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Excerpt

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BOOK IX

LAST STAGE OF FRIEDRICH'S APPRENTICESHIP:
LIFE IN RUPPIN

1732-1736

CHAPTER I

PRINCESS ELIZABETH CHRISTINA OF
BRUNSWICK-BEVERN

WE described the Crown-Prince as intent to comply, especially in all visible external particulars, with Papa's will and pleasure;—to distinguish himself by real excellence in Commandantship of the Regiment Goltz, first of all. But before ever getting into that, there has another point risen, on which obedience, equally essential, may be still more difficult.

Ever since the grand Catastrophe went off *without* taking Friedrich's head along with it, and there began to be hopes of a pacific settlement, question has been, Whom shall the Crown-Prince marry? And the debates about it in the Royal breast and in Tobacco-Parliament, and rumours about it in the world at large, have been manifold and continual. In the Schulenburg Letters we saw the Crown-Prince himself much interested, and eagerly inquisitive on that head. As was natural: but it is not in the Crown-Prince's mind, it is in the Tobacco-Parliament, and the Royal breast as influenced there, that

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

2 APPRENTICESHIP, LAST STAGE [BOOK IX.

[Feb. 1732

the thing must be decided. Who in the world will it be, then?

Crown-Prince himself hears now of this party, now of that. England is quite over, and the Princess Amelia sunk below the horizon. Friedrich himself appears a little piqued that Hotham carried his nose so high; that the English would not, in those life-and-death circumstances, abate the least from their 'Both marriages or none,'—thinks they should have saved Wilhelmina, and taken his word of honour for the rest. England is now out of his head;—all romance is too sorrowfully swept out: and instead of the 'sacred air-cities of hope' in this high section of his history, the young man is looking into the 'mean clay hamlets of reality,' with an eye well recognising them for real. With an eye and heart already tempered to the due hardness for them. Not a fortunate result, though it was an inevitable one. We saw him flirting with the beautiful wedded Wreech; talking to Lieutenant-General Schulenburg about marriage, in a way which shook the pipeclay of that virtuous man. He knows he would not get his choice, if he had one; strives not to care. Nor does he, in fact, much care; the romance being all out of it. He looks mainly to outward advantages; to personal appearance, temper, good manners; to 'religious principle,' sometimes rather in the reverse way (fearing an *overplus* rather);—but always to likelihood of moneys by the match, as a very direct item. Ready command of money, he feels, will be extremely desirable in a Wife; desirable and almost indispensable, in present straitened circumstances. These are the notions of this ill-situated Cœlebs.

The parties proposed first and last, and rumoured of in Newspapers and the idle brains of men, have been very many,—no limit to their numbers; it *may* be anybody: an intending purchaser, though but possessed of sixpence, is in a sense proprietor of the whole Fair! Through Schulenburg we heard his own account of them, last Autumn;—but the far noblest of the lot was hardly glanced at, or not at all, on

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAP. I.] PRINCESS OF BRUNSWICK-BEVERN 3

Feb. 1732]

that occasion. The Kaiser's eldest Daughter, sole heiress of Austria and these vast Pragmatic-Sanction operations; Archduchess Maria Theresa herself,—it is affirmed to have been Prince Eugene's often-expressed wish, That the Crown-Prince of Prussia should wed the future Empress.¹ Which would indeed have saved immense confusions to mankind! Nay, she alone of Princesses, beautiful, magnanimous, brave, was the mate for such a Prince,—had the Good Fairies been consulted, which seldom happens:—and Romance itself might have become Reality in that case. with high results to the very soul of this young Prince! Wishes are free: and wise Eugene will have been heard, perhaps often, to express this wish; but that must have been all. Alas, the preliminaries, political, especially religious, are at once indispensable and impossible: we have to dismiss that day-dream. A Papal-Protestant Controversy still exists among mankind; and this is one penalty they pay for not having settled it sooner. The Imperial Court cannot afford its Archduchess on the terms possible in that quarter.

What the Imperial Court can do is, to recommend a Niece of theirs, insignificant young Princess, Elizabeth Christina of Brunswick-Bevern, who is Niece to the Empress; and may be made useful in this way, to herself and us, think the Imperial Majesties;—will be a new tie upon the Prussians and the Pragmatic Sanction, and keep the Alliance still surer for our Archduchess in times coming, think their Majesties. She, it is insinuated by Seckendorf in Tobacco-Parliament; ought not she, Daughter of your Majesty's esteemed friend,—modest-minded, innocent young Princess, with a Brother already betrothed in your Majesty's House,—to be the Lady? It is probable she will.

Did we inform the reader once about Kaiser Karl's young marriage adventures; and may we, to remind him, mention them a second time? How Imperial Majesty, some five-and-

¹ Hormayr, *Allgemeine Geschichte der neuesten Zeit* (Wien, 1817), i. 13; cited in Preuss, i. 71.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 APPRENTICESHIP, LAST STAGE [BOOK IX.

[Feb. 1732

twenty years ago, then only King of Spain, asked Princess Caroline of Anspach, who was very poor, and an orphan in the world. Who at once refused, declining to think of changing her religion on such a score;—and now governs England, telegraphing with Walpole, as Queen there instead. How Karl, now Imperial Majesty, then King of Spain, next applied to Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel; and met with a much better reception there. Applied to old Anton Ulrich, reigning Duke, who writes big Novels, and does other foolish good-natured things;—who persuaded his Granddaughter that a change to Catholicism was nothing in such a case, that he himself should not care in the least to change. How the Granddaughter changed accordingly, went to Barcelona, and was wedded;—and had to dun old Grandpapa, ‘Why don’t you change, then?’ Who did change thereupon; thinking to himself, ‘Plague on it, I must, then!’ the foolish old Herr. He is dead; and his Novels, in six volumes quarto, are all dead: and the Granddaughter is Kaiserinn, on those terms, a serene monotonous well-favoured Lady, diligent in her Catholic exercises; of whom I never heard any evil, good rather, in her eminent serene position. Pity perhaps that she had recommended her Niece for this young Prussian gentleman; whom it by no means did ‘attach to the Family,’ so very careful about him at Vienna! But if there lay a sin, and a punishment following on it, here or elsewhere, in her Imperial position, surely it is to be charged on foolish old Anton Ulrich; not on her, poor Lady, who had never coveted such height, nor durst for her soul take the leap thitherward, till the serene old literary gentleman showed her how easy it was.

Well, old Anton Ulrich is long since dead,¹ and his religious accounts are all settled beyond cavil; and only the sad duty devolves on me of explaining a little what and who his rather insipid offspring are, so far as related to readers of this History. Anton Ulrich left two sons; the elder of whom was Duke, and the younger had an Apanage, Blankenburg

¹ 1714, age 70. Hübner, t. 190.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAP. I.] PRINCESS OF BRUNSWICK-BEVERN 5
 Feb. 1732]

by name. Only this younger had children,—serene Kaiserinn that now is, one of them. The elder died childless,¹ precisely a few months before the times we are now got to; reigning Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel,² all but certain Apanages, and does not concern us farther. To that supreme dignity the younger has now come, and his Apanage of Blankenburg and children with him;—so that there is now only one outstanding Apanage (Bevern, not known to us yet); which also will perhaps get reunited, if we cared for it. Ludwig Rudolf is the name of this new sovereign Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, or Duke in chief; age now sixty; has a shining, bustling, somewhat irregular Duchess, says Wilhelmina; and a nose—or rather almost no nose, for sad reasons!³ Other qualities or accidents I know not of him,—except that he is Father of the Vienna Kaiserinn; Grandfather of the Princess whom Seckendorf suggests for our Friedrich of Prussia.

In Ludwig Rudolf's insipid offspring our readers are unexpectedly somewhat interested; let readers patiently attend, therefore. He had three Daughters, never any son. Two of his Daughters, eldest and youngest, are alive still; the middle one had a sad fate long ago. She married, in 1711, Alexius the Czarowitz of Peter the Great: foolish Czarowitz, miserable and making others miserable, broke her heart by ill conduct, ill usage, in four years; so that she died; leaving him only a poor small Peter II., who is now dead too, and that matter ended all but the memory of it. Some accounts bear, that *she* did not die; that she only pretended it, and ran and left her intolerable Czarowitz. That she wedded, at Paris, in deep obscurity, an Officer just setting-out for Louisiana; lived many years there as a thrifty soldier's wife; returned to Paris with her Officer reduced to half-pay; and told him,—or told

¹ 1731, Michaelis, i. 132.

² 'Welf-booths' (Hutted Camp of the Welfs), according to Etymology. 'Brunswick,' again, is *Braun's-Wick*; 'Braun' (Brown) being an old militant Welf in those parts, who built some lodge for himself, as a convenience there,—Year 880, say the uncertain old Books. Hübner, t. 149; Michaelis, etc.

³ Wilhelmina, ii. 121.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 APPRENTICESHIP, LAST STAGE [BOOK IX.

[Feb. 1732

some select Official person after him, under sevenfold oath, being then a widow and necessitous,—her sublime secret. Sublime secret, which came thus to be known to a supremely select circle at Paris; and was published in Books, where one still reads it. No vestige of truth in it,—except that perhaps a necessitous soldier's widow at Paris, considering or ways and means, found that she had some trace of likeness to the Pictures of this Princess, and had heard her tragic story.

Ludwig Rudolf's second Daughter is dead long years ago; nor has this fable as yet risen from her dust. Of Ludwig Rudolf's other two Daughters, we have said that one, the eldest, was the Kaiserinn; Empress Elizabeth Christina, age now precisely forty; with two beautiful Daughters, sublime Maria Theresa the elder of them, and no son that would live. Which last little circumstance has caused the Pragmatic Sanction, and tormented universal Nature for so many years back! Ludwig Rudolf has a youngest Daughter, also married, and a Mother in Germany,—to this day conspicuously so;—of whom next, or rather of her Husband and Family-circle, we must say a word.

Her Husband is no other than the esteemed Friend of Friedrich Wilhelm; Duke of Brunswick-Bevern, by title; who, as a junior branch, lives on the Apanage of Bevern, as his Father did; but is sure now to inherit the sovereignty and be Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel at large, he or his Sons, were the present incumbent, Ludwig Rudolf, once out. Present incumbent, we have just intimated, is his Father-in-law; but it is not on that ground that he looks to inherit. He is Nephew of old Anton Ulrich, Son of a younger Brother (who was also 'Bevern' in Anton's time); and is the evident Heir-male; old Anton being already fallen into the distaff, with nothing but three Granddaughters. Anton's heir will now be this Nephew: Nephew has wedded one of the Granddaughters, youngest of the Three, youngest Daughter of Ludwig Rudolf, Sovereign Duke that now is; which Lady, by the family she brought him, if no otherwise, is memorable

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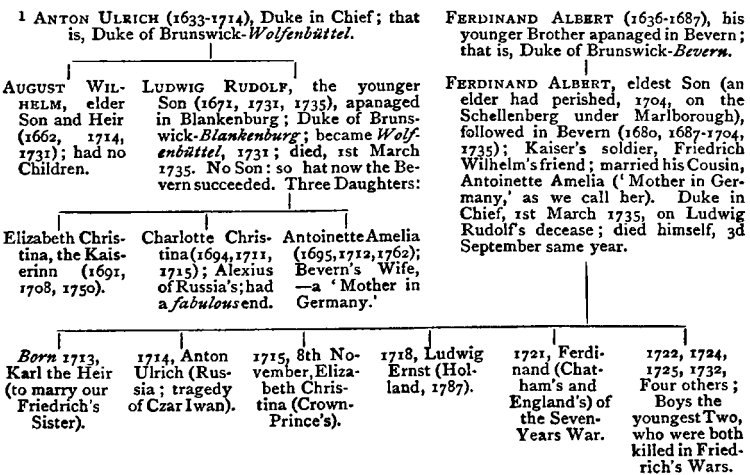
Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAP. I.] PRINCESS OF BRUNSWICK-BEVERN 7
Feb. 1732]

or mentionable here, and may be called a Mother in Germany.¹

Father Bevern her Husband, Ferdinand Albert the name of him, is now just fifty, only ten years younger than his serene Father-in-law Ludwig Rudolf:—whom, I may as well say here, he does at last succeed, three years hence (1735), and becomes Duke of Brunswick in General, according to hope; but only for a few months, having himself died that same year. Poor Duke; rather a good man, by all the accounts I could hear; though not of qualities that shone. He is at present ‘Duke of Brunswick-Bevern,’—such his actual nomenclature in those ever-fluctuating Sibyl’s-leaves of German History-Books, Wilhelmina’s and the others;—expectant Duke of Brunswick in General; much a friend of Friedrich Wilhelm. A kind of Austrian soldier he was formerly, and will again be for brief times; General Feldmarschall so-styled; but is not notable in War, nor otherwise at all, except for the offspring he had by this serene Spouse of his. Insipid offspring, the impatient reader says; but permits me to enumerate one or two of them:



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Excerpt

[More information](#)

8 APPRENTICESHIP, LAST STAGE [BOOK IX.

[Feb. 1732

1°. Karl, eldest Son ; who is sure to be Brunswick in General ; who is betrothed to Princess Charlotte of Prussia,—‘a satirical creature, she, fonder of my Prince than of him,’ Wilhelmina thinks. The wedding nevertheless took effect. Brunswick in General duly fell in, first to the Father ; then, in a few months more, to Karl with his Charlotte : and from them proceeded, in due time, another Karl, of whom we shall hear in this History ;—and of whom all the world heard much in the French Revolution Wars ; in 1792, and still more tragically afterwards. Shot, to death or worse, at the Battle of Jena, October 1806 ; ‘battle lost before it was begun,’—such the strategic history they give of it. He peremptorily ordered the French Revolution to suppress itself ; and that was the answer the French Revolution made him. From this Karl, what *new* Queens Caroline of England and portentous Dukes of Brunswick, sent upon their travels through the anarchic world, profitable only to Newspapers, we need not say !—

2°. Anton Ulrich ; named after his august Great-Grandfather ; does not write novels like him. At present a young gentleman of eighteen ; goes into Russia before long, hoping to beget Czars ; which issues dreadfully for himself and the potential Czars he begot. The reader has heard of a potential ‘Czar Iwan,’ violently done to death in his room, one dim moonlight night of 1764, in the Fortress of Schlüsselburg, middle of Lake Ladoga ; misty moon looking down on the stone battlements, on the melancholy waters, and saying nothing.—But let us not anticipate.

3°. Elizabeth Christina ; to us more important than any of them. Namesake of the Kaiserinn, her august Aunt ; age now seventeen ; insipid fine-complexioned young lady, who is talked of for the Bride of our Crown-Prince. Of whom the reader will hear more. Crown-Prince fears she is ‘too religious,’—and will have ‘*cagots*’ about her (solemn persons in black, highly unconscious how little wisdom they have), who may be troublesome.

4°. A merry young Boy, now ten, called Ferdinand ; with whom England within the next thirty years will ring, for some time, loud enough : the great ‘Prince Ferdinand’ himself,—under whom the Marquis of Granby and others became great ; Chatham superintending it. This really was a respectable gentleman, and did considerable things,—a Trismegistus in comparison with the Duke of Cumberland whom he succeeded. A cheerful, singularly-polite, modest, well-conditioned man withal. To be slightly better known to us, if we live. He at present is a Boy of ten, chasing the thistle’s beard.

5°. Three other sons, all soldiers, two of them younger than Ferdinand ; whose names were in the gazettes down to a late period ;—whom we shall ignore in this place. The last of them was marched out

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHAP. I.] PRINCESS OF BRUNSWICK-BEVERN 9

Feb. 1732]

of Holland, where he had long been Commander-in-chief on rather Tory principles, in the troubles of 1787. Others of them we shall see storming forward on occasion, valiantly meeting death in the field of fight, all conspicuously brave of character; but this shall be enough of them at present.

It is of these that Ludwig Rudolf's youngest daughter, the serene Ferdinand Albert's wife, is Mother in Germany; highly conspicuous in their day. If the question is put, it must be owned they are all rather of the insipid type. Nothing but a kind of albuminous simplicity noticeable in them; no wit, originality, brightness in the way of uttered intellect. If it is asked, How came they to the least distinction in this world?—the answer is not immediately apparent. But indeed they are Welf of the Welfs, in this respect as in others. One asks, with increased wonder, noticing in the Welfs generally nothing but the same albuminous simplicity, and poverty rather than opulence of uttered intellect, or of qualities that shine, How the Welfs came to play such a part, for the last thousand years, and still to be at it, in conspicuous places?

Reader, I have observed that uttered intellect is not what permanently makes way, but *unuttered*. Wit, logical brilliancy, spiritual effulgency, true or *false*,—how precious to idle mankind, and to the Newspapers and History-Books, even when it is false: while, again, Nature and Practical Fact care next to nothing for it in comparison, even when it is true! Two silent qualities you will notice in these Welfs, modern and ancient; which Nature much values: *First*, consummate human Courage; a noble, perfect, and as it were unconscious superiority to fear. And then *secondly*, much weight of mind, a noble not too conscious Sense of what is Right and Not Right, I have found in some of them;—which means mostly *weight*, or good gravitation, good observance of the perpendicular; and is called justice, veracity, high-honour, and other such names. These are fine qualities indeed, especially with an 'albuminous simplicity' as vehicle to them. If the Welfs had not much articulate intellect, let us guess

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 APPRENTICESHIP, LAST STAGE [BOOK IX.

[Feb. 1732

they made a good use, not a bad or indifferent, as is commoner, of what they had.

*Who his Majesty's Choice is ; and what the Crown-Prince
thinks of it*

Princess Elizabeth Christina, the insipid Brunswick specimen, backed by Seckendorf and Vienna, proves on consideration the desirable to Friedrich Wilhelm in this matter. But his Son's notions, who as yet knows her only by rumour, do not go that way. Insipidity, triviality ; the fear of 'cagotage' and frightful fellows in black supremely unconscious what blockheads they are, haunts him a good deal. And as for any money coming,—her sublime Aunt the Kaiserinn never had much ready-money ; one's resources on that side are likely to be exiguous. He would prefer the Princess of Mecklenburg, Semi-Russian Catharine or Anna, of whom we have heard ; would prefer the Princess of Eisenach (whose name he does not know rightly) ; thinks there are many Princesses preferable. Most of all he would prefer, what is well known of him in Tobacco-Parliament, but known to be impossible, this long while back, to go upon a round of travel,—as for instance the Prince of Lorraine is now doing,—and look about him a little.

These candid considerations the Crown-Prince earnestly suggests to Grumkow, and the secret committee of Tobacco-Parliament ; earnestly again and again, in his Correspondence with that gentleman, which goes on very brisk at present. 'Much of it lost,' we hear ;—but enough, and to spare, is saved ! Not a beautiful correspondence : the tone of it shallow, hard of heart ; tragically flippant, especially on the Crown-Prince's part ; now and then even a touch of the hypocritical from him, slight touch and not with will : alas, what can the poor young man do ? Grumkow,—whose ground, I think, is never quite so secure since that Nosti business,—professes ardent attachment to the real interests