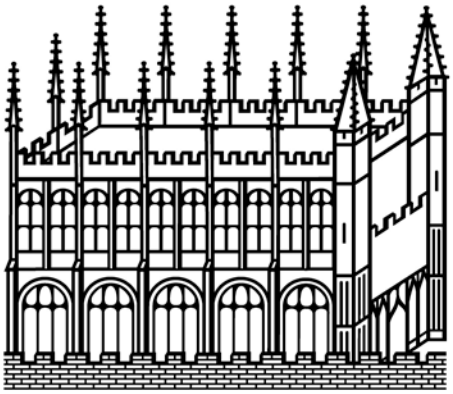

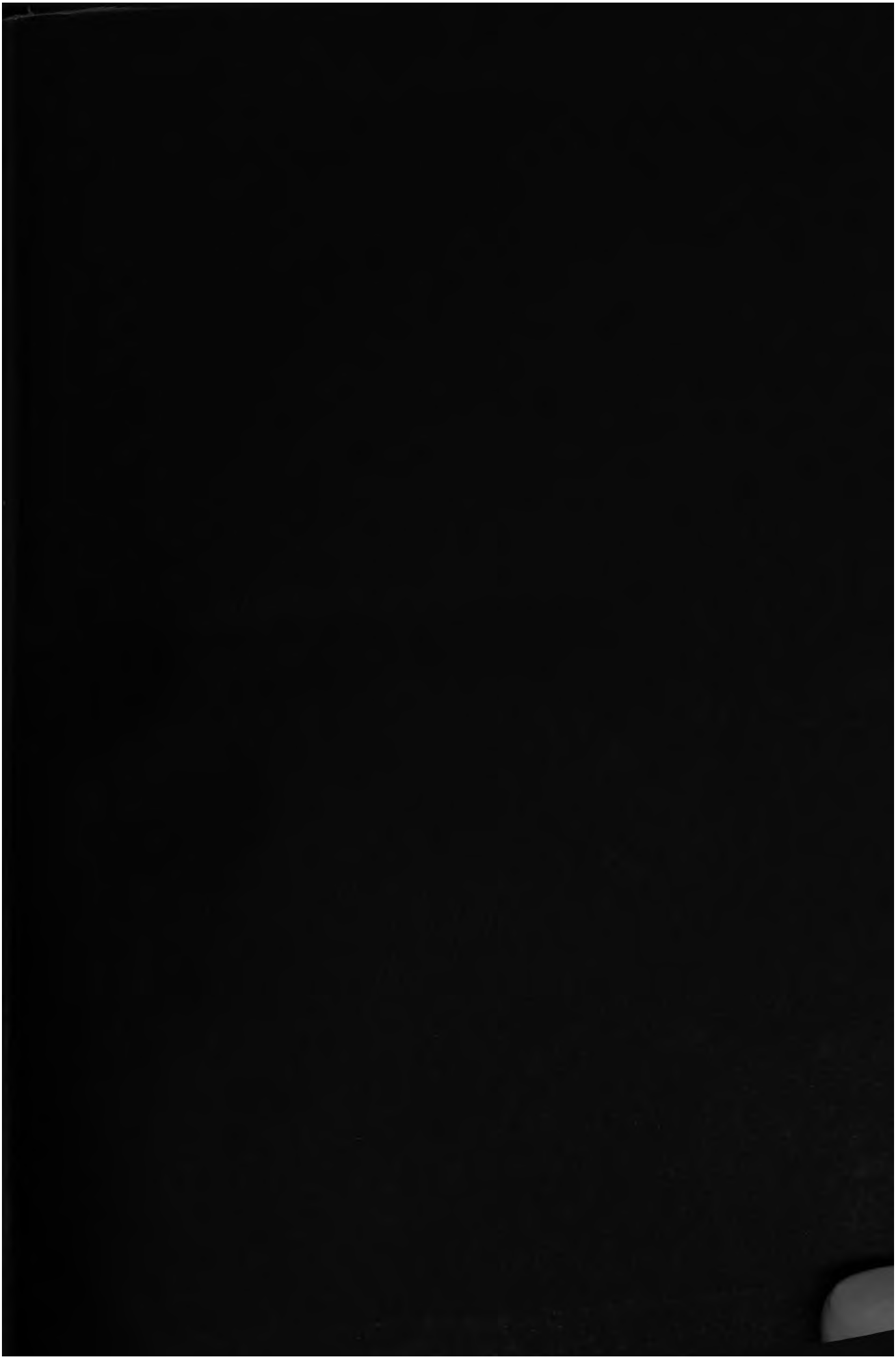

CHARLES XII.

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OSCAR II.

CHARLES XII.

BY

'OSCAR FREDRIK'

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL SWEDISH

With the Gracious Sanction of the Royal Author

BY

GEORGE F. APGEORGE

LONDON
RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen
1879

TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

ALBERT EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES

THIS TRANSLATION OF

'CHARLES XII.'

BY 'OSCAR FREDRIK'

IS

WITH HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S GRACIOUS PERMISSION

Most Humbly Dedicated

BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S MOST OBEDIENT

FAITHFUL SERVANT

GEORGE F. APGEORGE

BRITISH CONSULATE, STOCKHOLM
November 30, 1878

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following eloquent and comprehensive historical sketch of the career of CHARLES XII. is from the pen of His present Majesty, OSCAR II., King of Sweden and Norway. It was originally read by him, as an Address, at the festival given by the Military Association of Stockholm, on the occasion of the inauguration, in Carl XII. Square, of a statue of the world-renowned Swedish hero. The ceremony—which was performed with great official state, and amidst much demonstration of popular enthusiasm—took place on the 150th anniversary of Charles the Twelfth's death.

The Address was subsequently published by His Majesty—then Duke of Östergötland—

under the *nom de plume* of 'Oscar Fredrik,' and dedicated to a former preceptor—Professor of History in the University of Upsala. The dedication was as follows:—

To the Learned Professor and Historian
FREDRIK FERDINAND CARLSON
these pages are dedicated
by
A Grateful Pupil.

After its publication, the translator was honoured with the Royal Author's permission to render his historical sketch into English. At that time His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was at Stockholm, on a visit to His late Majesty Charles XV., when he graciously consented to allow the translation to be dedicated to him.

Works of high literary merit must always suffer in translation. In this instance, whilst the translator believes that he has faithfully rendered the substance of the sketch of the

career of Charles XII., he yet is conscious of having failed to transfer to his own language the finished style and glow of genius which distinguish the original Swedish work.

GEORGE F. APGEORGE.

BRITISH CONSULATE, STOCKHOLM:
November 30, 1878.

Woodburytype.

STATUE OF CHARLES XII.

CHARLES XII.

O could I from the crumbling tombs of old
Conjure our fathers' shades, their noble bearing,
Their deeds in storm and battle, brave and bold,
Their patience in the day of need untold,
As towards their goal they marched, all peril daring.

O kunde våra fäders ädla drag
Ur det förflutnas grifter fram jag mana,
Och deras hjeltemod i storm som slag,
Och deras tålamod i nödens dag,
På kraftens och försakelsernas bana.[1]

And still as of old are the folk that abide
'Mid northerly mountain and valley;
In God and their weapons they yet do confide,
To voice of their fathers they rally.

Och än är det likt sig det slägte, soin bor
Bland nordiska fjellar och dalar,
Och ännu på Gud och på stålet det tror,
Än fädernas kärnspråk det talar.[2]

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[1] From the introductory poem to *Reminiscences of the Swedish Navy*, by *Oscar Fredrik.*

[2] From *The Baltic*, in *Reminiscences of the Swedish Navy*, by *Oscar Fredrik.*

INTRODUCTION.

One thing I know that never dies:—
The verdict passed upon the dead.

Ett vet jag som aldrig dör;
Det är dom öfver död man.[1]

THESE simple words in the ancient poem 'Hávamál' express the true import of history.

The past appeals to the impartiality of the future. History replies. But, often, generations pass away ere that reply can be given in a determinate form. For not until the voices of contemporaneous panegyric and censure are hushed; not until passionate pulses have ceased to beat; until flattery has lost its power to charm and calumny to vilify, can the verdict of history be pronounced. Then from the clouds of error and prejudice the

[1] From *Hávamál* (The High Song of Odin) in the *Edda* (First Mother), a collection of the oldest traditional songs of the North, compiled in the Thirteenth century. The original parchment book, written in Icelandic, was found by Bishop Brynjölfr in 1643, and is now preserved in the Royal Library at Copenhagen.—*Translator's Note.*

sun of truth emerges, and light is diffused in bright rays, of ever-increasing refulgency and breadth.

But whilst the mind, thus enlightened, discerns with greater clearness the broad facts and events of past ages, there still may be danger that the sentence passed on them will prove both unjust and erroneous; that it may be based on some preconceived theory, and without a full appreciation of the circumstances and requirements of different periods and differing states of society. The verdict referred to in 'Hávamál' must, therefore, be understood as meaning an impartial verdict—yet not an unduly severe one—founded on an unprejudiced and well-considered view of past times, and of the persons and influences which have ruled them.

Every age has its own heroes,—men who seem to embody the prevailing characteristics of their relative epochs, and to present to after ages the idealised expression of their chief tendencies. Such men must be judged by no ordinary standard. History must view their actions as a whole, not subject them to separate tests, or examine them through the lens of

partial criticism and narrow-minded prejudice. Otherwise, Sweden's noble heirlooms—the brilliant exploits of her heroes—if not wholly wrested from her, would be shorn of their glory, leaving little for memory to dwell upon, to admire, or to love. Would this be a gain? Surely not.

It is precisely the influence of those glorious reminiscences that so endears to her the memory of her hero-kings—that causes the heart to beat quicker in the breast of every Swedish soldier, when the name of Charles XII. greets his ear. A name renowned throughout the world, and associated with a career so extraordinary, so abounding in strange adventure, that both the career and the personal characteristics of the hero himself have unceasingly formed a subject for much, and greatly varied, criticism. To show, then, what Charles XII. was—as a King, as a Soldier, as a Man—is but a tribute of homage justly due to his memory.

CHAPTER I.

WITH the beginning of the sixteenth century there dawned a new era on Europe, both political and religious. Powerful and hitherto unknown forces awoke to life, and stamped their impress deeply on the fortunes of this part of the globe.

The feudal system of the Middle Ages had long been on the decline; its part in the annals of history was almost played out. With tottering steps, it drew near its end—like a veteran knight, full of years and honours, and a memory stored with reminiscences of the greatness of the past; but, now become weary of existence, feeble and perplexed. The Reformation, in recognising the right of investigation and freedom of thought, became the antagonist of the feudal system, both temporal and spiritual. On the continent of Europe, where feudal power was so predominant that small landed proprietors had been unable, as a class, to main-

tain an independent existence, the new social system either developed into an absolute monarchy, or certain large and powerful cities became free and independent. In the former case, the ascendency was placed in the hands of a numerous and well-organised body of officials; in the latter, communal oppression, under the cloak of republicanism, was too much the rule.

Where, however, the Protestant faith triumphed, the clerical oligarchy was crushed, and, ere long, the temporal aristocracy also. In Germany alone some few of the most powerful feudal barons succeeded in establishing their independence, and on so firm a basis that only in the present day has it for the first time been shaken, but the majority, their influence being less, were speedily suppressed. In England, the aristocracy entered as an essential element of the new constitution—established there in the seventeenth century—which, being largely favoured by the natural position of the island and the character of the people, rapidly, and in a most extraordinary degree, developed itself, to the great advantage of the country.

In France, on the other hand, where religious agitation was prominent amongst the turmoils produced by the birth of a new era, centralising despotism assumed a determined form; and after a reconciliation—superficial in its nature—had been effected between the professors of the dissentient creeds, its progress was great and rapid. Louis XI. initiated this centralising system; Henry IV. and Sully essayed to establish it. Their efforts being energetically continued by the remarkable men who subsequently took the helm of the State, Louis XIV. was finally enabled to construct his mighty throne on the ruins of feudalism, and from that exalted station to give utterance to those world-renowned words, 'L'état, c'est moi!' And what words could express more clearly or truly both his own policy and the political characteristics of the period distinguished as 'Le siècle de Louis Quatorze'?

As regards Sweden,—notwithstanding certain occurrences of the latter part of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, which forcibly remind us of the despotism of France—she yet differed so materially from other European States, in her progress

towards social development, that the peculiar and distinctive features of the Swedish national character were faithfully portrayed in the respective relations of the several classes of society towards each other. Thus the consciousness of individual independence had its counterpart in a substantial landed peasantry, whose sense of freedom from control has never been so far subdued as to cease to exert itself against the other powers of the State. The character and habits of the Swedes, no less than the situation and climate of the country, were opposed to the rise of large and influential marts of commerce, such as, both in Germany and Italy, had become wealthy communities, enjoying independent constitutions, and having wide-spread commercial relations with foreign countries.

The ungenerous soil of Sweden was also unfavourable to the feudal system, which needs broad and fertile tracts of land to sustain it. And no less inimical to its establishment in that country was the fact of a freeborn peasantry having recognised that its future existence was threatened by it and that safety lay in becoming a trusty, if not altogether unselfish, ally of the monarchy. The Roman Catholic

clergy, it is true, had considerable power in Sweden, yet it fell far short of that exercised by them in places less distant from Rome. All the relations of the country were of a far simpler nature than those then existing in other nations: the links of its social chain were less numerous, although they were by no means weaker. Thus Sweden was saved from those violent and revolutionary changes that befell other countries.

CHAPTER II.

THE 'Calmar Union'[1] was based on a deep and grand idea, but being unsuccessfully developed, and still more unsuccessfully applied, it miscarried in its aim. Nevertheless, it may be confidently asserted that the sentiment of nationality struck its deepest roots in Sweden during that period, and that the most remarkable events of her history then occurred. The successes of the first king of the line of Wasa were mainly achieved by his reliance on this newly-awakened feeling of a national life. He sought and obtained shelter in Dalecarlia, the province in which the independence of the landed peasantry—favoured by local position and provincial characteristics—had been most

[1] By the 'Calmar Union' Norway and Sweden became in 1397 tributaries to Denmark, the three kingdoms being then united under the rule of Marguerite de Waldemar, younger daughter of Waldemar IV., who left no male heir to his crown. Gustavus Wasa, in 1523, rescued his country from this dependence, when the sovereignty was conferred on him and made hereditary in his line.—*Translator's Note.*

fully preserved. Thus, aided by the votes and the swords of the Swedish people, he raised his throne, having achieved the subversion of that of Christian II., the last monarch of the 'Union' period.

Like the French kings, Gustavus Wasa and his successors added to the powers with which they were first invested. This was a necessity of the times. But when the power of the people made itself recognised, it became the rampart of liberty, the glory of the greatest Swedish monarchs consisting in the fact that they were themselves the foremost representatives of the national life. Geijer has said, with much truth: 'The history of Sweden is that of her kings.' These words have another and far better signification than those of Louis XIV. quoted above.

The external greatness of Sweden was accomplished by warlike deeds; her inner regeneration by religious and political reforms. And it is worthy of remembrance, that the nobility, by their resolution, firmness, and statesmanlike qualities, succeeded in securing for their order a political position founded on personal merit, which they maintained as long

as the Swedish House of Nobles existed. It is probable that among its most distinguished members, some may have hoped, by services rendered to the State, both in the field and in the council chamber, eventually to regain the supremacy to which, in the Middle Ages, the Nobles of the North, like their compeers elsewhere, aspired. Two long minorities, during which statesmen of remarkable ability—members of the noblest families in the land—took the helm of the State; the reign of a Queen, who was fond of magnificence, and those incessant wars that kept the male Rulers of the country abroad, were circumstances well calculated to further such views and aspirations. Indeed, when Charles XI. attained his majority, the goal seemed well nigh reached.

In position, wealth, landed possessions, and official influence, the principal noble families vied with those of Germany. The Swedish Ministers of State claimed (and their claim was allowed) rank equal to that of the Princes of the German Empire; and several, by marriage, were connected with royal houses, both Swedish and foreign. A very large portion of the territory of Sweden was owned by the nobles, and

their property was exempt from taxation. The burden that, consequently, fell on the rest of the land became increasingly grievous, and the revenues of the Crown were threatened with extinction. The situation of the landed peasantry was critical in the extreme; whilst the nobles, like inexorable creditors, armed with the letter and the sword of the law, threatened to subjugate all classes of society. Fortunately, the Crown—being invested with national prerogatives—as prudently as powerfully curbed this attempt to lead the social development of the country in so perilous a direction. Sweden, before it was too late, possessed her Louis XIV. in the person of Charles XI. as in Charles IX. she had had her Louis XI. when the political development of the kingdom had so far progressed, as to enable the representatives of the nation to maintain their rights in unity with the royal prerogative. Truly Providence has manifestly protected the Swedish nation!

The confiscation of the estates of the nobles by Charles XI. was a necessary measure; but the mode of carrying it into effect was heartless and needlessly severe. On the subversion of

the provincial aristocracy, with their tendency to federation, Charles XI. constituted a governing body of trustworthy and loyal men to transact official business; while, to enable him to reorganise State affairs and establish a new political system, the representatives of the people themselves invested him with powers and prerogatives amounting almost to despotism. They believed it to be expedient that the power of the Crown should then be unlimited, it being needed as a bulwark for strengthening and supporting the new order of things. It may, therefore, with truth be asserted, that the King of Sweden was the chosen dictator of the nation; which made a temporary sacrifice of its liberty, in order that, for the time being, the State might be protected and its stability ensured in the future.

It was one of the highest merits of Charles XI. that he employed the great powers conferred on him for no private or personal advantage, but solely for the good of the country. And it was a proof of his wisdom, that although he possessed the right of final decision on questions of State, he yet often sought counsel from his 'Riksdag.' He was not a man especially gifted by nature, and his educa-

tion had been neglected; but Sweden yet preserves the memory of his beneficent rule. The provinces he so heroically defended in the time of danger still remain an appanage of the Swedish Crown, whilst other and dear-bought possessions have been utterly lost.

At the death of Charles XI. the country was in a state of greater prosperity than it had known since the times of Gustavus Wasa, and which it did not again attain until those of Charles XIV. and Oscar I. A wise and strict economy, with integrity in the administration of the finances, had enriched the exchequer. Justice was impartially dispensed, and commercial relations were extended to the most distant countries. The land forces were reorganised and well equipped,[1] and a powerful

[1] It is an admitted and well-known fact that it was by means of this army that Charles XII. achieved his great military exploits. Equally well known and acknowledged should it be, though it is not, that to the navy, created by Charles XI., a large share of the astonishing success that attended the earlier campaigns of his son is due. The immense advantages gained by Sweden when ruled by sovereigns who duly valued and developed her naval forces should not be forgotten. Gustavus Wasa, Charles XI., and Gustavus III., gave especial attention to the navy. The results were, that under the rule of Gustavus Wasa Swedish commerce flourished for the first time, and the land of the Vikings, so long disregarded, was again recognised, and its people respected. During the reign of Charles XI., the supremacy of Sweden in the

and well-disciplined navy may almost be said to have commanded the Baltic. Such were the fruits of this sovereign's able rule.

It was due also to him that Sweden's position as one of the great Powers of Europe was then fully recognised. Foreign Governments vied with each other in seeking her friendship; and she was able to appear as an effective mediator at the Congress of Ryswick, which she had been called upon to attend, in that capacity, by the unanimous consent of the contending parties.[1]

North was established, and her right to participate in the political councils of Europe acknowledged, and this chiefly from her command over the Baltic. Lastly, under Gustavus III., Sweden, notwithstanding many adverse circumstances, was enabled from the strength of her navy to maintain, singlehanded, against the superior power of Russia, the only war which, since the early part of the eighteenth century, the country concluded without loss of territory. Such historical lessons as these should not be buried in oblivion.

[1] France, through her Envoy at Stockholm, declared that she desired no further alterations to be made in the Treaties of Westphalia and Nimweg beyond those which the King of Sweden might consider expedient.

CHAPTER III.

THE boundaries of Sweden were never more extensive than at the period just referred to. If, according to modern ideas, they could not be termed natural, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that they were proofs of her power, and the means of her influence. By the treaties of Stolbowa and Brömsebro; by the peace of Westphalia and Oliva, Sweden had secured an acknowledged title to the territory won by her sword on the continent, as also to the provinces of Skåne, Halland, Blekinge, and Bohus, on the Scandinavian peninsula. Exemption from the Sound dues was accorded. Her right to participate in the administration of German affairs was conceded, and she was regarded as the champion of the imperilled Protestant States of the Empire.

Denmark was the only foreign power that possessed any considerable extent of territory

on the coasts of the Baltic, or had command of a fleet on that sea at all comparable with that of Sweden; and, as regarded that State, Sweden occupied a most advantageous position, being guarantee for Holstein, with whose ducal family her own royal house was closely allied. Besides, by the marriage of Charles XI. with the Danish Princess Ulrika Eleanora, a question for the future was raised, that might be answered by a new 'Calmar Union'—though on conditions very different from those of the first union, and far more favourable for Sweden.

Such was the kingdom to which Prince Charles was born heir on the morning of the 17th of June, 1682, at the palace of Stockholm. Throughout the country his birth was hailed with rejoicings, and many wonderful omens are said to have been noticed by those who surrounded his cradle (a cradle which still remains one of the most precious historical relics of loyal Swedes). These omens—foreshadowing a brilliant career awaiting the infant Prince—were firmly believed in by the mass of the people, and served to confirm the cherished hopes of the nation. His first years were passed under the care of an exemplary

mother, who implanted in his infant mind the seeds of those virtues—integrity, piety, and morality—which afterwards distinguished his youth and manhood.

When he was four years of age, Count Eric Lindsköld, member of the Privy Council, was appointed his Governor, and soon after, his Tutor was chosen; the Prince himself (so it is said) requesting his parents to select for that post, in preference to others who had been proposed for it, the famous Norcopensis, Professor of Elocution at Upsala, ennobled under the name of Nordenhjelm.

Charles XI. had experienced the disadvantages resulting from a neglected education, and was therefore careful that his son should be thoroughly instructed. The great talents of the young Prince were early developed; and being endowed with quick perceptions and great intelligence, his progress was rapid in most subjects, but especially in history, mathematics, and the classics. Unfortunately, the system of education so favourably begun was not destined to proceed uninterruptedly. In 1693 his affectionate and pious mother was removed, by death, from a world in which she

had known little of happiness, and had seldom been cheered by gratitude; though her life had been distinguished by much benevolence, conscientiousness, and greatness of mind. The death of Ulrika Eleanora was to Charles the loss of his guardian genius. His Governor, Lindsköld, died some time before the Queen; his Tutor, the worthy Nordenhjelm, shortly after. The latter was succeeded by a man indifferently qualified to supply his place—the Chancery Councillor, Thomas Polus; and Count Nils Gyldenstolpe filled the post of Governor.

The grief of the young Prince for the loss of his mother was so intense, so poignant, that, for a time, it affected his health—indeed, threatened his life. Shortly after her burial he was attacked by a violent fever, followed by smallpox of a severe type, which, however, passed away without leaving its too frequently disfiguring traces on the countenance. Youth and a robust constitution soon restored him to vigorous health, his physical development from that time being so rapid that he is described as having been, at the age of between fourteen and fifteen, almost the full-grown man he

is represented in those portraits so full of fascination to Swedish eyes.

Military exercises now became his favourite recreation, and the celebrated Quartermaster-general Stuart was appointed his instructor in tactical science. Frequently, too, the young Prince accompanied his father on his visits of inspection through the country, and was everywhere received by the people with demonstrations of loyalty and affection. It also appears that he passed through a short course of study at the University of Upsala. Bishop Benzelius prepared him for confirmation, in the beginning of 1697; but the first occasion of his partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was on the day following that on which his father for the last time received it.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLES XII. ascended the throne of Sweden, in right of succession, on the 14th of April, 1697, at the age of fourteen years and ten months. By the late King's will, made shortly after the death of his wife Ulrika Eleanora, the government of the kingdom was to be administered, until his son came of age, by a Regency, composed of five members, with the Queen-dowager (widow of Charles X.) at its head. The opinion of the Council was to be taken on all matters of importance, and clear instructions were given for the general management of affairs. But, the King having omitted to state at what age his successor should attain his majority, all his provisions for ensuring the good government of the country until that period arrived, proved abortive. The political energy of the Regency resolved itself into intrigues for obtaining the favour of the young King, and securing immunity from fiscal re-

sponsibility; while Charles soon began to enforce his own will, in opposition to that of the indulgent Queen-dowager, and the irresolute members of the Council of Regency.

Of the men who composed it, Count Bengt Oxenstjerna alone possessed any real power or influence, though his views and opinions did not always prevail unchallenged. The Regency was divided into distinct parties, especially opposed to each other on questions of foreign policy. Between France and the maritime Powers a contest was waged at the Swedish Council board, and weapons of flattery, money, and intrigue were industriously employed on both sides. Though we have, comparatively, but scanty information concerning those times, it yet clearly indicates that certain Swedish statesmen had a remarkable weakness for gold —a weakness which in these days men generally boast of being proof against. Such abuses cannot but be lamented, yet the entire blame of them must not be thrown on the Government. It should also be borne in mind that very different views on such matters from those of the present day then generally prevailed; and that the succeeding century, with all

its boasted liberty and intelligence, so far from discouraging, seemed rather to favour them.

There had sprung up in the State a third or Danish party, composed of those nobles who were most dissatisfied with the confiscation. At first they silently intrigued in favour of the Danish succession. But ere long they perceived their weakness, and joined the French party, which thus acquired a decided preponderance, in spite of the opposition of the Queen-dowager and Bengt Oxenstjerna. At the head of this faction were Christopher Gyllenstjerna, Fabian Wrede, Wallenstedt, Gyldenstolpe, the King's Governor—all members of the Regency—and other men of high rank and position. At the same time dissatisfaction with the general government of the Regency, and especially with the weakness displayed in its administration of public affairs, made it very unpopular. Throughout the country there was an increasing desire that the nation should be ruled directly by its youthful, bold, and resolute King. And this feeling daily gaining ground, the leading persons of each faction endeavoured to turn it to account for the furtherance of their own private ends. The result could not long be delayed.

It was hastened by the simultaneous occurrence of several extraneous circumstances. First, a general famine—of far greater severity than any the country had suffered from for years. Next, the threatening aspect of European affairs—although peace had so recently been signed and the flames of war extinguished. Lastly, the terrible conflagration at the palace of Stockholm—an event that produced in the public mind a deep dejection, almost superstitious in its nature. It was on this occasion that Charles for the first time gave proofs of the possession of that presence of mind and energy which subsequently rarely forsook him. His activity and courage increased his popularity; and when, reluctantly, he was compelled to leave the smoking ruins of his father's palace—the threshold of which he was never again to cross—in the applauding voices of the populace might have been heard a prophetic intimation of those events too soon to be accomplished, and destined so greatly to influence his future fate.

CHAPTER V.

THE Estates of the Realm were convoked, ostensibly to witness the magnificent obsequies of Charles XI. Yet a secret anticipation was cherished that their meeting would be attended by some important result. The knights and nobles assembled in unusual numbers. A Landmarshal[1] and other Speakers of the Chambers were elected; the French party—supposed to favour the immediate declaration of the King's majority—being triumphant. Intrigues were immediately set on foot, but they present no particular feature of interest: for there appears to have been neither a decided plan nor prominent leader aiming to effect the declaration of the Sovereign's majority; though Piper—afterwards so celebrated—has been considered an active party chief. There was certainly no need of plans,

[1] The title of the Speaker in the former Chamber of Nobles.—*Translator's note.*

and chiefs, and secret arrangements, as politicians were, or appeared to be, generally agreed respecting the momentous question. It advanced towards its solution, unaided, and with marvellous speed.

It was first publicly broached in the Chamber of Nobles, in the forenoon of November 8th. The few who had scruples on the subject were outvoted and silenced—even ridiculed. A deputation was instantly sent to the Council of Regency, then just assembling. Fabian Wrede alone expressed any feeling of doubt. The rest of the members, together with the Queen-dowager, unhesitatingly assented to the proposal laid before them. A meeting at the Chamber of Nobles (Riddar House) was agreed on for the same afternoon, and the three other Estates of the Realm—forgotten, it would seem, in the first excitement of the moment—were hastily summoned to attend it. When their deputations, headed by their Speakers, arrived, the object of the meeting was at once explained. The clergy alone cautioned the assembly against precipitancy in so grave a matter, and displayed a spirit of opposition, which the impartial historian must designate, respect for law.

As has already been stated, there was uncertainty in the terms of the will as to the age at which Charles XI. desired that his son should attain his majority. Possibly he may have wished that circumstances should determine it, and by ambiguity in his directions have left an opportunity open for their doing so. By ancient precedent, as well as by the decision of the Riksdag of 1604, a Swedish King should be of age at eighteen. Charles XII. at this time was only fifteen and five months. It happened, however, as in moments of party agitation it so often happens, that a storm of approval overpowered every hesitating voice. No time was allowed for deliberation; and on the same afternoon as the Estates of the Realm assembled at the Riddar House, the nobles—who were present to a man—threw their hats in the air and shouted with enthusiasm, 'Vivat Rex Carolus!'

No further consideration was given to the matter. The burghers and peasants willingly assented. The clergy were dispersed, and but few members of their chamber were present; though on the following day some speeches, recommending prudence, were made by them.

But the deed was done, and could not then be undone. Between six and seven on the previous evening an audience had been obtained of the King, when the Landmarshal, at the head of the assembled Estates, had prayed him, on their behalf, to assume the reins of government without delay. He promised the youthful Sovereign loyalty and obedience, in the name of the nation at large, and that neither property nor life should be spared in his service—promises which, it must be acknowledged, the nation redeemed to its utmost ability.

The King yielded to their wishes, and in the usual form of words: 'By the help of God, and in the name of Jesus, I assume the government.'

Thus, within the space of ten hours, was this remarkable revolution accomplished. It may be regarded as Charles the Twelfth's political battle of Narva.

We, who at this distance of time can survey events with calmness, must see that it would have been far better, both for Sweden and her King, had he been invested with the full powers of royalty in a less abrupt and more constitutional manner. The young lion might with ad-

vantage have had further opportunities allowed him for maturing his powers, and for the expansion of his youthful mind; more time for judgment to ripen and, generally, to prepare for the exercise of those arduous and important duties that awaited him. But most people thought only of present and personal advantages; so Charles, on November 29, 1697, with general acclamation, assumed the reins of government. With this act, the proceedings of the Riksdag were really at an end. But the Chambers continued their sittings a week or two longer, in order that the Estates, before finally dispersing, might witness the solemn obsequies of the late King, and afterwards swear fealty to his lawfully crowned successor.

CHAPTER VI.

IT is not surprising that a mere youth, as Charles XII. was at his accession, should feel little inclination to occupy himself with the serious business of State. He began his reign, as is well known, by devoting much of his time to military sports, in the company of youthful comrades; by engaging, with the ardour natural to his age, in the dangers of bear-hunting and feats of daring horsemanship. It has been said that his young brother-in-law, the Duke of Holstein, encouraged him to pursue these perilous amusements, by which the throne was likely any day to become vacant. And motives so ignoble were then attributed to the Prince that the public regarded him with extreme disfavour. The King, however (which seems to be less generally known), very soon gave up this wild mode of life, and withdrew from the intimate society of his brother-in-law. Without abandoning manly pursuits, he began to devote

more of his time to the duties of government—and this before the bursting of the storm that was soon to devastate the North.

The wise administration and neutral policy of the late King, while it had increased the already considerable influence and importance of Sweden in Europe, had also awakened the jealousy of her neighbours. Russia, for some years, had been governed by that illustrious man, the Czar Peter I., who was destined to found the greatness of his own country, to a large extent, at the expense of Sweden. Prince Augustus of Saxony, in spite of the efforts of France in favour of the Prince de Conti, had succeeded in gaining, in the Electorate of Poland, a crown surrounded by the semblance rather than the reality of power. The land of the great Brandenburgian was silently preparing for the part it was about to play in history; and Denmark—at that time an inveterate enemy—brooded on revenge for the provinces she had lost.

The Rulers of those countries—seeing that Sweden was governed by a boy-King, prematurely declared of age, whose time and thoughts were wholly given, as they supposed, to wild

and dangerous sports, and in whose kingdom were many discernible germs of discontent—naturally flattered themselves that Sweden would fall an easy prey to their forces. Traitors were not wanting to encourage such expectations. The Livonian nobles, whom the Swedish Government had treated with unwise severity, maintained a treasonable correspondence with both the Russian and Polish Courts, and naturally exaggerated the distress that prevailed in the country.

The treachery with which the Czar Peter and King Augustus, a relative of Charles's, began their proceedings against him, may find its parallel in the annals of history, but it was so totally opposed to the young King's principles, and his ideas of honour and integrity, that it inspired him with indignation—so strong and lasting, that his subsequent actions were greatly influenced by it. Only three days prior to entering into a treaty of offensive alliance with Augustus, the Czar had concluded a friendly treaty with Charles. The too trustful young monarch had, at the Czar's request, even supplied him with Swedish guns. While Augustus, on his part, had sent an embassy,

scarcely a fortnight before, to congratulate the King on his accession.

The Court of Brandenburg was no less inimical in its feelings towards Sweden; but, cautiously, remained neutral. Denmark, on the other hand, secretly joined the alliance, at the same time lavishing on Charles the strongest assurances of friendship. Thus, veiling their hostile intention under hypocritical professions of good will, three powerful States of Europe were arming against Sweden and its unsuspecting King.

Suddenly, and without any previous declaration of war, they cast aside the mask, and grasped the sword in the certainty of victory. But they had mistaken both Charles XII. and his Swedish subjects. Feelings of wrath and scorn thrilled through the breasts of the entire population when, simultaneously, from each frontier of the country, the unexpected intelligence arrived. The bond of patriotism at once united all factions and parties, and the enraged Lion of the North, lashed to fury, struck his adversaries to the ground. It was undoubtedly wise on the part of the King to direct his arms, in the first instance, against Denmark. She was

his nearest enemy, and the one farthest removed from the support of her allies. The naval forces, commanded by Admiral Hans Wachtmeister, were equipped without delay. The regiments nearest at hand were marched to the province of Skåne; and on the 12th of April, 1700, Charles left Stockholm—a city he was fated never to see again.

The main body of the Danish army was posted at Sleswig, where it was joined by the King, who probably expected to defeat the Duke of Holstein and his few auxiliary Swedish troops, before Zealand could be threatened. But this was an imprudence he had to pay dearly for. When the Swedish fleet entered the Sound from the south, and two squadrons of Dutch and English ships (coming to the assistance of Charles) appeared in the north, the Danish fleet dared not venture out. Not more than six thousand Swedish troops had mustered at Malmö when their King arrived. But to gain time was then more important to him than the number of his men. By a sudden impulse, which bore the stamp of genius, it occurred to the youthful general that, the fleet being in full command of the Sound, the regi-

ments he had with him might, at once, be thrown over to the opposite coast. Boldly he resolved to attempt it; and with great celerity the daring idea was carried out. He himself, at the head of his guards, waded ashore. A few Danish detachments, hastily mustered, endeavoured to prevent his landing, which, however, was successfully effected near Humlebäck, a village immediately south of Elsinore. It was then he heard, for the first time, the whistling of bullets around him, and it so stimulated his youthful courage that he exclaimed with rapture, almost prophetic, 'Henceforth, this shall be my music!'

His victory, almost a bloodless one, filled the surprised Danes with amazement. The perfect discipline of the Swedish troops, and the noble character of their young Commander-in-chief, quickly won the favour of the Zealanders, who welcomed with admiration and affection the son of their good Princess Ulrika. To the numerous deputations that came to his camp, he soothingly replied: 'What I have done, I have been compelled to do. But from this day forth, you may feel assured that I will be the faithful friend of your King.' And these were

not mere empty words; the promise was kept with chivalrous good faith.

Charles granted an armistice, under the walls of Copenhagen, to the now suppliant monarch who, scarcely a month before, had treacherously drawn his sword against him. Peace shortly after ensued; and Charles did not demand from his adversary an inch of Danish territory. The immediate interests of Sweden were thereby little affected; it was virtually a reconciliation between Denmark and Holstein.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the words of one of the most able Swedish historians, it may reasonably be asked: 'Can it be possible that a mere blind passion for war, wholly divested of pacific sympathies, influenced the man who thus concluded his first military achievement?' The enthusiasm awakened throughout Sweden in view of conduct, which displayed so remarkably, in a youth of eighteen, the noblest generosity combined with heroic energy, can more readily be understood. But the joy of both King and nation at these unexpected successes had soon to give place to the anxious consideration of the urgent question—against whom should the arms of Sweden next be turned?

Augustus had been the first to break peace; but, thanks to the vigilance and experience of Field-Marshal Eric Dahlberg, his attack on Livonia had failed. The Czar was a far more dangerous enemy—as well from his personal

qualities as his great military strength ; also, from having at his back the most populous country in Europe, desirous of obtaining substantial advantages at Sweden's cost. Even those who enjoyed the greatest intimacy with Charles were not allowed to become cognisant of his intentions. Distinguished men of action seldom talk much of their plans, and the treacherous plot of the three allied sovereigns against Sweden had especially disposed Charles to maintain secresy with regard to any intended enterprise. In this determination we may recognise one of his most marked characteristics.

Avoiding all enquiries, and the pacific proposals of foreign envoys, he hastened on the embarkation of his troops at Carlshamn. They were landed at Pernau ; and before his enemies had had time for consultation, or even were aware of the result of his campaign in Denmark, Charles and his army were already in the interior of Esthonia, pushing forward to the relief of Narva, which was hard pressed by the Russians. It is unnecessary to enlarge on that remarkable battle, in which, against greatly superior numbers, a mere handful of Swedish

troops achieved one of the most signal victories recorded in the annals of history.

It consisted mainly in the storming of earth-works, hastily thrown up by the enemy to cover his siege operations, then threatened in the rear. This, at the first glance, would seem likely to render success more difficult. Yet, actually, it was not so. The Russian forces—imperfectly drilled and organised—were far too widely extended; and nearly the whole of the second line being compelled to show a front to the town, in order to repel any sortie that might be attempted, it became very difficult for them to render the requisite support to the first line. The attack of the two small Swedish columns was hidden from the Russians by a heavy snow-storm, and the surprise was complete. The number of prisoners was greater than Charles's small army, overcome by fatigue, was able to guard. He therefore, on the day after the battle, ordered them to be set at liberty. The trophies taken were as numerous as honourable: among them were many of the guns lately given by the King to the Czar. The news of this victory soon spread far and wide, and its fame became imperishable.

But that renowned day of Narva, though forming a brilliant episode in military history, was not in reality a fortunate day for either Sweden or Charles XII. The victory was dearly bought, yet seemed to have been so easily won, that it induced a feeling of contempt for the enemy; and thus gave rise to subsequent disasters. The great Czar, while he regarded his youthful adversary with admiring astonishment, yet clearly penetrated his character; and at the same time perceived how advantage might be extracted from his own reverses. Although this was accomplished at the cost of Sweden, it is but just to recognise facts that, as a general, redound to his honour.

At the Swedish head-quarters, voices were very naturally raised in favour of carrying the war into Russia. Augustus, alarmed at the news he was constantly receiving from the field of action, reporting victory after victory, desired, and asked for, peace; and it is highly probable that the defeated Czar, deserted by both his allies, would have been compelled to lay down his arms. It would seem as if at that moment the guardian angel of Sweden held up a hand of warning to the youthful

hero so favoured by fortune. The High Chancellor, Bengt Oxenstjerna, then fast approaching the close of his career, implored the King to listen to offers of peace, now that victory so complete was obtained. Count Piper, Councillor of State, and Charles's most influential favourite, seconded the efforts of Oxenstjerna. But neither of these advisers prevailed with the King; because his *third* enemy was not yet vanquished *by force of arms*!

His decision appears to have been founded on two reasons: first, indignation at the faithlessness of Augustus—whom he regarded as the originator of the offensive alliance; secondly, the belief that his adversaries, should he give ear to their proposals of peace, subdued though they were for the present, would only await a more favourable opportunity for the renewal of hostilities. The latter motive is considered by some of his panegyrists to have been the ruling one. Without, however, denying it its due weight, it must yet be borne in mind that, although vanquished foes never make peace, except from necessity, and usually cherish a secret hope of avenging their defeat at some future time, it may nevertheless be prudent on the part of the

victors to assent to their pacific proposals. Besides, as two of the Powers forming the alliance were thoroughly crushed, and the third was suing for peace, the union was broken up. They were also, as is customary in such cases, reproaching each other with breach of faith, and consequently the renewal of their alliance would have been difficult. Charles's first reason, though a purely personal one, probably had the most weight with him. His character, education, and the form of government in his kingdom, alike prompted him to give more heed to private feelings than to the dictates of prudence.

But whatever his motive, the consequences were fatal. The die was cast in favour of war. Many years of national suffering followed, and much blood was shed before peace was again restored to the North.

CHAPTER VIII.

DURING the year 1700 Sweden had mustered and organised her military forces. Before the opening of the next campaign there were in Livonia about 16,000 dragoons and other cavalry, and 28,500 infantry.[1] Early in December, the King, with a part of his forces, began his march southward. It was supposed that this movement threatened Curland, where

[1] About 20,000 troops, of all arms, were left at home. They consisted chiefly of the so-called Tremänning's Regiments.* In Pomerania, Weismar, and Bremen, there was about the same number. Altogether, the armed forces amounted to nearly 90,000 men; about half of them being under the immediate command of Charles, although spread along the whole of the eastern frontier.

* The main stock of the Swedish army is supplied and supported on the 'indelta' (divisional) system, established by Charles XI. By this system the country is divided into 'Rotar' or divisions, each of which is bound to furnish, equip, and support one or more foot or cavalry soldiers. The military requirements of Charles XII. compelled him, in addition to the stock of his army thus supplied, to make further drafts upon the 'Rotar'; but in consequence of the scarcity of men, he could only demand one recruit from three, four, or five 'Rotar' combined. The regiments thus formed were called 'Tremänning,' 'Fyrmänning,' and 'Femmänning,' Regiments—Three, Four, and Five Man Regiments.

Translator's Note.

a body of Saxon troops was posted. But, to the astonishment of many, winter quarters were taken up in the south of Livonia. This postponement of hostilities gave the enemies time for consultation, and Russia and Poland renewed their alliance. Denmark, with which country a real peace had been definitively concluded, refused to join the confederation ; a fact of much significance.

Augustus, by promises and intrigue, succeeded for the moment in strengthening his party in Poland. Charles, meanwhile, was not idle. During the winter he assiduously devoted himself to the duties of government, and to exercising and hardening his troops. After Midsummer, 1701, he broke up his camp, and, at the head of about 20,000 men marched into Curland. The passage of the Dwina, obstinately resisted by the Saxon General, Field-Marshal Heinau, was cleverly and bravely accomplished. The enemy, being defeated, retreated to the interior of Poland, whither however Charles did not follow. As if pondering before taking that momentous step, which nevertheless he had firmly resolved on, and from which neither the humble representations of

Augustus, the entreaties of the lovely Aurora Königsmark, the mediation of foreign ambassadors, nor the warnings of his leading generals and councillors, could deter him, he marched leisurely towards the frontiers of Lithuania.

The crown of Poland—that alone was his price for peace.

The internal dissensions of that unhappy country, and the displeasure of the people at a Saxon prince being thrust on them as a ruler, encouraged the views of King Charles, which were also strengthened by the remembrance—still fresh in Poland—of the resistless valour of his grandfather. The wealthy and illustrious family of Sapieherne—whose pride and ambition Augustus had attempted to curb—openly espoused the cause of Charles. The secret machinations against the Polish King, in which some of the foremost of the nobility were concerned, also furthered his plans considerably; while from the ranks of the army numbers daily hastened to range themselves under the standard of Sweden. By these favouring circumstances Charles was incited to an enterprise, in several respects open to question, but of which, as regards its ultimate

results to Sweden, there can only be one opinion.

In March, 1702, Poland was invaded; and Charles, at the head of his troops, pushed rapidly forward to the heart of that country. Warsaw was taken, without opposition. The Diet was dispersed; and Augustus, hotly pursued by the Swedes, fled towards the south. At Clissau he made a stand; was defeated, and compelled to seek refuge, first at Sandomir, then at the fortress of Thorn, where part of his faithful Saxon infantry once more rallied. The gates of Cracow flew open to welcome the Swedish King, now in possession of the two chief cities of Poland, and whose sword dominated the entire country.

In this brief sketch of Charles the Twelfth's career, the movements of the Swedish troops, during their subsequent successes in Poland, cannot be followed step by step. Their arms were everywhere victorious, and the names of Frauenstadt, Pussitz, and Pultausk will not be forgotten. The campaign was, however, distinguished by forced and fatiguing marches; the pursuit of parties of marauders or of evading troops; also by protracted sieges of fortified places yet in

the possession of Augustus. Consequently, it affords no examples of brilliant strategy. But it should be remembered that the movements of the army were often dictated by purely political reasons, and that diplomatic negotiations were in progress at the Swedish head-quarters during the whole period of the war. At last in February, 1704, after much hesitation, and many preliminaries, it was declared at a General Confederation, summoned by the Cardinal-Primate, at Warsaw, that King Augustus had forfeited the crown of Poland. Thus Charles the Twelfth's chief object in this war was accomplished.

It now became necessary to find a suitable successor, and the King determined to nominate a native of Poland. This was wise; for if ever Poland was to become strong and prosperous, and to be allied with Sweden—which were alike expedient for the interests of both countries — it was desirable that her crown should not be placed on the head of a reigning foreign prince aspiring to wear it from a desire for personal honour and distinction; but on one who might be expected to think and act as a Pole.

The first choice made by Charles would have been the best. There was a name which then awakened in Polish hearts feelings similar to those that were more recently evoked in France by that of Napoleon: it was the name of Sobieski, the deliverer of Vienna from the sword of the infidel, and Poland's most illustrious ruler. King John Sobieski had three sons, and upon James, the eldest, Charles's attention was immediately fixed. He believed that the various parties and factions dividing the State would probably unite under the rule of a Sobieski. And it might have been so. But when James was summoned to the Swedish head-quarters from the exile to which he and his brother Constantine had been condemned by Augustus, they were waylaid by the emissaries of the latter as they journeyed through Silesia, and, in defiance of the rights of neutral territory, arrested and imprisoned. Thus frustrated in his first intention, Charles, after short deliberation, declared in favour of a Polish noble—Stanislaus Leczinski.

The character of Stanislaus was marked by disinterestedness, benevolence, and integrity; and later on, at a calmer stage of his career, he

proved himself an able ruler. But at the period in question, an iron will, self-confidence, and boldness were needed, in order to acquire moral influence and ascendency, without which the difficult task allotted to the ruler of Poland at that particular crisis could not be successfully accomplished. Unfortunately, Stanislaus lacked those qualities.

He was, however, elected to the throne at the Diet of Warsaw, on July 2, 1704, though far from unanimously. The debates were stormy, the protests numerous.

Discontent at the levies enforced by the Swedish troops, together with the private dissensions of the nobles, and the alluring promises of Augustus, had long delayed the decision so ardently desired by Charles. But the force of events proved in the end irresistible. Augustus, totally defeated at Pultausk, was wandering like an outlaw from province to province, while the grandson of Charles X., in all the halo of victory, and the grandeur of his native simplicity, stood in the very heart of the vanquished country. A large part of the lively and susceptible Polish nation was fired with that involuntary enthusiasm which has

made the name of Charles XII. so popular, even with his antagonists, and his memory so cherished by the Poles of the present day. It was this admiration of our hero that placed the crown of Poland on the head of the man he had chosen, though it could not permanently keep it there. Indeed, Stanislaus was never really King. He dared not for a single day dispense with the protection of the Swedish auxiliary troops; and when in the course of a few years they were withdrawn from Poland, he left his kingdom with them, to seek an asylum in the country of that protector, who, far away in Turkey, continued, with singular perseverance, to fight for his cause, long after all others regarded it as hopeless.

CHAPTER IX.

WHILE Charles with his army was ranging about Poland, important events were taking place on the eastern frontiers of Sweden. The Czar, availing himself of so favourable an opportunity, began his obstinate and merciless attack on the Swedish possessions skirting the Gulf of Finland. He was resisted only by the small detachments of troops that insufficiently garrisoned the fortresses scattered over the country. But the Russian giant, bent on reaching the waves of the Baltic, overthrew, by superior force, all opposition to his course. Only Charles, heading the main body of his victorious troops, could have checked the advance of the Czar and his powerful hosts. But he, unhappily for Sweden, was far away on the banks of the Vistula.

In Ingria, Esthonia and Livonia, one stronghold after another was taken; and at length, on the ruins of a Swedish fortress, arose

St. Petersburg, the capital of the modern Russian Empire.

It has frequently been both written and said, that 'an imperative necessity, an irresistible craving—as if for the breath of life—urged on the Russians to the coasts of Finland; and it was inevitable, and in the nature of things, that, sooner or later, Sweden should yield to such pressure.' There is a certain amount of truth in this observation; for the tide of emigration has for ages past flowed from the East towards the West, and it is doubtful whether, even now, it has altogether ceased. At the period referred to, it seemed, in its course from Asia to Europe, to have reached its culminating point. Its further progress, however, was favoured by the discovery of a new continent, and the first colonisation of the immense expanse of North America, which immediately after occurred. May not the Sclavonic race, with its fresh and youthful elasticity, be compared to a powerful generator of steam; while America, like a gigantic air-pump, by continual suction, creates for it the requisite vacuum?[1]

[1] The social system of the Scandinavian, Germanic, and Latin races in Europe, the home and hearth of modern civilisation, re-

Much that has happened and is still happening might be explained in this manner.

The progress of history and the general development of the human race cannot be arrested; yet it is the duty of everyone who would worthily bear the name of statesman, not only to abstain from favouring that which is injurious to his country, but to use every means in his power to counteract it. It is a duty on the altar of which a man may become a sacrifice, but, comprehended and practised, it is one that distinguishes him from that common herd which listens to the siren-voice of present advantage, and follows the flaunting banner of fortune wherever it leads. The application of this to Charles XII., and his course of action, is self-evident. The mistake he committed in regarding the northern theatre of war as secondary in importance, is the more to be regretted as Russian conquest at Sweden's expense might probably then have been checked for a considerable time.

Augustus was not compelled to abdicate and

sembles a complicated, and ingeniously devised machine, constructed with technical precision. Such a machine, however, requires that the steam be applied with the greatest care, as it is liable to explode if the engineers are not attentive to their duties.

sue for peace until his adversary had reached the very heart of his hereditary Saxon dominions; and Charles had postponed their invasion from month to month, though it was continually urged on him by France—anxious to divert attention from her own threatened frontiers. He had preferred to occupy himself, now in adventurous expeditions, now in protracted sieges, often conducted with little vigour. It may be, that before leaving Poland he desired to establish the power of Stanislaus more firmly, or to make it apparent to the world that the war was waged against the treacherous peace-breaker, not against his hereditary German dominions. His behaviour at the Saxon Court seems to confirm this idea.

When, at last, he did march into Saxony, the first proclamations he issued—concerning the contributions to be paid by that country, on account of its criminal share in protracting the war—were extremely severe. These proclamations were, however, very soon withdrawn, and new ones issued, in which the severity was directed against his own soldiers, should they be guilty of violence or plunder. His march had met with but little opposition; and the

vanguard had arrived in the neighbourhood of Leipsic when Charles received, at the Castle of Alt-Ranstadt, the Envoy sent by the Elector to negotiate terms of peace. There also assembled the representatives of several foreign Powers, some of the most distinguished statesmen and generals, and many German princes, all of whom had come to do homage to the young Lion of the North. And a very deep and favourable impression was made on them by the unostentatious bearing, and the determination of character, evinced by the youthful hero.

Charles XII. was then twenty-four years of age, and his fame at its zenith. Crowds thronged his head-quarters, eager to catch but a glimpse of him. He was accessible and affable to everyone; listened with patient attention to the advice that was given him, yet was proof against every temptation and illusion. It may confidently be asserted that the only person from whom he turned with dread—dread, prompted by the moral principles in which he had been reared—was Aurora Königsmark, famed for her beauty and her amorous intrigues. She was now, for the second time,

sent by Augustus to Charles, to endeavour by her blandishments to rescue the crown of her royal paramour.

The peace of Ranstadt, and the events immediately preceding it, remind us in many respects of Travendal. As then, the enemy's capital lay open to the victorious Swedish troops; but Charles, possibly fearing another Capua for his soldiers, did not permit them to enter. He required of his adversary no cession of territory, or indeed any other compensation for the expenses of the war. Subsistence for his army was the extent of his demands; and in this respect he perhaps carried disinterestedness too far; but he, at all events, acted chivalrously.

CHAPTER X.

THE conditions to which Augustus had been compelled to subscribe were: the recognition of Stanislaus as King of Poland; the recall of all auxiliary troops from the Russian army; the free exercise of the Lutheran faith in Saxony for all future time; the liberation of the brothers Sobieski; and the delivery of all Swedish deserters, foremost amongst whom was the unfortunate Patkull.

On the other hand, Augustus was allowed to retain his regal title, Charles pledging himself to protect his hereditary dominions, and to assist him in obtaining favourable terms of peace from the Czar. Fortunate indeed would it have been could the vanquished monarch have duly appreciated the moderation of the Swedish King, and by faithful fulfilment of his part of the compact shown himself alive to his own interests. But while Charles, immediately after the conclusion of peace, banishing

all resentment for past wrongs, displayed towards his foe the fullest trust and confidence, the thoughts of Augustus were only of treachery and revenge. It has been affirmed that he even sought to rid himself of his guest by assassination. If he ever really entertained such an intention, he fortunately was unable to carry it into effect.

There is a mournful reminiscence attached to this period in the sentence and punishment of Patkull.[1] This forms a dark page in the history of Charles XII. Yet it should not be for-

[1] The Nobles of Livonia, being treated with extreme severity by Charles XI., deputed Johan Reinhold Patkull to address the King on their behalf. His statement of their grievances was so forcible and eloquent, that, on concluding it, Charles laid his hand on Patkull's shoulder and said: 'You have spoken for your country as a brave man should. I esteem you for it.' No abatement of his rigour towards the Livonians resulting from it, Patkull was led to speak harshly and disparagingly of the King. A few days after he was arrested for high treason, and imprisoned. Contriving to escape, he fled to Poland; entered the service of Augustus, and, on the death of Charles XI., persuaded the Polish King to invade Livonia, supposing it would prove an easy conquest. When Augustus was driven from Poland, Patkull escaped to Russia. He returned to Augustus, in Saxony, but in quality of Ambassador from the Czar, to endeavour to effect a new alliance between them. The successes of Charles XII. put an end to his negotiations, and, to please Charles, Augustus delivered up Patkull as a Swedish deserter. He was tried by a council of war, and was condemned to be broken, alive, on the wheel, then beheaded, and quartered; Charles refusing to attend to the many petitions praying for a reprieve or some mitigation of the unusually barbarous sentence. Patkull was in his forty-seventh year.—*Translator's Note.*

gotten that the ideas which then prevailed on such matters differed greatly from those of our own time; also that the sufferer was not only a traitor to his own nation, but one of the boldest and most dangerous enemies of his adopted country and its lawful ruler. Patkull was the Ambassador of the Czar at the court of Saxony, and had been treated with every distinction, until Augustus, in order to gain the favour of his conqueror, ordered his arrest, and was therefore even more blamable than Charles. But let us turn from this deed of blood to episodes of a more agreeable character.

Chief among these was the enthusiasm displayed by the protected Protestants of Saxony and Silesia towards Charles and his troops. When the army, after lying inactive for more than a year, broke up from its Saxon quarters, the inhabitants followed the regiments for miles, testifying by expressions of friendship and regret their sorrow at parting from the true-hearted peasant soldiery. Many of them, from their experience in rural occupations and their general good nature, had been found valuable, active, and willing assistants to the agricultural population.

The people of Silesia, too, for whom also Charles, by his almost threatening bearing towards the Court of Vienna, had succeeded in obtaining religious liberty, were ardent in their manifestations of gratitude. When, on the march through their country, the Swedes assembled for evening prayer, and King, officers, and men devoutly bent the knee in supplication to the God of their fathers, they were joined by the long restrained voices of thousands, who invoked blessings on the people of Sweden and their noble-hearted King. Husbands and wives, parents and children, all united in the song of praise. 'And it is easy to imagine,' says a talented historian, 'whither the overflowing eyes were directed when soldiers and peasantry united in singing:'

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

Vår egen kraft ej hjelpa kan,
Vi voro snart förströdde,
Men med oss står *den ratte Man*,
Vi stå af Honom stödde.[1]

Scenes like these recall the times of Gus-

[1] From the Swedish Metrical Psalter.

tavus Adolphus, the heroic defender of our Faith, and should be numbered amongst the brightest in the career of Charles XII.

The army with which the King was marching to encounter his most dangerous foe, numbered about 44,000 men. It was composed of the best equipped and best armed troops Sweden had hitherto possessed. The officers, and even the men had saved considerable sums of money, and large amounts were collected in the regimental chests.[1] In other respects, however, this army had sustained irretrievable losses. Numbers of veteran soldiers, and many subaltern officers, had gone back to their homes on furlough, their places being very inadequately supplied by young and raw recruits. Amongst officers of superior rank, some of the most distinguished—Arvid Horn, Magnus Stenbock, Nieroth, Liewin, and others—all faithful friends of the King from his boyhood, had also returned to their country; either to fill places in the council or other important posts. Thus the number of experienced generals was reduced,

[1] In some instances it is said to have amounted to 150,000 or 160,000 Kronor—of the present currency; equal to from eight to nine thousand pounds sterling.

and the ranks at the same time were thinned of veterans.

Field-Marshal Rehnsköld alone remained of those who had held high command; and his influence soon became so predominant that even Count Piper, who, hitherto, had especially possessed the ear of the king, found himself supplanted. There were indeed, besides Rehnsköld, other and younger favourites—Majors-General Lagercrona and Axel Sparre, but these, although brave men, were too inexperienced to achieve much distinction in the war, and their authority in the camp was rather injuriously exerted than otherwise.

CHAPTER XI.

THE advance Eastward was not distinguished by celerity. At the close of 1707, however, Charles XII. bade a final adieu to Poland, and parted from Stanislaus only to meet him again as an exile in a distant land. A force of 8,000 men, under General Krassou, remained as a body-guard to the Polish King. They were chiefly volunteers, and were soon the only trustworthy supporters of his throne.

Charles, at the head of the main body of his army, numbering at the utmost 33,000 or 34,000 men, had at length determined to confront the Czar. General Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt, who had been ably defending Livonia and Curland, was ordered from the North to join the King with all his available troops, about 10,000 men; for it was not considered prudent to invade Russian territory with a force inferior in strength to that of the two armies combined.

The Czar, who was quartered in Lithuania, was so careless of his personal safety that he narrowly escaped capture at Grodno, being rescued only at the sacrifice of his rearguard. This mortifying event probably influenced his resolution to avoid engagements in the open field, and to ruthlessly burn and lay waste the country through which he retreated, in order to place a desert between himself and the Swedes. Charles, accustomed to a more chivalrous mode of warfare, found it hard to curb his wrathful impatience of such proceedings. Yet, as he always did, he set his soldiers an example of courage and self-denial; although both he and they were now convinced that they had to grapple with a very formidable foe. A decisive crisis in the history of Sweden was in fact approaching.

Late in the year the army went into unfavourable winter cantonments in the district of Minsk, the head-quarters being at Radoscovich. The spring of 1708 was unusually hot, and disease broke out among the troops to an alarming extent. To remain inactive was impossible: to retreat was incompatible with the temper of Charles. Such a course was indeed never sug-

gested by any of his followers. 'Forward!' was the word. But in what direction should it be? Three routes were open for choice—

The northern route, with St. Petersburgh for its goal, led through Lewenhaupt's camp, over Pleskow and Novgorod; after reaching which, Charles could have supported the detachments that were to approach from the north to the attack of the Czar's new capital.

The eastern route led to Moscow, over Smolensk, and through endless morasses and the wasted territory of Podlesia. It was the route that Napoleon selected for his march a century later.

The third, and southern route, also leading to Moscow, Charles probably never thought of. His previous line of march, and the fact of his having issued orders, when he met Lewenhaupt in the spring, for the junction of the two armies, seem to warrant this supposition. It was the Cossack hetman, Mazeppa, who first suggested the route to the King; and who induced him to take it by his glowing representations of the assistance he might look for from powerful, warlike, and freedom-loving tribes, as well as by the promise, so cheering to weary and famishing

troops, of finding a more favourable field for the operations of the war.

What Brennus' sword was it that turned the scale of Fate? The question is not easy to answer; but it may be safely affirmed, that the violent blame with which Charles's decision has been assailed is not wholly deserved. It should be remembered, that at this crisis he had only insuperable difficulties to choose between; for, take whichever road he might, they would confront him. After the victory of Narva, Russia might have been compelled to accept an immediate peace. But that opportunity was neglected, and the right moment for peace had passed away with the eight eventful years since elapsed. In that interval Sweden had lost provinces. The Russian Autocrat had gained them. He had founded St. Petersburgh; matured his plans; and trained his armies in six campaigns, against troops who, though brave, were few and scattered. Charles was also distant from his proper base of operations, and, besides, not a few in his army had begun to be weary of war, and of privations that seemingly were endless.

Many have thought that the army should have been led back to its original position in

Livonia, and that from thence—with the Gulf of Finland as a flank support—the campaign should have been opened against St. Petersburgh. But the march towards the coast in itself would have constituted a long and hazardous manœuvre, through districts exhausted by war, and in the immediate vicinity of the enemy. Furthermore, the fortresses that should have supported the army were already either in the grip of the Czar, or closely invested by him. Again, there have been those who have censured the King for not taking the direct road to Moscow. But they seem to have overlooked the enormous difficulties attendant on crossing broad and swollen rivers and interminable morasses, during the spring floods, with an army on the long march through a wasted country, and compelled to carry all its supplies.

Few have approved the march southwards to the Ukraine. Nevertheless, that disastrous expedition was not undertaken without some reason. Charles had, at last, become convinced that without aid it would be impossible to force advantageous terms of peace from the powerful neighbour whom he had neglected to crush at the proper time. He needed allies; therefore,

Mazeppa's offer must have been welcome to him, and motives of policy induced him to accept it. But from the moment he did so, his strategical movements were trammelled. Necessity pointed sternly towards those Steppes where the sun of his fortunes was to set.

Not without hesitation did he determine to proceed in the direction indicated; but the resolution once taken, it was carried out with activity and speed that would have been better applied during certain periods of his earlier campaigns. Lewenhaupt was ordered to join the main army. He was already very near, but appears not to have received the instruction in time. The delay has been attributed to the jealousy of Rehnsköld. The King, however, waited for him only three days. He then began his march towards the south,—thus detaching himself from his much-needed reinforcements, and opening the way to greater misfortunes.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING the advance towards Mohilew and the Ukraine, occasional days of victory still shed some rays of light on the Swedish arms. The battle of Holafzin is especially memorable, for the masterly strategy and indomitable courage that wrested the laurels from an enemy superior in strength and advantageously posted. The cavalry engagement, too, at Malatitza was as honourable and successful as it was bloody.

But while the enemy continued to retire and plunder, exhaustion and famine gradually spread among the Swedish troops. Hopes based upon Lewenhaupt and Mazeppa at first sustained their courage; but these hopes were not destined to be realised. Lewenhaupt, whose progress was greatly impeded by the large quantity of stores he conveyed, was attacked by the superior forces of the Czar, which had

thrown themselves between the two divisions of the Swedish army.

The troops of Lewenhaupt fought with much bravery. He was, however, compelled to sacrifice his invaluable supplies; so, that when he ultimately joined the King, instead of affording him the aid he had looked for, he became rather a new cause of difficulty. Mazeppa's high-flown promises, too, were found to be mere empty words the nearer their expected fulfilment approached. His richer domains were ravaged by the Russians; the greater part of his Cossacks hesitated at the decisive moment; and the alliance, he had so alluringly pictured, with the Crimean Tartars, proved an illusion.

Closer and closer relentless Fate drew her meshes around King Charles and his Swedes. A winter of unusual severity claimed thousands of victims. Spring, with destructive inundations, followed in its steps. Contagious diseases raged in the ranks already so cruelly thinned by incessant conflicts with the foe; and suspicion, dissension, and intrigue prevailed among the generals. Surrounded by hostile and growingly encroaching hordes, the Swedish

army moved forward with increasing difficulty, until finally it approached Pultowa, and began the siege of that city. The Russians had stored there large quantities of supplies, which the Swedes hoped shortly to appropriate, the town being poorly fortified. The garrison, however, was almost equal in numbers to the entire Swedish army, and was also under a brave commander. The Czar, too, was concentrating his forces for a decisive action in the neighbourhood of Pultowa, considering, with good reason, that the time had arrived to risk an assault. Probably his hopes would once again have been frustrated, had not Charles in an unlucky moment been disabled by a shot-wound in his foot, and compelled for the first time to entrust the chief command of a battle to other hands than his own.

Field-Marshal Rehnsköld commanded, when on July 9, 1709, the army advanced to meet the attack of the Russians. His generalship before and during the battle was marked by indecision, and led to defeat. There was no unity in the plans, no system in the manner of their execution. Lewenhaupt, who was to command the main body of infantry, was first left without

definite orders, and finally without support. A considerable part of the cavalry never operated on the points intended, and some regiments are reported to have gone altogether astray. The artillery was not employed—it has been said. because they lacked ammunition.

At the moment when the Swedish infantry, after prolonged fighting, succeeded in storming the Russian position, the Czar, supported by the garrison of Pultowa, assumed the offensive. As the main body of his army was three times greater in number than the Swedish assailing forces, this decided the fortunes of the day, notwithstanding wondrous valour on the part of the Swedes. Rehnsköld raved and swore; issued orders and counter-orders; until, blind with frenzy, he rode into the midst of the enemy, and was made prisoner. Several other generals also lost their presence of mind. Lewenhaupt, accustomed to an independent command, succeeded in keeping his division together, although he had received no positive instructions, and had been less informed probably than any of the others concerning the plan of action.

If the remembrance of Pultowa is mourn-

ful, it is not dishonourable to the Swedish arms. For, during that fearful day, the troops displayed the noble qualities of heroes—devoting themselves fearlessly to their certain doom. Yet, in the absence of the inspiring leadership of Charles, they did not fight with their wonted confidence. During the fury of the conflict the King was frequently in danger of being captured. When fortune seemed to forsake his arms, fearless of death, he cast himself into the heat of the fray; and, finally, collecting the remnant of his forces, led them in retreat towards the Dnieper. Unfortunately, the fever resulting from his wound—being aggravated by over-exertion and grief—paralyzed his mental and physical powers. He did not perceive the danger of retreating in the direction he had chosen; and neglected to make any preparation for crossing the broad river over which he intended to pass. Thus, the capitulation of Perewolatschna, by which the most famous of the renowned armies of Sweden was delivered over to the Russians, was attributable more to the illness of the King and the prevailing dejection than to the defeat itself. So extreme and general was the despondency, that

even experienced soldiers failed to observe, before it was too late, how little able the pursuing Russian troops would have been to renew the action.

With skill, deserving of all admiration, the Czar contrived to conceal from the Swedish negotiating officers the real condition of his army. Those who did discover it were at once made prisoners. Even Lewenhaupt lost his customary decision. He held councils of war, and asked advice of his soldiers, instead of commanding them ; thus increasing the general demoralisation. At such a moment the undaunted Rehnsköld would have been in his proper place. But he was missing, and the doom of the unfortunate Swedish army was accomplished.

Charles, himself, narrowly escaped capture by reluctantly abandoning his head-quarters only just before the surrender was made. Accompanied by his body-guard and a small band of officers, he succeeded in crossing to the opposite banks of the Dnieper in some of the country peasants' boats, and, finally, after numerous adventures, escaped through the Steppes. Thus did the Royal hero, before

whom the mighty ones of Europe had so recently bowed, either in fear or in admiration, enter Turkish territory as a fugitive—a striking instance of the fickleness of fortune, and the instability of human greatness.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE is a species of greatness, which is most strikingly displayed in the hour of trial, when all seems lost, and all despair. Charles XII. possessed this kind of greatness in the highest degree; and it enabled him to triumph over the blows of adverse fate. The despatches he sent to Stockholm to his Privy Council are convincing proofs of his firmness of mind under misfortune. There is not the slightest trace in them of doubt or fear. He writes: 'The loss is very great; nevertheless, the enemy shall neither gain the upper hand, nor the smallest advantage;' and, as though he foresaw with what feelings the news of his defeat would be received at home, he adds: 'It is only requisite not to lose courage; or to let go the conduct of affairs.'

His serious wound he describes, in a letter to his sister, Ulrika Eleanora, as only 'a trifling "faveur" in the foot.'

No man who had lost faith in the star of his fortunes could have given expression to words like these while wandering in distant countries, wounded, and almost alone. No man, whose strength of will and energy had failed him, could have established, and maintained, in a foreign land, the position and influence which Charles XII. won for himself among the Turks. History can scarcely produce a parallel case.

Although her dreaded main army was annihilated, yet Sweden continued for some time to exercise considerable political influence; and to inspire so much alarm, that the small force led back to Pomerania in 1709 by General Krassou, sufficed, at first, to check all attacks on her German possessions. Meanwhile, Saxony and Denmark unhesitatingly broke the treaty obligations into which they had so recently entered; thus, proving how little worthy they had been of Charles's generosity. It was not difficult for Augustus now to overthrow Stanislaus—abandoned by the fickle nobility of Poland; but when Denmark attempted to avenge the landing of Charles and his troops at Humlebäck, she found there still was vitality in Sweden, patriotism in her people, and genius

in her generals. Of these brave men Magnus Stenbock should especially be remembered by posterity with gratitude. That illustrious general, wisely availing himself of the services of officers who had returned home on furlough, and of the peculiar[1] military organisation of the country, soon created a fighting army. And since the memorable day of Helsingborg (February 28, 1710) no foreign soldier has placed foot on the soil of Skåne with hostile intent.

The King's protracted stay in Turkey has generally been harshly criticised. By many it has been attributed to arbitrary caprice, and even to political insanity. That the absolute monarch should have deserted his country in such perilous times, was doubtless a circumstance fraught with danger, and much to be deplored. But may it not reasonably be assumed that his five years' absence was based on a settled political plan? The real interests of Turkey were identical with those of Sweden, in respect to Russia, whose rapidly increasing power was menacing to both. But, unhappily then, as at a subsequent period, fortune did not smile on our alliance with Turkey. The one

[1] The '*indelta*' or divisional system.—*Translator's Note.*

Power delayed to draw its sword until the other, after a long, unequal, and unaided contest, was compelled to sheathe its blunted weapon. Shortly before the opening of the great Northern campaign, the Sultan concluded a peace with Russia; but, after allowing Charles to wrestle alone with the giant, for ten years, and when assistance from Sweden could no longer be expected, he armed himself again to battle, and actually commenced hostilities; though not until a year had been lost in indecision.

Unfortunately, the war thus tardily begun, was carried on with little energy, and a new peace was already concluded before Magnus Stenbock had landed in Germany with the army that was to have marched across Poland to the assistance of Charles. The Czar himself, however, was at one time on the verge of destruction—being surrounded by the Turks in superior numbers at the river Pruth. No means of escape was open to him, and captivity or death appeared inevitable. But extraordinary is the caprice of fortune: he was indebted for his rescue to a woman's presence of mind, and that woman, it has been said, was the daughter of a

Swedish soldier. He afterwards made her his consort.[1] With her jewels a corrupt Grand Vizier was bribed, and free passage given to the Czar. Charles deterred, by religious scruples it appears, from entering the Turkish camp arriving too late to oppose it, and the banishment by the Sultan of his treacherous Vizier was no remedy for the evil already done. As little could it be undone, as could Charles prevent the assistance promised him by the Crimean Tartars from being a second time withheld by means of Russian gold.

Time passed away in fruitless negotiations; hope grew faint; and the friendship of the Sultan gradually cooled towards Charles; but in the same proportion did the personal qualities of the King excite increasing admiration among the followers of Islâm generally. Finally, however, the guest, whose stay at length become inconvenient, received plain intimations to leave the country. But Charles refused to depart, alleging that the promised conditions were not yet fulfilled. An open rupture necessarily ensued, which ended in the so-called 'Kalabalik,' in Bender.

[1] The Empress Catherine I.—*Translator's Note.*

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was with great reluctance that the Janissaries and Tartars attacked the Swedish King, and in the combat they spared his life. While this does not lessen the honour of that brilliant achievement, it serves to explain how it was possible for the King, with only a few officers and his body-guard, to defend himself in a fragile house—during a whole day—against fourteen thousand men and fourteen guns. At last, the flames of the burning building compelling him to retire, he was surrounded, and captured by the overwhelming hosts assembled in the court-yard. When conveyed from the smouldering ruins of his head-quarters to Demotica, his personal influence was still so great that a revolt in his favour was on the point of breaking out in the Seraglio of Constantinople. The Sultan, to calm the excitement, was compelled, in proof of

his disapprobation, publicly to depose the Khan of Tartary. Little effort was needed to incite a fresh outbreak of war with Russia, and could Charles—overcoming his pious scruples—have taken the command of the Turks in person, it is probable that events might even then have assumed a different aspect.

The influence of Russia and the concessions of the Czar prevented temporarily the rupture of peace; but it was near at hand, and the questions naturally presented themselves:

From what other point of advantage could Charles now hope more effectually to damage his formidable opponent than from the position he already occupied?

How could the boundaries of his own exhausted kingdom be better protected than by a combined attack from Turkey?

It must be acknowledged that plans such as these evince no error of judgment. The miscalculation—the great and disastrous miscalculation—was with regard to Sweden herself. Charles forgot, or, more correctly, did not know, that the Sweden of the Carolinian era was passing away; that new opinions had sprung up, and even feelings hostile towards

his own person. These were the powers that really defeated him, and weakened the unity that ought to have roused the resistance of the country, and might have secured to her European allies.

It cannot be denied, that the general position of affairs on the continent of Europe, subsequent to the year 1709, was as unpropitious for Sweden as it well could be. The predominance of France was broken by the fatal campaign for the Spanish succession. The advantages that Prussia most desired were to be attained at the cost of Sweden. Even the Sovereign of England, as Elector of Hanover, became a natural antagonist of the Power that owned territory at the mouth of the Weser. Holland could not be relied on; for there the Czar enjoyed personal influence, and had ingratiated himself by fostering illusive hopes of new commercial advantages. Thus Sweden, when also deserted by Turkey, stood alone, abandoned to her own resources. To rally these, the King must return.

It is customary to regard Charles XII. as exclusively a soldier; but this is to view his character in a very partial light. Whenever

his sword was at rest—in Livonia, Poland, Saxony, and Turkey—he devoted himself with remarkable energy to questions bearing on the domestic economy of Sweden, and displayed the liveliest interest in national education and art. One of his most remarkable administrative measures—that of the new Regulations for the Chanceries of the different Departments of State—was worked out and signed by him in Turkey. From that country he also issued his Ordinances relative to improvements at Stockholm, the rebuilding of the Palace, and State assistance to men of science.

But side by side with this undiminished interest in his country—which he had never seen since he attained manhood—it, unfortunately must be observed that after his defeat at Pultowa the King began to place his confidence chiefly in men of foreign birth. Fabricius, and Müllern, for instance, seem to have replaced Piper, then a prisoner in Russia; and this tendency continued even after Charles's return to Sweden.

The talented and energetic, yet unfortunate Görtz, was the most prominent amongst the King's foreign favourites; but many others

were to be found both in the army and in the government; all of whom contributed to widen the breach that was gradually opening between the King and his people.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLES was at last induced by a combination of events to return to Sweden. First, he received a visit from Stanislaus to announce his voluntary resignation of the crown of Poland; then tidings reached him of Stenbock's capitulation at Tönningen; and, finally, came the unexpected message that the 'Riksdag' had been summoned without the Royal command, and that the Princess Ulrika Eleonora had been called to preside at the Council of State.

The ride across Europe which Charles, followed by a few attendants, then undertook and achieved, has no counterpart, except in the legends of olden times. Avoiding all frequented roads and populous tracts; pursued by hired assassins; resting in forest recesses during dark and chilly autumnal nights; and often without food and shelter; yet never downcast, never tired—even when his hardiest companions

sank under exhaustion—Charles, as by a miracle, arrived before the fortress gates of Stralsund on the 11th of November 1714.

An ecstasy of joy spread through the country with the news of the King's unexpected return. Even the discontented joined in the demonstration, either from prudence or from involuntary delight. Hope revived and painted the future in glowing colours; and Charles himself came full of trust and confidence. Both he and his subjects, however, soon discovered their mistake.

The country had suffered severely from war, and no less from internal dissensions. The greater part of Finland, after a valiant defence, was lost. The two best and largest armies of Sweden had surrendered, and no ally held out a helping hand. There was a general cry for peace; and to this cry was added the silent but irrepressible sigh for liberty. To neither of these yearnings did the King give heed. Almost everything was changed, except his own inflexible will. Now, as before, Augustus must be deposed, St. Petersburgh destroyed, the power of the Council curtailed, and the newborn aspirations for liberty suppressed. In

this late war against the demands of the time he did not succeed, and the attempt proved his ruin.

The Sweden to which the King returned was not the Sweden he had left. The men whom in former and happier times he had trusted, were no longer faithful to him. The people, who still idolised his person, no longer approved his policy. Therefore, to maintain his system of government, he was frequently obliged to employ other than Swedish agents. It has been rightly assumed that there was much exaggeration in the cry about the prevailing distress in the country during the last years of Charles the Twelfth's reign. Yet those loud complaints are irrefutable evidence of the general discontent with the policy of the King. Under these circumstances the system of absolute government became a great calamity. A second power, exercising its influence beside the Royal prerogative, would probably have led to a peace, and thus have averted many subsequent misfortunes.

Peace might then have been obtained on comparatively easy terms. Esthonia, Ingria, and St. Petersburgh, all long before taken, must

of course have been sacrificed, together with Stettin and the surrounding districts of Pomerania. Stralsund might probably have been saved by peace; but it could no longer be kept by force, though the King personally conducted its defence to the latest possible moment.

At last, negotiations for the capitulation of Stralsund were unavoidably opened; and the man who, fourteen years before, had left his country, convoyed by a powerful fleet, to march from one victorious field to another, was now conveyed back to the Swedish coast in a small brigantine—through masses of drifting ice, at the imminent peril of his life.[1]

[1] The vessel was commanded by Captain Christophers, who for his service was ennobled under the name of Ankarcrona. The King landed near Trelleborg, where a monument marks the spot.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Emperor of Germany, who wished to mediate a peace, had summoned a General Council of the Realm to meet at Brunswick. Charles, as a Prince of the German Empire, was invited to take part in the Council. He refused; partly because he again fostered the idea of an alliance with France—which country gave encouraging promises, though no longer possessing the power to help—and partly because Augustus was also summoned to the Council, and Charles would not by his presence appear to sanction the recognition of Augustus as King. Thus this favourable opportunity of arranging a peace was allowed to pass away. Again, then, the die was recklessly cast, and cast in favour of war; while, in consequence, the discontent of the country increased. As, after the battle of Narva, Charles underrated the strength of his foreign foes, so now he too lightly regarded the weight of the opposing faction in

his own dominions. The motives, now as then, were to be found in that daring self-will, which disposition and training had developed in the despotic King. The natural results were the more to be deplored as power, genius, and energy in execution conducted all that he undertook to a climax.

Peace having been rejected, war should have been waged upon the most threatened frontier, and that was Russia. But the indefatigable mind of Charles had conceived a new idea—nothing less than the conquest of Norway, and its annexation to the Crown of Sweden. The struggle to realise this idea was his last enterprise. In it he employed all the yet remaining resources of the country, and they were by no means so limited as some have endeavoured to prove. Fresh troops gathered to the standard at the call of their well-loved King, and a third large army was organised. Charles took up his residence at Lund, and never visited Stockholm. Discontent had fixed its head-quarters there, and with an invisible hand seemed to keep him from his capital. It may have been that it was repugnant to his noble mind to punish, and that he desired to

postpone retribution until happier times; when the voice of mercy might without danger prevail. These happier times, alas! Charles was not destined to see.

The defences of the eastern frontier were more and more neglected, and the plans of Russia accordingly were furthered. At Lund, in the meantime, the King gave many new proofs of his interest in the arts of peace and the progress of science. He worked assiduously with his new Minister of Finance, Baron Görtz, and occupied himself in improving the legal Code. He associated much with prominent scientific men—Swedenborg, Polheim, Rydelius, and others. His stay at the young university town must have tended considerably to strengthen the union between Royalty and the educated classes of Skåne.

The King's two campaigns against Norway were marked by the same obdurate courage that distinguished all his enterprises; but the victories were comparatively few. The climate, the nature of the country, the warlike qualities and highly developed independence of the people, opposed to the slight military experience of the King's own troops, increased the

difficulties of his undertaking and made victory always dear—sometimes impossible. Once, the Swedish forces advanced so far as to be able to pitch their tents on the heights of Ekeberg, commanding Christiania, and thence to cast a few shells over the fjord into the old citadel of Aker. This was in 1716. Lack of provisions, however, soon obliged them to retreat, and at the end of the campaign no decisive result had been achieved.

In 1718, the last year of the war, a new plan of action was adopted, which was expected to lead more surely to the end in view, though its accomplishment might be slower. The line of march was to be taken along the Christiania Fjord, and the fortresses on the way were to be reduced. Stores were to be collected on the ground occupied for the future movements of the troops; and, finally, a powerful fleet was to keep open free communication with the coast of the province of Bohus. Thus Charles XII. began the work which was to be completed a hundred years later in the same direction, but in another way one by which the welfare of two nations was to be promoted and a new era opened for Northern Scandinavia.

With the chronicles of a century and a half open before us, we may rightly invest this last aim in the life of Charles XII. with the attribute of greatness. It might, however, have been more easily accomplished, had Charles in due time consented to make those sacrifices that peace with Russia absolutely required. To present a front in two directions, against powerful enemies, is a risk which has been seen to miscarry, and bring ruin on stronger Powers than Sweden was at that time. In the autumn of 1718, Görtz, after lengthened negotiations in Åland, succeeded in arranging terms of peace with the Czar. Peter had become strongly disposed towards reconciliation—desiring leisure to fortify and secure his newly-acquired possessions. Görtz hastened with this news to the King, but the deadly missive at Fredrikshald put an end to all his plans.

It has never been known what prospect the astute and supple Minister had of winning his master's ear to the propositions he had to submit to him, for, immediately after the death of Charles, Görtz was taken prisoner. Considering, however, the character of the King, and how seldom Görtz was able to secure the adop-

tion of his views, even on home and financial questions, when not fully coinciding with his master's, there is reason to doubt whether the King would have approved the proposals of which Görtz was the bearer. This fluctuating hope of a longed-for peace, with compensation, by new conquests, for territory lost, has, however, cast the roseate ray of dawn into the evening twilight of the northern hero's life, and invested the record of his valiant deeds with an increased poetic charm.

The events of the subsequent period—styled 'the period of liberty'—with its exaggerations, mistakes, and party divisions; its enervating love of indulgence, and greed of foreign gold, produced, in the end, a strong reaction of opinion in favour of the Carolinian epoch. The chivalrous King—who always thought nobly, if not wisely, with regard to Sweden; and the incorruptible, simple-minded, soldiers who followed him for better or for worse, stood out, after the lapse of a few decades, in almost supernatural light; and more than a century passed away ere the Swedish people could be convinced that the ball, which, on the night of November 30th, struck down

their deified hero in the trenches before the besieged fort of Gyldenlöwe, was simply shot at random, in the dark, from the walls of the enemy. Suspicion and slander, those base accompaniments that have stood by the deathbeds of some of the greatest Swedish Kings, now, too, raised their voices, embittering the last days of certain honourable Swedes, and requiting with ingratitude the services of those valiant foreigners who had risked their lives, and shed their blood under the Swedish banner, although no trustworthy proof of disloyalty could be brought against them.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN contemplating Charles XII. at the head of his 'brave blue boys,' it is his own unconquerable and heroic courage, as first among his warriors, that chiefly rivets the attention. His great qualities as a general are too often overlooked. Nevertheless, they were so distinguished, that a Frederick the Great, a Napoleon the First, with other renowned commanders and military writers, have not hesitated to set them forth as examples. We may, therefore—having followed the hero to the close of his life, in his eventful political career—proceed to consider briefly his military capacity.

Charles XII. had had the advantage of a careful military education; and under the superintendence of the able Quartermaster General Stuart,[1] industriously studied the

[1] The Swedish branch of the Stuart family was naturalised and ennobled in Sweden by Gustavus Adolphus, in 1625. Quartermaster General Carl Magnus Stuart, son of David Stuart, Court Chamberlain, and his wife Britta Nilsdotter Lillieram, was born in 1650. He

science of war and the art of fortification. Consequently, it was not without preparation that he placed himself at the head of the Swedish army. He was fortunate, too, in being surrounded by most efficient subordinate commanders, who had acquired large experience—some under Swedish, others under foreign, banners.

The military tendencies of the time, and, still more, the King's own character and inclination, had made him an especially eminent cavalry general. Quickness of apprehension, celerity in movement, energy in assault, are three of his prominent traits as a soldier. The Swedish cavalry was then renowned, far and wide, no less for agility and good service in the field than for its resistless charges and effective sabres. Even Prussian military writers of the

began his career, at the age of eighteen, as a common seaman in the Royal Navy of Sweden, in which he served about a year, when he abandoned the sea and enlisted in the Halberdere Guard of Charles II. of England. Two years later he returned to Sweden, and was appointed a Gentleman-in-waiting at the court of Charles XI. Subsequently he obtained a commission as Lieutenant of Engineers in the Swedish army, and rapidly rose to higher grades. He was Military Instructor to Charles XII. in his youth, and afterwards one of that King's most trusted generals. It was under his superintendence that Charles's remarkable landing at Humlebäck in Zealand was effected.—*Translator's Note.*

highest merit, freely acknowledge that the models for the subsequently famous cavalry regiments of Ziethen and Siedlitz were sought in the army of Charles XII.

The King gloried in being himself the most indefatigable in reconnoitering, and the foremost in the charge. It frequently happened, while the divisions of the Swedish army lay widely spread over Poland, that, with a few squadrons of horse, or, accompanied only by his faithful mounted body-guard, Charles would speed, by forced marches, to render assistance at a threatened point, or to reinforce one of his generals; with whom he then made some unexpected assault. Cavalry was still the chief arm of European forces. In the main army of Sweden, this branch of the service in 1701, as compared with the infantry, was only in the proportion of sixty to a hundred; but when the Swedish troops marched out of Saxony, there were no less than 25,000 cavalry, in the total force of 44,000 men. And, as a large portion of the infantry was drafted off to various fortified places, the strength of that arm in the open field may confidently be estimated as less than that of the cavalry. A portion of the latter, however, and

especially the dragoons, rendered, as is known, frequent good service on foot.

The infantry of that period, in consequence of the imperfection of the weapons then in use, was not of the same importance in war as it has proved to be in later times. Yet its influence increased during the earlier part of the eighteenth century, and the Swedish infantry, in particular, was then counted amongst the best in Europe. Its unfaltering steadiness, made it, and with good reason, much dreaded; its tactics—the work of the immortal Gustavus Adolphus, and proved in many a hard-fought battle—won universal approval. Charles XII. well understood how to employ this arm. It was he who established that confidence in the sure, overpowering force of a bayonet charge, which so often led to the most improbable successes, and which, until the latest times, has survived amongst the soldiery of Sweden. A large portion of the Swedish infantry was still armed with the pike, although laid aside by most of the European armies. Charles successfully made use of this long weapon to produce in his columns that rare firmness with which they resisted the charges of the Polish and Russian

Light Cavalry. He ordered his soldiers to reserve their fire until the enemy was sufficiently near to allow it to be used with full effect. He, himself, fought at the head of his infantry at the landing in Zealand; at the storming of the ramparts around Narva; at the crossing of the Dwina; at Holofzin, and in many other, less memorable, but not less sanguinary conflicts. Like Gustavus Adolphus and Charles X., the twelfth Charles well knew how to make the infantry and cavalry effectively co-operate, and successfully support each other. The cavalry was usually placed on the flanks, and amongst them were often distributed small detachments of musketeers, chosen mostly from those provincial regiments that owned the surest marksmen. This greatly embarrassed foreign cavalry, who, seeing only horsemen opposed to them, were unprepared for a well directed and effective discharge of musketry. Charles, too, did not servilely follow the formal rules which prevailed at that time for the battle-field. His warlike temperament could not adapt itself to tactics which prevented immediate advantage being taken of the changes incident to battle. Thus, in his armies, we often find

other formations adopted than those that were then in vogue. Of this there were instances at Narva, and in the bold attacks at Clissau and Holofzin. Equally independent tactics were employed by Stenbock at the battle of Gadebusch—the force of his concentrated attack on the enemy's centre securing the victory there.[1]

To artillery, Charles was not much attached. This error—in which he was not alone among the generals of that time—may be explained by the fact, that this arm was yet very imperfect, difficult to manœuvre, and wanting in destructive power. The army estimates of that period totally pass over the item of artillery—a proof how little it was valued. Its operations were limited to firing at the breast-works, behind which the enemy's infantry not unfrequently took shelter. At Holofzin, the most cleverly ordered of Charles the Twelfth's battle-fields, this arm was employed far more than usual. But, if contemporary accounts may be trusted, its ammunition must have been expended: consequently, during the battle of Pultowa,

[1] The formation of the infantry was generally six deep; that of the cavalry, when in line, was three.

it was left inactive with the baggage, and increased the spoils of the enemy.

When the army evacuated Saxony in 1707, four light fieldpieces were apportioned to each regiment; but they do not appear to have been of much service. It is to be regretted that the improvements made by the talented Cronstedt in the weapon itself, and the means of charging it, which conduced so materially towards the victory of Gadebusch, were not known to the King until the defeat at Pultowa had deprived him of all his forces.

The Swedish soldier has never hesitated to follow loved and respected leaders; but, like the French, he has demanded much from his officers, and still more from his commander-in-chief. Never was a man more thoroughly suited than Charles XII. to inspire Swedish troops with courage, or to lead them to victory. Noble, just and self-denying, and brave as a lion, he seemed to them almost a supernatural being. Every victory he won made his soldiers more confident in him; every danger he shared with them spurred them on to increased exertion. His enemies lost faith in their own good fortune, and the bow had to be very strongly bent

before it finally snapped. The feelings that overwhelmed the Swedish soldier after the battle of Pultowa were probably more of wonder that their King could have been conquered than of sorrow at the calamitous defeat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT would occupy much time to recount the many exploits in which Charles was himself the foremost; but to enumerate them is unnecessary; the remembrance of them being deeply graven in the heart of every Swedish soldier. None can without emotion picture the hero pressing alone through the gates of Cracow—which opened to the stroke of his riding-whip as if to an enchanter's wand—or storming the virgin ramparts of Lemberg at the head of a few hundred dragoons. Who has not read with wonder and excitement how, mounted on horseback, he forded or swam over rapid rivers, waded through bogs and morasses, or, almost alone, duringly ventured into the midst of the enemy's outposts; heedless alike of flying bullets, wintery chills, and the rough paths of the desert? Who has not admired the example of fearless courage he gave to his soldiers when, during the siege of Thorn, he would not allow

earthworks to be raised around his own exposed head-quarters, because all could not enjoy the same advantage; or when, from the flames of his burning house at Bender, he rushed amongst the Janissaries crowding the court-yard, that, at least, he might die a soldier's death; or when at Stralsund he heard, without turning his head, a shell explode close by the table at which he was issuing his orders? Who must not respect the Commander who always shared his soldiers' hardships; and, that he might not suffer less than the meanest in his army, carefully avoided taking up his head-quarters in the larger towns, where he could have enjoyed much needed rest and greater comfort? And, finally, who that knows the character of Swedes can wonder at the respect and love, bordering on idolatry, with which he was regarded by his army?

He was the last of the Northern Vikings; and a halo surrounds his memory similar to that which gleams on the hero of ancient legend. To the adventures of both, Svea's sons even at this day listen with enthusiasm and pride.

But although Charles XII. was so generally

beloved by the rank and file of his army, he did not possess the rare gift of being able to maintain unbroken accord amongst its superior officers. The dissensions of Rehnsköld, Piper, and Lewenhaupt have been already alluded to, and other instances might be adduced. Arvid Horn, the most intimate of Charles's youthful companions, deserted his master, and became the head of the opposing party at home. Stenbock, though faithful, was suspected by the King, and allowed to pine away in the casemated castle of Copenhagen. Adam Ludvig Lewenhaupt shared the same fate in Muscovite captivity. And when, at length, Rehnsköld returned from Russia, he was but the shadow of his former self. Endless wars exhausted the energy and zeal of those most attached to the King; until, at last, with the exception of a few veteran officers and body-guards, who remained near his person, he was surrounded only by youthful soldiers. He had not succeeded during his campaigns in training new and distinguished generals to tread in the footsteps of their exhausted predecessors. His power was personal, and expired with himself. His career resembled the flash of a meteor, lighting up the

heavens, and dazzling the eye, but followed by deepest gloom, until, again sparkling in the horizon, rose memory's 'Charles's Wain.'

When, on the morning of the 1st of December, the news of the King's death spread through the army, all bonds of discipline and comradeship were at once sundered. No worthier points of union were found than ignominious retreat, division of the army cash among the leaders, intrigue in the Diet, and desertion. A sad prelude to Helsingfors and Anjala! It is hard to be compelled to say that Charles XII. was not only gone—but was forgotten! How different the scene presented by the Swedish army after the battle of Lützen, when its regiments, with ranks also thinned, surrounded the remains of a royal hero! How must we explain this difference? Undoubtedly, it was because the spirit of Gustavus Adolphus survived after his death in illustrious adherents and faithful followers. This was his greatest merit and honour, and the sixteen years between his glorious death and the peace of Westphalia bear witness of the fact to a grateful posterity.

Charles XII. possessed admirers, even

worshippers, and deserved to have friends. But he had not the faculty to create either political or military apostles, and his history is therefore left without a chapter on 'the acts' of his followers. Not without reason has the historian Geijer uttered over his grave the significant words: 'It was a finished life!' It might be added, that it was also a finished period in the history of his country. Its golden age, both political and military, had passed away, and Sweden ceased to be a great Power.[1]

[1] Cederhjelm, a contemporary poet, but little known, describes, with point, the descent of Sweden in political rank, and the beginning of a new period.

'We've just entombed King Carl, and now King Fredrik crown,
See thus our Swedish clock has passed from twelve to one!'*

'Kung Carl vi nyss begräft, Kung Fredrik nu vi kröna,
Så har vårt Svenska ur gått ifrån tolf till ett!'

* The play in this couplet is upon the numerals XII and I in the respective designations Charles XII. and Frederick I.—*Translator's Note.*

CHAPTER XIX.

THE gloomiest shade of this picture must not be the last to engross the eye. Brighter lights are there, and, in proportion as the simple humanity of our hero is developed, so do the shadows retreat and fade.

History proves that the Swedish people have generally borne adversity with fortitude, and have manifested nobler qualities under misfortune than in prosperity. No Swede, however, has met adversity with more indomitable firmness than Charles XII. None has been so indifferent to success; so little allured by the blandishments of fortune, so little dazzled by glory.

These qualities, at times displayed to excess, and often productive of mischief, must yet be admired. They were based essentially on religious principles. Unaffected piety, warm, living faith, and moral purity, were the fruits of a tender mother's care in his early life; while

in manhood they were fostered and developed by constant companionship with the Word of God. The uprightness of his character was rarely ever untrue to itself. If, looking from the light of our own times, we could wish that on some occasions he had acted with less severity, yet, we cannot call him hard—still less, cruel. Charges of cruelty, however have not been wanting; but they have generally come from by no means unprejudiced quarters, and remain unsubstantiated. On the other hand, it is known that he forbade the employment of torture, even when it was counselled by the highest officials of the kingdom. From this we may infer that in some respects he was more humane than the times he lived in. For real disinterestedness of character he was distinguished above many of the most upright men of the period.[1]

[1] The following anecdote is an instance in point, and also shows his readiness of repartee:

Among those whom it was proposed to exempt from one of the numerous conscriptions were the under-gardeners of the Royal Park of Carlberg. The High Marshal had especially exerted himself to procure the exemption of these men, probably under the expectation that no question on the subject would be raised, as they were the King's own servants. But Feif, the Secretary of State wrote, in reply to this proposal: 'His Majesty said, jestingly, that it was better to employ the under-gardeners, to guard against the possibility of any

Charles XII. has been called a woman-hater, but unjustly. He was far removed from so unnatural a feeling. In the correspondence between him and his younger sister, Ulrika Eleanora, warm brotherly love shows itself in every page, and fails not even when 'Mon cœur,' as he styles her, lends an ear to his enemies, and strengthens by her name and influence the opposition against her brother and lawful King. In his letters he often alludes to the ladies of the court by familiar and jocular names; and frequently sends them messages of remembrance. We have stories of his visits to the châteaux of Polish nobles, touchingly pourtraying the thoughtful, unpretending, and almost bashful behaviour of the youthful King.

The news of the death of his eldest and best-loved sister, Hedvig Sophia, Duchess of Holstein, reached the Swedish quarters shortly before the battle of Pultowa. The King being wounded, none dared to tell him the sorrowful news, which he learnt only after his passage across the Dnieper. What all the terrible mis-

Russian master gardeners coming to manage the gardens, as might otherwise happen for want of soldiers!'

fortunes that again and again befell him could not effect, this sad news produced. He shed bitter tears, and, for a whole day, not a word escaped his lips. Charles had then a heart for those nearest to him, and he could cherish affection even for women. Sensual desires, however, appear to have been quite unknown to the simple-minded soldier-Prince, and the seductive beauty of Aurora Königsmark produced an effect upon him the very reverse of what she expected and intended.

Of manly friendship his soul was highly susceptible, and, perhaps its most striking example is presented by his bearing towards Max Emanuel of Wurtemberg—styled the 'Little Prince.' He was a faithful admirer of Charles, and an inseparable follower during many years of adventurous enterprise and contest. For his courtiers, body-guards, and servants, the King entertained sincere regard and true sympathy, although hidden at times under a somewhat harsh exterior.

Even towards his enemies he was willingly tolerant, proof of which is given by his clemency towards the opposition party on his return from Turkey. Nevertheless, if his deep

displeasure was once aroused by falsehood or dishonourable conduct, then he was difficult to appease, and his sense of justice exacted punishment equalling in severity the gravity of the offence. It was this feeling that led him to reject the many petitions for Patkull's reprieve.

His addresses and proclamations were curt and pithy; his orders were clear—with the exception of those issued at Pultowa during the time that fever, resulting from his wound, enfeebled his strength and obscured his intellect. When his sword was at rest, reading was his favourite occupation; and, apart from religious books, he preferred old warrior legends and the classic authors. To this taste was added, during his long stay in Turkey, a fondness for chess, in which he is said to have attained more than ordinary skill.

CHAPTER XX.

MUCH of what is known of Charles XII. leads to the conclusion that, if he had been fortunate enough to secure for his country a peace after his own mind, he would have been greatly distinguished in scientific and other pacific pursuits, and as worthy of admiration as he was amid the storms and perils of war. Had he not been invested at so early an age with the dangerous gifts of despotic power, and had not the mighty stream of events so soon carried him far away from his own land, his reign would doubtless have been no less beneficial to the people, whose weal and woe Providence had placed in his hands, than, famous as it now is, for great misfortunes and glorious deeds.

In conclusion, let us glance at the personal appearance of this remarkable man—this chivalrous and noble representative of Swedish character—aided by the statue of bronze now

erected in the heart of his native city and near the banks of the stream that flows past his grave.

His features bore the stamp of the house of Pfalz Zweibrück. Gazing at the piercing deep-blue eye, the towering forehead—that abode of daring thoughts—the somewhat aquiline nose, the stern, almost defiant lines about the beardless mouth, no one could doubt for a moment that he was in the presence of an extraordinary man. Contrary to the custom of his time, from the tendencies of which he diverged in so many ways, he never wore a wig in his maturer years. On the momentous occasion when he embarked at Carlshamn, to enter upon his long career of warfare, he threw that covering aside; and thenceforth the auburn locks, already much thinned, waved in freedom around the head that bore itself so proudly. He was about five feet ten inches in height; his figure well built, though his limbs were not powerful. His constitution being uninjured by weak indulgence, he enjoyed unbroken health, and was able to endure extreme privation and hardship.

His diet was frugal. After the toils of the day, he rested on a couch of straw. During his

campaigns he allowed himself only a few hours' sleep, and at other times—at Lund, for instance—he is said to have been usually found at his writing-table as early as two o'clock in the morning.

His dress was Swedish in fashion and colour. All are familiar with his loose blue coat, with turned-down collar, and large plain brass buttons; the buff-coloured waistcoat, the black kerchief—doubly folded around his neck —the coarse felt hat, and the high, broad toed riding boots, with their massive steel spurs. External marks of rank and position he did not use. Neither medals for valour, nor orders of distinction adorned his breast; but within was enshrined a treasure of purest gold—a heart that throbbed with brave emotions; while in his hand flashed the blade so honourably symbolised by the Swedish Order of the Sword.

Such is the portrait of Charles XII. What makes it so fascinating to Swedish eyes? What has made the man himself so admired by the whole of Sweden, in spite of the misfortunes that attended his reign, and mistakes of which he cannot well be acquitted? This

is the charm—both his faults and his merits proclaim him a true son of our Mother Svea!

A mother is willingly blind to the failings of her son, and hides his misfortunes in silence; while she is an exultant witness of all that is great and good in his character; rejoicing at his success, and feeling pride in his fame and honour.

CONCLUSION.

ON the 31st of August, 1859, another King Charles, surrounded by some of the chief scientific men of the country, stood beside the opened sarcophagus of his illustrious namesake, in the vault of the Charles's in the Riddarholm Church. A careful examination then proved how utterly unfounded were the suspicions that the hero had fallen by an assassin's hand.

God be thanked for the certainty that his illustrious life had a better and worthier close! The sons of Sweden need no longer cast down their eyes with shame, oppressed by the cruel rumours which hitherto had whispered of treachery—treachery blacker than the darkness of that fatal November night, which more than a century and a half ago sank over the Scandinavian peninsula.

To me, the author of this biographical

sketch, the privilege was also granted of gazing upon the remains of that wonderful man, before whom Europe once had trembled, and over whose pallid form a thousand trophies—eloquent in their silence—drooped in half-mouldered folds from the lofty arches of the chapel of his tomb. The scene is as ineffaceable from the memory as it was solemn at the time. From that moment the features of Charles XII. became indelibly engraven on my mind. In memory of the day, I was permitted to take a leaf of the laurel wreath that encircled his brow and also a lock of his hair. These precious relics, together with the cast of his face which was taken at the time that his body was embalmed, are henceforth the property of the Swedish Military Association of Stockholm. To these gifts are added two others, eminently calculated to recall two of King Charles the Twelfth's most prominent qualities; namely, one of the good blades that so often opened his way to victory, and a copy of the holy Book, in whose pages he learned those lessons that give strength in all vicissitudes, and which are so grandly expressed in the old war cry of the Charles's, 'By the help of God!'

The era of Charles XII. is past, and a younger generation inhabits the land which witnessed the birth of the heroes of that age. A subsequent century not seldom underrates that which a previous one has held greatest and dearest. It is useless to deny the power of time to change many distinctive features in the character of a nation: but so long as Sweden remains an independent land; so long as her sons do not forfeit the heirloom inherited from their freeborn fathers; so long as chivalry and manliness, faith and virtue, have their abode in ancient 'Manhem,'[1] so long will all connected with 'King Charles the youthful hero' be valued and loved.

[1] 'Manhem' = Home of Manhood.—*Translator's Note.*

(From TEGNÉR'S *'Karl XII.'* 1818.)

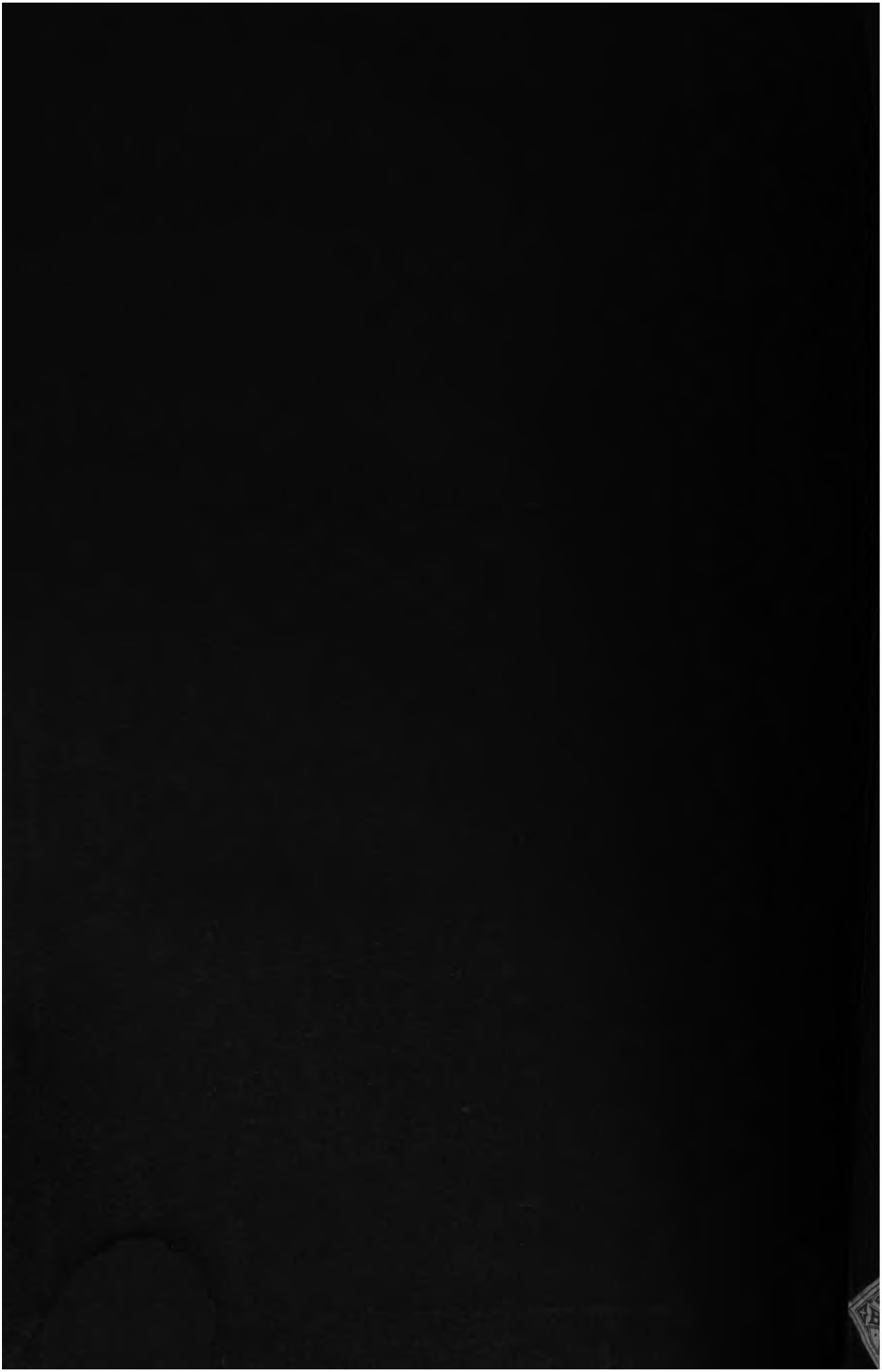
Our ancient land of story
Still listens to the tale,
Of scenes of war and glory
At which the timid pale.
His noble soul yet keepeth
A home in Northern glen;
He is not dead; he sleepeth;
Hath slept for decades ten.

O Svea, kneel and ponder
Before thy Hero's shrine;
Peruse thy epic yonder
Inscribed in time-worn line.
The sage in lowly manner
Seeks lore within those gates,
And her victorious banner
There Sweden consecrates.

Och än till sagan lyssnar
Det gamla sagoland,
Och dvärgalåten tystnar
Mot resen efter hand.
Än bor i Nordens lundar
Den höge anden qvar;
Han är ej död, han blundar,
Hans blund ett sekel var.

Böj, Svea, knä vid griften
Din störste son göms der.
Läs nötta minnesskriften,
Din hjeltedikt hon är.
Med blottadt hufvud stiger
Historien dit och lär,
Och Svenska äran viger
Sin segerfana der.

Spottiswoode & Co., Printers, New-street Square, London.

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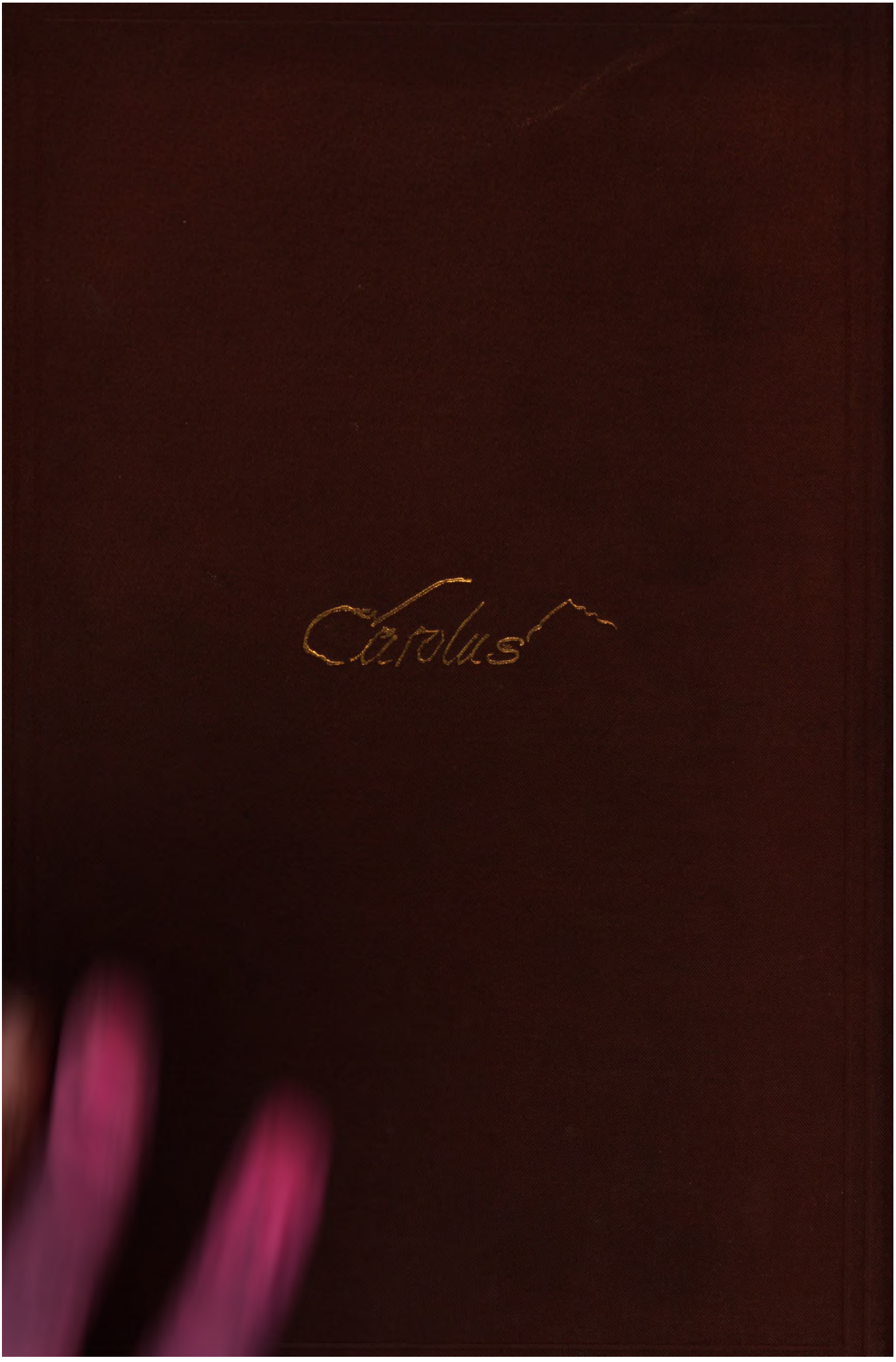
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