# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOLTAIRE AND FREDERICK THE GREAT AS REVEALED IN THEIR CORRESPONDENCE

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Lydia Joanna Mayfield

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Minnie M. Miller

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L. J. M.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an interpretation of the relationship that existed between Voltaire, the philosopher, and Frederick the Great of Prussia, the philosopher king, two of the greatest men of the eighteenth century. Except for background material, the study has been made from the correspondence that passed between the two men and from letters which they wrote to or received from third parties which throw some light on their relationship. Their correspondence was voluminous. In some years almost a hundred letters passed between the two men. Fortunately for the study of Voltaire, almost all the letters he wrote or received have been preserved. His collected correspondence contains all the known letters he wrote to Frederick and all the letters that he received from Frederick.

Unfortunately many of the letters no longer exist in their original form. Some exist only as copies, some only in earlier and incomplete editions of Voltaire's letters. Practically all of the letters that have been copied or printed have been edited. Spelling and punctuation have often been modernized. This accounts for the diversity that is found in the quotations from the

Yet, even with this drawback, it is hoped that this study will throw some light on this period in the lives of two of the most important men of their time.

## CHAPTER II

## THE LIFE OF VOLTAIRE

Voltaire, the greatest French philosopher, dramatist, and historian of the eighteenth century, was born in Paris on November 21, 1694, and was the next day baptized François Marie Arouet. Early in his career he changed this name to Voltaire. He came of high bourgeois parentage. His father was a lawyer, a man of considerable property, with contacts at court, for he numbered members of the nobility among his clients.

The boy received a good education at the Jesuit collège, Louis-le-Grand. At this time the Jesuits were by far the best educators in France. The staff of this collège stressed literature, so the very precocious boy received valuable training in the field for which he early showed a natural aptitude.

His father wanted him to study law. Young Voltaire had no desire to devote himself to the exacting and dull routine life of the legal profession. However, in order to please his father, or probably for financial reasons, he did consent for a short time to study law, but even at this time drama and writing verses were his chief pursuit and interest. However, the time spent in the study of law was not fruitless in Voltaire's later life.

The knowledge of courtroom procedures and law that he had acquired during this time he later put to practical use. It was of great help to him in the numerous legal battles he had throughout his life and in the many legal transactions he had in acquiring his vast fortune.

It was through a high official of the church, the Abbé de Chateauneuf, a close friend of the Arouet family, that Voltaire made his first important contact with a clever and influential literary group. This free-thinking ecclesiastic introduced him to the society of the Temple, centered around Philippe de Vendôme. This was a circle of clever and distinguished, but somewhat debauched, literary men, given to drinking bouts and witty scoffing at the seeming failings of church and state.[2] Voltaire's association with this group did much to develop his literary ability and that keen satire and biting wit which characterized his writings and did so much to make him such a witty and provocative conversationalist.

Voltaire began his literary career while under the influence of the Temple members. He wrote his first drama, OEdipe, read it to them; and, with their help

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[2]George R. Havens, The Age of Ideas (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), p. 159.

and criticism, then corrected it. However, he did not make it public at this time.

Voltaire early showed his ability to ridicule others with his pen. This naturally soon got him into trouble. He was sent to the Bastille, but released after a short imprisonment. While in prison, he recast OEdipe, and it was produced for the first time November 18, 1718, at the Théâtre Français. It was a success. It ran for forty-five nights and brought young Voltaire both fame and considerable money. But his literary fame was not enough to keep him out of trouble. In 1725, after he had offended the Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot, he was ignominiously beaten by the chevalier's hirelings and again sent to the Bastille. This time he was kept in prison only two weeks, then was allowed his freedom on the condition that he leave the country and go to England.

It was a fortunate escape for Voltaire. He had already made a name for himself in the literary world with OEdipe and other works. Beside this, his clever wit was enough to make him a welcome guest at any cultured and literary gathering. In England, Lord Bolinbroke, both Walpoles, and Alexander Pope were his friends. Young Queen Caroline, the wife of George II, welcomed and admired him. The three years that Voltaire spent in England were of inestimable value in his development.

It was the English political and social views, the democratic English institutions, and the marked freedom from the rigid and arbitrary French political restrictions that made a lasting imprint on his philosophy of life and his political views. And, since he had a keen eye for profit, the prosperity of England's manufacturing and commerce did not escape his sharp and inquiring eyes.

Three years later he returned to France where, largely through the influence of madame de Pompadour, he enjoyed a short period of popularity at the court. With Louis XV he was never popular. During this period he wrote a great deal and produced several plays with marked success. The Henriade, which had already appeared in England, was allowed publication in France.

His popularity was short-lived. In 1733 he had published his Lettres philosophiques sur les Anglais, which by praising the free English institutions was an indirect criticism of both church and state in France. The book was condemned, all copies found were seized and burned, and a warrant was issued for Voltaire's arrest. Fortunately he was in the independent duchy of Lorraine. That same year he had taken up his residence with madame du Châtelet at her château at Cirey. For seventeen years she was his friend, mistress, and literary collaborator. In her home he had a safe and comfortable retreat and

had excellent opportunity and leisure for his literary work. In 1735 the ban against him was removed, and he was allowed to return to Paris. However, he seldom availed himself of the privilege and never remained there long. It was during this time that his correspondence with Frederick, then the crown prince of Prussia, began.

Madame du Châtelet's death in 1749 left Voltaire disconsolate. To remain at Cirey was impossible. In Paris he was hardly welcome, for the king hated, feared, and distrusted him. To remain in Paris for any length of time was dangerous. It was then that he decided to accept the often repeated invitation of Frederick, now king of Prussia, to come as a permanent guest to Berlin, where he had twice visited briefly. When Voltaire arrived in Berlin in July of 1750 he was welcomed royally. For a short time everything went smoothly. But Frederick was too autocratic and Voltaire too outspoken and independent for the two men to remain friends long in such a close association. Voltaire's stay in Berlin did not last three years. When he left, the two men were both bitter and disillusioned with each other.

Again Voltaire was quite at a loss to find a refuge. He was even refused permission to enter France; however, in reality this meant Paris. Voltaire traveled about in the provinces for some time after he left Berlin.

In 1754 he bought a country home just outside the gates of Geneva which he named Les Délices. Four years later, because the rigid Swiss objected to his theatrical performances, he moved again. This time he bought an estate at Ferney, only four miles from Geneva, but just across the border on French soil. Here he lived, wrote, and entertained the great of the world for the next twenty years.

In 1778 popular demand for his appearance in Paris was so great that Louis XVI allowed him to come back. His latest drama, Irène, was produced. Honors were showered upon him from all sides except that of the court. The exertion and all the excitement were too much for Voltaire, now a frail, old man. He died in Paris May 30, 1778.

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## CHAPTER III

### THE LIFE OF FREDERICK THE GREAT

Frederick the Great was born in Berlin on January 24, 1712, the oldest son of Frederick William I, king of Prussia. The title of king was still quite new in his family. His grandfather, Frederick I, had held only the title of elector of Brandenburg until January of 1701, when he gained the sanction of the emperor, Leopold I, to take the title of king of Prussia.

Frederick William I, the father of Frederick the Great, was a man wholly lacking in any appreciation of the finer cultural things of life, such as music, art, and literature. He was harsh, tyrannical, and arbitrary, both as a king and as a family man. He could not understand or appreciate his cultured, sensitive wife, Sophia Dorothea of Hanover, the sister of George II of England. Their life together was not harmonious. Still Frederick William was not without virtues. He was honest, efficient, industrious, and saving to the point of being parsimonious. He was a very capable administrator and during his reign he greatly improved the economy and general standard of living in Prussia. He was far ahead of other European countries, even England, in establishing a system of

elementary schools for the common people and making attendance compulsary.

Young Frederick received a good education; and strangely enough, it was all French. At this time the influence of Louis XIV had spread to all the courts of Europe, and French was their language. To Frederick William, who was ambitious for his son and heir, it was more important that the son should be well educated in French than that he should speak his mother tongue, German, fluently. Frederick William despised French culture and literature, the Enlightenment was a bête noire to him, but he did accept the supremacy of the French language. The boy was taught French from his earliest childhood. All his tutors were French, most of them refugees from the French court. The study of any other language, above all, that of Latin, was strictly forbidden by his father.

Young Frederick's literary education then was wholly French. He knew no Latin so he could not have had any acquaintance with the great Latin classics. The beauty of all classical Greek was a closed book to him. English literature had already reached its highest peak in Shakespeare, but Frederick could not read English. He could read German, but he saw no possibilities in it as a literary language. And, during his youth, there was very little that could be called great in German

literature. Most of what passed for literary German during the first half of the eighteenth century was simply a servile imitation of French stylists. Lessing, the first great German literary giant, was born in 1729, Goethe in 1749, and Schiller not until 1759. Compared with that of England and France the flowering of German literature came late, too late for Frederick the Great.

Since French literature was the only one he knew and since Voltaire was the most important literary figure of his age, it is not at all surprising that young Frederick showed an inordinate appreciation for French literature and an almost idolatrous worship of Voltaire. Voltaire's writings were supreme in his view.

Nor was Frederick content simply to be a passive admirer of French literature. He wanted to be a creator as well. As a youth he had shown marked talent both in music and literary composition. He had great ambition for shining as a creator in both fields. During his busy adult life of making wars and political intrigue he sometimes had to neglect this ambition, but he never gave it up entirely. With his French literary education and his marked admiration for Voltaire's writings it is not surprising that the young prince wanted to make the acquaintance of Voltaire.

Frederick's French education explains his leaning toward French literature and toward Voltaire. There is still another experience, a more tragic one, that may, in a way, explain Frederick's character. As a boy Frederick had been sensitive, refined, and very fond of music and literature. His love for music and literature remained with him all his life, but one can find no trace of the sensitive, tender boy in the harsh, critical, and sometimes brutal man that Frederick became. The answer may lie in the tragic story of his attempted escape. In 1730, when Frederick was eighteen, his father's autocratic brutality became unendurable. With the aid of two friends, Kieth and Katte, he decided to try to escape to the court of his uncle, George II, king of England. The plot was discovered. Kieth managed to escape, but the prince and Katte were caught. The king's anger was terrible. At first he wanted to condemn both to death. Upon the intercession of other German princes, he changed the sentence to imprisonment for Frederick. But Katte was condemned to death, and Frederick was forced to watch the execution of his friend.[3] When the prince recovered from the bitter shock some of the mildness

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[3]Thomas B. Macaulay, Frederick the Great (New York: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1895), pp. 32-34.

seemed to have disappeared from his character. While Frederick never did develop into the churlish, uncouth, and brutal autocrat his father had been, when he did have the freedom to develop, he became more like his father than one would have expected from his youth.

The prince was released from prison in 1733 and forced to marry the Princess Elizabeth Christina of Brunswick-Bevern, a woman of his father's choice. Frederick consented to the marriage although it was distasteful to him. His relations to his father had changed. He now showed an outward deference for the king's wishes.

The king gave Frederick the castle of Schonhausen and the town of Rheinsburg. Here Frederick lived for the next six years, until he became king. During these six years he was free to devote himself to his beloved music and books. He also showed a growing interest in military affairs and in the political world. It was during this time that he began his voluminous correspondence with Voltaire.

Frederick became king of Prussia upon the death of his father in 1740. As a youth and even as a young man, he had expressed liberal ideas both in government and religion. He seemed to be a true disciple of the Enlightenment. After he became king, he changed. He was hardly in office a month before he began his plans

against the bishop of Liège. He had become king in June. In December he broke the Pragmatic Sanction, which protected Austria, turned against Maria Theresa, and took Silesia. Then when other German powers and even France, also eager for spoils from the sprawling Austrian empire, joined him, he broke his alliance with them as soon as he saw that it would be to his advantage.

In 1757 he started the Seven Years' War. Here his conduct was more excusable, for he was really only anticipating the attack that France and Austria, together with the smaller German states, were planning against him. With Russia and Austria he took an active part in the three partitions of Poland. In short, the prince, who had advocated peace, was engaged in wars of conquest during much of his forty-six years as king of Prussia.

On the other hand, Frederick worked hard for the economic well-being and development of his people. He allowed complete freedom of religion, speech, and the press. But he was an absolute monarch, did nothing at all to develop self-government in Prussia, and carried on his father's program in making Prussia an economically progressive, efficient, autocratic, and militaristic state.

He was very much interested in literature and drama, but he did nothing to further the development

of German literature. Lessing was making his important contribution to German literature during the second half of Frederick's reign, but the king could see nothing of value in him, and even refused him the post of librarian at Berlin. To Frederick, French was the only language worth considering in literature.

His character is somewhat of an enigma. He was autocratic and yet sometimes he was frank and liberal. He surrounded himself with a court of brilliant men for whom he sometimes showed marked respect, but at other times he humiliated with his cutting wit. He deplored dishonesty in others, but he himself was flagrantly dishonest, both in his public and his private dealings. Except for his mother and sisters, notably Wilhelmina, he hated women. His marriage was one of convenience only. After he became king, his wife appeared with him only on state occasions; otherwise they lived apart. He treated her with cool respect, when they met, at other times he ignored her. They had no children.

When he died in 1786, he had done much to increase the power, the economic development, and the area of Prussia. He had made it a power to be reckoned with, and had also done much to further the race for military supremacy in Europe.

## CHAPTER IV

## CORRESPONDENCE FROM 1736 TO 1750

It was the prince who sought the philosopher. Since his wedding young Frederick had been master of his own house at Rheinsburg. For the first time in his life he had been free to study and read, not only as much as he wanted, but whatever he wanted. He threw himself into the study of French literature with all the zest and drive of his energetic nature. It was during this time that he made the acquaintance of Voltaire's works and became his ardent admirer.

Frederick's first letter, dated August 8, 1736, expressed his admiration and appreciation for Voltaire. The letter opens:[4]

> Monsieur, quoique je n'aie pas le satisfaction de vous connaître personellement, vous ne m'en êtes pas moins connu par vos ouvrages. Ce sont des trésors d'esprit, si l'on peut s'exprimer ainsi, et des pièces travaillées avec tant de goût, de délicatesse et d'art, que les beautés en paraissent nouvelles à chaque fois qu'on les relit. Je crois y avoir reconnu le caractère de leur ingénieux auteur, qui fait honneur à notre siècle et à l'esprit humain.

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[4] Op. cit., vol. 5, p. 212. Hereafter, the volume and page of Voltaire's Correspondence will be indicated in parentheses in the body of the thesis. All references are from the Besterman edition.

In the same letter Frederick praised the Henriade, César, and Alzire. He asked Voltaire to send him all of his works, not only his published books and dramas, but also anything that he might consider too dangerous to publish:

> Si parmi les manuscrits il y en a quelqu'un que par une circonspection nécessaire vous trouviez à propos de cacher aux yeux du public, je vous promets de le conserver dans le sein du secret et de me contenter d'y applaudir dans mon particulier (Correspondence, vol. 5, p. 213).

This letter was the beginning of a voluminous correspondence.

Voltaire replied within the month. His pride was gratified by this notice from the prince, even though, at this time, Frederick was only the heir to the Prussian throne and had not yet had a chance to make a name for himself. He praised Frederick far above his due. Thus began that mutual exchange of admiration and eulogy, that at times reached quite ridiculous heights. He opened the letter with these lines:

> Monseigneur, il faudrait être insensible pour n'être pas infiniment touché de la lettre dont v.a.r. a daigné m'honorer. Mon amour propre en a été trop flatté; mais l'amour du genre humain, que j'ai eu toujours dans le cœur et qui, j'ose dire, fait mon caractère, m'a donné un plaisir mille fois plus pur, quand j'ai vu qu'il y a dans le monde un prince qui pense en homme, un prince philosophe qui rendra les hommes heureux (Correspondence, vol. 5, p. 231).

Such praise was rather extreme when one considers that at this time Voltaire probably knew nothing about the

character of the young prince outside of his literary leanings.

The next recorded letter is in the form of a long poem by Voltaire to the prince. In this poem he likened Frederick to Marcus Aurelius and Julius Caesar. Frederick replied with a long letter, dated November 4, 1736. After the opening paragraph he wrote:

> Vous faites, monsieur, dans votre lettre le portrait du prince accompli, auquel je ne me reconnais point . . . . Je me proposerai ce portrait pour modèle, et je ferai tous mes efforts pour me rendre le digne disciple d'un maître qui sait si divinement enseigner (Correspondence, vol. 5, pp. 296-97).

In this same letter Frederick expressed his surprise that Voltaire was not receiving the honor due him in his own land. He wrote:

> Je ne puis revenir de mon étonnement quand je pense qu'une nation cultivée par les beaux-arts, secondée par le génie et par l'émulation d'une nation voisine; quand je pense, dis-je, que cette même nation si polie et si éclairée ne connaît point le trésor qu'elle renferme dans son sein. Quoi! ce même Voltaire à qui nos mains érigent des autels et des statues est négligé dans sa patrie, et vit en solitaire dans le fond de la Champagne! C'est un paradoxe, c'est une énigme, c'est un effet bizarre de caprice des hommes (Correspondence, vol. 5, p. 298).

He also made his first mention of madame du Châtelet. He wrote that he respected the ties of friendship too much to "vouloir vous arracher des bras d'Emilie" (Correspondence, vol. 5, p. 302).

Voltaire replied on January 1, 1737. He began by writing that he had wept tears of joy upon reading Frederick's last letter. In this letter he expressed superlative praise of the young prince. He wrote:

> Vous pensez comme Trajan, vous écrivez comme Pline, et vous parlez français comme les meilleurs écrivains. Quelle différence entre les hommes! Louis 14 etoit un grand roy. Je respecte sa mémoire, mais il ne pensoit pas si humainement que vous Monseigneur, et ne s'exprimoit pas de même. J'ay vu de ses lettres. Il ne savoit pas l'ortographe de sa langue (Correspondence, vol. 6, p. 1).

To the modern reader this last statement sounds almost like sarcasm, for while Frederick's command of French was good, his spelling was atrocious.

In the same tone Voltaire continued:

> Berlin sera sous vos auspices l'Athenes de L'Allemagne, et poura l'être de L'Europe. . . . Un prince tel que vous doit en attirer bien davantage et je vous avoue que je me tiendrois bien malheureux si je mourois avant d'avoir vu L'exemple des princes et la merveille de l'Allemagne. Je ne veux point vous flater monseigneur, ce seroit un crime (Correspondence, vol. 6, p. 1).

Now while such extreme praise was too extreme to have been wholly sincere, Voltaire probably really did believe and he certainly hoped that Frederick would be an enlightened and liberal ruler.

During the year 1737, the two men exchanged thirty letters. Many of these were long. Often a letter opened with a long poem eulogizing the other correspondent. Voltaire surpassed Frederick in this art of emulation.

In February of 1737, Voltaire wrote from Amsterdam, where he had gone on business. In this letter he borrowed both from the classics and the Bible in his praise. He wrote of Frederick:

> Il est plus instruit qu'Alcibiade, joue de la flûte comme Télémaque, et est fort au-dessus de ces deux grecs; et alors je dis comme le vieillard Siméon: Quand mes yeux verront le sauveur de ma vie (Correspondence, vol. 6, p. 76).

Frederick never went to quite such lengths as these in his praise of Voltaire. This may have been due to the fact that Voltaire was probably more skilled in the art of adulation than Frederick. All this eulogy today sounds artificial and affected, but we must take into consideration that extreme expressions of praise were characteristic of the polite world of the eighteenth century.

Nor did they limit their correspondence to mutual eulogy. Both were really interested in literature, art, mathematics, religion, philosophy, and science. The larger part of most of their longer letters was long and involved discussions of some phase of learning. They even showed a marked interest in archeology, a science still in its infancy at this time. In a letter Frederick wrote in April, 1737, he related that a new version of the old Romulus and Remus story had been found in the Vatican library. In this account Remus was not killed by his twin brother, but instead escaped to northern

Germany, where he founded a city near the Elbe to which he gave his name. Since Frederick's city, Rheinsburg, had formerly been called Remusburg, he believed that this was probably the city founded by Remus. He even recalled an ancient story of some human remains having been found near the city during an excavation, which he thought might easily have been the remains of Remus himself. While Frederick's naïveté is somewhat amusing in the light of today's advances in the science of archeology, it is very evident that he did have an interest in archeology.

Each repeatedly expressed a wish to see the other in person and each repeatedly invited the other for a visit. And yet it was over four years from the time of Frederick's first letter until they met in person, and then only very briefly. Frederick's reason for not going to Cirey is easy to surmise. While now outwardly free and the trusted and honored heir to the throne, he was still very much under the old king's surveillance. Spies were always watching him. If he had left Prussia, his action would probably have been construed as desertion and he would have been arrested.

Why Voltaire did not visit Frederick is not so easily explained. Most historians believe that Voltaire did not visit Frederick because the prince did not include

madame du Châtelet in his invitation. But that still leaves the question why he did not include her. Later women were, for the most part, banned from his court. But, while men did outnumber women at Frederick's court at Rheinsburg, he did have women there, especially actresses and women of marked literary ability. Frederick's cynicism toward all women except his mother and his older sister, Wilhelmina, grew with the years, and yet certainly at this time he did enjoy their company and said that without women all conversation fell flat.[5] In his letters to Voltaire Frederick made quite frequent mention of madame du Châtelet and always with respect and with, at least, apparent appreciation. Sometimes he even included a separate note for her. Madame du Châtelet also sent Frederick some of her writings, and he sent her cordial replies. Sometimes he even wrote poetry about her as in the following extract from a letter he wrote to Voltaire, November 19, 1737:

> La sublime Emilie et le divin Voltaire
> Sont de ces presents precieux
> Qu'en mille ans, une fois ou deux
> Daignent faire les cieux pour honorer la terre
> (Correspondence, vol. 6, p. 249).

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[5]Ludwig Reiners, Frederick the Great, translated by Lawrence P. R. Wilson (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 73.

All this appears as if Frederick's attitude toward her was very friendly; and yet, while he never specifically excluded her in his invitation, he never included her. This slight probably accounts for the fact that Voltaire did not visit Frederick until 1740, four years after their correspondence began.

During 1738, the two exchanged forty-three letters. Many of these were long and contained long passages of poetry. Frederick, for the most part, praised effusively everything that came from Voltaire's pen. He sent his own poems to Voltaire with the express wish that they be corrected, a task that Voltaire continued to perform for many years.

During the summer of 1739, Voltaire and madame du Châtelet were planning a journey to Clèves, which was to take them quite near Frederick's residence at Rheinsburg. Despite Frederick's often repeated invitation, at least to Voltaire, to visit him, when madame du Châtelet wrote to Frederick about their probable visit, he made this reply in a letter written January 27, 1749:

> Vous me flattez, madame, de vous approcher ce printemps de nos frontières, & j'ai le chagrin de vous apprendre que je prends un chemin tout opposé cette année; je compte de suivre le roi en Prusse, & ce ne sera que dans deux ans que je reverrai le pays de Clèves. Je suis bien malheureux de ce que le destin me paraît si contraire (Correspondence, vol. 8, p. 302).

The prince's excuse may have been honest and sincere. At this time he was only the heir apparent to the throne. The king may have insisted that Frederick accompany him to Prussia; and, at this time, when Frederick saw that the ailing king could not live much longer, he may have been doubly careful not to alienate him.

On the other hand, he may have used his approaching trip as an excuse to ward off a visit that would include madame du Châtelet. This again brings up the question of Frederick's feeling toward her. His letters to her, which were often included with those he sent Voltaire, were filled with expressions of respect and often extreme admiration. She, in turn, often wrote him letters and included them with those Voltaire sent to Frederick. The prince certainly was not stinting in his praise of her. However, this was a period during which mutual flattery was the rule, and often was not sincere. Both the flatterer and the recipient of the praise realized this and thought nothing of the mutual, flowery eulogizing. It is possible that Frederick actually stood a little in awe of madame du Châtelet's vast knowledge and understanding of science and physics. Frederick was markedly weak in these fields. Whatever the reason, Voltaire and madame du Châtelet did not visit Rheinsburg. Another year was to pass before the two intellectual giants of

the century were to meet, and then without madame du Châtelet.

In economics, politics, history, and literature Frederick believed himself to be a skilled master. In his poetical ability he overrated himself. He produced reams upon reams of poetry, all flowery, dull, and pedantic. He repeatedly sent his poems to Voltaire with requests for criticisms and possible changes. At this time Voltaire's letters give no hint that this was in any way a chore. In a letter of April 15, 1739, Voltaire wrote the following effusive prologue before he began a long letter filled with suggestions for changes in one of Frederick's poems. He wrote:

> Votre style français est parvenu à un point d'exactitude et d'élegance, que j'imagine que vous êtes né dans le Versailles de Louis XIV, que Bossuet et Fénelon ont été vos maîtres d'école, et madame de Sévigné votre nourrice (Correspondence, vol. 9, p. 89).

Voltaire must have written this with his tongue in his cheek. Nobody can believe that he was sincere, and even Frederick must have realized this.

During the summer of 1739, Frederick did make a journey through Prussia with his father. In his letters he spoke of the fatigue of the long, gruelling rides through the country. One letter that he wrote from Insterbourg in Prussian Lithuania is unique in that in

it Frederick wrote with marked respect and appreciation about his father. He wrote that at the time when his father had come to the throne this region, naturally fertile, had been depopulated by a plague and that the whole area was in a state of utter devastation and added that his father had restored the region so well that now it was flourishing and prosperous. This letter also indicated the kind of king Frederick was going to be, still interested in literature and art, but even more concerned with the economic well-being and advancement of his country.

Voltaire was writing his Mahomet during this same time and sending the separate acts to Frederick as he finished them. In a letter written from Potsdam on September 9, 1739, Frederick made this criticism of the use of a word in the first act:

> Il y a cependant un vers, dans le premier acte, qui m'a fait naître un doute; je ne sais si l'usage veut qu'on dise écraser des étincelles; j'ai cru qu'il fallait dire éteindre ou étouffer des étincelles (Correspondence, vol. 9, p. 231).

It is noteworthy that Voltaire accepted Frederick's suggestion and made the change as he proposed.

Voltaire made frequent remarks about his ill health and Frederick sent him some powders in November of 1739. When Voltaire received them he wrote back, December 1, 1739, with these lines:

> J'ay commencé, monseigneur, à prendre de votre poudre. Ou il n'y a point de providence, ou elle me fera du bien. Je n'ay point d'expression pour remercier Marc Aurèle devenu Esculape (Correspondence, vol. 9, p. 279).

Voltaire was never at a loss for references to great historical and mythical characters when he wanted to flatter Frederick.

During the winter of 1739-40 Voltaire was working on both Mérope and Mahomet. Frederick was working on his Anti-Machiavel, a prose treatise on politics. Each sent the other portions of his work for comments and criticism. In December of 1739, Frederick wrote this to Voltaire after he had received a portion of Mérope and sent some of his Anti-Machiavel:

> C'est ainsi que je fais l'échange de mes faibles productions contre vos ouvrages immortels, a peu près comme les Hollandais, qui troquent des petits miroirs et de verre contre l'or des Américains (Correspondence, vol. 9, p. 282).

Frederick's respectful attitude toward Voltaire's works was noteworthy and sincere. His depreciation of his own works was probably not quite so honest.

At the same time, Frederick was bringing his Anti-Machiavel to its finish. It was to be published anonymously in Brussels, where Voltaire was taking care of the business end of the publication. This work of Frederick was a frank criticism of the intrigues, wars, underhanded deals, and other unethical acts and practices

of European monarchs of this time. Voltaire received the last four chapters of the work in January of 1740. In the letter by which he acknowledged their receipt he wrote:

> Un prince qui écrit contre la flatterie, est aussi étrange qu'un pape qui écrirait contre l'infallibilité (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 27).

What Voltaire did not realize at this time was that while what Frederick wrote might have been sincere at the time, it certainly was not what Frederick, himself, used for his own model when he became king. This work was indeed published anonymously in Brussels but caused no great interest in the literary world.

During the early months of 1740 Frederick William became quite ill, and Frederick spent much of the time near his father. On March 12, 1740, Voltaire wrote to his close friend, Charles Augustin Feriol, comte d'Argental. In this letter he wrote the following about Frederick:

> Le prince royal m'a écrit une lettre touchante au sujet de m. son père, qui est à l'agonie. Il semble qu'il veuille m'avoir auprès de lui, mais vous me connaissez trop pour penser que je puisse quitter mde. Châtelet pour un roi et même pour un roi aimable (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 65).

Unless a letter of Frederick's written at this time has been lost, this statement is not true. Frederick often repeated his invitation to Voltaire and his wish to see him in person, but at this particular time there is

nothing in any of his letters that even indicates that Frederick wanted Voltaire to come to Berlin during the king's last illness.

Frederick William I died on June 1, 1740. It was June 6 when Frederick, now king of Prussia, sent the news to Voltaire. He wrote:

> Mon cher ami, mon sort est changé, et j'ai assisté aux derniers moments d'un roi, à son agonie, à sa mort. En parvenant à la royauté, je n'avais pas besoin assurément de cette leçon pour être dégoûté de la vanité et des grandeurs humaines (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 144).

Frederick closed this letter with assurances of his continued friendship both for Voltaire and for madame du Châtelet and wrote that, despite all the duties that had now been suddenly thrust upon him, he wished very much to continue his happy relations with them. He closed the letter with these words:

> Adieu, mon cher Voltaire; si je vis, je vous verrai, et cela encore cette année. Aimez moi toujours, et soyez toujours sincère avec votre ami FREDERIC (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 145).

This letter clearly shows that Frederick did not intend to allow his new role as king in any way to change his friendship with Voltaire.

On June 12, 1740, Frederick wrote again, this time from Charlottenberg. He opened the letter with a poem in which he deplored the many arduous duties of a king. He complained that the days were never long

enough for him to do all that he needed to do and that he no longer had any time for any reflection on the higher things of life. He closed the letter with these lines:

> Enfin, mon cher Voltaire, ne vous refusez pas plus longtemps à l'empressement que j'ai de vous voir. Faites en ma faveur tout ce que vous croyez que votre humanité comporte. J'irai a la fin d'août à Wesel, et peut-être plus loin. Promettez-moi de me joindre, car je ne saurais vivre heureux ni mourir tranquille sans vous avoir embrassé, Adieu. Frederic.
>
> Mille compliments à la marquise. Je travaille des deux mains, d'un côté à l'armée, de l'autre au peuple et aux beaux arts (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 154).

Here he brings closer the prospect of a face-to-face meeting between the two men. It did not, however, take place for over three months.

On June 18, 1740, Voltaire wrote his first letter to the new king. At this time, he was sincerely hopeful that a new era would dawn in the affairs of Europe with the ascension of Frederick to the Prussian throne. All the contacts that he had had with Frederick up to this time gave promise of a sincere believer in liberty, peace, the well-being of his people, and the furtherance of the arts, science, and literature. In this letter Voltaire wrote:

> Je me livre à présent à la joye avec tout le monde. Grâce au ciel votre majesté a déjà rempli presque toutes mes prédictions. Vous êtes déjà aimé, et dans vos états et dans l'Europe (Correspondence, vol. 10, pp. 159-60).

Voltaire was a little premature in writing that Frederick had already fulfilled almost all of his predictions, something that would have been impossible if Frederick had had the best of intentions, since he had been king less than three weeks.

Despite Frederick's complaint that the duties of his new office took so much time that he had none left for letters, during July and August of 1740, the two men actually exchanged eighteen letters. Frederick was making a trip that would take him in the direction of France, possibly as far as Paris, and certainly to Brussels, where Voltaire and madame du Châtelet were spending the summer. Madame du Châtelet and Voltaire were making careful and detailed arrangements for the entertainment of their royal guest. They expected him to arrive early in September. The letters they exchanged at this time made frequent mention of the expected meeting.

Then on August 2, 1740, Frederick wrote to Voltaire:

> À vous parler franchement touchant mon voyage, c'est Voltaire, c'est vous, c'est mon ami que je désire de voir; et la divine Emilie, avec toute sa divinité, n'est que l'accessoire d'Apollon newtonianisé (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 216).

This leaves no doubt that Frederick was reluctant to meet madame du Châtelet.

Frederick's next letter, written only one day later, made this even clearer. In this letter, Frederick

no longer indicated that he was coming to Brussels. He gave no definite place or date for the coming meeting, but he wrote:

> S'il faut qu'Emilie accompagne Apollon, j'y consens, mais, si je puis vous voir seul, je préfererai infiniment le dernier. Je serais trop ébloui, je ne pourrais soutenir tant d'éclat à la fois; il faudrait le voile de Moïse pour temperer les rayons mêlés de vos divinités (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 218).

With this letter Frederick made it bluntly clear that he did not want to meet madame du Châtelet.

The planned for meeting did not take place in Brussels. Frederick became sick, and on September 6, 1740, he wrote to Voltaire from Wesel:

> Mon cher Voltaire, il faut, malgré que j'en aie, céder à la fièvre, plus tenace qu'un janséniste; et, quelque envie que j'aie eue d'aller à Anvers et à Bruxelles, je ne me vois pas en état d'entreprendre pareil voyage sans risque. J'ai donc à vous proposer si le chemin de Bruxelles à Cleves ne vous paraîtrait pas trop long pour me joindre; c'est l'unique moyen de vous voir qui me reste. . . Faites bien mes excuses à la marquise de ce que je ne peux avoir la satisfaction de la voir à Bruxelles (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 250).

As a result of Frederick's fever, Voltaire made a long journey to meet the king at Clèves. He arrived there Sunday evening, September 11, 1740, to find Frederick in bed and suffering from a fever. Frederick remained until Wednesday morning, when each left Clèves, Voltaire to return to Brussels, Frederick to continue his well-planned campaign of sharp strategy and aggression. It

seems quite evident that he never had the least intention of going to Brussels. His whole trip was a well-thought-out campaign of reconnoitering for his immediate military action against the bishop of Liège. He sent his ultimatum to the bishop on September 11, the very day that Frederick and Voltaire met in Clèves. The day they parted, September 14, Frederick's troops occupied Maaseyk (Correspondence, vol. 10, Commentary, p. 251).

Unfortunately, the letters that Voltaire wrote to his friends about this first meeting have either been lost or else he wrote very little concerning it. Nowhere in his correspondence can anything be found about his real reaction. Twenty years later, when the relation between the two men was far from friendly, Voltaire wrote frankly about this meeting.[6] At that time he did not picture the king in any friendly light, but this was written after Voltaire had become thoroughly disillusioned with Frederick, and cannot be taken as a true picture of his reaction at the time of the meeting.

On September 24, 1740, Frederick wrote to this meeting:

> J'ai vu ce Voltaire qui j'étais si curieux de connaître, mais je l'ai vu ayant ma fièvre quarte,

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[6]Thomas Carlyle, Frederick the Great, vol. 5 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1858-65), p. 65.

> & l'ésprit aussi débandé que le corps affaibli. . . . Il a l'éloquence de Cicero, la douceur de Pline, & la sagesse d'Agrippa; il réunit en un mot ce qu'il faut rassembler de vertus & de talents de trois des plus grands hommes d'antiquité (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 257).

Frederick seems to have found Voltaire as great as he had expected him to be. He deplored only his own physical disability for not being able to fully appreciate his great visitor.

Nor did Voltaire seem to have been at all disillusioned by his meeting with Frederick, nor with the young king's very militant action against the bishop of Liège. He seems even to have condoned the action. In a letter Voltaire wrote to Frederick on September 22, 1740, he made this mention about the king's action:

> M. de Fénélon[7] vint avant hier chez moi pour me questionner sur votre personne; je lui répondis que vous aimez la France et ne la craignez point; que vous aimez la paix et que vous êtes plus capable que personne de faire la guerre; que vous travailles à faire fleurir les arts à l'ombre des lois; que vous faites tout par vous-même, et que vous écoutez un bon conseil. Il parla ensuite de l'évêque de Liège et sembla l'excuser un peu, mais l'évêque n'en a pas moins tort, et il en a deux mille démonstrations à Maseck (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 257).

From this letter it seems that Voltaire not only condoned Frederick's action against the bishop of Liège, but seemed to find the bishop to blame, and even took a little pride

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[7]Note: This is not the famous Fénélon, the author of Télémaque, but a minister of Louis XV.

in Frederick's military might, something unusual in Voltaire, who was a pacifist.

In a letter to marquis Jean Baptiste de Boyer, October 2, 1740, Voltaire wrote:

> Mais vous, pourquoi aller en Suisse? Quoi, il y a un roi de Prusse dans le monde! Quoi, le plus aimable des hommes est sur le trône. . . . Tous les arts y courent en foule, et vous irez en Suisse. Non, non, croyez moi, établissez vous à Berlin; la raison, la vertu y vont renaître (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 261).

This shows how highly Voltaire regarded Frederick and that he probably wanted very much to be a member of the court of brilliant men that surrounded the king at Berlin. The only logical reason that he did not go at that time was probably because of madame du Châtelet. While the king seldom specifically excluded her in his invitation, he certainly did not include her.

After this first short meeting in 1740 letters passed between the two quite frequently. Despite the fact that each often complained about the heavy duties that took far too much of their time and left too little for literary pursuits, they not only wrote each other very long letters but often included long poems.

On October 20, 1740, the emperor, Charles VI, died. Louis XV and his ministers were at once worried about what Frederick was going to do. Long before his death the emperor had managed to get every European ruler

of any importance to sign the Pragmatic Sanction, a document by which each of them recognized the rights of the emperor's daughter, Maria Theresa, to all the hereditary territory of the House of Hapsburg. Frederick William I had signed the agreement with the other European monarchs. The question was whether the young king would abide by the paper his father had signed.

The French court was upset about Frederick's plans. The most trusted envoy they could send was Voltaire, who could go to Berlin ostensibly only because of his close friendship for Frederick and without any ulterior motive. Cardinal Fleury appears to have lost no time in deciding to send Voltaire. It is probable that a personal envoy was sent to Cirey to sound out Voltaire about such a mission, for on October 27, 1740, only a week after the emperor's death, Voltaire wrote to his friend, Claude Adrien Helvetius, that he would probably go to Berlin shortly (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 305).

Cardinal Fleury must have sent a message directly to Voltaire in which he probably tried to make up for past persecutions and to welcome him back into the favor of the court, for on November 2, 1740, Voltaire wrote a letter to Fleury that seems to be a reply to just such a letter.

Voltaire wrote to the cardinal again on November 4, 1740. While there is nothing in the letter that clearly said that he was going to visit Frederick in order to feel out his intentions, there can be little doubt that he was going on just such a mission and at the request of Fleury. It may be that the request was made by a personal envoy and not by letter, since no letter has been found. Voltaire opened his letter with these lines:

> Je ne peux résister aux ordres réitérés de sa mageste le roi de Prusse. Je vais, pour quelques jours, faire ma cour à un monarque qui prend votre manière de penser pour son modèle (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 316).

He then went on to tell the cardinal that he was sending him a book, Anti-Machiavel, which he was sure would echo many of the cardinal's views. Voltaire closed the letter with a request that, if the cardinal wished to communicate with him during his stay in Berlin, to send the message under the address of Beauvau, the French envoy who had been sent to Berlin to congratulate Frederick upon his ascension to the throne.

Voltaire appears to have lost no time in informing Frederick about his intended visit. Already on October 28, 1740, Frederick wrote to Algarotti, an Italian at his court, about the proposed visit:

> Voltaire arrive ici dans quinze jours. . . . Emilie est à Fontainbleu, et lui, . . . ne pouvant pas aller en France la Prusse sera le pis aller (Correspondence, Appendix 37, vol. 10, p. 360).

This indicates that when Frederick first received word about Voltaire's intended visit he did not suspect that Voltaire was coming on a secret mission, but only as a guest.

On November 14, 1740, Fleury replied to Voltaire with a cordial letter, giving his approval of Voltaire's visit to Frederick and speaking of the new king with the highest esteem. It was clearly intended for Frederick's eyes (Correspondence, Commentary, vol. 10, p. 323). This is borne out by the letter that Voltaire sent to Fleury from Berlin, November 26, 1740. In this letter he wrote:

> J'ai reçu, monseigneur, votre lettre du 14, que monsieur le marquis de Beauvau, m'a remise; j'ai obéi aux ordres que votre éminence ne m'a point données; j'ai montré votre lettre au roi de Prusse (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 328).

Voltaire had lost no time in showing Fleury's letter to the king, for he had arrived in Berlin on November 25.

Frederick probably guessed the real reason for Voltaire's visit soon after the latter's arrival, although he made no mention of this in his letters. The day that Voltaire arrived the king wrote to Algarotti:

> Voltaire est arrivé tout étincelant de nouvelles beautés, at bien autrement sociable qu'à Clèves. Il est de très-bonne humeur, et se plaint moins de ses indispositions que d'ordinaire. Il n'y a rien de plus frivole que nos occupations (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 360).

This indicates that Frederick made the visit wholly a social one with no discussion of affairs of state.

On November 28, 1740, Frederick wrote even more frankly about Voltaire:

> Ton avare boira la lie de son insatiable désir de s'enrichir; il aura mille trois cents écus. Son apparition de six jours me coûtera par journée cinq cent cinquante écus. C'est bien payer un fou; jamais bouffon de grand seigneur n'eut de pareils gages (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 360).

From this it seems that part of the frivolous occupations to which the king referred in the first letter was gambling. Throughout all his life Voltaire showed extreme shrewdness in making money and this extended even to gambling. During this time both royalty and nobility often played for high stakes in a sociable game of cards. Frederick, who was always very economical, was not happy about Voltaire's winnings.

So far as learning anything about Frederick's plans, Voltaire's mission was fruitless. The few letters that Voltaire wrote from Berlin during his short stay there give no hint about his success or failure. We do have numerous notes that the two men exchanged during this time. All of these deal with literary matters and are characterized by the same flowery praise found throughout their correspondence. Voltaire left December 1, 1940,

and sent Frederick a parting letter that he began with these lines of poetry:

> Je vous quitte, il est vrai; mais mon coeur déchiré
> Ver vous revolera sans cesse.

And closed with these lines:

> Je me jette aux pieds de votre humanité, et j'ose être attaché tendrement au plus aimable des hommes, comme j'admire le protecteur de l'empire, de ses sujets, et des arts (Correspondence, vol. 10, p. 335).

Although Frederick's plans of aggression must already have been well worked out during Voltaire's visit, he had not allowed even a hint of them to leak out. About two weeks after Voltaire's departure from Berlin, Frederick's troops moved into Silesia and began the War of the Austrian Succession, in which France soon too became involved.

Voltaire traveled by slow stages to Brussels where he arrived early in January. By this time he must have learned about Frederick's invasion of Silesia. He seems to have been somewhat disappointed in the kind of king his peace-loving philosopher-prince had become. However the two did continue to exchange some letters, even though Frederick was writing from the battlefield and often complained of the constant heavy duties and rigors of war.

During his visit to Berlin Voltaire had made the acquaintance of Wilhelmina, Frederick's oldest sister

and the margravine of Bayreuth. March 15, 1741, Voltaire wrote her a letter that reflected his disappointment in Frederick. This letter has never been found, but we know about it by a letter that Wilhelmina wrote to Frederick April 1, 1741. In this letter she wrote thus about the letter she had received from Voltaire:

> J'ai reçu une grande lettre de Voltaire avec une épître qui commence par; "soeur d'Apollon devenu Mars," il est fort estomaqué de ce changement. Mais je crois qu'il n'a pas bien consulté sa philosophie, et qu'il iroit au bout du monde pour quelques mille ducats (Correspondence, textual notes, vol. 11, p. 62).

Voltaire had probably chosen this method of criticizing the king through his sister because he did not wish to alienate him through a more direct criticism and also because he knew that Wilhelmina was closer to Frederick than any other person and wielded a stronger influence over him. The mention of the ducats again brings up the ill feeling he had engendered at the Prussian court by winning too heavily at cards. Voltaire's habit of turning every possible opportunity, even social contacts, into making money was a blot on his character and often rankled his friends.

March 25, 1741, Voltaire wrote again to Frederick. As in many letters he opened with a poem, which here eulogized the king's exploits in war. Then he closed

the letter with one of the frankest questions that he ever asked the king.

> Je voudrais seulement sire que vous eussiez la bonté de me dire, la main sur la conscience, si vous êtes plus heureux que vous ne l'étiez à Rheinsberg. Je conjure votre magesté de satisfaire à cette question philosophique (Correspondence, vol. 11, p. 73).

Whether Frederick answered Voltaire's question with equal frankness is not known. At least one of his letters to Voltaire at this time has been lost.

April 16, 1741, Frederick wrote Voltaire a letter in which he told of his defeat of the Austrians at Mollwitz. This was the battle in which Frederick fled like a coward, thinking everything lost, but one of his veteran generals rallied the troops and won the battle for him. Naturally, the king did not give these details.

Voltaire replied with a poem in which he praised the king's exploits in war as being equal, if not greater, than those of Charles XII and Gustaphus Adolphus of Sweden and of Turenne, the great French general, and added that beside all these qualities he was a great poet. Voltaire wrote:

> Mon prince est au-dessus de leur gloire vulgaire,
> Quand il n'est point Achille, il sait être un Homère
> (Correspondence, vol. 11, p. 91).

This praise of warlike pursuits is quite a departure from Voltaire's usual attitude towards war.

Although Frederick was actively engaged in war all through the summer of 1741, frequent letters passed between the two men. Many of these were largely in verse, even those from Frederick. One wonders how he ever found the time for writing such long poems when he was very busy planning out the strategy of his campaigns and fighting his battles.

As Frederick's victories, his indomitable driving power and scheming, and adroit political skill were winning for him both the admiration and fear of all Europe, Voltaire too seems to have caught some of the admiration and lost a little of his regret for his "Apollon devenu Mars." In a long letter in verse that Voltaire wrote to Frederick on June 29, 1741, he compared himself to a pigeon and Frederick to an eagle:

> Un honnête pigeon, point fourbe et point guerrier
> cache ses jours obscurs au fond d'un colombier.
> Je suis ce vieux pigeon; j'admire en sa carrière
> cette aigle foudroyante et si vive et si fière.
> Ah! si d'un autre bec les dieux m'avaient pourvu,
> Si j'étais moins pigeon, je vous suivrais peut-être;
> Je verrais dans son camp mon adorable maître
> (Correspondence, vol. 11, p. 145).

This comparison must have drawn a smile from the shrewd king. In his reply Frederick lauded Voltaire's exploits in the field of letters as much greater than his in the field of battle. Possibly as an excuse for his continual wars he wrote these lines:

> Chaque mortel est fol dans un goût différent (Correspondence, vol. 11, p. 162).

This seems to give some insight into Frederick's character. He accepted the fact that war had a fascination for him.

On August 24, 1741, Frederick wrote again from his camp at Reichenbach. In this letter he made this remark:

> Les hommes ne sont pas faits pour la vérité. Je les regarde comme une horde de cerfs dans le parc d'un grand seigneur, et qui n'ont d'autre fonction que de peupler et de remplir cet enclos (Correspondence, vol. 11, p. 192).

If these lines give a true picture of Frederick's view of mankind in general, they go a long way in explaining his wars. If the common people were only so many animals in the park of a great lord and if their only function was to increase their numbers for the greater glory of the lord, then their slaughter in war for the greater glory of that lord was a natural deduction. Frederick was an absolute autocrat, one of the benevolent despots. Throughout all his reign he cared for the well-being of his people, except that he sacrificed them in war. He wanted his people to be economically prosperous, happy, healthy, and even educated. But this was not for the good of the people, but rather because such prosperous, happy people were a better foundation on which to build his own power and glory.

During 1742, letters between the two men were less frequent. The reason probably lies in that both were very busy with their own affairs. Frederick was busy with his war. For Voltaire it was a busy year and, in many ways, a bitter, difficult year. He again sought admission to the Academy and again was refused. His publication of Mahomet was criticized as an attack on the monarchy, religion, and even morality. But, on the other hand, Mérope appeared and was a great success. He was also working on his Siècle de Louis le grand and sending advance portions of the work to Frederick for his criticisms. The king wrote back that he was devouring Voltaire's writings with delight and wrote with regret about his embroilment in war and the unfortunate duplicity of mankind that had forced him into war, apparently overlooking the fact that it was his own duplicity that had started the war.

After the Prussian victory over the Austrians, April 10, 1741, Louis XV had realized that Frederick was a power not only worth recognizing, but worth joining. He sent Belle-Isle, his minister, to Frederick to make a treaty of alliance between France and Prussia. The French army joined Prussia in an attack on Austria all through the summer of 1741 and the following winter and spring.

Then, with his usual duplicity, during the summer of 1742 Frederick deserted the allies that had joined him in war against the empress. Without consulting them he secretly concluded the Peace of Breslau with Maria Theresa on June 11, 1742, by which she recognized his rights to Silesia. Quite naturally the French reaction to Frederick's action was not friendly.

Voltaire's reaction was one of joy. On June 30, 1742, he wrote to Frederick, commending him for having made peace. He wrote, however, that half of the people were condemning Frederick severely and that the other half did not really know what it was all about. This rather indiscreet letter was opened by the French censors and caused a storm that almost sent Voltaire to the Bastille.

Voltaire rode out the storm with success and, in a letter to Frederick, dated July 15, 1742, he wrote:

> Dieu et le diable savent ce qu'est devenue la lettre que j'écris à v.m. sur le beau sujet, vers la fin de juin, et comment elle est parvenue en d'autres mains; je suis fait, moi, pour ignorer les dessous des cartes. Mais j'ai essuyé une des plus illustres tracasseries de ce monde; mais je suis si bon cosmopolite, que je me réjouirai de tout (Correspondence, vol. 12, p. 70).

With this letter Voltaire dismissed the incident. In his reply, Frederick declared that it meant nothing to him, even though all France condemned him for making

peace, so long as his philosopher friend was pleased. What Voltaire probably did not realize at the time was that the Peace of Breslau was for Frederick only an interlude, to give him time and opportunity to build up his army and resources for further territorial grabs and the wars they would require.

Frederick's interest in Voltaire's works continued, and he repeatedly asked for further portions of his unpublished works. March 15, 1743, Frederick wrote:

> Envoyez-moi, je vous prie, la Pucelle (j'ai la rage de la dépuceler), et votre Histoire, et vos épigrammes, et vos odes, et vous-même. Enfin j'espère d'une ou d'autre façon de vous voir ici (Correspondence, vol. 12, p. 207).

There can be no doubt that Frederick really appreciated Voltaire's literary works and that he read them with interest and extreme care. He also felt extreme pride in being privileged to read Voltaire's works before they were published, and his letters contain frequent requests for them, especially for La Pucelle. Voltaire did not make a secret of this very clever poem, by which he ridiculed both accepted religion and morals. He delighted in quoting passages to admiring friends and yet he lived in terror lest somebody make an unauthorized publication. Quite naturally he did not care to send it. His letters were opened far too often for him to trust La Pucelle to a letter. It is even possible that he did not trust

Frederick not to allow the poem to reach the eyes of the public. Voltaire sent advance chapters of Le Siècle de Louis XIV, but it seems he never sent any of La Pucelle, for the request was often repeated in the letters; but there was never any evidence that Frederick received it. Frederick wrote again on June 15, 1743, and repeated his request with these closing lines:

> Envoyez-moi la Pucelle, ou je vous renie (Correspondence, vol. 12, p. 244).

This was really an idle threat. Voltaire did not send La Pucelle, and the two remained good friends.

Voltaire was not barred from Paris at this time, but he was suffering under a cloud of criticism. Once again there had been an opening in the Academy, and his name had been rejected. All this gave Frederick an excellent reason for renewing his invitation to Voltaire to come to Berlin. In his letters he made much of the lack of appreciation Voltaire was receiving from his own people and painted rosy pictures of the warm welcome and true appreciation he would receive at his court. Voltaire suffered keenly from the constant persecution he was getting in Paris, and the prospect that Frederick painted must have made Berlin look very inviting. In the summer of 1743 he decided to accept Frederick's invitation, but not quite in the character of a fugitive from the French

court that Frederick was led to expect. June 15, 1743, he wrote to Frederick:

> Vous seul, sire, me consolez de tout ce que je vois, et quand je suis prêt à pleurer sur la décadence des arts, je me dis: Il y a dans l'Europe un monarque qui les aime, qui les cultive, et qui est la gloire de son siècle; je me dis enfin: Je le verrai bientôt, ce monarque charmant; ce roi homme, ce Chaulieu couronné, ce Tacite, ce Xénophon; oui, je veux partir; madame du Châtelet ne pourra m'en empêcher; je quitterai Minerve pour Apollon. Vous êtes, sire, ma plus grande passion, et il faut bien se contenter dans la vie (Correspondence, vol. 12, p. 247).

This letter shows that Voltaire was just as clever in duplicity as Frederick. For Voltaire was again going as a spy to try to sound out Frederick about his intentions in the now general war of the Austrian Succession. Prussia was for the moment at peace, to all appearances satisfied with the acquisition of Silesia, and without any further territorial ambitions. But every diplomat in Europe rightly suspected that this was only a lull in Frederick's plans of conquest. Voltaire was not loved at the French court; but, on the other hand, there was nobody else whom Louis XV could send who would arouse less suspicion and who was as close to Frederick.

As for Voltaire, the chance to play a double role seemed to delight him. The few persons who were in on the secret played their roles well. La Mort de César was about to be revived in Paris and then suppressed by royal demand, so that Frederick might be sure that Voltaire

was still in disgrace at Paris. Madame du Châtelet wrote pitiful letters to her friends bemoaning her loss of Voltaire to Frederick. So well was this done that even close friends of Voltaire were deceived and sharply criticized the court. Only Frederick, whose perspicacity was unrivalled, was not deceived and guessed, shortly after Voltaire's arrival, that his philosopher friend was coming as a diplomat en mission (Correspondence, Commentary, vol. 12, p. 242).

Voltaire must have left Paris almost at once after the letter of June 15, 1743, to Frederick, for by June 20 he was at The Hague, where he was making a stop for business reasons and where he awaited the horses and carriage that Frederick was sending to fetch him to Berlin.

Voltaire remained at The Hague until August 23, 1743. During this time he continued to write letters to Frederick, who was in Silesia at the time. These were all on the usual pattern, full of eulogy, often in verse form, and about his writings and theatrical productions. We find no hint of the real purpose for the coming visit. Frederick sent frequent short letters to Voltaire during this time. He was watching the war maneuvers with interest and reported to Voltaire his utter contempt for the French soldiers. He called them lâches and wrote that all dead bodies found on the battlefield had been shot in the back

(Correspondence, vol. 13, p. 49). Voltaire's letters to Jean-Jacques Amelot de Chaillon, the French foreign minister, were at this time even more numerous than those to Frederick. Most of these were written in code. In Besterman's Correspondence they are given both in the original code and with the deciphered version. They show that Voltaire was taking his mission seriously. While there is no really remarkable information in them, Voltaire sent long lists of supplies stationed at various points, all the information he could gather about the Prussian army, and the dispatches from Prussia that he could learn about while at The Hague.

It is not likely that, at this time, Frederick suspected Voltaire's real motive for the coming visit. Frederick had long been eager to add Voltaire to the circle of writers and artists with whom he surrounded himself. He now adopted a very reprehensible trick to put Voltaire into such a difficult position at the French court that he would be forced to stay in Berlin. He sent Friedrich Rudolf, count of Rothenburg, a letter that contained a forged poem supposed to have come from Voltaire. He used no deceit toward the count but openly wrote:

> Je ne vous écris aujourd'hui que des colonneries. Voici un morceau d'une lettre de Voltaire, que je prie de faire tenir à l'évêque de Mirepois par un

> canal détourné, sans que vous et moi paraissons dans cette affaire. Mon intention est de brouiller Voltaire si bien en France, qu'il ne lui reste de parti à prendre que celui de venir chez nous (Correspondence, vol. 13, pp. 45-46).

Part of the alleged poem ran as follows:

> Non, non, pédant de Mirepoix,
> Prêtre avare, esprit fanatique,
> Qui prétend nous donner les lois,
> Tel qu'un vieux prieur séraphique
> Dans un cloître de Saint-François,
> Cuistre imbécile et tyrannique,
> Fait pour chanter à haute voix
> Ton rituel soporifique
> Dans un couvent de Saint-François,
> Sur moi tu n'auras point de droits.
> Loin du plus stupide des rois
> Je vais oublier à la fois
> La sottise de Mirepoix
> Et la sottise académique (Correspondence, Commentary, vol. 13, p. 46).

In this Frederick overplayed his hand. Such gross, infamous ridicule and insults were far too crude to have come from Voltaire's pen. The poem was recognized for what it was, a forgery, and if it had any effect whatever on the French court it was to strengthen Voltaire's position. That he was in favor and his mission held to be well conducted up to this point is proved by a letter from de Chaillou, the foreign secretary, to Voltaire, written August 22, 1743, in which he highly commended Voltaire's work up to this date and discussed means of calling him back to France, after his work at Berlin was done, without arousing Frederick's suspicions.

Voltaire arrived at Berlin, August 30, 1743, where he took rooms at the Hotel de Montgobert. He remained there until about the middle of October for by October 27 he was back at The Hague. So far as learning anything about Frederick's intentions in the War of the Austrian Succession, Voltaire's efforts were unsuccessful. Frederick was far too shrewd to disclose any of his plans even to close friends. And despite all the mutual praise and emulation that passed between the two men and all the protestations of extreme affection that they so often exchanged, it is doubtful whether either actually trusted the other at this point in their friendship. Voltaire probably looked for some personal gain by his friendship with Frederick either through honor, position, or prestige. And possibly Frederick looked upon Voltaire more as an amusing entertainer of remarkable prestige. It seems that Frederick at this stage, his own ego having been inflated since he had become an intriguing and warlike king, no longer really took Voltaire quite seriously or appreciated his real worth and the depth of his political views.

Even while Voltaire was in Berlin, and often a house or dinner guest of the king so that they saw each other almost every day, they still exchanged letters and poems. None of these shed any light on Frederick's

political intrigues. Nor do we learn anything from Voltaire's letters to the foreign minister in Paris. Strangely enough, while practically all of the letters that he wrote from The Hague were in code, only two of those from Berlin are in code, at least as they have come down to us.

Although no letter has been found by which Voltaire was informed of Frederick's trick to attempt to make his return to the French court impossible by his forged poem, it is evident from a letter that Voltaire wrote to de Chailleu, the French foreign minister, October 3, 1743, that by this time Voltaire did know about the attempt at deception. He wrote:

> Il a cru que si j'étois brouillé sans ressource avec l'homme qui est le sujet de ces plaisanteries je serais forcé alors d'accepter les offres que j'ay toujours refusés de vivre à la cour de Prusse. Ne pouvant me gagner autrement il croit m'acquérir en me perdant en France, mais je vous jure que j'aimerais mieux vivre dans un village suisse que de jouir à ce prix de la faveur dangereuse d'un roy capable de mettre de la trahison dans l'amitié même (Correspondence, vol. 13, pp. 95-96).

This shows that Voltaire not only had learned about the trick, but a letter that Frederick wrote on October 14, 1743, indicates that he even broached the subject to Frederick. For Frederick wrote:

> Voltaire a déniché, je ne sais comment, la petite trahison que nous lui avons faite, et il en est étrangement piqué; il se défâchera, j'espère (Correspondence, Commentary, vol. 13, p. 96).

Whatever unpleasant passed between the two because of Frederick's trick did not change the character of their letters to each other. Voltaire went first to The Hague and then Brussels and arrived in Paris early in January. Frederick spent the fall and early winter in and near Berlin. Their letters at this time resumed the old pattern of mutual eulogy with many invitations from Frederick to return to Berlin.

Voltaire, back in favor with the court, while he may have been somewhat disillusioned with Frederick, still could not keep from boasting about the king's liberal offers to woo him to Berlin. Charles Philippe, Due de Luynes, wrote in his Mémoires of this time:

> Voltaire vient d'arriver ici de Berlin, il dit que le roi de Prusse lui a offert une belle maison et 12,000 livres de pension s'il voulait s'établir à Berlin (Correspondence, Commentary, vol. 13, p. 159).

The first part of this is true. But the amount of the pension is almost certainly exaggerated. Frederick was far too parsimonious and needing his money too much for war to offer that much to a man whose only returns would be aesthetic.

The next four years very few letters were exchanged between Voltaire and Frederick. In contrast to the many letters exchanged in their earlier correspondence, from the time in October, 1743, until the end of 1748 they

exchanged only eighteen letters. The reason lay not so much in any misunderstanding or even a cooling of their close friendship, but rather that their lives took different courses. Early in 1744, Frederick renewed his alliance with France and prepared to reenter the war, by August he was actively engaged in fighting, in working out battle maneuvers, and personally leading his army. In the early years of the War of the Austrian Succession, Prussia and France were allies; later they were enemies. In the early part Austria stood alone against most of Europe, in the latter part Prussia was fighting alone against most of her former allies. With all this war and intrigue on his hands, Frederick had little time for writing letters.

Voltaire, during this time, was enjoying the highest popularity he ever attained at the French court. He finished the Princesse de Navarre and saw it produced in splendor at Versailles. In the same year, 1744, he wrote an ode to celebrate the French victories in the Austrian war. He was also accorded the honor of having his Fontenoy printed by the royal press in the Louvre. In January, 1745, through the influence of madame de Pompadour, he was appointed historiographer-royal, a post that carried with it both high honor and a salary of two thousand livres a year.

Despite all these honors Voltaire had one bitter disappointment to swallow. There was another vacancy in the Academy and the young Abbé de Bernis, who had published only a few insignificant trifles, was elected to fill the vacancy, much to Voltaire's chagrin. Voltaire had to wait another two years, until May of 1746, when he received the long-deserved honor of entrance into the Academy. This year marked the peak of his prestige at Versailles.

The few letters that passed between them followed the usual pattern. Voltaire often included a poem in his letters. Frederick was too busy to compose poetry or much letter writing until October, 1748, when the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle finally brought the War of the Austrian Succession to a close.

In the meantime, a series of events brought about a change in the life of Voltaire. Possibly Voltaire was already beginning to lose favor at court. Late in 1747 an indiscreet remark forced him and madame du Châtelet to flee. Madame du Châtelet was playing cards with a group of the royal household at Versailles and losing heavily. Voltaire, who was not in the game but only an observer and who always had a keen eye for money, became irritated and remarked that she was playing with cheats. The two at once fled to a retreat offered by

the duchesse du Maine at Sceaux. From there they went to the court of Stanislas, the former king of Poland, at Lunéville in Lorraine. Here, madame du Châtelet fell in love with the young poet and soldier, the marquis de Saint-Lambert. Voltaire and madame du Châtelet remained there throughout 1748 and the winter that followed. Then they returned to Cirey when madame du Châtelet confided to Voltaire that, due to her liaison with Saint-Lambert, she was pregnant.

November 29, 1748, just a little over a month after he had signed the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, Frederick wrote Voltaire a long letter from Potsdam. He made no mention of his four years of war but wrote chiefly about Voltaire and his literary works and showed himself eager to renew their correspondence. He renewed his invitation for Voltaire to come to Berlin, assuring him that he would find better accommodations there than with an ex-king at Lunéville.

In reply, Voltaire stated that he was remaining at the court of the ex-king of Poland at Lunéville for reasons of health. He wrote to Frederick on January 10, 1749:

> Sire c'est que Lunéville est près des eaux de Plumbières et que je vais là souvent pour faire durer encor quelques jours une malheureuse machine dans la quelle il y a une âme qui est toutte à votre majesté (Correspondence, vol. 17, p. 7).

This excuse sounded reasonable, since throughout his long life Voltaire was, by his own words, always on the verge of collapse or even death. The real reason was madame du Châtelet's infatuation for the young marquis de Saint-Lambert.

By the middle of March, Voltaire's letters to Frederick took on a new tone. It is probable that by this time Voltaire knew that madame du Châtelet was pregnant and that he had some doubts about his future with her and his retreat at Cirey. We do not know when and how Frederick learned about her condition, but he must have heard about it some time early in the summer of 1749, for on June 10 he wrote to Voltaire and asked him again to come to Berlin and made these remarks about madame du Châtelet:

> Madame du Châtelet accouche dans le mois de septembre; vous n'êtes pas une sage-femme, ainsi elle fera bien ses couches sans vous (Correspondence, vol. 17, p. 85).

In the letter that Voltaire wrote in reply on June 29, 1749, he did not mince any words:

> My même Frederic le grand . . . ne peut à présent m'empêcher de remplir un devoir que je crois très indispensable. Je ne suis ny faiseur d'enfans, ny médecin, ny sage femme, mais je suis amy, et je ne quitteray pas, même pour votre majesté, une femme qui peut mourir au mois de septembre. Ses couches ont l'air d'être fort dangereuses, mais si elle s'en tire bien, je vous promets sire de venir vous faire ma cour au mois d'octobre (Correspondence, vol. 17, p. 102).

This letter reflects Voltaire's fears about madame du Châtelet's approaching accouchement, fears that were tragically realized.

Madame du Châtelet gave birth to a daughter the night of September 3, 1749. Her delivery was not difficult, and she was giving every appearance of making a satisfactory recovery, when she died quite suddenly about a week later. Both she and Voltaire were at Lunéville at this time. Three letters that Voltaire wrote on September 10, 1749, with the sad news, have come down to us. He was broken-hearted by her death. He accompanied her husband, the marquis du Châtelet, to Cirey for her funeral and burial, and then left Cirey forever.

## CHAPTER V

## VOLTAIRE AS FREDERICK'S GUEST

During the summer of 1749, Frederick's demands for a visit had become more insistent. It is probable that Voltaire fully expected to keep his promise to come to Berlin as soon as madame du Châtelet was safely through her childbirth. Her death left Voltaire in a state of despair and collapse and quite unable to make any definite plans for his future. For seventeen years, madame du Châtelet had been his most intimate friend and closest companion. Her château had been his home. Even when he had promised Frederick during the summer of 1749 to come to his court it is not likely that he had any definite plans of leaving Cirey for good. If he accepted an invitation to Frederick's court after madame du Châtelet's death, it could easily be on a permanent basis since he no longer had an established home. Voltaire did not make such a decision in haste.

In the meantime, Frederick repeated his invitation. It is unfortunate that we do not have either the letter by which Voltaire announced madame du Châtelet's death to Frederick, nor the letter of condolence by which Frederick replied, nor do we know the exact date when the news of her death reached him. It is evident that

on September 12, 1749, he had not heard either of the birth of the child or about madame du Châtelet's death for that day Algarotti reported in a letter that Frederick spoke to him about Voltaire's coming visit with these words:

> C'est bien dommage qu'une âme aussi lâche soit unie à une aussi beau genie. Il a les gentillesses et les malices d'un singe. Je vous conterai ce que c'est lorsque je vous reverrai; cependant je ne ferai semblant de rien, car j'en ai besoin pour l'étude de l'élocution française. On peut apprendre de bonnes choses d'un scélérat. Je veux savoir son français; que m'importe sa morale? Cet homme a trouvé le moyen de réunir les contraires. On admire son esprit, en même temps qu'on méprise son caractère. La du Châtelet est accouchée d'un livre, et l'on attend encore l'enfant; peut-être que, par distraction, elle oubliera d'accoucher, ou, si l'embroyon paraît, ce sera des oeuvres mêlées (Correspondence, vol. 17, commentary, p. 164).

This statement clearly shows that Frederick did not know that madame du Châtelet had come through the delivery, nor anything about her death on September 10. This is not surprising when one considers how slowly letters traveled at this time. What is surprising is the change in Frederick's feelings toward Voltaire. There can be no doubt that in the beginning of their friendship Frederick sincerely admired Voltaire and respected him highly. Outwardly there was no change in their relations, but a remark like this one shows that Frederick at this time was planning on using Voltaire for his own

aggrandizement and no longer had any real respect or love for the great man he was trying to lure to his court.

By September 19, 1749, Frederick had heard the sad news, possibly from Voltaire himself, but this is uncertain. Algarotti reported that, when he spoke with sympathy of Voltaire's bereavement and grief, Frederick replied:

> Voltaire déclame trop dans son affliction, ce qui me fait juger qu'il se consolera vite (Correspondence, vol. 17, commentary, p. 207).

It does not appear that Frederick's friendship for Voltaire at this time was truly sincere.

During the winter of 1749-50, Voltaire lived in Paris with his niece, madame Denis. In many ways it was a successful year for him. Oreste was produced and won high acclaim. Rome sauvée was shown privately. Paris was unusually hospitable. Still he was regarded with suspicion by the court. All this time he and Frederick exchanged numerous letters in which each seemed to try to outdo the other in praise. Voltaire obtained from Louis XV his permit to leave and made arrangements to go to Berlin in July. Frederick sent a carriage and horses to bring Voltaire to Berlin. Frederick even composed a poem in French addressed to the horses that were to bring Voltaire to Berlin, and then recited it to the horses, although Frederick believed, "La langue allemande

est faite pour parler aux bêtes" (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 88). Then he sent the poem on to Voltaire.

Voltaire left Paris on July 5, 1741. He was not to see it again for twenty-eight years. He was in Berlin on July 24, for he wrote Frederick a letter from Potsdam on that date, since the king was not in Berlin when Voltaire arrived. Voltaire wrote numerous letters from Potsdam during the first few weeks after his arrival. In all of these he praised Frederick and the Prussian court almost without limit. Voltaire had arrived in Berlin at a most opportune time. Frederick's sister, Wilhelmina, the margravine of Bayreuth, came to Berlin for a visit shortly after Voltaire's arrival, and Frederick spared no expense or effort in entertaining his favorite sister. Voltaire was delighted by the prospect of plays, musicals, dances, and carnivals. On August 1, 1750, he wrote, "Nous aurons dans quelques jours à Berlin un carousel digne en tout de celuy de Louis 14" (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 109).

Voltaire took an active and honored part in the celebration. His play, Rome sauvée, was produced with royal actors. There was no language barrier for the language of the Prussian court, as well as that of most of the lesser German courts, was all French at this time. On August 24, 1749, Voltaire wrote to madame Denis about his play:

> Nous nous préparons à jouer Rome sauvée. Vous ne vous douteriez pas que nous trouvassions ici des acteurs. Ce qui vous étonnera, c'est que le prince Henri, frère du roi, et la princesse Amélie, sa soeur, récitent très bien des vers, et sans le moindre accent. La langue qu'on parle le moins à la cour, c'est l'allemand. Je n'en ai pas encore entendu prononcer un mot (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 131).

In such a round of festivities Voltaire was in his element. His letters reflect his happiness and his congenial and honored relations with the king, whom he represented as Marcus Aurelius.

During this time, Frederick was trying to make Voltaire a permanent member of his court. Already on August 14, 1750, Voltaire had written to madame Denis, telling her about the king's offer both to him and her:

> Voici le fait, ma chère enfant. Le roi de Prusse me fait son chambellan, me donne un de ses ordres, vingt mille francs de pension, et à vous quatre mille assurés pour toute votre vie, si vous voulez venir tenir ma maison à Berlin, comme vous la tenez à Paris. Vous avez bien vécu à Landau avec votre mari; je vous jure que Berlin vaut mieux que Landau, et qu'il y a de meilleurs opéra .... J'ai peu de temps à vivre. Peut-être est-il plus doux de mourir à sa mode à Potsdam que de la façon d'un habitué de paroisse à Paris (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 120).

This shows how pleased Voltaire was with his reception at Berlin and that at this time he really wished to make it his permanent home.

At the same time, both he and Frederick were trying to get the permission of Louis XV that would allow Voltaire to accept Frederick's offer without endangering the relations

between the two monarchs. Voltaire was trying to obtain the French king's permission to accept Frederick's offer and at the same time retain his position as a subject of Louis XV. The permission was not long in coming. On August 22, 1750, the French minister sent this short letter in code to the comte Tyrconnell, the French ambassador at Frederick's court:

> Vous apprendrez que le roi de Prusse a fait demander Voltaire au roi. Sa majesté le lui a accordé. Elle a pensé que cette complaisance serait agréable à ce prince, et que si d'un côté elle laissait aller un académicien que quelqu'uns de ses ouvrages rendent célèbre elle n'avait d'ailleurs rien à regretter dans ce sacrifice. Je doute fort qu'à la longue le roi de Prusse s'accommode du caractère de monsieur de Voltaire. Ceci pour vous seul (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 127).

From this it appears that Louis XV was quite as happy to be rid of Voltaire as Frederick was to obtain him. The French king had never appreciated Voltaire's genius, but had often been offended by his satire and thinly veiled criticisms.

On August 28, 1750, Voltaire wrote to his old friend, Charles Augustin Feriol:

> Aujourd'hui c'est le premier homme de l'univers, c'est un philosophe couronné qui m'enlève. Comment voulez-vous que je résiste comment voulez-vous que j'oublie la manière barbare dont j'ai été traité dans mon pays?.... Puis-je regretter les cabales d'un pays où j'ai été si maltraité?.... Je comptais, en partant, n'être auprès du roi de Prusse que six semaines. Je vois bien que je mourrai à ses pieds (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 135).

This letter makes it clear that Voltaire's reception at the Prussian court had greatly exceeded his expectations. Part of his enchantment was probably due to the festivities. In this same letter Voltaire described a festival he had just attended, for which the grounds were lighted with forty-six thousand glass lanterns and the avenues bordered by three thousand armed and uniformed soldiers. With such grandeur and a continual whirl of festivities it is little wonder that Voltaire wrote that "Frederic le grand est plus grand que Louis XIV" (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 136) and that he considered himself happy and fortunate to be a part of Frederick's court.

During the first months of Voltaire's stay in Berlin, most of his letters to his French friends and relatives were filled with praise for the Prussian court and with answers to the many accusations of desertion that were coming to him. In a letter to madame Denis, dated October 13, 1750, he wrote:

> Il est plaisant que les mêmes gens de lettres de Paris, qui auraient voulu m'exterminer, il y a un an, crient actuellement contre mon eloignement, et l'appellent desertion. Il semble qu'on soit fâche d'avoir perdu sa victime (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 180).

Up to this time there is no hint that Voltaire was at all disappointed with Frederick or his life at the court.

During October of 1750 Louis XV deprived Voltaire of his post as royal historiographer. In a letter Voltaire wrote to madame Denis, he complained bitterly about his removal and, at the same time, expressed the view that his absence from France should not have hurt his ability to write a history of France but should rather have increased it because he would be free to express the truth without any danger of reprisals. He also wrote that his duties for Frederick were very light, taking only about an hour's time each day and that he was working on his history of Louis XIV and his times. In another letter to madame Denis on November 6, 1750, he wrote that everything was wonderful at Potsdam, but that he was homesick and that he would be leaving for a visit to Paris definitely by the middle of December. His letters to madame Denis were quite frequent at this time and clearly indicate his longing for France.

He wrote madame Denis another letter on November 17, 1750, in which he related an incident that must have caused him some sad misgivings about Frederick's character and should have revealed to him how two-faced his host could be and was. He wrote:

> J'avais vu une lettre touchante, pathétique, et même fort chrétienne que le roi avait daigné écrire à d'Arget sur la mort de sa femme. J'ai appris que le même jour sa majesté avait fait une épigramme contre la défunte; cela ne laisse pas de donner à penser.

> Nous sommes ici trois ou quatre étrangers comme des moines dans une abbaye. Dieu veuille que le père abbé se contente de se moquer de nous (Correspondence, vol. 18, p. 210).

Such insincerity and lack of honesty revealed to Voltaire a lack of real feeling in the king.

At the same time Voltaire's conduct was far from being above reproach in the notorious Hirschel affair. By the treaty of 1745 between Prussia and Saxony, certain Saxon bonds were to be honored in full when they were held by Prussian citizens. This led to speculation in the bonds. By a decree of May, 1748, speculation in these bonds was strictly forbidden. Voltaire certainly knew about this. The very secrecy with which he acted certainly indicates that he knew such speculation was forbidden. Nevertheless, the temptation tc make some easy, even though dishonest, money was too great. He turned over a large sum of money to a Jewish businessman in Berlin, Abraham Hirschel, who was to buy the bonds cheaply from non-Prussian citizens and then sell them for Voltaire. Hirschel gave Voltaire some jewels as security. The deal fell through, and Voltaire was forced to sue Hirschel to get his money back. The legal actions that followed dragged on through all the winter of 1750 and 1751. While Voltaire won the legal victory, he lost the moral one. The king was very angry with Voltaire,

and there can be no doubt that some words passed between the two about the affair. However, no letters either by Voltaire or the king make any direct mention of anything that the king might have said to Voltaire. But this Hirschel affair marks the beginning of the rift between the two men.

January 22, 1751, Frederick wrote to his sister, Wilhelmina, about the Hirschel affair with these words:

> Vous me demandez ce que c'est que le procès de Voltaire avec le juif. C'est l'affaire d'un fripon qui veut tromper un filou; il n'est pas permis qu'un homme de l'esprit de Voltaire en fasse si indigne abus (Correspondence, vol. 19, p. 29).

The suit was settled early in February and on February 12, 1751, Frederick wrote about it again to his sister. After telling her that the suit was settled he added:

> C'est bien dommage que l'esprit influe si peu sur les mœurs, et qu'un homme qui s'est rendu célèbre dans la republique des lettres soit aussi méprisable pour son caractère. Voltaire, malgré son esprit, est la fable de la ville, il fait, je ne sais combien d'incartades et de choses ridicules qui servent à désennuyer les fainéants de cette capitale (Correspondence, vol. 19, commentary, pp. 29-30).

These denunciations of Voltaire have to be considered in the light of Frederick's desire to influence his sister against Voltaire. A close friendship had developed between Voltaire and Frederick's sister, Wilhelmina, and the two were exchanging cordial letters. Frederick, who was greatly attached to his oldest sister, was jealous of

her interest in Voltaire. But nowhere do we find anything to tell us what actually passed between Frederick and Voltaire.

Early in January, 1951, Voltaire had had a real cause for feeling himself mistreated. He wrote to his niece, madame Denis, that his secretary, Tinois, had secretly sold the manuscript of La Pucelle to Henri, the king's younger brother, "qui mourait d'envie d'avoir Jeanne à sa possession" (Correspondence, vol. 19, p. 4). Voltaire at once discharged Tinois, but did not seem to feel too much rancor against Henri. This can be partly understood because Henri was taking an active part in many of Voltaire's plays that were being produced during this winter and seems to have been a fairly good amateur actor.

Despite the difficulties of the Hirschel affair, the theft of La Pucelle, and Frederick's biting wit that seemed to rankle Voltaire, the winter was really a happy one. Voltaire was very busy with both public and private productions of his plays; and, while his reputation had certainly suffered from the Hirschel affair, the honors heaped on him for his art more than made up for it. As for his repeated promise to visit Paris, he now wrote to madame Denis that his extreme ill health, the rigors of

a Prussian winter, and the condition of the roads made his trip to Paris impossible.

Throughout the year of 1751 the relations between Frederick and Voltaire became more and more strained, although there was no open break. Voltaire was often the victim of the king's cruel wit, barbs that Voltaire had to swallow with the best grace possible. Voltaire's tongue was just as sharp as that of Frederick, but the latter was an absolute and powerful monarch. Voltaire could only fight back through his criticisms of the king's literary productions. Here Voltaire could use his biting wit to the fullest advantage, especially in his criticisms of Frederick's Art de la guerre. Here it was the king's turn to take Voltaire's biting criticism with a forced smile.

Despite the growing tension between Voltaire and Frederick, the year of 1751 was a happy and successful one for Voltaire. He published his Siècle de Louis XIV with remarkable success. As with many of his works, pirated copies appeared almost at once and Voltaire was kept busy fighting and suppressing them. Voltaire always seemed to be happiest when he was very active. He also published Micromégas, and his Mahomet was revived with marked success.

Despite their growing antipathy and the close association that would seem to render letters unnecessary, Voltaire and Frederick did exchange numerous notes and even letters during this period. None of these give any hint of the growing discord. Nor, in general, did Voltaire give free rein to his grievances to even his closest friends in Paris. The reason for this could easily lie in the fact that, unless a letter was sent through a special and trusted carrier, it could easily be opened and censored. His friends were becoming apprehensive about Voltaire's continued stay at the Prussian court and were urging him to leave. In a letter of August 6, 1751, the Comte d'Argental wrote to Voltaire:

> Le roy pour qui vous avés tout abandoné ne pouvoit vous dédomager de tant de sacrifices.... Vous êtes entourés d'ennemis, d'envieux, de tracassiers. On se dispute, on s'arrache une faveur, une confiance que personne ne possède véritablement. C'est une coquette qui pour conserver plusieurs amants n'en rend aucun heureux. Cette cour orageuse pleine de toute sorte d'inconvénients est cependant le seul endroit où vous puissiés vivre.... Vous dépendes des caprices d'un seul homme et cet homme est un roy (Correspondence, vol. 20, pp. 3-4).

This letter was carried by a special messenger. The comte d'Argental would not have risked such criticism of royalty in any letter that could have been opened.

And yet Voltaire continued to remain at the Prussian court. While there can be no doubt but that friction and hard feeling was growing between him and the king,

nevertheless Voltaire did seem to be quite happy. One reason was that he was busy. Another was that he had formed some very congenial friendships. The king's brother, Henri, and his sister, Amélie, who were both at the court, were pleasant and agreeable friends. Voltaire carried on an extensive correspondence with Wilhelmina. Beside this he had formed a warm and close friendship with the countess Bentinck. He acted as her legal adviser and helped her in her many law suits, a field in which Voltaire was always at his best. Voltaire's close friendship with both Wilhelmina and the countess Bentinck irritated the king. The only cause for this was his own possessive and selfish nature. The king was jealous of Voltaire. He was truly very attached to Wilhelmina and hated to see Voltaire share in her affection. There was no logical reason for his jealousy about the countess Bentinck.

During the year of 1752 the friction between Voltaire and the king was augmented by friction between Voltaire and Maupertuis, a French mathematician who was a resident at Frederick's court. Maupertuis was no doubt a scholar of considerable ability, but he had a disagreeable disposition, which was very irritating to Voltaire. In general, the king took the side of Maupertuis, possibly for no reason except his growing dissatisfaction with Voltaire.

Voltaire was preparing for his departure although no open break had come between him and the king. He had brought considerable funds with him to Berlin. To take these out of the country presented some difficulties. He settled the matter by buying an annuity from the duke of Württemburg, secured by some properties that the duke held in France. The transaction, while it appeared satisfactory at the time, caused Voltaire considerable difficulty in the future for the duke was not at all prompt or regular in paying the annuity.

Voltaire also started two important literary ventures during the fall of 1752. The first one was the Dictionnaire philosophique, which later became one of his outstanding works. The other one had very little literary importance, but had far-reaching influence in bringing about the final rupture between Voltaire and the king. Maupertuis and König, also a scientist in Frederick's court, had been quarreling about the authenticity of certain letters of the philosopher, Leibnitz. Voltaire saw the opportunity to write something biting and clever and could not forego the temptation, although he must have known that it would cause trouble. The result was the Diatribe du docteur Akakia, a witty, biting satire directed at Maupertuis.

Before the storm over this satire broke, Voltaire had already taken more and more liberty in his criticism

of Frederick's verse. Some time in November of 1752 (the letter carries no date), the king replied to too caustic criticism with these words:

> C'est pourquoi en me rendant justice, & en avouant que mes vers sont mal faits, ma raison est assez éclairée pour me faire admirer les vôtres (Correspondence, vol. 21, p. 132).

In this the king showed commendable moderation. It was different with the satire.

The Diatribe du docteur Akakia was made public in the last days of November or early in December, for Frederick wrote to Voltaire December 5, 1752:

> Votre Effronterie M'étone, après ce que Vous venés de faire et qui est Clair Come le jour vous persistés au lieu de Vous avouer Coupable. Ne Vous Imaginés pas que vous feres Croire que le Noir est blang, quand on ne Voit pas, c'est qu'on ne Veut pas tout Voir, mais si Vous poussés L'affaire à bout je ferai tout Imprimer et L'on Vera que si Vos ouvrages Méritent qu'on vous Erige des statues votre Conduite Vous mériterait des Chaines (Correspondence, vol. 21, p. 164).

This letter is notable not only for the anger it displayed, but also for the strange use of capitals. Most of Frederick's letters to Voltaire were written with great care, but this one appears to have been written not only in great haste and anger, but probably by his own hand.

The same day Voltaire wrote an answer in which he used his old excuse of illness for not making a personal appearance. He wrote:

> Ah mon dieu sire dans l'état où je suis! Je vous jure encor sur ma vie à la quelle je renonce sans peine que c'est une calomnie affreuse. Je vous conjure de faire confronter tous mes gens. Quoy! vous me jugeriez sans entendre! Je demande justice, et la mort (Correspondence, vol. 21, p. 165).

Despite this reply, Voltaire allowed copies of the satire to be printed and distributed. The king had all copies that came into his hands destroyed and yet, by the middle of December, the satire was in general distribution in Berlin.

The king probably did not know how ineffective his suppression of the Diatribe had been for on December 10, 1752, he wrote to Maupertuis:

> Ne vous embarrassez de rien, mon cher Maupertuis, l'affaire des libelles est finie, j'ai parlé si vray à l'hôme, je lui ai si fort lavé la tête que je ne crois pas qu'il y retourne, et je connais son âme lâche, incapable de sentiments d'honneur; je l'ay intimidé du côté de la bourse ce qui a fait tout l'efet que j'en atendais. Je lui ai déclaré enfin nettement que ma maisson devait être un sanctuaire et non une retraite de brigands où de cellerats distillent des poissons (Correspondence, vol. 21, p. 168).

This was not quite the end of the controversy. On December 26, 1752, the Diatribe du docteur Akakia was publicly burned by the order of the king.

Voltaire had now definitely made up his mind to leave. On December 18, 1752, he wrote to madame Denis giving full vent to all the grievances he had suffered from the king. In this letter he wrote:

> Je vais me faire, pour mon instruction, un petit dictionnaire à l'usage des rois.
>
> Mon ami signifie mon esclave.
>
> Mon cher ami veut dire vous m'êtes plus qu'indifférent.
>
> Entendez par je vous rendrai heureux, je vous souffrirai tant que j'aurai besoin de vous.
>
> Soupez avec moi ce soir, signifie je me moquerai de vous ce soir.
>
> Tout ce que j'ai vu est-il possible? Dire à un homme les choses les plus tendres, et écrire contre lui des brochures! et quelles brochures! arracher un homme à sa patrie par les promesses les plus sacrées, et le maltraiter avec la malice la plus noire! que de contrastes! et c'est là l'homme qui m'écrivait tant de choses philosophiques, et que j'ai cru philosophe! et je l'ai appelé le Salomon du nord! (Correspondence, vol. 21, p. 180).

All this shows that Voltaire was thoroughly disillusioned with the king and bitterly disappointed by his stay at the Prussian court.

On January 1, 1753, Voltaire wrote to the king and asked permission to leave. With this letter he returned the key, that was a symbol of his office, and a cross, a badge of honor that Frederick had given him. Voltaire gave his failing health and family ties as his reasons for wanting to leave. He began the letter with these lines:

> Pressé par les sollicitations et par les larmes de ma famille, je me vois obligé de mettre à vos pieds mon sort et les bienfaits et les distinctions dont vous m'avez honoré. Ma resignation est égale à ma douleur (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 1).

Voltaire made it appear that the parting was painful to him. What seems strange is that he wrote another letter the same day. It was, in the main, a repetition of the first.

The king returned both the badge and the key and wrote Voltaire a cordial letter in which he expressed his desire to keep Voltaire at his court. This letter has never been found, but numerous references were made about it by Voltaire. He referred to it in a letter he wrote to madame Denis on January 13, 1753. He wrote:

> Il m'a écrit qu'il aimait mieux vivre avec moi qu'avec Maupertuis. Ce qui est bien certain, c'est que je ne veux vivre ni avec l'un ni avec l'autre . . . . Je veux partir absolument (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 21).

In the same letter he wrote about his failing health and said he could no longer endure the cruel and dangerous northern climate.

On March 15, 1753, Frederick at length gave his written consent for Voltaire's departure. He wrote:

> Il n'était pas nécessaire que vous prissiez le prétexte du besoin que vous me dites avoir des eaux de Plombières, pour me demander votre congé. Vous pouvez quitter mon service quand vous voudrez; mais avant de partir, faites moi remettre le contrat de votre engagement, la clef, la croix, et la volume de poésies que je vous ai confié. Je souhaiterais que mes ouvrages eussent été seuls exposés à vos traits et ceux de König. Je les sacrifie de bon coeur à ceux qui croient augmenter leur reputation en diminuant celle des autres. Je n'ai ni la folie ni la vanité de certains auteurs (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 106).

In this letter Frederick's tone was no longer friendly. From this letter it appears that the break was final, but in a later letter Voltaire indicated that he was returning to Berlin in October. The key, cross, and the book of poems are important. Voltaire did not return them, and this gave Frederick his excuse for later arresting Voltaire.

On the same date Frederick wrote to his sister, Wilhelmina, about Voltaire's departure with these words:

> Je laissé partir Voltaire sans regret, c'est un fou méchant qui n'est bon qu'à lire. Vous ne sçauriez croire toutes les fourberies et les tracasseries qu'il a fait icy (Correspondence, textual notes, vol. 22, p. 107).

It certainly was not true that Frederick did not regret Voltaire's departure. He must have regretted it, if only for the selfish reasons of the loss of prestige and the loss of an excellent critic of his own literary works.

The reason Voltaire did not return the requested key, cross, and book of poems probably lies in this extract of a letter he wrote to madame Denis on March 15, 1753, the same day that Frederick gave his permission to leave. This letter seems to have been written before Voltaire had received his letter from Frederick. He wrote:

> J'ai ce pays-ci en horreur; mon paquet est tout fait. J'ai envoyé tous mes effets hors du Brandenbourg; il ne reste guère que ma personne (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 108).

He probably did not wish to let the king know that he had already sent most of his effects out of the country even before he had received the king's consent to leave. The requested articles had already been sent away. He could not return them unless he delayed his departure until he could have them recalled. This Voltaire certainly did not want to do. He left Berlin on March 25, just ten days after he had received the king's permission to go. But from then on Voltaire appears not to have been in any hurry. He traveled by slow and easy stages, first to Leipzig, then stopped at Gotha and Cassel, and arrived in Frankfort on May 29, a little more than two months after he left Berlin.

Frederick's letters of this time show that he was really angry with Voltaire. On April 12, 1753, he wrote to his sister, Wilhelmina:

> Vous me demandez des nouvelles de Voltaire; voici la vérité de son histoire. Il s'est comporté ici comme le plus grand scélérat de l'univers. Il a commencé par vouloir brouiller tout le monde par des mensonges et des calomnies infâmes, dont il ne rougit pas.... J'ai eu ma part de cette affaire, et j'ai été assez bon que le laisser partir. A présent il est à Leipzig, où il distille de nouveaux poisons, et où il se dit malade pour corriger un ouvrage terrible qu'il compose. Vous voyez donc que, loin de vouloir jamais ravoir ce malheureux, il ne s'agit que de rompre entièrement avec lui. Si vous me permettez donc de vous dire librement mon sentiment, ma chère soeur, je ne serais pas fâché qu'il allât à Baireuth; car, si vous y consentez, j'y enverrais quelqu'un pour lui redemander la clef et la croix qu'il a encore, et surtout une édition de mes vers qu'il a envoyée

> à Franckfort-sur-le-Main, et que je ne veux absolument pas lui laisser, vu le mauvais usage qu'il est capable d'en faire (Correspondence, vol. 22, pp. 128-129).

This letter indicates that Frederick was really concerned about the key, cross, and above all the book of verses.

While traveling, Voltaire wrote Frederick a fairly cordial letter on April 28, 1753, which says: "Je reviendrai au mois d'octobre à vos pieds" (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 143). This indicated that for Voltaire at least the break was not final, or that he wished it to appear that way to the king.

Voltaire arrived in Frankfort on May 31, 1753. On June 4, he wrote to his old friend, D'Argental. In this letter he complained as usual of his many maladies, but made no mention of any arrest. He wrote:

> Je suis arrivé avec les jambes et les mains enflées. Cette petite addition à mes maux m'accomode point en voiage. Je resteray à Franckfort dans mon lit tant qu'il plaira à dieu (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 186).

This does not indicate that he had been arrested. Yet on the next day he wrote to the emperor, Francis I, to complain about his arrest, and said that he had been arrested on June 1. He wrote of Freytag, Frederick's agent:

> Il me répond qu'il va faire mettre une garde à ma porte, il me force à signer un écrit par le quel je promets de ne point sortir jusqu'à ce que les poesies du Roy son maître soient revenues (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 187).

This leaves the actual date of his arrest not quite clear. But some time late in May, Frederick sent his envoy, Freytag, to Frankfort and, with the assistance of the Frankfort Council, managed to put Voltaire under arrest. Frankfort was, at this time, a free city and in no way under the control of the Prussian king. Freytag could not have acted without the assent of the Frankfort authorities.

Nor is there any logical explanation why Frederick waited so long to have Voltaire arrested. He had ample opportunity to arrest him as he left Berlin and had he done so, he would certainly have been in his legal right. Frederick knew that the articles he had asked for had not been returned. He certainly also knew just when Voltaire left the city. Why he did not arrest him then, but instead waited for two months, and then had him arrested in a free city has never been explained.

At first it seemed that Voltaire did not suffer any great indignity by his arrest. He remained at his hotel, was under guard, and was not allowed to leave. When madame Denis arrived on June 11, 1747, she too was placed under house arrest. Both Voltaire and she at once began writing a great many letters in their efforts to regain their freedom; and, at the same time, Voltaire

sent for the book of poems that he had sent ahead with other baggage.

The letters that they wrote at this time are often very repetitious and are filled with sad accounts of the brutal treatment they were receiving from the hands of the Frankfort soldiers. How badly they were being treated is uncertain. At first, at least, they were only under house arrest and did not suffer any real indignity and cruelty. However, Voltaire wrote that madame Denis was so ill from the inhuman treatment that she was in convulsions for thirty-six hours. She, in turn, spoke of him as "presque mourant" (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 203).

On the day of her arrival she wrote to Frederick, requesting him to rescind the order of Voltaire's arrest. She wrote:

> J'arrive icy pour conduire Mon Oncle aux eaux de Plombières. Je le trouve mourant, et pour comble de maux il est arreté par les Ordres de votre magesté dans une oberge sans pouvoir respirer l'air (Correspondence, vol. 22, p. 205).

At this time he was certainly only under house arrest. On June 21, 1753, she again wrote to the king and implored him to release her uncle. She told him that the box with the book of poetry had arrived and that the book had been sent on to him. The next day, June 22, she wrote again and told the king that both she and Voltaire

had been treated with extreme indignity and cruelty by the Frankfort soldiers.

By June 26, 1753, Frederick must have received these letters. He wrote to Freytag:

> J'ai reçu une lettre de la nièce de Voltaire, que je n'ai pas trop comprise. Elle se plaint que vous l'avez fait enlever à son auberge, et conduire à pied avec des coldats qui l'escortoient. Je ne vous avois rien ordonné tout cela.... Je voulois que Voltaire vous remit la clef, la croix et la volume de poésies que je lui avois confié. Dès que tout celà vous a été remis, je ne vois pas de raison qui ait pu vous engager à faire ce coup d'éclat. Rendes leur donc la liberté dès ma lettre receue (Correspondence, vol. 22, pp. 265-266).

From all the evidence found either in their letters or in those written by others at this time it is not certain whether they were only under house arrest, or whether they had really been insulted and cruelly mistreated. Nor is there any reasonable explanation why they were not released so soon as the above letter from Frederick reached Freytag. They were first released on July 7, at least a full week after his letter must have reached Frankfort.

Voltaire went at once to Mainz and then on to Strasbourg. Here he spent all the summer instead of going to Plombières. Madame Denis returned to Paris. Despite his illness and feeble health Voltaire plunged into an active round of letter writing. In all of these he described his ill treatment at Frederick's hands and

did everything possible to discredit Frederick. From these letters it seemed that he was completely disillusioned with the king and wanted no further intercourse with him.

And yet this is not true. At the same time that he was heaping calumnies upon Frederick's head he wrote to Wilhelmina and tried to persuade her to intercede with the king on his behalf. He wrote from Strasbourg on September 22, 1753:

> Pour moy, madame, quel est mon état. Je suis vieux et infirme, j'avais sacrifié aux roy les dernières années de ma vie, je n'ay vécu que pour luy seul pendant trois années. Tout mon temps a été partagé entre luy et le travail. J'ay tout abandonné pour lui. Il le sait. . . Le roy votre frère aima la véritable gloire et il la mérite. Il vous aime, il doit vous croire. Madame, il s'agit de signaler la grandeur de votre âme et de toucher la sienne. Faites tout ce qu'il vous plaira. Je me mets entièrement entre vos mains respectables. . . . C'est votre cœur qu'il faut écouter. C'est au cœur seul de Roy que vous parlerez (Correspondence, vol. 22, pp. 193-94).

This indicates that Voltaire did not want the break to be final. But Frederick was different. He refused to have any further intercourse with Voltaire.

They parted as enemies. For years they had no further intercourse together. Both were busy with other pursuits. After the close of the Seven Years' War in 1763 they did exchange a few letters, but they were not on a friendly or cordial basis.

# CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

With Voltaire's departure from Berlin in the summer of 1753 the friendship between the two greatest men of the eighteenth century was at an end. The two had much in common. They were almost certainly the two greatest mental giants of their age. Both were very intelligent; both were liberal in their thinking. Voltaire may at times have been servile in his actions for personal gain or for his own safety, but he was never servile in his thinking. In their beliefs, in their attitude toward established religion, and in their outlook and philosophy of life they had much in common. They were also both ardent lovers of literature, poetry, and drama.

With so much in common it is not surprising that the two should have attracted each other. Their common interests, and the admiration each held for the other's intellect was enough to draw them together. Yet, beside the natural affinity that draws great minds together, each had an ulterior motive in his friendship with the other, nor can these ulterior and selfish motives always be readily separated from their natural admiration and fondness for each other.

Voltaire had always felt a little cheated by his bourgeois background and had an esteem for royalty that is not quite understandable today. But this was still the day of absolute monarchs in much of Europe, and Voltaire had grown up under the most royal of all French kings, Louis XIV. Despite the fact that Voltaire could and did criticize absolute monarchy as it was practiced in Europe, he still felt a great deal of respect for royalty. His own king, Louis XV, had largely rejected him. Frederick was one of the most important monarchs in Europe. And since it was the custom at this time for a man of letters to attach himself to a royal patron, for selfish reasons alone, it was natural for Voltaire to seek the patronage of the Prussian court. Beside this, Frederick was a king who had a natural appeal to Voltaire. Certainly, in the beginning of their friendship, Voltaire actually had hope that Frederick would turn out to be the kind of king he had envisioned: educated, liberal and bent on the furthering not only of the arts but of truly democratic principles.

Frederick's reasons for wanting to attach Voltaire to his court are also quite natural. Voltaire was the most important man of letters in France at this time. Frederick did admire his writing, and he recognized Voltaire's genius, something Louis XV never did. Frederick's court

was almost wholly French. It was only natural that he tried to bring the greatest French writer to his court, if only for his own glory and prestige. Beside that Frederick was really ambitious to achieve something really great in French literature. He certainly overrated his ability as a poet and writer. He recognized the purity of Voltaire's style and was eager to have him as a teacher in polishing his own verses.

While there was much to draw them together, the very same traits of personality that drew them together worked to separate them. Both were far too independent to get along together well. Voltaire's wit was mischievous and sometimes very malicious, Frederick's was cruel and biting. In their exchange of verbal barbs, Voltaire was at a disadvantage, for he was only an honored guest of an absolute monarch. In their relations during Voltaire's stay at Frederick's court, both were at fault. Voltaire was certainly at fault in the Hirschel affair and again in his publication of the Diatribe du docteur Akkakia. On the other hand, Frederick's cruel wit, coming, as it did, from a superior, must have been very galling to Voltaire's independent spirit. Frederick's big mistake was his arrest of Voltaire. In this we see Frederick at his worst.

For Voltaire, the break was fortunate. When he left Berlin, he still had a quarter of a century to live. Those years were the most influential of his life. Voltaire would never have held the honored place and prestige in the literary and political world of Europe that he held as the Squire of Ferney, if he had lived those years in the shadow of the dominant figure of Frederick the Great, even though the relations between the two men had been amicable. It was fortunate both for Voltaire and for European thought and development that Voltaire and Frederick broke their close friendship when they did. Voltaire certainly was greater for the break.

For Frederick the break was not so fortunate. If he could have kept Voltaire at his court for those twenty-five years, he certainly would have derived pleasure, honor, and prestige from the contact. Voltaire's influence might even have had a softening effect on Frederick.

While the two men had much in common their influence on the nineteenth and even the twentieth century was certainly different. Voltaire's influence can be felt even today in the searching out and destruction of false idols and in the fight for universal truth, justice, and liberty. Frederick's influence can best be seen in the

development of the Prussian state with its efficiency and militarism and its utter disregard for the individual except as an instrument of the state. Frederick's influence can be traced in the later development of Prussia, in the creation of the German Empire with its Prussian stamp in 1871, in the arms race that followed, in the war of 1914, and the militarism of the Hitler régime.

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