

# Frederick the Great

<b>Reign</b>	1786 - 1797
<b>Predecessor</b>	<a href="#">Frederick II</a>
<b>Successor</b>	<a href="#">Frederick William III</a>
<b>Consort</b>	<a href="#">Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Lunenburg</a> <a href="#">Fredericka Louisa of Hesse-Darmstadt</a>
<b>Issue</b>	<a href="#">Princess Frederica Charlotte</a> <a href="#">Frederick William III</a> <a href="#">Prince Louis</a> <a href="#">Princess Wilhelmine</a> <a href="#">Princess Augusta</a> <a href="#">Prince Charles</a> <a href="#">Prince Wilhelm</a>
<b><a href="#">Royal house</a></b>	<a href="#">House of Hohenzollern</a>
<b>Father</b>	<a href="#">King Frederick I</a>
<b>Mother</b>	<a href="#">Louise Amalie of Brunswick-Lüneburg</a>
<b>Born</b>	<a href="#">September 25, 1744</a> <a href="#">Berlin, Prussia</a>
<b>Burial</b>	<a href="#">Berliner Dom</a>



**Frederick William II**  
*King of Prussia; Elector of Brandenburg*  
Portrait by [Anton Graff](#) (1792)

## Frederick the Great, and His Relations with Masonry and Other Secrete Societies

Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of the fourth earl of Berkeley, was born on December 17, 1750. A sprightly and beautiful girl, she had many love affairs, and was finally married to William, 6th Lord Craven. She was unfaithful to him, having relations with the French ambassador, Count de Guines, but was pardoned by her indulgent husband. After Lord Craven's death she went to Germany and found a place in the train of the Margrave of Anspach, to whom, after an unseemly friendship, and within three months after the death of his wife, she was married. There is no need to detail her history further, or print the long codicil of her titles, save to say that, after having seen life in many courts, among them Russia, and after having had

a most mixed career of love affairs and intrigues, the Lady published her "Autobiographical Memoirs" in 1826, when she was in her seventy-sixth year. From these Memoirs the following chapter, with a few irrelevant paragraphs omitted, has been taken: for what reason, the Masonic reader will immediately discover for himself. The best edition of the "Autobiographical Memoirs" of the Margravine is published by John Lane under the title of "The Beautiful Lady Craven"; the two volumes are attractive in appearance, as most of Lane's books are, and have been very ably edited by A. M. Broadley and Lewis Melville. WE DISPATCHED a courier forward, after whose arrival at Berlin the King sent eight fine horses to draw us through the sandy plains of Prussia. The frost and snow in Bohemia had much damaged the springs and wheels of our carriage; but we arrived without any serious injury or accident, from a journey which was the most terrific I ever underwent; for if any thing had ever happened to the Margrave, I and I alone, should have been accused of doing him harm. When we arrived at Berlin, the Carnival being ended, all the Royal family were gone to their different villas; but His Majesty returned to meet the Margrave at his palace; while I was left to the discretion of the Princess Royal, afterwards Duchess of York, who had her own establishment in the Royal Palace. We remained here only four days, during which time I saw but little of the Margrave, for he was constantly with the King. He informed His Majesty that there had existed a mysterious correspondence among some of the nobility of Bareith, and others at Anspach the object of which he supposed was to form more distrusts between Austria and Prussia. Frederick William II had succeeded to the throne on the death of his uncle Frederick the Great, in 1786. He made many salutary regulations for his subjects and established a Court of Honor to prevent the horrible practice of dueling in his dominions. As I was willing to gain all the information possible respecting so great a character as Frederick the late King, it may easily be imagined that I lost no opportunity which could be afforded me during my residence among the Royal Family, and which, together with the Margrave's knowledge of this illustrious man, and that of Prince Hardenberg, afforded me much satisfaction. After my marriage with the Margrave, we brought out from Anspach a full-length portrait of the late King, for which he himself sat, for the Margrave, whom he also presented another of his father, Frederick William. The countenance and whole figure are striking resemblance of His Majesty. The expression is surprisingly fine. I had it placed under a canopy at Brandenburg House, and those who have seen it can never forget it. When Frederick ascended the throne he was only twenty-eight years of age. It is well known to all Europe how this great Prince profited by the army left to him by his father, and the riches which he had accumulated. He had been detested by the late King when he was Prince Royal, because he appeared to apply himself to the sciences and fine arts rather than to military affairs. Having followed his father to Weasel, he conceived the project of passing into a foreign country. He had probably other motives than those of gaining instruction by travels; no doubt it was to escape the tyranny of his father: but the latter had gained information of his design, and arrested him at the moment of its execution. He was tried by Commissaries who had the firmness not to condemn him to lose his head. It might appear to be a light crime for the presumptive heir of a kingdom to quit the realms without the permission of his Sovereign; but such was the law. Of four-and- twenty judges, only one was found who voted for the sentence of death, and that was a person named Derschau; yet such was the magnanimity of Frederick when he came to the throne that this man never experienced from him the slightest vengeance. Frederick, his father, was on the point of renewing on the theatre of Europe the

scene of Don Carlos, or more recently that of Czarowitz. The Prince was pardoned; but the unfortunate companion of his flight, his friend and confidant, was decapitated. Frederick has been accused by his enemies as having neither shed a tear nor used an argument to induce his father to save this victim from destruction. But I have been assured, from those who were present at the scene, that when the unfortunate man was led to the scaffold, the Prince Royal demanded his pardon with the effusions of a heart broken by grief; and that he fainted more than once during the punishment, and in fact experienced the greatest anguish. Before the execution he had tried every means in his power to save him. In his despair, he had offered to his father to renounce the throne forever, in order to preserve the life of his friend whom he loved: but the inflexible Monarch, not satisfied with the sentence of the judges, who had condemned him to the galleys for life, with his own hand signed his death-warrant, alleging that there was no justification for the crime of high treason, and treating his son's entreaties with indignation and contempt. Katt was the grandson of a field-marshal, and son of a general of that name at that time both alive and in the service of the King. Frederick the Great was born with sensibility, but he learned to suppress his emotions and his feelings; he saw how necessary it was to be just, as well as merciful, during his long military career; and perhaps the firmness which has been his reproach, was the greatest triumph of his nature. After this event he retired to Rheinsberg, applying himself to all kinds of acquirements; and here he learned to play on the flute, on which instrument he excelled, not as a prince, but as an amateur of the first rank. His allowance was extremely moderate, and his father had vigorously forbidden any one to advance him money. This order was, however, ill observed, and it has been objected against him that when King he never repaid the obligations of his creditors. But the fact was otherwise; he paid them in secret. The Minister of his father's finances had refused to advance him money, and when the Prince ascended the throne this man was supposed to be ruined, and on his coming to give in his accounts demanded permission to retire; when the young King, to the astonishment of all round him, praised his fidelity, begged him to continue his services, and doubled his salary. What a different fidelity from that of the judges of poor Katt, who considered blind obedience to the commands of their Sovereign as a proof of fit submission to his authority! It is a singular circumstance in the history of the House of Brandenburg, that during the space of 370 years, in which time the sovereignty was in their hands, there was never experienced one minority. Frederick enjoyed an immoderate reputation, and to a certain point even the adoration of his contemporaries, not only as a warrior, but as a governor of his empire, and as a profound politician. His assiduity was indefatigable, and his skill in affairs of government transcendent. The Government of Prussia appeared to rise from the seeds of despotism, and formed a lesson of instruction to the world. Notwithstanding his exactness and his inflexibility in war, he obtained the affections of his soldiers, who always denominated him their Father Fritz. It was the name by which he was familiarly called through the army. The severity of his conduct towards Baron de Trenck has excited the indignation of mankind, and has been considered as a blot on his escutcheon; but arbitrary order and rigorous detention have to be exercised in other countries as well as in Prussia. Without pleading this as an excuse, I shall endeavour, with impartiality, to remark on the leading points of the justification of Frederick's conduct, derived from those who were acquainted with the cause of such a punishment. M. de Trenck had been forbidden by the King, whom he acknowledged not only as his Sovereign, but as his benefactor, to write to his uncle, who was a chief of the Pandours His injunctions were violated. The King

demanded of him personally whether he was in correspondence with his uncle. M. de Trenck denied it. "Do you give me your word of honor of it?" said the King. "Yes, Sire," was the answer. It was at the very time that Trenck had just written to his uncle, that this dialogue passed. The discovery was made, and M. de Trenck was sent to the fortress of Magdeburg: it was a punishment usual in the Prussian service. M. de Trenck plotted his escape, and fled with an officer whom he had seduced to desert, he killed those who pursued him. The King's Resident at Dantzic, whither Trenck had fled, sent him back to his Sovereign. Trenck had certainly violated every law - he had at first been disobedient, then perjured - a rebel, and a murderer. At Magdeburg, Baron de Trenck recommenced his devices: his imprisonment was in consequence rendered more severe, and his confinement lasted for ten years. Trenck was six feet two inches high, and squinted: he was popular, and always followed by thousands. After the death of Frederick he published his Memoirs. At that period, all who were acquainted with the groundwork of his history were dead: on his own testimony depends the whole of his relation. Those whom he cites in his narrative have probably forgotten the circumstances of so distant a date, but without recurring to vague conjectures regarding the truth of this affair, or of the cruelty exercised against him, M. de Trenck avows that he had intrigued with a person of illustrious rank. If that person, as has been generally supposed, and which from good authority I know to be the case, was the Princess Amelia, sister of the King; if from this connection there were children who were deprived of life by means the most horrible - what strong inducements might not the King have had for visiting on Trenck a punishment of the severest kind, without being under the necessity of explaining (from motives of decorum and decency) the reasons which influenced him to such an act. Frederick frequently broke his officers for causes light in appearance; but he always had heavier charges against them, which were unknown to the rest of mankind, and which he concealed for the purpose of preserving military discipline. As soon as Frederick ascended the throne, he invited into his kingdom all those who were called *les esprits forts*: Voltaire, le Marquis D'Argens, the Abbe de Prade, Maupertuis, and even the impious La Metrie. This example encouraged the literary Germans to proclaim their sentiments, Berlin became the asylum of the persecuted, and the nursery of truth. The history of the secret societies of Germany was at that time little known. It might be interesting to a philosopher, but the generality of people might regard it as a romance: all well-informed persons can attest the reality of it. Towards the end of the last century an association, or secret society, existed, which was daily gaining ground. It was the Order of the Illumines. The chiefs of this Order had resolved to form an association which was to unveil the mysteries of superstition, to enlighten mankind, and to render them happy. Their object was to gain superiority over the lodges of Freemasonry, and to turn these institutions from darkness to the benefit of humanity. They proposed to extend the sphere of knowledge universally, not so much in depth as on the surface; to introduce reason and good sense; to ameliorate the condition of men by an insensible operation. No Prince, however great or good, was to be admitted. They swore to preserve, as much as was in their power, Sovereigns from the perpetration of crimes, and from the commission of errors; to abolish the slavery of despotism, to destroy ecclesiastical jurisdiction, to favor the liberty of the press, and to unveil mysteries of every description. The project was great noble and sublime; but prudence was wanting in its execution. They expected to see a sudden effect, whilst they forgot that the edifice was only building. The society enlarged, the wicked and designing were admitted; the powers of bigotry and superstition saw the force of

their enemy, and the arm of Government was called to their assistance. Many of the chiefs were driven from Germany, others were imprisoned, and every thing but death and torture inflicted on them. The dispersed members of this association soon formed another assembly; they were again surprised, their papers taken, and their doctrines published, without regard to the effects which they might produce. Many sects arose from these, which rendered discord prevalent throughout Germany. Their different Orders had little resemblance to Freemasonry - they were visionary, mystical, and cabalistic. Frederick had too sound an understanding to be caught in the snares of enthusiasm. It is not known whether the attempt was made to conquer him, but it is most probable that he was never tried. Nor is it certain when the area or how the nature of the misunderstanding between this Monarch and the superiors of the Order of Freemasonry began. Whether he was ignorant of the machinations of modern Masonry, of the visions and the horrors which were latterly raised, or of the general tendency of these mysterious associations; or whether having once adopted the Masonic costume, and having openly protected its Orders, he did not wish, even after having seen its evil tendencies, to retract and to separate from a society into which he had erewhile not disdained to enter - he refrained from excluding from his dominions these secret associations. Masons of every denomination - Rosicrucians, Centralists, Illuminate - had all, under his reign, the liberty of establishing lodges and societies according to their fancy, provided they did not disturb the public order. Thus Berlin became the receptacle of sects, of parties, of conjurations, of chemical mysteries, and of extravagances of every kind. In the meantime instruction was not neglected, and Frederick supported and protected every institution which might extend education throughout his kingdom. Rousseau had written his *Emilius* - a work the most perfect of its kind, and which places the author incontestably in the rank of the first of benefactors to mankind; in Germany this production became as a torch which extended its light throughout; it opened to the system of education new views. Youth was taught not by words alone, and those in an unknown language - but he gave them clear ideas of natural things, of moral and physical relations, of mechanism, of history, and of geography. Frederick did not lose sight of the good effects of such a system of education; and to promote it, established a Consistory, which was to superintend every institution, and at the head of which he placed himself. He procured masters, and did not blush to render homage to the superiority of the institution which he had promoted. The example of the Sovereign excited the nobility and gentry of the nation, and Frederick inspired in his subjects an admirable and laudable competition. It was in one of those moments which in human life are so contradictory to the general sentiments of the mind that Frederick, hearing the news of the proscription of the Jesuits in France, by the public functionaries, exclaimed, "Pauvres gens! ils ont detruit les renards qui les defendaient des loups, et ils ne voient pas qu'ils vont etre devores." Frederick had sanctioned and approved the writing of the philosophers; he had become a philosopher himself. Hevelius had published his work *De l'Esprit* in France, and to avoid punishment had fled to England. *Le Contrat Social* of Rosseau had found protection among the magistracy; and the Parliaments had defended Doderpt's declaiming against despotism. The Court and Clergy had admired Voltaire's ridiculing the Parliaments. There has been exaggeration, when it has been said that the philosophers proposed by a regular plan to subvert the foundations of societies and thrones: they worked to that effect without being sensible of it. They did not wish to be the destroyers, but the preceptors, of monarchs: and had Montesquieu only produced his work *Sur les Romains*, and his *Esprit des Lois*; had Beccaria only written his *Traite des Delits et des Peines*; had

Voltaire only refuted Machiavelli, and defended Calas, Scriven, and Lally; had pleaded the cause of nature, of morality, and of religion; and had the Encyclopedists respected the principles of religion alone - they would have been entitled to the indulgence of the world. But the discussion of one subject led to another, and in the correction of abuses they proceeded beyond the bounds which they had prescribed. Then it was, that one of the greatest Kings who ever wore a crown figured in the correspondence of philosophy: then it was, that he pronounced in his Academy the eulogy of the man who wrote L'Homme Machine, ("Man, a Machine"-Ed.) and that he compelled his churches to celebrate obsequies of the man who had endeavored to undermine the foundation of Christianity. This influence spread throughout Europe: it penetrated into every class. Diderot, D'Alembert, and Condoreet, united their forces in the operation. Then the sects of the Illuminate, who had associated for the destruction of revealed religion, overthrew its foundations, as far as regarded they, and introduced a new code founded on natural morality, which led to the system of primitive equality. Even Frederick himself proved that a king, though a man of letters, could not sustain with dignity the scepter of literature. Some unfortunate members defiled the character of his Academy; but Euler and La Grange were an eternal honor to it. Some men of high estimation were associated with others of obscure and even ridiculous talents: their inequalities were great. It was a prejudice generally spread throughout Germany, that the province of Prussia, and Berlin in particular, was peopled with Atheists. Because Frederick encouraged freedom of thought in his dominions; because he collected and united about his person men of genius; because, under his reign, some irreligious books escaped from the Prussian press - this conclusion, as absurd as precipitate, was adopted. M. Nicolai, a distinguished writer and bookseller of Berlin, (a union very rare, though it were to be desired that it were more general,) had depicted Berlin in a romance with great truth; and his work displays excellent notions on the manners of Germany. He has shown that if, in general, there are some Freethinkers in the Prussian provinces, the people at large are attached to the national religion. Towards the end of the seven years' war, a man named Rosenfeld, in the service of the Margrave of Schwedt, quitted the service of that prince, and began to inform the populace that he was the new Messiah; that Jesus had been a false prophet; that the preachers were rogues and liars, who preached death; that for himself he preached life, since his adherents never died; that the King of Prussia was the Devil; that the time approached when he (Rosenfeld) should assemble together the twenty-four Elders, and should obtain the sword, and govern the world with their assistance. Rosenfeld prevailed on some of his adherents to deliver over to him seven girls, of whom the zealous fanatics were the fathers. It was, he said, to open the seven seals that he required seven virgins. With these he formed a seraglio: one of them was his favourite Sultana; he made the others work, and lived upon the profit of their labors. After having carried on the trade of a Messiah for twenty-nine years, under different mischances; first poor, then imprisoned, afterwards entertained by the presents of his votaries, and living habitually by means of the wool which his mistresses spun; after acquiring disciples in Berlin and its environs, in Saxony, and even at Mecklenburg - one of his faithful followers, who had in vain expected to reap the fruit of his splendid promises - even one of those who had delivered over to him three of his daughters, accused him before Frederick; that is to say, denied his Messiah, who he believed to be the true God, before the King, whom he believed to be the true Devil. This very accuser always regarded Rosenfeld as the real Messiah, and only wished that the King could compel him to realize his prodigious offers. The King sent Rosenfeld to a

natural tribunal, which condemned him to be whipped, and shut up for the remainder of his days at Spandau. The Supreme Tribunal commuted this sentence, and pronounced that this new Messiah should be sent to the House of Correction, where he should be flogged as often as he attempted to have an adventure of gallantry, and after two years that a report should be made of his manner of conducting himself. The defenders of the accused appealed: the King revised the process, and confirmed the severer sentence of the first tribunal. He imagined, without doubt, that it was necessary that Rosenfeld should be punished in the sight of the people, to prevent them from being in future deceived through similar visions. But the most absurd opinions are often the most tenacious, because they have no perceptible basis by which they may be measured; and this spectacle did not undeceive any of the adherents of Rosenfeld, a great number of whom remained attached to him. He went afterwards to preach his doctrines at Charlottenberg, hardly a mile from the capital; but he found that this theatre was too small for two fanatics like himself and Musenfeld. The Government, without doubt, tired with his persevering enthusiasm, overlooked his folly and left him in repose. . . .Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick, the conqueror of Creveldt and of Minden, was induced, by the persuasion of the Baron de Hund, who was a Reformer, to place himself at the head of the reformed Lodges of Freemasonry, which has taken the appellation of the Strict Observance. It was supposed to be an Order of Freemasonry which was a continuation of the Society of Knights Templar: the highest step was that of a Templar, with all the ceremonies of ancient chivalry. Doctors of divinity and professors of Physic were received as Chevaliers d'Epee. It is hardly possible to conceive that reasonable beings could lend themselves to ideas so ridiculous; example, however, did everything, and enthusiasm was contagious. In this branch of the Order there reigned a monastic despotism, and men who led away by rites and ceremonies. The members alone possessed the secret; those out of the Order could never tell where or what it was. As no woman can possibly be a Mason, every woman has a right to endeavour to penetrate the mystery. It is admitted that Adam was the first Mason; he founded the first lodge - he had all the instruments necessary for the purpose - he produced the mortar;- without Eve there would have been no lodge. Where is the mystery of Masonry, if the idea be followed up? Having created the lodge, he made members for it: those members created others, and the society extended over the globe; and while the globe exists, members will never be wanting. Over this secret I will throw the apron! When the minds of men were sufficiently heated, the actor of this drama caused to appear upon the scene the Thaumaturgies, or miracle-workers. These appeared to have ordinarily no relation with Freemasonry in general, but attached themselves to personages eminent for rank or fortune. One of the first of these charlatans was Schroepfer, a coffeehouse-keeper of Leipzig, on whom Duke Charles of Courtland had inflicted corporeal punishment; but who afterwards so fascinated this Prince, and a greater part of the principal personages of Dresden and of Leipzig, that he compelled them to act a principal part with him. At that time were reproduced on the theatre of Europe the follies of Asia and of China - the universal medicine - the art of making gold and diamonds - the beverage of immortality. The peculiar qualification of Schroepfer was the invocation of manes; he commanded spirits, and caused the dead and the invisible powers to appear at his will. The denouement of his drama is well known. After having consumed immense sums which he obtained from his adherents, and alienated their senses, when he found that he could no longer sustain the imposture, he shot himself through the head with a pistol, in a wood near Leipzig To Schroepfer succeeded Saint-

Germain, who had been before announced by the Comte de Lambert. This Saint-Germain had lived a thousand years; he had discovered a tea, before which all maladies disappeared; he made, for his amusement, diamonds of immense magnitude! He attached himself to Prince Carles of Hesse; but, like his predecessors, he forgot not to die. In the meantime Gessner, religious miracle-worker, appeared in the environs of Ratisbon. He did not belong to the Freemasons, nor did he attach himself to any of the principal members of the Order; but he was equally useful to it, - for all the prodigies of whom he was heard to speak corroborated the general faith of miracles, which was one of the great springs of the machine. In the heart of Switzerland lived a preacher of an ardent imagination - of a penetrating mind - of immeasurable ambition - of undaunted pride; an ignorant man, but gifted with the talent of speech - intoxicated with mysticism - eager after prodigies - and made up of credulity. He imagined that, with faith, miracles might at this time be affected. Servants, peasants, Roman Catholic priests, Freemasons - all combined in his mind as contributing to the gift of miracle-working, whenever he discovered the slightest appearance of anything extraordinary. M. Lavater gained a great party, particularly among the women; these brought him the men - and he had soon thousands, and subsequently millions, of followers after his visionary ideas. After these, succeeded Mesmer and Cagliostro, whose tricks and extravagances are well known, without reckoning the crowds of madmen, of charlatans, of jugglers of every kind, who sprang up on all sides. This concourse of knaves, far from appeasing the divisions of Freemasonry, augmented the fermentation. A new branch arose in the dominions of Frederick: it was called the Lodge of Zizendorf, from the name of its founder. This Zizendorf had been formerly a member of the Templars, from which Order he detached himself, and formed a great party, assuring them that he alone had the true rites and the true mysteries. Each of these branches decried the other. This new agitation attracted the attention of men of sound understanding (at least of the Order), who immediately formed a new association under the name of Eclectic Masonry. They professed a general toleration of all sects of the Order; and this system, which was the only solid one (if any system of the kind can be so), gained in a short time many partisans. This was the cause of the fall of the Order of Templars, who soon saw their machine in ruins. Frequent Chapters were held, where the deputies of the provinces deliberated; and, with surprise, the first question they found they had put to the Grand Master was, what is the true end of the Order, and its real origin? Thus the Grand Master, and all his assistants, had labored, for more than twenty years, with incredible ardor, for an object of which they neither knew the true end nor the origin. Thus puzzled and perplexed, the system of the Templars was abandoned, and an Order instituted of the Chivalry of Beneficence. Every secret association has something of resemblance to a conspiracy, and it is incumbent on every Government to watch over it. But some consideration must be paid to the characters of the members. If they will not bear the test of inspection, doubtless measures should be taken to prevent their increase, with moderation and prudence. And when it is more-over remembered that Sweden lost its constitution from these associations, which are frequently composed of men profound in design and indefatigable in perseverance, no means should be laid aside which may develop their plans.

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*TAKEN FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE LADY CRAVEN*