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Excerpt

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## BOOK XII

FIRST SILESIAN WAR, AWAKENING A GENERAL  
EUROPEAN ONE, BEGINS

DECEMBER 1740—MAY 1741

## CHAPTER I

## OF SCHLESIEIN, OR SILESIA

SCHLESIEIN, what we call Silesia, lies in elliptic shape, spread on the top of Europe, partly girt with mountains, like the crown or crest to that part of the Earth;—highest table-land of Germany or of the Cisalpine Countries; and sending rivers into all the seas. The summit or highest level of it is in the south-west; longest diameter is from north-west to south-east. From Crossen, whither Friedrich is now driving, to the Jablunka Pass, which issues upon Hungary, is above 250 miles; the *axis*, therefore, or longest diameter, of our Ellipse we may call 250 English miles;—its shortest or conjugate diameter, from Friedland in Bohemia (Wallenstein's old Friedland), by Breslau across the Oder to the Polish Frontier, is about 100. The total area of Schlesien is counted to be some 20,000 square miles, nearly the third of England Proper.

Schlesien,—will the reader learn to call it by that name on occasion? for in these sad Manuscripts of ours the names alternate,—is a fine, fertile, useful and beautiful Country. It leans sloping, as we hinted, to the East and to the North;

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a long curved buttress of Mountains ('*Riesengebirge*, Giant Mountains,' is their best-known name in foreign countries) holding it up on the South and West sides. This Giant-Mountain Range,—which is a kind of continuation of the Saxon-Bohemian 'Metal Mountains (*Erzgebirge*)' and of the straggling Lausitz Mountains, to westward of these,—shapes itself like a bill-hook (or elliptically, as was said): handle and hook together may be some 200 miles in length. The precipitous side of this is, in general, turned outwards, towards Böhmen, Mähren, Ungarn (Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary, in our dialects); and Schlesien lies inside, irregularly sloping down, towards the Baltic and towards the utmost East. From the Bohemian side of these Mountains there rise Two Rivers: Elbe, tending for the West; Morawa for the South; —Morawa, crossing Moravia, gets into the Donau, and thence into the Black-Sea; while Elbe, after intricate adventures among the mountains, and then prosperously across the plains, is out, with its many ships, into the Atlantic. Two rivers, we say, from the Bohemian or steep side: and again, from the Silesian side, there rise other Two, the Oder and the Weichsel (*Vistula*); which start pretty near one another in the South-East, and, after wide windings, get both into the Baltic, at a good distance apart.

For the first thirty, or in parts, fifty miles from the Mountains, Silesia slopes somewhat rapidly; and is still to be called a Hill-country, rugged extensive elevations diversifying it: but after that, the slope is gentle, and at length insensible, or noticeable only by the way the waters run. From the central part of it, Schlessien pictures itself to you as a plain; growing ever flatter, ever sandier, as it abuts on the monotonous endless sand-flats of Poland, and the Brandenburg territories; nothing but Boundary Stones with their brass inscriptions marking where the transition is; and only some Fortified Town, not far off, keeping the door of the Country secure in that quarter.

On the other hand, the Mountain part of Schlesien is very

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picturesque; not of Alpine height anywhere (the Schnee-Koppe itself is under 5,000 feet), so that verdure and forest wood fail almost nowhere among the Mountains; and multiplex industry, besung by rushing torrents and the swift young rivers, nestles itself high up; and from wheat-husbandry, madder and maize husbandry, to damask-weaving, metallurgy, charcoal-burning, tar-distillery, Schlesien has many trades, and has long been expert and busy at them to a high degree. A very pretty Ellipsis, or irregular Oval, on the summit of the European Continent;—‘like the palm of a left-hand well stretched-out, with the Riesengebirge for thumb!’ said a certain Herr to me, stretching out his arm in that fashion towards the north-west. Palm, well stretched-out, measuring 250 miles; and the cross-way 100. There are still beavers in Schlesien; the Katzbach River has gold grains in it, a kind of Pactolus not now worth working; and in the scraggy lonesome pine-woods, grimy individuals, with kindled mounds of pine-branches and smoke carefully kept down by sods, are sweating-out a substance which they inform you is to be tar.

*Historical Epochs of Schlesien;—after the Quads and  
Marchmen*

Who first lived in Schlesien, or lived long since in it, there is no use in asking, nor in telling if one knew. ‘The *Quadi* and the *Lygii*,’ says Dryasdust, in a groping manner: *Quadi* and consorts, in the fifth or sixth Century, continues he with more confidence, shifted Rome-ward, following the general track of contemporaneous mankind; weak remnant of *Quadi* was thereupon overpowered by Slavic populations, and their Country became Polish, which the eastern rim of it still essentially is. That was the end of the *Quadi* in those parts, says History. But they cannot speak nor appeal for themselves; History has them much at discretion. Rude burial urns, with a handful of ashes in them, have been dug up in different places; these are all the Archives and Histories the *Quadi* now have. It appears their name signifies *Wicked*.

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They are those poor Quadi (*Wicked People*) who always go along with the Marcomanni (*Marchmen*), in the beadroll Histories one reads; and I almost guess they must have been of the same stock: 'Wickeds and Borderers;' considered, on both sides of the Border, to belong to the Dangerous Classes in those times. Two things are certain: First, *quad* and its derivatives have, to this day, in the speech of rustic Germans, something of that meaning,—'nefarious,' at least 'injurious,' 'hateful, and to be avoided': for example, *quaddel*, 'a nettle-burn'; *quetschen*, 'to smash' (say, your thumb while hammering); etc. etc. And then a second thing: The Polish equivalent word is *Zle* (Büsching says *Zlezi*); hence *Zlezien*, *Schlesien*, meaning merely *Badland*, *Quadland*, what we might call *Damagitia*, or Country where you get into Trouble. That is the etymology, or what passes for such. 'As to the History of Schlesien, hitherwards of these burial urns dug up in different places, I notice, as not yet entirely buriable, Three Epochs.

*First Epoch; Christianity:* A.D. 966. Introduction of Christianity; to the length of founding a Bishoprick that year, so hopeful were the aspects; 'Bishoprick of Schmoger' (*Schmagram*, dim little Village still discoverable on the Polish frontier, not far from the Town of Namslau); Bishoprick which, after one removal farther inward, got across the Oder, to '*Wratislav*,' which we now call Breslau; and sticks there, as Bishoprick of Breslau, to this day. Year 966: it was in Adalbert, our Prussian Saint and Missionary's younger time. Preaching, by zealous Polacks, must have been going on, while Adalbert, Bright in Nobleness, was studying at Magdeburg, and ripening for high things in the general estimation. This was a new gift from the Polacks, this of Christianity; an infinitely more important one than that nickname of '*Zlezien*,' or '*Damagitia*,' stuck upon the poor Country, had been.

*Second Epoch; Get gradually cut loose from Poland:* A.D. 1139-1159. Twenty years of great trouble in Poland, which were of lasting benefit to Schlesien. In 1139 the Polack King, a very potent Majesty whom we could name but do not, died; and left his Dominions shared by punctual bequest among his five sons. Punctual bequest did avail: but the eldest Son (who was King, and had Schlesien with much else to his share) began to encroach, to grasp; upon which the others rose upon him, flung him out into exile; redivided; and hoped now they might have quiet.

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## CHAP. I.]

## OF SCHLESIE N

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Hoped, but were disappointed; and could come to no sure bargain for the next twenty years,—not till ‘the eldest brother,’ first author of these strifes, ‘died an exile in Holstein,’ or was just about dying, and had agreed to take Schlesien for all claims, and be quiet thenceforth.

His, this eldest’s, Three Sons did accordingly, in 1159, get Schlesien instead of him; their uncles proving honourable. Schlesien thereby was happy enough to get cut loose from Poland, and to continue loose; steering a course of its own;—parting farther and farther from Poland and its habits and fortunes. These Three Sons, of the late Polish Majesty who died in exile in Holstein, are the ‘Piaſt Dukes,’ much talked of in Silesian Histories: of whose merits I specify this only, That they so soon as possible strove to be German. They were Progenitors of all the ‘Piaſt Dukes,’ Proprietors of Schlesien thenceforth, till the last of them died-out in 1675,—and a certain *Erbverbrüderung* they had entered into could not take effect at that time. Their merits as Sovereign Dukes seem to have been considerable; a certain piety, wisdom and nobleness of mind not rare among them; and no doubt it was partly their merit, if partly also their good luck, that they took to Germany, and leant thitherward; steering looser and looser from Poland, in their new circumstances. They themselves by degrees became altogether German; their Countries, by silent immigration, introduction of the arts, the composesures and sobrieties, became essentially so. On the eastern rim there is still a Polack remnant, its territories very sandy, its condition very bad; remnant which surely ought to cease its Polack jargon, and learn some dialect of intelligible Teutsch, as the first condition of improvement. In all other parts Teutsch reigns; and Schlesien is a green abundant Country; full of metallurgy, damask-weaving, grain-husbandry,—instead of gasconade, gilt anarchy, rags, dirt, and *Nie Pozwalam*.

A. D. 1327; *Get completely cut loose*. The Piaſt Dukes, who soon ceased to be Polish, and hung rather upon Bohemia, and thereby upon Germany, made a great step in that direction, when King Johann, old *Ich-Dien* whom we ought to recollect, persuaded most of them, all of them but two, ‘*pretio ac prece*,’ to become Feudatories (Quasi-Feudatories, but of a sovereign sort) to his Crown of Bohemia. The two who stood out, resisting prayer and price, were the Duke of Jauer and the Duke of Schweidnitz,—lofty-minded gentlemen, perhaps a thought too lofty. But these also Johann’s son, little Kaiser Karl iv., ‘marrying their heiress,’ contrived to bring in;—one fruitful adventure of little Karl’s, among the many wasteful he made, in the German Reich. Schlesien is henceforth a bit of the Kingdom of Bohemia; indissolubly hooked to Germany; and its progress in the arts and composesures, under wise Piaſts with immigrating Germans, we guess to have become doubly rapid.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Büſching, *Erdbeschreibung*, viii. 725; Hübner, t. 94.

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*Third Epoch; Adopt the Reformation:* A.D. 1414-1517. <sup>[13th-16th Dec. 1740]</sup> Schlesien, hanging to Bohemia in this manner, extensively adopted Huss's doctrines; still more extensively Luther's; and that was a difficult element in its lot, though, I believe, an unspeakably precious one. It cost above a Century of sad tumults, Zisca Wars; nay, above Two Centuries, including the sad Thirty-years War;—which miseries, in Bohemia Proper, were sometimes very sad and even horrible. But Schlesien, the outlying Country, did, in all this, suffer less than Bohemia Proper; and did *not* lose its Evangelical Doctrine in result, as unfortunate Bohemia did, and sink into sluttish 'fanatical torpor, and big Crucifixes of japanned Tin by the wayside,' though in the course of subsequent years, named of Peace, it was near doing so. Here are the steps, in that latter direction:

A.D. 1537. Occurred, as we know, the *Erbverbrüderung*; Duke of Liegnitz, and of other extensive heritages, making Deed of Brotherhood with Kur-Brandenburg;—Deed forbidden, and so far as might be, rubbed-out and annihilated by the then King of Bohemia, subsequently Kaiser Ferdinand I., Karl v.'s Brother. Duke of Liegnitz had to give-up his parchments, and become zero in that matter: Kur-Brandenburg entirely refused to do so; kept his parchments, to see if they would not turn to something.

A.D. 1624. Schlesien, especially the then Duke of Liegnitz (great-grandson of the *Erbverbrüderung* one), and poor Johann George, Duke of Jägerndorf, cadet of the then Kur-Brandenburg, went warmly ahead into the Winter-King project, first fire of the Thirty-years War; sufferings from Papal encroachment, in high quarters, being really extreme. Warmly ahead; and had to smart sharply for it;—poor Johann George with forfeiture of Jägerndorf, with *Reiches-Acht* (Ban of the Empire), and total ruin; fighting against which he soon died. Act of Ban and Forfeiture was done tyrannously, said most men; and it was persisted in equally so, till men ceased speaking of it;—Jägerndorf Duchy, fruit of the Act, was held by Austria, ever after, in defiance of the Laws of the Reich. Religious Oppression lay heavy on Protestant Schlesien thenceforth; and many lukewarm individualities were brought back to Orthodoxy by that method, successful in the diligent skilled hands of Jesuit Reverend Fathers, with fiscals and soldiers in the rear of them.

A.D. 1648. Treaty of Westphalia mended much of this, and set fair limits to Papist encroachment;—had said Treaty been kept: but how could it? By Orthodox Authority, anxious to recover lost souls, or at least to have loyal subjects, it was publicly kept in name; and tacitly, in substance, it was violated more and more. Of the 'Blossoming of Silesian Literature,' spoken of in Books; of the Poet Opitz, Poets Logau, Hoffmannswaldau, who burst into a kind of Song better or worse

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## CHAP. II.] FRIEDRICH MARCHES ON GLOGAU 7

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at this Period, we will remember nothing; but request the reader to remember it, if he is tunefully given, or thinks it a good symptom of Schlesien.

A. D. 1707. Treaty of Altranstadt: between Kaiser Joseph I. and Karl XII. Swedish Karl, marching through those parts,—out of Poland, in chase of August the Physically Strong, towards Saxony, there to beat him soft,—was waited upon by Silesian Deputations of a lamentable nature; was entreated, for the love of Christ and His Evangel, to ‘Protect us poor Protestants, and get the Treaty of Westphalia observed in our behalf, and fair-play shown!’ Which Karl did; Kaiser Joseph, with such weight of French War lying on him, being much struck with the tone of that dangerous Swede. The Pope rebuked Kaiser Joseph for such compliance in the Silesian matter: ‘Holy Father,’ answered this Kaiser (not of distinguished orthodoxy in the House), ‘I am too glad he did not ask me to become Lutheran; I know not how I should have helped myself!’<sup>1</sup>

These are the Three Epochs;—most things, in respect of this Third or Reformation Epoch, stepping steadily downward hitherto. As to the Fourth Epoch, dating ‘13th Dec. 1740,’ which continues, up to our day and farther, and is the final and crowning Epoch of Silesian History,—read in the following Chapters.

## CHAPTER II

## FRIEDRICH MARCHES ON GLOGAU

AT what hour Friedrich ceased dancing on that famous Ball-night of Bielfeld’s, and how long he slept after, or whether at all, no Bielfeld even mythically says: but next morning, as is patent to all the world, Tuesday 13th December 1740, at the stroke of nine, he steps into his

<sup>1</sup> Pauli, *Allgemeine Preussische Staats-Geschichte* (viii. 298-592); Büsching, *Erdbeschreibung* (viii. 700-739); etc.—Heinrich Wuttke, *Friedrichs des Grossen Besitzergreifung von Schlesien* (Seizure of Silesia by Friedrich, 2 voll. Leipzig, 1843), I mention only lest ingenuous readers should be tempted by the Title to buy it. Wuttke begins at the Creation of the World; and having, in two heavy volumes, at last struggled down close to the *Besitzergreifung* or Seizure in question, calls halt; and stands (at ease, we will hope) immovably there for the seventeen years since.

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[13th-16th Dec. 1640]

carriage; and with small escort rolls away towards Frankfurt-on-Oder;<sup>1</sup> out upon an Enterprise which will have results for himself and others.

Two youngish military men, Adjutant-Generals both, were with him, Wartensleben, Borck; both once fellow Captains in the Potsdam Giants, and much in his intimacy ever since. Wartensleben we once saw at Brunswick, on a Masonic occasion; Borck, whom we here see for the first time, is not the Colonel Borck (properly Major-General) who did the Herstal Operation lately; still less is he the venerable old Minister, Marlborough Veteran, and now Field-Marshal Borck, whom Hotham treated with, on a certain occasion. There are numerous Borcks always in the King's service; nor are these three, except by loose cousinry, related to one another. The Borcks all come from Stettin quarter; a brave kindred, and old enough,—‘Old as the Devil, *Das ist so old als de Borcken und de Düwel*,’ says the Pomeranian Proverb;—the Adjutant-General, a junior member of the clan, chances to be the notablest of them at this moment. Wartensleben, Borck, and a certain Colonel von der Golz, whom also the King much esteems, these are his company on this drive. For escort, or guard of honour out of Berlin to the next stages, there is a small body of Hussars, Lifeguard and other Cavalry, ‘perhaps 500 horse in all.’

They drive rapidly, through the gray winter; reach Frankfurt-on-Oder, sixty miles or more; where no doubt there is military business waiting. They are forward, on the morrow, for dinner, forty miles farther, at a small Town called Crossen, which looks over into Silesia; and is, for the present, headquarters to a Prussian Army, standing ready there and in the environs. Standing ready, or hourly marching in, and rendezvousing; now about 28,000 strong, horse and foot. A Rearguard of Ten or Twelve Thousand will march from Berlin in two days, pause hereabouts, and follow according to circumstances: Prussian Army will then be some 40,000 in

<sup>1</sup> *Helden-Geschichte*, i. 452; Preuss, *Thronbesteigung*, p. 456.



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## CHAP. II.] FRIEDRICH MARCHES ON GLOGAU 9

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all. Schwerin has been Commander, manager and mainspring of the business hitherto : henceforth it is to be the King ; but Schwerin under him will still have a Division of his own.

Among the Regiments, we notice ‘Schulenburg Horse-Grenadiers,’—come along from Landsberg hither, these Horse-Grenadiers, with little Schulenburg at the head of them ;—‘ Dragoon Regiment Bayreuth,’ ‘ Lifeguard Carbineers,’ ‘ Derschau of Foot’ ; and other Regiments and figures slightly known to us, or that will be better known.<sup>1</sup> Rearguard, just getting under way at Berlin, has for leaders the Prince of Holstein-Beck (‘ Holstein-*Vaisselle*,’ say wags, since the Principality went all to *Silver-Plate*) and the Hereditary Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, whom we called the Young Dessauer, on the Strasburg Journey lately : Rearguard, we say, is of 12,000 ; main Army is 28,000 ; Horse and Foot are in the proportion of about 1 to 3. Artillery ‘ consists of 20 three-pounders ; 4 twelve-pounders ; 4 howitzers (*Haubitzen*) ; 4 big mortars, calibre fifty-pounds ; and of Artillerymen 166 in all.

With this Force the young King has, on his own basis (pretty much in spite of all the world, as we find now and afterwards), determined to invade Silesia, and lay hold of the Property he has long had there ;—not computing, for none can compute, the sleeping whirlwinds he may chance to awaken thereby. Thus lightly does a man enter upon Enterprises which prove unexpectedly momentous, and shape the whole remainder of his days for him ; crossing the Rubicon as it were in his sleep. In Life, as on Railways at certain points,—whether you know it or not, there is but an inch, this way or that, into what tram you are shunted ; but try to get out of it again ! ‘ The man is mad, *cet homme-là est fôl* ! ’ said Louis xv. when he heard it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> List in *Helden-Geschichte*, i. 453.

<sup>2</sup> Raumer, *Beyträge* (English Translation, called *Frederick II. and his Times* ; from *British Museum and State-Paper Office* ;—a very indistinct poor Book, in comparison with what it might have been), p. 73 (24th Dec. 1740).

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*Friedrich at Crossen, and still in his own Territory,  
14th-16th Dec. ;—steps into Schlesien*

At all events, the man means to try ;—and is here dining at Crossen, noon of Wednesday the 14th ; certain important persons,—especially two Silesian Gentlemen, deputed from Grünberg, the nearest Silesian Town, who have come across the border on business,—having the honour to dine with him. To whom his manner is lively and affable ; lively in mood, as if there lay no load upon his spirits. The business of these two Silesian Gentlemen, a Baron von Hocke one of them, a Baron von Kestlitz the other, was to present, on the part of the Town and Amt of Grünberg, a solemn Protest against this meditated entrance on the Territory of Schlesien ; Government itself, from Breslau, ordering them to do so. Protest was duly presented ; Friedrich, as his manner is, and continues to be on his march, glances politely into or at the Protest ; hands it, in silence, to some page or secretary to deposit in the due pigeon-hole or waste-basket ; and invites the two Silesian Gentlemen to dine with him ; as, we see, they have the honour to do. ‘He (*Er*) lives near Grünberg, then, Mein Herr von Hocke?’ ‘Close to it, *Ihro Majestät*. My poor mansion, Schloss of Deutsch-Kessel, is some fifteen miles hence ; how infinitely at your Majesty’s service, should the march prove inevitable, and go that way!’—‘Well, perhaps!’ I find Friedrich did dine, the second day hence, with one of these Gentlemen ; and lodged with the other. Government at Breslau has ordered such Protest, on the part of the Frontier populations and Official persons : and this is all that comes of it.

During these hours, it chanced that the big Bell of Crossen dropped from its steeple,—fulness of time, or entire rottenness of axletree, being at last completed, at this fateful moment. Perhaps an ominous thing? Friedrich, as Cæsar and others have done, cheerfully interprets the omen to his