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SOBIESKI

*King of Poland*

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JOHN III, KING OF POLAND

(A contemporary portrait in the National Museum at Warsaw. Artist unknown)

# SOBIESKI

*King of Poland*

BY  
J. B. MORTON

MCMXXXII  
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*To my friend*

FRANCIS CZARNOMSKI

*Fuit homo missus a Deo cui nomen erat Joannes.*

(The text of Father Marco Aviano's sermon, which he preached in the Church of the Augustines, on September 13th, 1683, after the relief of Vienna and the victory of Sobieski over the Turks. Pope Pius V greeted the victory of Don John of Austria at Lepanto in the same words.)

*I do not despair of Europe . . . the deep springs of her life  
are still there, concealed but not dried up.*

(Jacques Maritain.)

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS book is an attempt to reconstruct, for English readers, the last and highest moment of Poland's existence as a great European Power, before the complete chaos which led to the Partitions. I am aware that the subject is an unfamiliar one, and that it has not yet attracted English scholarship and research. But now that Poland has re-arisen, I think it likely that an interest in the major episodes of her history may be awakened.

The very unfamiliarity of this story, coupled with its dramatic quality, led me to burden my text with footnotes, and to add a bibliography, lest the reader should think that what he read was mere fantasy.

Let me add that if, in this study, I have seemed to emphasise the nobility of Sobieski's motives, it is because his devotion to the Catholic Faith was undoubtedly the strongest thing in him, and is the only intelligible explanation of his actions. And I would ask those who are prepared to debate this conclusion to read his letters and his speeches.

J. B. M.



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Seebass : *Die Turken vor Wien, 1683*.  
Tatham : *John Sobieski*.  
Vanet : *Histoire des Turcs*.

For a general survey of the period the student is recommended to the *Cambridge Modern History*, Volume V, Chapter XII, pages 338-371 ; and part of Chapter II. For the rise of Prussia, see Chapters XX and XXI of the same volume. For the Swedish-Polish war, see Volume IV, Chapter XX.

The fullest life of Sobieski is the well-documented book of the Polish historian Tadeusz Korzon, mentioned above. It was published in Cracow in 1898, but takes the reader no further than 1674, the year of Sobieski's election to the throne. The older and less reliable work by Salvandy, published in 1829, covers the whole period. For the period 1674 onwards the best book is Dupont's memoirs. This French officer arrived in Poland in that year, and fought in all the chief campaigns. His book was published in 1885, and my map of the Siege of Vienna is based on his sketch. The best contemporary descriptions of Sobieski are those of Dupont, the Abbé F. D. S., Doctor Connor, who was his Court physician, and Dr. South, Chaplain to Hyde's embassy in 1676. Dr. Connor's book is valuable also for its descriptions of Polish manners and customs at that time.

Besides the original authorities I have mentioned there are

a number of Getman accounts of the Siege of Vienna, such as Vaelckeren's "Vienna a Turcis obsessa," a diary of the days between May 6th and September 15th. There is Zaluski's "Mowly na Radach," a collection of speeches made in the Diet. There is the "Bellorum Inter Christianos et Turcos Conspectio" of Hartnaccius. The French memoirs of the time of Louis XIV may also be consulted, notably those of Coulanges, Chavagnac, Pomponne, de Choisy and Saint-Simon, and the fortunes of the minor characters in the story may be more closely followed by referring to le Clerc's "Histoire d'Eméric, Comte de Tékéli," published anonymously in 1694, at Cologne; Vols. 9-11 of Kostomarov, dealing with Bogdan Chmielnicki (Mérimée also wrote of this Cossack hero in his "Les Cosaques d'autrefois"); and Locatelli's<sup>1</sup> account of Morosini's campaigns from 1684-1690. Several of the historical novels of Sienkiewicz, dealing with the period of Sobieski, have been published in English translations, and give a vivid picture of the times. Such are "On the Field of Glory" and "Pan Michael."

I have used, in the text of my book, and in the maps, the Polish spelling even of those places in the story which are just outside the Polish frontiers. Thus Chocim will appear on a modern map as Chotin or Hotim, and is now in Roumania. Similarly, Kamieniec, now in Soviet Russia, appears to-day as Kamenets Podolski. In the case of other places, further afield, whose names have been changed by the rearrangement of frontiers after the European War or for other reasons, I have given the new names in brackets. Thus Raab is to-day Győr, Komorn is Komorón, and Gran or (Strigonium) is Esztergom.

<sup>1</sup> "Racconta della Veneta Guerra in Levante Diretta dal Principe F. Morosini" (published in 1691).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I DESIRE to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to Professors Sobieski and Dyboski, who interested themselves in this book while I was in Cracow ; to General Kukiel, of the Czartoryski Museum in Cracow, who brought several invaluable documents to my notice ; to M. Sokolnicki, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw ; to M. Gembarzewski, of the National Museum in Warsaw ; to M. Brodl, with whom I went to Wilanow ; to MM. Dembinski and Bierowski, of the Polish High Commissioner's Office in Danzig, for hospitality and much useful information ; to Doctor Borowy, who gave me help in obtaining the pictures ; to Mlle. Marja Slomczanka, for her co-operation in research work, and for making translations ; and finally to my very good friend M. Czarnomski, of the Polish Embassy in London, who was kind enough to make many valuable suggestions.

J. B. MORTON.



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

WHENEVER the future of Europe is discussed, it is upon Poland that the debate ultimately concentrates, and it is impossible to make any sense out of Poland's importance to-day unless we realise that she was a great European Power when Prussia was a little subject state and Russia a mob of savages.

The first fact that emerges from even the most casual reading of Polish history is the close parallel between the part she was called upon to play in the seventeenth century, and the part she is once more playing to-day. She is still the European outpost. Then the enemy was Islam; to-day it is Communism. Then she had in her rear a treacherous Austria; to-day the Prussian Reich remains, in spite of the advice of Foch, to dominate Germany, and to brood upon the failure of a deliberate plan to exterminate the Polish nation. Geography and history have destined Poland to take up her old position as the warden of all that tangle of ill-defined frontiers which has never been completely westernised. And she has already given a sign for the world to see, that she has not forgotten her long tradition of warfare against whatever disruptive force threatens Western Europe. She stands between us and the Russian experiment. The roads along which the old raids came out of the Asiatic steppes have already seen the Marxian banners borne by the armies of a new anarchy. To-day, as in the seventeenth century, Europe is disunited.

This book is the story of a Polish nobleman of the seventeenth century, who spent his life fighting against the Turks



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

and the Tartars, and died a king, and full of glory. He himself planned and executed the last great exploit in which his country was concerned, before she dwindled and disappeared. He saved Europe outside the walls of Vienna in 1683, and blasted the last Turkish dream of planting the Crescent on St. Peter's at Rome, and making the Christian Princes dependants of the Porte. But although the rescue of Vienna was the most important (as well as the most spectacular) achievement in a life crammed with achievement, there remain for consideration more than forty years of incessant fighting on the frontiers and beyond them. Only his moral force and the spiritual strength that never failed him will account for repeated victories over enormously superior numbers. In almost every campaign he undertook it was the same tale of hastily raised troops mutinying because they could not get their pay. Even the nobility frequently deserted on the eve of an action, or refused to obey orders in the middle of a battle. Again, in almost every crisis the absurd Constitution prevented anything being done with speed, and he was likely enough to find, at the moment of marching against the enemy, that his ministers and even his wife were plotting against him, or conspiring with the ambassadors of foreign Powers to paralyse his arm. Nothing, I repeat, but moral strength could have kept him self-confident under the burden of such responsibility as few men have had to bear.

By tenacity and by an uncompromising fidelity to one idea, deplored by many modern historians, he had, before he died, added a splendour and a renown to his country which made even the young soldiers and courtiers of Versailles leave their own country and follow him to the wars. For a moment he, and not Louis XIV, was the great figure in Europe. But he himself did not live to know the extent of his victory at Vienna. After winning one of the decisive actions of the world, he died broken-hearted, prophesying Poland's doom. Is there not a meaning worth marking for us to-day in the life of a man who called upon the Christian countries in a

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

moment of peril to forget their mean quarrels and shabby rivalries, and to remember their past and the heritage handed down ; who turned his back on the new diplomatic chicanery, and preached the idea of a unified Christendom once more barring the way to the Infidel ; who strove to build a national policy on a foundation more solid than fashionable opportunism ?

The principal episodes in the story of John Sobieski are as simple and startling as any in the old heroic tales of battle and of a great love. But there is such a confused and shifting background of detail, and the events described are so unfamiliar to the English reader, that it is impossible to tell the story in that straightforward narrative style which would make it most dramatic, and therefore easiest to read. As an instance of what I mean, nothing would be easier than to describe the preparations for the relief of Vienna as they would be described in an historical novel, or in an account designed for an historical picture of an isolated episode. But half the point of what preceded the relief is the degraded Bourbon-Hapsburg quarrel which at that time filled European politics and debased everything it touched. Indeed, when one has waded through the morass of intrigue and double-dealing, and turned back to look at the central figure of the story, Sobieski stands out more clearly and more nobly by the very contrast.

The story is a tragedy, and has the solemn movement of a planned drama. There is the consciousness, as one reads, of a Power at work to make success futile and glory nothing but a show. And the end comes with shallow and ignoble people clamouring and bickering in the very death-chamber of a great man mortally stricken.

It has been said of him that he was a man of the Middle Ages, an anachronism, one born out of his time, and too late. He was certainly the last of the crusaders, for after him we shall find nobody to whom Europe was such a reality ; but to say that he was born too late is to talk empty nonsense. He was born at exactly the right moment, when there was nobody else who could do his work. That work he

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

accomplished, although he died before Carlowitz, and so never knew how completely his dream had come true. All his life he had been prevented from developing his victories, and from wresting any final settlement from the Turks, and as he lay dying he expected that one day the Porte would send another gigantic army up the Danube, to make one more attempt upon the West. But this never came to pass. He had carried out the duty which his mother had so fervently preached to him in his boyhood at Zolkiew.

The very splendour of his deeds, and the fact that they could not save Poland, have led some historians to say that personal ambition was the mainspring of his character. This shallow judgment is at variance with his recorded utterances, with his behaviour at moments of crisis in his life, with all that we know of him. It is a disastrous misunderstanding of the man, for instance, to suggest that, after relieving Vienna, he undertook the Hungarian campaign out of a mere thirst for renown. It is to make nothing of the oath by which he had bound himself; it is, incidentally, to suggest that he was ignorant of the most elementary principles of warfare. As he found it necessary to point out to his Queen, a general does not break off hostilities in the middle of a campaign. There are modern Polish historians who, without stressing his ambition, regard the whole business of Vienna as a foolish piece of chivalry, since, they say, he might have bargained with the Turk and bought him off. I doubt it.

Attempts to belittle him on the score of ambition make much of the arduous campaigns over the eastern frontier at the end of his life, as though he were not already gorged with renown, and were not desirous only of taking his rest in the gardens of Wilanow. His detractors should rather settle on the disgraceful desertion during the Swedish war. That, at least, is an unpleasant fact that cannot be avoided. An ambitious man would not have postponed his coronation for two years in order to go on risking his life in battle. An ambitious man would have accepted an offer from Louis XIV to make a career in the French Army, in which army he had

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

held a commission as a young man, and would have left a country where intrigue and ingratitude were the only rewards of service.

The charge, commonly levelled against him, of avarice is equally easily refuted. In an age when all around him were avaricious, he was conspicuous for his gifts to churches and religious orders, for endowments, and for a lavish distribution of booty after his victories. Over and over and over again we shall find him paying troops out of his own pocket, or selling land or other possessions to equip them or to buy guns. The Queen's tastes were of the most extravagant, his own those of a cultured gentleman of means. It is true that he left a large fortune and owned many properties, for he was wise enough to know that his family, after his death, might be the victims of any chance mood of the nobles, and find themselves glad of what they could get. He had, certainly, a love of pageantry and of the magnificence of rich accoutrements which at times seemed to be more Eastern than Western. In this he resembled the Poles of the period. But those who should go to his palace of Wilanow to-day, expecting an Oriental pleasure-house, would be surprised to find a small, two-storey building in the style of the French Renaissance, with but few rooms, and with such formal gardens as any gentleman, after a life of action, might take pleasure in laying out.

In the matter of his campaigns, the point to seize is that he was a fighting leader, which accounts for his effect on the Turks and Tartars. Had he been a mere director of operations from behind the battle, there would have grown up no such legend about his name. It was not any deeply-considered strategy of his that made them call him a wizard. It was some sudden tactical experiment, or even some ferocious assault which he led in person. We shall find him trudging among his soldiers across the steppes, as Napoleon marched over the Guadarrama, heartening all by his example, and by a strength of will that communicated itself to others. In attempting not to overrate the Turks and Tartars as a fighting

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

force, it is easy to underrate them. At first consideration there appears to be something as fantastic as a fairy tale in the repeated accounts of actions in which hundreds of thousands are kept at bay by a mere handful, and finally routed. Yet this is exactly what happened. It is easy to say, as has been said, that against a trained European army these hordes would have achieved nothing. But a French captain who fought under Sobieski has left his opinion that nobody who was not accustomed to their methods of warfare could have done anything with them. The Tartar rapidity and their insensibility to fatigue or hardship were on a scale beyond anything imagined in Western Europe; and it is as well to remember that the Turks, although swollen by a crowd of camp-followers and a rabble of marauders, had a core of well-disciplined, well-trying infantry, a plentiful artillery which included heavy siege guns, and all the up-to-date methods of fortification and entrenchment; also a valuable fanaticism that made them despise death. They were not tenacious—a long campaign wearied them, and a defeat became, almost automatically, a rout—but they had an inexhaustible man-power, and their leaders were perpetually spurred on to fresh efforts by the knowledge that a defeat, followed quickly enough by a victory, might yet save their throats from the Sultan's strangler.

As the story draws to a close, we shall see how the prestige of Sobieski's name worked upon those timid border countries whose rulers veered between the Crescent and the Cross, as the chance served. News of his approach nerved them to revolt. A rumour that he was far afield brought them back on their knees to the Sultan. The old saying about one man's name being worth so many army corps became more than a figure of speech, and it is easy to understand the request of the defeated Turks, after a long siege, that they might be permitted to file past the Polish King of whom such tales were told.

The magnitude of Sobieski's achievement in holding his crumbling country together and keeping Islam at bay is a



*John the third,*

*King of Poland*

*Great Champion of the Cross which glorious Name  
 Engraving all Heroes in the Bookies of Fame,  
 When Future Ages shall thy Picture see,  
 And read the Wonder of thy Gallanry,  
 In bended knees they must thy shrine adore  
 When hoisted Mahomet shall be no more.*

*After the later engraving.*

JOHN III, KING OF POLAND

(From a contemporary English engraving)



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

matter for astonishment when we consider the material he had at his command, and the intrigues and jealousies which hampered him, and interfered with the civil and military business of the kingdom throughout his life. But astonishment grows when it is realised that even his private life was full of exasperations and humiliations. When he turned homewards after months of fighting, it was not in the knowledge that repose awaited him. The Queen, Marie Casimire, was unfitted to be the wife of such a man. Her extravagance, her continual plotting, her petulance strained his loyalty to her, but did not break it. From his letters to her we can judge how she maddened him with her trivialities, but almost always he was able to laugh away his irritation and to treat her shortcomings as he would have treated the whims and caprices of a little child. He was held in chains. It seems that he had to love her. But of the many follies and weaknesses into which he is accused of having been led by this attachment to a worthless woman, one must be denied. He never put her before the work of his life—which is one of the reasons why she so whined and scratched. He delayed his departure for the camp when she was in ill-health, but he did not delegate his command and remain with her. He told her he longed to be with her, after Vienna, but not all her scolding and pleading curtailed the Hungarian campaign. He made her wait two years for her crown, after his election to the throne. And even at the end of his life, when her solicitude for his health moved him deeply, and gave him the illusion that, after so much endured, there might be perfect understanding between them, even then she could not hold him from the battle-field.

The few contemporary descriptions of Sobieski which we possess agree upon the main points. He was tall, of a majestic presence, yet of a simple courtesy that put all at their ease. His large dark eyes were set in a full face, which grew heavy as he became corpulent. His conversation was lively and well-informed, and he loved discussions upon metaphysical, theological or scientific questions. He ate



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

well and drank deeply, but his personal tastes were simple, and he preferred to dine only with his family and a few chosen friends. His head was shaved on the crown, and he had long drooping moustaches, but no beard. He was sparing of personal ornament, and his dress was the rich yet unostentatious dress of a Polish nobleman. When, however, he rode at the head of his army, he arrayed himself in splendour and denied to his followers none of the pomp and pageantry which they enjoyed so much. Great hardihood and physical strength enabled him to endure all weathers and all deprivations, and he never spared himself. Even at the time of the siege of Vienna he was fat and heavy, and had to be helped on to his horse, but once mounted he could remain in the saddle all day and sleep rough at the end of it.

There are few pictures of him, and fewer monuments. But one statue, still in existence, should be of interest to English readers.

Sir Robert Viner, a seventeenth-century Lord Mayor of London, acquired in Italy, at Livorno, a statue representing Sobieski overcoming the Turk. He brought it back to London in 1675, changed the head of Sobieski to that of Charles II, but left the figure of the Turk untouched; intending, as some said, to change it to that of Oliver Cromwell. At the end of the seventeenth century the statue was set up in the Stocks Market, on the site of the present Mansion House, where it remained many years. Every day crowds gazed at Charles II with a Polish body overcoming a Turk. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the statue came into the possession of a descendant of Sir Robert Viner, who found it in an inn yard in 1779, and took it to his country house at Grantby in Lincolnshire. In 1883 it was again removed, to Newby Hall, Ripon; where it stands at present in Newby Park, the property of Captain Compton.

## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

POLAND, as an organised state, enters history in the later middle years of the tenth century. Before the reign of Miesco I (962-992) this branch of the Slav race had from time to time formed itself into a community in order to resist invasions of the barbarians out of Asia. But it was the introduction of Christianity that created the Polish nation, conscious of itself, armed and subject to a powerful king. In a few years Boleslas the Brave, the first fighting king, had expanded his possessions in every direction, with the Vistula basin as his pivot, and had established his hold on the border provinces so firmly that the country emerged from a period of barbaric invasion and a fairly widespread uprising against the Christian religion as strong as ever, with the framework of her Constitution unshaken. But the eleventh century was a time of doubt for Poland. At one moment she appeared as a state securely founded and proof against internal and external shock, at another it seemed certain that the disturbances within her borders and outside them must destroy the work of her early kings.

From these first years, from the very beginning of her history, the outline of her story is plainly traced. Her main business then and ever afterwards was the occupation of the mouth of the Vistula and a firm foothold on the Baltic, both for her economic life and her security against the Teutons; a strong and centralised administration, which alone could deal with the perils of her geographical situation; and an undivided front against the invaders from the steppes beyond her frontiers. Those, her earliest problems, are her problems to-day. There is no country in Europe whose interests and

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whose duty have been so clearly defined and have changed less; and no country that has suffered more. From the moment of her reception into the Catholic Church, her destiny as a bulwark of Europe was inevitable. From the moment of her consolidation as a unity, the Vistula mouth became essential to her. Only by substituting an absurd system of elective monarchy for a Slav dynasty and a strong Constitution did she bring upon herself the miseries and tragedies of over two hundred years.

By the early years of the twelfth century, Stettin, the port of the Oder, was Polish, but only for a short time, for the country was on the eve of two hundred years of incessant dissension, the immediate cause of which was the rivalry of the great feudal nobles, who, after the death of the third Boleslas, obeyed no central authority and lost all sense of Poland as a nation. The work of the early kings had been premature, and all was to be done over again. The lawless condition of the country, and the absence of any dominating will, opened the gates for the watchful barbarians. In the middle of the thirteenth century the squat and hideous Tartars rode across the Podolian march, burning and harrying throughout the length and breadth of Poland. No organised resistance met them, for those who could have led a national army were quarrelling among themselves. Encouraged by this first experience of easy booty, these barbarian raiders returned whenever they thought fit. Their descents became a kind of perpetual refrain to every period of Polish history. Turk, Tartar, Cossack all looked upon Poland as their hunting-ground for hundreds of years, until Eugene completed the work of Sobieski and the great Ottoman Empire was smashed to pieces.

Another result of the chaos in Poland was the painstaking impregnation of the Polish borders with Teutonic ideas, and the arrival of German merchants and settlers in the Polish towns. Even at this early date the stubbornness and strength of character of the peasantry were the only guarantee of survival. The nobles had not yet been tested by the only

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thing that was to make them remember what they all had in common—a menace to their religion. During the thirteenth century, also, the Teutonic Knights, heirs of the twelfth-century Teutonic Order of Acre, settled on the Baltic shore, at the invitation of a bishop, and dedicated themselves to a war on the pagan tribes of that part. Poles, fighting side by side with these knights, exterminated the original Prussian tribe of heathens, and a Duke of Masovia presented the Order with the district of Kulm. At about the same time the Knights of the Sword received Livonia as a fief from the Pope.

Thus was sown the seed of modern Prussia.

It was not until the first years of the fourteenth century, and the final triumph of Ladislas the Short, that order began to appear. The process of recuperation was a laborious one. The country had become accustomed to a state of civil war, but the restoration was helped on by two factors. First, Ladislas had the vigour and the character so much needed. He brought back the idea of absolute monarchy. Secondly, throughout the two centuries of disruption the Church had been steadily increasing its influence, so that when the country emerged from its graver troubles, the Church was there, firmly established and ready to apply its authority to the business of civilising. The monasteries had never ceased from their educational work, and when political unity came in sight once more, the great churchmen took their places in the national Council.

Ladislas had three major problems to face. He had to confront and overcome the distaste of his subjects for a strong king, and to lead them slowly to realise the advantages, even to themselves, of a united Poland. To achieve this it was necessary for him to break down the now almost traditional custom of private wars inside the kingdom, and to show himself stronger than the feudal nobility. He had to deal with the numerous German settlers, who objected to being ruled by a Polish king, and especially by one who made no secret of his national feeling. He had to dispose

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of the claims of a Czech family to the Polish throne. When he died in 1333 he had prepared the way for the prosperous Poland of the later Middle Ages. He left to his son, the third Casimir, a foreign policy (alliances, through marriage, with Hungary to the south and Lithuania to the north) and the foundations necessary for peaceful development. Upon the latter Casimir concentrated his attention, fearing no extremes of opportunism in diplomacy. He was no warrior, and it is debatable whether the sacrifices which he made in order to leave his country happy and at rest were not too great. In 1335, for instance, he bought off the Czech claims to the Polish throne by the surrender of the Silesian march and the Masovian plain. The latter returned to Poland in the next century, but Silesia, and then only a section of it, did not become part of Polish land again until our own time. In the seventh year of his reign Casimir, to offset his losses of territory and prestige, claimed the South Russian territory called Red Russia, and finally won it by arms. Polish historians have taken this moment as marking an important change in the foreign policy of their country. Before the end of Casimir's reign a considerable expansion eastwards brought Volhynia and Podolia under Polish domination. It was as though Poland had for the moment turned her back on the Baltic and had seen, far away, the Black Sea. The new eastern lands, under-populated but very fertile, were to be the scene of a blunder of far-reaching consequences. Poland now found within her dominions an outpost of the Eastern Church. Partly through an easy toleration (the result of a kind of lethargy, a lack of iron in Casimir's character), and partly through the inability of a newly-restored country to undertake a propaganda campaign on any scale, the Byzantine form of Christianity remained side by side with the Catholic settlers. The lack of a hard line drawn between Europe and the East, between Western and Eastern civilisation, was destined to be felt long afterwards. At the moment of writing these words the Ukrainian question remains unsettled. However, as M. Roman Dyboski has said, Casimir's move-

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ment eastwards " moved the frontier of civilised Europe two hundred miles further to the East." It moved the frontier, but the border between the two religions and the two cultures was never clearly enough defined.

It was in this reign that the body of Polish law was collected and codified by lawyers and churchmen, and a Court of Appeal was set up in the capital city of Cracow, where also was founded the famous University, on the model of Bologna. In this reign also the Jews became rooted in the Polish towns, where, at a time when Europe was hostile to them, they were sure of an asylum, and of opportunities for carrying on their business of moneylending. The Jewish quarter of Cracow to-day bears the name of its fourteenth-century founder, Casimir.

After the death of Casimir, childless, there was an ineffectual Hungarian king. The impetus given to the country by the dead king carried her along through the eleven years of the Hungarian's reign. And then, after a year or two of civil war, Hedwiga, daughter of Louis of Hungary, was raised to the throne. She is chiefly noteworthy for having married shortly after her coronation the ruler of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Ladislas Jagello married Hedwiga in the year 1386. The immediate result was the union of the two countries, and the reception of the ruler and of a considerable part of the population of Lithuania into the Church. Up to this time Lithuania had hesitated between the Latin civilisation and the Byzantine, and had remained, for the most part, pagan. The union with Poland brought her into Europe. It also gave Poland, for nearly two hundred years, a strong hereditary monarchy, an ally against the Teutons (the battles of Grunwald and Tannenberg were only won nine years after the signing of the Act of Union), and constant help against the Tartar invaders.

It was through his second wife, Sophia, that King Ladislas II (the title taken by Jagello) was able to found the Jagellonian dynasty. Sophia bore him two sons. One became Ladislas III,

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the other Casimir IV. But before their turn came the father had built on the foundation left by the third Casimir. He, before his death, ruled over thirty million subjects. The river Dnieper, from Smolensk to Kiev, was Polish, as was the town of Vilna and the territories of Red Russia and Podolia. But over the early years of this century brooded an air of expectancy, as though the consolidation of the eastern frontier provinces were not the main business of the time. The old question of access to the Baltic now meant, more surely than ever before, a conflict with the German power. The time was clearly at hand when there would be no room for both Slav and Teuton in that quarter of the world. The more ordered and unified the kingdom of Poland became, the more obvious were the problems to be solved. She had to watch the East and the West at the same time, and both duties made more essential the union with Lithuania. The Lithuanians themselves became aware of the advantages of such a system when the Tartars rode in and defeated them in the last year of the fourteenth century. The constant Tartar menace turned the thoughts of Poland to the necessity of a strong government, and the coming struggle against the Teutons was made even more certain when it was known that they and the Czechs had suggested a partition of Poland. Ladislas II saw what was coming, and worked for a closer and more fruitful union between his country and the Lithuanians. Nor was his task easy, since there was still in Lithuania a disorderly pagan element, and it was by no means easy for a country, finding itself in the midst of a strange Western civilisation, to settle down. Lithuania's past history had not been the best preparation for the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. The alliance and then the Union had been sudden, and she found herself expected to breathe the strong Catholic air as though it were normal to her.

As early as 1410 the united forces of the two countries defeated decisively the Germans at the famous battles of Grunwald and Tannenberg. The result of the former was the cession to Lithuania of her province of Samogitia. The

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result of the latter was not fully enjoyed until the Peace of Torun (1466) gave West Prussia and Danzig to Poland, and the suzerainty over the German population. From this moment the Teutonic Knights retired to East Prussia. In 1526 this last important stronghold of the old Order was secularised by Albert of Brandenburg-Anspach, who became a Lutheran. East Prussia was converted into a Duchy, under an hereditary ruler whose overlord did homage to the King of Poland for his lands. This ceremony was repeated for the last time in October 1641, when the great Elector of Brandenburg, Frederick William I, travelled to Warsaw, and a Hohenzollern knelt before the King of Poland, Ladislas IV, and took the oath of fealty.

The victories over the Teutons, won side by side, strengthened the union.

It may be as well to point out here that Lithuania occupied a very large territory at this time, extending on the north beyond the Dwina, and southwards right down to the shore of the Black Sea. Eastward it stretched from the Polish boundary far into what is to-day Russia. Lithuania, in other words, took in modern Lithuania and the country north-eastwards as far as the latitude of Riga in Latvia; Smolensk, Kiev and most of the Dnieper basin; the shore of the Black Sea between, say, Odessa and Ochakov. It touched the borders of what is to-day Roumania (and was then Moldavia) and confronted the Khanate of the Crim Tartars.

The early fighting years of the Jagellonian dynasty were momentous years in the history of Europe. The Turkish peril was growing, and the Ottoman Empire in Europe brought the soldiers of Islam close up to the south-eastern frontier of Poland. Ladislas III, son of Jagello, was to fall on the field of Varna, in battle with the Turkish army, in 1444. In 1453 Constantinople was captured. The new Russian kingdom of the Muscovites was taking shape over the Lithuanian border. And, lastly, the ideas which were to disintegrate Europe and destroy the unity of Christendom were beginning to be discussed.



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Poland had been made and civilised by the Catholic Church. A strong king, Ladislas I, had rescued the country from the anarchy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This had been possible only because he had the backing of the Church, and because throughout this period of darkness and dissolution the Church had remained the repository of everything that is meant by Western civilisation. In her hands alone was the power to set in motion once more the civilising influences. It was as though a great tide, sweeping all away, had left unmoved a solitary rock. And what the Church did for Europe after the Dark Ages she did for Poland in the fourteenth century.

The expansion of Poland in the later Middle Ages was too rapid, and outpaced the development of her administrative machinery. Also, her conquests turned too often into mere overlordships. The new ideas had entered the country the more easily because there was no stabilised authority in the welter of races and creeds that composed her vague frontiers. Thus, in the Ukraine the Armenian rite, the Orthodox rite and the Catholic Church existed side by side. The Polish missionaries had been fully occupied in the Christianisation of the pagan Lithuanians.

There was, for a time, a Hussite party in Poland, almost entirely confined to the nobility. For neither at this time nor later did the ideas of the Reformers make any impression upon the peasantry. It will be interesting to remember this when, later, we see these peasants, who are little more than slaves, rise against a foreign invader in defence of their religion, and by personal example remind all men that the Polish cause and the Catholic cause are one.

Four circumstances, then, prevented the Polonisation of the newly-acquired territories: the growth of the Muscovite kingdom, the Turkish peril and the Tartar invasions, the perpetual conflict with the last of the Teutonic Knights and the coming of the Reformation. As to the first of these, the growth of Muscovy, there was a moment in the 'thirties of the fifteenth century when an understanding was reached

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between Moscow and Rome. An Act was signed, and it appeared that Muscovy was about to renounce the Eastern Church and enter Christendom. The promise of that moment was never fulfilled. Europe has not yet heard the last of that lost opportunity.

Casimir IV, the second son of Jagello, began his reign in 1447, and found himself in the midst of a nobility infected with discontent of two kinds: against the ever-growing power of the Church, and against the absolutism of the monarchy. He gave way to them in both matters. He defied Rome and began to appoint bishops himself, and he granted, by the Statutes of Nieszawa (1454), a Parliamentary Constitution, with a Lower House and an Upper House. This grant really amounted to nothing more than the ratification of a custom that had been slowly developing in the preceding years. Parliament was merely the evolution from periodical gatherings of the great nobles to discuss a policy or vote a tax. Casimir's important contribution to the idea was the enfranchisement of the smaller nobles—a measure, very largely, of self-defence. Poland owed many of her later misfortunes to the fact that the Parliamentary idea was never developed as it was in other countries. It was in this reign, also, that the King, by overruling his minister, Cardinal Olesnicki, established the Jews more securely than ever, and so bequeathed to his successors the problem that has assumed such alarming proportions in our day.

The fifteenth century brought the arts to their prime in Poland. Copernicus was an undergraduate at Cracow University, and Stoss was carving his Assumption for St. Mary's Church, still one of the glories of the ancient capital. It was also the century of the first printing-presses and of the full majesty of the Polish Gothic.

Before he died Casimir IV saw West Prussia and Ermeland become Polish.

As the sixteenth century proceeds, we see the stage being set, in a manner that has the inevitability of Fate, for what is to follow; for the agony and death of Poland. We see,

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it is true, in 1561, the secularisation of the last territories of the Teutonic Knights, and the erection of a new Polish fief. This gave Poland a Baltic sea-board, though Courland and Livonia remained German in population, in language and in culture. But there are more disquieting signs than the failure of Poland to consolidate her conquests. There is the appeal of a Hohenzollern to the Hapsburgs to support the German Baltic policy, and the alliance concluded between the Emperor Maximilian and the Czar at Moscow, and the final renunciation by Poland of all claims to the Hungarian and Czech crowns at the Congress of Vienna in 1515, under Sigismund I. With the Reformation the East Prussian population became a Protestant group, destined, in the seventeenth century, to turn to Brandenburg as its natural ally.

In this century, too, Europe was to perceive the meaning of the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire which followed the fall of Constantinople.

Mahomet II died in 1481, and left for his successors the inscription upon his tomb: "I wished to take Rhodes and subdue Italy." Bajazet II and Selim I extended the conquests of Mahomet II, and founded a strong navy, but it was left to Soliman II to occupy Rhodes, which he did in the second year of his reign. Even before this he had taken Belgrade, and so held the key of the Danube and an open road into Hungary. The feeble King of Hungary, Louis II, was not the man to oppose a victorious army. He himself and the best of the Hungarian nobility perished in the battle known as the Destruction of Mohacs. Soliman, with an immensely superior force, decided the issue in two hours. The treachery of Zapolya, the Transylvanian, whose cavalry might have made the defeat less ignominious, contributed to the triumph of the Turks. After such a victory Soliman began to talk of a decisive engagement beneath the walls of Vienna. Ferdinand, the Emperor, did not at first pay much attention to the rumours of Turkish preparations on a vast scale, and when at length the danger could not be ignored, by a stroke of good fortune the stores collected by the Turks for the great march

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were destroyed by storms. 1528, the year decided on for the Turkish advance, passed. On April 10th, 1529, all arrangements were completed, and the Sultan himself left his capital at the head of something under a quarter of a million men. This host crossed the Balkans, swept through Hungary, and, throwing out the usual advance guard of Tartar horsemen to burn and pillage, arrived at the gates of Vienna on the twenty-second day of September. There was a siege lasting three weeks. The final assaults failed and the Turks retreated. But Europe had had her warning.

One hundred years later was born the man who was destined to save Christendom from an even greater peril at the hands of the same Empire. The years between were filled with perpetual Turkish raids into Poland. Europe, apart from this bulwark and shield, was occupied, upon one side or other, with the Hapsburg-Bourbon conflict, and the terrible compromise by which Richelieu and Mazarin, in serving their own country, put nationalism first and the Catholic Faith second.

Within the Polish kingdom itself the fatal cleavage between the classes, which was to strike foreigners with amazement later on, was widening year by year. The nobles were growing more and more powerful, the peasants more and more completely enslaved. Before the century is half-way to its close, Sigismund I has found himself compelled to recognise the claim made by the nobles to the right of free election of kings. From this principle, and from the ridiculous *liberum veto* were to arise Poland's troubles in the years to come. Lack of a strong, central and hereditary monarchy led to increased lawlessness on the part of the great nobles, each of whom was a petty monarch; and the perpetual disorder of the kingdom opened all gates to the invaders from the Eastern Steppes, or to the Turkish armies coming up along the Dniester, to Kamieniec, Poland's key-fortress.

It is easy enough, when looking back, to see what was to happen in Poland. Wisdom after the event is a disease to which the historian is even more susceptible than are other

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men. Poland in this sixteenth century was spreading her culture among the Prussians and among the mixed races on her eastern borders. The landed gentry enjoyed a splendour and a luxury that by no means injured the strong military tradition in which they were brought up. The Muscovites and the Tartars made inroads at one time or another, but lack of discipline prevented them from being a too serious danger. Turkey, to the Pole, was Islam, and it seemed obvious that if ever Islam made another thrust at Europe, Christendom would remember the past and stand united. Who could have foreseen the ruin of the Austrian scheme by a Frenchman, and the country to which belongs the hegemony of Europe barred by jealousy and selfishness from the last Crusade of all; France standing aside in 1683?

All through the reign of Sigismund II (1548–1572) the nobles were increasing their power, and adding to the wealth and magnificence of the big towns. But this was also the period of the final Act of Union between Poland and Lithuania. It was signed at Lublin, a growing town south-east of Warsaw, after the ending of the nine years' war against Russia under Ivan the Terrible. It is interesting to note that though the countries were now strictly united under one king, yet the army and certain administrative posts were "doubled." That is to say—and it is of particular importance for what is to follow—certain Lithuanian officials were almost entirely independent of Polish authority. This explains the dual command, and the habitual desertions of Lithuanian gentry during the Turkish wars of the seventeenth century.

During this reign the Reformation fought hard, but was beaten in Poland; and that in spite of the fact that the cultured men and the gentry were nearly all hotly on the side of the new ideas. The King himself was considerably influenced, and if he had put himself at the head of a really national movement, Protestantism might have been forced on the peasantry as it was upon the people of England. Poland at this moment might have been lost to Christendom. But the danger blew over. There were sects here and there,

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particularly Socinianism,<sup>1</sup> but no united body against the old Faith. Like Arianism long before in Rome, Protestantism was the fashion for a while among the upper classes. When Sigismund accepted the Decrees of the Council of Trent the issue was settled beyond doubt, and the road was prepared for that sword of the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuit Order.

In 1572, with the death of Sigismund II, the Jagellonian dynasty came to an end. It had been remarkable for its almost unfailing supply of outstanding figures; warriors, law-givers, civilisers. In just under two hundred years these kings had made Poland into a European Power of the first class, with a clearly defined foreign policy. Only towards the end of the two hundred years had the selfishness and short-sightedness of the feudal nobles begun to wreck the Constitution. But, in spite of a domestic policy frustrated, the country had held the Muscovites off, subjugated the Prussians, planted herself on the Baltic coast, advanced the Western culture and the Catholic Faith over the Lithuanian borders in the North, and into the south-eastern marches between Russia and herself. She had seen the final Act of Union with Lithuania, and herself administering a kingdom that included West Prussia, the Ukraine, Podolia and Volhynia. To crown this good work done, eight years before the death of the last of the line, she rejected the spiritual poison that had begun to infect her, and stood once more as a Catholic outpost fronting Islam and Muscovy.

The years immediately following the end of the great dynasty were less calamitous than might have been expected. Henry of Anjou, a Valois, was elected king, after a stormy interregnum, but the death of Charles of France soon recalled him, and in his place was elected a man whose successes were so startling and whose governance so able that the great moments of the Jagellonian dynasty were equalled; even, perhaps, surpassed. This man was Stephen Bathory, a

<sup>1</sup> A Unitarian heresy started by Lælius Socinus and his nephew Faustus, of Sienna. Faustus was exiled for his opinions, and took refuge in Cracow. Servetus, whom Calvin had burnt alive in Geneva, was a Socinian.

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Transylvanian, Voivode of Siebenburgen. He reigned only ten years (1576-1586), but every moment was spectacular.

Bathory knew the importance to Poland of an assured position on the Baltic. The first notable undertaking of his reign, therefore, was to end by force the intrigues carried on between Danzig and the Germans and Russians, and the complete conquest of that port. He beat Ivan the Terrible at Wenden and conquered Livonia, making use of a Swedish alliance. He then advanced into the dominions of Ivan and forced him to conclude peace. Nor did he lose sight of that other Polish dream, a foothold on the shore of the Black Sea. Whatever plans of diplomacy or force he may have had for the execution of this idea, he was not given the time to carry them out. He died.

It was Bathory who founded the University of Vilna, and so prepared the way for a still deeper plantation of Western culture in the north-east. It was also he who gave the Jews a Parliament of their own and left to modern Poland a legacy that is not altogether welcome. And it was he, again, who first employed the Zaporogue Cossacks as permanent military pickets between the Bug and the Dnieper; outposts on guard against Turk, Tartar or Muscovite. These tribes, goaded by the cruelty of the Polish nobles, were later to rise in revolt against Poland. The Ukrainian question of to-day may be attributed to the fact that this territory was never completely Polonised, and was thronged with Orthodox Ruthenes, Armenians and so on.

There is one obvious reason why the territory held by these tribes was never absorbed; these steppes were the playground of the Tartar horsemen, whose incursions made anything like a settled and civilised life impossible. It is said that even the name Cossack was taken from a Tartar word—Kazaki—meaning freebooters. An upbringing in the midst of these incursions gave the Cossacks an appetite for fighting and plunder. They raided down to the Black Sea even, and lived the lives of happy savages. In the middle of the seventeenth century Cossacks and Tartars joined forces,

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and came very near to overrunning Poland. After being routed in 1658, and having put themselves under the protection of Russia, they were the indirect cause, after years of war between Russia and Poland, of the pushing forward of the Russian frontier to the Dnieper, and the loss of Kiev to Poland.

The vigorous, red-faced soldier, Bathory, was succeeded by a sickly, melancholy Swede of the House of Vasa, whose passion was alchemistic foolery. His mother was of Jagellonian descent, but there was little of that strong blood in his veins. His upbringing had been of the German sort, and not only his habits, but even his clothes stamped him as a foreigner. The only thing he had in common with his subjects was the Catholic religion, and it was the refusal of the Swedes to be ruled by a Catholic king that broke what had been to some the high hope of a vast Baltic state ruled from Warsaw. For it was in this reign that the capital was moved from Cracow.

Sigismund III, the first of the Vasa kings of Poland, has been blamed for thinking too much of Christendom and too little of Poland. It was his lot to be called to the throne at a moment when Poland was, in all eyes, the strongest Power in Central Europe, and the spearhead of the Catholic attack in the north of Europe. Against the Lutheran Swedes he fought all through his reign, allying himself with the Hapsburgs, the leaders of the Catholic reaction. He knew that Poland was a part of Europe, and that she must be upon one side or the other in the fighting. For a man who was never in rude health, and had no appetite for affairs or warfare, he performed his task well. In his reign the Polish eagles were planted on the Kremlin, and a son of his own was actually proclaimed Czar in Moscow by a faction. But this success was short-lived and the Poles were thrown back on Smolensk after fierce fighting. Towards the end of the reign the enemies closed in. The Cossacks harried Podolia and Volhynia, and the Wallachians joined the Turks. The Grim Tartars carried out an invasion of their own.

The real trouble of his reign, which lasted forty-six years,



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1587-1632, was the progressive debasement of the monarchy and the decline of the Constitution. The Diets or Assemblies were merely occasions for civil war between the most powerful families. One plain fact—the *liberum veto*—is almost too fantastic to be believed. The entire procedure of the Diet was subject to the right of anybody in the assembly to register his veto; that is, to put a stop to the proceedings for any whim that might come into his head.<sup>1</sup> No resolution could be taken except by a unanimous vote. A majority was worthless, however large. The minority of one held the winning card every time. For this farcical idea the nobles were ready to fight as though for a threatened liberty. Any attempt at reform—such as that made by Sigismund III—only led to rebellions.

Students of Polish history have marvelled that a country capable of so much in war, in literature, in art, should have remained so barbaric in constitutional development; that a nation which could assimilate the Gothic, and give it a national stamp of its own; which could take the best of the Renaissance and leave the worst; which could, in diplomacy, and on the field of battle, stand erect in a ring of enemies; that such a people should have clung, like children, to the elective principle which made their throne the chief prize in an auction-sale, and to the more infantile right of the veto, which obstructed all government. But there is a greater marvel. It appears as something like a miracle that in spite of all handicaps and obstacles at home, Poland should not only have survived as long as she did, but should have broken Islam for ever. For Zenta was but the end of the great Polish charge under the Kahlenberg, and the Peace of Carlowitz was the completion of Sobieski's work, three years after his death. "His sword had left the clauses of the treaty written upon the battle-fields of his victories."

<sup>1</sup> There is on record the case of a nobleman who exercised his veto and brought proceedings to an end. When asked why he had objected, and what his criticism was, he replied that he had merely wanted to see if he could break up the Diet.





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Sigismund lived long enough to see the great project of Richelieu. In the year he died Richelieu's hired captain, Gustavus Adolphus, was shot from his white horse, and killed by the sword-strokes of Pappenheim's cuirassiers on the misty field of Zutphen.

Three years before this, John Sobieski had been born at Olesko, at the beginning of Poland's last period of peace.

It will now be necessary to glance, as briefly as possible, at the Europe into which Sobieski was born.

Poland was still a great Power, but bearing within her the germs of decay. The nobility had succeeded in destroying the authority of the Crown and the machinery of government. The country had already sickened of the disease which was to bring her to ruin, and no devotion of a leader here and there, no military genius, no statesman's wisdom availed to do more than postpone the end. For by the time that the disease was seen to be mortal, Muscovy had become Russia, Brandenburg was Prussia, and Austria, by the Peace of Carlowitz (1699), had got Hungary and Transylvania, with the Save for a frontier. Czartoryski tried, too late, to reform the Constitution, and Poland began to vanish from the map.

Sweden comes into Polish history, first by dynastic alliance, then as a claimant to the southern Baltic shore, and later as a paid soldier of Richelieu against the Emperor Ferdinand II of Austria. Sobieski's infancy and boyhood is the time of the full achievement of Gustavus Adolphus, rabidly anti-Catholic and a usurper of the throne that by right belonged to the Polish King; of Breitenfelt; of Lutzen and the turn of the tide; of the final triumph of Richelieu by the victories of Turenne and Condé; of the Peace of Westphalia. Though Poland was as nearly as possible neutral in the Thirty Years' War, with, of course, Catholic sympathies, a conflict with Sweden was unavoidable when East Prussia was invaded. Minor successes were obtained, but when hostilities ceased at the close of Sigismund's reign, Sweden had come out on top, and was clearly ousting Poland from the sea-board.

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But the greatest effect of Sweden upon Poland at this time was an indirect one. The loosening of the Polish hold on the Baltic coast was of great importance for the future of Russia, whose vague ambitions were stirring, but still more for that of Brandenburg. The moral effect of the Swedish challenge to this keystone of Polish policy was enormous. If the rather feeble Elector George William did not seize his chance, it was because the Thirty Years' War gave him no opportunity. But the weakness of Poland was exposed. We shall see, shortly after the middle of the century, the Swedes, under the repulsive Charles X, overrun Poland, and capture Warsaw. There is even a discussion between Russia and Sweden of a Partition of Poland.

Sweden, then, in the first half of the seventeenth century, was not only preparing the loss of the Baltic to Poland, but was playing into the hands of Poland's old enemy, the Teuton.

The signal for the great campaign that was designed to make Europe a Catholic Empire once more, with an Austrian Hapsburg ruling it from the midst of a Catholic Germany, was given three months before Sobieski was born. The Edict of Restitution had been issued in March 1629, and Ferdinand II prepared to launch Wallenstein and Tilly, to undo the work of the Reformation. Not only was it intended to establish firmly once more the old religion, but also to revive the power of the Empire. The Hapsburg plan was smashed by the pernicious Compromise of Richelieu, who, in saving France, destroyed European unity. When he died the French monarchy was supreme in Europe, but Christendom was split into two opposing parties. Polish history and the history of Europe, for the whole lifetime of Sobieski, are filled with the Hapsburg-Bourbon quarrel, in which the common religion is forgotten and the nation made of prime importance. Sobieski was a boy of nineteen, on his travels abroad, when the Treaty of Westphalia set the seal upon the work of Richelieu, and wrung the fullest meaning from the victories of Gustavus and Bernard of Weimar. He saw the beginning of France's most magnificent period, and came to manhood in a court that was

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half French. The two powers, Austria and France, made full use of those opportunities of corruption to which the weakness of the Polish Constitution exposed the unhappy country. Their candidates for the throne were backed by ambassadors and envoys with almost unlimited money to spend. Now one wins a point, now the other. Austria has this to gain from Polish friendship, that if Poland can be relied upon to hold off the Turks, she, Austria, can give her undivided attention to France. France, on the other hand, is perpetually irritated by the friendly attitude of the one to the other, and even has an understanding with the Porte and encourages the Sultan to make war.

To both France and Austria Poland tends more and more to become a pawn in the game.

Brandenburg, during the early years of Sobieski, was being pillaged and ravaged by most of the armies engaged, and in addition had to deal with epidemics of disease. There is a contemporary account of a journey made by a courier who saw no house in which he could rest and refresh himself between Dresden and Berlin. But even before the effects of the war were shaken off, Prussia, or Brandenburg as it then was, had every intention of putting an end to the Polish suzerainty. When Sobieski was a boy of twelve the Elector Frederick William came to Warsaw and did homage to Ladislas for his lands. Eight years later, during a civil war, Poland is asking help from Brandenburg. In return for his help the Elector is promised the *jus sessionis et voti* in the Diet, but the Diet afterwards refused to honour the promise (made by John Casimir before his election). Meanwhile the Elector's minister Overbeck is pressing for investiture by deputies. It is the beginning of the Elector's ambitions—which, however, had a set-back later, when he had to give up the left bank of the Oder to the Swedes, who only left Pomerania five years after Westphalia.

The Elector was personally attached neither to Austria nor Poland nor France. Yet he venerated the Emperor for his office. His foreign policy was memorable for every kind of

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duplicity and opportunism, directed towards the power and prestige of Prussia. It was he who created the Prussian army and the Prussian bureaucratic machine. He settled the Pomeranian question by using the friendship of France against Austria, and in the Polish-Swedish war used the friendship of Austria against France. He was the cloud as big as a man's hand on the western horizon, in Sobieski's boyhood.

Turkey, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was in the midst of a rare period of peace, which gave her the chance of consolidating her vast Empire. The completion of this consolidation made her a great danger to Europe—and particularly to Poland. She was united, while Europe was torn by international quarrels, and Sobieski, brought up to loathe Islam, tried, and failed, to make Europe show a front as united as that of Turkey.

The Sultan<sup>1</sup> in Constantinople ruled Northern Africa, Western Asia and most of Eastern Europe. The ancient cities of the world were his: Babylon, Thebes, Jerusalem, Carthage, Nineveh. The Black Sea was his lake. He possessed a longer Mediterranean coast-line than any other ruler. He controlled the mouths of the Tigris, Euphrates, Nile, Dniester, Dnieper, Danube and Bug; and the absolute ruler of these territories, with his almost inexhaustible manpower to draw on, could always count upon national dissensions among his enemies. But the man who was to break his power for ever was trained from infancy to regard war against Islam as a sacred duty. As though to allow him to prepare for what was to come, there were two decades of peace while he was growing to manhood.

<sup>1</sup> The imbecile Ibrahim, in whose reign the island of Crete was conquered by the Turks, was strangled in 1649. Of him Racine wrote:

*"L'imbécile Ibrahim, sans craindre sa naissance,  
Traine, exempt de péril, une éternelle enfance."*

## I

### THE BIRTH AND YOUTH OF SOBIESKI; THE COSSACK AND SWEDISH WARS

(1629-1660)

A son, John, was born to me on Friday the 17th of August, the first day of the New Moon, in the year 1629, between the 14th and 15th hours, at Olesko.<sup>1</sup>

THIS entry in the diary of Theophila, the mother of Sobieski, records the birth of the man who was to complete the work of an illustrious line of ancestors, and to end for ever the menace of the Turkish Empire. He was to be the last of the hero kings, who would breathe into Europe, for a moment, the old crusading fervour, even after the Peace of Westphalia had sealed the destructive work of the Reformation. His long life was to be dedicated to unceasing war against Islam, and the gravest reproach made against him by historians has been that he thought more of Europe than of Poland.

John Sobieski was born in the Castle of Olesko, the ruins of which exist to-day, during a violent storm. Olesko was then in the Palatinate or Province of Russia, the south-eastern part of Poland, which was a kind of corridor for Turkish and Tartar invasions. The castle was built on a wooded hill which

<sup>1</sup> This is a free translation of the Polish entry, in the diary printed in the "*Acta Historica Res Gestas Poloniæ Illustrantia*" (Vol. VI). Salvandy, whose history of the whole period is the best known, gives, in two editions of his book, the date of Sobieski's birth as June 17th, 1624. This error, which has been widely repeated, he corrected in the edition published in 1841.



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had once been a Slav *mohila* or funeral mound. His mother was the grand-daughter of the great Zolkiewski, the warrior who burnt Moscow, and brought the Czar captive to Warsaw, and died in battle on the Moldavian steppe in 1620, at the age of seventy-three. His father, James, Castellan<sup>1</sup> of Cracow, four times Marshal of the Diet, had learnt war under Zolkiewski, and had lost his own father in the attack on Sokol. The whole tradition of the family was death in arms against the infidels, and the womenfolk brought up their sons to consider the protection of Christendom's outpost as the main business of life.

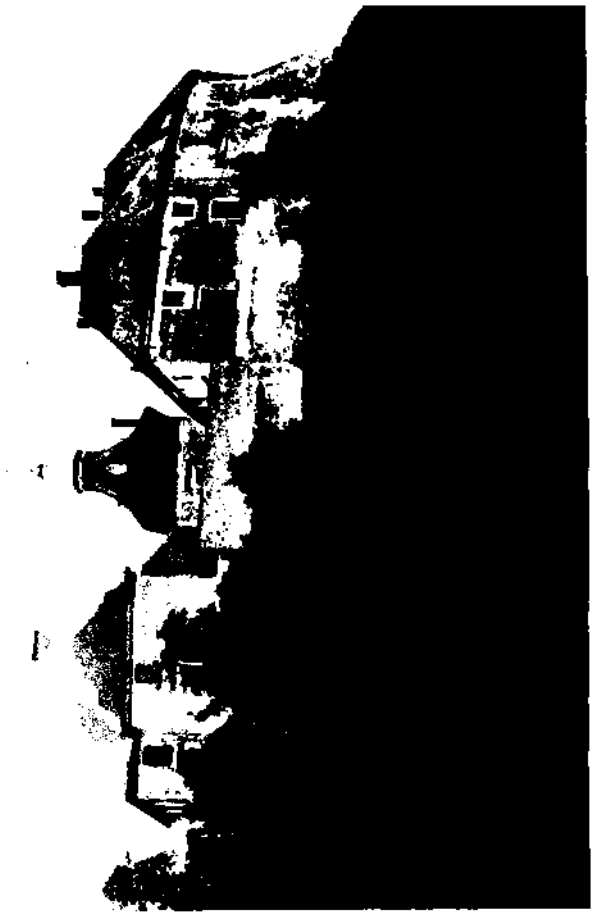
John and his elder brother Mark passed the greater part of their boyhood at Zolkiew, where they hunted and shot and received from their father himself the instruction customary to the sons of the nobility. Here, surrounded by the relics of old campaigns, and taken every day by their mother to pray at the marble tomb of Zolkiewski, they learnt of what manner of family they were the heirs, and what kind of life was expected of them. In the castle itself Zolkiewski's rooms were left untouched. Above his bed, where hung the picture of Our Lady of Czenstochowa, burned, night and day, a small lamp; and his sword and torn cape were preserved to make more vivid the story of Cecora and of the last retreat and the desperate and unavailing rally by the banks of the Kobylta. When the boys went to Mass they read upon the tomb of their ancestors the inscription

O QUAM DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI.

The father laid down as a command that his sons should wear Polish costume, and practise archery and the handling of the heavy Polish sabre; also that they should dance only Polish dances, for, said he, the Tartars would teach them other dances soon enough.

From 1640 to 1643 the boys were at the Nowodworski

A Castellan was the lieutenant or representative of a Palatine or Governor of a province. But the Castellan of Cracow was above all the Palatines, and first lay senator of the kingdom.



OLESKO, THE CASTLE IN WHICH JOHN SOBIESKI WAS BORN, AS IT IS TO-DAY



## THE BIRTH AND YOUTH OF SOBIESKI

College at Cracow,<sup>1</sup> following the usual course of studies. They read the *Aeneid* and the *Odes* of Horace, and were grounded in mathematics, history and the writing of verse both in Polish and Latin. As they advanced, rhetoric and dialectics came into the curriculum, also geography and theology. After the completion of their schooling they returned to Zolkiew to be prepared by their father for a period of foreign travel. John became the more proficient of the two in all warlike exercises and in the more arduous sports. Mark was of a less forceful, less robust nature. But in both burned the flame so sedulously tended by the mother and father.

At the beginning of 1646, when John was in his seventeenth year, James Sobieski made the final dispositions for their journey abroad, and drew up a memorial of instruction for them, which even specified certain works that they might study with profit: Tacitus, Livy, Suetonius, a history of France, and so on. He urged them to study military engineering in Holland, and to learn as many foreign languages as possible.

On February 21st they left Zolkiew, accompanied by two gentlemen, Orchowski and Sebastian Gawarecki.

This Gawarecki kept a journal of their travels through Germany, Belgium, France, Holland and England; even noting, with some care, the inns where they stayed. The still famous inn at Abbeville appears in the journal as the *Tête du Beauph*.

In Leipsic they dined with the renowned Swedish general Torstenson, and made a short stay there before visiting other German towns. But their exploration of France was far more thorough. They appear to have taken in Provence, Poitou and the Loire country, as well as northern France, and they remained almost a year in Paris, until May 1647. It was in the French capital that John laid the foundations of his love of France and of French life. He was well-grown and of a gay disposition, which made it easy for him to mingle with the fashionable world of the day. He joined a company of the famous

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

Musketeers, was received in the salon of the Longueville, met and became instantly friendly with the young Condé. Daily he heard the Fronde discussed. He may have met Madame de Sévigné, Colbert, Vauban, Bossuet. He took part in the royal hunting out at St. Germain, where he saw the Stewart refugees. And all these things left a mark upon him. He learnt the usages of Court life, and watched to see how men and women conduct themselves in the business of intrigue and counter-intrigue. And here in Paris he acquired that taste for discussion and intellectual exercise which never left him.

A short visit to England followed, and the chronicler of the party described London as "a very large city, densely inhabited, stretching along either bank of the river, to the length of more than two Polish miles." They admired particularly the East India Company House, and marvelled at the many ships which lay at anchor near it. They went to Canterbury, whose Cathedral, observes Gawarecki, is now Calvinist. Oxford and Vinzort (Windsor) were also visited, and they returned to Veix Meyster (Westminster). After this they went back to Holland, and spent the winter of 1647 in further studies, and in meeting such men as Van Tromp and William of Orange.

Early in the next year the long and unusual peace which Poland had enjoyed ended with dramatic suddenness. The Power that presides over the destinies of countries would seem to have designed this quiet interval in order that, when the later troubles fell upon Poland, John Sobieski should have grown to manhood. News of the great Cossack revolt, followed almost at once by the death of Ladislas IV, brought the two brothers home, and before they arrived at Zamosc, their father James, who had been chosen to represent Poland at the Congress of Westphalia, was dead. Their journey home, about which nothing is known, cannot have lacked danger, for they had to pass through the encampment of the enemy to reach the castle where their mother anxiously awaited them.

They found a changed Poland. In 1645 Louise-Marie de Gonzague had been brought from Paris with great pomp to

marry Ladislas.<sup>1</sup> The immediate result of this was the introduction of French customs and French clothes to the Polish Court. Everything Parisian became fashionable. Shortly after the marriage the whole Court was entertained by James Sobieski at the Castle of Zolkiew. In the entourage of the new queen was a little girl of four, Marie Casimire de la Grange d'Arquien, whose mother had been the governess of Louise de Gonzague. This little Nivernaise was to be the second French Queen of Poland.

But more striking than the French influence, which was part of Mazarin's scheming, was the internal condition of the country, as revealed by the Cossack invasion. It was impossible for the new King, John Casimir, brother of Ladislas IV, to work in harmony with the nobles, because the nobles suffered from their perennial obsession. They lived in daily fear of the Crown becoming more powerful at their expense, and in order to make anything like an absolute monarchy impossible, they were ready to sacrifice the interests of the country. The most obvious way of crippling the King was not to allow him to maintain a standing army of any size, and to see that he could be overruled if necessary by his high officers. Again, it was at this time that the *liberum veto* began to be used. Any member of the Diet, of his own will or for a bribe, could paralyse the Administrative or the Legislative at a moment's notice; with the result that the only business in which the Diet was interested was the confirmation of the inordinate power of the big nobles. Between these, who lived in the most sumptuous manner, and the peasants, who were serfs, there was no middle class. So the King had no body with which he could counter-balance the power of the autocratic gentry. So bad had the abuses become that government was impossible, and the new King, confronted with such problems, found himself called to meet the Cossack hordes from the Ukraine.

The Cossack revolt of 1648 was provoked by the evils of the Polish administration. A warrior people, and of great service

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Motteville said: "L'espérance de se faire riche la consola."

to Poland both by their position on the frontier and by the excellence of their cavalry, they had willingly placed themselves under Polish protection, and had been granted self-government by Bathory, who foresaw the need for an outpost on the eastern frontiers. This large and fertile territory might have been completely Polonised by slow stages, in which case we should not be hearing of the Ukrainian Nationalist movement to-day. But the Polish landowners who possessed properties in the Ukraine fell into the habit of absenteeism, and even exaggerated that evil by sending Jewish intendants to take their places and to administer their estates. The result was abominable tyranny. A rebellion was suppressed by Zolkiewski; a second, which broke out in the reign of Ladislas IV, was the occasion for a deliberate campaign of terror. The Polish nobles burnt and destroyed at large, and carried out a particularly repulsive religious persecution of the Orthodox Church. Deputations sent to the King failed to gain any redress—not because Ladislas approved of the violence and injustice of his nobles, but because he could do nothing against their wishes.

The signal for the great outbreak of 1648 was the seizure by a Polish intendant, Czaplinski, of a mill belonging to the famous Cossack leader Bogdan Chmielnicki. It was he who had suggested to Ladislas a daring expedition against Constantinople, to which, of course, the Diet, seeing in it nothing but the King's appetite for power, refused to listen. It was Bogdan, again, who had defended Zolkiew against the Tartars, a year before the birth of John Sobieski, and had saved John's mother from falling into their hands. With almost unbelievable stupidity, this Czaplinski, the creature of a Polish nobleman who was a high dignitary of the state, seized the mill. Bogdan's complaints were met with insults and even with violence, so that he took refuge among the Tartars, where he learned that the intendant had outraged his wife and killed one of his sons. At this culmination of all the evils of Polish misrule, Bogdan marched against Poland with an immense army of Cossacks and Tartars. He defeated the Polish army

sent against him, in two battles, and then wrote a generous letter to Ladislas, asking for peace. The King was dead before the letter arrived.

The interregnum was filled with the quarrels of the nobles, and the butchering of the inhabitants of a recaptured town spread the revolt. Even the Crim Tartars joined the Cossacks, who proceeded to conquer the entire Ukraine under the leadership of old Bogdan. The Poles, with no ruler and no military commander, made a last desperate attempt to get together some kind of army. At Pilawce, near Olesko, the flower of the Polish nobility was ignominiously routed by an undisciplined rabble of peasants. Pilawce, being on the very borders of what was called Little Poland, was an engagement that had the gravest consequences. The Cossacks advanced, pillaging and destroying, but taking great pains to show that they had no hostility to the peasants. It was the nobles with whom they had a quarrel to settle, and they set about the work with appalling vigour. Before they had finished there was no more fight left in the Polish gentry, who saw their country now at the mercy of whatever fate Bogdan should choose for it. The Diet, summoned to find any desperate remedy, fled in panic to Danzig in October. Meanwhile the Queen's strong will succeeded in rallying the nobles to the defence of Zamosc, which had become the last refuge for fugitives and their wives and families. Zamoyski, a descendant of a great warrior and statesman, was in the castle himself. Michael Koributh, later to be king, was also there. The place was already invested by the Cossacks and Tartars when the two Sobieski brothers succeeded in making their way through the enemy's lines. Their mother's only care was that they should fight, and when they had greeted her, she told them that if they ever behaved like the Poles at Pilawce she would disown them.

They immediately set to work to recruit and equip each his own regiment, as was the custom among those of their station. The new King, John Casimir,<sup>1</sup> elected in November,

<sup>1</sup> At the time of his election he was a Cardinal.



appointed Mark Starosta<sup>1</sup> of Krasnystaw and John Starosta of Javorow. He found himself at once between two hostile parties; the one demanding negotiations, the other renewed warfare. Casimir favoured the party of negotiation, but was overruled, and when finally he sent envoys, they were murdered by the Cossacks. Although he was in the midst of celebrating his marriage to his brother's widow, he decided to take the field. With him went the two brothers Sobieski, marching to their first campaign.

John was now in his twentieth year, tall and strongly built, of a proud carriage, with large dark eyes, and an air of command in his young face, so that he was remarked as he rode his gorgeously-apparelled horse in that array of tried captains. So great was the fame he was to win in his forty years of warfare that the temptation for historians, writing of his debut, to embellish the sparse records of contemporaries could not but be irresistible. He has been described as a young god of more than human stature, whose very voice drew tears of mortification from the too easily routed Poles. His fiery eye is said to have restrained those about to fly, and turned back those already flying.

The brothers were separated. Mark's first engagement was the defence of Zbaraz in Volhynia, near the family properties of Olesko and Zolkiew. He received his first experience of war in this stubborn siege which lasted more than six weeks. John, on the other hand, accompanied that part of the army commanded by the King in person, which set out from Lublin to the rescue of the besieged nobility. This force was intercepted at Zborow by troops detached from the besieging army of Bogdan, and John took part in the two days' battle which ended in the defeat of the Poles by an enormously superior force of savage fighters. He appears to have distinguished himself, and to have made unavailing efforts to retrieve a field already lost. The battle, then, at which he served his apprenticeship to arms was a decisive defeat which laid Poland,

<sup>1</sup> A starosta was the governor of a fortified castle, and had certain rights of local justice.

whose resources were at an end, at the mercy of Cossacks and Tartars. There was nothing to be done but sue for peace, and on the day after Bogdan's victory, the King of Poland and the great lords of the kingdom had the humiliation of awaiting the Cossack's pleasure. It was in his power to make Poland a Cossack dependency, and he had ample reason for exacting full revenge for the sufferings of his people, to say nothing of his personal wrongs. What the aged Bogdan did was to reply with dignity and generosity to John Casimir. He respectfully pointed out that the war had not been of his seeking, that he had always been a loyal subject, like his father who had died for Poland, and that all he asked was to be allowed to live peacefully under Polish protection.

Such a letter, the reader may imagine, would be likely to act as a salutary rebuke to the already humiliated nobility. It made perfectly clear the fact that the enemy whom they despised as a barbarian was teaching them a lesson that they would do well not to ignore. At the same time it was evident to the meanest intelligence that nothing but Bogdan's word of command was needed to pour Cossack garrisons into every Polish town, and to deliver the humbled gentry to the Tartars, to be sold as slaves in Constantinople—or massacred out of hand. But the moment it became known that the terms of peace had included certain attempts at redress, such as the withdrawal of the detested Jews from the Ukraine, and the representation of the Cossack people in the Polish Senate, the pride of the Poles rose again, and no sooner had the peace been signed than they determined to break it. However much one may sympathise with their resentment at having to bargain with a dependent race, it is impossible to forget that they had been fairly and completely beaten in a war which they had provoked by their own careless insolence. The strain was increased and the dangerous situation aggravated by the quarrel about the Princess Rosanda of Moldavia. A Polish noble wished to marry her, but Bogdan's son had fallen in love with her at sight. The father promptly marched into Moldavia, and dictated his terms at Jassy; forcing the governor to agree

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to the marriage of Rosanda to the young Chmielnicki. This was one more blow at Polish prestige, and one more insult to their pride. It was followed by worse. Bogdan began to preach a holy war against the Catholic Church, with the full support of the Greek hierarchy. The Porte declared Bogdan ruler of the Ukraine, and his kingdom a dependency of the Sultan.

By 1651 the thing had become a religious war with far-reaching possibilities. Innocent X at Rome sent a legate to Warsaw with marks of his approval, and John Casimir was collecting an army of Poles, supplemented by a number of veterans of the Thirty Years' War, whom Westphalia had deprived of their jobs.

John Sobieski and his brother were both with the army which the King led against the Cossacks and the Tartars in June 1651. With them went the young Jablonowski to his first engagement, the battle of Beresteczko.

In this battle the customary Cossack tactic of the Tabor was employed. It consisted simply of a fortification composed of chariots and carts, and was often copied by the Poles—notably by Zolkiewski in his last retreat across Moldavia. There was a stubbornly contested battle, the wild yells of the Tartars mingling with the exhortations of Orthodox monks and Catholic priests; and then the hosts of Bogdan broke. Before the issue had been decided, John had been badly wounded in the head. The Tartars, whose idea of a battle was a swift ride and a return with plunder, were the first to give in. The Cossacks entrenched behind their Tabor held out for a while with great courage, but I hesitate to accept the story that the last survivor kept the Poles at bay for three hours.

Bogdan had by now become very different from the almost benignant old man whose dearest wish was to live quietly under Polish domination. The change from rebellion to religious war had forced both sides to realise that this was no question of a revolt to be settled between overlord and vassal, but a war to the death between two cultures; between

the East and the West. After Beresteczko, the wife of the intendant Czaplinski was crucified, and many Polish nobles buried alive. In 1652 there were abortive attempts at peace. In the summer young Chmielnicki set out to take Rosanda by force, but was confronted by a Polish army at Batoh on the Podolian border. Once more the swift and overwhelming defeat of the Poles opened the country to an enemy exuberant with victory. Among the dead was Mark Sobieski.

John, to his mother's mortification, missed this battle. He had been wounded in a duel with Pac, a Lithuanian noble, and was at Lwow, unable to move. The details of this duel are not known, but a quarrel between two hot-blooded young men was by no means an uncommon incident at the time, and the suggestion that they fought over a woman may or may not be true. At any rate, from this time dated a hostility between the two men which was to endure as long as they lived, and which undoubtedly had much to do with the recalcitrancy of the Lithuanians in so many of John Sobieski's campaigns.

As soon as his wound was healed, the surviving brother rode out again, and spent month after month in skirmishes and unimportant engagements in the neighbourhood of Batoh, having vowed to avenge his brother's death and to make some reparation to his mother for the chagrin he had caused her by brawling when he should have been defending his country. During these formative days, while he was learning the methods of the Tartars and making himself familiar with the border country in which so many of his battles were to be fought, he indulged, in moments of leisure, his taste for reading, and established the camp library which was his solace on all his campaigns. We shall find him, at the time of the Vienna campaign, complaining in a letter to the Queen that he has had no time for reading. Here in Podolia he read science with avidity; Gassendi, Harvey, Galileo. He never tired of Corneille and Molière. Descartes he studied, and Pascal. The Jansenist affair interested him profoundly, as well as the teaching of the sects, such as the Socinians.

The ineffectual campaign dragged on without event into the

summer of 1653, until, in October, Bogdan's son was killed, and while the infuriated father was trying to compel the Czar Alexis to send a Muscovite army to his aid, Sobieski had his first sight of the Turkish Empire at close quarters, when he went as a hostage to Constantinople. He spent his time in studying the language and the customs. In the next year, 1654, he accompanied an Embassy sent by John Casimir. On the journey he passed through all those lands which were to fight for their independence during the great Christian uprising that followed the retreat of the Turks through Hungary in 1683. He was in the Turkish capital during the spring of 1654, and while he was away, Poland was called upon to meet a new danger. Bogdan placed the Ukraine under Muscovite protection, and Alexis, faced suddenly with the opportunity of consolidating a vast Orthodox kingdom, set his armies in motion against Kiev and Smolensk. While the Polish Diet wrangled, adjourned and met to wrangle again, Muscovites, Cossacks and Tartars swarmed all over the lands between the upper Dvina and the lower Dniester. In the late summer Sobieski had returned in time to see the stiffening of the Polish resistance, and in the winter some towns were recaptured. He fought at the battle of Uman, but the Poles had delayed too long, and the tight hold of Bogdan could not be loosened.

Meanwhile, from another quarter the beleaguered kingdom of Poland was being closely watched by the usurping Protestant branch of the Vasa dynasty.

Sweden as the tool of Richelieu had been the decisive factor in the Bourbon-Hapsburg warfare, and had come out of the Thirty Years' War with Western Pomerania, which meant the mouth of the Oder, the bishopric of Verden, the archbishopric of Bremen, and the district round Wismar. In the summer of 1654 the young Queen Christina abdicated, in order to be received into the Catholic Church, and there ascended the throne, in place of the Polish King, the son of a sister of Gustavus Adolphus; Charles Gustavus, with the title of Charles X. This repulsive young man, whom Christina called scornfully "the little burgomaster," had learnt war under Torstenson,

and had taken part in the last campaign of the religious war of 1618-1648. He was a short, squat, bloated man, devoid of intelligence, with the dull eyes of a beast, gross lips and small and furtive eyes. His one appetite was for military adventure and fame, and he had lived through the inactive years after Westphalia with increasing distaste, which was shared by his nobles, who longed for more churches to plunder. Fortune appeared to smile upon him, for at the moment when the Vasa King of Poland was refusing to acknowledge him, the Cossacks, Tartars and Muscovites threatened at any moment the extinction of the Polish kingdom. Never was a moment more opportune for declaring war. Nor were pretexts lacking. The immediate pretext seized upon was the omission in a letter from the King of Poland, of an *etc.* after the titles attached to the name of Charles X. But one of the biographers of the Swedish King<sup>1</sup> admitted with complete cynicism that it was necessary to have some sort of war in order to employ the soldiers, and that Poland was the safest enemy at the time, since she was too busy on the eastern frontiers to make much resistance in the west.

At the beginning of 1655 the Tartars broke their alliance, and came over in large numbers to the Polish side. Sobieski was appointed to the command of a body of them. But the Cossack-Muscovite advance continued deep into the kingdom. They had passed Lwow when, in July, Charles X, breaking the Swedish-Polish treaty, led his veteran army, with its famous captains, through Western Pomerania, and prepared to cross the Polish frontier.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Puffendorf.

<sup>2</sup> With the Swedish army was a certain picturesque adventurer, a genuine soldier of fortune, by name Patrick Gordon. This young Scot, who fought for the Poles in 1660 against the Cossacks and Muscovites, was a Lieutenant-General in the Jacobite rising of 1715, and finally died in Moscow (where he was known as Patrick Ivanovitch). He left a diary of his adventures in the Swedish war. He was under no illusion as to the humbug of Charles X, who, he says, "would needs begin his reign with some notable action." He gives a list of all the King's pretended grievances, and describes how the army was drawn up in a meadow at Stettin, and how Cromwell had advanced

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Not even at this critical moment, with her very existence threatened from two quarters, could the unhappy country act in unity. Some blamed the Polish King for starting the trouble, others, eager only to be on the winning side, prepared to join the Swedes. Yet others saw in the occasion no more than an excellent opportunity for marauding, and getting what they could while the whole kingdom was in chaos.

Charles Gustavus, with his memories of the Thirty Years' War, proclaimed the adventure a religious war, and himself the new protector of the Reformation. By his side was the Polish ex-Chancellor, Radzieowski, who had done so much at the Court of Stockholm to provoke this invasion.

By the end of August the Muscovites were overrunning Lithuania and had taken Vilna, the Cossacks held Eastern Poland, and the Swedish King was in Warsaw, tearing up the carpets in the palace to look for treasure.

We shall see in what follows how Poland escaped destruction, in spite of the boast of Charles Gustavus to Cromwell that he would not leave a Catholic alive in the country.

Whoever is at the pains of unravelling the tangle of the years 1655-1659 will be amazed to find Poland in existence at the end of that period. The country, still divided into factions, had to deal with invasions by armies enormously superior in mere numbers, from the east and from the west. In the case of the Swedes she had to deal with tried veterans. At the critical moment she was betrayed, first by one noble and then by another; afterwards by a whole body of nobles. Her King fled into Silesia, her government, such as it was, was overthrown, and foreign armies marched to and fro over her territory and garrisoned her towns. She was saved by an insurrection of peasants in defence of their religion.

Although it is impossible to keep Sobieski in sight throughout

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money to levy troops. He marches with the army on July 16th, and is captured and recaptured half a dozen times in the fighting. It evidently was a matter of no concern to him whether he helped the Poles or the Swedes. Portions of Gordon's diary were published in 1859 by the Spalding Club in Aberdeen.

the whole of these years, there can be no doubt about the part he played in October 1655, when he was one of the signatories to the shameful document that surrendered the Polish army to the Swedish King, and proclaimed Charles Gustavus ruler in place of John Casimir. Sobieski's apologists have either ignored or excused his treachery. His youth and impetuosity have been advanced as an explanation, and it has been pointed out that the flight of the King into Silesia left no other course open to the nobles. The answer to the second of these two suggestions is that there were many who fought on without their King. The answer to the first is that such a man, so brought up, does not betray his country so lightly. In fact, the incident is inexplicable and utterly out of character. When we remember his ancestry and his training, and the devotion of all the rest of his life, which was marred by nothing discreditable of this kind, his action becomes still more mysterious. By it he missed one of the great moments in the history of Poland; the national movement led by the priests against the enemies of the Faith. Although it is pleasant to think of him drilling and organising the peasantry in the winter of 1655, the picture is false. At the time he was marching with the Swedes against his own countrymen. For six months, from October 1655 to March 1656, he served the King of Sweden on Polish soil. That his treachery was not considered remarkable is proved by the fact that two months after rejoining the Poles, he was appointed royal standard-bearer, a sufficiently obvious token of the King's pardon.

The treachery of Opalinski opened the way for the Swedish invasion. There was a capitulation at Ojście, followed by the rapid advance of 60,000 Swedes, without serious opposition. In their wake the Swedish flag flew from the turrets of Polish castles, and the desecration of churches began. By the end of August Warsaw was occupied. In mid-September Cracow, which was to hold out gallantly for a month, was besieged.

During this time Sobieski was fighting in the army of Potocki, as the colonel of a regiment. This army, giving ground week by week before the Cossacks and Muscovites, had



retreated almost as far as Lublin when it discovered the Swedes in its rear. It was then, on October 15th, that the Polish nobles surrendered, and led their troops into the Swedish camp. Cracow fell a day or two later, and a number of the Lithuanian nobles, tainted with Protestantism, and under the influence of James Radziwill, made an Act of Homage to Charles X. A contemporary letter from Desnoyers, the Queen of Poland's secretary, to a friend, relates that this Radziwill, feeling death to be near, called loudly upon the devil from a window of his palace. Failing to attract the devil's attention, he asked for a priest—but in vain. He died, and when he was opened up, his intestines and heart were found to be black and swollen. Thereupon five of his personal attendants became Catholics!

But in the midst of treachery and surrender, there took place an event which was destined to be celebrated in Polish story, and to inspire the peasants to rise against Lutherans, Schismatics and Mahomedans. The triumphal progress of Charles Gustavus was checked by the stubborn resistance of the Paulite monks of Czenstochowa,<sup>1</sup> under their heroic Prior, Kordecki. The Church of Czenstochowa on the Jasna Gora housed then and houses to-day the Black Virgin. It is still the most famous of Polish national shrines. Thither the people went on pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady, and under her protection the kingdom was placed in the hour of peril or adversity.<sup>2</sup> The stubborn defence of the monks captured the

<sup>1</sup> Two contemporary accounts were written of the siege of Czenstochowa; one by Kobierzycy entitled: *Obsidio Clari Montis Czenstochoviensis, Deiparae imagine, a divo Luca depicta, in regno celeberrimi, ab exercitu Suecorum duce Burchardo Mellero generali legato. Authore Stanislao Kobierzycy, Palatino Pomeraniae. Dantisci. (Forster 1659.)*

The other was by the prior of the heroic monks of St. Paul, Kordecki, and was called: *Nova gigantomachia contra sacram imaginem Deiparae Virginis a S. Luca depictam, et in Monte claro Czenstochoviensi apud religiosos patres ordinis S. Pauli primi ermitae in celeberrimo regni Poloniae caenobio collocatam, per Suecos et alios haereticos excitata, fideliter conscripta a B. P. Augustino Kordecki praedicti ordinis, protunc Clari Montis Priore. (Cracoviae.)*

<sup>2</sup> The curious may see in this church the baton of Sobieski; and Mr. Hilaire Belloc's "Ballade to Our Lady of Czenstochowa," written out in English and Latin.

imagination of the people, and emphasised the danger to their religion; and to this heroic siege may be attributed the subsequent armed rising, when the King, returned out of exile, placed Poland under the protection of Our Lady of Czenstochowa, and the cause of the nation and of the Catholic Church became one.

While the King was in exile and Sobieski marching under the Swedish colours, Charles Gustavus issued coinage, calling himself the Protector of Poland, levied taxes, which the peasants refused to pay, and prepared to consolidate his gains. Churches were pillaged and then burnt down, priests were insulted and murdered, until the people, without a leader, banded together and made themselves into an avenging army. There was no reason why the Swedish King should have foreseen such a phenomenon. These half-starved and half-clothed serfs were not fighting for their country, since they owned nothing and had no rights. Nor had they anything to expect from the nobility, even if they succeeded in saving Poland. They were fighting for their religion, and Charles Gustavus discovered that though he had garrisoned the towns and bought or defeated the gentry, he had still to deal with the people. The despondent nobles saw with astonishment masses of men whom they had regarded as beasts, awakened, and only asking to be led against one or other of their enemies. The Confederation of Tyszowce was formed, the generals began to mould the angry and ill-armed masses into an army, and the King, John Casimir, returned to take his place at the head of the nation.

Early in 1656 the Cossacks and Muscovites decided to become spectators of the struggle, and withdrew from Eastern Poland. At the same time the Swedes found themselves set upon by the peasants from the Carpathian foothills beyond Cracow, and forced to take shelter in the towns and fortified places. They had also the fear that at any moment the Cossacks might join with Poland. As a matter of fact it was probably only the Cossacks' fear of strengthening Poland that made them hesitate. A weak Poland meant frequent opportunities for raids and plenty of easy plunder.

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On March 18th Czarniecki, the Polish commander, wrote to the Queen of Poland to say that he was expecting the return of Sobieski. On March 24th Sobieski changed sides, and on March 30th fought once more for his country at the battle of Nisko. The spring campaign had opened badly for the Swedes, who, after a swift dash into Eastern Poland, were forced to retreat, fighting all the time along the San and the Vistula. Sobieski served under Czarniecki, and was probably at the siege of Zamosc, where Zamoyski and Marie Casimire d'Arquien were celebrating their honeymoon.

This Zamoyski had a sense of humour. The Swedish King, who himself undertook the siege of the castle, summoned him to his presence. Zamoyski pleaded a previous engagement; one of his servants was getting married, and he had promised to attend the ceremony. Three weeks later the Swedish King summoned him to surrender. Zamoyski replied that so far the Swedish artillery had only hurt an old woman who happened to be leaning out of a window, and killed a sow in the courtyard. He offered to send him musicians to divert him during the tedious siege. Finally he refused a large bribe and the Palatinate of Lublin.

As the spring wore on the Swedish King became more alarmed. The Poles were recapturing towns everywhere, and there was no knowing when the Cossacks might move. Already there was the curious spectacle of the Khan of the Crim Tartars writing to Frederick William of Prussia, in Latin, and telling him to abandon Sweden and fight for Poland, as his duty dictated. But Frederick William preferred to adhere to his masterly policy of dishonesty and opportunism. His friendship with Sweden was merely hatred of Catholicism. His one idea was to bundle Sweden out of Germany—in which he was encouraged by the mouse-faced Waldeck, who seems to have had the idea of German unity before anyone else.

At the beginning of April Sobieski took part in an action that resulted in the decimation of the Margrave of Baden's army, which was hurrying to reinforce the King of Sweden, and the question of evacuating Warsaw forced itself upon the



A POLISH HUSSAR OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

(By *Stefan della Bella*)



invader. Cromwell, whose letter cannot have been read with much pleasure at such a moment, congratulated Charles X on having seized one of the Pope's horns. Later he sent a small body of English troops to support the Protestant invasion.

The hopes of the Court (the Queen was still at Glogau in Silesia with her entourage) ran high, and there was a good deal of talk of depriving Frederick William of his territory for his attitude during Poland's ordeal. Before summer had come the King felt justified in recalling the Queen from exile, and in June she commenced the journey, arriving in Warsaw in July, in time to be present at the three days' battle of Prag, outside Warsaw.<sup>1</sup>

In this battle Sobieski served under Lubomirski. The Poles fought stubbornly against more experienced generals and better-disciplined troops, and on the second day John Casimir, observing the wholesale desertion, warned the Court to be ready to fly once more. By the third day, July 30th, it was all over. The Polish artillery had been captured and the Swedes were ready to march in once more.

It was on the first day of this battle that there took place a picturesque incident. The intrepid Queen, sitting on a drum, herself directed the placing of Polish guns—to such effect that part of the Swedish right flank made a temporary withdrawal.

The fall of Warsaw, for the second time, had almost no effect upon the course of the war, which was now a guerrilla affair. Though his name is not mentioned in the reports, there is a tradition that Sobieski was at this time commanding a force of Tartars, sent by the Khan, Mehmet Gerej, to help John Casimir. The lack of information about him is probably explained by the nature of the warfare which was being waged. There were no great pitched battles to be reported, but merely

<sup>1</sup> In this battle the Swedes exposed the weakness of the famous Polish cavalry. They allowed them to charge, made a lane for them, and then closed in upon them and cut off their retreat. The whole tactic of this cavalry consisted in settling everything in one furious charge. Their arms were too cumbersome, and their horses too heavily burdened, to allow of any manœuvring.

daily skirmishes, ambushes and rough-and-tumbles. Brandenburg had definitely joined Sweden in the march on Warsaw in July, and there was one more enemy to deal with. But to counteract this there was a Muscovite diversion. The Czar Alexis, whose object was a foothold in Europe, sent his armies to overrun the Baltic lands of Livonia, Ingria, Carelia, Finland—this, incidentally, putting pro-Swedish Mazarin into an awkward position. This invasion forced Charles Gustavus to redouble the efforts he had been making to arrange an alliance with Transylvania. He offered Rakoczi, the ruler of Transylvania, the town of Cracow in return for his help. Sweden further promised all she held in Poland and Prussia for Livonia and a Muscovite alliance. The Muscovites, at the same time, offered Poland Livonia and Lithuania in return for the Polish throne. And while all this bargaining and counter-bargaining went on, a guerrilla warfare was kept up. The peasants formed themselves into bands and placed themselves under any Pole who would lead them. But just when these tactics were wearing down the Swedes, who were already frightened by the Muscovite advance, Rakoczi decided to move, and with an army of Moldavians, Wallachians and Hungarian Protestants, this Calvinist Prince, accompanied by Bogdan, invaded Poland in the first month of 1657, and subsequently occupied Cracow. It is probable that Sobieski was in this fighting, but the lack of records is not surprising. The situation in the spring of 1657 reads like a fantasy. Across Poland two armies were moving to meet each other, and to form a camp of Swedes, Germans, Wallachians, Hungarians, Moldavians, Cossacks. There were Tartars fighting on both sides, and Turks marching on Transylvania, which the Tartars were laying waste in Radoczi's absence. Europe and Asia were mixed inextricably on either side. To the north Finns and Lapps and Swedes and Muscovites were contesting the Baltic coast. Austria promised help to Poland, and had Brandenburg bought off, whereupon the Transylvanians threatened to call in Turkey. Beneath all this hotch-potch the Polish peasant fought to preserve his religion, and to expel those who threatened it,

whether Calvinists, Mahommedans, Lutherans, Protestants or Orthodox Greeks. He alone had a clear idea in his head.

The important fact—though it did not seem so at the time—of the spring of 1657 was the alliance between Austria and Poland. The price paid for Austrian help, by an agreement signed on May 27th, 1657, was a yearly sum payable to the Emperor, certain rights of administration over the salt mines of Wieliczka, and, in a secret article, the promise of Poznan and Cracow to Hungary. The Imperial troops were ordered to avoid any clash with Prussian troops. The Emperor, Ferdinand III, died soon after this, and was succeeded by his son Leopold, who carried out the pact, and suggested to the Elector of Brandenburg that such an ally of Poland ought not to remain a vassal. The result was the Treaty of Velau, signed in September 1657, and ratified in November of the same year. The Elector came to Bydgoszcz for the last time as a vassal of the Polish King.

Before this, in July, Rakoczi, abandoned by the Swedes, began to retreat. Sobieski probably marched under Czarniecki in pursuit of the Transylvanians, for he was present at the capitulation at Czarny Ostrov. The cause of this sudden retreat was the withdrawal of the Swedish armies to meet a Danish attack. Charles X, in his stampede, burned what there remained still to burn. When he had gone, the people could hardly believe that they were free once more to practice their religion.

Though there had been war for ten years there was no thought of rest. Czarniecki led an army into Pomerania, and while he was there, Bogdan, whose name perpetuates the memory of this stormy decade, and who stands at the beginning of the trouble, died of an apoplectic stroke, and bequeathed another civil war to the Polish border country. Had he not invaded Poland, Charles X would probably have hesitated.

The Polish army went into winter quarters in the districts of Torun, Elbing and Marienburg to prepare for the next campaign. The attempt of Charles X had failed, and though the land had been ravaged, and the people reduced to a pitiful



condition, they had saved what they had fought for, the religion of their fathers. Sobieski, whose activities after the treachery of 1655 are so obscure, may be presumed to have learned under Czarniecki and other commanders the elements of his trade. These years must also have given him that faith in the peasantry which made him say later: "The peasant is soon a soldier if his leader is a general."

The moment it was seen that the Swedes were occupied elsewhere, the Poles took the offensive, and drove the remnant off Polish territory. The year 1658 was notable for the machinations of the Austrians. As soon as the French appeared as peacemakers, the Empire made the negotiations as difficult as possible. The Imperial troops had taken the smallest imaginable part in the hostilities, and had, in fact, regarded the war merely as an opportunity to have an army on Polish soil. This might be handy if the Polish King died. Also it kept the fighting out of Empire territory. There was friction almost from the first between the Germans and the Poles, and when the French began to meddle, apparently in favour of Sweden, the Austrians had an excuse for remaining on Polish soil. Hence their inactivity at the remarkable siege of Torun, where the Poles fired a dead horse from a gun, and the Swedes retorted with a salvo of Dutch cheeses. But while negotiations dragged on into 1659 the country was still in a state of anarchy.

We hear of Sobieski at Javorow in the summer of 1658. He attended the Diet for the first time in that year, and had an opportunity of observing the manner in which public business was conducted. He followed the peace debates, and the stages of the agreement between Poland and the Cossacks—the Treaty of Hadziacz. He had spent his youth, ten years of it, in learning the command of men and the direction of operations, and had been able to study the weak points in the Polish army. He had noted the impetuosity and the fearlessness that made cavalry of the first class, and the physical hardihood that allowed the Poles to think nothing of sleeping without shelter and camping in the snow; but equally had he noted their independence and complete lack of military discipline. The

nobles would undertake no such duties as the furnishing of pickets or connecting links, and were frequently surprised either at meat or sleeping. In the actual business of battle there were no troops superior to them, but they cared for nothing but the fighting. Again, Sobieski had the opportunity of watching the mischief that could be done by allowing the generals to overrule the King in the midst of a campaign.

He was by now acquainted with the tactics of the Tartar horsemen; the swift raid, and the equally swift retreat in the face of danger; and had perhaps already begun to evolve in his mind a tactic to oppose against them with light, mobile cavalry. He had also had opportunity of watching the Swedish method of manipulating infantry and artillery, and the effect of a well-drilled and disciplined body used at the right moment. But the chief lesson that he had learned during these campaigns was that unless Poland could introduce into her affairs some sort of discipline and unity, she would only exist until the moment when her various enemies decided to combine against her. Such was her condition at the end of the Swedish war that a combined and well-ordered attack by Cossacks, Tartars and Turks must have destroyed her without hope of resurrection.

It is most important to seize the point that Poland had only saved herself by an insurrection to preserve her religion. No other explanation is possible of the banding together of peasants who had no rights, and no hope of attaining anything but the freedom to worship God as their fathers had worshipped Him. The turning-point was this spontaneous uprising of serfs who saw their old way of life threatened and their churches desecrated. It was they who took the lead, and the nobles, recalled to their duty, who followed. But let not the reader be tempted to imagine, from the results of this long war, a country at one, and determined to avoid the weaknesses that had so jeopardised its very existence. We are to read of the consequences of trying to strengthen the Crown, and of the interminable Franco-Austrian intrigues at the Polish Court. After the peace of Oliva (May 1660), Poland was secure for the moment on her western frontier, and could turn towards

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the east, where the Muscovites still threatened, and where, far away, Islam was preparing another campaign against Christendom. But the prestige and the glory which Sobieski was to bring to her were without practical effect, and though for so many years she presented to the world a magnificent exterior, and all the evidence of robust health, yet within she was already stricken with a mortal disease.

## II

### THE MARRIAGE OF SOBIESKI, THE LUBOMIRSKI REBELLION AND THE TREATY OF ANDRUSSOWO

(1660-1667)

THERE was to be no peace for Poland. Before the negotiations at Oliva had been concluded, the Cossacks and Muscovites were on the move again, and once more the eastern borders were overrun. The years 1655-1660 had made it plain that nothing but a direct miracle could prolong the life of the country more than temporarily; which is why there is an air of something that is almost futility over the victories that built Sobieski's reputation and made him talked of all over Europe. Not all the splendour of the Polish feats of arms, not all the appearance of unity which the country takes on at one critical moment after another, can keep our eyes from the internal conditions.<sup>1</sup> It was but too obvious that the consummate skill of one doctor was keeping the patient alive by stimulants. The years of the Swedish occupation had given all the lawless elements their opportunity to counteract the growing tendency to call for an amended constitution and a strengthened monarchy. As the King, John Casimir, grew older, the two dominant qualities in his character excluded all else from his life. He became more amorous, in the foolish way of an old man, and he placed himself more and more in the hands of the Jesuits who surrounded him. The business of reforms was left to his overbearing wife, the French Queen, whose aim was to make the Crown hereditary and so abolish Austrian influence in the Diet. The mere mention of an hereditary monarchy meant all the evils of absolutism to the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

## THE MARRIAGE OF SOBIESKI

self-seeking gentry. But when it became known that the French Queen contemplated a marriage between another Gonzague, Anne of Bavaria, and d'Enghien, Condé's son, who was to become king after John Casimir, the opposition was doubly fierce. The nobility was split into a French party and an Austrian party, and henceforward the long Bourbon-Hapsburg quarrel was to be the main issue in Polish politics. The Diets became armed camps, in which groups of nobles were the paid servants of one ambassador or another, and in which, at any moment, a well-paid deputy might rise and wreck the deliberations by opposing his *liberum veto*.

It was Sobieski's task to fight in the campaigns that laid the foundation of his fame while the country was sinking into a darker and duller chaos. In other circumstances, with the country solid behind him, the constitution changed, and a centralised government to subdue the various factions and confederations, he might have established Poland as the great nation she had once been. He did as much as a mortal man could do. After the Swedish invasion he was to fight for thirty years with small and ill-led regiments, frequently paid out of his own private fortune, and clothed at his expense. There was to be hardly a campaign in which he had not to deal with dangerously bad *moral*, and often to suppress active mutiny. As he grew older even his victories were attributed to personal ambition, and the spoils which he brought back to avarice.

The period which we shall consider in this chapter begins with considerable Polish victories over Muscovite and Cossack invaders, but ends ominously with the disastrous Peace of Andrussowo. It was called a truce, but it advanced the Muscovite frontier to the Dnieper, restored Kiev to Alexis and whetted the Muscovite appetite for further incursions into Western territory. An almost independent Brandenburg had appeared, Muscovy was becoming Russia and there was a growing Austrian party in Warsaw.

Though Podhajce was the first victory which gave Sobieski a European reputation, his battles of 1660, fought against the

Muscovites and the Cossacks, made him remarked in his own country and in France. He commanded the left wing at Lubartow in Volhynia and led the final assault against old Chmielnicki's son at Slobodyszcz, after which the Cossacks sued for peace. A month later, in October, he fought with conspicuous bravery at Cudnow. But in the midst of his first triumphs he was to be galled by the Polish habit of failing to follow up a victory. On many an occasion after these years he was to discover that the matchless Polish cavalry considered that its duty had been done when a successful charge was over. After these Polish victories of 1660, at the age of thirty-one, he gave evidence of what was to be one of his principles of warfare. He saw that to defeat these inexhaustible armies of Cossacks and Muscovites was not enough. Poland must keep the offensive, and never relax her efforts until the war had been carried into the very heart of the enemy's country. This was to be later his whole policy against the Turks and Tartars. And now, in 1660, if he could have had his way the advantages gained would have been followed up. The discomfited Cossacks would have seen their lands overrun and their towns garrisoned once more, and the Polish armies would have driven a wedge into the vague Muscovite frontiers. Moscow itself might have been invaded yet again. But the Grand Marshal, Lubomirski, decided against prolonging the campaign. It is probable that he already had his eye on a Dictatorship, his head being full of Cromwellian nonsense. It is certain that he cared more for the changes and chances of the political game in Warsaw than for the advantages to be got from a campaign of conquest. He wanted to be on the spot; and he intended that the army should be with him in case of emergencies. So Sobieski and his men were forced to remain idle. The young man cared nothing for political intrigue nor had he yet been drawn into it. It was left to Marie Casimire to initiate him.

The Queen had been working with astounding patience and concentration to see her dynastic plan successful. This strong-willed woman could turn the King round her little finger, and

as long as he was left with his Jesuits and his pathetic love affairs he made no objection to her activities. The French party grew in numbers and influence, but at the same time the Emperor Leopold began to take more interest in the question of the Polish succession. France and Austria were preparing to fight it out, with the old weapons of hard cash and promises of emolument, on Polish soil, over the ineffectual body of a senile King. As the machinations of Austria began to be more apparent, the Queen very cleverly suggested that anybody who was opposed to her scheme was clearly ready to submit Poland to Austrian dictation. But there was a reasonable fear which held back large numbers of the nobles. They dreaded a French monarchy in Poland, since it would obviously develop on the lines of the monarchy at Versailles. Warsaw would become a kind of annexe to Versailles, and Poland a dependent of France, with the result that the nobility would be held in check by a strong government and would lose its old privileges. There was far more fun to be had out of a general scramble and hurly-burly, with the throne going to the highest bidder. To this must be added a by no means negligible pride which the gentry inherited. Even though the election to the monarchy should become an auction sale, and appointments to offices of state a mere raffle, they could always tell themselves that they had put such and such a king on the throne by their votes, and could remove him at will if they did not like him. A French hereditary monarchy would be a different affair.

One of the most assiduous workers for the cause of Louise de Gonzague was the morally contemptible but exceedingly astute Morsztyn, of whom we shall hear a deal more, but little in his favour.

When the time drew near for the summoning of the Diet of 1661 it was thought advisable that the King himself should take an active part in the conspiracy. There was a secret meeting of the Queen's party at Czenstochowa, where the oath was sworn. John Casimir, surprised at the size and ardour of the French party, and wondering at the hard work undertaken by his Queen while he discussed philosophy or doddered after

some young maid-of-honour, entered into the business with all the energy that still remained in that wasting frame.

An important thing happened the moment news of this oath and of its full purport became known. The army, and a number of its leaders, cried out against interference with the ancient liberties of Poland, foreign domination, absolutism and so forth. And from this moment civil war became a probability. The neutral gentry felt that any amount of bargaining and haggling in the open, on the question of the succession was one thing; this attempt to conspire in secret and to force the decision on the nation without consulting it was quite another. The business of the country was suspended, and an anarchy worse even than that of the Swedish occupation set in. It was hopeless to expect the King to do anything, and nobody who knew the stubbornness of the Queen could have any hope of her placing the country's interest before her own.

In a Diet that was a rowdy farce the King did indeed utter words that are memorable when read to-day. He said: "Would God I may prove to be a false prophet! But I tell you that if you do not find a remedy for the present evil, the republic will become the prey of foreign countries. The Muscovites will attempt to detach our Russian Palatinates as far as the Vistula perhaps. The House of Prussia, already on the look-out, will try to seize Great Poland. Austria will hurl herself on Cracow. Each of these Powers will prefer to partition Poland than to possess the whole of it with such liberties as it enjoys to-day."

The King was no false prophet, but the evil to which he referred was not to be remedied by the tyranny of a French Queen.

Sobieski, with his thoughts still upon the pursuance of the war against the Cossacks and the Muscovites, found himself suddenly in the midst of a revolution. The army formed itself into a confederation, made categorical demands (such as the handing over of a part of the revenues of the clergy), and added to the misery of the country by burning and pillaging on a large scale. Even the great soldier Czarniecki could do nothing



with them, since they made a grievance of his disciplinary methods and his attempts to recognise and reward the work of the peasant-infantry of 1656. Sobieski and one or two others made good arrears of pay out of their own pockets, but there was no question of a foreign war. The rebels had tasted their power, and had the old cry of the defence of their liberties with which to rally the discontented or the merely restless adventurers to their standards. There was now no government, and no authority but that of an insurrectionary army in Poland. Crown lands and Church lands were seized and distributed by any chance leader of a band of marauders, and the evils which were attributed to the King's submission to the Jesuits were visited upon the priests.

Attempts were made by the King and Queen to put an end to the rebellion, but the bulk of the army was with the rebels. Sobieski remained loyal, and with him Czarniecki and Zamoyski. Lubomirski, whom popular gossip made the mysterious mover of the rebellion and the hidden director of its operations, was playing a double game for as long as he could. He had no intention of coming out into the open until he could be sure of success, for by this time he had very definite plans for making himself Dictator, with the support of the army. His hand was forced by the King and Queen, who summoned him to act as intermediary between the rebels and the loyalists. His nerve must have failed him, for he undertook this task in the summer of 1663. The result of these negotiations, which took place at Javorow, the starosty of Sobieski, was one of those sudden changes of heart to which the impetuosity of the Polish character accustoms the student of her history. So volatile was the temperament of the Polish lords that one passage of rhetoric was often sufficient to wreck the schemes of months. They were as easily reconciled to their duty and their loyalty as they were prone to forget both. What changed them upon this occasion was the King's assurance that he would give up the idea of the French succession—as though they did not know that it was the Queen who ruled and not he.

## THE LUBOMIRSKI REBELLION

The pacified army departed upon a swift campaign which led it across the Ukraine and into the Muscovite territory, only to end in retreat. But while the Poles drove before them the hordes that had so long invested the bankrupt and divided kingdom, and then, when counter-attacked, withdrew, the Queen, with a tenacity which it was a mistake to underestimate, nursed her schemes and prepared for the next trial of strength; while Lubomirski, in disgrace since the defection of the army, was finally driven into exile by the short-sighted actions of the King and Queen. He was accused of high treason, condemned to death, and all his offices and goods declared forfeit. From his place of exile in Silesia he plotted his revenge, with the encouragement and help of the Emperor.

What was Sobieski's duty? Those who see in Lubomirski the ill-fated defender of the liberties of Poland, the martyr to a gang of foreign conspirators, the antagonist of a tyranny that would have made his native land a French dependency—these show Sobieski as a sycophant whose loyalty went no deeper than his personal interest, and who made a very good thing out of the Grand Marshal's forfeiture of honours and offices. They make much of the immediate appointment of Sobieski to the vacant baton, and stamp his loyalty to the monarchy as disloyalty to the Constitution. The more we present him as a soldier defending the Crown as a duty, the more they see him as a traitor selling his country for favours. But the apologists of Lubomirski miss several points. Sobieski was at this time a soldier and not a statesman. What influence he had was with the troops he had led in battle. He held high military office, and to him civil war was civil war. The best thing for the country was that order should be restored as soon as possible. Again, though it is likely that Lubomirski had repented of his mad moment of outrageous ambition, and had even expressed himself as willing to make amends for his treason, yet his influence was still so great with the disaffected elements that he might be tempted by this, or by his degradation and condemnation to death, to try once more to carry out his designs. His cause was now associated with the Empire,

and Leopold was not likely to counsel submission to the French party. And again, if Sobieski had suddenly become the most important man in Poland, the highest minister of the Crown, it was because he was the one man fitted to step into the position. There was needed no fawning nor intrigue. It is true that the sympathies of Sobieski were French, now as always, but to suggest that this was the main reason for his support of the King and Queen is to forget his decision in 1683. Is it not more probable that, apart from the plain matter of a soldier's duty, he believed that some modification of the elective system, with its perilous interregnum, might be to the advantage of Poland?

But it is time now to speak of another influence in Sobieski's life; one that increased his love of France and everything French, yet always came second to his sense of duty.

Among the retinue of lords and ladies and their attendants who accompanied Louise de Gonzague when she came to Poland to marry Ladislas and to ascend the throne by his side, there was a little four-year-old Nivernaise, by name Marie Casimire de la Grange d'Arquien. Her parents were of the nobility, her father Henri being a captain in the Swiss Guard of the Duke of Orleans. Her mother, before her marriage Françoise de la Chatre, had been the governess of Louise, whose family also came from Nevers, and as an act of gratitude the Queen took the small child with her to her new home. At an early age she became a maid-of-honour to the Queen, and later a kind of political agent. She was self-willed and precocious, and rapidly became the favourite of the Queen. The influence of Louise upon a young girl was not calculated to be a good one. She was a woman notorious for her lovers, among whom had been included the foolish Gaston d'Orleans, brother of Louis XIII, and the swashbuckling young Cinq-Mars, who died so gallantly at Lyons—his was the last blood shed by Richelieu. She herself was to die with a phrase of his on her lips.

The young girl, Marie Casimire, was soon remarked for her beauty and her vivacity, and took her full share of the

diversions and the social life of the Court ; for in the intervals of warfare the King ordered balls and dramatic performances and spectacular hunting parties. We have no record of the first meeting of Sobieski and Marie Casimire, but it is probable that it took place on some festive occasion, and may have been not unlike that occasion when, in a crowded room at Versailles, Fersen first saw Marie Antoinette. He fell in love with her from that moment, and knew her for the woman who must rule his destiny. At the time she cannot have been more than fourteen or fifteen. She, too, may have loved him at once—but in a more calculating manner. At all events she married Zamoyski, an immensely wealthy debauchee and a fine soldier, in 1658. He was then thirty-one and she but seventeen. One can imagine that, even if she had not herself appreciated what a chance was being offered to her, the Queen would not be backward in pointing out the worldly advantages of such a match. She wrote to Madame de Choisy in delight, and emphasised the possessions of Zamoyski. Apart from his wealth, this Zamoyski was better known than Sobieski and more of a figure, having remained loyal during the Swedish invasion. The historian Korzon adds a reason for Sobieski's apparently easy surrender of the girl he loved to another man ; he was afraid to tell his mother, who was still living in exile, and had never forgiven him for the duel that kept him out of the battle in which his brother Mark was killed, that he wanted to marry a foreigner.

In any case, Zamoyski and Marie Casimire were married. A portrait of her at this time shows an oval face with a rather aquiline nose ; the small mouth upturned at the corners ; abundant dark hair. Her eyes were almond-shaped, she was of slight build, and her vitality was three-parts of her charm. She had a curious eccentricity—she loved to walk in the rain.

The marriage ceremony was of almost royal splendour, nor was the bride permitted to imagine that she would escape from the influence of the Queen by taking a husband. She dressed for her wedding in the royal apartments, and the King gave her away at the altar. Among the gifts of the bridegroom

were a diamond crown and a dressing-table of solid gold, ornamented with love-knots made of pearls. From the first the marriage was a failure. Three sickly children were born and died. There were quarrels and even brawls, and she left Zamosc whenever she could for the more varied amusements of the capital, and to forget her drunken husband.

Meanwhile her life was made more tolerable by a correspondence with Sobieski. The families of Zamoyski and Sobieski had always been friends, and the two young men had fought together against the Cossacks. It is certain that the unhappy wife and the disappointed suitor must have met on many occasions at the great houses or at Court. It is evident from the letters that she watched his career with the greatest interest. The letters are familiar, nearly always coquettish on her side, with now and then a barely veiled tenderness. She tells him her troubles and the trivial daily happenings of her life; gives him instructions to buy for her Flemish lace and various stuffs; discusses the different settings for pieces of jewellery. Sometimes she is bantering, and then will become of a sudden serious; tells him to make haste and marry, and not to omit to invite her husband and herself to his housewarming party. She bids him burn a letter; sends him a scapular and a crucifix ("If you are killed they will know you for a Christian. There's no favour in it"); reminds him to hold Konski to his promise to send her two pages and a lutenist; announces gravely that her husband has given her permission to abandon the French manner of dressing her hair. In one of the letters she addresses him as her beloved son, and signs herself his affectionate mother. Again and again she tells him to marry, so that she may have some consolation in her old age. They exchange books and copies of new songs; she gives him details of her reading—now a tragedy which he has recommended, now a comedy in vogue. They both read the novels of Madame Scudéry, and use her symbolical language in their letters. She draws his attention to a property for sale at Meudon, describes an illness she has had, says her husband is not speaking to her.

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The effect of such a correspondence, intimate, always seeming to mean rather more or rather less than is said, for ever non-committal, was cumulative. In between his campaigns, the young man, passionately in love, came to depend upon her letters, and her hold over him was the stronger since it was the hold of a subtle and sophisticated young woman over a simple young man. There was not a trick of the business which she did not know, nor one which he did know. He raged impatiently. She watched and waited.

Sobieski's reputation was increasing rapidly. By 1664, when Lubomirski was preparing his next stroke in his Silesian exile, the Queen had made up her mind that the affairs of her protégée were worth watching closely. She knew all about the romantic love-story of the soldier and the maid-of-honour, and appreciated the advantage of binding Sobieski to the French cause by strong personal ties. When Zamoyski died in 1665 she made Marie Casimire rush the business, and might have spoilt her plan completely. Even the ardent lover was not blind to the indecent haste with which the young widow consented to marry him. The two women staged a pretty drama. On a summer's night Marie Casimire gave her lover a rendezvous. As arranged, the Queen discovered them together, pretended to fall into a towering passion and ordered them to marry. The trap closed. In July 1665, a few weeks after the death of Zamoyski, the marriage took place.<sup>1</sup> The Arquier family were against it. Sobieski himself would have preferred to allow a decent interval to elapse. Had he been less straightforward himself, he might have found something to ponder in the widow's disregard of public opinion and even of respect for the dead.

The story of an earlier and secret marriage between Sobieski and Marie Casimire is part of the web of political intrigue in which he found himself caught. It has been affirmed and denied. Korzon denies it on the evidence of a letter. In June Marie Casimire wrote to Sobieski, telling him that on

<sup>1</sup> In the "Gazette de France" of August 14th, 1665, there is an account of the Nuptial Mass in the Palace Chapel at Warsaw.

arriving at Zamosc for her late husband's funeral—he had died on April 7th—she had been refused admittance. She had already been notified that as she had not shown any affection for Zamoyksi in his lifetime, it was late to begin such demonstrations now. Further, she was told that as she had not invited anyone to her second wedding, she must not expect an invitation to the funeral. In spite of this message Marie Casimire arrived, wearing a widow's veil. The gate was not opened to her. She was jeered at. "Do you know to whom you are speaking?" she cried. To which they replied, "Oh, yes. To Mme. Sobieski." She left Zamosc in a passion, tearing her clothes.

Marie Casimire's complaint at this treatment reached Sobieski while he was on his way to take command of the army. He replied in anger, using no terms of endearment, and ending his letter thus: "I must hasten towards Lwow, as I have to be in Warsaw again soon, where I hope to find your ladyship in good health. Please believe me your ladyship's most devoted and humble servant." Upon this letter Korzon bases his refutation of a secret marriage. But he does not deny that on June 8th Sobieski was writing to Marie Casimire as "My most beloved and beautiful little wife, the greatest solace of my heart and soul." He thinks that they met while she was returning from Zamosc and he on his way to Lwow, and discussed plans for their marriage. It is a far-fetched explanation. It seems to be more likely that the first letter had to be taken some distance by a messenger and that Sobieski feared its capture by his enemies. At this time he was complaining of the gossip that was being spread in all directions. The second letter, written after they had met and decided on their course of action, set out very frankly his feelings for her. To support the story of an early marriage there is, first, the known eagerness of the Queen and her party to have the matter settled, and the panic into which the Queen fell when, for two weeks after Zamoyksi's death, Sobieski sent no word of sympathy to the widow. She began to doubt his love. Secondly, we know that in May Sobieski discovered that the



QUEEN MARIE CASIMIRE IN HER CORONATION ROBES

*(Jerzy Siemiginowski. Wilanow Collection)*





Queen was negotiating with Lubomirski all the time she was building up the opposition against him. This double-dealing threw him into a rage, and the Queen, fearing that he might go away, had every reason for arranging a secret marriage. But the strongest evidence is a letter written on May 15th by Bonzi, referring to the wedding, which probably took place on May 13th or 14th, before Zamoyski had been buried. Waliszewski puts it as early as May 6th, and quotes Meyerberg as saying, later, that the public marriage in July was a comedy performed by people already married.

Nobody would pretend that Sobieski was not eager to marry the widow, but, left to himself, it is probable that he would have shown more restraint. The Queen cared nothing for the love affair except in so far as it might be used to further her political projects, and Marie Casimire was both eager to serve the French party and to secure Sobieski for herself. He himself resented the bullying and pestering to which he was submitted. In one letter he writes: "In God's name, ladies, leave me alone," and speaks of leaving Poland and living as a simple gentleman in a country where "soldiers do not rebel, and the leader thinks only of battles, and is not forced to worry about money and matters of administration." As early as April 21st Sobieski and Marie Casimire met in Warsaw, and he describes how they all immediately told him that he must marry, and how the Queen was set on taking away his honour and his reputation, so as to make him obedient to her and ready to do whatever she wanted. On April 24th he accepted the Hetmanship which he had before refused with such dignity.

Whether the marriage took place in May or July, the whole period is full of unsavoury incidents. Given the letter of May 15th and the acceptance by the people all over the country of popular rumour, it seems impossible to deny the secret wedding. But however discreditable Sobieski's submission to the Queen and her party, and to his personal ardour, it would be unjust to him to under-estimate the energy and the cunning with which the French party pursued their aim.

In March 1665 there had arrived in Poland another agent for the Queen, sent by Colbert ; Bonzi, Bishop of Beziers. He was, though no more than thirty-four, practised in all the diplomatic arts ; a small, dark-eyed man with a very handsome face, courteous, witty, and with cunning in his blood. For he was of a Florentine family, and a connection of the Medicis. He had been born in Florence. This man's job was to ensure the Polish throne to the French candidate, and to rouse the Poles against Lubomirski. He did not hesitate to provoke the civil war that was imminent. It was to him that the Queen said one day, " The kingdom of Poland is for sale." To which he replied, " Yes, but there are difficulties as to the price and the delivery of the goods."

Both the Queen and Bonzi set great store by Marie Casimire, and it is possible that the wily bishop had a hand in the hastening of the marriage after Zamoyski's death. His reports to Louis XIV or to Lionne mention her with great frequency. He praises her friendship for her native land, and begs favours for her family. Of Sobieski he notes that he is one of the best brains of the French party, that he is a staunch supporter of the Queen's scheme, and that he has a very useful passion for the widow Zamoyski. The little Florentine stopped at nothing. He forges a document, arranges a plot to assassinate Lubomirski, and even gets the astrologers to make the stars pro-French—a great stroke this, but partly due to a lucky discovery that the chief astrologer, Morin, came from Bonzi's see, Beziers. And by this time Louis XIV was promising armed support.

By July Lubomirski was ready. He crossed the Vistula near Cracow and marched to meet the royalist army.

It must be understood that Lubomirski had a large following in Poland. He was the embodiment of opposition to foreign conspirators, and even the monks of Czenstochowa supported him against the King. That he loved his country nobody can deny, but his method of defending its liberties with troops paid by Austria and Brandenburg would merely have substituted Leopold for Louis XIV. Nor was there any guarantee

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that his personal ambition might not awaken again with all its old violence.

This first campaign of five months was a farce. It consisted of a series of marches and counter-marches. Sometimes the rebels and the royalists got into touch, and even began a small engagement, but there was no decisive battle, and in November a truce was signed at Paczin. In fact the most noteworthy incident of the campaign had been the sacking and burning by Lubomirski of Zolkiew, while Sobieski and Marie Casimire, married by the future Pope Innocent XI, were celebrating their wedding feast in Warsaw.

After the failure of this first campaign to achieve anything the Diet met. But there was no hope of settling the civil war by arbitration, because there was no authority in the country. The moment hostilities ceased the intrigues became more and more involved. Sobieski during this time was holding the frontiers against Muscovite invaders, and had already shown his ambitious wife that he cared more for the simple task of the soldier than for the subtleties of the salon. But the plots of the Queen and of Marie Casimire gave Lubomirski an excuse to launch a second campaign against the enemies of constitutional government. Louis XIV, who was growing tired of the business, gave John Casimir exactly three months to bring Lubomirski to heel, and sent a sum of money sufficient for that period. After uneventful weeks John Casimir, anxious to deal a decisive blow before the French money gave out, was fool enough to attack Lubomirski in the Cujavian marshes, against the advice of Sobieski. His cavalry was cut to pieces. Sobieski rallied the remains of the army and conducted a skilful retreat, covering Warsaw. On the last day of July, 1666, a treaty was signed, and once more Lubomirski retired to Silesia, on the understanding that the King would henceforth serve the Constitution and the traditions of Poland, would make no attempt to interfere with the freedom of election to the throne, and would abandon the unpopular plans for a French succession.

Peace was thus restored, to all appearances, within the

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kingdom, but to many of the French party it was an Austrian victory. Not for a second were the intrigues relaxed. As for Sobieski, he left the Cujavian marshes only to go with all speed back to the eastern frontier, where the Tartars and the Muscovites, emboldened by the second campaign of the civil war, had begun to advance once more into Poland. But no such peril could turn the Queen and her circle from their schemes—for the treaty was a mere jest, and they clearly had not for one moment the smallest intention of keeping faith. Louis was ready to pay up again, and the sly Bonzi was not the man to take any notice of a treaty. May one, then, contemplate the embittered Lubomirski, watching from his place of exile, the broken word of the King, and planning yet one more stroke on behalf of the threatened liberties of his beloved country? Not at all. In September of 1666 an agreement was made between Bonzi, the Queen and Lubomirski's go-between, Morsztyn, in which the rebel leader, the high patriot, undertook to support the French succession in return for half-a-million livres from Louis, 100,000 from Condé, the governorship of Cracow and an interest in the neighbouring salt-mines of Wieliczka. But at the last moment Lubomirski failed to carry out the bargain. The agreement remained unsigned, and the rebel withdrew once more into Silesia. He died of apoplexy on the last day of 1666.

The situation on the eastern frontiers of Poland had not escaped the astute Bonzi. The Tartars were preparing a raid on a larger scale than usual. The Turks were reported to be arming, and the Muscovites held themselves ready to be at hand upon the dissolution of the kingdom. The death of Lubomirski, though it removed the leader of the rebellion, only served to throw his thoroughly disorganised army of supporters upon the country. Bonzi at once saw his opening. If he could persuade Louis XIV to send armed help he could explain such an action with the greatest of ease. The French troops would be not only a means of restoring order in the country, and a protection against the marauding bands of rebels, but also they would help to ward off the other and

graver danger from the Tartars and Turks and Muscovites. Further, the presence of a French army in Poland would divert the attention of Leopold from the Low Countries and the projected invasion by Turenne.

Fortunately for Poland, this cunning plan failed. When the critical moment arrived, and the Tartar invasion broke over the border, the Poles signified in no uncertain manner that they preferred to defend themselves.

But before Sobieski was called to block the advance of 80,000 Tartars, an event of the utmost significance took place. John Casimir, realising how the rebellion had divided and weakened the country, and being persuaded of the wisdom of detaching at least one enemy from the group that was about to sweep forward across Poland, entered into negotiations with the Czar Alexis. The result of the negotiations was called a truce. By the terms of it Poland gave up her overlordship of the Ukrainian Cossacks, and the Muscovite frontier was advanced to the Dnieper, where it remained until Poland was partitioned in 1772. The direct cause of this truce, known as that of Andrussowo, and signed on January 14th, 1667, was the division of Poland by the civil war. The less immediate cause was the state to which the country had been reduced by the influence of a domineering French woman over a weak king.

### III

## PODHAJCE, THE FIRST TURKISH INVASION, THE TREATY OF BUCZACZ, AND CHOCIM

(1667-1673)

IN the early months of 1667 Sobieski was regarded as the only man who could save Poland from the enemies massing on her frontiers. Already Grand Marshal, he was made Grand Hetman of the Crown in addition, thus uniting in his own person, at the age of thirty-eight, the highest civil and military offices. While he was fighting on the Volhynian plains, Morsztyn was at Versailles, extracting from Louis XIV a promise of troops in return for Casimir's abdication in favour of Condé. With indescribable stupidity the Polish King again brought up the matter of the French election, and caused another outbreak of the exasperated nobles, who now regarded the whole complicated business as an attempt to force upon them a French absolute monarchy, as well as the French customs already introduced by the Queen and her entourage. Bonzi was informed that Condé would land at Danzig with an army ten thousand strong, and that the chief Polish towns would be garrisoned by French troops. The little Florentine was further ordered to persuade Sobieski to give up his offices, and to return to France, where a welcome and a career awaited him. Already, then, even in France, he was regarded as dangerous, and the conspirators must have been greatly disappointed that his marriage had not made him their tool.

In the spring a strong rumour said that French envoys were demanding passage for their troops through the Rhineland, as they were in a great hurry to help Poland against the Turks.

The rumour was cleverly passed to and fro, in order that the Emperor might hear it, and refrain from sending his armies to resist Turenne in the Low Countries. It was true that the Turks, encouraged by hostilities between the Emperor and the French King, were preparing for a campaign on a large scale, but to Louis such an event merely provided the chance for a political manœuvre.

In May Louise de Gonzague died of heart failure, after working herself up into a frenzy during a discussion of the French succession. She died with the "*ergo moriendum*" of young Cinq-Mars on her lips; a woman detested by those outside her party. She had done more than anyone else to make Polish history, after her death, a tedious duel between the Emperor and the French King. And upon her must remain the blame for putting a reform of the Constitution beyond possibility. Any hint that the power of the nobles should be reduced, or that particular abuses should be destroyed, was in future not only suspect in itself, but immediately connected with French money or Austrian promises. The break-up of Poland was inevitable, but she hastened it on, and had it not been for Sobieski, the country would not have lasted out through all the wars and internal dissensions. Yet she must be blamed for one further thing; her influence upon Marie Casimire. This influence was exerted during the child's most impressionable years, and the girl came to womanhood in the midst of a clique that cared nothing for Poland except in so far as a show of loyalty might further their plans. Her marriage to Zamoyiski, the patriot, could not have done much to counteract the Queen's influence, since the marriage was planned and made by the Queen, and since the girl never loved him, and was repelled by his debauches. Nor had Marie Casimire enough nobility in her character to be sufficiently influenced by the devotion of Sobieski.

Upon the death of the Queen, Bonzi saw an excellent excuse for Condé and d'Enghien to be present in Poland as mourners. It would be most useful to have them on the spot, especially as John Casimir was growing more and more used to the idea



of abdication, and, being sixty years old, might even die at any moment. But Bonzi reckoned without his master, who had a new idea. Neuburg, having been induced to remain neutral in a certain matter of the Rhine bridges, was to be rewarded (by Louis XIV ! ) by marrying his daughter to the King of Poland. So Bonzi, who had been putting forward with all the suavity and charm at his disposal the merits of an early abdication, now found himself urging the King not to abdicate, but, instead, to marry a girl of thirteen, and share his throne with her. This fantastic nonsense was, as may be expected, not received well in Poland.

In the summer of 1667 an enormous force of Tartars and Cossacks made a rapid descent upon Eastern Poland, and it was known that the Turkish hosts might follow. To withstand the invaders Sobieski had some 12,000 men, mostly mutinous, and, as always, howling for arrears of pay. Of Tartars alone there were 80,000 on the march.

Sobieski, leaving Marie Casimire to set out on a journey to Paris (it is hardly surprising that political motives were ascribed to the journey), took in hand the reorganisation of the army, with the enemy almost in sight. By his personal influence over men and by freely spending his own money he increased his command to some 15,000. His first object was to force upon the invaders a slower and more cautious method of advance, in order to gain time for himself. This he accomplished by making a series of unexpected and very rapid attacks on isolated bodies of Tartars and Cossacks. He knew that he was fighting undisciplined troops, who were merely raiding for plunder, and who grew weary of a prolonged campaign. He knew also that they were easily thrown into a panic, and that panic spreads quickly. A mob of horsemen, out of contact with the main body, set on and thoroughly routed, would be likely to throw confusion into other separated bodies, and to start all manner of stories about the immense size of the opposing army and the suddenness of its onsets. With a kingdom at stake, no other tactic was possible. A deliberate and prepared attack upon such a sprawling host was

out of the question. Only audacity was of any use, and audacity Sobieski possessed in an uncommon measure. He went on harassing those stray bands of horsemen until he had completed his astonishing plan, which was, briefly, to divide his forces; to advance against the main body of the enemy, as though intending an attack, and at the same time to despatch a small force to get in rear of them, and then to shut himself up, with his small force, in a fortified place called Podhajce, which was in the midst of the territory occupied by the Tartars. Before making his dispositions he wrote to outline them to Marie Casimire in Paris, and to tell her that he was about to win the battle. The great Condé, having the plan read out to him, said, "He will win no success but that of dying a few days before his country." That was the common opinion of such audacity. It was also the opinion of the Polish troops as soon as they discovered that the small force of Poles was to be divided. They cried that they were betrayed, but Sobieski refused to change his plans. "This horde of brigands," he said, "does not frighten me. Can you doubt that God will fight for us against a pack of infidels?"

But before he left Lwow he had once more to feed and pay the hungry soldiers. He wrote to Marie Casimire on September 15th: "It seems that I shall have to pawn my last shirt for food for the soldiers," and he repeated his complaints against the King—to whom he had written imploring help. "But they do not care. They shift the whole responsibility on to me. They ask me to spend all my money, as though I had the navies of Spain to bring me fortune after fortune." He raised loans and continued to spend his own money, or as much of it as her extravagance had left him. He even mortgaged his property to the Jews. Having settled these troubles for the moment, he marched off with about 8000 men, excluding some not very valuable local militia. His own contribution consisted of about 800 workers from his estates and all his horses, as well as the stores of food; flour, peas, oats, pork, and so on.

While Sobieski went out through Podolia the dead Queen Louise was buried with great pomp in Cracow, the bed-ridden

King watching from his window, and preparing to receive the foreign bearers of portraits of marriageable ladies.

The cavalry moved forward against the enemy ; the infantry, perhaps 3000 strong, advanced also, but allowed the tide of Tartars to sweep past them, by concealing themselves in a gorge. Then they showed themselves, the enemy turned to meet them, and they retreated, fighting a rearguard action until the entrenched camp of Podhajce received them.

On September 28th Galga the Tartar carried out the part of the scheme allotted to him by Sobieski. He began the siege which was to last sixteen days, and to end, on the seventeenth, in a complete victory for Sobieski and the salvation of Poland. It was this Homeric siege which confirmed in the eyes of the world the promise shown by the great soldier, and established his reputation all over Europe. For sixteen days the little garrison withstood a hundred massed attacks, and wore down the ferocity of the assailants. When Galga called for surrender, Sobieski replied : " A head for a head, as the Sultan treated my brother."

On October 16th, the seventeenth day of the siege, Sobieski's cavalry arrived, and the Tartars and Cossacks, about to make one more desperate assault, saw something which must have seemed to them like stark madness. Instead of preparing to receive the assault, the worn and depleted garrison issued from the camp, lined up beneath the fortifications, and advanced to the attack themselves. Meanwhile the arrival of the cavalry, the bravery of the small handful in Podhajce, and probably the suspicion that the Poles would win a victory, had resulted in a wild rush of peasants to the standard of Sobieski. If the enemy had been European, this frantic and disorganised mob, armed anyhow and advancing in complete disorder, would have thrown the Polish army into disarray and robbed it of its victory. But the barbarians were by now utterly demoralised, and hardly waited for the first shock of the mixed host. They stampeded, and two days later, Galga had asked for and obtained peace, on the basis of an offensive and defensive alliance.

It might be thought that while the country was in

such extreme danger the King was rallying the intriguing nobles, and preparing an army to put up a last defence if Podhajce were taken. The King did no such thing. He had no power over the nobles. The more pious prayed in the churches for the salvation of their country, while the rest went about the customary business of plotting against each other. It was only when the news of the victory arrived that many of the nobles realised at what an hour they had been absent from the battle-field.

The Tartars and Cossacks withdrew from the border country, and Sobieski led his heroic army back through Poland. While he passed beneath the triumphal arches upon his way to Warsaw, Louis XIV was holding James Louis Sobieski, his first son, born in Paris, over the baptismal font. The conqueror entered Warsaw, where the Diet was sitting, and after rendering account of his command, was called the liberator of his country, to universal acclamation.

From this moment he is the great figure in Poland, universally respected, and the one man to whom all will turn in a crisis.

While Sobieski was saving his country, Marie Casimire had departed for France, ostensibly to settle the matter of a family inheritance, and to receive expert medical attention when her expected child should be born. But she took care to tell Bonzi that unless she got satisfaction in her claim, France need expect no support for Condé from her husband. Sobieski had been opposed to her journey, and had made no disguise of his feelings. His frankness resulted in an outbreak of malicious gossip, in which stories were spread of quarrels between him and Marie Casimire. In the midst of this unpleasantness she set out, with a suite of forty, for Paris. "Now am I poorer," he wrote to her, "than the beggars that stretch out their hands by the church door, for, losing you, I lose all." Nor did he hesitate to speak of the more intimate details of their love. He worried himself until he fell ill, and only recovered when he had news of her. She, too, was ill, but not for love of him. He at once distributed money to various monasteries and convents, and ordered a lamp to be lighted before the shrine

of Our Lady of Czenstochowa. Also he made a vow of fasting for nine Saturdays on bread and water—which he kept during the siege of Podhajce; a singular example of his piety. He sent her names for the child. If a son, it was to be James Louis; if a daughter, Thérèse.

It was about this time that the first Tartar Zagon<sup>1</sup> invaded Volhynia and got to within a short distance of Lwow. But nobody in Warsaw believed in the danger.

Sobieski's letters to Marie Casimire are almost despairing. He describes the confusion of the camp, which is like a public-house, and his attempts to pay the army with his own money. While, however, he was clearly indicating to her that his task was to fight and not to get mixed up in politics, she told Bonzi that he was winning over the army to the French cause. In due time Louis XIV received from Bonzi a report to that effect. When the report arrived Sobieski was still trying to grapple with the financial situation, a duty not made easier by a note from Warsaw saying that no money or help could be expected from that quarter, but that the recipient must not let Sobieski suspect such a state of affairs. To Marie Casimire he wrote saying that he was working so hard that he had almost forgotten what the sun looked like, and that the prospect was that he would have 8000 men with which to face 100,000. "Whoever comes to Poland from abroad says that the Poles have gone mad." He also complained of insomnia, and of such anxiety during the long nights as made him "almost sweat blood."

Meanwhile the news of Louis XIV's dropping of Condé and adoption of Neuburg had one curiously interesting result. Sobieski suggested James Stuart, Duke of York, whom he had met at St. Germain, as a candidate. Later, Sobieski's granddaughter was to marry the son of James Stuart.

The Poland to which Sobieski returned after Podhajce had already determined to use the rare moments of peace won by her army for the old purpose. The wrangling and plotting

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps our word "clan" is the one that will best convey the meaning of the word Zagon.

continued unabated. It was generally understood that the old King was now seriously considering abdication. He was weary of his office, and it was now plain beyond any doubting that there was not the slightest chance of his being able to restore internal peace. The more his mind turned towards a quiet end and the consolations of the Faith, the more apprehensive became the party of Lubomirski, who saw behind this resolution the old influence of the dead Queen and the interference of the French King. Throughout the early part of 1668 their fear grew. The great Jagellonian dynasty was about to end. Its last representative was already little more than an unquiet ghost, without substance and without authority. In June John Casimir announced publicly his intention to abdicate, and it was not only in Poland that excitement ran high. Bonzi wisely ran away back to France, where he found his King making hasty preparations for the European auction-sale which would give him his chance of snatching Poland from the Hapsburgs. The Emperor Leopold wanted the throne of Poland for his candidate, the old Duke of Neuburg, because it would give him a barrier against the Turks, now preparing another invasion, and would also be a victory over France. The Muscovites were also on the watch, since Alexis thought that with his son established in Poland he could achieve his ambition of advancing towards the west. The Tartars and the Cossacks, foreseeing an even more disordered state of affairs than usual, were ready to enjoy whatever plunder could be had, and to contribute, by repeated raids, to a state of affairs which was always much to their liking. It was only in Poland itself that there was no candidate for the throne. While the factions made ready for the coming scramble, Sobieski, as usual, departed for the frontiers with what troops he could raise.

In September 1668 the King mounted his throne for the last time and read out to the assembled nobles his Act of abdication.<sup>1</sup> In a final speech he spoke of the miseries of his long reign, and told them that he was now abdicating in the

<sup>1</sup> He said: "*Pro pulchro hoc solio sepulchrum, proque regali globo terrae glebam eligo.*" The full speech is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

interest of his country. He said that he would leave his kingdom to a younger and stronger man, who would inherit it by the will of God and by the free suffrage of the nation (!). He thanked his subjects for their devotion to him, and asked pardon of those whom he had offended. And at this point his emotion made him incapable of continuing. The rest of the speech was read by the Vice-Chancellor, and at its conclusion he stepped down from the throne and took his leave. The nobles, with characteristic volatility, broke down and wept, then refused him his pension, then granted it to him.

For nearly a year he roamed about Poland, still thinking of the French succession. Finally, he retired to France, where Louis gave him two or three abbeys. His name was connected with several women, particularly the renowned Marie Mignot, a washerwoman who married a Marshal of France.<sup>1</sup> He died in 1672 in his abbey of St. Martin at Nevers, the last of the line of that Lithuanian Prince, Jagello, who had married a Queen of Poland, and founded the great dynasty nearly three hundred years before.

The nine months that elapsed after the abdication, before the next King was elected, supply an excellent example of the internal state of Poland at the time. The interregnum was always a period of extreme lawlessness, but never before had there been such complete chaos. The situation was seized on by all the enemies of Poland, who hoped to make what they could out of it. But by an irony not uncommon in history, when all the foreign claimants had bickered and bribed to the full, the Poles, weary of the whole sordid affair, elected a Polish nobleman to the throne.

While the Primate, Prazmowski, was sending out his letters summoning the nobility to a General Convocation at Warsaw, the envoys of the various candidates began their electoral campaigns. The Muscovite Czar was backing the candidature of his son with a large army, Louis XIV was supporting his

<sup>1</sup> Some say she ended by marrying John Casimir. It would only have added one more extravagant touch to the story of this ex-Cardinal who became King, married his sister-in-law, and then abdicated and retired to an abbey.

nephews Condé and d'Enghien, and the Emperor Leopold had put forward the young Charles of Lorraine, among whose ancestors the Jesuits had discovered three hundred saints. But a fifth candidate was to appear, the sixty-year-old Duke of Neuburg, a German whom both the Emperor and the French King finally agreed to support, partly because fear of Alexis made them combine, and partly because they both believed in confusing the issue as much as possible.

In the last month of 1668 Marie Casimire returned from France, and wasted no time in preparing to play her part in the exciting intrigues of the moment. While Sobieski was fighting on the eastern frontiers, she worked hard to disentangle the threads of the affair, and to instruct herself as to the probable chances of the candidates. Alexis and his son were soon out of the running, as not being Catholics. Condé and d'Enghien also dropped out, and the choice now lay between the Bavarian Duke and the young Lorraine. The French party were for Neuburg; he was now receiving nothing more than the formal support of the Emperor, whose money was still on Lorraine. Long before the Diet of Election met in May 1669,<sup>1</sup> civil war had broken out between the factions, and while the nobles and their followers fought in the open streets, their wives and mothers and daughters entertained behind closed doors the various envoys and go-betweens, laid traps, bought and sold secrets.

Into the midst of this bloodshed and corruption came Sobieski, at the head of a small army, to fulfil his duties at the Electoral Diet in May, and for a month he exercised his authority and used the prestige of his name to prevent pitched

<sup>1</sup> A contemporary description of this Diet and of the subsequent election gives an excellent idea of the way such affairs were managed in seventeenth-century Poland. It proves that the pictures drawn by later historians of such events are not exaggerated, and it is to be found in the "*Mémoires de Jean Chrysostom Pasek, Gentilhomme Polonais*." The memoirs, translated out of the Polish by Cazin, are a record, with certain gaps, of the author's life from 1656-1688, and contain among much boasting and many interminable stories of drinking and gallantry, a description of the plunder found in the Turkish tents after the raising of the siege of Vienna.



battles on the plain of Wola,<sup>1</sup> where the Diet was held. Marie Casimire was spending the important moments in an attempt to seduce Lorraine from the Emperor's service, a difficult matter, because not only was he not a man of so contemptible a character, but also he was in love with the Emperor's sister Eleanor.

While the bargaining continued in the Diet, a few of those who were attached neither to Austria nor to France began to ask each other whether there was not some way out of the difficulty, and discovered a very simple way out. What could be more natural than that a Pole should be put up as candidate? Accordingly, a whisper went round, and one day this suggestion was actually made. It would be interesting to know exactly what part Marie Casimire had had in the suggestion, and whether she had yet thought of her own husband as a possible King. It is not likely that she had gone as far as that yet. She knew the jealousy of the other nobles, and probably intended a slower approach to such a pinnacle. But the idea must have been turned over in her mind. She had been in France when the news of Podhajce amazed Europe, and must have then realised what Sobieski was likely to become.

Sobieski should have been elected King at this Diet. He was in his fortieth year, popular, and—what the nation needed most—a soldier and a leader of men. He might have been elected, since the name of Michael Koributh Wisniowiecki can only have been put forward to test the assembly, and to see how such a startlingly simple solution to their problems would be taken. On the other hand, there was against Sobieski that very popularity and prestige which he had won. What guarantee was there that he would allow the nobles to do what they pleased? The indications were that he would be a strong ruler, and that the perpetual factions would be suppressed. There was also against him his marriage to a Frenchwoman. She would be likely to influence him in favour of the old absolutist policy which had brought so much trouble on the

<sup>1</sup> The traveller to Warsaw passes this plain to-day as he comes in from Lowicz.

kingdom already. There was nothing of this sort against Michael Koributh, a man of illustrious name, of Jagellon blood, but also a nonentity, an invalid; a man without energy, personality or talent. Moreover, he had lived in a monastery, and nobody knew anything of him. This poor young man of thirty was acclaimed and elected. And when they sent to escort him from the monastery he burst out crying, and had to be dragged to his glorious and unexpected destiny.

If Sobieski had been elected now, in 1669, instead of in 1674, it would have made no difference to the fate of Poland, but she would have escaped as ridiculous an essay in kingship as any country ever had to tolerate. For in spite of all the usual omens of a happy reign—the doves and eagles and so forth—the new King was never for a moment equal to his task. But perhaps the most entertaining aspect of the election is that the orgy of bribery and corruption, the high-handed manner in which foreign Powers had prepared to dispose of Poland, ended by bringing about something resembling a free election—that boast of the Polish gentry. When King had outbidden Emperor, when Emperor had tricked King, and when all the envoys, spies and ambassadors had played their last cards, the noise of the factions died down, the dense and excited crowds parted and there was disclosed this pitiful figure, bearing a great name. They dragged him forward, and the nobles knelt before him. And John Casimir, hearing the news, exclaimed: "What! And they've gone and crowned that poor fellow!" Sobieski, to avoid further civil war, joined in the ridiculous acclamations. Meanwhile the Cossacks of the Ukraine noted with anger the election of the son of their old oppressor, Prince Jeremy.

If the nobles expected this colourless invalid to remain passive upon the throne, and to leave them to their schemes, they were to be disappointed. No sooner did Michael feel the throne beneath him than he acted like many weak men upon whom power is thrust unexpectedly. The lamb became a lion. In a few weeks he had the factions at each other's throats again by his insistence on an unpopular marriage.

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Leopold, having lost Poland, repeated his old stale trick of thrusting forward one out of his inexhaustible supply of Grand Duchesses. Eleanor, who was to have married Lorraine, jilted him without a thought, since he had no kingdom. All the early months of the reign were filled with wrangling. The Lithuanians supported the King, the rest of the country objected to this new attempt of the Emperor to get a hold on Poland. In February 1670 the King had his way, and married at Czenstochowa (a) an Austrian (b) without the consent of the nobility. In other words, the nonentity elected to the throne had succeeded in being more of a tyrant than John Casimir with all his schemes and plots.

While this was going on, Sobieski, with what troops he could scrape together, not only held the Cossacks off, but, by an audacious offensive, carried out with extreme rapidity, striking now at one point, now at another, reduced the invaders to the necessity of considering negotiations. But when it became clear that the Diet would vote for peace, the King had it dissolved by means of the *liberum veto*. Perhaps his insane jealousy of Sobieski, which was by now notorious, made him afraid of the consequences of a victorious peace. He was conscious that only one man saved the country in crisis after crisis, and that he himself, for all his ludicrous airs, was a useless fool.

The result of the King's refusal to make peace was the calling in by the Cossacks of powerful aid. The Turkish Empire now began to see its chance of invading Europe. Refusal of peace to the Cossacks was the excuse, and the faction-ridden Poland, under an incompetent King, was the opportunity. And such a moment was chosen by the King to trump up a charge against Sobieski. The rumour was spread that it was he who had asked the Tartars and Cossacks to invade Poland. A likely story!

The East was in motion. The little drums were beating to war, and the dark men out of Asia were moving up the Danube river. Sobieski, at his post on the frontier, left the intriguers to do as they pleased, and concentrated his mind upon what



THE EASTERN BORDER-LANDS OF POLAND IN THE TIME OF SOBIESKI



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was before him. This time it was no mere raid of Tartar horsemen, no wild and irregular advance of marauding Cossacks. It was the systematic and meticulous preparation for a vast campaign by the Porte and its subject peoples. And as the danger grew, the Polish King's efforts to paralyse Sobieski's arm became frantic. He refused to grant subsidies or rations, and left Kamieniec, that most important of all the fortresses, without supplies. Sobieski paid the men with his own money, and bought what food he could for them.

There is more than jealousy in the King's conduct during 1670 and 1671. He was in the hands of his wife's Austrians, and the Emperor of Austria was only too anxious to divert Turkish attention from his own dominions. Louis XIV, also, encouraged a Turkish expedition against Poland, as a means of clearing out the Austrian party. And so, for one moment we have the rare and interesting spectacle of Bourbon and Hapsburg following, for different reasons, the same policy; a circumstance embarrassing to the diplomats of the time, but not without humour. But from now on, for over twenty years, Poland means one man, who through all the political bargainings and the rapid breakdown of the last remnants of ordered government, never forgot his position as a European, and the position of his country as an outpost of the great commonwealth of Europe. His is the one noble figure that rises out of the welter of corruption, and his name and the tale of his deeds shed the last glory over an expiring Poland.

The "Gazette de France" called the campaign of 1671 "miraculous." It is difficult to think of any other word that would be applicable to such feats as Sobieski performed. With his own King against him and the Lithuanians standing aside, he used his small army with such tactical genius that the Tartars and Cossacks could not stand against him. He captured many towns and fortified places, but the true value of the campaign was only seen in later years, when the mere rumour of his approach filled the camp of the enemy with consternation, and when the sight of him upon his horse, at the head of his squadrons, had more effect than the arrival of

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unexpected reinforcements. It was now that he was laying the foundation of that legend of invincibility which served later to prolong the life of his country for a few years. As long as he lived, nobody could believe that there was nothing but his name to hold off the invader.

He had to deal, during this campaign, with the disaffection that was to become so familiar to him. After one or two rapid strokes his army began to grumble, and there was always somebody to lead the deserters homewards. On this occasion, as though the country were not in peril enough, he fell ill; a circumstance that might have awakened the nobles to the danger that was now imminent. Without him there was nobody to meet the enemy.

While Sobieski lay ill the army got no pay and its leaders soon became aware that the King was doing his utmost to make this illness an excuse for ridding himself altogether of their general. Influential families were talking of dethroning the mischievous and useless King, and the shadow of civil war began to appear once more. The Emperor of Austria was not slow to seize his chance, and was ready to back the conspirators whole-heartedly, provided they would guarantee to substitute for Michael the old candidate of the Empire, Lorraine, who would, of course, marry Eleanor as soon as possible, and thus open the way for an Austrian dynasty in Poland, and for the subsequent organisation of Poland as an Austrian dependency.

While the envoy of Mahomet IV was demanding satisfaction in Warsaw for the Polish advance into the Ukraine, which he announced to be under his protection, the nobles were occupied in pushing on the dethronement of Michael. But as soon as Sobieski was restored to health he became an active opponent of the Austrian plan, and suggested that a Frenchman should be put forward—and, for choice, the son of that Duchesse de Longueville in whose salon Sobieski had been received when on his travels as a youngster. This de Longueville was a Bourbon, a nephew of the great Condé, tried in war. He was killed shortly afterwards by the Dutch. As for

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Eleanor, she had been ready to marry either candidate so long as she could hold on to the throne.

Salvandy counts, at this moment, eleven different conspiracies in Poland.

At the beginning of 1672 Sobieski knew, through his spies, exactly how serious was the Turkish menace, which the nobles either ignored or, for their own convenience, affected to disbelieve. Nor had the significance of the Emperor's massacres in his Hungarian territories escaped him. Tökölyi, the young Hungarian nobleman of whom we shall hear more, had already begun to organise resistance to the Imperial campaign of persecution throughout Hungary.

It was while Prazmowski the Primate was arraigning Michael before the Diet, and demanding his abdication on the grounds that he had violated the Constitution, and while the French party were awaiting de Longueville at Danzig, that news of the Frenchman's death arrived. He had fallen on June 12th at the passage of the Rhine.<sup>1</sup> On the same day the Sultan Mahomet IV led his armies out of Adrianople and headed for Kamieniec, the ill-garrisoned Podolian fortress.

The moment was critical, and luckily found Sobieski restored to health. While he was making preparations to advance into Podolia, the King, and those nobles who thought there was more to be got out of politics than out of war, solemnly condemned Sobieski and other high officers to death. Sobieski found himself with about 5000 soldiers and some hastily-armed and half-clad peasants. With such a force he made ready to save Kamieniec and to bar the way to a quarter of a million Turks. Once more, at the very beginning of the affair, one notes that it is on the epic scale. It appears that nothing short of interference by some tutelary god can possibly save Poland this time. The stout-hearted soldier who never despaired knew that now he was not called to confront a ragged and irregular drive of Tartar horsemen or a number of

<sup>1</sup> A great fuss was made of this action in France. Longueville appears to have been drunk, and to have fired on a number of Dutchmen who had surrendered.



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scattered and ill-disciplined Cossack bands. The men whom Mahomet and Kiuperli were leading against Kamieniec were trained and disciplined troops. They were the Spahi veterans who had conquered Hungary and Transylvania, the janissaries from Crete, with formidable artillery, with engineers practised in all the latest mining operations and all details of fortification and entrenchment. Their leader had been compared by Montecuculi to Turenne. Nor were the Turks under any illusion as to the state of affairs in Poland. Moreover, the insurrection in Hungary tempted them to look further.

The importance of Kamieniec as a strategic point, and all that its name connoted to the Poles, constrained Sobieski to make an attempt, however unavailing, to repair the mischief done by the King's refusal to garrison and victual his only strong fortress, whose bastions already showed signs of crumbling. He failed, as he was bound to fail. Kamieniec was surrendered before he could arrive with his small army, and the Turks occupied this superb natural fort, which seemed to grow out of a steep rock above the Dniester, and looked eastwards across Moldavia and westwards over the gorges towards Buczacz. Thus the key to Poland and Hungary fell into Turkish hands without a blow, while the King and his confederate nobles played the fool in Warsaw.

The news of the surrender of the key-position was passed rapidly from village to village in the Ukraine, and once more the mixed Cossack and Tartar population rose to the old lure of plunder and of paying back grievances. The roads and tracks of Volhynia and Podolia were soon covered with fugitive Poles, who were pursued and cut down, or carried off into slavery by the savage vanguard of the Porte. Sobieski, with his handful of men, could only retreat; nor had he even the hope of reinforcements, since in Warsaw Kamieniec was still regarded as impregnable, and even those who reported the surrender were looked upon as scaremongers and traitors. It was not until more than a third of the country had been overrun by the invaders, not until Lwow (the old capital of Ruthenia after Halicz had been destroyed by the Tartars in

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1240) saw beneath its walls the tents of the infidel, that the King and those about him were reluctantly compelled to admit that there was some truth in the recent rumours. The town of Lwow, the largest in Eastern Poland, had the reputation of being able to resist sieges. Hungarians, Muscovites, Cossacks, Swedes had all tried in vain to reduce it. This reputation it was to maintain through the present invasion. But the Swedes took it in 1704, and the Austrians in 1772, when it became the capital of Galicia. In 1920 it was true to its tradition, when the inhabitants turned out to play their part in the saving of Europe from the Bolsheviks.

The moment the truth was known, large numbers of the nobles, instead of going to the defence of their country, hurriedly embarked on the Vistula, and made off towards the Baltic and safety. But it seemed that the more despicable became the conduct of the nobility, the greater the heights to which the Polish leader was to rise. Even while the King, abandoning all hope, was negotiating a shameful secret treaty, Sobieski performed two exploits that in the bare telling seem to belong to a boy's book of adventure. There is that quality about much that Sobieski did, and it is a quality that fits exactly his character. He was often like a knight-errant living on from another age.

In the autumn of 1672, while he was endeavouring with his little force to stem the advance of the immense Ottoman armies, he learned by one of his spies that a large Turkish force was already withdrawing from the campaign with its booty, and was even now threading its way across the Carpathians on the way to Moldavia. Sobieski saw the chance for which he had waited. He knew the country. Somehow or other he got his men across the Dniester, hid them in the forest of Bednarow, chose the right moment for an ambushade, took the enemy by surprise, and then exploited the initial surprise to such purpose that, in spite of their enormous numerical superiority, he was able to follow up the victory, inflicting heavy casualties and finally rescuing 30,000 Polish captives. This unexpected success put new heart into the soldiers, and

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led to the second exploit, which was still more remarkable. It was nothing less than another rapid march, another crossing of the Dniester, and an attack upon the headquarters of the Turkish armies at Buczacz. Here in the pleasant valley of the Strypa Mahomet IV had established his camp, and had sat down to await news of the siege of Lwow. The surprise was complete. The Polish troops burst upon the Turks, who, confident of their security, were reclining in their gorgeous tents, where immense booty had been added to the normal luxuries and splendours of the Asiatic camp. There was a panic, an overturning of tents, and finally a rout, but Sobieski had not enough men to prevent the majority escaping. They left behind much booty, and the sight of the abundant camp that was like a small town still further improved the *moral* of the Polish troops.

While Sobieski was preparing to harry the invaders without pause, it became known that on October 18th Michael Koributh had made a secret treaty with Mahomet IV. By the terms of this shameful peace Poland, for the first time in her history, bought off the Turks by promising to pay an annual tribute to the Sultan, surrendered all claim to the Ukraine, gave up Podolia. Kamieniec became a Turkish fortress in a Turkish province, and the King of Poland a vassal of the Porte, the equal of a Moldavian hospodar. But even this humiliation, brought upon the country in secret, failed to bring Poland to its senses. There was still a party that supported the King, and the immediate effect of the treaty of Buczacz was once more to precipitate civil war and anarchy. The little army of Sobieski, which had been given an appetite for glory, swore fidelity to him, but he himself could do nothing. The Polish King, afraid of the storm he had raised by his disgusting treachery, put himself under Cossack protection, intending to let the various parties fight each other. Meanwhile, above the din of conflicting opinions, one cry made itself heard and grew louder day by day—a demand for the immediate breaking of the treaty.

In the second month of 1673 the clamour against the treaty

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became so insistent that a particularly vile plot was engineered, obviously with the sanction of the King. A deputy rose in the National Assembly and accused Sobieski of having sold Kamieniec to the Turk for a sum of money, and so made possible the invasion of Poland. The accusation was supported by other deputies, to the great satisfaction of the King, whose single strong passion was hatred of Sobieski.

Sobieski came hot-foot to Warsaw and carried all before him. The sight of the victorious soldier, the knowledge of what he had done for Poland, the confidence of his bearing and the consistency with which he had preached war against the infidel—all these things quickly won over those who had clung now to one party and now to another. Everybody recognised in him the only man strong enough to restore order and to wipe out the disgrace of Buczacz. He received the apologies of the nobles who had calumniated him, and had his accuser<sup>1</sup> (who confessed that the whole thing was a mass of lies) condemned to death, but ultimately spared his life. In the Diet Sobieski carried all his points. He demanded, above all, the breaking of the treaty, and the renewal of war as soon as the army had been reorganised and subsidies voted. Arrangements were at once made to raise and equip an army and to garrison fortresses. Even the Lithuanians guaranteed to take part in the next campaign, in return for a promise that one Diet out of every three should be held in their town of Grodno. Thus, in a few weeks, Sobieski had brought about another of those swift changes which the student of Polish history learns to expect. It was he who was in reality ruling the country now. There was nobody else who could have recalled the warring factions to something more important than their conspiracies. His sincerity and singleness of purpose reminded all but the most worthless of the gentry that it was not only their own country that was in danger so long as the Turks were on the frontier, but the very existence of the European culture of which they were part.

Once more, then, the nation began to prepare for war, and

<sup>1</sup> Lodzinski, a nobleman in need of money.

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once more brawling and intrigue impeded Sobieski's plans. Since there was no money for arms or for training depots, the Pope, Clement X, sent a contribution, and the collection of tapestries and precious stones lodged at Cracow was sold to the Jews. There was the usual row over this, but order was restored by Sobieski, who continued his task of creating an army. "The peasant," he said, "is soon a soldier if his leader is a general." And to those of the nobility whose enthusiasm had begun to wane he said, "Your ancestors would have preferred death to one year's slavery." The bitterness that drove him on came from the realisation that the shame of Buczacz had fallen upon Poland while he was the commander of her army. The old teaching of James Sobieski, the tales told by his mother, and the legend of the great Zolkiewski goaded him. And so, in spite of all obstacles, the country prepared for war.

Mahomet IV and his lieutenant Kiuperli were surprised at the unexpected stiffening of a country which they believed to be exhausted to the point of death. No tribute had been paid, and it was obvious that there would have to be another invasion. Moreover, there appeared to be no movement on the part of Europe to defend herself after Poland had been swamped.

Great men, and more especially those great men who are also devout, draw from responsibility a spiritual strength which fortifies the will. They are not subject to the hesitations and the doubts of lesser men.

If ever a man was tested, that man was Sobieski, who now seemed to support upon his shoulders the destiny of Europe. Only he knew by what a miracle his country had escaped the year before. Nor could he doubt that the Asiatics would count no victory complete until they had advanced beyond Poland, and established the Crescent in the great cities of Christendom. He well knew his own weapon—a kind of feudal cavalry who mutinied or deserted at will, and who regarded a long absence from the political arena as so much time wasted; an ill-clad, ill-equipped infantry, despised by the nobles, and condemned to supply all the special arms, not even excluding engineers;

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insufficient artillery. And arrayed against him a seasoned host, with inexhaustible man-power; sappers instructed in the latest technique of siege warfare; well-disciplined and fanatical infantry; plentiful artillery, including a number of heavy guns; and, always ready to act as a vanguard, huge hordes of Tartars and Cossacks. At any moment the preposterous King Michael might split even the army with another of his exhibitions of jealousy. Further, the Poles might have to reckon without the Lithuanians, who showed no great fervour for the approaching clash.

Sobieski was forced to wait while the Turks threw bridges across the Dniester, because the King was still doing his best to discredit the object of his babyish jealousy. When he saw that nothing could hold back the campaign much longer, he decided to lead his own people into battle for the first time in his life; that, at all events, was the decision he announced. But we may presume from subsequent events that his real intention was to put a stop to Sobieski's plans. To this end he brought with him a number of nobles who interfered, grumbled, protested and succeeded in spreading a certain amount of discontent. Luckily he fell ill, and after reviewing the troops, dressed, not as a Polish soldier, but as a French nobleman, he had to go back to Lwow. This was Sobieski's first piece of luck for many a day.

On October 11th Sobieski led rather more than 30,000 men out of the camp near Lwow, where the force had assembled. He had forty guns, under the command of an excellent soldier, Koski, who played a conspicuous part in all the fighting of the next twenty years.

Sobieski's plan was simple, and, as usual, impudent. It was nothing less than a rapid offensive; a thrust far into the enemy territory, to frighten the Moldavian Princes into making peace, and to drive out the Turkish reserves gathered there; then, having cut the Danube bridges and isolated Kamieniec, a swift return to reduce that fortress. The whole thing was really to be a turning movement which would win back Podolia. For a frontal attack on Kamieniec was out of the question.

## CHOCIM

There were 60,000 Tartars across the Dniester already and every Podolian village had been made into a small fort. Braclaw and Chocim had been rebuilt, and the best way to get them back was to cut the Turkish communications. The advance into Moldavia would effectually do this.

The whole point of the plan was its simplicity, but rapidity and surprise were absolutely essential. There was no other way of fighting forces so enormous. To give them time to prepare, to allow them to choose the site of battle, would have been fatal. The daring of the plan lay in the fact that it took the Polish army right into the centre of the enemy, far from its own frontiers; and that for its success it depended entirely on Sobieski's ability to hold together his men, and to impose his will upon them. Only too well he knew that the moment they crossed the Dniester the grumbling would begin.

But what actually did begin was a mutiny, led by Pac, the Lithuanian. The Dniester was frozen over, and the ice would have to be broken before the men could swim across, as they had done in the previous campaign. And beyond lay the unknown terror of the Moldavian steppes. Officers, turned agitators, addressed the men. They said such an attempt was stark madness and must end in annihilation. Murmurs led to violent speech. The whole plan of campaign was being jeopardised at the start, when Sobieski gained a hearing, and pointed out with a logic which they could not ignore, that, with the enemy all about them, the only way they could hope to return to their homes alive was after a victorious battle. In other words, it was too late now to do anything but fight.

He had his way with them. The ice was broken on the Dniester, and the surly army went on into the November mist. They passed through the wooded defiles of Bukovina,<sup>1</sup> and after eight days had reached the banks of the Pruth,<sup>2</sup> when there was another mutiny. In peril from attack at any minute, and from any quarter, the leaders made speeches and the men applauded.

<sup>1</sup> The vast forest that stretches from the Carpathians to the Dniester.

<sup>2</sup> The last tributary of the Danube before it flows into the Black Sea.

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Sobieski knew that no time could be spent now in persuasion. It was a question of withdrawing as quickly as possible. Beaten, not for the first time, nor for the last, by his own troops, he issued the order they demanded, turned back from the Pruth, penetrated the forest once more, and marched full-tilt at the strong fortress of Chocim. The big plan had been ruined, but it was not too late to win a spectacular victory here on the Moldavian border. The name was a famous one in Polish history, for this place was the scene of James Sobieski's heroic defence in 1623. His son was destined, half a century later, to win even greater glory.

Chocim<sup>1</sup> was an almost impregnable fortress on the right bank of the Dniester, built among the great jagged rocks of which it seemed a part. These rocks came right down to the river, and the fortress was protected further by a maze of intersecting ravines and gorges and by marshes extending between precipital cliffs of rock.

The fortress itself was connected with the camp by a bridge thrown across the ravines, and Hussein, who commanded here, had further strengthened the works, had palisaded the marshes and had concealed his powerful artillery in the clefts of the mountains. In the strongly entrenched camp, 3000 yards long by 2000 yards wide, Hussein and his 70,000 Turks made the best of the bitter winter weather, and watched the Podolian plain northwards, upon which the Polish army was expected to appear. Hussein was confident of his security, and had cause to be. Fifty years before, more than a quarter of a million Turks had failed to take the position, held only by a feeble and exhausted Polish army, disheartened by the disaster of Kobylta and the death of Zolkiewski.

On November 9th Sobieski appeared—but coming from the south. The astonished Hussein, hearing a clamour in his

<sup>1</sup> The village of Chocim, consisting of some thirty houses, on a kind of plateau, was between two rocks. It included some ruined Greek churches and an old square castle with a tower at each corner. To its right was a great wall of rock, and below this was the camp of Hussein, on the right bank of the Dniester.



camp, gazed out across the frozen sea of rock, and recognised the leopard skins and the lances of the Polish cavalry.

That night the small army slept without shelter and stood to arms early. Pac, the Lithuanian, refused to fight until Sobieski once more showed him that a retreat could only end in death, and that the bold stroke was the only one possible. "I am prepared for everything," he said, "except your proposal; and death under the walls of the fortress is better than a shameful end in the marshes. Your threats are our only danger." The day of the 10th was spent in overcoming the resistance of the faint-hearted, and in taking up positions; the artillery under Konski, who made the most of his forty guns, battered the Turkish palisades until breaches had been blasted in them. The infantry and cavalry were drawn up in a semicircle; the right, under Jablonowski, rested on the Dniester, and had the castle opposite to it. The centre was under Sobieski, and the left under Pac. Before evening large bodies of Wallachians and Moldavians deserted to the bivouacs of the Lithuanians.

The snow increased, and in the long hours of darkness the half-frozen men waited for what was almost certain death on the morrow. Sobieski alone among them refused to despair. Soon after the dawn he heard Mass, having snatched a few moments repose against a gun, and then went among the suffering troops. As the grey light grew it was seen that the guns were half-buried in snow, and each man looked into the haggard face of his comrade and wondered what force of will drove their leader on. Their accoutrements were thick with rime, their long moustaches frozen stiff. They now awaited the signal to advance; in numb despair they expected the release of death and the end of such misery. Przeborowski, the Jesuit, blessed the army as they knelt in the snow with uncovered heads, and then Sobieski harangued them, bidding them realise that the Turks could not endure the extreme of cold, and that they were already exhausted and half-defeated before a blow had been struck. "My companions," he cried, "in half an hour we shall be taking our ease in those gilded tents."

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As usual he was able to communicate some of his own fire and confidence to his army. It was clear from their attitude that they were now ready to fight. Sobieski had detected the weakest points in the defences, and ordered several feints to be made at various other points in order to conceal his main attack.

Word was given, and on this 12th of November, the Feast of St. Martin of Tours, the Poles swept forward, carried the entrenchments, and in one magnificent charge reached the rocks on which the camp was situated. The Turks were taken by surprise, and there was no organised resistance. The infantry, pressing forward through the eddying flakes, presently saw the great white eagle of Poland flying from the heights of the Turkish camp. Hussein himself, deceived by one of the feints, withdrew large numbers of his men to meet what he considered to be the main assault. The movement was carried out with the haste of panic, increased the chaos inside the camp, and gave an impression of flight which still further weakened the resistance.

So far the surprise had been complete, and the Polish infantry was already routing among the tents for spoil. But the battle was not over. The Turks, after the first shock of conflict, were able to appreciate the ridiculous size of the army that had so rashly attacked them. The Janissaries in their tall white hats and green coats, for the most part disciplined veterans, succeeded in restoring order, and not only held their ground, but in their turn attacked the scattered bands, who had no thought but for plunder, and who now found themselves as good as prisoners in the Turkish camp. Things were going badly for them when Sobieski himself succeeded in accomplishing the feat of leading his cavalry into the heart of the camp. From that moment and for three hours there was a slaughter of Turks. There was no escape from the cavalry. The bridge that connected Chocim with Kamieniec was already held by a detachment of Poles, and the fugitives, turning to this simple avenue of escape, were confronted with the choice of being hacked to pieces or hurling themselves from the steep rocks into the river.

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The victory was complete. The elated army heard Mass and sang a Te Deum among the gorgeous tents, and the remainder of the day was devoted to burying the dead under a vast mound.<sup>1</sup> Next day the fort itself capitulated, and Caplan, coming across Moldavia to the rescue, turned and joined the fugitives. Soon the Turkish garrisons began to withdraw towards the Danube, and Moldavia and Wallachia made submission to Poland. Sobieski, true to his principle of maintaining the offensive and of allowing the Turks no respite, was soon on the heels of the demoralised remnants of Mahomet's army. Not even the refusal of Pac and his Lithuanians to continue the campaign could withhold the rest of the army from pursuit. The young soldiers had tasted glory, and had already learned from their leader that a victory which is not followed up is only half a victory.

But though this time the desertion of the Lithuanians did not hinder Sobieski's plan for finishing the campaign, fate found another way of baulking him. He was already on his way to the Danube when the news reached him that Michael Koributh Wisniowiecki had died in Lwow on November 10th, two days before the battle that wiped out the shame of his secret treaty of Buczacz. In the hour of his triumph Sobieski saw his army desert and hurry back to Poland to be in time for the intrigues and brawls of the interregnum. He alone knew that the Turks would now be reassured, that the whole weakness of the Polish Constitution would now be plain to the world. For it seemed that this futile and jealous King had power, even in death, to undo all that Sobieski had done.

He returned across the steppes, disappointed and fearful of the future.

<sup>1</sup> Salvandy puts the Turkish dead at 40,000; Dupont at 30,000, and the Polish dead at 2000. The battle lasted six hours.

## IV

### SOBIESKI ELECTED KING

(1673-1674)

IN tracing the story of Sobieski one is exasperated because his greatest military achievements are only half what they might have been. Chocim is considered by Polish historians to be his most remarkable campaign, but the mind of the reader runs on to imagine what Sobieski might have done with a loyal and disciplined army and the backing of a strong government ; with a King who realised exactly what Poland's position was in Europe, and how, by saving herself, she was saving the Western world, and all that remained of the unity of Christendom after the Reformation. And it is the tragedy of Sobieski that he realised these things, and knew that he could not count upon even his wife to understand them. Again and again he was destined to see all the advantage he had gained over an invader frittered away for the sake of a few political intrigues, until he began to look upon the rigours of the camp and the ardours of distant expeditions as his only escape from the narrow and degraded world of the Court. Again and again he returned triumphant and acclaimed, to see his work forgotten in a week, and to watch his generals scrambling for power, or vying with each other in the selling of their country, now to one ambassador, now to another.

Chocim, which only drove off the Turks temporarily, nevertheless had other important results. It stopped the ratification of the shameful treaty, and put an end to the question of the payment of tribute—which would have made Poland a dependency of the Porte. It showed that the best

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Turkish troops could be beaten by a rabble of hastily-raised, ill-equipped, underfed recruits led by a resolute general. It justified Sobieski's principle of the offensive, based on the idea that if you could once get Asiatics on the run, they were not likely to rally. And these three results did have a strong moral effect upon all those of the nobility who cared more for fighting their country's wars than for playing at politics in Warsaw. Their effect upon the Turks and Tartars was even greater. The campaign of 1673 increased the stature of Sobieski to such an extent that his name began to possess over them that power which alone held off invaders in his old age. To us who read of the attack on Hussein's camp, the whole episode seems to be touched with magic. It is like one of those combats in the epics, that are decided by superhuman intervention. To the Turks that impression was even stronger. And from the day of Chocim they began to dread the appearance of Sobieski upon his horse, and to credit him with sorcery.

The news of Chocim reached Warsaw at a dramatic moment. The King was dead, and the Court took it for granted that Sobieski and his small force had been destroyed by the advancing Turks. The Turkish envoys themselves were so certain of this that they demanded more curtly than ever the payment of the promised tribute. Then the news came, and the capital gave itself up to rejoicings. Beneath triumphal arches erected to welcome home the victor of Chocim the body of the absurd King Michael was brought home from Lwow to Warsaw for the lying in state; while columns of deserters rode or trudged wearily across the snow-bound Moldavian plain, accompanied by carts full of plunder from Hussein's camp. The licence that always accompanied an interregnum, and the excitements of an Election Diet enticed them from the prospects of further glory; and finally Sobieski himself was summoned to return by the Primate. Before the snows had melted the amazed Turks had revictualled Kamieniec, halted the retreat, and persuaded Wallachia and Moldavia to place themselves once more beneath the protection of the Crescent. From December to May, while the foreign envoys bribed and

plotted and the nobility bargained and wrangled, the Turkish commanders reconstructed their armies, and made new plans for the coming campaign.

Sobieski, remaining as long as he could near the frontier, read the signs, and urged upon the nobles the necessity for a rapid election, so that the country might be ready to meet the next invasion. Meanwhile he did his best to get the Dniester passages fortified, and to throw adequate garrisons into the frontier places. Those who have emphasised his personal ambition appear to have overlooked his conduct at this time. If he wanted the crown there was nothing to stop him intriguing for it. He was the most popular man in Poland, and Madame de Sévigné, writing from Paris in December to tell the news of Chocim, said: "This victory is such a great one that there is not the slightest doubt he will be elected King—the more so as he is at the head of an army, and fortune is always on the side of the big battalions."

He had other things to think of. He was at Zolkiew, where Marie Casimire lay ill, and when she became convalescent, he stayed on for a while, taking his well-earned rest—though even here his repose was broken by the importunities of those who hoped to win him over to one faction or another. He made no secret of the fact that his own choice, out of the twenty or thirty candidates who squabbled over the vacant throne, was Condé; a warrior and a man of full maturity. Not only his love of France prompted this choice, but also the knowledge that what Poland needed, after the miserable four years of King Michael, was a monarch who could lead the nobility into battle. He opposed Lorraine, the Austrian nominee, because he feared and distrusted the Austrian influence, and knew that the Emperor had an army at that moment on the Silesian frontier. The French nominee, Neuburg, had a stronger backing than Lorraine, although Lithuania was solid for the latter. The Lithuanians would have nothing to do with a Pole, whatever happened. They pointed to the last reign as a warning.

Some have seen in Sobieski's absence from the Diet of

Convocation in January 1674 evidence of diabolical subtlety. It is said that by absenting himself he caused all eyes to be turned upon him at Zolkiew. By his very air of indifference he contrived to suggest himself as a candidate, and by a parade of carelessness covered his grave anxiety.

The simpler explanation of his absence is more in keeping with his character. He needed repose; his wife was unwell; it was his duty to watch the Turk; and, lastly, he detested political intrigue. There is the evidence of his whole life to show that he regarded himself as having a sacred mission to expel the infidel from Europe, and that he put this duty above all others, even when Marie Casimire opposed it. If he had wanted the throne he would have won it by his eloquence and by exploiting his popularity. Nor would he have wasted any time about it, since every moment was valuable. The more the thing dragged on, the better it was for the Turks, who could hardly believe in their good fortune.

There is nothing in history more extraordinary than the spectacle of this country following up one of the greatest victories ever won against the Turks, by allowing them time to recover and advance once again. And the interval is used by the Poles, not in preparing for the coming war, or in supporting the general who is ready to stand to arms again at the first alarm, but in opening the capital to spies, secret emissaries, cavalcades of foreign gentlemen, ambassadors and their retinues, and firebrands out for any adventure.

The widowed Queen Eleanor got more excitement out of the struggle for the throne than anyone else; since, being perfectly willing to marry anybody whom Leopold would back, she had the delightful uncertainty of the auction to keep her in a state of expectation. Now it seemed that Lorraine would win, and she recalled the old romance which he had taken more seriously than she; then Prince George of Denmark seemed to be carrying the day, in spite of his religion, and she called for his picture, and said he would do; then Neuburg bobbed up, and she was considering him, when the Emperor put his foot down. Her future was uncertain, but as long as it included

another husband, a further period upon the throne, and Austrian support, she would not complain. It was even rumoured that she had tried to poison Marie Casimire, in order to share the throne with Sobieski, whom the Emperor hoped to be able to win over.

At last, in April, there appeared to be a chance of finishing the business. The gentry were thronging all the roads that led to the great plain of Wola, outside the capital, where, in the midst of a vast armed camp, the Electoral Diet was to be held. To the casual spectator the assembling of the nobility would look more like the mustering of an army than the opening of a parliament. And the warlike character of the affair would be enhanced by frequent clashes of armed men, by single combats, by shouting and considerable bloodshed. The spectator would further notice the Eastern splendour of the decorated tents and gorgeously painted wooden galleries; strange tapestries and carpets of intricate pattern; horses richly caparisoned, their saddles glinting with huge precious stones, their flanks draped in stuffs of silver and gold tissue; horsemen carrying swords and daggers of curious design, embossed shields, cloaks that flashed like birds of paradise, quivers of ruby and turquoise, muskets inlaid with mother-of-pearl, girdles heavy with jewels; large barbarous rings. All this was the spoil of Chocim, brought from the camp where Hussein had taken his ease. Looking round the scene before the Diet opened, the spectator would receive the impression of purposeless brawling, and would be unable to disentangle the factions or to discover any method in the lawlessness. But later he would see the crazy pattern of violence arranging itself into a simple design. The chaos would resolve itself into a rivalry between Lithuania and Poland; that is, between Austria and France. And of all the competitors but two would seem to be left to fight it out; Lorraine, the Emperor's nominee, and young Neuburg, supported by Louis XIV—the latter a fourteen-year-old Bavarian boy, and eldest son of that Neuburg who had himself contested the election five years before. Not for one moment would our imaginary spectator be led by what



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he saw to believe that the hordes out of Asia were once more approaching the frontier, and that there was an obvious way to end all this useless haggling by choosing a Pole to rule Poland.

By April 20th the Diet was ready to commence business. The equestrian order and the deputies gathered under the standards of the various Palatinates, while the Senators entered the Szopa, a large enclosure erected in the midst of the camp. This was the signal for the last efforts of the competitors. They redoubled their bribes, made any wild promises that happened to enter their heads, and speeded up the campaign of slander against the other candidates. Lorraine promised nearly a year's pay to the army, swore to erect fortresses on the eastern frontier, and offered to raise a force for service against the Porte. Neuburg outstripped him by offering a full year's pay to the troops and a much larger army for as long as the Turkish war should last. But the Austrian party made the greater headway. The influential family of Pac employed all their energy in discrediting the German Neuburg. Though attached to the Austrian cause, they preferred a Frenchman to a German, and it was a Frenchman whom Leopold had put forward. So Lorraine seemed to be winning until the Pac family, thinking the victory won, and hoping to consolidate it, and make any accident impossible, did a foolish thing. They determined to get a motion carried excluding all Poles from the candidature before Sobieski could arrive. They knew the impetuosity of the gentry, and remembered the sudden election of King Michael at the last moment. To prevent any such occurrence a second time, they relaxed their propaganda on behalf of Lorraine, and concentrated upon this matter of exclusion. Now, since no Polish candidate had come forward, those who were not in the councils of the Lithuanian leaders asked themselves what this demand for exclusion could mean. Whom did they desire to exclude? They could only have in mind one man: Sobieski, the old rival of Michael Pac. The more balanced of the gentry at once saw this new plot as the outcome of personal jealousy and as a slight to the great soldier. Moreover, their eyes were opened suddenly to the

absurdity of allowing Lorraine and the young Bavarian child to bargain for the throne when there was one of their own countrymen, of noble lineage, and popular, who could wear the crown with far more dignity than either of them.

While the Lithuanians were trying to give the Emperor of Austria full value for his money, Sobieski was on the road to the capital. Could the conspirators of either party have watched his triumphal progress they would have realised that they had wasted their time. The nation itself had made up its mind. As he approached, he was delayed now in one village, now in another, while addresses of welcome were read to him, banquets organised and orations exchanged. Sometimes he was forced to halt while the barelegged peasants in their coloured coats and caps clung to his knees or knelt in the dirt of the highway and called down blessings upon him. Women in short smocks and threadbare petticoats held up half-naked babies as he passed, so that they might remember, and one day tell their children how they saw the great soldier ride by. As he drew nearer to the capital there was an exodus of gentry, deputies and even Jewish merchants. Everything was forgotten except that this was the first public appearance of the victor of Chocim, who had lingered so long in the gardens of Zolkiew. As the people crowded round him, they wondered at the magnificence of the arms he bore, at the harness inlaid with plaques of silver and gold and the many trophies from the Turkish wars carried by the tall yellow-haired men-at-arms, with their long moustaches and shaven chins. They gazed in awe at his own company of Janissaries and heard the strange Asiatic music. The pick of the Polish cavalry passed before them, bearing the sixty flags captured at Chocim as a present for the successful competitor for the throne. So might a vanished hero, whose return is promised in some song of the people, come back in the hour of his country's need. So might Arthur return from Avalon, or Charlemagne awake from his long sleep and ride once more through the thronged streets of Aix. All along the way the greetings of the people were as to one long expected and welcome indeed ; and when he made

ready to ride into Warsaw, deputations were sent to him, and the streets of the suburbs were lined as though for the entry of a king.

As for him, he responded to the acclamations with dignity. Nor did his strong body and royal bearing disappoint those who, from the tales of his exploits, had made a picture of him in their minds. They saw in the fine lines of his face the will that had imposed itself upon the timid or the treacherous; in the breadth of his shoulders the physique that enabled him to withstand the wind and sleet of the Moldavian desert; in the grave glance that held in it steadfastness of purpose, his devotion to his religion and his country; and in the large eyes full of humour and kindness, the secret of his popularity.

On May 3rd he attended the deliberations of the Diet, and was in time to watch the ceremony of the introduction of the various ambassadors and envoys, and to hear the speeches in which they proposed their candidates. And whatever had been the feeling of the simple countrymen out on the roads, and even of the small nobility, it was clear that here on the plain outside Warsaw the political game was all that counted. The bargaining went on as before but with less violence, and with the major depravities rather more concealed. Yet from the moment of Sobieski's arrival a change began to come over the assembly. The only opinion he was known to have expressed was that Poland needed a military leader of mature years. Lorraine was of mature years, but he had not sufficient fame as a captain, nor had he been trained in warfare against the chief enemy, the Turk. Neuburg was a mere boy, and his candidacy began to appear as nothing but a feeble jest. Whom then did Sobieski favour? It was no secret. Condé was his choice. He was a man not yet too old, and a great captain, but he was not trained in that particular kind of fighting which was necessary on the eastern frontiers of Poland. Furthermore, if it was a mistake to fall under Austrian domination, was it not equally a mistake to saddle the country with the old French party and incur the danger of absolutism? To more and more people it became clear that there was a Polish noble-

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man who fulfilled all requirements. Here, in their midst, was the great captain in the prime of life; a name already dreaded by the Turks; a personality capable of handling the undisciplined Polish army and imposing his will upon it. But when Sobieski definitely named Condé in the Diet, there was a great outburst in his favour in the ranks of the French party; and equally vigorous opposition from all those who, instructed by Eleanor and her Austrians, saw nothing but an attempt of Louis XIV to dictate to the kingdom of Poland.

Civil war seemed inevitable, but as a last resource a deputation begged an audience of Eleanor, and suggested to her a compromise. Why should she not marry Neuburg, and reign with him? Then both France and Austria, both Poland and Lithuania would be satisfied. The Queen would have nothing to say to this idea, and the Lithuanians suspected a trap. The situation had reached a deadlock when the bishops asserted their authority, and ordered the various Palatinates to assemble beneath their banners in order to vote. It was now May 19th, and no more time must be wasted.

Sobieski moved to his place among the nobles of Red Russia, and the Palatine, Stanislas Jablonowski, at once put into words the feeling that had been growing among those who were weary of the absurd election. He disposed of the Bavarian boy in a sentence, and declared that Lorraine, being an Austrian nominee, was out of the question. He granted Condé all the glory claimed for him, but pointed out that this illustrious Frenchman knew nothing of Polish traditions or history, was ignorant of her military system, and even of her language, and did not know the faces of the noblemen whom he would henceforth command. There was, he said, by their side at this very moment a man tested and well known to them all, who united in his own person the qualities essential to anyone who was, at this difficult moment, to wear the Polish crown; a man to whom the country owed its very existence. He then recited the names of Sobieski's battles, and bade them choose, like sensible men, one who had devoted his life to Poland.

Although Sobieski himself opposed the choice, saying that

the situation required a ruler of royal blood, who would be more capable of handling diplomatic affairs, and whose choice would stir up less opposition at home ; although he once more pressed the name of Condé upon them ; and although he foresaw the opposition which there would be to a French Queen, herself not even of the great nobility—yet Jablonowski had uttered the secret thoughts of many, and had repeated aloud the whispers of others. The castellan of Lwow stepped forward and loosed upon his hearers that rhetoric which they all needed. He reminded them that the noise of the Turkish hosts was even now in their ears, and that Poland's whole life was a long and heroic combat against the infidel. He bade them choose the one man whom the Porte would exclude if it had a vote in the matter, and finished by reminding them that this very day was a Saturday, the day of the week upon which the victory of Chocim had been won. "It is the finger of God," he said.

These two speeches had succeeded in clearing the issue, by emphasising the main business of the moment. Not foreign money, but considerations of national security must determine the choice of a King. The whole problem must be judged in the light of the Asiatic peril, and not as a mere essay in domestic politics.

From every corner of the electoral field the name of Sobieski was cried aloud, and we are told that even among the Lithuanian nobility voices were raised in support of this choice. All through that Saturday afternoon of May 19th the voting proceeded, and in spite of the hostility of the Pac family and their adherents, it was obvious that Sobieski was the popular choice. But even at the last moment when the Bishop of Cracow was about to announce the result of the voting, Sobieski himself opposed his veto, on the ground that his name had come up at the last moment, and that the matter could not be settled suddenly in this fashion, before anybody had had time to think about it and about its consequences.

It is not difficult to imagine the anger of Marie Casimire when she learned that the throne had been her husband's for

the asking, but that he had opposed his scruples, and by so doing had given the Austrian party time to organise a final campaign. It was easy for the Lithuanians to pretend that Sobieski's conduct from the death of King Michael onwards had been a clever and consistent piece of hypocrisy; that he had drawn attention to himself, first, by appearing to hide himself, and secondly, by so generously backing Condé, and by his insistence on a mature, vigorous warrior. But what they could not explain away was his action when his name was cried from one Palatinate to another across the electoral field. If his aim, all along, had been the throne, it was surely nothing less than madness to refuse to be named as a candidate. Looking at his face and remembering his past, the nobles knew that there was no cheap trickery in his nature, and that his hesitation was due to his fear of violent opposition from the Lithuanians, which might lead to civil war. He, more than anybody, knew the danger of delay, and had urged a speedy settlement, but, even so, he was not prepared to be carried to the throne on a momentary wave of emotion.

The Lithuanians tried everything from slander to organised violence, but one of their strongest weapons was the Polish dread of a second French Queen. Louise de Gonzague had been unpopular, and had brought misery upon the kingdom by using the King for her French machinations. The prospect of a second French Queen, as self-willed and as fond of intrigue as her predecessor, was not inviting. But, on the other hand, Sobieski was not the kind of man to be ruled by a woman, and in any case a French influence was better than an Austrian.

Louis XIV had a very able man on the spot, Forbin-Janson, Bishop of Marseilles. His orders were to cultivate friendship with Sobieski. "He can stir up a fuss in Hungary, claim rights in Silesia, and get the Imperial armies away from the Rhine." More particularly, he was commanded to work on Marie Casimire. Forbin-Janson had started to bribe and make promises right and left the moment it seemed probable that the foreign candidates would be beaten by the Polish nobleman. He was aided by Marie Casimire, who now felt that she had

behind her French money and French influence. The prophecy of Madame de Sévigné was repeated confidently in Paris, where the success of Sobieski was ascribed almost entirely to the intervention of Louis XIV. The failure of Neuburg was conveniently slurred over.

Meanwhile even the Lithuanians, persuaded by the enormous wealth of the sister and brother-in-law of Sobieski, began to waver, and a number of them deserted the Austrian cause. On the day following Jablonowski's nomination of Sobieski the Pac family saw their supporters drifting away. Yet their resistance continued, and Sunday, May 20th, was spent in negotiations, turning, for the most part, on attempts to persuade the minority that their obstinacy would merely endanger once more the welfare of the country. Two things were quite clear by now: the Poles were determined to have Sobieski for their King without delay; and the Turkish menace could no longer be ignored.

On May 21st, Monday, the Austrian party finally gave in, and, after all the usual solemn formalities, Sobieski was named King of Poland. The vast assembly, scattered over the electoral field, knelt and sang a *Te Deum*.

On the day that the new King and Queen were taking part in a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, news of the Turk came to disturb the national rejoicings. While the messengers, who had ridden hard, waited to give the King word that Mahomet IV was moving up through Bulgaria, he, with Marie Casimire by his side, walked slowly behind the priest who carried the Host. And before the feet of this priest who bore the living Son of God were strewn the flags and banners captured at Chocim, so that he trod them as he went.

## V

### THE RECONQUEST OF THE UKRAINE, THE SIEGE OF LWOW, THE CORONATION OF SOBIESKI, AND THE TREATY OF ZURAWNO (1674-1676)

JOHN SOBIESKI was elected King of Poland within six weeks of his forty-fifth birthday ; in the full vigour of his manhood, at the height of his popularity, and with the approval and applause of most of Europe. For to his countrymen and to foreign observers it seemed that, with such a man at the head of the State, the misfortunes of that unhappy country were at an end. Nobody would have believed that they were about to begin, or that Sobieski would give Poland her last hours of splendour before she dwindled and finally disappeared for a hundred and fifty years. For it was the paradox of his reign that although he saved Europe, he could not save his own country, and as his fame increased, and he drew all eyes upon him, the sickness of death wasted Poland. Destined to glorious failure, the last crusader, he took his religion as seriously as his contemporaries took their politics. Nobody after him, in the years during which the modern narrow nationalism was developing, accepted as a reality the broad European unity which our Faith founded, and by which alone we shall survive.

To the Austrians the election of Sobieski was, naturally, most displeasing, but the French regarded it as one more personal triumph for the astute diplomacy of Louis XIV. The official gazettes spoke of it as the outcome of a carefully conducted campaign, and gave great honour to Forbin-Janson, whose eloquence and tact were said to have influenced the voters.



The whole tone of the gazettes was one of condescension, and no mention was made of the spontaneous outburst of the Poles against foreign interference, or to the effect of the speeches of May 19th.

Sobieski is described at this time as being very handsome, of imposing height, dignified in all his movements; with a gravity of demeanour that was yet ready to give place to kindness and even careless gaiety. The glance of his eyes was steady, and his whole face, when the gleam of humour left it, could take on an aspect of noble anger. All those who came in contact with him remarked that he was easy of access, that his conversation was varied, energetic, and full of curiosity. He acquired information readily, and loved to debate scientific and metaphysical questions while at table. There is a story of one such discussion told by Bernard Connor, the Irish doctor. Once when Connor was dining with the King, in company with the bishops of Plock, Vilna and Poznan, and a few priests, including Father Vota the Jesuit, Sobieski turned to the doctor and asked him in Latin in what part of the body he imagined the soul to be situated. Connor replied, "That is the affair of the Church, Sire. My business is the body." "But," said the King, "the soul influences the body by such emotions as anger, and so on." This discussion lasted from three o'clock in the afternoon until seven.

Sobieski was tonsured, like all the Polish nobles, and, like them, grew long curling moustaches. His hair was still dark, but he was already beginning to show signs of that corpulence which was to inconvenience him so much later on. His features were regular, his nose aquiline, his complexion ruddy.

One of the first acts of his reign was to postpone the coronation, on the ground that it was a needless expense, and that there was no time for ceremonies. His mind was full of the Turkish peril, and two years were to pass before he was crowned King in the capital. There was wisdom in his decision, for the six months of the interregnum had not been wasted by the Porte. While Austria and France fought out their old quarrel on Polish soil, the Pachas had time to reconstruct their shattered

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armies and to prepare for a new advance. The advantage gained by the rapid campaign of Chocim, and all the effects that such a surprise should have had upon the Turks, were thrown away. What Sobieski had intended as a prelude to a campaign designed to drive the infidel back into Asia was fated to remain an isolated victory; glorious, certainly, and decisive in itself, but having no sequel. When the surprise and confusion of the rout were over, the Turkish commanders, who knew what a boon a Polish interregnum could be, at once set about their preparations. They argued that there should be nothing to fear from a general, however brilliant in the field, who had no authority over his own men, and could not even order them to follow up a defeated and retreating enemy. They were soon to learn that, even as King, Sobieski could not control his troops.

Achmet Kiuperli sent the Turkish commanders forward from their cantonments in Moldavia to wipe out the disgrace of Chocim. The fortress surrendered without a blow, and the garrison was massacred. A piece of good fortune saved Poland. The Cossacks had desired to place themselves under the protection of Muscovy, and, in accordance with an agreement, the Muscovites had approached the Ukraine in force. The Turks became uneasy, and instead of marching on Lwow and Cracow, turned aside. In three months, at the end of a campaign remarkable for its ferocity, all the country between the Dniester and the Dnieper was in Turkish hands. Bar, Uman, Mohilow—all the fortresses had fallen, and were garrisoned with Turks. But Sobieski was awaiting his time—partly because the Lithuanian army, as usual, was late in arriving, but still more because he had learnt that the Turks dreaded a winter campaign. In October he led his army forward, and drove the enemy before him. Before Christmas he had won back the Ukrainian and Podolian provinces, received the submission of the Cossacks and watched the Tartars disappear to protect their territory against Alexis and the Muscovites. The results of this whirlwind campaign, which had upset all the calculations of the Porte, were that the Sultan sued for

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peace; a project of alliance with the Muscovites was discussed, and negotiations actually begun; the Ukraine, after thirty years of disorder, was ready to become once more a Polish dependency. It was an inspiring beginning to the new reign, and gave Poland the possibility of some years of peace in which to recover from the wars and disorders of three decades. But it all came to nothing.

The Lithuanians, who had from the very first been surly and even mutinous, refused to remain in winter quarters on the frontier, and Pac announced that he was ready to lead all the malcontents home at once. In vain Sobieski went among them and used all his eloquence to prevent them from deserting. The influence of Pac was greater, for he promised them ease and the sight of their wives and children; while the King could promise nothing but the rigours of a winter encampment in exile, and further glory in the wars. The fatal stupidity of Pac once more made it plain to the Turks that the Poles could never follow up a success, however brilliant it might be. Each year they could return to the attack. It was simply a question of retiring before the King, and then waiting until his army melted away. But the consequences of the desertion did not end there. Poland might have obtained Kiev and Smolensk in return for a defensive and offensive alliance with Muscovy against the Porte. The conference at Ladzyn was proceeding favourably, until Alexis was given evidence of the weakness of Poland, even under such a leader. After the withdrawal of the Lithuanians, the Muscovites were not so eager to come to an agreement, and the negotiations broke down. Nor could anything be done to punish the deserters. Any such step would have provoked civil war. There was, however, an outcry in Poland against this new treason, and Pac was threatened with excommunication. He grew afraid, made some show of repentance, and returned to his camp upon the frontier—too late. An attack to be carried out on Karnieniec was given up, and the old, stale story repeated itself. Once more the Turks were allowed time to reorganise, to advance, to recapture outlying posts.

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Sobieski had other anxieties. It was not to be expected that Marie Casimire would be inclined to take the postponement of the coronation quietly, or that she would lose any time in plunging into intrigues. In the first months of the reign she had increased her unpopularity by trying too quickly to play the Queen. Her extravagance redoubled, and she set about making Louis XIV pay for what he boasted of so openly as his victory. If the election of her husband to the throne was to be known as a clever bit of French politics, then she was determined to get something for all the help she had given. From now on she pestered the King to grant this thing or that—a title, an abbey, an estate to one or other of her family. But her importunity was chiefly on behalf of her dissolute father. One of her sayings: "No abbey, no quarter," was reported to the French King, and did not incline him to show her any favour. The perpetual snubbing which she received from him, and his refusal to see in Sobieski anything but a parvenu monarch, an outsider in Europe, a commoner honoured by French diplomacy—all this it was that finally goaded her into the Austrian camp, and made her husband's decision in 1683 an easier matter than it might have been. It at any rate spared him further domestic quarrels at that critical moment.

The arrogant behaviour of Marie Casimire was all the more inexcusable in Polish eyes because she was not even of Polish blood. She had not hitherto concealed her gift for intrigue, but it was only after the election that her insatiable ambition was given full play. And Sobieski heard with concern of her activities and her growing unpopularity.

He had this trouble to bear; he had also, by now, the certain knowledge that the Emperor Leopold was behind the Lithuanian mutiny, and was directing a malicious campaign through the Court of the ex-Queen Eleanor at Torun; for Leopold dreaded a powerful Poland even more than a successful Turkish invasion. He had, finally, the responsibility of preparing for the next invasion, which could not fail to arrive during this year, 1675. He knew only too well that his small army, upon which he could only depend for a short time, could not hope to defeat

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the Turkish hosts in a pitched battle. He therefore prepared a number of strong points in advanced positions, like fortified sap-heads pushed out from the front line of defence; or like breakwaters thrust out into the advancing waves of invasion. All he could hope to do was to delay the invaders by forcing them to attempt the reduction of these little forts.

In April, while the Carpathian torrents were bringing down the melted snow from the high peaks, the storm burst, even more rapidly, even more violently than had been anticipated. Nothing could stand before it, and the Polish army fell back swiftly upon Lwow. Here, with 10,000 men, Sobieski awaited the appearance of a Turkish advance guard of 40,000; a mere screen thrown out from the enormous main body.

Meanwhile he directed his light cavalry to keep in touch with the enemy, and to harry them as much as possible, and he himself sought help on every side. He even succeeded in arranging a meeting at Zolkiew with a Persian envoy. Negotiations were also taken up with Alexis of Muscovy. But in the end it was upon his own little army that he had to depend. There were, as usual, innumerable acts of heroism, performed mostly by those small garrisons that lay in the path of the advance. Uman held out for fifteen days. At Zbaraz, a Picard captain named Des Auteuils, with 100 men under him, withstood a siege of fourteen days, until peasant refugees from over the border, who had been given shelter in the fortress, exterminated the garrison and threw the commander over the ramparts.

But no local or isolated resistance, however heroic, could hold up the Turks for long, and Sobieski would not have had time to organise the defence of Lwow, and strengthen its fortifications, had not the Turks, inflamed by their early successes, and confident of further and equally easy victories, given way to their customary love of plunder. And while they wandered about burning and pillaging to their hearts' content, Doroszenko and his Cossacks delivered an unexpected attack and threw them into still greater disorder. Nor was the Polish cavalry slow to take advantage of the situation.

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But the inevitable moment was only deferred. Other armies were on the way, to replace the disordered mobs of marauders. A chain of communication stretched back across Moldavia and Wallachia, and from the vast camp at Adrianople fresh columns, levied from the distant provinces of Asia, from the Persian Gulf, from the villages of the Caucasus, took the way of the Balkan mountains and came up along the Danube with their camel-trains and their barbaric drums. Those principalities which were at one moment under Christian protection, and at the next suburbs of the Ottoman Empire, saw the East coming up like a great coloured pageant against Europe, with its grotesque tents, its seraglios, and its Arab horses loaded with jewelled harness. They heard the muezzin call where Christian bells had chimed; elephants trumpeted on the banks of their rivers.

It was a moment of peril not for Poland only but for Europe. Europe looked on, anxious, but occupied with her usual political foolery. The Lithuanians hung back. Most of the trained Polish troops were terrorising their own countrymen by wandering about and robbing, burning or murdering at their pleasure; this being the result of the mutiny of the previous year. Sobieski himself was under no illusion as to the crisis at hand. He had known months before that even if he were lucky enough to hold up the advance by a skilful use of his covering cavalry, and by tempting the Turks to become involved in a series of sieges, there would yet come a moment when the Turkish commanders would grow weary of the delay and contemptuous of such small garrisons as might be left behind them, and would then direct their efforts against Lwow, the key to Poland. That moment had now arrived. The distant flames and smoke of burning villages, observed by watchers on the hills above the town, marked the progress of the army of Ibrahim Pacha. Having made his plans, the King spent the last moments before putting them into execution on his knees in prayer in one of the churches. Marie Casimire and her children had joined him in the town some days before and were now at his side.

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On the evening of August 24th, having set fire to the out-lying houses, the Turkish commander gave the order for the camp to be pitched before the Polish lines. The siege had begun.

But there was nothing of leisure in its beginning. While the tired Turkish army was preparing for rest, and before even the customary dispositions of pickets and so forth had been made, the Polish bugles had sounded the charge, and the thudding rhythm of that terrible cavalry was in the ears of the dumb-founded Asiatics.

The relief of Lwow, like most of the best-known actions won by Sobieski, was no less due to the leader's personal example than to the plan which he carried out. Lwow, the town, lay beneath high hills, upon whose crests were monasteries fortified by the King, and an inner and an outer citadel, with strong ramparts. Sobieski had drawn up his men in the maze of ravines and small gorges that lay beneath the fortified posts. His artillery, cleverly placed, was concealed by natural folds in the ground or by emplacements constructed behind rocks or hillocks. The afternoon of August 24th was already far advanced when the first Polish onslaught surprised the Turks upon ground where manœuvre was impossible. Their enormous superiority in numbers was of no advantage in these gullies, covered by the Polish artillery. It became an actual disadvantage as the panic spread. Furthermore, when the Turkish commanders became aware of the diminutive size of the army which had attacked them, and contemplated rolling up one wing or other, they saw the lances of what appeared to be a reserve army lining the hills. The sloping vineyards bristled with them. The ambush seemed to be complete. As a matter of fact the lances belonged to the assaulting body, and had been stuck into the ground in order to suggest to the Turks the presence of reserves. This successful piece of trickery deprived the cavalry of their favourite weapon throughout the action.

The first charge of the cavalry threw the Turkish ranks into disorder, but they rallied, and it was Sobieski himself, against

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the advice of his nobles, who led a second assault. He knew that time was the decisive factor, and that his only hope of winning a victory was to win it there and then while the dusk settled down over the valley. The Turks must be given no chance to recover from the first shock. They did not know the ground, and as soon as darkness fell they would be in indescribable confusion. He therefore pushed his advantage to the utmost limit and retained the offensive. His audacity succeeded. Once more his few thousands routed the gigantic army of the Porte, and when the last of the daylight had gone the Turks were flying in disorder. Not only was Lwow free, but Poland and Europe had been saved. Contemporary accounts of this extraordinary action speak of a hailstorm which beat down upon the Turks and completed their confusion. The word miracle was used a good deal. It may well be used without taking the hailstorm into account.

True to his principles of warfare, Sobieski gave the defeated enemy no time to reorganise, and on this occasion the customary desertions and mutinies appear to have been avoided. He was too late to prevent the Turks from capturing several frontier fortresses which had remained, like Polish islands, in the flood of the Turkish advance, but to this period belongs the story of Trembowla, the raising of the siege of which was Sobieski's last success of the campaign before he returned to Zolkiew, where all the talk was of the approaching coronation ceremony.

Trembowla is still to-day one of the picturesque Podolian towns, lying, as Connor described it in the seventeenth century, beneath the hill upon which stood the castle. The fortifications were destroyed by the Tartars in 1688. Its importance to Sobieski in the winter of 1675 was the possibility of using it as a base of operations for the spring campaign, since Podhajce was in Turkish hands. That he was in time to raise the siege which Ibrahim had laid to it was due to the heroism of a remarkable man and his wife. Samuel Chrzanowski, a Jew who had become a Catholic, commanded a small garrison inside the citadel. His food and his munitions were failing, but Sophia, his wife, moved among the faint-hearted, and told



her husband that she would kill herself and him if he attempted to surrender. Accordingly, at the next summons from Ibrahim, the commander replied: "You deceive yourself if you expect to find gold here; we have nothing but iron and some soldiers. But our courage is unshaken. Do not flatter yourself that we shall surrender. If you enter this citadel, it will be over the corpse of the last survivor. And now I am preparing another answer for you—to be delivered by my guns." But the situation became so desperate that some of the garrison entered into a conspiracy to make the gallant commander surrender. Sophia overheard them whispering together one day, told her husband what was toward, and helped him, sword in hand, to drive the conspirators back to their posts. He later addressed the traitors. "It is not certain," he said, "that the enemy will capture the citadel; but what is certain is that I will burn you all alive in this very room where we stand if you persist in your cowardice. There are soldiers at the door, carrying lighted torches, to do my bidding."

The conspirators assured him that they would rather fight than be burnt to death; and fight on they did until Sobieski arrived in time to lead the charge against Ibrahim's centre, which crumpled and broke. Once more there was a wild retreat. Trembowla completed the work of Lwow, and the whole campaign increased the King's reputation enormously. Not only had he directed the operations, but had fought in the ranks without a thought of his own life, and to those who blamed him for thus risking his country's most valuable possession he could reply that he had learnt by now the value of personal leadership, and the effect of a mere sight of him upon the Turks and Tartars.

During the lull that followed the rout of Ibrahim, Sobieski was busy with plans for following up his successes by a rapid series of bold strokes, intended to harry the Turk so continuously that he would be forced to withdraw still further from the Polish frontiers. But the nation saw at last a chance for the longed-for coronation, and when Sobieski knew that it could not be postponed any longer, he hastened it on in a

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most uncereemonious manner, refusing even to wait until the envoys and ambassadors were all assembled. But when once the arrangements were completed, he denied his people nothing of the pageantry to which they so keenly looked forward.

He entered Cracow, the ancient capital, upon the 30th of January, 1676. Before him moved a forest of flags and banners borne by six companies of infantry dressed in blue tunics lined with red, and blue caps. Then came six companies in red, and after them the green-clad Moldavian foot-soldiers, with red caps. Next two troops of Polish horse and two troops of Cossack horse. Then, the magnificent Polish hussars, the crack cavalry of the kingdom, in blue and white coats, with great white wings fixed to their shoulders, and cloaks lined with the fur of leopards and panthers. After them rode the nobles, the senators, the bishops, the marshals, the envoys and their suites. And then at last came the King, riding a dapple-grey horse, while six senators held a large canopy over him. One who saw him go thus attended through the streets said that it was his air of command rather than all the pomp which marked him as a King. He was dressed in cloth-of-gold, and wore a crimson cap furred with zebolina, and decorated with a tall, black feather set with precious stones. Ethiopian pages, Persian footmen, little dwarfs of Asia walked at his bridle-rein. After him came Moldavians in cloth of gold and silver, leading Turkish horses; and Cossack attendants and servants in embroidered blue drawing a gold chariot upholstered with crimson velvet. The music of drums and flageolets preceded the King's Guards, dressed in buff tunics, with cloaks of deep blue. Twelve companies of red-coated dragoons and squadrons of miscellaneous horsemen brought up the rear. And all this long procession passed beneath triumphal arches upon which were depicted scenes from the victories of Sobieski; the slaughter at Chocim, the last charge at Podhajce, the decisive assault at Lwow.

The King went up the steep road to the old Cathedral of the Piasts, beside that castle which the Austrians were later to

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turn into a barracks. Here, among the tombs of the Kings and Cardinals, he prayed for guidance.

On February 2nd the ceremony of the coronation took place in the Cathedral. The King confessed his sins, received absolution, and Communion. After being anointed with seven oils, he took from the hand of the Archbishop the sword offered to him, and swore to "Protect and defend Holy Church against all unbelievers." This sword he then flourished three times above his head. He was crowned. He took in his right hand the sceptre, in his left hand the globe. And the crowd cried "Vivat Rex!" and the guns outside announced that King John III had formally ascended the throne.

On the next day Sobieski and Marie Casimire sat side by side on thrones erected in the Rynek, the market-place of Cracow, where the visitor to-day can see so much that they saw on that February morning. The thirteenth-century Gothic church of Our Blessed Lady remains, and the Sukien-nice, or Cloth Hall, and one isolated tower of the Town Hall.

In this square they swore the Oath of Fidelity to the Republic, and received the homage of the nobles and the foreign ambassadors. There was prolonged feasting and popular rejoicing all over Poland, but Sobieski himself was anxious to get back to his work. He knew that the Turks had not been thoroughly beaten. He therefore endeavoured to use his popularity in order to bring about certain reforms, and in the months that followed his coronation he succeeded in obtaining more than seemed possible. He got the Diet to agree to the establishment of something in the shape of a regular army, to the levying of certain taxes, and to the furnishing of food and munition depots on the eastern frontier. He even made them recognise the importance of the infantry arm. And they promised him 70,000 men for his next campaign! What could he not achieve with such an army, ten times the size of his usual force?

Thus happily, then, the year 1676 opened. The popularity of the King appeared to promise that he could carry all before him, and could even save Poland by a gradual process of reform.



JOHN SOBIESKI, SURROUNDED BY HIS FAMILY  
*(In the Wilanow Collection. Artist unknown)*



Indeed, the suggestion for the most salutary reform of all came not from him, but from a body of senators. It was proposed that the high officers of the army should be compelled to swear an oath of obedience to the King, and that their commands should be allotted to them for a period of three years, to be renewed at the end of the period if they had carried out their duties satisfactorily. It is not necessary to point out the effect this would have had upon Poland.

This, which was worth all the other reforms put together, came to nothing. It was successfully opposed by a large body of nobles who started the old cry of despotic government, and who foresaw great discomfort to themselves in a properly disciplined army. But what made the opposition successful was the influence and the money of Marie Casimire. Whether for a whim, or because, as some said, she loved Jablonowski, and feared to see his power as one of the Marshals diminished, this woman, whose influence in affairs was so fatal to Poland, lavished her husband's money in a campaign of intrigue that ended by crippling him for the rest of his life.

Yet, had we been present in Poland during the early months of 1676, we should have been justified in thinking that a new age was beginning for the sorely-tried country; particularly should we have thought this had we also been present during the opening days of other reigns. We should have compared the popularity of the King and the tractability of the Diet with the turbulent scenes in the midst of which King Michael had played his ignominious part. We should have compared the general settled air of the country and the greater security felt even by the wretched peasants, with the perpetual menace of civil war, the plots and the counter-plots, and the repeated raids across the border which darkened the ineffectual last years of John Casimir. We should not have found it possible to believe that a country could come through such perils and despairs, by the devotion and genius of such a leader, only to allow his feet to be tied, his hands to be bound, and the foundations of his work to be undermined by a crowd of selfish and corrupt people, and by an alien woman who shared his

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throne. But we should have been wrong. We should have reckoned without that fatal instability of the Polish character.

Their repentance was short-lived. The glow of well-being, the luxury of a conscience at rest were not to last longer than their other emotions, whose intensity was in proportion to their brevity. To the delight of Austria, who helped with all her might, the nobility grew tired of this atmosphere of peace and regeneration. They began to long for the old disturbed way of life, with its chances for the bold adventurer. And they began to fear the strength and the popularity of this King who had so stern and so self-denying a sense of duty.

There was another man who, for a different reason, viewed with alarm the possibility that Sobieski would be able to give Poland a strong centralised government. Mahomet IV, after the retreat from Trembowla, had hoped for a repetition of the usual farce. He had watched anxiously for signs of disorder and for evidence that the country had once more forgotten the peril on her border, but all he saw was a new determination and a pitiful lack of armed factions to turn the sessions of the Diet into a battle. His commanders feared Sobieski enough already. The possibility that he might lead a large and disciplined army, himself now powerful as well as popular, filled them with foreboding. If he could not only hold them off, but turn defeat into a rout, with a discontented rabble of a few thousands, what might he not do with, say, 50,000 trained and contented men? It was therefore most gratifying to Mahomet IV to note signs of the old disorder within the kingdom of Poland. He had already begun to consider the idea of peace negotiations when the first reports reached him of discontent and of the growing opposition to the new reforms, when it came to the point of carrying them out.

While attempts were being made to levy the new taxes and to recruit the promised army, Marie Casimire planned a journey to France, ostensibly for her health and to have her daughter christened, but in reality, as everyone in France knew, to force the French King to recognise her as a Queen, and to pay her husband the honour due to him. Her personal vanity,

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which was limitless, found intolerable the smug attitude of Louis XIV, and his pose of having placed Sobieski on the Polish throne to suit his own ends. But Louis XIV persisted in his patronising air, and Marie Casimire had the sense to abandon the journey.

By the late summer of 1676 the old Bourbon-Hapsburg quarrel was breaking out once more, and the year that had begun under such happy auspices was destined to see everything go to pieces. The Emperor Leopold had feared the election of Sobieski, not only because he detested the idea of a strong Poland, but also because he foresaw a closer friendship between Louis XIV and Sobieski. It appeared that all Marie Casimire had to do was to play her cards well. Before he had time to realise that she had played them badly, by annoying Louis XIV, he seized the opportunity for a clever stroke. He supported, by all the usual methods of bribery and by the machinery of his secret service, the opposition to the raising of subsidies, the establishment of ration-dumps and the recruitment of men. He further set on foot a campaign of lies, which the rebellious gentry were only too delighted to believe. When the rumour spread that the new Polish army was not to be used against the Porte, but against Germany, they did not stop to examine the plausibility of such a story; they seized on it at once as a way of escape. And when they were told that France was behind this plan, they remembered that the Queen was a Frenchwoman, and were ready to believe that she had won the King over to her point of view. By bringing about this frame of mind in the nobles, Leopold hoped to damage both France and Poland, and to open the latter to further invasions. The work was well done by the Emperor's tools, but it was not difficult work. It was only a question of leading the malcontents a little faster in the direction in which they had been going.

So it was that Sobieski knew that he had been too sanguine, and reconciled himself to the breaking of all those high promises made but a few months before. It was clear that there was nothing upon which he could rely but his own steadfast will and unfailing faith. Once more disillusioned he turned to



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meet the fourth Turkish invasion, led by a fierce fighter known by the name of Satan, and supported by a huge force of Tartars.

In less than a month Sobieski had yet again saved Poland from destruction, and had convinced the Asiatics that he was a wizard who had the power to cast spells upon his enemies. He repeated on this occasion the tactics employed at Podhajce, and with complete success.

At the end of September he made a forced march through Podolia, crossed the Dniester, and with a fine eye for a defensive position chose his ground. He entrenched himself with a little river in front of him, wood and marsh to his right, and the village of Zurawno to his left.<sup>1</sup> As usual it was country of a kind that would give the Turk no chance of manœuvring with his vast army. Here, for three weeks, he held at bay considerably more than a hundred thousand Turks and Tartars, who had the support of the siege artillery that had battered the Christian stronghold of Crete. Each day of the siege was marked by a hundred deeds of heroism. There were sorties, followed often by prolonged engagements, and now the Turks, now the Christians would be driven back to their lines. There were moments when it seemed that a final assault must overwhelm the defenders, but Sobieski himself never failed to appear at that point of the battle-field where his presence was most needed. He had horses shot under him, he was almost captured, he performed exploits which made the Turkish commanders say that if he was not a magician, then most certainly he was a madman. Day by day the rations diminished and the usual grumbling began. Pac led the customary mutiny, when Sobieski had disdainfully refused an offer of peace, based on the ratification of the shameful treaty of Buczacz. "Tell your commander," said the King, "that the next man who makes any such proposal to the King of Poland will be hanged." The nobles, instead of drawing inspiration from such words, and being proud to follow such a King, began to clamour for an easy way out of all their troubles,

<sup>1</sup> The village was on the right bank of the Dniester, in the angle of confluence of the Swieczka and the Dniester, protected by ramparts.

and the Lithuanian leader bluntly announced his intention of deserting unless the terms were accepted. To which Sobieski replied that it was only fair that the last to arrive on the field should be the first to talk of leaving it. "Is there anyone here," he cried, "who perhaps imagines that my head has grown weaker since you placed a crown upon it?"

But for all his brave words and his dauntless air, he must have known that the end, one way or another, was at hand. Soon there would be no food left, and the mutiny might spread among the exhausted and despairing troops. He therefore decided to put everything to the hazard, and, as at Podhajce, he ordered preparations to be made for a general sortie and an assault upon the Turkish lines. He had already bought off large numbers of the Tartars, and he knew that the approach of winter never failed to terrify the Turks.

The signal for the advance was never given. Whether through fear of meeting a frontal attack of Polish cavalry, led by the King himself, or because Satan knew that reinforcements were on the way from Poland, the Turks sued for peace. And if we are tempted to think that the terms of the treaty which was signed before the end of October might have been more favourable to Poland, we do well to remember what a fate the country had once more escaped.

By the treaty of Zurawno one-third of the Ukraine was ceded to the Cossacks, who were to come under Turkish protection. The remaining two-thirds went to Poland. Poland also got Podolia, except for Kamieniec, the key position. Captives were to be exchanged. There was to be no question of demanding the tribute promised by King Michael. Thus all memory of the country's degradation under a weak and vicious King was wiped out, and the frontier of Christendom was once more advanced. But there was a further clause in the treaty, of singular interest to the whole of Europe. From his tent on the banks of the Dniester, Sobieski demanded and obtained the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre, which was taken out of Moslem hands and placed once more under the tutelage of a Christian religious order.

## VI

### A BOURBON-HAPSBURG INTRIGUE ; SOBIESKI PREACHES A CRUSADE AGAINST THE TURKS

(1676-1680)

SO great was the fame of Sobieski at this moment that the army of Satan requested to be allowed to defile in front of him, in order that they might see him close at hand and boast of it in their homes. The request was granted and the retreat began.

At this time died the renowned Kiuperli, saying : " Prophet, I shall now see for myself whether your Koran contains the truth." He was succeeded in his command by Kara Mustapha, Mustapha the Black, a son-in-law of the Sultan Mahomet IV. At this time, also, Odescalchi, the Cardinal who had married Sobieski and Marie Casimire, was elected Pope, and sat in the Chair of St. Peter as Innocent XI. He at once sent money to Poland for raising troops and building fortifications. But Sobieski was again hindered from establishing his army in a position from which he could enforce, if it were necessary, the treaty. The troops refused to remain under arms any longer, and when the reinforcements at length arrived, there was nothing for them to do. Sobieski returned to Zolkiew, and there he received in audience Rochester, the ambassador of James II of England, and Forbin-Janson, the French ambassador.

Rochester had sailed from Portsmouth in the " Tiger " on June 11th, and had landed and been met by Marie Casimire at Danzig eight weeks later. With him travelled a certain Doctor South, who wrote a speech in Latin for Rochester to deliver, to which the King replied extempore, also in Latin. Both Rochester and Dr. South noted down their impressions. The

former was struck by the lack of pomp in Sobieski's household, and still more impressed by the famous Polish cavalry, of whom he said, "I never saw a more beautiful sight." The doctor described the Polish King as tall, fat, with a large face and full eyes. He wore a jewelled cap of fur on his head, which was tonsured. He had no neckcloth. His robe reached to his heels, and his waistcoat, of the same length, was tied with a girdle. His coat was of scarlet cloth lined with fur. Instead of shoes he had boots of Turkish leather, with thin soles and silver heels, and at his side hung a scimitar. He wore no gloves.

As for the French ambassador, having made an entirely unsuccessful attempt to get himself adopted as mediator between Poland and the Porte—the Tartars beheaded his messenger—he lost no time in proclaiming to the world that it was he who was responsible for the treaty. Since the Bourbon-Hapsburg struggle was going on again more bitterly than ever, and since Louis XIV hoped that the Turks would now turn their attention to the Austrian dominions, the bishop's task was not a difficult one. It was easy to believe that France had arranged the whole affair. But that astute woman Madame de Sévigné was not deceived for a moment. On November 11th she wrote: "The Bishop of Marseilles has already announced that he was put to considerable trouble to conclude this peace. He puffs and blows, he mops his brow, like that doctor who had such a job to make the dumb woman, who was not dumb at all, speak. God knows what prating! He had the same sort of trouble when this heroic King was elected." Which shows that instructed opinion in France knew how to take the boastings of Louis XIV and his ministers at their true value. France's share in the campaign of Zurawno was confined to the activities of a number of French artillery officers. At Versailles, however, the hopes of Louis XIV with regard to a Turkish invasion of the Emperor's territory had been common talk for many months. As long ago as the spring of 1676 Madame de Sévigné had spoken in a letter of the pleasure of having "Our friend the Turk" in Hungary.

The years that followed Zurawno were singularly free from invasion, and are almost the only period in the active life of Sobieski during which Poland was not at war. But if there was no actual fighting, the period is one full of anxiety and brooding menace. Its outstanding characteristics are the changed attitude at Constantinople and the Franco-Austrian rivalry.

The advent to power of Kara Mustapha was felt at once. His vigorous personality was discernible in the rapid dropping of all peace-talk, and in a campaign of insult which made no attempt to disguise from anybody the approaching renewal of war. The Porte no longer made even a pretence of observing towards the Polish envoys the smallest diplomatic courtesies. When Sobieski's envoy proceeded with his suite to Constantinople, for the ratification of the treaty, he was kept for seven months outside the town. Mustapha, who had a turn of humour, remarked that if the Pole had come to capture Constantinople, his force was too small; but if the seven hundred attendants formed his suite, then it was too large. And when the Poles suggested that perhaps the Vizier found it difficult to feed such an escort, Mustapha said, "It is as easy for the Sultan to feed 700 Poles here as the 7000 of them whom he feeds on his galleys."

The Emperor Leopold, with a shortsightedness for which he was to suffer later, seized every opportunity to incline the Turks against a ratification of the treaty, by persuading them that the terms were nothing but a humiliation and that they must demand a revision. He worked quickly and with concentration, since he was now enjoying a series of incidents that gave him the support of large numbers of the Polish nobles; and he never knew when fortune might not swing round to Louis XIV once more. First, the *Brisacier*<sup>1</sup> incident was a

<sup>1</sup> Choisy, in his *Memoirs*, gives the full story. Béthune was told to find out the truth of it, and asked Sobieski, while out hunting, what it was all about. Sobieski said he knew nothing of the matter, and handed Béthune the letter he had received from the French Queen. Béthune sent it to the French King, who confronted her with it. She said it was indeed her signature, but she had signed it among a lot of unimportant documents, and

windfall for him. An obscure friar appeared in the Polish capital, and gave out that he was an illegitimate son of Sobieski. He presented to the King a letter from the French Queen, Marie-Thérèse, begging for Sobieski's intervention on his behalf, to obtain for him a Dukedom from Louis XIV. Sobieski at once wrote to Louis XIV, who replied that the letter from Marie-Thérèse was a forgery, and threw Brisacier into the Bastille. The affair was the subject of fierce discussion, and men remarked to each other that while the Queen, Marie Casimire, was intriguing to obtain honours for her father, the King was trying to acquire property in France, and was petitioning the French King on behalf of an adventurer. This was quite enough to start the old cry of a French plot. Cleverly managed by the Austrians, whom the Lithuanian nobles followed at a nod, the business assumed vast proportions.

The second incident that turned in favour of the Austrian party was a religious outbreak in Danzig, between the Prussian Lutherans and some Calvinists of the town. Sobieski himself went to Danzig and restored order, but Frederick William, the Elector, refused to accept the Polish King's decision. At this moment France was paying Sweden to invade the Elector's territory, and the Austrian party found no difficulty in spreading reports that Sobieski was preparing to turn his arms against Christians instead of against infidels, and that France, as usual, was behind the new adventure. The result of these reports was an outcry which we shall hear repeated year after year until the death of Sobieski. The deputies emphasised the fact that Kamieniec was still in Turkish hands, and that instead of leading an army against it, their King was making himself a vassal of France.

Again, Austria at this moment benefited by yet another and a wholly unexpected piece of good fortune. Marie Casimire was at last growing weary of the perpetual snubbings which

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had not even troubled to read it. Brisacier confessed the imposture, was imprisoned and then liberated. He died in Moscow. There are also references to the whole incident in letters written by *Mme. de Sévigné* on Sept. 25th, Oct. 7th, Oct. 9th, Oct. 14th, and Oct. 15th, 1676. The thing made a stir in France at the time.

she received from Louis XIV, and of his refusal either to enrich her family or to recognise her as a Queen.

The fact that Marie Casimire's exasperation with the French King and her consequent sympathy with the Emperor's party coincided with Sobieski's realisation that in the coming crisis he must fight with Austria, has been used to prove how completely the King was under the domination of his wife. On the surface this explanation fits the case. But to imagine that Sobieski's mind worked in any such way is a shallow judgment ; and to suggest that the important decisions of his life were dependent upon his personal emotions is to misunderstand the man ; to degrade him. He resented, as would have any husband, the haughty air of superiority which Louis XIV assumed in his dealings with both Poland and the royal family. For the humiliations were not borne by Marie Casimire alone. Louis XIV, who had called the usurper Cromwell his brother, could not bring himself to grant any such courtesy to an elected King. But we shall have later, after the relief of Vienna, an instance of the dignity with which Sobieski behaved in the face of deliberate humiliation. Such things had no effect upon the principles by which he guided his life. What was in his mind during these years was the great crusade which soon his envoys began to preach up and down Europe. And we shall find his whole mind in an instruction issued by him : " To give the barbarian conquest for conquest, to pursue him from victory to victory, over the very frontier that belched him forth upon Europe ; in a word, not to conquer and curb the monster, but to hurl him back into the deserts, to exterminate him, to raise upon his ruins the Empire of Byzantium ; this enterprise alone is Christian ; this alone is noble, wise, decisive."

Towards the end of the year 1678 it became clear that the sooner Poland struck against the Turks, the better it would be for Europe. France was encouraging the Hungarian rebels<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This had been going on for some time ; at first, probably, without Sobieski's knowledge. The intrigues of Béthune had succeeded in gaining the support of Lubomirski and 2000 Polish troops for the Hungarian rebels. Later on, France abandoned the rebels.

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against Leopold, and at the same time her representatives at Constantinople were emphasising the advantages of a Turkish invasion of the disturbed territory of the Emperor. The Emperor, for his part, had succeeded in changing the Turkish attitude towards Poland from insolence to open threats. A Polish envoy was imprisoned, and word was sent to Sobieski that his representative would not be released until the whole of Podolia had been handed over to the Porte.

Sobieski's answer is not difficult to guess; or, rather, it is not difficult to guess what action he would have taken at once had he been at the head of any other State. He determined to settle at once, by a swift and unexpected stroke, the whole Podolian question by capturing Kamieniec. The Diet was summoned, since nothing could be done without the unanimous consent of the deputies, and there followed months of futile bickering, of plot and counterplot, of espionage and treachery. For three months the main business of the country was not even mentioned. From day to day there dragged on disputes over property, personal quarrels and so forth. In one such quarrel the King himself was involved by the machinations of Marie Casimire, who meddled in everybody's business to her heart's content, and was now as inflamed against the French party as, before her snubbing, she had been against the Austrians. By this time all hope of a surprise attack on Kamieniec had been abandoned, since the spring was at hand, and the essence of Sobieski's plan was an advance during the winter, when the Turks would least expect it, and before rumours of Polish activity had led them to revictual the fortress and to increase its garrison. Kara Mustapha had profited by the news brought to him from Poland, and was not to be caught off his guard. And the arming and gathering of stores went on in the neighbourhood of Adrianople. Europe heard, like a distant thunder, all this noise of preparation, and travellers brought back tales from the swarming ports of the Black Sea and from the old caravan routes. The East was like a great hive, and men tried to read the riddle of the illimitable deserts of Asia. Only one man, seeing what was to come,



called for a crusade ; as though the kings and rulers of the seventeenth century could be persuaded to forget their little rivalries !

While Sobieski was calling upon Europe to remember the immense spiritual force of an ancient and unbroken tradition, the Emperor was straining every nerve and sinew to direct the Turkish invasion upon Poland, while Louis XIV pointed out to the Turks, as their obvious goal, the Emperor's territories. The Christian courts listened with amazement to the Polish envoys who suggested, with simplicity and fervour, that Europe's danger concerned everybody. They gazed upon Polish gentlemen with a sceptical smile, as upon some astonishing anachronism ; as they might have gazed at a mediæval knight. But they asked themselves whether, after all, there might not be something to be got out of this crazy knight-errant who commanded the outposts of Europe. Not one of them, watching the progress of the Hungarian rebellion, and seeing Hungary more and more inclined to pin her hopes on the Turks when France abandoned her, seems to have foreseen what might have been expected to happen. The Hungarians, who were originally nothing but an Asiatic<sup>1</sup> wedge driven into Europe, turned to their origins as a last resort ; and through their agency the storm was to break. Nothing could have suited Mahomet IV better than to have a friendly nation in Europe, ready to welcome his invading armies.

The only supporter whom Sobieski found immediately was Pope Innocent XI. Apart from his anxiety for the Faith, he needed small encouragement to annoy Louis XIV. The *Régale*<sup>2</sup> conflict was not forgotten, and the Pope supported Caulet against the King. In 1679 there was even a rumour that Louis XIV would be excommunicated. Nor had the French King, on his part, forgiven the Pope for fighting Gallicanism so stubbornly.

<sup>1</sup> Their language contains many Turkish words. Byzantine writers of the ninth century call them Turci.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XIV demanded for himself the revenues of any vacant see up to the moment when the new bishop had registered his oath at the Court of Exchequer.

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We have now reached that point in our story when the climax is seen to be at hand ; the climax not only of Sobieski's life, but of Poland's last year of glory, before her foundations, so long undermined, at last crumbled. The next chapter will relate the final efforts made by the French King to induce Poland to stand aside when the Turks advanced upon Europe, and the complete failure of his most cunning diplomats to achieve their object. After Vienna we reach the anticlimax, which drags on until the full tragedy is played out.

## VII

### THE FAILURE OF LOUIS XIV; THE TURKISH ADVANCE TO VIENNA

(1680-1683)

THE years 1680-1683 are from a certain point of view the most interesting period in the life of Sobieski. For these years represent the last efforts of Louis XIV to use Poland in his own interests, and to bribe her King into declared neutrality in the event of a Turkish invasion of Western Europe. The character and statesmanship of Sobieski can be studied during this time, as they were at their highest. The series of episodes which culminated in the establishment of the League against the Porte, in March 1683, reveal the King's singleness of purpose and strength of will.

The explanation of what happened in these years is to be found in a complete misreading of character and misunderstanding of motive. The envoys of Louis, men brought up in the air of diplomatic intrigue and tried in the tricks of statecraft, began by thinking that the problem before them was the old familiar problem of winning a man over by promise and cajolery, or perhaps by setting influences to work upon him. They treated the whole business as a political one; as a simple matter of coming to an arrangement, either agreeably or by the use of plots and the playing off of one faction against another. They made two very bad mistakes at the start. First, they thought that Sobieski's stubbornness was due to a personal motive. Perhaps someone else had got at him, offered more money or a more coveted honour. And secondly, they believed, from all they had heard, that the

Queen could do what she liked with her husband; that a strong French party, led by her, could not fail to make Sobieski do what they wanted. They knew the Polish avarice, the insecurity of power and the perpetual question of old Arquien's dukedom, cardinalate, or whatever it might be. What they did not know was the character of Sobieski. They did not know that he would place anything above his own personal interest, that where his honour and his religion were involved, even the Queen took second place. In short, they were the new product, the nationalist statesmen, while he was the old European crusader.

Their misreading of the King's character explains their absurd hopefulness. Right up to the end of the affair they still thought that he could be kept neutral by appeals to his avarice. And since they never read the man aright, they were puzzled to account for his attitude towards Austria. It was common knowledge that there was no love lost between the Emperor Leopold and Sobieski, and that Poland had nothing to gain from an alliance with the Empire. Louis was the most powerful monarch in Europe, and the relations between France and Poland had been of the friendliest—up to the time of the unfortunate snubbing of the Queen. In such circumstances the two envoys who, in the year 1680, replaced the Marquis de Béthune were full of confidence. These two were the incompetent de Vitry and the ambitious Forbin-Janson, now Bishop of Beauvais. The former came in the course of duty, and the latter, nominally, to support him. But the real object of Beauvais in making the journey was to get Sobieski's good word in the right quarter when the matter of new Cardinals came up. This he felt entitled to, as he had supported Sobieski's candidature for the crown.

The job allotted by Louis XIV to his two servants was the securing of Polish neutrality in return for a vague defensive alliance, a dukedom for the King's tiresome, besotted and shameless father-in-law, and an annual sum of money for the Queen. The amounts offered varied from time to time, but the objective remained the same. But another weapon lay

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ready to hand—the French party in Poland. Louis XIV attached the utmost importance to this party, and relied upon it, carefully nursed by his ambassadors, to spread dissension throughout the kingdom, to break the Diet, and to cripple any attempt at active preparation for the support of Austria. As part of the same policy against Austria, and in complete disregard of the interests of Christendom, he encouraged the Hungarian rebels under Tökölyi, who had, by their risings, begun to clear the way for a Turkish invasion.

Louis himself under-estimated the glamour that was already about the name and person of the King. Nor did he appreciate the moral effect of Rome upon the lords of Poland. When Innocent XI placed himself at the head of a Crusade which the Polish ambassadors were preaching at every Court, even the time-serving gentry were inclined to gather at the King's side. There was something in the air, some stirring of ancient things which had not entered into the calculations of the French Court, and which they could not understand. They tried every solution to the puzzle but the right one. They raised the price, they doubled the pension, they bargained and plotted and lied. They even considered assassination. But the thing which defeated them was too large and simple for them to see. It was another sort of grandeur they were used to. The distance from Versailles to Warsaw was measured not in leagues but in years.

To his servants, de Vitry and Forbin-Janson, in 1680 Louis sent a useful document. It was a list of those important Poles who were either in his service already or were considered likely to be seduced by the offer of money or position. To this document, given out on July 12th, 1680, the French King attached a memorandum made by Béthune, with remarks by the arch-traitor and leader of the French party, Morsztyn. The document was reasonably up to date, and the two ambassadors lost no time in making use of it.

Morsztyn, at the moment Grand Treasurer of the Crown, was a highly cultured man of repulsive morals and considerable wealth—acquired largely from French possessions. He

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retained something of the foppishness of his youth, and by double-dealing and sycophancy, allied to an attractive person and a keen intelligence, had made himself the confidant of Louise de Gonzague. As early as 1674 the acute Forbin-Janson had pointed him out to Louis XIV, and he now, in 1680, was the brains of the opposition to the Polish King. He was detested both in France and Poland, but his talent for spying and betrayal made him feared. Louis XIV never trusted him completely, and de Rebenac, French envoy at the Hohen-zollern Court, was told that he must be careful in his conversations with him. This successful villain had a pretty talent for verse—he translated the "Cid" of Corneille; and he died in France, bearing the titles of Comte de Chateauvillain and Seigneur de Montrouge.

The Grand Marshal of the Crown, Lubomirski, son of the old rebel, was another big man in the ranks of the opposition. He was a pensioner of Louis, a dull, popular man. Pac, the Lithuanian Grand Chancellor, and Radziwill also appeared on the list.

It was unfortunate for the French party that the Queen had turned in a huff pro-Austrian, and in a despatch of October 8th, 1680, de Vitry is complaining to his master that there appears to be no hope of bribing either the King or the Queen. But he soon changed his mind, and began to hold out his bait in a very hopeful mood. It was nervous work. Every now and again some rumour of a secret understanding between Austria and Poland would throw the envoys into a panic—especially as the chances were that they had but lately written to their master reporting a favourable state of affairs and progress made. Again, the building up of the essential French party was not easy. Many of the nobles who were quite ready to be friendly with France, and even to receive rewards for what appeared to be some indefinite political support, changed their minds when they realised what was going on behind the scenes. There had always, as long as they could remember, been some sort of French party at the Polish Court. It was a matter of course. Their French Queens had accustomed

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them to that. But a French party in direct and energetic opposition to their King, and apparently to the Pope, was an entirely different matter. And that was where the popularity of Sobieski came in. Even the wildest malcontents felt a reverence for the man who had become almost a legend before their very eyes.

In the first month of 1681<sup>1</sup> there was a scare. De Vitry feared a clandestine arrangement between Poland and Austria. Nothing came of the scare, and his hopes revived. Then, in March, there was a rumour that Poland and Muscovy had entered into a League against the Porte. As a matter of fact the treaty in question was between Muscovy and the Porte (February), but the false rumour did not prevent the two diplomatists from expressing amazement, and once more stating dogmatically that Poland would never break with the Porte.

Meanwhile the Diet was drawing near. So far Sobieski had not entered into any definite pact with the Emperor. He had been temporising, playing a part. While giving rope to his opponents, he let them believe that he was uncertain what course he should pursue, and so kept them in a perpetual condition of alarm. They alternated between hope and fear, but, on the whole, would have betted on the ultimate success of their plans. All this while, Tökölyi in Hungary was stirring up trouble, according to plan.

Before dealing with the Diet of 1681 and its effect on the general position, let us see what was going on in Turkey.

After the Peace of Zurawno in 1676, a Peace which wiped out the disgrace of Buczacz and gave Europe a breathing space after over twenty years of peril, the dogged Sultan began to prepare for another and a greater invasion. Arabs, Kurds, Greeks, Armenians, Albanians were being enrolled and drilled. From Baghdad to the Nile sources the drum was beaten for war. The slow trains of camels were bringing munitions and

<sup>1</sup> In this month Forbin-Janson told Pallavicini, the Papal nuncio, that if Poland were attacked, Louis XIV would send help, but that he could not do much because of French commercial interests in the Levant.

provisions along the old caravan routes to Smyrna. The dust of convoys rose on the tracks from the Ægean ports to the banks of the Danube. Vessels, commandeered from the harbours of the Porte, crossed the Mediterranean Sea and threaded the Cyclades, laden with stuffs for tents and engines of war. Kara Mustapha, Mustapha the Black, had it all in hand, and dreamed of Vienna fallen and the Milanese at his mercy. For Mustapha knew that Vienna was unprepared, and inclined to disbelieve in the Turkish preparations; and that Arabian astrologers had foretold the capture of Vienna, and the planting of the Crescent in the Rhine March and on St. Peter's at Rome. The muezzin already called to prayer in Buda. The mosque dominated the old fortified palaces of the middle Danube. Austria he did not fear, nor France, his friend. Hungary was in his hand. Poland alone was the obstacle, the moribund country led by a man before whose face the Turkish soldiers fell back, whose name was worth an army; a strong leader of terrible cavalry; a lifelong enemy of Islam, as his fathers had been before him.

All this preparation, all this coming and going, was helped by the foreign policy of Louis XIV. The French King was determined at whatever cost—and cost is the exact word—to profit by the peril of Austria, and to prevent Poland from declaring in favour of the Emperor. With this purpose in view France supported the rebellious Hungarians, and encouraged the friendship between Tökölyi and the Porte. The more violent the Hungarians became the better pleased was the French King. All news of the Turkish preparations was good news to him. He saw their invasion not as a threat to Christendom, but as a threat to Austria, and therefore a chance for France to wipe out the last considerable rival, the last powerful opponent of a French Europe. The whole object of French diplomacy during this time was to encourage Hungarian rebellion, to conciliate Poland, and to open a road for the Turks into Europe. To understand this it is essential to realise the narrow rut into which had fallen the Hapsburg-Bourbon quarrel. The statesmen of France and of Austria saw Europe



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as a battle-ground on which the fight for national supremacy must be determined. Austria's fear was that Poland might stand aside when the Turkish armies began their campaign, and so expose the Empire to a double attack—the Turks in front, the French in rear; and France's fear was that Poland might not stand aside, but might consent to act as a barrier between the capital of Leopold and the hordes of Mustapha. Each, for her own political ends, bargained, bribed and intrigued. But the cause of Poland was once more the cause of Europe.

To Sobieski the issue was a larger and a simpler one. The patience and the magnitude of the Turkish preparations, of which he was accurately informed by his spies, meant, for him, only one thing: another attempt at the complete conquest of Western Europe, which would become a Turkish province. He, who had no reason to under-estimate the military capacity of the Porte, and no excuse for misinterpreting its aims, saw that something more important was threatened than this nation or that nation. He knew that the very life of Europe depended upon her resistance to Islam; to this distortion<sup>1</sup> of the Catholic Faith, this plague from the East. But he also knew the weakness of his own country, which put it at the mercy of foreign diplomacy. He knew how the old quarrels obscured the important points in the problem, but in spite of his knowledge, he never tired of preaching the Crusade. He determined to wait as long as he could, to defer the decision, in order to avert open brawling, and perhaps even civil war.

All parties had great hopes of the Diet of 1681; Sobieski because he knew that it would force his enemies to come out into the open; Austria because the Emperor thought that a decision would be given in support of the Empire against the Porte; France because Louis depended upon the French party to break the Diet, and so to postpone the decision. It was the Empire that was destined to be disappointed. No

<sup>1</sup> I say distortion of the Catholic Faith because the Mahommedan religion is full of fragments of Catholic doctrine. Mahomet himself met and talked with heretics on his journeys while he was evolving his system.

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decision was made. France succeeded, through the agency of Morsztyn, in getting the Diet broken. This work was done by a deputy of Kalicz, by name Przyjemski, after some months of disorder and even bloodshed. But before the Diet was broken Sobieski had learnt a good deal. It is true that no League against Turkey was formed, and that the French party appeared to be the most powerful party in Poland, but after the Diet Sobieski knew exactly where he stood. It was quite obvious that the controlling factor in the situation was the extremely valuable power retained by the King of distributing offices of State. In spite of French intrigue, a great number of the nobles who had been about to support the French cause made a *volte-face*, and openly supported their King when the business of appointment to office drew near. This, coupled with a devotion to the person of the King, and a conviction that Christendom was in grave danger, influenced the waverers. The great mistake made by the ambassadors of Louis XIV was to think that the cupidity of the Polish nobles could only be satisfied by pensions from the King of France. What they forgot was the remaining power of the Polish monarchy; the power to appoint its servants to office. De Vitry and Forbin-Janson were not prepared for the sudden parade of loyalty to the Crown which marked the opening of the Diet. The obstructionist tactics of the French party succeeded in postponing a definite decision in the matter of the League against Turkey, but the result of the Diet was no indication of public feeling.

Forbin-Janson, however, satisfied with a negative victory, hastened back to France to tell his King that though Poland had given no undertaking to stand aside, yet she had no agreement with the Emperor. Both Forbin-Janson and de Vitry exaggerated the result of the Diet and made too little allowance for the influence of the Polish King. All the same, Sobieski's plan had been upset by the breaking of the Diet, and Louis XIV was pleased with the result of his machinations. He was encouraged to believe that the French party was much stronger than it actually was, and that French money could succeed indefinitely

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in hindering decisions. Much heartened, he redoubled his efforts both in Poland and in Hungary. He left Tökölyi in no doubt as to his support of the rebels. The fool Vitry writes of Sobieski to his master, at this time, "*Sa passion dominante est l'argent,*" and flatters himself that he has prevented all possibility of an alliance with Leopold. The French are still counting on the King's love of money.

The French King, then, sharing the remarkable delusions of his ministers, imagines that the Diet of 1681 has as good as settled the whole business. The French party has proved itself a valuable instrument, and it is clear that as long as the veto can be used effectively, nothing can be done. The King, for all his European reputation, can still be crippled by any nobody who cares to claim the right of the veto. Time is important. The Turk is arming for a decisive campaign. If the French party can be maintained at its present strength long enough to break another Diet, the trick will be done.

In this summary of the situation the King and his ministers made two grave mistakes. They left out of account Sobieski's Intelligence Service, the result of whose activities we shall see later, and they read into the minds of the Polish nobility their own feelings. Never, right up to the end, did they understand that the whole civilisation of Poland was built upon her religion, and that the nobles were realising, more and more clearly, what was in the mind of their King, and why the Pope had placed himself at the head of the suggested League. Neither Louis XIV nor his servants were capable of stepping out of the world in which they lived into the world in which the King of Poland lived. His conduct astounded them. They knew of no test to apply by which it might appear sane.

Just about this time, the midsummer of 1681, there was another scare. De Vitry announced to Louis that Morsztyn, the trusted traitor, was playing a double game; that he had been won over to the disgruntled Queen, and was prepared to urge an agreement with Austria. The immediate result of this

news was the formation of a new French party : Jablonowski, Lubomirski, Sapieha and so on. The last named, who was the big man in Lithuania after the death of Pac, was a great disappointment to Vitry. He returned in the end to his old loyalty—probably because he wanted to be Grand Chancellor of Lithuania.

The rest of the year was spent by the envoys of Louis in building up the new French party, and by Sobieski in watching very closely the movements of those who thought themselves secure from observation. Later, de Vitry complained bitterly that his least significant actions appeared to be known. At the same time Tökölyi, in Hungary, was still stirring up trouble and binding himself closer to the Sultan. De Vitry, at Warsaw, was in direct communication with the envoy of the Hungarian revolutionaries, Nemessani, but had to walk warily. But it is most probable that Sobieski came to know of the correspondence between de Vitry and Nemessani, and that the knowledge strengthened his hand when the time came to declare himself openly. The year closed with Sobieski troubled by the upsetting of his plans at the Diet, and still forced to dissimulate, but fully aware of what was going on around him ; with de Vitry and Forbin-Janson confident that the French party was strong enough to prevent a definite agreement with the Empire ; with Leopold nervous of Turkey, yet still incredulous of the actual state of affairs, and filled with a loathing of France ; with Hungary emerging rapidly as the active ally of the Porte ; and with Turkey completing the concentration of provisions and the mobilisation of armies, and still hopeful that Poland might be persuaded to stand aside when the campaign opened.

In February of 1682 Leopold's nervousness increased, and Count Caprara was sent to Constantinople from Vienna. His orders were to divert the danger of a Turkish invasion. His task was hopeless. Constantinople was in the hands of the war-party, and all eyes were on the Hungarian rebels, to whom encouragement was sent continually. Caprara was told bluntly the price that must be paid to avert war : an enormous

annual tribute ; the recognition of Tökölyi as Prince of Upper Hungary ; the cession of fortified places ; the restitution of territory taken from the Hungarian insurgents. These demands increased as the year proceeded, and news of Tökölyi's successes were coming in, and Caprara had before his eyes the massing of the vast armies of the Sultan and the growing arrogance of the Vizier, under whose eyes the preparations went forward. Finally, the ambassador from Vienna was put under arrest, and later saw the departure of the enormous host from Adrianople.

Leopold could now be in little doubt as to what was toward, but de Vitry was still keeping up his own spirits and those of Louis by pointing to the Diet of 1681 as a precedent, and by arguing that nothing could possibly be done before the next Diet, and that even then money spent in the right quarter would ensure a repetition of the old farce—the *liberum veto*.

About this time was concluded the alliance between Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavia, the Ukraine and the Hungarian rebels. The League placed itself under the tutelage of the Porte in April. Such a declaration meant that the Turkish armies could rely on Christian States to aid their advance upon Vienna, and that they would be passing through a friendly territory extending from the Dniester and the Carpathians to the Danube banks. At the same time the Emperor's resident at Warsaw complained that passports were given to rebel envoys for the mere asking. Even the Papal nuncio remarked on Sobieski's apparently friendly attitude to France and to the enemies of Austria. Sobieski's reply was to make it quite clear that he knew of the intrigues of the French party, and that from now onwards the passages of Stryj and Scola would be closed to all who attempted to go out of Poland into Hungary. Not even this unequivocal action of Sobieski made de Vitry despair. He merely redoubled his demands for the Arquien dukedom, and even succeeded in getting Louis to offer Sobieski a still larger pension. Tökölyi and du Vernay, who was assisting de Vitry,

went on trying to change the King of Poland's mind, but without any success. It has, in fact, been said that Louis ruined his cause irrevocably earlier in the year by sending du Vernay on a mission to Hungary, and thus giving the whole show away. Pallavicini, who had succeeded Martelli as nuncio at Warsaw, in a letter to Innocent XI (February 18th) took this point of view.

When the Emperor Leopold had grasped the significance of the alliance engineered by Tökölyi, his nervousness became panic, and he did a clever thing. He was no personal friend of Sobieski, and was no more able to appreciate the character of the man than were the French diplomats. He realised, even as de Vitry realised, that he was not in a position to offer much in return for help. His position was too weak. At any moment, he thought, Sobieski might decide to accept one of the French offers. He knew what he or any other sovereign of those days would have done. So Leopold tried Marie Casimire, knowing well that the constant snubbing she had received from the French King had turned her into an implacable enemy; and believing what he heard about the tremendous influence she exercised over her husband. The Queen made some pretence of going on a pilgrimage, and came back from Danzig determined to urge the cause of the Empire upon her husband. The air about him was thick with bribes. Louis was promising his support for Prince James in the matter of his succession to the throne, the crown of Hungary for Sobieski himself, Silesia (this was a joint offer from Denmark, Prussia and France), a pension, honours for the Queen's father. Leopold offered Prince James the hand of an archduchess.

To pretend that Sobieski did not feel the French temptation would be ludicrous. This was his chance to establish his family, and to make Poland a great European Power just when she was in grave danger of becoming a second-rate Power. And as if to try him still further the Sultan wrote to him to say that he had no designs on Poland and only wanted to be friendly. But if the King seemed to hesitate, it was not that

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his decision was not taken in his own mind.<sup>1</sup> He knew only too well the impossibility of carrying the country with him so long as the French party had any power left. He must first discredit them, and then, making full use of a dramatic exposure, rally the nobility to him by the force of his personality and the magic of his legend.

Then, suddenly, things began to happen. In June Tökölyi gave the word, and the Hungarians rose and overran Tokay on the Theiss and the towns of Northern Hungary. In August he was issuing his own money. In September he was solemnly invested with his kingdom by the Porte, on condition that no Jesuit should be allowed to set foot in it henceforth. The effect of this campaign was to set the Turkish armies in motion. All through the autumn the columns were coming up from Constantinople to concentrate on Adrianople. With them came the Vizier, Kara Mustapha. At Adrianople the troops went into winter quarters, and were joined, week by week, by contingents from the distant provinces of Asia. The Sultan himself arrived in the autumnal rains, and spent the winter in hunting. Thirty thousand beaters played their part in the royal chase. And when the winter had passed the great war-machine was ready to advance upon Belgrade and the Hungarian capital.

There was nothing new and nothing complicated in the Vizier's plan. It was Kiuperli's plan over again: a rapid conquest of the remaining territory of the Empire, to be followed by a triumphal progress through the Milanese to Rome. In the phrase of Montbrun, the Vizier would never rest until he had stabled his master's horses in the basilica of St. Peter. And for this purpose he had drawn upon Mahomet's vast Empire.

In the autumn, meanwhile, Zierowski, the resident of the

<sup>1</sup> As long before as April 1674 Sobieski had had a conversation with the nuncio Martelli, in which he revealed his plan of wintering over the frontier and forestalling the Turkish invasion, with the help of a French fleet in the Dardanelles. The traitor Morsztyn pretended that he could influence Louis XIV in favour of this plan.

Emperor in Warsaw, had intercepted letters passing between du Vernay and Tökölyi, and knew for certain the part played by French agents and French money in Hungary. De Vitry, when Sobieski complained to him of the French plots, came to a conclusion that is typical of his almost insane subtlety. He thought Morsztyn was poisoning the King's mind. In November Louis XIV began to indulge in the wildest expedients. De Vitry was ordered to spread a rumour that Sobieski had demanded from the Emperor, as a price of his help, the Order of the Golden Fleece for Prince James. And the object of this was to make the nobles angry with their King. De Vitry, in the next month, went one better, and told Louis that Sobieski's friendship for Austria must be represented as purely opportunist, and the outcome of his ambition for himself and his family. Let it be noised abroad, said de Vitry, that when Sobieski has saved Austria, he will immediately invite the Turks into Poland. But even de Vitry does not seem to have based his hopes on this kind of nonsense. The refrain of his thoughts and of his words is still: Nothing can be done until the Diet is summoned; and nothing can be done even then as long as there is someone to break it up. Morsztyn, far more astute, and a much greater danger to Poland, saw more clearly. He told de Rebenac, in mid-December, that there was nothing much to be hoped from the French party any longer—in fact, that it hardly existed; and that little short of a miracle could now stop the formation of the League against Islam. The arch-traitor now proceeded to Warsaw to make what he could of the situation and to try to patch up the French party. He began assiduously to spread rumours. He talked, here and there, of the absolutist tendencies of the Polish King. He chose his audience with discretion, and left it to the ambitious nobles to decide whether or not an unrestricted monarchy, on the model of the French, would do them much good.

But the ciphers of Morsztyn, du Vernay, de Vitry—of the whole pack—were by now in Sobieski's hands.

As the time for the Diet approached Sobieski came out



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further and further into the open, until nobody in contact with him could any longer be in doubt as to what he would do. In the last month of the year the French King sent orders to de Vitry to redouble his efforts. At the same time serious complaints were being made of this envoy's incompetence—notably by the King of Denmark and the Elector of Brandenburg. There was a growing feeling that the wretched fool had bungled everything. Fool he certainly was, but his task had been, from the very beginning, an impossible one.

Sobieski was now at the summit of his activity. His envoys were trying to persuade Venice, and even Persia, to come into the League against Islam. He proposed the re-establishment of an independent Greek Republic, made a pact with Sweden, and extracted promises of assistance from the Ukrainian Cossacks. He went into the Carpathians, ostensibly on a hunting expedition, but in reality to detach the Hungarian rebels from the Porte. He met Tökölyi, who was already full of consternation at what he had done by seeking Turkish protection, and made him agree to an armistice. The result of this was that Leopold was able to spend the winter in preparations, without the immediate fear of another outbreak; and that Sobieski was able to help Austria without fighting Hungary. As a matter of fact, he was sympathetic with Hungarian aims so long as they did not endanger Europe by helping the Turks.

Further successes attended the efforts of the Polish King. Tökölyi agreed to abstain from attacking, not only Austria, but Poland; and even to oppose armed force to a Turkish attack on Poland. He guaranteed not to invade Moravia (a territory by which Vienna could maintain communication with Bohemia, Saxony and Poland). And lastly, Abaffi, ruler of Transylvania, made a similar agreement. Leopold was now free to turn to the French dispute, in which Louis stubbornly refused to accept the Polish King as mediator; talking still of his grievances and rights. All efforts were concentrated on detaching Poland from Austria and England from Holland, and it became evident that the French were trying to time

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their advance on the Rhine so that it should coincide with the spring offensive of the Turkish armies.

Meanwhile, in order to assist the labours of de Vitry in Poland, Louis XIV sent a fresh cipher by a man disguised as a travelling merchant. But the ensuing letters that passed between the King and his envoy were intercepted by a post-master named Gratta, in Danzig.

At the end of the year Sobieski sent out his messages to the preliminary local Diets, and prepared to settle matters once and for all. In January Walstein came from Leopold's Court to take part in the negotiations for the formation of the League, and to bring the news that Bavaria and Saxony had definitely joined the Empire. Soon after the opening of the Diet, January 3rd, 1683, the appointments to office were made, and the King tried to disarm the opposition by choosing a number of the chief members of the French party for the highest honours. The plan was not by any means successful. All this time, however, the official correspondence between Versailles and Warsaw was being regularly intercepted.

It was in February,<sup>1</sup> when the Austrian ambassador entered the Diet, and presented letters from his master to the King and nobles of Poland, that the storm broke, and it was seen at once how well Morsztyn had done the work of reorganising the French party, in spite of the endless blundering of de Vitry. There was a torrent of oratory and of pamphlets, explaining that Poland would get nothing by helping Austria, who had never raised a hand to save her in former years from the repeated attacks of Islam; that he who helped Austria only made more certain the enslavement of the Bohemians, the Croats and the Hungarians; that the Turks had no designs on Poland, and were not her natural enemies, since they were out after bigger game; that the real enemies were Austria and Brandenburg, and the real friend France; that the King's absolutist tendencies and his dream of a hereditary

<sup>1</sup> This Diet is described by Pallavicini in his letters to Rome. (See "Innocent XI: sa correspondance avec ses nonces." Vol. III; 1680-1684. Edited by F. de Bojani. Published 1912.)

monarchy must not be tolerated for a moment—and so on. Behind all this was the cunning and capable Morsztyn, and his tool, the popular Jablonowski, an intimate friend of Marie Casimire, and already the second man in the kingdom. It is said that Morsztyn and his supporters intended to assassinate the King and place the crown upon this man's head. Rubinski dismisses the idea as mere nonsense and a ready-made pretext for discrediting the French party. But Salvandy appears to accept it, and mentions the evidence of Braun, the Prussian, in the "*Comitorum Poloniae Tractatus*." Sobieski himself believed in the plot, and said so in formal letters of instruction to the Diet in May. Having regard to the desperate situation from the French point of view, and the tremendous prestige of Sobieski, there seems to be no reason why Morsztyn should not have thought of assassination. With Sobieski out of the way there would be nobody to rally the nation to the Austrian cause.

While the uproar was at its height, and Sobieski was dreading the breaking of the Diet as soon as there should be any attempt at a decisive step, de Vitry was making complaints to his bankers in Danzig about his intercepted letters. Sobieski had already sent Morsztyn to him with details of the proposed League, but de Vitry did not believe that anything would come of it. The French party appeared to be master of the situation, and he, de Vitry, at the beginning of March, wrote to Louis XIV, giving a complete account of the transactions by which he was daily buying Polish nobles, and of the services rendered by Morsztyn.

Then Sobieski acted rapidly and with energy. He accused Morsztyn of high treason, mentioned that he had in his possession evidence of widespread conspiracies and double dealings, but was clever enough not to name the other conspirators; thus leaving no guilty man certain as to his position. None knew whether he was involved or not, whether his name was mentioned in any letter, or how much was known about him. Sobieski added that de Vitry had obviously calumniated many of the nobles, simply to show Louis XIV his devotion to

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his service. And he called upon the nobility to give the lie to such calumnies by passing a declaration of war against Turkey, with whom Louis had an understanding.

It was a master-stroke, and it succeeded. Morsztyn dragged down de Vitry with him, and the Frenchman found himself subject to insult whenever he showed his head in the streets of Warsaw. The two emotions that swayed the guilty were an overmastering anxiety to prove their loyalty to the King and the country, and a fear of disclosure that might fall on them at any moment. The Grand Treasurer prayed for pardon, but Sobieski knew the danger of a too great leniency. There was still the *liberum veto* between him and the declaration of war. Morsztyn, therefore, was placed under the guard of Lubomirski, the Grand Marshal, and later escaped to France.

In this month of March levies were already being raised, and Sobieski was telling Leopold to destroy the suburbs of Vienna, which might prove a foothold for the Turks. This sound advice was neglected by the Emperor. De Vitry, indomitable, and stupidly sanguine as ever, was writing to Louis XIV to tell him that even though it could not be denied that levies were being raised, it would be impossible to maintain an army, and that nothing would come of the King's exposure of the Grand Chancellor after all. By this kind of talk, and by the usual distribution of money and promises, he managed to win over a few of the more foolish nobles. In his attempt to save something from the wreck of the party he was aided by Brandenburg's envoy.

On the last day of March, 1683, the alliance, defensive and offensive, between Austria and Poland was signed.<sup>1</sup> There was nothing for it now but to break the Diet before the treaty could be ratified. A member was found who agreed to do the work on the last day, April 18th, for the sum of one thousand ducats. But his courage failed him when the moment for action arrived, and the session was concluded without incident.

<sup>1</sup> Pallavicini, the nuncio at Warsaw, in a letter written to Cybo at Rome, describes the six hours' debate, the Austrian stupidity that nearly broke down the whole business, and the final signing.

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De Vitry left Poland,<sup>1</sup> and on his return to Versailles rendered his master his last service in connection with his mission in Poland. He gave Louis an account of a country too weak to be anything but a laughing-stock and, what was more important still, described Sobieski as too ill from gout and too fat to lead his army in person or to sustain the rigours of a long campaign. Louis took good care to give this description the widest possible publicity, and it came to be taken for granted, all over Europe, that the King of Poland had no intention of playing an active part in the Turkish war. This sedulous propaganda had its effect on Kara Mustapha. It was not the Polish army he and his troops dreaded, though they well knew the weight of a Polish cavalry charge; it was Sobieski himself.

Before the winter was over the armies of the Sultan, under the supervision of Mahomet himself, were moving up from Adrianople, to concentrate between Belgrade and Buda; nearly four hundred thousand men, including the baggage train and the miscellaneous camp-followers. The enormous shadow of that host was darkening Europe, a moving mass whose destination was obvious. Between this last and greatest attempt of Islam and the Rhine, the Milanese, the Alps, was a small army of some thirty thousand men under the Emperor, on the Danube. Day by day the hordes advanced along the river, while the peasants from the hill villages above Vienna and from the farms of the March Field were working on the fortifications of the town and preparing oaken palisades. In upper Hungary there had already been a clash between Castelli and the Pacha of Neuhausel, who had orders to occupy Schutt,<sup>2</sup> an island in the Danube.

In May <sup>3</sup> the Sultan Mahomet took leave of his vast army

<sup>1</sup> Writing on June 2nd, Pallavicini describes de Vitry's last audience at Wilanow, his excuses and his denials, and the attack on his house by the exasperated Poles.

<sup>2</sup> Between Pressburg (now Bratislava) and Komorn (now Komoron).

<sup>3</sup> On May 30th, Buonvisi, the nuncio at Vienna, writes to Cybo a letter full of alarm. He despairs of Vienna's fortifications, and sees no salvation for the place unless the Turks divide their forces.

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at the bridge of Osek, not many miles from the Hungarian frontier, in what is now Jugoslavia. It was here that he received Tökölyi, and here also that he heard the news of the alliance between Poland and Austria. On the day following he handed over the command to Kara Mustapha, he himself having no taste for military campaigns. He preferred hunting. Here at Osek was held a Council of War, and several of those who could speak with authority advised against an attempt being made upon Vienna this year. They pointed out that the Empire still held fortified places in Hungary, and that when these had been reduced, there would be a strong base for operations further afield. Among those who urged this more cautious procedure was Tökölyi. The Vizier's reply was to pretend to agree, but to issue, at the same time, orders for an advance on Raab.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Sobieski's Cossack spies on the far side of the Balkans seized a letter containing enough information to prove that Vienna was the goal of Kara Mustapha, and that there was no time to be lost in raising and equipping an army of defence. Louis XIV chose this moment to profit by the situation. The Monmouth affair in England reassured him on that side, and he knew that the Emperor could not face two ways at once. He therefore advanced on the Rhine, and sent his fleets into the Baltic.

By June the unhappy Charles, Duke of Lorraine, was in command of the Imperial troops, and had been ordered to recapture Neuhausel, a fortified town of Hungary. The moment he moved, Tökölyi accused him of breaking the truce, and the six thousand Hungarians under Budiani, in the Emperor's pay, went over in a body to the rebels. Esterhazy alone remained loyal, and carried the tale to Leopold in Vienna. But there was a bigger and a more unpleasant surprise in store for the Imperial army. The Turkish invaders were supposed to be somewhere near Belgrade, but when Lorraine reached Raab they were beneath its walls. The Turk was already within twenty leagues of Vienna, and the savage

<sup>1</sup> Now Gyor.

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Tartar horsemen were preparing their wild ride into Bavaria.

Poland was arming, with the eyes of Europe upon her. Pope Innocent XI had placed himself at the head of the Crusade to save the Faith, and once more the cause of the Church, the cause of Europe and the cause of Poland were one.

The rapidity of the Turkish advance threw the Imperial troops into the utmost danger. The enemy had got behind them, and was burning and plundering and slaughtering on every side. At night Lorraine's men could see the flames far in their rear. Retreat was the only course, but it would have to be swift and well-ordered. Lorraine himself with the cavalry began to retire, by Altenburg and Kitsee, covering the right bank of the Danube, and hustling his infantry on to the island of Schutt, whence, by forced marches, they could reach the capital. On July 5th, Lorraine's advance guard encountered a screen of Tartar horsemen, thrown out from the main body, and there was a skirmish at Petronell, unimportant in itself, but important in its results. Petronell was but one day's march from the capital, and the first refugees to reach Vienna exaggerated the skirmish until it became a pitched battle of the first magnitude, and an overwhelming defeat for the Imperial forces. Mustapha, on his side, used the affair to silence all those who were opposed to his plans and to hearten his troops. The death of Louis of Savoy, elder brother of Eugene, was also used to enhance the importance of the engagement. All the same, unimportant though the skirmish really was, nothing could minimise the effect on the people of Vienna of the nearness of the enemy. Nobody had believed that their advance could be so rapid, and the state of panic was now in proportion to the sense of security that had prevailed hitherto. Nor was the presence of the Emperor in their midst calculated to strengthen the *moral*. He was no soldier, and soon after receiving the news of Petronell he had decided to leave the capital with his family. Even this was not easy. The Tartars might turn up on any of the roads by which he could travel. A council was held, made more urgent

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by the flames of burning villages in the neighbourhood, and the decision was taken to travel, not along the road to Linz, through Melk, but by the left bank of the Danube, by Krems ; a longer way, but one judged safer.

On July 7th, peasants working in the fields looked up and saw the dreaded irregular cavalry of the Tartars. So little prepared were they for what had only been talked of as a remote possibility.

These Tartar horsemen of the seventeenth century did not differ much from the Scythians who caused Darius and Alexander so much trouble. Their value as a force lay in their expert horsemanship, their ability to carry out one or two elementary manoeuvres faultlessly, the ferocity of their appearance, and their independence of organised transport for rations. But these great advantages were offset by their complete lack of discipline, and by the fact that a campaign was, to them, a mere series of raids for plunder. When they got their plunder they were satisfied, and they had no liking for prolonged expeditions. The Turks used them in their invasions as a kind of flying screen or advance guard, to burn and kill and harry, and so open a path for the main body.

One of the problems that confronted Sobieski was the evolution of a tactic against the Tartar bands, and he did succeed to a great extent in holding them in check with his light cavalry on many occasions, by employing a maximum of mobility and by splitting them into isolated groups. Dupont, the French artillery officer who fought against them under Sobieski, described them advancing like flocks of sheep, with the Molrac or commander acting as a dog to each drove. The commander controlled those under him by beating upon a small drum, about one foot six inches in diameter, which was attached to his saddle. Before him rode his men, and each with a whip looped over his right wrist. Man and horse seemed like one creature, and both were equally tireless. Their method of worrying an army on the march was to attack swiftly and suddenly, over and over again, all through the day



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and night. They would even keep up their barbaric shouting all night, one half standing to arms while the other half slept. Their horses lived on grass, and in the winter on roots and the bark of trees, and the riders themselves were contented with dried horse, which they put between the horse's back and saddle. They made it into a powder, which they threw into a vessel of water and stirred with their fingers. They drank fermented milk.

They had a way of crossing rivers which the Poles copied. The rider made a little primitive raft of straw or branches or whatever was to hand, and crouching on it, grasped the tail of his horse, and was thus dragged to the other bank, having fastened his belongings securely to the saddle.

A Frenchman, de Beauplan, who travelled among them, said they rode much as a monkey might ride a hare, crouching over it. The word "cloud," applied so often to rapidly advancing horsemen, had nothing fanciful about it in the case of the Tartars. They had no formation, and rode close together, covering the plains like swarms of locusts. In order to make them hardy their mothers bathed them in salted water, and they went to war at the age of twelve.

In appearance they were broad, squat, bull-necked, with large heavy hands and round faces; small pig's eyes, flat noses; olive-skinned with dark coarse hair, like the manes of horses, and ragged beards. They were renowned for their hideousness and their savagery. Before the battle of Arbele, Parmenion, dreading the effect of their appearance upon the Macedonians, had counselled a night-attack. They fought always on horseback, and carried their baggage with them, living by plunder as they went along. They could ride over any kind of ground at full speed. Their principal weapons were the arrow, the javelin and the Turkish scimitar, and they carried leather thongs to bind their prisoners.

At nine o'clock in the evening of this same day, July 7th, an undignified procession passed, with a haste that precluded the customary ceremonial, through the Rothenthurm gate,

across the Leopoldstadt, and over the Tabor bridge. The light from many torches revealed to any who chanced to be in the streets the Imperial carriages with their arms and postilions. The Hapsburg, with his wife, the Empress Mother, the ex-Queen Eleanor, the Archduchesses and the ladies and gentlemen of the Court, was flying from his capital, with the enemy at its gates. The royal example was quickly followed by all who had carriages or other means of flight. All night long the more important and the wealthier citizens took the road, in the wake of the Emperor. And during the night there was added to the fitful light of the torches a stronger and more awful glow. The sky over the Kahlenberg was red with the flames that destroyed the Convent of the Carmelites.

It is said that sixty thousand people left the city. Large numbers, particularly of those who took the Styrian road, were caught by the Tartars, and either butchered in droves or sold into slavery. However, the Imperial retinue reached Passau, the Bavarian fortress, in safety; but not without adventure. The whole party, including the Empress, who was with child, had to spend a night in the open under some trees, and nobody knew from what point the Tartars might appear without warning. At the bridge of Krems the fugitives were saved by the Marquis de Seperville, a French gentleman, and a handful of French officers, who drove off the enemy; a pretty piece of historical irony, and one that must have tried to the utmost the French King's sense of humour. There was a breathing space, and then news came that the Tartars were across the road to Passau. Linz, the first objective, was evidently too near the danger zone. And so Passau received the royal retinue.

While the Emperor was on the run, the meagre garrison of Vienna took stock of the situation. There were about one thousand men of the Kaiserstein regiment and no other troops. The special police, as we might call them—an organisation of burghers—amounted perhaps to four thousand. Upon the bastions there was no artillery. The palisades, although ready, were not in position. And at the gates of the city was the

## THE TURKISH ADVANCE TO VIENNA

advance guard of an army that popular rumour had for some months past exaggerated to between seven and eight hundred thousand. No directing hand took charge of the defence. It seemed as though there were nothing to do but sit down and wait for the capital to be occupied, and for Austria to become a Turkish province.

Then, in one day, the whole situation changed. While the Tartars were riding in every direction in search of plunder, and the main body under Kara Mustapha was drawing nearer, on July 8th the cavalry of Lorraine rode into the city, and contradicted the rumour of a crushing defeat with heavy losses. Some small degree of hope returned. On the same day arrived the man to whom Leopold had entrusted the defence of his capital, Count Starhemberg, who had fought under Montecuculi, and had held Moravia against Tökölyi and the Hungarian insurgents in 1681. Condé had praised his handling of the artillery at Seneff. But he had never had such a task as now confronted him. There were not even enough tools to go round for the very necessary work on the fortifications, and nobody knew at what hour the attack would fall. Swift as the march of Mustapha had been, if it had been a little swifter there might have been no defence. The Vizier's march had amazed everyone, because it was only made possible by a disregard of all the conventions of warfare at that time. Nobody could imagine that a leader would leave on one side considerable fortified places. Everybody expected a long campaign of sieges, lasting through the spring and summer, before there could be any serious menace to Vienna. And that is what the majority of Mustapha's advisers expected. But Mustapha, as we have seen, overrode them all, and Vienna might have been captured without a shot being fired.

While Starhemberg took the defence in hand, and the Turks were advancing along the right bank of the river, the infantry of Lorraine, twelve or thirteen thousand strong, were proceeding along the left bank by forced marches from the island of Schutt.

The population was mobilised and the tasks were allotted.

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The Arsenal, by the Scottish Gate, was stored with munitions brought down the river by boats. Meanwhile the Turks crossed the Raab river, and leaving Altenburg behind them, entered Austrian territory on July 10th. What villages the Tartars had omitted to destroy were burned by the Turks, and watchers from the towers of St. Stephen's Cathedral could follow the hourly progress of the enemy by the closing in of a great semicircle of flame and smoke. While the vast army bore down on the capital, upon whose ramparts the population was working with the energy of despair, terror of the Tartar bands was driving the Southern Germans from their homes. Fugitives from the Suabian forests and the Franconian uplands made their way towards the Rhine.

All through the 11th and 12th of the month the wide crescent of armies closed upon Vienna. Semmering alone, the Imperial villa, was left untouched, because it marked the spot where had stood the huge tent of Soliman during the siege of 1529. On the 12th the Tartars were seen where is the present Theresianum, by watchers from the town. On the 13th, early in the morning, Turkish cavalry appeared on the high wooded hills to the west of Vienna, and took its way down to the villages, halting in Döbling and Nussdorf. In the afternoon a large body took possession of most of what is now the 4th arrondissement, and began to move towards the Burg and the Löbel Bastions. The defenders opened fire and drove this vanguard back to the shelter of the vineyards. That evening, and none too soon, Lorraine's infantry crossed the river under cover of darkness and marched in by the Rothenthurm gate. The gate was barricaded, and the siege may be said to have begun, although the main force did not arrive until the next day.

Europe now looked, not at Vienna, but towards Poland.

It was known that an army was being slowly and laboriously raised. Sobieski had left the gardens of Wilanow, where alone he knew repose, and had thrown himself into the task of preparing the relieving force. He was helped by the pride of the nobility, who, when the issue was clear, for once forgot

their personal feuds and political quarrels. But he was hindered by the absence of any reliable machinery of mobilisation. The half-clad infantry, more like a mob than an army, passed along the roads that led to Cracow all the summer months, and squadrons of cavalry, splendid in the colours and magnificence of the Middle Ages, and with a touch here and there of Eastern barbarity, gathered in readiness for the start of the campaign. Regiments from the distant eastern frontiers came toiling in across the Polesian marshes and the valleys of Volhynia; veterans from the Podolian garrisons and young recruits from the Carpathian foothills, hastily summoned, made forced marches along the dusty roads and arrived in tatters. Frequent messages from the Pope and from the Emperor implored haste and recounted the desperate state of affairs. Yet all they hoped for was a handful of Polish troops, a few thousands of those soldiers who had been led by the great King and were informed with something of his spirit. Had Europe known that he himself would appear upon the Kahlenberg, riding once more at the head of his invincible cavalry, it is not likely that Louis XIV would have stood aside to allow another to save the Faith. Had Mustapha foreseen the arrival of the Captain whose name alone broke the manhood of his armies, he would have made one general onslaught in July or August, and could not have failed to take Vienna.

## VIII

### THE SIEGE OF VIENNA

(July–August 1683)

VIENNA,<sup>1</sup> the old frontier town of Rome, and later of Charlemagne, had in 1683 many natural advantages as a fortress. Northward, the Danube protected it. To the south and east the Wien, an arm of the Danube, flowed round the ramparts, cutting them off from the fertile plain that stretched away to the mountains on the Styrian border. Little tributary streams formed islands here and there. The largest of these, Leopoldstadt, was a considerable residential quarter. A bridge connected it with the capital itself. Westward, the last escarpment of the Alps fell from wooded height to wooded height, down to a maze of stony valleys and vine-clothed slopes which rolled to the very ramparts of the town. But a period of security had seen the fortifications fall into disrepair. The moat had been converted into gardens, and the suburbs had expanded up to the walls themselves, and even mixed with the outlying fortifications. These fortifications consisted of twelve bastions, faced with brick, with cavaliers, ravelins, half moons and stone gates. The moat was broad and deep, but only partially full of water. The houses approached so near to the ramparts that there was little room for entrenchment.

On the afternoon of July 13th, Starhemberg gave the order to do what should have been done long before, and what Sobieski had advised: to set fire to the suburbs in order to deprive the besiegers of a means of advancing under cover. As soon as the flames were doing their work a strong wind

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

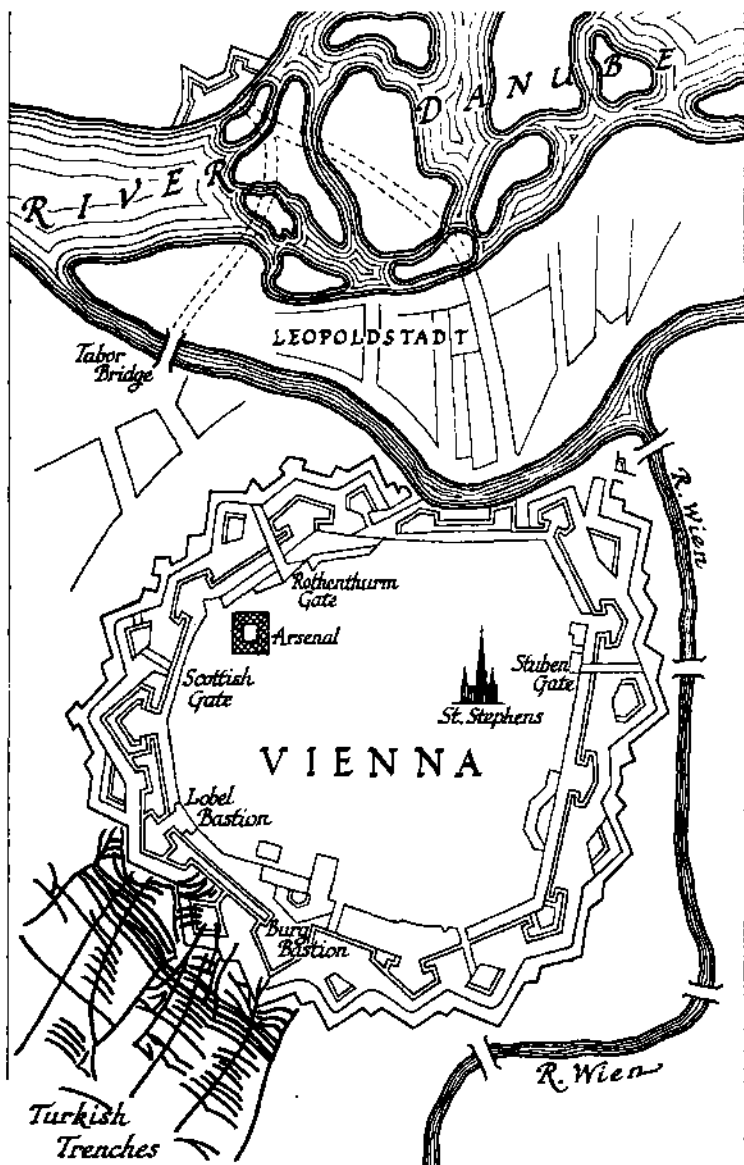
## THE SIEGE OF VIENNA

arose, with enough east in it to endanger the town itself. Only the vigilance and energy of the authorities prevented a catastrophe.

The Austrian commander has been blamed on two accounts : first for destroying public buildings and the homes of citizens, and secondly for not destroying them sooner. Both criticisms are unjust, but particularly the first. He postponed the unpleasant task to the very last moment, always hoping that the Turks might turn aside from Vienna, or that the advance of reinforcements in alliance with the Emperor might change the situation. It is probable that the differences of opinion in the Turkish council, and the general feeling against an attack on Vienna before the next year, had been reported and even exaggerated, so that Starhemberg did not feel justified in destroying the suburbs until he was compelled to do so.

The situation on the morning of July 14th was as follows.

The Turks were pitching their tents in a semicircle which stretched from Nussdorf on the Danube bank, in a great crescent four to five miles in diameter. The names of the villages which formed part of the Turkish encampment are to-day the names of streets and gardens and squares on the outskirts of Vienna. Penzing, Hernals, Ottakrin, Währing, Gumpendorf—they all remain in the Vienna of to-day. On the high ground outside the ramparts, somewhere near the place where St. Ulric's Church stands, the Vizier's great tent of green silk was pitched, a pavilion crammed with precious stuffs and housing what was afterwards mistaken for the standard of the Prophet. All through the morning a huge town of canvas was growing before the eyes of the watchers on the walls, and they could see the arrival of fresh bodies, and hear the trumpeting of elephants and the strange music of the little drums and the cymbals. Under the Burg gate the Tartars and the Janissaries were drawn up, and it was evident that the weight of the attack was about to be directed at the section of the defences running from the Burg to the Löbel bastions. Yet this great encampment struck observers not so much as a preparation for a siege as a town risen magically in one day.



VIENNA AT THE TIME OF THE SIEGE, 1683





## THE SIEGE OF VIENNA

Its mere size overawed. Its luxury surpassed all the old stories told of Eastern magnificence. For the Vizier had brought with him his seraglio, his private menagerie, his musicians, his merchants. Gardens were laid out, fountains played, and through the gaily-dressed crowds the trains of camels and flocks of cattle threaded their way. A great buzz and rumour of preparation, of coming and going, reached the ears of the defenders, and Christian sentries, marvelling at the splendour of it all, heard the muezzin calling the soldiers to prayer, and knew what manner of thing menaced them and all their world.

Against so enormous an array the small garrison stood to arms. The non-combatants were organised into an additional defence force, and even the women were allotted tasks by one of Starhemberg's most valuable helpers, the saintly and vigorous Leopold, Bishop of Neustadt. He in his youth had been a Knight of Malta, and had fought against the Turks, and was thus able to add his experience of war to his labours among the sick and the destitute. He sold his plate, and put the money at Starhemberg's disposal. Helping these two principal organisers of the defence, there were a crowd of German Princes and nobles, and one or two of the French nobility. They gave provisions and money. Old Vignancour, one of Mazarin's ambassadors to the Emperor Ferdinand, was there, and Charles-Eugène of Croy, who came down the Danube in a boat.

Throughout the night the Turkish fires burned in a half-moon about the now beleaguered city, and on the morning of the 15th all was ready for the active siege to begin. Fire was opened from the ground outside the walls, between the Burg and the Löbel bastions, for Kara Mustapha was wasting no time. Shortly after midday the Scottish Convent was destroyed by flames which spread rapidly in the direction of the Arsenal. This building, containing 1800 barrels of gunpowder, actually caught fire before the flames were smothered. But buildings in the neighbourhood smouldered for many hours, and the result of the incident was a brief but violent

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panic, during which the Hungarians in the town were accused of starting the fire. Many were massacred, and an officer of the Imperial troops in whose house a few fireworks were discovered was flung into prison. While this was going on, the Turks had opened their trenches. A Venetian engineer, Camuccini, and a German had charge of the countermining operations. Work on the counterscarps was hastily completed, and emplacements were prepared for guns. Now, more certainly than ever, it was the Burg and Löbel bastions that were destined to sustain the first attack. Meanwhile, although for the moment Kara Mustapha appeared to be concentrating upon this one sector of the defences, watchers high up in the spire of St. Stephen's Cathedral could take in the movements in every direction, and could see the immense army swarming. Starhemberg himself, looking out to the river, to the wooded hills, to the Styrian march, saw that Vienna was completely invested, and asked himself how help was to reach him. As the smoke of the batteries lifted in one quarter or another, he could see the troops moving up, closing in.

There appeared to be one avenue open, and Lorraine had grasped the importance of it. Schultz and his Imperial cavalry still held the island suburb of Leopoldstadt on the right bank of the river, and command of the river at this point meant communications kept intact between the besieged and the Bohemian and Moravian territories. Lorraine had determined that this, the only suburb unoccupied by the Turks, should be held at all costs.

Leopoldstadt to-day is in the second arrondissement and comprises most of the territory between the river and the canal. In 1683 it was one of many small islands formed by the multiple arms of the Danube. The confidence of the authorities had persuaded the people of the suburb that, since there was no question of the Turks capturing the place, they need not trouble to remove their possessions. But two circumstances might have warned them. Schultz had no artillery, and therefore no means of preventing superior numbers from building as many bridges as they pleased. Further, at this

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moment the stream was shallow enough to ford. Schultz did his best. When the Turks attacked he fought stubbornly, but was finally forced to withdraw to the left bank of the river. Leopoldstadt was occupied, sacked and burnt. Not even the Imperial villa, which stood in what is now the Augarten, was spared. When the burning and plundering were over, the Turks brought up batteries, and began to prepare for an advance, from this new quarter, upon the Rothenthurm.

Vienna was now cut off from the outside world.

Meanwhile the Turkish infantry were slowly advancing their deep trenches. Those trenches that were within range of the besieged garrison's guns had a roofing of wood and earth, and were twelve feet in depth. The more important commanders had luxuriously fitted dugouts. From the trenches were discharged fireballs, and arrows specially prepared to set alight the wooden houses within the ramparts. But, faced with this danger, the defenders stripped the wooden shingles from their roofs, pulled buildings down, walled up doors and windows. Even the paving of the streets was torn up to lessen the effect of shell-fire.

On the 18th Starhemberg was wounded in the head by a shell-splinter, but continued his active command of the defence from a chair, in which he was carried from one position to another. In some places the Turkish trenches were now within thirty yards of the counterscarp, and the preparations for the assault from Leopoldstadt were being pushed forward. The Vizier had already called upon Vienna to capitulate—without success.

When it was known in Europe beyond a doubt that the Turk was before Vienna, and that what had been a recurring fear for a hundred years was now once more, and more acutely than ever, an imminent peril, the heart of Christendom stood still. Leopold the Emperor, in Diet at Ratisbon, attacked Verjus, the envoy of Louis XIV, with the persistence of despair. He put aside his hatred of the Bourbon, and was ready to humiliate himself to secure help. This was the

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opportunity for the Most Christian King to forget the game of politics and to remember larger issues ; to throw his immense weight into the Christian cause, and to unite Europe in defence of something older and greater than any of her kingdoms ; to win that which he loved so dearly, the applause of this world, and the glory of triumph in arms ; but also a quiet mind and the consciousness of a sacred task fulfilled.

He hesitated. On the point of invading the territory of the Empire with Frederick William, he halted and considered the position in which he now found himself. He appreciated the chance of glory, and at the same time the danger. If Vienna fell, he would be left to confront the Turk on the Rhine. If the Empire were destroyed, France too might be destroyed. Could he afford to take that risk for the sake of gratifying his dislike of the Empire ? Then there was another dilemma. The Pope was exhorting him, the eldest son of the Church, to do his duty. Could he bargain ? If he did his duty, could he satisfy another ambition, that of seeing the Dauphin crowned King of the Romans ? Unable to decide, afraid to come down on one side or the other, Louis returned to Versailles on July 20th. All the chivalry of his Court, all those for whom the honour of the French armies was a reality, watched him in amazement. It was said that seven hundred thousand barbarians were at the gates of the Emperor's capital. And yet their King hesitated.

Ten days after the return to Versailles his Queen, the bitterly unhappy Marie-Thérèse, died. Louis mourned her<sup>1</sup> and his decision remained untaken.

Innocent XI in the Vatican was in daily communication with Sobieski, and as the news of the siege came to him, he despatched urgent and yet more urgent messages. The

<sup>1</sup> A letter of the second wife of the Duke of Orleans, Charlotte of Bavaria, described how the Bishop of Gap, on the day when official condolences were offered to the King, came tripping, as though to a dance measure, into the presence. He pretended to be weeping, but while he dabbed his eyes, his mouth was set in a grotesque smile, with the result that " the Princes, the Princesses, the King himself and all the Court laughed until the tears came into their eyes."

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Emperor did the same. But the man who was now the only hope of Europe had almost insurmountable difficulties to meet. There was no machinery of mobilisation. The nobles, impetuous always, had rushed to arms, but there were infantry regiments to be raised and equipped and drilled. There was the question of transport, of communications, of pay. Sobieski himself, as usual, poured out his own money, and made use of the Papal subsidies, but the whole slow business was made slower by a stroke of bad luck. The pro-Austrian Pac of Lithuania had died, and his place had been taken by the pro-French Sapieha. The new man did everything he could to delay the assembling and ordering of his army, and made Sobieski's task doubly difficult.

While the couriers were crossing each other, day and night, on the Moravian and Silesian roads, the Turkish trenches crept closer to the walls of Vienna, and the grip fastened tighter on the city. After a council it was decided that the time had come to make the first sally against the enemy whose trenches were nearest the Burg. On July 19th the sally was made, under the leadership of a nephew of Starhemberg. Prisoners were taken, and damage was done to the trenches. Further sallies resulted in the capture of cattle—a welcome addition to the provisions of the defenders.

All this time the Turkish batteries selected for their principal targets the tower of St. Stephen, the Burg, the Carinthian bastion and the Löbel bastion. Everybody was ready for the attack in this quarter. It came on July 23rd. The Turks had carried two mines under the counterscarp, and they both went up together, burying a number of men and smashing the palisade to pieces. There was a tumbling rush over the heaped earth and the splintered oak, but the assailants were met with steadiness and beaten back. This was the first direct assault, and the first momentary foothold gained by the besiegers upon the very walls of the place. The second assault, that of July 25th, was delivered against the almost destroyed Burg ravelin. A mine was exploded, the pell-mell rush followed, but was beaten off. Two more unsuccessful attempts were

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made on the same day. But the defenders lost Rimpler, an excellent engineer, who died of wounds received in the action. Further minor assaults on one point or another of the weakening fortifications followed day by day. Once the Janissaries got past the palisades but were thrown back into the ditch and slaughtered. And one day the Turks sent a flag of truce. The bearer requested, on the part of the Vizier, an armistice, in order that the dead might be decently buried. It was accompanied by a summons to surrender. The reply of Starhemberg is full of a lively humour. He bade the messenger tell his master that all in the city were in very good health, and since they had no dead to bury, it was, of course, not to be imagined that they would take any notice of the first proposal—the request for an armistice. The second proposal, surrender, was even less to be thought of. So long as there was a man left alive in Vienna the town would be defended.

All the same, there was the continual fear of a general assault by the Turks in force against the riddled ravelins and shattered bastions. It was especially the skilful mining operations of the Turks that gave cause for anxiety. They had, in places, been able to get a foothold in the ditch, and although they were always beaten in the hand-to-hand fighting that followed, it began to be a question of how long the defenders could keep it up. Starhemberg redoubled his vigilance. From his stone chair in the spire of the Cathedral he could survey the whole camp of Islam, and observe any unaccustomed movement or any concentration of forces at a single point. Kara Mustapha, too, watched. They carried him in an iron-plated litter from his gorgeous seraglio to the trenches, where he had a sand-bagged dugout of his own, and from the trenches to St. Ulrich's Church, from whose tower he could look into the city.

Why did Kara Mustapha delay the general assault which must have proved successful? What chance had the handful of defenders behind their precarious works against the weight of an onslaught in mass by the Turkish troops?

There were three reasons why the Vizier allowed all the advantage which he had won by his whirlwind march across

Hungary to be discounted ; why he hesitated to close his hand when the prize was in it. Those three reasons were his own natural disinclination for further effort, his refusal to believe that Sobieski would ever come to relieve Vienna, and his fear of losing the plunder by a sudden storming of the gates, in which he would be unable to control his masses, or even his high officers.

His disinclination for further effort is explained by his blood. He was all sudden effort and prolonged lassitude. And he had ministered to his own fundamental lack of energy by bringing with him on his expedition all the softening and emasculating luxuries of his Eastern capital. He had his women, his gardens, his slaves, his music, his tapestries, his rare foods. There was no chance of the small garrison being able to shift his vast army, and apparently nobody was in anything of a hurry to send help to the Emperor's handful. All he had to do, it seemed, was to keep up a kind of irritating activity on a small scale ; mine explosions, local engagements, perpetual bombardment. Then, when he had a mind to, and when the pleasures of repose began to pall, he would summon the town to surrender, and take possession in an orderly manner. Meanwhile, there were the delights of idleness.

Secondly, Kara Mustapha, in common with all Europe—except, perhaps, Innocent XI—believed the propaganda that de Vitry had spread so sedulously. Sobieski, they said, was too prematurely old, too fat, too gouty to undertake such a task. Why, he could not even sit a horse, much less undergo the arduous of an important campaign, far from home. All this was what he, like Louis XIV, wanted to believe ; Louis, because the possibility of the Empire being saved threw him into a rage (and the possibility of Christendom being saved by Sobieski would have made him even more angry, if he had faced it squarely) ; and Kara Mustapha, because it was Sobieski he feared more than any soldier in the world, and because Sobieski was the one Captain whom his armies would not fight. The Vizier cared not at all for a few thousand Poles. Without their leader they were nothing. They could not affect the



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outcome. And so, since it was common knowledge that Sobieski would no more ride at the head of his men, there was no hurry. Let the siege wear on.

Thirdly, if the town were captured instead of capitulating, Kara Mustapha knew his troops too well to expect that he could control them. They would become out-of-hand the moment they were through the gates, and he himself would lose the best of the booty.

So the siege went on at a slow tempo, until the *moral* of the troops began to be affected. They grumbled. They could not see why three hundred thousand men should nibble and nibble and nibble at Vienna when all they asked was to make one healthy mouthful of the place. By the end of July mines were exploded daily at one point or another, and frequent assaults were made by small bodies of men, but the great general assault did not take place. Meanwhile, in Europe the alarm grew. Nobody knew of the lassitude which had seized Kara Mustapha or of his lazy confidence, and every day news of the decisive assault was expected.

At the beginning of August the Vizier, who may have begun to grow weary of the dragging on of the siege, was heartened by reports of a kind of dysentery in the city. And, indeed, lack of fresh meat had started disease. But food of a sort was still fairly plentiful.

The Turkish trenches were slowly pushed nearer to the walls, day by day, and Jesuits, looking through telescopes from St. Stephen's, reported movements of the enemy to Starhemberg. But so careless had the conduct of the siege become that the Vizier neglected to occupy the heights above the city; particularly the Kahlenberg, that northern buttress of the Alps, some fifteen hundred feet high, by which disaster was to come upon Islam. The Convent of the Carmelites had been destroyed, but no garrison had been left upon the wooded hill; no post of observation, even.

In the last days of July proclamation was made throughout Vienna that a reward was offered to any man who would volunteer to leave the city, swim the Danube, and reach the

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camp of Lorraine on the left bank with letters. In the first week of August a messenger from Lorraine succeeded in bringing to the city news of the gathering of a relieving army. On his return the messenger was captured, but as his message was in cipher, he was able to invent, for the benefit of his questioners, a story of despair. He described a dreadful state of affairs, with the defenders at the last gasp, provisions almost exhausted, hope abandoned. So delighted was the Vizier that he shot the cipher message back into the city, with a caustic comment. He asked, what was the good of using a code when everybody knew the condition of the miserable defenders. Shortly afterwards an escaped Christian prisoner penetrated into the city, with the news that Kara Mustapha had decided that Vienna should be his within the week.

But the general assault, which might have decided all, was still delayed.

As disease inside the city increased and the enemy outside crept closer and closer, it became more and more necessary to let the relieving army know how desperate was the situation of the besieged. A Greek volunteered to carry a message to Lorraine. He got as far as Bisemberg, but was then taken prisoner. In his place, a Pole named Kolschitzki made the attempt. He knew Turkish. One evening he was let out of the city through the Rothenthurm gate, or rather by a sally-port. He passed openly, yet exercising his brains, down towards the river, through the Turkish encampment. As he went he sang, casually, a well-known song of the Turks. An Aga, hearing him sing, summoned the singer, listened to his story of having come across the Balkan lands and through Hungary to be in at the death of Christendom, and entertained him in his tent. Before letting him go, he warned him against the danger of wandering about, and hoped that he might avoid capture by the detested Christians. Kolschitzki thanked the Aga, left the tent, and pursued his journey towards the great hill, the Kahlenberg. He got over the river, then turned, and made his way through roving Tartar bands to the Imperial army, which was then halted between Stillfried and Angern, on

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the edge of the Marchfeld. With all possible speed the brave messenger returned, and was admitted through the Scottish gate. The despatch which he bore from Lorraine was of the utmost importance. It exhorted the besieged to still higher prodigies of valour, the more particularly as troops were arriving from the Germanies, and only the coming of the Poles, under their King, was needed to complete the relieving army. The Poles, it was added, were expected by the end of August, and then the whole force could move together in the direction of the beleaguered city.

It was good news, but it did little to steady the nerves of the defenders. Help was indeed on its way, but the time of its arrival was vague, and the whole tone of the message was too obviously calculated to keep the despondent garrison in good cheer. The Turks and the river were between them and their help. And every day the mines exploded and the trenches were pushed a little nearer. Epidemics carried off valuable lives, the supply of food decreased, and the ceaseless fear of a general assault in force began to have its effect on the worn nerves of the garrison. Hand-to-hand combats in the ditches, and even on the very ramparts, where shells had blasted gaps, were becoming more common. All the Turks had to do was to pour more men into the breach and press forward into the barricaded streets. In these hand-to-hand encounters women and old men played their part, bringing up to the walls, and even emptying with their own hands, vessels full of boiling pitch over the assailants. Against the pitch, and against the scythes clamped on to long staves, and against the many-spiked club called the morning star, the short Turkish scimitar was comparatively ineffectual.

While August wore on, Lorraine and Lubomirski (with the vanguard of the Polish relieving troops) recaptured Pressburg from Tökölyi, but were compelled to retreat through Moravia. They were now at Bisemberg, on the left bank. Lorraine had, throughout the siege, had no enviable task. As soon as the Turks had occupied Leopoldstadt it became obvious that their enormous numbers made it impossible for him to attempt any

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sort of attack. If he could keep out of the way until reinforcements arrived, either from Poland or from the German principalities, it would be doing as much as anybody could expect. The Poles had the excuse of distance and of lack of organisation for their delay. But the Germans might have moved more rapidly. Having abandoned, perforce, the idea of maintaining himself in Leopoldstadt, and so ensuring communication with the city, Lorraine cast about for an alternative plan. He had the Turks in front of him, on the opposite bank of the river, and in his rear the army of Tökölyi. He made it his object now to hold on to the left bank of the Danube, and for this purpose he garrisoned with what men he could the river towns of Lower Austria, acting from the base of Krems, and himself supervising now from Stockerau, now from Tulnn, now from one or other of the towns along what is to-day the great road from Vienna into Upper Austria, on the left bank. The whole country, acting on Lorraine's example, put itself into a state of defence. The fords of the river, such as that of Ybbs, were protected, the mountain passes guarded and blocked. Between the Turk and Styria stood Count Herberstein. Neustadt made ready to resist. As for Klosterneuberg, on the right bank and close up against Vienna, it beat off the Turk persistently, under the leadership of the heroic sacristan, Ortner. The Abbot of the big monastery at Melk took down a sword and defended St. Polten. It must be remembered that all this country was full of the wild Tartar cavalry, who might appear in force anywhere and at any moment. There are many stories of heroic defences of convents and villages, and of refugees turning at bay on the roads that led to the Styrian mountains, to Salzburg or to the Brenner. One of the noblest of these stories tells of the defence of the Abbey of Lilienfeld by its abbot, Kolbries. Lilienfeld, under the Reisalpe, covered the main pass into the Styrian hills, and the abbot, reinforced by some undisciplined Poles and a Bavarian officer, turned the abbey into a fort, and refused to budge. Not only that, but he made an expedition to the Hall Thal, and near Mariazell hewed a column of Tartars in pieces, rescued Christian

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prisoners and captured some money. This old man of sixty-three was still in possession of his Abbey when in the middle of August the Bavarian reinforcements for Lorraine came over the Danube at Melk, and as they passed near Lilienfeld, the warrior abbot saluted them with music and with gun-fire. The right bank of the river was now secure, and Kolbries had done more than his share to save a large territory until help arrived.

Tökölyi and his rebels in Upper Hungary continued to menace the rear of Lorraine's army, but Lorraine fell upon them and routed them while they, in concert with the Turks, were ravaging the Marchfeld.

After the middle of August the losses from disease and from the perpetual sallies began to have their effect on Starhemberg's garrison. As the numbers decreased, men worn with the length of the siege, and now insufficiently fed, found their duties doubled. The gaps in the defence were widening, and there was not enough interval between one bombardment and another, or between one attack and another, to allow the defenders to repair the damage. The outworks in that part of the defences where the pressure had been most violent and most tenacious—that is, between the Burg and the Löbel—were by now pulverised. Many of the guns were out of action, and the high officers either sick or wounded. What food remained was needed for the soldiers, and so the civil population organised cat-hunts over the roofs at night; they called it hunting roof hares.

But there were not lacking in the ranks of the besiegers certain indications of discontent. The soldiers in the trenches were becoming mutinous, and had announced that the thing had gone on long enough. With some difficulty they were persuaded to await the day of August 20th, the anniversary of the bloody field of Mohacs,<sup>1</sup> which had opened Hungary and

<sup>1</sup> August 20th, 1526. King Louis of Hungary and most of his nobility fell in the battle, and had not a disturbance at home made it necessary for Soliman to return, Vienna might have been captured. As it was, he came back three years later and laid siege to the Austrian capital.

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Austria to the armies of Islam. Both sides awaited this day with anxiety; the defenders because they believed that at last Kara Mustapha would discard half-measures and give the dreaded signal for a general assault on the walls; and the Turks because they felt that it was to be hit or miss at last, and that there was a chance of their tedious task being over. As for Kara Mustapha, he walked at ease in his gardens and lay upon his rich cushions with the women and the slaves about him, and all seemed good.

The day of the 20th came and went, with nothing more to report than the exploding of mines, and a bombardment. By this time the detached outwork called the Burg ravelin, with its embankments smashed and its communicating way with the curtain almost cut off by the enemy, was useless for defence. After a month's resistance, which included the beating off of fifteen assaults, the defenders withdrew from it, losing at the last moment the invaluable officer who directed the withdrawal. At once the Turks posted guns on the remnants of the work, and were able to commence a devastating fire upon the main defences. Starhemberg redoubled his exhortations, and continued to give a personal example of devotion and energy. A critical moment was clearly at hand. Rockets were sent up daily from the spire of St. Stephen's, and the watchers looked anxiously north-westwards for the answering signals that would mean the approach of the relief force. But the only answer came from the left bank of the river, where Lorraine at Bisemberg lit fires on the hill-top; that being all he could do to hearten the garrison. All the gates were blocked up and barricaded anew, except the sally-port of the Stuben, and the streets were put into a state of defence, every house being loopholed, and every alley palisaded. In the deep cellars of the houses were placed drums strewn with peas, a device by which the slightest vibration caused by Turkish mining operations was betrayed unmistakably. Countermining was continued, but the besieged were at a disadvantage, having lost early in the siege one of their few trained engineers. At any moment the Burg or the Löbel might

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become untenable, or a sudden rush might sweep over some weak point and establish the enemy inside the city. The whole curtain was being, as it were, eroded, and could not be manned for many more days. To make matters worse, the early days of September saw an increase in disease.

In the Turkish camp there took place at this time an incident of considerable importance. When the famous 20th passed without any considerable change in the situation, the mutinous troops grew bolder. Many, particularly those commanded by the Pacha of Aleppo, deserted their trenches. The Vizier succeeded in inducing some of them to return to their posts.

Kara Mustapha could not, at this time, have failed to realise the pitiful condition of the besieged and the weakness of their defences. Yet he persisted in his old plan of forcing the town to capitulate. Then he would march in and make it his European capital. He was still afraid to let his troops loose in any numbers, and never pressed home an advantage when an assaulting party looked like gaining a foothold on the walls ; and he still believed himself safe from any intervention on a scale important enough to matter. When, early in September, the almost hourly arrival of German contingents higher up the Danube, and the withdrawal from Upper Austria and the Styrian March of large bands of Tartar cavalry could no longer be ignored, the Vizier changed his mind suddenly, and decided that by being too greedy he might lose the prize. Also, the rapidly sinking *moral* of the men alarmed him. If he delayed longer, it might be impossible to get them to obey orders. His daily progress through his camp and along the trenches showed him sullen faces. Stories of desertion came to his ears, and other stories of preparation at Krems for an advance of the Imperialists along the river.

With a flash of that energy which had made the opening of the campaign such a remarkable exploit, Kara Mustapha became the commander of armies once more, and prepared an assault upon the Burg bastion, to take place on September 4th. The attack was as usual preceded by the explosion of a mine, and was directed by Kara Mustapha himself. The opening of the

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business was excellent. Ahead of them the charging Janissaries saw a breach of some thirty feet, where the mine-charge had blasted a mortal wound in the strong old wall. Moreover, the great crumbled stones and the rubble had so fallen that they half-filled the ditch, thus giving the attacking troops a platform.

At the sound of the explosion the men of the garrison ran to their posts and manned the curtain. As the smoke and dust drifted higher they could see the advancing mass; a moving wall of Janissaries, who set up, as they came, a great cry of triumph. A few of the fleetest outdistanced their comrades, scrambled over the half-filled ditch, and fixed upon the rampart itself the horse-tails of the Porte. Their triumph was momentary. They were shot down by the defenders, and when the main body arrived there was ferocious hand-to-hand fighting for two hours, at the end of which the Turk retreated, leaving the exhausted garrison master of the rampart but seriously depleted. The critical moment had come, and Starhemberg prepared to meet it as nobly as he had met everything from the siege's beginning. The dwindling, diseased and exhausted defenders set to work without pause for rest to repair the yawning breach through which the enemy had so nearly flung himself. Every conceivable object was used to block the gap; mattresses, rugs and broken furniture. Mantelets<sup>1</sup> were got ready. The beams were torn from the houses, and doors dragged from their hinges. No other major assault disturbed these final preparations, but two days later, on September 6th, another large opening was blasted in the thick wall of the Löbel bastion, and the Turks made a furious assault, again gaining a foothold, and again being forced back with considerable loss.

Once more the breach was hastily repaired, and the streets were so fortified and barricaded that, if the Turks should gain an entrance to the city, every inch would be disputed. There was still no thought of surrender, although the bombardments were becoming more general, as though an attack on a bigger

<sup>1</sup> Small wooden ramparts on wheels.



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scale were being prepared, perhaps on many points simultaneously. Starhemberg sent his famous letter to Lorraine, in which he announced the agony of Vienna, and the impossibility of holding out much longer. The letter said: "My lord, the moment has come when help is essential, for we are suffering heavy losses, and even more by dysentery than by the enemy's shells. We have no more grenades—and they were our best defence. Our guns are out of action. Our sappers have but now told me that upon the Castle bastions they can see the enemy mining beneath them, so that they must be past the ditch. There is no more time to lose."<sup>1</sup>

Europe made no doubt but that the reinforcements would arrive too late. Innocent XI at Rome ordered the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in all the churches of Christendom. But Louis XIV, on the last day of August, on the fiftieth of the siege, attacked, without declaration of war, the Austrian Netherlands.

But soon it was known that Sobieski was well on his way, and at the news Europe took courage. The German levies awoke. A little breath of hope freshened men's hearts. Kara Mustapha alone disbelieved the story of Sobieski's approach.

The rockets soaring up into the night from St. Stephen's still announced to the Imperialists the despair of the garrison. And then one night a rocket answered from the north-west, from the height of the Kahlenberg. The news ran through the beleagured city like wildfire, and stiffened the sick and outworn remnant. They knew now that help was at hand.

In mid-July,<sup>2</sup> when the position of the Viennese garrison was known to be serious, but before the first general assault,

<sup>1</sup> *Plus de temps à perdre, Monseigneur, plus de temps à perdre.*

<sup>2</sup> There is little doubt that Sobieski would have started before this had he not been detained by the illness of Marie Casimire. Pallavicini complains in his correspondence that the Queen is holding him back unnecessarily. Later, in a letter of September 8th, the nuncio, no doubt bullied by the Queen, reports that she is making a great fuss about certain Papal honours, such as the Golden Rose. She considers they are her due, and claims that without her nothing would have been done to help Vienna.

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Sobieski left the bedside of his sick wife in his palace of Wilanow, made the pilgrimage to Czenstochowa, and from there posted to Cracow, which had been appointed for the meeting-place of his relief force. He arrived there in the last days of July, and as the detachments of infantry or troops of horse presented themselves, he sent them on ahead, each under its own leader, himself waiting for the main body, and busying himself with his inadequate maps. It was here that he received news of what was going on in Austria and Germany; of the mobilisation of the German levies under Waldeck and Saxe and others. Frederick William promised to contribute a force as soon as his business with Louis XIV left his hands free. This now gouty, misanthropic and querulous man was tortured by doubts. His reverence for the Emperor's office and his feeling for Christendom were balanced by his fear of France. When Anhalt promised help he was enraged. Afterwards he had the grace to regret the wretched part he had played.

To Cracow, too, came the couriers and distraught envoys, bidding the King delay no longer. Here he sat, receiving them. Here, at his feet, there knelt on one famous occasion the Papal nuncio and the emissary of the Emperor, imploring him to save the Western world. Leopold promised him once more the crown of Hungary, to which he replied that he asked nothing better than to deserve well of God and man. That should be his reward. And now, at the news that the Polish contingents, small as they were, had actually started on the road to Silesia, and that the King himself was about to set forth, the chivalry of the Courts of Europe hastened to the standard of Lorraine. Even the French King<sup>1</sup> could not prevent his nobles from showing their mortification at being kept out of such an hour of history. Conti broke away, and

<sup>1</sup> Throughout July the nuncio in Paris, Ranuzzi, was making effort after effort to get the support of Louis for the League. Writing to Rome on August 16th, he describes an interview with Louis XIV, in which the French King talked hypocritical nonsense. Part of his humbug, later on, was to pretend that he thought the Emperor would make peace with the Turks and then attack France.

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started for the army on the Danube, but was brought back fuming. Carignan-Soissons went on, and joined Lorraine; so did his more famous younger brother, Eugene, the little abbé, who was to begin his high career of arms as it is given to few to begin it.

As for Lorraine, he asked but for one man, his old rival, the King of Poland. Let him come alone to take command. It would be enough.

The King of Spain sent money to the Emperor. His country followed his example. The Regent of Portugal, Pedro, not only sent money, but in a crazy gust of enthusiasm burned a number of Jews. The roads of Italy, the mule-tracks and pathways of the Apennines and the Alps, were thronged with pilgrimages and demonstrations, and the towns opened subscription lists. The Cardinals at Rome sold their household goods, their glass, their plate, while the Pope inspired the crusading fervour which Europe breathed from Vilna to Oporto.

On August 15th, the Feast of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady, under whose protection the Polish armies had been placed, Sobieski, having made the Stations of the Cross in all the churches of Cracow, rode out of the ancient capital at the head of the troops and took the Silesian route. At his side went Prince James Louis, now nearly sixteen, and the two generals, Jablonowski and Sieniawski. The Queen, now in health, her ladies and all the personnel of the Court accompanied the army as far as the frontier. At Tarnowitz they turned back, on August 22nd. Sieniawski led on the advance guard into Silesia. Already Sobieski had met Caraffa, and had an interview with him, during which he gathered very necessary information on the state of affairs in Vienna, and the disposition of the Turkish forces. He said he could save Vienna.

## IX

### THE RELIEF OF VIENNA

(August–September 1683)

IN connection with the Vienna campaign there is a document of the utmost importance; the collection of letters written by Sobieski to his wife, and discovered in 1823 by Count Raczinski among the ancestral papers. These letters, thirty only in number, were collected and translated into French by Count Plater. They have yet to be translated into English.

The value of these letters extends far beyond their usefulness for a study of the campaign. They reveal the simplicity of Sobieski's character, and the strength of his love for Marie Casimire, and they are full of what one might almost call marginal notes; descriptions of the captains of the time, judgments passed on one man or another, details of clothing or personal habits. They reveal also the character of the Queen, for he is so attentive to her letters, and so careful to answer her questions, that we often know the main matter of what she has written to him.

The reader of the letters will be struck, first, by the patience and good-humour of Sobieski. The perpetual nagging of Marie Casimire, her trivial complaints, her inability to understand what her husband's character was made of—all these things are borne by him, and even jested about. There is a bantering tone in his replies to her complaints, which only once or twice turns to bitterness. And on those rare occasions, when he is goaded beyond endurance, we get a glimpse of his weariness. I know of no correspondence like this in existence. For the entire Sobieski is in it, and the sorrow of a great love,

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as well as the almost daily record of one of the decisive campaigns of the world. Whenever he has a moment to spare from the cares of the camp, he employs it in beginning or continuing or winding up a letter to her. They are written at all hours of the day and night, and sometimes he is surprised at his task by a sudden lightening of the eastward sky and the fresh wind of dawn. Sometimes, when the army is asleep, and the bivouac fires are fading, he writes on until he remembers that he too must sleep for an hour or two. He puts in all those details which afterwards were to serve for the official chronicles published in Poland. He expects her replies eagerly, and is as petulant as a boy in his first love-affair when there is a delay for which he cannot account. Each letter, save one, begins in French: *Seule Joie de mon âme, charmante et bien-aimée Mariette*; and he drops naturally into French every now and then.

On August 24th, hardly separated from Marie Casimire, he calls for writing materials at 5 a.m., and writes to her from the monastery of Gleiwitz. He has passed a bad night, his arm and his back are paining him. "It looks as though a bout of rheumatism were coming." But he is far more perturbed by the news brought by Dupont, his messenger, whom he had left with the Queen. She is apparently on the verge of hysteria. "I beg you, calm yourself," he writes, "and submit yourself to the will of God. He will give me His angels to lead me, and will allow me to return safe and sound to my own people." Then he tells her to establish a chain of cavalry pickets, of four men each, between Cracow and Tarnowitz, so that he and she may be in constant communication. And what age is this ardent lover? He is in his fifty-fifth year; and the Queen is forty-two.

At dawn the army is on the move again, and the letter is speeding to Marie Casimire. He writes again on the next day, August 25th, from Troppau, and tells her how he had played cards on the previous day during a halt at Ratibor, in Obersdorff's castle. There were thirty ladies to dinner. More of them pestered him in his barn outside Troppau.

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Everybody wanted to make sure that the almost legendary hero was actually coming in person to save Christendom. He tells her that the Moravian mountains are quite near already and that he hopes to see the Danube by the end of the month. "Fanfan" (James) has a rash. He is hurrying on ahead to Olmütz (now Olomouc, in Czecho-Slovakia) with the light cavalry. Here, in the old Moravian capital, he passed under a triumphal arch erected by the Jesuits, and bearing the legend: *Salvatorem Expectamus*. The people flocked in thousands to catch a glimpse of him. His advance was already becoming a procession.

In his letter of August 27th, on the road to Nikolsburg (now Mikulov), he speaks of the beauty of the country, which presents, at times, difficulties for an army in a hurry. He tells her that he has to make speeches all the time, and that they showed him the famous clock of Olmütz, outside which, at the striking of the hour, little figures pirouette. He encloses various documents, among them a report of Lorraine's fighting.

On August 29th he writes from near Brün (now Brno), where he hears Mass in the Church of the Cordeliers. He is struck by the richness of the land, which he says is better than the Ukraine. He describes the mountains covered with terraced vineyards, and vine shoots trained on espaliers over the exteriors of the houses. An officer sent by Lorraine gives him a letter from Starhemberg, urging speed. To-morrow, he tells her, he hopes to be within sound of the guns, and the next day to drink the Danube water, and bids her hasten the Cossacks and the Lithuanians.

Hollabrunn was reached on the last day of the month, and a letter from Marie Casimire overtook him. She complains of pain in her fingers. He sends orders to Potocki, who is administering the country in his absence, to round up deserters in the neighbourhood of Czenstochowa, and to beat up the Cossacks, on whom he placed great reliance as scouts and raiders and spies. He draws, for her amusement, a small rainbow which he saw in the sky in the early morning. This letter of August 31st is one of his best. He is evidently in

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high spirits after receiving the Queen's letter, and at the prospect of getting into touch with the enemy soon. We are given a picture of Lorraine, who comes to dinner that day, having left his headquarters to greet the King, and give him news. Lorraine wears a grey, simple campaigning dress, and an old hat without a plume in it. His boots and even his horse's accoutrements are old and dilapidated. Yet for all that he has a look of distinction, and the pock-marked face with the parrot nose, under a badly-made blond wig, appeals to Sobieski, who forgives even his taciturnity. At dinner Sobieski plies the solemn soldier with wine. Taffe tries to stop him drinking, as tactfully as possible, but ends by becoming drunk himself. The comedy goes on for several hours, until Lorraine begins to talk nonsense, and to forget what he is saying in the middle of a sentence. He repeats Polish words meaninglessly, to the delight of his host.

On September 4th Sobieski writes from Count Ardek's castle near Tulnn. He has, meanwhile, received another letter from Marie Casimire, in which she accuses him of neglecting her. He replies that he has no time now even for food or sleep, and that he expects to meet the Turk on the 11th of the month. The etiquette and the formalities of the various Princes are exasperating him at every turn, and to add to his troubles he has continual colds and headaches, and is forced to sleep under a curtain, and with his waistcoat on. He gives her a picture of Saxe, with his cropped hair, and his beard cut in the old German style; no linguist, but a good, honest simpleton, perpetually drunk, and astonished at everything that goes on about him. There is plenty of game to eat, but no fruit. And so on. He writes on until the day breaks, and notes that there is a mist. At this point, evidently, he is interrupted, for he concludes, "It is already eight o'clock."

There is an interval of four days, and then, on the 9th of September, he writes from the left bank of the Danube, at Tulnn, in the midst of the allied troops and the nobility of Europe. Maximilian of Bavaria, aged twenty-four, was there, and the Dukes of Saxe-Lauenburg, Weissenfels, Holstein;

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Louis of Baden, the Landgrave of Hesse, Waldeck, Anhalt, Salm; George, Elector of Saxony, Eugene of Savoy—some thirty Princes in all. Here at Tulnn began the really difficult task of moving to the relief of Vienna. At Tulnn the armies had between them and the Turks an elbow of the Danube and the wooded mountains. It is true that Kara Mustapha had not troubled to watch Tulnn, and had even allowed Lorraine to throw a triple bridge across the river, but it was known that the mountains were full of wandering Tartar bands who might at any moment unite and either prevent the crossing or fall upon the relieving force when it had crossed. On the carelessness of the Vizier Sobieski expressed himself: "The general," said he, "who, with three hundred thousand men under him, has allowed this bridge to be built under his very eyes cannot escape defeat."

So, in his letter of the 9th, he is confident. His chief source of anxiety is a private and personal one. He has received two more of the Queen's letters, nagging letters again, in which she accuses him once more of neglect and of not reading her letters. With astounding patience and gentleness he replies to her preposterous complaints: "The fact is that in the midst of all my difficulties and all my business I read each of them three times: when they are brought to me I read them the first time; the second time when I am preparing for sleep, and when I am at last a free man; and a third time when I sit down to answer them. In your letter, and in all your thoughts, all the years of our married life, all our children, counted for nothing. If I do not always write you long letters, ah, my dear love, is there not a simple explanation of my haste without imputing evil motives? The armies of the two halves of the world are but a few miles apart, the one from the other. I have to think of everything, down to the smallest detail."

As he writes, his love obsesses him. He continues: "I beg of you, dear heart, for love of me, not to rise at such an early hour; what constitution could stand it, especially as you go to bed so late? You will make me very unhappy if



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you disregard my request ; you will rob me of my rest, of my health, and, what is far more serious, you will injure your own, and your good health is my only consolation in this world. As to our mutual love, let us see which of us cools first. If I have passed the age of ardour, my heart and my spirit are as young as in the old days."

So writes the King within the sound of the guns of Vienna. He tells her that he passed the preceding day in prayer, having been given the Papal Blessing by Marco Aviano. The rain is continuous, which is going to make the crossing of the river more difficult. There is no fodder for the horses, and false alarms are prevalent. Fanfan is well. He complains yet again of the delay of Menzynski's Cossacks, and describes the astonishment of the German Princes at the rich clothing and trappings of the Polish nobility. An envoy of Tökölyi, arriving to demand an armistice, is thunderstruck at the sight of Sobieski, not having believed that he would come in person.

On the day of the crossing of the river the rain ceased and the sun shone. There has come down to us a good story of this crossing of the Danube. The allies gazed in amazement at the rich apparel and the splendid accoutrements of the Polish cavalry, and then, with a different kind of amazement, at the wretched, ill-clad, half-starved infantry. One regiment of infantry presented such a pitiful spectacle that the King said to those standing about him : " Take a look at these brave fellows. They belong to an invincible regiment which has sworn a great oath to be clothed in nothing but the uniform of its enemies. After the last treaty they were all clothed in Turkish uniform, turban and all. It will be the same story in a few days. Only such men are accepted for this regiment." Of this proud saying the Abbé Coyer remarks : " If these words did not clothe them, they cased them in armour."

Once across the Danube (the Germans had passed it higher up at Krems) the armies were drawn up on the flat ground along the right bank which is still called the Tullnerfeld, and stretches roughly from Sitzenberg to St. Andra. The main

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body was distant some sixteen miles, as the crow flies, from Vienna, but that gives no idea of the task to be achieved. Separating the army from its objective was the wall of the Wiener Wald, running in a north-easterly direction. The slopes were densely wooded, the roads few and of a poor sort, and liable to be beset by roving Tartars from any or all directions. Had Kara Mustapha carried out the work of an active commander, it is not likely that the relief force would ever have arrived.

The story of the march from the Tullnerfeld to the Kahlenberg (the northern counterscarp of the Alps, the ancient Mount Aetius, nearly 1500 feet in height) is one of indomitable courage, inspired by the strong will and the high example of Sobieski himself, and aided by the laziness of the Turkish commander.

There was another approach to Vienna, a road that followed the river, took the great bend southwards below Hoflein, passed through Klosterneuburg, and edging between the northern slope of the Kahlenberg and the river, came by Nussdorf into the capital. This road, although it avoided the ascent and descent of the mountains, was out of the question, because the army would have had to advance in narrow column formation, pressed tight between river and mountain, without a possibility of deploying or executing any manoeuvre in case of a surprise at the issue of the defile. Sobieski chose the more difficult approach, but admitted afterwards that he had been badly misinformed as to the country on the Viennese side of the Kahlenberg.

The departure from the Tullnerfeld and the gentle slope encountered gave no hint of what was to come; even so it was an advance through devastated country under the peril of a sudden Tartar raid. Yet the thing was done. By forest paths and steep tracks the army climbed hour after hour, the Poles leading the way. The guns were hauled up painfully, foot by foot, and the horses lived on leaves. Each man ate what he had been able to save from his ration, since there could be no hope of the commissariat keeping up under such

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conditions. The King himself rode or scrambled from one point to another, encouraging, advising, and himself discouraging the profound despair of the Imperial troops, who were alarmed at the thought of those huge hosts awaiting them outside Vienna. And with him went, what all men marvelled at, his personal bodyguard of Janissaries, who refused his offer to them to return to the baggage at Tulnn before being forced to fight their own people.

Sobieski had realised that it was unlikely that the crest of the mountain would be unoccupied. He therefore pressed forward with a small party to reconnoitre on the evening of the 10th,<sup>1</sup> and was absent for so long that great anxiety was felt for his safety. He found, to his surprise, the crest of the mountain undefended. As a matter of fact the Turks had set out to do the obvious thing, but were too late. By the 11th, five Saxon battalions, with three guns, barred their way, and they retreated. The reports which they spread of the presence of Polish troops was not enough to make the Vizier, even now, realise the true position. He thought it was merely Lubomirski's contingent again.

The 11th was the final day and the hardest for the army. By the evening the stragglers had rejoined their units, and it was possible for the commanders to make their dispositions for the advance down the mountain. Sobieski was in the saddle before daylight, and personally supervised the ordering of the various units throughout the entire line, which stretched away to the Leopoldsberg. Before midday the beleaguered garrison in Vienna had seen the flash of the Polish cuirasses, and prepared to meet a fiercer and more general Turkish assault. The relieving armies looked down upon the maimed

<sup>1</sup> Dupont, who was one of those sent forward to reconnoitre, has left a description of what he saw from the summit of the Kahlenberg. The whole party was silent with astonishment as they looked down upon a vast plain covered with pavilions. Smoke drifted over the ramparts of Vienna, and as it shifted and swirled, they could see the points of steeples. Every foot of ground was occupied by Turks and Tartars, and the noise of the guns came up to them, as they watched, mingled with invocations and Asiatic music.

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city, seen intermittently through the drifting smoke, and at the same time were able to appreciate the further labours before them. The slope of the mountain, which they had thought would be easy, appeared to be cut up into gorges and precipices and lateral ravines. The difficulties of manœuvre appeared insurmountable. It would be as much as any leader could do to ensure that the various units kept in touch while moving over the broken ground. There was the further question of the artillery, which was under the tried hand of Konski, who had played so conspicuous a part at Chocim. To add to the anxiety of the relieving force, there was the knowledge that Vienna was at breaking point. As soon as evening fell, and while the King and all the leaders held a council to make the final arrangements for the descent of the mountain, the distress signals, sent up from St. Stephen's, grew more and more frequent.

The Vizier, too, summoned the Pachas to a council, to discuss what was to be done. The old Pacha of Buda, who had all along been opposed to the business, gave his advice without fear. He said the wise plan would be to raise the siege at once, to withdraw the army into hastily prepared entrenchments, and there to wait for the attack of the allies. This having been beaten off, let the cavalry be loosed, and an encircling movement of the wings carried out. This advice was supported by the majority of those present, but Kara Mustapha would have none of it. He knew that if he relaxed his grip on the town now, he might lose the prize, since any interval of repose would be certainly used by the garrison to repair all the damage of the Turkish guns. Also, he feared the moral effect upon his troops of even a temporary withdrawal. Disaffection was spreading rapidly. Cantemir, the Turkish historian, reports a saying common among the disillusioned Janissaries: "Hurry up, infidels. At the mere sight of one of your hats we shall take to our heels." The Vizier therefore determined to execute a bolder and more hazardous plan. He would carry on the siege as though nothing had happened, continuing the assaults, and at the

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same time would detach from his ample numbers a force sufficient to hold off the enemy, and finally to defeat him. He overrode the still feebly protesting Pachas, who knew far better than he did how the long siege and the example of their leader had undermined the troops. During September 11th, the Turkish troops were recalled from Leopoldstadt, and large bodies went forward and entrenched themselves in the mouths of the defiles beneath the Kahlenberg.<sup>1</sup> All along the foothills between Grinzing and Heiligenstadt, the Turks established themselves, and the allied guns, opening fire upon them from the mountain, were heard with delight in Vienna, where the civilian population divided its time between praying in the churches and watching the Turkish camp and the mass of the Kahlenberg from every tower or roof or mound inside the city walls. Starhemberg, who saw that the climax had arrived, sent one more messenger to Lorraine. He swam the Danube, and the receipt of the message was acknowledged by rockets sent up from Hermansdorf. Then Starhemberg ordered all under his command to hold themselves ready to make a sortie the next day, when the battle broke, with the object of joining the relieving army, and expelling the Turks from their entrenchments.

Evening became night. On the ramparts the sentries were changed, and those off duty lay down to sleep, for on the next day, the Sunday, all would rise early. High to the north-westward the allied armies bivouacked, the King and his son James lying under an oak tree, near the burnt convent of the Carmelites. At the foot of the mountain, blocking every issue, and with his guns mounted on every knoll, and his hastily entrenched positions taking advantage of every irregularity in the ground, the Turk held himself ready.

Long before dawn, in the windy darkness of the day that was to decide the fate of Christendom, the King was writing to Marie Casimire :

“ Since ten o’clock a violent wind has been blowing straight

<sup>1</sup> The street called *Turkenschanz* to-day, in the 18th arrondissement, runs over the site of one of their batteries.

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at us, so that the horsemen can hardly sit their horses; it would seem as though the powers of the air have been loosed upon us, for the Vizier has the reputation of being a great magician."

He describes for her the hazardous crossing of the river at Tulnn, with the bridges breaking under the weight of baggage and artillery, and the rapid current swirling dangerously all the while. He gives her a picture of the young Elector of Bavaria, who arrived on the 9th. He is about the build of her own brother, Marigny, not ill-looking, with chestnut hair, sunken eyes, Austrian chin and lips, but a French air about him. He is better dressed than the rest of them, and has some very fine English horses—a gift from Louis XIV. There are no pages or lackeys attending him. He has considerable *savoir-faire* and good manners, and he and "Fanfan" get on famously together.

He writes on: "We have been misinformed.<sup>1</sup> The generals assured us that as soon as we had got over the crest of the Kahlenberg, our difficulties would be over, and that from there our road would be a gentle slope through the vineyards. But now that we are arrived here, our first glance takes in the enormous camp of the Turks, and Vienna in the distance; but, far from being separated from our objective by fields, we have before us forests, precipices and a huge mountain of which nobody has told us. We have got to change our order of battle, and make war in the manner of Maurice Spinola and others, who advanced cautiously, foot by foot. At the same time, humanly speaking, and putting aside all our hope in God, it is permissible to believe that a commander-in-chief who has not thought of entrenching himself, or of concentrating his troops, but who is encamped as though we were

<sup>1</sup> Lorraine, in a despatch, described the country between Tulnn and Vienna very badly. He did not mention the difficult defiles under the Kahlenberg. Furthermore, his advice that the baggage should be left behind was one of the causes of the slow pursuit after the raising of the siege. Dupont mentions that he saw the map which Lorraine sent to Sobieski in July. It must have been a most inadequate one.

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a million miles away, it is to be believed that such a man is predestined to defeat."

This is the old confidence of Podhajce.

It is not yet time for the camp to be stirring, so he continues :

"The commandant of Vienna has already seen us, for he is sending up rockets and firing off his guns ceaselessly. As for the Turks, they have done nothing so far, except to detach some fifty squadrons, with some thousands of Janissaries, towards our left wing, where are Lorraine and the Elector of Saxony, with their headquarters in the Carmelite convent. The Turks seem to want to defend this defile. I must go myself to inspect the position at once, and that is why I close this letter. For it is a question of finding out if they have dug any sort of entrenchment—which would be very annoying for us, since it is from that quarter that I want to attack them."

He describes graphically the position taken up by the army under his command, among the woods and the ravines, in country so irregular that one can only get from one wing to the other by little paths.

But the time is growing short ; there is a hint of dawn in the sky over beyond Vienna. He writes on : "I have passed the night on the extreme right of the line, near the infantry. One could see the whole Turkish camp, and the noise of the guns made it impossible to close an eye. We have fasted so thoroughly throughout these last two days, Friday and Saturday, that there is not one of us but could chase the stag in these mountains. The provisions and the forage which we were promised have not been furnished to us. However, everybody is in good humour and the regiments of German infantry which have joined ours are showing a docility that I have never seen among my own troops. Our men are casting covetous eyes towards the Turkish camp, and are very impatient to establish themselves in it. The Tartars do not show up at present ; I don't know where they are."

And then the last words. When he next writes, on the Monday, he has saved Europe and broken Islam for ever.

"Dear heart, I have had your letter of September 6th. It was brought to me just at the moment when we were preparing to begin our ascent of the mountains. Do not boast so much about its being your sixth, for this is my eighth, and it has carried me along till the break of day. But now at length I must make an end, with a million embraces for my charming, my incomparable Mariette. My compliments to my sister<sup>1</sup> and to the Marquis.<sup>2</sup> I embrace the children with all tenderness."

Sunday, September 12th, one of the decisive days in the history of Europe, dawned mistily. As the mist floated upwards, clinging to the trees and muffling the movements of the army preparing for battle, the vast camp of the Turk received the full light of morning, and beyond, the smashed ravelins and the piled earth and stones of splintered gates and bastions picked out the line of the fortifications. Those with keen eyes could see the Turkish trenches, the overlapping curves of the approaches, which have been described as being like fish-scales. In the Turkish camp, which was a maze of streets, with tents for houses, there was the noise of confusion and of preparation. While the Janissaries stood to arms for a further assault, the remainder of the troops, threading their way through herds of camels and African horses and tethered elephants, pressed forward to support their comrades, already drawn up on all that broken ground which to-day is a tangle of vines and villas.

The scene was set. Each army expected the clash.

Meanwhile a little bell was tolling from the chapel of the Margrave on the height of Leopoldsberg, and Europe's chivalry came riding in arms to the Mass. At their head was a tonsured Capuchin, the Emperor's chaplain, the famous Marco Aviano, whose portrait you may see to-day in the castle at Wilanow. After him, upon a bay horse, came the Polish King sitting his saddle heavily, corpulent, but of majestic bearing, his moustaches still dark, his large eyes full of intelligence and humour; his figure even more conspicuous by reason of the

<sup>1</sup> Princess Radziwill.

<sup>2</sup> The Marquis d'Arquien, his father-in-law.



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tunic of sky-blue silk which he wore. Beside him was the boy, Prince James, his son, in breastplate and helmet. There followed the melancholy Lorraine, and the heads of all the princely Houses of the Germanies. Among them was the slender young man who was destined to complete and set a seal upon the work of Sobieski : Eugene of Savoy, who served his apprenticeship upon this day as a despatch rider between Lorraine and the Polish King. In his blunt and witty memoirs<sup>1</sup> he has left a picture of this Mass ; of Sobieski who heard Mass " with his arms folded in the shape of a Cross, in the church of Leopoldsberg." Marco Aviano said the Mass, Sobieski himself acting as server, and receiving Communion. Afterwards, while the thunder of the guns increased, the Capuchin gave a benediction to the armies, and the Polish King conferred knighthood upon his son James. He then said : " Warriors and friends ! Yonder in the plain lie our enemies, in numbers greater indeed than at Chocim, where we trod them underfoot. We have to fight them on a foreign soil, but we fight for our own country, and under the walls of Vienna we are defending those of Warsaw and Cracow. We have to save to-day not a single city, but the whole of Christendom, of which that city of Vienna is the bulwark. The war is a holy one. There is a blessing on our arms, and a crown of glory for him who falls. You fight not for your earthly sovereign, but for the King of kings. His power has led you unopposed up the difficult access to these heights, and has there placed half the victory in your hands. The infidels see you now above their heads, and with hopes blasted and courage depressed, are creeping among valleys destined to be their graves. I have but one command to give—follow me. The time is come for the young to win their spurs."

Shortly afterwards the signal was given for the general advance.

The action may be divided into three phases:—(a) The

<sup>1</sup> Of the action itself, on the 12th, he wrote : " The Poles, who had climbed up thither, I know not why, descended like fools, and fought like lions. . . . The Turks, having neglected the heights, and not knowing which way to face, conducted themselves like imbeciles."

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descent from the hills, and the fight for hillocks and ravines, each unit fighting its own action, and seizing any vantage-point that offered. (b) A consolidation of gains and a preparation for a co-ordinated advance, followed by a general engagement of all the troops concerned, who by twelve noon formed a great arc stretching from Nussdorf to Dornbach. An advance against a more tenacious resistance. (c) An infantry attack that took the Turks by surprise, and was followed by the final and decisive cavalry charge that threw the enemy into complete disorder.

The Christian army, on a front of something less than two miles, moved forward to engage the Turk in the defiles.

Sobieski had under him between seventy and eighty thousand men, of whom eighteen thousand were Poles, and his plan was to force the defiles and consolidate the ground won, on the first day, and then, upon the second day, to press home the advantage and drive the enemy from Vienna. Kara Mustapha's plan was to contest the defiles, and, while holding up the allies, to deliver the decisive assault on Vienna. He had at his disposal between one hundred and sixty thousand and one hundred and seventy thousand troops. The left wing of the Christian army, already descending from Leopoldsberg, was nearest to Vienna, and was the first engaged, for the Turk held the Nussberg, in front of Nussdorf. The Turkish line extended in a crescent from Breitensee to the Danube; a front of about four miles. It was a straggling line, with a river on either flank and a fortified city in its rear.

The Christian order of battle<sup>1</sup> was in four lines, the fourth acting as a reserve. Lorraine commanded upon the left, and his objective was limited by the villages of Nussdorf on the extreme left and Döbling on the extreme right. He had opposed to him the Pacha of Mesopotamia, and the Turkish vantage-ground of the Nussberg was his concern. The centre, commanded by Maximilian of Bavaria and Waldeck, had for objective Währing, where the Vizier himself commanded. The right wing, under Sobieski, had for objective the village of

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix D.

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Dornbach, and the whole sector commanded by the aged Pacha of Buda, whose heart was far from the affair. The troops descended the mountain in column formation, and deployed as soon as the ground allowed of such a manoeuvre, the second line advancing to fill up any gaps.

Seen in the large, this opening stage of the battle was a great wheeling movement, of which Lorraine, with his left resting on the river, was the pivot. As I have said, he was engaged earliest, and it was the Austrians and Saxons under Baden who, after fierce fighting, carried the Nussberg, and so won a position from which the allied guns could rake the Turkish right wing. This position was frequently counter-attacked by the Turks, and once might have been recaptured had not reinforcements from the Elector of Saxony restored the balance. In every hollow and behind every ridge of ground the Turks fought stubbornly, but the allied advance continued, and the villages of Nussdorf and Heiligenstadt were carried about eleven o'clock, after some three hours of continuous fighting. All this time the right wing had been swinging round slightly, and at the moment when Lorraine had halted to consolidate his gains, the Poles appeared, their cuirasses gleaming in the hot sunshine, and the King at their head, with his plumed lance borne before him. The cry "Vivat Sobieski!" echoed along the battle-front, and it was probably at this moment that the twenty-five-year-old Eugene of Savoy bore the message which set the armies in motion again. After receiving the reports of the various commanders and studying the position with his own eyes, Sobieski decided that the issue could be decided by nightfall of that very day. Meanwhile, during a lull, utilised by the allies for snatching a meal, each man keeping his position, the Turks reorganised their defence and brought up large reinforcements. There was further furious fighting on the left wing, and the second phase of the battle opened.

The whole line was engaged now, and no sooner were the Polish cavalry in touch with the enemy than their impetuosity led them to charge too far. They were in grave danger, until





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Sobieski led the Bavarians to the rescue and drove off the Turks. Everywhere the line was advancing. The Prince of Croy was killed outside Döbling, where the Turkish resistance was most tenacious.

It was after Sobieski had brought up the cavalry of the second line that the Turks began to break. All along the line isolated groups clung to favourable positions, but they had had no time to bring up their guns, and were rapidly becoming demoralised.

When the allied troops came within sight of the Turkish camp, hitherto hidden from them by the conformation of the ground, they saw that even now the victory was not won. Between them and the camp there was a fortified ravine, defended by the flower of the Turkish army, under the command of Kara Mustapha in person, whose great green standard, embroidered with golden crescents, was in the centre of the host. The right wing, under Kara Mahomet, reached the Danube and confronted the Imperial troops. The left wing, extending as far as what to-day is the long road to Schönbrunn, was under the Pacha of Buda.

It was now close on five o'clock and the third phase was about to begin. The King in person took the centre and prepared to advance. Lorraine, on the left, held himself ready to conform to the general movement of the line. Jablonowski covered the right and drove back the Tartars.

Sobieski must have taken into consideration the fatigue of the men after seven or eight hours of fighting under a blazing sun, and the magnitude of the task still before him. But the *moral* of the troops was so good, and that of the Turks so bad, that he gave up all thought of deferring the issue until the next day. While with his experienced eye he measured the field before him, and made his dispositions, the still confident Kara Mustapha reclined in his tent and took coffee. At the opening of the tent his bejewelled horses awaited him.

The King's decision was taken. The infantry was not yet in position and the artillery had not kept up with the advance, but he would strike before the Turks were ready for him.

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The few pieces of artillery available were hastily brought into position by Le Masson, and trained on the central point of the camp where the tent of the Vizier was pitched. The ammunition wagons had not come up, and the ammunition was carried by hand to the guns. One charge was rammed home by a French officer who made use of his wig, his gloves, and an old packet of French newspapers. While this was going on, the infantry under Marigny arrived, and was ordered to seize a mound that dominated the Vizier's quarters, and was held by an outpost. The operation was successful—so successful and so swiftly carried out that the Turks had no time to train their guns on to the attacking infantry. The Vizier himself, by calling in troops from the left wing, not only weakened his flank, and almost uncovered it, but threw the line into confusion, and caused a "bunch."

Sobieski's practised eye saw what was happening, and he knew that the critical moment was at hand. He gave the order to Lorraine to attack at once before the Turkish centre could recover from the surprise assault of Marigny. That opportunity had arrived which the great leader never fails to seize. Before the Turks could restore order the Polish cavalry formed up and moved forward to the charge.

It is permissible to believe that men long dead watched that charge; Aetius, who by Chalons, in the Catalaunian Fields, flung back the Huns of Attila and wounded mortally the barbarian Empire ruled from Buda on the Danube; Martel, Charles the Hammer, who upon an autumn day stood against the Arabs of Abdul Rahman, and, on that plain between the Vienne and the Clain, barred the way and drove back the host of Islam; Charlemagne, whom the Archangel Gabriel summoned forth to wars and further wars against the Paynim; the peers of France who fell at Roncesvalles; all those nameless and unremembered men who through the centuries regained their own land foot by foot; the dark horsemen of the Pyrenean foothills, the strong soldiers of Aragon. For if the dead remember or have knowledge of the things that filled their lives, then must these great dead have known the hour,

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then must they have awaited the issue, looking down from those places where they take their rest.

As the pace quickened, and the horses broke from a trot into a gallop, the Turkish leaders saw in the forefront of the squadrons a figure that seemed to absorb into itself all the long story of Christendom in arms and the awful majesty of the Faith embattled. They saw the royal standard and shield borne before him, and at the knowledge of his presence they lost their hope. The word spread through the ranks that the Polish King was leading the charge. Behind him came the Hussars in their richly ornamented cuirasses, with their panther-skins slung over their left shoulders and falling to their right thighs, their long gilded lances at rest, the gold and jewelled plaques on their harness glinting and flashing. As they drew near, there was added to the thunder of the hoofs the terrifying sound of the huge vulture and eagle wings fastened to their shoulders.<sup>1</sup> In their ranks rode the high nobility of Poland, and behind them pressed the Pancernes, in shirts of mail, soldiers less splendid to the eye, but no less fierce in battle, no less tried. It was a Polish cavalryman who told a Polish king that if the skies fell, he and his comrades would hold them up on the points of their lances.

There was no resistance to the shock of the charge. Everything in its way went down, while Lorraine and Waldeck turned the right wing of the Turks, and Jablonowski the left. It is recorded that Kara Mustapha, in despair, said to the Khan of the Crim Tartars, "And cannot you help me?" To which the Khan replied, "I know the king of Poland. I told you that if he came, there would be nothing for us to do but retreat."

Kara Mustapha did what he could. He attempted to reorganise the scattered units, to persuade them to stand firm. But he could not put courage into an army that was beaten

<sup>1</sup> In the National Museum at Warsaw there is a life-size figure upon horseback, in the armour of the period, and wearing these wings. Their purpose was to inspire terror.



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as soon as the Polish cavalry formed for the charge. Too often, on too many fields, they had learnt the folly of resistance. Fear became panic, and those not involved in the actual fighting of the last moments were only too anxious to save their skins, and perhaps some booty or other amassed during the advance to Vienna. By six o'clock Sobieski drew rein before the gorgeous tent of the Vizier; outside it a slave still held ready the horse upon which his master was to have rallied his men. One of the golden stirrups was at once sent to the Queen as a token of victory. Those Janissaries who were still in the trenches, and had been carrying on their work all through the day, attempted, when they learnt the truth, to turn their guns upon the victorious allies. But it was too late, and the remnant of them were either killed or captured. Meanwhile Louis of Baden's dragoons entered the town by what was left of the Scottish gate. It was the sixtieth day since the Turks had pitched their camp under the walls.

There followed a remarkable instance of the hold Sobieski had over the assortment of troops which he commanded upon this memorable day. Since it was by no means unlikely that Kara Mustapha would be able to rally enough men for a counter-attack, the King insisted upon the strictest discipline. There was to be no looting and no disorder, under pain of death. Exhausted though his men were, there must be no relaxation until all danger was over. It should be remembered that these orders were issued to men who had fought all day in almost unendurable heat, and among whom the rich plunder of the Turkish camp was a byword. Yet when the prize was before them, they found themselves working on the same old treadmill of pickets, fatigues and parties of reconnaissance. While they stood to arms through the night, too weary to pursue the retreating enemy, the remains of Mahomet's vast army were flying pell-mell along the roads to the Hungarian border.

Thus was Vienna relieved, and all our inheritance saved by the sword of the Polish King.

I will conclude this chapter by quoting a few passages which

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I take the liberty of translating from the letter written by Sobieski on the Monday night, September 13th, to the Queen. Its heading is, "In the tents of the Vizier," and the letter begins, after its customary salutation :

"God be for ever blessed ! He has given our nation the victory ; he has given it such a triumph as no past centuries ever saw. All the artillery, the whole Moslem camp, all its uncountable riches have fallen into our hands. The approaches to the town, the neighbouring fields, are covered with the infidel dead, and the remainder is in flight, and stricken with panic. Our people are bringing in, at every moment, the camels, mules, cattle and sheep of the enemy. Also, we are getting a large number of refugees, most of them renegades, well-clothed and riding good horses. So sudden and so amazing was the victory that there were continual alarms, both in the town and in the camp. We expect to see the enemy back at any moment. He has left about a million florins' worth of powder and munitions."

He then describes the end of the immortal cavalry charge :

"Advancing with the first line and forcing the Vizier back, I met one of his slaves, who took me to the tents of his private headquarters. These tents alone cover a space as extensive as Warsaw or Lwow. I took possession of all the ornaments and flags which are customarily carried before the Vizier. As for the great standard of Mahomet, entrusted to the Vizier for this campaign by his sovereign, I have sent it, by the hands of Talenti, to the Holy Father. Besides this, we have got some costly tents, some magnificent equipages, and a thousand other beautiful and rich toys.<sup>1</sup> I have not yet seen all the booty, but there is no comparison with what we got at Chocim. Four or five quivers alone, mounted with rubies and sapphires, are worth many thousands of ducats. You will not then, my

<sup>1</sup> In the ruins of one of the villages Sobieski found a very old picture of Our Blessed Lady. It bore the inscription : IN HAC IMAGINE VICTOR ERIS, JOHANNES. IN HAC IMAGINE VICTOR ERO JOHANNES. He sent it to the Queen, who had a chapel built for it. The King took it with him on all his subsequent campaigns.

love, say to me, as the wives of the Tartars say to their lords when they return without booty, 'You are no warrior, for you have brought me nothing. It is only he who is in the forefront of the fight that can get hold of anything.'

"I have also," he continues, "a horse belonging to the Vizier, with all its harness. He himself was very closely pursued, but escaped. His Kihag, or First Lieutenant, and a number of his other principal officers were killed. Our men got any number of gold-encrusted sabres. Night put an end to the pursuit; moreover, the Turks defended themselves stubbornly throughout their retreat. From this point of view it was the finest retreat in the world. However, the Janissaries were left, forgotten, in the trenches, and during the night they were all hacked to pieces. Such was the arrogance, such was the presumption of the Turks, that, while one part of their army was offering us battle, the other part was assaulting the town. And they had enough men for both operations. I estimate them, without the Tartars, at three hundred thousand. Others have counted three hundred thousand tents, which would swell the numbers beyond all known proportions. I myself counted one hundred thousand tents; for they covered three immense camps. . . . Yesterday I came across a child of three, a dear little boy, whose throat had been hideously slit by these cowards. The Vizier had seized, in one of the Imperial castles, a very fine ostrich; but he had its head chopped off, too, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Christians. It is impossible to describe in detail all the refinements of luxury that the Vizier had gathered together in his tents. There were baths, gardens with fountains, rabbit-warrens—even a parrot, which our men chased, without being able to capture it. To-day I went to look at the town. It could not have held out another five days. The Imperial Palace is riddled with bullets; the enormous bastions, cracked and half-fallen in, have a terrifying look. You would say they were great lumps of rock.

"All the troops have done their duty well; they attribute the victory to God and to me. At the moment when the

enemy began to give (and the greatest shock of the charge was in my part of the line, opposite the Vizier), all the rest of the cavalry galloped towards me on the right wing; the centre and the left having already little remaining to do. Then I saw Monsieur of Bavaria, the Prince of Waldeck and others; they embraced me, they kissed me on the face; the generals kissed my hands and my feet; the soldiers and their officers, mounted and dismounted, cried out, 'Ah! Unser brave König.' They all obeyed my orders far better than my own troops. It was not till this morning that I saw the Prince of Lorraine and Monsieur of Saxony again. We had not been able to meet yesterday because they were on the extreme left. I had given them a few squadrons of our hussars, under the command of the Marshal of the Court.<sup>1</sup> The commandant of the town, Starhernberg, also came to see me to-day. He embraced me and called me saviour. In two churches which I visited, the people kissed my hands, my feet, my clothing. Others who could not get near enough, cried, 'Ah! Allow us to kiss your victorious hands.' They seemed to want to cry 'Vivat,' but they were restrained by fear of the officers and other high officials. All the same a crowd of them did make a sort of 'Vivat' heard. I noticed that the high officials regarded them with some disfavour. Furthermore, after dining with the commandant, I hastened to leave the town and return to the camp. The crowd conducted me as far as the gates. I observe that Starhernberg is in bad odour with the chief magistrates of the town. In receiving me he did not present to me any of the civilians. The Emperor has let me know that he is five miles from us. . . . But here is the dawn beginning to break. I must finish this letter. They won't give me the opportunity of writing any more, and so of prolonging this agreeable tête-à-tête."

Nevertheless, he cannot tear himself yet from his pleasant task. He speaks of the losses,<sup>2</sup> of the joy of the "padre d'Aviano."

<sup>1</sup> Lubomirski.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire puts the Christian losses at 200, and Talenti, setting out for Rome, said he rode for miles over dead Turkish bodies! It is probable that the Turks lost about 10,000 and the Christians about 3000.

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"To-day we march in pursuit of the enemy into Hungary. The Electors told me that they would accompany me. It is indeed a great blessing from God. Honour and glory to Him, now and for ever."

The letter begins to show signs of haste; yet, before he closes, the thought of seeing Marie Casimire sweeps through him:

"I am on the point of getting into the saddle, to go forward into Hungary, and I hope, as I said when I left you, to see you again at Stryj. Tell Wyszynski to repair the chimneys and to set the apartments in order. This letter is the best Gazette, and you can use it as such, at the same time announcing that it is a letter from the King to the Queen. The Princes of Bavaria and Saxony have decided to follow me to the ends of the earth. We shall have to do the first ten miles at top speed because of the intolerable stench of the corpses—men, horses and camels. I have written to the King of France, and told him that it was fitting for me to report to him particularly, as being the Most Christian King, the news of the battle won, and of the salvation of Christendom. The Emperor is seven miles off. He is coming down the Danube in a boat. But I can see that he has no great desire to meet me, possibly because of the rules of etiquette. He is hurrying to Vienna to have a *Te Deum* sung, which is why I am giving place to him. I am only too glad to avoid all these ceremonies. We have been treated to nothing but that sort of thing up to the present moment. Our 'Fanfan' is as brave as he can be."<sup>1</sup>

Among the guns captured from the Turks were a number bearing the monogram of King Sigismund of Poland. It is not unlikely that they were the Polish guns lost at Kobylta, when Zolkiewski, the maternal grandfather of the hero of Vienna, fell in the retreat from the Moldavian steppes.

<sup>1</sup> Marie Casimire substituted the name of Alexander, her favourite son, for that of James, in the Gazettes. The exploits of the elder brother were in this way attributed to the boy of eight, merely, as far as one can judge, to satisfy the spite of the Queen, and to further her ambitious plans for Alexander.

## X

### THE HUNGARIAN CAMPAIGN AND THE RETURN TO POLAND

(September–December 1683)

THE liberation of Vienna was announced to the surrounding villages, whose inhabitants had placed a less favourable construction upon the sudden silence, by cannon fired from the ramparts. The word was taken up and passed across Europe.<sup>1</sup> Even Protestant England and Sweden celebrated the news with jubilation. Mass was said in the Church of the Augustinians in Vienna, and a *Te Deum* sung there, since St. Stephen's was being used as a hospital. The crescent at the top of the steeple of St. Stephen's, a relic of the former Turkish invasion, was torn down and trodden by the mob. In Rome there were festivities and thanksgivings for a month on the reception by Innocent XI of a letter in which the King wrote, "*Venimus, vidimus, Deus Vicit*," and which he signed "*Giovanni*." The great green standard with the golden crescents worked upon it was delivered by Talenti to His Holiness, and was then carried in triumph from church to church and from monastery to monastery. In the centre of it was written twice, "There is no God but the true God, and Mahomet is His prophet," and round the edge of it were written words from the 48th chapter of the Koran.

The old Queen Christina of Sweden wrote to congratulate

<sup>1</sup> Dupont carried the news to Cracow in seventy-two hours. The Queen was at prayer, and on seeing him enter the church, uttered a loud cry. On hearing the news she prostrated herself before the altar and had Mass said.

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the Pope on his possession of such a spoil, and she also wrote in the most fulsome terms to Sobieski. She told him that the Empire of the world would surely be his due, had Heaven reserved it for one potentate. The Pope sent presents to the conqueror, including a handsome cupboard which is at Wilanow to-day. But Louis XIV sent no word. Alone of all the sovereigns he kept silence, until it was absolutely necessary to take some notice of the event in the Gazettes. Finally, while the rest of Europe was making merry, a bare announcement of the relief of Vienna was made, without any mention of the Polish King. Another Gazette explained at some length that Sobieski had merely done his duty, as Louis would have done, had not Leopold refused his offers of help. No attempt was made to deny that September 12th saved both Germany and Italy, but all accounts of the battle were branded as lies—for the simple reason that there had not been any battle. The moment it was known that Sobieski was actually at the head of the armies, and present in person, the Turks fell into a panic and fled without fighting. "So," continues the official scribe of Versailles, "it is without striking a blow that the Christian army has relieved Italy of all fear, saved Germany, routed an enemy that had covered the countryside with his formidable armies, watched the failure of his ambitious schemes (in spite of an expenditure proportionate to his designs), and profited by all his booty. One may say that three people have contributed to this result : first, Count Starhemberg, by his wise conduct ; secondly, the safety of Vienna is no less due to the prayers of His Holiness and of the entire Church, and to the sums of money given by the Pope, and without which no such force could have been raised. The King of Poland ought to be set down as the third. We put him last because his reputation is so great that the Turks raised the siege before they were attacked, simply because it was said that the King was going to take part himself."

While taking it for granted that Louis XIV wished to minimise the importance of the part played by the armies

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under Sobieski's command, we may doubt whether the French King intended the flattery contained in the last sentence of the chronicler.

Through the night of the 12th and the day of the 13th the Turks fled with great rapidity into Hungary, and the Vizier soon had the river Raab between him and the pursuing army. Yet, while Sobieski was at dinner on the 13th in Vienna, there was an alarm. It was said that the Turks were returning to the attack. The meal was actually interrupted, and the officers prepared to stand to arms, but the alarm was proved to be false.

Sobieski wasted no time in Vienna. The pursuit called him, and, furthermore, he could read in the faces and in the constrained manners of the Imperial officers their uneasiness at his presence.<sup>1</sup> A change came over them all, even Lorraine, and the Polish King was glad enough to exchange the hardship of the camp for the cold formalities of the courtiers. That he did not immediately ride after his own vanguard, which was harrying the Turks already, was due to the fact that the Emperor had expressed his desire for an interview—a not surprising request, seeing that he owed his capital, and almost certainly his Empire, to Sobieski. At the news of the victory Leopold was as eager to re-enter Vienna as he had been to leave it previously. He came down the Danube rapidly, but took care not to make his entry into the town until the liberator had departed from it. But no sooner was he in the place than they told him that Sobieski was off on the road to Hungary, and that though, of course, a King of Poland was of no consequence, yet it might be awkward if the saviour of Europe went back to Poland in a huff instead

<sup>1</sup> Buonvisi describes the Emperor's ministers grumbling because, they said, the Poles wanted all the booty for themselves; and because Sobieski had had a *Te Deum* sung before the Emperor had done so. The nuncio further attributes the slowness of the pursuit to the formalities which Leopold's presence imposed upon the generals. Writing on September 11th, he had foreseen this difficulty of formalities. Had the pursuit been more rapid, it is probable that the Wallachians, Moldavians and Transylvanians would have deserted the Porte at once—as was their custom.



of completing the discomfiture of the Turks. It might even mean the return of Islam, and another siege—this time without Sobieski to save the place. To all of which the Emperor listened attentively. "But how," he said, musing, "does one approach an elected King?" This was too much for Lorraine, who replied, in some disgust, "With open arms, if he has saved one's Empire."<sup>1</sup>

Sobieski, then, is halted in his pursuit of the enemy, by a courier with a request for an interview, and in one of the most amusing of his letters to the Queen, that written from Schönau, on the road to Pressburg, we are told what happened at the famous meeting at Schweschat, outside Vienna.

After telling her that things are going none too well, he writes :

"I have had my interview with the Emperor, the day before yesterday, the 15th. He arrived in Vienna some hours after my departure. I sent my compliments to him by the Vice-Chancellor, whom I charged at the same time to present one of the standards of the Vizier, as a token of our victory. . . . At midnight Schafgotch is announced, having ridden post-haste from the Emperor. He assures me that His Majesty would be deeply chagrined not to be able to communicate with me save through the medium of the Vice-Chancellor ; that he does not wish to see my envoy ; that it is I myself, in person, with whom he desires an interview ; that accordingly I ought really to write to the Vice-Chancellor, bidding him not ask for an audience. Well, I sit down to write, and two hours later along comes Schafgotch again : 'There's been a misunderstanding,' says he, 'and it's all Galecki's fault.' I saw perfectly well that this was mere foolery, so I said that when it was a question of talking to sovereigns, I was in the habit of conducting the interview in person, and that my Chancellor addressed himself only to the envoys of other courts, or to similar authorities. 'So,' said I, 'you are bothering yourself about nothing ; tell me frankly, instead of going on like this, what it is you desire. No

<sup>1</sup> This spirited reply was much quoted afterwards.

doubt the whole difficulty rests in the important question of the ceremonial of the right hand. Very well. All that can be arranged, and the only matter before us is to reach an understanding.' Schafgotch answered that, as a matter of fact, that ceremonial was precisely what was worrying the Emperor; that he could not give way, for he was at the moment in the midst of the Electors, and represented, so to speak, the Empire. I proposed the following way out. I said, 'As soon as the Emperor is near my encampment, I will go to meet him, we will salute each other from our horses, and we will remain thus face to face, I beside my army, he beside his army and his capital; he accompanied by the Electors, I, by my son, my generals and my senators.' Schafgotch welcomed this proposal, and it all went off in that way. The Emperor, however, was accompanied only by the Elector of Bavaria; the Elector of Saxony had already left him. His retinue consisted of some fifty nobles, employees of the Court and ministers. Trumpeters preceded him. Men of his bodyguard and ten valets-de-pied followed him. I will not give you a portrait of the Emperor, for he is well known. He rode a Spanish bay horse, and wore a richly-embroidered coat, a French hat with a clasp and plume of red and white, a belt mounted with sapphires and diamonds, and a sword similarly ornamented. We saluted each other politely enough. I made my compliments to him in Latin, and in few words, and he answered with certain prepared words in the same tongue. When we were thus face to face, I presented to him my son, who drew near and saluted him. The Emperor did not even raise his hand to his hat. I remained like one petrified. He behaved in the same way to the senators and generals, and even to his relative, the Prince Palatine of Belz. To avert a scandal and public chatter, I spoke a few more words to the Emperor,<sup>1</sup> after which I turned my horse. We saluted each other, and I rode back to my encampment. The Palatine of Russia

<sup>1</sup> Sobieski is reported to have said that he was only too pleased to be able to render this slight service to the Emperor.

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showed our army to the Emperor, as he had desired. But our people are naturally very irritated, and complained openly that the Emperor had not deigned to thank them, not even by so much as removing his hat, for all their sufferings and privations.<sup>1</sup> After we had thus separated, everything changed suddenly. It was as though they did not know us. . . . We are given no more forage or food. The Holy Father sent money for these things to the Abbé Buonvisi; but the Abbé has remained at Linz."

The rest of this letter, equally important for a study of the days following the raising of the siege, is not written in the same spirit. It deals with graver matters. It describes the plight of the sick and dying, who are stretched on dung-heaps, waiting for the chance of a boat to take them down the river to Pressburg. Christian burial is refused to the dead, the cemeteries of Vienna are barred to them, and those who bear the Christian corpses painfully, in search of graves, are bidden deposit them among the Turkish dead. The King complains that his cloak has been stolen, that a German struck one of his pages and cut his face, "Four paces from me." But no satisfaction for the incident could be obtained from Lorraine. The Polish baggage and horses are stolen wholesale.

The despairing tone which deepens as this letter proceeds makes the subsequent events all the more remarkable. Here was an army that, after days of marching on short rations through a difficult country in bad weather, fought all day, and then, after a moment's rest, was on the march again, under appalling conditions, and apparently without hope. We shall see what things such an army accomplished.

The King, so quickly disillusioned, so bitter against those who fawned upon him when they needed his help, and ignored him when he had saved them, never allowed his

<sup>1</sup> Accounts of the meeting vary. There is a fanciful description of a meeting at Pressburg in Gasztowt's "*La Pologne et l'Islam*." In Vol. V of the "*Cambridge Modern History*" we read this amazing distortion of fact: "The Emperor strove to be cordial."

energy to flag. He sent emissaries to try to obtain boats for the wounded and the sick, and one of his captains went to Starhemberg to make formal complaint and to arrange for, at any rate, the provisioning of the troops. This captain, a man named Obar, found the high officers at meat, and Lorraine among them. They received him coldly, granted none of his requests, and even complained that the Poles were stealing provender. The Imperialists spoke with ingratitude and rancour of the Polish troops—possibly because their own share of the plunder was not as large as they had expected it would be. But even this disappointment will not excuse their conduct in opening fire on the starving men who dragged themselves back across the desolate country to re-enter Vienna in search of food and shelter.

The Polish army began to dwindle, not only from disease, but from desertion—some making off with their plunder, others determined to avoid death from famine.

Within a week, then, of that magnificent charge that saved the Western world, Sobieski and his army found themselves the victims of a deliberate campaign of ingratitude and ill-treatment; a campaign that extended to the German Princes and alienated them. Even the Elector of Saxony, who had been so loud in his professions of loyalty to the Polish King, could not tolerate the conduct of the Emperor, and went back with his army to his own territory. Lorraine himself got no thanks. Only Starhemberg was rewarded—with a large sum of money, the Order of the Golden Fleece, and the baton of a Field Marshal. The Duke of Saxe-Lauenberg withdrew, partly because he himself was disgusted, partly because his troops were in a rebellious state of mind.

The Polish King had the additional mortification of hearing his own officers grumbling, and regretting that they had ever raised a finger to help Austria; and the additional fear of what would happen if he pressed on into country equally desolate. As a soldier he was infuriated at the loss of time, when each day might have been employed in consolidating the victory by following up the enemy and harassing him.

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As a King he was humiliated by the treacherous conduct of the Emperor and his courtiers. As a man he was sick at heart, and must have been tempted to make for Poland with all possible haste.

Those who would know why he did not take this obvious course when he heard his men clamouring for a return will not find the answer in such speculations as that of the Abbé Coyer, who suggests that the King still had a hope of an Austrian Archduchess for Prince James.<sup>1</sup> It is absurd, on the face of it, to imagine that the King could entertain any such illusion any longer. The answer is to be found in his own letters to his Queen, in which he makes it clear that he regards himself as still bound by oath to help the Emperor against the Turks; to finish off the campaign and to leave no chance of recurring danger. His strong sense of duty withstood the demands of the army, and with his diseased and half-starved remnant he decided to be rid of the proximity of the Imperialists and their capital as soon as possible. The Turks still retreated before this travesty of a fighting force, leaving a trail of baggage and equipment and camp followers. Dysentery and fever increased day by day; but the King still found time for those little details that make his letters such good reading. One day the wind upsets his ink, and he has to start the letter all over again. He complains that he has not read a book since he was at Ratibor on the way to Vienna. He tells the Queen to prepare from such-and-such a letter of his the material for an article in the official Gazette, at the same time taking care not to mention any of the matters about which he has complained; and he recalls to her mind an old saying; the man who does not know how to conceal his disgust makes his enemies laugh. All she may say is that the promised provisions and forage are not forthcoming.

<sup>1</sup> Pallavicini, in a letter of September 26th, describes an interview with the Queen, in the course of which she said that Tökölyi wanted Prince James to be King of Hungary; Lorraine had made this suggestion to Sobieski himself, who assented unwillingly. In a letter of October 23rd Pallavicini reports that the Queen is still full of this project, but that Sobieski will have none of it.

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that the army is suffering considerably from hunger and sickness and exhaustion, that he himself is urging the Imperialists to move in pursuit, and is pressing the Turks with his light cavalry, that Tökölyi has made, through emissaries, full submission, and that if the country had not been so devastated, not one Turk would have escaped with his skin.

It seems probable that Sobieski did not realise the dilemma in which the Imperial Court found itself. At the moment when the ingratitude of the Emperor had succeeded in making the Polish King turn away from Vienna in disgust, it was observed that the Poles were marching as rapidly as possible to the Hungarian border. Not only was Leopold well aware of the sympathy of Sobieski for the Hungarians and of his dangerous popularity; not only was he aware of the submission of Tökölyi and the understanding between the rebel leader and the Polish King; but he also remembered his own frenzied promises of so short a while before. Had there not been talk of the Hungarian crown in return for the sorely-needed help? It was no wonder that the Empire was in no great hurry to help the Poles. As for those who say that Sobieski himself was content to waste time in the counting of his booty, they forget the desperate condition of his troops, and the possibility that at any moment a determined counter-attack by the Turks, directed with energy and skill, would have to be met by the Poles alone; an inferior (in numbers), sick and disorganised force.

But Sobieski determined to make the victory a complete one, and to reconquer, without help if no help came, the territory of Hungary from the Porte. Firm in his purpose he led his wreck of an army on towards Raab, where the half-mad Kara Mustapha was beheading the Pachas, the Emirs—any official he could lay hands on—to appease his master the Sultan.

There is a passage in one of Sobieski's letters which shows that he alone thought of the raising of the siege as merely part of a campaign. He says: "I think it would have been fitting to consult me as to how long I proposed to

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continue the war, but nobody any longer holds any intercourse with me. If, as they might at least do, they declared frankly that they have no further need of us, and that they would act separately, then I would start off, and I should be free to move as I pleased."

If any explanation of this slow pursuit beyond that already given were needed, here it is. Up to the very moment of the last charge outside Vienna, everybody had taken orders from Sobieski. He was, without one dissenting voice, the acknowledged as well as the appointed Generalissimo. He now regarded his work as but half done; and found himself deserted, without any official intimation that Leopold considered the campaign at an end.<sup>1</sup>

When Sobieski's plan of marching on the fortified places of Hungary, and finally upon Buda, became known to Leopold, there was a moment's consternation. Sobieski was persuaded to modify the plan, and to march by the left bank of the Danube instead of along the right. In this way the Poles would be cut off from the main operations in Lower Hungary, and the Emperor, who had a sudden desire to reconquer the old territory for himself, would be as good as rid of this importunate ally—without openly breaking with him. It was probably the hope of food that persuaded the Polish King to fall in with this cunning plan. Lorraine was ordered to throw a bridge across the river for the Poles, and he set out at once. While waiting for Lorraine, Sobieski wrote to the Queen, giving as few military details as possible, since, says he, "I've often had occasion to notice, when military despatches happened to arrive from somewhere or other, that you were not listening very attentively." He tells of the presents he is perpetually sending to the Emperor or to one Prince or another, remarking, "As this kind of business is not over yet, I look like returning to my home with a few buffaloes and camels."

<sup>1</sup> Rabutin, writing to Corbinelli on October 28th, 1683, said: "The Germans did not support the King of Poland's ardour. He would have destroyed the Ottoman army if they had been willing to follow him."

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When the bridge had been thrown across the river the weary army entered the undevastated island of Schutt, between the two arms of the Danube. On September 28th, three days after the crossing of the river, Sobieski breaks out into a rapturous letter. The French engineer Dupont has arrived with news from home. "What joy he has given me in bringing me the happy tidings of your good health, my sweetheart! Up to this very moment I have been questioning and questioning him on every matter that I must know about: how he found my incomparable, how surprised were you, what you said, what you did; in a word, if he was thoroughly questioned while in your presence, he was not less thoroughly questioned in our camp. A thousand thanks, my dearest love, for the scarf, and I kiss a million times the beautiful hands that worked it. It is most elegant, the daintiest thing, but there is not much occasion for showing it off here. Nobody cares about his toilet. Princes and generals dress half in French fashion, half in Hungarian. . . ."

But there were further trials for the Polish troops. Just when they had got into Hungary, and were congratulating themselves on the fertility of the country and the prospect of food for man and beast, a new scourge attacked them. After the long heat the rains came, and Hungarian fever, sudden in its onset and generally fatal, swept the army. Pressburg was full of dying men. The state of disorganisation can be pictured from the fact that an individual as important as the Palatine of Cracow was forced to sleep among a litter of corpses. Nobles and peasants suffered in agony and died side by side in the same overcrowded hut-shelter. And as if this were not enough, the Queen was at her nagging again. First she wanted him to get the throne of Hungary for himself; then she accused him of prolonging the war for personal reasons. He wrote to her:

"What you are doing, my love, between the two Elevations at Mass, troubles me and makes me very unhappy. You must submit yourself to the will of God, nor must you ask Him for anything that could not be pleasing to Him. So, in the



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name of this God to whom you address your prayer, I ask you to desist, and to conform yourself in all things to His holy will. I shall not have any peace until I see you more docile to the will of God than you are to mine."

Finally, Marie Casimire threatened to come herself, at the head of her company, and to take the King by force back to Poland. To which he retorted: "I have not been able to understand the end of your letter, my sweetheart. You told Starowolski that you would march yourself at the head of your company. Who, then, are these happy soldiers, and what is the company that you call your own?"

He complains of toothache, and tells her that drunkenness is said to be a protection from the terrible fever. He describes the gold box in which he carries the image of Our Lady given to him by her, and the way in which the young Elector of Bavaria sings the praises of his ten-year-old sister to Prince James. He is annoyed because the Bishop of Vienna, like Louis XIV, ignored his letter of congratulation on the retreat of the Turks, and he speaks of his compassion for the Hungarian nation. At the castle of Pressburg he sees the body of St. John the Almoner, preserved. He asks for news of France and Holland, and tells her that everybody is demanding a return to Poland.

The advance proceeded somehow along the left bank of the Danube, and from Komorn on October 5th Sobieski sent to the Queen a Chinese bed-cover of white satin, embroidered with gold flowers. From the same place many Turkish prisoners were sent to Zolkiew, where they set up as merchants, and flags and tents<sup>1</sup> were despatched to Warsaw and Cracow.

There was a curious passage in one of his letters at this time. He says: "I was very much worried to learn that what I had intended to keep secret has been printed in Polish, and given out to be an extract from a letter written by me to you. They have even added all manner of things. I conjure you to get the sheets bought back, and to burn them. This misfortune is a torture to me."

<sup>1</sup> They may still be seen in the museums of Poland.

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And the nagging! He writes: "As for cards, I have not played more than ten times since my departure, and barely two or three times with the man whose name you hint at—that is to say, only when there was nobody to replace him. All this kind of gossip is invented by people who have nothing to do but drink and backbite. They ought to leave in peace those who, like me, have already quite enough worry and trouble without having imaginary wrongdoings attributed to them. . . . You tell me I ought to put the army into winter quarters and return myself. You must know, dear heart, that we must first conquer those winter quarters; otherwise the Turks would return to the fight, and would not leave us in peace. But you make war, my love, according to your own desires. I'm really grateful to you for this proof of your attachment to me, and the only favour I ask is to be loved when I am by your side, as I am now while I am away from you. . . ."

Reading the letters which he wrote at this period we can read his mind, and see at work his indomitable will. No misfortune weakened him. It is a superb spectacle, this handful of tattered and discontented men marching on to finish the campaign; held together in spite of themselves and led forward through one disaster after another by the ageing King, who replies to the interminably whining Queen in such words as these: "I know very well that there are plenty of people who desire my return to Poland; but they desire it for their own advantage, not for mine. As for me, I have devoted my life to the glory of God, and to His holy cause, and I will go on to the end."

On October 2nd Lorraine and his troops rejoined the Poles, and a council of war was held near Komorn.

The Sultan had returned from his hunting, and had heard the news of Vienna. His orders were that no Hungarian fortress must be suffered to fall into Christian hands. On such condition he pardoned the Vizier for the failure before Vienna. Kara Mustapha had pushed his army forward from Buda to cover Esztergom, on the right bank of the Danube,

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and Parkan, its suburb or bridgehead, on the left bank. A bridge connected the two. It was decided that the Poles should advance at once along the left bank of the Danube, followed by the Germans under Lorraine. The Poles set off. The Germans waited two days before following them. By October 7th the Polish troops were marching straight at the bridgehead of Parkan. An advance guard of dragoons, evidently disdaining reconnaissance, thrust its way down a steep wooded escarpment which fell to the Danube bank. Before they knew what had happened the Turks were upon them. The batteries from the bridgehead of Parkan raked their ranks while they tried to dismount, and other guns from Esztergom across the river enfiladed them. Those troops nearest to the vanguard—they were Cossacks and heavy cavalry—came to the rescue, but in vain. The Turks fought like madmen, knowing that this might be a chance of wiping out the disgrace of Vienna; might even open the way for another attempt. There was no Polish infantry or artillery to help the demoralised cavalry. The hussars on the left broke, and fled in disorder; the right gave. Only the King and his entourage refused to retreat. They were finally swept back by the irresistible charge of the Turks, and a handful of nobles surrounded Sobieski as he galloped from the scene of his first defeat, his horse keeping its feet by a miracle on ground all cut up and furrowed, and littered with discarded arms and trappings. The strength of the King failed minute by minute, and his great weight was supported by a Lithuanian nobleman and a faithful servant, who almost held him in the saddle between them. As he thus fled, he asked if his son was safe.

The Turkish advance was only checked by the arrival of Konski's artillery, of the infantry, and of Lorraine's troops. The two armies bivouacked opposite one another, and the King of Poland passed the night on a truss of straw, almost insensible from fatigue, rage, and a body bruised black and blue. When he could speak he said: "Gentlemen, I've been well beaten, but I will have my revenge

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with you and for you. That's what we must concentrate on."

Sobieski's own account of the battle is to be found in the letter he wrote on the next day, Friday, October 8th :

"Yesterday was not a happy day. According to my custom I marched off at daybreak, and had sent the Abbé Zebrzdowski to find Lorraine, so that he might follow me with his cavalry ; at the same time I issued orders to the advance guard to push forward and to seize the boats on the Danube ; to halt five miles from the bridge, to wait for me there, and to reconnoitre the enemy's position. In the event of an evacuation by the enemy of Parkan, which is on this side of the river, and a withdrawal to the further bank, into the town of Gran (Esztergom), the bridge having been destroyed, it would be our task to occupy Parkan and entrench ourselves there. If, on the other hand, there was a body of the enemy to defend this position, my plan was to halt five miles away and wait for the infantry and artillery, which were in the rear. But our advance-guard, without reconnoitring the enemy's position, and without sending word to me, went on right up to the Danube, and found the whole Turkish army there (it having crossed the bridge that very night). The skirmish began. The Palatine of Russia (Jablonski) joined the advance-guard at once, and dismounted his dragoons. But the Turks were seen coming out of the mist on all sides, and advancing in large numbers. From that moment there was no time to retire, for we should have lost the dragoons and all the other cavalry. In this dilemma the Palatine (of Russia) sent to me for help, and I advanced with whatever regiments were at hand, but without infantry or guns—since they were all in the rear ; furthermore, nobody had warned me that I had against me the whole Turkish army. Suddenly our advance-guard was attacked and driven in, and the cavalry turned tail, leaving the dragoons to their unhappy lot.

"However, I drew up the few regiments at my disposal. Soon the enemy appeared, and took up a position about a hundred paces from mine. We were not quite 5000 men,

for we had already lost many in killed, in those dead from disease, and in the sick at Pressburg; while a still larger number was with the baggage. I halted my men, meanwhile sending courier after courier to the Duke of Lorraine and to the infantry regiments. I posted the Palatine of Russia on the right wing, the Palatine of Cracow (Potocki) on the left, and the Palatine of Lublin (Zamoyski) in the centre. In a word, I drew up as best I could this small and already shaken army. The state of mind of the men did not escape the Palatine of Russia, who came hotfoot to beg me, for the love of God and of our country, to withdraw while there was still time. The dragoons, who were still near me, refused point-blank to dismount, and the light cavalry would not take up the position allotted to them. But, having got my men into a fix, could I abandon them? I remained where I was, then, watching the enemy. I had beside me General Dunewald of the Imperial army—the only one of those people who had come up—and he too sent to ask the Duke of Lorraine for, at any rate, a few regiments of cavalry. But this help did not arrive.

“Meanwhile the enemy charged the Palatine of Russia, was driven off, charged again, and again had to withdraw. A third time the Turks charged Jablonowski, and with the greatest fury. His men were being attacked from the front, in flank and in rear. They wavered and began to run. I, knowing that the most dangerous course of all is to scatter before the Turks, put myself at the head of my best troops—the hussar squadron of the Starosta Szczurowieński, and some others, and advanced upon those who had turned the flank of the Palatine of Russia.

“By God’s aid I quickly routed them. But hardly had I changed my front when our centre and left, who had not even an enemy before them, began to fly. The Turks pursued stubbornly for about two and a half miles without a pause. In vain I shouted, in vain I tried to hold them back—all abandoned me. I then ordered Fanfan to forestall the fugitives, but I have been very anxious since then, as I could

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not find out from anyone what had become of him. I thought I should die of grief. Finally, I fled after the rest, having about me no more than six or seven horsemen. In all this confusion one man was jostled off his horse by another, as happened to our unhappy Palatine of Pomerelia, who remained on the field with so many others. I had near me the Master of the Horse, the Starosta of Luck, Piekarski, Czerkas, Ustryzcki, nobles of my hussar squadron, and a soldier of the heavy cavalry.

"The rumour had been spread among our army, and the Imperial army too, that I had been killed. And indeed it is a miracle that this was not the case. To God alone belongs the glory; for no human being had either the power or the thought to save me.<sup>1</sup> The Palatines of Russia, of Lublin, and of other territories, deluded by the rumours, have already sought me among the dead. So in order that such tidings may not reach you, I make all haste to write to you, and announce that I am safe and sound, thanks be to Heaven.

"There's no doubt that the enemy has plucked up courage again, and maybe the Vizier himself will be anxious to recross the Danube. If only we can get together all the Imperial infantry, we shall attack Parkan and the bridge to-morrow. We must accept this check as a just punishment from God for the pillage of so many churches, for so much rapine, so much licence, so many acts of disorder. I have seen it coming, and I have often threatened to give up the whole business, not wishing to remain any longer with an army which, by all its actions, continued to draw down upon it the wrath of God. Add to the foregoing the fact that all our men have become softened, have forgotten how to manœuvre. The officers are lazy and ignorant, and the men complain loudly of them, particularly the dragoons, who were sacrificed in the most wretched way. Just imagine it—they had not even their matches lighted! Yesterday again I proposed to the Duke of Lorraine that he should come up at once and

<sup>1</sup> In his letter of October 9th he modified this statement considerably. Actually, the "soldier of the heavy cavalry" mentioned above saved him.

attack the Turks, although I could hardly sit my horse for misery and fatigue. My hands, my thighs and all parts of my body were bruised by the armour and the sabres of the fugitives. And, apart from all that, I had to ride over ditches, mounds of dead, drums, and heaps of equipment thrown away during the flight. The Duke of Lorraine did not hurry himself very much to come to our aid. His excuse is that he could not collect all his detachments quickly enough, although, the country being open, there was no need to march in separate column formation; they could have advanced in mass formation easily enough. . . ."

The letter contains a postscript from Prince James, who says :

"I embrace your Majesty's knees, in announcing to you that I am safe and sound, thanks be to Heaven. I am, Madame, Your Majesty's most humble and obedient servant, James."

I make no apology for quoting the foregoing letter at such length. The surprise of Parkan was the first defeat of Sobieski. For the first time in his long career he failed to rally his soldiers by his personal example; and was forced to fly from the field ignominiously, hustled and jostled on every side. It is clear that the advance-guard did not carry out its instructions carefully enough and that the Germans, had they not delayed for two days at Komorn, might have restored the fight. The high officers of Lorraine said that Sobieski had been anxious to achieve personal glory by fighting a battle before they, the Germans, could come up. But the letter which I have quoted, almost in its entirety, dispels any such idea.

The effects of this battle were instantaneous. The Turks took heart. There was no longer any need for them to believe in the legend of Polish invincibility. They had seen the dreaded cavalry in flight before them. They had seen even the great King caught in the headlong rout and swept from the field, with his panic-stricken attendants round him. And to crown all, it was said that the King lay dead upon the battle-field, and that there was no longer anything to be

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feared from him. It does not require much imagination to picture the moral effect of such a rumour. Kara Mustapha at Buda took his opportunity with both hands. He moved up with his well-known rapidity all the troops at his disposal. His plan was simple and downright. He designed to follow up the victory of the 7th before the Poles had time to recover their breath, and before the lagging Germans could come into line. The thing was merely a question of continuing the interrupted pursuit indefinitely. All through the 8th the Turks and Tartars advanced along the Danube, and crossed the bridge of Esztergom during the night. On the morning of the 9th the Turkish army was drawn up on the left bank of the Danube in deep formation in front of the fortress of Parkan, and with its right wing resting on the mountainous country from which Tökölyi, with 40,000 men, was expected to emerge at the critical moment. By nine o'clock the Turkish line was in movement; impatient and confident of success.

The effect of the rout of the 7th upon the Poles was as decisive as it had been upon the Turks. The King alone was enthusiastic for revenge. At a council of war the majority voted for an immediate return to Poland. They had needed but this reverse to strengthen them in their disaffection. They had apparently left the last remnants of their fighting spirit on the field of Parkan. But Sobieski was irresistible, and by the force of his will he prevailed upon the timid and the disgruntled. He told them to make an Act of Contrition for their sins, and all would be well. The Abbé Skopowski read them an exhortation, which completed the work of persuasion. The perilous moment passed, and once more the Christian army advanced into battle, and was drawn up in three lines opposite Parkan by daybreak; the King on the right, Lorraine in the centre, Jablonowski on the left.

The first frantic assaults of the Turk were directed against the left wing, with the object of turning it. But Lorraine, moving some German infantry from the centre, helped the Poles to wear down the fury of the repeated onslaughts. At



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the same time, Sobieski on the right, under the fire of the batteries on the hill of Esztergom, advanced on the fortress of Parkan, and the Turks had the opportunity of testing for themselves the story of the Polish King's death. As soon as they had begun to retreat, the artillery of Lorraine smashed the bridge across the Danube. All that followed was slaughter of the bloodiest kind. No quarter was given. The fortress was carried, and any thoughts of mercy that might have lingered were blown away by the sight of the Polish heads impaled on the palisades—relics of the rout of the 7th. There was one despairing counter-attack before those who had escaped butchery struggled across the river by a bridge of corpses, to escape by boat down the Danube. The last scene was witnessed by Tökölyi, who, whether by incompetence or by design, arrived too late to help either side. Sobieski remarked on the joy shown by him at the victory, and thought it was genuine, since the Hungarians were Catholics.

At night, in camp beside the Danube, the King wrote to the Queen the only letter in which he forgot, in his excitement, the customary mode of address, but launched straight out into a cry of thanksgiving for a "victory even greater than that of Vienna," which made him feel "twenty years younger." There is in this letter an interesting reference to the cavalryman who saved his life on the 7th. "As for the cavalryman of whom I made mention to you, it is to him that I certainly owe my life. Two Turks were hemming me in closely, and he killed one and wounded the other at the same moment. I had destined for him a big reward, but, alas! he did not survive. At any rate, see that special mention is made of him at Mass." There is also an instance of the belief in signs and omens of which seventeenth-century literature is so full. "Last Thursday," Sobieski writes, "while we were marching on the enemy, a black earless dog went all the way before, and we could not chase him away. Further, a black eagle flew for some time almost on a level with our heads, and then flew away behind us. Yesterday, on the other hand, a white pigeon alighted several times in front of

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our squadrons; and also a very fine white eagle swooped down in front of our lines, and, almost grazing the ground, seemed to lead us against the enemy."

The result of the Christian victory was swift and startling. Kara Mustapha, whose hopes had once more been disappointed, immediately left Buda and rushed headlong to Belgrade. In his wake there was a movement of retreat. The foundations upon which the Porte had begun to build in Hungary two hundred years before showed signs of cracking. But once more disease and the wintry, rainy weather impeded the pursuit; and the caution of Lorraine, who once more opposed Sobieski's plan of marching forthwith on Buda. It was decided that Esztergom should be attacked next, and the work of bridging the river began. But under what difficulties! Sobieski, burning with impatience to drive the Turk out of Hungary without more ado, found himself confronted yet again by mutinous troops. The idea of going over on to the wrong side of the Danube, with winter coming on, was more than they could stand. They deserted, they roamed about in groups plundering and burning, they stole away by night and tried to live as freebooters. A noble who was refused the vacant Palatinate of Pomerelia threatened to lead his men home to Poland. "I do not disguise from myself," writes the King from his camp, on October 15th, "that to satisfy our people one would have to lead them straight back to Poland, to the bad beer and the smoky ovens which they prefer to fine palaces and to the wines of Tokay. And on top of all this, your letter, my love, instead of consoling me, on the contrary tells me that people are still grumbling because I did not throw up the campaign after the battle of Vienna. That would have been to allow everyone to say of me that I know how to win a victory, but not how to profit by it."

During this lull in the operations, while the Christian army was encamped opposite Esztergom, the King at last became exasperated at the perpetual misunderstanding and irritability of Marie Casimire. He had enough to trouble him, with

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the interminable delays, the disease, the mutinies, and the danger, all the while, of Tartar attacks from the flanks. That amazing woman chose such a time to write to tell him that she was gravely displeased with him, and to reiterate her tiresome demands for his return. These she strengthened, with disgusting cunning, by talking of the danger of an attack on Cracow by Tökölyi, and by pretending to be scared out of her life. A less simple man than the King would have seen the connection between her grievances and the grievances of the officers; might even have suspected that the Queen had forgotten the snubbing administered by Louis XIV, and was now full of rage against the ungracious Leopold. In the midst of the Polish army the old French party was at work again, with Jablonowski as its chief.

But with his troubles thickening about him Sobieski still had time to try to amuse her. He gives her a humorous description of a young gentleman with a sword like a kitchen-knife, who talked and talked and talked. He also laughs off her pretended fears with regard to Tökölyi, telling her that she cannot have read his letters to her with much attention. Tökölyi is far away from the Polish frontiers, and terrified of the Poles. He then tells her his plan, which is to take Esztergom, and then proceed to Pesth, the suburb of Buda; after that to turn towards the Polish frontiers once more, and put the army into winter quarters. "Your ill-health," he writes, "is a great anxiety to me, and is affecting my own health."

It was a race for time, and the impatience of the King on the Danube bank was due to his desire to finish off the campaign before winter stopped hostilities. He appreciated the lowered *moral* of the Turks, who were accustomed to a victorious advance, followed by a leisurely and thorough consolidation of the territory won; what was new and disturbing to them was to be forced to retreat, and even to be attacked in towns which they had come to regard as towns of their own Empire. Not the least remarkable fact of those days was that the King should have kept his head in the

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midst of all his misfortunes. His army was composed for the most part of malcontents who cared for nothing but a speedy return to their homes. Desertion and disease diminished the fighting strength day by day. But the Imperial troops were in no such hurry to end the campaign. Leopold was none too pleased at the idea of Hungary being won back for him by the Polish King, to whom he owed too much already. But the gods, as though they despaired of breaking the spirit of such a man as Sobieski by ordinary means, decreed that the Lithuanians should, with unparalleled imbecility, choose this moment to advance, three months late, into Moravia, and to lay it waste in the Tartar manner; thus alienating Tökölyi once more and endangering the delicate negotiations that were toward.

By October 19th the bridge was ready, and on the next day the infantry began to cross. Sobieski wrote two letters to the Queen on the 20th. He himself was now ill, and was taking medicine that, he said, made him worse. In the second of the two letters he answered more fully than usual the reiterated complaints of the Queen and her small-minded courtiers.

"It has always been and is still my conviction that it is better not to undertake a war at all than to abandon the campaign too soon, unfinished. War is not a hunting expedition that one can put off from one day to another. For every mile we give up to the enemy to-day, they will win whole provinces in the spring. Let us stick to the old proverb, and strike the iron while it is hot."

He ended this letter with the following words:

"If war did not take its toll of lives, if it did not impose upon men every kind of weariness and privation, the life of the camp would be like the life of the capital. Men would think only of amusing themselves, of spectacles and feasting. But it was the will of God to distinguish the two careers, and also the people whom He destines for each. To the latter He has given pleasure, to the former immortal glory."

Although the bridge was now ready, and time pressed, the

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disorder in the Polish army, and the exhaustion of the troops for ever on the verge of open mutiny, still hindered operations, and when finally, on October 25th, Esztergom was actively besieged, no Polish troops took part. Imperial troops and those of the Elector of Bavaria, who had arrived on the 20th, sat down before the fortress on the hill. Even so, the decision to attack was Sobieski's, and was made against the advice of all the leaders. Forage had given out and the weather had broken. The operations were carried out with great vigour against the garrison of 5000, under the command of two Pachas; the Pacha of Aleppo being in supreme command, and having an order from Kara Mustapha to defend the fortress to the last man. The Vizier himself had fled to Buda, followed by the curses of his men, who remarked that he who punished cowardice by execution was himself the first coward. On October 28th the garrison capitulated to Sobieski, and marched out, leaving baggage and artillery.

Esztergom<sup>1</sup> was Christian again after 140 years, and the withdrawal of the Turk from Hungary was now assured. The rebels began to lay down their arms and to surrender castles and fortresses. Sobieski went up to the old castle of Gran on the hill, and into the chapel of red marble, that reminded him of the Cathedral at Cracow. The chapel had been turned into a mosque, but the muezzin was to be heard no more from that hill. Mass was sung, and a *Te Deum*, and once more the Blessed Sacrament reposed in the tabernacle above the High Altar. Well might the King write in jubilation from the conquered town; and well might he reply with anger to the torments and jibes of the Queen:

"I have been deciphering your letter, and the work has brought me nothing but misery. In the name of God, what mischief-maker has got hold of you, and put all these ideas

<sup>1</sup> It had once been a rich bishopric. At this time it consisted of a walled citadel on a rock, with two towers guarding the only entrance, and a town below. Sieniawski, Palatine of Volhynia, who had been the first to start from Vienna, died here of dysentery. Here, too, Lorraine and Sobieski parted, never to meet again.

into your head? I shall draw on myself the hatred of the Poles! Why? Because every day I risk, for them, my fortune, my health, my life. They wanted the alliance with the Emperor. I consented. I put the army on its feet without costing the republic a sou. I am sparing the republic the burden of supporting the army for the winter. I have won glory and riches for my troops. If men have been killed—well, it is the common lot of us all. We are born to die. One must not overstrain the army, they say. That's all very well at the beginning of a campaign, but not towards the end of it, for next year there may be no war. We shall have to wait a hundred years for another such opportunity. You tell me, in your cipher, that others withdrew long ago, and why cannot I, in my quality of auxiliary, withdraw also? My dear love, there is a great difference between me and the others. First, it is to our interest to fight an enemy who, if he were not occupied here, would attack us in Poland. Secondly, nobody else swore such a solemn oath as that which I swore between the hands of the Cardinal-Legate, never to abandon my ally. Thirdly, if I withdrew, the Emperor would come to an understanding with the Turks, to my loss. Fourthly, the Christian armies elected me their Generalissimo; and even if the Polish army had deserted me, I would have remained alone, I would have finished the campaign with the Imperialists, the Bavarians and the Germans. Even now, at the siege of Strigonium (Esztergom), all the foreign generals begged me to command them, without asking any Poles to take part in the operation. Those who wish to make us return to our country are thoroughly ill-disposed towards it; it is as much as wishing to devastate it and to put the paying of taxes beyond its power. There is only one enemy of our country and our religion who could have wanted to fill your head with such ideas. Once and for all, I will not bring the army back to Poland. Someone else can be prevailed on to do it; let him make his country this fine present. As for me, it is time for me to rest, for no enemy has overwhelmed me as completely as these arguments and injustices.

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" They know how to talk, these chimney-corner statesmen ! And when their calculations are wrong, what does it matter to them ? They will contradict themselves, and there's an end of it ! Oh ! for the future I renounce all these alliances and all these commands, were they to include Europe in its entirety !

" It is I, then, who must be accused, I who expose myself to fatigue and hardship of every sort, I who torture myself day and night for the happiness of my country. Very well ! Let these clever talkers show their capacity. Let them replace me in my authority, since all I do is ill done—whatever the whole world may say. Yes ! Let the counsel of your advisers prevail ! Let everything be done according to their caprices ! For my task here will soon be accomplished. It will be accomplished with honour and glory, at any rate in the opinion of the foreigners, even if not in the opinion of my own people. . . ."

In this letter, for the first time, all the bitterness that Sobieski had been storing up for weeks burst out, and I find most illuminating that passage in which he says that he would stay to finish his work alone if the whole Polish army deserted. The energy and simplicity with which he expressed his conception of duty and of loyalty to an oath leave no ray of doubt as to the explanation of his obstinacy. Personally, he was as eager to be at home in Poland as anybody else. He was an old man, in failing health, and he was deeply devoted to his wife and his children. If he could have ridden back to the quiet gardens of Wilanow with a clear conscience and a belief in the security of Poland from further attacks, no mere appetite for glory would have held him from the pleasures of family life. But the clouds of tragedy which were to darken his end had already appeared. Almost before the last bonfires that carried the tidings of Vienna across the world had cooled, this King who was so much too great for his time saw the end that was to come upon all his high renown. We can see him moving across Hungary, strong on his horse, his head bowed, and all about him the iron fields of winter and the clear frosty

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air; but before he comes to his own land again the storm-light has made an uncertain background for his already legendary figure.

Esztergom had fallen, and the Turk was on the run. A swift stroke might have captured Buda and finished the work. But once more the gods were against it. The snow had arrived, and the muttering of the Poles threatened to become open mutiny. The high officers were almost unanimous in their demand for a return to their homes, and the intrigues and, finally, the open demands of Jablonowski were helped by the disaffection of the Germans and the Imperialists, and by the puerile conduct of the Lithuanians, who obeyed no order, but continued their campaign of plunder and destruction. The negotiations with Tökölyi, already made difficult by the attitude of the Empire, were finally broken off, and the rebels were ordered to do everything in their power to make things impossible for the advancing Poles, and to treat them henceforth as enemies. And so it came about that just when the Poles thought they were safe, and were overjoyed at the knowledge that they were marching northwards, and towards home, they met with resistance everywhere. They went slowly forward into a kind of guerrilla warfare, in which the villagers fired on them from upper windows and from hedgerows. The sick stragglers were butchered wherever they were found, and the advance became slower and more cautious with every day that passed.

On November 5th Sobieski wrote from the banks of the Ispel, near the village of Chago, describing the conditions under which the army was slowly approaching the frontiers. There are rivers to cross, and no bridges, and the weather is very cold, with continual snow. The objective of the army is Schetzin, and the plan is to go from there to Fillek and Kosice, and Eperyes at the foot of the Carpathians. From there two roads led into Poland, one by Lubowla, the other by Bardiov and Markowilze—but it was possible that both might be under snow by the time the army arrived.

Here, in camp near Chago, a council was held, and an



attempt was made to come to some arrangement with the Hungarian rebels, who were on the point of putting themselves once more under Turkish protection. The negotiations came to nothing. The two armies separated.

Sobieski, still further dispirited, led the remnants of his army on towards Schetzin, where, on the vigil of the feast of St. Martin of Tours, he won another victory. As soon as they came in sight of Schetzin a council was summoned, and all, with the exception of two, were in favour of passing on without attempting to attack the place. There was snow underfoot, and hail was falling. The Poles needed little to discourage them, and, weather apart, the strength and good repair of the fortifications, set on their hill, were no incentive to an attack. Sobieski, however, told them that he was lucky in the matter of fortresses, and that they actually surrendered at the mere news of his approach. Once more the will of the King prevailed, and the troops moved forward to the attack.<sup>1</sup> The defenders set fire to the suburbs at once, but the Cossacks rode up, and not only extinguished the flames, but established themselves on the outworks. The defenders, however, kept up such a hot fire that the Poles began to waver, and it was only after three hours of fighting that the garrison surrendered. The Turk in command opened the gates, and he and his associates were brought before the King, trembling, as he writes, "as though they had a fever, falling face downwards on the ground, kissing the flaps of my coat, and begging for their lives."

The place was strong enough to withstand a long siege, and was well furnished with food and munitions, but the *moral* of the Turks was at its lowest. There was no fight left in them. The capture of Schetzin cut communications with Agria, as that of Esztergom had cut communications with Buda.

After Schetzin the King wrote a bitter letter to Marie Casimire, complaining of the mischief done by the Lithuanians, whose commanders would not even obey his summons

<sup>1</sup> Prince James commanded in this action.

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to present themselves before him, and of the ingratitude of the Emperor.

"We are bivouacking in the open air, for we cannot make any use of our tents, the ground being frozen so hard that we are unable to stick the poles in."

Although the weather improved later, there was no other consolation. The joy which Sobieski would have felt as he drew nearer to the frontier was counteracted by his anxiety. He had no news from Marie Casimire, whose new form of torment was to keep him in ignorance not only of what was happening in Poland, but even of the condition of her own health. "If Poland," he wrote to her, "were an island in the middle of the ocean, it would be for us at the present moment like those islands of which the historians speak; islands floating about the sea, now visible, now submerged. For five weeks I have not known whether there is such a country as Poland in the world. And after all, it is not so much political news for which I am hungry, for this could reach me in a roundabout way from Vienna, and thence by the lines of communication. What I must have above all is news of your health; that health upon which depends my own health, my happiness and my life."

The army went slowly onwards, passing the demolished castle of Fillek and heading for the Carpathians. Instructions were sent to the Queen to stop the issue of lies in the Gazettes, and once more the King in his letters dropped the name of Orodontes, which he gave himself while at war, and became again the Celadon to Marie Casimire's Astræa.

Tökölyi was meanwhile drifting towards the Turk once more, and Sobieski, from his camp, made an effort to place before Innocent XI a picture of the danger and misery that would befall the unhappy kingdom of Hungary if it passed once more under the yoke of the Porte. The treachery of the Emperor and of the Hungarian rebels now appeared to him plainly, and the progress of his army became more difficult every day. The insurgents ambushed the Poles, refused them food, and pursued the stragglers night and day.

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Neither the Emperor nor Tökölyi deigned to reply to the letters despatched by the King, and when at last the town of Kosice came into sight, the Poles were met by a heavy fire. Everybody, seeing the King grow more and more dispirited, tried to console him by talking of the welcome that most surely awaited him at Lubowla, the first post on Polish soil. The Queen, they said, would be there, and all had been prepared and set ready in the castle.

On December 6th Preschov was reached, but Sobieski would not assault the place because his army was too tired, and also because he was unwilling to endanger the lives of the Catholic peasant population. After this the conditions of the march became worse. The roads were infested with marauders, and after the capture of the fort of Sibin the army grew more mutinous. Their one desire was to go home by the shortest route, without any more fighting. To force the King's hand, they set about devastating the rich countryside, so as to make it impossible for him to waste a moment's time. They burnt whole villages, and even churches, so that no billets should be found, and destroyed everything that might make a halt of any duration possible. As Sobieski remarked in a letter from Sibin: "It does not occur to them that the enemy may pluck up courage and pursue us into Poland."

Only one course was open to the King. He collected those of the nobility on whom he could rely, leaving the wilder elements of the army, and hastened into the mountains, having told the Queen to come to Czorsztyn or to Nowy-Targ to meet him.

At Lubowla in the mountains, after an absence of four months, the last crusader re-entered his own country, half expecting to find the Queen awaiting him. But she had gone by the wrong road, the road to Sandecz, having written to him an undated letter from Wieliczka, in which she gave no hint of the route she would take. From Lubowla he wrote to her the last letter of the campaign, dated December 17th. In it he said: "I am so unfortunate that I cannot persuade anybody to do anything. They always go against my wishes."

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From Lubowla Jablonowski deserted without a word to the King. Here also Potocki the Grand Treasurer died. Sobieski and the nobles went on in the snow, came down out of the mountains, and took the road through Nowy-Targ to Cracow.

On the eve of Christmas he rode under the triumphal arches into the ancient capital amid the cheers of his people. He went straight through the town to the Cathedral, where a *Te Deum* was sung. He returned clothed in glory, and bringing the spoils of the East in his train, but heavy at heart and worn more by the intrigues of his own people and the treachery of his allies than by the cares of the campaign. He knew what opportunity had been missed, and how his work was but half accomplished. With a disciplined and loyal army and with allies who thought more about the security of Europe than of their own conspiracies, there is nothing he could not have done. But we know to-day that he took the offensive from the Turks, and so mortally wounded their vast Empire that the offensive was never regained. He was not alive to see the end of the matter and the last humiliation of the Porte, but it was he who made possible all that followed after Vienna.

Nearly two and a half centuries after this salvation of the Western world, the armies of a newer and a more ignoble faith than that of Islam swept forward along the old roads of invasion, and were confronted by a long line of Polish soldiers. On the ancient ramparts of Christendom East and West met in arms once more, and once more Europe was saved—perhaps only temporarily. It may be that this new menace will only be removed when there arises a man to rally the nations, and to take up the long story of the Faith where the great King of Poland left it.

## XI

### CHAOS IN POLAND AND THE LAST CAMPAIGN OF SOBIESKI

(1684-1691)

ON Christmas Day 1683, the morrow of Sobieski's entry into Cracow, Kara Mustapha was cornered by the emissaries of Mahomet IV in Belgrade, and ordered to proceed to Constantinople, where, in due course, his head ornamented the gates of the seraglio. For comfort he had the words of the Koran: "There is no more glorious martyrdom than that of dying by the hand or order of the Prince of the Believers." Leopold continued his course of insolence, which even became clownishness, when he had medals struck of himself saving Vienna. He refused to the great noble Potocki enough ground for a memorial to his dead son, and disputed the ownership of the guns captured from the Turks at Vienna. Louis XIV, while reluctant to make any mention of Sobieski in the Gazettes, was quite ready to attribute the saving of Vienna to the Pope and the Emperor. But the fame of Sobieski and the prestige of Poland filled Europe.

In spite of everything the discontented nobles could say against the Vienna campaign, the blow which had shaken the Turkish Empire was not without its effects on the situation on the Polish frontiers. The Ukraine Cossacks placed themselves once more under Polish protection, and with the Poles completed the destruction of the Tartars, who slunk back from Hungary through the first months of the year. This was work of the greatest importance. It was the Tartars, acting as an advance guard of the Turks, who opened the

way into Europe. Those in the track of the various Turkish expeditions could always read the signs of a new attempt. As soon as the flying clouds of cavalry appeared, villagers deserted their homes, and brought their terror with them along the roads of their flight. As for the effect of the Tartars upon Poland itself, a perpetual vigilance, never relaxed one whit, had been necessary to guard against the sudden, swift raids. The fertile province of Podolia, to the south-east of Lwow, is to this day, like Volhynia, littered with the remains of castles ruined in the seventeenth century by the Tartar incursions. Such is Rakowiek on the Dniester, and such is Olesko, the birthplace of Sobieski. For through Podolia ran, and still runs, the Czarny Szlak or black track, along which raiding parties rode in.

Little did anyone imagine what effect the driving back of the Tartars would have upon the Russia of the future, for happier things were afoot. The lords of Moldavia and Wallachia, seeing the turn of events, did homage once more, and put themselves under the Polish eagle. But the impregnable fortress of Kamieniec remained Turkish, and the Poles clamoured for it.

Early in the year 1684 Sobieski was at Javorow to receive in audience the various ambassadors and envoys who came to convey the congratulations of their masters, and in April, at the request of Venice, a treaty was concluded between Poland and the already arming republic. The news of the Turkish defeat stirred even the aged Morosini to take down his sword from the wall and command once more the veterans whose eyes were fixed on Greece. At the same time negotiations with Muscovy broke down, because Sobieski claimed the return of Kiev and Smolensk to Poland; a claim that was a direct defiance to the traditional foreign policy of the Czars, and aimed at keeping Muscovy as far as possible from Western Europe.

In the spring and early summer of 1684 Louis XIV was active again. The treaty of Ratisbor was signed with Leopold, and with complete cynicism the French King left the

Hungarian rebels to stew in their own juice. At the same time he began to intrigue in order to detach Poland from the Austrian alliance; and he had considerable hopes of the resurrected French party and the renewed friendship of the Queen for France.<sup>1</sup>

The historian Salvandy took this Hungarian incident as an example of the shortsightedness of Sobieski, and as a peg upon which to hang the lecture that has been made so familiar by later historians. Sobieski has been blamed for taking his oath too seriously, and for not making certain stipulations with regard to Hungary his conditions for further hostilities against the Turk. So, they say, might he have weakened Austria. We, looking back through history, can see what was to follow because we know what did in fact follow. But it is no more reasonable to call Sobieski shortsighted for not foreseeing the rôle that Austria was to play in Polish history, than to reproach him for not seeing Peter the Great in the eleven-year-old boy at Moscow, or for not foretelling the birth of Frederick the Great of Prussia. To him Islam was the enemy. To him an oath was an oath, and not a political expedient or a vague engagement to be broken off at will.

Sobieski's plan for this year, 1684, was an ambitious one. He regarded, or wished to be able to regard the armies of the League as one force, with Venice as the right wing, Austria as the centre, and Poland as the left wing—a great bird swooping on the heart of the Turkish Empire. He wanted to push the Turks across the Danube, detach the dependent principalities and shut up the Tartars in the Crimea, where he would preserve their neutrality by bribes. To carry out these

<sup>1</sup> Marie Casimire was still demanding the Hat for Forbin-Janson. She even persuaded Louis XIV to ask the Pope for this favour; an action that was regarded as presumptuous at Rome, and gave offence. Pallavicini, at Warsaw, took a grave view of the Queen's persistence, and thought it would be as well to send her the Golden Rose, to prevent her from wrecking the plan of campaign for 1684. At this time (February 1684) Sobieski told Pallavicini that, though he wanted to recapture Kamieniec, he would "act according to the interests of Christendom rather than to the advantage of Poland."

projects it was necessary that Leopold should forget Hungary, as Sobieski would be ready to forget Kamieniec.

The plan came to nothing.

The Emperor Leopold decreed a kind of sham amnesty for the Hungarian rebels; an amnesty so conspicuously insincere that Tökölyi would have none of it, and the Polish King, exasperated, recalled the remnants of the army he had posted in Upper Hungary, and left Lorraine to besiege Buda without Polish aid. The world then had an opportunity of seeing the Imperial troops without the Polish King to lead them. After a siege of four months they failed to take Buda, and were forced to retreat. Everywhere else the offensive was being carried on against the Porte. Before the summer was out the Venetian ships had come down the Dalmatian coast, and old Morosini had taken Preveza. Greece dreamed of liberation once more. Meanwhile Sobieski himself had left Javorow in August and marched to the frontier. He took the eight-towered Podolian castle of Jaslowicz, and went on to the Dniester, where, opposite Kamieniec, he built the Fort of the Trinity as a base for his troops, and held court. The Queen was there, and all the foreign ambassadors. But Kamieniec remained in Turkish hands, although the new fortress built by the King caused considerable trouble among the convoys. It was the old story. October wore on. When the King gave the order to prepare for an attack, Jablonowski opposed him, and used in the Council his authority as Grand Hetman. The attack never took place. In November<sup>1</sup> the humiliated King led his army back to Zolkiew. With him went the host of ambassadors, and many cadets of the great French families who had come to serve their apprenticeship under so famous a captain. It was only his own generals who would not fight for him, and the greater his renown grew and the wider his fame spread throughout the world, the more was he mocked by his own people.

<sup>1</sup> There appears to have been at this time some talk of an arrangement between Louis XIV and Sobieski by which the former would support the succession of Prince James.



It was certainly more than a coincidence that there followed the King on this summer campaign of 1684, not only the disloyal and mutinous Jablonowski, the friend of France; and the Queen, once more Francophil; but also the Marquis de Béthune—with instructions from Versailles. They hindered the operations as vigorously as they could.

The French party won large numbers of adherents by assuming the attitude of a patriot group protesting against the tyranny of a King who had at heart his own glory rather than the good of the country. They made much of the distant Viennese adventure, and the fact that while Poland was still serving the interests of Austria and of an ambitious King, the key to Eastern Poland was still in infidel hands. Who cared about Hungary? Kamieniec was the one pressing concern of Poland. Why should Polish lives be sacrificed to the voracious appetite for glory of one man? Was not the fact that Kamieniec was still Turkish proof enough that Sobieski was neglecting the interests of his kingdom? And so on. To which the King might very properly have replied that it was the French party who refused to make an assault on Kamieniec, not the King. But he knew the danger of civil war, and once more what looks at first sight like mere weakness was but one more instance of wisdom. He had had a long training in ignoring the injustice with which his closest friends treated him.

The year closed in discord, and the health of Sobieski grew worse.<sup>1</sup> He suffered at this time considerably from insomnia.

According to the Constitution the Diet of 1685 should have been convened at Grodno in Lithuania. But the King summoned it to Warsaw; an obviously wise step, since Grodno was too far away at a time when another clash with the Turks was imminent. But this was yet another cause for the malcontents to make a disturbance, and for the Lithuanians to talk of the indignity put upon their country. Casimir Sapieha, who was hand-in-glove with Jablonowski, made the most of the occasion to plot for an independent republic of

<sup>1</sup> Pallavicini, in a letter of December 6th, speaks of the King's swollen legs (due to dropsy).

Lithuania. The Diet which should have opened on February 16th was held up until April, after the pride of the Lithuanians had been salved by the announcement that though they were to assemble at Warsaw, the Diet should be called the Diet of Grodno! The session was remarkable for the violence of the opposition to the King, and those who have suspected that Polish institutions still retained more than a touch of Sarmatian barbarity will be interested to read that the nomination of the Grand Chancellor provoked such an uproar that old Pac and Sobieski, who had fought a duel thirty-five years before, each laid his hand upon his sword. With roaring and the clash of arms and violent speeches the futile Diet dragged on, accomplishing nothing but intrigue and preparing the ground for the final collapse of the unhappy country. The only point upon which there was unanimity was the refusal to mediate between Tökölyi and Leopold. But the real business of the Diet, the voting of subsidies and the legislation to deal with the coming campaign, was postponed over and over again by the very nobles who were howling for an advance on Kamieniec. Sobieski himself, of whom the generals were jealous, had decided that his health was not good enough to allow him to lead the army into action, but even so the wrangling continued. On the last day of May the Diet ended, and Jablonowski placed himself at the head of what troops he could find. The intention was to march on the much-discussed fortress, but if the regiments of Lorraine had missed the Polish King, his own people were to feel the need of him still more acutely. The summer went by, while Morosini was winning fresh successes in Greece, and Lorraine was fighting in Hungary. By September Jablonowski had managed to collect something under 15,000 men with which to cross the Dniester at Halicz. It was out of the question to think of making any attempt on Kamieniec, but something had to be done to save the faces of the nobles in Jablonowski's party. They could hardly return to Poland after four months with the news that they had crossed the Dniester at Halicz and then recrossed it. What they did, therefore, was to advance

hardily into the great forest of Bukovina which stretches from the Carpathians to the Dniester, and get themselves thoroughly surrounded, in a strange country of marsh and gorge and dense woodland, by Turks and Tartars and Bessarabians. They were caught, in October, between the river Pruth and the marshes. In front of them were the Turks, in their rear the Tartars. There was a desperate hand-to-hand fight lasting all through an autumn day; so prolonged, in spite of the numerical superiority (four to one) of the Turks, because the nature of the ground prevented an advance in extended order. The Turks mismanaged their artillery, and the Poles knew that they must either fight or die. Konski, the artilleryman, particularly distinguished himself yet again. His courage and resource and the clever withdrawal of Jablonowski were all that the Poles had to show, so that, when they returned to Poland, their only course was to attribute the failure of the campaign to the inactivity of the King, and his refusal to provide reinforcements, owing to his jealousy of Jablonowski. The latter had not the courage to present himself at Zolkiew, where the King then was. Sobieski's reply to the stories spread by the French party was characteristic. He wrote to Jablonowski, speaking of the obligations under which he, the King, was to Jablonowski, and of the grief which his long absence and his apparent indifference caused him. "Whether I have deserved such things or not, come at once, and dispel the clouds that have covered our intimate friendship. Believe that your presence will do more to restore my health quickly than all the art of the doctors who surround me."

It was a singularly generous letter to a man who had made, first such a traitor, and then such a fool of himself.

Meanwhile the ascendancy of the French party in Poland and the indefatigable efforts of the Queen succeeded in persuading Sobieski to resume diplomatic relations with Versailles, and Leopold saw, with uneasiness, a Polish envoy on his way to the Court of Louis XIV. The Turk was by no means beaten yet, and the Hungarian trouble was still to be dealt with. The old Bourbon-Hapsburg quarrel flared up

again. But the Emperor had not improved his relations with the Polish King by marrying off the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette, promised to Prince James, to the Elector of Bavaria. This act was the culmination of his campaign of neglect and insult.<sup>1</sup> After it, and after the departure of the Polish envoy to Versailles, the Emperor realised that he had perhaps gone too far. Poland by this time was needed in the League of Augsburg.

Seeing that the King of Poland's health was sufficiently restored to enable him to take the saddle once more, Mahomet offered him Kamieniec if he would abandon his offensive against the Porte. Here was a chance to give his nobles what they had so long clamoured for, and without further loss of life or further expense. And those who see in the refusal of Sobieski one more example of his bad statesmanship, adduce as supplementary proof of his personal ambition the fact that it was Leopold's offer of Moldavia and Wallachia which made him reject Mahomet's offer of Kamieniec. They would show us Sobieski hesitating and calculating, weighing the two offers to see which would bring him the more glory and wealth. Sobieski did hesitate and calculate. He did weigh the two offers. But a larger vision was before his eyes than any mere personal triumph. The everlasting desire of his life as a soldier had been not the defeat of the Turk in battle, not diplomatic arrangements with them, but one final and irresistible attack on a large scale, to hound them off Christian land, and to bottle them up in the East so decisively that they would never again trouble Europe. Kamieniec, ceded to Poland, might be recaptured at any moment. And where was the garrison to come from, with the whole country split into factions? But Moldavia and Wallachia meant an advance far into the enemy's territory, right up to the Danube and the Black Sea. Moldavia and Wallachia meant a basis for further operations against the very heart of the Ottoman Empire. And their possession by Poland, guaranteed by Leopold when

<sup>1</sup> Pallavicini mentions an occasion upon which the Austrian envoy refused his arm to the Queen.

once they should have been conquered, would not only advance the religion and culture of Europe by hundreds of miles, but would remove for ever the peril of invasion. The possession of Kamieniec would only make invasion more difficult. Moreover, with Morosini advancing across Greece and rolling up the Turks as he went, and the Poles established along the Black Sea, Hungary, if still unconquered by Lorraine, would be slowly isolated.

When Leopold made his offer of help in the conquest of Moldavia and Wallachia, Sobieski must have thought that Fate was after all about to make amends to him for the misery of his declining years.

The chosen emissary of Leopold was a Jesuit priest of Savoy, by name Vota, who gave it out that he was passing through Poland on his way to Moscow, where he hoped to bring back the schismatics into the Church. His varied talents and his charm of conversation quickly made him welcome in the King's household. Instructed by the Pope himself, Vota set to work to win over the Queen, and so paralyse the French party. It was not difficult. The moment Marie Casimire heard talk of a Moldavian throne for one son, a Wallachian crown for another, she was convinced. The insults of the Emperor were forgotten. The French party might go to the devil. From that moment she added her persuasive voice to the voice of the Jesuit, and we may be certain that she was clever enough not to make too much of the thrones and crowns.

The year 1686 opened to the noise of arming. It seemed as though the dream of Sobieski would be realised at last, and a ring of steel be forged round the territories of the Porte. Everywhere the Turk was on the defensive or in retreat, for the wind of freedom was blowing over the old Christian places, and the story of Vienna had roused the subject peoples like a trumpet-call. And the centre of all this movement, this awakening, the directing will was Sobieski, who thought to serve Christendom, and was the heroic dupe once again of the Emperor. He made a treaty

also with Moscow, by which the Muscovites for their own ends agreed to attack the Porte, and he even tried to persuade the Persians to move on Erzerum and Baghdad and Basra. He poured out his own treasure to raise troops, and started a recruiting campaign among the Cossacks of the Ukraine. When the spring broke the harassed Turk saw himself beleaguered by land and sea. The Venetians had got a foothold on the Dalmatian seaboard, the Papal ships were in the Mediterranean, Maltese galleys in the *Ægean*, and the saics of the Cossacks came within striking distance of the Black Sea ports. By land the Russian drive was expected, and kept the Crim Tartars in suspense. The Balkan mountain tribes were revolting, Lorraine was coming down the Danube, and Caprara was advancing into Transylvania. The Christian world was at last on the move to drive back the Turk into a corner of his Empire, and to pen him up in such a fashion that he would never again be a serious menace. The question now asked in the Turkish army was : Where would the Polish King strike? He was known to be upon the frontiers. But nobody except the few courtiers with him, among whom were many Frenchmen, knew the true state of affairs in Poland. Nobody suspected that the splendour that dazzled Europe was but a magnificent façade, standing like a piece of stage-scenery, and hiding the reality behind it. Nobody suspected that this prematurely old warrior, now fat and suffering from gravel, was Poland, and that under his very eyes the nobility quarrelled and betrayed and sulked, and destroyed their country even while their mouths were full of empty phrases. Nobody would have believed that the man who had breathed new life into the Christian cause, and had set in motion the ships and the great captains and the fighting men from Venice to the Ukraine, from Malta to the Balkans, could not raise a Polish army to follow him. At his shoulder was Jablonowski, still chattering about Kamieniec, and he waited upon the Dniester in agony of mind while the daily news of Christian successes came in.

Blazing summer had arrived by the time an army had been

collected, and in July took place a slow march from the Dniester to the Pruth through the dark Bukovina where the corpses of the last campaign lay rotting. From the desert steppes the army passed on to the more fertile plain of Eastern Moldavia, leaving behind the old battle-field of Cecora,<sup>1</sup> still strewn with rusted and broken armour, where Zolkiewski had fought long ago. It was mid-August before the weary army entered Jassy, the capital city of Moldavia, and received the submission of the leading nobles ; one of whom, however, decided to fight for the Turk, while provisioning the Poles, for he was not quite certain which side would win.

After two days the army went forward once more along the Pruth and the country became more and more deserted and strange ; Mahomet was playing his game well. As Poland was left further and further behind them, the troops lost heart. There was no sign of the promised help from the Emperor. Once more he had betrayed them, and their King had brought fresh sufferings upon them. But while they thus grumbled Sobieski saw Bessarabia before him, and finally, as in a vision, the longed-for shore of the Black Sea. On August 21st the Tartar horsemen from the Crimea appeared. For the Muscovites, too, broke their word, and as the Poles went on over the plains where Darius rode against the Scythians, they were harried and hustled by day and night. Food was giving out, and there was no water. Even the streams were dried up.<sup>2</sup> A favourite trick of the Tartars was to make a sudden raid with the object of setting the grass on fire, the double purpose being to starve the horses, and to increase the thirst of the men, who were forced to march in a perpetual warm dust. When the level plains gave place to more hilly country, ambushes were added to the anxieties of the despairing army. But Sobieski held them together, still believing that help would come.

<sup>1</sup> This plain was a favourite rallying-place of the Tartars.

<sup>2</sup> The country through which the Poles marched had been almost without rain for three years. Dupont, who took part in the campaign, said that quite large rivers were completely dried up.

## CHAOS IN POLAND

The Turks, meanwhile, in great alarm, deflected an army that had been intended for Hungary, and entrenched themselves in the path of the advancing Poles. Which no sooner had the shilly-shallying Moldavians and Wallachians seen than they decided that the Turks would have no difficulty in overcoming the diseased and depleted Polish army. They therefore threw in their lot once more with the Porte.

The moment was critical. As an effective fighting force the Poles were now about ten thousand. The Tartars were on every side of them, and the Turks barred their advance. To retreat seemed to be as perilous as to give battle. Moreover, the Turks, carrying out a new tactic of theirs, denied battle. It appeared to be quite easy to hold the Poles off at arm's length until they died in their tracks or surrendered. Sobieski, true to his principle of the offensive, watched alertly for the chance to give battle. After that his plan was to take up a position on the Danube. But the army and its leaders were by now demanding to be led homewards again.

On September 3rd the order was given, and on this day, when the Polish army began the indescribable march back across the burning steppes through the roving Tartar squadrons, the soldiers of Lorraine entered Buda, where the muezzin had called to prayer for nearly a century and a half. But the fate of Buda was decided far away on these savage steppes, for the name of Sobieski had turned all eyes towards the Black Sea, whither he was known to be marching, and Abaffi's Transylvanians, who might have gone to the rescue of Buda, had fallen into a pitiful panic the moment the Polish King appeared on the Moldavian frontier.

This expedition to the Black Sea which Sobieski had planned with such high hopes failed in its object. But as a diversion it drew the attention of the Porte away from the fields where other Christian armies won successes. Its accidental results were widely felt.

The retreat along the Pruth and back to Poland was one of the most astounding operations of Sobieski's career. It took nearly six weeks, but it was accomplished. What the King



had to do was to lead a starving, thirsty, sick, mutinous and exhausted army across plains on which even the grass was cinders;<sup>1</sup> to meet, with such material, repeated Tartar attacks from every quarter, at every hour of the day or night; to close his heart against false hopes of finding villages unburned; and, above all, by example and by the strength of his will to preserve some semblance of discipline and of the military temper of his sorely tried troops. And all this was done by a sick old man of fifty-eight whose hopes had been disappointed once more, and whose task would begin all over again the moment he crossed the Polish frontier.

In November Sobieski was at Zolkiew receiving the excuses of the Muscovites, and already thinking of next year's campaign. He was now suffering from an old wound received in his youth, and his intimates, including the Queen, had begun to suspect that his days of active warfare were over. They did not know what flame burned in his worn body, nor guess with what chagrin he heard, once again, the old cry of "Kamieniec!" The vision of the Black Sea, of Constantinople was growing dim. He knew that he had not many years left, but the vigour with which he had been wont to override his nobles, and the eloquence that had so often brought them back to his side, were no longer unimpaired. He announced that the campaign of 1687 would be directed to the capture of the Turkish stronghold. This having been captured, there might still be time for the great stroke before he died.

The year 1687 showed, if further proof were needed, how much the Polish campaign of 1686 had done for the Christian cause. The moment it was known that the King meditated nothing but an operation against Kamieniec, the Turks breathed freely, and the Transylvanians became once more their active allies. In the month of June the Polish army set

<sup>1</sup> Dupont says that they had black faces like the Ethiopians, from the dust of charred scrub raised by their feet. As they plodded on, funeral mounds were used for observation posts, and they put bombs inside dead horses to prevent the Tartars getting them for food.

out for Kamieniec, but the King was evidently in no condition to command in the field. In July Prince James, Jablonowski and Sapieha took over control, and in the second week of the month the fortress was bombarded from the left bank of the Dniester. But once more the garrison held out, and the place remained in Turkish hands.

By the autumn the situation was such that, had the Emperor Leopold been another kind of man, the Turkish Empire might have been smashed to atoms. For success had followed failure in Hungary, and Lorraine was sweeping the Turk before him, the Venetians had taken Corinth and Athens,<sup>1</sup> and many Turkish garrisons were in revolt. The provincial troops turned and marched on Constantinople, where they demanded and obtained the deposition of Mahomet IV, who was thrown into prison. His successor, liberated from prison for the purpose, was his own ridiculous, inactive, half-crazy brother Soliman, the third of that name.

What a moment! Suppose that Leopold had loyally supported Sobieski, and that the Imperialists, the Venetians and the Poles, with the great King for their Generalissimo, had acted in concert, thinking only of the future of Europe! But Leopold was busy beheading the Hungarian nobles, and thinking of new ways to humble Louis XIV. Nor did he desire that Sobieski should, through him, win any more glory. And so the chance was lost.

One of the first acts of the miserable and terrified Soliman was to send an envoy to the Emperor to ask for peace; an action which awoke Louis XIV with a violent start, and set in motion once more all the old dreary and familiar intrigues. Béthune at Warsaw was to prevent Poland planning any further campaigns against Turkey, while Girardin at the Turkish capital was to persuade the Sultan that the last thing he, the Sultan, wanted was to sue for peace at the Court of Vienna.

<sup>1</sup> It was during this bombardment of 1687 that a Venetian shell exploded in the Parthenon, which the Turks were using as an arsenal, and blew the centre out. Many of the pillars lay where they had fallen until the work of replacement was begun in our time.

## THE LAST CAMPAIGN OF SOBIESKI

In January 1688 the Diet opened at Grodno, and it quickly became evident that in one point alone were all the factions unanimous: opposition to the King. However much one party might differ from another, they were all agreed upon the necessity of defying his authority, ignoring his wishes, impeding his attempts to get anything done. Grodno and the surrounding country were in a state almost of civil war, and there was more fighting than debating.<sup>1</sup> Sobieski himself was interested in but one piece of business, the voting of the money for raising levies, so that there should be no delay in the resumption of hostilities. Against him he had the French party, with his own wife and Jablonowski at the head of it, howling for peace with the Porte; and the Austrian party, who, on the one hand, wished to make use of Poland, and to appear to be fulfilling or about to fulfil their obligations, and, on the other hand, were frightened of the magnitude of the Polish King's schemes. The Austrian problem was to keep Poland friendly, while dissuading the nobles from supporting the King's policy.

As the Diet progresses, the main lines are more easily traceable. We see that once more the old Bourbon-Hapsburg quarrel is being fought out in Poland. Neither party can afford to dispense with Poland, while each tries, by its own methods, to put obstacles in Sobieski's way. But the Emperor Leopold's party has this advantage, that it was able to use for its own ends a considerable body of the nobility whose only idea is the recapture of Kamieniec.

This, the Emperor felt, was a local affair, and there was no harm in supporting it. There was all the difference in the

<sup>1</sup> A French abbé, "F. D. S.," was present at this Diet, and describes a scene that took place in the following words:—"The deputy then struck the bishop violently in the belly with his elbow, crying that he was fitter to live in an alley than to occupy an episcopal chair." The cause of this brawl was that the deputy called the King a miser, and the bishop protested. The abbé, whose name I have been unable to trace, wrote a book about his stay in Poland which is full of interest for a student of the period. It is called "*Rélation d'un voyage de Pologne fait dans les années 1688-1689.*" (See Appendix E.)

## THE LAST CAMPAIGN OF SOBIESKI

world between a Polish campaign against a frontier fortress and an expedition to the Black Sea. Louis XIV, who had already lost enough prestige by standing aside during the years of the Christian reawakening, saw where a determined Polish-Austrian campaign might end; so that the French party opposed as bitterly as the Austrian party the schemes of the Polish King. But Sobieski had yet other opponents to deal with. There was the discontented, lawless mob of men who belonged to no party at all, but knew that a disordered kingdom was to their advantage, and had but one desire—to stir up as much trouble as possible.

To restore order to such a state of affairs would have needed the prolonged labour of a young and vigorous monarch in full health, able to give all his time and his energies to the matter in hand, and with no external troubles to interrupt his work. The old King, sick in body and mind, betrayed on every hand, had no chance of doing more than preserve his dignity, and even, to a certain extent, his popularity. On a visit to Vilna he was acclaimed on all sides.

While everything in Poland was upside down the unhappy King was made the victim of yet another humiliation. Two years before he had planned a match between his son James and the young Princess Radziwill of Lithuania. She, however, had married instead Louis of Brandenburg. When he died, Gravel, the French minister in Berlin, partly to ingratiate his master with Sobieski, and partly because the French party was very strong in Lithuania, succeeded in persuading the widow to become betrothed to James. The young Polish Prince travelled to Berlin to see her and to conclude the formal betrothal, but the moment he had started on the return journey to Warsaw, she married Charles of Neuburg, brother of the Empress of Austria; much to the secret delight of Louis XIV, who could conceive no reason why, after such treatment, Sobieski should have anything more to do with the Emperor. He thought that surely no oath, however solemn, could be expected to survive this last and basest treachery. Once more Louis misread Sobieski; and when a

Turkish envoy arrived in Warsaw to offer not only peace but the fortress of Kamieniec, he returned to Constantinople carrying a refusal.

But the summer wore away, and no army was raised to march against the Turk. From end to end the kingdom was split and divided against itself, and the turbulent nobles began to talk of revolution. The sickness of the King, and the fact that he had not had his way in the matter of another expedition into Moldavia and Wallachia, emboldened them. Also his desire, of which he made no concealment, to establish an hereditary monarchy, encouraged them to cry out against attempted tyranny. Here the Austrian party was behind them, for Leopold hated the idea of an orderly and prosperous Poland, benefiting by a strong Constitution and a settled succession. And it was part of Sobieski's tragedy that once more all that he tried to do for his country was attributed to mere personal ambition. He himself understood, without room for doubt, that the foundations of Poland were cracking, and that only a settled government could save the country. But the nobles saw only a man who was desperately eager to secure the succession for his own family, in case one of the great houses should try to get it.

While the time slipped away, Louis XIV had allied himself with the Turk and had drawn all Europe against him.

The King was now openly insulted in the Assemblies, and accused of despotism and of destroying his country for a whim of his own. To one of the attacks made upon him he replied in words that have been often quoted. He spoke of the insane passions that led the Poles to fight among themselves instead of fighting to preserve their country. He said: "With what mournful amazement will posterity one day observe that we allowed our country to fall from such a height of glory (when the name of Poland filled the world) into ruin—and, alas! into lasting ruin. I, for my part, have been able to win battles here and there, but I recognise that I have no means of salvation at my disposal. Nothing is left for me but to entrust the future of my beloved country, not to destiny,

since I am a Christian man, but to God Almighty, great and powerful. It is true that I have been told to my face that there is a remedy for the evils of the Republic; namely, that the King should not do violence to liberty, but should restore it. Has he then done violence to it? Senators, this most holy liberty, in which I was born, in which I grew to manhood, is based upon the good faith of my sworn oath; and I am no perjurer. To this liberty I have devoted my life; from my infancy the blood that runs in my own people has taught me to found upon this devotion my glory. Let him who doubts me go visit the tombs of my ancestors. Let him follow the road traced by them, for me, towards immortality. He will recognise by the trail of their blood the path that leads to the Tartar lands and the deserts of Wallachia. He will hear, coming from the very bowels of the earth, and from beneath the cold marble, voices that cry aloud, 'Learn from me that it is a beautiful and a pleasant thing to die for one's own land.' I could invoke memories of my father, and of the glory that came to him when he was called four times to preside over the Assembly in this temple of our laws, and of the name Buckler of Liberty, which he so richly merited. But, believe me, all such eloquence of the tribunal would be better employed against those who, by their disorders, call down upon our country the cry of the prophet; the cry which, alas, I seem to hear resounding over our heads: 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be laid waste.' "

He told them of the retribution that would come upon them. He said: "Senators, in the presence of God, of the world, of the whole Republic, I protest my respect for liberty; I promise to safeguard it such as I received it. Nothing, not even the monster ingratitude, shall force me from this sacred trust. . . . I will continue to sacrifice my life to the interests of religion and of the Republic, hoping that God will not refuse His mercy to one who never refused to give his days for his people."

Nothing of that gloomy prophecy was overdone. Within but a few years his forebodings had been justified. Mean-

while, we are told that the speech impressed the Assembly profoundly. It is no wonder. We who read the words to-day, translated, and with all the life gone out of them, must surely be moved by the nobility of sentiment; our hearts, at this distance of years, and with the barriers of language and custom between them and the rhythm of these solemn utterances, must surely lift, as in a wind from beyond the world, when we come to that large and simple image of the great Captains of the olden time who hewed out the road that led to the strange deserts of Wallachia. Call up a picture of him, standing to address his nobles; royal still in his bearing, for all the heaviness of his body and the flesh on his face. Call up the large dark eyes, informed with intelligence, the greying hair at the sides of the tonsured head, the swift glance of one whose life has been passed in camps and upon battle-fields. As he spoke there was command in the very air about him, but when he approached his peroration the strength of his feeling overpowered him, and he was an old man, broken in health and making a last appeal.

The immediate effect of that speech upon the mercurial Poles was what we should expect. They acclaimed the warrior King, for as he sat there they saw his tall figure against a strange background, and remembered how that voice had rallied them in the frozen Podolian march or under the blazing sky above the Moldavian steppes. Forty years and a hundred battles had charged that venerable face with some strong magic that the Turks had taken for wizardry. The nobles, emotional and impulsive, swung back from their treachery and their small-mindedness under the influence of his will. The subsidies were voted.

Pronounced though the effect of the King's speech had been, it was short-lived. No hastily adjusted dressing could heal the wounds from which Poland was dying. In the first month of 1690 another Diet was summoned—surely sufficient proof that all the chatter about despotism and tyranny was sheer nonsense. The Diet was as stormy as its predecessor, and Sobieski was accused of trying to stuff his own pockets by

negotiating commercial treaties. Since they could not accuse him at the moment of plunging the country into war again, they chose what was to hand; his attempt to employ the rare interval of peace in developing the commerce of Poland. There were the usual daily brawls and insults, and the usual acts of violence committed by the armed factions. Bribes passed to and fro. The Lithuanians were involved in a plot with the Austrian minister. The plot was discovered, and the incriminating letters were delivered by the King to the assembled nobles. Now one, now another threatened to use the veto, and the King had to pardon Sapieha. A bishop was hit in the face, and Poland was put under a three days' interdict. So it went on for four months, and culminated in the abominable torture and murder of a learned man who wrote an ironical comment in the margin of a worthless theological treatise. A creditor of his produced the book, pretended to think that the ironical comment was intended as a serious statement, and got the man arrested. His tongue was torn out with a red-hot iron, his hands burned in a slow fire, and he himself was finally burnt also. Nor had the Polish King the power to stop such an act.

There is no parallel in history to this case of a King whose fame was so great, yet who sat impotent and all-seeing in the midst of a general chaos and ruin. He was like a man who sees and hears and feels, yet cannot move a muscle. And in a little while he was to realise that even though he might move, he was a prisoner. Had there been in Poland a middle class, or had the peasants been more than serfs, with the support of a sane element in the country, Sobieski might yet have succeeded in establishing a monarchy that was a reality. But there was nothing to counteract the factions of the nobility, and he, the King, was forced to watch his kingdom rattling to pieces while the lords fought each other.

The factions would not hear of abdication, but they would not allow the King to do anything in war or peace. The subsidies which had been voted came to nothing. Another spring and summer passed. Meanwhile in the autumn of



1689 had occurred two events of importance. The first was the complete defeat of the Muscovites by the Tartars on the Ukrainian shore of the Black Sea; the second was another revolution at Constantinople. The result of the first event was the ascent to the throne of the man who was to go down in history as Peter the Great, and of the second, the victorious campaign of Kiuperli.

Kiuperli had energy and ambition, but he had something which was more important at that moment—luck. Innocent XI had died, and had been replaced by the milder Alexander VIII. Lorraine was dead, Morosini aged and infirm, Peter the Great neutral, Leopold busy with Louis XIV, and Poland apparently negligible—with no army, and in a state of anarchy.

The campaign of Kiuperli in 1690 was of great peril to Europe, and was the direct outcome of the Bourbon-Hapsburg quarrel, and more particularly of Leopold's treachery and imbecility. The Crescent moved forward once more across the Danube and threatened Hungary. Belgrade was recaptured. Leopold, as I have explained, feared the prestige of Sobieski more than he feared the Turks. In any case he had considered all serious danger over, and had not thought it worth while to press home the advantage won by the Christians, and finish off the work once and for all. He had now the chance of seeing what his narrow and ignoble policy had brought upon Europe. It is not surprising that he looked once more towards the astonishing King whose pledged word seemed to be proof against every form of betrayal, double-dealing, cowardice, hypocrisy, insolence and plain lying. There was nowhere else to look. He held out the same old kind of bait—in case Sobieski should at last have grown weary of his oath. He promised a Neuburg Princess to James, and so genuine was his panic this time that the poor wretch actually carried out his promise, and in March 1690 James Sobieski became related by marriage to the Portuguese, Spanish and Imperial Royal families. One would not suspect Louis XIV of sitting still while this was going on. Béthune

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at Warsaw tried every art and every low practice to stop the marriage and the renewed understanding between Poland and the Empire. He failed, but in the month before the marriage the Tartars marched across the eastern frontier and did considerable damage. Possibly it was not his work. At all events he was recalled by Louis XIV, who had no alternative but to bow to the storm of rage that swept over Poland at the news of the Tartar raid.

The Imperial Princess, however, turned out to be another source of trouble. The Queen detested her at sight and took no pains to disguise her feelings. The young Alexander, her favourite son, also detested her because she added to the importance of his hated brother James. In such an atmosphere the King sought in vain the repose and the normal domestic delights for which he had hungered so long, and which he now needed more than ever. His family, between them, made his life impossible. They treated him as of no importance, and missed no opportunity of emphasising their contempt for his wishes. They snapped their fingers at his authority, haggled about the succession, intrigued, and degraded the whole life of the Court with their vulgar brawling. And when in July 1691 Sobieski climbed clumsily into his saddle, and rode off once more and for the last time at the head of an army, he was no longer the King who had so often ridden confidently and gaily against the Turk and the Tartar. His mind was clouded with sorrows, and in his sickness he perhaps forced himself to take the field rather than remain in his noisy home. The camp may have seemed to him a last refuge, and he may have imagined for himself a death in battle against the old enemy; a nobler death and one that more became a life so lived than the lingering torture that was all he could expect in the bosom of his own family.

So infirm was the King at this time that one is amazed to read of this campaign of 1691. Nothing but his indomitable courage can have made it possible for him to lead his army, especially as his two sons, James and Alexander, quarrelled openly all the time, through jealousy. James actually

published a manifesto in which he said that he would have nothing more to do with his country if this boy-brother were allowed to plot against him. Sordid though the whole business was, there was an excuse for James. He detected the hand of his mother in the repeated attempts to make Alexander of equal rank and importance with himself, and he remembered the incident of the official Gazettes at the time of the siege of Vienna, and the substitution of his brother's name for his own. The quarrel was patched up temporarily, but its cause remained, and exasperated the King at every turn. He was not even allowed peace of mind on the battle-field, and was to end even his military career in the midst of the wranglings of his family.

The campaign was a singularly successful one. The Poles crossed the Dniester and invaded Moldavia; once more throwing Transylvania into a state of terror, and drawing enough Turkish troops away from Hungary to enable Louis of Baden to win the victory of Salankemen on August 19th; in which battle Kiuperli himself was killed, fighting bravely in the ranks. But though Leopold's troops pressed on across the Hungarian border, reconquering the towns as they went, and coming within sight of Belgrade once more, yet no attempt was made to send assistance to the Poles, who apparently still expected Leopold to keep his word.

Sobieski meanwhile advanced, won a victory at Pererita and captured the walled citadels and castles of Moldavia by a series of swift strokes. The hurried retreat of the Turks was a complete justification of his policy of maintaining the offensive and advancing as rapidly and as far as possible. The Turkish retreat, however, was not due entirely to these military successes, for the Polish army was small and ill-equipped, and by no means free from the customary disaffection. It cannot be too often repeated that the mere name of Sobieski, and still more his presence, demoralised the Turks more than any huge army could have done without him. For eight years his enemies had been saying that he was too ill to lead an army, that he could not sit his horse,

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that he would take the field no more. Yet here he was, after forty years of combat, still attacking and still winning battles.

Polish garrisons were left in the Moldavian fortresses, and as no help came from the Emperor, the advance upon Wallachia had to be abandoned. Sobieski returned to Poland with his bickering sons beside him, a sick man. It was his last campaign. He was never again to cross the frontier.

Sobieski was in his sixty-third year when he rode slowly towards Poland to unbuckle his sword for the last time. His tall figure was still imposing, but the strong outlines of the face were lost in the sagging flesh of the cheeks and chin. Only the eyes, large and intelligent, remained to commemorate a vigour that was too swiftly departing from the diseased body. His active years from early manhood had been filled with warfare, and his private life had been crossed and recrossed with a thousand tangles of intrigue, conspiracy and betrayal. Such a life, so lived, demanded an ending either spectacular or calm. He should have died fighting, in some final charge, with the nation solid behind him; or else he should have passed from sleep to sleep, and so to death, with his family united about him, and a stable government assured to his country. No such end awaited him. From the noise of arms and the business of the camp he returned to further disillusionment, and to acute physical suffering. But the tragedy of his last years does but increase his stature.

## XII

### LAST YEARS AND DEATH OF SOBIESKI

(1691-1696)

THE moment it became clear that the physical and mental vigour of the King were at last breaking down beyond repair, and that he would never again lead his cavalry into battle, the nobles prepared to indulge their passion for intrigue with renewed zest. For they felt that at last they would be secure from the interference of the man who so repeatedly appealed to their better instincts, and called them away from the brawls of the factions to wage impossible warfare against an inexhaustible host. His last years, in which he might have had repose after such a life of labour, were tortured by the knowledge that the nobles were wrecking the kingdom with their insane rivalries, and by the attempts made to dishonour his name. He did indeed walk in the gardens of Wilanow or of Zolkiew, as far as his ill-health permitted, and he did indulge his taste for discussion, for reading and for music. But he was never at ease. He slept but ill, and in the long hours of the night he contemplated the future of his country, and turned over in his mind new schemes for persuading the equestrian order to forget their old quarrels, and to unite before it was too late. Sometimes he set out to make a slow journey from one of his estates to another, camping by the way. But the intrigues of his family and the perpetual plotting of those who formed his small Court robbed him of any real repose. Indeed, the chronicle of his last years is a tragedy of which he is the central figure; a Lear without the one grateful child who might have been a solace to him. Everybody seemed to be

awaiting his death eagerly, and nobody had a thought for the future of the unhappy country.

He could do no right in the eyes of the nobility. They accused him of being sold now to Austria, now to France, now to the Jews. When he attended the Diet, and implored them to consider their country and not to expose it to fresh perils by their endless civil war, they said he was trying to interfere with the elective principle and the free expression of opinion. When he withdrew from the turbulence of public life, and lived unostentatiously on one of his estates, they accused him of trying to save money, so that his sons would be able to bribe heavily when he died. Those whose conversation he enjoyed, and whom he persuaded to accompany him from one estate to another, were accused of being spies. When he decided to go into seclusion and lead a camp life with a few courtiers, they said he was hatching some plot or other. They pestered him with their suspicions, and turned all government into a chaos by a ridiculous use of the *liberum veto*. That the old Tartar raids were not restarted on a dangerous scale was only due to the prestige of his name. At the first rumour of his death—and Europe was full of this rumour during the last years of his life—the Tartars did indeed attempt a raid, but when they knew he was alive they retreated. Even when he could no longer mount a horse, even from his couch in the gardens of Wilanow, he held off the old enemy. But the agony of his closing years was that he himself foresaw what would follow upon his death. He knew the character of Marie Casimire and the temper of his sons; the lack of any authority now that his own hand had grown feeble. And he had the bitterness of knowing that all his work, all the glory of his battles had not saved his country. Yet he who had no cause to believe in anything but ingratitude, whose broken heart would have excused an ugly and evil despair, walking beneath his trees, spoke to his doctor of this life so rich in hope of what is to come, and said that for such hope, all the toil and misery of our brief passage through the world are not too great a price to pay. When

he was at Wilanow he had almost daily interviews with the chief nobles and the bishops, in which he strove to make them unite for the good of Poland before it was too late. Even when he was far from the capital, he absented himself from the plays and pageants of Marie Casimire, and spent long hours closeted with those whom he still hoped to persuade.

As he grew feebler, something that was almost anarchy existed in Poland. The abuses which he had remedied broke out anew, and the country districts were at the mercy of any leader who cared to quarter his soldiers on them, or even of wandering bands of adventurers who took what they wanted by force, and were answerable to nobody. The Queen, meanwhile, was busy with her own intrigues. She was as fond of her son Alexander as Sobieski was of James.

Connor, the King's doctor, has described them both briefly. Alexander, he says, was tall and looked like a Pole. James was very dark and very thin. He was of short stature, and more like a Frenchman or a Spaniard than a Pole. Marie Casimire had determined that if either of her sons succeeded to the throne it should be Alexander.

This Connor was present at an interesting ceremony in the first month of 1695, when Sobieski's daughter Theresa was married to the Elector Maximilian, who had fought at the siege of Vienna. The marriage was gratifying to Sobieski, not merely because it gave his daughter a great position, but because Maximilian's first wife, now dead, had been betrothed to James Sobieski. The Emperor, her father, had broken faith in 1685. Connor, who was appointed physician to the new Archduchess during the journey from Warsaw to Brussels, describes the King's "grave, majestic air," in spite of his illness. He was now crippled with rheumatism, and suffering from gravel and dropsy. When grave alarm had begun to be felt about the King's health, a Polish bishop at once remembered that Connor had made a reputation in Poland by correctly diagnosing a disease from which Sobieski's sister was suffering, when all the other doctors were wrong. The bishop



THE PALACE AT WILANOW  
*From a painting by Gaudette at Warsaw.*





at once wrote to the Irish doctor in London, and from one of Connor's letters we know that the King's legs and thighs and belly were covered with hard, purple tumours, for which the only relief was constant rubbing with a warm towel. He could walk only with great difficulty.

No military success was gained during these years. Kami-eniec remained uncaptured. Sapieha and Jablonowski commanded the Polish armies throughout unimportant campaigns in which the Turks and Tartars attacked but half-heartedly, still unable to believe that the King was not at call, and ready to mount his horse once more and lead his nobility into battle. But though the Polish arms won no new success, there came to Sobieski in his retreat news of the Venetian victories that ended the reign of Achmet II, and of the reconquest of the Cyclades. Then, as though he were to be given no consolation in his afflictions, came tidings of the campaign of Mustapha II, and the loss of all that had been won in the *Ægean*. Before the reply of Prince Eugene had echoed across the world, Sobieski was dead.

Marie Casimire increased her activities as the end drew near, and by her intrigues fostered the natural enmity between James and his brother Alexander. She decided that it was high time the King made his will, so that she might know exactly where she stood financially. She therefore deputed a bishop to take the matter in hand. This bishop, Zaluski, has left his own account of what took place. Sobieski was suffering even more than usual at the time, having been persuaded, against his will, by the Jewish doctor Jonas to take a dose of mercury. It nearly killed him, and it is possible that the dose was administered with that object. Sobieski himself cried out, "Is there nobody who will avenge my death?" That gave Zaluski his opening. The King went on, "I see my approaching end; I shall be in the same state to-morrow as to-day. All consolation is now too late." He then asked Zaluski how he had been occupying himself lately, and received the answer that since all men must die, he had been making his will. The King, who understood the hint, burst

into loud laughter, and, quoting a line from Juvenal's sixth Satire—"O Medici, mediam contundite venam"—implied that Zaluski was crazy. "What, my lord Bishop!" said the King. "Do you, whose judgment and good sense I have so long esteemed, make your will? What waste of time! . . . My orders are not obeyed while I am alive. Will they be obeyed when I am dead?" Then, after a long discourse on the making of wills, he said, "Well, Mr. Will-maker, what have you to answer to all that?" At the end of this discussion, Marie Casimire came into the room, but was wise enough to see at once that her plan had been defeated. She left him, therefore, to the Abbé de Polignac and Father Vota, whose conversation he enjoyed during the periods when he was free from acute pain. As he became feebler he could not lie down in bed, but slept, and that but little, on a sofa with furs over him. The Poles said that he had sold himself to the Jews, two of whom were constantly in attendance on him, and the Austrians were alarmed at the possible influence over him of the intelligent and versatile Polignac, the young man from the Velay, who wrote such good Latin verse, and who was later to be a Cardinal.

On the seventeenth of June, 1696, he walked in the gardens at Wilanow. Outside his gates a crowd from the capital and from the surrounding villages had gathered to catch a glimpse of him, or to make some demonstration of affection. His health was good enough to allow him both exercise and conversation, and at noon he heard Mass in the chapel there. He ate well, and then retired to the room where his couch was prepared. The Abbé de Polignac and Marie Casimire were with him, and all were engaged in a discussion, when he was seized with an attack of apoplexy. The alarm was given, and the nobles of the suite, who were still at table, hastened to the room where he lay insensible. Here they waited while the doctors bent anxiously over him and enjoined silence. When he opened his eyes and saw them all about him he spoke in Italian, saying weakly, "*Stava bene*"—"It was well with me then." Then, knowing that the release from suffer-

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ing would not be long delayed, he called to him his confessor, made a full general confession of all his sins, and received absolution; after which the priest gave him the Viaticum and the last rites of the Church. A second attack seized him close upon sunset, and he fell back upon the couch, dead.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix F.

## APPENDIX A

JAMES SOBIESKI gave to Orchowski, the tutor, detailed instructions with regard to his two sons when they set out for Cracow. These instructions were collected under the heads of Religion, Health, Manners, Cleanliness, Brotherly Love, Conversation, Study, Languages, Letters, and so on.

They were to hear Mass daily, and minute instructions were given to them as to the special prayers which were to be said at morning and at evening, and on Feast days. They were exhorted not to miss opportunities of hearing good preachers, or witnessing religious processions. They were to become accustomed to dispensing alms, and to paying special respect to priests and monks. Also they were encouraged to have a special regard for the miraculous image of Our Blessed Lady in the Church of the Carmelites at Cracow, for the tomb of the martyr St. Stanislas in the Cathedral, and for the tomb of St. James in the Dominican Church. They were to be confirmed as soon as possible.

In the matter of health the father deprecated any kind of effeminacy, and recommended walking, ball-games, running and archery. Gluttony was to be avoided. Bad table manners were to be corrected by a beating, and the brothers were to be encouraged in the usages of society, such as dancing, etc. They were not to be seen in public in torn or dirty clothes, and were to follow the instructions of the tutor in the matter of what to wear on ceremonial occasions. The tutor was also charged to see that the brothers did not quarrel, or indulge in petty jealousies; that they chose their companions carefully, remembering their dignity, but not falling into the sin of false pride; and that they avoided idle gossiping. They were

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to learn Latin, German, Turkish, French and Italian. The tutor was to see that they wrote home once a month—a letter in Latin to their father, or in Polish to their mother—and was not to make any corrections in the letters, as that would prevent their father from judging their progress. The tutor was further ordered to make frequent reports on their health, deportment, studies and so forth, and to inform James Sobieski of the latest news from Germany or Italy. This he could easily learn from any merchant in the town.

The boys were to keep a good table, having regard to their rank, but luxury and extravagance were to be avoided. On Sundays and Feast days they were to be encouraged to invite their masters and school-friends to dine with them; taking care that the friends were of good family. And the conversation at table was to be profitable, and not mere idle chatter.

The father even went into such details as the storing of oil and vinegar in a special box; the buying of beer and wine for their cellar and the provision of fuel for the winter; the laundry; and the rent of their house (200 zlate a year), to be paid half-yearly.

## APPENDIX B

POLAND in the seventeenth century was a republic with an elective King as its ruler. Under him, though really far more powerful than he was, were ten ministers of state, and a Senate composed of the great Church dignitaries, the Palatines, or governors of provinces, and the Castellans, or governors of towns. A Diet, composed of deputies elected in each Palatinate, was held biennially in the capital, but it was generally nothing but a brawl, which sometimes verged on civil war. These Diets were held on a plain outside Warsaw, and all those who attended were armed and ready to obstruct any business which might come up for transaction. To pass any measure, absolute unanimity was essential. There was no such thing as the opinion of the majority. One man, for a mere whim, could oppose his veto, and so close the debate. There is, in fact, on record, the case of a young nobleman who opposed his *liberum veto* for fun, and broke up a session. When they asked him why he had done it, he replied that he merely wanted to see how it would work. This ridiculous rule naturally made wholesale bribery the normal thing, and any ambassador who liked could pay some needy gentleman to oppose this or that measure as it came up for discussion, or, at a time of election to the throne, to support his master's candidate. The main result of this system was that the nobles were able to do pretty well as they pleased. The King had no real power at all. He could not attempt any legislation favourable to the peasantry. He could not levy taxes, because he had no machinery for compelling the rich lords to pay. He could not keep a standing army. He could not make war or peace. He was a mere figure-head,

## APPENDIX B

and the country was really ruled by whatever clique of nobles happened to be most powerful at the moment. A contemporary of Sobieski is quoted as having said that the Poles "Owed their preservation to God alone, who protected them to be the invincible bulwark of Europe against the progress of the common enemies of Christendom."

The greater part of the rich landed gentry lived in dread of a strong King, and any attempt to amend the Constitution was denounced as the first step towards the tyranny of an absolute monarchy. In their anxiety to retain their own privileges they destroyed their country. It was the absence of a solid middle class and a powerful and incorruptible executive that made breakdown inevitable. When it came it was complete.



## APPENDIX C

THE following is a description of Vienna taken from " Polish Manuscripts : or the Secret History of the Reign of John Sobieski," written by M. de Beaujeu, a Frenchman in the suite of Queen Marie Casimire.

The city of Vienna, being the capital of Austria, is situated on an unequal plain, being cut with rising grounds, hollow ways, and little heights, watered by the river of Wien, which gives name to the city, runs within 100 paces of the counterscarp, and nearer in some places, betwixt the glacis of the counterscarp and a suburb into which we enter by two stone bridges of very little use during the summer when that river is almost dry. Behind that plain towards Upper Austria there rises a chain of high mountains, which begin at the Danube and extend themselves towards Styria and Tirol, serving as a sort of rampart and barrier to the town, which is covered by them. Those mountains descend by stages, like an amphitheatre, to the very avenues of the suburbs, being a vast quantity of little hills, rough and stony, deep pools occasioned betwixt them by rain, the ascent of them steep and the heights rugged. There's abundance of villages amongst them, and concealed houses in the bottoms, and all round a vast plantation of vines, which fill the body of the amphitheatre. Upon the highest part of the mountains, where the chain begins over the Danube, there are two solid buildings, each of them situated upon a steep hill and separated by a valley. The one is a ruinous castle, call'd Callenberg, and the other a chapel, dedicated to St. Leopold, from which to the suburbs of the city there's a large half German league of

## APPENDIX C

descent across those lower hills, and above a league to the glacis of the counterscarp. The Danube washes one side of all this ground, and before the city forms diverse islands, by the several streams which it throws out to the right and the left, the least and shallowest of which touches the walls at one end of the city, where there is no other ditch, only the body of the place, and a very high wall, which covers the entrance of the city, with a street betwixt both, the canal of the river, over which there's a fine bridge, serving instead of a ditch at that point. The two other arms which are the largest have each of them a bridge, of very good workmanship for timber, and massy, such as the depth and rapidity of the Danube requires. Betwixt those canals there are several small ones, which cut the islands, but don't properly make distinct arms, being only streams that proceed from the inundations of the river. The first of those islands, and the nearest to the city, is a second town, as we may call it, the whole place being full of country-houses, palaces, gardens, great walks of trees, as those of the *Cours le Reins*, enclosures, thickets, malls and other things that conduce to the ornament of a capital city: the whole being inclosed like a park, with high pallissadoes of curious workmanship. This is that they call the Leopoldstadt. From hence we enter the city by a little bridge, and a great suburb beyond it, that joins to the houses of the island; in which the Empress some few years before had caused a Palace to be built, call'd the *New Favorita*, which was the principal beauty of the island, though, to speak freely, all those houses, palaces and gardens have little magnificence or grandeur in them, but the place in itself is very much adorned by Nature. The other island beyond it, betwixt the two great branches of the river, is greater than Leopoldstadt, but without houses, being only adorned with walks of trees and thickets: 'tis called Tabor, and communicates with the first by a large bridge, as it does with the *Terra Firma* upon the Austrian shore by one yet larger. This canal is properly the great stream of the Danube. At the head of this last bridge there's a little fort upon the bank of the river, built only with turf and

pallissadoes, which was useful to the Duke of Lorraine, favoured his retreat, and covered those that sustained the party commanded to destroy the bridge. In all the letters which that Prince wrote to the King of Poland about his retreat, of all those islands he mentions only the Tabor, as if he had confounded it with that of Leopoldstadt, but it is certain that he possessed himself of the latter immediately, from whence his infantry marched to Vienna, and into which the Tartars and Janissaries entered upon their arrival ; so that it was not possible for him to burn the bridge which joins with those two islands. Yet he left Coll. Greben there to defend it till he marched his troops over the Tabor, and gained the other bridge of the great canal : but the Tartars seized it, defeated the detachment, and took or killed Col. Greben, who was never afterwards heard of. Then they run to the other, of which the Duke of Lorrain had time to burn part, and by that means saved the remainder of the Imperial army. Those bridges are now rebuilt, but to me they don't seem to be in the same place, and the road across those islands appears to be changed.

The city is encompassed with large suburbs, which at that time extended very near the glacis, and to which the Imperialists had begun to set fire to satisfy, in some measure, the King of Poland, and to show some deference to his advice, for the Emperor thought there was no need of it ; so that they left in effect the walls of the houses and the terraces of the gardens, which the Turks made use of to place their batteries upon, and to make their approaches ; so that under the shelter of those ruins they advanced their trenches within 60 paces of the counterscarp, the first night that they opened them, which was the 13th July, 1683. This fatal experience hath since occasioned them to remove the suburbs at a greater distance, when they began to rebuild them after the siege. As to the fortifications, some of them are strong and others weak. There are 12 royal bastions, faced with brick, cavaliers, ravelins, half-moons, and fine gates, all faced with bricks, as the bastions, and adorned with wreaths of hewn stone. The

ditch is large and deep, part of it dry and part full of water. The counterscarp is very sorry, ill-pallissaded, nor did I see anything that deserved to be called a *Covert-Way*, or any detached works beyond it. The side on which the town was attacked hath two indifferent bastions, a ravelin before the curtain betwixt both, the whole covered with brick, with a cavalier or platform for guns, and a large ditch, but so little ground within, and so little space betwixt the rampart and the houses, that there could be no retrenchment made on it; particularly the bastion of the court, the Emperor's Palace, joining close to it, and the platform of it serving instead of a terrace for the apartments; so that when the Turks were lodged at the point of it, the Count of Stahrenberg could not make any more than one retrenchment, and told the King of Poland when he showed him the breaches, that he could not have held out above three days longer, notwithstanding certain barricades he had made at the entrance of the bastion, and of the streets which run into it; but I am of opinion, as were all those who saw the disposition of the ground, that it might have been carried in twenty-four hours if the Grand Vizier had not despised our supplies, been less intent upon the spoil of the town, and on the evening before the battle attacked the weak retrenchment of the Garrison, for all engineers agree that he began the siege like an able captain, and one that was well informed of the weak places of the town, and that there is no other place for carrying on of trenches, but those of the two bastions attacked by the Turks, called the bastions of the Lyon and of the Court.

## APPENDIX D

THE Order of Battle for September 12th, 1683, written out in French by Sobieski :

Le corps de bataille sera composé de troupes impériales, auxquelles nous joindrons le régiment de cavalerie du maréchal de la cour (Lubomirski), et quatre ou cinq de nos gendarmes, à la place desquels on nous donnera des dragons ou quelques autres troupes allemandes. Ce corps sera commandé par monsieur le duc de Lorraine.

L'armée polonaise occupera l'aile droite, qui sera commandée par le grand général Jablonowski et les autres généraux de cette nation.

Les troupes des messieurs les électeurs de Bavière et de Saxe seront à l'aile gauche, auxquelles nous donnerons aussi quelques escadrons de nos gendarmes et de notre autre cavalerie polonaise, à la place desquels on nous donnera des dragons ou de l'infanterie.

Les canons seront partagés ; en cas que messieurs les électeurs n'en aient pas assez, monsieur le duc de Lorraine leur en fournira. Cette aile sera commandée par messieurs les électeurs.

Les troupes des cercles de l'empire s'étendront le long du Danube avec l'aile gauche, en se rabattant un peu sur leur droite, et cela pour deux raisons : la première, pour inquiéter les ennemis, dans la crainte d'être chargés en flanc ; et la seconde, pour être à portée de jeter un grand secours dans la ville, en cas que nous ne puissions pas pousser les ennemis aussitôt que nous l'espérons. Monsieur le prince de Valdeck commandera ce corps.

La première ligne ne sera que d'infanterie avec les canons,

## APPENDIX D

suivie de près par une ligne de cavalerie. Si ces deux lignes étaient mêlées, elles s'embarrasseraient sans doute dans les passages des défilés, bois et montagnes ; mais aussitôt qu'on sera entré dans la plaine, la cavalerie prendra ses postes dans les intervalles des bataillons, qui seront ménagés à cet effet, surtout nos gendarmes, qui chargeront les premiers.

Si nous mettons toutes nos armées en trois lignes seulement, cela nous prendra plus d'une lieue et demi d'Allemagne, ce qui ne sera pas à notre avantage, et il faudrait passer la petite rivière de Vienne, laquelle il faut qu'elle nous demeure à notre aile droite ; c'est pourquoi il faut faire quatre lignes, et cette quatrième servira de corps de réserve.

Pour une plus grande sûreté de l'infanterie contre le premier effort de la cavalerie des Turcs, qui est toujours fort vif, on se pouvait fort bien servir de *Spanische Reiter* ou de chevaux de Frise, mais fort légères, pour les porter commodément et à chaque halte les jeter à la tête des bataillons.

Je prie tous les messieurs les généraux, qu'à mesure que les armées seront descendues de la dernière montagne, en entrant dans la plaine chacun prenne son poste comme il est marqué dans ce présent ordre.

## APPENDIX E

THE journal of the Abbé F. D. S. is extremely interesting to any student of this period. The abbé was in Poland for eleven months, from August 1688 to July 1689. He spent a month at Wilanow, which he described as a *colifichet en gentillesse*, and was also at Zolkiew. He dined with Sobieski on a hill at the foot of the garden, from which there was a very fine view. He described the King as being very well made, of great height and surprising corpulence; with a fresh, ruddy complexion, large blue eyes, an aquiline nose, a fine full mouth, admirable teeth; affable, generous, just, prudent, excessively devout; a man of parts—theologian, philosopher, mathematician, historian; possessing a remarkably good memory; speaking to perfection Latin, Polish, French, Italian, German, Turkish and Tartar; quick to attend to trifling matters, but more cautious in affairs of consequence; very fond of money, and therefore accused of avarice. On the whole, to be described as the best brain in the kingdom; lacking only authority; his temperament robust; capable of sustaining fatigue easily. He takes one meal a day, which lasts from one to four o'clock; a hearty eater and a deep drinker; sleeps but little; rises at 6 or 7 a.m., and retires late; dresses habitually in a coat of gold brocade with a diamond girdle; over this a fur robe, richly ornamented.

Marie Casimire is described as very beautiful, of middle height, neither fat nor thin, with a white and rose complexion, black eyes, aquiline nose, small red mouth; teeth not good, though regular; virtuous, liberal, charitable, fond of display; loved walking in the rain even in her finest clothes. She must have persuaded the Abbé that she loved her son James, for he noted down this piece of nonsense.

## APPENDIX B

James was described as small, thin, ugly and hunchbacked, with a girlish voice, fitter for an alcove than for horseback ; delicate, effeminate ; a good singer and dancer. The cultured Poles disliked him, and he would evidently never be King. Alexander, on the other hand, was big and popular, and resembled his father. Constantine, the youngest, was an agreeable, generous little chap, then aged nine. Theresa, the daughter, loathed France, was pretty, vivacious and a good dancer ; her teeth were ugly ; she was proud, avaricious ; of small build but well made ; with fine eyes ; hated her mother, but loved her father ; badly brought up.



## APPENDIX F

ON the death of Sobieski, Zaluski said: "He had but one fault, that he was not born immortal." In 1717 Charles XII of Sweden, who as a boy had made such a hero of Sobieski, saw him lying embalmed in his coffin. Dupont has described how the Swedish King gazed for half an hour at the body, and then said: "What a pity that so great a man should ever die."

On the very evening of Sobieski's death Prince James took possession of the Castle of Warsaw by force, and announced that his mother would not be admitted. The next day the Queen and her retinue bore the remains of Sobieski from Wilanow to Warsaw, but James refused to allow his father's body to rest in the palace. Finally, the nobles and bishops overcame his resistance and the body was laid in state. Marie Casimire refused to give up the crown or any other jewellery, for the proper decking out of the dead man, on the grounds that James might seize them and make off with them. Meanwhile Jablonowski rode in haste to Zolkiew to seize the royal treasure for the Queen. James and his brothers followed, the elder finally keeping the others at bay by turning the guns on them. Marie Casimire's plan was to get the money and the other possessions first, and then to have Alexander elected to the throne. He being a mere boy, she would have all the power. The others really cared only about the money. When this plan failed she changed her tactics, and begged the senators not to elect any of her family. She pretended to have the interests of Poland at heart, and urged the election of a Polish nobleman. Jablonowski was, of course, to be the man, and she would marry him. But Jablonowski would

have none of it, and she was forced back on the idea of being a mere queen-mother. Rather than lose all, she made up her quarrel with James—and so alienated the last fragment of Polish affection from him. In January 1697, and none too soon, she was exiled from Warsaw and went to Danzig.

There was a moment when it looked as though James Sobieski might succeed his father, so great was the power of his father's name; but the moment passed, and Frederick Augustus was elected.

Marie Casimire retired to Rome, where she appears to have led a life that supplied the scandalmongers with plenty of stories from 1699 onwards. In 1707 she was in Naples, travelling under the name of the Duchess of Jaroslavl. Before her death she returned to France, sailing in a Papal galley in June 1714, and settled at Blois, with the permission of Louis XIV. There she died in 1716, aged seventy-five. Orders were given that she should be buried with honours befitting her rank, and in spite of the statement of the prejudiced Saint-Simon to the contrary, it seems that these orders were carried out. But there were difficulties. Nobody knew where to bury her, who had been a Queen, and the priest who was to have made the funeral oration found that he knew nothing about her. Finally, the difficulties were overcome and she was buried.

She left money for Masses to be said, and for charity, asked pardon for her faults, and requested that a monument might be erected to the memory of her husband, near whom she desired to lie; though, she added, her body was not worthy of being carried far.

There is a strange legend of a man who came to the gate of the Capuchins in Warsaw upon a May evening of the year 1716. These friars had guarded the body of Sobieski. Their porter, on hearing the summons without, threw open the gate, and beheld upon the threshold a black casket, and a man who went away with no word said. Within the casket the friars found a silk-lined coffin, and in the coffin the body of an old woman, crowned and holding a sceptre. In her mouth was a

## APPENDIX F

medal, with her name engraved upon it. In this manner, they say, the dead Queen returned to the dead King.

James Sobieski was offered the throne of Poland by Charles XII of Sweden after the defeat of Augustus.

He was carried off by Saxon horsemen while on a hunting expedition with Constantine. Both of them were imprisoned near Leipsic, in February 1704. From there they were removed to Koningstern, from which fortress Charles XII obtained their release in December 1706. James died at Zolkiew in 1737. Clementina, his daughter, married James Edward, the Old Pretender, in 1719, at Montefiascone, after the romantic flight over the Brenner with Charles Wogan. She died at Rome in 1735, aged thirty-three, worn out with unhappiness and ill-health. Her remains are in St. Peter's.

Alexander, too, was offered the crown of Poland by Charles XII, but refused it. He died at Rome, and his body lay in state in June 1714, dressed as a Capuchin friar.

Constantine died in 1726.

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