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HISTORY OF FRIEDRICH II. OF PRUSSIA

FREDERICK THE GREAT

By Thomas Carlyle

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FREDERICK THE GREAT.

Book I. — BIRTH AND PARENTAGE. — 1712.

Chapter I. — PROEM: FRIEDRICH'S HISTORY FROM THE DISTANCE WE ARE AT.

About fourscore years ago, there used to be seen sauntering on the terraces of Sans Souci, for a short time in the afternoon, or you might have met him elsewhere at an earlier hour, riding or driving in a rapid business manner on the open roads or through the scraggy woods and avenues of that intricate amphibious Potsdam region, a highly interesting lean little old man, of alert though slightly stooping figure; whose name among strangers was King FRIEDRICH THE SECOND, or Frederick the Great of Prussia, and at home among the common people, who much loved and esteemed him, was VATER FRITZ,—Father Fred,—a name of familiarity which had not bred contempt in that instance. He is a King every inch of him, though without the trappings of a King. Presents himself in a Spartan simplicity of vesture: no crown but an old military cocked-hat,—generally old, or trampled and kneaded into absolute SOFTNESS, if new;—no sceptre but one like Agamemnon's, a walking-stick cut from the woods, which serves also as a riding-stick (with which he hits the horse "between the ears," say authors);—and for royal robes, a mere soldier's blue coat with red facings, coat likely to be old, and sure to have a good deal of Spanish snuff on the breast of it; rest of the apparel dim, unobtrusive in color or out, ending in high over-knee military boots, which may be brushed (and, I hope, kept soft with an underhand suspicion of oil), but are not permitted to be blackened or varnished; Day and Martin with their soot-pots forbidden to approach.

The man is not of godlike physiognomy, any more than of imposing stature or costume: close-shut mouth with thin lips, prominent jaws and nose, receding brow, by no means of Olympian height; head, however, is of long form, and has superlative gray eyes in it. Not what is called a beautiful man; nor yet, by all appearance, what is called a happy. On the contrary, the face bears evidence of many sorrows, as they are termed, of much hard labor done in this world; and seems to anticipate nothing but more still coming. Quiet stoicism, capable enough of what joy there were, but not expecting any worth mention; great unconscious and some conscious pride, well tempered with a cheery mockery of humor,—are written on that old face; which carries its chin well forward, in spite of the slight stoop about the neck; snuffy nose rather flung into the air, under its old cocked-hat,—like an old snuffy lion on the watch; and such a pair of eyes as no man or lion or lynx of that Century bore elsewhere, according to all the testimony we have. "Those eyes," says Mirabeau, "which, at the bidding of his great soul, fascinated you with seduction or with terror (*portaient, au gre de son ame heroique, la seduction ou la terreur*)." [Mirabeau, *Histoire Secrete de la Cour de Berlin*, Lettre 28?? (24 September, 1786) p. 128 (in edition of Paris, 1821)]. Most excellent potent brilliant eyes, swift-darting as the stars, steadfast as the sun; gray, we said, of the azure-gray color; large enough, not of glaring size; the habitual expression of them vigilance and penetrating sense, rapidity resting on depth. Which is an excellent combination; and gives us the notion of a lambent outer radiance springing from some great inner sea of light and fire in the man. The voice, if he speak to you, is of similar physiognomy: clear, melodious and sonorous; all tones are in it, from that of ingenuous inquiry, graceful sociality, light-flowing banter (rather prickly for most part), up to definite word of command, up to desolating word of rebuke and reprobation; a voice "the clearest and most agreeable in conversation I ever heard," says witty Dr. Moore. [Moore, *View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland and Germany* (London, 1779), ii. 246.] "He speaks a great deal," continues the doctor; "yet those who hear him, regret that he does not speak a good deal more. His observations are always lively, very often just; and few men possess the talent of repartee in greater perfection."

Just about threescore and ten years ago, [A.D. 1856,—17th August, 1786] his speakings and his workings came to finis in this World of Time; and he vanished from all eyes into other worlds, leaving much inquiry about him in the minds of men;—which, as my readers and I may feel too well, is yet by no means satisfied. As to his speech, indeed, though it had the worth just ascribed to it and more, and though masses of it were deliberately put on paper by himself, in prose and verse, and continue to be printed and kept legible, what he spoke has pretty much vanished into the inane; and except as record or document of what he did, hardly now concerns mankind. But the things he did were extremely remarkable; and cannot be forgotten by mankind. Indeed, they bear such fruit to the present hour as all the Newspapers are obliged to be taking note of, sometimes to an unpleasant degree. Editors vaguely account this man the "Creator of the Prussian Monarchy;" which has since grown so large in the world, and troublesome to the Editorial mind in this and other countries. He was indeed the first who, in a highly public manner, notified its creation; announced to all men that it was, in very deed, created; standing on its feet there, and would go a great way, on the impulse it

had got from him and others. As it has accordingly done; and may still keep doing to lengths little dreamt of by the British Editor in our time; whose prophesyings upon Prussia, and insights into Prussia, in its past, or present or future, are truly as yet inconsiderable, in proportion to the noise he makes with them! The more is the pity for him,—and for myself too in the Enterprise now on hand.

It is of this Figure, whom we see by the mind's eye in those Potsdam regions, visible for the last time seventy years ago, that we are now to treat, in the way of solacing ingenuous human curiosity. We are to try for some Historical Conception of this Man and King; some answer to the questions, "What was he, then? Whence, how? And what did he achieve and suffer in the world?"—such answer as may prove admissible to ingenuous mankind, especially such as may correspond to the Fact (which stands there, abstruse indeed, but actual and unalterable), and so be sure of admissibility one day.

An Enterprise which turns out to be, the longer one looks at it, the more of a formidable, not to say unmanageable nature! Concerning which, on one or two points, it were good, if conveniently possible, to come to some preliminary understanding with the reader. Here, flying on loose leaves, are certain incidental utterances, of various date: these, as the topic is difficult, I will merely label and insert, instead of a formal Discourse, which were too apt to slide into something of a Lamentation, or otherwise take an unpleasant turn.

1. FRIEDRICH THEN, AND FRIEDRICH NOW.

This was a man of infinite mark to his contemporaries; who had witnessed surprising feats from him in the world; very questionable notions and ways, which he had contrived to maintain against the world and its criticisms. As an original man has always to do; much more an original ruler of men. The world, in fact, had tried hard to put him down, as it does, unconsciously or, consciously, with all such; and after the most conscious exertions, and at one time a dead-lift spasm of all its energies for Seven Years, had not been able. Principalities and powers, Imperial, Royal, Czarish, Papal, enemies innumerable as the seasand, had risen against him, only one helper left among the world's Potentates (and that one only while there should be help rendered in return); and he led them all such a dance as had astonished mankind and them.

No wonder they thought him worthy of notice. Every original man of any magnitude is;—nay, in the long-run, who or what else is? But how much more if your original man was a king over men; whose movements were polar, and carried from day to day those of the world along with them. The Samson Agonistes,—were his life passed like that of Samuel Johnson in dirty garrets, and the produce of it only some bits of written paper,—the Agonistes, and how he will comport himself in the Philistine mill; this is always a spectacle of truly epic and tragic nature. The rather, if your Samson, royal or other, is not yet blinded or subdued to the wheel; much more if he vanquish his enemies, not by suicidal methods, but march out at last flourishing his miraculous fighting implement, and leaving their mill and them in quite ruinous circumstances. As this King Friedrich fairly managed to do.

For he left the world all bankrupt, we may say; fallen into bottomless abysses of destruction; he still in a paying condition, and with footing capable to carry his affairs and him. When he died, in 1786, the enormous Phenomenon since called FRENCH REVOLUTION was already growling audibly in the depths of the world; meteoric-electric coruscations heralding it, all round the horizon. Strange enough to note, one of Friedrich's last visitors was Gabriel Honore Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau. These two saw one another; twice, for half an hour each time. The last of the old Gods and the first of the modern Titans;—before Pelion leapt on Ossa; and the foul Earth taking fire at last, its vile mephitic elements went up in volcanic thunder. This also is one of the peculiarities of Friedrich, that he is hitherto the last of the Kings; that he ushers in the French Revolution, and closes an Epoch of World-History. Finishing off forever the trade of King, think many; who have grown profoundly dark as to Kingship and him.

The French Revolution may be said to have, for about half a century, quite submerged Friedrich, abolished him from the memories of men; and now on coming to light again, he is found defaced under strange mud-encrustations, and the eyes of mankind look at him from a singularly changed, what we must call oblique and perverse point of vision. This is one of the difficulties in dealing with his History;—especially if you happen to believe both in the French Revolution and in him; that is to say, both that Real Kingship is eternally indispensable, and also that the destruction of Sham Kingship (a frightful process) is occasionally so. On the breaking-out of that formidable Explosion, and Suicide of his Century, Friedrich sank into comparative obscurity; eclipsed amid the ruins of that universal earthquake, the very dust of which darkened all the air, and made of day a disastrous midnight. Black midnight, broken only by the blaze of conflagrations;—wherein, to our terrified imaginations, were seen, not men, French and other, but ghastly portents, stalking wrathful, and shapes of avenging gods. It must be owned the figure of Napoleon was titanic; especially to the generation that looked on him, and that waited shuddering to be devoured by him. In general, in that French Revolution, all was on a huge scale; if not greater than anything in human experience, at least more grandiose. All was recorded in bulletins, too, addressed to the shilling-gallery; and there were fellows on the stage with such a breadth of sabre, extent of whiskerage, strength of windpipe, and command of men and gunpowder, as had never been seen before. How they bellowed, stalked and flourished about; counterfeiting Jove's thunder to an amazing degree! Terrific Drawcansir figures, of enormous whiskerage, unlimited command of gunpowder; not without sufficient ferocity, and even a certain heroism, stage-heroism, in them; compared with whom, to the shilling-gallery, and frightened excited theatre at large, it seemed as if there had been no generals or sovereigns before; as if Friedrich, Gustavus, Cromwell, William Conqueror and Alexander the Great were not worth speaking of henceforth.

All this, however, in half a century is considerably altered. The Drawcansir equipments getting gradually torn off, the natural size is seen better; translated from the bulletin style into that of fact and history, miracles, even to the shilling-gallery, are not so miraculous. It begins to be apparent that there lived great

men before the era of bulletins and Agamemnon. Austerlitz and Wagram shot away more gunpowder,—gunpowder probably in the proportion of ten to one, or a hundred to one; but neither of them was tenth-part such a beating to your enemy as that of Rossbach, brought about by strategic art, human ingenuity and intrepidity, and the loss of 165 men. Leuthen, too, the battle of Leuthen (though so few English readers ever heard of it) may very well hold up its head beside any victory gained by Napoleon or another. For the odds were not far from three to one; the soldiers were of not far from equal quality; and only the General was consummately superior, and the defeat a destruction. Napoleon did indeed, by immense expenditure of men, and gunpowder, overrun Europe for a time: but Napoleon never, by husbanding and wisely expending his men and gunpowder, defended a little Prussia against all Europe, year after year for seven years long, till Europe had enough, and gave up the enterprise as one it could not manage. So soon as the Drawcansir equipments are well torn off, and the shilling-gallery got to silence, it will be found that there were great kings before Napoleon,—and likewise an Art of War, grounded on veracity and human courage and insight, not upon Drawcansir rodomontade, grandiose Dick-Turpinism, revolutionary madness, and unlimited expenditure of men and gunpowder. "You may paint with a very big brush, and yet not be a great painter," says a satirical friend of mine! This is becoming more and more apparent, as the dust-whirlwind, and huge uproar of the last generation, gradually dies away again.

2. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

One of the grand difficulties in a History of Friedrich is, all along, this same, That he lived in a Century which has no History and can have little or none. A Century so opulent in accumulated falsities,—sad opulence descending on it by inheritance, always at compound interest, and always largely increased by fresh acquirement on such immensity of standing capital;—opulent in that bad way as never Century before was! Which had no longer the consciousness of being false, so false had it grown; and was so steeped in falsity, and impregnated with it to the very bone, that—in fact the measure of the thing was full, and a French Revolution had to end it. To maintain much veracity in such an element, especially for a king, was no doubt doubly remarkable. But now, how extricate the man from his Century? How show the man, who is a Reality worthy of being seen, and yet keep his Century, as a Hypocrisy worthy of being hidden and forgotten, in the due abeyance?

To resuscitate the Eighteenth Century, or call into men's view, beyond what is necessary, the poor and sordid personages and transactions of an epoch so related to us, can be no purpose of mine on this occasion. The Eighteenth Century, it is well known, does not figure to me as a lovely one; needing to be kept in mind, or spoken of unnecessarily. To me the Eighteenth Century has nothing grand in it, except that grand universal Suicide, named French Revolution, by which it terminated its otherwise most worthless existence with at least one worthy act;—setting fire to its old home and self; and going up in flames and volcanic explosions, in a truly memorable and important manner. A very fit termination, as I thankfully feel, for such a Century. Century spendthrift, fraudulent-bankrupt; gone at length utterly insolvent, without real MONEY of performance in its pocket, and the shops declining to take hypocrisies and speciosities any farther:—what could the poor Century do, but at length admit, "Well, it is so. I am a swindler-century, and have long been,—having learned the trick of it from my father and grandfather; knowing hardly any trade but that in false bills, which I thought foolishly might last forever, and still bring at least beef and pudding to the favored of mankind. And behold it ends; and I am a detected swindler, and have nothing even to eat. What remains but that I blow my brains out, and do at length one true action?" Which the poor Century did; many thanks to it, in the circumstances.

For there was need once more of a Divine Revelation to the torpid frivolous children of men, if they were not to sink altogether into the ape condition. And in that whirlwind of the Universe,—lights obliterated, and the torn wrecks of Earth and Hell hurled aloft into the Empyrean; black whirlwind, which made even apes serious, and drove most of them mad,—there was, to men, a voice audible; voice from the heart of things once more, as if to say: "Lying is not permitted in this Universe. The wages of lying, you behold, are death. Lying means damnation in this Universe; and Beelzebub, never so elaborately decked in crowns and mitres, is NOT God!" This was a revelation truly to be named of the Eternal, in our poor Eighteenth Century; and has greatly altered the complexion of said Century to the Historian ever since.

Whereby, in short, that Century is quite confiscate, fallen bankrupt, given up to the auctioneers;—Jew-brokers sorting out of it at this moment, in a confused distressing manner, what is still valuable or salable. And, in fact, it lies massed up in our minds as a disastrous wrecked inanity, not useful to dwell upon; a kind of dusky chaotic background, on which the figures that had some veracity in them—a small company, and ever growing smaller as our demands rise in strictness—are delineated for us.—"And yet it is the Century of our own Grandfathers?" cries the reader. Yes, reader! truly. It is the ground out of which we ourselves have sprung; whereon now we have our immediate footing, and first of all strike down our roots for nourishment;—and, alas, in large sections of the practical world, it (what we specially mean by IT) still continues flourishing all round us! To forget it quite is not yet possible, nor would be profitable. What to do with it, and its forgotten fooleries and "Histories," worthy only of forgetting?—Well; so much of it as by nature ADHERES; what of it cannot be disengaged from our Hero and his operations: approximately so much, and no more! Let that be our bargain in regard to it.

3. ENGLISH PREPOSESSIONS.

With such wagon-loads of Books and Printed Records as exist on the subject of Friedrich, it has always seemed possible, even for a stranger, to acquire some real understanding of him;—though practically, here and now, I have to own, it proves difficult beyond conception. Alas, the Books are not cosmic, they are chaotic; and turn out unexpectedly void of instruction to us. Small use in a talent of writing, if there be not first of all the talent of discerning, of loyally recognizing; of discriminating what is to be written! Books born mostly of Chaos—which want all things, even an INDEX—are a painful object. In sorrow and disgust, you wander over those multitudinous Books: you dwell in endless regions of the superficial, of the nugatory: to your bewildered sense it is as if no insight into the real heart of Friedrich and his affairs were anywhere to be had. Truth is, the Prussian Dryasdust, otherwise an honest fellow, and not afraid of labor, excels all other Dryasdusts yet known; I have often sorrowfully felt as if there were not in Nature, for darkness, dreariness, immethodic platitude, anything comparable to him. He writes big Books wanting in almost every quality; and does not even give an INDEX to them. He has made of Friedrich's History a wide-spread, inorganic, trackless matter; dismal to your mind, and barren as a continent of Brandenburg sand!—Enough, he could do no other: I have striven to forgive him. Let the reader now forgive me; and think sometimes what probably my raw-material was!—

Curious enough, Friedrich lived in the Writing Era,—morning of that strange Era which has grown to such a noon for us;—and his favorite society, all his reign, was with the literary or writing sort. Nor have they failed to write about him, they among the others, about him and about him; and it is notable how little real light, on any point of his existence or environment, they have managed to communicate. Dim indeed, for most part a mere epigrammatic sputter of darkness visible, is the "picture" they have fashioned to themselves of Friedrich and his Country and his Century. Men not "of genius," apparently? Alas, no; men fatally destitute of true eyesight, and of loyal heart first of all. So far as I have noticed, there was not, with the single exception of Mirabeau for one hour, any man to be called of genius, or with an adequate power of human discernment, that ever personally looked on Friedrich. Had many such men looked successively on his History and him, we had not found it now in such a condition. Still altogether chaotic as a History; fatally destitute even of the Indexes and mechanical appliances: Friedrich's self, and his Country, and his Century, still undeciphered; very dark phenomena, all three, to the intelligent part of mankind.

In Prussia there has long been a certain stubborn though planless diligence in digging for the outward details of Friedrich's Life-History; though as to organizing them, assorting them, or even putting labels on them; much more as to the least interpretation or human delineation of the man and his affairs,—you need not inquire in Prussia. In France, in England, it is still worse. There an immense ignorance prevails even as to the outward facts and phenomena of Friedrich's life; and instead of the Prussian no-interpretation, you find, in these vacant circumstances, a great promptitude to interpret. Whereby judgments and prepossessions exist among us on that subject, especially on Friedrich's character, which are very ignorant indeed.

To Englishmen, the sources of knowledge or conviction about Friedrich, I have observed, are mainly these two. FIRST, for his Public Character: it was an all-important fact, not to IT, but to this country in regard to it, That George II., seeing good to plunge head-foremost into German Politics, and to take Maria Theresa's side in the Austrian-Succession War of 1740-1748, needed to begin by assuring his Parliament and Newspapers, profoundly dark on the matter, that Friedrich was a robber and villain for taking the other side. Which assurance, resting on what basis we shall see by and by, George's Parliament and Newspapers cheerfully accepted; nothing doubting. And they have re-echoed and reverberated it, they and the rest of us, ever since, to all lengths, down to the present day; as a fact quite agreed upon, and the preliminary item in Friedrich's character. Robber and villain to begin with; that was one settled point.

Afterwards when George and Friedrich came to be allies, and the grand fightings of the Seven-Years War took place, George's Parliament and Newspapers settled a second point, in regard to Friedrich: "One of the greatest soldiers ever born." This second item the British Writer fully admits ever since: but he still adds to it the quality of robber, in a loose way;—and images to himself a royal Dick Turpin, of the kind known in Review-Articles, and disquisitions on Progress of the Species, and labels it FREDERICK; very anxious to collect new babblement of lying Anecdotes, false Criticisms, hungry French Memoirs, which will confirm him in that impossible idea. Had such proved, on survey, to be the character of Friedrich, there is one British Writer whose curiosity concerning him would pretty soon have died away; nor could any amount of unwise desire to satisfy that feeling in fellow-creatures less seriously disposed have sustained him alive, in those baleful Historic Acherons and Stygian Fens, where he has had to dig and to fish so long, far away from the upper light!—Let me request all readers to blow that sorry chaff entirely out of their minds; and to believe nothing on the subject except what they get some evidence for.

SECOND English source relates to the Private Character. Friedrich's Biography or Private Character, the English, like the French, have gathered chiefly from a scandalous libel by Voltaire, which used to be called *Vie Privée du Roi de Prusse* (Private Life of the King of Prussia) [First printed, from a stolen copy, at Geneva, 1784; first proved to be Voltaire's (which some of his admirers had striven to doubt), Paris, 1788; stands avowed ever since, in all the Editions of his Works (ii. 9-113 of the Edition by Bandouin Freres, 97 vols., Paris, 1825-1834), under the title *Memoires pour servir a Vie de M. de Voltaire*, —with patches of repetition in the thing called *Commentaire Historique*, which follows *ibid.* at great length.] libel undoubtedly written by Voltaire, in a kind of fury; but not intended to be published by him; nay burnt and annihilated, as he afterwards imagined; No line of which, that cannot be otherwise proved, has a right to be believed; and large portions of which can be proved to be wild exaggerations and perversions, or even downright lies,—written in a mood analogous to the Frenzy of John Dennis. This serves for the Biography or Private Character of Friedrich; imputing all crimes to him, natural and unnatural;—offering indeed, if combined with facts otherwise known, or even if well considered by itself, a thoroughly flimsy, incredible and impossible image. Like that of some flaming Devil's Head, done in phosphorus on the walls of the black-hole, by an Artist whom you had locked up there (not quite without reason) overnight.

Poor Voltaire wrote that *Vie Privée* in a state little inferior to the Frenzy of John Dennis,—how brought about we shall see by and by. And this is the Document which English readers are surest to have read, and tried to credit as far as possible. Our counsel is, Out of window with it, he that would know Friedrich of

Prussia! Keep it awhile, he that would know Francois Arouet de Voltaire, and a certain numerous unfortunate class of mortals, whom Voltaire is sometimes capable of sinking to be spokesman for, in this world!—Alas, go where you will, especially in these irreverent ages, the noteworthy Dead is sure to be found lying under infinite dung, no end of calumnies and stupidities accumulated upon him. For the class we speak of, class of "flunkies doing *saturnalia* below stairs," is numerous, is innumerable; and can well remunerate a "vocal flunky" that will serve their purposes on such an occasion!—

Friedrich is by no means one of the perfect demigods; and there are various things to be said against him with good ground. To the last, a questionable hero; with much in him which one could have wished not there, and much wanting which one could have wished. But there is one feature which strikes you at an early period of the inquiry, That in his way he is a Reality; that he always means what he speaks; grounds his actions, too, on what he recognizes for the truth; and, in short, has nothing whatever of the Hypocrite or Phantasm. Which some readers will admit to be an extremely rare phenomenon. We perceive that this man was far indeed from trying to deal swindler-like with the facts around him; that he honestly recognized said facts wherever they disclosed themselves, and was very anxious also to ascertain their existence where still hidden or dubious. For he knew well, to a quite uncommon degree, and with a merit all the higher as it was an unconscious one, how entirely inexorable is the nature of facts, whether recognized or not, ascertained or not; how vain all cunning of diplomacy, management and sophistry, to save any mortal who does not stand on the truth of things, from sinking, in the long-run. Sinking to the very mud-gods, with all his diplomacies, possessions, achievements; and becoming an unnamable object, hidden deep in the Cesspools of the Universe. This I hope to make manifest; this which I long ago discerned for myself, with pleasure, in the physiognomy of Friedrich and his life. Which indeed was the first real sanction, and has all along been my inducement and encouragement, to study his life and him. How this man, officially a King withal, comported himself in the Eighteenth Century, and managed not to be a Liar and Charlatan as his Century was, deserves to be seen a little by men and kings, and may silently have didactic meanings in it.

He that was honest with his existence has always meaning for us, be he king or peasant. He that merely shammed and grimaced with it, however much, and with whatever noise and trumpet-blowing, he may have cooked and eaten in this world, cannot long have any. Some men do COOK enormously (let us call it COOKING, what a man does in obedience to his HUNGER merely, to his desires and passions merely),—roasting whole continents and populations, in the flames of war or other discord;—witness the Napoleon above spoken of. For the appetite of man in that respect is unlimited; in truth, infinite; and the smallest of us could eat the entire Solar System, had we the chance given, and then cry, like Alexander of Macedon, because we had no more Solar Systems to cook and eat. It is not the extent of the man's cookery that can much attach me to him; but only the man himself, and what of strength he had to wrestle with the mud-elements, and what of victory he got for his own benefit and mine.

4. ENCOURAGEMENTS, DISCOURAGEMENTS.

French Revolution having spent itself, or sunk in France and elsewhere to what we see, a certain curiosity reawakens as to what of great or manful we can discover on the other side of that still troubled atmosphere of the Present and immediate Past. Curiosity quickened, or which should be quickened, by the great and all-absorbing question, How is that same exploded Past ever to settle down again? Not lost forever, it would appear: the New Era has not annihilated the old eras: New Era could by no means manage that;—never meant that, had it known its own mind (which it did not): its meaning was and is, to get its own well out of them; to readapt, in a purified shape, the old eras, and appropriate whatever was true and NOT combustible in them: that was the poor New Era's meaning, in the frightful explosion it made of itself and its possessions, to begin with!

And the question of questions now is: What part of that exploded Past, the ruins and dust of which still darken all the air, will continually gravitate back to us; be reshaped, transformed, readapted, that so, in new figures, under new conditions, it may enrich and nourish us again? What part of it, not being incombustible, has actually gone to flame and gas in the huge world-conflagration, and is now GASEOUS, mounting aloft; and will know no beneficence of gravitation, but mount, and roam upon the waste winds forever,—Nature so ordering it, in spite of any industry of Art? This is the universal question of afflicted mankind at present; and sure enough it will be long to settle.

On one point we can answer: Only what of the Past was TRUE will come back to us. That is the one ASBESTOS which survives all fire, and comes out purified; that is still ours, blessed be Heaven, and only that. By the law of Nature nothing more than that; and also, by the same law, nothing less than that. Let Art, struggle how it may, for or against,—as foolish Art is seen extensively doing in our time,—there is where the limits of it will be. In which point of view, may not Friedrich, if he was a true man and King, justly excite some curiosity again; nay some quite peculiar curiosity, as the lost Crowned Reality there was antecedent to that general outbreak and abolition? To many it appears certain there are to be no Kings of any sort, no Government more; less and less need of them henceforth, New Era having come. Which is a very wonderful notion; important if true; perhaps still more important, just at present, if untrue! My hopes of presenting, in this Last of the Kings, an exemplar to my contemporaries, I confess, are not high.

On the whole, it is evident the difficulties to a History of Friedrich are great and many: and the sad certainty is at last forced upon me that no good Book can, at this time, especially in this country, be written on the subject. Wherefore let the reader put up with an indifferent or bad one; he little knows how much worse it could easily have been!—Alas, the Ideal of history, as my friend Sauerteig knows, is very high; and it is not one serious man, but many successions of such, and whole serious generations of such, that can ever

again build up History towards its old dignity. We must renounce ideals. We must sadly take up with the mournfulest barren realities;—dismal continents of Brandenburg sand, as in this instance; mere tumbled mountains of marine-stores, without so much as an Index to them!

Has the reader heard of Sauerteig's last batch of *Springwurzeln*, a rather curious valedictory Piece? "All History is an imprisoned Epic, nay an imprisoned Psalm and Prophecy," says Sauerteig there. I wish, from my soul, he had DISimprisoned it in this instance! But he only says, in magniloquent language, how grand it would be if disimprisoned;—and hurls out, accidentally striking on this subject, the following rough sentences, suggestive though unpractical, with which I shall conclude:—

"Schiller, it appears, at one time thought of writing an *Epic Poem upon Friedrich the Great*, 'upon some action of Friedrich's,' Schiller says. Happily Schiller did not do it. By oversetting fact, disregarding reality, and tumbling time and space topsy-turvy, Schiller with his fine gifts might no doubt have written a temporary 'epic poem,' of the kind read and admired by many simple persons. But that would have helped little, and could not have lasted long. It is not the untrue imaginary Picture of a man and his life that I want from my Schiller, but the actual natural Likeness, true as the face itself, nay TRUER, in a sense. Which the Artist, if there is one, might help to give, and the Botcher (*Pfuscher*) never can! Alas, and the Artist does not even try it; leaves it altogether to the Botcher, being busy otherwise!—

"Men surely will at length discover again, emerging from these dismal bewilderingments in which the modern Ages reel and stagger this long while, that to them also, as to the most ancient men, all Pictures that cannot be credited are—Pictures of an idle nature; to be mostly swept out of doors. Such veritably, were it never so forgotten, is the law! Mistakes enough, lies enough will insinuate themselves into our most earnest portrayings of the True: but that we should, deliberately and of forethought, rake together what we know to be not true, and introduce that in the hope of doing good with it? I tell you, such practice was unknown in the ancient earnest times; and ought again to become unknown except to the more foolish classes!" That is Sauerteig's strange notion, not now of yesterday, as readers know:—and he goes then into "Homer's Iliad," the "Hebrew Bible," "terrible Hebrew VERACITY of every line of it;" discovers an alarming "kinship of Fiction to lying;" and asks, If anybody can compute "the damage we poor moderns have got from our practices of fiction in Literature itself, not to speak of awfully higher provinces? Men will either see into all this by and by," continues he; "or plunge head foremost, in neglect of all this, whither they little dream as yet!—

"But I think all real Poets, to this hour, are Psalmists and Iliadists after their sort; and have in them a divine impatience of lies, a divine incapacity of living among lies. Likewise, which is a corollary, that the highest Shakspeare producible is properly the fittest Historian producible;—and that it is frightful to see the *Gelehrte Dummkopf* [what we here may translate, DRYASDUST] doing the function of History, and the Shakspeare and the Goethe neglecting it. 'Interpreting events;' interpreting the universally visible, entirely INDubitable Revelation of the Author of this Universe: how can Dryasdust interpret such things, the dark chaotic dullard, who knows the meaning of nothing cosmic or noble, nor ever will know? Poor wretch, one sees what kind of meaning HE educes from Man's History, this long while past, and has got all the world to believe of it along with him. Unhappy Dryasdust, thrice-unhappy world that takes Dryasdust's reading of the ways of God! But what else was possible? They that could have taught better were engaged in fiddling; for which there are good wages going. And our damage therefrom, our DAMAGE,—yes, if thou be still human and not cormorant, —perhaps it will transcend all Californias, English National Debts, and show itself incomputable in continents of Bullion!—

"Believing that mankind are not doomed wholly to dog-like annihilation, I believe that much of this will mend. I believe that the world will not always waste its inspired men in mere fiddling to it. That the man of rhythmic nature will feel more and more his vocation towards the Interpretation of Fact; since only in the vital centre of that, could we once get thither, lies all real melody; and that he will become, he, once again the Historian of Events,—bewildered Dryasdust having at last the happiness to be his servant, and to have some guidance from him. Which will be blessed indeed. For the present, Dryasdust strikes me like a hapless Nigger gone masterless: Nigger totally unfit for self-guidance; yet without master good or bad; and whose feats in that capacity no god or man can rejoice in.

"History, with faithful Genius at the top and faithful Industry at the bottom, will then be capable of being written. History will then actually BE written,—the inspired gift of God employing itself to illuminate the dark ways of God. A thing thrice-pressingly needful to be done!—Whereby the modern Nations may again become a little less godless, and again have their 'epics' (of a different from the Schiller sort), and again have several things they are still more fatally in want of at present!"—

So that, it would seem, there WILL gradually among mankind, if Friedrich last some centuries, be a real Epic made of his History? That is to say (presumably), it will become a perfected Melodious Truth, and duly significant and duly beautiful bit of Belief, to mankind; the essence of it fairly evolved from all the chaff, the portrait of it actually given, and its real harmonies with the laws of this Universe brought out, in bright and dark, according to the God's Fact as it was; which poor Dryasdust and the Newspapers never could get sight of, but were always far from!—

Well, if so,—and even if not quite so,—it is a comfort to reflect that every true worker (who has blown away chaff &c.), were his contribution no bigger than my own, may have brought the good result NEARER by a hand-breadth or two. And so we will end these preludings, and proceed upon our Problem, courteous reader.

Chapter II. — FRIEDRICH'S BIRTH.

Friedrich of Brandenburg-Hohenzollern, who came by course of natural succession to be Friedrich II. of Prussia, and is known in these ages as Frederick the Great, was born in the palace of Berlin, about noon, on the 24th of January, 1712. A small infant, but of great promise or possibility; and thrice and four times

welcome to all sovereign and other persons in the Prussian Court, and Prussian realms, in those cold winter days. His Father, they say, was like to have stifled him with his caresses, so overjoyed was the man; or at least to have scorched him in the blaze of the fire; when happily some much suitabler female nurse snatched this little creature from the rough paternal paws,—and saved it for the benefit of Prussia and mankind. If Heaven will but please to grant it length of life! For there have already been two little Princekins, who are both dead; this Friedrich is the fourth child; and only one little girl, wise Wilhelmina, of almost too sharp wits, and not too vivacious aspect, is otherwise yet here of royal progeny. It is feared the Hohenzollern lineage, which has flourished here with such beneficent effect for three centuries now, and been in truth the very making of the Prussian Nation, may be about to fail, or pass into some side branch. Which change, or any change in that respect, is questionable, and a thing desired by nobody.

Five years ago, on the death of the first little Prince, there had surmises risen, obscure rumors and hints, that the Princess Royal, mother of the lost baby, never would have healthy children, or even never have a child more: upon which, as there was but one other resource,—a widowed Grandfather, namely, and except the Prince Royal no son to him,—said Grandfather, still only about fifty, did take the necessary steps: but they have been entirely unsuccessful; no new son or child, only new affliction, new disaster has resulted from that third marriage of his. And though the Princess Royal has had another little Prince, that too has died within the year;—killed, some say on the other hand, by the noise of the cannon firing for joy over it! [Forster, *Friedrich Wilhelm I., König von Preussen* (Potsdam, 1834), i. 126 (who quotes Morgenstern, a contemporary reporter). But see also Preuss, *Friedrich der Grosse mit seinen Verwandten und Freunden* (Berlin, 1838), pp. 379-380] Yes; and the first baby Prince, these same parties farther say, was crushed to death by the weighty dress you put upon it at christening time, especially by the little crown it wore, which had left a visible black mark upon the poor soft infant's brow! In short, it is a questionable case; undoubtedly a questionable outlook for Prussian mankind; and the appearance of this little Prince, a third trump-card in the Hohenzollern game, is an unusually interesting event. The joy over him, not in Berlin Palace only, but in Berlin City, and over the Prussian Nation, was very great and universal;—still testified in manifold dull, unreadable old pamphlets, records official and volunteer,—which were then all ablaze like the bonfires, and are now fallen dark enough, and hardly credible even to the fancy of this new Time.

The poor old Grandfather, Friedrich I. (the first King of Prussia),—for, as we intimate, he was still alive, and not very old, though now infirm enough, and laden beyond his strength with sad reminiscences, disappointments and chagrins,—had taken much to Wilhelmina, as she tells us; [*Memoires de Frederique Sophie Wilhelmine de Prusse, Margrave de Bareith, Soeur d Frederic-le-Grand* (London, 1812), i. 5.] and would amuse himself whole days with the pranks and prattle of the little child. Good old man: he, we need not doubt, brightened up into unusual vitality at sight of this invaluable little Brother of hers; through whom he can look once more into the waste dim future with a flicker of new hope. Poor old man: he got his own back half-broken by a careless nurse letting him fall; and has slightly stooped ever since, some fifty and odd years now: much against his will; for he would fain have been beautiful; and has struggled all his days, very hard if not very wisely, to make his existence beautiful,—to make it magnificent at least, and regardless of expense;—and it threatens to come to little. Courage, poor Grandfather: here is a new second edition of a Friedrich, the first having gone off with so little effect: this one's back is still unbroken, his life's seedfield not yet filled with tares and thorns: who knows but Heaven will be kinder to this one? Heaven was much kinder to this one. Him Heaven had kneaded of more potent stuff: a mighty fellow this one, and a strange; related not only to the Upholsteries and Heralds' Colleges, but to the Sphere-harmonies and the divine and demonic powers; of a swift far-darting nature this one, like an Apollo clad in sunbeams and in lightnings (after his sort); and with a back which all the world could not succeed in breaking!—Yes, if, by most rare chance, this were indeed a new man of genius, born into the purblind rotting Century, in the acknowledged rank of a king there,—man of genius, that is to say, man of originality and veracity; capable of seeing with his eyes, and incapable of not believing what he sees;—then truly!—But as yet none knows; the poor old Grandfather never knew.

Meanwhile they christened the little fellow, with immense magnificence and pomp of apparatus; Kaiser Karl, and the very Swiss Republic being there (by proxy), among the gossips; and spared no cannon-volleyings, kettle-drummings, metal crown, heavy cloth-of-silver, for the poor soft creature's sake; all of which, however, he survived. The name given him was Karl Friedrich (Charles Frederick); Karl perhaps, and perhaps also not, in delicate compliment to the chief gossip, the above-mentioned. Kaiser, Karl or Charles VI.? At any rate, the KARL, gradually or from the first, dropped altogether out of practice, and went as nothing: he himself, or those about him, never used it; nor, except in some dim English pamphlet here and there, have I met with any trace of it. Friedrich (RICH-in-PEACE, a name of old prevalence in the Hohenzollern kindred), which he himself wrote FREDERIC in his French way, and at last even FEDERIC (with a very singular sense of euphony), is throughout, and was, his sole designation. Sunday 31st January, 1712, age then precisely one week: then, and in this manner, was he ushered on the scene, and labelled among his fellow-creatures. We must now look round a little; and see, if possible by any method or exertion, what kind of scene it was.

Chapter III. — FATHER AND MOTHER: THE HANOVERIAN CONNECTION.

Friedrich Wilhelm, Crown-Prince of Prussia, son of Friedrich I. and Father of this little infant who will one day be Friedrich II., did himself make some noise in the world as second King of Prussia; notable not as Friedrich's father alone; and will much concern us during the rest of his life. He is, at this date, in his twenty-fourth year: a thick-set, sturdy, florid, brisk young fellow; with a jovial laugh in him, yet of solid grave ways, occasionally somewhat volcanic; much given to soldiering, and out-of-door exercises, having little else to do

at present. He has been manager, or, as it were, Vice-King, on an occasional absence of his Father; he knows practically what the state of business is; and greatly disapproves of it, as is thought. But being bound to silence on that head, he keeps silence, and meddles with nothing political. He addicts himself chiefly to mustering, drilling and practical military duties, while here at Berlin; runs out, often enough, wife and perhaps a comrade or two along with him, to hunt, and take his ease, at Wusterhausen (some fifteen or twenty miles [English miles,—as always unless the contrary be stated. The German MEILE is about five miles English; German STUNDE about three.] southeast of Berlin), where he has a residence amid the woody moorlands.

But soldiering is his grand concern. Six years ago, summer 1706, [Forster, i. 116] at a very early age, he went to the wars,—grand Spanish-Succession War, which was then becoming very fierce in the Netherlands; Prussian troops always active on the Marlborough-Eugene side. He had just been betrothed, was not yet wedded; thought good to turn the interim to advantage in that way. Then again, spring 1709, after his marriage and after his Father's marriage, "the Court being full of intrigues," and nothing but silence recommendable there, a certain renowned friend of his, Leopold, Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, of whom we shall yet hear a great deal,—who, still only about thirty, had already covered himself with laurels in those wars (Blenheim, Bridge of Casano, Lines of Turin, and other glories), but had now got into intricacies with the weaker sort, and was out of command,—agreed with Friedrich Wilhelm that it would be well to go and serve there as volunteers, since not otherwise. [Varnhagen von Ense, *Furst Leopold von Anhalt-Dessau* (in *Biographische Denkmale*, 2d edition, Berlin, 1845), p. 185. *Thaten und Leben des weltberuhmten Furstens Leopoldi von Anhalt-Dessau* (Leipzig, 1742), p. 73. Forster, i. 129.] A Crown-Prince of Prussia, ought he not to learn soldiering, of all things; by every opportunity? Which Friedrich Wilhelm did, with industry; serving zealous apprenticeship under Marlborough and Eugene, in this manner; plucking knowledge, as the bubble reputation, and all else in that field has to be plucked, from the cannon's mouth. Friedrich Wilhelm kept by Marlborough, now as formerly; friend Leopold being commonly in Eugene's quarter, who well knew the worth of him, ever since Blenheim and earlier. Friedrich Wilhelm saw hot service, that campaign of 1709; siege of Tournay, and far more;—stood, among other things, the fiery Battle of Malplaquet, one of the terriblest and deadliest feats of war ever done. No want of intrepidity and rugged soldier-virtue in the Prussian troops or their Crown-Prince; least of all on that terrible day, 11th September, 1709;—of which he keeps the anniversary ever since, and will do all his life, the doomsday of Malplaquet always a memorable day to him. [Forster, i. 138.] He is more and more intimate with Leopold, and loves good soldiering beyond all things. Here at Berlin he has already got a regiment of his own, tallish fine men; and strives to make it in all points a very pattern of a regiment.

For the rest, much here is out of joint, and far from satisfactory to him. Seven years ago [1st February, 1705.] he lost his own brave Mother and her love; of which we must speak farther by and by. In her stead he has got a fantastic, melancholic, ill-natured Stepmother, with whom there was never any good to be done; who in fact is now fairly mad, and kept to her own apartments. He has to see here, and say little, a chagrined heart-worn Father flickering painfully amid a scene much filled with expensive futile persons, and their extremely pitiful cabals and mutual rages; scene chiefly of pompous inanity, and the art of solemnly and with great labor doing nothing. Such waste of labor and of means: what can one do but be silent? The other year, Preussen (PRUSSIA Proper, province lying far eastward, out of sight) was sinking under pestilence and black ruin and despair: the Crown-Prince, contrary to wont, broke silence, and begged some dole or subvention for these poor people; but there was nothing to be had. Nothing in the treasury, your Royal Highness:—Preussen will shift for itself; sublime dramaturgy, which we call his Majesty's Government, costs so much! And Preussen, mown away by death, lies much of it vacant ever since; which has completed the Crown-Prince's disgust; and, I believe, did produce some change of ministry, or other ineffectual expedient, on the old Father's part. Upon which the Crown-Prince locks up his thoughts again. He has confused whirlpools, of Court intrigues, ceremonials, and troublesome fantasticalities, to steer amongst; which he much dislikes, no man more; having an eye and heart set on the practical only, and being in mind as in body something of the genus ROBUSTUM, of the genus FEROX withal. He has been wedded six years; lost two children, as we saw; and now again he has two living.

His wife, Sophie Dorothee of Hanover, is his cousin as well. She is brother's-daughter of his Mother, Sophie Charlotte: let the reader learn to discriminate these two names. Sophie Charlotte, late Queen of Prussia, was also of Hanover: she probably had sometimes, in her quiet motherly thought, anticipated this connection for him, while she yet lived. It is certain Friedrich Wilhelm was carried to Hanover in early childhood: his Mother,—that Sophie Charlotte, a famed Queen and lady in her day, Daughter of Electress Sophie, and Sister of the George who became George I. of England by and by,—took him thither; some time about the beginning of 1693, his age then five; and left him there on trial; alleging, and expecting, he might have a better breeding there. And this, in a Court where Electress Sophie was chief lady, and Elector Ernst, fit to be called Gentleman Ernst, ["Her Highness (the Electress Sophie) has the character of the merry debonnaire Princess of Germany; a lady of extraordinary virtues and accomplishments; mistress of the Italian, French, High and Low Dutch, and English languages, which she speaks to perfection. Her husband (Elector Ernst) has the title of the Gentleman of Germany; a graceful and," &c. &c. W. Carr, *Remarks of the Governments of the severall Parts of Germanie, Denmark, Sweedland* (Amsterdam, 1688), p. 147. See also *Ker of Kersland* (still more emphatic on this point, *soepius*)] the politest of men, was chief lord,—and where Leibnitz, to say nothing of lighter notabilities, was flourishing,—seemed a reasonable expectation. Nevertheless, it came to nothing, this articulate purpose of the visit; though perhaps the deeper silent purposes of it might not be quite unfulfilled.

Gentleman Ernst had lately been made "Elector" (*Kurfurst*, instead of *Herzog*),—his Hanover no longer a mere Sovereign Duchy, but an Electorate henceforth, new "NINTH Electorate," by Ernst's life-long exertion and good luck;—which has spread a fine radiance, for the time, over court and people in those parts; and made Ernst a happier man than ever, in his old age. Gentleman Ernst and Electress Sophie, we need not doubt, were glad to see their burly Prussian grandson,—a robust, rather mischievous boy of five years old;—and anything that brought her Daughter oftener about her (an only Daughter too, and one so gifted) was sure to be welcome to the cheery old Electress, and her Leibnitz and her circle. For Sophie Charlotte was a bright presence, and a favorite with sage and gay.

Uncle George again, " *Kurprinz Georg Ludwig*" (Electoral Prince and Heir-Apparent), who became George I. of England; he, always a taciturn, saturnine, somewhat grim-visaged man, not without thoughts of his own but mostly inarticulate thoughts, was, just at this time, in a deep domestic intricacy. Uncle George the Kurprinz was painfully detecting, in these very months, that his august Spouse and cousin, a brilliant not uninjured lady, had become an indignant injuring one; that she had gone, and was going, far astray in her walk of life! Thus all is not radiance at Hanover either, Ninth Elector though we are; but, in the soft sunlight, there quivers a streak of the blackness of very Erebus withal. Kurprinz George, I think, though he too is said to have been good to the boy, could not take much interest in this burly Nephew of his just now!

Sure enough, it was in this year 1693, that the famed Konigsmark tragedy came ripening fast towards a crisis in Hanover; and next year the catastrophe arrived. A most tragic business; of which the little Boy, now here, will know more one day. Perhaps it was on this very visit, on one visit it credibly was, that Sophie Charlotte witnessed a sad scene in the Schloss of Hanover high words rising, where low cooings had been more appropriate; harsh words, mutually recriminative, rising ever higher; ending, it is thought, in THINGS, or menaces and motions towards things (actual box on the ear, some call it),—never to be forgotten or forgiven! And on Sunday 1st of July, 1694, Colonel Count Philip Konigsmark, Colonel in the Hanover Dragoons, was seen for the last time in this world. From that date, he has vanished suddenly underground, in an inscrutable manner: never more shall the light of the sun, or any human eye behold that handsome blackguard man. Not for a hundred and fifty years shall human creatures know, or guess with the smallest certainty, what has become of him.

And shortly after Konigsmark's disappearance, there is this sad phenomenon visible: A once very radiant Princess (witty, haughty-minded, beautiful, not wise or fortunate) now gone all ablaze into angry tragic conflagration; getting locked into the old Castle of Ahlden, in the moory solitudes of Luneburg Heath: to stay there till she die,—thirty years as it proved,—and go into ashes and angry darkness as she may. Old peasants, late in the next century, will remember that they used to see her sometimes driving on the Heath,—beautiful lady, long black hair, and the glitter of diamonds in it; sometimes the reins in her own hand, but always with a party of cavalry round her, and their swords drawn. [*Die Herzogin von Ahlden* (Leipzig, 1852), p. 22. Divorce was, 28th December, 1694; death, 13th November, 1726,—age then 60.] "Duchess of Ahlden," that was her title in the eclipsed state. Born Princess of Zelle; by marriage, Princess of Hanover (*Kurprinzessin*); would have been Queen of England, too, had matters gone otherwise than they did.—Her name, like that of a little Daughter she had, is Sophie Dorothee: she is Cousin and Divorced Wife of Kurprinz George; divorced, and as it were abolished alive, in this manner. She is little Friedrich Wilhelm's Aunt-in-law; and her little Daughter comes to be his Wife in process of time. Of him, or of those belonging to him, she took small notice, I suppose, in her then mood, the crisis coming on so fast. In her happier innocent days she had two children, a King that is to be, and a Queen; George II. of England, Sophie Dorothee of Prussia; but must not now call them hers, or ever see them again.

This was the Konigsmark tragedy at Hanover; fast ripening towards its catastrophe while little Friedrich Wilhelm was there. It has been, ever since, a rumor and dubious frightful mystery to mankind: but within these few years, by curious accidents (thefts, discoveries of written documents, in various countries, and diligent study of them), it has at length become a certainty and clear fact, to those who are curious about it. Fact surely of a rather horrible sort;—yet better, I must say, than was suspected: not quite so bad in the state of fact as in that of rumor. Crime enough is in it, sin and folly on both sides; there is killing too, but NOT assassination (as it turns out); on the whole there is nothing of atrocity, or nothing that was not accidental, unavoidable;—and there is a certain greatness of DECORUM on the part of those Hanover Princes and official gentlemen, a depth of silence, of polite stoicism, which deserves more praise than it will get in our times. Enough now of the Konigsmark tragedy; [A considerable dreary mass of books, pamphlets, lucubrations, false all and of no worth or of less, have accumulated on this dark subject, during the last hundred and fifty years; nor has the process yet stopped,—as it now well might. For there have now two things occurred in regard to it FIRST: In the year 1847, a Swedish Professor, named Palmblad, groping about for other objects in the College Library of Lund (which is in the country of the Konigsmark connections), came upon a Box of Old Letters,—Letters undated, signed only with initials, and very enigmatic till well searched into,—which have turned out to be the very Autographs of the Princess and her Konigsmark; throwing of course a henceforth indisputable light on their relation. SECOND THING: A cautious exact old gentleman, of diplomatic habits (understood to be "Count Von Schulenburg-Klosterröde of Dresden"), has, since that event, unweariedly gone into the whole matter; and has brayed it everywhere, and pounded it small; sifting, with sublime patience, not only those Swedish Autographs, but the whole mass of lying books, pamphlets, hints and notices, old and recent; and bringing out (truly in an intricate and thrice-wearisome, but for the first time in an authentic way) what real evidence there is. In which evidence the facts, or essential fact, lie at last indisputable enough. His Book, thick Pamphlet rather, is that same *Herzogin von Ahlden* (Leipzig, 1852) cited above. The dreary wheelbarrowful of others I had rather not mention again; but leave Count von Schulenburg to mention and describe them,—which he does abundantly, so many as had accumulated up to that date of 1852, to the affliction more or less of sane mankind.] contemporaneous with Friedrich Wilhelm's stay at Hanover, but not otherwise much related to him or his doings there.

He got no improvement in breeding, as we intimated; none at all; fought, on the contrary, with his young Cousin (afterwards our George II.), a boy twice his age, though of weaker bone; and gave him a bloody nose. To the scandal and consternation of the French Protestant gentlewomen and court-dames in their stiff silks: "Ahee, your Electoral Highness!" This had been a rough unruly boy from the first discovery of him. At a very early stage, he, one morning while the nurses were dressing him, took to investigating one of his shoe buckles; would, in spite of remonstrances, slobber it about in his mouth; and at length swallowed it down,—beyond mistake; and the whole world cannot get it up! Whereupon, wild wail of nurses; and his "Mother came screaming," poor mother:—It is the same small shoe-buckle which is still shown, with a ticket and date to it, "31 December, 1692," in the Berlin *Kunstammer*; for it turned out harmless, after all the screaming; and a few grains of rhubarb restored it safely to the light of day; henceforth a thrice-memorable shoe-buckle. [Forster, i. 74. Erman, *Memoires de Sophie Charlotte* (Berlin, 1801), p. 130.]

Another time, it is recorded, though with less precision of detail, his Governess the Dame Montbail having

ordered him to do something which was intolerable to the princely mind, the princely mind resisted in a very strange way: the princely body, namely, flung itself suddenly out of a third-story window, nothing but the hands left within; and hanging on there by the sill, and fixedly resolute to obey gravitation rather than Montbail, soon brought the poor lady to terms. Upon which, indeed, he had been taken from her, and from the women altogether, as evidently now needing rougher government. Always an unruly fellow, and dangerous to trust among crockery. At Hanover he could do no good in the way of breeding: sage Leibnitz himself, with his big black periwig and large patient nose, could have put no metaphysics into such a boy. Sublime *Theodicee* (Leibnitzian "justification of the ways of God") was not an article this individual had the least need of, nor at any time the least value for. "Justify? What doomed dog questions it, then? Are you for Bedlam, then?"—and in maturer years his rattan might have been dangerous! For this was a singular individual of his day; human soul still in robust health, and not given to spin its bowels into cobwebs. He is known only to have quarrelled much with Cousin George, during the year or so he spent in those parts.

But there was another Cousin at Hanover, just one other, little Sophie Dorothee (called after her mother), a few months older than himself; by all accounts, a really pretty little child, whom he liked a great deal better. She, I imagine, was his main resource, while on this Hanover visit; with her were laid the foundations of an intimacy which ripened well afterwards. Some say it was already settled by the parents that there was to be a marriage in due time. Settled it could hardly be; for Wilhelmina tells us, [*Memoires de la Margrave de Bareith*, i. 1.] her Father had a "choice of three" allowed him, on coming to wed; and it is otherwise discernible there had been eclipses and uncertainties, in the interim, on his part. Settled, no; but hoped and vaguely pre-figured, we may well suppose. And at all events, it has actually come to pass; "Father being ardently in love with the Hanover Princess," says our Margravine, "and much preferring her to the other two," or to any and all others. Wedded, with great pomp, 28th November, 1706; [Forster, i. 117.]—and Sophie Dorothee, the same that was his pretty little Cousin at Hanover twenty years ago, she is mother of the little Boy now born and christened, whom men are to call Frederick the Great in coming generations.

Sophie Dorothee is described to us by courtier contemporaries as "one of the most beautiful princesses of her day:" Wilhelmina, on the other hand, testifies that she was never strictly to be called beautiful, but had a pleasant attractive physiognomy; which may be considered better than strict beauty. Uncommon grace of figure and look, testifies Wilhelmina; much dignity and soft dexterity, on social occasions; perfect in all the arts of deportment; and left an impression on you at once kindly and royal. Portraits of her, as Queen at a later age, are frequent in the Prussian Galleries; she is painted sitting, where I best remember her. A serious, comely, rather plump, maternal-looking Lady; something thoughtful in those gray still eyes of hers, in the turn of her face and carriage of her head, as she sits there, considerably gazing out upon a world which would never conform to her will. Decidedly a handsome, wholesome and affectionate aspect of face. Hanoverian in type, that is to say, blond, florid, slightly PROFUSE;—yet the better kind of Hanoverian, little or nothing of the worse or at least the worst kind. The eyes, as I say, are gray, and quiet, almost sad; expressive of reticence and reflection, of slow constancy rather than of SPEED in any kind. One expects, could the picture speak, the querulous sound of maternal and other solicitude; of a temper tending towards the obstinate, the quietly unchangeable;—loyal patience not wanting, yet in still larger measure royal impatience well concealed, and long and carefully cherished. This is what I read in Sophie Dorothee's Portraits,—probably remembering what I had otherwise read, and come to know of her. She too will not a little concern us in the first part of this History. I find, for one thing, she had given much of her physiognomy to the Friedrich now born. In his Portraits as Prince-Royal, he strongly resembles her; it is his mother's face informed with youth and new fire, and translated into the masculine gender: in his later Portraits, one less and less recognizes the mother.

Friedrich Wilhelm, now in the sixth year of wedlock, is still very fond of his Sophie Dorothee,— "*Fiechen*" (*Feeekin* diminutive of *Sophie*), as he calls her; she also having, and continuing to have, the due wife's regard for her solid, honest, if somewhat explosive bear. He troubles her a little now and then, it is said, with whiffs of jealousy; but they are whiffs only, the product of accidental moodinesses in him, or of transient aspects, misinterpreted, in the court-life of a young and pretty woman. As the general rule, he is beautifully good-humored, kind even, for a bear; and, on the whole, they have begun their partnership under good omens. And indeed we may say, in spite of sad tempests that arose, they continued it under such. She brought him gradually no fewer than fourteen children, of whom ten survived him and came to maturity: and it is to be admitted their conjugal relation, though a royal, was always a human one; the main elements of it strictly observed on both sides; all quarrels in it capable of being healed again, and the feeling on both sides true, however troublous. A rare fact among royal wedlocks, and perhaps a unique one in that epoch.

The young couple, as is natural in their present position, have many eyes upon them, and not quite a paved path in this confused court of Friedrich I. But they are true to one another; they seem indeed to have held well aloof from all public business or private cabal; and go along silently expecting, and perhaps silently resolving this and that in the future tense; but with moderate immunity from paternal or other criticisms, for the present. The Crown-Prince drills or hunts, with his Grumkows, Anhalt-Dessaus: these are harmless employments;—and a man may have within his own head what thoughts he pleases, without offence so long as he keeps them there. Friedrich the old Grandfather lived only thirteen months after the birth of his grandson: Friedrich Wilhelm was then King; thoughts then, to any length, could become actions on the part of Friedrich Wilhelm.

Chapter IV. — FATHER'S MOTHER.

Friedrich Wilhelm's Mother, as we hinted, did not live to see this marriage which she had forecast in her maternal heart. She died, rather suddenly, in 1705, [1st February (Erman, p. 241; Forster, i. 114): born, 20th October, 1666; wedded, 28th September 1684; died, 1st February, 1705.] at Hanover, whither she had gone

on a visit; shortly after parting with this her one boy and child, Friedrich Wilhelm, who is then about seventeen; whom she had with effort forced herself to send abroad, that he might see the world a little, for the first time. Her sorrow on this occasion has in it something beautiful, in so bright and gay a woman: shows us the mother strong in her, to a touching degree. The rough cub, in whom she noticed rugged perverse elements, "tendencies to avarice," and a want of princely graces, and the more brilliant qualities in mind and manner, had given her many thoughts and some uneasy ones. But he was evidently all she had to love in the world; a rugged creature inexpressibly precious to her. For days after his departure, she had kept solitary; busied with little; indulging in her own sad reflections without stint. Among the papers she had been scribbling, there was found one slip with a HEART sketched on it, and round the heart "PARTI" (Gone): My heart is gone!—poor lady, and after what a jewel! But Nature is very kind to all children and to all mothers that are true to her.

Sophie Charlotte's deep sorrow and dejection on this parting was the secret herald of fate to herself. It had meant ill health withal, and the gloom of broken nerves. All autumn and into winter she had felt herself indefinitely unwell; she determined, however, on seeing Hanover and her good old Mother at the usual time. The gloomy sorrow over Friedrich Wilhelm had been the premonition of a sudden illness which seized her on the road to Hanover, some five months afterwards, and which ended fatally in that city. Her death was not in the light style Friedrich her grandson ascribes to it; [*Memoires de Brandebourg* (Preuss's Edition of *OEuvres*, Berlin, 1847 et seqq.), i. 112.] she died without epigram, and though in perfect simple courage, with the reverse of levity.

Here, at first hand, is the specific account of that event; which, as it is brief and indisputable, we may as well fish from the imbrolios, and render legible, to counteract such notions, and illuminate for moments an old scene of things. The writing, apparently a quite private piece, is by "M. de la Bergerie, Pastor of the French Church at Hanover," respectable Edict-of-Nantes gentleman, who had been called in on the occasion;—gives an authentic momentary picture, though a feeble and vacant one, of a locality at that time very interesting to Englishmen. M. de la Bergerie privately records:—

"The night between the last of January and the first of February, 1705, between one and two o'clock in the morning, I was called to the Queen of Prussia, who was then dangerously ill.

"Entering the room, I threw myself at the foot of her bed, testifying to her in words my profound grief to see her in this state. After which I took occasion to say, 'She might know now that Kings and Queens are mortal equally with all other men; and that they are obliged to appear before the throne of the majesty of God, to give an account of their deeds done, no less than the meanest of their subjects.' To which her Majesty replied, 'I know it well (*Je le sais bien*).'—I went on to say to her, 'Madam, your Majesty must also recognize in this hour the vanity and nothingness of the things here below, for which, it may be, you have had too much interest; and the importance of the things of Heaven, which perhaps you have neglected and contemned.' Thereupon the Queen answered, 'True (*Cela est vrai*)!' 'Nevertheless, Madam,' said I, 'does not your Majesty place really your trust in God? Do you not very earnestly (*bien serieusement*) crave pardon of Him for all the sins you have committed? Do not you fly (*n'a-t-elle pas recours*) to the blood and merits of Jesus Christ, without which it is impossible for us to stand before God?' The Queen answered, ' *Oui* (Yes).'—While this was going on, her Brother, Duke Ernst August, came into the Queen's room,"—perhaps with his eye upon me and my motions?"As they wished to speak together, I withdrew by order."

This Duke Ernst August, age now 31, is the youngest Brother of the family; there never was any Sister but this dying one, who is four years older. Ernst August has some tincture of soldiership at this time (Marlborough Wars, and the like), as all his kindred had; but ultimately he got the Bishopric of Osnabruck, that singular spiritual heirloom, or HALF-heirloom of the family; and there lived or vegetated without noise. Poor soul, he is the same Bishop of Osnabruck, to whose house, twenty-two years hence, George I., struck by apoplexy, was breathlessly galloping in the summer midnight, one wish now left in him, to be with his brother;—and arrived dead, or in the article of death. That was another scene Ernst August had to witness in his life. I suspect him at present of a thought that M. de la Bergerie, with his pious commonplaces, is likely to do no good. Other trait of Ernst August's life; or of the Schloss of Hanover that night,—or where the sorrowing old Mother sat, invincible though weeping, in some neighboring room,—I cannot give. M. de la Bergerie continues his narrative:—

"Some time after, I again presented myself before the Queen's bed, to see if I could have occasion to speak to her on the matter of her salvation. But Monseigneur the Duke Ernst August then said to me, That it was not necessary; that the Queen was at peace with her God (*etait bien avec son Dieu*)."—Which will mean also that M. de la Bergerie may go home? However, he still writes:—

"Next day the Prince told me, That observing I was come near the Queen's bed, he had asked her if she wished I should still speak to her; but she had replied, that it was not necessary in any way (*nullement*), that she already knew all that could be said to her on such an occasion; that she had said it to herself, that she was still saying it, and that she hoped to be well with her God.

"In the end a faint coming upon the Queen, which was what terminated her life, I threw myself on my knees at the other side of her bed, the curtains of which were open; and I called to God with a loud voice, 'That He would rank his angels round this great Princess, to guard her from the insults of Satan; that He would have pity on her soul; that He would wash her with the blood of Jesus Christ her heavenly Spouse; that, having forgiven her all her sins, He would receive her to his glory.' And in that moment she expired." [Erman, p. 242.]—Age thirty-six and some months. Only Daughter of Electress Sophie; and Father's Mother of Frederick the Great.

She was, in her time, a highly distinguished woman; and has left, one may say, something of her likeness still traceable in the Prussian Nation, and its form of culture, to this day. Charlottenburg (Charlotte's-town, so called by the sorrowing Widower), where she lived, shone with a much-admired French light under her presidency,—French essentially, Versailles, Sceptico-Calvinistic, reflex and direct,—illuminating the dark North; and indeed has never been so bright since. The light was not what we can call inspired; lunar rather, not of the genial or solar kind: but, in good truth, it was the best then going; and Sophie Charlotte, who was her Mother's daughter in this as in other respects, had made it her own. They were deep in literature, these

two Royal Ladies; especially deep in French theological polemics, with a strong leaning to the rationalist side.

They had stopped in Rotterdam once, on a certain journey homewards from Flanders and the Baths of Aix-la-Chapelle, to see that admirable sage, the doubter Bayle. Their sublime messenger roused the poor man, in his garret there, in the Bompies,—after dark: but he had a headache that night; was in bed, and could not come. He followed them next day; leaving his paper imbroglions, his historical, philosophical, anti-theological marine-stores; and suspended his never-ending scribble, on their behalf;—but would not accept a pension, and give it up. [Erman, pp. 111, 112. Date is 1700 (late in the autumn probably).]

They were shrewd, noticing, intelligent and lively women; persuaded that there was some nobleness for man beyond what the tailor imparts to him; and even very eager to discover it, had they known how. In these very days, while our little Friedrich at Berlin lies in his cradle, sleeping most of his time, sage Leibnitz, a rather weak but hugely ingenious old gentleman, with bright eyes and long nose, with vast black peruke and bandy legs, is seen daily in the Linden Avenue at Hanover (famed Linden Alley, leading from Town Palace to Country one, a couple of miles long, rather disappointing when one sees it), daily driving or walking towards Herrenhausen, where the Court, where the old Electress is, who will have a touch of dialogue with him to diversify her day. Not very edifying dialogue, we may fear; yet once more, the best that can be had in present circumstances. Here is some lunar reflex of Versailles, which is a polite court; direct rays there are from the oldest written Gospels and the newest; from the great unwritten Gospel of the Universe itself; and from one's own real effort, more or less devout, to read all these aright. Let us not condemn that poor French element of Eclecticism, Scepticism, Tolerance, Theodicea, and Bayle of the Bompies versus the College of Saumur. Let us admit that it was profitable, at least that it was inevitable; let us pity it, and be thankful for it, and rejoice that we are well out of it. Scepticism, which is there beginning at the very top of the world-tree, and has to descend through all the boughs with terrible results to mankind, is as yet pleasant, tinting the leaves with fine autumnal red.

Sophie Charlotte partook of her Mother's tendencies; and carried them with her to Berlin, there to be expanded in many ways into ampler fulfilment. She too had the sage Leibnitz often with her, at Berlin; no end to her questionings of him; eagerly desirous to draw water from that deep well,—a wet rope, with cobwebs sticking to it, too often all she got; endless rope, and the bucket never coming to view. Which, however, she took patiently, as a thing according to Nature. She had her learned Beausobres and other Reverend Edict-of-Nantes gentlemen, famed Berlin divines; whom, if any Papist notability, Jesuit ambassador or the like, happened to be there, she would set disputing with him, in the Soiree at Charlottenburg. She could right well preside over such a battle of the Cloud-Titans, and conduct the lightnings softly, without explosions. There is a pretty and very characteristic Letter of hers, still pleasant to read, though turning on theologies now fallen dim enough; addressed to Father Vota, the famous Jesuit, King's-confessor, and diplomatist, from Warsaw, who had been doing his best in one such rencontre before her Majesty (date March, 1703),—seemingly on a series of evenings, in the intervals of his diplomatic business; the Beausobre champions being introduced to him successively, one each evening, by Queen Sophie Charlotte. To all appearance the fencing had been keen; the lightnings in need of some dexterous conductor. Vota, on his way homeward, had written to apologize for the sputterings of fire struck out of him in certain pinches of the combat; says, It was the rough handling the Primitive Fathers got from these Beausobre gentlemen, who indeed to me, Vota in person, under your Majesty's fine presidency, were politeness itself, though they treated the Fathers so ill. Her Majesty, with beautiful art, in this Letter, smooths the raven plumage of Vota;—and, at the same time, throws into him, as with invisible needle-points, an excellent dose of acupuncture, on the subject of the Primitive Fathers and the Ecumenic Councils, on her own score. Let us give some Excerpt, in condensed state:—

"How can St. Jerome, for example, be a key to Scripture?" she insinuates; citing from Jerome this remarkable avowal of his method of composing books; "especially of his method in that Book, *Commentary on the Galatians*, where he accuses both Peter and Paul of simulation and even of hypocrisy. The great St. Augustine has been charging him with this sad fact," says her Majesty, who gives chapter and verse; ["Epist. 28*, edit. Paris." And Jerome's answer, "Ibid. Epist. 76*."] "and Jerome answers: 'I followed the Commentaries of Origen, of'"—five or six different persons, who turned out mostly to be heretics before Jerome had quite done with them in coming years!—"And to confess the honest truth to you,' continues Jerome, 'I read all that; and after having crammed my head with a great many things, I sent for my amanuensis, and dictated to him now my own thoughts, now those of others, without much recollecting the order, nor sometimes the words, nor even the sense.' In another place (in the Book itself farther on ["*Commentary on the Galatians*, chap. iii. "]), he says: 'I do not myself write; I have an amanuensis, and I dictate to him what comes into my mouth. If I wish to reflect a little, to say the thing better or a better thing, he knits his brows, and the whole look of him tells me sufficiently that he cannot endure to wait.'"—Here is a sacred old gentleman, whom it is not safe to depend on for interpreting the Scriptures, thinks her Majesty; but does not say so, leaving Father Vota to his reflections.

Then again, coming to Councils, she quotes St. Gregory Nazianzen upon him; who is truly dreadful in regard to Ecumenic Councils of the Church,—and indeed may awaken thoughts of Deliberative Assemblies generally, in the modern constitutional mind. "He says, ["*Greg. Nazian. de Vita sua.*"] No Council ever was successful; so many mean human passions getting into conflagration there; with noise, with violence and uproar, 'more like those of a tavern or still worse place,'—these are his words. He, for his own share, had resolved to avoid all such 'rendezvousing of the Geese and Cranes, flocking together to throttle and tatter one another in that sad manner.' Nor had St. Theodoret much opinion of the Council of Nice, except as a kind of miracle. 'Nothing good to be expected from Councils,' says he, 'except when God is pleased to interpose, and destroy the machinery of the Devil.'"

—With more of the like sort; all delicate, as invisible needle-points, in her Majesty's hand. [Letter undated (datable "Lutzburg, March, 1708,") is to be found entire, with all its adjuncts, in *Erman*, pp. 246-255. It was subsequently translated by Toland, and published here, as an excellent Polemical Piece,—entirely forgotten in our time (*A Letter against Popery by Sophia Charlotte, the late Queen of Prussia: Being, &c. &c.* London, 1712). But the finest Duel of all was probably that between Beausobre and Toland himself (reported by Beausobre, in something of a crowing manner, in *Erman*, pp. 203-241, "October, 1701"), of which Toland

makes no mention anywhere.] What is Father Vota to say?—The modern reader looks through these chinks into a strange old scene, the stuff of it fallen obsolete, the spirit of it not, nor worthy to fall.

These were Sophie Charlotte's reunions; very charming in their time. At which how joyful for Irish Toland to be present, as was several times his luck. Toland, a mere broken heretic in his own country, who went thither once as Secretary to some Embassy (Embassy of Macclesfield's, 1701, announcing that the English Crown had fallen Hanover-wards), and was no doubt glad, poor headlong soul, to find himself a gentleman and Christian again, for the time being,—admires Hanover and Berlin very much; and looks upon Sophie Charlotte in particular as the pink of women. Something between an earthly Queen and a divine Egeria; "Serena" he calls her; and, in his high-flown fashion, is very laudatory. "The most beautiful Princess of her time," says he,—meaning one of the most beautiful: her features are extremely regular, and full of vivacity; copious dark hair, blue eyes, complexion excellently fair;—"not very tall, and somewhat too plump," he admits elsewhere. And then her mind,—for gifts, for graces, culture, where will you find such a mind? "Her reading is infinite, and she is conversant in all manner of subjects;" "knows the abstrusest problems of Philosophy;" says admiring Toland: much knowledge everywhere exact, and handled as by an artist and queen; for "her wit is inimitable," "her justness of thought, her delicacy of expression," her felicity of utterance and management, are great. Foreign courtiers call her "the Republican Queen." She detects you a sophistry at one glance; pierces down direct upon the weak point of an opinion: never in my whole life did I, Toland, come upon a swifter or sharper intellect. And then she is so good withal, so bright and cheerful; and "has the art of uniting what to the rest of the world are antagonisms, mirth and learning,"—say even, mirth and good sense. Is deep in music, too; plays daily on her harpsichord, and fantasies, and even composes, in an eminent manner. [*An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover, sent to a Minister of State in Holland*, by Mr. Toland (London, 1705), p. 322. Toland's other Book, which has reference to her, is of didactic nature ("immortality of the soul," "origin of idolatry," &c.), but with much fine panegyric direct and oblique: *Letters to Serena* ("Serena" being *Queen*), a thin 8vo, London, 1704.] Toland's admiration, deducting the high-flown temper and manner of the man, is sincere and great.

Beyond doubt a bright airy lady, shining in mild radiance in those Northern parts; very graceful, very witty and ingenious; skilled to speak, skilled to hold her tongue,—which latter art also was frequently in requisition with her. She did not much venerate her Husband, nor the Court population, male or female, whom he chose to have about him: his and their ways were by no means hers, if she had cared to publish her thoughts. Friedrich I., it is admitted on all hands, was "an expensive Herr;" much given to magnificent ceremonies, etiquettes and solemnities; making no great way any-whither, and that always with noise enough, and with a dust vortex of courtier intrigues and cabals encircling him,—from which it is better to stand quite to windward. Moreover, he was slightly crooked; most sensitive, thin of skin and liable to sudden flaws of temper, though at heart very kind and good. Sophie Charlotte is she who wrote once, "Leibnitz talked to me of the infinitely little (*de l'infiniment petit*): *mon Dieu*, as if I did not know enough of that!" Besides, it is whispered she was once near marrying to Louis XIV.'s Dauphin; her Mother Sophie, and her Cousin the Dowager Duchess of Orleans, cunning women both, had brought her to Paris in her girlhood, with that secret object; and had very nearly managed it. Queen of France that might have been; and now it is but Brandenburg, and the dice have fallen somewhat wrong for us! She had Friedrich Wilhelm, the rough boy; and perhaps nothing more of very precious property. Her first child, likewise a boy, had soon died, and there came no third: tedious ceremonials, and the infinitely little, were mainly her lot in this world.

All which, however, she had the art to take up not in the tragic way, but in the mildly comic,—often not to take up at all, but leave lying there;—and thus to manage in a handsome and softly victorious manner. With delicate female tact, with fine female stoicism too; keeping all things within limits. She was much respected by her Husband, much loved indeed; and greatly mourned for by the poor man: the village Lutzelburg (Little-town), close by Berlin, where she had built a mansion for herself, he fondly named *Charlottenburg* (Charlotte's-town), after her death, which name both House and Village still bear. Leibnitz found her of an almost troublesome sharpness of intellect; "wants to know the why even of the why," says Leibnitz. That is the way of female intellects when they are good; nothing equals their acuteness, and their rapidity is almost excessive. Samuel Johnson, too, had a young-lady friend once "with the acutest intellect I have ever known."

On the whole, we may pronounce her clearly a superior woman, this Sophie Charlotte; notable not for her Grandson alone, though now pretty much forgotten by the world,—as indeed all things and persons have, one day or other, to be! A LIFE of her, in feeble watery style, and distracted arrangement, by one *Erman*, [Monsieur Erman, Historiographe de Brandebourg, *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de Sophie Charlotte, Reine de Prusse, las dans les Seances, &c.* (1 vol. 8vo, Berlin, 1801.)] a Berlin Frenchman, is in existence, and will repay a cursory perusal; curious traits of her, in still looser form, are also to be found in *Pollnitz*: [Carl Ludwig Freiherr von Pollnitz, *Memoiren zur Lebens-und Regierungs-Geschichte der vier letzten Regenten des Preussischen Staats* (was published in French also), 2 vols. 12mo, Berlin, 1791.] but for our purposes here is enough, and more than enough.

Chapter V. — KING FRIEDRICH I.

The Prussian royalty is now in its twelfth year when this little Friedrich, who is to carry it to such a height, comes into the world. Old Friedrich the Grandfather achieved this dignity, after long and intricate negotiations, in the first year of the Century; 16th November, 1700, his ambassador returned triumphant from Vienna; the Kaiser had at last consented: We are to wear a crown royal on the top of our periwig; the old Electorate of Brandenburg is to become the Kingdom of Prussia; and the Family of Hohenzollern, slowly mounting these many centuries, has reached the uppermost round of the ladder.

Friedrich, the old Gentleman who now looks upon his little Grandson (destined to be Third King of Prussia)

with such interest,—is not a very memorable man; but he has had his adventures too, his losses and his gains: and surely among the latter, the gain of a crown royal into his House gives him, if only as a chronological milestone, some place in History. He was son of him they call the Great Elector, Friedrich Wilhelm by name; of whom the Prussians speak much, in an eagerly celebrating manner, and whose strenuous toilsome work in this world, celebrated or not, is still deeply legible in the actual life and affairs of Germany. A man of whom we must yet find some opportunity to say a word. From him and a beautiful and excellent Princess Luise, Princess of Orange,—Dutch William, OUR Dutch William's aunt,—this, crooked royal Friedrich came.

He was not born crooked; straight enough once, and a fine little boy of six months old or so; there being an elder Prince now in his third year, also full of hope. But in a rough journey to Königsberg and back (winter of 1657, as is guessed), one of the many rough jolting journeys this faithful Electress made with her Husband, a careless or unlucky nurse, who had charge of pretty little Fritzchen, was not sufficiently attentive to her duties on the worst of roads. The ever-jolting carriage gave some bigger jolt, the child fell backwards in her arms; [Johann Wegfuhrer, *Leben der Kurfürstin Luise, gebornen Prinzessin von Nassau-Oranien, Gemahlin Friedrich Wilhelm des Grossen* (Leipzig, 1838), p. 107.] did not quite break his back, but injured it for life:—and with his back, one may perceive, injured his soul and history to an almost corresponding degree. For the weak crooked boy, with keen and fine perceptions, and an inadequate case to put them in, grew up with too thin a skin:—that may be considered as the summary of his misfortunes; and, on the whole, there is no other heavy sin to be charged against him.

He had other loads laid upon him, poor youth: his kind pious Mother died, his elder Brother died, he at the age of seventeen saw himself Heir-Apparent;—and had got a Stepmother with new heirs, if he should disappear. Sorrows enough in that one fact, with the venomous whisperings, commentaries and suspicions, which a Court population, female and male, in little Berlin Town, can contrive to tack to it. Does not the new Sovereign Lady, in her heart, wish YOU were dead, my Prince? Hope it perhaps? Health, at any rate, weak; and, by the aid of a little pharmacy—ye Heavens!

Such suspicions are now understood to have had no basis except in the waste brains of courtier men and women; but their existence there can become tragical enough. Add to which, the Great Elector, like all the Hohenzollerns, was a choleric man; capable of blazing into volcanic explosions, when affronted by idle masses of cobwebs in the midst of his serious businesses! It is certain, the young Prince Friedrich had at one time got into quite high, shrill and mutually minatory terms with his Stepmother; so that once, after some such shrill dialogue between them, ending with "You shall repent this, Sir!"—he found it good to fly off in the night, with only his Tutor or Secretary and a valet, to Hessen-Cassel to an Aunt; who stoutly protected him in this emergency; and whose Daughter, after the difficult readjustment of matters, became his Wife, but did not live long. And it is farther certain the same Prince, during this his first wedded time, dining one day with his Stepmother, was taken suddenly ill. Felt ill, after his cup of coffee; retired into another room in violent spasms, evidently in an alarming state, and secretly in a most alarmed one: his Tutor or Secretary, one Dankelmann, attended him thither; and as the Doctor took some time to arrive, and the symptoms were instant and urgent, Secretary Dankelmann produced "from a pocket-book some drug of his own, or of the Hessen-Cassel Aunt," emetic I suppose, and gave it to the poor Prince;—who said often, and felt ever after, with or without notion of poison, That Dankelmann had saved his life. In consequence of which adventure he again quitted Court without leave; and begged to be permitted to remain safe in the country, if Papa would be so good. [Pollnitz, *Memoiren*, i. 191-198.]

Fancy the Great Elector's humor on such an occurrence; and what a furtherance to him in his heavy continual labors, and strenuous swimming for life, these beautiful humors and transactions must have been! A crook-backed boy, dear to the Great Elector, pukes, one afternoon; and there arises such an opening of the Nether Floodgates of this Universe; in and round your poor workshop, nothing but sudden darkness, smell of sulphur; hissing of forked serpents here, and the universal allelu of female hysterics there;—to help a man forward with his work! O reader, we will pity the crowned head, as well as the hatted and even hatless one. Human creatures will not GO quite accurately together, any more than clocks will; and when their dissonance once rises fairly high, and they cannot readily kill one another, any Great Elector who is third party will have a terrible time of it.

Electress Dorothee, the Stepmother, was herself somewhat of a hard lady; not easy to live with, though so far above poisoning as to have "despised even the suspicion of it." She was much given to practical economics, dairy-farming, market-gardening, and industrial and commercial operations such as offered; and was thought to be a very strict reckoner of money. She founded the *Dorotheenstadt*, now oftener called the *Neustadt*, chief quarter of Berlin; and planted, just about the time of this unlucky dinner, "A.D. 1680 or so," [Nicolai, *Beschreibung der königlichen Residenzstädte Berlin und Potsdam* (Berlin, 1786), i. 172.] the first of the celebrated Lindens, which (or the successors of which, in a stunted ambition) are still growing there. *Unter-den-Linden*: it is now the gayest quarter of Berlin, full of really fine edifices: it was then a sandy outskirt of Electress Dorothee's dairy-farm; good for nothing but building upon, thought Electress Dorothee. She did much dairy-and-vegetable trade on the great scale;—was thought even to have, underhand, a commercial interest in the principal Beer-house of the city? [Horn, *Leben Friedrich Wilhelms des Grossen Kurfürsten von Brandenburg* (Berlin, 1814).] People did not love her: to the Great Elector, who guided with a steady bridle-hand, she complied not amiss; though in him too there rose sad recollections and comparisons now and then: but with a Stepson of unsteady nerves it became evident to him there could never be soft neighborhood. Prince Friedrich and his Father came gradually to some understanding, tacit or express, on that sad matter; Prince Friedrich was allowed to live, on his separate allowance, mainly remote from Court. Which he did, for perhaps six or eight years, till the Great Elector's death; henceforth in a peaceful manner, or at least without open explosions.

His young Hessen-Cassel Wife died suddenly in 1683; and again there was mad rumor of poisoning; which Electress Dorothee disregarded as below her, and of no consequence to her, and attended to industrial operations that would pay. That poor young Wife, when dying, exacted a promise from Prince Friedrich that he would not wed again, but be content with the Daughter she had left him: which promise, if ever seriously given, could not be kept, as we have seen. Prince Friedrich brought his Sophie Charlotte home about fifteen

months after. With the Stepmother and with the Court there was armed neutrality under tolerable forms, and no open explosion farther.

In a secret way, however, there continued to be difficulties. And such difficulties had already been, that the poor young man, not yet come to his Heritages, and having, with probably some turn for expense, a covetous unamiable Stepmother, had fallen into the usual difficulties; and taken the methods too usual. Namely, had given ear to the Austrian Court, which offered him assistance,—somewhat as an aged Jew will to a young Christian gentleman in quarrel with papa,—upon condition of his signing a certain bond: bond which much surprised Prince Friedrich when he came to understand it! Of which we shall hear more, and even much more, in the course of time!—

Neither after his accession (year 1688; his Cousin Dutch William, of the glorious and immortal memory, just lifting anchor towards these shores) was the new Elector's life an easy one. We may say, it was replete with troubles rather; and unhappily not so much with great troubles, which could call forth antagonistic greatness of mind or of result, as with never-ending shoals of small troubles, the antagonism to which is apt to become itself of smallish character. Do not search into his history; you will remember almost nothing of it (I hope) after never so many readings! Garrulous Pollnitz and others have written enough about him; but it all runs off from you again, as a thing that has no affinity with the human skin. He had a court "*rempli d'intrigues*, full of never-ending cabals," [Forster, i. 74 (quoting *Memoires du Comte de Dohna*); &c. &c.]—about what?

One question only are we a little interested in: How he came by the Kingship? How did the like of him contrive to achieve Kingship? We may answer: It was not he that achieved it; it was those that went before him, who had gradually got it,—as is very usual in such cases. All that he did was to knock at the gate (the Kaiser's gate and the world's), and ask, "IS it achieved, then?" Is Brandenburg grown ripe for having a crown? Will it be needful for you to grant Brandenburg a crown? Which question, after knocking as loud as possible, they at last took the trouble to answer, "Yes, it will be needful."—

Elector Friedrich's turn for ostentation—or as we may interpret it, the high spirit of a Hohenzollern working through weak nerves and a crooked back—had early set him a-thinking of the Kingship; and no doubt, the exaltation of rival Saxony, which had attained that envied dignity (in a very unenviable manner, in the person of Elector August made King of Poland) in 1697, operated as a new spur on his activities. Then also Duke Ernst of Hanover, his father-in-law, was struggling to become Elector Ernst; Hanover to be the Ninth Electorate, which it actually attained in 1698; not to speak of England, and quite endless prospects there for Ernst and Hanover. These my lucky neighbors are all rising; all this the Kaiser has granted to my lucky neighbors: why is there no promotion he should grant me, among them!—

Elector Friedrich had 30,000 excellent troops; Kaiser Leopold, the "little man in red stockings," had no end of Wars. Wars in Turkey, wars in Italy; all Dutch William's wars and more, on our side of Europe;—and here is a Spanish-Succession War, coming dubiously on, which may prove greater than all the rest together. Elector Friedrich sometimes in his own high person (a courageous and high though thin-skinned man), otherwise by skilful deputy, had done the Kaiser service, often signal service, in all these wars; and was never wanting in the time of need, in the post of difficulty with those famed Prussian Troops of his. A loyal gallant Elector this, it must be owned; capable withal of doing signal damage if we irritated him too far! Why not give him this promotion; since it costs us absolutely nothing real, not even the price of a yard of ribbon with metal cross at the end of it? Kaiser Leopold himself, it is said, had no particular objection; but certain of his ministers had; and the little man in red stockings—much occupied in hunting, for one thing—let them have their way, at the risk of angering Elector Friedrich. Even Dutch William, anxious for it, in sight of the future, had not yet prevailed.

The negotiation had lasted some seven years, without result. There is no doubt but the Succession War, and Marlborough, would have brought it to a happy issue: in the mean while, it is said to have succeeded at last, somewhat on the sudden, by a kind of accident. This is the curious mythical account; incorrect in some unessential particulars, but in the main and singular part of it well-founded. Elector Friedrich, according to Pollnitz and others, after failing in many methods, had sent 100,000 *thalers* (say 15,000 pounds) to give, by way of—bribe we must call it,—to the chief opposing Hofrath at Vienna. The money was offered, accordingly; and was refused by the opposing Hofrath: upon which the Brandenburg Ambassador wrote that it was all labor lost; and even hurried off homewards in despair, leaving a Secretary in his place. The Brandenburg Court, nothing despairing, orders in the mean while, Try another with it,—some other Hofrath, whose name they wrote in cipher, which the blundering Secretary took to mean no Hofrath, but the Kaiser's Confessor and Chief Jesuit, Pater Wolf. To him accordingly he hastened with the cash, to him with the respectful Electoral request; who received both, it is said, especially the 15,000 pounds, with a *Gloria in excelsis*; and went forthwith and persuaded the Kaiser. [Pollnitz, *Memoiren*, i. 310.]—Now here is the inexactitude, say Modern Doctors of History; an error no less than threefold. 1. Elector Friedrich was indeed advised, in cipher, by his agent at Vienna, to write in person to—"Who is that cipher, then?" asks Elector Friedrich, rather puzzled. At Vienna that cipher was meant for the Kaiser; but at Berlin they take it for Pater Wolf; and write accordingly, and are answered with readiness and animation. 2. Pater Wolf was not official Confessor, but was a Jesuit in extreme favor with the Kaiser, and by birth a nobleman, sensible to human decorations. 3. He accepted no bribe, nor was any sent; his bribe was the pleasure of obliging a high gentleman who condescended to ask, and possibly the hope of smoothing roads for St. Ignatius and the Black Militia, in time coming. And THUS at last, and not otherwise than thus, say exact Doctors, did Pater Wolf do the thing. [G. A. H. Stenzel, *Geschichte des Preussischen Staats* (Hamburg, 1841), iii. 104 (*Berliner Monatschrift*, year 1799); &c.] Or might not the actual death of poor King Carlos II. at Madrid, 1st November, 1700, for whose heritages all the world stood watching with swords half drawn, considerably assist Pater Wolf? Done sure enough the thing was; and before November ended, Friedrich's messenger returned with "Yes" for answer, and a Treaty signed on the 16th of that month. [Pollnitz (i. 318) gives the Treaty (date corrected by his Editor, ii.589).]

To the huge joy of Elector Friedrich and his Court, almost the very nation thinking itself glad. Which joyful Potentate decided to set out straightway and have the coronation done; though it was midwinter; and Königsberg (for Prussia is to be our title, "King in Prussia," and Königsberg is Capital City there) lies 450 miles off, through tangled shaggy forests, boggy wildernesses, and in many parts only corduroy roads. We

order "30,000 post-horses," besides all our own large stud, to be got ready at the various stations: our boy Friedrich Wilhelm, rugged boy of twelve, rough and brisk, yet much "given to blush" withal (which is a feature of him), shall go with us; much more, Sophie Charlotte our august Electress-Queen that is to be: and we set out, on the 17th of December, 1700, last year of the Century; "in 1800 carriages:" such a cavalcade as never crossed those wintry wildernesses before. Friedrich Wilhelm went in the third division of carriages (for 1800 of them could not go quite together); our noble Sophie Charlotte in the second; a Margraf of Brandenburg-Schwedt, chief Margraf, our eldest Half-Brother, Dorothee's eldest Son, sitting on the coach-box, in correct insignia, as similitude of Driver. So strict are we in etiquette; etiquette indeed being now upon its apotheosis, and after such efforts. Six or seven years of efforts on Elector Friedrich's part; and six or seven hundred years, unconsciously, on that of his ancestors.

The magnificence of Friedrich's processionings into Konigsberg, and through it or in it, to be crowned, and of his coronation ceremonials there: what pen can describe it, what pen need! Folio volumes with copper-plates have been written on it; and are not yet all pasted in bandboxes, or slit into spills. [British Museum, short of very many necessary Books on this subject, offers the due Coronation Folio, with its prints, upholstery catalogues, and official harangues upon nothing, to ingenuous human curiosity.] "The diamond buttons of his Majesty's coat [snuff-colored or purple, I cannot recollect] cost 1,500 pounds apiece;" by this one feature judge what an expensive Herr. Streets were hung with cloth, carpeted with cloth, no end of draperies and cloth; your oppressed imagination feels as if there was cloth enough, of scarlet and other bright colors, to thatch the Arctic Zone. With illuminations, cannon-salvos, fountains running wine. Friedrich had made two Bishops for the nonce. Two of his natural Church-Superintendents made into Quasi-Bishops, on the Anglican model,—which was always a favorite with him, and a pious wish of his;—but they remained mere cut branches, these two, and did not, after their haranguing and anointing functions, take root in the country. He himself put the crown on his head: "King here in my own right, after all!"—and looked his royalest, we may fancy; the kind eyes of him almost partly fierce for moments, and "the cheerfulness of pride" well blending with something of awful.

In all which sublimities, the one thing that remains for human memory is not in these Folios at all, but is considered to be a fact not the less: Electress Charlotte's, now Queen Charlotte's, very strange conduct on the occasion. For she cared not much about crowns, or upholstery magnificences of any kind; but had meditated from of old on the infinitely little; and under these genuflections, risings, sittings, shiftings, grimacings on all parts, and the endless droning eloquence of Bishops invoking Heaven, her ennui, not ill-humored or offensively ostensible, was heartfelt and transcendent. At one turn of the proceedings, Bishop This and Chancellor That droning their empty grandiloquences at discretion, Sophie Charlotte was distinctly seen to smuggle out her snuff-box, being addicted to that rakish practice, and fairly solace herself with a delicate little pinch of snuff. Rased tobacco, *tabac rape*, called by mortals *rape* or *rappee*: there is no doubt about it; and the new King himself noticed her, and hurled back a look of due fulminancy, which could not help the matter, and was only lost in air. A memorable little action, and almost symbolic in the first Prussian Coronation. "Yes, we are Kings, and are got SO near the stars, not nearer; and you invoke the gods, in that tremendously long-winded manner; and I—Heavens, I have my snuff-box by me, at least!" Thou wearied patient Heroine; cognizant of the infinitely little!—This symbolic pinch of snuff is fragrant all along in Prussian History. A fragranciness of humble verity in the middle of all royal or other ostentations; inexorable, quiet protest against cant, done with such simplicity: Sophie Charlotte's symbolic pinch of snuff. She was always considered something of a Republican Queen.

Thus Brandenburg Electorate has become Kingdom of Prussia; and the Hohenzollerns have put a crown upon their head. Of Brandenburg, what it was, and what Prussia was; and of the Hohenzollerns and what they were, and how they rose thither, a few details, to such as are dark about these matters, cannot well be dispensed with here.

END OF BOOK I

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HISTORY OF FRIEDRICH II OF PRUSSIA — VOLUME 01

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