In the year 1138, Boleslaus the III., regent of Poland, divided his states amongst his sons, and gave over to his eldest, Wladislaus, Silesia, with some other estates, and the greatest authority in the government. His brothers, how- ever, conspired against him, and succeeded in expelling him from the country. The three brothers divided the land into portions to each, who thus became the founders of the three dukedoms of Silesia, belonging to the race of the Piastis. As the progeny of these dukes multiplied, their respective portions were subdivided, and thus gave rise to the great number of principalities of which the country con- sists. Besides these, there were other princes, especially in Upper Silesia, who were the descendants of Ottohar, king of Bohemia, who died in 1278, after establishing the dukes of Troppau, Jagendorf, and Raliber. When king John had succeeded to the throne of Bohemia, he was anxious to unite all the power in his own hands, under the pretext of restoring tranquillity to the country, which had been weakened by internal quarrels and hostility He was so far enabled to succeed, in 1327, in persuading the several princes to receive their lands as a feud from him, that two only of the whole number, the prince of Jauer, and the prince of Schweidnitz, declined compliance. In the next reign, when John was succeeded by his son, the emperor Charles IV. of Germany, these two principalities came into his possession by marriage ; and Silesia was thus formed into one dukedom, in connexion with the kingdom of Bohemia, in the year 1355. At this time, the king of Poland relinquished all claim over Silesia, and renewed his renunciation by a subsequent treaty in 1372.

Under the Bohemian monarchy, the religious tenets of Huss, Luther, Calvin, and Swenkfeld, spread themselves over the whole country, and the adherents to them were, under some restrictions, permitted to exercise their own forms of worship.

In 1498, a kind of constitution was imparted to the coun- try, which, whilst it gave consistency to it as a whole, lessened the power of the nobility, and increased that of the king, Wladislaus, who then filled the throne. Under him, as well as under his predecessors, since the Polish renunciation, the language and manners of the Poles were gradually exchanged for those of the Germans, and industry, and commerce, and with them, the arts and sciences, were gradually extended. They, however, received a severe check by the persecution of the protestants which was barbarously carried on by the successive princes of the house of Austria. The tremendous scourge of religious and civil war extend- ed from Bohemia to Silesia.

The peace of Westphalia gave tranquillity to the country, for though that treaty was less productive of religious toler­ation in the dominions of Austria, than in the other divisions of Germany, yet a degree of it was allowed to the protestants, though with imperfect securities for its continuance. Under that house, however, to which it passed, in the early part of the sixteenth century, it was tolerably prosperous ; manufactures were introduced, the land was well cultivated, and a degree of ease enjoyed by the inhabitants, to which their ancestors had been utter strangers.

After a century of increasing advancement, Silesia be­came the theatre of a tremendous war. The death of the emperor Charles VI., when the throne devolved on a female, revived a long dormant and certainly fictitious claim to the western part of Silesia, by Frederick of Prussia, commonly surnamed the great. No justification of his conduct could be made ; indeed, in his memoirs his ambition is avowed. He and Bavaria made attacks on Austria on each side, which received some aid both from England and France. The contest was carried on with alternate suc­cess, and terminated by the cession of Silesia to Prussia. But the proud house of Austria had no intention of defini- tively relinquishing such a valuable province. A war commenced in 1756, when France, Saxony, Russia, and Sweden, formed an alliance against Prussia, which brought the king and his country to the brink of ruin, from which it was saved by the talents of the monarch, and some aid from England. After seven years of hostilities, the peace of Hubertsburg was concluded in 1763, by which Silesia was finally settled under the government of Frederick, and has remained subject to his successors to the present time.

Prussian Silesia, according to its present limits, (for a por- tion of Silesia is still retained by Austria,) extends in north latitude, from 49° 49' to 52° 1'; and in east longitude, from 14° 20' to 19° 17', and comprehends 15,945 square miles. It is bounded on the north-west by Brandenburg, on the north-east by Posen, on the east by Poland, on the south-east by Cracow and Galicia, on the south by Moravia, and on the south-west by Bohemia.

It is divided into the governments, taking their names from the cities where the administrative boards are fixed, viz. Breslau, Oppeln, and Liegnitz. In these, are 186 cities and towns, and 5355 villages and hamlets. It is the most densely peopled of any portion of the Prussian dominions; and it appeared by the census of 1831, that the number of inhabitants was 2,464,413; the births exceeding the deaths at the rate of 100,000 annually. Nearly one half the in- habitants are Catholics, the others are chiefly Lutherans, with about four or five thousand Calvinists, some Menonites, Hussites, and Hernhutters, and about 17,000 Jews. Each of these sects have their establishments for education, and a University in Breslau, open to all, without distinction of religious opinions.

The river Oder runs from south to north, and divides the province into two parts of different character, as to the face of the country. On the east, it presents a flat sandy plain of rather a sterile appearance. On the eastern or German side, the land is rather mountainous, presenting much variety of scenery, with a good soil, though intermixed with extensive tracts of sandy land.

In the part of the province where it touches on Bohemia is a mountainous range, some of whose peaks are very lofty. The Reisenkoppe is 4950 feet, the Grasse-Rad 4070, and several others above 4000.

The state of agriculture is much improved, and the land produces a sufficiency, in some years a surplus, of corn, consisting chiefly of rye, with about one-fifth as much wheat. The cultivation of flax is. however, the employment to which the greatest skill is directed, and in some years 17,000,000 pounds have been raised, the greater part of which was used in the manufactures of the province. To- bacco, fruit, and culinary vegetables are abundant, and in the southern part, some moderate wine is made. The mines are considerable, and yield still a little gold and silver, and abundance of copper, lead, iron, calamine, arsenic, vitriol, sulphur, zinc, and cobalt. This country has been long celebrated for its manufactures of fine linen ; their shirt- ings are exquisite, both for strength and fineness, and no other table linen has yet been made that can rival theirs. Of late years the cotton trade has been introduced, and is increasing. The chief commerce is in manufactures, and the exportation of pitch, tar, and turpentine. The imports of foreign goods reach them by the way of the Oder from Stettin, or by the Elbe from Hamburg.

Breslau, the capital, contains 90,000 inhabitants.

The portion of Silesia left to Austria by the peace of Hubertsburg, has been incorporated with Moravia, and makes a part of the government of Bran. It is formed into the following circles, viz. Teschen, Bielitz, Freudenthal, Freistadt, Friedeck, Deutchleuthen, Reschenwaldau, and Roy, each named from the chief city of the district.

It is bounded by Prussian Silesia, by Galicia, by Moravia, and Hungary. It comprises 27 cities, 4 towns, and 646 villages, with about 380,000 inhabitants. The country is