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Author(s): G. B. Malleson

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TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

THE LOST OPPORTUNITIES OF THE HOUSE OF AUSTRIA.

BY COLONEL G. B. MALLESON, C.S.I., F. R. Hist. S.

(Read February 7, 1884.)

WHETHER, in deciding to uphold the old faith in Germany, the Emperor Charles V. and his brother Ferdinand I. missed a great opportunity of establishing the House they represented in a position of permanent predominance in that country, is a question to which I shall only refer as forming the historical starting-point of this paper. It has been argued with great ability by Schiller, and Schiller—certainly not under-estimating the enormous difficulties which would have beset the House of Habsburg had its representative cast in his lot with the Reformation—apparently leans to the conclusion that the actual decision arrived at by that representative was, in reality, a lost opportunity. ‘It is hard to say,’ he observes towards the close of his argument, ‘what would have become of the Reformation, what of the liberties of the German Empire, if the dreaded House of Austria had not decided against the former. This much, however, seems proved, that the Austrian princes in no way so barred their way to universal monarchy, as by engaging in stubborn con-

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flict against the new doctrines. Under no other circumstances and in no other eventuality would the weaker princes have been able to force their Order to make the extraordinary efforts which gave them strength to withstand the House of Austria. Under no other circumstances and in no other eventuality would the minor States have combined against one common enemy.'

But, although this is a question which might be fairly argued, I do not propose to argue it this evening. I propose rather to glance at the preponderating influence which the House of Austria did actually attain under the rule of the brother of Charles V. ; to show how it was affected by the results of the Thirty Years' War, as evidenced by the Peace of Westphalia ; to indicate the dangers of its position, external and internal, until the events which produced the Peace of Carlowitz (September 26, 1699) not only removed for ever all fear of Turkish supremacy, but, by removing that fear, enabled the House of Habsburg to concentrate all its efforts upon internal aggrandisement ; to show then how, on four remarkable occasions, when the opportunities for the most advantageous of all possible aggrandisements came so easily within reach that it required only the stretching forth of a hand to seize them, the representative of the House held back, allowed 'I dare not' to wait upon 'I would,' and, by that timidity, allowed the rulership over Germany to fall into the grasp of the bolder House, which wields it at the present hour !

In 1556 Ferdinand I. succeeded in Germany the Emperor Charles V. With Ferdinand began the unbroken line of Bohemian and Hungarian kings belonging to the House of Habsburg. Thirty years before—August 29, 1526—King Louis, the last of the Jagellons, whilst fleeing from the fatal field of Mohács, had met his death. Less than two months later, October 24, the assembled estates of Bohemia elected his brother-in-law, Ferdinand of Habsburg, to succeed him ; and some seven weeks after that, December 16, Hungary followed the example of Bohemia. On the death of Ferdi-

nand, in 1564, the hereditary dominions of the House of Habsburg were divided among his sons. They were reunited, however, in 1619, in the person of Ferdinand II. grandson of the first of that name.

Upon the character of Ferdinand II. depended more than ever the future of the House of Habsburg. Upon it, and upon the manner in which the questions of the day would be affected by it, rested the fate of Germany. The combined religious-political ferment had reached its boiling point. Ferdinand had to decide on the instant whether he would rule strongly, or whether he would be content to be an uncrowned spectator whilst the unchained spirit of anarchy should run its turbulent course.

Many have written of the character of Ferdinand: one writer has completely appreciated it. After describing the circumstances of Germany at the time of his accession, Mr. Samuel Gardiner¹ thus continues:—

It was hard to form a clear conception of the views and opinions of such a man (Ferdinand II.) in the midst of the contest in which he was involved. Even now his distinct place in the scale which leads from the unquestioning intolerance of men like our Henry V. to the large tolerance of men like William III., has still to be recognised. Step by step, as each generation took its place upon the stage, the political aspect of ecclesiastical disputes presented itself more vividly to the minds of the representative men of the age, whilst the theological aspect was gradually dropping out of sight. The place of Ferdinand is to be found midway between Philip II. and Richelieu. . . .

To him Protestantism was hateful, but rather as a source of moral and political disorder than as a spiritual poison. It could not well have been otherwise. When he passed, as a boy, from his own distracted land into Bavaria, where he was to receive his education from the Jesuits of Ingolstadt, the language of the Catholic reaction must have seemed to him like a Divine revelation. At Munich he saw an orderly and well-regulated government walking hand in hand with an honoured clergy. At home he knew that every landowner was doing what was right in his own eyes. To him the religious

¹ *History of England from the Accession of James I. to the Outbreak of the First Civil War*, vol. iii., pp. 267-9.

condition of the Austrian territories must have appeared even more anarchical than it really was.

The view taken by a man possessing the resolute character of Ferdinand of the anarchical effects of the workings of Protestantism, more especially in the hereditary States and in the Kingdom of Bohemia, goes far to account for the Thirty Years' War. That his view was in the main correct is indisputable.

It was the misfortune (to quote again Mr. Gardiner) of the Protestantism which sprang into existence in the dominions of the House of Austria that its fate was intimately united with that of an anarchical aristocracy. . . . To the great families the adoption of the new religion had commended itself as the readiest way of shaking off the supremacy of the Crown. It gave them, upon their own estates, all the power which had been assumed by German princes within their territories. It enabled them to seize Church property by force or fraud, and to trample at pleasure on the wishes and feelings of their serfs. It annihilated the authority of the sovereign and of the clergy to the sole profit of the landowner.

This, then, was the position in which Ferdinand II. found himself on his accession to the empire. A very resolute man, possessing nerves of iron, and if narrow in his views yet a firm upholder of the law as the law stood, was in the presence of a revolution—a revolution fomented by a greedy and selfish aristocracy, leading a people so blinded by religious enthusiasm, that they did not realise clearly the actual points at issue, and directing that enthusiasm to promote its own ends. The inevitable result was the Thirty Years' War.

That war, after undergoing many phases, assured the victory of legality. Well was it for Germany, well for Europe, that this result was obtained. The victory of the weaker princes would not only have dissolved the empire, but 'by the dissolution of the ties which bound German Austria to Hungary and Bohemia it would have thrown the whole of Eastern Europe into confusion, and would have reopened the road into the heart of Germany to Mussulman hordes.'¹

¹ Gardiner. The reader will bear in mind that, even when sheltered by the strong arm of Austria, Southern Germany all but succumbed to the invasion of

There are few, then, I think, who will not arrive at the conclusion of Mr. Gardiner, that 'the dispassionate inquirer, however badly he may think of the religious system by which Protestantism was superseded in these territories, can hardly do otherwise than rejoice at the defeat of the political system of the men by whom Protestantism was in the main supported.'

Internally—that is, within the limits of Germany—the Peace of Westphalia settled the religious question. Whilst it confirmed the dogma, held by every prince, great and small, as an unquestioned prerogative, that the religion of the prince was to be the religion of the people, it left, with rare exceptions, the people practically free to worship God as they chose.¹ But as, generally, the people of Southern Germany adhered to the old, and those of Northern Germany embraced, in some form or other, the new religion, the practical result was to divide Germany into two camps—the Southerners allied by sympathy with Austria; the Northerners more or less divided, but prepared, as the sequel has proved, to follow the lead of a strong man, whenever that strong man should appear.

From the Peace of Westphalia, October 24, 1648, to the signature of the Peace of Carlowitz, September 26, 1699, the main danger to Southern Germany was the danger of an Ottoman invasion. During those fifty-one years the discontented nobles of Transylvania and of Hungary ever found a protector in the Porte. The Porte protected in order to devour. It required all the valour of Sobieski (September 12, 1683), the tactical skill of Prince Charles of Lorraine² and Prince Louis of Baden,³ and the genius of Prince Eugene,⁴ to

the Turks, under Kara Mustapha, nearly fifty years later. What would have been the position had the invader been met by the petty armies of small and disunited States?

¹ The expulsion of the Protestants of Styria by the Emperor Charles VI is an exception to this general rule.

² Who won the second battle of Mohács, August 12, 1689.

³ Who defeated the Turks at Salankama, August 19, 1691, slaying one-fifth their number.

⁴ Who crushed the Turks at Zenta, Sept. 11, 1697.

deliver Eastern Europe from being scoured by Turkish hordes. The battle of Zenta was, however, one of the decisive battles of the world. It not only destroyed the Ottoman army, it caused even a rising in Constantinople. Its result was the treaty of Carlowitz. From the date of this treaty Turkey ceased for ever to be dangerous to Austria. Following, moreover, as it did, upon a long and terrible war for existence, it assured the firmer adhesion to the House of Habsburg of Hungary¹ and Transylvania.

The danger from the side of Turkey passed and gone for ever, the emperor had to confront another, less imminent but still very formidable, arising from the ambition of Louis XIV. In 1702 began the war of the Spanish succession. It was in the course of this war that a magnificent opportunity offered to the House of Habsburg to make its hold on Catholic—that is, on Southern—Germany so absolute and binding, that no future combination could shake it. Of this opportunity, which was not taken, I propose now to give the details.

When the war of the Spanish succession broke out, Leopold, called by the Austrians ‘the Great,’ grandson of Ferdinand II., was emperor. Leopold lived to witness the triumph of the allied arms at Blenheim (August 2, 1704); the year following, he died (May 5, 1705). His eldest son and successor, Joseph I., carried on the war with even greater vigour than his father. The triumphs of Ramillies, May 23, 1706, of Turin, September 7 of the same year, of Oudenarde, July 11, 1708, and of Malplaquet, 1709, whilst they humbled the pride of Louis XIV., exhausted the resources of France. It is true that in Spain the victories of Almanza, April 25, 1707, and of Villa Viciosa, December 10, 1710, acted, to a certain extent, as a counterpoise to those triumphs. But the victories

¹ The first battle of Mohács had transferred the elective crown of Hungary from the extinct line of the Jagellons to the Habsburg. The result of the second battle was to cause the estates of Hungary to pass at Pressburg a decree solemnly conferring upon the House of Habsburg the right of succession in male line to the throne of Hungary. They proceeded, on the spot, to crown the eldest son of the Emperor, the Archduke Joseph, though he was hardly nine years old, Dec, 9, 1687.

of the French candidate for the Spanish throne were but a poor compensation for the long series of humiliation and disaster sustained by the French arms in Italy, in Belgium, and in Germany.

In this great contest Bavaria had cast in her lot with France: The victory of Blenheim had given that electorate into the hands of the emperor, and the elector, Maximilian Emanuel, had been placed at the head of the empire. Already, after Blenheim, Louis XIV. had made (1704) to the States-General of Holland proposals to cede Naples and the two Sicilies to the Archduke Charles provided that his grandson were to be acknowledged as King of Spain and the Indies. With respect to the Netherlands, he proposed to form of it an independent kingdom, the rule of which, apparently, he designed for the Elector of Bavaria. At that time certainly it would have been easy for Austria to obtain peace on the basis of an exchange of the Netherlands for Bavaria. The allies rejected these terms. Nor when, in 1706, Louis saw his armies beaten in Flanders at Ramillies, in Italy at Turin, and in Spain before Barcelona, and proposed terms of a far more yielding character—offering to transfer Spain and the Indies to the Archduke Charles, provided the Spanish possessions in Italy should be secured to his grandson, and to consider with the States-General the question of the Netherlands—were his terms more readily listened to. Again, after the disastrous campaign of 1708, did the French king still further lower his pretensions. To the offer of Spain and the Indies he added that of the Milanese. For his grandson he asked only Naples and the two Sicilies.

As my subject is the consideration of the lost opportunities of the House of Austria, I propose to place upon record the views by which the leading statesmen of that House were animated when they decided to reject such proposals as these. It must be recollected that the time was the winter of 1708–9, when although Joseph I. was emperor he was without male offspring; when Charles, the claimant to the Spanish possessions, was also heir to the empire; further,

when the dominions of the Elector of Bavaria were occupied by Austria, when the elector himself was at the ban of the empire, and when the French king had shown himself not unwilling to consider an arrangement whereby his ally, the elector, might be compensated for the loss of his hereditary States, by the possession of the Netherlands. Such an opportunity for rounding off its borders, for taking in the territory which would be of priceless advantage to her, while she made a show of magnanimity by rejecting that which, though of greater sounding value, could only be an incumbrance to her, has rarely been presented to any State. Let us mark now the spirit in which these proposals of 1708 were debated by the foremost statesmen of the House of Austria.

It was dreaded in Vienna (writes the Ritter von Arneth,¹ basing his conclusions upon an examination of the Imperial archives) that the States-General, even if they were not to conclude a separate peace with France, as they had done on a former occasion, might yet be drawn into one-sided preliminary engagements, the unsatisfactory character of which might prevent the conclusion of a peace on a firm basis. To provide for such a contingency, the emperor thought it necessary to nominate, at a very early period, a commission to consider the terms which, in his own interest, in the interests of his House, and of the German Empire, it would be incumbent upon him to demand at a general peace conference.

This commission was composed of a so-called 'deputation,' of which Prince Salm was the president, Prince Eugene, Trautson, Seilern, Zinzendorff, and Wratislaw, were members. As during the greater part of its sittings, Prince Salm was ill, the presidency practically devolved upon Eugene, and the meetings were held at his house.

The first minutes of the conference prove at once how highly raised were the expectations of the Court of Vienna with respect to the conditions to be demanded.

Count Zinzendorff opened the proceedings with the declaration that two years previously the terms upon which a satisfactory peace could be concluded had been agreed upon with Marlborough, and placed upon paper. The basis of these terms were as follows :—

¹ *Prinz Eugen von Savoyen*, in three volumes, Wien, 1864.

With respect to Spain, no agreement could be satisfactory which did not transfer to the House of Austria the undivided possessions of Spain as those possessions were at the date of the Peace of the Pyrenees (November 7, 1659), that date to be insisted upon, because the subsequent treaties—those of Nymwegen (August 10, 1678) and Ryswick (September 20, 1697)—were far more favourable to France. The absolute transfer, then, of all Spain to the House of Austria was a cardinal point, to be insisted upon without reserve, not one inch even to be yielded to Philip of Anjou. In Italy, the same conditions were to be rigorously insisted upon, and if any part of the Spanish dominions were to be alienated in favour of Philip, that part must be the Netherlands ; not, indeed, that the transfer of that country to the House of Bourbon was thought of for a moment, but the idea of it would excite the Dutch, and induce them to support the demands of the emperor.

With respect to the second point—the Holy Roman Empire—it was again Zinzendorff who declared that Marlborough and Heinsius had proposed the Peace of Westphalia as the basis of the new treaty. But when Zinzendorff had insisted upon the inadequacy of the terms of this Peace with respect alike to Italy and Germany, it had been agreed to insist upon the deposition of the two princes who had been placed at the ban of the empire—the electors of Bavaria and of Cologne—and to treat for their reinstatement as the basis of an extension of the borders of the empire.

The point which now had to be considered was the definite meaning to be attached to the term ‘extension of the borders of the empire.’ It was decided to demand from France the old boundaries. If these were not to be obtained, then the least that would be accepted were: Strasbourg, with the territories belonging to its bishopric ; Alsace, with the three bishoprics, Metz, Toul, and Verdun ; together with all the places severed from the empire by the Peace of Ryswick.

I have been particular in stating at length all the matters with respect to Germany which came under consideration of the foremost statesmen of Austria at their secret conference in 1709, to prove that the idea of the incorporation of Bavaria by the head of the House of Habsburg—the only measure needed to make that House absolutely supreme in Southern Germany—had not at that date even been considered. This seems the more curious inasmuch as in 1704 and 1706, Louis XIV. had, in his proposals to the States-General of

Holland, given some indication that he was not indisposed to exchange Bavaria for the Netherlands. It would seem that in their desire to secure for the Imperial House the whole heritage of Charles V,—Spain and the Indies, Spanish Italy, and the Netherlands—the wisest heads in Austria despised the comparatively small addition of territory which, nevertheless, would have rendered the House of Habsburg absolutely supreme in Germany.

In the months of April and May following, the representatives of the allies met at the Hague the Foreign Minister of France, the Marquis of Torcy, who was there, incognito, to urge the acceptance of the very favourable terms to which his master was ready to accede, and which have already been stated in full detail. The strongest opponent of the French minister was the prince who represented alike the interests of the German Empire and the interests of the House of Austria—Prince Eugene of Savoy.

With whomsoever he had to do (I quote again his biographer, Arneth), with the deputies of the States-General, with the representatives of England, or with those of the German princes, Eugene argued emphatically against the acceptance of the French proposals. He asked them how the bestowal of Naples or the two Sicilies, or of both, upon Philip of Anjou, was compatible with their often-repeated consent to the cession of the entire Spanish dominions to the House of Austria. The King of Portugal wants to obtain a strip of Spain; the Duke of Savoy demands the best part of the Milanese; the States-General require the Netherland fortresses as a barrier against France, and hope to obtain for themselves the commerce with the Indies. These demands may be granted, but why should they admit the claim of the King of France to a kingdom for his grandson simply because, against the right of nations, and by force of arms, he had at one time seized for him the throne of Spain? I believe (concluded Eugene, in a conversation of this character with Heinsius) that that king would consider himself fortunate if, in addition to the territories which have been demanded of him, he were forced to restore to the Netherlands and other neighbours the lands of which he had unjustly deprived them.

The winter of 1708-9 had been one of extraordinary

severity. The long war had exhausted France, and the allies believed that the misery of the winter, following upon the exhaustion of the war, would largely influence Louis XIV. and incline him to make peace on any terms. The fact that he had sent to the Hague his principal minister seemed to prove that he had very much at heart the conclusion of the war.

This thought, their successes in the recent war, the union amongst themselves, gave to the representatives of the allies an arrogance which in the end worked much to their disadvantage. It is true that the French minister, unable to divide them—although Louis XIV. had commissioned him to offer Marlborough four millions of francs if he would agree to the French terms¹—was so struck with the strength of their position that he agreed to the transfer to the House of Habsburg of the Spanish monarchy and possessions as they had existed at the death of Charles II. ; to recognise the Protestant succession in England ; to demolish the fortifications of Dunkirk ; to the dismissal of the Pretender, and the evacuation of the frontier fortresses demanded by Holland. With respect to the German empire, Torcy agreed to treat on the basis of the conditions of the Peace of Ryswick, and to yield in addition Strasbourg, Kehl, and Alt-Breisach, retaining only Landau. To Victor Amadeus he offered to restore Savoy and Nice.

It was on the terms relating to Germany and Italy that the greatest difficulties arose. For the former, Eugene demanded, in addition to the concessions offered by Torcy, Alsace and the Sundgau, Hüningen, Fort Louis, Neu Breisach, Schlettstadt and the remaining frontier fortresses. To Victor Amadeus, the allies insisted on the rendition, besides Savoy and Nice, of Exilles, Fenestrelles and the entire country as far as Mount Genève.

In the course of the lively discussions which followed—discussions marked, writes Arneth, 'by the insistance of Eugene,

¹ *Mémoires de Torcy*, Coll. Petitot, lxvii. 340. The despatch of the French king to Torcy is dated May 14, 1709,

the prolixity of Marlborough, the curt dryness of Heinsius and the tact, temper, and moderation of Torcy'—the demands of the German plenipotentiary varied, and varied, I venture to think, in a wrong direction for the real interests of the House of Austria. Eugene agreed to modify his demands regarding the frontier between France and Germany: to accept Alsace and the bishoprics of Metz, Toul, and Verdun: but on the other hand, he demanded that the Spain to be transferred to the House of Habsburg should be the Spain of the time of the Peace of the Pyrenees, and not the Spain of the time of the Peace of Ryswick. Finally, the allies presented an ultimatum, in which they formulated these conditions, and required further that if Philip of Anjou should decline to accede to those affecting Spain, the King of France should send his armies to compel him.

On May 28 the Marquis of Torcy left the Hague, and hastened with the result of the negotiations to Versailles. He had promised that before June 4, he would inform the allies whether the king had accepted or rejected their proposals. He kept his word; for on June 2 he wrote to Eugene to state that after mature reflection the king had found it impossible to agree to the ultimatum. 'If I must wage war,' Louis, with noble indignation, had exclaimed, 'I would rather wage it against my enemies than against my grandson.'

But for that clause compelling him to such a course, it is probable that the conditions, hard as they were, would have been accepted. The insistence upon impossible terms prevented the conclusion of a peace which would have given the House of Austria Spain and the Indies, and possibly, regard being had to the proposal made by Louis in 1704, have enabled it, had it insisted, to exchange the Netherlands for Bavaria. The opportunity for obtaining this result, the enormous advantages of which were, apparently, but dimly seen by Austrian statesmen, was deliberately thrown away.

That Prince Eugene himself felt that he had committed a great error by his too great insistence is certain. He had

insisted because he believed that the condition of France would force Louis to give way. He had counted on the acceptance of the ultimatum. He had written of it as an accomplished fact. When it was refused, the sense of the responsibility the House of Austria had incurred by its excessive demands found expression in a letter which he wrote on June 11, to Count Zinzendorff:—

It is true (he wrote) that a victory might give us still better conditions. But they can never be much better, for the Dutch do not wish the complete humiliation of France. If the military operations do not, at the outset, produce very favourable results, I am very much afraid that the union which has till now prevailed amongst the allies will disappear, and that we shall lose much more than we can win. I have often affirmed that whenever France obtains the upper hand she pushes her good fortune to the very utmost. When, however, by an enormous expenditure of blood and strength she is driven to a disadvantageous position like the present, then the majority of her enemies fear to humiliate her too much, not considering that after a few years' rest she will arise refreshed and begin again to worry her neighbours. I know well the people with whom we have to deal, and I do not hesitate to affirm that we are risking far more than we can possibly win.

Memorable and prophetic words! But why, then, did Eugene, who was the soul of the negotiators, insist upon conditions which would place his adopted country in such a position?

The war, then, continued. The allies did meet with the early success to which Eugene referred, in his letter to Zinzendorff, as being essential to prevent disaster. They took Tournay, July 30; its citadel, September 5. Six days later they defeated the French army at Malplaquet. On October 20, they concluded the campaign by the capture of Mons. On the Flemish frontier, then, there had been a series of successes. In Spain the allies under Stahremberg and Stanhope had done somewhat more than hold their own.¹ On the Italian side, Count Mercy, whilst endeavouring to effect a junction with Count Wirich Daun in Franche Comté, had been beaten by the French general Du Bourg. This

¹ They had taken the town of Balaguer on the Segre.

defeat had compelled Duan to confine himself to the defence of Piedmont. On the Rhine, thanks to the incapacity of the Elector of Hanover, who commanded the German army on that frontier, nothing had been gained: but then nothing had been lost. The campaign of 1709, on the whole, left the allies in a more favourable, France in a worse, condition, than they had respectively occupied at its commencement.

The exhaustion and the losses caused by the war had been felt not alone in France. The Dutch troops had suffered terribly at Malplaquet; the resources of the German empire had been drawn upon to their utmost. England was beginning to tire of fruitless slaughter. From almost every quarter, then, from Holland, from England, from Germany, and, loudest of all, from France, there came a cry for peace. Secret negotiations with that object had begun between the Hague and Versailles as soon as the campaign had terminated.

In Vienna only, the Court opinion in favour of the continuance of the war except upon impossible terms of peace predominated. This was the more strange, inasmuch as it was well known that the hereditary dominions of the House of Habsburg were exhausted; that a war was raging in Hungary; that the Princes of the empire, especially the King of Prussia, were beginning to show a distaste for the continuance of a war the profit of which would accrue mainly to the Imperial House; that it would be impossible to carry on the contest without allies. Yet never in the world's history has a greater obstinacy—an obstinacy on points of secondary importance—been displayed than that which marked all the consultations of the statesmen of Austria at this memorable epoch. In the deliberations regarding the articles which should form the basis of a permanent peace held at Vienna during the winter of 1709-10, two specially were insisted upon: the first, that not even one shred of the ancient Spanish monarchy should be assigned to Philip of Anjou, and that the King of France should co-operate with the allies to compel him to renounce his claims thereto; the second, that certain fortresses should be placed in the hands of the allies

as pledges for the fulfilment of this contract, those fortresses to be permanently forfeited by France if the conduct of that country should justify the continuance of the war against her.

To discuss the conditions of peace, especially those two conditions on which the House of Austria laid so firm a stress, Louis XIV. despatched two plenipotentiaries, Marshal d'Huxelles and the Abbé de Polignac, to Gertruidenberg, in North Brabant, in the winter of 1709-10. The allies were represented there only by the Dutch deputies, Buys and Van der Dussen.

After many verbal encounters the French plenipotentiaries so far yielded that they agreed to the cession of the entire Spanish dominions to the House of Austria, provided that the islands of Sicily and Sardinia were secured to Philip of Anjou ; further, that if that prince should decline, within a term of six months, to accept these conditions and to quit Spain, then the King of France would contribute a stipulated fixed sum to aid in his forcible expulsion from that country.

But before this conclusion was arrived at, hostilities had begun. Again had fortune favoured the allies. They had taken the important fortress of Douay (June 29, 1710) in the face of Marshal Villars, and the army commanded by that illustrious general was, they well knew, the last hope of France. They had then a great opportunity of concluding an advantageous peace. But neither did the concession I have mentioned nor even the further yielding of the point regarding the two islands satisfy them. They insisted that if Philip were to refuse to yield, the armies of his grandfather should compel him. On this point Louis XIV. was firm, and on this alone the negotiations at Gertruidenberg were broken off.

The allies continued their victorious course. On August 31, they took Bethune ; then Aixe and St. Venant. Heavy rains prevented the further continuance of the campaign. In Spain, however, matters had gone badly. The English general, Stanhope, had been forced to surrender with all his troops at

Brihuega, and though Stahremberg had held the field of battle at Villa Viciosa, he had been compelled to recross the Catalan frontier.

The growing disinclination evinced by the English Court during the winter towards a continuance of the war, the removal from power of Marlborough's friends, and, above all, the death of the Emperor Joseph, April 17, 1711, gave an entirely new complexion to affairs. The last-named event virtually made the Archduke Charles emperor of Germany. Then occurred an opportunity, of all others the most favourable, by a great act of renunciation of a monarchy, the holding of which was not, at that time certainly, compatible with the equally exalted position of emperor of Germany, to secure for the House of Austria those permanent advantages which would have secured for her permanent predominance in Germany.

No one comprehended the new situation more clearly than Louis XIV. He saw that Europe would never permit the union on one head of the crowns of Spain and Germany. He knew that England and Holland were tired of a war the original object of which had been in a great measure diverted by the force of events. He had read, moreover, the obstinate character of the new emperor, the almost passionate influence which his predilection for Spain and the Spanish monarchy exercised over him; and he felt that with ordinary prudence on his part the grand alliance would dissolve. He transmitted then the most peremptory orders to Marshal Villars to avoid, however much he might be tempted, delivering a battle. A victory would be as dangerous to him as a defeat. For whilst the latter would leave open the road to Paris, the former would rouse again to fever heat the warlike passions of the English people which had now begun to slumber. His policy was to await, armed yet passive, the course of events.

In this prescient policy Louis was singularly aided by the sovereign who was his principal opponent, the new Emperor of Germany. Charles had proceeded to Spain in

the early days of the war to give life, by his presence, to the cause of which he was in that country the representative. There he had imbibed a love for the Spanish character which had become a passion. He had returned surrounded by Spanish councillors, men who had imperilled their possessions in Spain to support him, and whose fortunes depended upon his success. To Charles, then, the maintenance of the Spanish possessions in their integrity was a point of cardinal importance. For a long time no statesman in his hereditary dominions dared to whisper in his presence the cession of even a yard of the territories of Charles II. He returned to Austria, a Habsburg indeed in obstinacy, a Spaniard in every other feature of character.

Yet the opportunities before him were such as never before or since offered to a purely Austrian statesman. To an Austrian Emperor of Germany the possession of Spain and the Indies would be little more than an incumbrance. To maintain that double empire the interests of one portion must be sacrificed. The genius of Charles V., had found the inheritance a burden too great to be borne by one man. He had consigned the lesser portion, as he considered it, to his brother in order the better to govern the greater. There could be no doubt that were the dream of Charles VI. to become a reality he would be impelled to a similar conclusion, and as little that he would repeat and ratify the selection made by his great forerunner.

To Charles, as a German, and especially as an Austrian German, the hold which he still had on the Spanish possessions should have appeared as the light of a lever wherewith to force from France concessions which might have made Germany strong, the House of Austria predominant. From the moment of his accession, that became the view of the most prominent purely Austrian statesmen. Unfortunately it did not become the idea of Prince Eugene, whose influence, had it been thrown into that scale, might ultimately have caused the purely Austrian cause to triumph. To renounce Spain and the Indies, but to obtain the Spanish

Netherlands and the Spanish possessions in Italy; to exchange the Spanish Netherlands for Bavaria, were terms which might have been exacted at any period after Blenheim, and which might have most certainly been exacted on the accession of Charles to the imperial dignity.

The exchange of the Netherlands for Bavaria would have been singularly acceptable to the prince most interested in the matter, the elector, Max Emanuel. That prince had no liking for the customs and people of the Fatherland. In character a Frenchman, lively, witty, fond of gaiety, he infinitely preferred the lightheartedness of Brussels to the staid solemnity of Munich. Not only would he not have objected to the change: he was even anxious for it.

That such terms could have been obtained if the emperor had worked well with England and Holland in 1711-12 is not to be doubted. In the death of the Emperor Joseph, England had seen the opportunity for the conclusion of the war. There was as little desire in Europe to see the crowns of two nations of first-class importance on the head of a Habsburg as of a Bourbon. A few moments of staid reflection on the part of Charles, and he could have dictated the terms I have already indicated.

But Charles showed no moderation. When he heard that England had agreed to treat with France on the basis of the recognition of the Protestant succession, and on the renunciation by Philip, for himself and his successors, of the French inheritance, he despatched Eugene to England to reason with the British ministry. What were the instructions given to Eugene may be gathered from his language to Lord Oxford. 'If,' he said to that minister, 'there were any question on the part of England of ceasing to insist upon the claims of the emperor to the throne of Spain and the Indies, I have no longer any business in this country.' After a stay of over two months in England, he returned to the Hague with the conviction that, for the assertion of his Spanish claims 'the emperor had nothing to hope for from the English ministry.'

The campaign which followed soon showed that Eugene had as little to hope for from the English army. Weakened by the defection of the Duke of Ormond, who had received peremptory orders, first, to assist in no attack on the French, and later, to retire upon Dunkerque, Eugene was not only forced to forego a very favourable opportunity for attack, but to witness, without power to prevent it, the fall of St. Arnaud, Marchiennes, Douay, and Quesnoy. These events should have opened the eyes of the emperor. It was still in his power to make favourable terms. But, after the campaign, his ablest minister, Count Wratislaw, was able only to make a slight impression upon him ;¹ and the death of Wratislaw soon afterwards threw Charles once more under the supreme influence of his Spanish councillors.

England, France, Holland, Portugal, Savoy, and Prussia, signed the Peace of Utrecht on March 14, 1713. The terms upon which the emperor might be admitted to that treaty were formulated, and he was allowed till June 1 to declare his adherence. But he cared not for the time. He withdrew his ambassador at once, determined to continue the war on the Rhine

The campaign which followed was disastrous to him. Eugene outnumbered could not prevent the fall of Landau (August 19), nor that of Freiburg (November 17). Even then the emperor wished to continue the war. But events were too strong for him, and finally he was forced to confer upon Prince Eugene powers to negotiate at Rastadt conditions of peace with his opponent on the field of battle, Marshal Villars.

At the conferences at that place Eugene seriously mooted the question of the exchange of the Netherlands for Bavaria. But an arrangement which at any time from 1704 to 1711 might have been dictated, which from the latter year up to March 13, 1713, was still negotiable, was now scarcely possible.

¹ 'I see,' wrote Wratislaw to Eugene in 1712, 'that, though the pill is bitter, if some arrangements could be made to preserve his honour with respect to the pledges he has given to the Catalonians, it will eventually be swallowed.'

Louis XIV. had no desire to pluck a thorn from the side of the House of Austria, nor did he care much to have upon his own borders a prince who might not always be a friend. Whenever, therefore, Eugene led up to the subject, Villars gracefully turned it. When, at last, Eugene insisted upon its being discussed, Villars roundly declared that his master's word was pledged to the restoration of Max Emanuel to all his rights and dignities in Bavaria ; that, with the accomplishment of that stipulation his interest ended ; that, then, whatever arrangement Austria and Bavaria might come to in no way concerned him. It seems to me, as it has seemed to more than one Austrian writer, that this reply should—Max Emanuel being willing—have fixed the idea more firmly than ever in the mind of the emperor. But, throughout his life, Charles VI. was neglecting the substance to pursue the shadow.¹

'It appears,' writes the Ritter von Arneth, 'that the matter was not pressed with the necessary vigour from Vienna. This is to be attributed to the extraordinary influence which the Spanish surroundings of the emperor exercised upon that monarch.' The opportunity was lost. The Peace negotiated at Rastadt, and signed the September 8 following at Baden, in Switzerland, whilst it restored Kehl to the empire, Altbreisach and Freiburg to the emperor, and ceded to him the Spanish Netherlands, the Milanese, Naples, Sardinia, and the fortresses and harbours on the coast of Tuscany, insisted on the restoration of Bavaria and of the electoral dignity to Max Emanuel!

Twenty years passed. Once again did Fortune offer an opportunity—a very tempting opportunity—to the House of Austria. In 1734 the question of the succession to the Crown of Poland produced war between France and the empire. Again did the Elector of Bavaria, now Charles Albert, show an inclination to take part against the emperor.

¹ In his later years he directed all his efforts to secure adhesion to the Pragmatic Sanction, neglecting his army by which alone the conditions of that instrument could have been upheld. The consequences are well known.

Charles Albert, son of Max Emanuel, whom he had succeeded in 1726, had married the daughter of the Emperor Joseph I., the elder brother of Charles; and in her right, according to the will of the Emperor Leopold and the law of hereditary succession, he possessed a better-founded claim to the succession to the Austrian dominions than did the eldest daughter of the reigning emperor, Maria Theresa. It had been to change the order of succession in favour of his daughter that Charles had devoted all his energies to procure from all Europe the acceptance of the Pragmatic Sanction. Charles Albert, however, had never concealed his intention to insist upon his rights, and in 1734, when the empire was once again entangled in war with France, he gave, as I have said, unmistakable symptoms of hostility to his liege lord.

Fortune, however, had provided a way out of the difficulty—a way which, if Charles VI. had chosen to adopt it, would have made his daughter hereditary joint-ruler over Southern Germany, and have for ever resolved the question of pre-dominance in that country.

The means she had provided for the attainment of this end were a marriage between the son of Charles Albert and the eldest daughter of Charles VI. Charles Albert was most anxious for the union; he proposed it over and over again. The emperor, although he saw all the advantages it promised, all the dangers which its rejection would entail—a disputed succession and a war which would tax all the resources of the hereditary States—persisted in refusing the offer. The reason he gave was that his daughter was older than her suitor. His jealous mistrust of the ambitious character of Charles Albert was, however, the real cause of his refusal.

The refusal of Charles VI. was the more full of danger to Austria because the elector, Clement Augustus, of Cologne, was the brother of Charles Albert of Bavaria, and had warmly espoused his interests; because, further, the Elector Palatine, Charles Philip, had been alienated from the Imperial House by the conduct of the emperor in espousing the claims to

the Duchy of Berg of the King of Prussia in preference to his own. The opportunity, however, though it would have been in precise accordance with the hereditary policy of Austria—

Bella gerant alii, tu, felix Austria, nube,

was rejected. That rejection not only prevented the permanent predominance of Austria, but entailed, by its consequences, the loss of Silesia.

Again, after a term of years, did the question arise. Again was the opportunity offered. In the interval had occurred the two Silesian Wars and the Seven Years' War. The daughter of Charles VI., the illustrious Maria Theresa, ruled over all her father's dominions, lost Silesia excepted. By her side, invested nominally with equal powers, but obliged to conform in matters of high policy to the strong will of the empress, stood her gifted son, Joseph II. Once again offered the opportunity of incorporating Bavaria, although, this time, not without a battle. The opportunity arose in this wise.

Charles Albert of Bavaria had lived to enjoy a fleeting gleam of prosperity by his election to the imperial dignity. and had then died, all his ambitious hopes shattered, in 1745. His son, Maximilian Joseph III., had, by the Peace of Füssen, April 22 of the same year, become reconciled to Austria. He died childless December 30, 1777. He was the last of the Bavarian line of the House of Wittelsbach. His nearest of kin was the Elector Palatine, Charles Theodore. But, in virtue of the title of investiture drawn up more than a century before by the Emperor Sigismund, the House of Habsburg had claims, on the failure of heirs to the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, to the whole of lower Bavaria. Joseph II. then represented, in co-regency with his renowned mother, the House of Habsburg. He did not allow the opportunity to slip. Charles Theodore was childless, and had no hope of children. A lover of pleasure, given to profuse expenditure on his own gratifications, he readily acceded to the claims of Austria to transfer to her the

territory indicated in Sigismund's old parchment. But his nearest relative and heir, Charles II., Duke of Zweibrücken, stepped in to prevent the transaction, appealed to the old jealousy of the aggrandisement of the House of Austria of Frederic II. of Prussia, and incited that prince to invade Bohemia in order to maintain the right of the ruler of Bavaria and his successors to the possessions of the territories intact, just as they had been at the death of the last of the Bavarian Wittelsbachs.

This action on the part of Frederic brought on the war of the Bavarian succession. Joseph, meanwhile, had taken up on the Bohemian frontier, behind the Elbe, a position so strong by nature and so fortified by art, that Frederic found it unassailable. He did all he knew, tried all the tricks and stratagems which had served him so well during the Seven Years' War, to entice Joseph from his strong position, to divide the army, or to leave an opening for an attack. Joseph was not to be tempted, and his quiet persistence completely baffled the great warrior king.

But Frederic did not renounce hope. He had ordered his brother, Prince Henry, to march through Saxony and endeavour to break into Bohemia through the Lausitz. With the aid of the army under his orders he would have at his disposal a sufficient superiority in numbers to force the Austrian position.

But Joseph had placed in the field, to observe and baffle Prince Henry, an army 50,000 strong, under the command of his best general, Field-Marshal Loudon, a man who had shown his capacity to look even Frederic himself in the face. Able, then, as were the dispositions made by Prince Henry, Loudon baffled them. He did more—he forced the prince to retreat. He followed him and was on the point of forcing him to deliver, under very disadvantageous circumstances, a battle which—if success had crowned his efforts—would have been fatal to Frederic, which would not only have secured the whole of lower Bavaria, but have recovered Silesia, when his hand was stayed in the most marvellous manner.

The story is thus graphically told by the Freiherr von Janko in his 'Life of Loudon.'

On September 13, information reached Loudon that Prince Henry had crossed the Elbe near Leitmeritz, and had taken a firm position. Exclaiming, 'Now, at last, I have the prince in the position in which, since the beginning of the war, I have wished to see him,' Loudon sent an express to the emperor to promise him, if he would send him only twelve battalions, he would finish the war. The emperor despatched the battalions; Loudon, meanwhile, had concentrated his troops; and, hearing that the battalions were proceeding by forced marches to join him, hastened from Münchengrätz to Benatek, crossed the Elbe at Brandeis, the Moldau at Weltrus, and on September 20 took up a position opposite Prince Henry at Budin. His position was in every respect most advantageous for an attack, one of his corps occupying a commanding post on the enemy's left, whilst his front and right were so placed that Prince Henry could not retreat without fighting, whilst, in case of defeat, his army had no means of escape.

I now relate in the words of the author the incident which prevented the destruction of the Prussian army: 'With an overstrained anxiety everyone in both camps,' writes Von Janko, 'beheld the arrival of the moment which was to decide the question of superiority between the two generals, who, according to the judgment of the best-approved strategist,¹ had, during the Seven Years' War, made no mistakes. But just as he was preparing, on the 23rd, for an attack which should be decisive, Loudon was surprised by the arrival in his camp of the emperor. Joseph had come himself in order to soften, by his presence, the unpleasantness of the orders of which he was the bearer. The empress, absolutely determined to bring to an end by peaceful means the dispute between Frederic and herself, had commanded her son to

¹ Frederic himself. 'We all committed faults,' said he one day to his generals, speaking of the events of the Seven Years' War, 'except my brother Henry and Loudon.'

forbid at all costs the risking of a battle, even were a brilliant victory the certain consequence.' Maria Theresa, in fact, saw opposed to her only the warrior who, having robbed her of Silesia, had kept that province against all continental Europe ; she did not realise the fact that Frederic was no longer the Frederic of Leuthen and Torgau, but an over-cautious warrior, fearing to risk much lest he should lose all ; she dreaded lest, as in former days, a defeat should only make him more terrible in his revenge. On the eve, then, of a battle which could not have been lost, and which would, in its results, have amply avenged her earlier wrongs, she ordered Loudon to abstain. Loudon did abstain. Peace was concluded. Austria renounced her pretensions to the whole of lower Bavaria and was forced to be content with the acquisition of the Inn Circle and Braunau, a territory of about a hundred and ninety square miles. The fears of Maria Theresa had lost the opportunity of incorporating the whole of lower Bavaria and of recovering Silesia !

One more chance offered a few years before the outbreak of that great revolution which was to efface all the landmarks of continental Europe.

Joseph II. had never in his heart renounced the idea of incorporating Bavaria with the hereditary lands of his House. In 1784, events seemed peculiarly propitious to the carrying out of this idea. Frederic II. of Prussia was fast sinking, and there seemed no other ruler in Germany capable of thwarting the plan. That plan was to revive the idea mooted during the War of the Spanish Succession, to exchange the Netherlands for Bavaria. Charles Theodore, the Elector of Bavaria, had, in the preceding year, expressed his willingness to accept the terms offered. He renewed that consent in January 1784. The exchange was to be absolute—the only point not decided was whether, as ruler of his new dominions, Charles Theodore should be called King of Burgundy or King of Austrasia. At any rate, he was to be a king. Again, however, did the nearest of kin, the Duke of Zweibrücken, step in to arrest the plan. He found a firm supporter in

Frederic of Prussia, who, to prevent the aggrandisement of the Austrian House at the expense of its neighbours, formed on July 3, 1785, with Saxony and Hanover a league called the Fürstenbund. To this league other smaller States afterwards adhered, but it was the accession to it of the Elector of Mainz which gave it a preponderating vote in the electoral college.

It seems to me that Austria missed here another great opportunity. By vigorous action the exchange might have been effected before the Fürstenbund could have been formed. The exchange once effected, no effort on the part of the German princes could have restored the *status quo ante*. Frederic was seventy-one, and his campaign of five years before had proved that he had lost the dash and energy which had made him so formidable. The war with France eight years later was to show that he had left no successor. Never, on the other hand, had Austria been more formidable than she was during the ten years which intervened between 1780 and 1790; never had her armies been so well equipped and so well disciplined. She had at their head, too, the illustrious Loudon, the general characterised by Frederic himself as the general who, on the side of Austria, had made no mistake during the Seven Years' War; and Loudon was to show, in his campaign against the Turks in 1788-9—by his conquest of Berbir and Belgrad—and later, in 1790, by the skill and celerity with which he concentrated 150,000 men on the borders of Silesia, that he had not degenerated—that he was still the man who had beaten Frederic at Kunnersdorf, who had forced the entire corps of Fouquet to lay down its arms at Landshut, and who had taken Schweidnitz under the very eyes of his great adversary. No—that was a lost opportunity. Joseph had come under the spell of the Czarina; and to obey her behests, the House of Austria once again sacrificed the substance in a vain effort to secure the shadow!

So much for the opportunities which, from the time of Charles V. to the outburst of the French Revolution, came to the House of Austria and which, from want of precision,

or from prejudice, or stupidity, or from lack of prescience, that House let slip. At any moment from 1704, the date of the battle of Blenheim, to 1711, she could have secured the exchange of the Netherlands, which were useless to her, for Bavaria, which would have secured for her the permanent leadership of Germany. Up to 1713 such an exchange was always possible. The want of political insight of the ministers of Joseph I. and the prejudices and obstinacy of Charles VI. alone prevented it. The same prejudices and the same obstinacy on the part of the same member of the House preferred the loose promises to respect the Pragmatic Sanction to a solution which would have incorporated Bavaria with the hereditary dominions of the House of Habsburg. In 1778, the weakness of Maria Theresa—a weakness based on a fearful recollection of the prowess of her great enemy and a forgetfulness of the fact that he, too, had aged, and that years had quenched his fire—prevented the delivery of a battle which, considering the fact that the greatest Austrian general had caught the Prussian army in a position in which its defeat was certain, might have given her more even than lower Bavaria ; and again, in 1783, the want of nerve and dash on the part of Joseph II. allowed the formation of a league which, inaugurated after he had consummated his action, would have been powerless. Any one of these opportunities, taken at the flood, would have given the House of Austria predominance in Southern Germany—probably a permanent preponderance over all Germany. They can never recur.

Time will not allow me to enter upon the period which has elapsed since the outbreak of the great convulsion which changed the face of Europe. I may be allowed merely to state that in the last phases of the war which was its immediate consequence the diplomacy of Austria was again at fault. No Continental nation had displayed so much constancy, throughout, in the war with France as Austria. The directness of her policy contrasts very favourably with the shiftiness and hollow-heartedness, from 1791 to 1806, of her German rival ; yet, at the close of the war the dominions of Prussia

received a large accession of territory in Germany, whilst Austria obtained little or nothing. Nor will time permit me to do more than glance at the possibilities which were before Austria in 1866. It was asserted at the time that she could have made a peaceful settlement of her differences with Prussia by accepting the boundary of the river Main as the boundary behind which her own influence was to be predominant, but this is, I think, more than doubtful. A curious circumstance brought me, at Gastein, in 1864, into communication with a nobleman then high in the confidence of the King of Prussia, and he sketched out to me a plan of policy with regard to Austria and to France, which, strangely enough, has since been realised even to its minutest detail. I believe that Prussia would then have accepted no terms which did not secure to her predominance over all Germany. But during the long negotiations which preceded the war, and in the conduct of the war itself, the defect, which paralysed her action before the Revolution, is apparent in the conduct of the House of Austria. Again did that House neglect the substance to pursue the shadow. It was the shadow of Venetia which this time enticed it. Had Austria frankly made peace with Italy on the basis of the concession of the quadrilateral, the army of Archduke Albert would have been available for the defence of the hereditary dominions, and it is not too much to believe that the field of Sadowa might have told a different tale.

With Sadowa the hopes of Austria to take the lead in Germany vanished. It has been the aim of the great statesman who crushed in 1866 the ambition of many centuries to turn her thoughts Eastward. Austria has seemed, during the past five years at all events, to lend a willing ear to his suggestions. The occupation of Bosnia, and the manner in which her statesmen direct their attention to Salonica, prove that the idea is gradually becoming national. To discuss the question—the question of the disposal of the spoils of the Turk, when the Turkish empire in Europe shall dissolve—would neither be possible nor advisable at this hour. The

solution of this question is one in which England is deeply interested ; and if, as I believe, there is a general consensus of opinion that Austria is the fittest custodian of the city of many waters, then I shall utter the thoughtful sentiment of the public when I express a hope that when the crisis does arrive the historian may not have to record another lost opportunity !