

CHAPTER XV.

PRINCE FREDERICK CHARLES.

Military Ancestry—Place of Nativity—Early Embarkment into Military Life—First Military Expedition—His Exemplar—At Duppel—In the Austrian War—"May your Heart beat toward God and your Fists upon the Enemy"—Bravery—Military Author—Franco-Prussian War—Battle of Metz—"You cannot Make an Omelette without Breaking the Egg"—General Characteristics.

ONE of the names most prominent in the history of the German Empire during its period of military glory in this century is that of Prince Frederick Charles, or, as he is usually called, Prince Karl.

He is the son of Prince Frederick, brother of the reigning sovereign, William I., and is consequently cousin to Prince Frederick William, who has also won distinction as a soldier. But Prince Charles, as we shall call him for the sake of distinguishing him from the Crown Prince, is admitted on all sides to be one of the ablest, as he has proved himself to be one of the most successful, generals of this era. He was born in 1828, and entered the army at ten years of age, in accordance with the theory always held by the reigning family of Germany, that every prince of the House of Hohenzollern should receive military training, in order that he may be, if necessary, competent to serve in the defence of his country.

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Frederick Charles was an enthusiastic admirer of Frederick the Great. He studied closely the history of the Seven Years' War, and familiarized himself with the whole subject of strategy and tactics. His decided bent in the direction of military life led him to adopt it as his career, and when but twenty years of age he took an active and able part in the first invasion of Schleswig-Holstein.

In 1849, his uncle, then the Crown Prince of Prussia, was sent to Baden to quell an insurrection there. Prince Charles accompanied him, and rendered signal service in the severe conflicts that ensued. Fifteen years of peace followed, during which he steadily pursued his military studies, with special reference to the organization and movements of large armies.

At the time of the accession of William I. to the throne, Prussia was a second-rate power, with a territory of about twenty-five thousand square miles, and a population of little more than eight millions. Adjoining Prussia, on the northwest, were two small duchies—Schleswig and Holstein. These were a part of the dominion of the King of Denmark, but, on the death of Frederick VII., it became a question whether the duchies should belong to Denmark or to the Germanic Confederation. In this difficulty the Danish government secured a treaty, to which Austria, Prussia, France, Russia, and England were parties, guaranteeing the integrity of the Danish monarchy. Thus nearly all Europe was drawn into this controversy. England held aloof in the subsequent events, being embarrassed by the matrimonial connections of her royal family. The Prince of Wales had married the daughter of the Danish king, and the Princess Royal

McMahon at Verdun. About half his force had crossed the Moselle, when the Prussians suddenly attacked him. After terrible slaughter, the French were driven back to the city. Bazaine made some attempts to cut his way through his foes, and was much blamed for his want of success. But it must be remembered that the Prussian army outnumbered the French by eighty thousand men; that Prince Karl, an able and experienced general, had so posted these troops as to cut off every avenue of escape; and that McMahon, with whom he was endeavoring to effect a junction, was cut off from him by an army of one hundred and twenty thousand men under the Crown Prince, Frederick William. When Metz capitulated, Prince Karl had lost forty-five thousand of his army. This heavy loss in the space of sixty days showed how desperate was the resistance opposed to him. The possession of Metz left Prince Karl free to unite his forces with those of Frederick William, and together the victorious armies swept on their triumphant march toward Paris. In March, 1871, the great conflict ended. France had been beaten in every battle, and her capital was in the hands of the conqueror. She was obliged to surrender Alsace and a great part of Lorraine, thus transferring one million and a half of her subjects to Prussia. France was also obliged to pay a thousand millions of dollars as indemnity. Of the loss of life, of the untold suffering endured, the story can never be written. Prince Karl and Prince Frederick either could not or would not endeavor to check a certain brutality which their soldiers exercised in the conquered country. It has been retorted that, had the position been reversed, Frenchmen would have acted with the same brutality.

It would, at least, be difficult for them to exhibit more. "The Prussians are becoming ferocious," says one writer. "They revenge themselves on any one they catch. It is their common mode of procedure to tie their prisoners' wrists with a rope which they attach to the pommel of their saddles. They bring the unfortunates in, dragging at their horses' heels, with the same indifference to suffering that a red Indian exhibits. A hasty trial is hurried through, and the nearest thicket serves as a place of execution." Their proceedings on entering captured towns were harsh in the extreme, the slightest opposition to the will of the conquerors drawing down the punishment of death, or of floggings so severe that the victims were maimed and mutilated. The Prussian commanders appear to have taken no notice of these excesses of their troops, and the Prussian prime minister, when the sufferings of the French were mentioned in his presence, answered with a brutal jest, "You cannot make an omelette without breaking the eggs." It is to be regretted that the Prussian leaders did not add the virtue of magnanimity to that of courage; but it is undoubted that they proved themselves the greatest of modern soldiers. Prince Karl still remains the commander-in-chief of the Prussian army, and it is considered that the overwhelming successes of the Franco-Prussian war were due in great measure to his wonderful ability in handling great masses of men.

CHAPTER XVI.

FREDERICK WILLIAM (CROWN PRINCE).

Birthplace—Heir to the Throne—Youthful occupation—Military Life—Commanding the Central Prussian Army—Personal appearance, by a French Officer—"Our Fritz"—Marching on Paris—At the Battle of Sedan—At the Scene of Surrender—Besieging Paris—Paris Surrenders—Return to Berlin—Domestic Life—Brilliant celebration of his Wedding.

FREDERICK WILLIAM is the eldest son of the King William I., of Prussia, consequently heir to the great German empire, and is at present known by the title of Crown Prince of Prussia. He was born in 1831, and is therefore three years younger than his cousin, Prince Frederick Charles. Like him, he received the usual military training of the German princes, but although he made a very efficient general in the Franco-Prussian war he had not the remarkable military talent of Prince Karl. In 1858 he married the Princess Victoria, eldest daughter of the Queen of England. It is now generally supposed that this marriage was happier than royal marriages usually are, but the King of Prussia was at that time very unpopular. He had the reputation of being harsh, despotic, and uncultivated. It was known that his domestic relations were unhappy. The dislike felt for him extended to the members of his family; and it is re-

markable how widely extended was the belief that the Princess Victoria's husband was dull, harsh, and a drunkard. But popular opinion was unjust alike to William and his son. There is nothing cruel in William's character. He is, indeed, rather humane and kind-hearted than otherwise, but he is prejudiced in the extreme, and opposed to popular freedom. His idea is to keep his people always in leading-strings, and he was at one time heartily disliked by them. But his great successes have turned the tide of feeling in his favor. He is now the popular idol, and his son shares his popularity.

In 1870 the crown prince was invested with the command of the central wing of the Prussian army, which was about to invade France. He had already had experience in the Holstein and the Austrian campaigns. A French officer, who had been taken prisoner, thus describes the prince:

"Prince Frederick William, heir to the crown of Prussia, is a tall, thin man, with a tranquil and placid physiognomy; to which, however, the curve of his aquiline nose and the vivacity of his eyes lend a stamp of decision. He speaks the French language with great purity. 'We all,' said he, 'admired the tenacity and courage evinced by the very meanest of your soldiers. I do not like war; if I ever reign, I will never make it. But, in spite of my love of peace, this is the third campaign I have been obliged to make. I went yesterday over the battle-field; it is frightful to look at. If it only depended on me, this war would be terminated on the spot. It is, indeed, a terrible war. I shall never offer battle to your soldiers without being superior in number; without that, I should prefer to withdraw.'"

In this speech the prince referred specially to the battle of Worth, in which he had led his forces with brilliant success. It is true that he had an overwhelming force, his army, it is said, numbering 140,000 men. The French, under Marshal MacMahon, were, we are credibly informed, but 30,000; but they fought with the recklessness of despair. Eleven times the French charged the Prussian lines. The Prussians advanced in dense masses right against the heavy artillery of the French. They fell by thousands, but they won, and after thirteen hours of constant fighting, the remnant of the French broke up in a disorderly retreat, hotly pursued by the victors. On this occasion, the Prussian king sent the following telegram to Queen Augusta:

"Wonderful good fortune! A new, great victory won by our Fritz. Thank God for his mercy. We have taken thirty cannon, two eagles, six mitrailleuses, 4,000 prisoners. A victorious salute of one hundred and one guns was fired upon the field of battle."

After this battle the crown prince moved on to Paris. There was no force before him to oppose his march. Never was the march of an invading army so resistless, until, near Rheims, the Prussians encountered MacMahon's corps. After a fierce battle, the Prussians drove the broken columns of the French in complete rout towards Sedan. On the 1st of September the French were so hemmed in as to cut off the possibility of retreat. They were crowded into a narrow space, while 500 pieces of artillery opened fire on them. The battle began at five in the morning, and was an indescribable scene of tumult and carnage. Nearly

300,000 men hurled a storm of bullets, shot, and shell into the ranks of the French.

After twelve hours of this unequal contest, the commanders of the French army corps reported to the emperor that further resistance was impossible. The emperor ordered a white flag to be raised, and sent the following letter to the Prussian king:

"Sire, not having been able to die in the midst of my troops, it only remains for me to place my sword in the hands of your majesty."

In a letter to Queen Augusta the next day, the Prussian king wrote as follows:

"You already know through my telegrams the extent of the great historical event which has just happened. It is like a dream, though I have seen it unroll itself hour after hour As the emperor wished to see me, I started to meet him, with Fritz, escorted by the cavalry staff. We were both much moved at meeting again under such circumstances."

But although the emperor surrendered, France did not surrender. Prince Frederick and the forces under his command did much hard fighting all through the northern section of France, until in September, 1870, he encamped in front of Paris. There were 2,000,000 of people within the city, and there were 400,000 Prussian troops without. For 130 terrible days the doomed city remained in the grasp of the iron power that had closed around it. Of the sufferings of that siege, who can adequately tell the story? War, famine, and fire did their worst. The bombardment was incessant; night and day, shells were thrown into the city by hundreds; starvation prevailed everywhere. At last, on the 25th of January, Paris surrendered.

The victorious Prussian king and his son returned to Berlin, almost worshipped by the excited multitudes of their subjects. The crown prince was highly honored for his bravery, and the prestige of his military successes still clings to him. As his father is now eighty-seven years old, it cannot in the course of nature be long before the crown prince is called to reign over the great empire which he has helped to acquire. In 1883 a magnificent celebration was held of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his marriage. Here, surrounded by royal guests and affectionate subjects, the emperor and empress, the crown prince and princess, enjoyed what was truly an ovation, and presented an illustration of that true saying, that "nothing succeeds like success."

of England had married the son of the Prussian king. Thus, allied to both powers, England took no action with or against either. None of the other powers ventured to intervene. Schleswig and Holstein were wrested from Denmark, and no less than five claimants appeared for their possession, of whom King William was one.

In the invasion of Holstein that followed, Prince Frederick Charles was intrusted with the command of the Prussian division. In an attack upon Duppel, which was one of the most formidable positions in Denmark, he personally led the assault, and, after two repulses, he made a final attack, which proved successful.

But the Schleswig-Holstein contest was but one step in the newly adopted policy of Prussia. The crafty and ambitious prime-minister, Otto von Bismarck, had formed the design of making Prussia the leading power of the Germanic Confederation, and he so directed the course of events that, step by step, Austria found herself forced into a war with Prussia.

In this war, Prince Charles, then thirty-five years of age, was intrusted with the command of the first division of the Prussian army. He crossed the frontier on the 23d of June, 1866, and, in ordering the first attack of his troops on the Austrians, he addressed them in the following curious phrase:—"May your hearts beat towards God and your fists upon the enemy." The campaign was a series of victories. The advance of the Prussian army was like the sweep of a tornado. Armed with the terrible needle-gun, perfect in discipline and drill, they overran kingdoms and principalities and drove their foes before them for

forty days without intermission. The terrific battle of Sadowa closed the conflict. In this battle there were two hundred and fifty thousand men engaged. The ground shook under the discharge of fifteen hundred pieces of artillery. The Austrians were utterly defeated, and with terrible slaughter. In a campaign of seven weeks they had lost over one hundred thousand men. Further effort at resistance was hopeless. Austria found herself compelled to accept the hard terms which Prussia chose to dictate. The conquering power claimed sovereignty over all the provinces which her armies had overrun. Thus she annexed Schleswig and Holstein, Hanover, Saxony, large portions of Bohemia, Bavaria, Austrian Silesia, and a number of minor dukedoms and principalities. But, notwithstanding the triumphant nature of this campaign, Prince Frederick Charles, with the keen-sightedness of an accomplished soldier, saw that the system of organization and mobilization used in the Prussian army was susceptible of improvement. He wrote and published a work on the subject, which attracted great attention, and proved him to be especially expert in the difficult task of moving great bodies of men over great extents of territory.

This great acquisition of power did not satisfy the ambition of Prussia. The policy dictated by Bismarck was pursued steadily, and tended so evidently to further conquest that France especially became alarmed. It was considered a source of danger that the frontier of France was now open to Prussia, and this alarm was heightened when Leopold, a prince of the House of Hohenzollern, was proposed as a candidate for the throne of Spain. France vehemently opposed this

candidacy, which would have the effect of giving her a German neighbor on her Spanish frontier. It is impossible not to see that the Prussian policy was to force on a war, and France was very ready to accept the challenge. In both countries the unanimity with which the people took up arms was remarkable.

This, the most terrible war of modern times, broke out in July, 1870. Almost the largest army of which history has any record was immediately on the march for the invasion of France, an army estimated to number in the aggregate over seven hundred thousand men. Another army almost as large was held in reserve, to be used as occasion might require. The armies of France are supposed to have numbered less than one-fourth of their adversary's force.

A succession of battles took place. Almost every hour of every day the two great armies were in conflict. The French were assailed wherever they made a stand. The Prussians were victorious in every engagement, but the loss of life was terrific on both sides. The slain were counted by scores of thousands. Hundreds of hospitals were crowded by the victims of the strife. The culminating struggle took place around the city of Metz. This was a strongly fortified town which was held by Marshal Bazaine, with not less than a hundred and eighty thousand troops. To this force was opposed two hundred and thirty thousand under Prince Karl.

For days and weeks an almost incessant battle raged around this fortress. Prince Karl had so skillfully managed his troops that the French were hemmed in on all sides. Bazaine, leaving a sufficient force to garrison the town, attempted with the main body of his army to effect a junction with the troops under Marshal



BATTLE OF GRAVELLOT.