

FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

THE THIRTY YEARS WAR —
VOLUME 03

Friedrich Schiller
The Thirty Years
War — Volume 03

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25451468

The Thirty Years War — Volume 03:

Содержание

BOOK III

4

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

36

Friedrich Schiller

The Thirty Years

War — Volume 03

BOOK III

The glorious battle of Leipzig effected a great change in the conduct of Gustavus Adolphus, as well as in the opinion which both friends and foes entertained of him. Successfully had he confronted the greatest general of the age, and had matched the strength of his tactics and the courage of his Swedes against the elite of the imperial army, the most experienced troops in Europe. From this moment he felt a firm confidence in his own powers — self-confidence has always been the parent of great actions. In all his subsequent operations more boldness and decision are observable; greater determination, even amidst the most unfavourable circumstances, a more lofty tone towards his adversaries, a more dignified bearing towards his allies, and even in his clemency, something of the forbearance of a conqueror. His natural courage was farther heightened by the pious ardour of his imagination. He saw in his own cause that of heaven, and in the defeat of Tilly beheld the decisive interference of Providence against his enemies, and in himself the instrument of

divine vengeance. Leaving his crown and his country far behind, he advanced on the wings of victory into the heart of Germany, which for centuries had seen no foreign conqueror within its bosom. The warlike spirit of its inhabitants, the vigilance of its numerous princes, the artful confederation of its states, the number of its strong castles, its many and broad rivers, had long restrained the ambition of its neighbours; and frequently as its extensive frontier had been attacked, its interior had been free from hostile invasion. The Empire had hitherto enjoyed the equivocal privilege of being its own enemy, though invincible from without. Even now, it was merely the disunion of its members, and the intolerance of religious zeal, that paved the way for the Swedish invader. The bond of union between the states, which alone had rendered the Empire invincible, was now dissolved; and Gustavus derived from Germany itself the power by which he subdued it. With as much courage as prudence, he availed himself of all that the favourable moment afforded; and equally at home in the cabinet and the field, he tore asunder the web of the artful policy, with as much ease, as he shattered walls with the thunder of his cannon. Uninterruptedly he pursued his conquests from one end of Germany to the other, without breaking the line of posts which commanded a secure retreat at any moment; and whether on the banks of the Rhine, or at the mouth of the Lech, alike maintaining his communication with his hereditary dominions.

The consternation of the Emperor and the League at Tilly's

defeat at Leipzig, was scarcely greater than the surprise and embarrassment of the allies of the King of Sweden at his unexpected success. It was beyond both their expectations and their wishes. Annihilated in a moment was that formidable army which, while it checked his progress and set bounds to his ambition, rendered him in some measure dependent on themselves. He now stood in the heart of Germany, alone, without a rival or without an adversary who was a match for him. Nothing could stop his progress, or check his pretensions, if the intoxication of success should tempt him to abuse his victory. If formerly they had dreaded the Emperor's irresistible power, there was no less cause now to fear every thing for the Empire, from the violence of a foreign conqueror, and for the Catholic Church, from the religious zeal of a Protestant king. The distrust and jealousy of some of the combined powers, which a stronger fear of the Emperor had for a time repressed, now revived; and scarcely had Gustavus Adolphus merited, by his courage and success, their confidence, when they began covertly to circumvent all his plans. Through a continual struggle with the arts of enemies, and the distrust of his own allies, must his victories henceforth be won; yet resolution, penetration, and prudence made their way through all impediments. But while his success excited the jealousy of his more powerful allies, France and Saxony, it gave courage to the weaker, and emboldened them openly to declare their sentiments and join his party. Those who could neither vie with Gustavus Adolphus

in importance, nor suffer from his ambition, expected the more from the magnanimity of their powerful ally, who enriched them with the spoils of their enemies, and protected them against the oppression of their stronger neighbours. His strength covered their weakness, and, inconsiderable in themselves, they acquired weight and influence from their union with the Swedish hero. This was the case with most of the free cities, and particularly with the weaker Protestant states. It was these that introduced the king into the heart of Germany; these covered his rear, supplied his troops with necessaries, received them into their fortresses, while they exposed their own lives in his battles. His prudent regard to their national pride, his popular deportment, some brilliant acts of justice, and his respect for the laws, were so many ties by which he bound the German Protestants to his cause; while the crying atrocities of the Imperialists, the Spaniards, and the troops of Lorraine, powerfully contributed to set his own conduct and that of his army in a favourable light.

If Gustavus Adolphus owed his success chiefly to his own genius, at the same time, it must be owned, he was greatly favoured by fortune and by circumstances. Two great advantages gave him a decided superiority over the enemy. While he removed the scene of war into the lands of the League, drew their youth as recruits, enriched himself with booty, and used the revenues of their fugitive princes as his own, he at once took from the enemy the means of effectual resistance, and maintained an expensive war with little cost to himself. And, moreover,

while his opponents, the princes of the League, divided among themselves, and governed by different and often conflicting interests, acted without unanimity, and therefore without energy; while their generals were deficient in authority, their troops in obedience, the operations of their scattered armies without concert; while the general was separated from the lawgiver and the statesman; these several functions were united in Gustavus Adolphus, the only source from which authority flowed, the sole object to which the eye of the warrior turned; the soul of his party, the inventor as well as the executor of his plans. In him, therefore, the Protestants had a centre of unity and harmony, which was altogether wanting to their opponents. No wonder, then, if favoured by such advantages, at the head of such an army, with such a genius to direct it, and guided by such political prudence, Gustavus Adolphus was irresistible.

With the sword in one hand, and mercy in the other, he traversed Germany as a conqueror, a lawgiver, and a judge, in as short a time almost as the tourist of pleasure. The keys of towns and fortresses were delivered to him, as if to the native sovereign. No fortress was inaccessible; no river checked his victorious career. He conquered by the very terror of his name. The Swedish standards were planted along the whole stream of the Maine: the Lower Palatinate was free, the troops of Spain and Lorraine had fled across the Rhine and the Moselle. The Swedes and Hessians poured like a torrent into the territories of Mentz, of Wurtzburg, and Bamberg, and three fugitive bishops,

at a distance from their sees, suffered dearly for their unfortunate attachment to the Emperor. It was now the turn for Maximilian, the leader of the League, to feel in his own dominions the miseries he had inflicted upon others. Neither the terrible fate of his allies, nor the peaceful overtures of Gustavus, who, in the midst of conquest, ever held out the hand of friendship, could conquer the obstinacy of this prince. The torrent of war now poured into Bavaria. Like the banks of the Rhine, those of the Lecke and the Donau were crowded with Swedish troops. Creeping into his fortresses, the defeated Elector abandoned to the ravages of the foe his dominions, hitherto unscathed by war, and on which the bigoted violence of the Bavarians seemed to invite retaliation. Munich itself opened its gates to the invincible monarch, and the fugitive Palatine, Frederick V., in the forsaken residence of his rival, consoled himself for a time for the loss of his dominions.

While Gustavus Adolphus was extending his conquests in the south, his generals and allies were gaining similar triumphs in the other provinces. Lower Saxony shook off the yoke of Austria, the enemy abandoned Mecklenburg, and the imperial garrisons retired from the banks of the Weser and the Elbe. In Westphalia and the Upper Rhine, William, Landgrave of Hesse, rendered himself formidable; the Duke of Weimar in Thuringia, and the French in the Electorate of Treves; while to the eastward the whole kingdom of Bohemia was conquered by the Saxons. The Turks were preparing to attack Hungary, and in the heart of

Austria a dangerous insurrection was threatened. In vain did the Emperor look around to the courts of Europe for support; in vain did he summon the Spaniards to his assistance, for the bravery of the Flemings afforded them ample employment beyond the Rhine; in vain did he call upon the Roman court and the whole church to come to his rescue. The offended Pope sported, in pompous processions and idle anathemas, with the embarrassments of Ferdinand, and instead of the desired subsidy he was shown the devastation of Mantua.

On all sides of his extensive monarchy hostile arms surrounded him. With the states of the League, now overrun by the enemy, those ramparts were thrown down, behind which Austria had so long defended herself, and the embers of war were now smouldering upon her unguarded frontiers. His most zealous allies were disarmed; Maximilian of Bavaria, his firmest support, was scarce able to defend himself. His armies, weakened by desertion and repeated defeat, and dispirited by continued misfortunes had unlearned, under beaten generals, that warlike impetuosity which, as it is the consequence, so it is the guarantee of success. The danger was extreme, and extraordinary means alone could raise the imperial power from the degradation into which it was fallen.

The most urgent want was that of a general; and the only one from whom he could hope for the revival of his former splendour, had been removed from his command by an envious cabal. So low had the Emperor now fallen, that he was forced to make the

most humiliating proposals to his injured subject and servant, and meanly to press upon the imperious Duke of Friedland the acceptance of the powers which no less meanly had been taken from him. A new spirit began from this moment to animate the expiring body of Austria; and a sudden change in the aspect of affairs bespoke the firm hand which guided them. To the absolute King of Sweden, a general equally absolute was now opposed; and one victorious hero was confronted with another. Both armies were again to engage in the doubtful struggle; and the prize of victory, already almost secured in the hands of Gustavus Adolphus, was to be the object of another and a severer trial. The storm of war gathered around Nuremberg; before its walls the hostile armies encamped; gazing on each other with dread and respect, longing for, and yet shrinking from, the moment that was to close them together in the shock of battle. The eyes of Europe turned to the scene in curiosity and alarm, while Nuremberg, in dismay, expected soon to lend its name to a more decisive battle than that of Leipzig. Suddenly the clouds broke, and the storm rolled away from Franconia, to burst upon the plains of Saxony. Near Lutzen fell the thunder that had menaced Nuremberg; the victory, half lost, was purchased by the death of the king. Fortune, which had never forsaken him in his lifetime, favoured the King of Sweden even in his death, with the rare privilege of falling in the fulness of his glory and an untarnished fame. By a timely death, his protecting genius rescued him from the inevitable fate of man — that of forgetting

moderation in the intoxication of success, and justice in the plenitude of power. It may be doubted whether, had he lived longer, he would still have deserved the tears which Germany shed over his grave, or maintained his title to the admiration with which posterity regards him, as the first and only JUST conqueror that the world has produced. The untimely fall of their great leader seemed to threaten the ruin of his party; but to the Power which rules the world, no loss of a single man is irreparable. As the helm of war dropped from the hand of the falling hero, it was seized by two great statesmen, Oxenstiern and Richelieu. Destiny still pursued its relentless course, and for full sixteen years longer the flames of war blazed over the ashes of the long-forgotten king and soldier.

I may now be permitted to take a cursory retrospect of Gustavus Adolphus in his victorious career; glance at the scene in which he alone was the great actor; and then, when Austria becomes reduced to extremity by the successes of the Swedes, and by a series of disasters is driven to the most humiliating and desperate expedients, to return to the history of the Emperor.

As soon as the plan of operations had been concerted at Halle, between the King of Sweden and the Elector of Saxony; as soon as the alliance had been concluded with the neighbouring princes of Weimar and Anhalt, and preparations made for the recovery of the bishopric of Magdeburg, the king began his march into the empire. He had here no despicable foe to contend with. Within the empire, the Emperor was still

powerful; throughout Franconia, Swabia, and the Palatinate, imperial garrisons were posted, with whom the possession of every place of importance must be disputed sword in hand. On the Rhine he was opposed by the Spaniards, who had overrun the territory of the banished Elector Palatine, seized all its strong places, and would everywhere dispute with him the passage over that river. On his rear was Tilly, who was fast recruiting his force, and would soon be joined by the auxiliaries from Lorraine. Every Papist presented an inveterate foe, while his connexion with France did not leave him at liberty to act with freedom against the Roman Catholics. Gustavus had foreseen all these obstacles, but at the same time the means by which they were to be overcome. The strength of the Imperialists was broken and divided among different garrisons, while he would bring against them one by one his whole united force. If he was to be opposed by the fanaticism of the Roman Catholics, and the awe in which the lesser states regarded the Emperor's power, he might depend on the active support of the Protestants, and their hatred to Austrian oppression. The ravages of the Imperialist and Spanish troops also powerfully aided him in these quarters; where the ill-treated husbandman and citizen sighed alike for a deliverer, and where the mere change of yoke seemed to promise a relief. Emissaries were despatched to gain over to the Swedish side the principal free cities, particularly Nuremberg and Frankfort. The first that lay in the king's march, and which he could not leave unoccupied in his rear, was Erfurt. Here the Protestant party

among the citizens opened to him, without a blow, the gates of the town and the citadel. From the inhabitants of this, as of every important place which afterwards submitted, he exacted an oath of allegiance, while he secured its possession by a sufficient garrison. To his ally, Duke William of Weimar, he intrusted the command of an army to be raised in Thuringia. He also left his queen in Erfurt, and promised to increase its privileges. The Swedish army now crossed the Thuringian forest in two columns, by Gotha and Arnstadt, and having delivered, in its march, the county of Henneberg from the Imperialists, formed a junction on the third day near Koenigshofen, on the frontiers of Franconia.

Francis, Bishop of Wurtzburg, the bitter enemy of the Protestants, and the most zealous member of the League, was the first to feel the indignation of Gustavus Adolphus. A few threats gained for the Swedes possession of his fortress of Koenigshofen, and with it the key of the whole province. At the news of this rapid conquest, dismay seized all the Roman Catholic towns of the circle. The Bishops of Wurtzburg and Bamberg trembled in their castles; they already saw their sees tottering, their churches profaned, and their religion degraded. The malice of his enemies had circulated the most frightful representations of the persecuting spirit and the mode of warfare pursued by the Swedish king and his soldiers, which neither the repeated assurances of the king, nor the most splendid examples of humanity and toleration, ever entirely effaced. Many feared to suffer at the hands of another what in similar circumstances

they were conscious of inflicting themselves. Many of the richest Roman Catholics hastened to secure by flight their property, their religion, and their persons, from the sanguinary fanaticism of the Swedes. The bishop himself set the example. In the midst of the alarm, which his bigoted zeal had caused, he abandoned his dominions, and fled to Paris, to excite, if possible, the French ministry against the common enemy of religion.

The further progress of Gustavus Adolphus in the ecclesiastical territories agreed with this brilliant commencement. Schweinfurt, and soon afterwards Wurtzburg, abandoned by their Imperial garrisons, surrendered; but Marienberg he was obliged to carry by storm. In this place, which was believed to be impregnable, the enemy had collected a large store of provisions and ammunition, all of which fell into the hands of the Swedes. The king found a valuable prize in the library of the Jesuits, which he sent to Upsal, while his soldiers found a still more agreeable one in the prelate's well-filled cellars; his treasures the bishop had in good time removed. The whole bishopric followed the example of the capital, and submitted to the Swedes. The king compelled all the bishop's subjects to swear allegiance to himself; and, in the absence of the lawful sovereign, appointed a regency, one half of whose members were Protestants. In every Roman Catholic town which Gustavus took, he opened the churches to the Protestant people, but without retaliating on the Papists the cruelties which they had practised on the former. On such only as sword in hand refused to submit,

were the fearful rights of war enforced; and for the occasional acts of violence committed by a few of the more lawless soldiers, in the blind rage of the first attack, their humane leader is not justly responsible. Those who were peaceably disposed, or defenceless, were treated with mildness. It was a sacred principle of Gustavus to spare the blood of his enemies, as well as that of his own troops.

On the first news of the Swedish irruption, the Bishop of Wurtzburg, without regarding the treaty which he had entered into with the King of Sweden, had earnestly pressed the general of the League to hasten to the assistance of the bishopric. That defeated commander had, in the mean time, collected on the Weser the shattered remnant of his army, reinforced himself from the garrisons of Lower Saxony, and effected a junction in Hesse with Altringer and Fugger, who commanded under him. Again at the head of a considerable force, Tilly burned with impatience to wipe out the stain of his first defeat by a splendid victory. From his camp at Fulda, whither he had marched with his army, he earnestly requested permission from the Duke of Bavaria to give battle to Gustavus Adolphus. But, in the event of Tilly's defeat, the League had no second army to fall back upon, and Maximilian was too cautious to risk again the fate of his party on a single battle. With tears in his eyes, Tilly read the commands of his superior, which compelled him to inactivity. Thus his march to Franconia was delayed, and Gustavus Adolphus gained time to overrun the whole bishopric. It was in vain that Tilly,

reinforced at Aschaffenburg by a body of 12,000 men from Lorraine, marched with an overwhelming force to the relief of Wurtzburg. The town and citadel were already in the hands of the Swedes, and Maximilian of Bavaria was generally blamed (and not without cause, perhaps) for having, by his scruples, occasioned the loss of the bishopric. Commanded to avoid a battle, Tilly contented himself with checking the farther advance of the enemy; but he could save only a few of the towns from the impetuosity of the Swedes. Baffled in an attempt to reinforce the weak garrison of Hanau, which it was highly important to the Swedes to gain, he crossed the Maine, near Seligenstadt, and took the direction of the Bergstrasse, to protect the Palatinate from the conqueror.

Tilly, however, was not the sole enemy whom Gustavus Adolphus met in Franconia, and drove before him. Charles, Duke of Lorraine, celebrated in the annals of the time for his unsteadiness of character, his vain projects, and his misfortunes, ventured to raise a weak arm against the Swedish hero, in the hope of obtaining from the Emperor the electoral dignity. Deaf to the suggestions of a rational policy, he listened only to the dictates of heated ambition; by supporting the Emperor, he exasperated France, his formidable neighbour; and in the pursuit of a visionary phantom in another country, left undefended his own dominions, which were instantly overrun by a French army. Austria willingly conceded to him, as well as to the other princes of the League, the honour of being ruined in her

cause. Intoxicated with vain hopes, this prince collected a force of 17,000 men, which he proposed to lead in person against the Swedes. If these troops were deficient in discipline and courage, they were at least attractive by the splendour of their accoutrements; and however sparing they were of their prowess against the foe, they were liberal enough with it against the defenceless citizens and peasantry, whom they were summoned to defend. Against the bravery, and the formidable discipline of the Swedes this splendidly attired army, however, made no long stand. On the first advance of the Swedish cavalry a panic seized them, and they were driven without difficulty from their cantonments in Wurtzburg; the defeat of a few regiments occasioned a general rout, and the scattered remnant sought a covert from the Swedish valour in the towns beyond the Rhine. Loaded with shame and ridicule, the duke hurried home by Strasburg, too fortunate in escaping, by a submissive written apology, the indignation of his conqueror, who had first beaten him out of the field, and then called upon him to account for his hostilities. It is related upon this occasion that, in a village on the Rhine a peasant struck the horse of the duke as he rode past, exclaiming, "Haste, Sir, you must go quicker to escape the great King of Sweden!"

The example of his neighbours' misfortunes had taught the Bishop of Bamberg prudence. To avert the plundering of his territories, he made offers of peace, though these were intended only to delay the king's course till the arrival

of assistance. Gustavus Adolphus, too honourable himself to suspect dishonesty in another, readily accepted the bishop's proposals, and named the conditions on which he was willing to save his territories from hostile treatment. He was the more inclined to peace, as he had no time to lose in the conquest of Bamberg, and his other designs called him to the Rhine. The rapidity with which he followed up these plans, cost him the loss of those pecuniary supplies which, by a longer residence in Franconia, he might easily have extorted from the weak and terrified bishop. This artful prelate broke off the negotiation the instant the storm of war passed away from his own territories. No sooner had Gustavus marched onwards than he threw himself under the protection of Tilly, and received the troops of the Emperor into the very towns and fortresses, which shortly before he had shown himself ready to open to the Swedes. By this stratagem, however, he only delayed for a brief interval the ruin of his bishopric. A Swedish general who had been left in Franconia, undertook to punish the perfidy of the bishop; and the ecclesiastical territory became the seat of war, and was ravaged alike by friends and foes.

The formidable presence of the Imperialists had hitherto been a check upon the Franconian States; but their retreat, and the humane conduct of the Swedish king, emboldened the nobility and other inhabitants of this circle to declare in his favour. Nuremberg joyfully committed itself to his protection; and the Franconian nobles were won to his cause by flattering

proclamations, in which he condescended to apologize for his hostile appearance in the dominions. The fertility of Franconia, and the rigorous honesty of the Swedish soldiers in their dealings with the inhabitants, brought abundance to the camp of the king. The high esteem which the nobility of the circle felt for Gustavus, the respect and admiration with which they regarded his brilliant exploits, the promises of rich booty which the service of this monarch held out, greatly facilitated the recruiting of his troops; a step which was made necessary by detaching so many garrisons from the main body. At the sound of his drums, recruits flocked to his standard from all quarters.

The king had scarcely spent more time in conquering Franconia, than he would have required to cross it. He now left behind him Gustavus Horn, one of his best generals, with a force of 8,000 men, to complete and retain his conquest. He himself with his main army, reinforced by the late recruits, hastened towards the Rhine in order to secure this frontier of the empire from the Spaniards; to disarm the ecclesiastical electors, and to obtain from their fertile territories new resources for the prosecution of the war. Following the course of the Maine, he subjected, in the course of his march, Seligenstadt, Aschaffenburg, Steinheim, the whole territory on both sides of the river. The imperial garrisons seldom awaited his approach, and never attempted resistance. In the meanwhile one of his colonels had been fortunate enough to take by surprise the town and citadel of Hanau, for whose preservation Tilly had shown

such anxiety. Eager to be free of the oppressive burden of the Imperialists, the Count of Hanau gladly placed himself under the milder yoke of the King of Sweden.

Gustavus Adolphus now turned his whole attention to Frankfort, for it was his constant maxim to cover his rear by the friendship and possession of the more important towns. Frankfort was among the free cities which, even from Saxony, he had endeavoured to prepare for his reception; and he now called upon it, by a summons from Offenbach, to allow him a free passage, and to admit a Swedish garrison. Willingly would this city have dispensed with the necessity of choosing between the King of Sweden and the Emperor; for, whatever party they might embrace, the inhabitants had a like reason to fear for their privileges and trade. The Emperor's vengeance would certainly fall heavily upon them, if they were in a hurry to submit to the King of Sweden, and afterwards he should prove unable to protect his adherents in Germany. But still more ruinous for them would be the displeasure of an irresistible conqueror, who, with a formidable army, was already before their gates, and who might punish their opposition by the ruin of their commerce and prosperity. In vain did their deputies plead the danger which menaced their fairs, their privileges, perhaps their constitution itself, if, by espousing the party of the Swedes, they were to incur the Emperor's displeasure. Gustavus Adolphus expressed to them his astonishment that, when the liberties of Germany and the Protestant religion were at stake, the citizens of Frankfort

should talk of their annual fairs, and postpone for temporal interests the great cause of their country and their conscience. He had, he continued, in a menacing tone, found the keys of every town and fortress, from the Isle of Rugen to the Maine, and knew also where to find a key to Frankfort; the safety of Germany, and the freedom of the Protestant Church, were, he assured them, the sole objects of his invasion; conscious of the justice of his cause, he was determined not to allow any obstacle to impede his progress. "The inhabitants of Frankfort, he was well aware, wished to stretch out only a finger to him, but he must have the whole hand in order to have something to grasp." At the head of the army, he closely followed the deputies as they carried back his answer, and in order of battle awaited, near Saxenhausen, the decision of the council.

If Frankfort hesitated to submit to the Swedes, it was solely from fear of the Emperor; their own inclinations did not allow them a moment to doubt between the oppressor of Germany and its protector. The menacing preparations amidst which Gustavus Adolphus now compelled them to decide, would lessen the guilt of their revolt in the eyes of the Emperor, and by an appearance of compulsion justify the step which they willingly took. The gates were therefore opened to the King of Sweden, who marched his army through this imperial town in magnificent procession, and in admirable order. A garrison of 600 men was left in Saxenhausen; while the king himself advanced the same evening, with the rest of his army, against the town of Hoechst

in Mentz, which surrendered to him before night.

While Gustavus was thus extending his conquests along the Maine, fortune crowned also the efforts of his generals and allies in the north of Germany. Rostock, Wismar, and Doemitz, the only strong places in the Duchy of Mecklenburg which still sighed under the yoke of the Imperialists, were recovered by their legitimate sovereign, the Duke John Albert, under the Swedish general, Achatius Tott. In vain did the imperial general, Wolf Count von Mansfeld, endeavour to recover from the Swedes the territories of Halberstadt, of which they had taken possession immediately upon the victory of Leipzig; he was even compelled to leave Magdeburg itself in their hands. The Swedish general, Banner, who with 8,000 men remained upon the Elbe, closely blockaded that city, and had defeated several imperial regiments which had been sent to its relief. Count Mansfeld defended it in person with great resolution; but his garrison being too weak to oppose for any length of time the numerous force of the besiegers, he was already about to surrender on conditions, when Pappenheim advanced to his assistance, and gave employment elsewhere to the Swedish arms. Magdeburg, however, or rather the wretched huts that peeped out miserably from among the ruins of that once great town, was afterwards voluntarily abandoned by the Imperialists, and immediately taken possession of by the Swedes.

Even Lower Saxony, encouraged by the progress of the king, ventured to raise its head from the disasters of the unfortunate

Danish war. They held a congress at Hamburg, and resolved upon raising three regiments, which they hoped would be sufficient to free them from the oppressive garrisons of the Imperialists. The Bishop of Bremen, a relation of Gustavus Adolphus, was not content even with this; but assembled troops of his own, and terrified the unfortunate monks and priests of the neighbourhood, but was quickly compelled by the imperial general, Count Gronsfeld, to lay down his arms. Even George, Duke of Lunenburg, formerly a colonel in the Emperor's service, embraced the party of Gustavus, for whom he raised several regiments, and by occupying the attention of the Imperialists in Lower Saxony, materially assisted him.

But more important service was rendered to the king by the Landgrave William of Hesse Cassel, whose victorious arms struck with terror the greater part of Westphalia and Lower Saxony, the bishopric of Fulda, and even the Electorate of Cologne. It has been already stated that immediately after the conclusion of the alliance between the Landgrave and Gustavus Adolphus at Werben, two imperial generals, Fugger and Altringer, were ordered by Tilly to march into Hesse, to punish the Landgrave for his revolt from the Emperor. But this prince had as firmly withstood the arms of his enemies, as his subjects had the proclamations of Tilly inciting them to rebellion, and the battle of Leipzig presently relieved him of their presence. He availed himself of their absence with courage and resolution; in a short time, Vach, Muenden and Hoexter surrendered to

him, while his rapid advance alarmed the bishoprics of Fulda, Paderborn, and the ecclesiastical territories which bordered on Hesse. The terrified states hastened by a speedy submission to set limits to his progress, and by considerable contributions to purchase exemption from plunder. After these successful enterprises, the Landgrave united his victorious army with that of Gustavus Adolphus, and concerted with him at Frankfort their future plan of operations.

In this city, a number of princes and ambassadors were assembled to congratulate Gustavus on his success, and either to conciliate his favour or to appease his indignation. Among them was the fugitive King of Bohemia, the Palatine Frederick V., who had hastened from Holland to throw himself into the arms of his avenger and protector. Gustavus gave him the unprofitable honour of greeting him as a crowned head, and endeavoured, by a respectful sympathy, to soften his sense of his misfortunes. But great as the advantages were, which Frederick had promised himself from the power and good fortune of his protector; and high as were the expectations he had built on his justice and magnanimity, the chance of this unfortunate prince's reinstatement in his kingdom was as distant as ever. The inactivity and contradictory politics of the English court had abated the zeal of Gustavus Adolphus, and an irritability which he could not always repress, made him on this occasion forget the glorious vocation of protector of the oppressed, in which, on his invasion of Germany, he had so loudly announced himself.

The terrors of the king's irresistible strength, and the near prospect of his vengeance, had also compelled George, Landgrave of Hesse Darmstadt, to a timely submission. His connection with the Emperor, and his indifference to the Protestant cause, were no secret to the king, but he was satisfied with laughing at so impotent an enemy. As the Landgrave knew his own strength and the political situation of Germany so little, as to offer himself as mediator between the contending parties, Gustavus used jestingly to call him the peacemaker. He was frequently heard to say, when at play he was winning from the Landgrave, "that the money afforded double satisfaction, as it was Imperial coin." To his affinity with the Elector of Saxony, whom Gustavus had cause to treat with forbearance, the Landgrave was indebted for the favourable terms he obtained from the king, who contented himself with the surrender of his fortress of Russelheim, and his promise of observing a strict neutrality during the war. The Counts of Westerwald and Wetteran also visited the King in Frankfort, to offer him their assistance against the Spaniards, and to conclude an alliance, which was afterwards of great service to him. The town of Frankfort itself had reason to rejoice at the presence of this monarch, who took their commerce under his protection, and by the most effectual measures restored the fairs, which had been greatly interrupted by the war.

The Swedish army was now reinforced by ten thousand Hessians, which the Landgrave of Casse commanded. Gustavus

Adolphus had already invested Koenigstein; Kostheim and Floersheim surrendered after a short siege; he was in command of the Maine; and transports were preparing with all speed at Hoechst to carry his troops across the Rhine. These preparations filled the Elector of Mentz, Anselm Casimir, with consternation, and he no longer doubted but that the storm of war would next fall upon him. As a partisan of the Emperor, and one of the most active members of the League, he could expect no better treatment than his confederates, the Bishops of Wurtzburg and Bamberg, had already experienced. The situation of his territories upon the Rhine made it necessary for the enemy to secure them, while the fertility afforded an irresistible temptation to a necessitous army. Miscalculating his own strength and that of his adversaries, the Elector flattered himself that he was able to repel force by force, and weary out the valour of the Swedes by the strength of his fortresses. He ordered the fortifications of his capital to be repaired with all diligence, provided it with every necessary for sustaining a long siege, and received into the town a garrison of 2,000 Spaniards, under Don Philip de Sylva. To prevent the approach of the Swedish transports, he endeavoured to close the mouth of the Maine by driving piles, and sinking large heaps of stones and vessels. He himself, however, accompanied by the Bishop of Worms, and carrying with him his most precious effects, took refuge in Cologne, and abandoned his capital and territories to the rapacity of a tyrannical garrison. But these preparations, which bespoke

less of true courage than of weak and overweening confidence, did not prevent the Swedes from marching against Mentz, and making serious preparations for an attack upon the city. While one body of their troops poured into the Rheingau, routed the Spaniards who remained there, and levied contributions on the inhabitants, another laid the Roman Catholic towns in Westerwald and Wetterau under similar contributions. The main army had encamped at Cassel, opposite Mentz; and Bernhard, Duke of Weimar, made himself master of the Maeusethurm and the Castle of Ehrenfels, on the other side of the Rhine. Gustavus was now actively preparing to cross the river, and to blockade the town on the land side, when the movements of Tilly in Franconia suddenly called him from the siege, and obtained for the Elector a short repose.

The danger of Nuremberg, which, during the absence of Gustavus Adolphus on the Rhine, Tilly had made a show of besieging, and, in the event of resistance, threatened with the cruel fate of Magdeburg, occasioned the king suddenly to retire from before Mentz. Lest he should expose himself a second time to the reproaches of Germany, and the disgrace of abandoning a confederate city to a ferocious enemy, he hastened to its relief by forced marches. On his arrival at Frankfort, however, he heard of its spirited resistance, and of the retreat of Tilly, and lost not a moment in prosecuting his designs against Mentz. Failing in an attempt to cross the Rhine at Cassel, under the cannon of the besieged, he directed his march towards the

Bergstrasse, with a view of approaching the town from an opposite quarter. Here he quickly made himself master of all the places of importance, and at Stockstadt, between Gernsheim and Oppenheim, appeared a second time upon the banks of the Rhine. The whole of the Bergstrasse was abandoned by the Spaniards, who endeavoured obstinately to defend the other bank of the river. For this purpose, they had burned or sunk all the vessels in the neighbourhood, and arranged a formidable force on the banks, in case the king should attempt the passage at that place.

On this occasion, the king's impetuosity exposed him to great danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. In order to reconnoitre the opposite bank, he crossed the river in a small boat; he had scarcely landed when he was attacked by a party of Spanish horse, from whose hands he only saved himself by a precipitate retreat. Having at last, with the assistance of the neighbouring fishermen, succeeded in procuring a few transports, he despatched two of them across the river, bearing Count Brahe and 300 Swedes. Scarcely had this officer time to entrench himself on the opposite bank, when he was attacked by 14 squadrons of Spanish dragoons and cuirassiers. Superior as the enemy was in number, Count Brahe, with his small force, bravely defended himself, and gained time for the king to support him with fresh troops. The Spaniards at last retired with the loss of 600 men, some taking refuge in Oppenheim, and others in Mentz. A lion of marble on a high pillar, holding a naked sword

in his paw, and a helmet on his head, was erected seventy years after the event, to point out to the traveller the spot where the immortal monarch crossed the great river of Germany.

Gustavus Adolphus now conveyed his artillery and the greater part of his troops over the river, and laid siege to Oppenheim, which, after a brave resistance, was, on the 8th December, 1631, carried by storm. Five hundred Spaniards, who had so courageously defended the place, fell indiscriminately a sacrifice to the fury of the Swedes. The crossing of the Rhine by Gustavus struck terror into the Spaniards and Lorrainers, who had thought themselves protected by the river from the vengeance of the Swedes. Rapid flight was now their only security; every place incapable of an effectual defence was immediately abandoned. After a long train of outrages on the defenceless citizens, the troops of Lorraine evacuated Worms, which, before their departure, they treated with wanton cruelty. The Spaniards hastened to shut themselves up in Frankenthal, where they hoped to defy the victorious arms of Gustavus Adolphus.

The king lost no time in prosecuting his designs against Mentz, into which the flower of the Spanish troops had thrown themselves. While he advanced on the left bank of the Rhine, the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel moved forward on the other, reducing several strong places on his march. The besieged Spaniards, though hemmed in on both sides, displayed at first a bold determination, and threw, for several days, a shower of bombs into the Swedish camp, which cost the king many of

his bravest soldiers. But notwithstanding, the Swedes continually gained ground, and had at last advanced so close to the ditch that they prepared seriously for storming the place. The courage of the besieged now began to droop. They trembled before the furious impetuosity of the Swedish soldiers, of which Marienberg, in Wurtzburg, had afforded so fearful an example. The same dreadful fate awaited Mentz, if taken by storm; and the enemy might even be easily tempted to revenge the carnage of Magdeburg on this rich and magnificent residence of a Roman Catholic prince. To save the town, rather than their own lives, the Spanish garrison capitulated on the fourth day, and obtained from the magnanimity of Gustavus a safe conduct to Luxembourg; the greater part of them, however, following the example of many others, enlisted in the service of Sweden.

On the 13th December, 1631, the king made his entry into the conquered town, and fixed his quarters in the palace of the Elector. Eighty pieces of cannon fell into his hands, and the citizens were obliged to redeem their property from pillage, by a payment of 80,000 florins. The benefits of this redemption did not extend to the Jews and the clergy, who were obliged to make large and separate contributions for themselves. The library of the Elector was seized by the king as his share, and presented by him to his chancellor, Oxenstiern, who intended it for the Academy of Westerrah, but the vessel in which it was shipped to Sweden foundered at sea.

After the loss of Mentz, misfortune still pursued the

Spaniards on the Rhine. Shortly before the capture of that city, the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel had taken Falkenstein and Reifenberg, and the fortress of Koningstein surrendered to the Hessians. The Rhinegrave, Otto Louis, one of the king's generals, defeated nine Spanish squadrons who were on their march for Frankenthal, and made himself master of the most important towns upon the Rhine, from Boppard to Bacharach. After the capture of the fortress of Braunfels, which was effected by the Count of Wetterau, with the co-operation of the Swedes, the Spaniards quickly lost every place in Wetterau, while in the Palatinate they retained few places besides Frankenthal. Landau and Kronweisenberg openly declared for the Swedes; Spires offered troops for the king's service; Mannheim was gained through the prudence of the Duke Bernard of Weimar, and the negligence of its governor, who, for this misconduct, was tried before the council of war, at Heidelberg, and beheaded.

The king had protracted the campaign into the depth of winter, and the severity of the season was perhaps one cause of the advantage his soldiers gained over those of the enemy. But the exhausted troops now stood in need of the repose of winter quarters, which, after the surrender of Mentz, Gustavus assigned to them, in its neighbourhood. He himself employed the interval of inactivity in the field, which the season of the year enjoined, in arranging, with his chancellor, the affairs of his cabinet, in treating for a neutrality with some of his enemies, and adjusting some political disputes which had sprung up with a neighbouring

ally. He chose the city of Mentz for his winter quarters, and the settlement of these state affairs, and showed a greater partiality for this town, than seemed consistent with the interests of the German princes, or the shortness of his visit to the Empire. Not content with strongly fortifying it, he erected at the opposite angle which the Maine forms with the Rhine, a new citadel, which was named Gustavusburg from its founder, but which is better known under the title of Pfaffenraub or Pfaffenzwang. — [Priests' plunder; alluding to the means by which the expense of its erection had been defrayed.]

While Gustavus Adolphus made himself master of the Rhine, and threatened the three neighbouring electorates with his victorious arms, his vigilant enemies in Paris and St. Germain's made use of every artifice to deprive him of the support of France, and, if possible, to involve him in a war with that power. By his sudden and equivocal march to the Rhine, he had surprised his friends, and furnished his enemies with the means of exciting a distrust of his intentions. After the conquest of Wurtzburg, and of the greater part of Franconia, the road into Bavaria and Austria lay open to him through Bamberg and the Upper Palatinate; and the expectation was as general, as it was natural, that he would not delay to attack the Emperor and the Duke of Bavaria in the very centre of their power, and, by the reduction of his two principal enemies, bring the war immediately to an end. But to the surprise of both parties, Gustavus left the path which general expectation

had thus marked out for him; and instead of advancing to the right, turned to the left, to make the less important and more innocent princes of the Rhine feel his power, while he gave time to his more formidable opponents to recruit their strength. Nothing but the paramount design of reinstating the unfortunate Palatine, Frederick V., in the possession of his territories, by the expulsion of the Spaniards, could seem to account for this strange step; and the belief that Gustavus was about to effect that restoration, silenced for a while the suspicions of his friends and the calumnies of his enemies. But the Lower Palatinate was now almost entirely cleared of the enemy; and yet Gustavus continued to form new schemes of conquest on the Rhine, and to withhold the reconquered country from the Palatine, its rightful owner. In vain did the English ambassador remind him of what justice demanded, and what his own solemn engagement made a duty of honour; Gustavus replied to these demands with bitter complaints of the inactivity of the English court, and prepared to carry his victorious standard into Alsace, and even into Lorraine.

A distrust of the Swedish monarch was now loud and open, while the malice of his enemies busily circulated the most injurious reports as to his intentions. Richelieu, the minister of Louis XIII., had long witnessed with anxiety the king's progress towards the French frontier, and the suspicious temper of Louis rendered him but too accessible to the evil surmises which the occasion gave rise to. France was at this time involved in a civil war with her Protestant subjects, and the fear was

not altogether groundless, that the approach of a victorious monarch of their party might revive their drooping spirit, and encourage them to a more desperate resistance. This might be the case, even if Gustavus Adolphus was far from showing a disposition to encourage them, or to act unfaithfully towards his ally, the King of France. But the vindictive Bishop of Wurtzburg, who was anxious to avenge the loss of his dominions, the envenomed rhetoric of the Jesuits and the active zeal of the Bavarian minister, represented this dreaded alliance between the Huguenots and the Swedes as an undoubted fact, and filled the timid mind of Louis with the most alarming fears. Not merely chimerical politicians, but many of the best informed Roman Catholics, fully believed that the king was on the point of breaking into the heart of France, to make common cause with the Huguenots, and to overturn the Catholic religion within the kingdom. Fanatical zealots already saw him, with his army, crossing the Alps, and dethroning the Viceregent of Christ in Italy. Such reports no doubt soon refute themselves; yet it cannot be denied that Gustavus, by his manoeuvres on the Rhine, gave a dangerous handle to the malice of his enemies, and in some measure justified the suspicion that he directed his arms, not so much against the Emperor and the Duke of Bavaria, as against the Roman Catholic religion itself.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.