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CHAPTER I

THE GERMAN TRIBES

Two thousand years ago the land and people of Germany were a subject of deep interest to Roman writers. These set down in the Latin tongue descriptions of a great cold stretch of country, covered with desolate heaths and swamp, or matted with vast, wild, dark sweeps of forest. Among these naked heaths and through the dusky woodlands roamed men of giant stature, with fair skin, blue eyes, and long, yellow hair, the men who formed the many tribes of Old Germany. They were hunters and warriors. They were free men and loved to dwell apart, each in his own homestead or village, rather than to gather in towns. When they marched to battle they were led by the chief of their tribe, who was looked upon as king and head of the great family which the tribe formed.

It was about a hundred years before Christ when the Romans first began to feel the presence of these fierce warriors, coming down from their northern wilds in search of new homes and of plunder. There was desperate fighting when Roman legions were sent to bar the march of the Germans into Italy, and, though the march was checked, it was not until several Roman armies had been destroyed by the wild tribesmen.

Fifty years passed, and the great Roman general, Julius Caesar, subdued the German tribes dwelling along the Rhine. In later days the Roman legions were pushed forward until the land between the Rhine and the Elbe was made tributary to Rome. But the Germans, always lovers of freedom, were eager to throw off the Roman yoke, and in the year 9 A.D. they struck a terrible blow at the Roman power. The Emperor Augustus sent one of his friends, a general named Varus, into Germany with a vast army. The Germans, under a great leader named Herman, rose

and attacked him on the march. There was a fierce battle, and the Roman army was cut to pieces. When Varus saw that all hope was lost, he threw himself on his sword and perished. When the news of the great disaster was brought to Rome it caused a panic in the city. Augustus himself was in an agony of distress, and wandered to and fro, calling out wildly: "O Varus, give me back my legions!" But they were lost beyond recall, and Varus with them. A few years later, the Roman leader Germanicus won his name for his exploits in Germany, but he returned to Rome in 17 A.D. and the Germans were once more left to themselves.

The Roman power was then employed to keep the fierce marauding tribes within their proper boundaries, and the Old Germans fought amongst themselves now that no foreign troops entered their land. Tacitus, the great Roman writer, tells us many things about these wild tribesmen. He praises them for their bravery in war, for the bold and hardy life to which their sons were bred, for the deep respect which they paid to their women, for their faithful conduct and their kindness to strangers. But, on the other hand, he points out their faults, saying that they loved to drink so deeply that a feast often ended in a fierce riot, and they were so fond of gambling that they would often throw away all they owned on the cast of the dice, even to the losing of their own freedom.

Three hundred years passed after the great victory of Herman, and then there began that strange and wonderful movement of the peoples which is called the Migration of the Nations. From the vast forests of Germany there began to pour in various directions great streams of adventurers seeking new abodes for themselves, north, west, or south of their old homeland. There were two reasons for this mighty movement. One was that the German tribes were being pressed upon by enemies from the east, but the second and chief was that the Roman power was failing, and the rich and fruitful lands hitherto guarded by the swords of the legions now began to lie open to attack.

The chief tribes of Germany were the Saxons, the Franks, the Goths, and the Alemanni. The Saxons sailed north and west, crossed to Britain, whence the Romans had now departed, and formed the kingdom of England. The Franks moved west-ward into Gaul, and in time gave their name to the land of France. The Goths formed a great and important tribe, famous among their kinsmen because they were the first Germans to become Christians, and to become polished and civilised in their mode of life. The Goths won wide lands for themselves in the south of Europe, marching as far east as Athens. They were the first German people to feel the assault of a new and terrible foe which appeared in Europe, the Huns.

The Huns were a wild barbarian race which came from Asia, and they swarmed westward in countless hordes, the warriors marching ahead, while vast trains of waggons rolled after them bearing their women and children. They were of Mongol blood, short, dwarf-like men, but thick-set and powerful in build. They were very hardy, caring nothing for cold, heat, hunger, or hardship. They were so ugly with their flat noses, yellow faces, tiny eyes, and big, upstanding cheek-bones that the people of Europe believed that they were the offspring of demons, and dreaded them as much for their horrible appearance as for their fury in attack.

Upon the Goths fell the first onset of these terrible little savages, and some of the chief Gothic tribes were conquered. A great branch of the Gothic people, the Visigoths, turned for help to their old enemies, the Romans, and were allowed by the Emperor Valens to cross the Danube, and settle on the Roman side, the southern bank, in order to be safe from the dreaded Huns. But the Goths were so badly treated by Roman officers that they rose against Valens and overthrew him in a great battle in 378. These were the people who were to strike the blow which shattered Roman authority, and showed that Roman power was but the shadow of its former greatness. In 408 they marched into Italy under their great commander Alaric, and sat down before the walls of Rome. The Romans, once so stern a fighting race,

trembled at sight of the Gothic horde, and begged for peace. Alaric offered peace, but it must be paid for, and he demanded so vast a ransom for the safety of the city that the Romans were aghast. "What should we have left?" they cried. "Your life," was the grim answer of the Goth.



DOLMEN IN A GERMAN FOREST
A BURIAL-PLACE OF AN ANCIENT GERMAN CHIEF.

He received the money and went away, only to return the next year. Now the gates of the Eternal City were opened to him by treachery, and he and his Goths swept in and Rome was sacked. For six days the plundering hordes rifled the city and swept together a vast mass of treasure, then marched away to southern Italy. Here Alaric suddenly died, and the Goths gave their famous king a wonderful burial. A river was turned aside from its course, and in the dry river-bed a deep grave was dug and a great vault of masonry built in it. In this vault was placed Alaric clad in full armour and seated on his war-horse. Around him was heaped a vast pile of glittering treasure, the choicest of the immense spoil which he had taken. Then the river was turned into its former bed and rushed along over the grave, so that no one might know where the great King of the Goths was buried.

The next great conquest of the Goths was the land of Spain, where another German tribe settled beside them. The latter was the tribe of the Vandals, who seized a province called by them Vandalusia, but now known as Andalusia. These Vandals also crossed over to Africa and seized the Roman possessions there, and formed a Vandal empire whose capital was the famous city of Carthage. The Vandals were a ferocious race who did such terrible mischief wherever they went that their name has lingered to this day, and we still use the term vandal for one who destroys for the mere pleasure of destruction.

The Huns now drove their way into the heart of Europe and settled in the land still called Hungary. But they pushed on westwards under the banner of their terrible leader Attila, known as the Scourge of God, and feared all over Europe and Asia. With a vast army Attila swept over Germany and marched deep into Gaul, till he was brought to bay in 451 on a great plain near Chalons, on the Marne. Here a great army of Romans, Goths, and Franks had gathered, the last hope of Europe in face of the swarming hordes of savage Huns. The battle was long and desperate, and vast numbers were slain on both sides. In the end the Huns were driven back and Europe was saved.

The next year saw Attila marching on Rome, but he turned aside on receiving a great ransom and retired to Hungary. In a short time he died, and after his day the Huns, having no great leader, were no longer a terror to their neighbours.

CHAPTER II

CHARLEMAGNE AND CHRISTIANITY

While great leaders at the the head of strong German tribes were winning new kingdoms in Europe and Africa, the land of Germany itself was being slowly converted to Christianity. The old Germans were heathens. They worshipped a number of gods and goddesses, of whom the chief was Odin or Woden, the All-Wise, and next to him were his sons Thor, the god of Thunder, and Thiu, the god of War. The goddess Hertha was the great Earth mother, and the goddess of Love was Freya. The Germans did not build temples to their gods nor carve any images, but they reared altars to them in the depths of sacred groves, and sacrifices were offered by the priests. These priests foretold the will of the gods by signs and tokens, but there was also a class of wise women who were believed to be able to read the future, and to their sayings the Germans paid very deep regard. The old German heaven was named Valhalla, and it was thought that none could enter there save brave warriors who fell in fight. In Valhalla the departed hero was pictured as spending his day in battle or the chase, and his night in joyous feasting, being summoned to the banquet by the blowing of celestial horns.

To this faith the old Germans clung very closely, and many centuries passed before it was given up in favour of Christianity. The Goths were the first to become Christians, and the Gospels were translated into their tongue as early as the fourth century. Then the new faith slowly spread through South Germany, and some Irish monks were among the most able and successful missionaries. English teachers were found in the north of the land, but here progress was very slow, and the Saxons and Frisians of North Germany held most stubbornly to the faith of their fathers.

Chief among the English teachers was Winifred, called the Apostle of the Germans, and named Boniface by the Pope, because of his good work. Winifred found the affairs of the Church in great confusion, and he laboured hard to introduce order. He founded abbeys, monasteries, and convents. He arranged sees and set bishops over them. He sent his disciples to preach to the heathen, and set them a noble example in his own person. Scorning danger, he would push his way into a heathen district and assail with his own hands a rude altar of stone at which a crowd of pagans was about to offer some dreadful sacrifice. Seizing an axe, he would hew down some sacred tree, in which the wild tribesmen believed that a great deity had made his home. The people looked on with awe and wonder, expecting at every moment that the offended god would destroy the bold stranger. But when they saw the altar scattered or the tree felled, and there stood Winifred unhurt, they lost their confidence in Woden or Thor and listened to the new teaching which fell from his lips.

Yet in the end Winifred came to his death on a missionary journey. He went to preach to the Frisians of the north, and by them he was slain in the year 755, when he was in the seventieth year of his age. Thus at his death the Saxons and Frisians of North Germany were unconverted. But the religion which they had refused from a bishop was about to be forced upon them by the sword: Charles the Great, the mighty and famous Charlemagne, became Emperor of the Franks in 771.

The Franks had founded a powerful empire in France and had been ruled by kings for centuries. Now the greatest ruler of the Frankish line had come to the throne and he cherished a great aim: he wished to unite the countries of Western Europe under one ruler and under one religion. This aim could not be carried out as long as the Saxons and Frisians remained pagans, and in the year after he came to the throne Charlemagne proclaimed war against the Saxons, announcing his resolve to subdue and convert them.

It was a long and very difficult task. For thirty years the Saxons fought most stubbornly in defence of their freedom and the faith of their fathers. Time and again the powerful armies of the great king drove the Saxons before them in defeat, and inflicted terrible losses on the gallant tribesmen. But time and again the broken forces rallied and gathered in the depths of their gloomy woodlands, to swear undying enmity to the Franks on the altars of their ancient faith. Every time that Charlemagne had his hands full with wars in other lands the Saxons broke into revolt, and burst over their borders carrying fire and sword into their enemy's territory.

In 779 Charlemagne thought that he had beaten down the Saxon opposition, but they broke out again, and he now seized 4500 of their leading men and had their heads struck off in a single day. He next ordered the Saxons to become Christians, and issued a law by which all who continued to follow the worship of Odin and Thor were to be condemned to death. The Saxons replied by a furious revolt, and Charlemagne had to put forth his full strength to crush them. But now he took the work in hand himself, and marched to and fro in overpowering force until the last sign of resistance had been swept away.

While this struggle with the Saxons had been going on, the armies of the great monarch had been winning victories for him in other lands, and at length he arrived at the height of his ambition: he was the ruler of almost the whole of Western Europe. Now, under the Romans, Europe had been divided into two empires, the Empire of the West and the Empire of the East. There had been an Emperor of the West, whose capital was Rome, and an Emperor of the East, whose capital was Constantinople. Charlemagne had gathered into his hands the lands which had formed the Empire of the West, and he was given the old title. On New Year's Day, 800, he was crowned by the Pope in Rome, and was hailed as Emperor of the Romans. In the end this great title proved of little value to German rulers. It was hopeless to think of German and Latin races living in unity under one crown, and the German Emperors, divided between

their subjects north and south of the Alps, were unable to rule either race properly.

For himself, Charlemagne was, above all, a German Emperor. He loved Germany and his native German tongue. He caused a German grammar to be written, he changed the Latin names of the months into German, he ordered the priests to preach in the language which the people understood. He brought skilled workers from other lands to build splendid palaces and churches in German towns, and he adorned his favourite city of Aix-la-Chapelle with magnificent buildings. In this city he died in 814, aged seventy-one. His body was laid in the noble cathedral he had raised, not placed in a coffin, but set upon a golden throne with crown on head and sword at side, wrapped in a gorgeous robe and a book of the Gospel upon the knees.

The mighty Charlemagne was followed by several kings of his house, the Carlovingian line, but not one of them showed a sign of the ability of their great ancestor, and the vast empire of Charlemagne fell to pieces and was shared among his descendants. In 843 the empire was divided into three kingdoms, and France and Germany became separate realms, each under its own ruler. In Germany the line of Charlemagne came to an end in 911; in France it lasted until 987.

When the last Carlovingian ruler of Germany died in 911, a powerful German prince, Conrad, Duke of Franconia, was chosen king. Conrad's great aim was to bring the whole country under his rule, for it seemed very likely that Germany would be split up into a number of small kingdoms. There were several powerful dukes, ruling over large duchies, and these men wished to be independent of the king, and become rulers in their own right. One man above all withstood Conrad, and this was Duke Henry of Saxony, a very strong and able man. In 918 Conrad died, and Duke Henry was chosen for the next ruler. He came to the German Crown as Henry I, and with him opens a long line of emperors, the first line of great importance in purely German history.

CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE OF SAXONY

It is said that when a party of German nobles rode to the Duke of Saxony to tell him that Conrad was dead, and to offer him the crown, they found him hawking in the forest. For this reason he gained the name of Henry the Fowler. Henry proved as strong a king as he had been a duke. The first thing he did was to gain the aid of the great dukes of the country, and then he turned to deal with the powerful enemies who threatened Germany. The worst of these were the Normans, who sailed along the northern coasts and plundered the German shores, and the Magyars, who assailed the land from the east, from their home in Hungary.

The Magyars were Tartars from Asia, a fierce barbarian race who had seized upon Hungary and thence made savage raids into Germany. They were looked upon with the greatest dread by the Germans, for they were ferociously brave, and moved with wonderful speed on their swift horses. Thus it was difficult to meet them in battle, for they swooped on a countryside, plundered and burned and slew, and then were gone and in search of a new object of attack. They were very cruel, stripping the conquered people of all they possessed, binding captive women with their own long hair, and driving flocks of captives into Hungary.

Henry saw that his people were not ready to meet these terrible foes, so he made a truce with the Magyars for nine years and agreed to pay them tribute. He spent the nine years in training his subjects to arms, and in building strong places where the people could find refuge in case of need. Now he was ready to meet the Magyars, and refused to pay tribute. The Magyars rushed into Germany in two great armies, but both were overthrown. Henry himself led his men in the second battle, and

the Hungarians were routed with such terrible slaughter that but few of them escaped from the field. This was in 933, and in 936 Henry I died, and was followed by his son, Otto I.



THE BLACK GATE AT TREVES
BUILT BY THE ROMANS WHEN THEY WERE MASTERS OF GAUL.

Otto proved so able a king that he won the title of Otto the Great. He beat his enemies wherever they appeared. He mastered the Northmen, he beat back the Hungarians, he went to Italy and won great victories there and became King of Italy. His empire stretched from the North Sea to the Adriatic, and it seemed as if a second Charlemagne had appeared. While he was fighting in Italy he heard that a revolt had broken out in Germany, and he came back to put it down. He found that the rebels had called in the Hungarians to their aid and that the fierce Magyars had marched through the country, plundering everywhere. Now the Hungarians, laden with booty, had retired into the province of Suabia, and here Otto, with only a small army, came up with them. There was a terrible battle, but Otto gained the day and crushed the Magyar power. Never again did the Hungarians venture into Germany: for the future they settled down quietly in their own country.

In the year 962 Otto received the Imperial crown from the hands of the Pope at Rome. This was in token that he was head of the empire formed by Germany and Italy, which was now called "The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation." The dignity was a lofty one, but it was an honour for which Germany paid a great and bitter price. The German Emperor could only maintain his power south of the Alps by keeping a powerful army in Italy, for the Italians disliked German rule. For years at a time the German Sovereign spent his days and his strength in keeping order among his Italian subjects. But his presence was badly needed in Germany itself. There were many great German princes who were always trying to free their lands and themselves from the rule of their king: instead of being vassals, they wished to become independent lords. The absence of their ruler and his army in Italy left them to do very much as they pleased, and the results were bad; for Germany, in place of becoming a strong, united country, was split up into a number of small states, and thus the land was greatly weakened in presence of a powerful foe.

Otto I died in 973 and was followed by his son, Otto II. This ruler strove to weld Germany and Italy into one kingdom, but he failed, and died after a short reign in 983. Otto III was a child three years old when he came to the throne, and he grew up to be so clever and learned a young man that he was called the Wonder of the World. But he died in root, before he was twenty-two, and his cousin, Henry, Duke of Bavaria, was chosen to follow him as Henry II. Henry ruled from 1002 to 1024, and almost the whole of his reign was filled with war. He had first to fight hard to make his position safer in Germany. Then he had a sharp struggle to secure his dominion in Italy. At last he received the Imperial crown at Rome in 1014, but still he had to battle with his foes in the south of Italy. He died in 1024, and with him came to an end the line of Saxon rulers.

CHAPTER IV

EMPERORS AND POPES

The German nobles now chose Conrad, Duke of Franconia, to fill the vacant throne, and he began to reign in 1024 as Conrad II. Conrad's chief aim was to secure to himself the great duchies so that the power of the Emperor should be increased, and the power of the great nobles become less. In 1034 he secured the Duchy of Burgundy, and Bavaria and Suabia also fell into his hands, with many smaller fiefs. He went twice to Italy, where he was crowned at Milan as King of Lombardy and at Rome as Emperor. In Italy he gave land to Normans, who thus gained a footing in the country. In time the Norman rule was extended over the south of Italy from Naples to Sicily. Conrad died in 1039, and his powerful son Henry III began to reign. Henry showed his strength by crushing the great nobles who were always ready to rise against a new ruler and to attempt to snatch the power from his hands. In his reign, too, Hungary was added to the German Empire. Yet strong as he was in ruling the State, he showed still greater authority over the Church.

At that time the Pope of Rome was the head of the Roman Catholic Church, just as he is to-day, but his power was far greater than now. He was not only a great Churchman, he was also a great prince ruling a wide kingdom, served by strong armies, making war with kings, and holding his own both on the battlefield and in the council chamber. While Henry III was Emperor, the Normans were winning fresh lands in the south of Italy, and they came into conflict with the Pope. He led an army against them, but they beat his men and took him prisoner, nor could he obtain peace until he had given them a large province. This led to a great deal of strife in the Church, and, in the end, each contending party set up a Pope of its own,

so that there were three Popes at one and the same time, and all claimed to reign over the Papal kingdom.

Henry III was called in to settle the dispute. He made a short end of the matter by removing all three and choosing a Pope of his own, a German, who came to the Papal throne as Clement II. Henry also said that in future no Pope might be placed in power without the permission of the Emperor. The authority of Emperor over Pope was now complete, but, as we shall see, it did not last long, and Henry's own son was to feel the full weight of a great reverse.

This son was Henry IV, who came to the throne in 1056 when he was only six years old. He grew up under bad influence, and his favourite advisers taught him to despise his people and, above all, his Saxon subjects. This evil counsel brought about great ill-feeling between Henry and his chief vassals, and the Saxons, in particular, were marked out to suffer under heavy taxes. If they made remonstrance they were treated with insult. The consequence was that great revolts broke forth, and there was much tumult and bloodshed. In the end, however, Henry put down the Saxons, and the conflict ended in triumph for him.

But he was now face to face with another conflict which would see him reduced to the lowest pitch of disgrace, and it began when Gregory VII was made Pope in 1073. Before Gregory became Pope he had been known as Hildebrand, and was famous as an eloquent preacher and an ardent reformer. As soon as he came to the Papal throne he began to put forward claims which would render the Church all-powerful in matters of state as well as matters of religion. He forbade the buying and selling of offices in the Church, and he said that the giving of great places in the Church should not be left in the hands of laymen. Thus a king who had appointed bishops and abbots in his realm lost the power, and these great officers of the Church were to be elected by the clergy and their election confirmed by the Pope. Gregory also forbade the clergy to marry, and all his efforts were aimed at making the Church supreme, so that just as

an emperor or king ruled over his vassals, so should the Pope hold sway over the emperors and kings themselves.

But how could the Pope enforce these very great demands? What weapon had he of such weight as to beat a powerful monarch to his knees? Did he depend on his army of mail-clad knights and men-at-arms? He did not. Seated in his papal chair, he issued a decree which fell like a thunderbolt upon the king he assailed, and not only upon the king, but upon every living human creature in the offender's realm: he decreed a ban of excommunication, or proclaimed an interdict upon the country.

When a king was banned by the Pope, the ban called upon every Christian in the land to abandon the loyal obedience he had paid to his ruler; it called upon every priest to disallow the monarch the rites of the Church, called upon every one to shun him in life, and forbade that Christian burial should be given to his body if he died under the ban. When an interdict was laid upon a country it touched all. No services were held in any church, no priest was allowed to fulfill his sacred office, no clergyman was permitted to visit the sick or the dying, or give any aid to the people of his parish. Thus the babe could not be christened, the bride could not be married, the dead were buried without a single prayer being read over the grave. Nor was it possible to evade the interdict. Every Christian country lay under the rule of Rome: every priest was bound to pay obedience to the Pope, and thus the latter could reach into the farthest corner of every Christian land.

Gregory VII met with much opposition in the Church when he put forward these vast claims. The great nobles and the bishops of Germany were in the forefront of his opponents. They saw that all power would be gathered into the hands of the Pope, and they strongly disliked the idea. Gregory replied by putting both princes and bishops under a ban of excommunication. But Henry IV would not agree to the ban, and still gave his favour to the men whom the Pope had thrust outside the pale of the Church. Then Gregory put forth his strength and hurled a ban at

the Emperor himself, declaring that Henry was now no longer the ruler of Germany and that his people were free from obedience to him.

The enemies of Henry took advantage of this to rise against him, and the Saxon nobles led the attack. At a meeting of the German Princes in 1076 it was declared that if Henry was not freed from the ban within a year he should forfeit the crown, and they would elect another emperor. Henry lost courage in this desperate situation, and resolved to go to the Pope and beg Gregory to take the ban from him. In midwinter Henry crossed the Alps and sought the castle of Canossa, where the Pope was staying. He came to the gates, but the warders would not let him in. For three days he was forced to stand at the gates of Canossa, bare-headed and bare-footed and clad in the shirt of a penitent, humbly begging to gain admission to the presence of Gregory. On the fourth day he was admitted, and the Pope, having shown his power to all men, removed the ban from the suppliant monarch.

But though the Pope absolved Henry, the latter found that the German nobles had set up another ruler in his absence, Rudolph, Duke of Suabia, and there was much fighting and confusion in the realm before Rudolph was killed in 1080. Henry bestowed the province of Suabia upon one of his supporters, Frederick of Staufen, from whom was to spring a famous line of German emperors.

Henry was now strong again in Germany, and he made up his mind to go into Italy and punish his old enemy, Gregory, for the disgrace the Pope had put upon him at Canossa. He marched to Rome, and Gregory threw himself into the strong castle of Angelo, and the Romans submitted to Henry. The latter caused a new Pope to be set up, Clement III, and also had himself crowned by Clement. Gregory left Rome, but returned at the head of an army of Normans. But the latter burned and robbed and slew and did such harm that the Romans rose and drove both Gregory and the Normans from the city. Gregory never returned to Rome, but died at Salerno in 1085. His policy

did not die with him. It appealed so strongly to the feelings of the Popes that followed him that, for hundreds of years, each Pope did his utmost to grasp all the power that he could gather into his hands.

Henry returned to Germany to find the country in the utmost confusion, and when he had put an end to the disorder north of the Alps fresh strife broke out in Italy, so that the rest of his long reign was filled with wars and tumults. The Popes who followed Gregory put him under the ban of excommunication and did their best to hinder and thwart him in every way, and, to crown his troubles, his sons rose against him, and one of them, Henry, took his father prisoner. In the midst of the struggle with his rebellious son Henry IV died in 1106, after a long and wretched reign in which the Popes had treated him as badly as his father had treated them.

Henry V reigned from 1106 to 1125, and though the Pope had helped him to rebel against his father, he showed plainly at once that he did not intend to give up any of his rights to the Pontiff. His whole reign was filled with quarrels with the Pope, who excommunicated him, but that did not prevent Henry from making a strong fight for his rights as Emperor. In the end peace was made between the two parties, and a treaty drawn up by which the Pope gained much influence in Germany. Henry died in 1125 and, as he was the last of his line, the crown passed to Lothair, Duke of Saxony. The reign of Lothair (1125-1138) was very unquiet, for he had to hold his own against the two powerful dukes of Suabia and Franconia, Frederick and Conrad, two brothers of the great house of Staufen. This rivalry filled his reign with strife, but before his death both the brothers had submitted to him, and Lothair gained a great height of power.

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE OF HOHENSTAUFEN

Upon the death of Lothair, his old foe, Conrad of Staufen, Duke of Franconia, was elected King of Germany as Conrad III. Now Henry the Proud, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony, had hoped to follow Lothair, whose daughter he had married. War broke out between Conrad III and Henry the Proud, and after Henry's death the war was carried on by his son, Henry the Lion, a famous warrior about whose name a great store of romantic legend has gathered. This conflict split the kingdom in two: on the one side were the Welfs, who followed Henry, the Welf Duke of Bavaria, on the other the Waiblings, who fought for the House of Hohenstaufen. The battle cries were "Hie, Welf" "Hie, Waibling" that is, "Here, Welf!" "Here, Waibling!" The name Waibling was taken from that of a small town in Suabia, a stronghold of Hohenstaufen. These names were carried into Italy, and upon Italian lips became changed to Guelf and Ghibelline, and applied to the parties who fought for the Emperor and the Pope.

Conrad III was victor in the struggle, and crushed the Welfs at the town of Weinsberg. The place was held firmly by the Welfs, and Conrad could only gain it by a long, hard siege. Angry at the resistance offered, the Emperor vowed that every man of the garrison should be put to death, but that the women might go free, each taking with her what most she prized of her belongings. But when the gates were opened a very strange procession marched forth, for every woman came out, bearing her husband on her back. Thus the lives of the men of Weinsberg were saved, and the spot which the women crossed with their precious burdens is known to this day as "Weibertreu," or "Woman's Fidelity."

In 1147 Conrad joined Louis VII of France in leading the Second Crusade. A vast army of knights and men-at-arms and pilgrims followed the two monarchs to Asia Minor, but they did not reach Jerusalem. Disease and famine thinned out their ranks more terribly than battle, and a mere handful returned to Europe, to mourn the utter failure of the expedition.

Conrad died in 1152. He left a little son, but the times were too rough for the rule of a child, and he advised the nobles to elect his nephew Frederick. This was done, and one of the most famous of German emperors came to the throne, the mighty Frederick Barbarossa, Frederick Redbeard. He had won great fame as a warrior in the Second Crusade, and all Germany received him with joy as their ruler. But on the other side of the Alps things were very different. The North Italian towns, with Milan at their head, had formed themselves into a strong league, and were resolved to throw off the Imperial rule and govern themselves.

Frederick marched into Italy with a powerful army and was crowned at Pavia with the iron crown of Lombardy. He took Milan and beat it almost entirely to the ground, and the other cities, fearing a like fate, made haste to offer their submission to the great Emperor. He received the Imperial crown at Rome from the hands of the Pope, but he would not consent to be the Pope's man, and bitter strife rose between him and the Pontiff. The quarrel grew to such a height that each party set up its own Pope, and banned and excommunicated each other. The cities of Lombardy took advantage of the struggle and again tried to make themselves independent, and the affairs of Italy fell into the utmost confusion.

Frederick's troubles were increased by his chief vassal, Henry the Lion, who refused to come to his sovereign's aid, and Frederick was forced to make peace with the Pope. Matters now became quiet in Italy, and Frederick was free to return to Germany, where much work awaited him. First he dealt with Henry the Lion, against whom many complaints were made. There was much sharp fighting before Henry was defeated,

when Frederick banished him from the Empire. Next Frederick turned on the robber barons who had set up their castles on the heights beside the high roads and on the banks of rivers. From these strongholds the lawless nobles pounced on merchants and travellers, plundering the mule-trains or seizing the laden ships, and holding their captives to ransom. Frederick assailed these dens of thieves and beat the castles to the ground and put many of the robber barons to death, to the great joy of all peaceful people.



STREET AND TOWN HALL IN HALBERSTADT
THE GIGANTIC FIGURE REPRESENTS THE ROLAND, THE MOST
CELEBRATED OF THE PALADINS OF CHARLEMAGNE.

After many years spent in warfare in Italy and in maintaining order in Germany, Frederick Barbarossa resolved to lead a Crusade into the Holy Land, where Jerusalem had fallen into the hands of the great Sultan Saladin, the Saracen Emperor. Together with Richard the Lion Heart, King of England, and the King of France, he marched to Palestine, where in 1190 he lost his life in crossing a river.

When it was known in Germany that the great and good Emperor Barbarossa was dead there was deep grief, but among the people it was said that he was not dead, that he would some day return, and for many years they watched eagerly for his coming. In time a legend grew up that he had come back, and lived under a spell of enchantment in a castle in the heart of a lonely mountain. There he sat sleeping beside a broad stone table through which his great red beard had grown. Once in a hundred years he woke up and asked if the ravens were flying over the hill. If they were he went to sleep again. But on the day that they no longer hovered there, he and his men would march forth to bring a Golden Age to a new and glorious Germany.

Barbarossa was followed by his son, Henry VI (1190-1197), who found himself at once at war with Henry the Lion, who was raising fresh disorders in Germany. Henry the Lion had made an alliance with Richard the Lion Heart of England against the Emperor. But Richard of England was seized by Leopold of Austria and shut up in a castle, so that he could give no aid to the old rebel. In the end Henry the Lion's son married a daughter of the House of Hohenstaufen, and the turbulent old warrior made friends with his former opponents and died in peace.

When all was quiet in Germany Henry VI crossed the Alps and conquered the south of Italy, destroying his foes with the greatest cruelty. His mind was set upon conquests in Eastern Europe, but death seized him in the midst of his plans, when he was only thirty-two years of age. His son was a child three years old, and two kings now sprang up. The Waiblings and the Welfs were at heart as bitter enemies as ever, and the Waiblings, or Ghibellines, chose Philip, Henry's brother, to succeed him; the Welfs, or Guelfs, chose Otto, son of Henry the Lion.

For ten years these rivals struggled for the throne, until, in 1208, Philip was murdered. Otto now received the Imperial crown at Rome, but in a short time a fierce quarrel broke out between him and the Pope, Innocent III. Innocent was one of the strongest men who have ever sat in the papal chair, and he was resolved to make the rule of the Church absolute over both priest

and layman. He excommunicated Otto, and called upon the nobles of Germany to choose another ruler. They chose the boy who had been set aside fifteen years before, Frederick, the son of Henry VI and grandson of Barbarossa, who now came to the throne as Frederick II. Thus the House of Hohenstaufen was restored.

Frederick reigned from 1212 to 1250 and, as became the grandson of Barbarossa, he proved himself a great warrior and a powerful ruler. He had need to be a warrior, for his whole reign was filled with fierce and unceasing strife between Guelfs and Ghibellines, between the party which supported the Pope and the party which supported the Emperor. The Guelfs were strong in the great towns of Italy, and the towns and the Pope formed two great Powers which waged unending warfare against Frederick at the head of his Ghibelline followers.

This constant strife in Italy was a bad thing for the German portion of the Empire. Frederick was not often seen among his German subjects, and turbulent barons were not kept in order. These men raised anew the robber strongholds which Barbarossa had thrown down, and not only plundered passing travellers but the country around for far and near, robbing the peasants and ill-treating all who opposed them or refused to surrender their wealth.

It was during this reign that the famous league of trading towns was formed, the Hanseatic League. For two hundred years the towns of Germany had been growing swiftly in wealth and importance. The Crusades had caused a great trade to spring up with the East. Spices, gems, rich stuffs, all the luxuries of the East poured into Europe along the routes opened by the Crusaders. The towns which received these goods and spread them on every hand rose in importance, and the merchants who dealt in these rare and costly things became wealthy and powerful men. The towns bought many privileges from the lords who had owned them. They bought freedom and the right to live under law instead of under the lord's pleasure. The burghers built walls to secure their safety, and within these walls rose the

stately palaces of merchant princes. Such was the strength and splendour of many of the great Imperial towns that each city became, as it were, a small republic, ruled by its own officers, making its own laws, and if need be waging war on its own account with any great lord who might seek to oppress it, or a rival city who wished to oppose it.

From time to time a number of these towns would form a league or confederation to protect or aid each other, and the greatest of these unions was the Confederation of the Hansa, a league of great trading towns, mostly seaports on the North Sea and the Baltic, though some large inland towns were also included. At the height of their power the Hanse towns rose to the dignity of a kingdom: they had armies and fleets; they waged wars and made treaties; they fought with kings and overthrew them. This Confederation was formed in the reign of Frederick II, and for the next two hundred years its influence was great; in the end it fell to pieces owing to quarrels between the towns, and the rise of rival trading centres in neighbouring countries.

At the time of the bitterest strife between Emperor and Pope, Germany was attacked by Mongol hordes from the East, the hosts who had been led to conquest by Genghis Khan. These Tartar barbarians overran Russia and Prussia and advanced far into Germany. Frederick was fighting in Italy, but the progress of the invaders was checked by the Duke of Silesia and they retired. Up to this period the province of Prussia had been a pagan land, one of the last outposts of heathendom in Europe. It was now conquered by the knights of the German Order, who introduced Christianity and civilisation. In a short time churches, monasteries, and towns began to rise, and in time Prussia became a most important part of the German Empire.

Frederick II died in 1250 and was followed by his brother, Conrad IV. The latter's reign was very brief, for he died in 1254, leaving a little son named Conradin. The story of Conradin is very sad. He was only a child when his father died, and he was too young to ascend the German throne. But when he was sixteen he set out with an army to win back his father's

kingdom in the south of Italy, the kingdom of Naples and Sicily. The Pope had given the crown of Naples and Sicily to a French prince, Charles of Anjou, a stern and cruel man who had no mercy on any foe who fell into his hands. Conradin marched south through Italy, gaining all hearts by his youth, his handsome face, his gallant bearing, and his winning tongue. Rome received him with open arms, Sicily rose in his favour. But when the day of battle came Charles was the victor and Conradin was taken captive. Two months later the gallant lad was beheaded at Naples in 1268, and with the fall of his head the famous House of Hohenstaufen came to a tragic close: he was the last of his great race.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEVEN ELECTORS

After the death of Conrad IV in 1254, Germany saw a most unhappy and unsettled time. It was known as the Interregnum—the time between one reign and another—because between 1254 and 1273 there was no proper ruler in the land. One king or another was set up for a time, but each was merely a shadow of a monarch and held no power. In the meantime the great nobles fought out old quarrels, a hundred petty wars raged between rival towns, or between towns and princes who wished to master them, and everywhere the strong robbed the weak, for there seemed neither law nor authority in the country. The robber barons saw this confusion with delight: they swooped from their castles and fortresses and returned from a raid with crowds of prisoners to thrust into their dungeons, and with vast stores of rich goods to fill their treasure chambers.

Nearly twenty years passed in violence and disorder, and then all ranks of the people called for a king who could restore peace to the troubled state. It was resolved that in future the choice of a monarch should be left to seven great men who were called Electors. Three were to be princes of the Church, the Archbishops of Cologne, Mayence, and Treves, four were to be princes of the State, the Dukes of Bavaria, Suabia, Franconia, and Lorraine.

The Electors chose Rudolf of Hapsburg, who reigned from 1273 to 1291, a sensible king, who, instead of spending his time in Italy, gave all his strength to the welfare of Germany. He restored order in the land, and broke the power of the robber barons. Castle after castle was seized by his troops, and every robber knight who fell into his hands was at once put to death. He never went to Rome to be crowned and gave up all idea of maintaining German authority south of the Alps. When Rudolf

died in 1291, Adolf of Nassau reigned for seven years. The latter was killed in battle with Rudolf's son, Albrecht, in 1298, and Albrecht was elected to the throne. He ruled for ten years, and was murdered in Switzerland by his nephew John in 1308. Tradition says that William Tell lived during his reign, and it was then that the famous incident occurred of the great archer shooting the apple from the head of his own son.

Upon the death of Albrecht many princes sought the German throne, and the Electors chose the Count of Luxemburg, who became Henry VII (1308-1313). This ruler attempted to restore the Imperial power in Italy, but the Pope, the Italian princes, and the Italian towns combined to offer a fierce opposition, and he had done little when he died of fever in 1313.

After a war between rival candidates of the Houses of Luxemburg and Hapsburg, Louis of Hapsburg became Emperor. He had to struggle hard against the Pope, and now there came about a most important change in the relations between Germany and the Pope. The Germans were tired of their rulers being set up or cast down by order of the Pope, and the Electors decreed that for the future any one whom they might choose to fill the throne should be the lawful ruler even if the Pope refused to recognise him. The next step they took was to declare the Pope's ban and interdict should be of no weight in their country.

These decrees were passed at a time when the Popes were not living at Rome. From March 1309 to September 1376 the Papacy had its seat at Avignon, in the south of France, under the protection of the French kings, and from that time its influence began to wane.

When Louis died in 1347, Charles of Bohemia was chosen as the German king. Charles made friends with the Pope, and was crowned in Italy, as former emperors had been. He is to be remembered as the founder of the first German university. This was set up at Prague in 1348. He also issued decrees which provided for the election of the sovereign, and which fixed the rank of the Electors.

In 1378 he was followed by a careless, drunken son, Wenceslaus, whom the people called "Lazy Wenzel." This king ruled so badly that in 1400 he was turned from the throne, and Rupert of the Palatinate was chosen for the vacant place. Rupert was an able man, but he had a very uneasy time of it, for Wenzel was not willing to be deposed, and gathered his friends to support him. Rupert had thus to fight Wenzel, to try to restore order in Germany, and to hold his own in Italy. He died in 1410, and now three emperors appeared in the land: Wenzel still maintained his claim, while the Electors failed to agree and set up two other rulers, Sigismund, brother of Wenzel, and Jost of Moravia. Of these three Jost died and Wenzel gave way, leaving Sigismund to fill the throne from 1410 to 1437.

The reign of Sigismund is of great importance, for now we see the first signs of that vast movement that was to shake Germany to its centre: the Reformation. The Church of Rome had amassed great riches. With riches came luxury and a love of ease. Instead of living lives of self-denial, instead of preaching and teaching and helping the poor, the great Churchmen spent their days in hunting, feasting, and all kinds of riotous excess. Their example was copied by the lesser clergy until the whole Church had become corrupt. Many earnest men were troubled at this state of affairs and did their utmost to bring about a change for the better: they were called the Reformers, and they were very active in Bohemia, where they were led by a good and able man named John Huss. Huss was excommunicated by the Pope because of his attacks on the abuses of the Church of Rome, but he continued his work as a Reformer.

The Emperor Sigismund saw that there were great quarrels and differences in the Church, and he resolved to call a great council in order that vexed questions might be argued out and matters put straight. In 1414 a great crowd of cardinals, bishops, and priests from many countries gathered at the famous Council of Constance, and the Council sat for four years, till 1418. At the head of the gathering was Pope John XXIII, a man whose evil life had been stained by many crimes.

The Emperor asked John Huss to appear before the Council to answer for himself, and promised that Huss should come and go in safety. Huss trusted the Emperor's word and went to Constance. He was at once taken prisoner by order of the Pope, and, after a time, was placed upon trial as a heretic. He refused to deny the opinions he had taught, and was condemned to die by fire. Sigismund, in spite of his plighted word, did not interfere to save Huss from this dreadful death, and in July 1415 the Reformer was burned at the stake. This was the first step of the Reformation, though a hundred years were to pass before the great movement should rise to its height.

When the death of Huss was known in Bohemia, his followers were filled with fury and flew to arms. They were led by John Ziska, who made his name dreaded for the merciless cruelty of his ravages. For fifteen years the wars of the Hussites went on and reduced many parts of the country to a desert. Sigismund led armies of mail-clad knights and trained men-at-arms against Ziska's hordes of ill-armed peasantry, but the latter won the day again and again. Filled with hatred of the Germans, and careless of their own lives, the Hussites fought with such desperate fury that none could stand before them. Nor, in the end, were they conquered. Sigismund was forced to make peace with them, upon terms honourable to the Hussites.

Another point to be noted in the reign of Sigismund is the rise of the Hohenzollern family. In 1411 the Emperor appointed Frederick, Count of Hohenzollern, to be Margrave of Brandenburg and an Elector. The new Elector had only small possessions, but his family grew in power and influence until it gave kings to Prussia, and to-day its head is the Emperor of the great German Empire.

CHAPTER VII

THE REFORMATION

The century which passed between the death of Huss and the day of Martin Luther, the great German Reformer, was occupied by the reigns of sovereigns who were of slight importance as rulers. Sigismund was followed in 1438 by Albrecht II, who died in 1439. This very short reign was followed by a long one, for Frederick III of Hapsburg ruled from 1440 to 1493. Frederick was a careless, lazy king, under whom the land fell into great confusion, and a hundred little civil wars were waged between his quarrelsome subjects.

The great event of this reign was not one of war, but a mighty victory of peace—the invention of printing. The first printing press of Germany produced a Latin Bible in 1457, and the new art spread rapidly. Books, which had been so scarce and precious when written by hand, now became much cheaper. Where one had been able to read, fifty scholars were now found, and men began to search out things for themselves instead of blindly taking the word of those who had hitherto taught them. Printing and the Reformation were closely allied. As the new learning spread, men became more and more discontented with the abuses of the Church. Scholars left the convent schools and flocked to the new universities, which were founded in such numbers in Germany that there were more learned men among the Germans than in any other nation of Europe.

The tide of thought rose higher during the reign of Maximilian I, who came to the throne in 1493. He took the title of German Emperor without being crowned in Rome, and from his day the custom was followed. Under Maximilian the House of Hapsburg rose to great authority. Maximilian was Emperor of Germany; through his wife Mary, daughter of Charles the Bold

of Burgundy, he gained the Netherlands; and the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary fell into his hands.

Throughout the whole of Maximilian's reign there was growing up, boy and man, one of the greatest reformers the world has ever known, the famous Martin Luther. Luther began life as a simple, pious son of the Church. He became a monk at the age of twenty-two, and in 1511, when he was twenty-eight, he made a journey to Rome. There he was filled with horror at what he found. He saw priests making a mockery of the most solemn rites of their religion, he saw that they placed the love of pleasure and the lust for gold far beyond every other aim of their lives, he saw at close quarters a hundred abuses which shocked and angered him.

He returned to Germany and began to preach openly against the abuses of the Church. So fiery was his speech, so great his eloquence, that people flocked in vast numbers to listen to him. Then he took a great step: he came out in full defiance of the Pope. The Pope at that time was Leo X, who wished to raise large sums for the building of the great Church of St. Peter at Rome. In order to do this he sent out a number of monks called pardoners, who sold indulgences or pardons for sins. In Germany the chief pardoner was a monk named Tetzel, and he went from town to town persuading people that they could obtain forgiveness for sins by purchasing a pardon from him, and the greater the crime the greater the price of the pardon.

The minds of thoughtful men were filled with disgust at this shameless traffic, and Luther attacked it fiercely. On October 31, 1517, Luther posted up on the door of a church in Wittenberg his famous declaration that pardon for sin could not be obtained for money, but must be sought by sorrow and penitence. This declaration was received with joy by vast numbers of earnest people, and from that moment Luther became the leader of the Reformation.

The Pope commanded Luther to appear at Rome, but Luther did not go; nor did he cease to speak against the abuses of

the Romish Church. He also wrote a number of letters in which he set forth his opinions, and these were printed and widely read among the German people, and brought great numbers to his side. Finally, in 1520, the Pope sought to crush him by a decree, a papal Bull, in which it was declared that Luther should be excommunicated and punished as a heretic unless he gave up his opinions. Luther now broke with Rome for ever: he publicly burned the Bull at Wittenberg, and thus avowed himself an open opponent of the Pope and the Romish Church.

The Emperor Maximilian died a year before this, and his grandson, Charles V, Charles the Great of Spain, had become Emperor. Charles was one of the most powerful monarchs who have ever ruled in Europe. He was King of Spain, master of the Netherlands, Emperor of Germany, King of Naples and Sicily, and lord of the New World, Spanish America. It was known that Charles was a rigid Catholic, and had promised the Pope to put down the Reformation: all eyes were turned upon Germany to see what would happen to Luther.

In 1521 a Diet, or meeting of the great nobles, was held at Worms, and Luther was summoned to attend. His friends wished him not to go, lest harm should befall him, but the stout heart of Luther did not quail, and to Worms he went. All the way vast crowds flocked to gaze on the man who had dared to defy the Pope, and was going calmly to face terrible enemies. Luther appeared before the Diet and refused to withdraw one word of his teaching or writings. He ended by saying: "Here I stand; I cannot act otherwise: God help me, Amen!"

There is no doubt that Luther's end would have been like that of Huss, had he not had powerful friends in the Diet, who brought him off safely, and afterwards hid him when the Emperor sought to punish him. After the Diet of Worms Charles left Germany to itself for many years, save for an occasional visit; he, himself, was fighting with France, with the Turks, or with Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean. During this time the Reformation spread steadily through the land. Monasteries and nunneries were swept away, the Latin service of the Mass was

changed for a service conducted in the native tongue, the clergy were permitted to marry, the practice of confession was abolished, the Bible was printed and spread freely among the people. Luther himself, when he had thrown off his priest's habit, married a wife, Catherine, who had been a nun.

In the course of these great changes in the religious faith of the country disorder arose. At Wittenberg the Lutherans attacked the churches and broke the painted windows, tore down pictures and altars, and destroyed crucifixes. Luther hurried to the place at once and checked the rioting. Much more serious troubles arose among the country people, and led to the Peasant Wars. The farmers and labourers had been treated most cruelly by the princes and nobles, who had taxed them heavily, and often despoiled them of their goods and laid waste their crops. Filled with an idea that the new form of religion would give all they wished in the way of freedom, and misled by ignorant leaders, they broke out and avenged their ancient wrongs. They gathered in great bands and marched through the country, burning, plundering, and slaying with dreadful cruelty those whom they disliked. Nor were these mobs of armed peasants put down by the authorities until large numbers had been killed on both sides.

The Reformation gained a much stronger hold in the northern provinces of Germany than in the southern. Austria and Bavaria remained true to Rome, and in these parts of Germany there began in 1524 a cruel persecution of the Lutherans. The Emperor Charles was a resolute enemy of the Reformation and issued an edict against it. The princes and towns that followed Luther protested against this edict, and thus the Reformers gained the name of Protestants.

Charles called the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, and he found that the Lutheran opinions had made great headway since the Diet of Worms. Nine years before, a poor monk had appeared before him and his nobles to protest against the wrongdoing in the Romish Church, but now many of the greatest princes of his realm were followers of Luther. The chief event of

the Diet was the reading of the Protestant confession of faith, ever afterwards known as the Confession of Augsburg. It was read by Luther's friend, Melancthon. Charles would have none of it, and threatened those who agreed with ban and excommunication. The next year many states and towns formed a union, called the Schmalkelden Alliance, to defend Protestant interests.

Again Charles left Germany for a long time, and the Reformation, in his absence, grew apace. Luther was at its head until the end of his life. He preached, he taught, he wrote noble hymns for his followers to sing, he was by far the greatest power in the land, and when he died, in 1546, deep sorrow was felt through all Germany for the loss of their great leader.

At the time of Luther's death trouble was threatening for the Protestant cause. The Emperor Charles had returned to Germany, resolved to crush the Lutherans. He called upon the Pope to summon a Council at Trent in Tyrol, at which the Protestant princes should attend. The latter refused to go, fearing they would not get fair play, and Charles attacked the Schmalkelden Alliance. The Protestant allies managed affairs badly. Instead of standing firmly together, they wavered, and Charles attacked the Lutheran armies one at a time and subdued them at his leisure. He made prisoners of some of the chief leaders and took them to Augsburg. Here Charles tried his hand upon a settlement of the Reformation, hoping to please Protestants and Catholics alike, but he failed altogether.

Charles now became weary of the strife with the Protestant states. Maurice of Saxony had deserted the Protestants and sided with Charles; now he went over again and led a Protestant army against the Emperor. At the same moment Charles was threatened by his old enemy, the King of France. But Charles had neither the heart nor the means to fight: he agreed to the Peace of Passau in 1552, a peace which secured religious freedom to the Protestants and made the Reformation complete.

Three years later, in 1555, Charles gave up his throne and retired to a monastery. His health was failing, and he wished for a time of peace before his death. His vast dominions were divided between his brother Ferdinand and his son Philip. Ferdinand became Emperor of Germany and Philip took Spain and the Netherlands. Charles lived three years after his abdication, dying in 1558.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

The two Emperors who followed Charles V did not harass the Protestants in any way. His brother, Ferdinand I (1556—1564) strictly kept to the treaties Charles had made, and did his utmost to restore order to Germany. Ferdinand's son, Maximilian II (1564—1576), was a good friend to his Protestant subjects, and did his utmost to keep the peace between Lutherans and Catholics. In his reign the Protestants became divided against each other: they fell into two parties, Lutherans and Calvinists. The Calvinists were followers of John Calvin, a Reformer whose teachings had spread through Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands, and, owing to differences of doctrine, there was the greatest bitterness between the two Protestant bodies.

The excellent Maximilian II was followed by a weak and foolish son, Rudolf II (1576—1612). Rudolf persecuted the Protestants, and ruled so badly that the powerful state of Bohemia rose against him and threw off his rule, his brother Matthias becoming King of Bohemia. The Protestants felt that they stood in great danger and, in 1608, they formed an alliance called the Union. In the next year the Catholics banded together under the name of the Holy League, and from that time the two great parties slowly moved towards a dreadful struggle.

In 1612 Rudolf died and his brother was chosen Emperor. Matthias being now called upon to rule the Empire, he handed over Bohemia to his nephew, the Archduke Ferdinand. The Protestants of Bohemia were very uneasy at this change of rulers, for they knew that Ferdinand was a rigid Catholic and no friend to them. Ferdinand soon showed his feelings by ordering that Protestant churches should be pulled down, and by refusing

to listen to any protests on the part of Protestants who had complaints to make.

The proud and fiery Bohemians were filled with anger at this treatment, and the province was ripe for revolt when an act of violence brought about a rupture. A meeting was held in May 1618 at the Palace in Prague: here the Protestant leaders met the governors who ruled for Ferdinand and made anew their complaints of unjust treatment. A dispute arose, and two of the Catholic governors, who were noted for their harshness and injustice, were seized and hurled bodily through a window. From that moment may be dated the Thirty Years' War, a war which was to drag Germany to the lowest depths of misery and suffering.

The Protestants and the Catholics now gathered their forces, and the latter marched into Bohemia in August 1618, only to suffer a defeat. The next March the old Emperor Matthias died and Ferdinand himself was elected Emperor, so that the Protestants knew they had no mercy to expect. The Emperor's army was commanded by a famous soldier, General Tilly, who led the Catholic troops of the League to a great victory at Prague in 1620. This victory crushed Bohemia. The leaders who had risen against Ferdinand were put to death or imprisoned, all Protestant churches were shut up or handed over to the Catholics, the Protestant clergy were slain or banished, and the people were forced to rejoin the Church of Rome or leave the country.

The scene of war now changed to the banks of the Rhine in the province known as the Palatinate. Here the Protestants gained a victory over Tilly in 1622. But the victors were too careless. They divided their forces, and Tilly, rallying his troops anew, fell suddenly on the two scattered foes, and defeated each body in turn in two fierce battles. He was now the master of the Palatinate and he swept it with fire and sword, laying towns and villages in ashes and treating the Protestants, whom he hated, with most savage cruelty.

The Elector of the Palatinate had married the daughter of James I of England, and he had now been driven out of his electorate and outlawed by the Emperor. An alliance was formed to assist him, England, Holland, Denmark, and the Protestant states of North Germany joining to assail Ferdinand. But James I did little for his son-in-law, and Denmark was the only land to give the Protestants any real help.

The Emperor felt uneasy at the prospect of facing a number of enemies and called to his aid Wallenstein, Duke of Friedland, one of the greatest commanders of the day. Wallenstein had gained renown and wealth in the early days of the war in Bohemia, and he came to the aid of Ferdinand at the head of 50,000 men, adventurers from all parts of Europe, who served under his banner in the hope of plunder. In 1625 Wallenstein marched into Saxony and, after overthrowing a Protestant army, made himself master of the province.

The King of Denmark was defeated by Tilly in 1628, and then the two great captains joined their forces and marched into Denmark, and overran it from end to end; at the same time Wallenstein made himself master of the towns along the Baltic coast, and by 1629 the Emperor Ferdinand stood in a position of commanding power in all parts of Germany. He now issued decrees that all Catholic property which had fallen into the hands of Protestants should be restored, that the Protestant form of worship should be suppressed, and that all great Church offices should be filled by Catholic clergy.

The next year, however, saw a great champion of the Protestant cause enter Germany to fight on behalf of his German brethren. This was Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, the "Lion of the North." In 1630 Gustavus landed in Germany with a small army and soon drove away all the Emperor's troops near at hand. As he moved through the country the people gazed upon his progress with wonder. They had fled before the fierce troops of Tilly, or the still more savage adventurers who followed Wallenstein. From this army there was no need to fly. Gustavus Adolphus was the greatest general of his age, and kept his men

in perfect order. He allowed no noise or riot in the camp, and morning and evening a religious service was held. He permitted no disorder on the march, and the peasants whose homes had been burned and their barns plundered by the troops of the Emperor, flocked to hail him as their saviour and liberator.

At the first appearance of the small Swedish army the Emperor Ferdinand and his friends in Vienna had been scornful. "We have got another little enemy on hand," jeered Ferdinand, and his courtiers laughed at Gustavus and called him the "Snow King," who would melt away as he came towards the warm south. Before the winter was over their laughter died away. Gustavus proved a "Snow King" in truth, but not in the sense his enemies had meant. It had been the custom of the Emperor's troops to go into winter quarters, and take the field again in the spring, when the fine weather returned. Not so Gustavus. He and his hardy Swedes laughed at frost and snow, and marched and fought in midwinter as gaily as in summer warmth, and during the cold season he made immense progress, seizing town after town and driving the Emperor's men before him.

At first the Protestant princes were slow to join forces with Gustavus. This was because they dreaded the vengeance of Ferdinand, and feared to be assailed by Tilly, who was now besieging the important town of Magdeburg, in Saxony. Magdeburg had refused to obey the Emperor's decree against the Protestant form of worship, and the cruel Tilly was resolved to seize the town and give it up to his soldiers to sack. The citizens made a splendid defence and held Tilly out for six months. But, unluckily, before Gustavus could come to their aid, the town was seized by a sudden assault in May 1631. A terrible scene of butchery and plunder followed. The ferocious troops slew all before them, men, women, and children, and their savage old general made no attempt to check them. Fire and pillage laid the town in ruins, and the fate of Magdeburg sent a thrill of horror through the whole land.

But the Lion of the North was already preparing to spring upon Tilly. Gustavus, with a number of Protestant princes who

had at last joined him, marched upon the Emperor's army, and faced it at Leipzig in September 1631. He won a complete victory. Tilly was now seventy-two years of age. He had fought many battles, yet had never been wounded. At Leipzig he had to fly, his body pierced by three musket balls. His troops fell in great numbers, and when they broke and ran, the peasantry avenged their wrongs on the soldiery who had ill-treated them by slaying the fugitives in hundreds.

Gustavus marched through Germany in triumph and was received everywhere with great joy. But Tilly gathered another army and again he and Gustavus met at Rain, on the Lech. In this battle Tilly received a mortal wound and died in a few days. His death left the Emperor without a great commander, for Wallenstein had been dismissed: he had offended the Catholic princes of the League by his overbearing conduct, and Ferdinand had been forced to part with him.

The Emperor now turned to Wallenstein and asked his assistance: the latter would only give it on his own terms, to which Ferdinand was compelled to agree. Wallenstein took the field and, in November 1632, found himself face to face with the great Gustavus Adolphus on the plain of Lutzen. Here a great battle was fought, and the Swedes won a victory for which they paid a terrible price. For their mighty leader and king was killed almost as soon as the battle began, and his body was found beneath a heap of slain.

The death of the great Protestant hero marked a dreadful change in the course of the Thirty Years' War. The destruction and misery had been great before his death: it became far worse afterwards. Instead of a religious war pure and simple it became a war in which every leader fought for his own hand, every prince seeking to extend his own territories, every victorious army seizing the chance to despoil the unhappy people among whom they fought. When the firm hand of Gustavus was withdrawn, the Swedes became as wild and lawless as the rest, and poor, bleeding Germany was torn and devastated by the armies which marched across her hills and plains, the path of

every destroying horde being marked by blazing towns and villages, and heaps of slaughtered country folk.



A WATER-STREET OF HAMBURG.

Wallenstein did not live long after the death of his famous opponent. The great captain of fortune thought to better himself by changing sides and fighting against the Emperor. But before he could do this his plans were found out, and he was murdered by a party of the Emperor's men in 1634. The Emperor's son, whose name also was Ferdinand, became commander of the Imperial armies and the war went on.

The Emperor died in 1637, leaving a name stained with blood. Few men have acted more cruelly than he. In order to force his Protestant subjects to profess the same form of religion as himself, he sent fire and sword through his native land, causing the death of millions of human beings, and laying waste vast stretches of fruitful country. He was followed by his son, Ferdinand III (1637-1657), and the war dragged on. For another eleven years Swedes, French, and Germans marched and counter-marched, fought, beleaguered towns, and carried the worst horrors of war to every corner of the land. At last the struggle ended in 1648: it ended in Prague, where it had begun, and it was closed by the Peace of Westphalia.

The war had been destructive to Germany: the peace was no less harmful. By its provisions France seized a portion of the Empire on the west, Sweden a portion on the north, Switzerland was separated from Germany, and the Netherlands became independent of Spain. But one of the most dangerous provisions was that which made every German prince or princelet an independent ruler in his own kingdom, and allowed him to form alliances with other states or with foreign powers. This tended to split up the Empire into a multitude of small isolated states, often warring with each other, rarely moved by the spirit of national unity.

National unity, indeed, had been almost destroyed by the frightful effects of the Thirty Year's War. Wealth and prosperity had fled. Arts and commerce seemed to be driven from the land. Prosperous towns, busy villages, homesteads, and cottages had become heaps of ruins. There were great numbers of small towns and hamlets of which barely the memory was left: the names

were in the records, but no man lived who could point out where they had stood. In a great plain which had been filled with cornfields and orchards, with meadows and vineyards, the traveller could journey for many miles and see not a single house, not a tilled field, not a fruit-tree, not a living being, either human or animal. The once smiling scene was a stretch of fire-blackened desolation. And such things were to be seen not in one region only, but throughout all Germany. Never has that great country known so terrible a state of affairs as she had to face at the end of the Thirty Years' War.

CHAPTER IX

RISE OF PRUSSIA

While the Thirty Years' War was still raging, a German prince came to the throne of a state which was in time to stand at the head of the modern German Empire. This prince was Frederick William, head of the Hohenzollern family, and Elector of Brandenburg and Prussia. He began to rule in 1640, and made his power so felt in German affairs that he won the name of the Great Elector.

In his day the power of the Emperor was fast falling to nothing. The Imperial crown served as a name under which the many states of Germany were gathered, and the Emperor himself held authority in his own kingdom of Austria. But the kings and princes of German principalities paid no obedience to the Imperial will, and each ruled for himself.

In these smaller German courts the influence of France became very great. It was the time of Louis XIV, Louis the Great, and the French Court was a scene of brilliant splendour, and the home of wasteful and senseless extravagance. Young German princes went thither to complete their education, and returned home to imitate as far as they could the luxury of Versailles.

At these courts Louis maintained a host of spies, for he wished to despoil Germany of her lands on the west bank of the Rhine. He had already seized part of the province of Alsace, he was now eager to set foot in Lorraine, so that the left bank of the Rhine from the Swiss frontier to the Netherlands would belong to France. Louis was a most powerful enemy, for he was undisputed master of the great realm of France, while Germany was so divided into petty kingdoms that her national power as an empire could scarcely be said to exist. But there was one

German prince who clearly saw the designs of Louis and meant to defeat them if possible: this was the Great Elector.

Frederick William had spent the early years of his reign in strengthening his position. He found that his territories were loose and straggling, and mingled with them were provinces belonging to Poland. He was a vassal of the latter kingdom, holding his Duchy of Prussia from the King of Poland. This vassalage he threw off with the help of Sweden, and in the course of time he gathered into his hands the provinces which form the modern kingdom of Prussia.

When the Great Elector saw in 1672 that the French king was threatening the German provinces along the Rhine, he marched to oppose the French advance. But he could gain no aid from the Emperor, and was compelled to withdraw. The Emperor was Leopold I (1658-1705), a dull, weak man of the House of Hapsburg, who had succeeded his brother, Ferdinand III. The Elector was not easily to be driven from the Rhine, and Louis, in order to draw him away, prompted the Swedes to invade Brandenburg. They did so, and Frederick William was forced to go home to defend his own territories. He beat the Swedes and drove them into Pomerania. He followed and made himself master of the latter province in 1678, but, under pressure from France, he had to give it up the next year. The French king next laid claim to some six hundred German towns and villages. He said they had once belonged to France and he was resolved to take them again. Then he seized the great German city of Strasburg, and added it to France.

All these doings aroused great anger in Germany, but no state was strong enough to stand alone against Louis, and the German princes were disunited. The Great Elector died while Louis was at the height of his power, in 1688, and was followed by his son, Frederick I (1688-1713). Frederick William had reigned over Brandenburg for forty-eight years and had done much for his state. He raised a standing army to defend it, and he carefully fostered arts and commerce. When the Huguenots, the Protestants of France, fled from the persecution of Louis, he

allowed numbers of them to settle at his capital of Berlin. The Huguenots were clever craftsmen and made excellent citizens, doing much good to the trade of their adopted country.

At the time of Frederick William's death an alliance had been formed by William, Prince of Orange, to withstand Louis, who was a bitter foe to William's people, the Dutch. In 1688 William of Orange became William III of England, and now England, Holland, Sweden, Spain, Brandenburg, the Emperor, and a number of German princes combined to check Louis, who aimed at becoming the master of Europe. In order to keep the war out of France Louis attacked the Palatinate, thus forcing the allies to stand on the defensive. The French king ordered his troops "to burn the Palatinate," and this cruel order was carried out. The beautiful Rhine province was devastated, many hundreds of thriving villages and busy towns being burned and sacked. In 1699 the Peace of Ryswick was made, and Alsace and Strasburg were left in the hands of Louis.

The next quarrel broke out over Spain. The King of Spain died, and Louis wished to secure the crown for his grandson; on the other hand, the Emperor of Germany wished to obtain it for his second son, the Archduke Charles of Austria. The Emperor was supported by England, Holland, and the German princes, with Brandenburg at their head. In this war, which lasted from 1701 to 1714, Prince Eugene, a famous German commander, and the Duke of Marlborough, a great English general, won many victories for the allies, and the power of Louis was dashed to pieces. The war was closed by the Peace of Utrecht, which divided the Spanish dominions among several claimants, and one clause acknowledged that Prussia had become a kingdom.

During the war Brandenburg and Prussia had been ruled by the son of the Great Elector, Frederick III, who had fought steadily against Louis. In 1700 the Electorate was raised to a kingdom, and in 1701 Frederick became Frederick I, the first King of Prussia. He died in 1713, and was followed by his son, Frederick William I (1713-1740).

Frederick William was very simple in his tastes, and very careful of money. His father had spent great sums in court display: Frederick William at once cut down all the expenses of pomp and show and employed the money to build schools and make useful improvements. He would tolerate no idlers in his kingdom, and walked about the streets of his capital clothed in a very plain dress, and with a heavy cane in his hand. If he came across a man who seemed to be an idle fop or a lazy workman he would lay the cane across the culprit's shoulders till he howled for mercy.

There was only one thing for which Frederick would spend money freely and that was his army. It was his great ambition to make Prussia so strong that she need fear no enemy, and could take a leading place among the states of the German Empire. In the army he had one pet regiment: his famous giant guard, to fill the ranks of which he sought for the tallest men of the day. Not only did he scour Germany for big men, but he had agents who searched for him in every country of Europe. He would pay vast sums for recruits, and when money would not tempt them, huge fellows were often kidnapped and dragged into Prussia by force to serve him. On one occasion a big man was seized by his agents, packed in a great box, and carried over the frontier. When the box was opened the unfortunate giant was dead: he had been suffocated because the air-holes bored for breathing were not large enough.

Frederick William died in 1740, and was followed by his son, Frederick II (1740-1788), who was to become known as Frederick the Great.

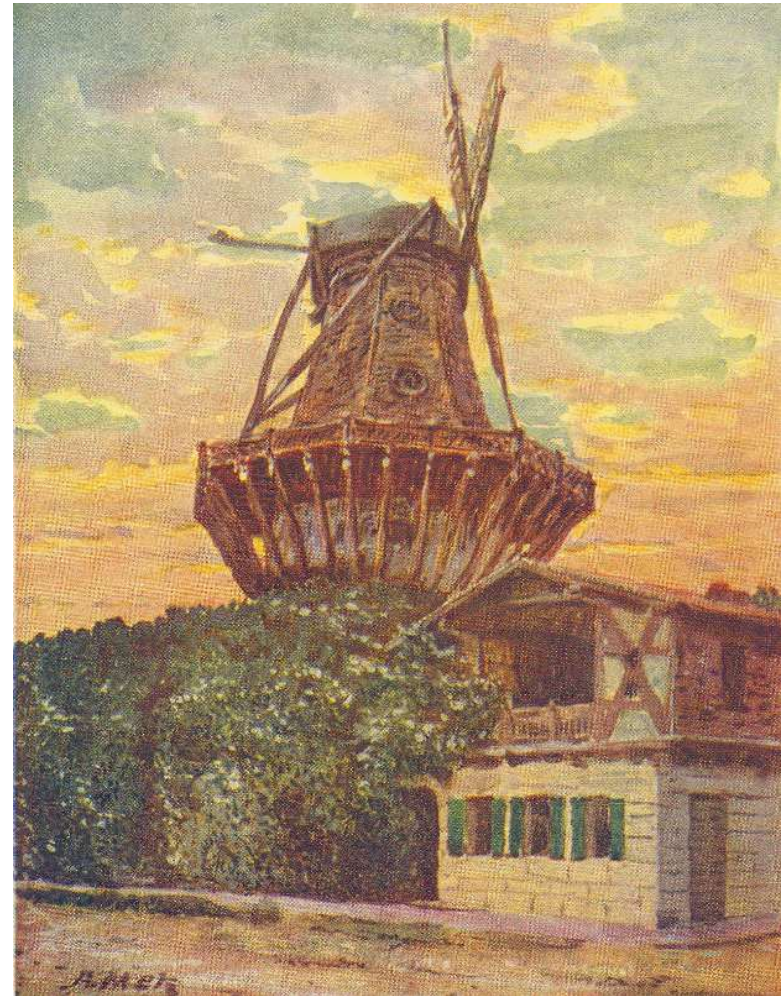
CHAPTER X

FREDERICK THE GREAT

As a young man, Frederick the Great did not get on well with his father, Frederick William. The son was a gay, lively young fellow, fond of playing the flute and of reading French poetry, and disliking very much the stiff drill-sergeant ways of which his father thought so much. Frederick William behaved so severely to his son that the prince resolved to fly from Prussia, and seek refuge from his father's harshness in England. He made the attempt, but it proved vain. He was seized and placed in prison, and brought up for trial as a deserter. He had a close friend named Lieutenant Katte, who knew of his design to escape, and Frederick William resolved to make Katte an example and a warning to his son. So the King ordered that the unfortunate lieutenant should have his head struck off in front of the windows of the Crown Prince. The latter was punished by close imprisonment. After a time father and son became reconciled. In 1733, submitting to his father's wishes, Frederick married Princess Elisabeth Christine, daughter of the Duke of Brunswick-Bevern. When Frederick came to the throne in 1740 he at once showed that he was prepared to take his duties as king in a most serious manner.

In the same year the crown of Austria fell to a woman, Maria Theresa, daughter of the late Emperor Charles VI. Charles had persuaded the chief men of Europe to agree that his daughter should follow him as he had no son, and this agreement was known as the Pragmatic Sanction. Frederick now demanded that the Empress should give up to him the province of Silesia. Silesia had once belonged to Brandenburg, but had been lost in the Thirty Years' War. Maria Theresa refused, and Frederick marched into Silesia at the head of the army which had been so well drilled by his father, and seized the province. In 1741 he

beat the troops of the Empress, and in 1742 she made peace with him and gave up Silesia.



POTSDAM
THE HISTORIC MILL WHICH FREDERICK THE GREAT WISHED TO PULL
DOWN.

Maria Theresa had many troubles to distress her, but she was a stout-hearted woman and strove with all her might against her enemies. The Elector of Bavaria said that he ought to have

received the crown of Austria, and he attacked Maria Theresa, and won such success that he was crowned Emperor in 1742 as Charles VII (1742-1745). For the next three years there was a great deal of fighting between Bavaria and Austria, each side being helped by a number of allies. Frederick, too, joined in the warfare, for he feared lest the Austrians should take Silesia again, and in 1745 he fought Maria's troops and beat them. Charles VII died, and a general peace was patched up on these terms: the new Elector of Bavaria gave up all claims to Austria; Maria Theresa gave up all claims to Bavaria; Maria's husband, Francis, was chosen as the new Emperor Francis I (1745-1765); Frederick was left in possession of Silesia.

For some years there was peace in Germany, and Frederick led a very busy life improving his Kingdom of Prussia. He looked very carefully to the finances of the state, travelled about the country to find out how his subjects lived and what he could do for them, built splendid buildings in Berlin, and kept a watchful eye on his army, for he never knew when he might need to make a stand against his enemies. Of these the most bitter was Maria Theresa. The proud and brave Empress had never forgotten the loss of Silesia, and Frederick knew that she would do her utmost to regain the province if she saw an opportunity.

In the year 1756 Frederick heard bad news. His spies reported to him that Maria Theresa had made a secret agreement with France and Russia to assail Prussia and overthrow his throne. Frederick, full of boldness, daring, and energy, resolved to strike the first blow. He at once crossed his frontiers with a powerful army and defeated an Austrian force in a battle fought in Saxony. This was the first encounter of the famous Seven Years' War (1756-1763), in which Frederick fought single-handed against the three greatest Powers of Europe, and won his title of Frederick the Great. He did not win this name because he was always the victor; far from it—he suffered many and many a bitter defeat. But he never gave in. At the moment when his foes thought they had crushed him for ever, he was busily gathering

together once more the remnants of his shattered forces, weaving anew the web of his policy, marching again to offer battle to those who had considered him to be beaten once and for all.

In 1757 the war began in earnest. The ban of the Empire had been issued against Frederick, and the Emperor had declared him to be a rebel and a traitor. Frederick took very little notice of this, but the news that four powerful armies were advancing upon Prussia from four different points was very serious. Frederick struck first at the Austrians and beat them near Prague. Another army came up and Frederick in turn suffered a heavy defeat, losing many thousands of his best troops, his artillery, and his baggage. He retired into Silesia to meet further bad news: the Russians and the French had won victories over his friends. In November of the same year Frederick met the French at Rosbach, near Leipzig, and triumphed over foes three times as numerous as his own troops, and a month later he won a wonderful victory at Leuthen, in Silesia. Thus 1757 ended brightly for the Prussian cause.

In the next year Frederick was not so fortunate. It is true that he drove the French over the Rhine in the west, and beat back the Russians in the east, of his state, but he lost a great battle with the Austrians, and many of his best troops were slain. His funds, too, were running very low, though England helped him with a large sum every year, and his enemies felt certain that another campaign would crush him and end the war.

It is true enough that the campaign of the next year, 1759, was as bad for Frederick as his worst enemy could have wished. A great Russian army advanced to the Oder, and waited for the Austrians to come up, when both armies meant to march into the heart of Brandenburg. Frederick attacked the Russians and drove them back. Next he turned on the Austrians, but these were fresh and full of fight, while the Prussian troops were weary, and Frederick suffered a terrible defeat. He would now have been utterly crushed, but his enemies started to quarrel among themselves, and this gave him a chance to draw his shattered forces together. He sent out a fresh army under one of

his best generals, but it was forced to surrender in a body, and the fortunes of Prussia sank to a very low ebb. Still Frederick maintained the struggle.

In the next year, towards the end of the campaign, Frederick gained a victory which made up for many of his defeats. In November he overthrew the Austrians at Torgau, in Saxony, the last decisive battle of the Seven Years' War. Still Frederick's difficulties were not at an end, for the English Government withdrew the payments which had helped him so much, and he knew not where to turn for money to pay the great expenses of the war. England, too, advised him to give up Silesia, and it seemed that Frederick would have to own himself beaten, so much was he at a loss for men and money. Then a strange turn of affairs was seen, a change which saved him at the last moment. His bitter enemy, the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, died, and her nephew, Peter, came to the throne. Peter was a great friend and admirer of Frederick, and he not only ordered the Russians to make peace with the King of Prussia, but sent an army to his aid. Thus, at a stroke, a powerful enemy became a powerful friend.

There was some more fighting, but by this time both sides were weary of the struggle, and early in 1763 a peace was made by which Frederick retained Silesia, nor was any further attempt made to wrest it from his grasp.

This remarkable war in which Prussia made so wonderful a stand against such strong enemies raised the kingdom to a high position in Europe. From that time Austria and Prussia became the two chief German states, the Protestant states looking more and more upon Prussia as their leader.

A long period of peace followed the Seven Years' War, and Frederick laboured with all his might to make good the damage which the fierce struggle had inflicted on his country. He gave the people grain to sow in their fields, he freed them from taxes where they were too poor to pay, he encouraged them to settle in districts which had been laid waste, and founded

hundreds of new villages. In religious matters he held the scales equally between his subjects, treating both Protestants and Catholics alike. He was a great lover of justice, and saw to it that every man had his rights in the courts of law. In this connection there is a famous story of Frederick and a miller whose mill stood beside the grounds of the king's palace at Sans Souci. Frederick wanted to buy the mill and pull it down, and make his gardens larger. The miller refused to sell. The king offered a great sum of money, and said that he would build a new mill for him. Still the miller refused. Frederick lost his temper and declared that he would pull the mill down about its owner's ears. "No, you won't," said the miller, "if you lay a finger on my mill I'll summon you before the law courts in Berlin."

Frederick took this bold answer in good part, and was greatly delighted at the man's confidence in the reign of law in his kingdom. The mill was left untouched, and became a national monument of the respect which Frederick the Great paid to the law.

Another famous story about Frederick shows his kindness of heart. One morning he found the page who waited upon him asleep in the ante-chamber. Frederick saw a paper sticking out of the boy's pocket, and he drew the paper out and read it. It was a letter from the boy's mother, who was very poor, thanking him for his goodness in sending her money from his small wages. The king was pleased with this kind act of a good son, and slipped a handful of gold coins into the letter and put it back in the boy's pocket.

Frederick now went back to his own room and rang the bell so loudly that the page was awakened at once. The boy was so astonished to find his pocket full of gold that he went all colours. "What is the matter?" asked Frederick; and the page at once told him of the strange thing that had happened.

"Ah," said the king, smiling, "it must have been Dame Fortune who paid you a visit while you were asleep. Send the

money to your mother, and tell her that from this time she will find a friend in Frederick."

Until his death in 1786 he strove to raise Prussia to a high position in Europe, and he won great success. He left his country strong and prosperous, and when he died there was great sorrow felt for the loss of "Old Fritz," as his people loved to call him.

CHAPTER XI

THE FALL OF GERMANY

Frederick the Great was followed by his nephew, Frederick William II (1786-1797). In this reign the kingdom of Poland was finally broken up and divided among Prussia, Russia, and Austria. Maria Theresa had died in 1780, and her son, Joseph II, was Emperor. The condition of the Empire was very weak. Around the great states, such as Prussia, Austria, and Bavaria, there was a welter of small principalities, each with its little prince and little court, and every princeling claiming to be as independent a ruler in his dominion as the King of Prussia or the Emperor of Austria in his. Many of these German princes were very despotic in their sway, and the helplessness of their people is shown by the fact that from some states men were sold in thousands to other nations who required soldiers. The English Government bought large numbers, and formed them into regiments of the English army.

Upon this state of affairs there burst in 1789 the great storm of the French Revolution, a movement which shook Europe to its centre, and had a tremendous effect on Germany. The people of France, lashed to fury by misgovernment, rose against their king and the French nobility, putting the latter to death wherever they could seize them. Many nobles fled into Germany, and begged the Emperor to send an army into France to restore the French monarchy.

In 1792 Austria and Prussia joined to assail the French, but the campaign proved a very feeble effort, and though the German troops entered France they were soon driven back. Their leader was the Duke of Brunswick, who issued a proclamation that the allies meant to replace Louis XVI of France on the throne, and would destroy Paris if any harm was done to the royal family. To this proclamation the French replied by cutting

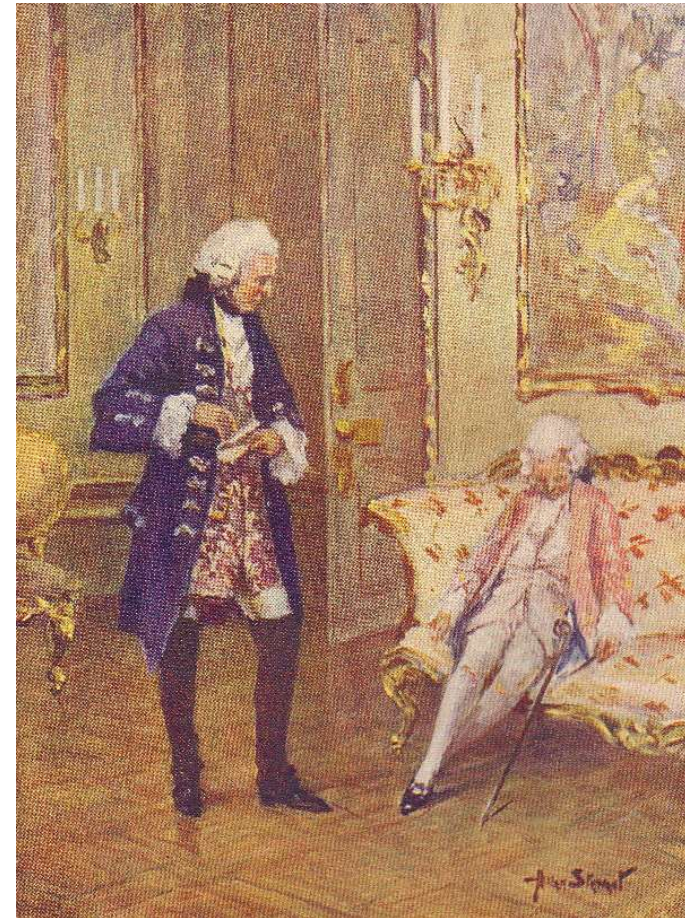
off the heads of the unfortunate Louis and his wife, Marie Antoinette, an Austrian princess and sister of the Emperor; they also established a republic. These doings alarmed the rulers of the neighbouring countries, and the German Empire, England, Holland, Spain, and Naples joined to crush France. At first the armies of France were beaten, but the whole country rose in arms, and vast forces were poured over the frontier to assail the nations of Europe.

In 1795 Prussia withdrew from the struggle and made peace with France. Austria fought on, and now there arose upon the scene the tremendous figure of Napoleon Bonaparte, one of the greatest captains of war that the world has ever known. He was a young officer of twenty-six when he was given the command of the French army in Italy. He soon subdued the north of Italy, and in 1797 he marched into Austria and forced the Emperor to make peace on terms favourable to France.

The Powers of Europe were very uneasy at these conquests of France, for every land seized was converted into a republic and added to the French possessions. In 1798 a fresh body of allies was formed to oppose the #ch, the chief Powers being England, Austria, and a. Prussia was asked to join, but she refused. Her new ruler, Frederick William III (1797-1840), thought that safety lay in keeping on good terms with France. In 1799 there was a great deal of fighting in Germany and Italy, and the French had by no means the best of it, but then Napoleon was not there. He had gone to the East and was fighting in Egypt, and he had dreams of conquering India. But all his plans were upset when Nelson destroyed his fleet at the Battle of the Nile, and Napoleon returned to France.

In 1799 he became the ruler of France under the title of the First Consul, and now he began the career which made him the master of the Continent. He attacked Italy and Germany and overran them, and Austria was overthrown. He forced the Emperor Francis II to agree to a treaty which rent the German Empire in pieces. The German states which had been friendly to France obtained the lion's share of the spoil which Napoleon had

won. Most of the free Imperial cities lost their proud position and, together with a vast number of small principalities, were handed over to swell the territories of the princes who had aided France. Prussia was a great gainer. She received rich rewards for her desertion of the German cause, and her dominions were greatly extended at the expense of her neighbours.



FREDERICK THE GREAT AND HIS PAGE.

Napoleon now did much as he pleased in Germany, and offered insult after insult to the German people by seizing a state or a town at his will. He became Emperor of the French in 1804,

and in 1805 England formed a fresh league against him. Prussia still hung back, and Napoleon resolved to invade England. His hopes of doing this were crushed when Nelson made an end of his fleet at Trafalgar. Napoleon turned upon his enemies by land and met the Emperors of Austria and Russia at Austerlitz. Here, in a great battle, he utterly overthrew them, and both emperors had to accept peace on such terms as Napoleon dictated.

The next year he dealt the cause of German unity a last destroying blow. He formed the "Confederation of the Rhine," when sixteen German princes were given full sovereignty in their own states on the condition that they should assist Napoleon, and form a bulwark of France to the east. It was felt on all hands that the old German Empire was gone, and that the title of Emperor of Germany, passed on from ruler to ruler since the days of Charlemagne, was no more than an empty form. So the Emperor Francis II gave up the Imperial crown of Germany, and took the title of Emperor of Austria, a title which his family of Hapsburg retains to this day.

And now Prussia was to feel the weight of the conqueror's iron hand. She had stood aside from the cause of German freedom, she had accepted gifts from the hand of the man who was crushing her country and refusing Germans all liberty of speech or action, and now she was to fall in turn. Early in 1806 Frederick William III of Prussia was forced to conclude a treaty with Napoleon which brought about a state of war between England and Prussia, and England seized a great number of Prussian ships, Napoleon had begun to distrust Prussia and heaped such insults upon her that every citizen who loved his country was filled with patriotic anger.

None felt these insults more deeply than Louise, the brave and beautiful Queen of Prussia. She urged her husband to resist the tyrant, she roused her people; a call to arms rang through the land, and Prussia declared war upon France in the autumn of 1806. But the ill-trained and poorly led troops of Prussia were no match for Napoleon's splendid veterans. The great commander broke the Prussian armies in every direction,

and such was the dread of his name that strong fortresses and large divisions of men surrendered without striking a single blow. Within a few weeks from the declaration of war he marched into Berlin in triumph, and occupied it as a conquered city.

Frederick III fled and sought to collect the shattered remnants of his forces. A Russian army came to his aid, and Napoleon met the allies in a terrible battle, where the victory remained uncertain after great numbers of men had fallen on both sides. But the next great battle was more dreadful still, for a German army marched from the Rhenish Confederation to assist Napoleon, and Germans sought to crush Germans at the side of the French conqueror. Frederick William and his friends were overthrown, and the next blow to Prussia was that her ally Russia deserted her and went over to Napoleon.

Unhappy Prussia was now beaten to the earth, and Napoleon had no mercy upon her. He imposed the most cruel and bitter terms, and she had no longer any strength with which to resist. Napoleon demanded that she should be stripped of a great part of her land, so that her dominions would be no larger than those ruled by the Great Elector; that she should pay a vast sum of money; and that she should maintain a French army until the great fine was paid.

Such terms as these meant that Prussia would lose her position among the Powers of Europe, and Queen Louise herself met Napoleon at Tilsit and begged him to be more generous to Prussia. She spoke in vain, and the Peace of Tilsit crushed her as well as her country. She died shortly afterwards, broken-hearted at the sight of misery which she could do nothing to soften.

Napoleon was now in the full enjoyment of power. He carved kingdoms out of Europe for his brothers and his chief followers, a large part of Prussia going to form a realm for his brother Jerome to govern, and his will was absolute from end to end of Germany.

CHAPTER XII

THE RISE OF GERMANY

The Peace of Tilsit in 1807 marks the lowest point to which Germany fell. It was indeed very low. She lay under the heel of a conqueror who knew nothing of generous pity for a fallen foe. Her fields were wasted by war, her people ground down under a cruel load of taxes and contributions which were wrung from their poverty with merciless rigour. Some of the princes of the Empire were held down with firm hand by Napoleon; the others, a situation a thousand times more disgraceful, were in alliance with him and fought under his banners. From the great ones of the land no help could come. Whence did Germany gain the new strength that raised her from the dust? From her people.

Little by little there grew up in German hearts the feeling that though prince might war with prince, yet in both states the people were Germans and brothers, and had a common fatherland. There were patriots who spoke and wrote to this effect in the darkest days of Germany's despair, and their pamphlets were passed from hand to hand, and awoke a spirit of brotherhood among their fellow-countrymen.

In Prussia a number of able statesmen began a great work of reform in the state, and laboured to restore the land to a condition of prosperity. They took the army in hand above all, and strove to bring it into line with modern conditions, for little had been learned in the Prussian army since the days of Frederick the Great. It was they who formed the famous Landwehr, a levy of the people to defend their country. In Austria, too, ministers were busy with reform, and gradually the two great states gathered strength again.

Napoleon watched this slow growth of power with uneasy eyes, and outlawed Baron Stein, the chief minister of

Prussia, who was compelled to fly the country. But Napoleon now had to give much attention to Spain, where the people had risen against the French, and were trying to drive out the king whom Napoleon had set over them, his own brother Joseph. The Spaniards were aided by an English army under Sir Arthur Wellesley, afterwards the Duke of Wellington, and Napoleon was forced to send large armies to oppose the great English general. To the Austrians this seemed a good chance to strike a blow for freedom, and they declared war on France early in 1809.

The Austrian government declared that they were fighting for German independence, and they called on every German to rise and throw off the French yoke. Throughout the Empire a great number of broadsheets were circulated among the people, calling upon them to show their ancient spirit. Here is the vigorous appeal of one of these publications: "Austria saw (and every German heart bled at the sight), she saw you sunk to such a depth of degradation as to submit like vassals to the laws of a foreign monarch, and beheld your sons dragged into the field to fight against their brethren. Germans! Austria calls on you to raise your degraded heads and burst your chains! How long shall Hermann mourn over his degenerate descendants? Does the clank of your fetters sound pleasantly in your ears? Awake, Germans! Awake from this death-slumber of infamy! Let not your name be a byword of generations yet unborn!"

But Germany had not yet awakened. The appeals were all in vain. The dread of Napoleon and the fear of his power was such that not a finger was lifted to help Austria, and she had to enter on the struggle single-handed. Nay, more, it was a German army, recruited along the Rhine, which Napoleon led against the Austrians. The latter fought most bravely, but were beaten, and for the second time Napoleon entered Vienna in triumph. He punished Austria by stripping her of much territory, and once more all was quiet save in the Tyrol. Here the brave mountaineers, led by a gallant man named Andreas Hofer, struggled hard against the French power, and won several

victories. But in the end their resistance was broken and Hofer was captured. He was carried in chains to Mantua and there shot in 1810.

Napoleon continued to march on from victory to victory, and it seemed as if none could shake his authority. In Germany his power appeared absolute. He permitted no patriot to make any open sign of love for his country: to do so was branded as treason and severely punished. But though Germany seemed silent and dull in her despair, yet beneath the surface things were slowly moving, and there were the first faint stirrings of a national spirit which should one day flame up and fill all German hearts.

There became spread widely through the country a secret society called the League of Virtue. Its ranks were filled by statesmen, officers, professors, literary men, students, and citizens: its object was to arouse German national feeling, and unite all in the freeing and defense of their country. The poets of the movement wrote stirring songs full of patriotic feeling, songs which were sung everywhere in Germany, and literary men called attention to the glory of the land in past ages, and wrote of heroes and statesmen. Their writings were read eagerly, and the spirit of the people was roused by these pictures of other days when Germany was great and free.

At last there came a chance for these brave souls panting for freedom. Napoleon had set his heel on every great Power of the Continent save Russia. He resolved to subdue Russia to his arms, and in June 1812 he entered that country at the head of half a million troops. Men from all parts of Europe marched in this vast army: Prussia and Austria had been forced to supply many thousands of soldiers, and the Grand Army, as it was called, swept into the heart of Russia.

Napoleon's aim was Moscow, the ancient capital of the Russian Empire. He reached it without great resistance, for the Russians fell back before him, laying waste the country so that his troops went out in vain to forage. He found Moscow

deserted, entered it, and took up winter quarters. But to his dismay Moscow was set on fire by its people, and in a short time Napoleon found himself faced by a heap of blackened ruins which could afford no shelter to his troops. Winter was near at hand, the army could not stay at Moscow, so there was nothing for Napoleon but to retire, and he began the terrible retreat from Moscow.

The sufferings of his troops on this awful march can hardly be pictured. The Russian winter fell upon them, with its iron frost, its driving snowstorms, and its piercing winds. The country was a desert, for the peasants had fled, taking all stores of food with them, and destroying every building where the famished, frozen troops could seek shelter. Worn out by hunger and cold, the men of the Grand Army fell by thousands, and upon these unhappy masses left in the rear of the retreating troops the Cossacks descended, to slay the dying and plunder the dead. Of all the magnificent army which entered Russia, only a few thousands of weak, weary men crept back over the frontier.

This fearful repulse was a shattering blow at the power of Napoleon. It filled with joy every heart which longed for his downfall, and nowhere did it have greater effect than in Germany. Every patriot hoped that the day of freedom was near, and when the King of Prussia declared war against France in March 1813, and called upon his people to rise in defense of the Fatherland, the response was wonderful.

The professor and the student left their books, the workman threw down his tools, the farmer rushed from his plough, the merchant from his office, the tradesman from his shop: all hastened to enroll themselves in the army of freedom. Those who could not fight gave their possessions to aid the national cause. Money, jewels, vessels of gold and silver were offered, and furniture, horses, cattle, clothing, anything and everything, were sold and the money poured into the treasury of the state. In a short time hundreds of thousands of German patriots were under arms, and the War of Liberation began.

On his side Napoleon collected a fresh army, but though its numbers were great, the new levies were, for the most part, raw boy's, young and poorly trained: he had left vast numbers of his former veterans beneath the Russian snows. Still he marched into Germany and beat the allied armies of Prussia and Russia in May 1813, and tried to win over Austria to his side. This attempt failed, and shortly Austria came into the field against him, and a last great struggle in Germany was joined.



KAUB AND PALATINE CASTLE
ON NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1813, GERMAN TROOPS UNDER FIELD-MARSHAL
BLUCHER HERE CROSSED THE RHINE IN PURSUIT OF THE FRENCH ARMY.

During the autumn there were a number of minor battles in which the French were, as a rule, roughly handled, and the German volunteers distinguished themselves by their fury of onset and desperate courage in hand-to-hand conflicts. Then, on October 16, 1813, began the battle which broke Napoleon's power: the mighty three days' struggle at Leipzig. On the 16th things went well for the French, and Napoleon thought he had won another victory; on the 17th the famous Prussian general, Blucher, turned the tide of success against Napoleon; on the 18th he was routed horse and foot, and the next day he fled towards the Rhine. His power in Germany had been destroyed at a blow, and the land was free up to the right bank of the Rhine.

Prussia, Austria, and Russia now determined to make an end of Napoleon's authority. The King and the two Emperors did not feel safe as long as Napoleon ruled in France, and they entered the latter country on January 1, 1814. A proclamation was issued that they were not making war upon the French people, but upon Napoleon himself, whose ambition and love of war made him a danger to Europe. An English army under the Duke of Wellington also marched into France from Spain, and these combined foes were too powerful for the French nation, now weary of war, and worn out by the loss of vast numbers of their sons in the multitude of battles fought in the last twenty years.

Napoleon continued to struggle with his old skill, and there were a number of engagements before the allies entered Paris at the end of March 1814. Napoleon was now compelled to give up the throne and was exiled to the island of Elba. Peace was made, when Prussia was very angry upon finding that France was to be allowed to keep Alsace and Lorraine, but she was overruled by the other Powers.

A year later Napoleon escaped from Elba and entered France, where his old soldiers received him with joy, and gathered to fight for him once more. His triumph was short, for on June 18 he was defeated at Waterloo, and the allies now sent

him into exile to a safer place, the lonely island of St. Helena in the Atlantic.

With the fall of the French Emperor Germany was free, and now she had to rearrange the states which had fallen into such confusion under the handling of Napoleon.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GERMAN CONFEDERATION

When Germany settled down again after the French wars there were great changes in her political condition, as well as in the shape and size of some of her states. Prussia regained many of the territories of which she had been stripped and Austria was given possessions in the north of Italy and some provinces to the east. From this time Austria began to draw apart from the rest of Germany, and this was a natural consequence of the many races which inhabited her borders, Germans forming only one division of the subjects of Austria.

The German people now had to consider in what manner they should combine to make themselves safe against future enemies. Some wished the Empire to be set up again, but Austria and Prussia frowned upon this, and it was finally agreed to form a German Confederation. The states of Germany therefore entered into an alliance by which they bound themselves to stand together against any foreign foe, and to secure the independence of each state. Deputies from the states were to meet at a Diet in Frankfort to settle the affairs of the Confederation, and it was arranged that Austria should preside.

From this time, for many years, the history of Germany becomes the story of a great struggle for civil liberty. The ideas of the French Revolution had left a deep mark on German minds. German thinkers and patriots had no love for French rule and fought to throw it off, but the ideas upon which the Revolution was founded, that citizens should be equal before the law, that all should pay taxes, that the people should have some voice in making the laws they were forced to obey—these things seemed right and just. It had been far otherwise in the German states before the wars of the Revolution. In former days many princes had made laws and imposed taxes without a thought of

the people, ruling absolutely as they pleased, and the German people resolved that, after the sacrifices they had made of blood and treasure to free their country, they would not go back to the old state of affairs. There were parts of Germany where the peasantry did not enjoy common freedom, and so late as the year 1820 the last remains of serfdom lingered in Mecklenburg.

The lovers of progress had a severe struggle before they made much headway. It is true that the Act of Confederation had promised that absolute rule should be abolished, and that the people should receive some share in the government. A number of states at once framed constitutions, but in others the ruler and his ministers fought hard to retain the absolute power of the monarch and keep the people in subjection. Those who wished to gain power for the people were called Liberals, and those who loved the old ways were known as Conservatives. The Liberals were found mainly in the universities, among the professors and students, the writers and thinkers, who had done so much to fire the minds of the people during the War of Liberation. But the power was largely in the hands of the Conservatives, and they used it freely to crush Liberal thought and to check freedom of speech and pen.

The chief Conservative state was Austria, where the famous minister Metternich used his power to arrest all progress and make the Emperor an absolute monarch. Prussia joined Austria in this line of action, and in the Diet resolutions were passed that the spread of Liberal ideas ought to be checked. A Commission of Enquiry was appointed, and writers and speakers were seized and shut up in prisons and fortresses, many professors being deprived of their chairs and sent out of the country. Among these were several of the famous poets and patriots who had nobly led the people to the attack upon Napoleon, and their punishment aroused deep anger among the German Liberals. It was said that the princes who had not dared to face the great tyrant were now persecuting the very men who had saved them and their thrones.

While the great states of North Germany were thus trying to crush freedom of thought, matters were much better in Bavaria and other states of South Germany. In the latter the people had gained much power; they had control over rates and taxes, and they took part in the making of the laws; thus a sharp contrast existed between them and their brethren in North Germany, who had no such rights and privileges.

As time passed on the discontent of North Germans with the government under which they lived grew more and more bitter. In 1830 the slumbering fire was fanned into flame by another, revolution in France, where a hated king was driven from the land and replaced by one who would be more favourable to the people. This example roused the Liberals of North Germany to demand reforms from their rulers, but Austria, Prussia, and Russia joined to crush the agitation and maintain the power of the monarch. Again a commission was set to work to find out Liberals and punish them. Many hundreds of men were imprisoned without reason, and kept in confinement without trial. Professors were driven from their university chairs and one university was closed. Freedom of the Press was abolished, and no one was allowed to print anything until it had been examined by a censor, who would allow nothing to pass unless it was in favour of the government and its methods. This led to much greater discontent and anger, and in the midst of these troubled times Frederick William III closed his long reign in 1840.

Frederick William IV (1840-1861) followed his father, and his reign opened well. He released the political prisoners, and promised reform in the government. But though he was a clever man he was not a strong one, and could not be relied upon to keep his word. Years passed and no reforms were undertaken: then the King said that he did not intend to make any reforms at all. The people who had been patiently waiting to gain some share of power were thrown into a state of great excitement and anger, and the excitement was increased by trouble in the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. These were small German

states lying to the south of Denmark and forming the isthmus of the peninsula of Jutland. They are largely German in language, feeling, and customs, but were under Danish rule, and wished to break away from the sway of the King of Denmark and join the German Confederation. The Duchies declared that they were oppressed by the Danish king, and while all German minds were filled with sympathy for them, another tremendous wave of excitement swept through Europe, starting, as ever, from Paris.

In February 1848 Paris rose again upon her king, drove him out, and proclaimed the Second French Republic. In Germany this event was hailed with fierce delight, and the people rose everywhere to demand their rights. They, too, would wait no longer. If their rulers would not grant reforms then they, like the French, would sweep away the men who stood in the path of progress.

Governments tottered and fell in every direction, and the monarchs of Prussia and Austria trembled on their thrones. In Berlin there was a sharp conflict between the people and the troops. Barricades were thrown up in the streets, and the people fought so well that they seized the city, and the king was compelled to order his troops to leave Berlin. A few months later the army returned and the people were disarmed. But the power of the latter had been shown, and in the end Frederick William was forced to grant reforms and introduce a Liberal constitution.

In Austria the struggle was far longer and more bitter, the populace rising in several states of the empire. The Emperor and his minister, Metternich, were driven from Vienna, which fell into the hands of the citizens and students. In October the city was assailed by the Emperor's troops and for some days the people held their own in a fierce combat. Then the troops stormed Vienna, and shot down a large number of the insurgents. It was felt that there would be a better chance of peace with a new ruler, so the Emperor gave up his crown, and his nephew, Francis Joseph, came to the throne in December 1848. He still rules over Austria, the most venerable monarch of Europe, beloved by his people and respected by all nations.

Many other revolts broke out in the states of Germany, but the governments put them down by force, crushing the ill-armed and untrained insurgents by strong forces of soldiery. Yet the people, though beaten down again, had shown their strength, and many reforms were granted lest they should break out again.

Meanwhile Prussia, though backward in granting her people political liberty, had done an excellent piece of work for Germany as a nation. She saw how bad a thing it was that each state should look upon its neighbour as a foreign country in the case of exchange of goods. Every state had its own frontier line, where it collected the dues on goods entering or leaving the territory. Thus all Germany bristled with custom-houses where guards watched the transit of merchandise and collected the duty. This was very bad for trade, for it greatly hindered the free movement of goods from state to state. So Prussia proposed that all inland customs should be abolished and that the frontier should be the boundaries of Germany. Little by little this idea found favour, and state after state joined until, in 1834, eighteen states, with Prussia at their head, had formed the Zollverein, the Tariff or Toll Union. This union was not only a splendid thing for trade and commerce, but it was a first step in the reuniting of the German states to form a nation.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MODERN GERMAN EMPIRE

The outbreaks of 1848 were followed by fresh trouble in Schleswig-Holstein. Germany and Denmark went to war over the disputed territory and the result was that Holstein was handed over to Denmark. But, as we shall see, this was not the end of the matter. The years which now followed were marked by the growth of a strong and bitter struggle between Prussia and Austria for the leading place in German affairs. Frederick William died in 1861 and was followed by his brother, William I, who had ruled the country for some years as Prince Regent. This post had been given to him because of the long illness of the late king.

William I felt that Prussia was threatened with danger from both sides; on the one side from France, on the other from Austria. France at the time was ruled by Napoleon III, nephew of the great Napoleon. He had overturned the Second French Republic, and seized the crown as French Emperor. He was no friend to Prussia, for he was jealous of the growing power and strength of this great state which bordered upon his country. Austria was known as a rival which was desirous of lessening Prussia's authority and influence in Germany.

Under these circumstances the King of Prussia was anxious to maintain a large army and add to its numbers. His wish was opposed by the representatives of the Prussian people, but after a long struggle, William, aided by his powerful minister, Bismarck, gained his end. Bismarck was the greatest statesman whom Germany has produced, and he had already formed a plan to add largely to the power of Prussia. He wished to break up the German Confederation, in which Austria held the chief place, drive Austria out, and form a new union of German states with Prussia at the head.

In 1864 Austria and Prussia worked together for the last time. The Schleswig-Holstein question came up again, and Austria and Prussia attacked Denmark and took these duchies from her. A quarrel now arose between Prussia and Austria with regard to the government of Schleswig-Holstein, and was carried to a great height. It was a small matter, but it served as an outlet for the bitterness with which the rivals looked upon each other: the real cause lay behind the trivial dispute—it was the struggle for the leadership of Germany.



IMPERIAL PALACE AT POTSDAM.

There was but one end to so keen a rivalry—war, and it came in 1866. It was short and sharp: so short that it is known in history as the Seven Weeks' War: so sharp that Austria was swiftly crushed before the powerful armies of Prussia. The decisive battle was fought at Konigsgratz or Sadowa, in Bohemia, on July 3, 1866, and after a most, desperate struggle, marked by terrible slaughter on both sides, the Austrians were utterly routed. The consequences of this defeat were of the utmost importance to Germany, and to Prussia in particular. The German Confederation was broken up and Austria lost her pride

of place in German affairs: Austria no more formed a part of Germany; she gave up Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia, and agreed to pay 3,000,000 as a war indemnity; Prussia added to herself a number of smaller states which had sided with Austria, and the larger had to own her supremacy in the new union of states called the North German Confederation. The great South German states, such as Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and Baden, did not enter this Confederation.

This great triumph of Prussia added vastly to her size and strength. With the addition of her new territories she now formed a large compact state, having a coast line both on the Baltic and the North Sea, and plans were laid for the formation of a German navy. Napoleon of France watched this growth of Prussia with uneasy eyes, and he demanded a rearrangement of the frontier. Bismarck refused to give up an inch of land, even though Napoleon spoke of war. War did not come at that moment, but it was not far off, and both sides began to prepare for the struggle which lay in the near future.

The trial of strength came four years later. By the year 1870 Napoleon had lost much of the favour of his people. He felt that the fortunes of his House were failing, and he hoped that a war of conquest and victory would please the French people and re-establish his power. He feared, too, to see the great South German states join the North German Confederation, when his opponents would be much more powerful. His ministers, also, assured him that his army was in perfect order and ready to march to Berlin. So now there remained nothing to do save to find a pretext for attacking Prussia.

It came when the crown of Spain was offered to a German prince, Leopold of Hohenzollern. The French declared that they would never allow a Hohenzollern prince to ascend the Spanish throne, and they called upon King William I of Prussia, as head of the House of Hohenzollern, to forbid Leopold to accept the crown. But Leopold refused the offer of his own will, and there it seemed the matter would end. But the French government went on to demand a promise from the King of

Prussia that he would never permit Leopold to come forward at some future time. King William refused to make any such promise and Napoleon at once declared war: then followed the famous Franco-German war of 1870-71.

From the first the war was one terrible downfall for France and Napoleon. The French army was not ready: the men who had boasted that everything was in order had themselves greatly destroyed its value by careless handling, or stupid mistakes, or even by actually pocketing the money which should have been employed in purchasing the things needed by the troops. On the other hand the German armies were in order. Everything had been carefully provided, every plan had been thought out, every provision had been made. Above all, France had to face a united Germany.

Napoleon had been deceived not only about his own army, but about that of his enemy. His ministers had assured him that the great South German states felt a deep jealousy of Prussia, and would never come to her aid. Never was a greater mistake made. Germany rose as one man when her old foe and oppressor, France, hurled the challenge of war across the frontier. Old feuds and quarrels were forgotten as though they had never been, and North and South Germany stood shoulder to shoulder to defend the Fatherland. Within a few days of the declaration of war more than 400,000 Germans were under arms and marching towards the frontier to prevent the war being carried into their own country.

Disaster after disaster befell the French troops. One large army was driven into the great fortress of Metz and shut up there, another into Sedan. The fate of Sedan was sealed on September 1, 1870, when in a tremendous battle the Germans won a crushing victory. They took Sedan, made the Emperor Napoleon a captive, and a French army of 83,000 men became prisoners of war. The news of this terrible defeat aroused deep anger in Paris. The French cast off Napoleon for ever and proclaimed the Third French Republic; the Empress Eugenie and her son fled to England, and a republican government was

formed. This government resolved to carry on the war, and the Germans marched on Paris and laid siege to the chief city.

The people of Paris felt no great fear. The capital was guarded by strong forts, a strong army lay within the walls to defend it, and other armies would come to its aid. But though armies were raised to relieve Paris not one came near its object: each was over-thrown in turn by the victorious Germans, and fortress after fortress fell. In September Strasburg was seized, and in October Metz was given up with a huge French army of 175,000 men. All these disasters to the French cause set free fresh masses of German troops to face the armies raised in different parts of France, or to aid in the siege of Paris. Thus, when winter closed in, the great capital lay in an iron ring of armed men against which her garrison dashed out in vain. Slowly, but surely, the grim shadow of famine crept across Paris. Food became scarce, and all kinds of creatures were eaten by the starving people—cats, dogs, rats from the sewers. At length Paris could hold out no longer, and at the end of January 1871 she surrendered.

France was now beaten to her knees, and Germany demanded that she should give up Alsace, part of Lorraine, and pay a war indemnity of £200,000,000.

Until this was paid German troops were to hold part of the land. To the astonishment of all Europe, France paid this vast sum in about two years, and the last German troops then retired across the frontier.

During the course of the war a great step had been taken by Germany, a step to which her best thinkers and noblest patriots had looked forward for many, many years, the uniting of her states into a German nation. It was felt that as all the states were now joined in war to defend the Fatherland, so should they be joined in peace to protect it. In November 1870, while the siege of Paris was going on, Bismarck invited the representatives of other states to Versailles to confer on the subject of German union.

An agreement was made, and on December 3 the King of Bavaria, the chief ruler of South Germany, proposed that the Imperial crown should be offered to the King of Prussia as head of the new German Empire. William I accepted the crown on January 18, 1871. He did so at Versailles, in the great hall of the palace of Louis the Great, a hall hung with pictures of the victories of the mighty Napoleon, he who had destroyed the ancient empire, and amid the joyous shouts of princes who had but a few years since fought against Prussia: all were now united under one ruler and as members of one empire. In March the new German Emperor rode into Paris as a victor: he had done so once before, but nearly sixty years had passed since, as a boy, he had ridden into Paris with his father after the fall of the great Napoleon in 1814.

So, after centuries of strife and misery, of war and bloodshed, Germany was once more united, and her principalities and cities welded into a firm whole, raising her at once to the rank of a great world-power and one of the leading nations of Europe. Since the days of that great war she has developed swiftly under the rule of William I, his son, and his grandson. William I died in 1889, more than ninety years of age, respected and honoured by the whole German people. His son, Frederick William, an able and kindly man, only reigned a few months, and then William II came to the throne as King of Prussia and German Emperor.

He still reigns over Germany, and his reign has seen a wonderful development of German industries and commerce. For the victories of war Germany has exchanged the victories of peace. Her manufactures have grown with wonderful rapidity, her men of science have made striking discoveries, her scholars and thinkers have added greatly to the sum of the world's knowledge. She has known no war since the struggle which saw her born anew as a nation, and in the long interval which has passed she has steadily risen in power, wealth, and authority.