

about, the re-establishment of a successful Imperial government could be no longer expected from the central authorities,—the Emperor and the Imperial Diet (Reichstag). Austria and Prussia had as rivals, now risen to a height of power which enabled them to lay claim to the leadership of the entire nation. Austria took the initiative. To the old inherited lands of the House of Hapsburg were added as a result of the great victories of Prince Eugene the whole of Hungary, with Belgium and Lombardy, then Tuscany, Modena, and Galicia. Accordingly, from the inheritance of the old Empire, that cardinal principle, namely, the union with the Church of Rome, was unswervingly maintained by its successor. Catholicism enjoyed to some degree its former ascendancy.

But the inner strength of Austria did not at all correspond to the extent of its dominions, and its ambitious schemes. In the endeavor to increase its Italian possessions, the court of Vienna gave up Strasbourg; by the cession of Lorraine it paid for the acquisition of Tuscany, and to gain Venetia it sacrificed Belgium and the left bank of the Rhine. Germany had good reason to wish that another power might rise by the side of Austria which should protect the northern and western borders of German territory. This task fell to Prussia.

Christianity and civilization had been introduced into Prussia towards the close of the Crusades, since that time it had been governed by the grand masters of the Teutonic Order, and then by the princes of the House of Brandenburg under the title of dukes. In 1701 it arose to the dignity of a kingdom, the title of king being conferred on Frederick, the son of the great Elector of Brandenburg.

His successor, Frederick William I, so enlarged his boundaries and strengthened his authority, that the name of Hohenzollern began to shine bright beside that of Hapsburg. His was a nature in which the repulsive and the imposing, the uncouth and the admirable, were closely united. But his reign was the rough, rude bridge which led to a Frederick the Great, and the reign of the Great Frederick was that other bridge which led to the powerful Prussian Kingdom from which was to spring a new German Empire.

When Frederick William died, in 1740, his son was prepared to take the reins of government with a comprehensiveness of grasp of which his father was incapable. He snatched from the Court of Vienna in a bold attack the noble province of Silesia, and then made good his claim to it in an unprecedented war of seven years'