

## BOOK XVII

### THE SEVEN-YEARS WAR: FIRST CAMPAIGN

1756—1757

#### CHAPTER I

##### WHAT FRIEDRICH HAD READ IN THE MENZEL DOCUMENTS

THE ill-informed world, entirely unaware of what Friedrich had been studying and ascertaining, to his bitter sorrow, for four years past, was extremely astonished at the part he took in those French-English troubles; extremely provoked at his breaking-out again into a Third Silesian War, greater than all the others, and kindling all Europe in such a way. The ill-informed world rang violently, then and long after, with a Controversy, ‘Was it of his beginning, or Not of his beginning?’ Controversy, which may in our day be considered as settled by unanimous mankind; finished forever; and can now have no interest for any creature.

Omitting that, our problem is (were it possible in brief compass), To set forth, by what authentic traits there are,—not the ‘ambitious,’ ‘audacious,’ voracious and highly condemnable Friedrich of the Gazetteers,—but the thrice-intricately situated Friedrich of Fact. What the Facts privately known to Friedrich were, in what manner known; and how, in a more complex crisis than had yet been, Friedrich demeaned himself: upon which latter point, and those cognate to it, readers ought not to be ignorant, if now

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fallen indifferent on so many other points of the <sup>[1755-1756]</sup>Affair. What a loud-roaring, loose and empty matter is this tornado of vociferation, which men call 'Public Opinion'! Tragically howling round a man; who has to stand silent the while; and scan, wisely under pain of death, the altogether inarticulate, dumb and inexorable matter which the gods call Fact! Friedrich did read his terrible Sphinx-riddle; the Gazetteer tornado did pipe and blow. King Friedrich, in contrast with his environment at that time, will most likely never be portrayed to modern men in his real proportions, real aspect and attitude then and there,—which are silently not a little heroic and even pathetic, when well seen into;—and, for certain, he is not portrayable at present, on our side of the Sea. But what hints and fractions of feature we authentically have, ought to be given with exactitude, especially with brevity, and left to the ingenuous imagination of readers.

The secret sources of the Third Silesian War, since called 'Seven-Years War, go back to 1745; nay, we may say, to the First Invasion of Silesia in 1740. For it was in Maria Theresa's incurable sorrow at loss of Silesia, and her extinguishable hope to reconquer it, that this and all Friedrich's other Wars had their origin. Twice she had signed Peace with Friedrich, and solemnly ceded Silesia to him: but that too, with the Imperial Lady, was by no means a *finis* to the business. Not that she meant to break her Treaties; far from her such a thought,—in the conscious form. Though, alas, in the unconscious, again, it was always rather near! Practically, she reckoned to herself, these Treaties would come to be broken, as Treaties do not endure forever; and then, at the good moment, she did purpose to be ready. 'Silesia back to us; Pragmatic Sanction complete in every point! Was not that our dear Father's will, monition of all our Fathers and their Patriotisms and Traditionary Heroisms; and in fact, the behest of gods and men?' Ten years ago,

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this notion had been cut-down to apparent death, in a disastrous manner, for the second time. But it did not die in the least: it never thinks of dying; starts always anew, passionate to produce itself again as action valid at last; and lives in the Imperial Heart with a tenacity that is strange to observe. Still stranger, in the envious Valet-Heart,—in that of Brühl, who had far less cause!

The Peace of Dresden, Christmas 1745, seemed to be an act of considerable magnanimity on Friedrich's part. It was, at the first blush of it, 'incredible' to Harrach, the Austrian Plenipotentiary; whose embarrassed, astonished bow we remember on that occasion, with English Villiers shedding pious tears. But what is very remarkable withal is a thing since discovered:<sup>1</sup> That Harrach, magnanimous signature hardly yet dry, did then straightway, by order of his Court, very privately inquire of Brühl, 'There is Peace, you see; what they call Peace:—but our *Treaty of Warsaw*, for Partition of this magnanimous man, stands all the same; doesn't it?' To which, according to the Documents, Brühl, hardly escaped from the pangs of death, and still in a very pale-yellow condition, had answered in effect, 'Hah, say you so? One's hatred is eternal;—but that man's iron heel! Wait a little; get Russia to join in the scheme!'—and hung back; the willing mind, but the too terrified! And in this way, like a famishing dog in sight of a too dangerous leg of mutton, Brühl has ever since rather held back; would not reëngage at all, for almost two years, even on the Czarina's engaging; and then only in a cautious, conditional and hypothetical manner,—though with famine increasing day by day in sight of the desired viands. His hatred is fell; but he would fain escape with back unbroken.

*How Friedrich discovered the Mystery. Concerning Menzel and Weingarten*

Friedrich has been aware of this mystery, at least wide

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, next Note (p. 4).

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awake to it and becoming ever more instructed, for almost four years. Traitor Menzel the Saxon Kanzellist,—we, who have prophetically read what he had to confess when laid hold of, are aware, though as yet, and on to 1757, it is a dead secret to all mortals but himself and ‘three others,’—has been busy for Prussia ever since ‘the end of 1752.’ Got admittance to the Presses; sent his first Excerpt ‘about the time of Easter-Fair 1753,’—time of Voltaire’s taking wing. And has been at work ever since. Copying Despatches from the most secret Saxon Repositories; ready always on Excellency Maltzahn’s indicating the Piece wanted; and of late, I should think, is busier than ever, as the Saxon Mystery, which is also an Austrian and Russian one, gets more light thrown into it, and seems to be fast ripening towards action of a perilous nature. The first Excerpts furnished by Menzel, readers can judge how enigmatic they were. These Menzel Papers, copies mainly of Petersburg or Vienna *Despatches* to Brühl, with Brühl’s *Answers*,—the principal of which were subsequently printed in their best arrangement and liveliest point of vision,<sup>1</sup>—are by no means a luminous set of Documents to readers at this day. Think what a study they were at Potsdam in 1753, while still in the chaotic state; fished-out, more or less at random, as Menzel could lay hold of them, or be directed to them; the enigma clearing itself only by intense inspection, and capability of seeing in the dark!

It appears,—if you are curious on the anecdotic part,—

‘Winterfeld was the first that got eye on this dangerous Saxon Mystery; some Ex-Saxon, about to settle in Berlin, giving hint of it to Winterfeld; who needed only a hint. So soon as Winterfeld convinced himself that there was weight in the affair, he imparted it to Friedrich:

<sup>1</sup> In Friedrich’s Manifestos, chiefly in *Mémoire Raisonné sur la Conduite des Cours de Vienne et de Saxe* (Compiled from the *Menzel Originals*, so soon as these were got hold of: Berlin, Autumn 1756). A solid and able Paper; rapidly done, by one Count Herzberg, who rose high in after-times. Reprinted, with many other ‘Pieces’ and ‘Passages,’ in *Gesammelte Nachrichten und Urkunden*,—which is a ‘Collection’ of such (2 voll., 113 Nos. small 8vo, no Place, 1757, my Copy of it).

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“Scheme of partitioning, your Majesty, of picking quarrel, then overwhelming and partitioning; most serious scheme, Austrian-Russian as well as Saxon; going on steadily for years past, and very lively at this time!” If true, Friedrich cannot but admit that this is serious enough: important, thrice over, to discover whether it is true;—and gives Winterfeld authority to prosecute it to the bottom, in Dresden or wherever the secret may lie. Who thereupon charged Maltzahn, the Prussian Minister at Dresden, to find some proper Menzel, and bestir himself. How Maltzahn has found his Menzel, and has bestirred himself, we saw. Thief-keys were made to pattern in Berlin; first set did not fit, second did; and stealthy Menzel gains admittance to that Chamber of the Archives, can steal thither on shoes of felt when occasion serves, and copy what you wish,—for a consideration. Intermittently, since about Easter-Fair 1753. Three persons are cognisant of it, Winterfeld, Maltzahn, Friedrich; three, and no more. Probably the abstrusest study, and the most intense, going-on in the world at that epoch.<sup>1</sup>

‘At a very early stage of the Menzel Excerpts it became manifest that certain synchronous Austrian Ditto would prove highly elucidative; that, in fact, it would be indispensable to get hold of these as well. Which also Winterfeld has managed to do. A deep-headed man, who has his eyes about him; and is very apt to manage what he undertakes. One Weingarten Junior, a Secretary in the Austrian Embassy at Berlin (Excellency Peubla’s second Secretary), has his acquaintanceships in Berlin Society; and for one thing, as Winterfeld discovers, is “madly in love” with some Chambermaid or quasi-chambermaid (let us call her Chambermaid), “Daughter of the Castellan at Charlottenburg.” Winterfeld, through the due channels, applied to this Chambermaid, “Get me a small secret Copy of such and such Despatches, out of your Weingarten; it will be well for you and him; otherwise perhaps not well!” Chambermaid, hope urging, or perhaps hope and fear, did her best; Weingarten had to yield the required product and products, as required. By this Weingarten, from some date not long after Menzel’s first mysterious Dresden Excerpts, the necessary Austrian glosses, so far as possible to Weingarten on the indications given him, have been regularly had, for the two or three years past.

‘Weingarten first came to be seriously suspected June 1756 (Weingarten Junior, let us still say, for there was a Senior of unstained fidelity); “June 15th,” Excellency Peubla pointedly demands him from Friedrich and the Berlin Police: “Weingarten Junior, my *second* Secretär, fugitive and traitor; hidden somewhere!”<sup>2</sup> Excellency Peubla

<sup>1</sup> Retzow, *Charakteristik des Siebenjährigen Krieges* (Berlin, 1802), i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Berlin, 22d June: Every research making for Mr. Weingatten,—in vain hitherto’ (*Gentleman’s Magazine*, xxvi., i.e. for 1756, p. 363).

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is answered, 24th June: "We would so fain catch him, if we could!"<sup>[1755-1756]</sup> We have tried at Stendal,—not there: tried his Mother-in-law; knows nothing: have forborne laying-up his poor Wife and Children; and hope her Imperial Majesty will have pity on that poor creature, who is fallen so miserable."<sup>1</sup> So that Excellency Peubla had nothing for it but to compose himself; to honour the unstainable fidelity of Weingarten Senior by a public piece of promotion, which soon ensued; and let the Junior run. Weingarten Junior, on the first suspicion, had vanished with due promptitude,—was not to be unearthed again. We perceive he has married his Charlottenburg Beauty, and there are helpless babies. It seems "he lived long years after, in the Altmark, as a Herr von Weiss,"—his reflections manifold, but unknown.<sup>2</sup> What is much notabler, Cogniazzo, the Austrian Veteran, heard Weingarten's *Master*, Graf von Peubla, talk of the "*grand mystère*," soon after, and how Friedrich had heard of it, not from Weingarten alone, but from Gross-Fürst *Peter*, Russian Heir-Apparent!<sup>3</sup>

'As to Menzel, he did not get away. Menzel, as we saw, lasted in free activity till 1757; and was then put under lock and key. Was not hanged; sat prisoner for twenty-seven years after; overgrown with hair, legs and arms chained together, heavy iron-bar uniting both ankles; diet bread-and-water;—for the rest, healthy; and died, not very miserable it is said, in 1784. Shocking traitors, Weingarten and he.'

Yes, a diabolical pair, they, sure enough:—and the thing they betrayed against their Masters, was that a celestial thing? Servants of the Devil do fall out; and Servants not of the Devil are fain, sometimes, to raise a quarrel of that kind!—

The then world, as we said, was one loud uproar of logic on the right reading and the wrong of those Sibylline Documents: 'Did your King of Prussia interpret them aright, or even try it? Did not he use them as a cloak for highway robbery, and swallowing of a peaceable Saxony, bad man that he surely is?' For Friedrich's demeanour, this time again, when it came to the acting point, was of eminent rapidity; almost a swifter lion-spring than ever; and it brought on him, in the aerial or vocal way, its usual result: huge clamour of rage and logic from uninformed mankind. Clamorous rage

<sup>1</sup> *Helden-Geschichte*, iii. 713.<sup>2</sup> Retzow, i. 37.<sup>3</sup> Cogniazzo, i. 225.

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and logic, which has now sunk irresuscitably dead ;—nothing of it much worth mentioning to modern readers, scarcely even its *Hic Jacet* (in Footnotes, for the benefit of the curious !)—and it is, at last, a thing not doubtful to anybody that Friedrich, in that matter, did read aright. So that now the loud uproar is reduced to one small question with us, What did he read in those Menzel Documents? What fact lying in them was it that Friedrich had to read? Here, smelted-down by repeated roastings, is succinct answer ;—for the ultimate fragment of incombustible, here as elsewhere, will go into a nutshell, once the continents of Diplomatist-Gazetteer logic and disorderly stable litter, threatening to heap themselves over the very stars, have been faithfully burnt away.

Readers heard of a 'Union of Warsaw, early in 1745, concluded by the Sea-Powers and the Saxon-Polish and Hungarian Majesties: very harmless *Union* of Warsaw, public to all the world,—but with a certain thrice-secret '*Treaty* of Warsaw' (between Polish and Hungarian Majesty themselves two, the Sea-Powers being horror-struck by mention of it) which had followed thereupon, in an eager and wonderful manner. Thrice-secret Treaty, for Partitioning Friedrich, and settling the respective shares of his skin. Treaty which, to denote its origin, we called of Warsaw; though it was not finished there (shares of skin so difficult to settle), and '*Treaty* of *Leipzig*, 18th May 1745,' is its *alias* in Books:—of which Treaty, as the Sea-Powers had recoiled horror-struck, there was no whisper farther, to them or to the rest of exoteric mankind;—though it has been one of the busiest Entities ever since. From the Menzel Documents, I know not after what circuitous gropings and searchings, Friedrich first got notice of that Treaty: <sup>1</sup> figure his look on discovering it!

We said it was the remarkablest bit of sheepskin in its Century. Readers have heard too, That it was proposed to Brühl, by a grateful Austria, directly on signing the Peace of Dresden: 'Our Partition-Treaty stands all the same, does it not?'—and in what humour Brühl answered: 'Hah? Get Russia to join! Both these facts, That there is a Treaty of Warsaw, and that this is the Austrian-Saxon temper and intention towards him and it, Friedrich learned from the Menzel Documents. And if the reader will possess himself of these two facts, and

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<sup>1</sup> Now printed in *Œuvres de Frédéric*, iv. 40-42.

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understand that they are of a germinative, most vital quality, <sup>1755-1756</sup> indestructible by the times and the chances; and have been growing and developing themselves, day and night ever since, in a truly wonderful manner,—the reader knows in substance what Menzel had to reveal.

Russia was got to join;—there are methods of operating on Russia, and kindling a poor fat Czarina into strange suspicions and indignations. In May 1746, within six months of the Peace of Dresden, a Treaty of Petersburg, new version of the Warsaw one, was brought to parchment; Czarina and Empress-Queen signing,—Brühl dying to sign, but not daring. How Russia has been got to join, and more and more vigorously bear a hand; how Brühl's rabidities of appetite, and terrors of heart, have continued ever since; how Austria and Russia,—Brühl aiding with hysterical alacrity, haunted by terror (and at last mercifully *excused* from signing),—have, year after year, especially in this last year 1755, brought the matter nearer and nearer perfection; and the Two Imperial Majesties, with Brühl to rear, wait only till they are fully ready, and the world gives opportunity, to pick a quarrel with Friedrich, and overwhelm and partition him, according to covenant: This, wandering through endless mazes of detail, is in sum what the Menzel Documents disclose to Friedrich and us. How, in a space of ten years, the small seedgrain of a Treaty of Warsaw, or Treaty of Petersburg, planted and nourished in that manner, in the Satan's Invisible World, has grown into a mighty Tree there,—prophetic of Facts near at hand; which were extremely sanguinary to the Human Race for the next Seven Years.

This is the sum-total: but for Friedrich's sake, and to illustrate the situation, let us take a few glances more, into the then Satan's Invisible World, which had become so ominously busy round Friedrich and others. The Czarina, we say, was got to engage; 22d May 1746, there came a Treaty of Petersburg duly valid, which is that of Warsaw under a new name: and still Brühl durst not, for above a year coming,—not till August 15th, 1747;<sup>1</sup> and then, only in a hypothetic half-and-half way, with fear and trembling, though with hunger unspeakable, in sight of the viands. A very wretched Brühl, as seen in these Menzel Documents. On poor Polish Majesty Brühl has played the sorcerer, this long while, and ridden him, as he would an enchanted quadruped, in a shameful manner: but how, in turn (as we

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoire Raisonné* (in *Gesammelte Nachrichten*), i. 459.



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study Menzel), is Brühl himself hag-ridden, hunted by his own devils, and leads such a ghastly phantasmal existence yonder, in the Valley of the Shadow of *Clothes*,—mere Clothes, metaphorical and literal!<sup>1</sup> Wretched Brühl, agitated with hatreds of a rather infernal nature, and with terrors of a not celestial, comes-out on our sympathies, as a dog almost pitiable,—were that possible, with twelve tailors sewing for him, and a Saxony getting shoved over the precipices by him.

A famishing dog in the most singular situation. What he dare do, he does, and with such a will. But there is almost only one thing safe to him: that of egging-on the Czarina against Friedrich; of coining lies to kindle Czarish Majesty; of wafting on every wind rumours to that end, and continually besieging with them the empty Czarish mind. Brühl has many Conduits, 'the Sieur de Funck,' 'the Sieur Gross,' plenty of Legationary Sieurs and Conduits;—which issue from all quarters on Petersburg, and which find there a Reservoir, and due Russian *service-pipes*, prepared for them;—and Brühl is busy. 'Commerce of Dantzig to be ruined,' suggests he, 'that is plain: look at his Asiatic Companies, his Port of Embden. Poland is to be stirred-up;—has not your Czarish Majesty heard of his intrigues there? Courland, which is almost become your Majesty's,—cunningly snatched by your Majesty's address, like a valuable moribund whale adrift among the shallows,—this bad man will have it out to sea again, with the harpoons in it; fairly afloat amid the Polish Anarchies again!' These are but specimens of Brühl. Or we can give such in Brühl's own words, if the reader had rather. Here are Two, which have the advantage of brevity:

1°. \* \* The Sieur de Funck, Saxon Minister at Petersburg, wrote to Count Brühl, 9th July 1755 (says an inexorable Record),

'That the Sieur Gross' (now Minister of Russia at Dresden, who

<sup>1</sup> 'Montrez-moi des vertus, pas des culottes (Have you no virtues, then, to show me; nothing but pairs of breeches)!' exclaimed an impatient French Traveller, led about in Brühl's Palace one day: Archenholtz, *Geschichte des Siebenjährigen Krieges*, i. 63.

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vanished out of Berlin like an angry sky-rocket some years ago)<sup>[1755-1756]</sup> ‘would do a good service to the Common Cause, if he wrote to his Court, “That the King of Prussia had found a channel in Courland, by which he learned all the secrets of the Russian Court;”’ and Sieur Funck added, ‘that it was expected good use could be made of such a story with her Czarish Majesty.’—To which Count Brühl replies, 23d July, ‘That he has instructed the Sieur Gross, who will not fail to act in consequence.’

2°. Sieur Prasse, same Funck’s Secretary of Legation, at Petersburg, writes to Count Brühl, 12th April 1756 :

‘I am bidden signify to your Excellency that it is greatly wished, in order to favour certain views, you would have the goodness to cause arrive in Petersburg, by different channels, the following intelligence : “That the King of Prussia, on pretext of Commerce, is sending officers and engineers into the Ukraine, to reconnoitre the Country and excite a rebellion there.” And this advice, be pleased to observe, is not to come direct from the Saxon Court, nor by the Envoy Gross, but by some third party,—to the end there may be no concert noticed ;—as they’ (*l’on*, the ‘service-pipes,’ and managing Excellencies, Russian and Austrian) ‘have given the same commission to other Ministers, so that the news shall come from more places than one.

‘They’ (the said managing Excellencies) ‘have also required me to write to the Baron de Sack,’ our Saxon Minister in Sweden, ‘upon it, which I will not fail to do ; and they assured me that our Court’s advantage was not less concerned in it than that of their own ; adding these words’ (comfortable to one’s soul), “‘The King of Prussia” (in 1745) “gave Saxony a blow which it will feel for fifty years ; but we will give him one which he will feel for a hundred.”’

To which beautiful suggestion Excellency Brühl answers, 2d June 1756 : ‘As to the Secret Commission of conveying to Petersburg, by concealed channels, Intelligence of Prussian machinations in the Ukraine, we are still busy finding-out a right channel ; and they’ (*l’on*, the managing Excellencies) ‘shall very soon, one way or the other, see the effect of my personal inclination to second what is so good an intention, though a little artful (*un peu artificieuse*,—*un peu*, nothing to speak of) !<sup>1</sup>

Fancy a poor fat Czarina, of many appetites, of little judgment, continually beaten-upon in this manner by these Saxon-Austrian artists and their Russian service-pipes. Bombarded with cunningly-devised fabrications, every wind freighted for her with phantasmal rumours, no ray of direct daylight visiting the poor Sovereign Woman ; who is lazy, not malignant

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoire Raisonné* (in *Gesammelte Nachrichten*), i. 424-5 ; and *ib.* 472.