

murderer and voluntary combatant on the same level—is such, that no man is deterred from risking his own life, or taking that of another, in single combat, from any fear of the penalties of the law, which he knows will never be enforced. In the same manner Henry the Fourth of France, in the five first years of whose reign, we are told, no less than four thousand gentlemen perished in single combat, yielding to the persuasions of his able minister, the Duke de Sully, held a council of his nobility and officers at Blois, in 1602; at which edicts were published, inflicting the severest penalties on duellists. But here again, as in the former case, the law was wholly inoperative; as pardons were so easily obtained by those who offended it, that none of the penalties were ever enforced. The conduct pursued by Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, was more prompt and decisive. During one of his campaigns in Russia, the practice of Duelling had reached such a height in his own army, that he denounced death against any who should engage in it. Two officers in high command, nevertheless, subsequently quarrelled, and, knowing the king to be inflexible, they did not dare to fight without asking his permission. It was granted; but on condition that the king himself should be an eye-witness of the combat. The time and place being appointed, the combatants appeared; when they found the king, accompanied by a small body of infantry, which he drew in a circle round them: and calling the provost-marshal to attend as executioner, he said, “Let the combatants continue until one is slain; and the instant that occurs, do you behead the other before my eyes.” The generals (for the officers were of that high rank) pausing at the inflexible determination of their sovereign, mutually embraced, and forgave each other in the presence of their monarch—solicited, and received his pardon, and promised to be, as they continued, till death, firm and faithful friends. Joseph the Second, the Emperor of Germany, in a letter written with his own hand, to one of his general officers, dated Vienna, August, 1722, says:

“I will not suffer Duelling in my army. I despise the maxims of those who pretend to justify it, and to kill each other in cold blood. I feel high esteem for officers who courageously expose themselves to the enemy. The indifference with which they brave death in battle is useful to their country; but there are among them men ready to sacrifice every thing to revenge, and to the hatred which they bear to their enemies. I despise them. Such men are, in my opinion, no better than the Roman gladiators. Call a court-martial to try the two officers, who have given and received challenges to fight. Examine the subject of their quarrel with the impartiality which I require from every man who is invested with the office of rendering justice; and let him who is guilty submit to his fate, and to the rigour of the laws. I am resolved that this barbarous custom, worthy only of the times of Tamerlane and Bajazet, and which has so often thrown families into mourning, shall be repressed, should it even cost me the half of my officers to effect it. There are still men who know how to unite bravery with the duties of a faithful subject. It is they who respect the laws of the state.”

In the reign of Louis the Thirteenth, the successor of Henry the Fourth, and surnamed the Just, the law against Duellists was so rigorously put in force, that men who were mortally wounded in the combat were dragged to the gibbet, and there hung up by the hands of the public executioner, before they died of their wounds. In the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, in the year 1609, a Court of Honour was established, for considering and deciding on all points theretofore settled by appeals to arms; and from that period, the number of duels began greatly to decline; as undoubtedly they would do in any country where so much more just and satisfactory a method than the barbarous one at present in use, should be adopted for the settling of all personal matters of dispute. In 1712, Augustus, king of Poland, prohibited Duelling in his kingdom by severe edicts. Even Christophe, the late