CHAPTER III.

THE SEVEN-YEARS' WAR.

FREDERICK, having obtained Silesia, felt now disposed to cultivate the arts of peace. He had withdrawn from his allies, and entered into externally friendly relations with Austria. But still the storms of war were raging over nearly the whole of Europe. Though Frederick had dexterously escaped from the tempest with the spoil he had seized, other nations were still involved in the turmoil.

Maria Theresa became signally victorious over France. Austrian generals had arisen who were developing great military ability. Bohemia and Bavaria were reconquered by Austria; and the emperor, Charles VI., desolate, sad, and pain-stricken, was driven from his realms. Encouraged by these successes, Maria Theresa was quietly preparing to win back Silesia.

Thus influenced, Frederick, in the spring of 1744, entered into a new alliance with France and the emperor. With characteristic foresight, he had kept his army in the highest state of discipline; and his magazines were abundantly stored with all the materials of war. Having arranged with his allies that he was to receive, as his share of the spoils of the anticipated victory, the three important Bohemian principalities of Königgratz,

Buntzlau, and Leitmeritz, he issued a manifesto, saying, with unblushing falsehood, —

"His Prussian majesty requires nothing for himself · he has taken up arms simply to restore to the emperor his imperial crown, and to Europe peace."

In three strong military columns the king entered Bohemia, and on the 4th of September, having thus far encountered no opposition, invested Prague. The campaign proved to be the most sanguinary and woful he had yet experienced. The sweep of maddened armies spread desolation and misery over all Bohemia. Starving soldiers snatched the bread from the mouths of starving women and children. Houseless families froze in the fields. In the dead of winter, Frederick was compelled to retire to Silesia in one of the most disastrous retreats recorded in the annals of war.

Cantoning his shattered army in the Silesian villages, he returned to Berlin to prepare for a new campaign. His pecuniary resources were exhausted, his army dreadfully weakened, and his *matériel* of war impaired or consumed.

It was in such hours of difficulty that the genius of Frederick was developed. The victorious Austrians had pursued his troops into Silesia. The unhappy emperor died in poverty and pain. France alone remained an ally to Frederick. His situation seemed almost hopeless. On the 29th of March, 1745, he wrote from Neisse to his minister, Podewils, at Berlin, —

"We find ourselves in a great crisis. If we do not, by mediation of England, get peace, our enemies from different sides will come plunging in against me. Peace I cannot force them to; but, if we must have war, we

will either beat them, or none of us will ever see Berlin again."

On the 20th of April he again wrote, "If we needs must fight, we will do it like men driven desperate. Never was there a greater peril than that I am now in. The game I play is so high, one cannot contemplate the issue in cold blood."

Another desolating campaign, with its series of sanguinary battles, ensued. At Hohen-Friedberg and at Sohr, Frederic gained great victories, though at the expense of the terrible slaughter of his own and of the Austrian troops. Dreadful as were the blows he inflicted upon others, he received blows almost equally terrible himself. At length, once more a victor, having captured Dresden, the capital of Saxony, he again sheathed his dripping sword, and concluded a peace. In his comments upon this war, Frederick writes, —

"Considering, therefore, things at their true value, we are obliged to acknowledge that this contest was in every respect only useless effusion of blood, and that the continued victories of the Prussians only helped to confirm to them the possession of Silesia. Indeed, if consideration and reputation in arms meant that efforts should be made to obtain them, undoubtedly Prussia, by gaining them, was recompensed for having undertaken the war. But this was all she gained for it; and even this imaginary advantage excited feelings of envy against her."[1]

Frederick returned to his capital on the 1st of January, 1746. Prussia now enjoyed a few years of repose. The king, with energies which never tired, devoted himself to the development of the resources of his realms, and,

[1] Histoire de mon Temps

like Cæsar, to writing the history of his own great achievements. In a letter to Voltaire upon this subject, he writes modestly, —

"'The History of my Own Time,' which at present occupies me, is not in the way of memoirs or commentaries. My own history hardly enters into my plan; for I consider it a folly in any one to think himself sufficiently remarkable to render it necessary that the whole universe should be informed of the details relating to him. I describe generally the disturbed state of Europe; and I have particularly endeavored to expose the folly and the contradictions which may be remarked in those who govern it."[1]

The impulse which Frederick gave to industry was very great; and the reforms which were introduced into the laws by the *Code Frederick* were worthy of all praise, when compared with the semi-barbaric and confused system which had before existed. During this time, Frederick became involved in a bitter quarrel with Voltaire, into the details of which we have no space here to enter. But again the clouds of war began to gather, and darken the horizon.

Maria Theresa, ever anxious to regain Silesia, entered, with that object in view, into a secret alliance with Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, and with Augustus III. of Poland. Both Elizabeth and Maria Theresa entertained a very strong personal dislike for Frederick. The Marchioness of Pompadour, who ruled France, had considered herself insulted by the sarcasms of his Prussian majesty. Anxious for revenge, she also joined the alliance. It so chanced, at that time, that three women

[1] Letter to Voltaire of the 24th of April, 1747.

ruled Continental Europe. These three women were arrayed against Frederick. Thus, in addition to the important diplomatic issues which were involved, personal pique envenomed the conflict. There were also many rumors that Frederick was contemplating additional conquests. Frederick, by bribery, became acquainted with the plan of the coalition. It was nothing less than taking possession of Prussia, and essentially dividing it between them; leaving to their vanquished foe, perhaps, a small duchy or marquisate. The king resolved to anticipate his foes, and to strike them before they had begun to move. France was at that time at war with England, and hoped to take Hanover. This led the British court, trembling for its Continental possession, to enter into a reluctant and inefficient alliance with Prussia. Thus commenced the Seven-Years' War.

France had already assembled an immense force on the Rhine to march upon Prussia from the west. The Swedes, who had been drawn into the alliance, and the Russians, were marshalling their forces in Pomerania and Livonia for an attack from the north. Austria had gathered a hundred and fifty thousand men on the frontiers of Silesia to invade Prussia from the south. Prussia seemed now doomed to destruction.

Frederick, having demanded, as a matter of form, the object of these military demonstrations, and receiving an evasive answer, informed the court of Vienna that he considered their answer a declaration of war. Immediately, three divisions of the Prussian army, amounting in all to over a hundred thousand men, entered Saxony, and were soon united near Dresden. Dresden was easily captured; and its archives fell into the hands of the victor. Immense sums of money were levied from the people.

Austria rushed to the aid of Saxony. The utmost human energy was expended in the mortal struggle. The reader would weary at the recital of the names even of the battle-fields. Dispersing his foes, though at a vast expense of misery and blood on the part of his own troops, the Prussian monarch rushed into Bohemia, and fell fiercely upon the Austrian troops intrenched outside of the walls of Prague. The renowned battle of Prague, which, says Carlyle, "sounded through all the world, and used to deafen us in drawing-rooms within man's memory," was fought on the 5th of May, 1757.

"This battle," writes Frederick, "which began towards nine in the morning, and lasted till eight at night, was one of the bloodiest of the age. The enemy lost twenty-four thousand men. The Prussian loss amounted to eighteen thousand. This day saw the pillars of the Prussian infantry cut down."

The routed Austrians fled for shelter behind the walls of Prague. The city, which contained one hundred thousand inhabitants, was quite unprepared for a siege. The garrison, daily expecting an Austrian army to march to its relief, held out with great firmness. The scene of misery witnessed in Prague was awful. An incessant storm of shot and shell fell upon the crowded dwellings. Conflagrations were continually bursting forth. There was no safety anywhere. Famine came; pestilence followed. Demons could not have inflicted more misery than the wretched inhabitants of Prague endured.

At length the banners of Marshal Daun appeared, waving over sixty thousand Austrians. The antagonists met, and fought with the utmost ferocity. The slaughter on both sides was awful. Frederick, almost frantic with grief, saw his battalions melting away before the

batteries of the foe. Six times his cavalry charged six times they were repulsed. Frederick was beaten. Sullenly he withdrew, leaving fourteen thousand behind him slain, or prisoners. With but twenty-five thousand men, their ranks shattered and bleeding, and their hearts despondent, Frederick retreated to the Fortress of Breslau in Silesia. An allied force of ninety thousand Austrians and French pursued them. Soon another terrific battle ensued. The Prussians, having lost eight thousand more men, were driven from Breslau.

It was now mid-winter. The allies supposed that Frederick was ruined. The Austrians spoke of his shattered bands with ridicule and contempt. Marvellous are the vicissitudes of war. On the 4th of December, 1757, the antagonistic hosts again met on the Plains of Lissa. Frederick had thirty thousand men; the allies, ninety thousand. The battle was short and decisive: it lasted only from the hour of noon to the going-down of the sun.

The Austrians were thoroughly routed. Seven thousand of their slain were strewed over the blood-stained snow. Twenty thousand were made prisoners. All their baggage, their military chest, one hundred and thirty-four pieces of cannon, and fifty-nine standards, fell into the hands of the victors. The Prussians paid for this victory five thousand lives.

Frederick, with triumphant banners, marched upon Breslau. The city capitulated, surrendering its whole garrison of eighteen thousand men and its supplies. The victor then turned upon the approaching Russians, and drove them out of the kingdom. He then advanced upon the Swedes: they fled precipitately to take shelter behind the walls of Stralsund. Thus terminated the campaign of 1757.

During the winter, both parties were recruiting their strength for the renewal of the fight. The returning sun of spring opened new woes for war-stricken Europe. The summer was passed in a series of incessant battles, sweeping over nearly the whole of Germany. In the battle of Hochkirchen, on the 14th of October, Frederick, in his turn, encountered a woful defeat. He retreated, leaving behind him nine thousand slain or prisoners, and a hundred and one guns. Nothing decisive was accomplished by the enormous expenditure of treasure, and the carnage and woe of this campaign. Thus ended the third year of this cruel and wasting war.

The spring of 1759 came. Maria Theresa was elated by her victories at the close of the last campaign. The allies redoubled their efforts. Catholic Germany generally rallied with religious zeal against heretical Prussia and England. England, a maritime nation, could afford Frederick but little assistance, save in money. Her gifts in that respect were small, amounting to but little over three millions of dollars a year. Indeed, England did but little, save to protect her own province of Hanover.

The armies of France, Austria, Poland, Sweden, and Russia, were now marching upon depopulated and impoverished Prussia. The allies represented a population of over a hundred millions. The population of Prussia was less than five millions. Thus Frederick had against him about twenty to one. With incredible exertions, the king had raised forty thousand troops. Early in June, he met eighty thousand of the allies near Frankfort on the Oder. Both parties were vanquished: first the allies in awful slaughter; then, by a sudden and un-

expected turn in the tide of battle, the Prussians were overwhelmed.

Frederick, in the moment of supposed success, sent the following despatch to Berlin: "We have driven the enemy from his intrenchments. In two hours, expect to hear of a glorious victory."

The two hours of battle's hideous and hateful clamor passed away; and another courier was despatched with the appalling message, "Remove from Berlin with the royal family. Let the archives be carried to Potsdam, and the capital make conditions with the enemy."

Twenty-four thousand of the allies, and twenty thousand Prussians, fell on that bloody day. Two horses were shot beneath Frederick; and his clothes were pierced with many balls. In the darkness of the night, he retreated with the remnant of his troops. The allies had suffered so severely, that they did not attempt to pursue.

Disaster never disheartened Frederick: it only aroused anew his energies. With amazing vigor he rallied his scattered forces, dismantled distant fortresses, and brought their cannon into the field, and in a few days was at the head of twenty-eight thousand men to dispute the advance of the foe upon Berlin. Week after week, the thunders of war continued to echo over this wretched land. Winter came. The soldiers, on both sides, suffering more from famine, frost, and sickness, than from the bullets of the foe, could no longer remain in the open field. In the Austrian army, four thousand died in sixteen days from the inclemency of the weather. Thus terminated the campaign of 1759, the fourth year of this desperate conflict.

The spring of 1760 found both parties equally eager

for the renewal of the war. Maria Theresa was elate with hope. Frederick was inspired by despair: the veteran army of the Prussians was almost annihilated. The Prussian king had filled his broken ranks with peasants and boys, and any raw recruits whom he could force into the ranks by the energies of absolute power. With his utmost efforts, he could muster but seventy-five thousand men; and these, to use his own language, "were half peasants, half deserters from the enemy, — soldiers no longer fit for service, but only for show." The "deserters" were prisoners of war, whom Frederick had compelled to enlist under his banners.

The allies were marching upon him with two hundred and fifty thousand men. Against such unequal numbers, Frederick fought with energy and skill which filled Europe with wonder. Villages were burned; harvests were trampled under foot; fields were crimsoned with gore; widows and orphans starved on the dreary plains; and still there were no decisive results. On the whole, the campaign was in Frederick's favor. To the surprise of all, he had succeeded in thwarting the endeavors of the allies to crush him. Again the combatants retired to winter-quarters; and the fifth year of the war was ended.

Frederick, in his correspondence with his friends, confessed that his prospects were hopeless. He, however, resolved to struggle to the last, and to bury himself beneath the ruins of his kingdom. Having rejected Christianity, and having none of the consolations of religion to sustain him, he carried constantly with him a phial of poison, that, as a last resort, he might commit suicide.

The sixth campaign, that of 1761, proved uneventful.

Frederick fortified himself with so much skill at Kunersdorf, that the allies did not venture to attack him. They surrounded him in large numbers, as hounds surround a tiger at bay. There were many bloody skirmishes and sieges: large regions were devastated, and thousands perished in their misery. Frederick encountered severe reverses, and was, apparently, every month approaching nearer to his end. Despairing, yet resolute, when the storms of winter drove the allies from the field, the Prussians sought refuge in a camp near Leipsic. The sixth year of blood and woe had ended.

Frederick could no longer conceal his despondency. The English withdrew their subsidy: the Prussians declared that they could struggle no longer against such fearful odds. The allies were elated: it seemed manifest that one campaign more would finish their work, and that Prussia would lie helpless at their feet. In this dark hour, in a day as it were, the whole prospect became changed.

One individual chanced to be taken sick and die: that individual was Elizabeth, the Empress of Russia. She died on the 5th of January, 1762. Her death changed the fate of Europe. Peter III., who succeeded Elizabeth, hated Maria Theresa, and admired Frederick. He ordered his troops immediately to withdraw from the alliance, and sent them to the aid of Frederick. The Swedish court was so allied with that of Russia, that their troops also withdrew. Peter III. even solicited a position for himself in the Prussian army.

The change was as sudden as that caused by a turn in the kaleidoscope. Again there was a transient reverse. Peter III. was assassinated. His wife, the world-renowned Catharine II., ascended the throne: she dissolved the Prussian alliance, and ordered her troops to return to Russia. In the mean time, Frederick had roused the Turks against Austria. Before the Russians had left his camp, he attacked the Austrians with his accustomed impetuosity, and they were routed with great loss. Maria Theresa was now in dismay: her allies were leaving her; her treasury was exhausted. The Turks, sweeping all opposition before them, were ascending the Danube: Frederick, victorious, was enriching himself with the spoils of Saxony and Bohemia. On the 15th of February, 1763, peace was concluded. *Frederick retained Silesia.*

According to Frederick's computation, the conquest of the province had cost the lives of six hundred and seventy thousand of the allies, and one hundred and eighty thousand Prussians who had perished on the field of battle. The treasure expended and wasted in the desolations of war can never be estimated; neither can there be any accurate estimate of the hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children, who had perished of exposure, famine, pestilence, and misery. The population of Prussia had diminished five hundred thousand during the Seven-Years' War.

The day after the treaty of peace was signed, Frederick wrote to his friend D'Argens, "For me, poor old man that I am, I return to a town where I know nothing but the walls; where I find no longer any of my friends; where great and laborious duties await me; and where I shall soon lay my old bones in an asylum which can neither be troubled by war, by calamities, nor by the wickedness of men."

Under the energetic and sagacious administration of Frederick, Prussia rapidly recovered from its ruinous

condition. "To form an idea," he writes, "of the general subversion, and how great were the desolation and discouragement, you must represent to yourself countries entirely ravaged, the very traces of the old habitations hardly discoverable: of the towns, some were ruined from top to bottom, others half destroyed by fire. Of thirteen thousand houses, the very vestiges were gone; there was no field in seed, no grain for the food of the inhabitants; noble and peasant had been pillaged, ransomed, foraged, eaten out by so many different armies, that nothing was now left them but life and miserable rags."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARTITION OF POLAND, AND THE INVASION OF FRANCE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the acquisitions which Frederick had made to his domains, Prussia was still but a feeble kingdom, compared with the great monarchies of Austria, France, and Russia. To place Prussia upon any thing like an equality with these first-class powers, it was necessary for his Prussian majesty still more to enlarge his realms.

The kingdom of Poland occupied a territory of two hundred and eighty-four thousand square miles. It contained a population of twenty millions. Poland was surrounded by Austria, Russia, and Prussia. It is not certain with whom the idea originated, of dismembering this kingdom, — whether with the Russian empress, or with Frederick. The king was chosen by the nobles. Upon the death of Augustus, King of Poland, on the 5th of October, 1763, Catharine, by bribery, succeeded in placing upon the throne a handsome young Pole, Stanislaus Poniatowski, who had for some time been a very special favorite at her court. He was crowned King of Poland on the 7th of September, 1764.

Two or three years passed away of wars and insurrections, and all the usual tumult and woe which have