

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Scott
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Burton Harte
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Hesse
Hale James Hastings Cooke
Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott
Swift Chekhov Newton



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History of Friedrich II of Prussia

Volume 3

Thomas Carlyle

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HISTORY OF FRIEDRICH II.
OF PRUSSIA

FREDERICK THE GREAT

By Thomas Carlyle

Volume III.

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BOOK III. — THE HOHENZOLLERNS IN BRANDENBURG. - 1412-1718

Chapter I. — KURFURST FRIEDRICH I.

Burggraf Friedrich, on his first coming to Brandenburg, found but a cool reception as Statthalter. ["*Johannistage*" (24 June) "1412," he first set foot in Brandenburg, with due escort, in due state; only Statthalter (Viceregent) as yet: Pauli, i. 594, ii. 58; Stenzel, *Geschichte des Preussischen Staats* (Hamburg, 1830, 1851), i. 167-169.] He came as the representative of law and rule; and there had been many helping themselves by a ruleless life, of late. Industry was at a low ebb, violence was rife; plunder, disorder everywhere; too much the habit for baronial gentlemen to "live by the saddle," as they termed it, that is by highway robbery in modern phrase.

The Towns, harried and plundered to skin and bone, were glad to see a Statthalter, and did homage to him with all their heart. But the Baronage or Squirearchy of the country were of another mind. These, in the late anarchies, had set up for a kind of kings in their own right: they had their feuds; made war, made peace, levied tolls, transit-dues; lived much at their own discretion in these solitary countries;—rushing out from their stone towers ("walls fourteen feet thick"), to seize any herd of "six hundred swine," any convoy of Lubeck or Hamburg merchant-goods, that had not contented them in passing. What were pedlers and mechanic fellows made for, if not to be plundered when needful? Arbitrary rule, on the part of these Noble Robber-Lords! And then much of the Crown-Domains had gone to the chief of them,—pawned (and the pawn-ticket lost, so to speak), or sold for what trifle of ready money was to be had, in

Jobst and Company's time. To these gentlemen, a Statthalter coming to inquire into matters was no welcome phenomenon. Your EDLE HERR (Noble Lord) of Putlitz, Noble Lords of Quitzow, Rochow, Maltitz and others, supreme in their grassy solitudes this long while, and accustomed to nothing greater than themselves in Brandenburg, how should they obey a Statthalter?

Such was more or less the universal humor in the Squirearchy of Brandenburg; not of good omen to Burggraf Friedrich. But the chief seat of contumacy seemed to be among the Quitzows, Putlitzes, above spoken of; big Squires in the district they call the Priegnitz, in the Country of the sluggish Havel River, northwest from Berlin a fifty or forty miles. These refused homage, very many of them; said they were "incorporated with Bohmen;" said this and that;—much disinclined to homage; and would not do it. Stiff surly fellows, much deficient in discernment of what is above them and what is not;—a thick-skinned set; bodies clad in buff leather; minds also cased in ill habits of long continuance.

Friedrich was very patient with them; hoped to prevail by gentle methods. He "invited them to dinner;" "had them often at dinner for a year or more:" but could make no progress in that way. "Who is this we have got for a Governor?" said the noble lords privately to each other: "A NURNBERGER TAND (Nurnberg Plaything,— wooden image, such as they make at Nurnberg)," said they, grinning, in a thick-skinned way: "If it rained Burggraves all the year round, none of them would come to luck in this Country;"—and continued their feuds, toll-levyings, plunderings and other contumacies. Seeing matters come to this pass after waiting above a year, Burggraf Friedrich gathered his Frankish men-at-arms; quietly made league with the neighboring Potentates, Thuringen and others; got some munitions, some artillery together—especially one huge gun, the biggest ever seen, "a twenty-four pounder" no less; to which the peasants, dragging her with difficulty through the clayey roads, gave the name of FAULE GRETE (Lazy, or Heavy Peg); a remarkable piece of ordnance. Lazy Peg he had got from the Landgraf of Thuringen, on loan merely; but he turned her to excellent account of his own. I have often inquired after Lazy Peg's fate in subsequent times; but could never learn anything distinct:—the

German Dryasdust is a dull dog, and seldom carries anything human in those big wallets of his!—

Equipped in this way, Burggraf Friedrich (he was not yet Kurfurst, only coming to be) marches for the Havel Country (early days of 1414); [Michaelis, i. 287; Stenzel, i. 168 (where, contrary to wont, is an insignificant error or two). Pauli (ii. 58) is, as usual, lost in water.] makes his appearance before Quitzow's strong-house of Friesack, walls fourteen feet thick: "You Dietrich von Quitzow, are you prepared to live as a peaceable subject henceforth: to do homage to the Laws and me?"—"Never!" answered Quitzow, and pulled up his drawbridge. Whereupon Heavy Peg opened upon him, Heavy Peg and other guns; and, in some eight-and-forty hours, shook Quitzow's impregnable Friesack about his ears. This was in the month of February, 1414, day not given: Friesack was the name of the impregnable Castle (still discoverable in our time); and it ought to be memorable and venerable to every Prussian man. Burggraf Friedrich VI., not yet quite become Kurfurst Friedrich I., but in a year's space to become so, he in person was the beneficent operator; Heavy Peg, and steady Human Insight, these were clearly the chief implements.

Quitzow being settled,—for the country is in military occupation of Friedrich and his allies, and except in some stone castle a man has no chance,—straightway Putlitz or another mutineer, with his drawbridge up, was battered to pieces, and his drawbridge brought slamming down. After this manner, in an incredibly short period, mutiny was quenched; and it became apparent to Noble Lords, and to all men, that here at length was a man come who would have the Laws obeyed again, and could and would keep mutiny down.

Friedrich showed no cruelty; far the contrary. Your mutiny once ended, and a little repented of, he is ready to be your gracious Prince again: Fair-play and the social wine-cup, or inexorable war and Lazy Peg, it is at your discretion which. Brandenburg submitted; hardly ever rebelled more. Brandenburg, under the wise Kurfurst it has got, begins in a small degree to be cosmic again, or of the domain of the gods; ceases to be chaotic and a mere cockpit of the devils. There is no doubt but this Friedrich also, like his ancestor Friedrich III., the First Hereditary Burggraf, was an excellent citizen

of his country: a man conspicuously important in all German business in his time. A man setting up for no particular magnanimity, ability or heroism, but unconsciously exhibiting a good deal; which by degrees gained universal recognition. He did not shine much as Reichs-Generalissimo, under Kaiser Sigismund, in his expeditions against Zisca; on the contrary, he presided over huge defeat and rout, once and again, in that capacity; and indeed had represented in vain that, with such a species of militia, victory was impossible. He represented and again represented, to no purpose; whereupon he declined the office farther; in which others fared no better. [Hormayr, *Oesterreichischer Plutarch* vii. 109-158, ? Zisca.]

The offer to be Kaiser was made him in his old days; but he wisely declined that too. It was in Brandenburg, by what he silently founded there, that he did his chief benefit to Germany and mankind. He understood the noble art of governing men; had in him the justice, clearness, valor and patience needed for that. A man of sterling probity, for one thing. Which indeed is the first requisite in said art:—if you will have your laws obeyed without mutiny, see well that they be pieces of God Almighty's Law: otherwise all the artillery in the world will not keep down mutiny.

Friedrich "travelled much over Brandenburg;" looking into everything with his own eyes;—making, I can well fancy, innumerable crooked things straight. Reducing more and more that famishing dog-kennel of a Brandenburg into a fruitful arable field. His portraits represent a square headed, mild-looking solid gentleman, with a certain twinkle of mirth in the serious eyes of him. Except in those Hussite wars for Kaiser Sigismund and the Reich, in which no man could prosper, he may be defined as constantly prosperous. To Brandenburg he was, very literally, the blessing of blessings; redemption out of death into life. In the ruins of that old Friesack Castle, battered down by Heavy Peg, Antiquarian Science (if it had any eyes) might look for the tap-root of the Prussian Nation, and the beginning of all that Brandenburg has since grown to under the sun.

Friedrich, in one capacity or another, presided over Brandenburg near thirty years. He came thither first of all in 1412; was not completely Kurfurst in his own right till 1415; nor publicly installed, "with 100,000 looking on from the roofs and windows," in Con-

stance yonder, till 1417,—age then some forty-five. His Brandenburg residence, when he happened to have time for residing or sitting still, was Tangermunde, the Castle built by Kaiser Karl IV. He died there, 21st September, 1440; laden tolerably with years, and still better with memories of hard work done. Rentsch guesses by good inference he was born about 1372. As I count, he is seventh in descent from that Conrad, Burggraf Conrad I., Cadet of Hohenzollern, who came down from the Rauhe Alp, seeking service with Kaiser Redbeard, above two centuries ago: Conrad's generation and six others had vanished successively from the world-theatre in that ever-mysterious manner, and left the stage clear, when Burggraf Friedrich the Sixth came to be First Elector. Let three centuries, let twelve generations farther come and pass, and there will be another still more notable Friedrich,—our little Fritz, destined to be Third King of Prussia, officially named Friedrich II., and popularly Frederick the Great. This First Elector is his lineal ancestor, twelve times removed. [Rentsch, pp. 349-372; Hubner, t. 176.]

Chapter II. — MATINEES DU ROI DE PRUSSE.

Eleven successive Kurfürsts followed Friedrich in Brandenburg. Of whom and their births, deaths, wars, marriages, negotiations and continual multitudinous stream of smaller or greater adventures, much has been written, of a dreary confused nature; next to nothing of which ought to be repeated here. Some list of their Names, with what rememberable human feature or event (if any) still speaks to us in them, we must try to give. Their Names, well dated, with any actions, incidents, or phases of life, which may in this way get to adhere to them in the reader's memory, the reader can insert, each at its right place, in the grand Tide of European Events, or in such Picture as the reader may have of that. Thereby with diligence he may produce for himself some faint twilight notion of the Flight of Time in remote Brandenburg,—convince himself that remote Brandenburg was present all along, alive after its sort, and assisting, dumbly or otherwise, in the great World-Drama as that went on.

We have to say in general, the history of Brandenburg under the Hohenzollerns has very little in it to excite a vulgar curiosity, though perhaps a great deal to interest an intelligent one. Had it found treatment duly intelligent;—which, however, how could it, lucky beyond its neighbors, hope to do! Commonplace Dryasdust, and voluminous Stupidity, not worse here than elsewhere, play their Part.

It is the history of a State, or Social Vitality, growing from small to great; steadily growing henceforth under guidance: and the contrast between guidance and no-guidance, or mis-guidance, in such matters, is again impressively illustrated there. This we see well to be the fact; and the details of this would be of moment, were they given us: but they are not;—how could voluminous Dryasdust give them? Then, on the other hand, the Phenomenon is, for a long while, on so small a scale, wholly without importance in European politics and affairs, the commonplace Historian, writing of it on a large scale, becomes unreadable and intolerable. Witness grandiloquent Pauli our fatal friend, with his Eight watery Quartos; which gods and men, unless driven by necessity, have learned to avoid! [Dr. Carl Friedrich Pauli, *Allgemeine Preussische Staats-Geschichte*, often enough cited here.] The Phenomenon of Brandenburg is small, remote; and the essential particulars, too delicate for the eye of Dryasdust, are mostly wanting, drowned deep in details of the unessential. So that we are well content, my readers and I, to keep remote from it on this occasion.

On one other point I must give the reader warning. A rock of offence on which if he heedlessly strike, I reckon he will split; at least no help of mine can benefit him till he be got off again. Alas, offences must come; and must stand, like rocks of offence, to the shipwreck of many! Modern Dryasdust, interpreting the mysterious ways of Divine Providence in this Universe, or what he calls writing History, has done uncountable havoc upon the best interests of mankind. Hapless godless dullard that he is; driven and driving on courses that lead only downward, for him as for us! But one could forgive him all things, compared with this doctrine of devils which he has contrived to get established, pretty generally, among his unfortunate fellow-creatures for the time!—I must insert the following quotation, readers guess from what author:—

"In an impudent Pamphlet, forged by I know not whom, and published in 1766, under the title of *Matinees du Roi de Prusse*, purporting to be 'Morning Conversations' of Frederick the Great with his Nephew the Heir-Apparent, every line of which betrays itself as false and spurious to a reader who has made any direct or effectual study of Frederick or his manners or affairs,—it is set forth, in the way of exordium to these pretended royal confessions, that '*notre maison*,' our Family of Hohenzollern, ever since the first origin of it among the Swabian mountains, or its first descent therefrom into the Castle and Imperial Wardenship of Nurnberg, some six hundred years ago or more, has consistently travelled one road, and this a very notable one. 'We, as I myself the royal Frederick still do, have all along proceeded,' namely, 'in the way of adroit Machiavelism, as skilful gamblers in this world's business, ardent gatherers of this world's goods; and in brief as devout worshippers of Beelzebub, the grand regulator and rewarder of mortals here below. Which creed we, the Hohenzollerns, have found, and I still find, to be the true one; learn it you, my prudent Nephew, and let all men learn it. By holding steadily to that, and working late and early in such spirit, we are come to what you now see;—and shall advance still farther, if it please Beelzebub, who is generally kind to those that serve him well.' Such is the doctrine of this impudent Pamphlet; 'original Manuscripts' of which are still purchased by simple persons,—who have then nobly offered them to me, thrice over, gratis or nearly so, as a priceless curiosity. A new printed edition of which, probably the fifth, has appeared within few years. Simple persons, consider it a curious and interesting Document; rather ambiguous in origin perhaps, but probably authentic in substance, and throwing unexpected light on the character of Frederick whom men call the Great. In which new light they are willing a meritorious Editor should share.

"Who wrote that Pamphlet I know not, and am in no condition to guess. A certain snappish vivacity (very unlike the style of Frederick whom it personates); a wearisome grimacing, gesticulating malice and smartness, approaching or reaching the sad dignity of what is called 'wit' in modern times; in general the rottenness of matter, and the epigrammatic unquiet graciousness of manner in this thing, and its elaborately inhuman turn both of expression and of

thought, are visible characteristics of it. Thought, we said,—if thought it can be called: thought all hamstrung, shrivelled by inveterate rheumatism, on the part of the poor ill-thriven thinker; nay tied (so to speak, for he is of epigrammatic turn withal), as by cross ropes, right shoulder to left foot; and forced to advance, hobbling and jerking along, in that sad guise: not in the way of walk, but of saltation and dance; and this towards a false not a true aim, rather no-whither than some-whither:—Here were features leading one to think of an illustrious Prince de Ligne as perhaps concerned in the affair. The Bibliographical Dictionaries, producing no evidence, name quite another person, or series of persons, [A certain 'N. de Bonneville' (afterwards a Revolutionary spiritual-mountebank, for some time) is now the favorite Name;—proves, on investigation, to be an impossible one. Barbier (*Dictionnaire des Anonymes*), in a helpless doubting manner, gives still others.] highly unmemorable otherwise. Whereupon you proceed to said other person's acknowledged WORKS (as they are called); and find there a style bearing no resemblance whatever; and are left in a dubious state, if it were of any moment. In the absence of proof, I am unwilling to charge his Highness de Ligne with such an action; and indeed am little careful to be acquainted with the individual who did it, who could and would do it. A Prince of Coxcombs I can discern him to have been; capable of shining in the eyes of insincere foolish persons, and of doing detriment to them, not benefit; a man without reverence for truth or human excellence; not knowing in fact what is true from what is false, what is excellent from what is sham-excellent and at the top of the mode; an apparently polite and knowing man, but intrinsically an impudent, dark and merely modish-insolent man;—who, if he fell in with Rhadamanthus on his travels, would not escape a horse-whipping. Him we will willingly leave to that beneficial chance, which indeed seems a certain one sooner or later; and address ourselves to consider the theory itself, and the facts it pretends to be grounded on.

"As to the theory, I must needs say, nothing can be falser, more heretical or more damnable. My own poor opinion, and deep conviction on that subject is well known, this long while. And, in fact, the summary of all I have believed, and have been trying as I could to teach mankind to believe again, is even that same opinion and

conviction, applied to all provinces of things. Alas, in this his sad theory about the world, our poor impudent Pamphleteer is by no means singular at present; nay rather he has in a manner the whole practical part of mankind on his side just now; the more is the pity for us all!—

"It is very certain, if Beelzebub made this world, our Pamphleteer, and the huge portion of mankind that follow him, are right. But if God made the world; and only leads Beelzebub, as some ugly muzzled bear is led, a longer or shorter temporary DANCE in this divine world, and always draws him home again, and peels the unjust gains off him, and ducks him in a certain hot Lake, with sure intent to lodge him there to all eternity at last,—then our Pamphleteer, and the huge portion of mankind that follow him, are wrong.

"More I will not say; being indeed quite tired of SPEAKING on that subject. Not a subject which it concerns me to speak of; much as it concerns me, and all men, to know the truth of it, and silently in every hour and moment to do said truth. As indeed the sacred voice of their own soul, if they listen, will conclusively admonish all men; and truly if IT do not, there will be little use in my logic to them. For my own share, I want no trade with men who need to be convinced of that fact. If I am in their premises, and discover such a thing of them, I will quit their premises; if they are in mine, I will, as old Samuel advised, count my spoons. Ingenious gentlemen who believe that Beelzebub made this world, are not a class of gentlemen I can get profit from. Let them keep at a distance, lest mischief fall out between us. They are of the set deserving to be called—and this not in the way of profane swearing, but of solemn wrath and pity, I say of virtuous anger and inexorable reprobation—the damned set. For, in very deed, they are doomed and damned, by Nature's oldest Act of Parliament, they, and whatsoever thing they do or say or think; unless they can escape from that devil-element. Which I still hope they may!—

"But with regard to the facts themselves, 'DE NOTRE MAISON,' I take leave to say, they too are without basis of truth. They are not so false as the theory, because nothing can in falsity quite equal that. 'NOTRE MAISON,' this Pamphleteer may learn, if he please to make study and inquiry before speaking, did not rise by worship of

Beelzebub at all in this world; but by a quite opposite line of conduct. It rose, in fact, by the course which all, except fools, stockjobber stags, cheating gamblers, forging Pamphleteers and other temporary creatures of the damned sort, have found from of old to be the one way of permanently rising: by steady service, namely, of the Opposite of Beelzebub. By conforming to the Laws of this Universe; instead of trying by pettifogging to evade and profitably contradict them. The Hohenzollerns too have a History still articulate to the human mind, if you search sufficiently; and this is what, even with some emphasis, it will teach us concerning their adventures, and achievements of success in the field of life. Resist the Devil, good reader, and he will flee from you!" —So ends our indignant friend.

How the Hohenzollerns got their big Territories, and came to what they are in the world, will be seen. Probably they were not, any of them, paragons of virtue. They did not walk in altogether speckless Sunday pumps, or much clear-starched into consciousness of the moral sublime; but in rugged practical boots, and by such roads as there were. Concerning their moralities, and conformities to the Laws of the Road and of the Universe, there will much remain to be argued by pamphleteers and others. Men will have their opinion, Men of more wisdom and of less; Apes by the Dead-Sea also will have theirs. But what man that believed in such a Universe as that of this Dead-Sea Pamphleteer could consent to live in it at all? Who that believed in such a Universe, and did not design to live like a Papin's-Digester, or PORCUS EPICURI, in an extremely ugly manner in it, could avoid one of two things: Going rapidly into Bedlam, or else blowing his brains out? "It will not do for me at any rate, this infinite Dog-house; not for me, ye Dryasdusts, and omnipotent Dog-monsters and Mud-gods, whoever you are. One honorable thing I can do: take leave of you and your Dog-establishment. Enough!" —

Chapter III. — KURFURST FRIEDRICH II.

The First Friedrich's successor was a younger son, Friedrich II.; who lasted till 1471, above thirty years; and proved likewise a notable manager and governor. Very capable to assert himself, and his just rights, in this world. He was but Twenty-seven at his accession; but the Berlin Burghers, attempting to take some liberties with him, found he was old enough. He got the name IRONTEETH. Friedrich FERRATIS DENTIBUS, from his decisive ways then and afterwards. He had his share of brabbling with intricate litigant neighbors; quarrels now and then not to be settled without strokes. His worst war was with Pommern,—just claims disputed there, and much confused bickering, sieging and harassing in consequence: of which quarrel we must speak anon. It was he who first built the conspicuous Schloss or Palace at Berlin, having got the ground for it (same ground still covered by the actual fine Edifice, which is a second edition of Friedrich's) from the repentant Burghers; and took up his chief residence there. [1442-1431 (Nicolari, i. 81).]

But his principal achievement in Brandenburg History is his recovery of the Province called the Neumark to that Electorate. In the thriftless Sigismund times, the Neumark had been pledged, had been sold; Teutsch Ritterdom, to whose dominions it lay contiguous, had purchased it with money down. The Teutsch Ritters were fallen moneyless enough since then; they offered to pledge the Neumark to Friedrich, who accepted, and advanced the sum: after a while the Teutsch Ritters, for a small farther sum, agreed to sell Neumark. [Michaelis, i. 301.] Into which Transaction, with its dates and circumstances, let us cast one glance, for our behoof afterwards. The Teutsch Ritters were an opulent domineering Body in Sigismund's early time; but they are now come well down in Friedrich II.'s! And are coming ever lower. Sinking steadily, or with desperate attempts to rise, which only increase the speed downwards, ever since that fatal Tannenberg Business, 15th July, 1410. Here is the sad progress of their descent to the bottom; divided into three stages or periods:—

"PERIOD FIRST is of Thirty years: 1410-1440. A peace with Poland soon followed that Defeat of Tannenberg; humiliating peace, with mulct in money, and slightly in territory, attached to it. Which

again was soon followed by war, and ever again; each new peace more humiliating than its foregoer. Teutsch Order is steadily sinking,—into debt, among other things; driven to severe finance-measures (ultimately even to 'debase its coin'), which produce irritation enough. Poland is gradually edging itself into the territories and the interior troubles of Preussen; prefatory to greater operations that lie ahead there.

"SECOND PERIOD, of Fourteen years. So it had gone on, from bad to worse, till 1440; when the general population, through its Heads, the Landed Gentry and the Towns, wearied out with fiscal and other oppressions from its domineering Ritterdom brought now to such a pinch, began everywhere to stir themselves into vocal complaint. Complaint emphatic enough: 'Where will you find a man that has not suffered injury in his rights, perhaps in his person? Our friends they have invited as guests, and under show of hospitality have murdered them. Men, for the sake of their beautiful wives, have been thrown into the river like dogs,'—and enough of the like sort. [Voigt, vii. 747; quoting evidently, not an express manifesto, but one manufactured by the old Chroniclers.] No want of complaint, nor of complainants: Town of Thorn, Town of Dantzic, Kulm, all manner of Towns and Baronages, proceeded now to form a BUND, or general Covenant for complaining; to repugn, in hotter and hotter form, against a domineering Ritterdom with back so broken; in fine, to colleague with Poland,—what was most ominous of all. Baronage, Burgherage, they were German mostly by blood, and by culture were wholly German; but preferred Poland to a Teutsch Ritterdom of that nature. Nothing but brabblings, scufflings, objurgations; a great outbreak ripening itself. Teutsch Ritterdom has to hire soldiers; no money to pay them. It was in these sad years that the Teutsch Ritterdom, fallen moneyless, offered to pledge the Neumark to our Kurfurst; 1444, that operation was consummated. [Pauli, ii. 187,—does not name the sum.] All this goes on, in hotter and hotter form, for ten years longer.

"PERIOD THIRD begins, early in 1454, with an important special catastrophe; and ends, in the Thirteenth year after, with a still more important universal one of the same nature. Prussian BUND, or Anti-Oppression Covenant of the Towns and Landed Gentry, rising in temperature for fourteen years at this rate, reached at last the