CHAPTER III

The Eighteenth Century. Hapsburg versus Hohenzollern (1714-90)

The eighteenth century continued and sharpened the tendencies already observable in the seventeenth. This was the century of princely absolutism par excellence. The last significant vestiges of the old local diets or estates, which had constituted some check on the princes, disappeared. It was a century of dynastic rivalries culminating in the long struggle between the two principal German dynasties—the Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns—which was to be a principal issue in German history for over a century. Intellectually and artistically speaking, it was a century in which Germany made enormous strides and entered fully into the mainstream of western European thought. By the end of the period no Englishman or Frenchman could disregard the German contribution.

The most spectacular development of this era was the growth of the electorate of Brandenburg in the sandy wastes of the northeast into the powerful kingdom of Prussia, which by the end of the eighteenth century ranked as one of the great powers of Europe. This feat was made possible by several lucky inheritances and by the deeds of three Hohenzollern rulers of genius, Frederick William, the Great Elector of Brandenburg, King Frederick William I of Prussia, and King Frederick II, the Great.

The geographical basis of the kingdom of Prussia was composed of three separate areas spread loosely across the whole width of northern Germany, which came to the Hohenzollerns at different times and in different ways. The electorate of Brandenburg with its capital at Berlin was granted to Frederick of Hohenzollern by his friend, Emperor Sigismund, in the early fifteenth century. A century later the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, who was a member of the Hohenzollern family, secularized their lands and established for himself and
his descendants the duchy of Prussia, with its center in the town of Königsberg. The two branches of the family made a compact providing that if either branch died out, the other would inherit its possessions. The Prussian branch became extinct in the early seventeenth century, so the elector of Brandenburg also became duke of Prussia, for which he owed homage not to the Holy Roman emperor but to the king of Poland, the overlord of Prussia. The third component of the future Prussian kingdom was made up of the three small principalities of Cleves, Mark, and Ravensburg in northwestern Germany along the lower Rhine. They were a part of the complicated Cleves-Jülich inheritance, which was such an unsettling part of the diplomacy prior to the Thirty Years’ War. The elector of Brandenburg was one of the principal claimants. When the inheritance was divided, he received the three territories mentioned above. The various Hohenzollern territories had no cohesion. Each had its own laws, customs, traditions, which it guarded jealously. Each had its own estates, or representative body, which was determined to resist any monarchical authority imposed from above.

In 1640 the young elector Frederick William came into a sorry inheritance. His lands had been the battlefield and playground of foreign armies for years. Brandenburg was one of the most ravaged areas of Germany, since the former elector had been a weak tool in the hands of the Swedes. Frederick William himself had been sent to well-organized Holland for his education. He did not forget what he learned there.

Frederick William began his reign by a policy of conciliation and a search for peace, necessitated by his weakness. He managed to get rid of many of the foreign soldiers on his lands and to reorganize his army into a small but respectable force, one of the few left in Germany. Thus his voice at the Peace of Westphalia was out of proportion to his strength. He received eastern Pomerania, Minden, Halberstadt, and the expectancy of the important archdiocese of Magdeburg when the administrator died. This was a notable increase of territory.

In 1655 the First Northern War broke out when King Charles X of Sweden attacked Poland. At first Frederick William remained neutral but took care to increase his army greatly and to demand recruits from all his territories even though they might be called upon to fight a long distance away. During the five-year conflict he was successively neutral, allied with Sweden, and allied with Poland. His army acquired a good reputation at the battle of Warsaw in 1656. When the eventual peace was signed at Oliva in 1660, Frederick William did not gain any land but instead the very important right that henceforward he was sovereign
in Prussia, where he now owed no allegiance to Poland, Sweden, or the
Empire.

During much of his reign Frederick William was involved in bitter
conflict with the estates of his various holdings, which insisted (especially
in Prussia) on privileges and local peculiarities which had been granted
them from time to time, so that it was impossible to establish any cen-
tralized administration. Frederick William was determined, in the spirit
of his period, to erect a firm, centralized state, controlled exclusively
by himself on the pattern of the state of Louis XIV. The details of the
struggles are picturesque but need not detain us. By the end of his reign
the elector had achieved extraordinary success and laid the foundation
for the unified army and the efficient civil service which were to remain
the hallmarks of Prussia thenceforward. He began the typical Hohen-
zollern policy of granting almost unlimited authority to the nobles on
their estates so long as they recognized the prince’s authority in war, for-
eign affairs, and national policy. He was a patriarchal ruler with the
foresight to introduce economic reform in Brandenburg-Prussia, to
welcome industrious Huguenot exiles from France, and to build canals
and roads. He left a far stronger state than he inherited.

In his foreign policy Frederick William pursued a devious course in
the complex diplomacy and wars of the time. He realized that Branden-
burg-Prussia was not wealthy enough to support the big military es-
tablishment he felt necessary to defend her unusually long and ill-
protected boundaries and to support her growing pride. Thus he sup-
ported his projects by a policy of subsidy from abroad. Although
usually loyal to his Hapsburg overlord, he did not hesitate at times to
ally himself with France if greater advantage appeared likely. He proved
a competent general, especially at the battle of Fehrbellin in 1675 when
he defeated a Swedish army. Frederick William did not add any territ-
ory to his domains in the latter part of his reign, but on his death in
1688 he left a state respected and feared.

His son and heir, Frederick III (1688–1713), had none of his
father’s great qualities. Ostentatious and extravagant, he dissipated
much of the treasure his father had accumulated. He devoted himself
to the beautification of Berlin, importing the great sculptor, Andreas
Schlüter, and building palaces. He founded the Berlin Academy of
Sciences, the University of Halle, and also attracted a number of learned
men to his court. In foreign affairs he dabbled in the wars of his time,
loyal to the Hapsburg interests but gaining only a few pieces of terri-
tory here and there. Probably his greatest achievement was the title of
king. The elector of Saxony was king of Poland; the elector of Hanover
could look forward to being king of England. Frederick wanted the
same rank. So he devoted much time and effort and, more important, the services of his soldiers to this goal. He finally achieved it and in 1701 crowned himself in the castle of Königsberg. Thus from that date he is styled King Frederick I. The royal title came from Prussia rather than Brandenburg because there he was sovereign. At first he was permitted to call himself simply king "in" Prussia, but the humiliating preposition did not stick.

King Frederick William I (1713–40) was again a great change from his father. This disagreeable, miserly, avaricious, coarse, vulgar, gouty, drill sergeant was amazingly competent and laid the foundations for Prussian power which his genius son was able to exploit. He scorned the artistic and intellectual interests of his parents and led with his big family a parsimonious existence taking pleasure only in smoking strong tobacco with his cronies or in drilling his tall soldiers on the parade ground at Potsdam.

Frederick William, like his grandfather, was determined to assert absolute authority—in his own phrase, like a "rock of bronze." To this end he was ruthless and resembles his contemporary, Peter the Great of Russia. His particular ability lay in civil and military administration, the pillars of Prussian greatness. For instance, in 1723 he established the General Directory for over-all administration, a remarkably neat and efficient institution, which however depended on the constant and minute supervision of the king. None of the ministers had any authority without the king; they were higher secretaries. This system worked with Frederick William in charge, and later with his son. These two were willing to give unlimited pains to public affairs. However, it broke down when less devoted and efficient men wore the crown.

The great joy of Frederick William's life was his army. The soldiers were his favorites, especially if they were tall. He formed units of men over six feet in height, and other sovereigns, anxious to win his friendship, would send him tall young men. He loved his army so much that he did not want to risk it in battle. During his reign the army was doubled in size to over 80,000 and became the best-trained in Europe, but it rarely fought. The king dallied with diplomacy, but it was usually over his head; he stuck to his wise policy of remaining at peace. His only campaign was a profitable one. The Great or Second Northern War raged for over twenty years involving Russia, Sweden, Poland, and some of the German states. Toward the end Frederick William entered temporarily and for his pains received an increase in his Pomeranian lands including the mouth of the Oder River and the important city of Stettin, which became the port for Berlin until it was removed from Germany in 1945.
Personal tragedy entered the Hohenzollern family with the conflict between Frederick William and his eldest son Frederick, later Frederick the Great. Their personalities were poles apart. The father was brutal, stingy, coarse; the son, artistic, literary, and dreamy. He liked to play the flute and to read and write poems and plays in French. The father felt that the son would destroy all his achievements and handled him with brusqueness and an utter lack of understanding. This situation culminated in an attempt by Frederick, accompanied by a favorite officer friend, to escape from Prussia. The fugitives were caught and imprisoned. Frederick was forced to watch the execution of his beloved friend. The king even talked of executing his son. Instead he imprisoned him for a year. Frederick spent this time learning about local administration and political affairs, and the father eventually released him and permitted him to come to Berlin. During the last years of the king's life the two managed to get along reasonably well. Frederick William presented his son with a palace, Rheinsberg, which he loved, and with a wife, whom he did not love since he never had any interest in women. At Rheinsberg Frederick spent several happy years reading, playing music, and writing a work on political philosophy, Anti-Machiavel, in which he refutes the doctrine of Machiavelli, of whom he was later to prove one of the best disciples. In May 1740 Frederick William died as a result of gout, and Frederick II ascended the throne he was to occupy until 1786.

The German situation in 1740 was dominated by the Hapsburg emperor's preoccupation with the succession to his far-flung family possessions. Charles VI's only surviving children were two daughters, the elder being the Archduchess Maria Theresa, a beautiful and deeply religious young woman. No woman had ever before inherited in the Hapsburg lands; Charles devoted his life to making sure that Maria Theresa would be an exception. Thus he promulgated a document known as the Pragmatic Sanction, which declared that the Hapsburg lands were indivisible and that in default of male heirs they should pass to Maria Theresa or to his other daughter. A good part of Charles' reign was then devoted to securing the recognition of this principle by the powers of Europe. He achieved the acceptance of the estates of the Hapsburg realms without very much difficulty, but each time that he secured an acceptance he had to make a concession. Thus his weakness forced him to cede some Balkan territory, including Belgrade, back to the Turks. Frederick William I made little trouble about accepting the Sanction. Spain agreed for a time. However, in the 1730's the short War of the Polish Succession broke out, in which the Sanction became an issue. It arose over a disputed election to the Polish throne, which was still elective. Emperor Charles supported the candidacy of Augustus III of Saxony, son of the
former king. The fighting was not serious, but the Hapsburg armies made a poor showing. At the Treaty of Vienna in 1738 Augustus received the throne of Poland. The losing candidate was given the duchy of Lorraine for his lifetime, after which it was to revert to France. The former duke of Lorraine, Francis, received compensation for his loss in Tuscany, where the Medici family had just become extinct. The Hapsburgs granted back to the Spanish royal family some of their former Italian possessions which they had obtained in 1714, receiving some smaller ones in return. Charles received the acceptance by the powers, especially France, of the Pragmatic Sanction, but at a considerable cost. Francis, the dispossessed duke of Lorraine was soon thereafter married to Maria Theresa. It looked as if the succession were secure. Five months after the death of Frederick William I in 1740, Charles VI also died, and Maria Theresa claimed her inheritance of the Hapsburg realms.

It soon became clear that Charles’ work had been in vain. Within six weeks the new king of Prussia invaded Silesia, and Europe started a quarter century of warfare. Very soon three claimants, the elector of Bavaria, the elector of Saxony, and the king of Spain, disputed Maria Theresa’s right to the Hapsburg succession. Frederick asserted as his excuse for the invasion some old claims of the Hohenzollern family to various parts of Silesia, but there is no question that they were mere pretexts. He wanted Silesia and he wanted glory.

Frederick achieved immediate success and occupied the whole of Silesia by the spring of 1741. By this time the Silesian war had spread and had become part of the general War of the Austrian Succession, which was to last for eight years in Europe and overseas. France, Bavaria, and Spain allied against Maria Theresa, while Britain supported the lady. The beautiful young princess appealed to the chivalrous Hungarian nobility, who enthusiastically rallied to her cause. An Austrian army entered Silesia, and Frederick retired to meet it. The first of Frederick’s many battles, Mollwitz, was a Prussian victory although the king, fearing defeat, rode distractedly into the night.

When the electors of the Empire met in 1742, they passed over Maria Theresa’s husband, Francis, and chose as emperor the elector of Bavaria who took the name of Charles VII (1742–45). This was the only occasion since the fifteenth century that a non-Hapsburg was elected. A few days after his coronation an Austrian army captured his capital, Munich; wits parodying the old phrase *aut Caesar aut nihil* (“either Caesar or nothing”) commented about Charles *et Caesar et nihil* (“both Caesar and nothing”).

From the outset Frederick showed himself an undependable ally to the French and Bavarians. His interests were centered solely in Silesia
and he had no intention of wasting his good army to fight the battles of the French. Twice before 1742 he negotiated with Maria Theresa and promised to get out of the war if she would cede Silesia to him. After two Prussian victories in 1742 Maria Theresa unwillingly agreed to this proposal and signed the Treaty of Berlin with Prussia. This freed the Austrians and their Anglo-Hanoverian allies to operate against their other enemies, which they did successfully, especially at the battle of Dettingen where George II of England defeated a French army. These Austrian successes frightened Frederick, who knew that Maria Theresa in her heart was not reconciled to the loss of Silesia. Therefore in 1744 he re-entered the war and invaded Bohemia.

In the beginning of 1745 the unfortunate Emperor Charles died, and his successor in Bavaria offered to get out of the war and abandon his father's pretensions. He was restored to his lands and dignities and promised to vote for Francis of Lorraine in the coming imperial election. Sufficient votes were acquired, and Francis I (1745–65) was duly elected. Militarily, it was an unhappy year for the Austrians because Frederick won the battles of Hohenfriedberg and Soor, while the French general Maurice de Saxe (an illegitimate son of Augustus II of Saxony-Poland) defeated the Austrians badly in the Austrian Netherlands at the battle of Fontenoy. Maria Theresa was again forced to deal with Frederick and in the Treaty of Dresden confirmed her loss of Silesia.

From this time on the war in Europe petered out. The British had to bring their troops home to face the invasion of Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender. The principal interest of the war was now the colonial contest between Britain and France, which did not concern Germany. A treaty was finally signed at Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) in 1748, which confirmed Maria Theresa in her inheritance and also her cession of Silesia to Prussia. It was an inconclusive peace to end an inconclusive war.

Both Maria Theresa and Frederick II spent the eight years of peace between 1748 and 1756 reorganizing their realms and setting the tone for an important period intimately connected with their two very different personalities. During the war Maria Theresa had proved to be a woman of determination and forcefulness, with high qualities of leadership. She far overshadowed her ineffectual husband, who is important only because he fathered her numerous children. She had observed the weakness latent in her domains, a weakness which was to lead to their collapse in the twentieth century, namely their multiplicity and variety in government, customs, and traditions. She attempted a partial cure of this weakness. Not being a child of the Enlightenment, as her eldest son was, she did not have his single-minded reforming instinct. Her reforms were
tempered with gentleness and an understanding that one cannot make changes too rapidly. She attempted centralization, mostly in Austria and Bohemia, of such things as tariffs, the army, finances, and justice, where the awkwardness was most glaring.

Maria Theresa set the tone for the laughing, gay Vienna that was to become so beloved by the world in the nineteenth century. In her elaborate rococo palace of Schönbrunn on the outskirts of Vienna she welcomed to her court musicians and poets who created much of the artistic taste of Europe, as the court of Louis XIV had done at Versailles a century before. This was the Vienna of Haydn and Gluck, later of Mozart and Beethoven, which was to make the word music almost synonymous with Vienna.

Frederick II had different and, on the whole, simpler problems to deal with. He had inherited from his father an extremely efficient administration; it was necessary only to keep it operating and to integrate into it Silesia and also East Friesland, which had fallen to Frederick by inheritance during the war. The mature Frederick proved himself as competent an administrator as he was a general. He devoted the same constant and selfless attention to the minutiae of public affairs that his father had. He was if possible even more despotic than his father, rarely seeing his ministers and spending his time reading and annotating the endless written reports they were required to submit to him. Yet it was a despotism animated by extreme intelligence and by an understanding of economic and social forces rare in his time. During the years of peace Frederick built his lovely little palace of Sans Souci in Potsdam, where he was happiest. There, when work was done, this lonely, cynical, unscrupulous, and shrewd recluse would sit with a company of men distinguished in the letters and sciences and make music, listen to poetry, or read aloud his own prolific if mediocre literary output.

Maria Theresa was still not reconciled to the loss of Silesia; Frederick realized this and knew that there would no doubt be another conflict before the matter was settled. Thus the years from 1748 to 1756 were filled with diplomatic maneuvers culminating in the so-called Diplomatic Revolution. One of its principal architects was Prince Kaunitz, who after 1753 was the empress' chancellor. Kaunitz recognized that Great Britain was an undependable ally for a purely continental nation like the Hapsburg realm. Her interests were almost exclusively concerned with her struggle with France for possessions overseas. Kaunitz, who had spent some years at Versailles as Austrian ambassador, was convinced that an influential pro-Austrian party could be formed there under the aegis of Madame de Pompadour, the powerful mistress of Louis XV. Maria Theresa had drawn close to Empress Elizabeth of Russia. Thus the pos-
sibility loomed of a great continental alliance composed of Russia, Austria, and France, which would seal Frederick's fate.

Frederick was worried about the Austro-Russian relationship and thus was receptive to British advances motivated by a desire to protect Hanover, which was also ruled by the British monarch. Thus Britain and Prussia signed a neutrality agreement, the Treaty of Westminster, which much irritated France, already at war with the British overseas. Kaunitz exploited this irritation to obtain French acceptance in 1756 of a defensive treaty with Austria. The centuries-long conflict between French and Hapsburg rulers was ended, and the two prepared to fight as allies.

Frederick was not the man to wait until his enemies were ready to attack him. In August 1756 he invaded Saxony to use it as a base for an attack on Bohemia and launched the Seven Years' War (1756–63). Within a few months the opposing alliance was completed and Frederick found himself at war with Austria, France, and Russia, as well as a number of the smaller German states. Help from Britain was reluctant and spasmodic, in the form of subsidies, not of armies.

The Seven Years' War was an epic struggle between a small country and the three greatest continental powers. In it Frederick displayed himself as one of the greatest military geniuses of all time. The loving attention which Frederick William I had given his army bore fruit. Frederick was like a swordsman who confronts several enemies at the same time and has to face first one way, then another, to defend himself. The French and Austrians were to the southwest and south, while each summer a large Russian army appeared from the east to threaten the heart of Prussia. Frederick won victory after victory, but he also suffered some serious defeats; in 1759, 1760, and 1761 it looked more and more as if he had to perish under superior strength and see the breakup of the Prussian state. His greatest victories were in 1757 when, within a few weeks, he defeated the French and minor German states at Rossbach and then the Austrians at Leuthen. The following summer he triumphed over the Russians at Zorndorf, but in 1759 the Russians won a major victory at Kunersdorf and a few months later actually occupied and burned Berlin itself.

Frederick's letters and remarks during this period when he was constantly with his army tell of a neurotic and neurasthenic, often sunk in gloom, who always carried on his person a vial of poison in case worst came to worst. In spite of everything he kept hoping for a miracle.

The miracle came in the first days of 1762, when Empress Elizabeth of Russia, who hated Frederick, died and was succeeded on the throne by her nephew, Peter III, who had nurtured a cult of Frederick and Prussia.
Peter immediately made peace and, indeed, an alliance with Prussia. In the west, France, which had been defeated both in India and in Canada, was ready to make peace with Britain and was no longer interested in the war in Europe. This war too was petering out. Frederick continued to win victories over the Austrians, and finally the two combatants signed the Treaty of Hubertusburg on February 15, 1763, which confirmed the situation before the war. Maria Theresa had to recognize the final loss of Silesia. Prussia gained no territory, but there was henceforth no question that she was one of the great powers of Europe and that no general question could be settled without consulting her. This was Frederick's greatest achievement in the international field.

After 1763 Frederick II had had enough of war, and except for a short campaign in 1778 Prussia was at peace for the remainder of his reign. He did not neglect his army, however, and was happiest when reviewing his troops. He kept an intimate watch on everything that happened in his kingdom, traveling constantly through it and noting even the most insignificant details on his estates. He built the New Palace at Potsdam and continued his evenings of music and poetry. Frederick became very popular with his people during these years when they spoke of him as der alte Fritz and laid the groundwork for the legend which became so persistent and influential in later years.

Frederick had learned in the Seven Years' War how dangerously exposed Prussia was, and he was determined not to risk again the near disaster of those years. His role became that of a peacemaker, but he managed to maneuver it into one of great profit for Prussia. The most impressive example of this was the First Partition of Poland in 1772. The Russian empress, Catherine II, was waging a successful war against Turkey, and the expectation was that she would make large demands on the Turks when the peace was arranged. This seriously worried Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II (1765–90), who had succeeded his father as emperor in 1765 and ruled jointly with his mother in the Hapsburg lands. They feared an increase of strength for Russia in the southeast to such an extent that a war between Austria and Russia seemed very possible. This prospect worried Frederick, who was afraid that Prussia might be drawn into the struggle. He sought some alternative plan whereby Russia might make gains which would not affect Austria. Obviously he hoped for Prussian gains as well. The perfect situation seemed to exist in Poland, whose weakness made her a possible prey for aggression. Frederick's idea was simplicity itself, namely that Russia and Prussia (and if necessary Austria) should each take a slice of the old kingdom of Poland. Thus Catherine would have her glory without the danger of a European war. Frederick sent his brother Henry on a visit to St. Peters-
burg with instructions to sound out Catherine. She was delighted with the idea and it was implemented right away. Maria Theresa was shocked at such unclad robbery but was afraid not to take her share. Thus she received the province of Galicia, while Frederick received the bishopric of Ermeland and the province of West Prussia (without Danzig and Thorn), so that now East Prussia was joined geographically to the bulk of the kingdom. This was an important accretion and gave Frederick the pleasure of organizing an efficient Prussian administration for the new territories.

The one war which Frederick undertook in the later years of his reign arose, as usual, over a problem of succession, this time in Bavaria. The elector of Bavaria died in 1777, leaving no direct heirs. The legal heir was Charles Theodore, Elector Palatine, who also had no direct legitimate heirs. The presumption was that eventually the lands would go to still another branch of the Wittelsbach house, whose head was Charles, duke of Zweibrücken in the Saar area. Emperor Joseph, anxious to increase his German holdings, persuaded Charles Theodore for various favors to cede to him about one third of Bavaria. Frederick had no notion of watching Joseph succeed in so considerable a project, so he persuaded Charles of Zweibrücken to make objection, which both Prussia and Saxony supported. Negotiations came to nothing, so war was declared. It was a comic opera war dubbed by the soldiers the “Potato War,” for they insisted they spent most of their time foraging for supplies during the cold winter months. There were no battles, merely a few skirmishes. In early 1779 Maria Theresa took the initiative and opened a correspondence with Frederick. This interchange resulted in the Treaty of Teschen by which the Austrians got only a very small part of what they had anticipated.

Joseph was not satisfied with the rebuff; in 1785, having been freed of the tutelage of his mother by her death five years before, he tried another plan. This time it was to be a straight trade. Charles Theodore was to cede Bavaria to Austria in return for the Austrian Netherlands, which was proving a nuisance to the Viennese government. Once again Frederick took action, but on this occasion no war developed. To help Charles of Zweibrücken, who once again resented the loss of his Bavarian expectancy, Frederick founded the League of Princes (Fürstenbund) composed of most of the important north German states. The pressure of this group forced Joseph to give up his ambitious plan. Some Prussian historians have seen in this action a step toward the unification of Germany under Prussian auspices. Actually it was just a pose for Frederick in his long struggle against Austria and his attempt to maintain the old ramshackle character of the Holy Roman Empire which so
conveniently made possible the expansion of the Prussian state. Frederick did not live very long to enjoy his new triumph; he died in August 1786.

Only the decade of the 1780’s was granted to Joseph II to carry out his contemplated reforms in the Hapsburg dominions. As long as Maria Theresa lived, she was clearly the senior partner who made the major decisions. Unlike his mother, Joseph was a full child of the Enlightenment and should be counted in the list of the enlightened despots with Frederick II, Catherine II of Russia, and Charles III of Spain. Joseph hated the untidy and cumbersome structure of the lands he had inherited, in which his position differed from place to place according to the customs and traditions in a particular area. He wanted to establish a centralized unitary monarchy in the neat eighteenth-century sense. He realized that his principal enemies were the corporate vested interests of the aristocracy and the church. In his attack on them Joseph ran the danger of encouraging those in the nonprivileged classes who believed in popular sovereignty according to natural law. These people became the so-called Austrian Jacobins, who were prosecuted during the nineties.

It is difficult to be unsympathetic to some of Joseph’s goals, but he had the faults of his virtues. He was one of those reformers who try to do too much too soon at the expense of offending attitudes and beliefs that have grown up over the centuries. Thus he failed in nearly all his efforts. On his epitaph he described himself as one “who, with the best of intentions, was unsuccessful in everything that he undertook.”

Joseph decreed the abolition of serfdom, he tolerated the private celebration of Protestant services, he drastically cut down the number of monasteries, and he withdrew most of the censorship so that criticism of the possessory classes could be published. In spite of his personal strong Catholicity, he paid little attention to Pope Pius VI, who traveled to Vienna to protest his actions. But constantly he was rebuffed by a population which was not willing to welcome the new order. He had even more difficulty when he tried to integrate the various nationalities into a centralized government. For instance, he removed the crown of Hungary to Vienna as a symbol of his intentions. The Hungarians reacted violently, and the crown had to be returned. He had even more trouble in the Austrian Netherlands where he revoked the constitution of Brabant. The Belgians in 1789 broke into open revolt, a movement which in the following years merged into the greater French Revolution. Joseph died in 1790, a failure whose reforms died too within a few years. At least he had addressed himself to the problems which all Austrian rulers after him had to face, especially the nationality problem which was to become so intense in the nineteenth century. Austrian imperial history
down to its end in 1918 is the story of a continuing swing between centralization and some kind of federal settlement. No really workable solution was ever obtained.

During the eighteenth century Germany achieved for the first time in years a full-fledged intellectual and spiritual partnership with England and France. By the end of the century a German could no longer be scorned as a boorish bumpkin. While it is true that much of this cultural development was derivative from France, which dominated the continent culturally (Frederick the Great regularly spoke and wrote in French), this dependence became weaker as the century wore on and was diluted by the influence in Germany of English thought and letters. By the early years of the next century Mme. de Staël was able to astonish the French reading public with an account of the achievements of the Germans in her work *De l'Allemagne*.

Space precludes an adequate discussion of German intellectual developments in the eighteenth century. In fact, since the century was such a cosmopolitan one, it is almost impossible to discuss German thought without at the same time including French, English, and even Italian culture. However, some comment on the greater figures may lend clarity to the later development of German thought and the German state.

The seventeenth century was on the whole a time of cultural stagnation in Germany during which she fell behind both England and France, which were enjoying periods of brilliant creativity. Germany was trying to heal the ravages of the Thirty Years’ War, while at the same time she was forced into participation in the wars of Louis XIV. By the early years of the eighteenth century things were somewhat improved, and a degree of prosperity returned. This is particularly true in the towns of north Germany where a middle-class culture was developing that was usually free from the irritating restrictions of the petty princelings. Notable examples are Leipzig and Hanover and also the newly established universities at Halle and Göttingen. Halle, in fact, became the center of the new religious movement known as Pietism. Pietism, associated with the names of Philipp Jacob Spener (1635–1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), was an effort to return emotionalism and an “inner light” to Protestantism, whose theology had become unduly rationalistic. Thus Pietism, which developed a considerable influence over eighteenth-century thought and thinkers, encouraged that sort of liberation of the human spirit which was characteristic of the greatest German writers.

One of the earliest figures in the revival and one of the giants of German thought was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (1646–1716), who was born in Leipzig but lived most of his creative life in Hanover. True to
his period, Leibnitz was trained as a scientist and made some important contributions to science, notably as the discoverer of the differential calculus. However, his universal mind transcended the boundaries of mathematics and physics, and much of his importance lies in his effort to synthesize the Aristotelian-Scholastic philosophic tradition with the newer scientific approach. In his *Monadology* Leibnitz stated that everything in the universe is composed of monads—simple, indivisible, indestructible units, each of which is unique. They are not simply material, but both material and spiritual. Thus Leibnitz hoped to bridge the dichotomy between matter and spirit or form. A citizen of the world, Leibnitz usually wrote in French, but he was interested in the development of German culture. Thus he devoted much effort in persuading Elector Frederick III of Brandenburg in 1700 to establish the Berlin Academy, of which he became the first president. Correspondence among the various learned societies of the Western world was typical of the eighteenth century, and to Leibnitz goes much of the credit for including Germany in the learned sphere.

The other German philosophic giant of the eighteenth century was Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Born in Königsberg, he attended the university there; except for a short period tutoring not far away, Kant never left Königsberg, where in later life he became a professor of philosophy. This was the complete "ivory tower" philosopher, never marrying nor venturing more than a few yards from his study or lecture room in a relatively obscure and remote town. Yet so great was the universality of his genius that philosophy has never been the same since his career, and he must surely be reckoned in any list of the few great philosophers. *Kant spent his early mature years* as a student and teacher of science; his philosophic position was the standard rationalism of his time. He was profoundly shocked when he read David Hume and realized the drastic limitations of unaided reason. Thus he spent the rest of his life trying to transcend reason and to find a position of certainty on which to base behavior. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant establishes that man can never know the "thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*) but must content himself in the knowledge of phenomena or the reflection of the real on the human mind and consciousness. From this subjective point of view Kant goes on in his *Critique of Practical Reason* to try to discover how man should know how to act since he cannot know full truth. He finds the one inescapable value, *where in a sense subjective and objective meet*, in the "moral law," and sets up as the basis for human action the "categorical imperative." This imperative exhorts man "to act in such a way that the principles of his actions may at any time be applicable to all mankind; to choose such maxims as may be
made the bases of a universal law and rule” (quoted from K. F. Reinhardt, Germany 2000 Years, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1950, pp. 372–73). Thus Kant was primarily a philosopher of the theory of knowledge and of ethics; some critics have suggested that it was because of his influence that Christianity, especially Protestant Christianity, has tended to become primarily ethical rather than dogmatic. In later years Kant turned to studies in aesthetics and also to a consideration of history culminating in his noble essay On Eternal Peace.

The German Enlightenment was a complicated movement. Its source stems from several strands which were interwoven intricately, especially in such a complex personality as Goethe. One of the strands was the introduction of English literature into Germany. This had the effect of liberating German writing from the tight forms imposed by older styles and by French fiat. Milton and, above all, Shakespeare received a warm welcome; it is fair to say that Shakespeare has remained almost as much a part of German literature as of the heritage of the English-speaking peoples. An early example of the fusion of English forms with the new Pietism is found in the work of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803). Klopstock, deeply religious and emotional, was very much moved by Paradise Lost. The result was a lengthy poem, The Messiah, different in style from anything that had preceded it.

The cult of individualism infected some of the younger German writers with an almost Renaissance intensity and led into the “Storm and Stress” movement of the 1760’s. These young men espoused literary radicalism for its own sake. They were tired of old religious shibboleths and professed belief in the self-containment of man and his life on earth. They adopted formlessness as an end in itself and worshiped the memory of Shakespeare, neglecting the fact that only a master of form can successfully transcend the forms. Not much of the production of the Storm and Stress writers has endured with the exception of some of Goethe’s early work, but the liberating influence of the revolt fertilized the minds of later and greater writers.

A more sober element entered into this ferment of ideas with the rediscovery by the Germans of classical antiquity. The urge to the south was nothing new in German history. It had been a leading motive in the Middle Ages, but the Protestant movement had lessened it by cutting the bond with Rome. Now again Greece and Rome, especially the former with its sense of limitation and formed perfection, tempered the enthusiasm of the new movements. One of the men most responsible for this new interest in the ancient past was Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68), who made his way gradually south from Prussia until he reached Rome where he reveled in the remains of the past. The new
excavations at Pompeii excited him enormously and his studies culminated in his *History of the Art of Antiquity*, which was to have considerable influence in his homeland.

The two great teachers of the German Enlightenment were Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). Lessing led a penurious and uncomfortable life. He was born the son of a Saxon Lutheran pastor but gave up his own theological studies at Leipzig to devote himself to literature. For short periods he was a free-lance writer, a critic at the National Theater in Hamburg, and a librarian to the duke of Brunswick, but he died in poverty and was buried at public expense. Lessing was more of a critic than a creator, a reflection of his being a good son of the Enlightenment. His Deistic beliefs also reflect the Enlightenment, although he gave much greater importance to God than did most of the French Deists. He wrote extensively on the theater insisting that the classic French dramatists had emphasized form too much, and presenting Shakespeare as a model. His theories on art are found mainly in his *Laocoön*, in which he criticizes Winckelmann’s insistence on the serenity of Greek art. His fame as a creative writer rests mainly on two plays, *Minna von Barnhelm* and *Nathan der Weise*. The former is Germany’s first and best classic comedy, to an extent in praise of Frederick the Great’s Prussia. The latter is a long poetic drama set at the time of the Third Crusade. The three protagonists are Saladin; Nathan, a noble-minded Jew; and an equally noble-minded Christian knight. The theme of the play is tolerance and cosmopolitanism: it is not a man’s dogma that counts but his charity and goodness. Once again Lessing proved himself a product of the Enlightenment.

Herder was even less of a creative artist than Lessing, but it may be argued that his influence was greater than Lessing’s. He was born in East Prussia, was a student of Kant at Königsberg, and became a Lutheran minister. For some time he carried out both clerical and teaching duties at Riga in Russia; eventually, owing to Goethe’s help, he settled in Weimar, where he was in charge of the church in that grand duchy. Probably his single greatest contribution was that he was one of the first literary critics to think in historical terms. He was interested in the growth of language and its development in literature. He deplored the influence of foreign literatures upon the German and initiated the study of native folk poetry (a direction of thought that was to have dire influence on the next century). In later life he developed a philosophy of history in which he saw mankind evolving toward a higher humanity, but the concept of the evolution is uppermost. Herder has been accused of being the first German nationalist. There is some weight to this accusa-
tion, but certainly it was a nationalism heavily tinctured by the cosmopolitanism of his period. All critics are agreed on his importance both as a teacher and as an influence on Goethe.

Unquestionably the greatest product of eighteenth-century Germany and one of the greatest literary figures of all time was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). It is difficult to say something significant about Goethe in a few paragraphs. His long life spanned such a stirring period, his interests were so amazingly versatile, and his formulation of ideas so lofty that he comes nearer than anyone else to the Enlightenment ideal of the universal man.

Goethe was born in Frankfurt to a wealthy middle-class family. He was sent to the University of Leipzig to study law but spent much of his time consorti with the literary figures who abounded there. Bad health forced him to cut short his studies, and after a brief stay at home he continued his education at Strassburg. In 1775 he settled in Weimar at the invitation of the young grand duke, Charles Augustus, the most remarkable prince patron of the arts of the century. Except for some trips Goethe spent the rest of his years in Weimar, usually active as a political functionary in the little principality. His residence there, and that of Schiller a few years later, made the word Weimar synonymous with the Germany of poets and thinkers.

Goethe’s early works breathe the spirit of Storm and Stress. In his play Goetz von Berlichingen he departs from the Aristotelian unities and approaches the Shakespearean form. In it he depicts a protagonist whose tragic and powerful will dooms him to disaster. Much the same theme dominates the original version of Faust, in which violence and passion wreck the bourgeois world of the young woman Gretchen. Finally in The Sorrows of Young Werther Goethe stretches the limits of lachrymose emotion almost to the breaking point in describing the passionate unfulfilled love of Werther for his Charlotte, a passion which ends in Werther’s suicide. Werther stands high on the best-seller list of all time for it hit Europe just as the age of sentimentality was beginning and caused even such a cynical and hardheaded young man as Napoleon Bonaparte to cry himself to sleep more than once. Goethe’s early works were characterized by emotion, strength, and vitality, but also by the lack of discipline of a sensuous and passionate man.

In 1786 Goethe went to Italy for a long sojourn which was to have a great influence on him. He fell a prey to the classic environment. The immediate results were several dramas that were classic and restrained in form but still clamorous for human liberty and for a cosmopolitan sense of love and humanity: Egmont, Iphigenia, and Tasso. To the period shortly after Goethe’s return to Weimar belongs also the classic ex-
ample of the typically German form of the novel of educational development, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (Lehrjahre)*. Goethe's versatility showed itself in these years too, for he devoted much of his time to studies in natural science: botany, morphology, mineralogy, and meteorology. These studies resulted in important writings.

One of the most profound influences on Goethe's life, and one of the most fruitful associations in literary history, was the friendship between Goethe and Friedrich Schiller which ended only with Schiller's death in 1805. Schiller was born in 1759, the son of a medical officer in the army of the duke of Württemberg. As opposed to Goethe, Schiller was reared amid hardship and privation. His superior intellect won him a scholarship in a school dominated by Duke Charles Eugene, one of the least enlightened princes of the Enlightenment period. Here at a military academy he was stifled by rigid discipline and censorship in an attempt to make a lawyer out of him. He finally studied medicine but without enthusiasm. Schiller thrived on the literature which was smuggled into his school and secretly wrote his first drama, *The Robbers*, which was produced in Mannheim. He had to attend the production in secret; he lost patience with this frustration and escaped from Württemberg to Mannheim. He was now destitute; to make matters worse, his second play, *Fiesco*, was unsuccessful. He found temporary refuge with a friend and completed his third drama, *Love and Intrigue*, which was more successful. These early plays cry for liberty and attack tyranny. They betray the Storm and Stress attitudes, but in a much more restrained dramatic form.

Schiller was rescued from his financial problems by a young admirer with whom he lived in Saxony for two happy years, marked by the composition of *Don Carlos* and also of the *Ode to Joy*, which Beethoven later set to music in his *Ninth Symphony*. Finally the same enlightened grand duke of Saxe-Weimar who was Goethe's patron came to Schiller's rescue. He gave Schiller an appointment as professor of history at the University of Jena, where he remained for a few years until bad health forced him to move to Weimar where he could be nearer Goethe and supervise the productions of his dramas at the court theater. He died in 1805 of a consumption which had ravaged him for years.

During the Jena period Schiller turned to serious historical studies and produced a *History of the Revolt of the United Netherlands* and a *History of the Thirty Years' War*. These works provided him with some of the background for his later historical dramas.

Schiller's most important creations occurred in the last years of his life at Weimar where he was in constant contact with Goethe. The two men were extraordinarily complementary. Goethe provided a subjective
sensuousness and Schiller an objective idealism. They were even able to write some works together, but mostly they encouraged and inspired each other. During these years Schiller developed his remarkable lyric gift, writing some short poems which rival Goethe's unquestioned pre-eminence in this genre. However, Schiller's great achievement during these six years was the composition of five long poetic dramas (one of them a trilogy), on which much of his reputation rests. The greatest ones were *Wallenstein, Mary Stuart, The Maid of Orleans*, and *William Tell*. The first three are studies of tragedy in personality or circumstance; the last is one of the greatest songs of liberty.

Goethe lived for almost thirty years after Schiller's death. They were years of increasing serenity when Goethe assumed an almost Olympian stature. He refused to become absorbed in German nationalistic strivings. In fact, he is an embarrassment for nationalistic historians since, being the greatest figure in German literature, he was a staunch admirer of Napoleon and regarded him as the representative of the spirit of the time. If any word can be applied to Goethe, it is the word cosmopolitan; he is a pleasant relief from the nationalist fanatics in which German literature sadly abounds.

These years saw Goethe's most mature production. Shortly after Schiller's death the first part of *Faust* appeared, a recasting of the original version. Then came the novel, *Elective Affinities*, the autobiographical *Poetry and Truth*, the collection called *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*, and finally the second part of *Faust*. These major works were interspersed with volumes of short lyrics, scientific works, and Goethe's conversations carefully transcribed by his faithful friend Eckermann.

This is no place for a comprehensive comment on *Faust*. It is one of the monumental creations of the human spirit, astounding in its architectonic form and its breadth and depth of human understanding. It moves from the sensual, selfish, and passionate emphasis in the first part to the altruistic and loving strivings of the second. Faust never ceases to strive; he is never able to say that any moment is so wondrous that he would wish it prolonged indefinitely. Finally the chorus of angels sings out that he who is ever striving and aspiring can be redeemed and that if he is also conscious of love and grace from on high, he will receive there a heartfelt welcome. This characteristic of constant aspiration is always present in the *Faust*. One of the German thinkers of the twentieth century, Oswald Spengler, has diagnosed it as the touchstone of modern man, whom he calls the "Faustian" man.

Goethe is one of those authors so lofty as to defy classification. He was poet, novelist, dramatist, scientist, and political thinker. No catalog of the few outstanding creations of our literary history will omit his
Faust; yet from the grandiose conception of that work he could move to the lyric gracefulness of some of his short poems. A classicist? Sometimes. A romanticist? Sometimes. Perhaps Napoleon, who was no flatterer, summed it up when he met Goethe and said afterward, "Voilà un homme."

If Germany was pre-eminent in the eighteenth century in letters, she was incomparable in music. The catalog of German composers during the period is long, but six of them remain among the greatest musical geniuses of our culture.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was born in Eisenach of a family already known in musical circles in the vicinity. He spent his whole life in music, at first for several years handling the music, both religious and secular, for a number of the small central German courts. In 1723 he settled in Leipzig, where he passed the rest of his life as cantor of the church of St. Thomas. He was extremely busy composing ad hoc pieces for the services, drilling the choir, and carrying out a host of minor obligations, but still he found time to compose a prodigious number of works. Bach died as obscurely as he lived, and it was not until 1894 that his grave was identified. His works too were almost unknown until the mid-nineteenth century when the Bach revival began. The first performance, after the original, of the St. Matthew Passion occurred in 1829 under the direction of Felix Mendelssohn. Since that time composers and critics have uniformly acknowledged the fact that Bach is without a peer in his own fields. The Mass in B Minor, the St. John and St. Matthew Passions, the immense amount of cantatas, and the numerous compositions for various instruments are among the richest inheritances in music.

An almost exact contemporary of Bach was George Frederick Handel (1685–1759). His life was spent according to a far different pattern in association with some of the wealthy and great of his day. He was born in Halle and intended for the law. However, when his father died, Handel took up the serious study of his beloved music. He achieved his first success in Hamburg where an opera of his was presented. He then spent several years in Italy perfecting himself in the art of the Italian opera, which was then the vogue. He was appointed court composer in Hanover, but soon went to London where he spent the rest of his career after 1713. In fact, he is a more significant figure in the history of English music than of German. He even anglicized his name (originally Händel). For a number of years he wrote and produced Italian operas in England, writing more than forty-five himself, but in the late thirties the fashion changed and Handel found himself in serious financial straits. He eventually turned to the composition of oratorios, the form
which was to bring him fame. He wrote thirty-two of them, of which *The Messiah* is the most beloved today. In addition, he composed a large number of cantatas and much incidental music, mainly for the court of George I.

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–87) is sometimes known as the father of opera. He was born in south Germany and during his early mature years traveled extensively with opera companies composing and producing in both the Italian and French styles. He attracted the attention of Empress Maria Theresa, who put him in charge of opera at her Court Theater. From then on his career was assured and he spent most of his time in Vienna, though there was a tumultuous period when he attempted with varying success the production of operas in Paris under the patronage of Marie Antoinette. He wrote several dozen operas, of which the most enduring have been *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Alceste*, and *Iphigénie en Tauride*. Gluck’s importance lies not in the intrinsic value of his operas but in the fact that he changed their form, making them more dignified and restrained, insisting on the literary quality of the librettos, and breaking the dominance of the singers. His was a work of purification which left the way open for the far greater genius of Mozart, whom Gluck knew and admired.

One of the most prolific of the great composers was Franz Joseph (“Papá”) Haydn (1732–1809). Haydn, who was born and spent nearly all his life in Austria, came of peasant stock and had all the virtues associated with that class. As a child he was taken to Vienna to sing in the cathedral, but when his voice changed he was thrown penniless on the world. He started to compose and moved from patron to patron until he became the protégé of the Esterházy family with whom he remained for thirty years composing symphonies, quartets, operas, and incidental music for performance in the great Esterházy palace. By the time he was sixty, although he had never left Austria and had lived most often in the countryside, he was one of the best-known composers in Europe, a friend of Mozart and a teacher of Beethoven. He was invited to London where he had enormous success both as a composer and as a conductor. At that point in his life he moved to another genre and wrote several major oratorios inspired by the work of Handel. He composed more than a hundred symphonies, more than sixty string quartets, and a large amount of assorted vocal and instrumental music. If Gluck can be called father of the opera, Haydn should be considered father of the symphony.

Nature smiled when Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) was born in Salzburg. He was endowed with prodigious musical gifts which appeared in early childhood, and was trained in their development by a father who was both a competent musician and a tough taskmaster.
Mozart is perhaps the classic example of the infant prodigy. He started writing music at the age of six and was taken to most of the courts and capitals of Germany and western Europe where he appeared frequently, charming his hearers both with his music and his personality. During his teens Mozart spent much time in Italy breathing the musical air of that land. He then returned to Salzburg where he became a court musician for the prince-archbishop, who, however, was jealous and difficult to work with. In 1781 Mozart broke with the archbishop and moved to Vienna where he spent most of the remainder of his short life constantly fighting poverty. He died a pauper. Probably never in the history of music has one man possessed such versatility and mastery of a variety of musical forms. The very list of Mozart’s compositions is almost unbelievable. He wrote over forty symphonies, three of which are among the greatest ever written; there are more than twenty operas, including the marvelous Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and The Magic Flute. There are also countless religious works, string quartets, and compositions for varying combinations of instruments. A lightness of touch, a sure sense of melody, and a complete mastery of form characterize Mozart. Although his work does not possess the stormy violence of some of his successors, there are moments of deep seriousness—especially in the later symphonies and Don Giovanni—which are a long distance from the frivolity of the earlier rococo music. Several critics have said that of all the composers Mozart would be the hardest to replace.

The last of the German musical titans of the eighteenth century was Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827). The word titan fits Beethoven well, for his personality, his life, and his work were all tempestuous and revolutionary. He was born at Bonn to a lower-class family of Flemish descent. He made his first musical studies in west Germany, but in 1792 went to Vienna to become a pupil of Haydn. He stayed in or near Vienna for the rest of his life. His personality was craggy, irritable, difficult; he was a revolutionary, even a democrat. He dedicated his third symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte; but when he heard that Napoleon had made himself emperor, he tore up the dedication and replaced it with the word “heroic” (Eroica). He despised Napoleon thenceforward and refused to be presented to him. He would not accept the servile position in which musicians had existed at the palaces of the nobility and thus rendered his own finances more difficult. Yet he would not submit. In music, too, he liberated the forms of composition and wrote passages which, though normal to our ears, were frightening to his first listeners. His first two symphonies are in the classical Mozartean style, but beginning with the third he introduced a long first movement of tightly knit, thoughtful, dramatic quality. He also replaced the traditional minuet with the
scherzo, usually a tumbling rapids of ironic buffoonery interspersed with reflection on the seriousness of life. Finally in his last symphony he made a drastic innovation by introducing the human voice in the last movement; it is a massive chorale based on Schiller’s *Ode to Joy*. His personal tragedy was enhanced by the fact that from the age of thirty his hearing grew faulty, and in the last years of his life he was deaf. Nevertheless, he continued to compose and left a great body of work embodying almost every musical form: his nine symphonies; his opera *Fidelio*; his religious music, including the *Missa Solemnis*; and an abundance of works, such as his later string quartets, which are considered by some critics to be among the most profound musical compositions of all time.

Germany, then, enjoyed an extraordinarily rich cultural flowering in the eighteenth century. This was aided by the very fact of her decentralization. German culture did not tend to center in one spot, as French culture in Paris and English in London. The traveler is astonished at the proliferation of palaces, churches, and dwellings that still remain from this period. Every princeling wanted his Versailles. Some of the princelings were coarse and vulgar despots, but a number of them were men of high and dedicated cultivation, like Charles Augustus of Saxe-Weimar.

This was an important century for Germany. She repaired some of the spiritual and material damage of the turbulent sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She saw the development of two great powers, Austria and Prussia, each stronger than all the other German states put together. The Holy Roman Empire lived on as a political fiction, but the time was at hand when, as a result of the great French upheaval, it was to be buried and the German world was to take important steps toward the modern concept of the national state.