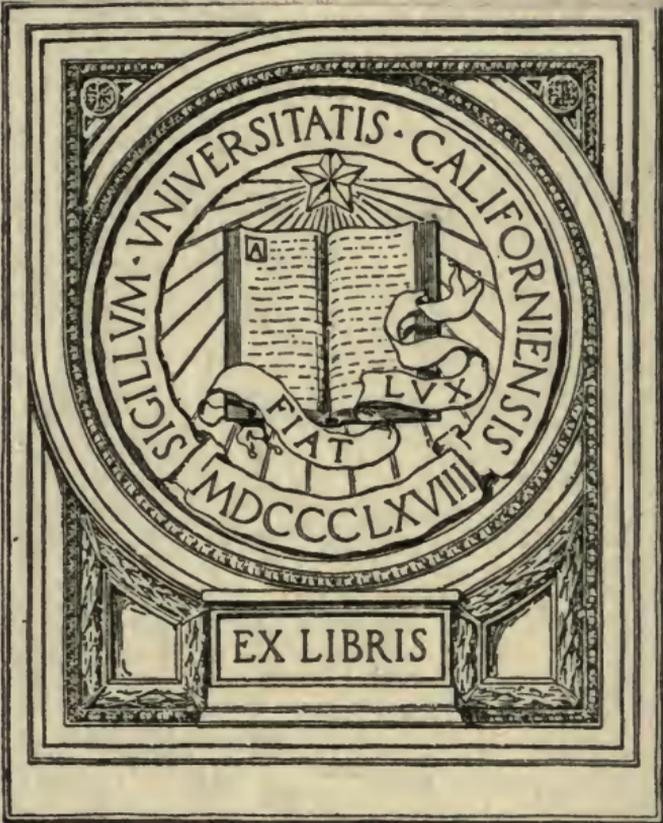


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CHARLES XII.,
KING OF SWEDEN.

—
From a portrait in the Palace at Schwerin.

CHARLES XII
OF SWEDEN,

BY

OSCAR BROWNING

1111

LONDON
HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED
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1899

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HISTORY I

1914

TO
LORD CURZON, OF KEDLESTON,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

IN MEMORY OF

A LONG AND UNBROKEN FRIENDSHIP.

346839

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FRONTISPIECE

THE best thanks of the author are due to the Duke-Regent of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the worthy descendant of an ancient and illustrious line, for the gracious courtesy which prompted him to have his unique portrait of Charles XII. photographed, in order to adorn the present work.

ON what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
How just his hopes let Swedish Charles decide;
A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
No dangers fright him, and no labours tire;
O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain;
No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;
Behold surrounding kings their pow'rs combine,
And one capitulate, and one resign;
Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain;
'Think nothing gain'd,' he cries, 'till nought remain,
'On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,
'And all be mine beneath the Polar sky.'
The march begins in military state,
And nations on his eye suspended wait;
Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,
And Winter barricades the realms of Frost;

He comes, nor want nor cold his course delay;—
Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultava's day:
The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,
And shows his miseries in distant lands;
Condemn'd a needy supplicant to wait,
While ladies interpose, and slaves debate.
But did not chance at length her error mend?
Did not subverted empire mark his end?
Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?
Or hostile millions press him to the ground?
His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

JOHNSON.—*Vanity of Human Wishes.*

CHARLES XII

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, EDUCATION, ACCESSION, AND CORONATION.

THE child who was to be known to the world at a later period as King Charles XII. of Sweden was born in the royal palace of Stockholm on June 17, 1682, at a quarter before seven in the morning. It is said that he came into the world with his hands dripping with blood, and that his birth was accompanied by a violent storm which unroofed the houses and churches of the capital. These are probably fables, but they sum up in prophecy the after-consciousness of his career. Up to his seventh year he was left to the charge of his mother, Ulrica Eleanora, the daughter of King Frederick III. of Denmark and Norway, and the sister of Christian V., the reigning sovereign. She was a model of domestic virtues, of gentleness and piety. By her the young prince

was brought up to love goodness, justice, and benevolence. He learnt the German language by joining in the morning and evening prayers which were said in the court tongue, and his first instruction was in Bible history.

In 1686, when he was in his fourth year, Charles was taken by his mother to the university town of Upsala, where she made the most diligent enquiries as to the tutor who would be most fit to direct the education of the young prince. Having chosen out three, she presented them to the boy, telling him to make his selection amongst them. He held out his little hand to a certain Norcopenensis, professor of rhetoric, who fortunately enjoyed the favour of the Queen-mother, and the respect of all his colleagues. He was an oldish man,—fifty-four years of age, with grey hair,—and he has left a name in the literary history of his country as the founder of the Swedish school of Latin poetry.

He was simple and old-fashioned, even in his dress, and the child may have been attracted by his kindly smile, if indeed the choice was not suggested to him. At any rate, it was successful. Boy and teacher lived together in harmony. Speedily and half playing, as Milton says, the child learnt to read and write, he acquired the rudiments of geography, history, and arithmetic, so that when six years old

he could write letters and do sums. The mother followed the education of her son with the liveliest interest. The tasks of the day were repeated in the evening, and every Sunday Charles had to repeat the text and the argument of the weekly sermon. As a relaxation he was allowed to copy out the diary which his grandfather Charles X. had kept during his youthful travels.

At the age of six years and a half Charles was removed from the care of women, and received an establishment of his own.

According to the custom of those times he must have a governor to superintend his education, and for that part Erick Lindskjöld was chosen, against the will of the Queen. He died, however, shortly afterwards, and was succeeded by Nils Gyldenstolpe, who like his predecessor was more acceptable to the father than to the mother. Charles XI. wrote out very precise instructions as to his son's education. His first care was to be devoted to the Bible and the truths of Christianity, and he was to be fervent in prayer. He was to learn arithmetic and the Swedish and German languages. In Latin his principal authors were to be Cornelius Nepos and Julius Cæsar, the first to hold up to his imitation the great deeds of antiquity, and the second to instruct him in the art of war. The tutor was to make Cæsar's

campaigns live again as if the boy were taking part in them. Tully's offices were to teach him his duty towards his fellow-men, Livy the course of Roman history. Statecraft he was to learn from Puffendorf, and from 'Barclai's' *Argenis*, a political romance written in favour of absolutism and divine right, which has received the praise of Cowper, Coleridge, and Hallam. We do not know how far these instructions were followed out, but it is certain that during his campaigns his favourite author was Quintus Curtius, who described the wars of Alexander the Great.

In 1693, when Charles was eleven years old, a tall, slim lad, developed beyond his years, he lost his mother, who had watched over him with tender care. She said to him on her deathbed,

'As fate has destined you to reign after your father, strive to make yourself worthy of his high fortune and to tread in the footsteps of his example. Be a good brother and a loving friend to your younger sisters, who need your help and your counsel.'

In the next year the good Norcopenensis, now ennobled under the name of Nordenhjelm, followed his mistress to the grave.

These events brought about a change in Charles's life. Books were laid aside, the instructions of

Polus and Gustav Cronhjelm, who succeeded as his tutors, were disregarded, and the boy accompanied his father in riding and hunting parties. The king was glad to forget his sorrow in these strenuous exercises, and delighted in the society of his son. Yet the lad's education was far from complete. He was indeed a fervent Christian, and possessed a deep Protestant piety which he never lost. But his handwriting was very bad, and became gradually worse throughout his life. His knowledge of Swedish was very imperfect, and he knew Latin better than his mother tongue. It is said, however, that he was only induced to apply himself to the study of this language by the argument that if he did not he would find himself inferior to the Kings of Denmark and Poland. He was very reluctant to learn French, and absolutely refused to speak it. His governor representing to him that he ought to prepare himself to converse with a French ambassador, he replied,

‘My dear Lindskjöld, I understand French and will not learn any more of it. If I ever meet the King of France I will converse with him in his own tongue, but if a French ambassador comes to Sweden, it is more fitting that he should learn Swedish for my sake than that I should learn French for his.’

Yet we know that at a later period he enjoyed

French plays, and that he conversed in French with the Ambassador d'Avaux and his suite.

Charles now began to exhibit signs of that bodily strength and endurance which were to be the wonder of his contemporaries. He first rode on a pony when he was four years old, and took part in the exercises of the troops. He showed a precocious passion for sport; he shot his first fox when he was seven, and his first bear before he was twelve. The bear was shot in the right side of the neck, the bullet pierced straight through the heart and came out on the other side of the body. This feat was considered a remarkable one, and his father recorded it with joy in his diary. The boy's mind seems to have been set on dangerous adventures. He loved to peruse the stories of northern war, and when he was seven years old, said that he wished he had a brother who could rule the country in his absence whilst he wandered about the world with his warriors in search of adventure.

'Wish for good things when you are young,' said Goethe, 'for when you are old they are sure to happen to you.'

Nordenhjelm once asked him how he liked Alexander the Great, and the boy replied that he would wish to resemble him.

'But he only lived thirty-two years,' said the tutor.

‘One has lived long enough when one has conquered a whole kingdom,’ replied the boy.

It is said that he once saw in his father’s study two maps, one of Riga, and one of a Hungarian town which had been taken from the Emperor by the Turks, under which was written, ‘The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.’ Charles took a pencil and wrote under the plan of Riga, ‘The Lord hath given it to me, and the devil himself shall not take it from me.’

Like his great rival Peter the Great, who was to prove the devil in this instance, he gave much of his boyish studies to the art of war. He built model fortresses, he learnt how to cast a cannon and how to form a camp. He shared the hardships of the common soldiers. He cared little for food or sleep; in the fight itself he was possessed with a fever of excitement, and not seldom endangered his life. Yet he never lost his presence of mind. He practised himself to despise pain. It is said that once at his mother’s table he was bitten by a dog to which he had offered a piece of bread, and that he bound his hand in a napkin, saying nothing about the wound until the blood dropped upon the floor.

Indeed his steadfastness often degenerated into obstinacy. He persisted in saying that the court

painter Behn looked like a water-rat, and could not be persuaded to desist. Also having once been told by his nurse that he was to remain in a certain chair until she returned, he absolutely refused to accompany his mother to the sermon and to violate his promise. Similarly having once said that blue was black, he continued to declare that it was. We need not multiply these tales; it is enough to say that his obstinacy and stubbornness of will was tempered by his love for his mother and his fear of his father, that his virtues were well known in the land, and that much was hoped from his piety, his sense of justice, his truthfulness, his strength and his courage. Our narrative will show that these hopes were not disappointed.

Charles XI. died in Stockholm on Easter Monday, April 5, 1697. He left Sweden at the height of her power, a level which she never passed, and from which she could only decline. She possessed broad provinces to the south of the Gulf of Finland. The River Düne formed a natural boundary on the side of Poland; Riga, Revel, and Narva were flourishing centres of commerce; the Swedish flag floated over the battlements of Stettin, Stralsund, Wismar, Bremen and Stade, places which we have been long accustomed to consider as German towns. The population was on the whole devoted to the Swedish crown,

but the nobles had become discontented from the carrying out by Charles XI. of the so-called 'Reductions,' that is the resumption by the crown of the lands granted to them in feudal tenure by the ill-judged generosity of previous monarchs. From Torneå at the northern end of the Gulf of Bothnia to Ystad in the extreme south there was but one speech, one law, and one rule. The army consisted of eighty thousand well drilled and seasoned troops, the Swedish fleet was of special importance, and the war treasury was well filled. Such was the inheritance which Charles XI. bequeathed to his illustrious son, dying at the early age of forty-two.

On the death of his wife in 1693, Charles had made all preparations for a Regency. He had committed his son to the charge of the Queen-mother Hedwig Eleanora, and had appointed five regents to assist her. These were Bengt Oxenstierna, who was President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Christopher Gyllenstjerna, Minister of War, Nils Gyllenstolpe, Minister of Justice, Fabian Wrede to command the fleet, and Lars Wallenstedt to preside over the Home Office and the Exchequer. But a terrible calamity presaged coming troubles. On May 7, just a month after the King's death, the royal palace was destroyed by fire, and the body of the monarch, as it lay in solemn splendour on a bed

of state, was with difficulty rescued from the flames. The Queen-mother was beside herself with emotion, but Charles kept his presence of mind. When the fire first seized the old castle in which the dead body of his father lay, he remarked that it was so old that it must soon have been destroyed; and when the large new palace, the ornament of the capital, was in a blaze, he exclaimed with pious fervour,

‘The Lord’s will be done—His name be praised.’

When the Swedish diet met on November 4, the first question submitted to them was, whether Charles should or should not be declared of age, the regency put an end to, and the government committed to his hands. The precedent of the great Gustavus Adolphus was alleged in support of this course; the minority of the late King had not been a success, and the regency was now committed to the same hands, grown older and more incompetent. The sermon of the official preacher pointed to the wished-for change. The Marshall Gripenhjelm had in his speech commiserated Hedwig Eleanora for having a burden imposed upon her at a time of life when she naturally desired peace and quiet, and expressed the desire of the nobility that she might soon be liberated from its weight. The diet of Sweden was at this time composed of four orders of estates, the nobles, the clergy, the burghers or *tiers-état*, and the

peasants. When the nobles met in their chamber on November 8, Count Axel Lewenhaupt, the Vice-Admiral, said,

‘As our young King is by all report gifted with great virtues and capacities, why do we not ask him to undertake the Government?’

Axel Sparre supported him, saying that in a case like this we must consider not age but understanding.

Then they all rose from their seats, threw their plumed hats into the air, and shouted, ‘Long live Charles XII.,’ and just at this moment the church clock struck the hour of ten.

As some doubt was felt as to whether the other estates would follow the example of the nobles, it was determined first to approach a more important body, the Council of State, and Gripenhjelm went into their hall of sitting, where the Queen-mother was waiting with her twelve councillors, a full assembly ready for important resolutions. Suggestions of delay were over-ruled. The Marshall was ordered to introduce the representatives of the nobles, and just as the clock struck eleven, he led a commission of seventy-four, accompanied by the King himself, towards the Hall of Council. The council, knowing the decision to be inevitable, and wishing to anticipate acquiescence, while the nobles were waiting in an ante-room, went in a body to the King

and asked him what he desired to be done. Charles replied,

‘Although I am aware how heavy the burden is that I am undertaking, and although I would gladly have deferred its acceptance for a time, yet I will not renounce it for the love I bear to my dear subjects, but, according to your wishes, assume the government with the help of God.’

The representatives of the nobles were then at last introduced, and were informed of what had occurred. The council and the nobles were agreed, but the consent of the other estates must be obtained. The representatives of the three remaining orders were summoned for three o’clock in the afternoon, and the nobles went cheerfully to dinner, where many a glass was drained in honour of the occasion.

At three o’clock it was found that the majority of the clergy wished for delay, but that the burghers were firm for the change, and the speaker of the peasants said,

‘I answer in my simplicity. We are of opinion that in a matter of this kind, the Lords Regent are more capable of answering than ourselves, yet we think it better that the country should be ruled by a single king than by many.’

The clergy still remained obstinate, and the nobles, heated by their banquet, did not spare their

reproaches. But the patience of the nobles was now worn out, and they shouted with one voice, 'Long live King Charles XII.,' and threw their hats into the air. The burghers and peasants did the same, and just as the clock struck four the business was practically concluded. The clergy still continued to protest, but on the following day gave in their formal acquiescence.

The question of the coronation aroused serious disputes. Why, it was urged, should the King receive his crown from the hands of another when he is born to wear it? In an elective kingdom like Poland a coronation is intelligible, but in an hereditary monarchy it is unmeaning.

'Yet,' said the Queen-mother, 'the King must be anointed, or else he cannot be an anointed King.'

It was asked why should the King take a coronation oath when he was already bound by the oath taken by Charles X. in 1654, which constrained the whole of his descendants. The question at issue was that of a limited or an unlimited monarchy, a quarrel which had long divided Sweden, and which was not to be decided until Sweden herself ceased to be powerful. A coronation and an oath meant the recrudescence of the influence of the nobles; a simple anointing pointed to an absolute monarchy, deriving its authority from God alone. It was soon

known that the young King was opposed to the coronation and to the oath, and a severe blow fell upon the nobles when they heard that they were to do their homage not on horseback, but on foot. The horse implied a feudal subordination and not the submission of a subject ; but feudality was now abolished, and the nobles must walk like the other orders.

Further humiliation awaited the grandees of the kingdom. At the coronation of Charles XI. in 1675, the Lords of the Council had appeared in their uniforms, with red mantles trimmed with ermine.

This was now impossible in consequence of the court mourning, and the aristocracy had to clothe itself in a uniformity of black. The King was in black also, but the purple robe of sovereignty could not be dispensed with, and the only colour in the pageant was seen on the person of the King. On the other hand the Lords Councillors carried the canopy over the King's head, displacing the general who had previously performed that office, and they waited at the King's table, reluctantly, but not daring to refuse this honourable servitude.

The act of homage was performed in the square before the Riddenholm, on December 13. The weather was cold and stormy, and it snowed heavily. The black robes of mourning were turned to a deathly white. The anointing followed on the next day.

Charles bore the crown on his head and the sceptre in his hand, symbolising the absoluteness of his title and of his rule. But as he sprang to mount his horse, the crown tottered and fell, some say on the ground, others that it was held up in the grasp of Count Stenbock. Indeed, how could Charles save it with his bridle in one hand and his sceptre in the other? A dull murmur ran through the crowd, and the boy-King was disconcerted. No one, not even the Queen-mother, knew whether Charles would take an oath or not, or indeed what he would do. He first sat upon a throne in the lofty choir, then approaching the altar, laid his crown and sceptre upon a cushion, and knelt awhile in prayer. The archbishop then, with the customary ritual, anointed him; first on the brow, and then upon the two wrists. Then the King arose again, and placing the crown upon his head, took the sceptre in his hand and returned to the throne. Prayers, hymns, with a final blessing echoed by salvoes of artillery, announced to the capital that Sweden had an anointed King.

Wine flowed from the fountains, and oxen were roasted in the square. Enthusiasm spread throughout the country, roused by the youth and the splendid qualities of the new sovereign. But there were murmurs of discontent. Why was the will of the

late King disobeyed? Why had Charles refused to take the coronation oath? Was it wise to entrust so large an empire to the untried hands of a boy of fifteen? Had not heaven itself pronounced its verdict on this rashness? The storm and snow of the homaging, the mourning garments of the crowning, the fall of the diadem from the monarch's head, and of the horn of anointing from the archbishop's hand, were all signs of Divine displeasure. Indeed the reign of Charles was seldom free from storm clouds, and was illuminated rather by fitful flashes of lightning than by the steady radiance of a beneficent sun.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAD TIME.

WHEN Charles ascended the throne at the age of fifteen, he was tall for his age, but rather slender and thin. His cheeks were pink and white, like those of a young girl. This was a great annoyance to him, as he desired above all things to look like a man, and it was a comfort to him that his face was slightly marked with the small-pox. He lived as much as possible in the open air, that he might become sun-burnt. His dress was simple, but he complied with Fashion so far as to wear a wig, which, however, he laid aside on his expedition to Denmark, and appeared ever afterwards with the bare 'Swedish head' which has become proverbial. He ate but little, and his favourite food was bread and butter, fried bacon, and small beer.

Charles, like his father, had a passion for the chase. His favourite game were wolves, foxes, elks,

but especially bears. At first he condescended to use a gun, but he afterwards gave orders that only spears should be employed in the conflict with so defenceless an animal. The King set the example of daring to his followers. They often trembled when they saw the life of their sovereign hang in the balance of a moment. Once a bear came so near to inflicting a deadly blow, that it tore the wig from the King's head. This, however, was not enough, even the cold steel was discarded. The royal hunt was armed only with wooden forks, so as to thrust the bear backward, a bludgeon to stun him with, and a cord to bind him. A great battue was organized in this manner in the year 1700. In a few days fourteen bears were either killed or captured. One of the bears first attacked, rushed violently upon the King, who however gave him such hearty blows with his bludgeon, that the beast was stunned and safely captured. The booty was brought back in triumph with songs and music to Kungsör.

The King showed equal daring in riding. He rather liked a heavy fall, because it covered his body with the scars and bruises which were a sign of manliness. Once he undertook a long ride in a storm, fell into a snow-drift, and was only saved by the activity of Count Sparre. At another time,

when he was just sixteen, he set out at five in the morning and reached a small fiord in the neighbourhood of Stockholm. It was April, and the ice was melting, so that the floe was loosened from the shore. The King would hear of no denial, and sprung upon the ice, but at the other side was a gap of fifteen feet. Charles at first wished to jump it, but finding that was impossible, urged his horse into the freezing stream, and by good luck safely reached the shore. What wonder if his tutor warned him that God Almighty had already saved him twice, but could hardly be expected to do it a third time, and that horses were designed for the service of men and not to help them to break their necks!

Many stories are told of his sledge parties and his tobogganning, in which he seems to have anticipated the discoveries of an Engadine winter. Thus he would harness on the horses in front, and place all the sledges behind, after the manner of the modern 'bob-sleigh;' and at Kungsör he made an ice-run by pouring water down a steep hill, ending with a leap which nearly killed his two companions. To all remonstrances he would reply, 'Oh! it's nothing,' an expression which became proverbial in the mouths of the peasantry.

Like his rival Peter the Great, he accustomed himself early to military exercises, knowing tha

most of his life would be spent in these pursuits. He built fortresses of snow, engaged in sham fights on the water, in which the ships were armed with fire-engines. In one of these encounters the King was nearly drowned, and was only saved by the presence of mind of his companion Horn. He took every pains to harden himself in preparation for future campaigns. He would rise in the night, and lie almost naked on bare planks. In December, 1698, he slept for three successive nights in the stables, with no covering but hay. At the same time he was not free from horse-play and practical jokes, which are the weakness of princes. He would drag the wig off a chamberlain's head, or flip cherry stones into his face. He would shoot at the marble statues in the palace, till they were shattered as by bullets, or make a bear drunk, and laugh when it broke its back. At the same time he knew how to distinguish between jest and earnest. He was serious in public affairs, and above all silent. Indeed, the silence of the young King became prevalent, but his word once spoken was never changed.

From the first he played the despot in Government. He had conceived a contempt for the estates which were left him, and he did not trust the Lords Counsellors. Charles XI. used to summon his council once a week, but his son transacted affairs in his bed-

room, discussing foreign business with Polus, and domestic matters with Charles Piper. He did not go to his council till matters were already settled, and a war might be imminent before they had been told anything about it. They had to wait outside the door for the King's pleasure. Charles was, as might be expected, wayward in his habits of work. Sometimes he would be engaged with Piper from five in the morning till late in the evening, at other times he would attend to nothing serious. At the same time he inspired general respect, and no combination of the nobility was able to make head against him. He was sincerely pious, his justice was unimpeachable, and his honesty beyond all reproach, his words were scrupulously pure. He had once or twice given way to drink, and under its influence behaved rudely to the Queen-mother. Upon this he determined never to indulge in strong drink again, and this resolution he kept till his death. Also he had a certain love of art and refinement, inherited from his mother, which would hardly be expected from his character. He studied engravings, paid honour to artists, and, severe in his own simplicity, was anxious to maintain the splendour of his court.

Duke Frederick IV. of Holstein-Gottorp was on his mother's side a cousin of Charles XII. and on his father's side a cousin of Charles XI. He had also

married Charles's elder sister, Hedwig Sophia, and was consequently a constant visitor in Stockholm. He was a bad companion for his brother-in-law, as he exaggerated, if he did not cause, his eccentricities, and the mad freaks they played together were a prototype of the similar pranks which shocked and enlivened Weimar in the early days of Goethe and Karl August. A hare hunt was held in the council hall; the King and Duke raced from Stockholm to Kungsör, Charles on horseback, Frederick in a carriage, with twelve miles' start. The young King won, and is said to have covered eighty-five miles in five hours. One day the Duke rode into the capital clad in nothing but a shirt, his suite in similar attire with their sabres drawn; in return the King mounted a stag, and rode it, happily without danger. Count John Gabriel Stenbock was their constant butt. The cousins dragged his wig from his head, tried to break his sword, threw his hat out of window and cut it to pieces; they broke up all the benches in the royal chapel, so that the congregation had to stand. The Duke having boasted that he had cut off a calf's head with a sword, goats, sheep, and calves were brought to the palace to be operated upon, and their severed heads thrown through the palace windows. A similar fate was inflicted upon a number of peasants' horses at Kungsör.

During this period of mad frolic, the King would listen to no business, and the Duke became very unpopular. It was said that he wished to bring his cousin into hatred and contempt, and even to expose him to danger of life, in order that he might ascend the throne. Once he dared the King to leap a dangerous ditch. Charles's devoted page Klinkowström, a lad of the same age, the companion of his fun and frolic, held him back and obtained permission to try the leap first. The horse was killed, the page's arm broken, but the King's life was saved. Another day Charles was dared by Frederick to ride over a heap of planks piled up together. Hans Wachtmeister, who was in the suite, lost his temper, and cried,

'Have done with this! We know your object, but we have not got a king that he may break his neck at your pleasure.'

The Duke attacked the councillor with his sword, but the King threw himself between them, and cried,

'Hush, hush! my dear Hans, I won't ride up the bank; be easy on that score, my old friend.'

Similarly once on the lake of Malår, when the same three were in a boat together, the Duke began to shake it from side to side, but Wachtmeister laid his hand on his sword, and threatened to run him through if he did not desist.

Great was the joy of the Swedes when the newly-married couple went back to their own country. Charles travelled for some distance with them, and played his mad pranks on the way. At one place a row of gallows was erected, on which were tied by their feet living geese with their necks smeared with fat. Peasants rode through them on horseback, and tore their necks off, each successful slaughterer receiving a ducat. The next day the game was renewed for the peasants' wives and daughters, and the female victors received two ducats each.

When the Duke had finally departed, and Charles had returned to Stockholm, he appeared to be quite an altered man. He was indefatigable in performing his kingly duties, and when his friends begged him to take some repose, he refused, and said that he had already kept his subjects waiting too long for the justice which they had a right to expect from him. However, the respite was not for long. At the beginning of 1699, the Duke and Duchess of Gottorp were obliged to fly from their dominions, and eventually took refuge in Sweden. Piper did everything he could to prevent the visit, but in vain. Charles was too fond of his sister, and too generous in character to refuse hospitality in time of need. He stood at the very end of the landing-place at Ystad to await his visitors. But the fears

of his advisers were groundless. There was but little of the old extravagance, but too much extravagance of a new kind. The court adopted a more splendid and brilliant air than had been seen since the days of Queen Christina. In August the King's gardens were turned into a Vauxhall, and in October the eighty-third birthday of the Queen-mother was celebrated with extraordinary pomp and expense. In November a French company came to Stockholm, and played the best pieces of Molière and Corneille, the King being himself nearly always present. In January and February three masked balls were held, regardless of expense, and the nobles followed the example of the court.

The cost of these extravagances was serious, the treasures amassed by the care and economy of Charles XI. were wasted in two years. The Elephant vaults were empty, other resources were exhausted, there was even a talk of pledging Pomerania or Bremen, which was only prevented by the representations of Piper. But the hour of retribution was at hand. It is said that in the spring of 1700 the court came to Kungsör, and the King was preparing to give a masked ball with his usual magnificence. The pious Svedberg, hearing of this, asked the court preacher whether he could not prevent it, and, on his declining to interfere, asked to be allowed to

preach in his place. Svedberg in his sermon represented that to hold masked balls on Sundays was such a terrible sin that the King gave up the idea, and just at this moment a courier arrived with the news that King Augustus of Saxony and Poland had invaded Livonia.

CHAPTER III.

THE INVASION OF SEELAND.

WHILST Charles was spending too much of his time in folly and extravagance, a serious conspiracy was being formed against him and his country. The main instigator of this was Reinhold Patkul, a Livonian nobleman, who dreamed of the possible independence of his native province, and had private wrongs to avenge upon the royal house of Sweden. When Charles XI. put an end to the feudal rights of the Livonian nobility, Patkul was sent to Stockholm to plead their cause. He produced some effect upon the King, and was thanked by him, but was nevertheless arrested and condemned for high treason. He escaped, and wandered in different parts of Europe seeking for revenge. The accession of a boy to the Swedish throne seemed to give him opportunity, and he approached Augustus of Poland, suggesting the conquest of Livonia. If that country,

he thought, could not be independent, it might be better off under an elective than under an hereditary monarch.

We must remember that at this time the growing power of Sweden was regarded as a serious danger to Europe. She had been gradually enriching herself at the expense of her neighbours. She had taken Ingria from Russia, Stettin, Rügen, and part of Pomerania from Brandenburg, Wismar from Mecklenburg, Bremen and Verden from the Empire, and a number of provinces from Denmark, besides supporting the Duke of Gottorp in the independent possession of Schleswig-Holstein. She was dreaded in the North, as Louis XIV. and Napoleon I. were dreaded in the rest of Europe.

The thrones of the powers hostile to Sweden were occupied by young and enterprising sovereigns, one of them a man of genius, Frederick IV. of Denmark, Frederick Augustus of Poland, and Peter of Russia. Mainly by the instrumentality of Patkul an alliance was formed between them for the dismemberment of their common foe. In the division of the spoil, Russia was to have Ingria, Narva and Uxholm, and as much of Finland as she could acquire; Poland was to have Livonia and Esthonia; Denmark was to be set free from the rival pretensions of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, and to recover her

lost provinces; Brandenburg, who at first hesitated to join the league, was to receive Stettin and perhaps a portion of Pomerania. If the allies had all worked together in combination, Sweden would have had little chance. But Peter was too young and inexperienced to assume a directing power, and Charles was able to meet his enemies one after the other and to defeat them, at least for the moment, in detail.

War first broke out between Denmark and the Duke of Gottorp. The Schleswig-Holstein question is well known as one of the most complicated in history, and this is not the place to unravel it. King Christian I. of Denmark, who reigned from 1448 to 1481, when on his way from the Baltic to Italy, was invested with the sovereignty of the Duchies by the Emperor in the Imperial town of Rothenburg on the Tauber. Schleswig was mainly Scandinavian, while Holstein was German, being said indeed to form an integral part of the German Empire. The grandson of Christian I., Christian III., in 1533, gave the Duchies as fiefs to his two half brothers, John and Adolf. John died without issue, but Adolf settled in Schleswig, and founded the line of Holstein-Gottorp. After the death of Christian III., there was a continual struggle between the Kingdom and the Duchies, the Duchies striving for independence, and Denmark

aiming either at an effective suzerainty over the Duchies, or at their complete reduction. The marriage of Charles X. of Sweden to Hedwig Eleanora, sister of the reigning Duke of Gottorp, strengthened the pretensions of that house, and in the peace of Roskilde, which concluded the victorious campaign of Charles X. in 1658, Frederick III. of Denmark was forced to renounce the suzerainty to which he laid claim. But his son and successor, Christian V., allured the Duke of Gottorp to Rendsburg, made him prisoner, and compelled him to surrender the fortress of Tönning with its new earthworks, to receive a Danish garrison into his town, and again to become the vassal of Denmark. This arrangement lasted for a little more than a year, and was put an end to by French intervention. But in 1682, Christian V. made an alliance with France, and again occupied the ducal fortresses with his troops. England and Holland, now under the sway of William III., naturally intervened against France, and by the peace of Altona, signed on June 20, 1689, the Duke was again restored to his privileges, and the Duchies were placed under the guarantee of the maritime powers.

Duke Christian Albert, in whose favour this intervention had taken place, died in 1694, and was succeeded by his son Frederick, of whom we have already heard so much. He placed a garrison of

Swedish troops in Tönning, and restored the earth-works. King Christian could not, for the moment, interfere, because he dreaded the power of Charles XI. But with the death of that King came the opportunity of revenge, and on March 24, 1698, the treaty of alliance, of which we have already spoken, was signed with the King of Poland and the Tsar. It remained a dead secret, and was scarcely suspected by the Swedish government. In it King Augustus promised to support an attack on the Duchies with a force of eight thousand men, and to keep the Swedes employed by an invasion of Livonia. King Christian died on New Year's Day, 1699, before he could put these plans into operation, but his son Frederick IV. was even more eager for action than his father. Before the end of the year a new alliance was concluded with the King of Poland and the Tsar, which provided for a common attack on Sweden, and that no peace should be made until Sweden had consented to surrender her conquered provinces, and the Tsar had received a port on the Gulf of Finland.

Duke Frederick had no other resource left him but to take refuge in Sweden, where he met Charles and placed his country under his protection. Charles promised to undertake the responsibility, even if it should cost him his crown. Consulting no one but Piper, he ordered troops to march from Stade

and Wismar into Holstein, and to join the Duke's forces. His councillors protested, and the sea powers deprecated the opening of a northern war. But all that they could obtain from Charles was a promise that he would not be the first to take the aggressive. King Augustus did his best to conceal his intentions. He sent an embassy to Stockholm, and even made proposals for an alliance. Dahlberg, the governor of Riga, suspected mischief, but could not persuade his government. He put the walls into a state of defence, and fortified a bastion called Kobern, on the other side of the river Düna. In the dawn of a wintry morning, February 14, 1700, two thousand Saxons attacked this bastion, and occupied it after two hours' fighting. The great northern war, which was to last so many years, and to cause so much bloodshed, had now begun.

We have already stated that Charles was at Kungsör, when he heard of the invasion of Livonia. He turned quietly to the French ambassador, and said, 'We shall soon induce King Augustus to return to the place from whence he came.'

However, he betook himself to Stockholm, and addressed his assembled councillors.

'I am determined,' he said, 'never to begin an unjust war, but never to end a just one, save by the subjection of the enemy.'

Again, 'Strange that both my cousins wish to make war against me. Be it so! But King Augustus has broken his word; our cause is therefore just, and God will fight on our side. I will first settle matters with one, I will then speak with the others.'

Charles received with equal calmness the news that Russia had joined the league against him. The crisis, however, produced an entire change in his habits and demeanour. Theatres, dances, and other amusements were completely given up, and the young King devoted himself unreservedly to the study of the art of war, and of the military history of his ancestors.

The army was brought up to its full strength, and new regiments were formed. A regiment of Dragoons was levied on the preachers and another on the civil servants, a regiment of infantry was demanded from the citizens of Stockholm. Some of the higher nobility raised companies for the service of the crown. The fleet was fully manned and equipped, no sailors were allowed to be engaged for the merchant service until the needs of the navy were supplied.

But for these purposes and for the conduct of the war, money was above all things necessary, and the state treasury was exhausted. In the autumn of 1699 a war tax was imposed, which brought in about

a million thalers. The friends of the King, such as Piper and Stembock, subscribed large sums, but the nobles were in general discontented, and the example was but slowly followed. The *reductions*, the confiscations of their property by the Crown, were too fresh in their recollection. Forced therefore by circumstances, Charles determined to retrace this policy. By a rescript of April 13, 1700, he revoked the Reduction Edict which his father had issued. On the evening of that day he took an affecting leave of his grandmother and his two sisters, saying that he was going to spend a short time at Kungsör. However, in the middle of the night, he stole secretly out of the palace, and took the road to the south. He never returned to his capital, and never saw his grandmother or his eldest sister again.

Frederick IV., King of Denmark, Charles's first cousin and his present enemy, ascended the throne on August 25, 1699. He was of low stature, thin, pale, his face decked with a scanty beard. He had a long Roman nose, large dark and fiery eyes, a broad mouth, bad teeth, a slight stoop, a short neck, and a broad chest. In this small and unattractive body dwelt a great and fiery spirit. Frederick was clever and sensible, cultivated, honest, and a true friend. He was convinced that his first duty was to carry out his father's wishes, and the alliance with Russia and

Poland, which was offered to him, seemed to make it certain that it would succeed in doing so.

However, the affairs of the north were, for special reasons, a matter of interest to the other powers of Europe. A great European war was imminent, ostensibly for determining the question of the succession to the Spanish Empire, but really for destroying the preponderating power of Louis XIV. William III., King of England and Stadholder of Holland, who had spent his life in opposing the aggrandisement of the French king, who now wielded the resources of two governments and commanded two powerful fleets, was not likely to allow the interest of the Danish peninsula to interfere with his far-reaching plans. A war in the north might spread over the whole of Europe, and array combatants on very different lines to those which his policy required. He therefore, with remarkable prescience and admirable presence of mind, determined to stamp out the flame before it became a conflagration. He had a ground for interference as a guarantor of the treaty of Altona, which had arranged matters between the King and the Duke of Gottorp. He therefore despatched a fleet of English and Dutch ships, with orders to maintain the provisions of the treaty which had been violated by Frederick, and with instructions to bring about a peace as speedily

as possible. The fleet was under the orders of the English Admiral, Sir George Rooke.

In January, 1700, a convention had been signed at the Hague between England, Holland, Brunswick, Lüneburg, and Celle, for the purpose of supporting the treaty, and negotiations were entered into. Frederick refused to submit; Swedish troops were stationed in the Duchy of Holstein, some were collecting in Bremen, others were advancing from Pomerania, and from the frontiers of Norway. General Reh binder stood, ready to march, in Gothenburg. The warnings of the French ambassador were of no use; Frederick saw that war was inevitable, and determined to meet it. He manned and equipped the Danish fleet, and put it into fighting trim. His army entered Holstein on March 17, destroyed the earthworks erected by the Duke, and invested the fortress of Tönning on April 22.

Just at this moment Charles had left Stockholm, and, accompanied by Duke Frederick, went first to Carlsrona, where he inspected the fleet, and then to Malmö, where he superintended the mustering of twelve thousand troops for invasion of Seeland. Frederick left his cousin at Gothenburg, and returned to his own country. The allied English and Dutch fleet was already on its way, and Charles returned to Carlsrona in order to go on board and to join its

vessels with his own. In the meantime the siege of Tönning was proceeding with little success. King Frederick proceeded thither in May, hoping to be witness of a victory. The bombardment had opened on April 26. More than ten thousand bombs and red-hot balls had been shot into the town, with the result of burning a single house and killing a few men. The besiegers suffered more than the besieged, their powder magazines exploded, and the Danes believed that the town was full of witches and magicians, against whose art ordinary means were powerless. Under these circumstances there was nothing to be done but to raise the siege, and King Frederick retired to Rendsburg.

Here, on June 7, 1700, he received a visit from the English minister, Mr. Gregg, who informed him that his sovereign, as a guarantor of the peace of Altona, had determined to send a detachment of his fleet into the Baltic in order to preserve its conditions. He hoped, however, that the King would render its operations unnecessary by recalling his troops from Holstein, and giving satisfaction for the damage which he had occasioned. Frederick replied that he would comply with the wishes of England when the allied troops had quitted Holstein, and that he would then willingly accept the mediation of France. The day after this interview the allied fleet reached the har-

bour of Vinga in the neighbourhood of Gothenburg. The Danish fleet consisted of twenty-nine line of battle-ships and fifteen frigates, and was under the command of Ulrich Christian Gyldenlöve, a natural brother of the King's, young in years, but of ripe experience, with pleasant exterior, a clear understanding, and chivalous nature. Gyldenlöve took a position in the sound between the island of Hveen and Helsingör, under the guns of Kronburg, to prevent the advance of the Swedish fleet. But on June 26 the allied fleet was sighted from the battlements of the castle. It anchored, thirty-two strong, on the north coast of Seeland, not far from Helsingör. The Danes naturally sent to demand their intentions, and were answered by Admirals Rooke and Allemonde that they had come, not to cause a war but to prevent one, that they desired to sail through the sound, and hoped for an undisturbed passage. Gyldenlöve put his ships in order of battle, and prepared to dispute their advance.

In the meantime the Swedish fleet, consisting of thirty-eight ships of the line and ten frigates, carrying more than two thousand guns, had left the harbour of Carlscrona. It was under the command of the Admiral of the fleet, Hans Wachtmeister, an experienced veteran of sixty years of age, who had served his apprenticeship in the English navy. The

object of the Swedes was to join the allied fleet, that of the Danes to prevent their junctions. A large portion of the sound between Seeland and the Swedish coast is occupied by the islands of Amack and Saltholm, and the passages available for ships run on either side of this latter island. The western passage, called 'The Drogen,' is deep and available for ships of war, but it is commanded by the batteries of Amack and is very narrow. On this occasion the Danes had removed all marks of navigation. On the eastern side of Saltholm is the passage called 'Flinterenden,' shallow, tortuous, and full of sandbanks, seldom attempted by ships of war. Charles XII., who had only recently left the Admiral's ship, gave positive orders to Wachtmeister that he should sail with what ships he could through the main channel, and send the rest back to Carlscrona. The Danish fleet left their position to oppose the coming of their enemy, and the allies immediately weighed anchor and sailed into the sound, saluting the fortress of Kronburg as they passed. They occupied the position which the Danish fleet had just left. Rooke was, however, greatly alarmed lest the Dutch should give way, and they should be obliged to quit the sound before the Swedish ships arrived. The Danes were now between two fires, and the capital itself was insecure. It must have been a picturesque

and thrilling sight: the ships of four great powers ranged in battle order against each other in the narrow sound, while vessels of commerce pursued their business unhindered as in a time of peace.

On July 6, Wachtmeister prepared to execute the positive orders of his sovereign, and to the terror and astonishment of the Danes he accomplished it. One of the largest ships went aground, and, when it was got off by the removal of its cannon, had to be sent back to Carlscrona. Four or five of the ships of deepest draught had been left behind, but the rest reached the roadstead of Malmö in safety, and effected their junction with the allies. The combined fleets were now very strong, and the Danes retired under the walls of Copenhagen.

The bombardment of the town began on the evening of July 9. The Danish fleet had been anchored in such a way as to prevent the guns of their fortresses from being fired without injuring their own ships. The bombs thrown did little injury, many of them bursting in the air. Rooke made it obvious by his demeanour that his principal object was the restoration of peace, and that he had not come with any hostile intentions. But it now became evident that Charles was meditating a descent into Seeland, with the object of capturing Copenhagen from the land-side while the combined fleets

blockaded it from the sea. He moved about between Carlscrona and Malmö, partly to complete his preparations, partly to deceive the enemy as to his intentions. The first plan had been to land in two divisions, one under General Rehnskjöld at Kjöge, and the other under General Wachtmeister between Helsingör and Copenhagen. This was given up, owing to unfavourable winds. On the evening of August 3 (N.S.) a detachment was formed, consisting of some ships of the line and some frigates, accompanied by an English and a Dutch ship, and carrying on board the Swedish regiments of Upland and Calmar. Charles superintended the operations, remaining at the place of embarkation from five in the morning till midnight. When this division had reached the island of Hveen it was joined on the following day by Charles himself, who had passed the night in the guard-house on the bridge, on board the yacht 'Sofia,' in the midst of a large assemblage of vessels of all kinds, conveying the Swedish Guards and other troops. They set sail at seven in the morning, and reached the Danish coast at noon, the weather being very bad. From four in the afternoon till midnight there was a continued rain, and then a violent gale of wind sprang up, so that many thought that the expedition would prove a failure.

Orders had been given that as soon as the vessels struck ground, the soldiers should jump into the water and wade to the shore. The grenadiers were to attack first, then the cavalry, and then the rest of the troops, the rear ranks being furnished with spades; the artillery was to be landed last. But these precautions were not required. Charles, at the head of five thousand men, found only two hundred cavalry to oppose him, with a hundred armed peasants and six one-pounders placed on two hills. These were soon driven into their entrenchments by the fire of the Swedish ships, and the landing was effected at six o'clock in the evening, at the village of Humble Beck, about twenty miles from the capital. The grenadiers sprang into the water up to the waist, and the king would have liked to be among them, but contented himself with keeping order. The engagement lasted a very short time; the Danes were quickly driven back, and their guns captured.

During the following days reinforcements arrived from Sweden, which brought Charles's force up to eleven thousand men. He now advanced towards Copenhagen and halted about ten miles from the city, which he undoubtedly intended to besiege. But the siege train had not arrived, and nothing could be done without their help. The envoys of

England and Holland did all they could to restrain the King from further action. They represented to him that on July 28 an armistice had been signed in Holstein between the Danish and the allied troops, and that negotiations for peace had been opened at Travendal. It is said that Charles was popular amongst the Danish people, and that supplies came readily into his camp. He issued a proclamation, previously printed at Lund, promising the inhabitants security for their persons and property, and recommending them to remain at home and attend to their own affairs. If captured peasants were brought to him, he gave them money and said,

‘Go to your home, my children, and mind your own business in God’s name ; I am not come here to conquer you, but to establish peace. If you have anything to sell bring it here, and you shall be paid ready money for it.’

He spoke affably to all who approached him, and was glad to hear the peasants say,

‘God bless your majesty. You will do us no harm, for you are the son of our pious Ulrica.’

Strict discipline was kept. The citizens of Helsingör placed themselves under his protection, and it is said that nobles and rich merchants came to Charles from Copenhagen to ask that their palaces and their beautiful churches might be spared

Charles replied to them that they would be treated as their conduct deserved.

Charles was as simple as ever in his diet and habits of life, but he and his officers did not spare his cousin's preserves, so that the fleet was well supplied with game. At last the peace of Travendal was agreed on August 17, and the war came to an end. The condition of the peace was that matters should remain between the King and the Duke as they had been before the war, while at the same time the King was to pay an indemnity of two hundred and fifty thousand thalers. The negotiations had lasted only eleven days.

Charles had taken part in the war as one of the guarantors of the treaty of Altona, and he would have liked to have continued it on his own account. But the maritime powers were opposed to this, and he had other enemies to deal with. Therefore the Swedish troops returned to their own country, and Charles crossed to Helsingborg on September 3, after an absence of four weeks. The Swedish fleet sailed to Carlscrona, and Admirals Rooke and Allemonde sailed home again, having satisfactorily accomplished their embassy of peace. The young King had begun his career well. He had carried out a bold scheme with the most complete success. His name was known throughout Europe, and his army

had shown that it was brave and well disciplined. The Danes took leave of him with fear in their eyes. He told them, in a parting address, that if they had suffered any inconvenience it was against his will, and that from this moment he would be the most faithful friend of their King. A fountain, from the water of which he used to quench his thirst, still exists and bears the following inscription :

‘Charles XII., King of Sweden, took every day water from this well, while he was superintending the embarkation of his troops at Vedbek, from August 28 to September 4.’

It adds that the peasant Hans Petersen, to whom the well then belonged, and who spoke to Charles every day, bore testimony of the fact to its present owner.

CHAPTER IV.

NARVA.

THE peace of Travendal satisfied none of the parties most concerned in it, least of all the Danes. It could only be regarded by Frederick IV. as an armistice. He therefore kept his army on a war footing, and provisioned his fleet for six weeks. Charles XII. was inclined to defer the expedition to Livonia, and indeed only took with him a force of six thousand men. With this small army he set sail from Carlshamn on October 1, and reached the harbour of Pernau five days later. The expedition had been directed in the first instance against King Augustus of Poland, to avenge the attack on Riga, but no sooner had Charles landed on Livonian soil than he heard that the Tsar Peter had declared war against him, and had invaded Ingria; he had therefore to defend himself against two enemies at once. Augustus had long been urging Peter to declare himself as a mem-

ber of the triple alliance, and to throw off the mask, but he answered that he could do nothing until he had finished matters with the Turks.

The peace of Travendal was signed on the very day on which Peter had received news that the peace of Carlowitz was concluded at Constantinople.

The next day he sent to King Augustus that he would declare war immediately and march into Swedish territory. In fact war was proclaimed at Moscow on August 31, and the Swedish ambassador was thrown into prison. From this moment there began a quarrel which determined the course of Charles's life, which ruined his plans, made his usefulness impossible, and turned what might have been a brilliant career, directed to the aggrandisement of his country, into an heroic but ineffectual struggle against a scarcely more gifted, but more fortunate foe.

This wrestle of youthful giants for a supremacy in the north, on which was to depend the supremacy of their countries in the world, has terrible fascination when seen by the experience of two hundred years. Peter was now only twenty-eight years of age, Charles was only eighteen, Gyldenlöve twenty, his brother Frederick of Denmark but a few years older.

For the next fifteen years the large field of central and southern Europe was occupied by the conflict

of mature warriors and diplomatists, William and Lewis, Marlborough and Eugene. Far away in the north-east the boisterous sport of the young sovereigns continued, threatening ever and anon to render the main action impossible. Messages and threats availed nothing to keep them quiet, and the battle of mighty interests was nearly stopped by their dissensions. But in the light of history the results of the northern war are far more important than those of the war of the Spanish succession. The latter achieved nothing except the partial weakening of the French monarchy; the objects with which the war was commenced were none of them attained. On the other hand the northern war determined the fate of Sweden and the destiny of Russia. Sweden, great in her people and her sovereigns, was relegated to a humble seat in the Parliament of nations, while Russia was allowed to enter upon a career which has made her, next to England, the arbitress of the world.

After landing at Pernau, Charles betook himself to Rujen, where he heard from General Wellingk that the Swedes had gone into winter quarters, and that Riga was for the moment out of danger. He therefore determined to turn his attention to the north, and relieve the fortress of Narva which the Russians had attacked. In the middle of September

Prince Trubetskoi, governor of Novgorod, had received orders to advance to Narva with a force of above eight thousand men. He arrived on September 23, fortified a camp, and awaited the coming of the siege train. The town was in a tolerably good condition of defence. It had a garrison of two thousand men, half of whom were citizens and peasants of the neighbourhood; the place was commanded by the excellent and energetic Colonel Arved Horn. The Russians had expected that the garrison would surrender without much resistance, but it was soon seen that the Russian forces were insufficient. They were scantily supplied with munitions of war. The roads were bad, and carriages were wanting, and neither the Russian artillery nor their powder was good enough in quality for the purpose.

The besieging army may be reckoned at about thirty thousand men. It was under the command of Count Golovin, a friend and favourite of Peter. The Duke of Cröy was also in the army, an officer who had served both the Danes and the Austrians previous years. Peter had promised him a position of importance, but was not able to find one for him, and he was obliged to content himself with the function of an adviser. The troops of Charles had arrived at Pernau much exhausted by a stormy passage, and it took

some time for them to recover. General Wellingk had been ordered to march with a corps of nine thousand men to Wesenberg, in Esthonia, by way of Revel. But it took nearly a month to reach the place of assembly, in consequence of the badness of the roads. Charles had ordered magazines to be provided, but the country was bare of resources, the whole neighbourhood had been plundered, the temper of the army was bad, the soldiers had no confidence in their youthful leader, and those who were escaping from Narva brought bad news into the camp. The King, however, never lost his presence of mind. He remained calm and unshaken, certain of himself, and steadfast in his purpose. He exhibited in his early youth qualities which were to distinguish him throughout his life.

Although all the troops had not yet arrived Charles determined to march to Narva. He had under his command only about fourteen thousand men, of which five hundred must be left to guard Livonia and to watch the Saxons. Between Wesenberg and Narva lay the pass of Pyhäjoggi, the 'Holy Meadow,' about eighteen miles distant from the fortress. It consists of a deep valley enclosed by steep hills and traversed by a stream with marshy banks. Through this difficult ravine there lay only one road, which crossed the river by a bridge, and there were no

means of passage. By the advice of General Gordon, the confidential adviser of Peter, this pass had been occupied by Sheremetief, with about six thousand men. But the force was clumsily distributed, about a thousand men being sent over the stream, while the main body remained on the other side. When the Swedish advanced guard met the Russian force, they halted and informed the King that the pass was occupied. He rode ahead, and gave orders for eight guns to follow him. The Russians were speedily driven back, and the guns, coming up, opened fire on the other bank. The Russian cavalry were seized with a panic of terror, and galloped hastily away, and the pass was forced.

That night Peter received news from Sheremetief that he had been obliged to retreat, and that Charles might be expected to arrive at any moment. He took an extraordinary resolution, which has always been made an accusation against him. At three o'clock in the morning he called on the Duke of Cröy, and asked him to take the command while he retired with Golovin to Novgorod, to hasten the reinforcements which were expected from Pskof. It is not fair to attribute this step to cowardice. It is more probable that Peter was conscious of his own shortcomings, and that, while he felt it best to be absent, he did not think it wise to entrust his troops

to a divided command. He said afterwards that he should have escaped the disaster of Narva, if he had given the command to Crøy a fortnight earlier.

Crøy did his best, but he could not enforce the unwilling obedience of the Russian officers, nor could he avoid the faults of Sheremetief's dispositions. The line of circumvallation was too long, and the troops were too much scattered. Also the Russian force was badly clothed and insufficiently fed, so that although they fought bravely at certain points they could not withstand the furious onslaught of the Swedes. On November 29, the Swedish army reached Lagena, a country town a few miles distant from Narva. As they did not know whether the town had fallen or not, Charles ordered four signal guns to be fired as a warning to the besieged. Soon four dull and distant sounds were heard from the fortress, which told them that their labours were not in vain. Still their condition was not a prosperous one, their provisions were exhausted, nothing was to be obtained from the plundered country, and the continued rain had turned the ground on which they were encamped into a morass of mud.

The next day they continued their march in two detachments, hoping that the Russians would come out to meet them, but they remained immovable in their lines. The King, after reconnoitring the

Russian frontier, ordered an attack. Indeed he could do nothing else, as the horses had eaten nothing for two days and could scarcely move, so that to remain still and to retreat were equally impossible. Fascines were made for filling up the ditches, and the regiments were formed into small battalions, each two hundred and fifty strong, the cavalry being arrayed in small squadrons each of seventy men. The hill of Hermannsberg, which lay in the centre of the Russian lines, necessitated the breaking up of the Swedish army into two divisions. The King and Rehnskjöld commanded on the left, and General Wellingk on the right.

The attack began at two in the afternoon, the fire of artillery preceding the advance of the troops. As they approached the enemies' line, the sky, which had been clear, became dark with a sudden storm; heavy snow fell, which was driven by the wind in the faces of the Russians. This favoured the Swedish approach, and when they were close upon the lines the sky cleared again. The Swedes leaped into the ditch, and where there were no fascines to assist them sank up to the waist. They then mounted the wooded slopes on the other side, and threw themselves upon the foe. On the right wing the Russians defended themselves bravely, until their general was wounded. But Sheremetief's cavalry

were seized with panic before they were attacked, and threw themselves into the river Narova. On the left the Swedes were first engaged with the Streltzi, under the command of Trubetzkoi, whom they easily routed, then drawing towards the left they attacked the division of Golovin, and a hand to hand struggle ensued. The Russians, inexperienced in battle, could not make head against the Swedish veterans, and, as one regiment after another was driven back, fell into confusion. Some fled, others climbed over their own entrenchment and reached the open country, where they were repulsed by the cavalry under the command of the King and were driven back to their lines. Their only line of retreat was by the bridge over the Narova, and many Russian soldiers found their death in the stream.

The extreme right of the Russians, six regiments under the command of Buturlin, still held their ground, and had they been properly led they might have turned upon the flank of the Swedes and changed the fortune of the day. But, terrified by the disaster which had befallen their commander, they formed a zareba out of the train waggons which were posted near, and with the assistance of nine guns held out till late in the evening. Charles hastened to the post of danger ; he climbed over the

wall, but fell with his horse into a morass, from which he was extricated with difficulty. Darkness had now come on in that short November day, and it was impossible to distinguish between friend and foe. The Swedes were found to be firing upon each other. Therefore at seven o'clock the King gave orders to cease firing, and the Russians were glad of a similar respite.

The victory could even now be scarcely declared decisive, and had the Russians waited for the day they might have held their own with advantage. In spite of their losses they were still twenty thousand strong, when the Swedes had only six thousand fighting men left. The zareba was uncaptured, and the extreme Russian left had taken but little part in the engagement. If at daybreak the two extremities of the Russian army had turned towards each other, the Swedes would have found themselves between two fires. But the spirit of the Russians was broken. The generals who commanded in the zareba became convinced that further resistance was hopeless, and eventually surrendered, on the condition that the officers should be made prisoners of war, and that the soldiers should march out with their arms.

The bridge across the Narova was repaired in the night, and the Russians began their march across it at sunrise. The left wing was forced to follow the

example of the right, and General Weide capitulated, but with the harder conditions that his troops should lay down their arms.

Thus ended the battle of Narva, a brilliant victory for the young sovereign. The Russians had about six thousand men, not counting the cavalry of Sheremetief, who were drowned in the Narova. The loss of the Swedish infantry was six hundred and forty-six killed and one thousand two hundred and five wounded; that of the cavalry and artillery is not known, but was probably not considerable.

But the glory of the day is rather to be found in the numbers who capitulated and the richness of the captured booty. Twelve thousand Russians laid down their arms at the bidding of a Swedish force of half their strength. As Charles stood by the bridge over the Narova endless lines of efficient troops passed by him with uncovered heads, and laid their arms and their banners at the monarch's feet. Nine generals and eleven officers of lower rank were made prisoners of war, the rest were dismissed into their own country. The prisoners were well treated, and the Duke of Crôÿ, who was amongst them, was presented by Charles with one thousand ducats. The spoil consisted of one hundred and forty-nine cannon, thirty-two mortars, ten thousand three hundred cannon balls, three thousand and

fifty muskets, three hundred and ninety-seven barrels of powder, one hundred and forty-six flags, and a war chest of two hundred and sixty-two thousand thalers. The value of the whole was estimated by the French ambassador at three million six hundred thousand French livres. Horses were so plentiful that they were sold for a thaler a piece. Besides this, in the next few days a hundred and fifty Russian barges were captured coming from Lake Peipus, laden with provisions and munitions of war of all kinds.

On the third day after the battle, Charles entered the liberated Narva in solemn triumph. After rendering hearty thanks in the cathedral to the Lord of Battles, he rewarded those who had distinguished themselves in the siege, and advanced Arved Horn and Magnus Stenbock to high rank in the service. He then took possession of the camp which had been deserted by the Russians. But brilliant as the victory had been it was impossible to follow it up. Peter was now at the head of fifty thousand troops, so that all idea of carrying the invasion into Russian territory was hopeless. Charles remained at Narva till December 25, and then went into winter quarters in Livonia.

CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE OF THE DÜNA.

How was the victory of Narva to be turned to the best advantage? The King's principal advisers, Piper, Wrede, Wellingk, and Stenbock, urged him to accept the proposals made by King Augustus for peace, and to turn his arms against the Russians; winter in their country, as he at a later period encamped in the heart of Saxony, and stimulate the discontent which Peter was even now arousing by his reforms and his cruelties. But Charles refused to accept these suggestions. It is said that he did so because he hated Augustus and despised the Russian troops. But there were better reasons for the resolution which he adopted. A winter campaign in Russia was a difficult and dangerous task, as he afterwards found to his cost, and although Augustus was now ready to make peace, he was an untrustworthy ally, and might at any time turn

against his friends. Charles therefore determined to stay where he was, and fixed his abode in an old dilapidated palace, called Lais, not many miles north of Dorpat, once belonging to the order of German knights, and at this time to the family of Fleming. Here the young King enjoyed himself with hunting and shooting, sham fights, and peasant weddings. General Magnus Stenbock was active in arranging masques. On January 28, after a morning spent in a *battue*, a scene was discovered, in which a fruit-tree represented Sweden, while two eagles, one white and the other black, tried to pluck the fruit. At the foot of the tree lay a lion, which treated the black eagle so roughly that the white eagle flew away. In another scene a mouse-trap was opened by a lion, and the whole crowd of mice scattered themselves in flight. Over this was written the legend, 'Go and tell it to Peter.' By these and other devices Stenbock endeavoured to wean the King away from thoughts of little wars, and encouraged him to spare his matchless infantry for more important enterprises.

But Charles was seriously infected with the war fever. He gave but little time to affairs of state, and rode out every day to inspect his soldiers, even those who were encamped at a great distance. Unfortunately the army, although lying in their

own country, suffered great hardships. The troops who were not lodged in the towns had bad quarters, and were scantily supplied with provisions and hospitals. The winter was very severe, the icy wind penetrated the walls of the huts, and the snow was so deep as to stop all traffic. Many were frozen to death, many died of hunger, and infectious diseases broke out. Among the victims was the Palsgrave Adolf John, a relation of the King's. It is said that a third or more of the troops were rendered unfit for service. The head of the commissariat, Andreas Lagercrona, was greatly to blame for these misfortunes, which carried with them worse results than the loss of troops. As the government was unable to provide proper provisions and clothing for the army, the soldiers and even the officers began to plunder the inhabitants. The easy-going Livonians were not used to this treatment. They asked why the King, after beating the Russians, had not marched into Ingria, and imposed upon the enemy the burden which now had to be borne by his friends. Thus it came to pass that the dissatisfaction against the Swedish government with which the nobles had been infected by the Reduction Edict of Charles XI. now spread among the masses, and was the cause of serious dangers for the future.

Charles remained six whole months in Lais. He

has been reproached for this inactivity, but he was obliged to wait for reinforcements from Sweden. Great exertions were being made in that country, and about eleven thousand troops disembarked at Reval at the end of May; they were, however, rough levies, and could not be employed until they had been properly drilled, which occupied the month of June.

At length, on June 27, he broke up his encampment in the neighbourhood of Dorpat and marched quickly to Riga by way of Wolmar and Wenden. Peter was not at all disheartened by his defeat, he desired nothing better than a continuance of the war, and did his best to stimulate the Kings of Poland and Denmark to new exertions. The latter, indeed, was tied, for reasons which it was impossible to disregard, to the fortunes of the allies in their struggle against France. But Augustus was easier to persuade. Peter had a conference with him, which lasted from February 26 to March 14, in the country palace of Birze, not far from the frontiers of Courland. It is said that the results of the meeting, although shrouded in secrecy, were made known to Charles soon after its close by a Scotch gentleman, who condescended to act as a spy. There is a similar story that the private conversations, if there were any, between Napoleon and Alexander on the raft of Tilsit

were revealed to the English government by a Scotch gentleman, named Mackenzie, who had shut himself up in the raft under the guise of a carpenter. The monarchs were reported to have agreed that no exertion should be spared until Charles had been driven entirely from his possessions on the Baltic. Peter was to supply, for the purpose, two hundred thousand men and Augustus fifty thousand. Peter was to pay to his poorer ally a subsidy of two million thalers, until the Polish Republic should have taken up the war on its own account. Augustus was to operate in Livonia, the Tsar in Finland, and the troops supplied by Peter to the King of Poland were to be trained and armed in the German fashion.

The knowledge of this plan, and the conviction of the treachery of Augustus, induced Charles to turn his arms against the King of Poland before he proceeded to attack Peter. It is said indeed that he despised the Russians as antagonists, and thought that they could be dealt with at any moment. He hoped also to be able to dethrone Augustus from his Polish sovereignty and to put James Sobieski in his place. We have said that Charles broke up from Dorpat on June 29, 1701, the day on which he completed his nineteenth year. The Saxons were successful in the neighbourhood of Riga, on the other side of the river Dïina, ten thousand strong,

under the command of Field-Marshal Steinau. On July 3, Steinau had received a reinforcement of Fussian troops under the command of Prince Reprin, the number of which was not more than twelve thousand seven hundred. Steinau knew that the object of Charles would be to pass the Düna as quickly as possible, but he did not know which point of passage he would be likely to choose. He therefore established eight points of observation along a line of fifty miles. Charles made feints at two of these points, but his real design was to cross at Riga itself and to strike at once at the heart of the enemy.

Riga was commanded by the aged Field-Marshal Dahlberg, whose acquaintance Charles had made during his previous passage. Dahlberg exerted himself to assist the King's enterprise in every way. He collected boats and other vessels with great secrecy, and had a number of flat-bottomed barges prepared, each of which was to carry a gun and a certain contingent of horses. A broad plank was attached to them which served as a defence against the enemies' fire in crossing, and when let down, rendered disembarkation easy. The stream was further defended by floating batteries.

Charles reached Riga on July 17. By the evening of the next day as many troops were embarked as the vessels could hold, about seven thousand

infantry and three hundred cavalry. The vessels remained during the darkness under the eastern bank of the stream, and at four in the morning pushed off from land. The Saxons had not the slightest idea of what awaited them, and their guards were not roused until the flotilla had reached the middle of the stream. They then opened fire, which was returned by the forts of Riga, the heavy smoke concealing the Swedish troops and rendering the aim of the Saxon artillery difficult. Charles had foreseen this, and had determined to take a further advantage of the favourable wind. He had placed in the van of his expedition a number of boats full of damp straw. This was now lighted, and the heavy smoke lay like a curtain over the approaching vessels.

The Saxons arranged themselves as well as they could in order of battle. Steinau was engaged in another part of the river, and the command of the troops was left to Duke Ferdinand of Courland, and Lieutenant General Patkul. As the passage of the Düna could not have taken more than half an hour, and the flotilla was not discovered until it was half way across, there was only a quarter of an hour left for the Saxons to make their preparations. However, they drew up in two lines, the infantry in the centre, and five regiments of cavalry on the flank. The actual landing took place at Kramersdorf, about a mile

below the town. The King was the first to leap ashore. He drew up his troops in single line, with his small force of cavalry on the right wing. The Saxons attacked with great fury, but were received, at close quarters, with a fire that made them quail.

Steinau now came up, and consolidating the Saxon reserves into a single line renewed the attack. But the Swedes had succeeded in mastering some of the entrenchments, and began to shoot down the Saxons with their own guns. Steinau exerted himself to the utmost; he drew off his troops to the left, and made a desperate onslaught on the Swedish right wing. The Swedes, only a hundred and fifty strong, after repelling the charge of the Saxon cavalry, attacked the Saxon infantry in the rear. Just at this moment the barges were seen crossing the Düna and bringing up reinforcements, so that Steinau was forced to give orders for the retreat. The battle was over, the Saxons lost two thousand men, the Swedes only five hundred. The Russians, who were encamped at some distance from their allies, had not been able to take part in the engagement.

The battle of the Düna was honourable to both parties engaged; the Saxons, although defeated, did their best. All their generals, Steinau, Patkul, and the Duke of Courland, were wounded, and a

third of their body rendered unserviceable. The Swedes deserve praise for reserving their fire until the enemy was at close quarters with them. Charles was engaged in the front rank from the beginning to the end; to him is due the whole credit of the victory,—the conception, the execution, and the triumphant results of a daring blow. The fruits of the battle were of great importance. All the strong places along the Düna fell into the hands of the Swedes, only the fort of Dünamünde, at the mouth of the river, was able to hold out till the end of the year. But the combination of Birze was broken up, the Russian contingent retired to Pskov, and the Saxons slowly withdrew to their own country. Not more than six thousand Saxon troops remained in Poland. The activity and military success of Charles during the first year of his military life are unsurpassed in history. In less than twelve months he had crossed the sound and extorted peace from the Danes; he had at Narva defeated a force of Russians much larger than his own, and compelled them to lay down their arms; he had now with unexampled daring defeated the Saxons, and driven their allies back into their own country. The three conspirators against his crown had each received their several lessons, and that from the hand of a beardless boy.

Charles did not set himself to pursue the beaten enemy, but marched closely in the direction in which they had retreated. At the beginning of October he placed his troops in winter quarters in the west part of Courland, which was then subject to the Polish Republic, taking up his own abode in the Castle of Würgen. He did not, however, reside there, but in a simple house like the rest of the soldiers, sharing their hardships as far as possible.

It is difficult to understand why at this moment he neglected both to attack the Russians and to return to Stockholm. His enemies were so far disheartened that there should have been no difficulty in making an advantageous peace. But he had little taste for affairs of state, and he took a boyish pleasure in the operations of war; it is certain also that he despised the character and resented the treachery of Augustus, and was not inclined to rest until he had exacted a complete vengeance. Here the weakness of Charles's character shows itself. Peter was greater in administration than in war; he kept a clear object before his eyes, which he never lost sight of. If Charles had been determined in like manner to hand down the Swedish Empire, which he had received from his ancestors, unimpaired to his successors, it is possible that the domination of the Baltic would never have passed to Russian hands.

It must be remembered that although Charles was at war with the elected King of Poland, who was at the same time master of Saxony, he was not at war with the Polish Republic, and that no Polish troops had been employed against him. Augustus was now in Warsaw, and Charles could not attack him without violating the territory of a neutral state. At the same time the Poles could hardly regard the presence of Charles in Courland with indifference. On July 25, the Primate of Poland wrote to Charles to remind him that his country had nothing to do with the war, that she had refused all assistance to King Augustus, and to express a hope that he would not undertake any hostile operations against Poland, or indeed approach her confines. On August 6, Charles received another letter, written from Warsaw by Prince Lubomirski in the name of the Republic, complaining of the occupation of Mitau, the capital of Courland, by Swedish troops, and saying that, although the disposition of the Poles was at the moment friendly, their policy might easily undergo a change if occasion were given for it.

Charles wrote in answer to the Cardinal Primate, that he must know as well as anyone else how badly King Augustus had behaved both to Swedes and to his own subjects, that the best course would be to depose him, and that if that were done

Charles would be happy to assist the Republic with his forces. To Lubomirski he replied with greater sternness,—that he was merely following the retreat of the king whom he had defeated; that he had no security that the Poles were not secretly assisting their sovereign. Augustus, he said, had behaved so badly that he could no longer be trusted, and it was unworthy that a faithless and perjured prince should occupy the Polish throne. Before any other steps were taken, he must insist upon the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Polish soil.

It was now the object of Charles to get a firm footing in Poland, and to approach Warsaw without breaking peace with the Republic. An opportunity was afforded by the rivalry between the two great families who divided the supremacy in Lithuania, the Sapieha and the Oginski. The first of these had for a long time enjoyed a position of preeminence in the Grand Duchy, but had made themselves unpopular by their overbearing conduct. In the last election the Oginski had been opposed to the candidature of Augustus, and in consequence of this Lithuania had been devastated by a baronial war in which the Sapieha found themselves worsted. They were driven to the frontiers of Samogitia, a territory to the south-west of Courland, and naturally sought the assistance of Charles, who was not unwilling to

afford it. The Sapiiha had large possessions between Schawli in the interior, and Polangen on the sea-coast, north of Memel, which had hitherto been spared in the great devastation. To protect these districts, the Swedish Colonel Hummerhjelm was sent with a detachment of six hundred men to Schawli, and Polangen was occupied in a similar manner by Colonel Meyerfeld.

These outposts were, as might naturally have been expected, attacked by the Oginski, and Charles seized the opportunity of heading an expedition against them. So in the night of December 11, Charles left his head-quarters in Courland, with four hundred infantry of the Guards, conveyed in sledges, marched into Lithuania, and summoned the two detachments which were posted at Schawli and Polangen to join him. Hearing that the Oginski were at Shkudi, he proceeded thither, with a smaller company of dragoons, but, finding that the Oginski had left the town, as soon as his troops had come up he hastened to Triski, a little town to the west of Schawli, which he reached on December 15. Here he rested his forces, but was attacked by the Oginski during the night. The onslaught was speedily repulsed, and Oginski himself was nearly captured. Again waiting to concentrate his forces, he reached the important town of Kowno on the Niemen on December 29, and

found it deserted by the Oginski. The object of the expedition was now attained. Kowno was well on the road to Warsaw. Here Charles left all the troops he had brought with him, cavalry as well as infantry, and returned with a small escort to his head-quarters in Courland. He found his generals in the greatest anxiety. He had been absent a whole month, and nothing had been heard of him. A strong detachment had been sent out to search for him, but he met them on the road and took them back with him to Würgen. At this time, as at others, obituary notices and epitaphs were composed about him which anticipated the judgment of posterity.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE OF CLISSOW.

THE Polish diet met at Warsaw on December 22, 1701. King Augustus had hoped that he would be able to induce the Poles to declare war against Sweden, but when he found that impossible he made overtures for peace. For this purpose he asked for the friendly offices of the King of France and the Emperor, and, on his own account, could find no more fitting ambassadress than his former mistress, the Countess Aurora of Königsmarck. She was renowned throughout Europe for her beauty, her accomplishments, her cleverness, and her diplomatic tact, indeed for everything but her virtue. As mistress of the Elector she had become, five years before, the mother of a child who was some day to become the famous general, the Maréchal de Saxe. It did not shock the feelings of those times that she should be appointed abbess of the distinguished

convent of Quedlinburg in the Harz, where she was buried, and where not many years ago her body was still to be seen enveloped in a veil of rich golden hair. She was now thirty years of age, but had lost nothing of her loveliness and charm, and she reckoned with confidence that she would easily gain an influence over the young King of nineteen years. As she passed through Warsaw she was entrusted with letters for Piper and for Charles himself, not only asking for peace but offering the surrender of Courland and a portion of Lithuania.

She arrived at Würgen shortly after the return of Charles from his expedition to Kowno. Countess Piper treated her with courtesy, and a suitable lodging was provided for her. Whilst waiting to be presented to the King, she tried her arts on the most influential members of his court. As Charles still refused to see her, she composed complimentary verses in his honour, and at last wrote him a letter in which she begged to be allowed to kiss his hand, saying that she had a proposition to make which could be communicated to him alone. When all this proved of no avail, she contrived that her carriage should be stationed at a spot which she knew that Charles would pass on horseback. When the King approached, she got out and bent before him, hoping that she would compel him to speak to her. Charles took off

his hat and made a courteous bow, but then set spurs to his horse and galloped away.

Shortly after this the army broke up, and Aurora was left at Würgen to mourn over the failure of her mission. As a rebuke to Augustus and to Aurora herself, the King gave orders that all loose women who were to be found in the camp should be collected together. They were compelled to fall on their knees and to listen to a long Protestant service, and were then driven from the district. Aurora retired to Tilsit, and from that place and from Königsberg she sent letters to Piper persisting in her desire to have an interview with Charles, and to communicate to him a secret proposal which she could impart to no other ears. But all this was of no avail.

Charles left Würgen on January 25, 1702, having sent on a large portion of his troops on the road to Kowno a few days before. Their progress was very slow, and he did not reach Rossieny till the end of February, where he found comfortable quarters for his troops. After dispatching a large detachment under Stenbock in the direction of Wilna he took up his abode in the hunting castle of Bjelovice. Augustus now made a further attempt to induce Charles to conclude peace by sending to him his chamberlain, Count Vitzthum von Eichstädt, who was instructed to ask for a personal interview be-

tween Charles and Augustus. He was, however, arrested on the ground of having no passport, and was sent to Riga, but was shortly afterwards set at liberty. A fortnight later another envoy brought a message from the Polish Republic, saying that they were preparing to send an embassy, and asking the King to remain where he was. Charles replied that he would spare the ambassadors the trouble of coming all that distance, but made no other reply. It was obvious that he had made up his mind to dethrone Augustus, and that nothing could shake his resolution.

An event now occurred which favoured the object of Charles's policy. The last Polish diet had nominated to the command of the Lithuanian troops a certain Prince Wiesnowiecki, who thought it his first duty to get rid of the Swedish troops who were occupying Kowno, under the command of Colonel Hummerhjelm. The first engagement between them was favourable to the Swedes, who captured the guns and inflicted other loss. A few days afterwards Hummerhjelm set out to recover six of the guns, which he had left behind, but being attacked by Wiesnowiecki with a much larger force, his whole detachment was cut to pieces, and he was himself taken prisoner. Wiesnowiecki entered Wilna in triumph, and was received with great re-

joicings. When Charles heard of this he determined to be avenged not only on Wiesnowiecki and his Lithuanians, but on the town of Wilna, their capital, which had exhibited such untimely joy at his disaster. So he broke up from Rossiény at the beginning of April, somewhat too early for his purposes, and marched to Kowno, ordering Stenbock to proceed to Wilna and if possible to capture Wiesnowiecki. The Swedes were allowed to enter Wilna without opposition, and a heavy contribution was levied on the city.

The passage of the Niemen occupied the Swedish army a whole week, and it was not till April 27 that they reached the neighbourhood of Grodno, where the Swedish embassy had been patiently awaiting their arrival. Charles, however, fixed his headquarters at Dlugowice, about thirty miles distant, and ordered the ambassadors to attend him on the following day. The audience eventually took place on May 4. The Poles presented three demands: first, that the Swedish army should evacuate Polish territory as soon as possible; secondly, that the Republic should be compensated for the loss which it had sustained; and thirdly, that the cannon taken at Dünamünde which belonged to the Republic, should be restored to it. The Poles seemed to forget that although they were not actually at war with Charles,

yet their country was being used as a basis of operations against him, and that the only effective manner of showing their neutrality would be to compel King Augustus to make unconditional submission. Charles seems to have been more convinced than ever that peace was hopeless so long as Augustus remained King of Poland, and that he must use all his efforts to dethrone him. However just this opinion may have been, there can be little doubt that Charles pursued this object to the neglect of others which were far more important. He could have made peace with Augustus on favourable terms, and had leisure to set his own house in order, which was his first duty, and to watch the designs of Russia, which were far more dangerous to him than any action of Poland or Saxony could be. In vain the aged Bengst Oxenstierna raised a warning voice, conjuring his master to make peace; Charles stubbornly pursued the end he had in view. On May 8, the King resumed his march towards Warsaw, and the court of Augustus broke up and fled to Cracow. Some of the senators and the Primate Cardinal Radziejowski remained behind. He had voted against Augustus at the last election, and was not without hopes that Charles might assist him in securing his political ends, which were his own aggrandisement and the limitation of the royal

authority. Charles, on the other hand, saw in him a convenient instrument for the dethronement of Augustus.

On May 16, the Swedish army reached Ostrow, about fifty miles from Warsaw. From this place Charles issued a manifesto to the Polish people. He declared that the Poles had as many grievances against Augustus as he had himself; that contrary to his coronation oath, Augustus had introduced foreign troops into the country to constrain Polish freedom; that he had sent ambassadors to foreign courts without the consent of the Republic, and had made an alliance with the Tsar, their bitterest enemy; that so long as Augustus sat on their throne peace was impossible, for he was a breaker of its oaths. He said that Augustus had sent him envoys with magnificent offers, but that he had refused to listen to them, because they came without authority, and because he had no desire to profit at the expense of the Republic. He came, he declared, as a friend and helper, to deliver them from an intolerable burden; if they would assist him he would leave their territory without any demand for compensation, and turn his arms elsewhere against a common foe.

The army reached the right bank of the Vistula on May 24; a small detachment was sent across the stream to occupy the citadel, the Poles making no

resistance. The next day Charles entered the capital, and sent a messenger to Radziejowski, begging him to come to him. After the message had been three times repeated the Primate arrived, and the interview took place on June 9.

Charles proposed to summon a diet, and to elect a new King, but the Cardinal represented that it would be an insult to Polish pride to dethrone their sovereign at foreign dictation; he preferred the policy of reducing his power to a shadow, and if he refused the terms offered him he could easily be deposed by the Poles themselves. Charles declined to discuss matters personally with the Primate, but left the negotiations in the hands of Piper. Indeed, he refused to see the Cardinal a second time, so that nothing was settled. On June 21 Radziejowski took a formal leave of Charles, and returned to his own estates. In the meantime, Augustus had not been idle. The Saxon army, increased to the strength of twenty thousand men, had entered Cracow in June, in spite of the law which forbade the sovereign to introduce more than six thousand foreign troops into the territory of the Republic. The crown army was also mobilised, and, under the command of Prince Lubomirski, advanced to Lemberg.

Charles left Warsaw on June 26, and on July 10

reached Kielce, more than half-way to Cracow. Here he intended to await the arrival of another detachment, but, hearing that Augustus was approaching, he broke up his camp on July 17, and halted at Objetza, about four miles from Clissow. He would have attacked the King of Poland on the following day without waiting for reinforcements, had not Piper reminded him that July 19 was the anniversary of his passage of the Düna, and induced him to delay. In the evening Mörner came up with his detachment of four thousand, and increased the strength of the Swedish army to twelve thousand men.

The Swedish army was summoned to arms early on the morning of July 19, by a report that the enemy was at hand. They drew up in order of battle, and awaited the attack, but the enemy did not come, and the scouts could give no information as to their position. At nine o'clock the King lost patience, and ordered his troops to advance. They marched in order of battle, just as they had been drawn up, except that the right wing was forced to divide into two parts from the nature of the ground. Passing through a thick wood they reached a plain, bounded by a wood on the other side. In order to avoid this, they bent towards the right and marched with the wood on their left. Just at the end of the

wood, as they mounted an eminence, they saw the camp of the enemy lying exactly at their left, its position having been concealed by the wood which they had manœuvred to avoid. The King made a sharp left turn and went straight on to the camp, halting when he came within cannon-shot.

It was now high noon, three hours having been consumed in the march from Objetza and in the manœuvres which we have described. Charles rode forward to reconnoitre, and found the camp unassailable in front, as it was covered by a deep morass. Marshes impossible for cavalry extended towards the right, whereas some slightly higher ground spread out on the left. Charles again altered his line of march, and turned his whole army to the left in the direction of the solid ground; when he had reached it, he called 'halt and front.' He also sent six battalions from the centre to strengthen the left wing, placing them between the squadrons of cavalry. The position of the King of Poland was very strong. His front was defended by morasses, broken only in the centre by a stretch of solid ground about nine hundred yards in breadth. His left and rear were also protected by marshy ground, and his right wing rested on a thick wood.

The approach of Charles had been so unexpected and was carried out in so unusual a fashion, that the

Saxons did not realize the situation, but thought that they had in front of them nothing but scattered detachments sent out to reconnoitre. When the truth became known, Augustus altered his formation, which had the effect of cramping a portion of his cavalry so as to hinder their action. However, he was able to harass the Swedish infantry, during their approach, with artillery fire, until the guns were captured about an hour before the main battle began.

At two in the afternoon Charles, who was on the left wing, ordered the Duke of Holstein to attack the right wing of the enemy, which consisted of the Polish crown army. But no sooner had the Duke given the necessary orders than he was killed by a ball from a falconet. General Wellingk, therefore, took the command, and the advance took place. The Poles, however, lost no time in running away, and disappeared from the battle-field, and the extreme left of the Swedes followed in pursuit. In the meantime the right half of the Swedish left wing was attacked by Lieutenant-General Flemming, but he was repulsed by the Swedish cavalry, who eventually succeeded in putting the Saxons to flight, in spite of all efforts of their commander, who had himself been twice wounded, to stop them. The pursuit was only checked by the unfavourable nature of the ground.

In the centre the Swedish troops continued to advance, impeded by the marshy ground and the fire of artillery. They broke through the *chevaux de frise* which protected the enemies' line, and then threw themselves on the Saxon infantry, who soon retired with considerable loss. On the Swedish right the fortune of the day was somewhat different, as here the Saxons took the offensive. Field-Marshal Steinau with a large portion of the Saxon cavalry vigorously attacked the front and the right flank of the Swedish first line, while another detachment manœuvring to the right attempted to take the Swedes in the rear. Their danger was, however, seen in time, and Rehnskjöld was able to repel the attack with the King's body-guard of trabants and the body-dragoons. The Saxon cavalry were driven back by the superior energy of the Swedes, and the attack in front met with no greater success. The Saxons retired to a village in the rear, where they were able to reform on high ground. The Swedes pressed them in their turn, but were much hindered by the marshes, while the Saxons retaliated from their position of advantage. The Swedish cavalry, however, withstood the shock, and the Saxons, exhausted by this last effort, retired from the field and were pursued by the Swedes into the marshes behind Clissow. Thus at six o'clock in the evening the battle was at

an end, having lasted just four hours. The Saxons lost in dead and wounded more than two thousand men, while about one thousand five hundred were made prisoners. The Swedish loss was three hundred dead and eight hundred wounded; besides this the Swedes captured forty-eight guns.

After the battle, Augustus retired to the neighbourhood of Cracow. Charles remained at Clissow for a fortnight, and resumed his advance on August 2, the Saxons having in the meantime received a reinforcement of ten thousand men. He reached Cracow on August 9, and found it occupied by only a small garrison, which was not calculated to offer a serious resistance. The Swedes found on their arrival that the bridge over the Vistula had been broken down, so General Stenbock was ordered to convey four hundred men across the river in barges and to obtain an entrance into the town, without, however, making use of fire-arms. Stenbock marched through the suburbs and reached the town walls, where he began a parley with the commandant Wielopolski, who was reluctant to allow the Swedes to enter; but Charles, coming up at this moment and thinking that the negotiations had continued long enough, gave orders for the doors to be forced and the palisades to be removed, orders which were immediately obeyed. The commandant then took refuge in the

citadel, whither he was followed by the Swedes. Cracow was thus captured without shedding of blood, but a heavy contribution was laid upon it, as a punishment for having made even a show of resistance.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLES IN POLAND.

WHILST King Charles was remaining quietly at Cracow, he received a reinforcement of ten thousand men under the command of Gyllenstierna. In the meantime, the Polish diet was meeting at Sandomierz. It was not, however, complete, as there were no representatives either from Great Poland or from Masovia. These two provinces were opposed to King Augustus, whereas the diet of Sandomierz appeared to give him their complete confidence. Augustus declared that he had always kept the interests of the Republic in sight, and that he had brought in a larger number of troops than the law allowed, solely with the view of making a better resistance to the enemy. The Poles, on the other hand, promised to remain true to their sovereign and never submit to Swedish domination. At the same time, they determined to send an embassy to Charles. The

terms proposed were that Charles should make a defensive alliance with Poland, which the Poles bound themselves to maintain, even at the cost of taking arms against their King. On the other hand, Charles was entreated to withdraw his army from Poland, Lithuania, and other territories belonging to the Republic, and to surrender the cannon taken at Dünamünde. Charles refused even to receive the embassy, and maintained his previous declaration that no lasting peace was possible so long as Augustus remained on the throne.

On September 20, Charles broke his leg by a curious accident. The Polish heavy cavalry was, as we have seen, of excellent quality, but the light cavalry was not up to the Swedish standard. Stenbock, therefore, determined to levy a small troop, of one hundred and fifty strong, under the name of *Tovarshes*, composed of poor noblemen who were attached to the Swedish cause. When they had been properly drilled and exercised, Stenbock was anxious to present them to the King, and for this purpose engaged them in a sham attack upon the Swedish camp. Charles, who was just sitting down to dinner, hearing the noise and the loud shouts which accompanied their charge, sprang up, threw himself into the saddle, and hastened to the scene of action. But in the hurry his horse became entangled in the cords of a tent,

and fell with him to the ground. Charles dropped heavily, his face and neck were injured, and his left thigh was broken just above the knee. The King remained unmoved amongst the general consternation, and said,

‘Nonsense, it will soon be all right again.’

His trabants carried him into the tent of General Mörner, where his wound was dressed, the King giving no signs of pain, and in this condition he was carried through the camp, that the soldiers might see that there was no danger of life. But the loss of blood was considerable, and a report naturally spread through Europe that the young hero was dead or dying, so that Charles was again able to anticipate the judgment of posterity. In spite of his protest, he was removed from his tent into a house, the doctor declaring that a certain degree of warmth was necessary for recovery. Compound fractures were dangerous in those days, and it was owing to Charles’s abstinence and healthy life that the wound was able to heal so quickly. When the army advanced along the Vistula, Charles refused to make use either of wheel or of water-carriage; he was borne upon a litter carried by forty-eight soldiers of the guard, who relieved each other. He was able to join the march of his troops a fortnight after the accident. After five weeks he insisted upon mounting his horse, but

was obliged to desist from any further attempt. After six weeks he went upon crutches, and on Christmas Eve, just twelve weeks after the accident, he threw his crutches away and announced himself as completely cured. However, a slight limp in his gait was always observable to the end of his life.

The object of Charles in marching along the Vistula was to approach Sandomierz, where Prince Lubomirski was in command of the crown army of Poland. King Augustus had retired to Thorn, where he intended to pass the winter, and the departure of the sovereign from their midst made some difference in the feelings of the Poles towards him. Lubomirski himself opened negotiations with Charles with regard to a possible juncture of the Swedes with the army which he commanded. News also came that the nobles of Galicia and Volhynia were favourable to the Swedish cause, and, on November 1, General Stenbock was sent into these countries with an army of two thousand two hundred men to hasten their resolution. The instructions given to him recommend a curious method of procedure. He was allowed to behave as civilly as he pleased, provided that he did not trust to the efficacy of politeness.

‘They must be either absolutely annihilated,’ said Charles, ‘or they must take our side.’

Again, ‘I hope that you will soon be able to knock

out of the Poles a considerable sum for the support of our army.'

And once more, 'All the Poles that you can lay hands upon you must compel, willy nilly, to follow us, or you must treat them in such fashion that they will long remember the coming of the old gentleman. You must use every effort to press everything out of them that you possibly can.'

It may be supposed that Stenbock did not fail to execute these instructions to the letter. The Swedes were hated, but they were feared. The nobles attempted resistance, but found it of no use, and in the middle of January, 1703, they placed themselves formally under the protection of the King of Sweden.

Proceeding by slow marches Charles eventually arrived at Sandomierz, now no longer occupied by the crown army, which had been sent under Prince Lubomirski to put down the rebellions of the Cossacks of the Ukraine, a body of men who were at a later period to have so momentous an effect upon the fortunes of the King's career. The Cossacks were under Polish protection, and the greater part of their territory was possessed by Polish magnates. They were treated very badly by their suzerains, and sought the protection of Russia. Lubomirski in vain attempted to quell the insurrection, and although it was event-

ually crushed for the moment, the Russians contrived to obtain a hold in the country which was very useful to them at a later period.

Cardinal Radziejowski now thought that the time had come to throw off the mask, and summoned the senators of the kingdom to meet him at Warsaw on February 28, 1703. King Augustus in answer convened a diet to meet at Marienburg in Polish Prussia on March 26, and severely rebuked the conduct of the Cardinal in thus forming a centre of discontent. The senators who met at Warsaw came to a very important determination. They decided to summon a counter-diet at Warsaw on March 27, the day after the King's diet was summoned to meet at Marienburg. The only excuse for this proceeding was, that the King of Sweden had promised that the diet which was to meet at Warsaw should be free to express any opinion it pleased, which could not be the case with a diet meeting under the presidency of the King. This, however, came very near to an act of rebellion.

In the middle of January the Swedish army marched to the neighbourhood of Lublin, where they remained till the beginning of March, Charles taking up his residence in a palace belonging to Prince Lubomirski. Here he received Stenbock on his return from Galicia, and then marched northwards in the direction of Praga, which is the *tête-de-pont* of

Warsaw. He threw a bridge across the Vistula, and made preparations to attack the Saxons under Steinau, who was established in a strong position on the river Narew near Putulsk. He also received at Warsaw some envoys sent from the diet which was meeting at Marienburg. They were admitted to his presence, and declared that the Republic wished for nothing more than peace, but that they would always remain faithful to their elected King. Charles answered them by given them a copy of the letter he had written to the Primate, in which he insisted on the unworthiness of King Augustus, his deep-seated perfidy, and constant breaking of his word. Obstinacy was one of the chief elements in Charles's character. He detested the King-Elector's manner of life, so much in contrast to his own, and he had formed the conclusion once for all that he was on no account to be trusted, and that no lasting peace could be made with Poland until he was dethroned and someone else established in his place. In the pursuit of this object, which, however true, might reasonably be modified by other considerations, he wasted some of the most valuable years of life, neglected his immediate duties as King of Sweden, and allowed the Russians to gain a footing in his dominions from which he was never able to dislodge them.

Putulsk is situated on an island in the river Narew,

which lower down, at Serock, joins the waters of the Bug, and, after uniting with them, pours its stream into the Vistula not many miles below Warsaw. In order to attack Steinau it was necessary to cross the Bug, and Charles sent a number of boats to the banks of the river in order to build a bridge. Breaking up from Warsaw, he reached the Bug towards the end of April, and found that the Saxons had thrown up entrenchments on the other side to dispute the passage. By a simple manœuvre he eluded them, and the Saxons retired to Putulsk. The infantry were hindered by the breaking down of a bridge over a small river, but Charles pressed on with his cavalry through woods and morasses, and, on May 1, found the Saxons drawn up to meet him in battle array.

Putulsk, being on an island, was difficult to capture. It was united with the mainland by two bridges on the left and one on the right bank, and if Steinau, who had with him six thousand Saxons, and about the same number of Lithuanians, had remained in the town and broken down the bridges, Charles could never have gained his object with his cavalry alone. Steinau, however, determined to anticipate the attack, and placed his troops behind a deep entrenchment, with his left wing supported by the Narew and his right wing in the direction

in which the Swedes were approaching. However, when he saw the Swedes really before him he lost courage, deserted his position, and retreated into the town. His troops had not all passed over the bridge when the Swedes reached the entrenchments which led directly to it, and entered the town with the fugitives, who were in the greatest disorder.

The Saxons did not attempt the slightest resistance. Many of them fled over the bridge leading to the right bank, and, when they saw the Swedes coming, broke the bridge down, leaving their comrades in the lurch. Many threw themselves into the Narew and were drowned, while seven hundred soldiers were taken prisoners in the town. The Swedes lost only twelve men killed and wounded in this remarkable engagement, whereas the Saxons are said to have lost two thousand. Steinau, with great difficulty, escaped personal capture. He collected together such troops as he was able, and retreated to Ostrolenka, also on the Narew, where he took up a strong position. Charles, after pursuing the enemy for a short distance, returned to Warsaw.

Here, on May 8, he received the resolutions of the diet which had met at Warsaw under the presidency of the Cardinal. They were to the effect that the Polish Republic was sincerely anxious for peace, and that the best way of attaining it would be by a

conference between ambassadors of both parties. At the same time they could not allow any interference with the right of choosing their sovereign, and they would hear nothing about the dethronement of King Augustus, so long as he pledged himself for the future to do nothing which would prejudice the interests of the Republic. Charles remained in his previous determination that nothing could be done for peace so long as Augustus occupied the throne. In order to emphasize his decision, he determined to attack the monarch in the stronghold which he had chosen for his residence.

Augustus, who had spent the winter in Thorn, a strong fortress on the Vistula, had collected together a force of about six thousand men, and this Charles was now prepared to destroy, leaving for the moment Steinau at Ostrolenka with the bulk of the Saxon troops. The Swedish army reached the scene of operations on May 25, and Thorn was speedily invested. Charles had expected that Thorn would speedily surrender, as the Saxon garrison was badly supplied with provisions and weakened by disease; but, finding that this was not the case, it was necessary to commence a regular siege. For this purpose Stenbock was sent to Dantzic to receive the siege train and other necessary munitions of war which were on their way from Sweden and

from Riga. He did not return to Thorn till September 5, and even then the transport of the recruits and the materials for war occupied a considerable time. Therefore, although Thorn had been invested for four months, the actual operations of the siege did not begin till September 15, and nine days later the bombardment ensued. The inhabitants of the town would have been glad enough to capitulate, but the Saxon garrison would hear nothing of it, and it was not till October 7 that General Kanitz offered to deliver up the fortress, if the garrison were allowed to depart freely. Charles replied to this by a renewal of the bombardment, and on October 15 the commandant eventually consented to an unconditional surrender.

At the opening of the siege the garrison had consisted of six thousand men; of these one thousand had died, three thousand were sick in hospital, and only two thousand were fit for service. The soldiers were well supplied with provisions, but they were not fresh, and scurvy was very prevalent. There is no doubt, however, that the town might have held out much longer if the Saxon garrison had not been detested by the citizens, who regarded them as foreign intruders, and did their best to hasten the catastrophe. The capture of Thorn was of great importance to Charles's main object, the dethrone-

ment of Augustus. The Saxon army, which was his principal support, was now nearly annihilated, and we see the idea of the deposition, to which the Poles were at first strongly opposed, gradually winning its way to favour until it attained its final accomplishment.

We must now retrace our steps and chronicle the changes which had taken place during the course of these events in the internal affairs of Poland. We have seen from the last letter of the Primate that he was inclining more than before to the side of Augustus, and that he evidently had some doubts as to which party would eventually prove the conqueror. Besides, he was always in favour of a weak monarchy, and he thought, perhaps, that this object would be better attained by leaving the discredited Augustus on the throne, than accepting a nominee of Charles, who would be supported by the whole force of Swedish power. The Cardinal now wrote a letter to Charles on June 1, which reached him as he had just begun the investment of Thorn, in which he informed him that the diet of the whole kingdom was summoned to meet at Lublin, where care would be taken that no order in the state was overshadowed by the influence of another, and where a free and unbiassed opinion could be expressed upon the condition of affairs.

The diet met at Lublin on July 18. This place had been chosen because it was not far from Lithuania, and sufficiently removed from the influence of the Cardinal Primate Radziejowski. Augustus hoped that it might lead to a declaration of war against Sweden, to an alliance with the Tsar, to the punishment of the Sapieha family, and, perhaps, to the deposition of the Cardinal from his place as primate of the kingdom. But matters were not so easily settled in a country like Poland. The deputies of Great Poland appeared upon the scene, who were known to be unfavourable to Augustus. They were forbidden to take their seats in the diet under the plea that their election had been illegal. Much time was wasted in discussion, and meanwhile the Cardinal himself appeared upon the scene attended by a brilliant suite. Augustus refused, at first, to receive him, but at last was compelled to do so, and he took the oath of allegiance to the King and to the Republic with ostentatious emphasis. He further strengthened his position by a brilliant speech, which was received with great applause. In order to support Augustus in his efforts for an alliance with Russia, Peter, through his ambassador Dolgomky, promised the Republic a contingent of twelve thousand troops, and a subvention of two million roubles. But the Poles, under the influence

of the Cardinal, refused to accept this offer. The Maritime Powers, who were above all things desirous that the northern war should come to an end, also sent representatives to Lublin, urging the desirability of peace. It was intended that they should then approach Charles in order to lead him to a similar conclusion, but he refused to receive them, on the ground that they had previously communicated with Augustus; and he treated the representatives of the Emperor in a similar manner.

The diet of Lublin was at length closed on July 10. Augustus promised on his side that he would conscientiously preserve the rights and privileges of the Republic, that he would begin no war without their consent, that when the present war was at an end he would withdraw his troops from the country and never introduce foreign troops into it again. On the other hand, the diet promised to raise an army of thirty-six thousand Polish and twelve thousand Lithuanian soldiers, and to raise new taxes for their support. An ultimatum was to be sent to Charles, leaving him six weeks in which he might choose between peace and war. After this time Augustus was to be free to make what alliances he pleased, especially with the Tsar. The Sapieha were to be deprived of their offices and their property confiscated. The deputies of Kalisch and Posen, who had been

excluded from the diet, made a parade of their grievances on their return home. The result of this was the summoning of a Confederation of Great Poland, which eventually led to the deposition of Augustus. Charles at first treated this movement with great caution, and began to show an interest in the war of the Spanish succession, which was now dividing the nations of Southern and Central Europe into two camps. He signed a treaty with Holland, the so-called Maritime Powers, on August 18, promising to assist the allies with a contingent of ten thousand men, at his own cost, when the present war was at an end, if they desired the assistance earlier they must pay for the maintenance of his troops. At the same time a defensive alliance was signed with Prussia, which had lately been recognised as a kingdom. Two separate articles provided, first, that the contracting powers should combine in the defence of the evangelical communities in Poland and Lithuania, and secondly, that, if the Poles should support King Augustus in a war against Sweden, Prussia should assist Sweden against Poland.

During the siege of Thorn, Charles had exposed himself to all the fatigues and dangers of a common soldier. Not a week passed in which cannon balls, discharged from the fortress, were not dug out from the floor of the tent in which he slept and ate. One

day, as he was rising from table with his guests, a cannon ball passed through the walls of the tent and across the dinner-table. At another time a cannon ball passed right through the tent of the young Prince of Würtemberg, a boy of fifteen, to whom Charles was acting as guardian, and fell close to the tent in which the King slept. One day, when he was encouraging the workers in the trenches, a shot carried away the fascine which he held in his hand. Another day, as he was standing by a basket half filled with earth, a shot struck the gabion, as it is called, and threw the King down with it, covering him with earth in such a manner that he was with difficulty extricated. He was fearless even to rashness in everything. Whenever he rode out to visit the works of the siege he was a mark for the enemy's bullets, but he seemed to bear a charmed life, for he never was hit. About the same time as the capitulation of Thorn, Posen also fell into the hands of Charles, being taken by General Wardenfeldt, by storm, indeed, because the troops fixed their ladders and scaled the walls, but without firing a shot or shedding a drop of blood.

In the meantime, the Confederation of Great Poland, formed ostensibly in opposition to Augustus, received more and more adherents. Charles allowed it to proceed in its own way, carefully

guarding himself from any direct connection with it. He refused to take any decisive step until King Augustus had been deposed. The capture of Thorn and Posen, and the dispersion of the Saxon army, also produced an effect on the vacillating Cardinal. He began to look about for a successor to Augustus, and fixed upon James Sobieski,—who was now living in Silesia,—son of the heroic John Sobieski, who had preserved Vienna from the Turks. He lent a favourable ear to the proposals of the Cardinal, and asked Charles to assist him in leading an attack upon Saxony, in which he might show his mettle. But the King of Sweden replied that he could not countenance any breach of the peace of Germany, which would certainly give rise to the suspicion that he was acting in the interests of France. However, Charles now began to turn his eyes to Sobieski as a possible king, for although he intended to leave the Poles a free choice, he could not be indifferent as to whom they might choose.

The growth of the Confederation roused serious anxiety in the mind of Augustus. He became more anxious than ever to secure the alliance of the Tsar, and Patkul, who was now in Warsaw, was a ready instrument for the purpose. A formal treaty was signed on October 12. Peter engaged to place a Russian army of twelve thousand men at the dis-

position of Augustus ; the Lithuanian army was to be raised to the strength of fourteen thousand men at Peter's expense ; Mazeppa, the hetman of the Cossacks, was to send an auxiliary force of sixty thousand. On the other hand, the Saxon army was to be increased to ten thousand infantry and six thousand cavalry, substantial subsidies being provided by Russia. Augustus was to command in Poland ; Peter on the shores of the Baltic. The treaty was concealed, as a profound secret, from the Polish Government.

Towards the end of November, Charles broke up from Thorn and went into winter quarters. He had chosen for this purpose the neighbourhood of Dantzic, Marienburg, the ancient seat of the Teutonic Knights, and Elbing, choosing as his own residence the bishop's palace at Heilsberg. The prisoners and the trophies of war which he had taken were sent by sea to Sweden. His principal object was to settle in a country which had not yet been exhausted by war, but he also desired to provide sinews for a new campaign. The town of Elbing felt his heavy hand. The citizens had refused to supply a hundred waggons requisitioned by Stenbock for the conveyance of siege material to Thorn. They had also delayed to reply to a request to allow a passage through their town for Charles's troops, and to build

a bridge across their river. Stenbock then demanded free quarters for several regiments, which was haughtily refused. When Charles heard of this, he dispatched some troops to the refractory town, and took possession of the sluices by which its country could be flooded. The town council was so frightened that they made an immediate submission, but they had to pay a fine of two hundred and sixty thousand thalers, besides delivering up one hundred and eighty cannon, and one hundred and sixty hundred-weight of gunpowder. He left behind three regiments to garrison the town. After the campaign of 1703, the Swedish army was in excellent condition, and consisted of seventeen thousand seven hundred infantry, and thirteen thousand five hundred cavalry, besides four new regiments which Charles was now enabled to form. But the severity with which contributions were enforced made the Swedes very unpopular, and even the King's most confidential friends admitted that it was difficult to care much for a master who robbed you of your last crust of bread.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ELECTION OF STANISLAUS.

WHILST Charles was thus engaged in weary and apparently fruitless efforts to induce the Poles to dethrone the King of their choice, his great rival Peter was with admirable prescience robbing the Swedes of that little fragment of their empire which was in the course of time to be the cornerstone of a renovated and modern Russia. A Swedish fort, called Nyenskantz, or the new entrenchment, was situated on one of the islands formed by the Neva before it enters the Gulf of Finland. It was occupied by a Captain Appellof with a force of six hundred men. He was a stout-hearted soldier, and after repelling three attacks, capitulated on May 12, 1703, with leave to withdraw the whole of his garrison. The Russians, however, violated the agreement and made the garrison prisoners. Peter called his new possession Slotburg, and it became the nuc-

leus of the city of St. Petersburg. The little Swedish fortress of Nöteborg, situated on an island at the point where the Neva leaves the Lake of Ladoga, had been captured in the previous October and received the name of Schlüsselburg. Swedish writers say that the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul stood, not on the site of Nyenskanz, which was deserted and burnt to the ground, but on another island a little lower down the Neva, named Ljusteland, or the Island of Joy. However this may be, immediately after the capture of Nyenskanz, a Swedish squadron appeared at the mouth of the Neva, not knowing that the fort had fallen into Russian hands. Their signal was returned, in order to lead them into a trap. Peter and Menshikof went down the river in boats and attacked the Swedish vessels of war, armed with about a dozen guns. The ships were captured, and the men killed almost to a man. This was the first Russian naval victory. On May 27, 1703, Peter began the building of St. Petersburg, and the possession of this 'window' into Europe was the most memorable result of the northern war. In this manner do some men pursue the shadow and others the substance.

In December, 1703, the Cardinal Primate had sent summonses to the whole of the Polish nobility to come together in a diet at Warsaw. The ostensible

object was to make peace with Sweden, but the Cardinal's real wish was to secure the deposition of Augustus, which he had now come to think absolutely necessary for the repose of his country. Charles was informed of the meeting of the diet, and was invited to send representatives to it. It would indeed have been acceptable to the Cardinal's party if Charles could have brought his army into the neighbourhood of Warsaw, in order to secure the orderly conduct of the assembly. But he was determined to leave the Poles as free as possible in their action, and not to seem to influence them. He, however, issued a manifesto to the Polish people, dated from Heilsberg on January 2, suggesting that James Sobieski should be chosen king, and promising him to assist him against all opposition.

In this Charles was undertaking a serious and dangerous task. He had begun by demanding the deposition of Augustus, leaving the choice of his successor to the Poles themselves. He now nominates a successor and engages to support him on the throne by force of arms. It may be urged that, anxious as he was to withstand the encroachments of Russia, he saw no way of doing so effectually until Poland had been put into a condition to support his interests, and that he must take the first step before taking the second. However this may be, we must

admit that his policy was fatal to his country, and the only excuse we can make for him is that he did not at first realize the importance of the Russian conquests, and the difficulty of undoing them.

On January 30, 1704, the Polish diet was opened at Warsaw, attended by men of all parties. Charles sent to it, as his representatives, Arved Horn and Wachslager. The opening speech of the Cardinal commended the formation of the Confederation of Great Poland, and advised all parties to join it in order that it might become a general instead of a local Confederation. He was followed to the same effect by Peter Bronitz, who had been Marshal of the Confederation of Great Poland, and was now made General Marshal of the diet. The diet adopted the advice of these two influential statesmen, and styled itself a General Confederation.

On February 11, papers were communicated to the diet which proved that Augustus had been a traitor to his country by making offers of peace at the price of dismemberment, to Charles, Piper, and others, by means of Aurora von Königsmarck and Vitzthum. The reading of these documents raised a storm of indignation against Augustus, and the Cardinal was empowered to draw up a declaration renouncing obedience to the King. This declaration was accepted almost unanimously by the diet, and the result

was that the throne was pronounced vacant, the Poles freed from their oath of allegiance to Augustus, and preparations made for a new election. It should be noticed that these important resolutions of the General Confederation, although they could be no secret in the country, were not formally published to the nation. It is probable that the Cardinal was anxious to see how they would be received, and did not desire to run the risk of a popular check. He also thought that this act of the Confederation would, perhaps, put an end to Charles's extortionate exactions, and that there would be room for the Swedish cause to become more popular in the country.

In the face of these circumstances, Augustus acted with considerable energy and promptitude. He had spent the winter in Saxony making preparations for another campaign, but when he heard of the proceedings of the diet, he came at once to Cracow, which he reached on February 3. From this place he summoned an assembly to meet at Sandomierz under the name of a Reconfederation, with the acknowledged design of neutralizing the policy of the Confederation of Warsaw. A considerable number of nobles were already collected at Sandomierz, and here also was a portion of the crown army, the rest of it being at Warsaw under the command of Prince Lubomirski. Thus the country was divided into

two camps, and in the battles which ensued we shall see that Poles fought against Poles. Augustus sought for the assistance of foreign allies, and applied to Denmark, Prussia, and the Pope. The first would have liked to have wiped out the disgrace of Travendal, but he had a wholesome fear of the possible action of the sea powers. Prussia was already in alliance with Sweden, and the Pope was too well assured of the orthodoxy of the General Confederation to take any action against it.

Augustus had recourse to another step of a more decisive character. There was no doubt that his chosen successor was James Sobieski, the son of the famous John. At the time he was living with his brothers Constantine and Alexander in the Castle of Ohlau, about fifteen miles from Breslau in ~~Siberia~~, not far from Mollwitz, afterwards the scene of one of the most famous battles of Frederick the Great. One day as James was riding with his brother Constantine towards Breslau he was seized by a body of thirty Saxon officers, led by one Wrangel, and carried off to Leipzig, where he was imprisoned in the Pleissenburg, but treated with consideration. ^{Silesia} ~~Siberia~~ at this time was a part of the Imperial dominions, and this act of violence was a breach of neutrality. There was an outcry in Europe against the violation of International Law, but as the Emperor did not seem to

interfere, even for the sake of the deliverer of his capital, the matter was allowed to rest.

It now became necessary to choose another candidate for the crown, and four names were mentioned: Prince Redzinik, Chancellor of Lithuania, Prince Lubomirski, Piemiazek, Voivode of Siradia, and Count Stanislaus Lesczinski, Voivode of Posen. The last was a young man of seven and twenty, handsome and affable, with an honest and manly bearing, cautious and brave, strong in resolution and incapable of deceit. At the end of March he visited Charles at Heilsberg, and made the most favourable impression upon him. He said that he had never met a Pole who seemed better suited to heal the differences of the Republic, and that he would always remain his friend. Another possible candidate for the crown was Alexander Sobieski, the youngest of the three brothers, who had escaped capture, and came to Warsaw at the time. It is said that he positively refused to be a candidate for the crown, not liking to take advantage of his brother's misfortune, and preferring the security of a private life. But, in his conversations with Piper, he seemed inclined to entertain the proposal, if Charles would give him command of a body of troops with which he might make a raid into Saxony and set his brother at liberty. Piper naturally replied that he might

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fail to be elected King, and that then he could take this step with better hope of success.

On May 2, 1704, the Cardinal published a manifesto, in which he announced for the first time to the Polish people the deposition of Augustus which had been pronounced by the General Confederation on February 16. It also proclaimed an interregnum, and appointed June 19 as the date for the election of a new King. The Cardinal based his right to act on the ground that he was the King's vicar, and consequently took his place should the throne become vacant, either by the King's death or his breach of the fundamental law of the kingdom. In less than two months a new King had to be chosen, but Charles and the Primate held different opinions as to the policy to be pursued. Charles wished for a born Pole, a Piast; the Primate feared that the elevation of any Polish noble would excite the jealousy of the rest, and strongly recommended the choice of a foreigner, who would, like the Podestà of an Italian city, be able to restrain all parties with impartiality. The Cardinal suggested the names of the Elector of Bavaria, the Max Emmanuel who played so prominent a part in the war of the Spanish succession, the Duke of Lorraine, and Prince Rakoczi of Transylvania, and, when these were rejected, the four Poles mentioned above. At the name of Lesczinski, Ar-

ved Horn remarked that he would be a candidate acceptable to his master, but it is probable that the Cardinal did not favour his pretensions seriously.

The General Reconfederation had met at Sandomierz in considerable numbers at the beginning of June. It naturally declared the resolutions of the Warsaw Confederation to be null and void. Any King whom they might elect was declared to be a tyrant and an enemy to the country; Lubomirski was denounced as a rebel; Augustus was given full authority to make alliances with foreign powers, and to encourage invasions of Swedish territory. In the meantime the day of election was approaching. The Cardinal was opposed to the election of Lesczinski, and the fatal day was deferred. Charles now lost patience, and saw that unless he were present nothing would be done. He therefore marched with his army to Blonie, about fifteen miles west of Warsaw, which he reached at the end of June. On July 7 he had an interview with the Cardinal in Warsaw, which lasted far into the night, in which he endeavoured to bring him over to his views. When the Cardinal remarked that Lesczinski was too young for the post, Charles naturally replied that he was, himself, five years younger, and had undertaken far greater responsibilities.

The day of election was eventually fixed for July

12. Radziejowski declared that he would not be present, and all Horn's representations did not avail to change his resolution, nor to move him from the opinion that the election should be deferred for two days. Between three and four in the afternoon the Swedish party repaired to the Field of Election, that broad plain to the west of the suburb of Pola, which has played so important a part in Polish history. The place was filled with a large crowd of curious spectators, but those who had a right to vote were few. Count Gembicki was conspicuous as representative of the smaller nobility. Not a single Voivode was present, no Bishop of Posen, and no official of higher rank than the Grand Treasurer of Lithuania, Sapieha. On the other hand, the plain was guarded by three hundred Swedish cavalry and five hundred infantry. Arved Horn and Wachslager were also there, besides a number of Swedish officers and their attendants. At the same time it was known that Lubomirski, Lesczinski, and other Voivodes were in the town, and Bronitz, who presided as marshal, sent to invite their attendance. They excused themselves on various grounds, the majority, however, promising to attend if the election were postponed to July 14. The only Voivode who obeyed the summons was Lesczinski, who came to the field accompanied by his relatives, friends, and

adherents. Under these circumstances Bronitz was unwilling to hold the election. Gembicki said with much warmth that if Radziejowski and others of his rank would not take the lead which properly belonged to them, the lower nobility must consider their own interests.

Just at this moment a deputation from Podlachia appeared on the field, led by one Jerusalski. The Swedish body-guard tried to prevent their approach, but Jerusalski protested that no election could be free which was held in the presence of Swedish bayonets. Thus the time passed in disputes and wrangles until the sun set, after which the election could not legally be held. The Bishop of Posen was now invited to propose Stanislaus, in place of the Cardinal Primate, Jerusalski protesting loudly against it. Bronitz did his best to keep order, and struck the ground so violently with his staff that it broke in his hand. He desired to defer the election, but Horn declared that it should take place, even if it lasted all night. Then Jerusalski shouted in a stentorian voice, that he was ready to vote for Stanislaus at the proper time and with due formality, but that he protested against the present proceedings, because the election was not free, because soldiers were present on the field, contrary to the law, because not a single great Polish official was present,

—Sapieha being a Lithuanian official,—and because the candidate was present in person, which the law expressly forbade. The other Podlachian deputies expressed their agreement with this protest, and Horn made as though he would drive them from the field by force, but Jerusalski called out with spirit,

‘Cut us down if you like! we shall at least have won everlasting honour by having suffered death in the defence of our opinions and our country.’

The Bishop of Posen did his best to bring over the Podlachians to his views, but before he could succeed one of the assembly cried,

‘In the name of Great Poland I nominate, for my part, the Voivode Stanislaus Lesczinski to be the King of Poland.’

The crowd shouted ‘Hurrah!’ and ‘Long live the King!’ the Podlachians ‘No! No! we protest, we protest.’

The Bishop could not secure their assent, and they continued to protest, till at last the Bishop ceased to pay attention to them, and declared Stanislaus the first elected King of Poland. The new King mounted a richly caparisoned horse, and entered the capital by torchlight. He proceeded to the cathedral, where he received the blessing at the hands of the same bishop who had nominated him. In the absence of a herald one of the canons called out,

‘Long live his Majesty Stanislaus the First, King

of Poland,' while the Swedish troops standing in the square fired a salute.

Klinkowström had already brought the news to Charles, who was at Blonie, and on the following day the two kings rode out to meet each other, and held a long conversation.

The plans of Charles were now realized, in that Augustus was deposed and a new king elected; but the result raised more difficulties than it solved. There had been present at the election only a single bishop, a single Voivode, five or six Castellans and about sixty delegates. As Stanislaus owed his crown to the iron resolution of his Swedish brother, so he could only be maintained in its possession by the same means. However, a few days later the election of Stanislaus was recognized by Radziejowski and Lubomirski, and the other Voivodes who were resident in Warsaw. Unfortunately the Pope, who had at first been neutral, now declared against Stanislaus. He blamed the action of the Cardinal Primate in the strongest language, threatened him with ecclesiastical censure, and summoned him to appear before him at Rome within three months. The Cardinal thought it more prudent not to obey this summons, or even to remain in Poland; he sought the protection of his friends the Swedes, and retired first to Thorn and then to Dantzic.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIVAL KINGS.

THE object which Charles now had in view was to drive Augustus and his followers from Poland, in order to establish the authority of the sovereign of his choice. But his enemy contrived to elude him with great adroitness. Charles left Blonie on July 19, 1704, and joined Rehnsjköld at Sandomierz on August 5. He found that Augustus had already left for Jaroslav. Three days were consumed in building a bridge across the Vistula, and when Jaroslav was reached ten days later, the Elector-King had already started for Lublin, where he awaited the arrival of a contingent from Russia. Charles did not follow him to the north, but, after remaining a short time at Jaroslav, marched in the direction of Lemberg. In this he apparently committed a serious mistake, because, on August 26, Augustus was able to make himself master of Warsaw, which was defended only

by a small Swedish garrison, and to take Arved Horn prisoner. It was but a slight compensation that Charles was able to capture the fortress of Lemberg, not without some difficulty. Here the news of the capture of Warsaw reached him, brought by Horn himself, who was allowed to visit his sovereign before he went into captivity at Leipsig. The possessions of Stanislaus were plundered, the members of the General Confederation were scattered to the four winds, and this at the beginning of the reign of a sovereign whom Charles was bound to protect. The Cardinal Primate only escaped capture by a few hours.

The capture of Warsaw was undoubtedly a very clever stroke. King Stanislaus and Alexander Sobieski joined Charles at Lemberg, Lubomirski retired with the remains of the crown army to one of his estates in Galicia, and announced that he had fore-sworn the name of Lesczinski, and did his best to make terms with Augustus. He could not bear that the diadem which he might have borne himself should decorate the head of another.

It is not worth while to describe in detail the pursuit of the Saxon king by his Swedish rival, as they hurried from one part of Poland to another, the prey being reached just in time to escape capture, the chase carried on in an uninteresting country through

places with unpronounceable names. Suffice it to say that Charles reached Warsaw again on October 24, only to find Augustus flown, that he had a brush with him at Punitz on November 7, and that in marching from the Vistula to the Oder, he covered two hundred and fifty miles in ten days. During this march the Swedish cavalry suffered from terrible privations, and their only consolation was that the King suffered with them. At one time when sleeping in a peasant's hut, guarded only by six soldiers, Charles might have been captured, but it is said that the Saxon general could find no one to undertake the task. Not long before this Charles seeing a servant hiding himself on the banks of Vistula to shoot at King Augustus, who was riding on the other shore, forbade him to fire under pain of being killed, whether the bullet took effect or not.

Unfortunately his enemies were not so magnanimous. At the taking of Kobin after the capitulation had been signed a treacherous shot struck Klinkonström through the heart as he was sitting down under the town wall. He had been the bosom friend of Charles from his boyhood upwards. The best honour Charles could now pay him was to carry his body with him and have it sent to Sweden for burial. The army went into winter quarters in Great Poland on the borders of Siberia, Charles taking up his abode

in Ranitsh, a small town not far from Lissa, the birth-place of the Lesczinski. It is said that he occupied himself during this winter more with the affairs of his own country than usual, and less with his army, but he refused the earnest request of his two sisters that he would allow them to see him once again, after five years' absence.

We must now trace the progress of the wily Russians, for the development of whose plans Charles gave unfortunately so much opportunity by his absence.

After a hard and costly struggle, Dorpat was captured by the Tsar on July 24, 1704. But this was thrown into the shade by the recapture of Narva. The siege was conducted mainly by Field-Marshal Ogilvy, who had been induced by Patkul to enter the Russian service. Peter was also present in person. The bombardment began on August 10, the besiegers being ten times as numerous as their enemies. Horn, the commandant of the place, refusing to surrender, the town was carried by storm on August 20. Neither age nor sex were spared, and two-thirds of the Swedish garrison were killed; although Peter did his best to stop the slaughter. The fortress of Ivangorod, which lies on the opposite bank of the Narva, was starved into surrender in a week. With the fall of Narva the whole of Ingria fell into

Russian hands. Just at the time when the siege was proceeding, the great battle of Blenheim was fought on the banks of the Danube. How many have heard of Blenheim to whom the name of Narva is absolutely unknown? Yet in the light of our present knowledge it would be almost reasonable to say that the capture of Narva was the more important event of the two.

King Augustus remained at Cracow during the rest of the year, and then went to Saxony to obtain means for carrying on the war. The fickle and frivolous Poles, when they heard of his departure, thought that he would never come back, and that he had given up all hopes of recovering the crown. They therefore began to turn their eyes towards Lesczinski. In order to strengthen this feeling, Charles took measures for the capture of Cracow, which was defended by a Saxon garrison of three thousand men. This was effected without difficulty, and after it the nobles of Cracow and Sandomierz assembled in a diet and declared for King Stanislaus, sending also a message to Charles, begging him to renew the negotiations for peace. Charles promised to do this so soon as Stanislaus had been crowned, and in his turn begged the Cardinal Primate, who was now, as we have seen, at Dantzic, to take measures for performing the ceremony. Radziejowski

tried to excuse himself as usual, but eventually issued a proclamation summoning a general diet at Warsaw for July 11. Before this could be arranged, Charles had promised to maintain Stanislaus for five years in his new dignity, and to prevent any invasion of the Republic. He undertook also to put a stop to the intolerable exactions which were exhausting the strength of the country, and promised to defend the Cardinal Primate against the excommunication which was certain to be hurled at him from Rome if he consented to crown the new King.

In fact, as soon as the Pope heard of what was on foot, he sent a circular letter to all the archbishops and bishops of Poland, threatening them with excommunication if they took any part in the coronation. This, however, did the cause of Stanislaus more good than harm, because the Poles resented any Papal interference in their domestic affairs. The Tsar issued a similar manifesto, threatening anyone who should countenance the upstart sovereign with the penalty of fire and sword.

Lieutenant-General Nierolt was sent to Warsaw with three regiments of cavalry, to protect the diet, and arrived there at the beginning of July. But at the end of the month the Saxon troops, which had removed from Cracow to Brzez-Litewski, and had joined with a portion of the Polish crown army,

making altogether a force of ten thousand men, advanced upon the capital, under the command of Paikul. He crossed the Vistula, which is very dry at this time of year, and met the Swedes at Rakov-ice. After a short engagement the Saxons were entirely defeated, not only at Rakovice, but at Wola, where they also endeavoured to make a stand. Paikul was captured, and any attempt to interfere with the diet by force of arms came to an end. Documents were found in Paikul's possession which showed that Peter had intended to head an expedition to Poland, combined with a similar advance from the side of Saxony, and that both these plans had been foiled by his defeat. Paikul was taken to Stockholm, and tried as a rebellious subject, being by birth a Livonian. He was acquitted on the ground that he had left Livonia with his father when a child, and that his father had ceased to be a Swedish subject. Notwithstanding this, he was executed at the express command of Charles—a foretaste of what was eventually in store for Reinhold Patkul. It is said that this severity is to be explained by Augustus at a later period having shown Charles a letter of Paikul's which said,

‘I hope within a fortnight, or at least three weeks, to deliver into your Majesty's hands the wild and mad young King of Sweden, dead or alive.’

Thus it would have been better if Charles had paid no attention to this swaggering utterance of a now defeated enemy.

Charles remained in his winter quarters at Rawicz until August 6, 1705, and marched towards Warsaw, arriving at Blonie on August 19, his army now amounting to seventeen thousand men. The diet met at Warsaw, and Stanislaus was crowned on October 4; not, however, by the Radziejowski, who had been deprived of his archbishopric by the Pope shortly before, but by the Archbishop of Lemberg who had no scruples of legality. Radziejowski took his treatment so much to heart that he died at Dantzic on October 13, and the Archbishop of Lemberg was made Primate in his place. In this way there were in Poland two crowned and anointed kings with about an equal number adherents. Stanislaus could command the allegiance of Great Poland, Polish Prussia, ~~Moscow~~, and Little Poland; the authority of Augustus was recognized by Lithuania, Polesia, Volhynia, and the eastern part of Poland generally. Both were supported by foreign armies; one by Sweden, the other by Russia. Charles might contend against the united forces of Poland and Saxony with some hope of success, but if the whole weight of Russia were thrown into the scale the result could hardly be doubtful.

Augustus had lingered a whole year away from Poland, but, as his rival was now crowned, he thought it time to return in order to put some spirit into his disheartened followers. He therefore left Guben, in Silesia, and travelled to Grodno, which he reached on November 10, 1705. Here he met the Tsar Peter, who had brought with him a considerable force of Russian troops. An alliance was made between the Tsar and Augustus in his capacity as King of Poland, and an union was effected between the crown army of Poland and the Russian troops. There was some intention of making an attack upon Charles, but the news of a rising in Astrakan recalled Peter to Moscow.

At this time Reinhold Patkul was acting as Russian envoy in Dresden, and was also engaged as a secret councillor in the Saxon service, Augustus having a great respect for his judgment. But Patkul was of an incautious and outspoken character. He had severely criticised the faults of Saxon administration, and had even hinted that the subsidies paid by Russia to the Saxon Elector were squandered in his private pleasures. Augustus was not of a character to offer a willing ear to unpleasant truths. He conceived a deep dislike to Patkul, who had naturally made himself unpopular with many of the Dresden officials by denouncing their corruption. When Augustus

was at Grodno accusations of a very grave but an entirely untrustworthy character against Patkul were brought to him. He therefore gave orders for his immediate arrest. He was seized whilst sleeping quietly in bed, and taken first to the fortress of Sonnenstein, and then to the stronger prison of Königstein.

The progress made by the Tsar in appropriating the possessions of Sweden this year received a check. After the conquest of Ingria, Peter determined to attack Livonia, and sent Sheremetief to lay siege to Riga. But, as General Lewenhaupt was posted with seven thousand men at Mitau, it became necessary to dislodge him before the siege commenced. The result was the battle of Gemauerthof on July 16, 1705. Sheremetief advanced to the attack with fourteen thousand cavalry, four thousand infantry, and two thousand Cossacks. Lewenhaupt had chosen his position with care, and was protected by a deep brook on his right and an impassable morass on his left. The Swedes were drawn up in two lines,—the infantry in the centre, the cavalry on the wings, and the artillery in the gaps of the infantry formation. Lewenhaupt's strength was about a third that of the Russians, but he determined to begin the attack.

The first onslaught of the Swedes was repulsed,

and the Russians advanced in their turn. The cavalry carried infantry with them on their horses, and then brought them across the brook and threw the left wing into momentary confusion. But the Swedes soon recovered themselves, and turning on the Russian infantry, who were not able to recross the brook alone, cut them to pieces. On the right wing the Swedes were altogether victorious, but the Russian infantry again succeeded in crossing the brook to the left, and, if they had not been led aside to plunder the Swedish baggage in the rear, might have done serious harm. Towards the end of the long summer's day, Lewenhaupt prepared himself for the final onslaught. He threw his left wing over the brook, and drew up the whole of his troops in a single line. The Russians lost heart, and offered no serious resistance. They lost a third of their number, and Sheremetief was so disheartened that he gave up all idea of besieging Riga, and retired to Wilna.

Peter was determined to avenge this defeat, and entered Courland in the middle of August with forty thousand men. But Lewenhaupt succeeded in evading an engagement, and did not allow himself to be crushed by superior forces. He left a small detachment in Mitau, and found a safe retreat in Riga and Dünamünde.

‘He must have learnt that from the devil!’ cried Peter, when he heard the news; and he wrote to Golovin, ‘We have here a great misfortune, for Lewenhaupt flies before us as Narcissus fled before Echo.’

CHAPTER X.

THE INVASION OF SAXONY.

KING CHARLES left his head-quarters at Blonie on January 8, 1706, taking with him all the forces he had available, excepting those under the command of Rehnskjöld. They amounted to something less than twenty thousand men. At Grodno there was a Russian army twenty-five thousand strong, under the command of Field-Marshal Ogilvy, to which were attached about three thousand Saxon cavalry. Mazeppa, hetman of the Cossacks, was posted at Lublin, with an army of fourteen thousand men. He set out in the depth of winter, in a season of hard frost, which made it easier to cross the rivers and the morasses. Still his progress was impeded by great hardships. The ice upon the Bug was too thin to bear the weight of the army, and the Swedes had to bivouac for two nights on the road. They spread straw over the ice, and covered it with

water, which, when hard frozen, made the passage secure. The soldiers had scarcely any provisions for themselves or forage for their horses, and they bivouacked, as far as possible, in the huts which had been deserted by their enemies. The cold became more and more intense, and even water could only be obtained by purchase. Still they succeeded in covering two hundred miles in seventeen days, and on January 24 were close to Grodno, and were ready to attempt the passage of the Niemen. The Russians marched out to dispute the crossing, but Charles led six hundred grenadiers in person against the enemy. They immediately retired, and, when some squadrons of dragoons had also traversed the ice, the Russians dispersed. The next morning Charles led his army close up to the fortress. He probably expected to be able to take the town by a *coup-de-main*, but Ogilvy was not the man to surrender without reason, and it was necessary to adopt other measures.

Charles was obliged, for the moment, to lodge his troops in villages at some distance from the town, and Augustus, finding the place too hot for him, left it with his Saxon cavalry and about four thousand Russian dragoons. Rehnskjöld was at this time in winter quarters in Poland with a force of thirteen thousand men. Ogilvy had suggested that Schulenburg, with an allied army of Saxons and Russians,

should attack him in front while Augustus fell upon his rear. When Rehnskjöld had thus been annihilated by a combined attack, the victorious forces were to unite and march upon Charles, who would in his turn be placed between two fires, that of the retiring force and the garrison of the town. Schulenburg, however, declined to execute his part of the scheme, alleging first the season of the year, then his want of superiority in numbers, and lastly, that Saxons always felt inclined to run away when they met the Swedes.

Augustus reached Warsaw on February 5. He gave Schulenburg positive orders to advance. He accordingly crossed the Oder, but after two days' march halted to repose his troops. The news was brought to him that the Swedes were approaching, and, had he followed his own inclinations, he would have done his best to avoid the enemy. But not liking to take the responsibility of disobeying the positive orders of his sovereign, and hearing that the Swedes had again retired, he advanced to Fraustadt, a small town, half way between Glogan and Lissa, which he reached on February 12. Rehnskjöld had, indeed, at first intended to attack the Saxons in their previous position at Schlawa, but, finding that it was very strong, hoped by a feigned retreat to entice them into less favourable ground, an

expectation in which he was completely successful.

Schulenburg had with him, according to his own account, about fifteen thousand infantry, four thousand cavalry, and thirty-two guns, making up a force of something under twenty thousand strong. He drew up his army in two lines, protected by the hedges and fences of two small villages, placing the Saxons on the right and the Russians on the left. The Russians wore white coats lined with red, and Schulenburg made his allies turn their coats inside out, that they might resemble the Saxons, and that the Swedes might not direct their whole strength against the Russians, whom they knew to be the weakest part of the army. On the whole the Saxon army was arranged with great skill, and would undoubtedly have conquered if the spirit of the soldiers had equalled the science of their general. As we have seen, he had but little confidence in their steadfastness, and it was not likely they would have confidence in themselves.

Rehnskjöld was far inferior in numbers; according to the best authorities he had not more than eleven thousand men under his command. He placed all his infantry in the first line, some being distributed among the cavalry in the wings, his second line was formed by about a third of the cavalry, the other two-thirds, according to the usual practice in those

times, acting as wings of the infantry. Rehnskjöld began the attack at half-past ten; he had no artillery with him, just as Charles had none at Clissow, so the Swedes had to sustain the fire of the Saxon guns without the opportunity of reply. The charge of the Swedes was made with furious energy. They rode through the *chevaux de frise* without firing a shot, and then, after discharging a few rounds, threw themselves upon the ranks of the enemy. The Russians in the left wing offered no resistance, and were soon cut to pieces, nor was Schulenburg successful in supplying their place from the second line. Nor did the cavalry on the left do any better, but galloped away from the field of battle. On the right the Saxons fought with bravery and determination, and the Swedes were found foemen worthy of their steel. They were, however, at length broken, pursued by the Swedish cavalry, and ruthlessly cut to pieces, orders having been issued that no quarter was to be given to the Russians. The allies are said to have lost seven thousand killed and eight thousand, including four hundred officers, taken prisoners; indeed, very few of Schulenburg's army escaped destruction. The Swedes also lost more heavily than usual, the numbers being four hundred killed and one thousand four hundred wounded. Thirty-four years after the battle, Schulenburg sent an account

of these operations to Voltaire, and in this he attributes his defeat, with probable correctness, to the bad conduct of his own cavalry and of the Russian infantry; but in his report made to Augustus at the time he finds a sufficient reason for his misfortune in the temporary withdrawal of divine assistance. This, at any rate, saved him from disgrace, and he was given the command of the troops in Saxony, in the hope that he might be more fortunate on another occasion.

Augustus had advanced from Warsaw as far as Kalisch with his seven thousand cavalry, hoping, as we have said, to assist Schulenburg, but on hearing of his defeat he retired to Cracow. Rehnskjöld, after giving his troops some days' rest, and making arrangements for the care of the wounded, retired to his winter quarters. Charles was equally surprised and delighted at the victory, which he had not in the least expected. He rewarded Rehnskjöld by making him a Field-Marshal and a Count.

Rehnskjöld was indeed a remarkable man, and is, perhaps, the only one of Charles's generals, with the possible exception of Lewenhaupt, who can be at all placed on a level with him. He was educated at the University of Lund under Samuel Pufendorf, whom he assisted in his literary labours. He distinguished himself under Charles XI., both in Sweden and in

the Netherlands. The education of the young Duke of Holstein was entrusted to his care. He was sometimes, in the courtly language of the day, described as the Parmenio to Charles's Alexander. Stenbock wrote of him in 1701,

‘He is an honest and true friend, and is beloved by the whole army.’

He was a tall man, with a handsome face and agreeable manners, he was of a benevolent disposition, and is said to have been better disciplined and to have plundered less than most of the other generals. As Governor of Great Poland, in 1703 and 1704, he showed some of the best qualities of a statesman, and he won over the Poles not only by his ability in business, but by his skill in speaking Latin and his readiness to empty his glass with theirs. He undoubtedly contributed largely to his master's plans for the deposition of Augustus. The victory of Fraustadt was the culminating point of his fame, and it is said that he was never the same man after it, becoming proud and self-centred, and quarrelling with Piper, but this may have been exaggerated by his enemies. He was taken prisoner at Poltava, and was sent to Moscow, where he kept open table for Swedish officers, and instructed them in the art of war. He was allowed to purchase his release in 1718, and returned to Stockholm, where he was re-

ceived with great distinction. He was on his way to Norway to rejoin his sovereign when he heard of the catastrophe of Frederikshald.

When Augustus set out to combine operations with Schulenburg, Ogilvy had remained behind in Grodno. But his position became every day more intolerable, and he was compelled to leave the town. He set out on April 10, 1706, with an army reduced to ten thousand men, and, marching south, reached Brzez-Litewski ten days later. Charles was quite prepared for this event, and started in pursuit, but the thaw had just commenced, the bridges were carried away by the ice, and the King could not pass the Niemen till April 14. Even then the ground had become so soft that the troops could scarcely march. When about half way on his road, Charles heard that Ogilvy had left Brzez-Litewski and was retiring to Kieff. He thereupon determined to turn in a south-easterly direction and intercept him. But in that swampy region progress was slow, and, on reaching Pinsk on May 4, he found that it was surrounded by marshes and was unapproachable except by boat. He therefore bowed his head to fate, and gave up his design. He remained at Pinsk till June 2, collecting and refreshing his troops. It is said that he used to mount the tower of the Jesuit monastery, look far and wide over the waste of water, and consult the Vicar

as to the chance of their subsiding ; but he gained no encouragement. He gradually came to the conclusion that there was only one way of bringing Augustus to terms, and that was to follow him into his own electoral dominions. At last he determined upon his fateful enterprise, the invasion of Saxony.

Charles did not proceed to Saxony by the shortest road. He determined first to enter Volhynia, because the inhabitants were at that moment much devoted to Augustus, and he wished to win them to the cause of Stanislaus. The country also offered rich and unwonted supplies for the support of his soldiers. So we find the Swedish army, on June 19, encamped at Luck, the capital of Volhynia, Charles according to his custom taking up his abode in a country palace some fifteen miles away. He communicated his plans of invading Saxony to no one but Piper, who did his best to dissuade him from the enterprise. He represented to him that King Augustus himself was now in Poland, and that the Tsar had collected large masses of troops on the frontier, that so soon as Charles was removed there would be a general rising of the Swedes against the Poles, and that the fruits of five years' labour would be lost at a single blow.

The Swedish army broke up from Luck on July 17, after nearly a month's sojourn in the district, and marched to Horodlo on the Bug, the river being

crossed on July 21 ; the Vistula was reached at Pulawy a week later, and it took four days to build a bridge. The junction with Rehnskjöld's corps was effected at Piatek on August 16. A week later the river Warta was crossed, Charles leaving behind him General Mardefeld with a division of four thousand men to watch Augustus and the Russians. On September 2, 1706, the Swedes crossed the Oder at Steinau, and entered Saxon territory on September 6. The army which Charles had with him consisted on paper of twenty-nine thousand six hundred men, but in reality of only nineteen thousand. It was a small army, but there were no better-seasoned troops in Europe, and it may be doubted whether better troops, more able to bear fatigue and to fight, have ever existed.

At the time when Charles formed the design of marching upon Saxony, Augustus was at Novogrodek, whither he had removed from Cracow, so as to be nearer to his Russian allies. The news of the King's march filled them with terror; he foresaw that his supplies would be cut off, and his hereditary dominions plundered. His luxurious life was threatened at its root, there would be no more extravagance and self-indulgence, no more spending of the Tsar's subsidy in his own pleasure; it was necessary to strain every nerve to hold Charles back from the

fulfilment of his design. He therefore sent two of his state officials, Imhoff and Pfingsten, to meet the King and offer him terms of peace, the full powers to this effect being dated Novogrodek, August 19, 1706. We do not possess their instructions in full, but we may infer that they were restricted to making offers to Charles of the following purport: that if he would give up his design of invading Saxony, Augustus would promise to draw no more troops from that country, and would acknowledge Lesczinski as legitimate successor to the Polish throne; but that if this were not sufficient he would, himself, surrender up the crown at once. The Saxon envoys went, first to Dresden, which they reached on September 1. The government, acting in the absence of Augustus, sent to request Charles to desist from his march, and to wait for the coming of plenipotentiaries who were on their way to him, asking at the same time for passes for their security. The passes were indeed prepared, but the delays were long, and the commissioners did not reach Charles's camp till September 11, when he was already at Bischoffswerda, not much more than twenty miles from Dresden.

The negotiations began on the following day. The envoys promised Charles that, if he would retire from Saxony, Augustus would withdraw all his troops from Poland, and would recognize Stanislaus

Lesczinski as his successor to the Polish crown; they also mentioned the possibility of a partition of Poland, in which Lithuania should fall to the share of Sweden. On the other hand, Piper would be content with nothing less than the immediate surrender of the Polish crown by Augustus, and the giving up of his alliance with the Tsar. As Piper continued absolutely firm in this attitude, and no arguments of Imhoff or Pffingsten could shake him, seeing that peace was to be obtained on no other terms they accepted these conditions as preliminary, and the chief difficulties of the negotiations were overcome at once. There is no doubt that in this action they exceeded their instructions. They were empowered to offer these terms only if Charles could be prevented from entering Saxony at all, and when that proved impossible their powers ceased. Any idea that they hoped by a speedy submission to secure the immediate retreat of the Swedes must have been dispelled when Piper made the request that the Swedish army might be allowed to stay in Saxony for the winter. On September 13, Charles removed from Bischoffswerda, crossed the Elbe at Meissen on August 15, and on August 21, 1706, reached the old country palace of Alt-Ranstädt, in which he took up his quarters, his troops being quartered in the neighbourhood.

The lofty church of Markranstädt is visible for miles over the broad plain which surrounds Leipsig, the plain on which the great ancestor of Charles XII., Gustavus Adolphus, found his death. The suburb of Alt-Ranstädt lies at two miles' distance, and, being now situated in Prussia, is little known even at Leipsig itself; yet it deserves to be considered as one of the most remarkable places in the world, for it was here that the Swedish King, a young man, it is true, of twenty-four, but acknowledged as one of the greatest warriors of his time, remained for a whole year, encamped in the heart of his enemies' country, and during that time was justly regarded as the arbiter of Europe. In the great struggle then raging between the allies and Louis XIV. for the possession of the Spanish Empire, the forces on either side were equally matched, and the balance would incline in favour of that party for whom Charles elected to draw his sword. The eyes of Europe were directed with breathless interest towards that tiny spot, and it must always have a fascination for the historian. The Saxons were frightened out of their wits at the coming of the Swedes. The treasures of Dresden were removed to the vaults of Königstein. The Elector's mother fled to her family in Holstein, his wife with her son to her father in Baireuth, the two captured Sobieskis were shut up in Königstein to

keep Patkul company. The roads which led to Berlin, Magdeburg and Halberstadt, were crowded with fugitives, and the jobmasters of Dresden and Leipsig made enormous profits. Charles did his best to allay this senseless terror, by appeals to the Saxon people, and by preserving the strictest discipline. Charles had, indeed, met with no resistance from the Saxons on his march. Schulenburg, thinking discretion the better part of valour, had withdrawn with his army into Thuringia.

The conditions of the peace of Alt-Ranstädt were finally concluded on September 24. They provided that Augustus should renounce the throne of Poland, and should make his decision known to the Polish people within six months; that he should give up all his alliances, deliver the two Sobieskis from their imprisonment, surrender all deserters, and especially John Reinhold Patkul, and allow the Swedish army to winter in Saxony, supplying them with all necessaries. The ratifications were to be exchanged within six weeks. The strictest secrecy was to be preserved, in order that the conclusion of peace might not be hindered by the interference of any third power. Pfungsten was sent to Augustus to obtain the ratification. Mardefeld and Stanislaus were ordered to desist from all hostilities as soon as this should be given. In the meantime, Charles let it be

known that he had agreed to a suspension of arms for ten weeks. Pfingsten was given clearly to understand that unless he returned with the signature of Augustus within six weeks Charles would not feel himself bound by the terms of the preliminaries.

Pfingsten found Augustus at Petrikow, about half way between Cracow and Warsaw, but it is not exactly known what passed between them. Augustus declared at a later period that Pfingsten had not made him fully acquainted with the conditions of the peace, that he had informed him of certain points only, and given his master to understand that easier terms might possibly be obtained; and that upon this Augustus had signed blank forms of ratification, to be delivered in case the conditions should prove satisfactory. It is impossible to believe that this was really the case, or that Pfingsten would have dared, or would even have wished, to conceal from his sovereign so important an instrument. There is no doubt that Augustus was extremely angry at the news brought to him by his envoy. His desire had been to prevent the invasion of Saxony, and when that proved to be impossible he had given orders to Imhoff and Pfingsten to prolong the negotiations as much as they could, in order that time might be given for the mediation of the Emperor or the Maritime Powers.

Augustus was indeed in a serious dilemma. He had promised the Russians that he would not agree to any separate peace with Sweden. An army of twenty thousand Russians was in his immediate neighbourhood, and his breach of faith would probably meet with speedy punishment. Further, how could he depend upon the support of the Poles if they came to learn that he had, under any circumstances, agreed to abdicate in favour of Stanislaus? The only course open to him was to induce Pfingsten, partly by threats and partly by promises, to enter upon a course of mendacity and deceit. Augustus was to give him the desired ratifications, but he was in the first place to keep the treaty as secret as possible, and in the next place to declare, if necessary, that the ratifications had been obtained under false pretences, that he had never communicated the real conditions to his master, but merely given him a general outline of the negotiations, with the assurance that easier terms could probably be obtained. This ill-judged self-sacrifice eventually cost Pfingsten his life and Imhoff his liberty at the hands of their ungrateful sovereign.

Pfingsten left Petrikow with the ratifications on October 20. They were two in number, one confirming the conditions of the treaty, the other resigning the crown, recognising Stanislaus as King, and call-

ing upon all Poles and Lithuanians to render him allegiance and obedience. He was also the bearer of a letter from Augustus to Charles, saying that, as the possession of the crown of Poland had given him more pain than pleasure, he could not regard its loss as a very severe calamity, especially if it gave him in exchange the friendship of the King of Sweden.

Just at this time an unexpected event occurred. Mardefeld had, as we have seen, been left behind by Charles on the Warta to watch the Poles and the Russians, and at the beginning of October, seeing that the enemy was increasing in force, had marched southwards from the Warta to the Prosna, in order better to perform his duty. Charles had charged Pfingsten with a commission to inform Mardefeld of the conclusion of the armistice; but he could not deliver the message himself, and the person to whom he entrusted it failed to do so, so that Mardefeld was entirely ignorant of the suspension of arms. Just at the time when Pfingsten was at Petrikow, Men-shikof, who commanded the Russian force, determined to attack Mardefeld, although Augustus did his best to restrain him, not wishing that there should be an engagement between himself and the Swedes just as the negotiations for peace were in progress. When he found that this was impossible, Augustus sent a secret message to Mardefeld informing him

that he would be shortly attacked by a united army of Poles and Russians, and advising him to retire. Mardefeld believing this to be a trick, and being without instructions from Charles, remained in his position. Whereupon Augustus sent a more urgent warning, telling him that peace had been concluded between Charles and himself, that he would keep the Russians back for two days, which he recommended him to use in providing for his safety. Mardefeld again put a wrong construction on this letter, and when he became aware that the enemy was really at hand he drew up his army in front of the Prosna, placing his four thousand Swedes in two lines in the centre, and eight thousand Poles and Lithuanians, who were commanded by Sapieha, in the wings.

The united army consisted of twenty thousand Russians, and fifteen thousand Saxons and Poles,—nearly three times the strength of Mardefeld. As soon as the attack began, Sapieha's troops naturally ran away, leaving the Swedish flanks unprotected. The masses of the allies enveloped the little handful of their opponents, and after a brave resistance, in which he lost seven hundred men, Mardefeld was compelled to surrender. The Swedish general, Crassow, fought his way through the enemy, and managed to escape with a thousand cavalry. Such was the battle of Kalish, fought on October 29, 1706.

Augustus, contrary to his custom, took part in the battle—a conduct which contrasts rather strangely with his efforts to prevent it; he was evidently afraid to give either the Russians or the Poles the slightest suspicion of his treachery. After the engagement he sent the Russians into winter quarters, and retired himself to Warsaw, whence he dispatched a letter of excuse to Charles, promising to set the captured Swedes at liberty as soon as possible.

Charles was extremely enraged at the news of Kalish and at the perfidy of Augustus, but he became pacified when he considered the solid advantages he had gained. On November 28, he communicated the conditions of the treaty of Alt-Ranstädt to the ambassadors of foreign powers who were present at Leipsig, and it is needless to say that it caused the greatest sensation throughout Europe, and raised the fame of Charles as a general and as a diplomatist to a higher point than it had yet attained.

Augustus, after celebrating his victory in Warsaw, betook himself to his palace of Tarnowitz in Silesia, when he used every effort to wriggle out of the treaty. He hoped to obtain some alleviation of the terms, and to secure this he paid a visit to Charles at Alt-Ranstädt on December 18. Charles received him with more consideration than might have been

expected, but would not depart one inch from the conditions already accepted ; so that on January 1, 1707, Augustus was obliged to announce to the world, on his side also, that the treaty had been concluded. Nothing remained but to throw the blame on the plenipotentiaries. They had obtained, he said, his signature under false pretences ; they had misinformed him as to the conditions of the treaty, and led him to believe that if it were speedily concluded he could obtain easy terms. They had then persuaded him that a personal interview with the King of Sweden was sure to effect this object, and had thereby induced him to place himself in the power of his enemy. Once in this position, what was he to do? He had been led into a trap, but woe to the traitors who had thus deceived him.

CHAPTER XI.

ALT-RANSTÄDT.

WE have said above that Charles XII., in electing to take up his abode in the hunting villa of Alt-Ranstädt rather than in a large town, was following his usual custom. His life there was exceedingly simple, and his establishment had but little of the appearance of a court. Entertainment and representation was left to Count Piper, who was a rich man, very fond of money, and not above receiving presents when he could get them. Charles, indeed, was not only simple in his dress, but dirty and untidy. There could not be a greater contrast than between him and the Elector Augustus when they met as above described. Augustus was clothed in those bright-coloured garments, embroidered with gold lace and enriched with precious stones, which we can still see represented on the walls of Dresden Gallery. Charles wore heavy boots, the worse for

rough usage, dirty leather breeches, and a simple blue coat with enormous copper buttons. Yet the conqueror Charles received more respect, in his untidiness, than Augustus, the conquered, in all his splendour. Charles was especially popular with the common people, the more so because he made no difference between classes. The Saxon nobles had been, like the French, free from taxes, but Charles imposed the same burdens upon them as upon the rest. They complained of this, and spoke of their privileges, saying that they were excused from military taxes on the ground of supplying cavalry to the sovereign. Charles replied to them,

‘When they use your cavalry? If the cavalry had done its duty in the last campaign I should not be here. If a party of amusement is to the fore you are ready to take a share in it, but if the country is in danger you stay at home. You are the very men who ought to pay taxes first.’

Charles was, indeed, like Napoleon, and like Peter the Great, in another manner,—a bitter enemy of what has been known since as the *ancien régime*, its extravagance, its laziness, its hollowness, and, what was especially unbearable at the Saxon court, its profound immorality. Charles lost no opportunity of showing his contempt for the Dresden nobles in this respect, and his treatment of Aurora von Königs-

marck was hardly more respectful at Alt-Ranstädt than it had been before at Courland. It was natural that one of Charles's first anxieties at Alt-Ranstädt should be to visit the field of Lützen, and the stone which marks the place where his heroic ancestor had fallen in the fight on November 6, 1632, fifty years before Charles's birth. He had carefully studied the plan of the battle, and explained to Rehnskjöld, Nierolt, and the young Prince of Wurtemberg, who were with him, how everything had occurred. He spoke much of the character and personality of Gustavus, and said,

‘I have striven to live like him. May God give me grace to find my death in the same honourable manner.’

At a later period he visited Wittenberg, in reverence to the memory of Luther. He rode over one day, quite unexpectedly; but the authorities hastened to open the church, and to show him Luther's grave. All the professors were present, and they wished to present him with an address, but he would hear nothing of it. It happened that he reached the grave of the great reformer just at the time of the customary evening prayers, held by the Swedes daily. The King and his generals went into one of the neighbouring benches, fell on their knees, and performed their devotions. The professors, officials,

and the town councillors who were present were standing round Luther's grave, and they could not refrain from following the King's example, so that the church presented an extraordinary spectacle. The occurrence seemed to have a softening effect upon the King's temper, but after staying an hour or two he mounted his horse and rode away.

The Swedish army, when it reached Saxony, was in a horrible condition. It was badly clothed, and many gaps had been made in the ranks by sickness and death. Pay was much in arrears, both for officers and for common soldiers. But the sojourn in Saxon territory put this all right. The war taxes were amply sufficient to supply clothing for the troops, and all arrears of pay were made up. But the enforced idleness was not all to the good, and the morals of the army suffered severely from their sojourn in this northern Capua. Charles insisted on the maintenance of discipline with the greatest severity. Soldiers who could not restrain from plunder were shot down without mercy. It is said that one day Charles discovered a soldier red-handed in an act of loot, and cried,

‘Is it true that you have been robbing this man?’

The soldier replied,

‘Yes, your Majesty; but I have only stolen a chicken from this peasant, whereas your Majesty has stolen a crown from his master.’

Charles was for the moment confused, and did not order the soldier to be punished; but he gave two ducats to the peasant, and said to the soldier,

‘Consider another time, my friend, that if I have taken an empire away from King Augustus I have, at least, kept nothing for myself.’

Charles did not hesitate to levy recruits in Saxony, and, where his drums beat, hundreds flocked to his standard. In this manner the army was increased to the number of forty-three or forty-four thousand well-equipped soldiers.

Owing to the special circumstances of Europe at that time, Charles was an object of interest to all who were taking part in the war of the Spanish succession. It is said that his quarters at Alt-Ranstädt were visited by ten princes and by thirty ambassadors of foreign powers. The most remarkable of these visits, perhaps, was that of Marlborough, of which we shall speak presently.

The peace of Alt-Ranstädt was signed and had been published by both parties to the world; the two Sobieskis had been released from prison, but Augustus did everything in his power to avoid the fulfilment of the other conditions which were so distasteful to him. He betook himself to foreign powers, such as Denmark, Prussia, and Austria, begging them to intercede with Charles, but he received evasive answers.

He then turned, in his distress, to the Tsar ; he complained that he had been driven to accept the treaty by the nonfulfilment of Peter's promise, and that he signed it without being acquainted with its conditions. Peter was at last overcome by these arguments, and promised that, if Augustus would violate the treaty, he would help him with large subsidies and a considerable auxiliary army. Augustus, however, required money down, and that Peter was not disposed to give, so the matter came to an end.

It is said that Augustus went so far at this time as to plan the murder of his enemy. A great wild-boar hunt had been arranged at Liebenwerde, an occasion on which it would not be difficult to carry such a design into execution. Charles accepted the invitation, but missed his way, and found himself in the neighbourhood of the residence of the Elector's mother, who had now, we may suppose, returned from Holstein. As Charles was a connexion of hers he determined to pay her a visit, and thus let the time arranged for the hunt slip by, and returned straight to Alt-Ranstädt. It is more probable that Charles made this mistake on purpose than by accident, because his habits were most punctual, and he was not likely to miss an opportunity for a boar-hunt. Charles now began to press for the fulfilment of the treaty, and especially for the surrender of Patkul, which the

Saxons were very anxious to evade. It is said that Augustus had promised Peter that he would not give him up, but he was between two terrors, the wrath of Peter and the wrath of Charles. It was difficult to say which of the two was the more serious calamity, and the indecision of the King-Elector's character became more conspicuous than ever. It would have been easy to have assisted Patkul to escape, but the King of Sweden would have inflicted summary vengeance on the abettors of such a trick. Schulenburg has left on record that he was once summoned by Augustus with Hoyer and Pfingsten to decide on Patkul's fate. What was to be done? How could Patkul be set at liberty without irritating the King of Sweden to a dangerous point? Augustus would not agree to any method which was proposed, and eventually determined to surrender Patkul to torture and death.

Patkul had no illusions about his own destiny. It is said that he had promised a considerable sum to the commandant of Königstein, if he would allow him to escape, and that he had shown the agreement to Augustus, whereupon the commandant was immediately executed and a new one appointed of a different temper. There is another account, that Patkul was not willing to give as much money as the commandant demanded, but we cannot tell whether both the

stories or either of them are true. Augustus, however, had favours to ask of Charles, and he could not expect to obtain them unless he met the King half way. A number of Saxon troops had been left in Poland, and Augustus, who feared that they might be attacked by the Russians, was anxious for their return. Charles promised to assist their operations and protect them against a Russian attack. Augustus, having lost one crown, was anxious to obtain another, and set his affections on Naples, which was then in dispute with the rest of the Spanish Empire. He begged for Charles's help in the negotiation, and hopes were held out that it might be obtained. The consequence of all these intrigues was that Patkul was delivered to General Meyerfeld on April 18, 1707, and was kept by him in the closest custody. When the Swedes left Saxony they took Patkul with them under the strongest guard, and on crossing the Polish frontier he was executed at Kasimierz, on October 10. He was broken on the wheel. The executioner gave him fourteen or fifteen blows on the back, during which time he screamed and groaned greatly, and called on God and the devil. After receiving two blows on the breast he became more quiet, and only murmured,

‘Take my head off.’

He then crawled along the scaffold and lay his

head upon the block. The head was not severed till the fourth blow. Patkul committed the fault of meddling with matters too great for him. His designs for the freedom of his native country were swallowed up and neutralized in the conflict of more powerful interests. Livonia, which he died to save, fell to the lot of Russia. But still he deserves a niche in the temple of historic fame.

The surrender of Patkul naturally caused deep offence to Peter. Augustus had committed no mere nominal crime in delivering up the Russian envoy to a disgraceful death, especially when he had so often promised that he would do nothing of the kind. To cover his deceit and to atone for one sin by another, Augustus arrested Imhoff and Pfingsten in May, for having obtained the ratification of the treaty of Alt-Ranstädt under false pretences. Peter indeed requested that the offenders might be delivered up to him, but Augustus feared that, in that case, the web of deceit which he had woven would be unravelled, and matters made worse than ever. He therefore promised to punish the offenders himself, perhaps the only promise which it was not likely that he would violate.

Although winter had long passed, Charles still continued to linger in Saxony. The reason for this delay is to be sought rather in the King's character

than in anything else. In his life, periods of feverish activity were often succeeded by long spells of unreasonable rest. He had, however, two ostensible grounds for his action,—one, that Augustus still continued to call himself King of Poland, contrary to the treaty, which only allowed him to retain the title of King, and also that the powers who had been invited to guarantee the treaty of Alt-Ranstädt had not yet returned an answer. Another and more serious reason was, that misunderstandings had broken out between Charles and the court of Vienna which it was now necessary to arrange. The main grievances were two in number,—first, that a number of Russian soldiers, which had escaped at the battle of Fraustadt and had been well received by Augustus, had at the time of Charles's invasion taken refuge in Bohemia; and the Emperor now refused to give them up, according to the provisions of the treaty of Alt-Ranstädt; and secondly, that the freedom of worship in Silesia, which had been expressly provided for by the treaty of Westphalia, was violated by the Catholic clergy, who had closed a number of evangelical churches. Charles was by inheritance a guarantor of the treaty of Westphalia, and had thus a right to see that this provision was carried into effect.

The possibility of a serious breach between Charles and the Emperor was regarded with alarm by the

Maritime Powers, and especially by England. A war between them might throw Sweden into the arms of France, greatly increasing her chance of success in the struggle, and if the Emperor was implicated in another conflict he might have little time to spare for the humiliation of Louis. Further, any development of the northern war would probably involve the intervention of Denmark and Prussia, and the contingent which they were supplying then would be withdrawn. It was determined that the great Duke of Marlborough himself, who was as successful in diplomacy as he was brilliant in battle, should visit the Swedish King at Alt-Ranstädt, and do his best to recognise the danger.

George Stepney, who was at this time British envoy in Poland, has left us a graphic account of the personal appearance and habits of Charles at the time of Marlborough's visit. He says, 'He is a tall, handsome gentleman, but immoderately dirty and slovenly, his behaviour and carriage more rustic than you can imagine in so young a man, and that the outside of his quarters should not bely the inside, he has these the dirtiest of all Saxony, and one of the saddest houses. The cleanest place is the land before the house, where everybody is to alight off their horses, and is up to the knees in dirt. Here his horses stand with hardly any halters, and sacking

instead of clothes, without either rack or manger. The horses have their coats rough, also their bellies, their buttocks and their switchy tails. The grooms that look after them seem not to be better cloathed nor kept than their horses, one of which stands always ready for a mighty monarch, who runs out commonly alone and bestrides his steed and away he gallops before anyone else is ready to follow him. Sometimes he will go forty-eight or fifty miles a day, even in the winter-time, bespattered with dirt like a postillion.

‘The King’s coat is plain blue, with ordinary brass buttons, the skirts pinned up behind and before, which shows his nasty old leather waistcoat and breeches, which, they tell me, are sometimes so greasy they may be fried. But when I saw him they were almost new, for he had been galanting a little before, and had been to see King Augustus’s Queen upon her return to Leipsig, and to be fine had put on these new leather breeches. He spoke not above three words to her, but talked to a foolish dwarf she has for about a quarter of an hour, and then left her. He wears a black crape cravat, but the cape of his coat is buttoned so close about it that you cannot see whether he has any or no. His shirts and wristbands are commonly very dirty, for he wears no gloves or ruffles on horseback, and his

hands are commonly of the same colour with his wristbands, so that you can hardly distinguish them. His hair is of a light brown, very greasy and very short, never combed but with his fingers. He sits upon any stool or chair that he finds in the house, without any ceremony.

‘He begins his dinner with a great piece of bread and butter, having stuck his napkin under his chin. He drinks, with his mouth full, out of a great old-fashioned beaker, small beer, which is his only liquor at his meals. He drinks about two English bottles, for he empties his beaker twice. Between every bit of meat he eats a piece of bread and butter, which he spreads with his thumbs. He is never more than a quarter of an hour at dinner, eats like a boor, and speaks not one word all the while. As soon as he rises, his trabants, or Life-Guards, sit down to the same table to the same victuals.

‘His bed-chamber is a little dirty room with bare walls, no sheets or canopy to his bed, but the same quilt that is under him turns up over him and so covers him. His writing-table is a slit deal with only a stick to support it, and instead of a standish (or ink-stand) a wooden thing with a sand-box of the same. He has a fine gilt Bible by his bedside, which is the only thing that looks fine in his equipage. He is a very handsome man, well shaped, with a very good

face, and no stern countenance. But he is very whimsical and positive, which makes all the allies afraid of him, for he rouses up himself and his army as long as another would fight a duel. He hath not shown much generosity to King Augustus, who seeks *carte blanche* to make peace, and to recommend himself to his friendship. But he does still every day very hard things to that poor prince, whom he treats always like one he has entirely in his power.'

Stepney further tells us of King Stanislaus, whom he saw at Leipsig, that he is tall, young, and handsome, wearing whiskers in the Polish dress, but inclined to be fat, and a little upon the dirty, as all Poles are. 'He was lodged in a very pretty little castle belonging to King Augustus, but against that King's wish, who will never see him and cannot bear to have him spoken of, and yet the Swedes would oblige him to see him, which they say he ought to do by treaty.'

Marlborough arrived at Halle on the afternoon of April 26, 1707, and on his way to Alt-Ranstädt was informed that the King would see him the next day. After visiting Count Piper, the Duke went to the quarters prepared for him, about a mile and a half from the King's. The interview took place on the following morning at eleven o'clock, in a cabinet, where the King was with several senators, generals,

and other officers about him. After a 'short compliment' in English, Marlborough spoke in French, which Charles understood, but would not speak. The Duke presented to Charles an autograph letter from Queen Anne, and said,

'I present your Majesty a letter not from the Chancery but from the heart of the Queen, and written with her own hand. Had not her health prevented it, she would have crossed the sea to see a prince admired by the whole universe. I am in this particular more happy than the Queen, and I wish I could serve some campaign under so great a general as your Majesty, that I might learn what I yet want to know in the art of war.'

After the conversation had lasted about an hour, Charles took Marlborough in to dinner, placing him at his right hand. They then returned into the audience chamber, and conversed for an hour and a half, till it was time for Charles to go to church. Piper, who was present with Hermelin, shed tears at Marlborough's eloquence.

Marlborough's keenness of vision soon enabled him to discern that Charles had no idea of becoming an ally of Louis XIV. He hated the French and everything that belonged to them. Nor did it appear to the Duke that the Swede was deeply concerned about his differences with the Emperor, but on the

*Charles was the active leader of the South
; it is absurd to think that he would*

other hand he found the tables covered with maps of Russia, and when the Tsar's name was mentioned, Charles's cheek flushed and his eyes sparkled. The news that the great general and the great sovereign were holding an interview drew such large crowds to the spot that the efforts of several regiments were required to keep order. Marlborough presented Countess Piper with a costly diamond ring, and he promised pensions of fifteen hundred pounds to the Count himself and of five hundred pounds to Hermelin and Cederhjelm, with an extra five hundred pounds to Hermelin. Can we wonder if this latter gentleman said at the time that any Swede who should attempt to persuade the King to involve himself in a new war until the war with Russia was concluded, must either be a madman or a traitor to his country. Marlborough went away convinced that Charles would not intervene between France and the allies, unless he were invited to do so by both parties.

Charles, however, was so much enraged at the delay of the Austrians in coming to terms that it nearly led to a rupture. When Piper pleaded for a little more time Charles said to him,

‘I have already waited too long from feelings of politeness, if I do not receive a positive answer I am determined to set off the day after to-morrow.’

Eventually another treaty of Alt-Ranstädt between Sweden and Austria was signed on August 22, and the sea powers immediately declared that they were ready to become guarantors of the whole settlement. Charles was at length able to say to Piper,

‘We have now been a whole year in Germany, the peace with King Augustus is concluded, and all disputes with other powers are amicably arranged without our having made a single new enemy. We have done all our business, and are in a position to leave Saxony, of which we were formerly so much in dread.’

CHAPTER XII.

THE INVASION OF RUSSIA.

IN the middle of August, Charles ordained a solemn service of prayer and humiliation for all his troops. He commanded all the women who had found their way into the camp to return to their homes, and on the very evening of the day when the treaty with Austria was signed he gave orders for departure. His army was in a splendid condition, he had brought twenty thousand troops with him, and he now had thirty-three thousand besides the Polish auxiliaries, although he had received no reinforcements from his own country. The army began to march on September 1 (N.1), and when the King reached Oberan, near Meissen, on September 6, he suddenly determined to pay a flying visit to Dresden, in order to take leave of King Augustus. He was accompanied only by seven persons. When they reached the gate they were stopped and taken to the guard-

house in the centre of the town. Here Charles was accidentally recognised by General Flemming, who conducted them to the King. Augustus, not feeling well, was, we imagine to his great distress, still in his dressing-gown. Whilst the Elector went to dress, Charles paid a visit to his aunt Anna Sophia, the Elector's mother. Then both sovereigns set out on horseback and inspected the fortifications, the arsenal, the stables, and the riding-school, followed by a dense crowd. After four hours' sojourn, Charles left amid the thunder of cannon from the walls, and the Elector accompanied him for several miles on his road. He reached his quarters before the army had known anything of his adventure.

On September 17, the Swedes re-crossed the Oder at Steinau, and nine days later took up their quarters at Slupce. Here Charles received reinforcements from Sweden of nine thousand recruits, which brought up his army to its full war strength. The King had now under his own command sixteen thousand two hundred infantry, twelve thousand two hundred and fifty dragoons, and eight thousand four hundred and fifty other cavalry, making a total of thirty-five thousand nine hundred men, whilst three thousand infantry and five thousand dragoons were left behind in Posen under General Crassow. After spending six weeks in ordering his troops, the King marched towards the

Vistula, in order to prepare for the crossing of that important river. He did not, however, intend to begin any further operations against the Russians until the frost had made the rivers passable. This could not be the case till the end of the year, so he quartered his army in the neighbourhood of Brzez-Litewski, and took up his own abode in the Castle of Wienicz, only a short distance from the Vistula and about a hundred miles north-west of Warsaw. Here he was visited by a Turkish embassy, an event which did not seem of much importance at the time, but which had a profound influence upon his after career.

King Stanislaus had in the course of the year 1707 sent an embassy to Constantinople to announce his accession to the throne, and the Sultan, Ahmed III., had in return dispatched an Aga to thank the new King for his courtesy, and that he was now encamped only at a short distance from the Swedes. The Aga, having delivered his message to Stanislaus, came into the Swedish camp and presented to Charles a letter from Jussuf Pasha, the Seraskier of Silistria, containing a number of complimentary expressions. Charles was at first somewhat cold in his reception of the Turk, because he had not been dispatched directly from the Sultan; but afterwards, recognizing the advantage which both he and Stanislaus could

derive from a Turkish alliance, he treated him with more confidence, and eventually came to speak of a possible alliance between Turkey and Sweden for the humiliation of Russia. The Aga said that such an alliance might be possible, but Charles must first send an embassy to Constantinople. Jussuf Pasha informed the Porte of these events, and was told in answer that the Grand Vizier was, himself, in favour of a war with Russia, but that the Sultan could not be induced to violate the treaties which subsisted between himself and that power. However, there could be no objection to a Swedish embassy being received by the Porte. This led to a correspondence between Jussuf Pasha and the Swedish Chancery which accompanied Charles in the field; the result of which was to strengthen in Charles's mind the idea of a Turkish alliance. Hope was also held out that the Khan of Crim-Tartary might put a considerable army in the field. The Sultan knew nothing of these offers, and when he heard of them he gave the most precise orders that the Khan was to commit himself to no promises whatever. The negotiation opened through the intermediacy of Jussuf Pasha, and he became so devoted to Charles, and so much convinced of the desirability of the alliance, that he concealed the Sultan's real sentiments, and led Charles to believe that his sovereign would support him in his plans against Russia.

At the same time negotiations were opened with Mazeppa, hetman of the Cossacks, a man whose poetically sounding name and strange history have won for him more attention than he would otherwise have deserved. He was sprung from an old Podolian family, and was now sixty-three years old. When quite young he came to Warsaw to be a page at the court of King Casimir. It is said that when in this position he aroused the jealousy of a Podolian noble, who in revenge bound him on the back of a wild horse, who fled with his burden into his native Ukraine. Here he was discovered and set free by peasants, and remained with the Cossacks, who made him their hetman in 1681. There is, however, another version of the story, probably more true and certainly more prosaic, which relates that whilst living with his mother in Volhynia he had an intrigue with the wife of a neighbouring nobleman, who bound him on to his own horse, and so terrified it with whips and pistols that it galloped away with his master to his own door, through woods and thickets, so that he arrived in a state hardly to be recognised. After the escapade he joined the Cossacks, but did not become their hetman until shortly before the campaign of Peter against Azoff, in 1695. Mazeppa, whose relations with Peter had become strained, applied, in the first instance, not to Charles but to Stanislaus with offers of assistance. Charles at first looked coldly

on them, but was glad to make use of them at a later period.

The passage of the Vistula was effected with considerable difficulty, on January 9, 1708, and Charles marched with his army, now thirty-six thousand strong, to Grodno, where he hoped to find the enemy. He proceeded by a circuitous route, and did not reach the neighbourhood of his objective till February 6, when he arrived at Nowodwor, about twelve miles distant. Here he heard that Peter was in the town with a considerable force, and he determined to obtain further information. He rode on with eight hundred horse, and met a division of Russian dragoons, whom he easily drove back under the walls of their city. In the meantime night had come on, and Charles slept on the field of the engagement, determined to attack the town as early as possible on the following morning. The Russians, however, evacuated Grodno in the night. Charles found the gates open, and no trace of the enemy. Peter was pursuing at this time the policy which was followed with such success in 1812; besides, he was suffering from fever, and had no wish to risk a general battle.

Charles left Grodno on February 9, in pursuit of the Russians. He arrived at Smorgonie on February 22, but in spite of all his efforts could not come up

with the enemy. Smorgonie is known to us as the place at which Napoleon left his army on the retreat from Russia in 1812. Charles remained for some time and carefully considered the plans of his further operations. He had two courses before him. One was to march into the Baltic provinces and to recover them from the Russians, destroying the establishments which they had made there and revindicating for Sweden what had been lost in his absence. The other was to destroy the power of Peter as he had before destroyed that of Augustus, and for this purpose he meant to strike at the heart of the enemy, making use of the allies which circumstances had placed in his way. But the world has now come to know that the reduction of Russia to submission is a very difficult operation, even for the most consummate military genius, and Charles was not likely to succeed where the great Napoleon was afterwards to fail. The Russians, as they retreated, wasted the land behind them, having learnt this policy from the Cossacks and the Tartars, and nothing was left for their pursuers, who pressed on into a barren wilderness. On the side of the Russians, General Bog, General Swamp, and General Famine were as powerful as General Frost and General Snow; and in enterprises of the kind it is always dangerous to rely on the support of disaffected subjects. Rebels are pro-

verbially fickle, and the man who has once betrayed his friend, may more easily be led to betray him who was once his enemy.

At Smorgonie there was a parting of the ways. Charles could reach Livonia in fourteen days, but it was scarcely likely that he would follow this direction when he had before rejected the shorter road from Grodno. He could march by Pleskow to Novgorod, when he would find a detachment of the Tsar's troops posted behind the Düna; he could advance straight to the east by Smolensk to Moscow, where he would encounter another Russian army on the Beresina; or as a fourth course he could march towards the Ukraine and the south-east, where he would join hands with his allies, the Tartars and the Cossacks. After some hesitation Charles adopted the fatal plan of marching into the Ukraine, and at Smorgonie a formal treaty was signed between Mazeppa and himself. Mazeppa promised that on the advance of the Swedes he would bring a rebellion of the Cossacks against the Russians, would deliver some important fortresses into Swedish hands, and would also stir up to rebellion not only the Zaporovian Cossacks, and the Cossacks of the Don, but the Tartars of Astrachan who had already given evidence of their discontent. The Swedes were to unite with this cloud of irregular cavalry and march towards Moscow. It was also

provided that Lewenhaupt, who was now in Livonia, should join the main army with eleven thousand men, and that Lübecker with a force of fourteen thousand should invade Ingria and destroy St. Petersburg and the Russian settlements in those parts. Stanislaus was to march with the Polish troops to Poland, join with General Crassow, and establish his own authority on a firm basis, whilst the army of Lithuania should advance to Smolensk, and the crown army to Kieff. There is no doubt, also, that Charles counted on the support of the Crim-Tartars, and cherished a hope that early success might also bring him the alliance of the Turk. It was indeed a mighty plan, but it aimed at nothing less than the annihilation of Peter, and Charles did not know with what a formidable adversary he had to contend.

According to the arrangements with Mazeppa, the advance was to be deferred until the soil should produce fodder for the horses. On March 27, Charles removed his head-quarters to Radoszkowice, where he remained till the middle of June. From this place he wrote to Lewenhaupt and ordered him to come with all his troops to increase the King's army. He was to collect the largest possible amount of supplies, sufficient not only for his own army but for the King's, as their march would be through a desolate country. On May 25, Lewenhaupt returned to Riga

and began to carry out the instructions which had been given him; but a fortnight later he was ordered, to his great surprise, to prepare to march at the middle of June, and to proceed by way of Lithuania to the Beresina. In spite of all his efforts he could not complete his preparations till the end of June, and he then set out in accordance with the King's commands.

On June 11, Charles advanced towards Mohilew, while Stanislaus conducted an army of sixteen thousand Poles by way of Grodno to West Poland. Charles reached the Beresina on June 25, at a place of the same name, where there was a bridge across the river. A week later the Swedish army reached the Druc, where Charles had to remain till July 6, because the bridge was broken down. Having crossed this river, the King moved in a northerly direction, because he was informed that there was a great Russian camp established amongst the marshes at Goloftchin. Charles reached this town, situated on the river Wabis, on July 10. The position of the Russians was very strong. Both their flanks were protected by marshes, and another morass extended right through their centre, cutting the Russian army into two halves. The army was commanded by Menshikoff, and it numbered about thirty-six thousand men, and was especially powerful in the wings.

On the evening of July 12, the river and its boats were concealed by a thick mist. Charles took advantage of this circumstance to erect a battery close to the stream, and to place in it eight heavy pieces of artillery. As soon as the rising sun had dispersed the mist, the Swedish guns opened fire upon the Russian centre, which had the effect of scattering the troops posted there, and driving them towards the wings. In the meantime, about seven thousand troops had been collected on the river's bank, and a pontoon bridge was in the course of construction. Charles, in his impatience, would not wait for its completion, but sprang into the stream, calling upon his soldiers to follow him. The water came up to their arm-pits, and they had great difficulty in keeping their muskets dry; indeed, when they reached the opposite shore many of their guns would not go off. Charles, therefore, ordered to cease firing, and to charge with the bayonet.

It was, however, more difficult for the Swedes to advance through the marshes than through the water, but as soon as they touched solid ground the King got his regiment into order, and led them against the left wing of the enemy. The Russians opened a heavy fire, but it had little effect in the seasoned ranks of the Swedish soldiers. They continued to advance unbroken, and the Russians could

not withstand their attack. They, however, retired in good order, continually halting and firing, but at last they were thrown into disorder and broken up.

In the meantime, the Russian cavalry was doing its best to come to the assistance of the hard-pressed infantry, and threw itself on the right flank of the Swedish foot. But Rehnskjöld came up just in the nick of time with his cavalry of the guard, not exceeding six or seven hundred men. By their extraordinary vigour and hardiness they forced the Russian cavalry first to desist from their attack, and then to retire themselves. This performance of the Swedish cavalry has received great praise from military authorities, as showing what may be effected by a small number of troops brought to a high state of efficiency. The trabants, who formed Charles's personal body-guard, were a picked body of men, all with the rank of officers. They were brought up in the tradition of the most daring courage, and were never known to blench before any odds.

The central morass of which we have spoken had the effect of preventing the Russian right from giving any support to the left. Peter says in his diary that special care had been taken to provide passages over this morass, and that their guard of them had been committed to Repnin's division. But, however this may have been, it is certain that the passages

were not made use of. This was the first battle of the new campaign, the first step in Charles's gigantic enterprise of driving Peter from his throne. It lasted but a few hours, and was entirely in favour of the Swedes. The loss was not large on either side. The Swedes lost two hundred and sixty-five killed and one thousand and twenty-eight wounded, the Russians only seven hundred and forty-five men killed, which is to be explained by the fact that the Swedes made no use of their muskets.

Charles made no attempt to follow the Russian retreat, in consequence of the heavy rain, which made the roads, always difficult, now impossible. He marched to Mohilew, which he reached on July 18, and there awaited the arrival of Lewenhaupt. Exactly a hundred and four years afterwards, to the very day, the advanced guard of Napoleon's army entered the same town. The victory of Goloftchin was the last star in Charles's coronet of glory, and it may be said to form the middle point of his career. For nine years, since, as a boy of seventeen, he had to meet the powerful coalition formed against him, his reputation had become more and more brilliant, and his fame had spread to the ends of the earth. The nine years which now followed are a period of defeats, of successes which were as bad as defeats, and of retreats

which were worse. The Russians pursued a policy with which they always have foiled and always will foil an invader, retiring before him, destroying his supplies, harassing him with swarms of light-armed cavalry, while avoiding a serious engagement. Such a policy ruined Charles as it afterwards ruined Napoleon. Indeed, the victory of Golofchin and the retreat of the Russians which followed it may themselves be regarded as disastrous, because they confirmed Charles in his false opinion of the Russian army which afterwards led to such serious blunders.

CHAPTER XIII.

LJESNA.

THE time passed at Mohilew was spent by Charles in the greatest anxiety. The moment had arrived when Mazeppa was to appear on the scene, and the great rebellion was to begin. But nothing could be done without the active co-operation of the Swedes; they must be seen in the neighbourhood of the Cossacks, in order to give Mazeppa an excuse for taking their side in attacking the authorities of the Tsar. Unless they gave their active assistance, the movement could not attain sufficient dimensions to threaten the power of Peter to any serious extent. Mazeppa sent message after message, begging Charles to march towards the Ukraine, as it was now high time that the enterprise should begin. For the first time in his life, Charles showed indecision. He seems to have had some foreboding of the destiny that awaited him, and some fear of the

consequences of his fateful step. This want of resolution brought on dangers and destruction. Had he determined to wait at Mohilew for Lewenhaupt, or had he, after exhausting the resources of the country, approached the Cossacks without throwing himself recklessly into their territory, events might have had a different conclusion.

Charles left Mohilew on August 18, 1708, and marched in a south-easterly direction, as if he were intending to give the hand to Mazeppa. There had been heavy and continuous rain, and the march was so difficult that nearly a fortnight was consumed in covering the sixty miles which separated him from Tsherikoff. Peter had removed his head-quarters from Smolensk to Mstisloff, and had sent a strong detachment under General Goltz to Tsherikoff, to prevent the Swedes from crossing the Sosh. Charles, however, did not attempt to cross the river, but left the Russians in the position they had taken up, and marched northwards to Malatitsh to come nearer to his adversary. His path lay through a completely deserted country, and the roads were laid in swamps. He was obliged to spend six days in covering a distance of less than thirty miles, a distance which he had often accomplished in a single day; and when he arrived both horses and men were so utterly exhausted that they were unfit for work, and

required complete repose. The Swedish army lay at Malatitsh on the Black Napa, a tributary of the Sosh, almost in sight of the enemy's lines. The right wing of the Swedes, commanded by General Ross, and consisting of four regiments of infantry and one of cavalry, was about three miles from the main body.

Peter seized the opportunity of falling upon this isolated detachment. With the help of fascines and hurdles he made a passage over the morass, and attacked the right wing of the Swedes, under the cover of a dense mist, at six o'clock in the morning of September 10. General Ross had been warned of the approaching danger, and was just preparing to join the main army when the Russians broke in upon his as yet disordered troops. The Swedes quickly recovered themselves and formed in order of battle, but they would have been cut to pieces if the King had not come to their assistance. The regiment of Dalecarlia, well known as the foremost in every fight, fell upon the enemy, which gave the right wing time to recover itself and to continue the contest with some chance of success. The Prince of Würtemberg, little more than a boy, led a charge of dragoons against the Russian flank with such vigour that the Russians gave up their attack and betook themselves to flight. Many were pur-

sued into the marsh, where they were cut to pieces by the Swedes.

Charles believed at first that the attack on the right wing was only a feint, and drew up the rest of his army in battle array to meet the main body of the Russians who he felt sure were coming. But Peter had no intention of the kind; he retired, on the other hand, to Smolensk, not so much, perhaps, from the circumstances of his repulse, as from the desire to allure the Swedes into a deserted country in which they would find no sustenance. This policy succeeded only too well. Charles could only proceed by short marches, harassed by continual fighting, and it was not till September 21 that he reached Tatarsk, only twenty-four miles from Malatitsh, the first town on what was then the Russian frontier. He found the Russian army posted in a position which was altogether inaccessible, behind a river with broad marshy banks. Charles did not know what to do. Contrary to his usual custom, he asked the advice of his generals and even of a council of war. All, except Rehnskjöld, dissuaded him from the march into the Ukraine, the general opinion being that he should advance northwards to Vitebsk and meet Lewenhaupt who was on his way. But Charles feared that to retire to the Dnieper would have the appearance of a retreat, and to that

his pride would never permit him to consent. Therefore with a heavy heart, and with little confidence of success, he set out towards Severia to join Mazeppa.

Charles determined to take this fatal step at the very moment when he had certain information that Lewenhaupt was already in the neighbourhood of the Dnieper. In order that the general might be in no doubt as to his movements, Charles had sent out three messengers in different directions to give him orders. They were dispatched on September 24, and carried instructions to Lewenhaupt that, if he has not yet reached Mohilew, he was to march to Propisk, but that if he had already passed Mohilew, he was to cross the Sosh or Tsherikoff, and continue his course to Starodub, where in all probability he would be able to effect a juncture with the King. These messengers have a curious history, and contributed in no small measure to the final disaster. The letters they bore were all dated September 24, the day before Charles broke up with his army, but they were dispatched at three several times, the first on the evening of September 26, and the second and third on the morning and afternoon of the following day. Lewenhaupt received each of these messages about twenty-four hours after they had been sent, but as they were all dated September 24, he could not

understand how two days could have been allowed to elapse before the first messenger was dispatched. At the same time it was clear to him that they had been dispatched in different directions, and he was afraid that some other message of similar purport might have fallen into the hands of the enemy.

He attributed the delay in sending the first message to an intrigue of the camp. He was by nature distrustful, and thought that all the world was against him and that his enemies were seeking to poison the King's mind against him ; above all he suspected Rehnskjöld of conduct of this kind. Lewenhaupt therefore persuaded himself that this delay was specially contrived for his destruction. There was, of course, no foundation for these dismal suspicions. The probable explanation of the mystery was, that the messengers had been dispatched just at that time which was found most convenient, safety being more important than speed. If Charles had been waiting in a particular place for Lewenhaupt's arrival, celerity would have been a matter of the first importance, but as he was on the march, the difference of a day or two did not matter, compared with the absolute certainty of the information being carried safely. This, at least, is the opinion of competent military authorities.

Before we pursue Charles's adventures further, we

had better return to Lewenhaupt and trace his future from the time when he set out from Riga. He had left this town, with eleven thousand men and a large column of provision waggons, at the beginning of July, and in a month's time reached Swenciany; a fortnight more brought him to Dolhinow, where he remained for some time to collect the whole of his troops and the baggage train. This delay was caused partly by the continual rain, which made the roads almost impassable, and partly by the fact that he was more conspicuous for courage, endurance, and strict observance of military tactics, than for complete authority over his subordinates. The colonels of the different regiments were accustomed to exercise a certain degree of independence, and Lewenhaupt had sometimes great difficulty in hurrying their movements.

On September 11, Lewenhaupt broke up from Dolhinow, and in seven days reached Czereja, where he stayed another week. Here he received a message from Charles to hasten his march as much as possible, which had the effect that in two days he was within twelve miles of the river Dnieper. It was while encamped at a place called Maroneowicze that he received the three messages of which we have spoken, conveying the news that the King was marching towards Severia. On September 25, when

he left Tatarsk, Charles was only about a hundred miles from Czereja, and if he had marched to the west instead of the south, he could have effected his junction with Lewenhaupt on the Dnieper, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Sklow, in the space of three, at most four days. This short delay could have had no influence on the events of the Ukraine and Severia. It is difficult to account for the want of wisdom and of steadiness which Charles showed on this occasion, when every consideration of prudence and of generalship should have urged him to join with Lewenhaupt. His rashness may be partly attributed to the contempt which he felt for the Russians, a feeling which had been strengthened by the affair of the Bläck.

At the time certain information reached the Russians that Lewenhaupt was approaching with reinforcements for Charles's army, and it was arranged that Sheremetief should move southwards to observe the main army of the Swedes, while the Tsar Peter himself, with a force of twenty thousand men, attacked Lewenhaupt, whose troops were not estimated at more than eight thousand. Lewenhaupt arrived at Sklow on the Dnieper on September 29, the very same day that King Charles crossed the Sosh. He had taken the precaution to send General Stackelberg ahead to throw a bridge over the stream,

but the work proceeded so slowly that he was not able to cross the river till October 2. Having surmounted this obstacle the army marched in a southeasterly direction towards Starodub, intending to cross the Sosh at Propoisk. On October 5 he arrived at Medvedkowlice, (the bear village,) situated at the east of Mohilew, about half way between Sklow and Propoisk. In the meantime, Peter advanced towards the Dnieper in a north-westerly direction, and had reached it at Gorki, where he heard that Lewenhaupt had already crossed the river and was marching towards Propoisk. Peter therefore changed his plans, and determined to dispute the passage of the Sosh, sending forward a detachment to occupy the bridge, while he harried the rear of Lewenhaupt's army. On October 8, the Swedes arrived at Ljesna, about five miles and a half from Propoisk. On the following morning, just as the long line of waggons was crossing a bridge which had been hastily constructed over the Lesnjanka, strong masses of Russian troops showed themselves in the rear of the Swedes. Lewenhaupt was compelled to retrace his steps, and drew up his troops in order of battle to resist the enemy. He had already dispatched half his forces to Propoisk, where he imagined that the enemy's main strength lay, so that he only had now under him five thousand five hundred men. The

Russian army, on the other hand, was thrice as large, being estimated by Peter himself in his diary at the number of fifteen thousand seven hundred.

Lewenhaupt drew up his army in a single line, and his preparations were scarcely completed when the Russians attacked him from the wood which they were occupying. The Swedes did not wait for the enemy to approach, but led by their general, who had placed himself in person at the head of one of the infantry regiments, after a severe struggle drove them back into the wood from which they had come, while the Russian cavalry was similarly repulsed by far inferior forces. This, however, was only the beginning of the battle, and the Russians soon returned with redoubled strength. Their infantry charged in four lines one after the other, and, resuming their fire, threw themselves upon the Swedish ranks.

Again their attack was anticipated, and the first line of the Russians was driven back upon the second. This threw everything into disorder ; and the defeated troops sought a refuge in the wood. The Swedes followed in pursuit, but were prevented from further progress by the Russian artillery which was posted at the entrance of the forest. The Russians made yet a third advance, but the division which had been sent to Propoisk, and had been recalled by Lewenhaupt, had by this time come up, and they resisted

the enemy's attack with such energy and success that the Russians desisted from any further attempt.

Lewenhaupt remained in his position for some little time, but seeing the impossibility of a continued resistance, he took advantage of the darkness to march to Propoisk. He was, however, obliged to abandon his train of waggons, so he destroyed the greater part of them with their contents and threw his guns into the morass. He then mounted his infantry upon the waggon horses, and was then able to march with greater rapidity. The next morning he reached Propoisk, where he had intended to cross the Sosh, but he found the enemy in so strong a position that he was obliged to give up the attempt. Turning to the south, and marching along the right bank of the stream, he reached Litwinowice two days later, where he was eventually able to cross. On October 20, he arrived at his objective Starodub, where he met the outposts of the Swedish General Lagerkrona, and had thus effected his union with the main army after nearly four months' marching. But of the eleven thousand men, with which he set out from Riga, scarcely seven thousand remained, and the provisions which Charles was anxiously expecting were almost entirely destroyed, so that the King's position was made rather worse instead of better by the addition of these new mouths, and the

absence of anything to feed them with. Charles did not appear to be much put out by Lewenhaupt's misfortune, and welcomed him with cordiality. He was indeed more responsible for what had happened than Lewenhaupt himself.

We left Charles at Tatarsk, having just sent off his messages to Lewenhaupt. As soon as he had determined to march southwards to join the Cossacks, he was anxious to make up as much as possible for the time he had lost by his indecision. He sent Major-General Lagerkrona with a division of three thousand men to Mglin, and followed himself with the main body of the army on September 25. It is said by military authorities that he made a bad choice, and that Lagerkrona did not possess either the insight or the commanding personality which would have secured success in so difficult a task. The country through which Charles had now to march presented every kind of difficulty. It consisted partly of woods, and partly of low-lying ground which had been converted by a long series of heavy rains into little better than a marsh. It offered no supplies, so the Swedish soldiers had to live upon the scanty rations which they had brought with them. Here these seasoned warriors began to lose courage, and to break out into loud complaints. Discipline would have been impossible unless the army had been con-

vinced that their sovereign and leader was sharing in every respect the privations of the common soldier. When the King reached Kuzminicze on October 1, he was met by the alarming intelligence that Lagerkrona had not taken the road to Mglin, but had marched straight to Starodub. To prevent so important a strategical point falling into the hands of the Russians, Charles was forced to proceed thither himself with an advance guard, and he reached the town on October 5.

Starodub was the most important place in Severia, and it was here that the junction between the Swedes and the Cossacks was to be effected. A Cossack officer of high rank, who was acquainted with Mazepa's plans, had been placed there to await the coming of the Swedes, and had been long expecting them. Unfortunately Lagerkrona had omitted to occupy the place, which he could easily have done, and it fell into the hands of a Russian division. The Cossack officer had no choice but to exhibit the most friendly disposition towards the Russians, and to offer to assist them in defending the fortress against the Swedes. The news of this fresh fault of his general reached Charles on October 11, and he heard at the same time of the systematic wasting of the country which the enemy were carrying out in pursuance of their policy. He therefore placed all his

hopes on Lewenhaupt's arrival, who would bring him not only munitions of war, but a plentiful supply of provisions. Fortified by these he could refresh his troops, wait until the winter had made the country traversable, and then, even if Mazeppa should fail him, pass on into the heart of Russia on the road to Moscow. Just as Charles was comforting himself with these delusive dreams, a soldier who had fled from the field of Ljesna brought the news of the disaster, and of the entire destruction of the train. Nothing now remained but the support of Mazeppa. Even of this he could hardly feel confident. The time when he should have been actively engaged had long passed, and the Russians were straining every nerve to hinder his further advance into the country of the Cossacks.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAZEPPA.

IT is said that misfortunes never come singly, and Charles was now to hear of another blow to the success of his plans. It had been an integral part of his scheme that whilst Peter was engaged in the south of Russia, the Swedish army in Finland should fall upon St. Petersburg, destroy this mushroom city and capture its territory, and press on perhaps even to Novgorod itself. This enterprise had been committed to the charge of General Lübecker. After serving in inferior positions for many years, he was rapidly promoted after the battle of Clissow, and it is said that he owed his advancement to the favour of Karsten Feif, an official who afterwards managed the internal affairs of Sweden whilst sojourning with Charles in Turkey. Lübecker obviously did not possess the qualities required for so important a command, and although Charles forgave his fault on

this occasion he conducted himself so badly in the future course of the war that he was tried in 1717, and barely escaped with his life.

It had been arranged that Lübecker should set out from Wiborg in June with a force of fourteen thousand men, but by the end of August he had only succeeded in collecting twelve thousand, and those not very well provided. He managed to cross the Neva, which was obstinately defended by the Russians, and captured one of the earthworks by which St. Petersburg was protected. In the assault of another there arose such a panic for no reason whatever that the attempt had to be given up. As Lübecker had made no provision for his commissariat, the troops had nothing to eat but horse-flesh and water, and the Russians, according to their usual custom, laid waste the land around them. Apraxin, who commanded at St. Petersburg, got a letter written to him, which he managed should fall into Lübecker's hands, stating that in a short time he would have four thousand troops in St. Petersburg. Lübecker was completely deceived, retired to the neighbourhood of Narva, where he found the Swedish fleet, and begged Admiral Ankarsterna, who was to have co-operated in the capture of St. Petersburg, to take him on board and convey him to Wiborg. Before he embarked he killed and disabled six thousand horses,

and a large number of prisoners fell into Russian hands. Apraxin, having foiled this incompetent antagonist, set out with his army to swell the forces of Peter.

The only hope which now remained to Charles was his alliance with Mazeppa. On October 21, he left the neighbourhood of Mglin and marched southwards towards the town of Baturin, the capital and residence of Mazeppa, which he hoped to find well provided and capable of defence. On his march he discovered that the country was everywhere wasted by the Russians, the villages burnt down, supplies of provisions destroyed, and the inhabitants forcibly removed. His army, after the junction of Lewenhaupt's corps, was now not less than thirty thousand men, and it was exposed to the most extreme privations.

As we have frequently had occasion to allude to the methods of defence adopted by Peter, it will be well to give a more detailed account of them in this place. The scheme was conceived in the year 1707, when all hope of making peace with Charles seemed to be at an end, and was elaborated with the assistance of Sheremetief. The first point was to avoid all decisive engagements with the Swedes, the second was to wear out the strength of the enemy by making their advance as difficult as possible. For this purpose the passages of fords and rivers were to be carefully

defended, bridges were to be broken down and destroyed, towns, villages, and mills were to be set on fire, and all food either for men or horses annihilated. It is said that even the wells were poisoned. Peter thought it certain that Charles would direct his march to the Baltic provinces in order to recover what he had lost, and as he had no hope of defending them he determined to turn them into a desert. This was the third part of his plan, and it was so literally and exactly carried out by his rough soldiers that for miles not a single house was standing in that unfortunate country. But he went even further than this. He determined to remove the inhabitants to the interior of Russia, where there was great need of young workmen and artizans. At the end of the winter of 1707-1708, the period which we have been describing, hundreds of sledges and carriages crowded the roads, filled with involuntary emigrants.

What happened at Dorpat will serve as an example for the rest. On February 9, 1708, the preachers announced to the inhabitants from their pulpits that within eight days they must sell their houses, and hold themselves in readiness to remove into the interior of Russia, taking as much of their property with them as could be conveyed in one or at the most in two waggons; that the Tsar would provide them lodging and means of living in their

new residences. At hearing this announcement the citizens were naturally overwhelmed with horror and distress, but there was nothing to be done but to obey. But who was to buy the houses, when there was no one left in the town? They naturally fell to the lot of Russian soldiers, who from the first purchased them far below their worth, but eventually refused to give anything for them at all, feeling certain that they would in any case fall into their hands.

On February 16, almost the whole of the inhabitants received the Lord's Supper, and took a solemn leave of each other before passing into what resembled a Babylonish captivity. The morning was bitterly cold, but all had to depart, young and old, rich and poor, sound and sick, even the dying. The sledges and carriages were packed with such belongings as they were permitted to take with them. The exodus took place in fairly good order, and the last sledge left the town at ten, whereupon the Russians fired the cannons from the walls as if they had gained a victory. Next day the church bells, the copper roofs, and even the ornaments of the churches were claimed as the property of the town, and sold for a nominal sum. At last the fortifications were blown up, and all the houses of the town burnt, so that all that the purchasers had gained

were such valuables as they could rescue. After Dorpat had been thus ruthlessly destroyed, the Russian soldiers moved on to carry out a similar policy at another place. Serfs and peasants came back to the scene of destruction to seek for anything they could find of value in the ashes. It is said that the graves were opened, and that the dead were dug up for the sake of their shrouds.

Other towns were treated with like severity. Seventy-one families from Narva and Ingria were settled at Vologda, and seventy-seven in Kazan; but as a rule the fate of the transported wanderers was buried in obscurity. It is remarkable, however, that when everyone believed that the Baltic provinces would not be defended, and must fall again into the hands of their previous possessors, Peter seemed never to have a doubt about his pet creation St. Petersburg. He strengthened its defences, and did all he could to secure its safety, but he never ceased to labour at its extension and improvement. In this combat of giants he certainly showed more steadfastness and tenacity than his rival.

When the Swedes reached the river Desna, Mazepa indeed appeared in their midst, but not, as Charles had expected, at the head of a large Cossack force, prepared to lead him to victory against the Russians, but with a few thousand cavalry only.

Instead of thirty or forty thousand men, which he had promised, he had only been able to collect fifteen thousand, under the pretence that he was preparing to assist the Tsar against the Swedes. When he communicated to the Cossacks, during the march, what was his real object, more than half his army fell away from him. It is indeed difficult to fathom the depths of Mazeppa's treachery at this time. There is no doubt that Peter was as much surprised and horrified by his revolt, as Charles was by his not fulfilling his promises towards him. I have elsewhere given an account of his proceedings as seen from the Russian side. It is said that Mazeppa did not desire the advance of the Swedes into his country, and that he attributed their appearance there to the devil. He knew that it would be followed by the approach of a Russian army also, which he had good reason to dread. Peter trusted Mazeppa so much that he gave him instructions to fall upon the rear of the Swedes with a body of Cossacks, if possible under his own command. Mazeppa feigned illness, but at the same time wrote to Piper, to say that he was delighted at the approach of the Swedes, and that he would prepare a ferry across the Desna.

At the same time Mazeppa sent his nephew to Menshikoff, to say that, being at the point of death, he was going from Baturin to Borzna, to receive

extreme unction from the Bishop of Kief. Menshikoff, who knew of his character, set out to pay him a visit. Hearing of Menshikoff's approach he had no other resource but to escape from Baturin, so he crossed the Desna in the manner we have described. When Menshikoff heard of Mazeppa's flight, he rode to Baturin and was refused admittance at the gate, and then heard by gradual stages that he had crossed the Desna and that he had gone over to the enemy. Peter on becoming acquainted with what had happened wrote to Apraxin—

‘Mazeppa has turned out a new Judas, for after being loyal to me for twenty-one years, now, when he is almost in his coffin, he has become a traitor and betrayer of his people.’

Menshikoff hastened to invest Baturin. Finding that negotiations were of no avail, he ordered the assault, and the town was taken. It was absolutely destroyed with everything in it, including the supplies for which the Swedes were so anxiously waiting, and, from having been the ancient stronghold of the Cossacks, it is now nothing but a small village.

The failure of Mazeppa to perform his engagements put an end to Charles's plan of marching towards Moscow in the winter. Nothing remained for him but to place his army in winter quarters, with the hope of resuming the campaign in the following

spring, with the help of his troops in Poland and with the assistance of the Turks. Charles had great difficulty in crossing the Desna. He first found the passage so strongly defended by Russians that the attempt was hopeless, and therefore tried a place lower down. Here he was able to clear the opposite bank with his artillery, and by constructing pontoon bridges and rafts he succeeded in getting over the stream on November 15.

Following Mazeppa's advice, Charles distributed his army in the fertile district of northern Ukraine, between Romny and Hadjacz, and gave them a month's repose. But this hardly brought peace of mind to the King. A bad feeling grew up between the Cossacks and their allies. They gave the Russians information of everything the Swedes did, and if a Swede strayed from the camp he was lost. The Russians lost no opportunity of petty offence, and, although no action was fought, the sum total of Charles's losses became considerable. Mazeppa, foreseeing the fatal end of the expedition, made traitorous proposals to Peter, and offered to deliver the Swedish King and his generals into the Tsar's hands if he might hope for forgiveness and restitution to his rights.

The powers of nature were all destined to fight against Charles, as they afterwards fought against

Napoleon. The winter of 1708-9 was an unusually severe one, not only surpassing the well-remembered winter of 1656, when Charles X. invaded Denmark by crossing the frozen Belt, but the cold winters of several centuries. The whole of the Baltic was covered with ice, and heavily-laden waggons passed over the Belt and other sea channels. On the steppes of the Ukraine the cold was made worse by a high wind, birds and other animals lay dead in the fields. In many districts the snow lay on the ground from October 10 to April 5, and it was in some places so deep that all communications were stopped. Charles had been badly enough off in his camp at Romny, and he was determined to remove to Had-jacz so as to be nearer to the Russians. The bitterest cold began on the very day that the army reached its new quarters. Charles had been informed that there was a town to receive him, but he found nothing but burnt and plundered villages. It had been impossible to make any proper arrangements for the billeting of the army; men, horses, and waggons, the living and the dead, were crowded together in inextricable confusion, only a small portion of the troops could find any shelter, the greater number passed the night in the open air in the frost and snow. It is said that the cold was so intense, that men dropped down suddenly dead with it; the rider sat frozen on

his horse, the soldier was welded by frost to the tree or the carriage on which he leaned for support. The King himself had his nose frost-bitten, and circulation was with difficulty restored. The loss of troops in consequence of the cold was not less than three or four thousand men.

These sufferings seemed to make Charles more obstinate than ever. Instead of doing his best to house and to warm his soldiers, he went on to attack the fortress of Wiprek, which was defended by the Russians. It refused to surrender, and was invested. It was a place of no importance in itself, but had served to harbour Russian marauders, and therefore Charles wished to destroy it. The fortress was bravely and skilfully defended. The commandant took advantage of Charles's absence on an expedition to raise the wall by heaping up gabions, or baskets filled with earth, over which he poured quantities of water, so that the palisade was topped with a rampart of solid ice. He also blocked up the gates with large dung-heaps. He gave orders to the soldiers to reserve their fire and to aim chiefly at the officers. In consequence of these arrangements the storm failed. A large number of officers fell, showing that the garrison had obeyed commands, and about one thousand soldiers lay dead before this worthless possession. At last Charles sent a message that, if the commandant

would surrender, he and his garrison should march out with the honours of war, if not he would renew the attack at nightfall. This offer was accepted. Charles entered the place, and found only four cannon as a compensation for everything that he had lost.

CHAPTER XV.

POLTAVA.

THE little fortress of Wiprek was not captured till the beginning of 1709. The attacks of the Russians now became more irritating than ever. They occupied all the towns of any size which could be used as bases of operation against the enemy, and Charles was forced to undertake expeditions against them. He followed the Russian example of laying the country waste, in order to impede the operations against him as far as possible. The sufferings of the Swedes continued to be very severe.

Piper wrote to his wife,

‘The campaign is so laborious, and our position so miserable, that our wretchedness cannot be described, and surpasses all belief.’

The soldiers had been for weeks without any news from home, because all posts were intercepted by the Russian forces. Orderly officers sent with despatches

found it impossible to cut their way through; and the soldiers began to doubt whether they should ever see their homes again. Charles, it is true, bore his full share of all their sufferings, but when the complaints of others were brought to his ears he treated them with indifference. He said once to a veteran soldier,

‘Are you so much put out because you will not see your wife again? If you are a true soldier and love fame and honour then we will march so far together that you will never get any more news from Sweden, not even once in three years.’

On another occasion a soldier showed him a specimen of the bread which they had to eat. Charles took it and ate a mouthful of it, and said, giving it back, ‘It is not good, but it can be eaten.’

He was once riding by a hospital waggon in which there was a young officer named Piper, a relation of the minister’s. Charles asked him how he was, and the young man replied that he could not walk because his toes and heels had been frozen away.

‘Nonsense! nonsense!’ cried the King, ‘I have seen people with the whole of their feet frozen off, and yet they could march very well if they took care to stuff up their boots.’

Still, as he rode on, he expressed his sorrow for the young fellow.

Writing to his sister Ulrica he made light of his condition, said that the army was naturally exposed to hardships as they were in the neighbourhood of the enemy, that the winter had been unusually severe, and that many, both Russians and Swedes, had lost their feet, hands, and noses through the frost, but that in spite of that the winter had been a quiet one, and that it had been enlivened by occasional brushes with the enemy. That they had lost a few men, who had been taken prisoners, but that on the other hand they had chased the Russians about from place to place. Even now most of his generals ordered him to retire behind the Dnieper, and Rehnskjöld himself had come round to that opinion, but Charles was not likely to give way to any such suggestions. Indeed, he had just been reinforced by the adherence of the Zaporovian Cossacks. The Cossacks, it must be remembered, were not a separate race or nation, but a motley collection of outcasts from a more civilized society, drawn together by common interests and united by common dangers. As Schuyler says in his *Life of Peter the Great*, 'They were a characteristic manifestation of the time, a national protest against the governmental forms which did not satisfy the Russian ideal.'

Where the Dnieper, not far from its mouth in the Black Sea, passes through a hilly country it forms

thirteen waterfalls or cataracts, and many islands of different sizes. The swiftness of the stream and the danger of the navigation made these islands secure refuges for outlaws, who could brave the perils of the passage in their light canoes. Hence arose the Zaporovian Cossacks, the Cossacks who dwelt *Zaporoghi*, behind the cataracts. They lived from fishing, hunting, and robbery. Their constitution was entirely republican, and their hetman was elected by manhood suffrage, and could be easily deposed. He could only make alliances with the consent of the representatives of his people; the proceeds of their plunder was divided equally amongst all members of the horde. The islands on which they lived were forbidden to women, and if a Zaporovian decided to marry he must leave the society. Any women whom they captured in their raids were sold to the Turks as slaves. A body of fifteen thousand of these Cossacks, under their hetman Horodenko, now placed themselves at the disposition of Charles. They did good service by harassing the Russian positions, and thus preventing the Russians from engaging in similar exploits. But their assistance did not last long, as Menshikoff sailed down the Dnieper and destroyed their island strongholds, so that they were reduced to insignificance, and were obliged to disperse.

In the middle of March, 1709, Charles marched southwards to Senkow, in the neighbourhood of Poltava, which was a town belonging to the Cossacks, well supplied with provisions, but at this time occupied by the Russians. He began the siege in April, 1709, his operations being watched by the Russian armies, one under Field-Marshal Sheremetief, and the other under General Rönne. It is known that the siege of Poltava was strongly opposed by some of Charles's best officers, and in view of the disasters which actually occurred it is not easy to defend the enterprise. But competent military judges are of opinion that, considering the critical position in which Charles then was, and the steps he had taken to extricate himself from it, a stay of some time in this neighbourhood was of great advantage to his plans, and that he could not stay there without engaging in a military operation of an offensive nature. His great object, it is said, was still to march on Moscow, but that could not be accomplished without sufficient means. With a view to collecting forces he had sent orders at the close of the previous year for all the Swedish garrisons in German towns to join General Crassow in Poland. This officer was, after uniting with the Polish crown army, to march through Volhynia to Kief, and there to effect a junction with Charles.

The King had also sent ambassadors to Constantinople to rouse the Sultan to war against Russia, and, if he refused to move himself, to induce the Seraskier of Wallachia, and the Khan of Crim-Tartary, who were under his suzerainty, to assist the Swedish enterprise. Charles, therefore, it is contended, remained in this district until, on the one hand, he should receive the reinforcements which he expected, and, on the other, the attention of the Russians should be diverted by the new enemies that would arise against them.

In the month of May, Charles pushed the trenches close up to the walls of the city, and he could have made arrangements for storming the place, if he had desired to do so. But this, it is said, was not part of his plan, nor was it his object to bombard the town, because he did not wish to waste his ammunition, of which he had so scanty a supply. However, he failed to invest the place completely, so that on May 26 the Russians were enabled to throw into the place a reinforcement of twelve hundred men. It might surely be answered to these arguments that, if Charles had taken the town, he could have found an ample supply of the munitions which he needed. At this time the Russians approached the river Vorshla on which Poltava is situated, and formed a camp upon the left bank. They threw up

entrenchments with a view of protecting their passage of the river, and to enable them to open communication with the besieged garrison. Baron Gyllenkrook, however, whom Charles used to call the Swedish Vauban, was able to prevent these plans from being carried into effect.

The Tsar Peter himself joined the army on June 15, and it was determined to execute the crossing in another manner. Demonstrations were made at different points of the stream, and on the night of June 27 the Tsar advanced with his army to Pietrovka, and sent a strong detachment across with orders to entrench itself on the other bank. Two days later the whole Russian army succeeded in crossing to the right bank, and, after first entrenching itself, gradually approached nearer to the town.

It happened most unfortunately that, during the operations of June 27-28, Charles was severely wounded in the foot. On the morning of June 28—his twenty-seventh birthday—he was riding close to the river, exposing himself in his usual reckless manner, when a ball struck him on the left heel, passed through his foot, and lodged close to his great toe. He rode on for some time as if nothing had happened, but a groom noticed that blood was dropping from his boot. He thought at first that the King's horse was wounded, but soon observed

more accurately the source of the blood, and also that the King was becoming weak. Indeed, Charles became paler and paler, and had difficulty in reaching the camp. On the road he met Lewenhaupt, who said to him,

‘God help us, that has now occurred which I have so often dreaded and foretold.’

Charles replied, ‘It is only in my foot; the ball is still there, but I will have it cut out again.’

Even then he did not ride to his tent, but spent an hour in the trenches giving orders to Sparre and Gyllenkrook. Then, when he reached his quarters, the wound had inflamed so much that the boot could only be cut off with great difficulty. Several of the bones were broken, and the splinters had to be removed, which necessitated deep cuttings into the side of the foot. Charles cried to the surgeon,

‘Cut away, it doesn’t matter.’

During the operation he held his foot up to the knife without any support, and when the surgeon was afraid of using the knife further, and was recommending caustic, the King took the knife and cut away the rest of the diseased flesh himself. A severe fever ensued, and it was feared that amputation might be necessary; but luckily the King consented, contrary to his usual habit, to take some medicine, which gave him refreshing sleep, from

which he awoke much relieved. However, he had to keep his bed, and it is said that one of his servants would often sit by his bed-side and repeat to him Sagas of the old northern wars ; one especially which related how Rolf Götrekson drove a Russian sorcerer out of the island of Retusari and conquered all Russia and Denmark.

Whilst Charles lay upon his bed of sickness he received two messages of evil import, both arriving on July 2. He heard that Crassow and King Stanislaus had quarrelled, and that there was no hope of their marching towards the Ukraine, because they were being watched by Siniawski, and by a Russian army under General Goltz. The second message told him that the Sultan absolutely refused to have anything to do with him, and would not allow any of his vassals to render him assistance. Charles now became convinced that he had no one but himself to depend upon. His army consisted of about twenty-two thousand men, from which number five thousand sick and wounded must be deducted. A general like Charles, with a well-seasoned and efficient force of sixteen thousand men, might have hoped, under ordinary circumstances, to have made head against any enemy of triple the strength. But the Swedish troops, who were now lying before Poltava, had been so much exhausted by physical fatigue and suffering,

and were so much depressed by the causes we have already narrated, that they could no longer be expected to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of their ancient fame. Besides this, Charles was no longer able to lead his troops in person to victory, but must commit them to other hands. Therefore, an attack upon the Russian army would be a very anxious operation, and of very doubtful results.

Still the gradual advance of the Russians towards the fortress left him no choice. Charles had always rejected the advice of retiring across the Dnieper to Kief as unworthy of his character and reputation, and it was now very doubtful if such a retreat was possible. The crossing of a wide river in the presence of an enemy of overwhelming numbers is always difficult, and Charles, by this time, had learned enough of the Russian methods of defence to make him avoid such a risk. It was now too late for any such counsels, however reasonable they may have been at any earlier period. Nothing was left but to attack the Russians, and to enforce the attack with all the energy which the circumstances allowed. But even this was not to be lightly undertaken, and we cannot blame Charles if he put off the evil day until further delay became impossible.

On the afternoon of July 7, 1709, Charles sent for Rehnskjöld and the other generals, with the excep-

tion of Lewenhaupt, and, lying upon his bed of sickness, informed them that the attack upon the Russian army must take place on the following day. He gave, at that time, no more detailed explanation, but only ordered that the infantry should march in four columns and the cavalry follow them in six. Nothing was said about the formation in lines of attack. It was understood that Rehnskjöld should command the army in the King's place. No special independent command was given to Lewenhaupt, but he acted during the battle as a kind of assistant to the general-in-chief. Gyllenbrook, who was quartermaster-general, undertook the division of the infantry into four columns. The whole strength of the infantry at Charles's disposal amounted to about six thousand five hundred men, divided into eighteen battalions of three hundred and fifty men each. The two columns of the right wing had four, and the two columns of the left wing five battalions each. The first column, which consisted entirely of the Guards, was commanded by Colonel Posse, the second by Major-General Roos, the third by Stachelberg, and the fourth by Sparre. In a similar manner the cavalry was divided into forty squadrons of one hundred and fifty men each; the two columns on the extreme right and left were guarded each with eight squadrons, the four columns in the centre with

six squadrons each. We have said before that they marshalled in six columns, Generals Kreutz and Schlippenbach commanding the three on the right, Hamilton and Kruse the three on the left. According to the above calculation the whole force of Swedes engaged in the battle itself amount to twelve thousand five hundred men.

Besides those actually engaged there were one thousand men left in the trenches at Poltava, one thousand five hundred men with the baggage, and about one thousand five hundred more at different parts along the river Vorshla, so that the entire strength of the Swedish army might be reckoned at sixteen thousand five hundred. There were also about five thousand soldiers sick and wounded, while Mazeppa was posted with three thousand Cossacks to guard the baggage. As there was no ammunition, the artillery was sent back into park. We must remember that these soldiers, whatever may have been their previous glory, had been weakened by sufferings of every kind, that their ammunition had been entirely spoilt by the long continuance of wet weather, and that, therefore, they had to depend upon the cold steel alone. We cannot, therefore, be surprised if they did not exhibit their usual cheerfulness or confidence in marching into battle. Nearly all were filled with a dim foreboding that the trials

they had gone through would be crowned by even a more fearful catastrophe. Even the King himself could not shake himself free from these anxieties. He asked Lewenhaupt, at day-break, just before the troops advanced to the attack, what he thought of the condition of things, and the old general replied,

‘I hope that, with God’s help, it will go well.’

Upon which the King answered,

‘In God’s name then let us march to the attack.’

The Russian army consisted of forty-eight infantry battalions of eight hundred men each, and of sixty-nine squadrons of one hundred and fifty each, besides seventy-two guns. On the evening of July 7 it was posted in a fortified camp about three miles to the north-east of Poltava, with the Vorshla in its rear. The ground between the camp and the town was much cut up, in different ways, and was unsuitable for the manœuvres of large masses of troops, and especially for the movements of cavalry. Immediately in front of the camp there was a broad plain, enclosed on either side by thick woods. To protect this against the attack of the enemy, the Russians had thrown up two rows of redoubts, one of which was parallel with the camp itself, and the other at right angles to the first, pushed forward on the road to Poltava. We have shown that the Russian army consisted of fifty-seven thousand men, and

therefore was from three to four times as numerous as the Swedes.

At eleven o'clock on the night of July 7, 1709, the Swedish army broke up from its camp and marched slowly against the enemy. Charles had his foot carefully dressed, while he wore a spurred boot on his sound foot, put on his uniform, and placed himself in a kind of litter, in which he was drawn before the lines of the army. When he reached the regiment of Guards he halted, and drew round him Piper, Rehnskjöld and the principal generals, all of whom lay on the ground enveloped in their military cloaks. There was but little moon and the night was dark. At midnight Rehnskjöld gave orders for the advance. The soldiers took their places, the cavalry bitted their horses, which were already saddled, and the officers hurried to their columns. The Swedes, whose uniforms had become of a very motley character during their long campaign, wore a wisp of straw in their caps to distinguish themselves from the enemy, and adopted as a watch-word, 'With God's help.' For the first time in the long struggle they began the day's work without morning prayer. Some departure from the previously-arranged order was noticeable as they advanced, and Rehnskjöld threw the blame of this on Lewenhaupt, who had received no instructions. Thus the

battle began with a quarrel between the generals. Charles in his litter held himself entirely aloof.

About five o'clock in the morning the columns of the right wing, commanded by Posse, reached the first Russian redoubt, which had been left unfinished and was easily taken, and the next redoubt met with the same fate. Lewenhaupt, who was with Posse, drew off to the right, in order to escape the fire of the other redoubt. This was a natural thing to do, but it had the unfortunate effect of causing a great gap in the battle order of the Swedes. Lewenhaupt now received the order to attack the central redoubt of the second row with the centre of the troops which had been formed out of column into line, he was therefore obliged to continue in the direction which he had already taken. By these circumstances he was separated from the rest of the army, and the order sent to him by Rehnskjöld to form again out of line into column never reached him.

Suddenly a cry arose from the left wing, 'Advance cavalry!' and without the order of the commanding officer the greater part of the cavalry of the left wing advanced towards the right. It passed by the troops who were being led by Lewenhaupt, broke through the line of redoubts, and charged the Russian cavalry which was posted behind them, and

for a moment threw them into confusion. They, however, soon recovered themselves, and in their turn drove back the Swedish cavalry, so that they had to find refuge behind the line of the infantry. The Swedish infantry then pushed forward, and drove the Russian cavalry back. In the meantime, Lewenhaupt was pursuing his own course; he was now attacking the last row of redoubts, and found no enemy to oppose him. But behind him a furious combat was raging round the first redoubts, and the possession of the ground was hotly disputed. Lewenhaupt eventually reached the fortified camp of the Russians, which he found very weakly garrisoned. He was preparing to enter it when he received the command to draw off to the left, and join the rest of the army. It has been often maintained that, if Lewenhaupt had not been then recalled, the fortune of the day would have been different, the Russians would have been driven out of their camp, and the Swedes would have gained a brilliant victory. It has been argued on the other side that the Russians were informed of the Swedish advance at day-break, and that by seven o'clock in the morning their troops had occupied the plain in front of their camp. It was natural, therefore, that when Lewenhaupt passed through to the south-west corner of the camp he should find it undefended.

But nine battalions had been left in the camp for its defence, and the one thousand four hundred Swedes Lewenhaupt had with him could hardly have made head against seven thousand Russians. At the same time it is possible that a panic might have been caused amongst the Russians left in the camp, who were probably not the best troops, and it is impossible to foretell what effect this would have had.

There can be no doubt that the assistance of Lewenhaupt was much needed in another quarter. General Roos had not succeeded in passing the redoubts, but was heavily engaged amongst them. On the other hand, the ten battalions of Sparre and Stachelberg had passed through them, but they found themselves opposed to the masses of the Russian infantry, who were far superior in numbers. They had advanced in two lines of attack. The battalions of infantry in the centre was commanded by Repnin, the cavalry on the right by Rönne, and that on the left by Menshikoff. Whilst the cavalry engagement which opened the battle was still continuing, Menshikoff was sent with five battalions and twenty squadrons to attack the Swedes who were still engaged in the redoubts. These were the troops of General Roos, to whose assistance Schlippenbach had also been sent. When the Russians approached, the Swedes took them, at first, for reinforcements of

their own men, and did not discover their mistake till they were close upon them. Under the combined fire of the redoubts and the Russian infantry, the Swedes could only make a faint resistance, and retreated to Poltava, where Charles hoped to be supported by that reserve which had been left to guard the trenches. He was, however, disappointed in this hope, because the garrison of Poltava had made a sally and had driven the soldiers out of the trenches. Roos, therefore, had no resource except to throw himself into a redoubt, in which, after resistance, he had to lay down his arms.

The Swedish line continued to advance slowly and then to halt, waiting for the arrival of Roos, whose arrival they were expecting every minute. In the meantime the Russian artillery opened fire upon them to prepare for the advance of the infantry. The Swedes had no means of returning their fire, and could do little else but stand and let themselves be shot down. They were gradually surrounded by their overwhelming enemies, and were broken in their centre, but they still resisted for several hours, until their strength was entirely exhausted. Those who survived took refuge in flight, the King—whose litter had been smashed by a cannon ball, and who was carried by the soldiers on crossed poles—going with them, and the Russians neglecting to pursue. In this manner they reached their former camp.

The account which I have given of the battle of Poltava may seem bald and uninteresting when compared with others, but this great event has become the field not only of controversy but of legend. The best authorities, and those most generally favourable to Charles, are of opinion that in this engagement he never had a chance of success. The Russians were four times as strong as their opponents, they had artillery, the Swedes none, and as we have seen the Swedes could make no use of their muskets. It is to their credit that they made a stout resistance, and deterred the Russians from pursuit. It is useless to discuss who was responsible for the disaster, which was inevitable from the first. If the battle had not been fought, Charles and his whole army might have been captured; as it was, the King and a considerable number of his troops were able to escape.

After a short halt in their camp before Poltava, the whole Swedish force set forth, numbering about sixteen thousand men, including such sick and wounded as they were able to carry with them. They marched down the Vorshla to its junction with the Dnieper, and reached this spot on July 11. Here they had to consider their future movements. Lewenhaupt was in favour of marching to the west, and of crossing the Dnieper in the neighbourhood of Kief,

Charles, however, determined to proceed further to the south, in the hope of reaching Turkey, and of stirring up the Sultan to war against the Tsar. An attempt to cross the Dnieper at Perewoloczna failed, because the Russians had not only destroyed the town, as a punishment for the Zaporovian Cossacks, but had also taken away all the means of traversing the stream, which is here a mile broad. The Swedes, therefore, had to stay on the left bank, expecting at every moment to be attacked by the enemy.

It became necessary, above everything else, to secure the person of the King. Charles for some time insisted upon remaining to share the fate of his troops, but at length he was persuaded to escape, and on the night of July 12, with about a thousand men, he crossed the river, taking with him a silver table-service, and a considerable amount of money which he had raised in Saxony. On the very same day Menshikoff appeared at Perewoloczna with nine thousand cavalry, and summoned the Swedes to surrender. These were commanded by Lewenhaupt, who had just taken an affecting leave of his sovereign, and after some hesitation he made terms. Lewenhaupt has been blamed for this, as he has been for many actions of his life, and it is said that he ought to have made an attempt to repulse the Russians, and so to have escaped imprisonment. Charles afterwards ex-

pressed the opinion that, if they had not capitulated at this point, they might have crossed the Dnieper and escaped into Poland. But it must be remembered that, in the first place, there were no means of transport, and that if the army had crossed the Dnieper it must have perished in the steppe from want of provisions. Besides, the remains of the Swedish army were not in a fit condition to offer any resistance. It is true that when Lewenhaupt asked them whether they were willing to fight, they answered in the affirmative, but at the first semblance of conflict they either went over to the enemy or threw themselves into the stream. Even if they had succeeded in repelling the force commanded by Menshikoff they must have fallen into the hands of the whole Russian army. It is probable, therefore, that Lewenhaupt adopted not only a reasonable course, but the only course possible under the circumstances.

Thus ended the battle of Poltava, which marks an epoch in the world's history, the comparative extinction of Sweden, and the rise of Russia to a predominant authority in Europe. But it differs from other great battles of the world in this respect, that, if it had been won by Charles, the result would not have been very different. It is true that a victory might have given the Swedes the opportunity of retiring to the Dnieper and into Poland, but it is very doubt-

ful whether Charles would have consented to take this course. On the other hand, if he had remained at Poltava, or had followed the conquered Russians in their retreat, he would soon have found himself in as bad a position, unless indeed a decisive calamity had called out the resources of Peter's enemies against him. The Swedish army in the Ukraine in July, 1709, was entirely isolated, it had no communication with any base of operations, it was without supplies of war or ammunition, in a country completely exhausted of food, without any hope of alliance or of reinforcement. It was also in the face of an enemy at least three times as powerful as itself. Therefore, humanly speaking, the army led by Charles was doomed to destruction before the battle of Poltava was fought; it was indeed itself an expression of despair, the last convulsive struggle of a dying cause.

*It was a blow, from which the
autonic race, has never recovered*

CHAPTER XVI.

CHARLES AT BENDER.

IT took five days for Charles and his small body of attendants to reach the Bug, crossing a desert in which there was some fodder for horses, but little food for man. When they came to the bank of the river a boat made its appearance, and the man in charge of it said that he had come to convey the King across. Charles refused to go unless his companions went with him. But the Pasha of Otchakof not only refused to consent, but declared that the inhabitants of the town would not lend their boats for that purpose. Provisions were then bought, which were sold at an exorbitant price. At last a visit of Poniatowski to the Pasha, and a distribution of bribes, smoothed the difficulties, and the Swedes were taken across. The boats, however, were so small, both in size and number, that when three days later a body of six thousand Russian cavalry appeared in pursuit, Charles himself

and a considerable number of Swedes were still left on the bank. In order to escape capture the King crossed to Turkish territory, accompanied by only four or five persons. Of the five hundred who were left behind the greater part were made prisoners, but many were drowned.

Charles did not enter the town of Otchakof, as the Pasha, in spite of the money he had received, continued to be unfriendly to him; he continued his march to Bender, where he was certain to find his friend the Seraskier, Jusuf Pasha. He reached Bender on the Dniester on August 1, and met with a royal reception. On arriving at the bank of the river he found two tents pitched, one for eating and the other for sleeping in. Tents were also prepared for the suite and the soldiers. Jusuf Pasha paid him a visit amidst the thunder of artillery, and bade him welcome in the name of the Sultan. He offered him the keys of the town, and begged him to take up his quarters there. Charles, however, declined the invitation, and preferred to remain where he was. When, however, it was represented to him that the Seraskier was answerable for his safety, and that on that side of the river he would not be secure against an attack of the Russians, who would naturally be anxious to capture him, he consented to cross, and pitched his camp in a beautiful meadow, planted with fruit-trees and pro-

tected on three sides by the river Dniester. The hospitality of the Turks was exercised upon a splendid scale. A sum of forty-five pounds a day was devoted to the King's support, besides provisions for himself and forage for his horses.

The court of Charles XII. at Bender, although simple in many respects, was arranged on a royal scale with a proper household and guard. Morning and evening prayers were held every week-day, and there were three services on Sunday, all of which were announced by the sound of drum and trumpet. The number of those who accompanied the King, including generals, officers, body-guard, clergy, and suite, amounted to about four hundred, but afterwards it swelled to nearly a thousand. The Swedes lived at first entirely in tents, but huts were afterwards built to protect them from the winter. Charles was warned by the Turks that the island which he had chosen for his residence was subject to dangerous floods, and that he had better seek a more solid habitation in another place. But in this matter the King showed his usual obstinacy, declared that he was not afraid of the Dniester, and went on building. We are told that the Dniester was in the winter afraid of Charles, that it gave up its accustomed floods in deference to the Swedish hero, and also that a herd of deer were so impressed by Charles's personality that they not

only accompanied him wherever he went but laid quietly down round his tent when he went to sleep. It is difficult to believe these stories.

There is, however, no doubt that Charles had an extraordinary influence over the Turks. Their curiosity to see him had been excited to the utmost by the narratives of his heroic deeds, and they now found him not only commanding in appearance and well worthy of his fame, but despising the very things which are most attractive to a Mussulman—women, magnificence and money. At the same time he shunned wine as conscientiously as a Mohammedan, and no follower of Islam could be more regular or more fervent in prayer. His contempt for danger, his superiority to all ordinary human weaknesses, completed their subjection, and it is reported that one day a Turk laid his hand on the King's shoulder, and said,

‘Why did not Allah give us a Sultan like you? With you at our head, we should have conquered the world.’

It may well be asked why Charles selected to stay in Bender, instead of returning to his own country, which so sorely needed him, and which he had so shamefully neglected; to this it is difficult to give an answer. We must seek the solution rather in the peculiarities of Charles's character than in anything

else. He was obstinate in pursuing any design which he had once begun, and, as we have before remarked, his periods of feverish activity seemed to alternate with long spells of lethargy. Like his rival Peter, he was not without a touch of madness. Genius, we know, is a disease, but, unfortunately, it is not catching. Charles, with all his greatness, was subject to those 'fixed ideas' which have on the testimony of competent doctors sent so many to a lunatic asylum. It was supposed at first that Charles would speedily return to Pomerania or to Sweden, and letters were written from Bender to that effect. The journey could not be carried out immediately, owing to the condition of Charles's wounded foot. It had become worse in the passage from the Dnieper to the Bug; the wound was inflamed, and Charles was only induced to take medicine under threat of an amputation; more splinters, also, had to be removed. In September it was so far healed that his return was again spoken of, and General Gyllenkrook was despatched with a body of Cossacks and Zaporovians across the Dniester to discover how far an advance into Poland and a union with the army of Crassow might be possible. His report was very unfavourable, and it was soon afterwards confirmed by his own catastrophe. Whilst he was at Tsharnovitch, a town in Swedish territory, he was treacherously seized by the Russians,

with the assistance of Brancovar Hospodar of Wallachia, and made prisoner. The troops he had with him were captured to the number of a thousand, of whom a hundred and fifty were Swedes.

If Charles had seriously wished to return to Sweden, there is little doubt that he could have done so. The war of the Spanish succession was now drawing to an end, and the powers of Europe had leisure to look elsewhere than to their immediate enmities. They had no wish to see Sweden annihilated for the advantage of Russia, and they desired to possess the balance of power in the north. The French offered to embark Charles at a Turkish port, and to bring him in safety to Toulon or Marseilles. To have accepted this offer, which was worthy of the magnanimity of Louis XIV., would have identified Charles too much with one side of the great struggle, and would have offended the sea powers. Holland, it may be assumed with the consent of England, made similar proposal, and Müllern, who had succeeded Piper as Charles's principal adviser, recommended Charles to accept it, but he replied that he had determined never to trust his life to the sea. The Austrian government also offered a passage for Charles, under safe protection, through Hungary and Germany, and Müllern again did his best to make this proposal acceptable to the King, but Charles only answered that he

was pledged to the Sultan, and that the Sultan must and would keep his promises. Whether the reluctance of Charles to return to Stockholm was due to a disinclination to appear after his defeat in a capital which had so often rung with acclamation of his victories, is difficult to say.

One of the first actions of Charles after entering Turkish territory had been to despatch a clever diplomatic agent, by name Neugebauer, to Constantinople, to open negotiations with the Turkish government. His first proposals had reference to a commercial treaty between Turkey and Sweden, but an offensive and defensive alliance between the two powers was the main object in view. At the same time Charles asked the Sultan whether he would be willing to give him an escort to Poland in case he should require it. The Porte received these proposals favourably, but asked more time for considering the question of the escort. Charles was not sorry for this, as it is doubtful whether he had any serious idea of leaving Turkey. He perhaps thought that the Turks were the most effective enemy the Russians had, and that, if he left their country, all hope of an alliance would be at an end. No one, however, can doubt that if Charles had been able to establish his power in Sweden he would have had no difficulty in obtaining support for crushing the ambition of the upstart mistress of the

Baltic. As matters now stood it was equally easy for Peter to renew the coalition against Charles. King Frederick IV. of Denmark came to Dresden at the end of May, 1709, and on June 28 a formal alliance was signed between Saxony and Denmark to restore the balance of power in the north, so that Augustus should receive the crown of Poland, and Denmark the provinces which she had surrendered. Russia was to be invited to join the alliance, and if this could be effected before September Sweden was to be attacked from the side of Norway as well as in Scania, and Augustus was at the same time to invade Poland.

On July 15 this alliance was further extended by arrangement with Prussia, which was mainly of a defensive character. The negotiations between Sweden and Russia resulted in the drawing up of preliminaries which, however, the Tsar refused to ratify, and Peter did not finally enter the league until Augustus had returned to Warsaw and Stanislaus had resigned his crown. The alliance was concluded on October 20, 1709. Augustus indeed had lost no time in profiting by the disaster of his most ruthless enemy. He immediately made preparations for advancing into Poland; and, in order to excuse to the world his breach of the peace at Alt-Ranstädt, he published a manifesto on August 8,

1709, almost every line of which contains a lie. As we have investigated above Augustus's account of these transactions, we need not deal with the matter again. Unfortunately, the lie was only too successful. Nations, like individuals, do not care to enter into the domestic quarrels of their neighbours. It has been reserved for a later historical research to discover the truth, and at the time public opinion was easily contented by the sacrifices of Imhoff and Pfungsten, whose loyalty was cruelly rewarded.

Augustus crossed the Polish frontier a fortnight after the date of this manifesto, and the Poles flocked to him in crowds, thinking that any change in their circumstances must be for the better. Stanislaus, on the other hand, felt himself entirely deserted. He and the Swedish general, Crassow, had remained during the whole year inactive, and had made no attempt to break through the forces of Siniawski and Goltz. When they heard of the disaster of Poltava, they deemed their position at Lublin no longer secure, and although Crassow had been reinforced by the arrival of some troops from Pomerania, they retreated to Cracow. When Augustus entered Poland, they attempted no resistance, but marched straight away to Stettin; so that now, with very few exceptions, there was not a single Swedish soldier left on foreign soil.

Such was the result of Charles's superhuman struggles, continued for so many years !

After the battle of Poltava, the Russian army was divided into three portions, the smallest of which was left in Southern Russia to watch the Turkish frontier, while an army of about thirty thousand men marched into Livonia to invest Riga, and another of the same size advanced by way of Kief into Volhynia. The King of Denmark, on his side, lost no time in putting into execution the provisions of the treaty of Dresden. He commenced his preparations at once, and at the beginning of November General Reventlow, who had gained military laurels in the Low Countries, embarked a body of fifteen thousand men at Copenhagen, destined for the invasion of Scania. A body of three thousand cavalry, under the command of Gyllenstjerna, feeling itself out-matched, withdrew to Christianstad, and a certain number of Swedish towns fell into Danish hands. In December, the defence of Sweden was committed to the competent care of General Stenbock, to whom Charles had entrusted that duty. The country, however, mourned in vain for the loss of her natural protector.

Before we proceed to narrate the more serious occurrences which were the consequences of the King's captivity, we will give some account of

his life in that condition. He passed a very simple and regular existence, every day having the same recurring occupations. He began by reading a chapter in the Bible, and then attended at morning prayers. The next hours were devoted to business, and then followed a hasty dinner. The afternoon was devoted to drilling soldiers, and to long rides, in which the King often tired out more than a single horse. On his return he was present at evening service, and then retired to bed, often sleeping in his clothes, even in his spurs and boots. He spent much of his time in the consideration of military tactics, and is said to have filled two volumes with notes on this subject. He was fond of chess, which he played with Poniatowski and Grothusen. One of his suite used to read to him in French, especially the tragedies of Racine and Corneille. He preferred 'Mithridate' to all the others, seeing in his story some reflection of his own. His servant Hultmann, of whom we have before spoken, used to entertain him with long tales of chivalry.

Charles slept but little, and when he woke in the night he used to sit by the bedside of some of his friends, and talk to them for hours; in general, he showed more affability than before, and did not despise a joke. He was fond of playing tricks on the too well-dressed gentlemen of the court, tearing

off the high-heeled shoes or their lace ruffles, and throwing them into the fire, as a practical exhortation to simplicity of attire. He insisted upon Müllern and his secretaries wearing boots, and if he found them in shoes or slippers it was the worse for them. Like Peter the Great he left magnificent entertainments, whenever they were necessary, to others, and took no part in them himself. At first there was but little communication between Bender and Sweden; a messenger was sent every other month, and very little news came from him. Not until the end of the year 1710 was a regular post established, which was connected with the Austrian post through Hungary. Charles discouraged communication with his own country. He used to write, himself, not more than once a month, and kept the time of the post's departure a secret, in order that it might not be used by others. He once dismissed a clerk in the secretary's office for sending news home, and he used regularly to read the letters written by his suite and those also which they received. With this change of life came a change of appearance. His face lost the red and weather-beaten appearance which had distinguished it in his campaign, and it is said also that he became fat, although it is difficult to believe it. He was certainly for the most part in a good humour, and

was very affable and even sportive in his social demeanour.

The King always appeared to have command of money, although it is not clear in what way he obtained it. Peter boasted that he had captured the Swedish war-chest after Poltava, but enough must have remained to enable Charles to make presents to the Khan of Tartary, the Pasha of Otchakof, and the Seraskier of Bender. Mazeppa left at his death a considerable fortune, a quarter of which Charles appropriated to himself. There were probably, also, savings from the sums allowed to him by the Sultan. The Sultan assisted him in borrowing some money for his needs, and it is said that in 1709-1710, Charles received considerable sums from France, which curiously enough were employed to bribe the Turks at Constantinople. His two principal secretaries were Chancellor Müllern, who took the place of Piper, and Karsten Feif, who was employed principally for home affairs. His fullest confidence was given to Grothusen, who took the place of the discharged and humiliated Lagercrona. Besides these should be mentioned Stanislaus Poniatowski, the commander of his namesake's body-guard, who always remained true in his allegiance both to the Polish and the Swedish sovereign, and Baron Fabricius of Holstein-Gottorp, who had been sent as a kind

of envoy to Charles by the minister Gorz. He remained with Charles from 1710 to 1714, and worked hard in the interests both of his country and his patron. His anecdotes, published at Hamburg in 1760, give a graphic and amusing account of the sojourn of Charles at Bender.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CATASTROPHE OF THE PRUTH.

AFTER the Danish army had established itself fairly on the coast of Scania, General Reventlow, in the beginning of January, 1715, pressed further into the country, going first to Christianstad, with the intention of making that a point of attack for Carlsrona, where the Swedish fleet was detained. The ships had been frozen in the harbour, and could therefore be easily destroyed; but the Danes delayed the attack too long, and the Swedes were able to collect a considerable force at Wexiö, in order to take the Danes in flank. Reventlow had already reached Karlshamn, but he thought that he could not advance with safety, and therefore returned to Christianstad. The Swedes now took the offensive, and Reventlow having fallen ill, and his place having been taken by General Rantzau, the Danes retired to Helsingborg and encamped to the north of the town.

Stenbock, who commanded the Swedish army, made the best use of his opportunities after the retreat of the Danes, and collected considerable forces in a short space of time. He had first intended to order a *levée en masse* of all the population capable of bearing arms, but, the people not being inclined to so serious a sacrifice, he contented himself by getting together all the regular troops which were available in the south of Sweden. They were barely armed and only partially supplied with uniforms, but they had been well drilled, and were skilfully commanded. This army of fourteen thousand men and twenty-six guns made a sudden attack on the Danish camp on the morning of March 10. The Danish army was well posted, protected by marshy ground on the two flanks, while a woody and difficult tract lay in its front. The battle began by an attack of the Swedish right wing on the Danish left, but the cavalry moved slowly through the broken ground, and were also checked by the fire of the Danish artillery. Stenbock then moved his centre and his left against the Danish right wing, but, in order to reach them and avoid obstacles, his troops had to draw to the left, as if they were intending to outflank the Danes on that side. Rantzau anticipated their attack, and to meet the danger which he thought was impending he supported his right with his centre, so that his

troops lost the advantage of their good position, the centre being entangled in the broken ground, and breaking its connection with its left. Notwithstanding this, the Swedish cavalry were obliged at first to give way to the Danes, and were only gradually able to put a stop to their attack.

After a short pause, during which he was forming his troops in their new position, Rantzau attacked the Swedes, and drove them back with such vehemence that, being carried away by the ardour of pursuit, he was not able to keep in touch with the rest of his army. The Danish cavalry lost their formation, and Stenbock, by bringing up fresh squadrons, was enabled to throw them into still greater disorder. Several Danish squadrons were put to flight, and after a short time their right wing was entirely broken up. During all this time the centre of the Swedes had not been engaged, and it now advanced against the centre of the enemy in admirable order. At the proper distance they opened fire with their artillery, the Danes not being able to reply, because the greater part of their cannon had been left behind, owing to the nature of the ground. The Danes held out with firmness until they were charged by the Swedish cavalry. A good many of the infantry of the line were now scattered, but the guards and grenadiers held their

ground. After a stout resistance, these brave troops were at last partly cut down and partly taken prisoners, so that the Danish centre was almost annihilated. After this, it was a comparatively easy task for the Swedish left to drive the Danish right, which had been seriously weakened by sending drafts into other parts of the field, under the walls of Helsingborg, beyond which they did not attempt to follow them.

This battle, complicated and hardly contested as it was, lasted only three hours, but the Danes lost in it four thousand five hundred men,—dead, wounded, and prisoners,—or more than a third of their number. The Swedes, on their side, lost three thousand, their dead and wounded exceeding considerably the Danish loss, as no Swedish prisoners were taken. Rantzau lost the battle by not keeping his presence of mind, and by leaving the favourable position which he had taken up. If he had remained firm, the Swedes could hardly have won the day. The result was that five days later the Danes left Scania, and returned to their own country. Frederick IV., however, did not surrender the hope of conquering the province, and for this purpose he asked and obtained the assistance of Russian troops, which were to be transported from Dantzic in Danish ships. On the way they fell in with a

violent storm, which caused them immense damage, but saved them from being entirely destroyed by the Swedish fleet, which had been sent out to intercept them, the engagement being interrupted by the fury of the elements. So that the Danes had to return home without effecting their object.

The Swedes were not so fortunate in the Baltic provinces. Since the autumn of 1709, Riga had been invested by a strong Russian force under the command of Prince Repnin. In April, 1710, they received large reinforcements, and the siege of the town was seriously entered upon. The garrison was decimated by hunger and disease, but the commandant, General Stromberg, held out bravely, and was able to repel the Russian attack as late as July 10. But he was forced to capitulate on the following day. Dünamünde surrendered on July 28, and Pernau on August 31. At length, by the taking of Revel on October 8, the Russians obtained entire possession of Livonia and Esthonia, and thus carried out, as far as they were concerned, the object for which the triple alliance had been formed ten years before. Peter wrote :

‘The last town has surrendered, and Livonia and Esthonia are entirely cleared of the enemy. In a word, the enemy does not possess a single town on the left side of the East Sea, not even an inch of land.’

Russian arms had not been less successful in Finland, and Wiborg, which had been the goal of so many fruitless attacks, surrendered on June 24. It had been taken with some difficulty, Apraxin commanding an army of eighteen thousand men, and Cruys a fleet in which Peter himself served as rear-admiral. Peter wrote to his wife Catherine that it would act as a buffer for the security of St. Petersburg.

In the meantime Charles was doing his best to stir up the Turkish government to war against Russia. He had already, as we have seen, despatched Neugebauer for this purpose, and he now sent his confidential friend, Stanislaus Poniatowski. The only means of producing any effect upon the Porte was either by bribes or by palace intrigues, in both of which Poniatowski proved himself proficient. Foreign affairs were naturally under the direction of the Grand Vizier, and it was only by the removal of this minister that any change could be effected. There was little doubt that the Grand Vizier Ali had received money from Tolstoi, the Russian ambassador, and pains were taken to get this to the ears of the Sultan. But for a long time he refused to believe the accusation, and it is said that the fall of Ali was eventually brought about by the news of Stenbock's victory at Helsingborg. The new Grand Vizier was

Nuuman Köprili, and it was assumed that he would be more favourable to Swedish influences than his predecessor. He went so far as to begin armaments on a large scale, and there seemed to be a general desire to make war for the recovery of Azof. But it is doubtful to what extent Köprili had these objects really at heart, and he probably received bribes from Russia as well as from Sweden. But Köprili had roused a feeling with which he did not sympathize, but which he was unable to restrain. The Turks had become convinced that Russia could never be their friend, and that they should not again have as good an opportunity of fighting as they had now. He was therefore dismissed, and Mohammed Baltad-schi, an Italian by origin, put in his place.

The armaments were now pursued with vigour. The Khan of Crim-Tartary appeared at Constantinople and fanned the martial flame. At last, when Peter, in October, 1710, addressed an ultimatum to the Sultan, asking that Charles might be expelled from Turkish territory, in accordance with existing treaties, the envoys who brought the document were arrested and imprisoned. On November 30, at a solemn sitting of the Divan, war with Russia was determined upon. According to the usual custom, Tolstoi, the Russian ambassador, was half stripped of his clothes, set upon a sorry nag, exposed to the

derision of the populace, and imprisoned in the Seven Towers. Now fortune seemed at last to smile on Charles, and he began to feel more confidence in the future, although his character was not distinguished by any want of self-confidence. He wrote to his sister Ulrica just at this time, that he believed that his affairs would have a successful issue, that it was necessary to pursue them with boldness and fortitude, and not to give way on any point. Sweden would then come out victorious. This was extraordinary language for a King who had just lost a number of valuable provinces. Although Charles's presence in Turkey was of some advantage in stirring it up against Russia, yet it is difficult to believe that he would not have been of greater use to his country if he had established himself in the capital. Charles's firmness was too much akin to fixed and narrow-minded obstinacy.

The danger which threatened Peter from this Turkish war was the most serious that he ever encountered, and it was only by a combination of adroitness and good fortune that he was able to extricate himself from the toils which surrounded him. The Turks were able, in the spring of 1711, to put in the field an army of two hundred thousand men, and it had been promised that they should be supported by an equal number of Tartars. The demands advanced

by the Sultan to Peter were, that he should surrender Azof and raze all the fortifications he had erected either there or in the neighbourhood ; that he should evacuate Poland, recognise Stanislaus as king, and compel Augustus to recognize him also ; that he should restore freedom to the Cossacks ; that he should destroy St. Petersburg, and give back to Sweden not only the provinces he had captured from her, but also the prisoners and the trophies at Poltava. It was not likely that the Tsar would agree to these terms.

The war began on February, 1711, by an invasion of Poland. On his twenty-ninth birthday, January 28, 1711, Charles issued a manifesto to the Polish people, in which he complained of the perfidy of Augustus, of the violation of the treaty of Alt-Ranstädt, and of the design of the Tsar to seize a portion of Poland for himself. He continued,

‘With great labour and danger, and with great sacrifice of Swedish blood, we have restored the noble Polish nation to freedom, we cannot without sorrow see them groan once more under the lawless rule of King Augustus. Our feelings are what they always have been, and we have spared no expense or labour to restore freedom to your country and the throne to your legitimate King. For that reason we have concluded an alliance with the Ottoman Porte and

the great Khan of Tartary, for the sake of Polish freedom. For this purpose we send a numerous army, under our crown General Potocki, into your country, and we are intending soon to follow ourselves with a more powerful host. Every Pole who has a heart for the welfare of his fatherland, his aged parents, his wife and his children, every Pole in whom the former feeling of Polish self-respect has not been extinguished by the yoke of slavery, and every Pole who desires to see the end of his country's misery, all these will hasten to range themselves under our banner.'

Unfortunately this manifesto had no effect, and the expedition was undertaken without the co-operation of the inhabitants. Charles furnished it with money, and accompanied it for two days when it set out. But the only result was to plunder and lay waste large stretches of the Polish Ukraine, and to carry off a number of Poles into slavery. The feeling against Stanislaus and his protector Charles became more bitter than ever.

The operations undertaken by the Turks were of a different character. Their plan was to cross the Danube and the Dniester, and from thence to press on to the Russian frontier. Peter had, on his side, collected an army of about sixty thousand men, marched through Podolia to the Dniester, passed over

this river and entered Moldavia, having made a formal alliance with Cantemir, the Hospodar of that country. He had hoped to receive the support of the Christian nationalities who were groaning under Turkish rule, to cross the Danube and the Balkans, and to march direct to Constantinople. It is possible that this plan might have succeeded if it had been carried out with sufficient celerity. But the Turks acted with remarkable energy. There was a race between them and the Russians as to who would reach the Danube first, and in this the Turks won. The detailed narrative which follows belongs rather to the history of Peter than to that of Charles. The Turks and Tartars advanced in such a manner that they entirely enclosed the Russian army, and Peter found himself shut up in an elbow of the Pruth not able to advance or retreat, or to break through the overwhelming forces of the enemy. As he said himself, he had committed the fault of Charles XII. at Poltava. The Russian army seemed doomed to destruction, but Peter found a way out of danger. Acting, it is said, under the advice of his wife Catherine, he offered the Turkish Grand Vizier a large sum of money, and also favourable conditions of peace. In spite of all that Poniatowski could do to prevent it, the Vizier accepted the Russian proposals, and July 21, 1711, a treaty was signed between Peter and

Mohammed Baltadshi, on the terms that the Russians should surrender Azof, and should withdraw their troops from Poland, and that Peter and his army should be allowed to retreat unscathed.

Charles had been invited by the Grand Vizier to take part in the campaign, but he thought it unworthy for a sovereign to appear in the military suite of a subject. Had he been present the treaty would probably have never been signed, and Peter's army would have been destroyed. The news of the Russian catastrophe became known at Bender late in the evening. Charles mounted his horse at ten o'clock, and, accompanied by some of his officers and his body-guard, reached the Turkish camp at three o'clock the next afternoon, just in time to witness the retreat of the Russian army, which took place two hours afterwards. Charles, informed of the fact, strode to the tent of the Grand Vizier and threw himself upon the sofa. The Grand Vizier sat opposite him with the Khan of Crim-Tartary by his side.

'You have collected a fine army here,' said Charles.

'God gave it us,' replied the Turk.

'Shame that you have made so little use of it,' said the King.

'It is of no more use,' answered the Vizier, 'as we have made peace.'

‘I hear,’ continued Charles, ‘that you have made peace, and, in breach of the promise of the Sultan and your own word, have entirely neglected my interests.’

When the Vizier said that the Porte had gained great advantages, Charles answered,

‘You might have gained a thousand times more, because the Tsar and his whole army were in your power.’

The conversation then continued thus :

‘The laws of Mohammed forbid to refuse peace to an enemy when he sues for it ; besides, who would have governed the Tsar’s empire if he had been taken prisoner ?’

‘That is not your affair, and do you think that your Sultan will be content with such a peace ?’

‘I have the army under my command and peace in my hand.’

‘It is still time to recover what has been lost,’ said Charles, rising from the sofa. ‘Give me the liberty to act, I will myself provide soldiers, and settle accounts with the Tsar ; it shall not cost you a man, and I will defend you before the Sultan.’

‘It is too late, the peace is signed,’ muttered the Vizier, and closed the conversation.

The Vizier was right in supposing that the Sultan would not object to the peace, and that all he required

was the restoration of Azof. The peace was received with joy at the Turkish court, and no notice was taken of the fact that the interests of the King of Sweden had been entirely overlooked. Charles returned to Bender on the following day, leaving Poniatowski in the Turkish camp to continue his protests against the peace. He contrived to acquaint the Sultan with what had really occurred, and he was supported by his friend the Khan of Crim-Tartary, who reported to his master,

‘We were engaged with the enemy for several days, and had brought him into a position in which not a single man could have escaped, but on the request of the Tsar the Grand Vizier granted him terms of peace, gave him provisions, and escorted him home.’

The Grand Vizier had, on his side, not forgotten Charles’s threats, and he did his best to get him out of the way. Peter, in the treaty of Hush, had promised that Charles should go where he liked without hindrance, and not only the Emperor but King Augustus had offered him a safe conduct through their dominions. Mohammed Baltadshi informed Charles of this, and promised also a body-guard of six thousand cavalry. At the same time he took measures to make the stay of Charles in Bender less comfortable than it had been. Charles did not reject these propo-

sals, but asked, in addition, for an army of at least thirty thousand men, and for the loan of a considerable sum of money. The Grand Vizier would not accede to this, but threatened the King that he would carry him off by force, if he would not go of his own accord. To this the King replied that he would repel force by force. But matters were soon to take a turn more favourable to Charles.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHARLES AND THE SULTAN.

PETER, having rescued his army from a desperate position, cared little about performing the promises by which his safety had been purchased. He did not surrender Azof, and he did not withdraw his troops from Poland. This had a great effect upon the Sultan's mind, and he was more inclined than before to listen to those who accused Mohammed Baltadshi of self-interested treachery. The consequence was that the Grand Vizier was dismissed, and Jusuf Pasha, the friend of Charles, who was in favour of a war with Russia, was put in his place. Attempts were made by the sea powers and others to keep the peace, but the Sultan raised his army to a strength of four hundred thousand men, and prepared to place himself at its head. Unfortunately the desire for war in Constantinople was not of long duration, as the Grand Vizier could not resist the influence of Russian gold.

The Tsar, whose chief object was to gain time, confirmed the treaty of the previous year by a new engagement, and promised to withdraw his troops from Poland as soon as possible.

The hopes of Charles were thus again disappointed. He felt that no confidence was to be placed in the Turks, and he determined to leave their country. The Turks, on their side, were not anxious to keep him any longer, they found that he was a source rather of danger and expense than of pleasure and advantage. But his departure was not easy to manage. Charles positively declined to go by sea, or to travel by any other route than Poland. But at this time King Augustus refused him a safe conduct. It suited his plans and those of his ally Peter that Charles should stay a little longer where he was. They began to see that the Turks were not serious in their threats of war, and that difficulties could always be got over by a judicious use of Russian gold. Also Charles was not very moderate in his demands. He asked for the payment of his debts, besides a large sum of money, and an escort of six thousand Spahis and thirty thousand Tartars, which were not very easy to provide.

Another plan which Charles formed at this time was also doomed to failure. When the war with Russia was in prospect a large body of Tartars, Cos-

sacks, and Poles had assembled in Moldavia, not very far from Bender, in order to place themselves under the command of Charles if he should undertake an expedition into Poland. However, as we have seen, peace was suddenly concluded with Russia, and the Sultan gave orders that their troops should disperse. Charles thought that something could be done with them, and determined to send them to Poland to fight for the cause of King Stanislaus. A Pole named Grudzinski, who had been a supporter of Stanislaus, was chosen to command them, and they were ordered to stir up an insurrection in Poland, and then to unite with Stenbock, who was expected with an army from Pomerania. The fate of Stenbock will occupy our attention at a later period. Grudzinski's army crossed the Pruth in May, declaring that he was sent by Charles and Stanislaus. It was joined by a number of adherents who were discontented with the present government, and reached the number of fifteen thousand men. Grudzinski pressed on into the country between Posen and Thorn, always expecting Stenbock, who never came. At last he was surrounded by a body of Russians and Poles and entirely defeated, so that he had to escape into Silesia. If Charles and Stanislaus could have placed themselves at the head of this body, the result might have been different.

In the meantime, Peter took no steps for the eva-

cuation of Poland. The Sultan was deeply offended, and Charles did his best to excite his wrath. The Grand Vizier Jusuf was dismissed, and Suleiman, a former slave, put in his place. So on November 30, 1712, war was declared against Russia for the third time. But the Porte was still anxious, for many reasons, to get rid of Charles. They sent him a large sum of money for his travelling expenses, and promised him the escort he demanded. He would probably have yielded and returned to Poland had not important information reached his ears which caused him to change his plans. A secret correspondence—carried on between Devlet-Gherai, Khan of the Tartars, and Siniawski, of whom we have often heard, as a general of King Augustus—with the object of getting possession of Charles's person, had come to the knowledge of Poniatowski. Devlet-Gherai had been destined to command the escort which was to accompany Charles to Poland. His plan was to weaken this gradually by detaching various portions of it under different pretexts, so that when they reached the frontiers of Poland they might be so weak as not to be able to withstand the attack of the Poles, and indeed would offer no resistance. The correspondence was being carried on by a Polish cavalry sergeant, and Charles entrusted his adjutant, Macdougall, with a body of

well-mounted officers, with the duty of intercepting the messenger.

Macdougall disguised his soldiers as Tartars, and had no difficulty in effecting his purpose. Charles obtained possession of papers which gave him certain knowledge of the plot formed against him, and he discovered that Ismail Effendi, the Seraskier of Bender, was also involved in it. He communicated to no one what had come to his knowledge, but when he was pressed by those who surrounded him to yield to Turkish pressure, and depart, he answered,

‘I know what I am doing, there is no means of escape for me, I am betrayed.’

Charles now made up his mind not to leave Turkey until he was sure he could do so with perfect safety. He did not, however, state his reasons, but when the traitorous Seraskier of Bender gave him money for his departure, he merely said that he required more, and that he could not think of leaving until he was perfectly satisfied that everything needful had been done. The Sultan at last lost patience, and took measures that from this time Charles should be treated as a prisoner.

Before taking definite action the Sultan consulted his Divan. He said,

‘When the King of Sweden sought refuge in my territory after the battle of Poltava, I stood in no

special relation of friendship with regard to him. I had no particular reason either to love him or to hate him, but I received him from reasons of generosity, and also because hospitality is enjoined upon all Moslems. I have entertained him and his numerous suite for three years and a half. I have overwhelmed him with benefits and with tokens of good will. Soon after his arrival I sent him four hundred pieces of gold, and besides this I have given him every day a purse of silver for his maintenance, besides food for himself, his suite, and horses. Some little time ago he asked for one thousand purses for the expenses of his journey; I gave him twelve thousand purses, and carriages, horses, and a large escort besides. Although everything was ready for his departure, and he promised to leave at the beginning of winter, he now tries to put it off by every kind of excuse. Sometimes he says that the escort is insufficient, sometimes that he requires another thousand purses, and has not courage to ask for them. I desire now to make known to him my Imperial will that he must keep his promise and depart as soon as possible. I wish to know whether, if he refuses obedience to this order, it will be contrary to the laws of hospitality laid down by Mohammed, and will it be regarded as barbarous and unjust by the Christian princes of Europe, if I compel him by

force to keep his word, and drive him as an enemy from the country, seeing that he will not depart of his free will.'

The Divan decided unanimously in favour of the Sultan's proposal, and orders were given to the Seraskier of Bender in accordance with it. He was first to attempt to persuade the King to depart quietly, but if this was of no avail, he was to cut off his daily allowance, then to withdraw his guard of honour, and then to interrupt all communication with the Swedish camp. If none of these measures had any effect, he was to have recourse to force, and to carry off the Swedish King to Adrianople alive or dead.

The order reached Bender on January 8, 1713, and five days afterwards it was read by the Seraskier to the King. Charles declared that he was anxious to go away, but that he could not fix the exact time of his departure, that he must first complete his preparations, buy horses, and receive the thousand purses of gold which he had asked from the Sultan. The Seraskier insisted that Charles should fix the day of his departure, but Charles answered that it was impossible. The Seraskier then asked if he must obey the order of his master in using force. Charles replied that he did not believe that the Sultan could have meant this, that he was not ready to travel, and had no fear of threats; if he was attacked he

should know how to defend himself. With these words he turned his back upon the Seraskier, who mounted his horse and galloped away to Bender. On the road he met Fabricius, who asked him how matters were going.

‘All is lost,’ he replied, ‘you will soon see here some wonderful things.’

On the following day, January 14, the supplies were stopped and the guard of Janissaries was withdrawn. The Swedes and Poles, as well as all the Turkish inhabitants, were ordered to withdraw from Warnitza, where the camp of the King was placed. The village was occupied by four thousand Tartars, and the camp was enclosed by Turkish soldiers on the other side. The consequence of this was that a good number of the Poles and Zaporovian Cossacks in Charles’s service left him and went over to the Turks. Charles replied to these measures by shooting nineteen beautiful Arabian horses which the Sultan had given him. Charles supplied the loss of the Janissaries by a guard of Swedish soldiers, and tried to build a wall round his camp, but the frozen earth would not admit of it. He therefore protected the principal buildings by barricades made out of waggons, carts, tables, and benches, mixed, where possible, with dung-heaps, while the house of Charles himself was protected by a palisade. He

concentrated his small forces in the middle of this fortification, and prepared to repel the attack. The following day, in order to show his contempt for the Seraskier's threats, he rode into Bender, but no one ventured to lay hands upon him.

The Seraskier was in great embarrassment. There were two foreign envoys now at Bender, Fabricius from Holstein-Gottorp and Jeffries from England, whose good offices he used to the best of his ability. They visited Charles, and tried to persuade him to give in, but he showed them his defences, and declared that he was prepared to resist to the death. They also did what they could to influence the Turks to milder measures, but they had not much effect either on one side or the other. Provisions were smuggled into Charles's camp by Jews, Turks, and Tartars, for which he had naturally to pay dearly. At last the King managed to get together food for six or seven weeks, and powder and shot were introduced by similar means. In the meantime, Charles and the Seraskier had both written to the Sultan, and their letters had arrived at Constantinople. The Divan, after consideration, renewed their former resolution that Charles was to be removed by force, if he would not depart of his free will, that he was to be placed in a carriage, and taken to Salonica or some other town, but that if

he resisted, and if either he or any of his soldiers were killed in the struggle, no guilt would rest on any Moslem's head. This news reached Bender on February 9.

The preparations of Charles for defence were now complete. His house, built of stone, became the citadel of the fortress; everything of value was brought into it, the King's table service of silver, carpets, provisions, and ammunition. The Swedish garrison is estimated at seven hundred men. The number of Turks and Tartars assembled for the attack is not precisely known, but it was probably not less than fifteen thousand. They were posted all round the Swedish camp, and a present of eight ducats a man had been promised to them if the King should be taken alive. When the Turkish bands played, the King replied by his Swedish trumpeters. The Turks then fired their cannon, aiming too high on purpose, but one of the Swedish trumpeters was killed. The Swedes tried to tamper with the fidelity of the Janissaries who were placed close to the camp. These soldiers had a fanatical admiration for Charles, and determined that they would never make up their minds to attack him. The Seraskier seized thirty of them in their beds, had them strangled, and their bodies thrown into the Dniester. The next day the remaining Janissaries recognised the genuineness of the Sultan's

edict, which they had professed to doubt, and promised their concurrence. At the same time he took the precaution of introducing other Janissaries, who were not under Swedish influence, from the neighbouring towns.

On the morning of February 12, 1713, a line of from fifty to sixty Janissaries, unarmed, with white staves in their hands, were seen moving from Bender to the Swedish camp. They had determined, on the proposal of the Seraskier, to make a last attempt to influence Charles to submission. They were accompanied by the King's favourite interpreter, and by some of the Turks who were favourable to the Swedes. Charles would not even receive the deputation, but said,

‘If they do not go away, I will singe their beards off; it is time for blows, and not for talking.’

The Janissaries retired to Bender with bitterness in their hearts.

‘The Swedish Charles has gone mad,’ they said.

It was quite clear that Charles had no intention of giving in, but that he looked forward to the coming contest as a sportsman to the chase, or as a schoolboy to a football match, with the additional feeling that he was giving to the world a spectacle which would spread his reputation far and wide, and would never be forgotten.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE KALABALIK.

THE Kalabalik, the Lion Hunt, is the name given to the capture of Charles by the Turks, the romantic story of which it is now time to relate. On Sunday, February 11, 1713, the Swedes who then remained in camp—for many of them, considering the cause hopeless, had gone over to the enemy—were collected for divine service in the King's house. The Gospel for the day described how Jesus slept peacefully in the ship when the storm raging was round Him, and Provost Brenner the chaplain was preaching upon that text. He had not proceeded far when the war-cry of the Turks was heard, and the thunder of their cannon. The Turkish force was not less than eight thousand men with eleven guns, and the Swedish garrison did not exceed eight hundred. The Swedes, on hearing the noise, rushed from the hall, and hastened to the barricades. The Turks

and Tartars came on with cries of 'Allah! Allah!' From their overwhelming number they found but little resistance, few Swedes were killed, and the greater number laid down their arms. In about half-an-hour the Turks and Tartars had climbed over the Swedish trenches, and had reduced the number of the defenders to fifty or sixty men.

Before the fight actually began, Charles had ridden round the entrenchments to encourage his soldiers, and to urge them to a stout resistance, but found to his surprise that many of them had already surrendered to the Turks. He cried out in anger,

'Let him who has any honesty or courage in his heart follow me, and I will afterwards reward him.'

Indeed, Müllern and Feif and many others had already given themselves up quietly. Charles now found himself in the camp, and with a body of about twenty men tried to fight his way back to his house, which, as we have before seen, was a kind of citadel. The enemy pressed around him and endeavoured to prevent him, but Charles made a road for himself and reached the house, the Turks sparing him from their anxiety to take him alive.

As he got off his horse a Janissary caught hold of the cuff of his enormous glove, and Charles freed himself by such an effort that the glove was torn and the King fell backwards to the ground. The Janissaries

threw themselves upon him to seize him, but two of his body-guard, his famous trabants, Axel Roos and Olaf Aberg, cast themselves before him and protected him with their bodies. The Swedes were driven away for the moment, the King was set on his legs, and General Hård tried to get him into the house. At this moment a wounded Janissary fired his pistol at the King. The shot singed and grazed his eyebrows, the tip of his nose, and one of his ears; indeed, if the King had not happened to turn his head just at the lucky moment, it would have pierced his skull. As it was, it struck Hård's arm so that he fell down bleeding, and was taken prisoner.

Charles now managed to reach the steps to the ante-chamber. As soon as he entered it, Axel Roos sprang back to bolt the door; but the King said,

‘Wait a moment! first see what the Turks are going to do.’

Roos begged him not to delay any longer, and, when he saw the King preparing to return to the charge, he caught hold of his belt and held him fast. Charles unfastened the buckle in front, the belt gave way, and he rushed upon the enemy. Roos, however, seized him round the body, crying, ‘I won't let go of your Majesty again,’ and with the help of two other Swedes brought him into the house.

The defence of this building had been entrusted

to a garrison of twenty-eight, but when the camp was taken the Turks pressed on to it in large numbers, knowing that it must be the chief object of their attack. A part of the defenders offered no resistance, and the Janissaries broke in through the windows and began to loot, especially in the spacious hall where the King's famous silver service was stored in large chests. One by one all the rooms were plundered, except that of the Court-Marshal Düben, in which twenty-one Swedes had taken refuge and now opened the door for the King.

The garrison now consisted of forty-two besides Charles—six officers, six servants, and thirty soldiers. Charles first passed in review this small body of faithful friends, and then exhorted them to be courageous in the coming struggle. He then had the door opened which led into the next room, and advanced at the head of his Swedes. The room was full of Janissaries and Tartars, but the Swedes shot and slashed about them with such desperate courage that in a few minutes the enemy had either escaped by the windows or been killed. Close to this room was the great hall, where several hundred Janissaries were employed in appropriating everything of value. Nevertheless, Charles determined to open the door. A hotly-contested fight ensued, and the room was so full of smoke that the combatants could only dis-

tinguish each other by their legs. The King was for a moment separated from his companions, and three Janissaries did their best to take him prisoner, but he managed to kill two of them. The third, terrified at the death of his friends, tried to cut the King down, but a trabant intercepted the blow with his heavy glove, and it was also broken on the King's thick fur cap. The King also warded off a similar blow from a Turk, but was wounded in his hand. Then another Janissary rushed at the King, seized him by the neck, and pressed him against the wall. Just at this moment Charles saw General Hård's cook with a pistol in his hand, gave him a signal, and the cook shot the Janissary down. Charles then killed the Janissary who had nearly killed him, and at length succeeded in reaching his retainers, and in driving all the Turks out of the great hall.

The defenders now made for the King's bed-chamber, but the plunderers had withdrawn and only two Turks were seen in it. They fled for safety into a corner, and Charles ran them through with a single thrust. A third was eventually found who had crawled under the bed. He was dragged out, but casting away his arms threw himself at the King's feet, and begged for pardon. Charles spared his life, on the condition that he should tell the Seraskier

what he had seen, and helped him with his own hands to escape through the window.

The house was eventually entirely cleared of the assailants, but twenty corpses lay stark in the different rooms, and the garrison were reduced to thirty-two men. Charles posted them at the several windows, with instructions as to how they should conduct themselves. Their numbers were increased by some Swedes who had retired from the Chancery buildings when they were captured by the Tartars, and had entered through the windows. Charles again exhorted them to a brave resistance, and promised that if they could hold out till four in the morning, they would purchase peace, and gain renown which would astonish the whole world. The fight was continued with musket-firing at a distance, in which the assailants naturally suffered more than the defenders. Charles searched the uniforms of the fallen, and distributed the cartridges he found in them amongst his men. Then, hearing that the Turks had again forced themselves into Düben's room, he rushed thither, and would have been lost if the faithful Roos had not followed him and set him free. Charles wiped the blood from his face, and allowed Roos to bind up his wounded hand; they both returned to the large hall, where some Turks were endeavouring to pass in through the windows,

but they were soon repulsed. The garrison was suffering agonies of thirst, and Charles with great difficulty procured them a supply of brandy, which refreshed them for the moment.

It was now between four and five in the afternoon. Charles had not only been able to expel the Turks from his house, but had kept them at bay for three hours. The assailants had been contemplating for some time setting the house on fire, but they were afraid of destroying the booty which yet awaited them. But at last the Khan and the Seraskier lost patience, and came to the conclusion that no other course was possible. The Tartars enveloped the points of their arms in tow dipped in spirits, and shot them upon the roof of the King's house, which being covered with shingles was soon in a blaze. The Turks had also heaped up hay and wood and other inflammable material at the side of the house, so that the fire soon caught the beams on which the roof rested. All efforts to put the fire out or to prevent it from spreading were in vain, and there being no water they poured brandy on the flames, which only made matters worse. The Turks fired upon the Swedes who were endeavouring to extinguish the flames, and killed some of them. The heat at last became intense, and the fire caught the staircase. Charles and his followers threw their coats over their heads and rushed

into the hall, and it is said that the King was so consumed by thirst that he actually drank a glass of wine, which he had never been known to do before.

The Swedes were now on the ground floor; the Turks exclaimed,

‘Allah! Allah! will the King allow him and his people to burn, or can they stand the fire like salamanders?’

The floor of the middle story now began to fall in upon the Swedes below, and caused injuries. Charles being pressed to give in, replied,

‘No! it is better for us to defend ourselves as brave men to our last breath, and gain undying glory by our bravery, than to surrender ourselves to the enemy in order to live a little longer. There is no immediate danger, so long as our clothes are not on fire.’

At last a piece of burning ceiling fell on Charles’s head, so they removed into the King’s own bedroom, where the roof had not, as yet, caught fire.

‘Dear Roos,’ said Charles, shaking his friend’s hand, ‘let us defend ourselves here with what remains of our forces, till all comes to an end.’

The fire now seized their clothes, and the Turks fired through the windows. Charles was so angry that he tore a musket from a carabineer and shot a Turk dead with his own hands; he then stood at the window and offered himself as a mark. The King

was not hit, but a ball struck the devoted Roos, and he fell back senseless into his master's arms. The fire at last made its way into the chamber, the door was alight, the roof began to fall, and the heat was insupportable. Charles, however, was apparently ready rather to die than to surrender.

Roos now proposed that they should try to reach the Chancery buildings, which had as yet escaped the flames, so the doors were burst open, and Charles, with a sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, rushed from the burning house. He had only gone a few steps when he was tripped up by his enormous spurs, and fell faltering to the ground. Immediately a mass of Janissaries threw themselves upon him, they wrenched his weapons from his hands and took him prisoner, some of them tearing off pieces of his uniform as a sign that they had won their eight ducats. No sooner was this done than Charles became quite tame, he made no attempt at resistance, and expressed his pleasure that he had fallen into the hands of the Janissaries rather than into those of the Turks. The struggle had lasted till seven in the evening and it had long been dark. Fifteen Swedes had been killed in the conflict, and the Turkish loss was at least three hundred, of whom about ten had been killed by Charles himself. We need not be surprised that the King was not shot dead on purpose, because the

Turks had been exhorted to spare him ; but it is strange that, with all his wilful self-exposure, he should not have been killed by accident ; and it speaks well for the discipline of the Turks, and the respect which he inspired amongst the Janissaries.

Thus ended the Kalabalik. It is difficult to pronounce a judgment upon it. Standing by itself it does not increase Charles's fame nor add to his dignity. There is indeed something grotesque and even absurd about the whole proceeding. The best excuse that can be made is, that Charles had good reason to believe that if he went away of his free will he should fall into the hands of the enemy whom he most hated and despised, and that he considered any fate preferable to that. A richly-caparisoned horse had been prepared for the royal prisoner's use. Charles rode first to the Turkish camp, where he distributed some ducats amongst the Janissaries. He then entered the tent of the Seraskier, and was invited to take a seat ; but he refused, and strode up and down the room. The Seraskier asked him why he had done all this, and whether it would not have been better undone ; upon which the King smiled, and said that he was sorry it had not lasted longer, and that if it were to be done again he would not get him at so cheap a rate.

It was now night, and the ride to Bender was

accomplished with a guard of Turkish officers and Janissaries, the Seraskier heading the march. When they arrived at the Seraskier's house the King was led into a room ready prepared for him. He tore off his cap which had been cut in two, threw himself on a couch, and asked for drink, upon which they gave him sherbet and water. He drank some water, and fell fast asleep just as he was. His appearance was indeed peculiar; his clothes were torn and covered with blood, his left hand was wounded, his nose grazed, his eyebrows burned entirely away, and his face so blackened by smoke and powder that he could scarcely be recognized. After a good sleep of some six hours he woke up at three in the morning, dirty, battle-stained, and ragged, but as serene and happy as if nothing remarkable had occurred.

It took about a week to complete the arrangements for Charles's departure. No one appeared to know where he was going, some said to Salonica, others to Adrianople. For many reasons, and among them perhaps from fear that he might be betrayed, Charles had feigned illness, and had somewhat delayed his journey. He now came out of the Seraskier's house enveloped in a cloak, and entered the carriage prepared for him. His sword was returned to him, but he threw it out of the window, saying that as a prisoner he had no right to wear it. Grothusen, Müllern,

and Feif accompanied him. Two hundred Turkish cavalry led the way with bands of music. Jeffries saw him lying in a Turkish waggon, drawn by four horses, about a hundred Swedes, without swords or pistols, following on sorry nags. He says, 'I cannot express what a melancholy spectacle this was to me, who had formerly seen the Prince in his greatest glory, and a terror almost to all Europe, now to see him fallen so low and to be the scorn and derision of Turks and Infidels.' Just at this time King Stanislaus had arrived at Jassy, bringing news of a combination between Prussia, Saxony, and Poland against Peter, and asking for leave from Charles to resign the crown. Charles received a dispatch to this effect just as he was setting out, but replied angrily to Fabricius,

'Tell Stanislaus, as soon as you see him, that if he will not remain King of Poland I will choose another in his place.'

The royal train resumed its progress, no one knowing whither they were going. The Swedish ministers were wretchedly clothed, and had no money to purchase new suits. They were much dejected, although Charles did his best to set an example of cheerfulness. Whenever he left his carriage he was carried on a mattress, with his cap drawn over his face to escape the inquiring gaze of the Turks. The Sultan had apparently not determined where the place of

Charles's detention should be ; Salonica had the advantage that he could easily take ship to France and thence to Sweden, Crete was also mentioned, or an island in the Cyclades. If he was to be kept in prison, Nicomedia in Asia Minor was suggested as a suitable spot, but any such idea was strongly opposed by the French ambassador, who knew how to maintain the dignity of crowned heads. At last Charles was taken to Adrianople, and from there to the neighbouring palace of Demotika ; at a later period quarters were found for him in the Castle of Demurtasch, the Castle of the Iron Rock. Here he arrived on April 20, 1713, and was received with all honour.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FATE OF STENBOCK.

WE must now turn our attention to events of a very different character which had happened during the imprisonment of Charles in Turkey. In August, 1711, the King of Denmark invaded Sweden from the side of Norway, which at that time belonged to him. The expedition was carried out with no vigour or energy, and when his troops had remained for some time in the country they retired without even having seen the enemy. In the middle of August, in the same year, another Danish army of twenty-five thousand men marched from Holstein into Mecklenburg. They first set down before Wismar, which at that time belonged to Sweden, and is even now only held by Mecklenburg under a mortgage which expires in 1903. Afterwards a large portion of them were sent to Stralsund, that famous fortress which Wallenstein, in the Thirty Years' War, declared he would take even if it were fastened by chains to

heaven, but from which he was obliged to retire discomfited. Here were assembled in the middle of September a motley group of forty-five thousand soldiers, Saxons, Russians, and Danes, who were employed in drawing lines of investments round the fortress which they had at present no means of besieging. They were also prevented by internal dissensions from any united or vigorous action. On the other hand, the Swedes were able to throw into the fortress a reinforcement of three thousand five hundred men.

For a whole year matters remained in Pomerania much in the same condition. Stralsund was still blockaded by an army of Saxons, Russians, and Danes, but their number had been reduced to sixteen thousand, and the siege material had not yet arrived. In May, 1712, the Russian troops which Peter had been obliged to withdraw from Poland came into Pomerania, and encamped before Stettin; but at a later period they took before Stralsund the place of the Danes who went to Wismar. The Danish army was also employed in besieging the fortress of Stade, which lies between Hamburg and Cuxhaven, and with an invasion of Bremen which Frederick IV. was anxious to wrest from the Swedes.

Stenbock, who in the absence of Charles had the main direction of military affairs in Sweden, found

great difficulty in getting together a sufficient army. During the campaigns of Charles XII., Sweden had suffered but little, and had been asked for few sacrifices. Between the years 1700–1709 the Swedish army under Charles did not probably take more than twenty thousand men from the country; and now, when it was necessary to provide men and money for national purposes, there was great discontent. When the army had at last been got together, the Danes proposed to dispute their passage, which caused further delay, and it was not till September 5, 1712, that Stenbock went to Stralsund to make preparations for the reception of the troops and the war material which were expected. At last, on September 28, the Swedish transports, with a protecting guard of men of war, appeared off the island of Rügen, where some of their freight was disembarked. The Danes were, however, close at hand, and they attacked the Swedish fleet whilst it was engaged in this operation, captured some ships, destroyed others, and put the rest to flight.

The larger part of the troops, about ten thousand men, had been fortunately landed, but very little of the provisions. Stenbock, therefore, determined to remain in Rügen for some time to await the arrival of fresh transports, but finding his supplies fail he was obliged to remove to Stralsund. He remained here for some months, and when he had thoroughly

refreshed his troops and filled up their gaps, he marched out of the fortress on November 1, with a force of about fourteen thousand men, leaving two thousand soldiers behind him to strengthen the garrison. His intention was to proceed into Mecklenburg, and to remain in the neighbourhood of Wismar until the expected reinforcements had arrived. To do this he had to cross the river Reckenitz, the passage of which was defended by a detachment of Saxons and Russians who had entrenched themselves. On November 3, he overcame this opposition, took Rostock, and fixed his head-quarters at Schwaan, about eight miles distant. The allied Saxons and Russians, under the personal command of Augustus and Peter, established themselves with twenty thousand men in Güstrow, about the same distance to the south.

The armies remained here doing nothing till December, and Stenbock took the opportunity of opening negotiations with Augustus for a separate peace between Sweden and Saxony, and on December 1 concluded an armistice for fourteen days. About a fortnight later Stenbock received information that a body of Danish troops, which had been posted in Holstein, and had hitherto occupied itself with plundering Hamburg, had now advanced into Mecklenburg. He immediately broke up his camp and marched in a westerly direction to Gadebusch, between Lübeck

and Schwerin, and on December 15 met the Danes who had come there the same day. The Danish army consisted of about twelve thousand men, and was commanded by General Scholten. A camp had been formed to the west of Gadebusch, and there they awaited the attack of the Swedes. Stenbock, instead of attacking the Danish army in front, manoeuvred to outflank them, and with this object marched in a southerly direction, and on the evening of December 18 reached Brütz, about six miles south-east of Gadebusch.

Early on the morning of December 30, 1712, the Danish army left its camp and took up a position about two miles south-east of the town, at the village of Wackenstedt. The right flank was covered by a morass and a wood, which prevented the necessary extension of the line of battle, so that Scholten determined to draw up his forces, both cavalry and infantry, in five lines. He placed his thirteen guns in the rear. During the course of the evening thirty-two squadrons of Saxon cavalry, under the command of Flemming, came up from Schwerin. They were very unwisely placed between the last line of cavalry and the first of the infantry.

The Swedish army consisted of fourteen thousand men, with thirty-two guns. The battle began about mid-day, by a severe artillery fire directed against

the dense masses of the enemy. The artillery was served in a new fashion. Instead of being limbered and unlimbered, which necessitated turning them round, they were drawn forward by ropes, with their mouths to the enemy, which saved a great deal of time. The firing was also quickened by the use of cartridges. By these means the Danish guns were soon silenced, and their troops suffered great loss before the battle really began. While this was going on, Stenbock was drawing up his troops for the attack. The centre consisted of two lines, each formed of six battalions, and on each side of the centre were placed three battalions in columns to protect the flanks from the cavalry of the enemy. The Swedish cavalry were posted in deep columns on the wings, with orders to extend to the side whenever opportunity should offer.

After the artillery fire had lasted for an hour, the Swedish right wing advanced to the charge. Scholten now saw the mistake he had made in placing his cavalry in front of his infantry, and he summoned up some infantry regiments from the rear line. But before they could take their position, the shock of the Swedish charge occurred, and the Danes fled in disorder, carrying the Saxon contingent with them, although they had not been directly attacked. King Frederick IV. narrowly escaped being taken prisoner.

When the Swedish centre reached their point of attack, the Danish infantry had already taken up their position. They held their ground for a space, but were eventually driven back by the Swedish cavalry. The efforts of the Swedish left were less successful, they found themselves opposed by the heavy infantry fire of the Danes, and when they turned in flight they were pursued by the Danish cavalry. In fact, the whole of the Swedish left wing would have been thrown into confusion unless order had been restored by Stenbock sending up some fresh cavalry regiments to support it.

The beaten Danish army attempted to recover itself on the rolling and broken ground behind the village of Wackenstedt, but was pursued by Stenbock, who had now concentrated his forces. The victory of the Swedes was complete; they had lost only fifteen hundred men, whereas the Danes had lost nearly six thousand. All the same, the position of Stenbock was not as favourable as he could have wished. He had entered Germany with the view of pressing on into Poland, and giving his hand to his master Charles. But now he had only ten thousand fighting troops left, and only twenty-miles off—at Crivitz—was posted a combined force of Saxons and Russians of double the strength. If he desired to profit by his victory at Gadebusch, he must attack

the allies before the moral effect of the victory had worn off, and before the Danes had been able to receive reinforcements. But Criwitz lay due east of Gadebusch, and to march there would take him away from his base and his source of supplies, and the further he retreated the worse his position would become. On the other hand, if he were to force the allies to a battle and defeat them he could not march into Poland, for any effectual purpose, with only ten thousand men. He had therefore only one resource, to wait for reinforcements from Sweden. He went himself to Wismar where he looked anxiously for the transports, seeing with despair the ice forming every day thicker on the shore of the harbour, whilst his troops were suffering terribly from storm and cold. It is now obvious that the only safe course would have been to retire to Stralsund, and to wait for the spring and for reinforcements, but he could scarcely have seen at the time that so strong a step was necessary.

Unfortunately, Stenbock chose another course, and advanced into Holstein, expecting to find there comfortable winter quarters. He was influenced to this course by the advice of Count Wellingk, Swedish Ambassador at Hamburg, who believed that Charles was invading Poland with a large force. This, Wellingk thought, would cause the retreat of the

allies, and then Stenbock would only have to deal with the Danes themselves. The information was singularly opposed to the truth. At this moment Charles was fortifying his camp at Bender, and doing his best to avoid or rather to defer his capture by the Turks. The Danes showed the falsity of Stenbock's hopes, by marching in front of him and joining the allied forces at Criwitz, whence on January 1, 1713, they all set out towards the Elbe. Stenbock now knew that his position was untenable; he therefore crossed the Eider in order to protect himself by that river, and took measures to make the advance of the enemy as difficult as possible. He now committed a great and startling act of cruelty and barbarism, which brought him no advantage. The town of Altona had given great assistance to the allies, as it was natural that it should, and Stenbock believed, or feigned to believe, that large supplies of provisions were stored up in it. Therefore he determined to destroy it. He laid upon it a contribution of one hundred thousand thalers, well knowing that it was beyond the power of the inhabitants to pay it. The magistrates brought half the demanded sum, and begged on their knees that time might be given them to raise the rest. Stenbock refused to listen, and on the same night the whole of this unhappy town was given to the flames.

Stenbock now moved northwards, and on January 19 crossed the Eider and took up a position at Friedrichstadt on the Treene, a town founded by Dutch Remonstrants in the early part of the seventeenth century. If Stenbock hoped by marching to the north to emulate the exploit, of Charles X., and eventually to get an opportunity of crossing the ice to Copenhagen, he was bitterly disappointed, because a thaw set in at the end of January.

In the meantime the allied forces continued to advance, and on January 24, 1713, their advanced guard under General Bauer attacked the advanced posts of the Swedes and drove them back over the Treene, after a stout resistance. Stenbock recognised that his position was indefensible, and determined to retreat to the fortress of Tönning, situated on the North Sea at the mouth of the Eider. The government of Holstein-Gottorp had given him permission to occupy this place, and he believed that from it he could open communications with Sweden, receive reinforcements and provisions, and in case of extreme necessity fall back upon the support of the Swedish fleet.

However, before he had time to carry this into effect, on February 12, 1713, the very day of the Kalabalik, the allies attacked Stenbock at Friedrichstadt, and defeated him, nearly cutting off his retreat

to Tönning. He was, however, able to reach this place of refuge with a portion of his troops. But his position was desperate. He was cooped up in a small space where he could not remain long. Tönning was badly furnished with supplies, and could not contain the whole Swedish army, even in its present diminished state. Besides, Stenbock could not bear the idea of being beleaguered, and was anxious to obtain more liberty of movement. He therefore made an attempt to take his troops across the Eider, and to march into Mecklenburg. To this end, on January 19 he collected all his forces at Tönning, and began to ship them across the river. The work was slow, and hardly a fifth part had been able to cross when a violent storm arose which put a stop to the operations. As soon as the allies saw what was going on, it was easy for them to prevent it; indeed, if Stenbock had been able to cross, he would certainly have found himself in the presence of a hostile army of treble his strength.

The fruit was now ripe, but the allies were in no hurry to pluck it. All attempts of Stenbock to cross over were repulsed with overwhelming strength. He hoped to obtain reinforcements from Sweden, but they could not arrive till the month of May, and they would then be too late. The awaited attack took place at last on April 26, and Sten-

bock was driven back into the fortress with the loss of the greater part of his cavalry horses. The regular siege began on May 4, and on May 16 he was obliged to capitulate. The Swedes purchased their freedom by a heavy ransom, and Tönning was given up to the government of Holstein-Gottorp. The Swedish government paid the money and sent ships to carry off Stenbock and his army. But, as the money passed through the hands of Count Wellingk, he kept it for the strengthening of the Pomeranian fortresses, and Stenbock and his troops were treated as prisoners of war. Stenbock was carried to Copenhagen, where he was at first well treated, but having made attempts to escape was confined in the citadel, where he died on February 23, 1717. The greater number of the Swedish troops were persuaded to enter foreign service, and Sweden thus lost an excellent army of ten thousand men.

So ends one of the most pathetic stories in military history. The combined army of Saxons and Russians left the Schleswig-Holstein duchies in June, the Saxons marching to Stralsund, the Russians to Stettin, which after a siege of five weeks was now nearing its fall. The commandant, General Meyerfeldt, was well aware that the other powers could not wish to see so important a fortress fall into the hands of Russia, so he opened negotiations with the

Prussians as to the possibility of making some arrangements. By the diplomacy of Count Görz, the minister of Holstein, who at a later period had so much influence with Charles, an arrangement was made by which Stettin received a garrison of two Prussian and two Swedish battalions, the latter of which were to be in the service of Holstein-Gottorp. This led to the retreat of the Russians under Peter, who desired at this moment to be directing his attention to the conquest of Finland. All eyes were now turned upon Stralsund. The fortress was commanded by General Dücker, who had fought so well at Gadebusch. Reinforcements, long expected, arrived from Sweden at last, and the Saxons were driven back from the assault, after which they went into winter quarters.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE KING'S RIDE.

DEMURTASCH was a magnificent and well-kept Imperial palace, surrounded by a large park with flower-gardens and fountains. The water was, however, chalky and the surrounding neighbourhood marshy, which caused disease amongst the northern visitors and occasionally death. From the time he left Bender on February 17, 1713, to the evening of Christmas Eve in the same year, Charles lay constantly and uninterruptedly in bed. It is difficult to find a reason for this. For some part of the time he was undoubtedly ill, but during the longer portion perfectly well. The reason is given that he feared assassination, but his foolhardy courage was proverbial, and if he expected danger he was more likely to seek than to avoid it. By this expedient he escaped visitors and visiting, and this may have been a material advantage. The best explanation is that he felt himself

in a false position, beaten and to some extent dishonoured. He was conscious of being a king, but was not sure that he should be treated as one, hence he would offer to no one the opportunity of insulting him. Further, we must take note of his eccentric obstinacy, of his persistence in continuing a course upon which he had once entered, of his apparent love of idleness after periods of feverish activity, and lastly, of that strain of madness which was not entirely absent from his character.

At any rate he got up as little as possible, and only, when his bed had to be made, threw himself upon a neighbouring sofa. His dinner-table, laid for eight, was placed close to his bed-side. The day was spent in the usual round of business, correspondence, and morning and evening prayers, but affairs of state occupied but little of his thoughts. Communications with Sweden were rare, and foreign powers seemed to devote but small attention to him. He played a good deal of chess, and his servant, Hultmann, told him stories of Vikings. He was comparatively poor. The silver dinner-service had disappeared in the confusion of the Kalabalik, and the court had to content itself with pewter or tin. Everyone was of course anxious to get a glimpse of the captured lion, but Charles would never allow himself to be seen. A favoured few were occasionally smuggled

into the King's chamber, and permitted to look at him through a hole in a screen. It was said that even the Sultan availed himself of this opportunity in the dress of a Janissary, but that is probably a fable. For five weeks out of the forty-three in which he lay in bed he was really ill, which is not altogether to be wondered at.

In April, 1713, just after the King's arrival, the Grand Vizier came to Adrianople. He had a magnificent tent pitched in the neighbourhood of Demurtasch, and sent to ask Charles whether he would pay him a visit. His pride was offended that a sovereign like himself should be expected to pay a visit to a subject, and no representatives could induce him to consent. The Vizier sent a second time, saying that he wished to discuss a project for the return of Charles to his country and the re-establishment of King Stanislaus. The King replied that he and his suite had no proper clothes to appear in, but that he should be very glad if the Vizier would visit him. Müllern and Feif in vain urged him to give way, and not to anger the great man by a refusal. Charles said nothing, but wrote in General Hård's pocket-book two Latin lines to this effect :

‘ Of this be certain, if you fight with muck,
Conquering or conquered, some of it has stuck.’

As soon as the interpreter returned with Charles's

answer, the Grand Vizier broke up his camp and went off.

The feelings of the Porte towards Charles underwent various changes during this period. At first opinion ran strongly in his favour, from the natural admiration of the Turks for so great a warrior, and also from the undisguised partiality of the ladies of the harem towards the Swedish Lion. This feeling rose to its height after the victory of Gadebusch. Then came the defeat and captivity of Stenbock, and the destruction of his army, as well as the entire loss of the Baltic provinces. Also the great war of the Spanish Succession was now at an end, so that the Emperor was free to act against the Turks if he pleased to do so. The sea powers, also, were especially anxious to prevent a conflict between Turkey and Russia, which might lead to a general conflagration. So in August, 1713, the peace between the two powers was renewed and definitely ratified, and under these circumstances it was impossible that Charles should continue to reside in Turkish territory. The difficulty was how to get rid of him, and the Grand Vizier could find no better way than by dismissing the Swedish Ambassador from Constantinople, and cutting down the supplies for the King's maintenance.

It is not our purpose to deal at length with the

situation of European politics, or with the various attempts which were made to induce Charles to make peace. His answer was always the same, that he would not surrender a foot of Swedish territory, nor return home except at the head of an army, nor would he even recognize Augustus as King of Poland. It is said that, when he was brought with the greatest difficulty to contemplate the possibility of a settlement with the enemy against whom he had striven for thirteen long years, the conditions which he proposed were altogether impossible of acceptance, or even of consideration. Augustus was to remain King of Poland, but to grant to Stanislaus also the title of King with the right of succession to the throne, as well as an appanage of thirty thousand pounds a year and an immediate payment of fifteen thousand pounds. The supporters of Stanislaus were to have a complete amnesty; Augustus was not only to give up his alliance with Russia, but to join Sweden in war against that country, with a view of recovering all that she had conquered from Sweden, together with a pecuniary compensation; Denmark was also to restore what she had taken from Holstein-Gottorp and from Sweden, also with compensation. Terms such as these might have been imposed by a triumphant conqueror, but could not be listened to when coming from a defeated captive. Stanislaus,

also, absolutely refused to draw his sword for the recovery of his crown, and Charles generously established him in his own hereditary principality of Zweibrücken.

Still the return of Charles could not be much longer delayed if he wished to keep his crown, for discontent in Sweden was rising to a dangerous height. The condition of that country was indeed most distressing. Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, Carelia, and half of Finland had been captured by Russia, Stenbock with fifteen thousand Swedish soldiers had been lost at Tönning, Pomerania was being overrun by a crowd of enemies, Prussians, Saxons, Danes, and Russians, and at any moment a Russian fleet might threaten Stockholm. The Swedes were decimated by constant losses in war, and ground down by oppressive taxes, while they believed their King to be either mad or dead, or at best a life-long prisoner amongst the unbelievers. Discontent was universal in all classes, high and low, and the only solution seemed to be in choosing another ruler. Later in the year Stettin was captured by the allies, Åbo by the Russians, while southern Finland seemed about to suffer the fate of its northern half. In December, 1713, Arved Horn wrote to Charles that nothing could save Sweden but his return or a miracle.

It is curious that during the sojourn of Charles in

Turkey, notwithstanding his simplicity of life, and the comparative generosity of the Turks, his debts should have been very large. In 1713, they amounted to one hundred and sixty-five thousand pounds, and he tried to borrow money from all possible sources. These debts were not paid until long after his death. In 1737 the Swedish government voted one hundred and fifty thousand pounds to Turkey for this purpose, and in 1747 there was still a large sum owing to a merchant who resided in Paris. Charles mounted his horse for the first time since the Kalabalik on January 1, 1714, and resumed his long rides morning and evening, but he could not longer indulge in his former state, and it is said that Müllern, the foreign secretary, had to do the cooking for the King and his suite.

It was necessary to inform Charles of what was passing in Sweden, and at Christmas-tide, 1713, a certain Baron Lieven was despatched for this purpose, and with great difficulty reached Demotika, to which place Charles had been removed from Demurtasch, in March, 1714. He told Charles that the estates had met and offered the regency to his sister, Princess Ulrica Eleanora, that she was very unwilling to accept it, but that she would be compelled to do so unless Charles came back. Charles was at last persuaded to consent, but two difficulties stood in the way,

how to find money for his journey, and how to provide for his personal safety. Charles at first wished to travel by way of Poland, but for that he would require an escort of several thousand men. The Porte was unwilling to do more than it had done already, and as a last resource Grothusen was sent as an ambassador to Constantinople. Every effort had been made to equip him in a worthy manner, and his suite numbered seventy-two persons. The Sultan and the Grand Vizier were not inclined to listen to arguments until they became convinced that Charles was serious in his desire to depart, and they refused to consent to his travelling through Poland. Discussions connected with the embassy took a long time, and it was not till the middle of September that the envoy returned to Demotika. Peter had utilised the interval by seizing the Aland islands, and taking possession of northern Finland.

At last on October 1, 1714, at ten o'clock in the morning, Charles mounted his horse to return to his own country. A large crowd had assembled to see him depart, and as he rode through their ranks cries were heard of 'Allah, save the Swedish King.' They reached the neighbourhood of Demurtasch in the evening, and here Charles received a present from the Grand Vizier of a magnificent travelling tent, eight Arabian horses, and a sabre set with

jewels. All Charles could give in return was a fur coat, which he had to borrow from Grothusen. He stayed here three days, and set out northwards at two in the morning, travelling by torchlight. He reached Pitesti, in Walachia, on October 19, a town near the spot where the Turkish frontier marches with the Austrian. His money had now come to an end, and he found himself in great embarrassment, so he sent one of his body-guard to raise funds in Transylvania. At Pitesti he was joined by some Swedish troops who remained behind at Bender.

Charles decided to get rid of his large following, and to march through Germany unknown, with as small a number of companions as possible. He fixed the number at twenty-six, and chose them in the following remarkable manner. He established three tests of horsemanship: first, to pick up a fallen glove from the ground, both at the trot and at the gallop; then to catch a glove in a similar manner, thrown into the air, and if it fell to pick it up again; lastly, to ride at full speed through one of the narrow stone doors leading into the vineyards. It is said that whilst Charles himself was performing this act of skill, his horse, being rather fat, stuck in the doorway, and could only be extricated by pulling down the wall. It may be imagined that all this caused much amusement, and passed the time until

the wished-for funds arrived. Out of the twenty-six thus selected Charles chose two to accompany him, General von Rosen and Lieutenant-Colonel Düring; the remaining twenty-four were to follow at a day's interval. The rest of the troops were to march in the usual manner through eastern Germany to Stralsund.

The three travellers assumed false names and journeyed as Swedish officers, Charles taking the name of Peter Frisch. He disguised himself with a black wig and a brown coat. They left Pitesti on November 6, each leading a spare horse by the bridle. They had the most extraordinary adventures. They lost themselves in a wood, and wandered all night leading their horses. Charles discovered that Rosen was very like what he had been himself in his younger days, so he left him behind with orders to follow at four hours' interval. At last, crossing the mountain by torchlight, they arrived at Hermannstadt on the road to Klausenberg. Düring was knocked up, and with difficulty recovered, while Charles himself fell ill soon afterwards, and at Semlin he was probably recognised. Indeed, his personality and habits were so well known,—especially his practice, a very rare one in those days, of drinking no wine,—that it was difficult for him to escape notice. The only remedy

was to travel so fast that even if he were discovered the news could not outstrip him. Through Transylvania and Hungary they were obliged to use carriages which at least gave an opportunity for repose.

In Germany they again mounted their horses, and travelled from Vienna by a circuitous route by way of Regensburg, Nüremberg, Bamberg, Würzburg, and Hanau to Cassel, carefully avoiding Saxon territory, Charles fearing lest he should suffer the fate of John Sobieski. It was of course equally impossible to travel by way of Berlin. At Frankfort, which they touched between Hanau and Cassel, Düring lost his cloak, which, when found, was recognised as having belonged to Charles. It was cut up into little bits, and sold as relics. Cassel belonged to the Landgrave of Hesse, whose son was engaged to be married to Charles's sister, Ulrica Eleanora. The Landgrave had commissioned one of his officers, by name Kagge, a Swede by birth, to watch the Post-house carefully with a view of discovering the King. When the King arrived, and sat down to dinner in the inn, Kagge placed himself at the same table with Peter Frisch, and seemed to recognise him. Düring, seeing what was afoot, gave Charles a hint, and the King filled up a glass of wine and drank to the brigadier's health, which

puzzled him. However, when the King had finished his meal and had mounted his horse, he turned to the brigadier, and said in Swedish,

‘Farewell, my dear Kagge, and greet the Landgrave for me.’

Charles at last reached Stralsund in the early morning of November 22. He asked for entrance at the gate, saying that he had despatches from the King. The officer of the guard begged him to wait till day-break, but on Charles insisting went to the governor. Dücker had been expecting the King’s arrival, and ordered the gates to be opened, but when he met Charles he found him so altered that he did not recognise him; when he knew who he was he received him with heartfelt joy. The King was terribly exhausted, having covered the fourteen hundred and thirty miles between Pitesti and Stralsund in sixteen days. For the last eight days he had not removed his boots, and his feet were so swollen that the heavy riding-boots had to be cut off. It was some time before he recovered himself, and could show himself abroad. We may judge better of what he had gone through by the fact that the Swedish troops from Bender, whom he left at Pitesti with orders to follow him, although they travelled by a much shorter route, did not reach Stralsund till March 29, 1715, and were then in such a condition that they were ashamed to be seen.

Thus ended Charles's fateful sojourn in Turkey, so difficult to understand or to defend, and in its results so disastrous to his country. The King has become the centre of many legends among the Turkish people. The ruins of his palace at Warnitza still exists, the former abode of Schwetzky Karol, as the peasants call him. Under the ruins is a vault which they say is filled with Swedish treasure, and there also sits the fair but enchanted daughter of the King, waiting for her destined lover, and guarding the gold. When he comes he will bear the treasures to Sweden, and there receive the hand of the Princess and the succession to the Swedish crown; for Charles, they believe, still reigns over the people for whom he sacrificed his life and liberty.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LOSS OF STRALSUND.

THE joy and the enthusiasm which was roused in the greater part of the Swedish people by the first news of the return of Charles to Stralsund cannot be described. The reappearance of the hero of his country after fourteen years' absence gave rise to the most exaggerated hopes. The unpopularity which had begun to attach to him disappeared in one moment, and gave place to the expectation that all the misery and suffering which had weighed down the land for many years would now come to an end, and that the blessings of peace would eventually be restored to it. There were indeed good reasons for this feeling. Charles had never bowed his head to misfortune. In spite of his long continued ill-luck and his protracted captivity in a foreign land, he had shown no weakness of character, although he might have been blamed for obstinacy. But

peace was far away yet, and many more sacrifices must be borne with until it could be secured.

Charles declared that he was not adverse to peace, but that he could only receive it upon honourable conditions, and that they could not be expected unless Sweden should exhibit a strength which would command the respect of her enemies. For this armaments were necessary, and for armaments money. To provide this was the first occupation of Charles in Stralsund, where he was assisted by Baron Görz, a minister of Holstein-Gottorp, whom many have believed to have been his evil genius. Charles seems to have thought that he could conduct his financial operations better from Stralsund than from Stockholm, and he was probably held back from a visit to his capital from his reluctance to enter it rather as a released prisoner than as a conqueror coming home from a victorious campaign.

During the whole of this history we have seen Charles and his country surrounded by enemies seeking his destruction, and their number was now greater than ever. Six stalwart foes were at war with Sweden in the summer of 1716, Russia, Poland, Saxony, Hanover, and Denmark, and to these may be added England. The Dutch had not declared war, but their feelings were very unfriendly, in consequence of the operations of the Swedish privateers

in the Baltic and elsewhere, which the Swedish government were unable to put down, even if there had been any adequate reason for their doing so. The seas surrounding Sweden and Denmark swarmed with privateers, commerce became almost impossible. Sweden suffered in this respect with other countries. The customs received in Stockholm sank to one-seventh of their proper amount, and English merchants complained that in one single instance they had lost ninety-six thousand pounds of merchandise owing to the war. Charles, unable to prevent the evil, spoke of it lightly. He said, 'Privateering is a better business than mining, for it requires less capital and brings in more profit; it is better than commerce, for it is less costly and less dangerous; it is better than letting lodgings, because it is less annoying. If I lived on the Swedish coast I should soon become rich, because I should sell house and home and become a privateer.' The sea powers did not, however, declare war, but they sent a fleet of some thirty ships to the Baltic under Admiral Norris to convoy a merchant fleet of five hundred sail, a force which intimidated the Swedes. Norris was well received in St. Petersburg, but coldly in Stralsund. When he threatened Charles with an attack upon the Swedish fleet, the King replied that in that case he should invade Hanover.

The cause of the war between Sweden and Prussia was the so-called 'sequestration' of Stettin. In the summer of 1713, an army of allied Saxons and Russians had invaded southern Pomerania and had taken the fortress of Stettin, and the King of Prussia had ransomed it for a sum of four hundred thousand thalers, on the condition that it should receive a Prussian garrison, and that it should not be given back to Sweden till the end of the war. Charles was not at all inclined to surrender another portion of his hereditary monarchy to a foreigner, nor was he willing, or able, to produce a sum of four hundred thousand thalers. He demanded that Stettin should be given up to him, promising that France and Hesse should be guarantees for the debt, and that he would not use Stettin as a base of operations against Poland or Saxony. The King of Prussia replied by seizing the town of Wolgast and the island of Usedom as advanced points of defence, and occupied both these places with his troops. Charles, against the advice of his minister, determined to drive them out, and the consequence was a declaration of war and the entire loss of Stettin to Sweden.

The breach of friendship with Hanover, and consequently with England—for by this time the Elector of Hanover had succeeded to the English throne—had a less respectable origin. It seemed that the power

of the Swedes was broken, that even if they could continue to survive as a nation they could not retain their German provinces, that a partition of them was imminent, and that, if spoil was in prospect, there was no reason why Hanover should not have her share. If Wolgast and Stettin were to go to Prussia, Rügen and Pomerania north of the Peene to Denmark, and if so many Swedish provinces had passed to Russia, there was no reason why Bremen and Werden should not fall to the share of Hanover, especially as the Elector was willing to pay a considerable sum to their present occupier, the King of Denmark. Therefore the Elector, in his capacity as King of England, supported the Danish fleet with eight ships of the line, and approached the Swedish coast without firing a salute. This conduct was excused by the loss which the English were suffering from the Swedish privateers, and from the reception which Norris had met with from Charles XII. This piece of rudeness was shortly followed by a declaration of war from Hanover against Sweden, in which no sufficient reason was given, stress being laid upon the unwillingness of Charles to make peace, and the necessity of compelling him to do so.

Encompassed by this crowd of enemies Charles had one friend, the aged Louis XIV., King of France, but, weighed down by a load of years, and wearied

by the exertions of the war of the Spanish succession, he was not disposed to undertake new adventures in foreign politics. However, in the spring of 1715, he made a treaty with Sweden, in which he promised to pay to that country a subsidy of ninety thousand pounds a year. Unfortunately Louis died soon afterwards; the money was paid for a short time by his successor the Regent Orleans, but he was not personally well disposed to Charles, and soon joined his adversaries. The Landgrave of Hesse, whose son had married the favourite sister of Charles, Ulrica Eleanora, had promised to support him with a body of troops, on the condition that they should not take part in active warfare, and should return if Hesse were threatened. But the death of Louis XIV. and the declaration of war by Prussia frightened him, and his troops were never sent to Stralsund. Only one German prince stood by Charles, Christian Augustus, the administrator of Holstein-Gottorp, who supplied him with a force of four thousand men, in return for which the Danes sequestered the administrator's own little principality of Eutin.

Whatever might be the ultimate object of the allies, their attention was at present concentrated on Stralsund, a fortress whose natural strength had been greatly increased by the additional fortifications designed and ordered by Charles. The town is en-

tirely surrounded by water, and is connected with the main land only by three causeways called the Frankendamm, the Knieperdamm, and the Triebseerdamm, the town being shaped like a triangle and a causeway leading from each side. Charles had erected strong defensive works before the gates leading to these passages, and also formed an entrenched camp about a mile from the walls. The island of Rügen on the coast of Pomerania, and the smaller islands of Usedom and Wollin were also fortified, to keep up communication with Stralsund and to prevent the enemy from using them as a base of operations against the fortress. The sea passages to the south-east of Stralsund were made impassable by spars and sunken ships, and sixteen Swedish frigates were stretched there for the defence of the harbour.

The combined army of Danes, Saxons, and Prussians stationed in Pomerania in June, 1715, amounted to sixty thousand men, and of these about forty thousand appeared before Stralsund on July 15. They contented themselves by opening up trenches against the fortress, but they would undertake nothing more serious owing to the want of a siege-train, and this did not arrive till the end of October. Meantime steps were taken to make the approach to the fortress easier by the removal of the defences which Charles had been at pains to create, and in

this work the Danish fleet rendered excellent service. In July and August the earthworks on the island of Usedom were stormed, and especially the very strong fort of Peenamünde, which was bravely defended by the Swedish garrison. On August 8, there was a sea engagement between the Danish fleet under Admiral Raben, and the Swedish fleet under Sparre, in the waters of Rügen. The fleets were of nearly equal strength and both sides claimed the victory, but the Swedes suffered such severe damage that they were compelled to retire into the harbour of Carlserona. A result of this was that the English ships lent by George I. to Hanover now joined the Danish fleet and hoisted the Danish flag.

A more important success was gained by Admiral Sehested, who compelled the frigates lying close to Rügen to retire, and cleared the passage between that island and Stralsund, so that it was possible to effect a landing. King Charles himself was posted here with a force of from five to six thousand men. For this expedition a force of twenty-two thousand men with twenty-four guns had been prepared, which then exceeded the number of the Swedes at least four-fold. The troops were embarked at Greifswald, about fifteen miles south of Stralsund, at the beginning of November, but the operation was hindered by a violent storm, so that the fleet of four hundred

transports on which the Kings of Prussia and Denmark were both embarked did not sail till November 12. A plan had been drawn up by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, by which the transports, which had been collected at Ludwigsburg, a small harbour to the east of Greifswald, and which had the cavalry on board, should sail to Palmer Ort, the extreme southern point of the island, and should make a feint of landing, with the view of enticing the Swedes to that spot. In the meantime the rest of the fleet, with artillery and infantry, should make for the Bay of Stresow, to the north-east of Palmer Ort, not far from Putbus, in which the true landing was to take place.

In spite of the stormy weather these dispositions were punctually carried out, and the stratagem was completely successful. Charles assembled all the forces at his disposal at Palmer Ort, while the bulk of the enemy's ships made sail for Stresow when the transports were beached. The disembarkation of the whole army was effected in two hours, and when Charles, who had hurried away from Palmer Ort as soon as he had discovered his mistake, arrived at Stresow early on the following morning he found them, to his great surprise, strongly entrenched. Without hesitating a moment he ordered the charge, in the hope that Cronstedt's artillery, firing quickly

in the manner which we have before described, might clear a path for him. He attacked the very point at which the King of Denmark was posted, but after reaching the dry ditch could not mount the breastwork. Only one company of the body-guards, under the command of Torstenson, succeeded in surmounting this obstacle and pressed into the camp. Here he was overmastered by superior numbers, and taken prisoner with his handful of men. At all other points the Swedes were repulsed. The allies then left their trenches and prepared to surround the Swedish army, and a severe combat ensued. Charles again and again exposed his life. A Danish cavalry officer, who had recognized him, seized him with one hand by the hair, and with the other tried to wrest his sword from him crying, 'Surrender, sir, or you are a dead man.'

But Charles drew a pistol from his holster with his left hand and shot the Dane dead. He was again surrounded by the enemy, and only rescued by Poniatowski. At another time the King's horse was shot under him and he fell beneath it, a spent cannon-ball struck him in the breast and deprived him of his senses, so that he lay there helpless, in danger of being crushed and killed or taken prisoner. A friend recognised him by the flash of a cannon, put him on his own horse and carried him off. He was brought back senseless to Stralsund.

After this the allies proceeded to besiege Stralsund with redoubled vigour. The entrenched camp, of which we have before spoken, fell into their hands on November 5. This was the result of treachery. A Swedish lieutenant, who from some personal slight had deserted from Stralsund, showed the besiegers a concealed passage which led under the water to the rear of the camp. By these means a body of two thousand men were enabled to break through, and after a stout resistance overpowered the garrison, the greater number of whom were taken prisoners. Reinforced by the troops which arrived from Rügen, and using the entrenched camp as a base of operations, they opened trenches against the Hornwork which defended Frankenthor, making use at the same time of their heavy battering guns. On December 3, they had arrived within fifty feet of the palisade which protected the covered way, whence they began another cannonade. They got possession of the covered way on December 5, and no efforts of the garrison, although they were led by Charles in person, could drive them from it.

Three days later three batteries of heavy guns were directed against the Hornwork and silenced its batteries, and next day a large breach was made in its walls. On December 17, at three in the afternoon, they advanced to storm it in four columns, and suc-

ceeded in getting possession of it, nearly the whole of the Swedish garrison being either killed or captured. The next day Charles made a desperate attempt to recover possession of this most important work. At the head of four Swedish regiments he succeeded in expelling the garrison, but reinforcements came up and the Swedes were driven out. The time had now come to attack the wall of the town itself, and a large breach was speedily made in it. Stralsund was no longer tenable, all hope of resisting a storm was at an end. The ice was beginning to form over the harbour, and when that had frozen all hope of escape would be gone. Charles had the choice between death, captivity, and flight. By the advice of his most trusted counsellors Duches, Müllern and Feif, he chose the last. With the greatest difficulty a way was cut through the ice into the open water beyond. The King selected a six-oared boat, and in the night of December 21, accompanied only by a page and by his faithful friends Rosen and Düring, he went on board. Rosen had attended him on the memorable ride from Pitesti, and so had Düring's brother, who had fallen only two days before in the attempt to recover the Hornwork. They found that the frost had already iced over the channel which they had prepared, so that it had to be cut out again, and this delayed them so much that they

could not reach the open sea of safety before day had dawned. The enemy fired at them, and one of the Chancery officers who were following in another boat was wounded.

At length, after twelve hours' battling with the sea, the three boats of which the expedition consisted reached the Cloister Island of Hiddensee; here they found no ship ready to receive them. At length an old and rotten boat, 'The Whale,' was discovered, but their journey was still impeded by the ice. Even in the open sea itself they were in danger of being cut off by the Danish cruisers, but were protected from their view by storm and snow. They now fell in with a Swedish brigantine, and were received on board, and at four o'clock on the morning of Christmas Eve they cast anchor at Trelleborg, between Malmö and Ystad, close to the scene of the King's boyish exploits. The night was dark and rainy, and Charles had to take refuge under a rock to wait for day. In such sorry guise did Charles return to his own country after fifteen years' absence, without an army and with scarcely a friend. When day broke the travellers passed through Trelleborg unnoticed, and being a peasant's waggon proceeded to Ystad, where the King occupied the same house which had received him in 1710, when, after the conclusion of the peace of Travendal, he set out for the defence of

Livonia and the punishment of King Augustus. If he thought of the contrast between the two epochs what emotions must have filled his breast !

On the day that Charles set foot again upon the soil of Sweden Stralsund capitulated, and on Christmas Day the victorious troops entered the town. The garrison of six thousand men were prisoners, with the exception of certain officers, and personal attendants and body-guards of the King, who were allowed to depart. All Swedish possessions, as far as the river Peene together with the island of Rügen, fell to the King of Denmark, while the King of Prussia contented himself with the possession of Stettin, together with the islands of Usedom and Wollin. King Augustus was to have received as his share sixteen regiments of prisoners, but they were found to exist principally on paper, so he was presented with cannon, standards, drums, and trumpets, as compensation for his loss.

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that if Charles had accepted the treaty of neutrality in 1710, in common with the other powers, Sweden might, in all probability, have remained in possession of its German provinces. She had now lost them, six years afterwards, with further loss of Cracow's army in 1710, Stenbock's in 1712, and the King's in 1714, together not less than fifty thousand men, not count-

ing the enormous expenditure of money which the operations of these years had cost the country. It is also difficult to excuse Charles for remaining a whole year in Stralsund, in compliance with that curious trait of character which rendered him as obstinate in his dogged inactivity as in his feverish energy. He had not sufficient troops to expel the allies from Pomerania, and Stralsund was scarcely of sufficient importance to justify the presence of the King within its walls for so long a time. It certainly served to attract the armies of the allies, and to prevent them from doing mischief in other places, but this end might have been achieved by a commandant of lesser eminence. Charles would have been better advised to have used Stralsund as a basis of operations against the allies, and to have collected reinforcements from Sweden for that purpose. If he had been thus occupied his stay in Stralsund would have been defensible. But a diversion in Norway would have been still more advantageous, as that country was but scantily defended. When he at last undertook the expedition in 1716 he was compelled to surrender Christiania, which he had been able to capture, to the very Danish troops who had been set free by the capitulation of Stralsund.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LION AT BAY.

CHARLES after his arrival at Ystad behaved in a most extraordinary manner. It had been hoped that he would visit his capital, and a state-coach had been constructed to be used for this purpose. But nothing would induce him to take this step, not even the illness and death of his grandmother, to whom he had been so devotedly attached. He gave his entire confidence to Baron Görz, a subject of Holstein-Gottorp, of whom we have previously heard. Görz would only accept the offer of Charles on the conditions that he should remain in the service of Holstein, that all his communications should be made to the King himself and not through any intermediary, that he should choose his own subordinates, that the King should promise to make peace with his enemies within the year, and that Görz should not be bound to remain in the King's service

for more than a year. With these understandings Görz entered upon his office in February, 1716, with the unrestricted power of a Viceroy or a Grand Vizier. If Charles would not consent at the first interview, Görz asked leave to put his views into writing, and by leaving out those points to which the King principally objected generally got his own way.

Before peace could be made war must be continued, and for that purpose both men and money were necessary. To explain the manner in which Charles filled up his decimated and in some cases nearly annihilated regiments would require a knowledge of the extremely complicated system of Swedish recruiting, which it is beyond our purpose to attempt to give. Suffice it to say that all laws and customs which compelled individuals or corporations to furnish troops were strained to the utmost, and when the old laws failed new laws were created for the purpose. Men were dragged from the church in the middle of divine service, they were extracted from the mines, they were seized in the public houses. Those which were previously exempt were compelled to submit themselves to the same obligations. Even University students and schoolboys were forced to serve. Inquiries were made in these establishments if there were any sturdy young fellows who were not fond of their studies, and who would be

better employed in handling a musket or trailing a pike. If this were the case, they were remorselessly carried off. After the death of Charles some of them returned to their studies, and it was not uncommon to find in the latter half of the century reverend preachers who had in their youth served in the great King's army.

Even with all these expedients it was difficult to obtain a sufficient supply of soldiers. The people left their homes for military service with sighs and tears. Many fled into the woods, where they were protected by sympathising peasants. Charles was obliged to order that anyone conniving at the escape of a recruit should be immediately impressed for military service, and that anyone giving information which would lead to the discovery of a recruit should receive a reward of thirty shillings. Many cut off their fingers or wounded themselves in the feet to escape this dreaded fate, and an edict had to be passed that anyone so treating himself should still be obliged to serve, and should receive thirty strokes of the rod at the same time. But, if they succeeded in making themselves absolutely useless, they were to receive sixty strokes and were to be put to compulsory labour in the convict yard. At this time, for some reason with which we are not acquainted, Charles dismissed his splendid corps of body trabants,

and formed instead a so-called body squadron of three hundred and sixty mounted horse, the best riders of the Swedish army. The cost of purchasing and equipping them was thrown upon individuals, who thus found themselves exposed to a new burden.

The methods adopted for raising money were not less oppressive. Old taxes were increased as much as possible, the imposts on land were doubled and sometimes trebled in amount. The towns had to pay at first twice, and then four times their former contribution, although from their condition of poverty the money received from them did not increase in proportion. The carriage of letters was made dearer, and the custom duties were raised. Charles found it so difficult to manipulate all these varying sources of income that he occupied himself with a plan of simplifying taxation by a single income tax and a single land tax, but the scheme was cut short by his death. Another source of income was found in a kind of compulsory contribution exacted from all Swedish subjects to supply the necessities of the Crown. For this, generals, bishops, rich merchants, and such like people, paid thirty thalers, majors fifteen, captains twelve, parsons, lieutenants, and attornies nine, preachers and non-commissioned officers three, married and well-to-do peasants a thaler and a half. The produce of this tax was very considerable.

Taxes were also imposed on luxuries. These had existed previously and Charles had done away with them, but he found himself compelled to bring them back again. The Swedes had to pay for the use of tea, coffee, and chocolate, for foreign lace, for silk dresses, for gold and silver ornaments, for fur robes, for smart hats, for carriages. It is said that a wealthy citizen's wife who dressed herself in the manner to which she had been accustomed before the tax would not have to pay less than three hundred thalers a year. But sumptuary laws are generally of little avail, and these taxes, however irritating they might be to individuals, brought but a small return into the treasury. Other even more oppressive taxes were devised, but owing to the King's death and to other reasons were never imposed. Also the compulsory quartering of troops was a severe burden to the country, and so were the purveyance of provisions and the use of horses and carriages for the public service, which laid a terrible burden upon the peasants, and brought the harshness and the unpopularity of the government home to their very doors.

Other means of raising money were created by the inventive imagination of Görz. Besides securing a loan from Holland, which he could not obtain from his own countrymen, all bodies in possession of funds, such as churches, schools, and charitable corporations,

were induced to lend their money to the government at a promised interest of six per cent. Even this was not enough, and it was followed in 1718 by a compulsory loan from all Swedish subjects; also the salaries of civil servants were largely taxed, and the arrangements of the Post Office, which included also the transport of travellers, were altered for the profit of the Crown. The Crown lands provided another source of income; some were mortgaged and some were sold, waste lands were also claimed for the support of the state, and the great tea-tax, which had been part of the revenue of the Crown, was farmed out to individual contractors. Violent hands were laid on the securities of the bank, and the coinage was depreciated with reckless extravagance. Tokens were struck of various kinds, and attempts were made to give them a forced value, the amount coined being not under thirty-four million thalers. They were given strange outlandish names, which caused both merriment and contempt amongst the people. One stamped 'Publica Fides,' was called Görz's cook, and those stamped with Jupiter, Saturn, Phœbus, or Mars, received the nickname of Görz's copper gods. Many more would have been struck if it had not been for the King's death. It was natural that every effort to give to these tokens the value which they were supposed to possess, and to

get them accepted for regular payments, proved a failure. Görz also went on to depreciate the regular currency, and a silver coin struck with the King's name, because no one could be found in Stockholm able to reproduce his head, received the title of Görz's thaler.

Besides this, the cultivators were compelled to deliver their produce at a maximum price. After the great harvest of 1716, producers of corn and hay had to make large contributions to a public granary, to be paid for at once in bonds and in the following year in money. A careful list was made of all provisions in the hands of private individuals, also Stockholm and other large towns were compelled to provide for sale a certain amount of corn and salt under the penalty of a fine. Similar measures were taken with regard to the produce of mines and smelting works, and in respect to breweries and bake-houses. The first were compelled to serve a special district, in order that the fullest supervision might be exercised over any possible waste of barley. For a similar reason all houses and offices of private individuals were to be carefully searched once a fortnight, and if any superfluous grain were found it was to be taken to certain public bake-houses which were established, and after being made into bread was sold at a fixed price. As most of the bakers' apprentices had gone

away to the army, and as journeymen were difficult to obtain, bakers were allowed to make use of soldiers from the garrisons of their respective towns, and also to impress all women who were found walking about the streets in idleness or evil conduct. This naturally caused great dissatisfaction, because it was said that, if private baking were done away with, the public bake-houses could only supply a very small proportion of the bread which was required. In spite of these exactions, there was a very heavy deficit. In spite of Charles XI. the expenses of the government did not exceed six millions of thalers; in 1711 they ran to more than fifteen millions, and for the year 1718 they were estimated at nearly thirty-five millions. Görz declared that, at that time, the ordinary public income would only suffice for a fortnight's expenditure, and the deficit for three years amounted to over thirty millions of silver thalers.

It may easily be imagined to what extent this method of government roused discontent and hatred against Charles and his minister, so that these times are looked back upon by the Swedes in something of the same light as the French regard the reign of terror. We may feel surprise that a man of such firm and generous character as Charles XII. undoubtedly was should have allowed himself to have been led into these courses, but we can hardly be

surprised that a summary vengeance was inflicted upon the minister after his master's death.

To turn to other matters, Charles had no sooner set foot in Sweden than he lost no time in turning arms against that one of his enemies who lay nearest to him and was the easiest to attack. He thought immediately of renewing the first exploits of his youth and of seizing Copenhagen, which the intervention of the sea powers had on that occasion prevented him from doing. The sound was now covered with strong ice, and Charles in the first half of January assembled a portion of his troops at Landscrona, in order to cross over into Seeland. But on January 20, 1716, there was a violent storm; the ice was shattered and the passage rendered impossible; the expedition therefore had to be given up. It is considered by the best military authorities very doubtful whether the plan would have been successful. Copenhagen was now in a better condition for defence than it had been fifteen years earlier. King Frederick IV. had returned to his capital, which was garrisoned by more than six thousand soldiers and as many sailors, which would have been sufficient to have kept at bay the fifteen thousand men commanded by Charles, especially as he was not provided with the necessary siege-train.

He, therefore, after a short interval determined to

invade Norway, which then belonged to Denmark. It has often been said that the arrangements of the treaty of Vienna which united Norway and Sweden were a mistake, because it joined together two nations differing in history, character, and language, who although belonging to the same peninsula were placed, as it were, back to back and were separated by a chain of mountains, traversable only by a limited number of passes. Still the juxtaposition of two countries, who were so often set by the ears by public quarrels and private jealousy, must have been a constant source of danger and insecurity to both, and the history of invasions and counter invasions was a warning that the continuance of this condition of things was a standing menace to the peace of Europe. At this time the occupation or the conquest of Norway would have inflicted a severe blow on Denmark.

During the war which we have described the defence of Norway had been neglected, because so many troops were required for service in other parts of the Swedish attack, and it was garrisoned by a number of soldiers in no way proportionate to the extent of territory which they had to guard. There were not more than nine thousand men employed in watching the frontiers, while only about five thousand were available for the defence of its

fortresses. If Charles, instead of spending a year in Stralsund, had, as soon as he returned from Turkey, marched into Norway with a force of twenty thousand men, leaving the fortress of Stralsund to occupy the attention of the Danes, he might have gained possession of the whole country, and the Danes would have found it extremely difficult to expel him from it. Now it was too late. His troops were insufficient in number and they were badly found, consequently he could hardly hope for success.

At the beginning of March the Swedes marched into Norway in two columns, consisting altogether of twelve thousand men. After leaving a small detachment in Moss, a small town on the eastern side of the Christiania Fiord, to keep up communication with Sweden, Charles occupied the capital Christiania on March 22, without meeting with any resistance. But the fortress of Akershus, which formed the citadel of the town, still remained to be taken. Charles had expected that it would fall into his hands immediately, but the garrison of two thousand men defended it with obstinacy. It could not be captured by a *coup-de-main*, and the King was obliged to wait until his siege-train and other reinforcements arrived from Sweden. After staying a month in Christiania he was informed that the Danish troops had been shipped from Pomerania into Norway, and

were threatening his communications with his own country. He was therefore compelled to retreat, and marched with his whole force to the frontier fortress of Frederikshald, a place of such ominous significance to him two years later, which he had neglected to secure at the beginning of his expedition. This also he had hoped to surprise, but it was defended bravely by its inhabitants, notably by one Peer or Peter Colbjørnsen, who preferred to set the town on fire rather than it should be taken by the Swedes. Charles did indeed get possession of it, but there lies at a considerable height above it the fortress of Fredericksten, memorable for its connection with the monarch's death. Bombs were shot from this with the object of setting the town on fire, and the same work was more effectually accomplished by Colbjørnsen's servants. All the efforts of the Swedes to extinguish the conflagration were ineffectual, and they found themselves between two fires, that of the burning dwellings and that of the fortress. Charles, with his accustomed obstinacy, long refused to retreat, but was at last compelled to do so. The retreat lay over a bridge, which was swept by the cannons of the citadel. The Swedes retired at seven in the evening, having held the place for just a day, Charles himself bringing up the rear. It is said that the loss of the Swedes was six hundred dead, and one hundred wounded.

A still worse disaster befell the Swedish King two days later. The Swedish fleet of transports, which was lying in the bay of Dynekil, carrying ammunition and provisions for the army, was attacked by the Danish Captain Tordenskjöld on July 8, and entirely destroyed. Five Swedish vessels were destroyed, sixteen were captured with their freight, and nine hundred Swedes were taken prisoners. This disaster, combined with the news that the Danes and Russians were preparing to invade Sweden itself, forced Charles to give up all idea of a further attempt on Frederikshald, and to retreat to his own country. But even then he did not proceed, as might have been expected, to Stockholm, but fixed his head-quarters at Lund. He had indeed good reason to fear that he would not be received in his capital with enthusiasm, and his pride again forbade him to appear as a defeated general in the place which he had so long desired to enter as a victorious sovereign.

He did, however, at this time pay a flying visit to his sister Ulrica Eleanora, with whom he had always maintained a correspondence, and whom he had kept well supplied with money, although he had not seen her for so many years. Her husband, the Landgrave of Hesse, had been wounded in Norway, and was being tended by her in the ancient castle of Wadstena, close by the health-giving baths of Medevi. She had long desired an interview with

her brother, but had been put off by various excuses. At length, on the last day of August, 1716, Charles rode to Hjo situated on the western shore of the Weltemsee, where he arrived alone and unrecognized. The weather was bad and the waves of the lake were rough. He tried to hire a fishing boat to take him across, but the boatmen were unwilling to move and could only be persuaded by much argument and much money. The boat crossed in safety, and Charles landed at Hjiestholm at the foot of the Omberg, the Rigi of those parts. Here the King hired a horse and rode to Wadstena, and walked, all dirty and soaked as he was, into the room of the Princess. What they talked about no one knows, but it may be assumed that they did not quarrel. On the following day, a Friday, there was a public service in the church, which the King attended, but in the evening Charles mounted his horse and rode back to Scania.

The report of an arrangement between Russia and Denmark to invade Sweden was true. The treaty had been concluded whilst Charles was in Norway. In August forty Russian battalions and three thousand dragoons crossed into Iceland, and the King of Denmark promised to support the attack with a force of fifteen battalions of infantry and sixty squadrons of horse. September 21 had been fixed

as the date of the combined movements, and all preparation had been made, when Peter suddenly declared that the time of year was too far advanced, and that he could not take part in the expedition. The facts connected with this event have been related by me elsewhere, and belong rather to the career of Peter than to the life of Charles. The Tsar was now at Copenhagen, where he was treated with distinguished honour by Danes, Dutch, and English. But they were all afraid of him. The Maritime Powers dreaded the effect of the sudden development of Russian power in the Baltic, which might have so injurious an influence on their trade, and professed to believe that the Danes had actually offered him not only the part of Pomerania now in their possession, but also the town of Stettin. The Danes, on their part, thought it not unlikely that he might seize Copenhagen. It is even said that Admiral Norris, who commanded the British fleet, received orders from his government to annihilate the Russian men-of-war and to seize the person of Peter. Under these circumstances, energetic action was hardly to be expected. George I. was also afraid lest, if Peter should succeed in conquering any portion of Sweden, he would never leave it, and, as Elector of Hanover, begged his suzerain the Emperor to intervene, to prevent this ominous enterprise.

Peter was probably quite sincere in ordering that the expedition should not take place, although when it was at an end he would probably have regarded his own personal interests as paramount. A reconnaissance was made upon the coast of Scania, but he found it strongly fortified and defended by a considerable force, got together and equipped in the manner which we have described above. The Russian ships, especially the *Princess*, on which Peter's flag was hoisted, were much injured by the fire of the Swedes. The operation was given up, and the alliance came to nothing. Freed from this danger, Charles remained in Lund from the autumn of 1716 to the spring of 1718, when he undertook the enterprise which was to end in his death.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE KING'S DEATH.

WHILST he was at Lund, Charles lived in the house of Professor Hegardt. His day was spent in the manner with which we are already acquainted, carried out perhaps with greater strictness. He rose very early in the morning, some say soon after midnight, he read his papers, held interviews with his generals and officials till seven; then he mounted his horse and galloped about, whatever the weather might be, always till two in the afternoon, often till the evening. His meals were of the simplest character. He went to bed at nine or ten in the evening, often sleeping on a bed of straw, with a military cloak thrown over him. The King devoted considerable attention to the levying of new troops, and inspected every man and every horse carefully. If a horse was not up to the proper standard, he had its left ear cut off that it might not be passed again by

a more lenient inspector. Besides riding and hunting he often attended the lectures of the professors, and took part in academical disputations. In the autumn of 1718, Charles paid a flying visit to the Norwegian frontier, which lasted a month, but with this exception he remained for eighteen months in this little town. It is difficult to understand why he never visited his capital, and his not doing so must be ascribed in part to indefensible eccentricity.

The King's residence at Lund naturally attracted a large crowd of officials and travellers. The price of provisions rose, and it was difficult to get a lodging. When the students returned at the beginning of term many of them had to go home again. Soldiers were quartered even in the professors' studies. The army paid in tokens and assignats, and there was no compensation for the loss sustained. A part of the corn belonging to the University was confiscated for the army, and paid for at a late period at a reduced price. It is said that during the thirteen years from 1706 to 1719, no one was made a Master of Arts, and that in August, 1717, only twelve students could find a lodging in the town, and that no professors had given more than twelve regular lectures in the course of the year. They had, on the other hand, to preside every fortnight at public disputations, the King himself frequently forming part of the audience.

The health of Charles during his stay at Lund was not always good, and indeed on one or two occasions he was seriously ill, suffering either from his chest or from the wound received at Poltava. He occasionally took medicine, but in far larger doses than those which the doctor had prescribed. His whole thoughts were set on war, and he did not seem to mind how many enemies he had upon his hands.

At the same time, every effort was made by the powers of Europe to conclude an honourable peace, and to put an end to this interminable discord. The Tsar had nothing more to gain by a war with Sweden, his views were directed elsewhere. King George of England would have desired a friendly accommodation with Sweden, for many reasons—for the protection of English commerce, for the security of the possession of Bremen, and because of the growing jealousy of the development of Russia amongst English merchants. Charles, however, paid little attention to the suggestions of these potentates. It seems that in the spring of 1717, Peter made a proposal to Görz for restoring Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, and Finland to Sweden, keeping of course St. Petersburg and a small strip of land in the neighbourhood of the new capital. King George, on his side, proposed that Sweden should give up Verden to Hanover, and also Bremen, for a considerable sum of money and some

compensation elsewhere. Charles would only consent to deliver them as a temporary pledge, and that on the condition of receiving Bornholm from Denmark and the part of Norway east of the Glommen. Bremen would have given Hanover a port, and an easy communication with England by sea, which she greatly needed, and Verden was necessary for the effective possession of Bremen. Prussia desired to obtain for herself Stettin and the country south of the Peene, and offered to guarantee to Sweden the rest of Pomerania, and promised assistance against Russia; Charles, on the other hand, demanded the restoration of the whole of Pomerania.

In August, 1717, Görz, who appears to have been allowed a free hand in these matters, had an interview with the Tsar Peter at the Palace of Loo in Holland. Here there was undoubtedly some conversation as to the possible conditions of peace between Russia and Sweden, although what took place is not exactly known. It is said that the minister drew a straight line from Wiborg to the White Sea, and suggested that it should be the boundary of the two empires; also that he offered the Duke of Holstein, the probable successor of Charles on the Swedish throne, as a suitor for the hand of Peter's daughter Anne. In this way that Princess would become Queen of Sweden, and, if Peter received Holstein,

he would be a member and perhaps eventually the head of the German confederation. It is certain that on his return from Holland, in the autumn of 1717, Görz was received by the Russians in Riga and Reval with great honour, and accompanied to Sweden by an escort of ships of war. There were indeed two parties at the Swedish court, the Hessian and the Holstein parties, the one desirous of peace with England, the other of peace with Russia. Charles himself without doubt inclined towards the latter. Negotiations were eventually opened at a very retired spot, Löfö in the Åland Islands, not far from Bomarsund, in May, 1718. The place was of so desert a character that wood had to be brought from a distance, out of which two large barns were built for the accommodation of the Russian and Swedish negotiators.

The meeting of the congress was delayed, from the fact that just as the arrangements for it were concluded the Hessian party in Sweden gained the upper hand, and an ambassador was sent with the greatest secrecy to London. It was, however, soon seen that the views of King George and King Charles were incompatible, and the other negotiation was proceeded with. The news of this secret embassy came to Peter's ears, and he was so much enraged that he opened a communication with Denmark, with the

view of marrying his daughter to the Danish Crown Prince, and of making a combined attack upon Sweden. When, however, he heard that the embassy had failed he turned again to Sweden.

Görz appeared at Löfö with great pomp. He took with him, besides two secretaries, sixty-seven servants, fifty-seven soldiers, and fifty-three horses. He had borrowed for his use the Duke of Holstein's silver dinner-service, while his master ate out of the commonest pewter. He had kept the Russian envoys waiting for two months and a half, which was an indication of the Tsar's desire for peace. The instructions given by Charles were not very favourable to that end. Peter was to restore everything that he had conquered from Sweden, without exception—Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, Finland, and Åland, together with their cannon, munitions, and inhabitants, even those of them who belonged to the Greek Church. The Cossacks were to receive back their ancient rights, and the Tsar was to pay a compensation for his unjust attack. These terms were of course impossible, and it is to be wondered that Görz ever consented to convey them. The proposals of Russia, on the other hand, were that Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria and Corelia should remain with Russia, that Finland and Åland should be restored to Sweden, that Augustus should be King of Poland, that Stettin,

with its surrounding district, should be the property of Prussia, and that peace should be made with Hanover and Denmark. Charles was quite as certain to reject these conditions as Peter was to reject those of Charles.

Görz said that he must acquaint his sovereign with these propositions, and prepared to depart; but Ostermann, the Russian envoy, fearing lest Charles might suddenly conclude an alliance with England, suggested more favourable terms, the exact nature of which is not precisely known. Görz was surprised at their moderate character, and hastened to carry news of them to his King. They offered, amongst other things, an alliance with Sweden, for the purpose of conquering Norway, and perhaps Mecklenburg and Hanover, for the advantage of Charles. Görz found his sovereign at Strömstad on the way to Frederikshald, not in a very peaceful humour. He was much tempted by the alliance, but he was hoping to make war in Poland after he had conquered Norway, and to dethrone his own enemy, Augustus. He therefore refused to receive the condition that he should acknowledge Augustus as King, and insisted on the recognition of Stanislaus. Görz thought that this was impossible for Peter to accept, but there was no help for it, and he returned to Åland with the message.

Peter, however, had by this time reasons of his own for being displeased with Augustus, and knew that he had been plotting with other powers for his destruction ; when, therefore, Görz arrived at Åland, at the beginning of July, he heard to his great surprise that Peter was ready to concede the condition about Stanislaus. The proposals made by Ostermann now were, that a line should be drawn from Wiborg to the White Sea, and that everything to the east of this line should belong to Russia, and everything to the west to Sweden, besides Norway, Mecklenburg, and possibly a portion of Limburg or Hanover. Sweden was also to receive Bremen, Verden, Wismar, Rügen, and Stettin, Prussia being compensated by some portions of Poland. To carry out these schemes Charles was to appear in Germany with an army of forty thousand Swedes, and twenty-five thousand Russians, while Peter was to invade Poland with a force of eighty thousand men, to depose Augustus and to set up Stanislaus in his place.

Görz naturally imagined that there was not the slightest doubt about Charles accepting these proposals, and he would perhaps have done so, had not his counsellor been strongly opposed to it. Müllern wrote of these proposals :

‘ All that Sweden yields to Russia is a certain loss,

what Russia gives to Sweden will involve her in war with Poland, Denmark, England, Holland, Austria, and other German powers, who have a claim to Mecklenburg. It will certainly bring about a European, perhaps another Thirty Years', War. If the King enters Germany in 1719 for this purpose he will probably never see his country again, and perhaps, after all, the design of the Tsar is merely to weaken Sweden, in order that she may fall an easy prey to his ambition.'

Charles was impressed by these arguments, and wrote to Görz in August that before anything else was done the Tsar must surrender Livonia, Esthonia, and Finland, which he has captured in an unjust war, and that unless he would consent to this there could be no question of peace.

Görz concealed this answer from the Russians, and undertook a journey with the object of bringing Charles over to his views. He represented to his sovereign that there was no possibility of recovering their lost provinces from Russia; that Sweden with the greatest exertions could not put into the field more than thirty thousand men, whereas Russia could command one hundred and fifty thousand; that the Swedes had only two thousand horses, and no fleet for the transport of troops; that any invasion into Russian territory would be met by the old tactics

of devastation and retreat; that no efficient aid would be forthcoming from other powers, and that Russia was the only enemy which Sweden had to fear. He could, however, produce no effect on the King's stubborn resolution, especially as France was doing her best to bring about an understanding between Sweden and England. When he returned to Åland he had no other course open to him but to amuse the Russians and to prevent them from breaking off the negotiations and attacking Sweden. He persuaded Ostermann to wait till January 1, 1719; but in the meantime Peter had become convinced that peace with Charles was impossible, and began to open negotiations with King George and Frederick IV. of Denmark, either to compel a peace or to give Sweden, as he said, her *coup-de-grâce*.

Such was the state of affairs at the time of Charles's death. We must retrace our steps, and narrate the events which led to that catastrophe.

The greater part of the year 1718 was taken up with the projected expedition into Norway. From the middle of March to the end of October, Charles was on different points of the Norwegian frontier, generally in the neighbourhood of Strömstad. But no one knew where precisely he was to be found. With very few attendants he rode along the frontier line, sometimes as far north as Jemtland, sleeping

in farm-houses, and delighting the peasantry by the cheerfulness with which he lay on a wooden bench, and drank out of a wooden bowl. At length everything was ready. General Armfeldt crossed the border with a force variously estimated at from seven thousand to fourteen thousand men, and advanced against Trondjem, while the main army, thirty thousand strong, invaded the enemy's country at three points. One column, under the command of General Dücker, was entrusted with the duty of making a bridge over the Swinesund, in the neighbourhood of Frederikshald. He was then to extend his troops to the south of that fortress, in order to secure it from attack on that side. The season was late, the weather rainy, the roads heavy, and the river in floods, but with their King at their head the Swedes overcame all obstacles. On November 18, Charles appeared before Frederikshald with the troops destined for the siege of that fortress.

Frederikshald is, as we have already seen, an open town. On a rock just over it rises the citadel of Frederiksten, which completely commands the place. In front of the fortress there had been constructed three advanced works, of which Fort Gyldenlöw, lying to the east, was the largest and the strongest. The town was finally invested on November 25, and the attack upon this fort begun. It was so well defended

that the Swedes could not get their heavy guns into position till December 6, but these soon reduced the enemy's cannon to silence, and on December 8 the place was taken by storm. Immediately after their trenches were opened against the fortress itself, and in spite of a heavy fire the work advanced so rapidly that, on December 11, a parallel was completed at the distance of only two hundred yards. Charles had placed his head-quarters at Tistedden, on the other side of the river, but in order to give constant attention to the siege, he had a little wooden hut built for him close to the fortress, in which he often took his meals and spent the night. On December 11, the first Sunday in Advent, Charles rode to Tistedden, changed his clothes, read some papers which he threw into the fire, seeming, apparently, somewhat depressed. He then attended both the morning and evening services, and gave necessary orders to his generals. At four in the afternoon he rode out accompanied by two Frenchmen, Maigret and Sicre, not to his own hut but to the parallel which had just been opened. The King seemed impatient, and ordered a nearer approach, and Maigret said,

‘ We shall take the fortress in a week.’

‘ We shall see,’ replied the King.

Presently the soldiers came up and went forward, led by Maigret, carrying spades, hoes, fascines, and

gabions. Each soldier laid down his fascine and gabion in the proper place and began to dig under their protection. They were now within musket-shot, and the commandant of the fortress had filled the outworks with sharpshooters, in order to confuse the besiegers; the firing was hot, and a good many men were falling. About eight o'clock in the evening the King took his simple supper, standing in or near the advanced parallel, being, as we have said, within musket-shot. But owing to the darkness the soldiers of the fortress could not take proper aim, so the commandant hung out large torches, and shot fire-balls in order to assist the besieged, and by this time the moon, which was nearly at its full, began to rise. Charles began to suspect that a sally was in prospect, and in order to get a better view climbed up from the ditch of the parallel and leaned against the breastwork, with his hands and arms above it, earnestly watching at the same time the operations of the fortress-garrison and of his own soldiers, who were at work beneath him. Maigret said to him,

‘This is no place for your Majesty; musket and cannon-balls have no more respect for a King than for a common soldier.’

The King ordered him and the others who were near to go and watch the working party, and promised to get down soon from his exposed position. The officers whispered to Maigret,

‘Leave him alone, the more you warn him the more he will expose himself.’

The town clock now struck nine, and the moon was fully risen. The King still stood at the breast-work, his head exposed above it, and his chin supported by his left hand, the left side of his body leaning upon the earth-work. Directly behind him in the trench were Maigret and some other officers, Maigret so near that his head was between the King’s heels. Suddenly a dull sound was heard like that of a stone falling into a swamp, the King’s head sank upon his shoulder, and his left hand slipped down to his side; the body remained standing in the same position.

‘Lord Jesus,’ exclaimed Kaulbars, ‘the King is shot!’

Maigret pulled at the King’s cloak, but there was no answer, no movement, the King was dead. Anxious to conceal the disaster, the officers sent the soldiers away, and removed the body to the trench. They found the left eye pierced, the right eye driven out of its place, and the left hand touching the sword hilt, as if the King had instinctively tried to grasp it in the moment of death. The body was dressed and carried to head-quarters, it was then brought to Uddevalla and embalmed, and it lay in state in the palace of Carlberg until the time had come for its interment. On February 26, 1719, it was buried in the choir of the Ridderholm Church with solemn

pomp, the dead King entering once more, as a mourned and idolized hero, the capital which he had never seen but as a boy. His body now lies in a sarcophagus of black marble, covered with a lion's skin, and surmounted by a crown and sceptre, and, as a fitter monument, there flutter around hundreds of standards and banners, ensigns of many nations, captured in his wars.

It is hardly worth while to mention the rumours of treachery and assassination which have been so abundantly disproved, and which have been shown to have arisen from the ravings of Siquier, who accompanied the King on that fatal day, and who in the delirium of fever declared that he had murdered him. The body was exhumed in 1859, and a careful examination made, by which it was found that the King died of a wound in the left temple, three fingers broad, which could not have been caused by a pistol-shot, but must have come from some larger missile, either the ball of a falconet or the fragment of a shell. It is strange that two other persons confessed to having murdered Charles—Cronstedt, general of artillery, who declared it on his death-bed, and Fabricius, whom we have seen with Charles in Turkey, but who was then in Germany. Such an effect did this sudden and terrible calamity have upon the minds of men!

CONCLUSION.

CHARLES was of middle height, slim in figure, except during some periods of enforced idleness, and broad of shoulder. His appearance was simple yet full of dignity, his expression one of seriousness, benevolence, and repose. He was courteous in demeanour, but never condescended to familiarity. His hair, becoming scantier with years, was brushed up from the sides into the centre, so that the Court poets likened it to a crown. His brow was lofty and broad, his eyes dark-blue, bright, and kindling, his nose curved, his lips full and smiling, his chin dimpled, but he had no beard. After his early years he always wore the same dress, yellow breeches and waistcoat, a dark-blue coat with gilded buttons, a black neckerchief and a three-cornered hat, on his hands gloves of deerskin with long stoutly-made cuffs, a broad girdle round his body, thick riding boots on his feet

with high heels and long flaps which reached over his knees, and large iron spurs. He sometimes wore an ordinary military cloak. He was undoubtedly not only untidy but dirty in his dress. For his own lodging he chose the smallest room in the smallest house, with only a simple bed, a table, and a few chairs, the only ornament a gold-embossed Bible.

He used often to sleep in his clothes, sometimes taking off his boots; his sword was also so placed that he could grasp it at any moment. In later years he gave up the use of a bed and preferred to lie on hay or straw, or even on the ground itself, always choosing the hardest place. He required only from five to seven hours' sleep, generally going to rest at about nine or ten o'clock. But he sometimes closed his eyes in the day, especially, we are told, during sermons, although the preacher declared that he never slept, but only shut his eyes for greater attention. During his first campaigns he slept alone, so that no one knew when he went to bed or when he got up, but in later years a page slept in his room, who was ordered always to go to bed at tattoo. His food was simple, a breakfast of bread-and-butter and beer-soup, but a solid dinner, which he consumed in a quarter or half an hour, when his trabants finished what remained. During his marches he frequently ate standing, making plentiful use of his fingers.

After his early years he entirely renounced the use of wine.

Like his father he was fond of hard exercise and fresh air. He rode many miles a day, rather preferring storm, wind, and rain, generally at a gallop, not unfrequently killing his horse. For these reasons he seldom had a very valuable stud. He had one famous horse called Brandklepper, which had belonged to his father. He rode it in his Polish and Russian campaigns, and in the flight to Bender. It knew how to follow him about wherever he went. It was captured at the Kalabalik, but was afterwards ransomed and brought to Stralsund. Here it was again captured, but was sent across to Scania, where it died in 1718, it is said more than forty-five years old. He had also a favourite dog Pompey, which he had brought with him from Stockholm. It was found one winter's morning dead in the King's bed.

Charles had good health, remarkable strength, and unusual adroitness in bodily exercises. He could at a gallop take up a glove from the ground, and even in his thirty-sixth year, when dressed in his long riding boots, could scratch his ear with his foot. He had a good memory, great acuteness, and a certain degree of scientific ability. But his studies were interrupted at an early age and never resumed, and his literary style became worse and worse. His

later letters were so disfigured by erasures and splashes of ink that he frequently had to write them over again, nor was the matter much better than the manner. It is true that when he stayed in the University town of Lund he made some attempts to improve his education. He studied arithmetic, and suggested a new unit of reckoning in the number sixty-four, which had the advantage of being a square and a cube, and of being divisible by two down to unity; but he made only slight progress in algebra, and declared it a useless science. He also wrote some essays about the connection and the mutual influence on each other of the body and the soul, but Feif was probably a true friend when he represented to him that he was more suited for the sword than for the pen.

One of the most striking characteristics of Charles XII. was his contempt of danger and of death, and it is probable that this was due to a deep-seated fatalism. He is reputed to have said,

‘I shall fall by no other bullet than by that which is destined for me, and when that comes no prudence will help me.’

He was also, as a Calvinist, convinced to his heart of the doctrine of election. He believed that he had a supernatural mission and a supernatural protection. He expected the same principles from his ministers

and his men. He considered it cowardly to save your life by surrender or by flight, or to wish to escape from captivity when you were once in it. He was strict in his religious observances. He always kept the prayer-book of Gustavus Adolphus in his pocket, and a Bible lay on his table, of which he read a portion every day till it was finished. In the autumn of 1708, he had read the book through four times.

He received the communion twice a year, sometimes with tears in his eyes ; on solemn days of penitence he fasted till six in the evening. His soldiers were taught to pray twice a day. On the march or in the camp, when the clock struck seven and four, the trumpets sounded, the host halted, everyone knelt where he stood, on the rock or in the road, uncovered his head and offered a prayer to the God of Battles.

Although so simple in his own tastes, Charles was extravagant towards his friends and dependents. He squandered the resources of the State as if he had no idea of the value of money. He used to put large sums of money into people's pockets without their knowing it, and refused all thanks. Stanislaus Leszczinski cannot have received from him less than two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. After his return from Sweden in 1716, he used to keep from three to

four hundred ducats in purses made up to contain from ten to fifty ducats each. These were kept in his room for use, and he used to slip one or other into the hands of those who visited him, rejecting any expressions of gratitude. It was the duty of the page to see that the proper number of these purses were made up every night. Perhaps his chief characteristic was the narrow, obstinate, and almost insane following of a single end, neglecting all other considerations. He possessed this fault as a boy, but it grew with his growth. He showed it also in little things. When he was hunting, if several hares were started he would only allow one to be pursued and followed, whatever might be the chances of catching it, showing in this, perhaps, the qualities of a good sportsman. In chess also he would fix his attack on a single piece, and neglect everything else till it was captured. It was this over-persistence of will, as well as over-confidence in his own sense of right and justice, that led to his destruction. He seems never to have had a confidant, but he had many friends whom he loved with a deep affection, and whose deaths cut him to the heart; those, for instance, of the Duke of Holstein, of Axel Hård, of Klinkowström the darling of his youth, and above all of the 'little prince,' whom he loved more than a brother. He could never speak of his mother with-

out tears, and the death of his sister Hedvig Sophia caused him a bitter pang.

Let us review for a brief space the career we have described. In the year 1699, when he was a boy of seventeen, the rulers of Russia, Poland, and Denmark formed a conspiracy against him, to partition his kingdom. King Augustus attacked Riga, King Frederick invaded Holstein, but Charles, after forcing his fleet through almost impassable channels, crossed the sound to Seeland, and, in a fortnight, compelled the King of Denmark to accept a humiliating peace. Immediately after this he defeated the Russians at Narva, who were three times his strength, and he could have obtained a peace if he had not set his heart on crushing his third enemy Augustus. Such were the exploits of 1700. The next year he smote the forces of King Augustus, so that they fled to Saxony; he then determined to deprive the Saxon Elector of the Polish Crown. For this purpose he made use of the party strifes which were distracting that country. The victory of Clissow followed in 1702. The King of Poland retreated behind the Vistula and the Bug, Charles attacked him on May 1, 1703, at Pultusk, and drove him from his position with scarcely the loss of a man. Thorn was then invested, and the greater portion of the Saxon infantry taken prisoners.

In the early part of 1704, Charles was occupied in securing the election of Stanislaus Lesczinski as King of Poland. Then followed the march to Lemberg, inspired perhaps by the wish to capture a virgin fortress, but it gave Augustus an opportunity of returning to Warsaw. Charles was soon in pursuit, drove his enemy from his capital west and south, and scattered him to the winds. The year 1705 was spent in inactivity; in the next year followed the battle of Fraustadt, in which Rehnskjöld almost annihilated the Saxon forces. Charles then determined upon his wonderful march into Saxony, where he extorted what conditions he pleased from his deceitful enemy. He remained a whole year at Alt-Ranstädt, the arbiter of Europe. His star then declined from its zenith. He invaded Russia to punish the third enemy, with whom he should have made an advantageous peace long before, and suffered the fate of those who invade that country, the land of the Dark Tower, of which Charles in vain attempted to sound the bugle horn. Holowczyn was his last victory, but also his first defeat. The march into the Ukraine, the defeat of Lewenhaupt followed blow after blow, till in the spring of 1709 he invested Poltava. The lion, caught in the snare, managed to escape with his life from the battle which was fought under its walls, and Charles fled into Turkey, where

he remained for five whole years. In 1714, he undertook his adventurous ride to Stralsund, where he again remained for a year until the fortress fell. Returning at last to Sweden, he renewed the exploits of his youth, and the expedition to Norway was the only one he ever undertook with the idea of conquest. The first failure drove him back to make more careful preparations, and it is probable that he would have gained his purpose had not the fatal bullet pierced his temple at Frederikshald.

His was a life of failure, but it was dominated by the idea of defeating the enemies who had tried to rob him of his patrimony in his youth. His first attack crushed Denmark, and would have taken Copenhagen if the sea-powers would have permitted it. Then, after striking a severe blow at Russia, which kept her quiet for some time, he followed Augustus into the heart of his own country and compelled him to a peace. Lastly he dealt with his third foe, the Tsar, grown much more powerful in the nine years which had elapsed from Narva. His means of attack were not sufficient, he was too proud to retreat, and his obstinate persistence on the same spot, and his culpable rashness, led to his catastrophe. His misfortunes, therefore, are not to be ascribed to a mere adventurous disposition without plan or prudence, but to the carrying out in too narrow

and stubborn a manner of a scheme deliberately and wisely formed.

Charles is placed by competent judges almost in the first rank of generals. He formed his plans swiftly and clearly, executed them deliberately, could wait for the proper moment of execution, and then strike his blow. He had a good eye for country, could use his troops for the best advantage, and always kept his head. His soldiers were devoted to him, and looked upon him as a god; they never ran away when he led them, and when he heard of their flight at Poltava he exclaimed,

‘My God! is it possible that they run!’

Yet no general ever demanded greater sacrifices from his men. For himself he drank to the full of the joy of battle, he loved the shock of conflict, and clapped his hands when he saw the enemy approach. But, as we have seen, he was reckless, and did not calculate the force of surrounding circumstances. He had but little sense or feeling for politics, in which his rival Peter was so great. Through him Sweden lost her place as mistress of the north, but some think she could never have kept it, as, by the conquests of her previous kings, she had undertaken a task far beyond her strength. Charles represented in his character the virtues which his country loves, piety and firmness, simplicity and strength; he has

left a name which will always be honoured amongst that brilliant line of sovereigns who have filled the throne of Wasa, and in spite of the misfortunes with which his government is stained, and in spite of the errors which occasioned them, next after her great hero Gustavus Adolphus, Sweden and the world with her will always honour the memory of Charles XII.

THE END.

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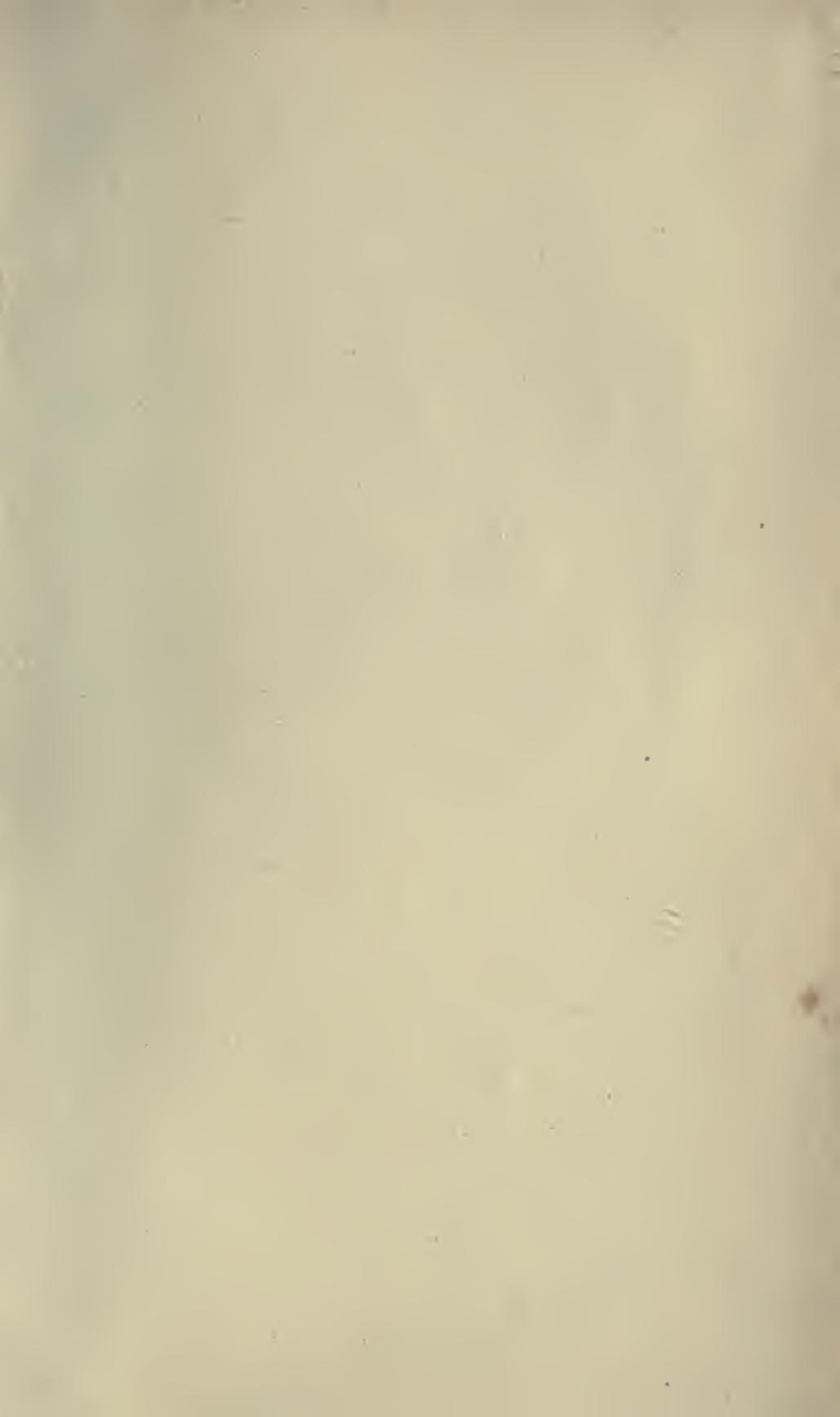
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