Norway and Sweden. He was a man of good intentions, but was not strong enough to overcome the prejudice created against him by the fact of his being a foreigner. When he died in 1448 the Danes chose Christian, count of Oldenburg, as his successor, and the Norwegians by and by followed their example. Had the decision in Sweden rested only with the nobles and the clergy, Christian would at once have received the Swedish crown, for under the nominal rule of a foreign king these classes were able to tyrannize as they pleased over their poorer neighbours. But the Swedish people generally so strongly disliked the union, aud stood so urgently in need of the protection of a native sovereign, that Charles Knutsson was made king. He mounted the throne as Charles VIII. The aristocracy, both spiritual and temporal, detested him ; and in 1457 he found in Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson so formidable an enemy that he had to make his escape to Dantzic. Christian I. of Denmark and Norway then became king of Sweden, but he was unable to assert supremacy over the country as a whole, and in 1464 Charles VIII. again secured the throne. In the following year Charles was displaced a second time, but soon after­wards he was recalled, and he retained the crown until his death in 1470.

Charles was succeeded, not as king but as regent, by his nephew Sten Sture, under whose firm rule Sweden became prosperous and contented. Sten Sture was a far- seeing statesman, and sided resolutely with the peasants against the nobles. He took great pains also to promote the intellectual culture of the people. The university of Upsala was founded by him, and he introduced into Sweden the art of printing, and invited to the country many foreign scholars. He was not able wholly to destroy the union, for in 1496 he was defeated by King Hans of Denmark and Norway, who afterwards received the Swedish crown. Nevertheless Sten Sture remained the real master of Sweden, and after the defeat of the Danes by the Ditmarshers in 1500 his power was almost absolute. He died in 1503, when his authority passed to his nephew Svante Nilsson Sture, whom King Hans and the Swedish clergy and nobles in vain attempted to put down. Svante Nilsson Sture was succeeded by his son, Sten Sture the younger, in 1512, and for some time this brave and patriotic regent vigorously held his own both against his enemies at home and against Christian II., king of Denmark and Norway. In 1520, however, he was mortally wounded in a battle with the Danes at Bogesund, after which Christian II. became king of Sweden. This sovereign had some enlightened ideas, but he was a man of ferocious passions, and he had no sooner restored the union than he made the maintenance of it impossible by an act of almost unparalleled cruelty. Under the pretence of upholding the honour of the church he ordered at Stockholm the execution of ninety persons accused of having taken part in the deposition of his friend and supporter Archbishop Gustavus Trolle, who had been the late regent’s bitterest enemy. Most of the condemned men were nobles, and Christian hoped that by killing them he would secure the allegiance of the peasantry. The whole Swedish nation, however, was shocked by so horrible a massacre, and resolved to shake

off for ever the hated Danish yoke.

The movement for national independence was headed by Gustavus Ericsson, known afterwards as Gustavus Vasa. This young noble had been one of a group of Swedish hostages whom Christian II. had sent to Denmark, treat­ing them as if they had been prisoners of war. In 1519 he escaped from prison, and after a short stay in Lübeck found his way to Dalecarlia, where he went about in disguise among the peasantry, urging them to combine

against the common enemy. At first they were afraid to act with him, but their hesitation vanished when they heard of the blood-bath in Stockholm,—a crime by which Gustavus himself was more than ever embittered against the Danes, for his father was one of Christian II.’s victims. A force raised by Archbishop Trolle having been defeated, Gustavus led his troops beyond the limits of Dalecarlia and took Vesterås and Upsala, and laid siege to Stockholm and Calmar. These fortresses were bravely defended, but in 1523, with the help of a fleet sent to him by Lübeck, he succeeded in capturing them. In 1521 he had been declared regent, and in 1523, before the conquest of Stockholm and Calmar, he summoned at Strengnäs a diet which elected him to the throne. Soon afterwards he made himself master of Finland, and he annexed Scania, Halland, and Blekinge. The union had now been brought to an end, and from this time Sweden was always ruled by her own kings. Denmark and Norway, however, remained subject to one crown until the beginning of the 19th century

Gustavus Vasa was by far the greatest sovereign who had up to this time ruled the Swedish people. Before he was made king the doctrines of Luther had been pro­claimed in Sweden by the brothers Olaus and Laurentius Petri ; and Gustavus, who listened attentively to their teaching, became one of the most enthusiastic adherents of the Reformation. He acted cautiously, however, and resolutely opposed violent agitators. The majority of the Swedes cordially accepted the new doctrines, and at a diel held at Westerns in 1527 Gustavus received authority to reorganize the church. This he did thoroughly, making it clear from the beginning that Protestant pastors would never be permitted to wield the power which the Roman priesthood had so often abused. The greater part of the vast estates which had belonged to the Roman clergy he confiscated and applied to the uses of the state. In his secular policy he was as bold and successful as in his dealings with the church. For centuries the independence and arrogance of the great nobles had been the curse of the Swedish people. Gustavus missed no opportunity or limiting their influence. He compelled them to bear their fair share of the public burdens, and secured for himself faithful allies by obtaining for burghers and the peasantry, who had lost almost all their political influence a recognized place in the diet, which was now summoned more frequently and regularly than it had been for several generations. Gustavus did everything he could to encourage industry. For six years he fought with Lübeck ir order to break the supremacy of the Hanseatic League and he concluded treaties of commerce with England and the Netherlands. So many changes were effected ir Sweden in his time that several conspiracies were formed against him, but he had little difficulty in overcoming his enemies, for he had the confidence and affection of the great mass of his subjects. In 1544 it was decided by the diet that the Swedish throne should cease to be elective, and that it should be hereditary in the family of Gustavus.

When Gustavus died in 1560, his eldest son Eric be­came king. Eric was foolish enough to go to war with Frederick II. of Denmark for no better reason than that the latter, like Eric himself, claimed the right to put three crowns in his coat-of-arms. This war, which lasted seven years, caused much suffering to both nations. The Danes were generally beaten at sea, but under the leader­ship of the stout soldier Daniel Rantzau they gained important victories on land. Intellectually Eric was one of the most cultivated of Swedish kings, but in action he was so headstrong and wayward that most people believed him to be insane. He wasted the treasure amassed by