and, in June 1629, the king gladly accepted the lucrative truce of Altmark. By this truce Sweden was, for six years, to retain possession of her Livonian conquests, besides holding Elbing, the Vistula delta, Braunsberg in West, and Pillau and Memel in East Prussia, with the right to levy tolls at Pillau, Memel, Danzig, Labiau and Windau. From these tolls Gustavus derived, in 1629 alone, 500,000 rix-dollars, a sum equivalent to the whole of the extraordinary subsidies granted to him by the Riksdag. Thus Sweden held, for a time, the control of the principal trade routes of the Baltic up to the very confines of the empire; and the increment of revenue resulting from this commanding position was of material assistance to her during the earlier stages of the war in Germany, whither Gustavus transferred his forces in June 1630.

The motives of Gustavus in plunging into the Thirty Years’ War and the details of the struggle as regards Sweden are else­where set forth (see Gustavus II.; Oxenstjerna [Axel]; Banér [Johan]; Torstensson [Len­nart]). Here the only point to be insisted upon is the extreme precariousness of the Swedish position from first to last—a precariousness due entirely to inadequacy of material resources. In 1632 all Germany lay at the feet of Sweden; two years later a single disaster (Nörd­lingen) brought her empire to the verge of ruin. For the next seven years the German War as regards Sweden was a struggle for existence. She triumphed in the end, it is true, but it was a triumph due entirely to a lucky accident—the possession, during the crisis, of the greatest statesman and the greatest captain of the age. It was the exploits of Oxenstjerna and Banér which alone enabled Sweden to obtain even what she did obtain at the great Westphalian peace congress in 1648. Her original demands were Silesia (she held most of the fortresses there), Pomerania (which had been in her possession for nearly twenty years), and a war indemnity of 20,000,000 rix- dollars. What she actually got was (1) Upper Pomerania, with the islands of Rügen and Usedom, and a strip of Lower Pomerania on the right side of the Oder, including the towns of Stettin, Garz, Damm and Gollnow, and the isle of Wollin, with the right of succession to the rest of Lower Pomerania in the case of the extinction of the Brandenburg Hohenzollerns; (2) the town of Wismar with the districts of Poel and Neukloster; (3) the secularized bishoprics of Bremen and Verden; and (4) 5,000,000 rix-dollars. These German possessions were to be held as fiefs of the empire; and in respect thereof Sweden was to have a vote in the imperial Diet and to “ direct ” the Lower Saxon Circle alternately with Brandenburg. France and Sweden, moreover, became joint guarantors of the treaty with the emperor, and were entrusted with the carrying out of its pro­visions, which was practically effected by the executive congress of Nüremberg in 1650.

Sweden’s reward for the exertions and sacrifices of eighteen years was meagre, almost paltry. Her newly won possessions were both small and scattered, though, on the other hand, she had secured the practical control of the three principal rivers of north Germany—the Oder, the Elbe and the Weser—and reaped the full advantage of the tolls levied on those great commercial arteries. The jealousy of France and the impatience of Queen Christina were the chief causes of the inadequacy of her final recompense. Yet, though the immediate gain was small, she had not dissipated her blood and treasure altogether in vain. Her vigorous intervention had saved the cause of religious liberty in Europe; and this remains, for all time, her greatest political achievement. Henceforth till her collapse, seventy years later, she was the recognized leader of Continental Protestantism. A more questionable benefit was her rapid elevation to the rank of an imperial power, an elevation which imposed the duty of remaining a military monarchy, armed *cap-à-pie* for every possible emergency. Every one recognizes now that the poverty and sparse population of Sweden unfitted her for such a tremendous destiny. But in the middle of the 17th century the incompatibility between her powers and her pretensions was not so obvious. All her neighbours were either decadent or exhausted states; and France, the most powerful of the Western powers, was her firm ally.

For the moment, however, Sweden held the field. Everything depended upon the policy of the next few years. Very careful statesmanship might mean permanent dominion on the Baltic shore, but there was not much margin for blundering. Unfortunately the extravagance of Gustavus Adolphus’s two immediate successors, Christina@@1 and Charles X., shook the flimsy fabric of his empire to its very base. Christina's extravagance was financial. At the time of her abdication the state was on the verge of bank­ruptcy, and the financial difficulty had superinduced a serious political agitation. the mass of the Swedish people was penetrated by a justifiable fear that the external, artificial greatness of their country might, in the long run, be purchased with the loss of their civil and political liberties. In a word, the natural equili­brium of Swedish society was seriously threatened by the pre­ponderance of the nobility; and the people at large looked to the new king to redress the balance. A better arbiter between the various estates than Charles X. it would have been difficult to find. It is true that, primarily a soldier, his whole ambition was directed towards military glory; but he was also an unusually sharp-sighted politician. He affected to believe that only by force of arms could Sweden retain the dominion which by force of arms she had won; but he also grasped the fact that there must be no disunion at home if she were to continue powerful abroad. The most pressing question of the day, the so-called *Reduktion,* or restitution of the alienated crown lands, was adjusted provisionally at the Riksdag of 1655. The king proposed that the actual noble holders of crown property should either pay an annual sum of 200,000 rix-dollars, to be allowed for out of any further crown lands subsequently falling in to them, or should surrender a fourth of the expectant property itself to the estimated amount of 6oo,ooo rix-dollars. The nobility attempted to escape taxation as cheaply as possible by stipulating that the 6th of November 1632, the day of Gustavus Adolphus’s death, should be the extreme limit of any restrospective action on the part of the crown in regard to alienated crown property, and that the present subsidy should be regarded as “a perpetual ordinance” unalterably to be observed by all future sovereigns—in other words, that there should be no further restitution of alienated crown property. Against this interpretation of the subsidy bill the already over-taxed lower estates protested so energetically that the Diet had to be sus­pended. Then the king intervened personally; not to quell the commons, as the senate insisted, but to compel the nobility to give way. He proposed that the whole matter should be thoroughly investigated by a special committee before the meeting of the next Riksdag, and that in the meantime a con­tribution should be levied on all classes proportionately. This equitable arrangement was accepted by the estates forthwith.

Charles X. had done his best to obviate the effects of the financial extravagance of Christina. It may well be doubted, however, whether his own extravagant desire for military glory was not equally injurious to his country. In three days he had succeeded in per­suading the Swedish estates of the lucrative expediency of his unnecessary and immoral attack on Poland (sec Poland: *History)·,* but when he quitted Stockholm for Warsaw, on the 10th of July 1654, he little imagined that he had embarked on an adventure which was to contribute far more to his glory than to the advantage of his country. How the Polish War expanded into a general European war; how Charles’s miraculous audacity again and again ravished favours from Fortune and Nature (e.g. the passage of the Belts) when both those great powers combined against him; how, finally, he emerged from all his difficulties triumphant, indeed, but only to die of sheer exhaustion

@@@1 Christina’s reign dates, properly, from 1644 when she attained her majority. From 1632 to 1644 Axel Oxenstjerna was virtually the ruler of Sweden.