SILESIA, the name of a district in the east of Europe, the greater part of which is included in the German empire and is known as German Silesia. A smaller part, called Austrian Silesia, is included in the empire of Austria-Hungary.

*German Silesia.*

German Silesia is bounded by Brandenburg, Posen, Russian Poland, Gahcia, Austrian Silesia, Moravia, Bohemia and the kingdom and province of Saxony. Besides the bulk of the old duchy of Silesia, it comprises the countship of Glatz, a fragment of the Neumark, and part of Upper Lusatia, taken from the kingdom of Saxony in 1815. The province, which has an area of 15,576 sq. m. and is the largest in Prussia, is divided into three governmental districts, those of Liegnitz and Breslau comprising lower Silesia, and of Oppeln taking in the greater part of moun­tainous Silesia.

Physiographically Silesia is roughly divided into a flat and a hilly portion by the so-called Silesian Langental, which begins on the south-east near the river Malapane, and extends across the province in a west-by-north direction to the Black Elster, following in part the valley of the Oder. The south-east part of the province, to the east of the Oder and south of the Malapane, consists of a hilly outpost of the Carpathians, the Tarnowitz plateau, with a mean elevation of about 1000 ft. To the west of the Oder the land rises gradually from the Langental towards the southern boundary of the province, which is formed by the central part of the Sudetic system, including the Glatz Mountains and the Riesengebirge (Schneekoppe, 5260 ft.). Among the loftier elevations in advance of this southern barrier the most conspicuous is the Zobten (2356 ft.). To the north and north-east of the Oder the province belongs almost entirely to the great North-German plain, though a hilly ridge, rarely attaining a height of 1000 ft., may be traced from east to west, asserting itself most definitely in the Katzengebirge. Nearly the whole of Silesia lies within the basin of the Oder, which flows through it from south-east to north-west, dividing the province into two approximately equal parts. The Vistula touches the province on the south-east, and receives a few small tributaries from it, while on the west the Spree and Black Elster belong to the system of the Elbe. The Iser rises among the mountains on the south. Among the chief feeders of the Oder are the Malapane, the Glatzer Neisse, the Katzbach and the Bartsch ; the Bober and Queiss flow through Silesia, but join the Oder beyond the frontier. The only lake of any extent is the Schlawa See, 7 m. long, on the north frontier; and the only navigable canal, the Klodnitz canal, in the mining district of upper Silesia. There is a considerable difference in the climate of Lower and Upper Silesia; some of the villages in the Riesengebirge have the lowest mean temperature of any inhabited place in Prussia (below 40° F.).

Of the total area of the province 56% is occupied by arable land, 10∙2% by pasture and meadow, and nearly 29% by forests. The soil along the foot of the mountains is generally good, and the district between Ratibor and Liegnitz, where 70 to 80% of the surface is under the plough, is reckoned one of the most fertile in Germany. The parts of lower Silesia adjoining Brandenburg, and also the district to the east of the Oder, are sandy and comparatively unproductive. The different cereals are all grown with success, wheat and rye sometimes in quantity enough for exportation. Flax is still a frequent crop in the hilly districts, and sugar-beets are raised over large areas. Tobacco, oil-seeds, chicory and hops may also be specified, while a little wine, of an inferior quality, is produced near Grünberg. Mulberry trees for silk-culture have been introduced and thrive fairly. Large estates are the rule in Silesia, where about a third of the land is in the hands of owners possessing at least 250 acres, while properties of 50,000 to 100,000 acres are common. The districts of Oppeln and Liegnitz are among the most richly wooded parts of Prussia. The merino sheep was introduced by Frederick the Great, and since then the Silesian breed has been greatly improved. The woods and mountains harbour large quantities of game, such as red deer, roedeer, wild boars and hares. The fishery includes salmon in the Oder, trout in the mountain streams, and carp in the small lakes or ponds with which the province is sprinkled.

The great wealth of Silesia, however, lies underground, in the shape of large stores of coal and other minerals, which have been worked ever since the 12th century. The coal measures of Upper Silesia, in the south-east part of the province, are among the most extensive in continental Europe, and there is another large field near Waldenburg in the south-west. The output in 1905 exceeded 34 million tons, valued at £12,500,000 sterling, and equal to more than a quarter of the entire yield of Germany. The district of Oppeln also contains a great quantity of iron, the production in 1905 amounting to 862,000 tons. The deposits of zinc in the vicinity of Beuthen are perhaps the richest in the world, and produce two- thirds of the zinc ore of Germany (609.000 tons). The remaining mineral products include lead, from which a considerable quantity of silver is extracted, copper, cobalt, arsenic, the rarer metal cadmium, alum, brown coal, marble, and a few of the commoner precious stones, jaspers, agates and amethysts. The province contains scarcely any salt or brine springs, but there are well-known mineral springs at Warmbrunn, Salzbrunn and several other places.

A busy manufacturing activity has long been united with the underground industries of Silesia, and the province in this respect is hardly excelled by any other part of Prussia. On the plateau of Tarnowitz the working and smelting of metals is the predominant industry, and in the neighbourhood of Beuthen, Königshütte and Gleiwitz there is an almost endless succession of iron-works, zinc- foundries, machine-shops and the like. At the foot of the Riesenge­birge, and along the southern mountain line generally, the textile industries prevail. Weaving has been practised in Silesia, on a large scale, since the 14th century; and Silesian linen still maintains its reputation, though the conditions of production have greatly changed. Cotton and woollen goods of all kinds are also made in large quantities, and among the other industrial products are beetroot sugar, spirits, chemicals, tobacco, starch, paper, pottery, and "Bohemian glass.” Lace, somewhat resembling that of Brussels, is made by the women of the mountainous districts. The trade of Silesia is scarcely so extensive as might be expected from its im­portant industrial activity. On the east it is hampered by the stringent regulations of the Russian frontier, and the great waterway of the Oder, though in process of being regulated, is sometimes too low in summer for navigation. The extension of the railway system has, however, had its usual effect in fostering commerce, and the mineral and manufactured products of the province are freely exported.

At the census of 1905 the population of Silesia was 4,942,611, of whom 2,120,361 were Protestants, 2,765,394 Catholics and 46,845 Jews. The density is 317 per sq. m., but the average is of course very greatly exceeded in the industrial districts such as Beuthen. Three-fourths of the inhabitants and territory are German, but to the east of the Oder the Poles, more than 1,000,000 in number, form the bulk of the population, while there are about 15,500 Czechs in the south part of the province and 25,000 Wends near Liegnitz. The Roman Catholics, most of whom are under the ecclesiastical sway of the prince bishop of Breslau, are predominant in Upper Silesia and Glatz; the Protestants prevail in Lower Silesia, to the west of the Oder, and in Lusatia. The nobility is very numerous in Silesia, chiefly in the Polish districts. The educational institutions of the province are headed by the university of Breslau. In 1900 the percentage of illiterate recruits, in spite of the large Polish-speaking contingent, was only 0∙05. The capital and seat of the provincial diet is Breslau (*q.v.*), which is also by far the largest and most important town. The towns next in point of size are Görlitz, Liegnitz, Königshütte, Beuthen, Schweidnitz, Neisse and Glogau. The province sends thirty-five members to the Reichstag and sixty-five to the Prussian chamber of deputies. The government divisions of Breslau and Oppeln together form the district of the 6th army corps with its headquarters at Breslau, while Liegnitz belongs to that of the 5th army corps, the headquarters of which are at Posen. Glogau, Glatz and Neisse are fortresses.

*History.—*The beginnings of Silesian history do not reach back beyond the 10th century λ.d., at which time the district was occupied by clans of Slavonic nationality, one of which derived its name from the mountain *Zlenz* (mod. *Zobtenburg),* near Breslau, and thus gave rise to the present appellation of the whole province. The etymology of place-names suggests that the original population was Celtic, but this conjecture cannot be verified in any historical records. About the year 1000 the Silesian clans were incorporated in the kingdom of Poland, whose rulers held their ground with difficulty against continuous attacks by the kings of Bohemia, but maintained themselves successfully against occasional raids from Germany. The decisive factor in the separation of Silesia from Poland was furnished by a partition of the Polish crown’s territories in 1138. Silesia was henceforth constituted as a separate principality, and in 1201 its political severance from Poland became complete.

A yet more important result of the partition of 1138 was the transference of Silesia to the German nation. The independent dynasty which was then established was drawn under the influence of the German king, Frederick Barbarossa, and two princes who in 1163 divided the sovereignty among themselves as dukes of Upper and Lower Silesia inaugurated the policy