his father, and under the influence of passion and suspicion caused the death of many powerful and loyal subjects. In 1568 his brothers John and Charles rebelled against him. His favourite, Göran Persson, who was accused of having constantly misled him, was seized and executed, and Eric himself was obliged to surrender. He was deprived of the crown and kept in close confinement until 1577, when he was murdered.

John mounted the throne as John III. (1568-1592). In 1570 the war between Sweden and Denmark was brought to an end by the peace of Stettin. Sweden obtained some advantages by this treaty, but she had to resign to Denmark her claims to the island of Gotland, and to Scania, Halland, and Blekinge. Through the influence of his first wife Catherine, sister of King Sigis­mund II. of Poland, John had become a Catholic ; and as king he laboured to restore as far as possible the old religious forms. His efforts were bitterly resented by the Protestants, while at Rome he was condemned for not acting with sufficient decision in the interest of his church. He was succeeded by his son Sigismund, who had been elected king of Poland in 1587. In the interval between John’s death and Sigismund’s arrival in Sweden supreme power was exercised by Duke Charles, Sigismund’s uncle. Charles, the ablest of all the sons of Gustavus Vasa, resolved to take advantage of the opportunity to place the ecclesiastical system of the country on a satisfactory basis. Accordingly a great assembly was summoned at Upsala in 1593, and by this assembly it was decreed that the Augsburg confession of faith should be accepted as the authoritative statement of the theological doctrines of the Swedish church. The decision was of vast importance, and the Swedes have ever since looked back upon it as one that marked an era in their national history.

Before his coronation in 1594 Sigismund undertook to protect the rights of his Protestant subjects ; but, being an ardent Catholic, he soon began to work for the triumph of his own creed. On his return to Poland the discontent he had excited in Sweden found free expression, and he was obliged to place the administration of affairs in the hands of his uncle, Duke Charles. In the time of King John a dispute about frontiers had led to war between Sweden and Russia, and this war was still going on when Charles undertook his new duties. In 1595 he concluded peace, securing for Sweden the provinces of Esthonia and Narva, but yielding to Russia some districts on the borders of Finland. These districts were held by Klas Fleming, an enthusiastic adherent of King Sigismund, and he declined to give them up, nor were they surrendered until the death of this general in 1597. Meanwhile Charles had found that some members of the council of state were bent on thwarting all his schemes, and from them he appealed to the diet. The diet heartily supported him, and appointed him governor-general of Sweden ; where­upon he set to work in earnest to put down Catholic intriguers, and to promote the interests of the peasantry in opposition to those of the great nobles. In 1598 Sigis­mund advanced against him with a Polish army, and was defeated at Stängebro, near Linköping. The war went on for some time, but Sigismund himself returned to Poland. In 1600 the diet demanded that he should reside in Sweden or send his son to be educated as a Pro­testant. No answer being returned to these demands, Sigismund was dethroned, and his heirs were deprived of the right of succession. Duke Charles was then made king, and reigned as Charles IX. Sigismund continued to regard himself as the lawful sovereign, and as the same pretension was made by his descendants, a very bitter feeling sprang up between Sweden and Poland,—a feeling which led to many wars during the next sixty years.

Charles IX. (1600-1611) carried on with splendid vigour the work which had been begun by his father Gustavus Vasa. Under his rule Sweden became a thoroughly Protestant country, and for the first time associated herself to some extent with the general Pro­testant movement in other lands. Charles watched with especial interest the action of religious parties in Germany, and carefully maintained good relations with the leading German Protestant princes. At home one of his principal aims was to force the aristocracy to be subservient to the crown, and he succeeded as no Swedish king had done before him. For burghers and the peasantry he secured in the diet a more important and more clearly defined place than had formerly belonged to them, and he devised many sagacious measures for the material welfare of his people. He devoted much attention to the development of mining industries, and by the founding of convenient seaports he gave a great impetus to trade. In foreign relations he was not less masterful than in his manage­ment of domestic affairs. In 1609 he sent an army into Russia to oppose the false Demetrius, whose pretensions to the Russian throne were supported by Poland. The Swedish generals, after having achieved some success, were obliged to retreat in consequence of a mutiny among their troops ; but Charles despatched a fresh force, which did its work so well that the Russians came to terms, and even promised to accept his younger son, Charles Philip, as czar. In the last year of his life Charles was engaged in a war with Christian IV. of Denmark, who invaded Sweden because Charles claimed to be king of the Norwegian Laplanders and sought to exclude the Danes from the extensive trade with Riga. Calmar, notwithstanding the strenuous exertions of Charles, was captured by the Danes, and from this circumstance the struggle came to be known as the Calmar War.

Charles IX. was succeeded by his son Gustavus Adolphus (1611-1632), the most illustrious of the kings of Sweden. He was only seventeen years of age when he became king, but he had already given evidence of high intellectual and moral qualities. One of his first public acts was to appoint as chancellor the youngest of his counsellors, Axel Oxenstjerna, a great statesman whose name is intimately associated with all the most prominent events of his reign. By mingled gentleness and firmness Gustavus won almost immediately the goodwill of his subjects, and before he was many years on the throne he became the object of their most enthusiastic devotion. He showed unfailing respect for the rights of the diet, improved its organization, and summoned it regularly once a year. Industry and trade flourished under his wise rule, and he did much to develop the educational system of Sweden by giving splendid endowments to the university of Upsala and by founding the university of Dorpat and many schools and colleges. He introduced into the army a rigid system of discipline, yet he was adored by his soldiers, who had perfect faith in his military genius and were touched by his care for their welfare and by the cheerfulness with which, when necessary, he shared their hardships.

The war with Denmark which had been begun in his father’s time he was obliged to continue, but he did so very unwillingly, and as soon as possible (in 1613) he signed a treaty of peace, by which, in return for the pay­ment of a million thalers, Sweden received back all the territory that had been conquered by the Danes. Having no further cause of anxiety in this direction, he prosecuted with renewed vigour the war with the Russians, who had not kept their promise to recognize Prince Charles Philip as czar. The Swedish general, Count de la Gardie, had gained many advantages in the struggle, and when