

divine right of bribery, of open purchase, of petty thievery, of legacy hunting, and traitorous partition agreements.

In the beginning of the 15th century the Margraviate of Brandenburg belonged to the house of Luxemburg, at the head of which was Sigismund, who at the same time wielded the scepter of Imperial Germany. Sigismund was always in financial difficulties, and was hard pressed by his creditors. He found in Count Frederick of Nuremburg, of Hohenzollern descent, a friend who was both agreeable and helpful. At the same time, as security for the sums loaned to the Emperor at various times, the administration of Brandenburg was conveyed to Frederick by the Emperor in 1411. After the shrewd creditor had managed to secure temporary possession of the property of the spendthrift, he continued always to involve Sigismund in new debts; in the year 1415 upon final accounting between creditor and debtor, Frederick was invested with the hereditary title of Elector of Brandenburg. In order that there should be no doubt as to the nature of the agreement, two clauses were inserted: the one contained the condition that the house of Luxemburg had the right to buy back the Electorate for 400,000 florins, and in the other, Frederick and his heirs bound themselves in the case of all subsequent elections in Germany to cast their vote for the house of Luxemburg. The first clause shows that the agreement was a bit of bargaining, the second that it was pure bribery. In order now to acquire complete possession of the Electorate, it was merely necessary for the avaricious friend of Sigismund to get rid of the option to repurchase, and it did not take long before a favorable opportunity for undertaking this operation presented itself.

At the Council of Constance, when Sigismund was once again unable to raise the necessary funds to defray the expense of Imperial attendance, Frederick hurried to the Swiss border and bought with his purse the cancellation of the fatal clause. Such is the nature of the methods employed by the Divine Right, by virtue of which the ruling dynasty of Hohenzollern

acquired possession of the Margraviate of Brandenburg. That is the origin of the Prussian monarchy.

Frederick's successor, a weakling, who was given the surname "Iron" because he had a preference for going about in armor, bought an additional section from the Order of Teutonic Knights, just as his father had done before him. Just as the Roman senate had once been accustomed to serve as arbitrator in the internal disputes of neighboring countries, so a policy of acquiring by purchase the lands of principalities overloaded by indebtedness, became the customary method of the Hohenzollern princes.

We shall not dwell further on these dirty details, but shall proceed to the time of the Reformation. It would be absolutely wrong to suppose that, because the Reformation proved to be the mainstay of the Hohenzollern, the Hohenzollern were the mainstay of the Reformation. Quite the contrary. Frederick I., the founder of the dynasty, at the very outset of his reign, led the armies of Sigismund against the Hussites, who rewarded him for his trouble by giving him a sound thrashing. Joachim I. Nestor (1493-1535) was an adherent of the Reformation until he died. Joachim II. Hector, while he was an adherent of Lutheran protestantism, refused to draw the sword in defense of the new creed, and this at a time when it was in danger of being overcome by the overwhelming power of Emperor Charles V. Not alone did he refuse to participate in the armed resistance of the Smalcaldic League, but he offered his services to the Emperor surreptitiously. The German Reformation therefore met with open animosity on the part of the Hohenzollern at the time of its origin, false neutrality during the period of its initial struggles, and at its terrible conclusion through the Thirty-Years War, weak vacillation, cowardly inactivity, and base perfidy. It is a known fact that the Elector Georg Wilhelm tried to block the way of the liberating army of Gustavus Adolphus so that the latter had to drive him by force into the Protestant camp from which he afterwards tried to steal away