He sent for a clergyman, M. Cochius, and, as he entered, exclaimed, —

"Pray for me! — pray for me! My trust is in the Saviour."

He called for a mirror, and carefully examined his emaciated features "Not so worn out as I thought," he said: "an ugly face, — as good as dead already."

As he was thus faintly and almost inarticulately talking, he seemed to experience some monition that death was immediately at hand. "Lord Jesus," he exclaimed, "to thee I live; Lord Jesus, to thee I die. In life and in death, thou art my gain."

These were his last words on earth. Thus the soul of Frederick passed to the judgment-seat of Christ.

Fritz was now King of Prussia, — King Frederick II. He was just completing his twenty-eighth year. His realms comprised an area of about fifty-nine thousand square miles; being about the size of the State of Michigan. It contained a population of 2,240,000 souls. Frederick was absolute monarch, restrained by no parliament, no constitution, no custom, or laws superior to his own resolves. He commenced his reign by declaring that there should be entire freedom of conscience in religion, that the press should be free, and that it was his wish to make every one of his subjects contented and happy.

Speedily he taught all about him that he was to be undisputed monarch. "I hope," said a veteran officer, speaking in behalf of himself and his sons, "that we shall retain the same posts and authority as in the last reign."

"The same *posts*," replied the king, "certainly. Authority — there is none but that which resides in the sovereign."

One of his boon-companions advanced, as had been his wont, to meet him jovially. The young monarch, fixing a stern eye upon him, almost floored him with the rebuff, "I am now king!"

Those who had been his friends in the days of his adversity were not rewarded; those who had been his foes

were not punished. The Giant Guard was disbanded, and, instead of them, four regiments of men of ordinary stature were organized. The king unexpectedly developed a very decided military taste. He immediately raised his standing army to over ninety thousand men. Very systematically, every hour was assigned to some specific duty. He rose at four o'clock in the morning: a single servant lighted his fire, shaved him, and dressed his hair. He allowed but fifteen minutes for his morning toilet. The day was devoted untiringly to the immense cares which devolved upon him.

His nominal wife he recognized in public as queen, and ever treated her, when it was necessary that they should meet, with cold civility. Gradually these meetings grew rare, until, after three or four years, they ceased almost entirely. Frederick was anxious to embellish his reign with men of literary and scientific celebrity. He established an academy of sciences, corresponded with distinguished scholars in other parts of Europe, and commenced correspondence and intimate friendship with Voltaire.

On the River Maas, a few miles from Liege, there was a renowned castle, which, with some thousand surrounded acres of land, had long been considered a dependency of the lords of Herstal. Frederick demanded this property upon a claim too intricate to be here fully explained. Voltaire, who drew up the manifesto, declares the claim to have been a mere pretext. Two thousand men, horse and foot, were sent to take possession of the surrounding territory, and to quarter themselves upon the inhabitants until the property, or its equivalent, was surrendered.

The Bishop of Liege, who was in possession, was a

feeble old man of eighty-two years. Resistance was impossible. The sum of a hundred and eighty thousand dollars was paid as a ransom. "This," writes Voltaire, "the king exacted in good hard ducats, which served to pay the expenses of his pleasure-tour to Strasburg."

On the 20th of October, 1740, the Emperor Charles VI. died. He left no son. That he might secure the crown to his daughter, Maria Theresa, and thus save Europe from a war of succession, which otherwise appeared inevitable, he issued a decree called "The Pragmatic Sanction." This law had been accepted and ratified by the several estates of the Austrian monarchy. Prussia, all the leading powers of Europe, — England, France, Spain, Russia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, — and the Germanic body, had solemnly pledged themselves to maintain the Pragmatic Sanction.

Thus, by the death of the emperor, his daughter Maria Theresa, a very beautiful young wife, twenty-four years of age, whose husband was Francis, Duke of Lorraine, and who was just about to become a mother, inherited the crown of Austria. She was inexperienced; had scarcely the shadow of an army; and her treasury was deplorably empty.

On the south-eastern frontier of Prussia, between that kingdom and Poland, Maria Theresa had a province called Silesia. It was about twice as large as the State of Vermont, and contained a population of two millions. For more than a century, Silesia had belonged to Austria. The assent of Europe had sanctioned the title.

Frederick was ambitious of enlarging his dominions: it was not pleasant to be king of a realm so small, that other sovereigns looked upon it with contempt. With

his powerful standing army, it was easy to take military possession of Silesia: it had no strong fortresses: there were not two thousand Austrian soldiers in the province. Frederick could present no claim to the territory which was deserving the slightest respect. In conversation with his friends, he frankly admitted, that "ambition, interest, the desire of making people talk about me, carried the day; and I decided for war."

With the utmost secrecy he matured his plans, gathered his army near the frontier, and then, after some slight diplomatic manœuvring, but without any declaration of war, rushed his troops across the border, and commenced taking military possession of all the important posts. It was proposed that he should place upon the banners the words, "For God and our Country." "Strike out the words, '*For God*,'" said the king: "I am marching to gain a province, not for religion."

That Austria might not send troops to the rescue of her invaded province, Frederick commenced his campaign in mid-winter. The roads were miry: storms of sleet swept the bleak plains: there was scarcely any enemy to be encountered. In the course of a few weeks, the whole country seemed subjugated. Frederick left Berlin for this campaign on the 12th of December, 1740. The latter part of January, he returned to receive the congratulations of his subjects upon the conquest of Silesia. In six weeks he had overrun the province, and virtually annexed it to his realms.

But Maria Theresa developed character which alike surprised Frederick and all Europe. The chivalric spirit of the surrounding monarchies was enlisted in behalf of a young queen thus unjustly assailed, and despoiled of an important province of her realms. The

preparations which Maria Theresa made to regain her lost possessions induced Frederick to send an army of sixty thousand men into Silesia to hold firmly his conquest. A terrible war was the consequence, — a war in which nearly all the nations of Europe became involved, and which extended even to the distant colonial possessions of England and France. Millions of money were expended, hundreds of thousands of lives sacrificed, cities sacked, and villages burned; while an amount of misery was spread through countless homes which no imagination can gauge.

Year after year rolled on, while the strife was continuing in ever-increasing fury. France, wishing to weaken Austria, joined Frederick; England, jealous of France, joined Maria Theresa; Prussia, Sweden, and Poland were drawn into the maelstrom of fire and blood. The energy displayed by Frederick was such as the world had never before witnessed: he was alike regardless of his own comfort and that of his soldiers. His troops were goaded forward, alike over the burning plains, beneath the blaze of a summer's sun, and through winter's storms and drifts and freezing gales.

"On the head of Frederick," writes Macaulay, "is all the blood which was shed in a war which raged during many years and in every quarter of the globe, — the blood of the column of Fontenoy, the blood of the brave mountaineers who were slaughtered at Culloden. The evils produced by this wickedness were felt in lands where the name of Frederick was unknown. In order that he might rob a neighbor whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coast of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the Great Lakes of North America."

Frederick was equally versed in diplomacy and in war. He did not hesitate to resort to any measures of intrigue, or of what would usually be called treachery, to accomplish his ends. Several of the victories which he gained gave him world-wide renown. By a secret treaty, in which he perfidiously abandoned his French allies, he obtained possession of the Fortress of Neisse, and thus became, for a time, undisputed master of Silesia.

On the 11th of November, 1741, Frederick returned to Berlin, congratulating himself and his subjects with the delusion, that his conquest was established, and that there would be no further efforts on the part of Austria to regain the province. He was thus secure, as he supposed, in the possession of Silesia.

There seems to have been no sense of honor or of honesty in any of these regal courts. The province of Moravia was a part of the Austrian kingdom: it was governed by a marquis, and was about one-third larger than the State of Massachusetts. Frederick entered into an alliance with Saxony, Bavaria, and France, to wrest that territory from Maria Theresa. Moravia, which bounded Silesia on the south, was to be annexed, in general, to Saxony; but Frederick, in consideration of his services, was to receive a strip five miles in width along the whole southern frontier of Silesia. This strip contained the important military posts of Troppau, Friedenthal, and Olmutz. Again the storms of war burst forth with renewed fury; again Frederick displayed that extraordinary energy which has filled the world with his renown.

In the midst of winter, on the 26th of January, 1742, Frederick set out upon this campaign. Speaking of the

first day's movement from Glatz to Landscrona, Gen. Stille says, —

"It was such a march as I never before witnessed. Through the ice and through the snow which covered that dreadful chain of mountains, we did not arrive till very late: many of our carriages were broken down, and others were overturned more than once."

By the skilful diplomacy of Frederick, aided by France, Maria Theresa was thwarted in her efforts to place her husband, Duke Francis, on the throne of the empire; and Charles Albert, King of Bavaria, was chosen emperor. This was regarded as a great triumph on the part of Frederick. Charles Albert, whose life from the cradle to the grave was a constant tragedy, took the title of the Emperor Charles VII.

Frederick, in the intensity of his earnestness, was greatly annoyed by the lukewarmness of his allies. He was not disposed to allow any considerations of humanity to stand in the way of his plans. Regardless of his own comfort, he was equally regardless of that of his troops. But the allies, whom he had with some difficulty drawn into the war, and who were not goaded on by his ambition, had no taste for campaigning through blinding, smothering snow-storms, and bivouacking on frozen plains swept by wintry gales.

At last, Frederick, in disgust, withdrew from his allies, and with marvellous sagacity and determination, though at an awful expense of suffering and death on the part of his troops, conducted the campaign to suit his own purposes, and in accordance with his own views. An incessant series of bloody battles ensued. Cities were bombarded, villages laid in ashes, and whole provinces

devastated and almost depopulated. Frederick was again triumphant.

On the 11th of June, 1742, a treaty of peace was signed at Breslau. Again his conquest was assured to him: Silesia was ceded to Frederick and his heirs forevermore. Elate with victory, the young conqueror cantoned his troops in Silesia, and, with a magnificent suite, galloped to Berlin, greeted all along the road by the enthusiastic acclaim of the people.

In the following terms, Frederick, in his "Histoire de mon Temps," narrates the results of these two campaigns: —

"Thus was Silesia re-united to the dominions of Prussia. Two years of war sufficed for the conquest of this important province. The treasure which the late king had left was nearly exhausted. But it is a cheap purchase where whole provinces are bought for seven or eight millions of crowns. The union of circumstances at the moment peculiarly favored this enterprise. It was necessary for it that France should allow itself to be drawn into the war; that Russia should be attacked by Sweden; that from timidity the Hanoverians and Saxons should remain inactive; that the successes of the Prussians should be uninterrupted; and that the King of England should become, in spite of himself, the instrument of its aggrandizement.

"What, however, contributed most to this conquest was an army, which had been formed for twenty-two years by means of a discipline admirable in itself, and superior to the troops of the rest of Europe; generals who were true patriots; wise and incorruptible ministers; and, finally, a certain good fortune which often

accompanies youth, and often deserts a more advanced age."

Maria Theresa regarded the loss of Silesia as the act of a highway robber. She never ceased to deplore the calamity. If the word "Silesia" were spoken in her presence, her eyes would be immediately flooded with tears.