

His body lay in state at Marlborough house, with the standards and shields of the towns he had taken and the fields he had won. Seeing these England had no cause to blush for her hero, but rather for the manner in which she had allowed his detractors to assail him.

Prince Eugene, whose love and admiration for Marlborough had never waned, in answer to some one who said in his downfall that he had once been fortunate, answered: "It is true he was *once* fortunate, and it is the greatest praise that can be bestowed upon him, for as he was *always* successful, that implies that all his other successes were owing to his own conduct."

CHAPTER IX.

KING CHARLES (MAN OF IRON).

Ancestral Lines—Birth and Education—Early Characteristics—On the Throne at fifteen—Impatience—Coronation—The Leagued Enemy—Early Display of Power and Genius—Attacking his Enemies Individually—Battle of Narva—Instance of Bravery—Defeat at Pultowa—Flees to Turkey—Charles Threatens the Sultan—Returns Home—At War with Norway—Second Campaign—Last Battle—The Fatal Shot.

AT the beginning of the sixteenth century, a new era, both in politics and religion, dawned upon Europe. The feudal system had long been on the decline. The Reformation, in recognizing the right of freedom of thought, had become its deadly enemy. The soil of Sweden was not favorable to the old plan of feudalism, which required large tracts of fertile land to sustain it.

The ancestors of Charles XII. were warriors, and his immediate predecessor had been the most despotic of all. He abolished the authority of the Senate, declaring it was not the Senate of the people, but of the king.

In June, 1682, at the palace in Stockholm, Charles XII. was born. His first years were passed under the guardianship of his mother, a woman of great virtue and integrity. The remarkable talent of the young Prince was early developed, and his progress was rapid

Poland, who desired a treaty of peace; but Charles, remembering the past, had no faith in him, and refused all negotiations. The crown of Poland was his only price for peace. In March, 1702, Poland was invaded, and Charles, at the head of his army, pushed on toward Warsaw, which fell into his hands, and Augustus fled to the south.

In February, 1704, it was declared at Warsaw, by the cardinal primate, that King Augustus had forfeited the crown of Poland, and thus Charles had accomplished his object before he had entered his twenty-third year.

The following year he marched into Saxony, meeting little opposition, and at the castle of Alt-Ranstadt Charles received the envoy sent by the Elector of Saxony to negotiate terms of peace; there, also, assembled the representatives of several foreign powers to do homage to the Lion of the North.

Charles was now twenty-four years of age, and in the zenith of his power and fame. Chief among his admirers were the protected Protestants of Saxony and Silesia. When leaving the country with his troops the inhabitants followed him for miles, and it is easy to imagine whither the overflowing eyes were directed, when peasants and soldiery were singing:

"Our own poor strength is weak indeed,
And foes would soon o'erpower,
But with us stands the Man we need,
A strong, unyielding tower."

Charles now resolved to march his victorious armies into Russia, and beard the czar in his own strongholds.

At the close of 1707 he bade a final adieu to Poland, and with an army of 34,000 men, late in the year, they went into winter quarters at Minsh. The spring of 1708 was unusually hot, and disease, to a fearful extent, prevailed among the soldiers, so that, in self-defence, he was forced to move to a more healthful location. In June he was on the march, and his first encounter with his formidable foe occurred at Hollosin, near the river Dneiper, when the Muscovites were completely routed, to the astonishment of the czar, who now began to desire a truce with this all-conquering foe. For this purpose Peter sent an envoy to Charles, who returned the haughty answer, "I will treat with the czar at Moscow."

On September 22, 1708, Charles attacked a large body of Russian Tartars, near Smolensk, and obliged them to fly, after a day of fearful carnage, while he continued his conquering way. The long train of victories had inspired the Swedes with so much confidence that they were always confident of victory. On October 7th they advanced against a force of Russians, throwing them into dire confusion. As Peter saw his troops begin to waver and fly, he sent orders to the rear, where the Calmucks were posted, to fire on every man who should be seen flying from the field. Rallying his disordered lines he retired in order, and the contest for that day was closed. But early the ensuing morning Peter renewed the battle, being strongly reinforced, and for the first time Charles was conquered. This was the turning point in the career of Charles XII. The succeeding winter was of unexampled severity, but on February 1st he renewed, in the midst of snow and frost, his military operations, for he had lost neither

the design nor hope of penetrating to Moscow. Accordingly, in May, he laid siege to Pultowa, upon the river Vorska, knowing that here were stored in immense quantities supplies of every kind. The garrison was stronger than Charles had supposed, but in all probability he might have carried the siege successfully had he not been disabled by a wound in his foot, and compelled, for the first time in his life, to intrust the command to other hands than his own. It was not for some days that the closing battle of Pultowa was fought, ending in utter defeat to the Swedes. Charles narrowly escaped capture, by crossing the river in the boat of a peasant, and, after many adventures, he escaped through the steppes of Russia and entered Turkey as a fugitive in disguise.

There is a greatness which is most strikingly displayed in the hour of trial, when all seems lost. In the highest degree Charles displayed this trait, and it enabled him to triumph over adverse fate. History cannot produce another instance of a fugitive in a foreign land attaining such a position as that in which Charles soon found himself among the Turks. For a full understanding of the situation we must glance at the then condition of Turkey. Achmet III. was on the throne—placed there by a revolution—who had greatly weakened the strength of the nation by putting to death, one after another, the officers, ministers and generals who had placed him on the throne, lest they might some day attempt another revolution. In July, 1709, Charles wrote to Achmet a letter marked by haughtiness of manner, and the most invincible and audacious courage. To this no reply was returned until September of the same year. In the meantime he had

an envoy at Constantinople, and he actually attempted to arm the Ottoman empire against his enemies, and through them subdue Russia. Failing in this, the monarch, disappointed but not subdued, returned to Stockholm in 1714.

We must not regard Charles as exclusively, or even mainly, a soldier. He displayed the liveliest interest in questions bearing on domestic economy, in national education and art. During his residence in Turkey he sent to Stockholm orders for the rebuilding of the palace and for state assistance to men of science.

But from the defeat at Pultowa the lustre of the star of Charles began to wane, and by his misplaced confidence in men of foreign birth, a breach gradually opened between the king and his people.

The Sweden to which the monarch returned was not the Sweden which he left. The people, though still idolizing his person, no longer approved his policy.

The restless mind of Charles now meditated the conquest of Norway, and its annexation to the crown of Sweden. The struggle to realize this was his last enterprise. Before beginning the campaign of Norway he worked faithfully in improving the new legal code, and gave many proofs of his interest in the arts of peace and the progress of science.

In 1716 the first advance into Norway was made, but lack of subsistence for his army obliged him to retreat, with no decisive result. In 1718 a new plan of action was begun. Charles again moved on Norway, laying siege to Frederickshall, a point of great importance, and considered as the key to the kingdom. But the result was fatal to his troops, not only by

reason of the valor of the opposing force, but by the extreme and fatal cold, which caused the death of his hardy soldiers. At length, as the fearless king was exposed on a parapet cheering and encouraging his men, a shot from a cannon struck him on the right temple, causing instant death. Thus fell, at the age of thirty-six and a half years, Charles XII. of Sweden. It is fitting that so gallant a soldier should pass from earth in just this way. He never said "Go" to his troops; it was always, "Come."

He was of commanding stature; his eye of a piercing deep blue; somewhat aquiline nose; towering forehead, and about his beardless mouth there ran lines of defiance. Contrary to the custom of his time, he never wore a wig; his long auburn hair waved in freedom about his proud head. His dress was essentially Swedish. A loose blue coat, turned-down collar, and large, plain, brass buttons, buff waistcoat, and black kerchief folded doubly about his neck, a coarse felt hat, and high, broad-toed riding boots, completed his costume. The name of Charles XII. is a household word in Sweden, while the youth of every age and in every land are taught to emulate his virtues and honor the true nobility of his character.

CHAPTER X.

FREDERICK WILLIAM (LITTLE FRITZ).

Early History—Military Inclinations—The Prescribed Course of Instructions—Discipline—Youthful Hardships—Attempt to Escape—Execution of his Friend—Fritz saved by the Interference of European Sovereigns—Married—Pursuing his Studies—King—What a King should be—Personal Observations—Invading Austria—At Prague—Return to Berlin—Reception—Making a Strong Coalition—In Saxony—Defeat at Kollin—Resigning Command of the Army—Genius to the Front—At Peace—Serving his Subjects—Vain Attempt of his Secretary to arouse him—Peaceful Death.

THE subject of this sketch, better known as Frederick the Great, was born January 17, 1712. He was the grandson of Frederick I. of Prussia, and son of Frederick William and Sophie Dorothea, daughter of George II. of England. The crown prince Frederick William was twenty-four years of age at the time of the birth of "Little Fritz," as he was called. The reigning king, his grandfather, was old and infirm, and the joy with which he greeted the young prince was shared by the Prussian nation. Great rejoicing was made throughout the empire, and with much pomp and ceremony he was christened Charles Frederick. He afterwards dropped the name of Charles, and was designated Frederick only.

His grandfather, the king, died when Frederick was

in most subjects, particularly in mathematics and the classics. But in 1693 his devoted mother was removed by death, and this was to Charles the greatest possible loss. His grief was so intense as not only to affect his health but to threaten his life; but youth and a robust constitution soon restored him to vigor, and his physical development, from that period, was so rapid that, when fourteen years of age, he had well-nigh attained the size of a full-grown man.

He was extremely fond of military studies and exercises, in addition to which he passed through a course of study at the University of Upsala. He was very much interested in the German language, which he spoke with the same fluency as his own.

He portrayed a disposition of most inflexible obstinacy, which is illustrated in the following incident, which could only be managed by awakening his sense of honor. It is said of him that in childhood he was one day examining two plans, one of a town in Hungary, under which was written, "The Lord gave it to me, and the Lord hath taken it from me; blessed be the name of the Lord." The Turks had taken this Hungarian town from the Emperor. The other plan was of Riga, a Livonian province, which the Swedes had conquered about a century before; the young prince, having read the inscription penned by his father, took a pencil and inscribed on the second plan: "The Lord hath given this to me, and the evil one himself shall not take it from me."

Charles XII. nominally ascended the throne in 1697, when only fifteen years old, and found himself master not only of Sweden and Finland, but of Livonia, Carelia, Ingria, and Wibourg, besides the islands of

Rugen and Oesel, the finest part of Pomerania, and the duchy of Bremen. By the will of his father, whose mother, no doubt, instigated the scheme, a regency was appointed, of which she should be chief, which should govern during the minority of the young king. The impatience of Charles would not brook this restraint: he scorned to receive orders at the hand of a woman.

There was, in addition, throughout the country, a desire to be ruled directly by its youthful sovereign.

Three things combined to hasten the following result: 1st, a general famine, the most severe from which the country ever suffered. 2d, the threatening aspect of European affairs. 3d, a terrible fire at the palace in Stockholm. After grave consultation with his nobles, on November 8, 1697, Charles appeared in the Council of Regents, and baring his head, uttered these words—"By the help of God, and in the name of Jesus, I now assume the government."

On the 24th of the succeeding month he made entry into Stockholm on a sorrel horse, shod with bright silver, amid the acclamations of the people. The ceremony of consecration and coronation belonged, of right, to the Archbishop of Upsala. After he had anointed the prince, as he held the crown in his hand before the kneeling king, Charles suddenly snatched it from the prelate, and placed it upon his own head! The multitude applauded this action; arrogant though it was, they failed to hear in it the key-note of his coming reign.

At this period no one knew the real character of Charles.* He appeared as indolent as he was haughty, and the neighboring kings doubted not that Sweden would fall an easy prey to the attacks of their troops.

Frederick IV., of Denmark, Augustus, of Poland, and Peter the Great, of Russia, combined against the boy king. Words fail to express the scorn with which Peter should be regarded, in the light of this transaction. Only three days before entering into alliance with Augustus to war upon Sweden, Peter had concluded a friendly treaty with Charles. The confiding young monarch had, at the request of the Czar, supplied him with Swedish guns, in one short week to be turned against himself. The perfidious Augustus had, a few days before, sent a congratulatory address to Charles on his accession to the throne.

Suddenly, with no preparation, Sweden became aware of this union between the three powerful potentates, and was assured that they intended to advance at once upon the youthful monarch; as Peter had determined to obtain control of all territory between the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic Sea, Poland and Russia. Especially did the councilors of Charles experience the most profound alarm, as the older generals were dead, and no one, tried in emergencies, remained upon whose counsel they could rely. Imagine their astonishment when the youthful king rose with innate majesty to the occasion. He immediately assumed the grave air of a man of superior ability, and issued his orders with the deliberation of well-digested plans.

As the main body of Danes was posted at Gleswig, with the king (Frederick) in command, Charles, by an impulse which was nothing less than the inspiration of genius, decided upon his course. When the Swedish fleet entered the sound from the south, and two squadrons of Dutch and English ships appeared in the north, the Danes did not dare to venture out of their harbor.

Charles had only 6,000 troops, but TIME was of the greatest importance, and at once he decided to push across and take possession of Denmark. The Swedish fleet rapidly stood over the sound, and advanced toward land under shelter of the fire from their cannon. When as yet the boats were 300 paces from the shore, Charles, impatient at their slow motion, leaped into the water, sword in hand, and steadily marched to the land. So daring an example was quickly imitated by his ministers, his officers, and many of the soldiers. The sheer audacity of this movement appears to have been its protection—his victory was almost bloodless. He immediately sent his vessels back for reinforcements of 9,000 men, and Charles became master of the enemy's entrenchments. He fell upon his knees and returned thanks to God for this first success to his arms. Copenhagen, thoroughly frightened, sent deputies, begging him not to bombard the town. He received them, in the saddle, at the head of his troops, and the deputies threw themselves on their knees before him.

This first campaign and military manœuver has been described at greater length than its importance seemed to warrant, but, considered as the exponent of the future, it may not be as insignificant as at first glance it seems. Under the walls of Copenhagen Charles granted an armistice to the treacherous Frederick, on payment of \$400,000, and the promise to furnish his army with provisions, for which he agreed to pay. The promises were faithfully fulfilled on both sides.

The strict discipline of the Swedish army was too noticeable to be passed by without comment. Not a soldier dared to forage for himself; not a follower was

allowed about the camp; not a man dared to search or strip a dead body without permission; twice a day prayers were said—at 7 A. M. and 4 P. M.—at which his majesty failed not to assist in person, thus giving to his soldiers an example of homage to the King of kings, as well as of personal valor at the landing on Danish soil.

The czar was much the more formidable of the two enemies which now remained to Charles.

Not one, even of his most trusted counsellors, was allowed to become cognizant of his plans. He received, at this point in his career, many proposals of assistance from foreign envoys, but, declining all, he proceeded early in July of 1700 to embark his troops at Carls-
hamm, on the Baltic. They were landed at Pernau, a town in Livonia, and before the Russians had even time to learn the result of his campaign in Poland, he was pushing on toward Narva, which was at this time hard pressed by the Russians. At this remarkable battle of Narva the Swedish troops achieved one of the most signal victories recorded in the annals of history. Charles attacked the greatly superior force of Russians without giving them time to become acquainted with his small numbers, and in the midst of a blinding snow-storm, which rendered the surprise complete. The number of prisoners was so great that his small army, overcome with fatigue, could not guard them, and on the day following the battle he ordered them all to be set at liberty. During the battle the king's horse was killed as he sat upon it. Loosing his feet from the stirrups as his steed sank, he sprang upon another horse, exclaiming, "These Muscovite gentry do make me take exercise!" It must be re-

membered that Charles was at this time only eighteen years of age.

During the year 1700 the military forces of Sweden had been entirely reorganized. The winter of 1700-1 was devoted to exercising and disciplining his troops. About midsummer 1701 Charles broke his camp, crossed the Dwina into Poland, and, after an obstinate and bloody battle, achieved a complete victory. At this period he was assailed by a new temptation, in the person of the lovely Aurora Königsmark, an ambassadress before whose charms many noble and crowned heads had bowed. It is said by historians of that day that Charles feared, and absolutely refused, to see her; the principles of stern morality in which he had been reared, and which bound him as with chains from any indulgence against which his conscience warned him, forbade him to treat with this lady, whose beauty had been so fatal to others, and who was possessed of more wit and talent than any minister in the north of Europe. Chagrined at her lack of success with the Swedish king, she amused herself in writing some verses, in which she recited his history, concluding thus:

"Nay! All the gods to sound his fame combine
Except the deities of love and wine."

Determined that he should not escape her, she one day met him in a narrow path; descending from her carriage as soon as she saw him coming, she stood awaiting his approach. Charles bowed to his saddle-bow, wheeled his horse and instantly rode back, giving her the poor satisfaction of saying that he retreated before her. The Countess Königsmark was trying to influence the king in the interests of Augustus of