The Austrian Court from Within

By the same Author

Memories of Forty Years

The Royal Marriage Market of Europe

Sovereigns and Statesmen of Europe

The Austrian Court from Within

By

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With Eight Photogravure Illustrations

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PREFACE

BEFORE sending this little book into the world, I would like to warn any readers which it may find that the facts related in it are published by me in full consciousness that some eventual importance may come to be attached to them.

We are fighting an enemy who ignores the most elementary moral principles, and I do think it is the duty of everyone to try to unmask that enemy, to cry out to the civilised world to beware of him. The present work is the result of a careful study of German politics for a period stretching over something like forty years: a study which has convinced me that Austria all through that time has been but a pawn in the hands of her powerful neighbour, and that she is bound in the end to become absorbed in Germany.

I have, therefore, attempted to depict a country, a Court and a society already in the last stages of decay. I will not pretend that in doing so I have been looking only for the best characteristics they may happen to possess. On the contrary, I have tried also to unmask the hypocrisy which has always lain at the bottom of Austrian policy; to point out the bigoted egotism of Austria's higher classes; to draw my readers' notice to

the selfishness, aggravated by vanity, which from time immemorial has characterised the dynasty and the House of Habsburg.

I feel obliged to make this confession, and also to add that I am indebted to my own observations, and to the correspondence which at different times I have exchanged with several leading political men in Europe, for the facts that I have here sought to fit one with the other so as to produce a whole out of which I draw my own conclusions. Of course, there may be inaccuracies, but I have tried only to mention things which I either knew for fact, or at least had heard from people upon whose veracity I could rely.

C. R.

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CHAPTER I

FRANCIS JOSEPH, AS ARCHDUKE AND EMPEROR

THE great wave of revolution which swept over nearly the whole of Europe in 1848 did not spare Austria. Germany was in a blaze of fiery agitation, too. It seemed as if it were inevitable that the two ancient dynasties of Habsburg and Hohenzollern were both destined to immediate exile; from which there would be no prospect of return.

At Vienna the danger seemed to be more intense than anywhere else. The upper classes and the higher spheres of the aristocracy, indeed, were fully persuaded that not only were their possessions and privileges in imminent danger, but that their very existences were in peril. Prince von Metternich himself—that Nestor among statesmen whom the world, in common with himself, believed to be so firmly established in the confidence of the people as leader of Austrian policy, that death alone could rob him of office—found himself compelled to seek refuge abroad. The tide of rebellion rolled strong and swift over those of high estate in Austria.

It is not difficult to explain the seething discontent

that reigned. The Sovereign had lost the sympathy and the respect of his subjects by his manner of life. There was, indeed, nothing in his personality, attainments or behaviour which could claim either allegiance or affection from his subjects.

The Emperor Ferdinand I. was the eldest son of Francis II., that Emperor who had not hesitated, for political gain, to hand over his daughter to the mercies of the man whom he considered as a mere "Corsican adventurer." Ferdinand himself was imperceptive, obstinate and bigoted in his usual attitude toward life. So strongly, indeed, were these characteristics displayed that even his most devoted adherents were forced to acknowledge that his presence at the head of the Government was a peril for his dynasty as well as for his country. He belonged to the ranks of those who forget that they have obligations and duties, but who never fail to remember that they are in possession of special privileges which raise them above common mortals.

The Emperor Ferdinand married a woman renowned for her loveliness, the Princess Marie Anne of Savoy. At this date, of course, he was still the Archduke. His Archduchess found her life so very different from her legitimate expectations that before she became Empress she lived her days as a nun. When Ferdinand came to the throne the Empress Marie retained her austere views, and, greatly to the distress of her Court and the chagrin of Austrian Society, she tabooed low-cut dresses at the receptions which, occasionally, she was compelled to give.

In one thing, it must be remembered, both the Emperor and Empress were like-minded: they were devout to a degree. In another aspect, indeed, they were also well-matched: they were both negligible quantities so far as real administrative work was concerned. Metternich held in his hands the reins of the Empire, and the Emperor was only too glad. This state of things suited Metternich very well indeed, for that clever, domineering politician would not have cared to have as his master a man who insisted upon his personal opinions being taken into account.

When the revolution broke out and threatened Vienna, the politicians who aided Metternich in ruling the State were obliged to realise that it had become impossible to keep on the throne a Sovereign who could hardly sign his name to documents put before him and who had but a dim understanding of the duties of a monarch. The difficult thing, however, was to persuade Ferdinand that it was for the good of his country that he should abdicate. He shared with other individuals who have crossed the pages of history by way of the Habsburg throne, an exalted idea of his own fitness for the Imperial mantle, and his attitude to those around him—who, whatever their status, he considered were inferior beings—was that of a despot with the instincts of a tyrant. In regard to his own family he was imperious and impatient, brooking no challenge to his decisions and no difference from his opinions. Yet, with it all, Ferdinand was not a bad man so far as his private life was

concerned. He had no desires, no aspirations beyond eating a good dinner, or going to church, or participating in some religious function, while he found perennial enjoyment in feeding one or other of the many monkeys he kept about him. Had Ferdinand been a common mortal he would have been considered a bore, with some suspicion as to his mental fitness.

When the question of abdication became more insistent, considerations arose as to upon whom the crown would devolve. Ferdinand's next brother, the Archduke Francis Charles, had made himself unpopular by a suspicion of being implicated in reactionary propaganda. He was accused, indeed, of being the instigator of the indignation against the Austrian Government which lay at the root of the turbulence of those troubled times.

How far true in reality was the belief held by those in power never became known, but the shadow remained upon the name of Francis Charles. Had circumstances been different in regard to his political activities he would hardly have been chosen to succeed his brother, because he, too, had those unmistakable traits of degeneracy which mark the Habsburgs, and is the outcome of intermarriage with their own line. It would be unfair to speak of their idiosyncrasies in any stronger way than to utter the remark that these men were not well balanced, and were liable at any moment to indulge in extravagance or break into some form of dangerous originality. No doubt much of this defect could have been eradicated by judicious education, but this, instead,

proceeded upon lines which failed to correct their natural deficiencies or to temper their extravagances of thought; rather, it increased their sense of self-importance and inculcated the certainty that in brain power they were infinitely superior to the rest of mankind.

Under these circumstances it was doubly unfortunate that the Empress Marie Anne was a woman incapable of arousing in her husband the desire to do something toward the progress of his Empire. She neither urged him to make use of his own capabilities nor pointed out to him that the wise course would be to surround himself with Ministers possessing the qualities and experience which he lacked. She was lovely, kind and meek, but with no grain of enterprise in her soul. Marie would never have dared to interfere, even for the best of reasons, with what did not immediately concern her. History says that she was once implored by the mother of a young soldier condemned to death for desertion to beg Ferdinand I. for a commutation of the sentence. The only reply the Empress made to the agonised mother was that she would try her best should the Emperor speak to her on the subject, but on no account could she broach the matter to him unasked. The Empress had all those traits which come of being born in a circle where there are always people to do the thinking and to relieve one from the necessity of attending to one's wants. She firmly believed that the only duties of an Empress consisted in setting a good example to her Court; of wearing the Crown jewels on stated occasions; of going to church every day—fasting

whenever the Church required her to do so; and ultimately to retire into a complete retreat from the world when she became a widow.

The sister-in-law of the Empress, Sophy of Bavaria, who married the Archduke Francis Charles—the second son of the Emperor Francis II.—was of very different calibre from the Empress, being used to give expression to her opinions with entire freedom. A member of that gifted race, the Wittelsbachs, she was endowed with their high intelligence, but managed to evade their penchant for extravagance of thought and manner. She was clever to a remarkable degree, ambitious, enterprising, and of a dominating temper. She was, indeed, quite the antitype to the archduchesses of Austria. Beautiful and accomplished, too, she easily acquired influence over all with whom she came into contact, and was always able to hold her own with people cleverer than herself. She had all the dignity of her unfortunate aunt, Marie Antoinette, and was imbued with the grand manner to her very fingertips. From the very first day she entered into the intimate family circle of Imperial Habsburg she was a power in it, and was listened to with far more deference than the Emperor himself. As a matter of fact, though Ferdinand was feared, he was neither liked nor considered among his immediate kindred.

One of the early determinations of the Archduchess Sophy was that when she became Empress she would sweep away the old regime at the Hofburg, where contact with the outside world was prohibited, and the

domestic and Court life so hedged round with archaic customs and ceremonies that existence became unbearable to anyone possessing originality of thought. With this intention firmly fixed in her mind Sophy gathered around her men and women who held other claims to notice than high birth, a procedure which aroused bitter animosity among the courtiers as well as among her immediate relatives. Of this, however, Sophy was disdainful, though she curbed her feelings in the face of opposition. She was by temperament an opportunist, determined in the end to secure her own way, but wise enough, or unscrupulous enough, to dissemble for the time being; she understood, in short, the art of diplomacy in its more delicate phases.

The Archduke Francis Charles was fortunate in his choice of a wife. Her domestic and family life was wise and womanly. The four sons which came of the marriage were brought up with care and foresight and a wise restriction rarely met with in royal families. Some there were who said that the Archduchess had realised that when her husband came to the throne he would not, without a terrible struggle, allow her to exercise power. Therefore, she was training her sons so that, when the turn of one of them came to reign, he would recognise her political and diplomatic wisdom, and be content to let her be the real ruler. Be that as it may, it is certain that Sophy had been the dominant partner all through their married life. It was equally certain, too, that Francis had chafed exceedingly under the imperious will

of his Archduchess. Like all weak temperaments, he would be certain to take the first opportunity of his new power as Emperor to avenge himself for the state of servitude in which she had managed to keep him. The Archduchess knew quite well that though her career as Empress would be brilliant, from the moment she entered the ancient walls of the Vienna Hofburg as a bride she would not be permitted to do as she liked to the extent she had been accustomed.

In the meantime the Archduchess Sophy was content to watch the unfolding of events and to observe the motives and aims of the political agitations which were beginning to trouble the serenity of Europe. She was in constant correspondence with her sisters, the future Queens of Prussia and of Saxony, thereby remaining familiar with all that went on at these two Courts as well as at Munich. What she observed as to the trend of affairs, from her knowledge of current events and her conclusions based upon what happened, led her to determine to train her boys in a way entirely different from the lines hitherto adopted in regard to young archdukes. Usually they were educated to be keenly alive to their own importance, but at the same time denied anything approaching to serious education fitting them to take up their part in life with real earnestness and discernment.

The Archduchess reversed this order, and succeeded admirably in her plans, particularly with her son Maximilian, who was afterwards to perish so miserably at

Mexico. Her eldest son, Francis Joseph, also showed the benefit of the training his mother enforced, though in his case his grip of matters was more superficial; still, to those who judged from outward appearances, he was so different from his cousins that he was certain to become a popular monarch when the time arrived for him to rule the Empire of the Habsburgs.

The manner in which young Francis Joseph was received by the people was a source of much joy to the Archduchess Sophy. He was her favourite son, and, more than that, in him she saw her future assured. It is said that a considerable factor in the depth of her affection was that Francis Joseph resembled another prince to whom Sophy had been warmly attached in her youth. The young nobleman for whom she had nursed a romantic affection was the Duke of Reichstadt, that unfortunate man whom sad destiny wrenched from the splendours of the Tuileries and thrust into the semi-imprisonment he so long endured at Schönbrunn. This luckless son of the greatest man of modern times had found in the Archduchess Sophy a kind and attentive friend, one who had never failed him in time of need, and who had done all she could to bring joy into his miserable life. When he died the young Archduchess Sophy shed for him more tears than even his mother—whom, history records, callously left him to his fate when misfortune overcame him. Later on it pleased the Archduchess to find some resemblance between the object of her former tenderness and the son for whom she nursed

so many dreams of ambition, dreams in which, in truth, she played a leading part herself.

When the Archduchess Sophy found her young son Francis was not so pliable as she imagined he would be, her love for him underwent some change; she managed, nevertheless, to retain a very considerable influence over him in regard to political matters, upon which he constantly sought her advice and acted upon it. In the more intimate domain of the private domesticities of the royal household the strong personality of the Archduchess Sophy maintained its dominance, and the manner in which she exercised her power at Court and in the inner life at the Hofburg made life very hard indeed for the exquisitely beautiful bride whom Francis Joseph wedded.

As Francis Joseph approached his later 'teens it became evident to even the strongest partisans of the House of Habsburg that its tenure of the throne was really in peril. Discontent was on every hand, and it seemed inevitable that the House would lose its kingdom if the Sovereign were allowed to continue his erratic rule. Nor was it likely that the people would look with favour upon the direct successor, the Archduke Francis Charles, the father of Francis Joseph and the brother of Ferdinand I. The only hope lay in the abdication of the one, and the renunciation of the right of succession on the part of the other in favour of his son Francis Joseph, then a young man of considerable promise. Undoubtedly, from the point of view of the nation's best

interests this was quite the best thing to do, but everyone felt that it would take a very great deal of diplomatic persuasion to induce the Archduchess Sophy to consent to being deprived of the pride and glory of wearing the diadem of an Empress. Curiously, the feelings and claims of the two men most interested were not looked upon as factors of any importance in the affair; what they thought or wanted mattered but little; they were negligible factors.

Even in favour of her own son, it was beyond expectation that the Archduchess Sophy would quietly and willingly forgo her legitimate ambition. Especially was this felt when it was remembered that her personal concerns were always accorded first place in her plans.

At this difficult juncture a lady well known in Viennese society, the Princess Schwarzenberg, became the *deus ex machina* of an intrigue which successfully resolved the difficulty in a manner congenial to all concerned, and caused the Archduchess Sophy herself to propose the alternative which all had feared to place before her.

By birth the Princess Schwarzenberg was a Princess of Liechtenstein, and among her friends in Society was known as Princess Lory. She was one of those women who make an impression in whatever kind of environment they may be thrust. She was beautiful, and loved to see that her charms called forth admiration. She was fond of the good things of life, and, needless to relate, was the object of all sorts of stories as to the genial frailties

she was supposed to possess. She exercised an undisputed sway over Society in Vienna until the day of her death.

At the time when the Princess made her influence felt in connection with the matter of the Habsburg succession, she was the object of the adoring passion of Count William von Montenuovo. This dashing noble, like the Princess, was one of the idols of Society, who made much of him because of the valiant deeds he had performed. He was the only son of the morganatic marriage of the Empress Marie Louise, the widow of the great Napoleon, with Count Neipperg.

During the Italian war of 1848 Count William had accomplished many heroic deeds and had displayed such skill in leadership that he was promoted to be Colonel when he was only twenty-seven years of age. His other promotions and various honourable decorations were also won at the point of the sword. Few men were so popular as he in Vienna Society and in Court circles, for in addition to his personal qualities and attractions, the fact that he was the son of an Archduchess procured for him an exceptional position. With the young Archduke Francis Joseph he was a favourite companion, the Emperor himself liked to have him in his entourage, while the proud and haughty Archduchess visibly unbent whenever he was near. She had been fond of him from the day he had come to the Court with a letter from Marie Louise, begging Sophy to extend to the son of her second marriage the same kindliness and courtesy she had given to

her only son by the first marriage, the Duke of Reichstadt.

The Princess Lory was a keen judge of human nature, and it did not take her long to enlist the entire allegiance of her admirer, von Montenuovo, to the scheme which she propounded into his willing ear. Gossip said with emphasis and delight that the Princess embarked upon her adventure largely because it afforded her an opportunity to repay a grudge she nourished against the Empress Marie Anne, who had expressed herself with more freedom than discretion respecting the sprightly ways of the Princess. The Empress, indeed, used a much stronger term, for which the Princess had never forgiven her.

Thus it came about that circumstances played together, and the outcome was that the Princess recognised that the situation between the Royal House and the country provided a ready means of revenge for an old-standing slight. Her knowledge of her own sex enabled her to understand how to appeal to the Archduchess Sophy. She wanted her to view the facts in such a light that it would appear to her best interests, as well as to the future welfare of the Habsburgs, that Ferdinand should be dispossessed. And not only that: Sophy's own husband, too, would have to be sacrificed to the future welfare of the House, though she herself need not be a sufferer; it would be her lot, rather, to reign in reality through the nominal headship of her son.

In following out this plan the Princess was too wise

to make her advances in person. She did so through the Count von Montenuovo. He, already, was assured of a favourable hearing to anything he might say, and the proposals, therefore, had better chance of success.

So strongly did the Count put the case from the tutoring he had received from the Princess, that the Archduchess became persuaded that the whole fate of the Habsburg dynasty depended upon Ferdinand resigning the Crown into hands better able than he to carry with dignity, respect and efficiency the weight of responsibility in the momentous times which the Empire was passing through. This thoroughly frightened the Archduchess, whose love for her son would not allow his ultimate succession to be endangered, and she agreed to persuade her husband to look at matters from the same aspect.

That point being settled, the Archduchess Sophy was then introduced to the fact that her husband was also considered incompetent to occupy the throne. Impinging as it did upon her own prospect of becoming Empress, it required considerable tact and persuasion for the Count von Montenuovo to force home to the Archduchess the hopelessness of the future for the Habsburgs under any other condition than that the power should pass into the hands of her son, Francis Joseph. At last, however, the Count succeeded in the task the Princess had set him, and this made things much easier. For one thing, as soon as there was no likelihood of Archduchess Sophy becoming Empress, the Empress Marie Anne was willing to fall in with the idea, affording her, as it did, an opportunity of

embracing more completely than ever the ascetic course of life she preferred.

When the Archduchess went to her husband she experienced far less surprise and opposition than she expected. Francis did not find it a hard task to approach his brother Ferdinand, and point out that unless he abdicated the dynasty would be in jeopardy. He, too, had not needed much persuasion to renounce, also, his right of succession, so that when he went to see his brother he was prepared to put the whole proposition before him : that the abdication should be in favour of Francis Joseph. The Empress added her views to those of Francis Charles, and the matter was speedily settled.

The solemn abdication of the Emperor Ferdinand I. took place with great pomp on the 2nd of December, 1848, after which he retired to the Palace of the Hradschin in Prague, where he ended his days on the 29th of June, 1875, twenty-seven years later. The Empress survived him a few years, and left behind her a memory more marked by respect than regret.

The part which the Count von Montenuovo had taken in bringing Francis Joseph to the throne was never forgotten by the Emperor, who showered favours upon the Count and later created him a prince. He always remained on the most intimate terms with the Count, and it is noteworthy that in recent years his son, Prince Montenuovo, is easily the most influential man at the Austrian Court.

When Francis Joseph took upon his shoulders the

Imperial mantle, he was a young man of eighteen: a handsome, tall, splendid fellow, full of life and activity and desirous of distinguishing himself not only as a Sovereign, but also as a man; life had not yet soured him, nor sapped away his principles. To anyone seeing Francis Joseph for the first time he created a distinctly favourable impression; only to the close observer did the latent cruelty of his disposition become apparent, and only after knowing more of him did the selfish and superficial traits which dominated his character show themselves. He was an example of Habsburg degeneracy. Well concealed as yet but nevertheless present, the inherent defects of his race were perpetuated in his person, to come out strongly as the years rolled by.

Francis Joseph had been brought up with a strict regard to the outward observances of the State religion, Roman Catholicity, and was supposed to be very religious. At heart he was no believer in the tenets of Mother Church; indeed, it would have puzzled him to explain what they were. To him Catholicism was an abstract something which was a powerful factor in keeping his House on the Throne; while Church attendance was but a necessary means of demonstrating to his people that he adhered to the traditions of his forefathers. The matter appealed to his sentiment with far more force than to his reason.

From his mother, Francis Joseph had inherited an imperiousness of manner and character which was often of use to him in impressing his dignity upon the people.

He had not, however, been endowed with her active brain and intelligent mind. Consequently, all through his life he has been governed by prejudices rather than convictions. His private life has been unfettered by deep moral qualities, and he has carried that same feeling into his political activities, not scrupling to break his word whenever he has thought it of advantage to do so. His reign has shown this more than once. A single reference will display his shortcomings in this respect. Take the Hungarian rebellion; it clearly demonstrated to all who cared to make a study of his character and of his actions during that period, that he was narrow-minded, vindictive, hypocritical, selfish and mean.

At the beginning of his reign Francis Joseph did not hesitate to invoke the aid of Russia against his own subjects. When the revolution was broken the Hungarians were so mistrustful of the Austrian Sovereign and his advisers that their leader, Georgey, preferred to surrender to the Russians than to the officials of Austria. And history proved the Hungarians right, because to this day the terrible reprisals this eighteen-year-old Emperor ordered remain unforgotten. Every Hungarian homestead could tell how entirely hideous were the things which were done. Women, young and old, were stripped of their garments and flogged in the public streets of Budapest, and among them were ladies of the highest Hungarian aristocracy.

Another incident of the same rebellion should be retold. Rather than hand down to his descendants the stain

of a father criminally hanged, Count Louis Batthyany poisoned himself on the eve of the day appointed for his execution. It is related that the Countess Batthyany forced an entrance into the chamber of the Emperor, and implored him on her knees to grant her husband's life. He, curtly and with unnecessary cruelty, refused to do so, and when he heard of the suicide of the Count, ordered his lifeless body to be hung from the gallows which would have borne him had he lived a few hours longer. The result of this personal action of the Emperor was that the Countess made her son swear an oath never to condone his father's murder and never to accord to the Monarch the least token of respect.

When the Emperor became King of Hungary he endeavoured by favours and honours to win recognition from the Count, but the son of Francis Joseph's victim refused every advance and every offer with cold and undisguised contempt.

When the Hungarian rebellion had been crushed, the Emperor Francis Joseph received the Russian commanders in audience. In returning to their own country he wished them to carry away his thanks for the help they had given, and also asked them to convey to their Emperor words which, since that day, have acquired a sad significance: "Tell your Emperor," he said, "that he has in me a son who will always be ready to obey any orders that he may care to give him. So long as I live I will remember and I will tell my children to remember when I am no more. It is entirely owing to the generous

initiative of the Emperor Nicholas that I have been able to retain my throne."

To these beautiful words facts were soon to give a terrible denial. It is to be wondered if the aged Emperor Francis Joseph, now that he has set fire to the conflagration which is enveloping Europe in its devouring flames, ever thinks of that episode, ever recalls those words. It is another example of the hypocritical selfishness of his race that he should desire above all things that the result of the conflict he has started should be the harming—the destruction if he could have his will—of the nation which saved his throne in the hour of his distress.

The fact that the Emperor was but eighteen at the time of the Hungarian atrocities saved him from blame. Much, indeed, may be forgiven a youthful monarch on account of inexperience, and the people were indulgent enough to throw the blame for his crimes on to the shoulders of his advisers. Even then, had he liked, Francis Joseph could have escaped the odium which was felt in the heart of every right-minded man at the terrible things which were done in Hungary; but, strange as it may seem, Francis Joseph did not care in the least to prove himself innocent of the dark deeds that had sullied the opening days of his reign. Instead, he was rather inclined to boast of what he called his firmness, and he wished to impress upon his subjects that it was a thing to be proud of. He turned a deaf ear to the misery of his victims, and not only expected his subjects to do the same, but also to greet with acclamation and pride the cruelties

which he had ordered with such relish and had had performed with such indifference.

His subjects, however, were not so delighted with him as in his vanity and selfishness he imagined they would be. Discontent increased as people realised that the change of ruler had not bettered their lot, and the pity which had prevailed at one so young being called upon to rule gave way to bitterness.

With the coming to the throne of Francis Joseph the people had hoped for liberty of thought and action such as was enjoyed by almost every nation of Europe. Instead, they found their every action dogged by a tyrannical and arbitrary police just as harshly as under the old regime, while any opinions expressed were stifled by the axe of the executioner. This discontent assumed such proportions that one afternoon, as Francis Joseph was taking his customary walk along the ramparts which at that time surrounded the city of Vienna, a young man, who, it was later discovered, had been waiting several days to take his opportunity, stabbed the Emperor in the neck. The dagger wound was so serious that at first it was thought that Francis Joseph would die. His hour of destiny had not arrived, though he remained for a long time disabled as a result of the wound, and, indeed, lost the use of his sight for some weeks.

The attempted assassination of Francis Joseph swerved the sentiments of the Austrians back again in his favour, and the people, especially in Vienna, gave way to explosions of delight when it was at last announced that th

Emperor was on the high road to recovery. The first time he appeared once more in public he was received with effusive demonstrations of joy. So sincere did the ovation seem that Francis Joseph became convinced that his life was precious to his subjects, and that thereafter he could treat them with even less ceremony than ever.

This complacency was not shared by the Archduchess Sophy, who had been seriously alarmed at the attempt on her son's life. She was discerning enough to recognise that the affair meant more than the courtiers pretended to believe. It meant that in reality, despite the surface manifestations, the early popularity of Francis Joseph had disappeared, and that many had realised that the expectations they had consequent upon the change of ruler would not be fulfilled. Throughout their dominions the Habsburgs had accumulated so much hatred that it was indeed a wonder they were allowed to remain on the throne. They were looked upon with distrust and dislike mingled with active suspicion, and altogether, as she, the only one perhaps of that House with the desire or acumen to look ahead, peered into the future, the outlook was full of ugly omens for the Royal House.

The relations of the Archduchess Sophy with the Emperor Francis Joseph were no longer what they had been in the past, though they were still more intimate than they had ever been with her second son, Maximilian. Later on there was to come a time when circumstances drew the Archduchess and Maximilian into closer bonds than with Francis Joseph, and she was to stand by him

in open defiance of the Emperor. But as yet the Archduchess Sophy found herself isolated, with no one of her own family to whom she could confide her fears and anxieties respecting the future of the dynasty.

About this time it was the hope of the Archduchess that the Emperor should marry, but whenever she broached the subject to him Francis Joseph spurned the idea with a disdain which savoured of anger. He preferred to indulge in the many love affairs with which he was successively engaged than to embarrass himself with a Consort. He would not be brought to a consideration of his duty toward his country and his dynasty; it amused him and pleased his vanity to see the fairest women in Vienna eager to obtain one of his glances and always ready to cultivate a flirtation, which was the mild word Society applied to their Emperor's amorous proclivities. Love in its beautiful sense was unknown to him. He was undoubtedly a handsome and attractive man in those years; and apart from his royal estate he would have been called an unprincipled Lovelace. There came a day, however, when even his pursuit of love palled, and he tired of his everlasting successes among the willing beauties of the city; his vanity had allowed him to see that the flattering attentions to his royal person were not disinterested, as the jewellers of Vienna could tell. Before he had reached his twenty-third year he was so thoroughly blasé that the fairest women failed to please his satiated palate, and his thoughts turned to the pleasure to be derived from securing the love of a young and innocent princess who would

give herself to him without even a passing thought of worldly gain.

The Archduchess was pleasantly surprised, therefore, to be told one day by her son that he contemplated falling in with her wishes in regard to marriage. She speedily proposed that he should visit his cousins, the daughters of the Duchess Louise in Bavaria, of whom Hélène was then one of the most beautiful of the Royal Princesses of marriageable age in Europe. The Archduchess Sophy had long set her heart on the marriage of these two, as the girl fulfilled all the most rigid requirements of an ideal Empress of the House of Habsburg. Francis Joseph, being so enthusiastically assured of her rare beauty, was easily persuaded to see her, and a meeting was arranged at Ischl, whither the Duchess Louise repaired with her two daughters in the month of July, 1853.

A romantic tale has been put into circulation concerning the completeness with which, at first sight, Francis Joseph fell in love with Elisabeth, Hélène's sister. The story is believed in right unto this day by certain persons well able to know what really were the facts of the case. When Francis Joseph approached Hélène with his proposal of marriage, the Princess told him frankly that she was quite willing to unite her fate with his, but first he would have to assure her that after the wedding he would no longer indulge in any of the romantic intrigues to which he was supposed to be inclined. The Emperor was aghast at the audacity of the girl, and at once turned his back upon her, and more to pique Hélène than anything

else, began a violent flirtation with the schoolgirl Elisabeth. The young Princess viewed the honeyed words of the Emperor as serious attentions, and forthwith fell violently in love with him, giving him a young heart's adoration. In truth, the whole matter was settled more out of vanity on both sides than anything else, as after events go far to prove.

Whether the version given is the true one or not I have no means of telling, but the fact remains that this schoolgirl in short frocks, with her hair flying round her shoulders, became betrothed to the Austrian monarch four days after he arrived at Ischl to ask her sister to become his wife.

The Archduchess Sophy was dumb with astonishment when she discovered that her son was bringing a child to Vienna as the future Empress, but resigned herself to the fact in the hope that this inexperienced girl would be content to remain under her influence and supervision in all matters, and would not force her own opinions and will either in the Court or the domestic circle.

As for the Princess Elisabeth, later on, when she had realised the emptiness of all her fond delusions, she acknowledged that she had been desperately in love with this cousin who had appeared like a Prince Charming of the fairy tale, and placed at her feet the Imperial Crown of one of the oldest dynasties in Europe. She confessed to being dazzled by the vision of pomp and the brilliance of the prospect thus opened up before her, and to being so overwhelmed with the magnitude of the future that she

thought of nothing else but that life would continue to be the beautiful dream it had appeared to be at that moment when her schoolgirl's fancy was captured by the vision.

Elisabeth was accomplished and beautiful. She was bright, observant and quick in her mind, which was filled with romance and idealism. When she entered the church at Ischl on the day following her betrothal, she thanked God, as she leaned on the arm of her Knight, with all that fervent simplicity which was one of her most alluring charms, for all the happiness He had granted her, and for the Crown which was to be hers. Alas! it was to become a crown of thorns in the days to come. The tragedy of that alliance was that Francis Joseph did not realise the jewel that God had given into his care. Had he understood the treasure he had taken to his heart he would have known how to guide the beautiful creature amidst the difficult duties of her new career, and to teach her how to fulfil them without committing blunders.

In the April following the engagement the couple were to make a public entry into Vienna. The populace gathered in its streets, eager to catch a glimpse of the lovely Princess who would soon become their Empress. Her youth and sweet grace had been freely spoken of, and wonderful tales had been told of her exquisitive beauty. The people, therefore, were in a tumult of excitement and impatience for her arrival, her progress being triumphal in its vivacious jubilance. Acclamations rose on every side as the flower-laden barge which brought her to the landing-place on the Danube approached the spot

where the carriage was waiting. She sat amid the profusion of roses that decked the Royal vessel, looking like a fairy in pale pink, wrapped around with billowy clouds of white tulle. Added to this effect was the brilliant gleam of diamonds, which shone and glittered among the dark beauty of her hair. Never did a queen seem so fair as this daughter of the Wittelsbachs when she entered the gates of the old town, proudly led from the barge by the Sovereign-lover, who escorted her through the long line of courtiers and officials who had gathered to meet her on that auspicious day which saw her first appearance in the Hofburg.

The marriage took place three days later in the chapel of the Hofburg. It was a scene to be remembered as long as memory lasts. During the first few months after the wedding Elisabeth was the most popular figure in Vienna. The whole of Austria, indeed, doted upon its new Empress and her radiant beauty. It seemed at first, moreover, contrary to expectation, that the Sovereign was going to settle down to the quiet joys of domestic life, subdued by her gentle and girlish nature. Unfortunately this happiness, which Elisabeth remembered and cherished all through her life, was of short duration—as brief as it had been intense. The disruption was largely the work of the Archduchess Sophy, who, as one writer has put it, "transformed the Eden into which Elisabeth thought herself transported, into a hell whence she tried vainly to escape." Francis Joseph should never have allowed his mother to interfere so drastically with his

married life. But he had really nothing in common with his wife, and moreover was a slave to the iron etiquette of the Austrian Court and its high priestess, his mother.

Elisabeth entered upon her new life with high thoughts as to its responsibilities and its possibilities for doing good. If she had been allowed her own way she would have spent much of her time in relieving distress and soothing the sorrows of her subjects, but she soon found that she was curbed in her every action. She was highly indignant at first at the hampering restrictions of an etiquette so severe that every action of her daily life became subordinated to it and dependent upon its rules. A tide of anger soon succeeded the indignation, an anger specially directed against the Archduchess Sophy, who seemed to the young Empress to be the prime mover in this conspiracy of repression. In this, however, she was unjust; quite truly the Archduchess directed matters, but she did so out of deference to the heartless rules which had existed for centuries among the Habsburgs. Whenever the young Empress wanted to go here or desired to go there, or do this or that, she was met with an attendant or the Archduchess, who either remonstrated or pointed out that she must be accompanied, or it was impossible for the Empress of Austria to do so and so. The Empress appealed to her husband, only to find that where she had refused to bend to the rigid etiquette, the Archduchess had forestalled her and impressed upon Francis Joseph the necessity of laying his commands upon Elisabeth to regard with strict obedience all the commands of Habs-

burg Court ceremonial, even though it did kill individuality and all human emotions.

The effect of all this treatment upon the high-spirited girl can be imagined. Disgusted at being systematically treated as a child, she began to hate ferociously everything around her, not excepting her husband, and particularly the Archduchess Sophy. Had anyone taken the trouble to explain to her the iron demands of the Court etiquette things might have been different, but no one thought it worth while, not even her husband, who had drifted back into his old courses, leaving his child-wife to discover too late that he had only been amusing himself with her. Torn by the love she still held for the unworthy Francis Joseph, and the conflicting passion the knowledge of his attentions in other directions aroused, the Empress, who was proud and spirited, refused to complain; she determined to live her own life, and henceforth proceeded to map out her existence in supreme disregard of those around her. As an outcome the Empress Elisabeth developed a taste for solitude which gave rise to many misapprehensions on the part of friends, and unjust suspicions from those who were too ready to blacken the sweet purity of her character. Of course, this was made known to her, but she disdained either to notice them or to alter the course of her life, forgetting that calumny can even sully the reputation of an angel.

The Emperor Francis Joseph soon disinterested himself altogether from his wife's affairs, except when he was called upon by his mother to bring her to account for some

infraction of archaic regulations. The children of the marriage were placed under the care of the Archduchess, and Elisabeth only allowed to see them at stated intervals and seldom alone. At last the health of the Empress broke down entirely, and she was compelled to spend several winters abroad, which completed the breach between her and the Emperor.

Notwithstanding, the Empress did not evade her duty to the Empire in moments of crisis, and when it was necessary for her to appear beside her husband on special State occasions she did so with grace and dignity. During the war with France in 1859, as well as during those months, few but full of destiny, when the battle of Sadowa threw the Habsburgs out of the German Confederation, Elisabeth remained in Vienna and fulfilled all the obligations of her position. Although she had grown to despise her husband, she knew that her place was beside him, and that in the hour of his need it would be dishonourable to desert him.

In political matters the Empress held entirely aloof, more so, perhaps, because Francis Joseph prided himself upon his acumen in handling affairs of a political nature. He was aided in this delusion by the members of his Court and the politicians to whom he listened, who all flattered him and carried out his whims in utter disregard to their effect upon the State. It is not remarkable, therefore, that the most appalling calamities befel Austria, disasters which have passed into history. Of one such disaster the end is still on the knees of the gods; it may quite well

end for ever the rule of the Habsburgs. Throughout his long reign Francis Joseph has been in the hands of his Ministers, except on occasions when he has determined upon independent action, and whenever he has done so the result has been lamentable. After the defeat of Sadowa he allowed himself to be persuaded to shake hands with his triumphant foe, for the sole reason that in his heart he longed for the opportunity to strike a blow at Russia in order to wrest from her the preponderance of power in the Near East which he cherished as belonging to him alone. This hatred of Russia has been the only sentiment to which the Emperor Francis Joseph has remained faithful.

In his family life he has never been true to the ties of blood. Quite likely, had he been more human in his treatment of the Crown Prince Rudolph, the tragedy which was enacted at Mayerling would not have taken place. And, too, it was freely said at the time, that the main reason of his brother Maximilian accepting the throne of Mexico, was to get away from the influence and repression of his brother Francis Joseph, whose jealousy had been aroused by the popularity of Maximilian at the time he acted as viceroy at Milan.

One of the favourite claims of the Emperor Francis Joseph is that he was the man who conceived and carried into execution the Triple Alliance. He shut his eyes to the knowledge that Bismarck framed its provisions, and that Count Andrassy carried the thing to practical issue. To this day he maintains that he suggested the whole

thing to the old King William I. of Prussia. As a matter of fact, Bismarck knew with whom he had to deal, and made use of the Austrian Emperor's vanity in this way so as to be able to shelter behind him at need.

In the same way Austria has been made use of in the Great War. No student of European politics will deny that during the last twenty-five years the war was carefully planned and prepared by Germany, and that Austria has been but a pawn in the terrible game, used by the Hohenzollern according to the necessities of the moment. On her own account Austria would never have dared to present the fateful ultimatum to Servia, and when the die was cast she was utterly unable to hold her own against the troops of the little country until German soldiers had come to her assistance. Yet, despite it all, in his mind the old Emperor firmly believes that he is guiding the nations to victory, and that in the end the Habsburgs will regain supremacy in Germany, with the Hohenzollerns as their vassals. He is quite happy in this thought, and firmly convinced that the future will prove him right. Even if he sees the end of hostilities and the establishment of peace on a basis which will upset all his vain imaginings of Habsburg power and might, he will be quite satisfied that the way things turn out will be due to some premature and foolish blundering on the part of "that impetuously rash youth," as he thinks William II., and go to his grave certain that he could have arranged matters much more satisfactorily.

CHAPTER II

THE EMPRESS ELISABETH

IN all Europe no queen has excited so much interest as the Empress Elisabeth of Austria. Even with her untimely death at the hands of an assassin the interest did not cease; if anything it increased, and has not yet vanished. She exercised an extraordinary fascination, owing to her unusual beauty and the strength and vivacity of her mind. To this add the mystery of her life and her enigmatic personality, and one begins to understand the magnetic power of this original creature.

Several books have been written of recent years which have to do with the Empress, and affect to portray her inner life and her true character. But the book still remains to be written which does these things with full knowledge.

It is certain that Elisabeth of Bavaria was a strange woman of energetic mind and character. It is the more remarkable, therefore, that an unkind fate should have linked her life with that rigid and cold Court of the Habsburgs. She had never been able to reconcile herself to the tameness of its everyday life. The vivid and imaginative temperament which she inherited from her Wittelsbach descent led her to believe that she could always live in a

fairyland of her own, a world in which her life was occupied in performing good and charitable actions toward her subjects. It was certainly difficult to understand such a being, more difficult still to appreciate her; but to conclude from her eccentricities that the Empress was not faithful as a wife and pure as a woman is cruelly false.

The Empress had been unhappy as a wife and disappointed as a mother, but she always remained fond of her children and as affectionate toward her husband as circumstances permitted, for she had a high sense of the duties of wifehood and strove to keep to her part of the marital contract despite the irregularities of the Emperor. At the same time she had a contempt for the conventions of life, which led her to disregard and detest the etiquette that surrounded her and crabbed her freedom.

Court life jarred upon the Empress Elisabeth's nerves, and made her long the more for mental and personal freedom. An unfettered life was essential to her nature. It had thrived during her early years among the wild Bavarian Alps, upon the open freshness of her native hills, and her soul had grown beautiful by close intercourse with the delights of Nature as she revelled in the forests and wild scenery surrounding her home. She would have been perfectly happy with the proverbial "love in a cottage" had Fate been in the mood to confer such an existence upon her. At first she was amused at the pomp and luxury which surrounded her as Empress, and played with the unwonted wealth then at her disposal by her marriage, as a child does with a gift of fruit, bestowing it

upon whomsoever she pleased. But she soon discovered that these things left her soul unsatisfied, as it was forced upon her that her heart was empty and bare of the love which an Emperor had professed.

Having given her love to the gay young man who had made such rapid capture of her unsophisticated innocence, her proud and haughty nature rebelled against unrequital, and her disappointment was cruelly hard to bear. She had wanted to become her husband's companion in a real sense, to share the responsibilities of his high estate and to be the good angel always at his side to point out the path of justice and mercy. She had hardly been married three months ere she found out that all this was a myth of her own fond imaginings, and that Francis Joseph was entirely uninfluenced by her in his personal life and in his plans for the country at large. She found out later too that the Emperor had allowed his mother to retain unchallenged her sway of the domestic side of the Royal household, and that she as Empress had no power over her own servants or even her own children.

The Archduchess also constituted herself her daughter-in-law's most harassing critic. She was hardly the woman to understand a girl who was all heart and impulse, who would laugh one moment and cry the next, and whose warm, loving heart was full of noble intentions and loving desires. The Archduchess thwarted her daughter-in-law at every step, complained against her to the Emperor, and never lost an opportunity of emphasising to Francis Joseph that his wife was a raw, uncultivated

creature whom it was necessary to mould into a strict observance of what was required of her by her position as an Empress of the House of Habsburg. The Emperor's mother would have liked to transform Elisabeth into a wooden Empress, always smiling, always extending her hand to be kissed, but without initiative or will, and entirely dependent upon others. This, however, was precisely the kind of thing to which an ardent nature, such as Elisabeth possessed, could never submit, and domestic scenes of a most painful character were frequent.

These squabbles, in which, not unnaturally, Elisabeth mostly failed to discomfit her more experienced relative, soon became common property in Court circles, and rulers of Vienna society, following the lead of the Archduchess Sophy, were not slow to treat the Empress as a nonentity, continuing to look to her mother-in-law as the real leader at Court. Unfortunately, Elisabeth did not think it worth while contesting the situation with the usurper, having a hearty disdain for the petty intrigues daily going on around her, and having by this time learned the uselessness of appealing to her husband.

In spite of her beauty and charm the Empress had not made herself liked among the haughty and ceremonious aristocracy of the capital, though she was adored by the common people of Austria and, too, in later years, as she travelled among them, by the Hungarians, among whom she was happier than anywhere else save in her beloved native land. Often she thought with a sigh of the delicious liberty she enjoyed amid the solitudes and beauties of

the lovely woods which surrounded her stately home at Possenhofen. In her new fatherland, with the exception of her brother-in-law Maximilian, she had no real friends; and even the Archduke's friendship led to difficulties and unjust thoughts, owing to the enmity which Francis Joseph had long cherished in regard to his brother. Thus forced to become self-centred in the sense of finding relaxations which she could enjoy in solitude, the Empress took refuge in study, which was always congenial to her. As soon as this became known, it was attributed to affectation. She turned to riding, which she had loved from a child; and Society ridiculed her action as being undignified. She then ceased to repress her love for books and flowers and art and the lovely things of the world, and she was at once condemned as extravagant and irritatingly superior. In short, everything she did to save herself from a wooden existence was turned and twisted to her disadvantage and discredit until at last, thoroughly disheartened and disgusted, she decided that whatever she did she would be misrepresented; therefore, she would live her own life in her own way, without troubling in the least about what her detractors, or even the world at large, might say.

In regard to her children, whom she had hoped to bring up according to her own ideas and to keep always about her, she received bitter disappointment. They were taken from her and given into the care of the Archduchess, who had explained to her son that it was impossible to allow so irresponsible and young a mortal

as the Empress to have a free hand in the rearing of her boy and girl, lest she should bring them up according to her own extravagant ideas and without reverence for the iron traditions of the Habsburgs. The Emperor had entered fully into his mother's views and arranged matters so that Elisabeth became almost a stranger to her own children, deprived of the love of those to whom she had hoped to turn as a solace from the sorrows which her marriage had brought.

It is little wonder that under these circumstances she soon found the pretence of ill-health to enable her to escape from the daily slights, and sought the distraction of travel in foreign lands. Had she not done so she would probably have shared the fate of others of the House of Wittelsbach—solitude and quiet saved her mind from losing its balance. The doctors sent her to Madeira, which was not then so fashionable as it has since become, and there health returned to her, and her mind recovered that moral strength which had been sapped by struggles of spirit against the awful restrictions of the chilly etiquette of the Court of Vienna. Amid the beautiful country and the warm restfulness of Madeira the Empress Elisabeth learned resignation, even if submission did not come, and calling to her aid her proud reserve, she made up her mind to take up the thread of her life once more where she had let it fall. In doing so she became entirely indifferent to praise or blame, only allowing her conscience to be her judge and giving no account of her actions to anyone.

When she returned to Austria she surprised everyone by the expression of set sadness and melancholy which had taken the place of the old animation and interest which had made her so exceedingly charming. She assumed a cold dignity which bordered upon cynicism, and which imposed even upon the haughtiness of her mother-in-law, who was surprised to find that the child whom she had successfully bullied was now capable of holding her own and making her mother-in-law feel that, after all, she was not Empress. Elisabeth was always courtesy itself toward the Archduchess, but she raised an icy barrier between them that even the audacity and the imperiousness of the latter failed to penetrate. The Empress Elisabeth brushed the Archduchess aside with the same ease that she took precedence over her at State ceremonies.

The only point upon which the Empress Elisabeth did not succeeded in thwarting the old Archduchess was that which was closest to her own heart: the education of her children, which was proceeding along the archaic lines prescribed for centuries.

On her return from Madeira she once more appealed to the Emperor to allow her son and daughter to remain under her immediate care. She met a refusal couched in such unthinkable terms that she never again renewed the subject. From that day she dissociated herself entirely from the education and rearing of her offspring. Quite expectedly, the world thereupon said that the Empress was an unnatural mother who hated the children to whom

she had given birth. This and many other legends were accredited concerning Elisabeth, who disdained to give the lie to the numerous untruths that were being circulated concerning her person and tastes. She lived her own life, in which none of those who ought to have played the principal part were allowed an entrance, and when the Emperor once attempted a reconciliation she made him understand that she was no longer willing to give to his throne heirs that would belong to the State and him, but not to the mother who had brought them into the world. She was never a faithless wife, but for many years she remained wife in name only, and was truly, as she once said in a moment of bitterness, "*une Impératrice de parade.*"

Elisabeth of Bavaria was made for something better than Fate had decreed for her life. She had in her the stuff of which great sovereigns are made, and it was through no fault of hers that all attempts to live up to her great position were repulsed by the pitiless hand of her mother-in-law, abetted by the Emperor Francis Joseph. Serene and brave as she appeared to the world that watched her, she had terrible hours of discouragement, during which she struggled bravely against the storms that were perennially shaking her heart. This necessity of shutting up within her bosom all her feelings could not but exercise a baneful influence upon her conduct and upon her deportment. She could not hide the contempt which she felt for her life, and she became cynical owing to the impossibility of being natural. Yet

all the time she suffered terribly, because she was unable to give way to the generous and noble impulses of her heart.

In one of the books written in recent years about the Austrian Court is repeated every kind of silly gossip calculated to lower the beautiful womanliness of the Empress Elisabeth in the estimation of the reader. If one were only to believe it, the Empress was absolutely devoid of heart, absorbed in the most selfish pursuits, and putting before everything else in the world the care of her own person and of her own beauty. In reality the Empress did no such thing. She had some curious notions concerning her hair and the manner in which it was to be treated, dressed and arranged; but, apart from this very innocent originality, she evinced no signs of inordinate solicitude for her own beauty. Like all artistic people, she had an innate love for everything that was beautiful, be it in nature or in humanity, but she was far too clever a woman to be content to spend her time in self-admiration. Had she done so she would have been far happier than was the case and would, at least, have found some solace in her life. But her memory outlives untruth.

As time goes on, and especially after certain documents, now locked up in the archives of the Hofburg—among which are the Empress's own "Recollections"—have seen the light of day, the public will have opportunity to judge and appreciate this extraordinary woman. It is said that it was the intention of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand to give publicity to these documents

as soon as he had the power to do so. Whether the idea will be followed by the present heir to the throne when he succeeds his uncle it is difficult to say. The young Archduke belongs to those people of restricted vision who can never understand that moral suffering ennobles, and perhaps he will think that for the reputation of the Habsburgs it will be more advantageous to allow oblivion to fall upon the whole personality of the beautiful Empress who entered the Vienna Hofburg one spring morning in quest of a happiness which she was never to find within its walls.

After the death of the Archduchess Sophy the position of her daughter-in-law changed considerably, and might, perhaps, have become even quite tolerable if she could have made up her mind to try to overcome the prejudices which had been fostered against her. But Elisabeth had been wounded to the quick by the facility with which people had turned against her, and she was not of a forgiving nature, though by temperament most indulgent. She was above taking revenge upon those who had slighted or hurt her; she simply ignored them. Hypocrisy was hateful to her, and she could no more have smiled upon a person whom she knew to be her enemy than she could have flown. She decided that, since she had been misjudged, it would be waste of time on her part to attempt to convince those who had done so that they had been mistaken. It was in such moments that she felt herself truly an Empress, placed so far above common mortals that it would have appeared an undignified descent to

confess to knowledge of the vile attacks of which she had been the object. She knew very well that she was disliked by the aristocracy of Vienna, and she revelled in it, applying herself instead to the affection of her Hungarian subjects, who, as she was aware, worshipped the very ground on which she walked.

When at Budapest, or in her residence at Gödollo, she was quite another person than at Schönbrunn or in the old rooms of the Hofburg. She allowed herself to be natural, and, freed from the trammels of an etiquette which she hated more and more every day, she moved familiarly among the Hungarian nobility, within whose circle she found numerous friends.

It is no secret that it was owing to the efforts of the Empress that a reconciliation was at last effected between Francis Joseph and his rebellious subjects of former times. It is to be questioned, indeed, whether such a burying of the axe could ever have taken place but for the efforts of the Empress, who gave proofs on this memorable occasion that, when necessary, she could be a clever diplomat and a far-seeing politician. It was in circumstances like these that the Empress showed the generosity of her nature. Forgetting all the slights and the insults which the Emperor had heaped upon her, she only remembered her duty to him and to the monarchy of which her son was the heir, and freely gave them the help of her high intellect and of her popularity. One could meet her beside her husband whenever danger threatened him or the Empire over which he ruled. It was in such dark hours,

when one misfortune after another was falling on the ancient House of Habsburg, that Elisabeth of Bavaria, ignoring everything else, remembered that, despite the spurnings and denials to which she had been subjected, her place was on the throne to which she had been raised.

In the last years of her life, and especially after the tragic death of the Crown Prince Rudolph, the relations of the Empress with Francis Joseph became more friendly than they had been for a long time. The bereaved father and mother, who had lost their best hope in life through a catastrophe the like of which has never yet been recorded in the annals of any Royal House, were drawn together in those dark hours of agony by a grief shared in common.

The selfish nature of the Emperor, however, soon regained the upper hand; yet, nevertheless, the feelings of respect with which his wife had inspired him at this period of sorrow, owing to the dignity of her attitude and the generosity with which she had laid aside her own wrongs to stand by him, made h[illegible] vaguely realise what a treasure he had had in this woman[illegible]t, and brought him some regret that he had himself thrust her from him. He could not undo the past, but he became more indulgent in regard to the independence manifested by his consort, and interfered no more with her liberty. The Empress found herself free at last to do what she liked and to spend her time as suited her own inclinations without being subjected to everlasting remonstrations. From that day forward Francis Joseph also began to consult the Empress in political matters more than he

had ever done before, seeking her advice and opinions in the difficulties which arose from time to time. He discovered that her common sense, which, in spite of her idealistic instincts, was very great, could be of considerable use to him, and that her soft manners brought to him friends he could never have made for himself without her aid.

The Empress, in spite of her preference for the solitude into which she had retired more than ever after the drama of Mayerling, twice emerged from the shadows. The first time was on the twenty-fifth anniversary of her coronation as Queen of Hungary, when she appeared, together with the Emperor, at the festivities which took place at Budapest to celebrate the event. The second occasion was during the famous visit of the Tsar Nicholas II. and the Tsaritza to Vienna, just after their marriage. This was the last time the Hofburg saw her appear in all the pomp of her royal position, wearing the most precious of the jewels of state, regal and splendid in the black garments she then always wore. Those who were present on this memorable occasion say that her appearance excited even more curiosity than that of the newly wedded Tsaritza, in spite of the great renown of the Empress of Russia as a beauty. After that day the world saw her no more, and Elisabeth vanished, nevermore receiving the homage due to her as a sovereign until that sad day when she reposed in her coffin.

Very soon after the marriage of her second daughter, the Archduchess Marie Valerie, to the Archduke Franz

Salvator, the health of the Empress Elisabeth began to fail. She felt acutely the separation from her youngest child, the only one she had been allowed to keep beside her and to bring up according to her own ideas. Her love of wandering gained the upper hand once more, and she carried her sorrows and fancies all over the world, trying to find solace in new scenes and foreign countries. She spent some time in Paris with her sisters, the Queen of Naples and the Duchess d'Alençon, who lived in the French capital.

She enjoyed her stay in the great city all the more because she indulged in the illusion that she was unknown, and was therefore able to lead the kind of existence which appealed most to her restless heart. The Empress also visited the Riviera, where the sunshine and warmth of the climate was a perpetual joy to her. The wonderful air and the wealth of flowers in that happy corner of Europe spoke to her imagination a language that it loved to hear.

The Emperor came to see her once or twice at the Hôtel du Cap Martin, where she resided, and during the quiet walks which they took together in the olive woods which surround the place Elisabeth became more charitable in heart toward the man who, instead of the love for which her whole soul had craved, had given the barren splendour of a crown which, for her, had so often been one of thorns. Seeing her thus, lonely and beautiful in spite of her years and the griefs that had shadowed her existence, he must surely also have felt some regret that

he had misjudged her. At least we must hope that such was the case, because if he allowed her to guess that he felt some such sentiment it might have given consolation to the broken heart of the poor Empress.

The story of her last hours is too well known to repeat here. She found rest at last after her stormy life, which began so brilliantly and ended in tempest. For years Elisabeth had been tossed from side to side in the vain quest of a peace which the grave alone gave her, suddenly and unexpectedly. The shores of Corfu, which she loved so well, see her no longer; the Achilleion, which she built with such enthusiasm, has passed into hands that she would probably never have consented to have touched again had she guessed they would one day be dyed with so much blood.

All the emotions that filled the soul of Elisabeth, Empress of Austria, all the poetry which lay hidden in her heart, all the sorrows which she had to bear, and the few joys that were granted to her—all came to an end. She lies in the cold vault of the Capuchin Church, beside the coffin of the son whose tragic death changed her into a *Mater Dolorosa*, wandering with her despair all over the earth, and never again smiling on a world that had neither appreciated nor understood her. Her body was taken back to Vienna with every manifestation of grief on the part of the people of Geneva. An Imperial train was sent from Vienna to carry her remains back to Austria. Officials, ladies-in-waiting, high dignitaries, started for Switzerland to escort their Empress on this last, mournful

journey, but none among her family accompanied them. When she was placed in her coffin, neither her husband nor her daughter were present to give a last kiss, to say a last prayer over her mortal remains. Francis Joseph was reported to be ill; the Archduchess Marie Valerie was said to be in attendance upon him. Elisabeth of Bavaria only found mercenary hands to lay her on her bier, to bid her the supreme good-bye. She had been lonely in her life, and her death was also a lonely one. Perhaps, after all, it was what she would have preferred. Who knows?

CHAPTER III

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

FEW Royal Houses can boast of so many Princes and Princesses as that of Habsburg. To-day there are no fewer than thirty-one Archdukes and fifty Archduchesses, all standing more or less in the direct line of succession to the throne. This populous family circle, which, by the way, is far from being happy or united, is entirely under the sway of the Emperor Francis Joseph, on whom alone its members are dependent for their yearly allowance, and who, according to the statutes that rule the reigning house, is the sole master of their fate. The Emperor can deprive them of their rank and privileges, or even have them imprisoned at his will, without any chance of protest against whatever decisions it may please him to make.

As can be imagined, tyranny of this kind, when harshly exercised—as it has been—is the direct cause of a multitude of intrigues, the details of some few of which with but little variation repeat themselves in books about the Habsburgs. The descendants of Marie Thérèse have never been famed for puritanical virtues. They have not even misbehaved with dignity or with propriety, but simply lowered themselves to the level of the companions which they found for themselves, for no other reason than

that it was amusing and appealed to their coarse tastes. The Emperor himself gave them no high example to follow, though he simulated affront, surprise, and grief whenever it came to his ears that one of his numerous nephews or cousins had succumbed to the temptation of sacrificing to those gods whom it is not usual to mention in polite society. They failed to appreciate the foolishness of believing that what the Emperor allowed himself to perform his relatives were also at liberty to do. The result was that *they* paid for the milk spilt, while the Sovereign remained peacefully in possession of all the facilities which his unapproachable position allotted to him, secure in the fact that he was entirely above the criticisms of men and the disapproval of his own family.

Francis Joseph had three brothers. Of these, the cleverest was undoubtedly the charming, fascinating, and amiable Archduke Maximilian, whom a cruel fate was to send to die on Mexican shores. This Prince had none of the failings and all the qualities of the House of Habsburg Lorraine. He had profited far better than any of his brothers by the lessons which their mother, the Archduchess Sophy, had instilled into their minds, and he had proved an able pupil to the masters who had been responsible for his education. A sailor by profession, he had voyaged all over the world, during which he had won the affection of superiors and subordinates. While acting as Viceroy of Milan he had succeeded in making himself popular, even in Italy, where the name of Austria was violently detested. Had Archduke Maximilian been

allowed to do as he liked, and to rule the countries confided to his care along the lines of the liberal principles which he professed, it is likely that the whole course of history in that part of Italy would have turned out differently, and that the House of Savoy would have found it more difficult than was the case to bring about Italian Unity. But when the Emperor Francis Joseph and the Empress visited their Italian dominions in the early days of their married life, Francis Joseph became jealous of the affection with which the Archduke was viewed by the population of the Duchy of Milan, and decided to remove him to another sphere, with the result that the war of 1859 with France and the Kingdom of Sardinia put an end to Austrian domination in the Peninsula.

In the meanwhile Maximilian, at the time still Viceroy of Lombardy, had married the Princess Charlotte of Belgium, the only daughter of King Leopold I., and an exceedingly clever and ambitious woman. He retired with his bride to Miramar, on the Adriatic Sea, where he had built for himself a fairy-like residence in which he hoped to forget the worries and difficulties of his brief sojourn in Italy.

The Archduke Maximilian was an attractive man, with all the instincts of an ancient knight of chivalry, always ready to put his person and his sword at the service of the oppressed ones of this earth. His dreamy, idealistic character had much in common with that of his sister-in-law, and the two became great friends, a friendship which was shared by the Archduchess Charlotte. When the

Empress returned to Europe, after wintering at Madeira, she landed at Trieste and repaired to Miramar, where she spent some happy weeks with the owners of this lovely place. When she returned to her gilded captivity at the Hofburg, and to the companionship of Francis Joseph and his haughty and imperious mother, her impatience and grief at being compelled to leave the cordial hospitality of Miramar was interpreted in a most malicious sense by busybodies eager to make bad blood between the Emperor and his consort. The vanity of Francis Joseph was hurt at the thought that his brother might have won some affection from the lonely woman who had hitherto met with so little sympathy in her own family circle, in spite of the exalted position that she occupied in it.

After the Empress had returned from Miramar petty persecutions began to be exercised against the Archduke Maximilian, which at last led to the exchange of a violent correspondence between him and Francis Joseph. The result of this quarrel would have probably led to the banishment of Maximilian from the Court, and also from Miramar, had not unforeseen circumstances caused the crown of Mexico to be offered to Maximilian. He accepted it only because he felt his position had become so intolerable that, exile for exile, he and his wife—with whom he was in perfect accord on that point as well as on all others—preferred one across the seas, where at least they would be, as they thought, masters of their actions, to the uncertainty of an existence

which they knew but too well might become absolutely intolerable. They found themselves objects of continual suspicion in Austria, and were but too well aware that the situation might easily provoke a tragedy which their feelings of family pride, and their attachment to the traditions of their race, made it a duty for them to try to avert by every means in their power.

As for the Emperor Francis Joseph, it was with very mixed feelings that he heard about the new prospect that opened up before his brother; he was glad, nevertheless, to have him out of the way. On the other hand, he hated to think that Maximilian would become an Emperor as he was. Had he dared, he would have objected to this plan of the Archduke, but then he found suddenly before him an adversary on whom he had not reckoned. The ambitious soul of the Archduchess Sophy, his mother, saw in the elevation to Imperial rank of her second son an addition to the family glory of the Habsburgs, as well as an advantageous establishment for him; therefore, she was heart and soul in favour of the proposal. When the Emperor declared he would not give his consent to the proposition brought by the Mexican deputies, she interfered and boldly told him that he had always shown himself a bad brother to Maximilian, and that if he persisted in his wish to deprive her second son of advantages that would allow him to have an independent position, she would leave Vienna immediately and retire to Miramar for the rest of her days. This would have pleased neither Francis Joseph nor his Ministers. They

well knew the Archduchess was capable of being a most dangerous enemy, and by her opposition to the Government might have brought about serious difficulties.

The possibility of a revolution in Hungary, where the person of the Emperor at that time was most unpopular, was still a serious contingency. Had it come to pass it would have robbed Francis Joseph of his kingship and elevated in his place, as King of Hungary, the Archduke Maximilian. The Ministers at Vienna admitted that the idea was not such a preposterous thing as it might appear at first sight. The advisers of the Austrian Sovereign, therefore, told him that, all things considered, it would be better to allow the Archduke to start for his Mexican adventure, but only on the condition that he renounced once for all his rights to the succession of the Imperial throne, and also the fortune to which he was entitled as an Archduke. A further provision they advocated was that, in case events prevented Maximilian from remaining in Mexico, he was not to return or to settle in his native land without the express permission of the Emperor.

The conditions put forward by his Ministers, as being the only ones under which he would give his consent to the Archduke's departure, were accepted by Francis Joseph and submitted to Maximilian, rather to the consternation of the latter. But things were already too far advanced for him to go back. He had given his word to the Mexican deputies, and he also felt that if he now recoiled from the regal state he had assumed his already

difficult existence would become even more intolerable. With the consciousness, therefore, that since the die was cast there was no retracing his steps, he declared himself ready to subscribe to his brother's wishes, with the one reservation of retaining possession of his beloved Miramar for his life time; but the favour was refused—Francis Joseph had long envied Maximilian his beautiful palace.

Charlotte felt the injustice more than her husband. She refused to go to Vienna to take solemn leave of the Imperial Family, and a meeting was arranged at Gratz between her and her mother-in-law. The Archduchess Sophy, accompanied by the Empress Elisabeth, travelled thither to wish the new Sovereigns a last good-bye. Francis Joseph, however, declared that he would come to Miramar to accept his brother's renunciation of his patrimonial rights and to bid him God-speed. His visit, which was surrounded by all the pomp required by etiquette on such occasions, passed off very stiffly and with much ceremony on both sides. But when the Emperor, who had been accompanied by the Archduke Maximilian to the little railway station in the park of the castle, was about to board the train that was to take him back to Vienna a sudden remorse seized him, and, turning round, he just said one word, "Max," and opened his arms to the Archduke. The latter threw himself in them, and for the last time in their lives the two brothers exchanged a warm and fervent embrace.

Three years later the last act of the Queretaro tragedy was about to take place, and the hapless Mexican Monarch

was soon to be brutally put to death by Juarez. For how much did the memory of that embrace on the station at Miramar count?

When things came to this pass with Maximilian the Archduchess Sophy implored Francis Joseph to make an effort to save his brother, and to threaten the Emperor Napoleon with a break of the diplomatic relations between Austria and France in case he persisted in his design to bring back to Europe the corps of French troops which were the only defence left to Maximilian against his enemies. Francis Joseph brutally declined, and declared that the matter did not concern him any longer—his brother had made his own choice, and no one else was responsible for his lack of success. He reminded his mother, with that brutality to which he sometimes gave way in spite of the restraint which he exercised in her presence, that he had always been averse to the plan of sending an Archduke to try his fate among a land of savages. Unworthy motives, he proclaimed, had been ascribed to his opposition; he could now no longer be of any use to his brother, and, moreover, he had to consider before everything else the interests of Austria. He refused even tc allow his Ministers at Mexico to take any official steps in the hope of saving Maximilian, giving as his excuse that it was ridiculous to threaten when it was impossible to carry threats into effect, and, besides, it was beneath his dignity to plead with a brute like the leader of the Mexican rebels.

In spite, however, of the opposition of the Emperor

Francis Joseph, an effort was made by the Austrian legation in Mexico. This was at the instigation of the Archduchess Sophy, but so feebly was it carried out that it was interpreted rather as a matter of form than as a real desire to snatch the victim from the hands of Juarez.

After the heroic death of Maximilian the Empress Charlotte became insane. The Emperor Francis Joseph shed many tears in public and expressed himself as unutterably shocked at the awful tragedy of Maximilian's end, but in truth his grief was essentially conventional, and interfered neither with his sleep nor his digestion. The horror of the drama, in which his brother lost his life and his sister-in-law her reason, made little impression on the placidity of Francis Joseph, and when the remains of the hapless Mexican Sovereign were at last given up by Juarez, and brought back to Vienna, Francis Joseph considered that he had performed all the duties which nature and the exigencies of Society expected of him. He laid a beautiful wreath upon his coffin, and after this last proof of remembrance considered himself free from all further obligations in regard to the memory of a brother he had never loved but often feared.

The Empress Charlotte was removed to Belgium by her own relatives, and Miramar became the property of the Austrian Crown. During her lifetime the Empress Elisabeth used sometimes to go and spend a few weeks there, buried in the remembrance of a past that she, at least, had not forgotten. The Crown Princess Stephanie was also fond of this silent, solitary royal palace, where

the murmurs of the sea that surrounded it seemed perpetually to mourn for the master who had gone from it for ever on a beautiful summer day that for him was to have no morrow. It was at Miramar that Stephanie was married to her second husband, Count Lonyay. Later on the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his consort, the Duchess of Hohenberg, used to visit the castle from time to time; but now it lies mostly deserted the whole year round. Perhaps it is better so, because no Habsburg can really understand all the poetry contained within its walls nor the soul of the man who built it with such love and care; whose ghost, if ghosts exist, must surely haunt the spot he cherished with such tenderness.

The next brother of Francis Joseph was the Archduke Charles Louis, with whom he always remained upon excellent terms, owing probably to the great resemblance in their characters and to the fact that the younger one always gave in to his elder. In the 'nineties the Archduke was a fat old man, with courteous manners, an immense amount of small talk at his disposition, and none of the Habsburg arrogance. Rumour says that he was upon bad terms with his nephew, the Archduke Rudolph, and that had the latter succeeded to the throne of his uncle, he would have lost no occasion to snub Charles.

Fate, however, was kind to Archduke Charles Louis; it successively removed from his path all the people who might have proved troublesome to him. He lived an entirely commonplace life, which he managed to make

most comfortable for himself and the reverse for others. He was married three times: first, to the Princess Margaret of Saxony, who died after giving birth to a stillborn infant two years later; his next wife was a Princess of Bourbon Sicily, by whom he had three sons, of whom the eldest, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, was to perish at Sarajevo, while the second, Archduke Otto, became the father of the present heir to the Austrian Crown. The second wife died from consumption. After two years Charles Louis again sought an alliance, which he found in the person of one of the most beautiful women in Europe—one of the six lovely daughters of the Portuguese Pretender, Dom Miguel—the Infanta Marie Thérèse. He tormented, bullied, and generally made her life miserable for something like a quarter of a century until, to her undoubted relief, a merciful Providence removed him to a land where, according to all probability, Austrian Archdukes do not enjoy the exalted position which belonged to them in the world.

The Archduchess Marie Thérèse was a very clever woman, who managed to attain considerable influence not only in Court circles but in the outside world, and who, being gifted with wonderful tact, made an admirable stepmother, obtaining her stepchildren's affection and respect, and coming to their help whenever it was possible to do so. The Archduke Otto, her husband's second son, was past praying for, and besides also took unto himself a wife who knew very well how to get on in life and who did not require the assistance of the

Portuguese Infanta to make herself loved and respected. But the eldest son of the family, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, found in his father's wife the kindest of friends and a valuable help, as well as encouragement in the romance which ended in his marriage to the Countess Sophy Chotek.

The Archduchess Marie Thérèse was the only member of the Imperial Family who held her own with the Emperor, and who obliged the latter to reckon with her opinions and judgments. She contrived in a very short time to secure a position of independence and in a certain sense to replace the late Archduchess Sophy without, however, showing any signs of the imperious temper which characterised the latter. Since the death of the Crown Prince Rudolph the Empress Elisabeth had definitely withdrawn from the social world of Vienna; she never again graced a Court ball with her presence. The Archduchess Marie Thérèse took her place, and did the honours of the Hofburg by the side of Francis Joseph until her own widowhood obliged her to withdraw into the retirement imposed by Austrian etiquette on an Imperial Princess when her husband dies.

This, however, did not prevent Marie Thérèse from remaining the most important personage in the House of Habsburg, one whom even Francis Joseph did not dare to contradict. So strong was her position that when it was rumoured that she was about to re-marry, and take for husband the master of her household, the Count Cavriani, not one voice in the whole of Viennese society

dared say a word against her. The report, however, turned out to be quite untrue.

Marie Thérèse is still a power at Court, and though she is seldom seen in public, it is to her that one applies in the many emergencies inseparable from the existence of Royal personages, and it is her advice and opinions which prevail in all matters where etiquette comes into question. She still lives in Vienna during the winter months, whilst her summers are spent at the castle of Reichstadt in Bohemia, which she has embellished and transformed into a modern habitation where mediæval walls and furniture rival twentieth-century comforts. It was at Reichstadt that the marriage of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand with Countess Chotek took place, and it was largely due to the influence of the former's step-mother that it became possible.

When the Archduchess Isabella turned the unfortunate Countess Chotek, who had attracted the heir to the Austrian monarchy, out of her house, and the young lady found every door, including those of her nearest relatives, closed against her, it was Marie Thérèse who went to fetch her from the convent at Prague to which she had retired, and who took her into her own house, pleading her cause with the Emperor. She took upon herself, too, all the arrangements in connection with the wedding, which she insisted was to take place in her own private chapel. She it was who fastened on the head of the bride the diamond diadem that had formerly belonged to her future husband's mother, and once upon a time had adorned

Photo: Adele

ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND AND
THE DUCHESS OF HOHENBERG

the brow of Queen Caroline of Naples. Her relations with the newly married couple whom she had befriended remained excellent until the catastrophe of Sarajevo claimed them as its victims, and immediately upon hearing of it she went to Konopischt, where the unfortunate children of her stepson and of the Duchess of Hohenberg were staying, and herself broke to them the terrible news of their parents' horrible death. And when, thanks to the intrigues of a certain Prince who is a favourite of the Emperor, the funeral of Francis Ferdinand and of his wife was celebrated in a way which, to say the least of it, was absolutely indecent, Marie Thérèse was the only one who dared tell Francis Joseph to his face what she thought of him, as well as declare to him that if he did not grant to the sons and daughter of his murdered nephew the yearly income usually awarded to Austrian Archdukes, she would resign in their favour the allowance which she drew as the widow of their grandfather.

The argument proved effective, because her wishes were taken into consideration and the future of the children assured in a manner befitting their rank and station in life. It must here be remarked that had it not been for this intervention of the Archduchess the fate of these children might have been very different, as the great fortune enjoyed by their father as heir of the Duke of Modena passed, according to the Duke's will, to the young Archduke Karl Franz Joseph until his accession to the throne, when it would revert to his youngest son.

Francis Ferdinand had always been his stepmother's

favourite, but his other brothers, too, were the object of her care and attention. The youngest of the three, Ferdinand Charles, who was the best looking of the whole family, became the hero of a romance that caused a mild sensation in Viennese society. He was of a retiring and studious disposition, and did not care for the pleasures generally dear to young men of his age. He was very much liked for the affability of his manners and his absence of affectation, as well as for a great generosity and kindness that always made him seek occasions to become useful to others.

Ferdinand sought the society of men capable of sympathising with him and of sharing his favourite pursuits. He cared for literature, and had assembled a considerable library of well-selected books mostly treating of historical and scientific matters. He was the first Archduke who was to be seen in the houses of men who had made for themselves a name among the learned ones of their country, and it was in their company rather than in that of the golden youth of Vienna that he could be found. As he was a youngest son, his tastes did not enter into account at Court, and people did not trouble to make any ill-natured reports concerning him to the Emperor. Francis Joseph, too, was also supremely indifferent to a nephew about whom he never thought, reserving his attention for the sons of the Archduke Otto, in whom he saw his future successors and whom, as such, he had carefully watched by those among his personal attendants and friends who cared for that sort of work.

Love Affairs of Ferdinand Charles

Meanwhile, Ferdinand Charles had met at the house of one of the professors at the Vienna University, with whom he had struck up a great friendship, a girl who captivated his imagination by the charm of her manners as well as by her extreme beauty. Her name was Bertha Tschuber, and her father was a famous mathematician whose fame had gone far beyond the limits of his native country. For something like two years the Archduke paid his addresses to her and tried to persuade her to marry him in secret, as he could hardly hope to obtain the sanction of the Emperor to their union. She absolutely refused to lower herself to what she justly thought would be considered in the light of personal mercenary aims, and, besides, did not care to run the risk of seeing her marriage declared illegal, as it would surely have been if it did not receive the Imperial consent.

It is difficult to say how the matter would have ended had not Marie Thérèse interfered in favour of the young people. She took upon herself the task of smoothing the obstacles which stood in the way of their union, but though she pleaded hard with Francis Joseph to induce him to permit a morganatic marriage, she only obtained this permission on the condition that the Archduke would renounce his titles and rank, and would consent to be known in the future by the name of plain Ferdinand Burg, engaging himself at the same time never to live in Austria or to show himself in Vienna. In return the Emperor promised Ferdinand Charles an income which, though moderate, was yet quite sufficient for his

requirements. The young Archduke was but too glad to obtain his liberty at the price, and he settled in Munich, where he soon made himself very much liked and respected by the dignity of his conduct, manners, and general demeanour.

His marriage proved to be an extremely happy one, and the daughter of Professor Tschuber showed herself quite worthy of the honour of her wifely estate. Unfortunately for them both, the health of Ferdinand Charles, which had never been good, began to fail, and it soon became evident that he had inherited from his mother the seeds of consumption. The best care could not cure the insidious advances of disease, and poor Ferdinand Charles died in 1914, after a brief period of happiness that had been very great, and which would have probably remained so, as both he and his wife had the same tastes and were quite suited to one another. The Archduchess Marie Thérèse came from Vienna to attend her stepson's deathbed, and helped to nurse him with that devotion which she knew so well how to bring in regard to everything that she did concerning her stepchildren, to whom she had always shown herself the best of mothers.

During her long married life Marie Thérèse had given birth to two daughters, of whom the eldest, Marie Annonciade, was appointed Abbess of the Convent of Noble Ladies of the Hradschin, in Prague, a purely honorary position which, however, conferred a large income as well as a very high rank on the holder. Previous to the Archduchess Annonciade, the place had

been occupied by the now Dowager Queen of Spain, Marie Christine, and it was always given to a Princess belonging to the Imperial House. This convent was something like the abbeys of ancient France—a refuge for ladies devoid of means and whose noble birth was beyond dispute. They were perfectly at liberty to marry if they liked, when, of course, they had to renounce the privileges appertaining to their association, for it could hardly be called anything else. Among other rights the abbess had that of crowning the Queens of Hungary, an occasion upon which she appeared in full canonicals with a mitre on her head and a staff in her hand, just as if she had been a real *religieuse*.

The Archduchess Marie Annonciade was but eighteen years of age when she was called upon to occupy this important office, which, thanks to the sound advice that she received from her mother, and had the good sense to follow, she contrived to fulfil to the satisfaction of all concerned. After the death of her half-brother, the Archduke Otto, when the latter's consort found herself, in her turn, compelled to retire from the world, and until the marriage of Otto's son with the Princess Zita of Bourbon Parma, it was the Archduchess Marie Annonciade who did the honours of the Hofburg, in connection with which she was given a household of her own and became absolutely independent. She is a very great lady in manners and a most affable Princess, who has won for herself golden opinions in Vienna, where her great courtesy in regard to the dowagers, whose word had long

been law in Society, has been the more appreciated because these severe ladies had not been considered as of much account either by the late Empress or the Crown Princess Stephanie. Especially noticeable had always been the impatience of the Crown Princess, whose aversion for every kind of constraint had made her many enemies.

The sister of Marie Annonciade, the Archduchess Elisabeth Amelie, was married to a Prince Liechtenstein, who in all probability will one day succeed to the family estates and the principality of that name. She is very pretty and resembles her mother more than the Habsburgs, whose lower lip she has not inherited by some kind of miracle, for which, I suppose, she feels immeasurably grateful.

The Archduke Otto—often referred to as the half-brother of these young ladies—who ought in due course to have succeeded his uncle on the thrones of Austria and Hungary, was spoken of with bated breath in Society as "one of the worst men who ever lived." Stories without number are related of his excesses and extravagances and the bad treatment which he showered upon his wife, a Princess of Saxony and a most admirable woman, who bore with him with exemplary patience. When he was dying of a loathsome disease Marie Josepha went to nurse him, though they had not lived together for more than ten years. She remained with him to the end, attending to his wants with a devotion that excited the admiration of all his doctors and attendants, and which

no sister of charity could have equalled. Archduke Otto was a thoroughly bad man, who respected nothing, believed in nothing, and was never stayed by thought of any pain that he would inflict on others if by doing so he could obtain gratification of any of his fancies.

Among the tales that were related about him there are two which deserve more than a passing mention. One day when out riding in the neighbourhood of Vienna he met a funeral on its way to the churchyard. A wild thought seized hold of him, and, setting his horse straight for the procession, he made it spring across the coffin that was being carried to the grave. The scandalised family of the deceased complained to the Emperor in energetic terms concerning the conduct of the Archduke, and his freak led to an exile for some long time in Oedenburg, in Upper Austria, where he spent his days more in riotous living than in the fulfilment of his military duties.

The other story is too difficult to relate delicately, especially as it concerns a shocking indignity to which he caused his wife to be subjected. After this drunken escapade the Archduchess thought it was high time to apply to the Emperor, who, entering into the difficulties of her position, and for once showing himself kind to a member of his own family, allowed her to live apart from her husband, and even conferred an independent income upon her.

The Archduchess Marie Josepha was a very pretty woman, and a good one into the bargain. Being the mother of the future heir to the throne, and exercising a

very real influence over him, she was rather more considered than the other Princesses of the Imperial Family, and she became the leader of a powerful party at Court. This circle acquired further strength owing to the fact that it identified itself with the Clerical party and with the Jesuits, who wanted to rule under her name and that of her son at some future time. She was liked by Francis Joseph, but nevertheless did not influence him to the same extent as the Archduchess Marie Thérèse, who was far cleverer than her stepdaughter-in-law, with whom, though outwardly on the best of terms, she did not thoroughly sympathise. The two ladies used to see each other frequently, and in regard to certain matters acted together, understanding very well that union is the best strength. But it is to be questioned whether, if either of them had become an Empress, she would have shown herself as affectionate to the other one as was the case when they were both, as it were, equals in rank.

The great preoccupation of the Archduchess Marie Josepha is her two sons, especially the eldest, who, owing to the morganatic marriage of his uncle, had always been considered as the eventual heir to the throne. He is a mild young man, one of those who are commonly called very good boys. He inherited his mental capacity from his mother's family, who came from the House of Saxony, which had never been famed for a superabundance of executive ability. For the present I will merely say that he will assuredly prove to be a docile Emperor, and at least he has no vices. He is blessed with a very pretty

wife of his own mental calibre. She will make an excellent Empress, especially in such a diminished and unimportant country as Austria will become after the present war. Francis Ferdinand, his uncle, was a quite different individuality. He would have asserted himself, most probably, in an unexpected way had it been granted to him to succeed to his uncle.

The member of the Imperial Family with most influence at the present day is the Archduke Frederick, who by reason of his immense fortune—inherited from his uncle, the Archduke Albert—has acquired an authority and an importance far exceeding that of any of his cousins. He is supposed to be an excellent general, though his relative, the Archduke Joseph Ferdinand of Tuscany, has given proofs of much greater military talent. But Frederick, by reason of his age, has become a *persona grata* with the Emperor, who frequently consults him in matters of state on such subjects as he consents to discuss with anyone else but his own conscience and common sense.

The Archduke is married to the Princess Isabella of Croy, a daughter of the late Duke. The marriage caused a nine-days' wonder, though the Croys were considered a family having the right to ally itself to Royalty. She is a stout and enterprising lady, with an erratic temper, a fair endowment of haughtiness, and much ambition. The couple have a quiverful of daughters, who with one exception have married common mortals boasting of unimpeachable quarterings. They also have one son, who will one day come into possession

of the enormous and splendid estates which his father owns and which, but for his advent, after his parents had been already married about twenty years, would have gone to a collateral branch of the Habsburg family.

I notice that I have not spoken yet of the Emperor's youngest daughter, the Archduchess Marie Valerie, which is an unpardonable omission if one remembers that she is a very considerable personage by reason of the uncontestable influence which she wields over her father, an influence that once even exceeded that of Frau Schratt, the great friend and Egeria of Francis Joseph. Marie Valerie rules the Court, though she does not own to the fact, as well as all matters relating to the domestic affairs of the Hofburg and of Schönbrunn. She is clever in her way, with none of the charm but much of the manner of her mother, the late Empress Elisabeth. The Archduchess Marie Valerie can show herself very determined on occasions when she thinks that her interests, her welfare or her comforts come into question. She has married a younger son of a Habsburg branch that once reigned in Tuscany, a good-natured fellow who thinks of nothing else but his family and the game he is about to shoot or has already shot. They have a numerous family. Her eldest daughter is the most beautiful of the children, but to her mother's great sorrow the Archduchess Elisabeth did not elect to wed an Archduke; she married in preference a simple captain in the army—Count George of Waldbourg.

These marriages of the young Archduchesses of the

present generation with private gentlemen belonging to the highest aristocracy have been very frequent lately. The Emperor's granddaughter, the Archduchess Elisabeth, the only child of the poor Crown Prince Rudolph —whom there had been a question of uniting to the King of Spain—led the way in such unions. She fell violently in love with Prince Otto Windisch Graetz, a younger son of the illustrious house. A proverb has long been current in Vienna concerning the House of Graetz. It runs: "God has created clever men, stupid men, and Windisch Graetzes." If one is to believe all that one hears, the husband of the Princess Elisabeth is no exception to this rule—a fact which, happily for her, his wife has so far not realised.

CHAPTER IV

THE AFFAIRS OF FRANCIS FERDINAND

AFTER the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand no one of sufficient personal importance to take his place was left in the Austrian Imperial Family. The new heir to the throne will certainly never dare to emerge from his present attitude of strict submission to the will of the old Emperor. He lacks that initiative of which his uncle had, perhaps, too much.

The unfortunate victim of the Sarajevo tragedy—if we are to believe those who knew him well—was not at all the kind of man he has been commonly represented. In fact, all through his life he kept the general public profoundly ignorant as to his real aims and ambitions. Francis Ferdinand, though heavy and dull in appearance, was gifted with more insight into human nature than he has been given credit for, and he had nothing of the warlike character which has been attributed to him. On the contrary, he showed himself on more than one occasion the restraining spirit among the advisers of the Emperor. In particular, he could never be brought to endorse the policy of Count Aerenthal, whom he profoundly disliked, and mistrusted even more than he detested. He had applied himself to the reorganisation

of the Austrian army, not because he was anxious to bring about a war, but because he did not intend, in case his country should be drawn into one—an entirely different thing—that Austria should be compelled to play second fiddle to her Prussian allies.

At the time of the last Balkan crisis he had displayed extreme moderation, and is wrongly supposed to have urged the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Austrian Empire. This measure, the forerunner of so much trouble, originated entirely in the fertile mind of Count Aerenthal, who had always nursed the ambition of becoming the Bismarck of his country and of earning for himself a name in her diplomatic annals by making her come out of her outwardly relative passivity to assume the leadership in the Balkan Peninsula. Moreover, he saw clearly that in that part of the world, with a little management, Austria could easily find the opportunity she had sought ever since 1848 to pay out Russia for the help the latter country had awarded her at the time of her Hungarian misfortunes.

Count Aerenthal was of Hebrew origin, and, like the generality of converts, he was a fanatic. Furthermore, he remained all his life more or less under the influence of the Jesuits, though he was not at all a devout sort of man in the church-going sense; in fact, he was not given to going to church more than was absolutely necessary to establish his reputation as a right-thinking man in those circles of Viennese society which could further the development of his career. He had applied himself to

study the character of the Emperor, and, with singular insight into its intricacies, had at once put his finger on the vulnerable spot of that selfish, opinionated nature—its immeasurable vanity. From the day when, still as a young secretary of legation, he had replaced one of his chiefs during a temporary absence, and had been admitted to the honour of presenting a report on some diplomatic incident to the Sovereign, he had contrived to please him, principally by the apparent astonishment and admiration which he had assumed at every word and remark uttered by Francis Joseph.

The Emperor had not been used to produce such an impression on his Ministers, especially on those who during the past twenty-five years had had the direction of the outward politics of his Empire. Count Andrassy, for instance, had never taken the trouble to dissimulate his impatience whenever the Emperor had attempted to inquire as to any of the details of the Count's administration of the Foreign Office. Baron von Haymerle had said nothing, but allowed Francis Joseph to guess a good deal, and had flatly refused to follow his indications on several occasions. As for Count Goluchowski, who had all the haughtiness of the Polish aristocracy to which he belonged, he had simply ignored his Imperial Master until the day when, thoroughly disgusted by the turn which events were taking, he had retired into private life. With Count —at that time still Mr.—Aerenthal things were very different. He made a special point of always taking the orders of the Emperor before making any suggestion to

him, but contrived to do it in such a cunning way that in the long run it was *he* who decided everything and *his* plans that were put into execution.

The annexation of Bosnia and of Herzegovina, for example, was hinted at in one of these private conversations. The old Monarch at once declared that he had all along thought it was a shame this measure had not been resorted to long ago, and finally took upon himself the responsibility of this bold step about which he would never have troubled but for the activity of Count Aerenthal.

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand was perfectly well aware of this state of things, and it made him dislike even more than he had done before his uncle's adviser and Minister. The Archduke, whatever has been related to the contrary, had no hostile intentions against anyone among the neighbours of Austria. Indeed, he was very averse to any complications likely to bring the Monarchy into trouble—complications for which public opinion might have made him answerable. His one great ambition was to consolidate the position of his wife and children, and, if possible, to arrange matters so that his son might succeed him, if not in Austria, at least in Hungary. When he had married the Countess Sophy Chotek—a union which would never have taken place had it not been for the stupidity of the Archduchess Isabella, who, in thrusting out of her house her unfortunate lady-in-waiting, compromised her so thoroughly that the Archduke could but offer her the only reparation which

lay in his power and wed her—Francis Ferdinand had been compelled by his uncle to renounce for his posterity all rights, not only to the succession to the throne, but also to the immense inheritance of the Duke of Modena, which constituted the bulk of his future fortune. I use the word "future" because, though the vast estates of the ducal family of Este passed to the Archduke, their revenues continued to be enjoyed by the widow of their last owner, the Princess Adelgonda of Bavaria. She died in October, 1914, four months after the murder of her nephew, when the present heir to the Austrian throne, the young Archduke Charles Francis Joseph, stepped into her place.

Francis Ferdinand, who was always supposed to be very rich, had in reality very little beyond his allowance as a member of the Imperial Family to live upon, together with some estates that he had inherited from his father, which were encumbered by the large dowry which his stepmother drew from them. When people in Vienna, who did not like either him or his wife, reproached them for what they called their meanness, they did not realise that he drew no revenue from the Modena estates, and far from having the millions attributed to him, the Archduke had to be very careful with his money—the more so in order that he might make provision for his children. The Countess Chotek had no money of her own. The children, therefore, would have been left with but a very modest fortune if the Archduchess Marie Thérèse, their father's stepmother, had not intervened

on their behalf and persuaded the Emperor to give them for their lifetime an allowance of the same proportions as enjoyed by all the Archdukes and Archduchesses.

Considering these facts, of which no one abroad and but few people in Austria were aware, it will not be difficult for the reader to believe that Francis Ferdinand's immediate interests commanded him to try and smooth over any political difficulties likely to compromise the peace of the Austrian Monarchy which might have arisen. He was perfectly well aware that, should his wife survive him before her position had been put on an unassailable footing, she would find herself in most terrible difficulties, both from a moral and a material point of view. The Imperial Family detested her, and the society of Vienna had not forgiven her for a marriage which had at once raised her to a pinnacle to which even the daughters of the haughtiest princely family of the upper aristocracy could not have aspired. She had lived a secluded life since she had become the consort of the heir to the throne, and this also was reproached to her and put to the account of a pride which seemed out of place to those who had known her as a girl. Then she was of no importance and had been glad to obtain the appointment of lady-in-waiting to the Archduchess Isabella—a position which had allowed her to become independent of the relatives on whose bounty she had been thrown when the death of her parents had left her almost without resources.

Count and Countess Chotek had both been delightful people, had spent their money freely in the various

diplomatic posts which they had occupied, shown themselves admirable hosts, and been immensely popular; but they had never given a thought to the morrow or to the future of their numerous children. Providence, however, had been kind to them in that all their daughters married admirably well. There were six of them, and none were provided for when the Count died, after a mental illness which had necessitated his confinement in an asylum. Countess Chotek had died a few years before. The happy home in which their children had been reared was broken up, and the children left to make their own way in the world as best they could. They had all inherited the great charm of their father and mother, and were general favourites in Viennese society, as well as in Prague, where they had innumerable relations and friends, the Choteks being themselves Czechs and connected with the highest Bohemian aristocracy.

Sophy, who was to ally herself in such an unexpected manner to the Habsburgs, was perhaps the cleverest of her family. This fact, however, did not help to smooth the ground before her at the time when her love-romance with the Archduke directed toward her the attention of the whole of Austria. She was perfectly well aware of the angry looks of those whom her marriage had either disappointed or offended, and, as was but natural, this made her shy. It also angered her, though she knew how to conceal her anger. She made up her mind that she would conquer for herself the position which had been refused to her, and began from the first hour of her

marriage to feel her way, very cautiously at first, and with more assurance later, into the good graces of the Emperor.

The latter had never cared for his nephew; he perceived in him signs of an independence of character that jarred upon him, and felt dissatisfied with the ease with which the Archduke had stepped into his position as heir-presumptive, insisting upon being kept instructed as to what was going on in both political and military matters, and making friends and supporters for himself without any reference to his uncle's wishes, likes or dislikes. Francis Joseph, therefore, was not so very sorry when he discovered that the young man who had made himself so disagreeable to him was meditating a marriage which would put him in an awkward position in regard to the whole family; and he gave his consent to this romantic union with less opposition than could have been expected, but surrounded it with all the formalities that he could think of, so as to guard against any possibility of the children which Sophy Chotek might bear to her husband becoming anything but rich private people. Sophy herself was given the title of Princess of Hohenberg, but no rank whatever at Court—a state of affairs which made her position almost unbearable, seeing how strictly Court etiquette was observed at the Hofburg. The new Princess, however, said nothing. The Emperor was already a very old man; she felt she could reasonably hope to survive him. Nevertheless, she set herself to win his good opinion, and partly succeeded, principally

because she persuaded him that she was influencing her husband toward a definite abandonment of his rights to the succession in favour of Charles Francis Joseph (the son of his next brother, Otto), who had always been the great favourite of the Emperor.

Finally, the Emperor fell to quite an appreciable extent under the influence of his clever niece by marriage. Indeed, he conferred upon her the title of Duchess, together with a rank that gave her precedence over all ladies of society with the sole exception of the Archduchesses. Moreover, he liked to have her about him, and this was a source of displeasure to many people, among others to Prince von Montenuovo, the great favourite of the Emperor, who hated the Archduke Francis Ferdinand.

As time went on the Duchess of Hohenberg became an important personage, though she kept always more or less in the background. The Emperor William II., however, was clever enough to seek her friendship; he saw that if he won her good graces she could persuade her husband to enter into the political views of Germany and espouse her quarrels. But she and William II. were at cross purposes; the consort of Francis Ferdinand merely wanted the Emperor's help to consolidate her own position in the present as well as in the future by obtaining its official recognition at foreign Courts; the German Emperor, on the contrary, simply wished to make her a pawn in the complicated game he had already made up his mind to play sooner or later.

Francis Ferdinand at Potsdam

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife were invited to spend a week at Potsdam, where they were awarded a warm welcome, and Sophy Hohenberg treated as if she had been the Archduchess she dreamt of becoming one day. This visit led to another one; this time to Windsor Castle, where King George and Queen Mary received the future Emperor of Austria with the courtesy which they know so well how to show to all who have the honour to become their guests. But though the Duchess was herself accompanied by one of her own relations, who for the occasion filled the place of a lady-in-waiting, she felt that the English Court did not forgo its etiquette so far as to consider her quite as the equal of her husband. This wounded her, but, whatever she might have felt, she effectually concealed it with that self-control for which she was so remarkable, and the visit passed off better than could have been foreseen when it was entered upon.

On their return from England the couple began to show themselves in Society more than had been the case before. They took to entertaining their friends in a quiet way and made a few country-house visits in Bohemia, Galicia and other Austrian provinces. The Duchess, who had always belonged to the extreme Clerical party, but had always refrained from airing her opinions too openly, now showed less reticence. She was preparing her ground for the time when her husband succeeded to his uncle, a moment that she fully intended would see her put at last into the place which she considered to be her due.

According to the Hungarian constitution, she might have been acknowledged as the Queen of that country, and her children declared able to succeed to their father, had Francis Ferdinand cared to make an effort in that direction. It was to make this effort that the Duchess was determined to persuade him. But in order to effect this revolution—for it would be nothing else, according to the traditions which up to that day had ruled all the actions of the Habsburgs—a perfectly peaceful political situation was a *sine qua non*. The Archduke was very well aware of this fact, and this was the reason why he did not view with a favourable eye the adventurous line of policy pursued by Count Aerenthal. Far from approving the annexation of Bosnia and of Herzegovina to the Austrian crown, Francis Ferdinand violently opposed it, though throughout Europe he was given the credit for the contrary, partly through the agency of Aerenthal himself, who, to justify his action before foreign chancelleries, declared that he was not to blame in the matter. The Emperor, influenced by his nephew and heir, Aerenthal said, had personally decided the matter.

The Archduke became aware of this calumny and of the astuteness of his uncle's adviser, who thus shifted the burden on to his shoulders. He was furious with Aerenthal, and they quarrelled, from which time, until Aerenthal's fatal illness, they were greater enemies than ever.

The choice of a successor to Aerenthal became a matter of supreme importance, and though the names of

several candidates were submitted for the approval of the Sovereign, Francis Joseph did not take kindly to any. At this juncture the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who had hitherto never interfered with any of the decisions of the Monarch, came forward and proposed the Austrian Ambassador in Petersburg, Count Berchtold, as the successor of his late *bête noire*.

Count Berchtold was one of his personal friends, and he trusted him more than anyone else among the men who held important posts in the Empire. He was a very amiable man, the perfect type of an Austrian aristocrat—proud, haughty, and more or less convinced that the Almighty, in creating him, had had some quite special views and intentions as to his future. He was very rich, had married a handsome and attractive woman who had been born and bred in the heart of diplomacy, her father, Count Aloys Karolyi, having been successively Austrian Ambassador in Berlin and in London, where the beauty of the Countess Karolyi had made a considerable sensation. Countess Berchtold was a very great lady, with the manners and the attitude of one, and she had been one of the few persons who had neither abused nor turned the cold shoulder on Sophy Chotek when the latter had won the heart of the heir to the Austrian and Hungarian crowns.

Perhaps this circumstance had had something to do with the favour with which he was viewed by Francis Ferdinand.

With Count Berchtold installed at the Ball Platz, the

Archduke thought that he was safe from any complications that could interfere with the plans which he was already preparing for the day when he should become the master.

A serious illness of the old Emperor during the first months of 1914 brought the Archduke more in evidence than had ever been the case before and added considerably to his importance. This was felt everywhere—nowhere more than in Berlin and at Potsdam, where William II. was speculating as to what the future held in reserve for him on the day when his grandfather's old ally, Francis Joseph, should have closed his eyes for ever. He showed himself unusually attentive to Francis Ferdinand and to the latter's consort, and he visited them at Miramar, where they were spending the spring, on his way back from Corfu, whither he had repaired at the beginning of March for his annual holiday. The interview was a most cordial one; the Emperor and Archduke separated apparently on the best of terms. Three months later the German Emperor invited himself at the Castle of Konopischt, in Bohemia. This visit did not end so happily as the former one, because it became clear to William II. that the Archduke did not in the least intend following him in the adventurous policy which he was already dreaming of, and that all his thoughts were concentrated on family matters.

The whole world was convinced that the accession of Francis Ferdinand would mean war within a short time. This opinion had originated from Count Aerenthal, and

had been so cunningly put into circulation that there are a good many people who to this day are convinced that the one bellicose element in Austria was the unfortunate Prince who fell at Sarajevo. In reality, things were entirely different, and it is pretty certain that had Francis Ferdinand not been murdered in such a dastardly manner he would have done much to consolidate the peace of Europe. He had a will of his own, and would never have become a puppet in the hands of his Ministers and advisers, and he was far too good a husband and father to endanger the existence of his wife and children in an adventure which, in any case and whatever the ultimate results, could only have done them harm.

His assassination was one of those misfortunes of which the magnitude can only be appreciated long after it has occurred. It left the field free to all the intrigues of the military party in Austria and of the partisans of war in Germany, and it afforded the pretext, which the latter had long been looking for, to put into execution the programme which has plunged the whole of Europe into chaos and calamity.

Once the Archduke had disappeared there remained no strong man or character in the Imperial Family. The new heir was not of the stuff that heroes, or even men of initiative, are made. He was a perfect example of that obedience in which the Habsburgs are reared in regard to the head of their house, an obedience which never dares to question any of the decisions which it pleases the latter to make. His wife, pretty, insignificant, and admirably

brought up, had neither inclination nor desire to keep herself in touch with what was going on in the political world. She was timid and stood in great awe both of her mother-in-law, the Archduchess Marie Josepha, and of the Archduchess Marie Thérèse.

Zita of Bourbon Parma, it is to be feared, will never assert herself otherwise than in matters of pure etiquette and, perhaps, of fashion. Her husband has, up to now, faithfully performed the duties of his new position, and whenever he has been at the front to review the troops, by order of his uncle, he has smiled when it was necessary, pitied when sympathy was expected of him, and made himself generally agreeable. He has not inspired any enthusiasm in the soldiers he had been told to encourage. Nevertheless he always returned full of the conviction that he had done so, his ears not being sufficiently trained yet to observe the difference between an official and a heart-spoken "Hurrah!"

CHAPTER V

THE PERSONAL FRIENDS OF FRANCIS JOSEPH

THE popular saying that Sovereigns cannot often find disinterested friends could not be better applied than in the case of the present Austrian Emperor. During the whole of his reign he has found hardly any disinterested friends. He did not suffer from this, as his was not a nature that craved for companionship, and he had no real secrets to share with anyone. When he had been young and handsome women had smiled on him, and he had accepted it with that perfect equanimity and conviction of his own merits which has never left him. He had liked his youngest brother, the Archduke Louis Victor, whose tastes resembled his own, and in whose companionship, in spite of the great difference of age that existed between them, he had indulged in the spasmodic outbursts to which he was inclined.

The Archduke Louis was far cleverer than the Emperor, and he had contrived to acquire over Francis Joseph a certain influence which had caused him to be considered as an important personage in the State. But he never could get on with the great favourite of the Emperor, Prince Alfred von Montenuovo, who very soon managed to get him out of the way. This was not diffi-

cult to do, as it was quite sufficient to say to Francis Joseph that the Archduke aspired to become a social and political power, to make him desirous of getting rid of him. It began to be whispered in Court circles that Louis Victor had contracted unmentionable habits, and these rumours reached the ears of Francis Joseph in some apparently inexplicable manner, which, however, was not difficult to trace by any who knew the ins and the outs of the inner life of the Hofburg. The result was that the Archduke received orders to repair to the castle of Kleisheim, near Salzbourg, where he is still kept under severe control on the pretext of not being quite right in his mind. This procedure is a favourite resource with the Habsburgs whenever they wish to put out of their way anyone whom they consider either a nuisance or likely to cause them some annoyance.

With the disappearance of Louis Victor the last link between the Emperor and the outside world was broken. From the day that his brother passed into exile, the only two people who could have free access to him were his old aide-de-camp, General Count Paar, who is perhaps the only man in the whole of Austria who loves his Sovereign truly and sincerely, and whose devotion to him has never varied. The other one is the Grand Master of his Household, Prince Alfred of Montenuovo, who by judicious flattery has implanted himself so firmly at the Hofburg that it is hardly likely he will be dismissed while Francis Joseph lives.

The Prince's influence is the most dominant factor at

Court, and he uses it freely. Unkind people say that his own ambitions are never lost sight of. Even the Archdukes dread him and try to propitiate him, and whenever one among them has attempted to stand in his way he has invariably regretted it afterwards. The Archduchess Marie Valerie abominates Prince von Montenuovo, but nevertheless has so far failed in the repeated efforts she has made to show to her father that his favourite is in no way worthy of the kindness he has received. Her antagonism against the Prince is so strong that, as a penalty for the animosity which she displayed in regard to the one man at the Hofburg whose orders no one ever disputes, she was very nearly deprived of part of the allowance which Francis Joseph makes to her out of his private purse.

It is extremely difficult to explain how the Prince, who is much younger than the Emperor, has contrived to acquire such an empire over Francis Joseph. Some kind-hearted souls have been found to hint that the secret of this affection borne by Francis Joseph for the Prince has its origin in the one which in a distant past he had nursed for the latter's mother, a Countess Batthyany by birth, who enjoyed the reputation of being one of the loveliest women of her generation. But honesty compels one to say that nothing stronger than pure friendship ever existed between them. On the other hand, her husband, William of Montenuovo, who by reason of his relationship with the Imperial family, through his mother, Marie Louise, the widow of Napoleon, had been admitted into

the companionship of the sons of the Archduchess Sophy when these were but small boys, and was strong in their favour. He was indeed a pleasant man, and a great favourite in Vienna society until the illness which struck him a few years before his death, and which obliged him to retire from the world. When the Emperor ascended the throne he continued his friendship with this morganatic cousin of his, and conferred upon him the title of Prince with that of Serene Highness, appointing him at the same time commander-in-chief of the Traban guards, one of the highest distinctions of the Vienna Court. Still, though he was on terms of great intimacy with him, and though their ages, which were about the same, ought to have been a link between them, he never exercised a real influence on the Emperor; and though he was considered to be a personal friend of his, he never enjoyed his entire confidence, as is the case with the present Prince Alfred, from whom his Imperial master has no secrets—perhaps because the latter would never allow him to keep any.

It was thought at one time that Frau Catherine Schratt, the only feminine friend which the Emperor has at present, and who for more years than one would care to count has occupied the position of his chief adviser, was the great power that protected the Grand Master of the Household; but those in the secrets of the gods, and able to know all that goes on in the Hofburg, are sure that far from this being the case, if Frau Schratt could have had her own way Prince von Montenuovo would have

been dismissed long ago. The mystery remains therefore quite unexplainable. But whatever may be the reason for the immense influence exercised by the favourite of the Emperor, there is no gainsaying that it is a very real one, and that it is not likely it will be damaged or shaken, so long as Francis Joseph remains in the land of the living.

Prince von Montenuovo belongs to that happy class of people who believe themselves not only clever, but also able to lead the world according to their personal likes or dislikes. He makes a point of interviewing the Ministers of the Crown, to ascertain their plans and intentions before he allows them to present themselves before the Emperor. It was reported that he was one of the greatest friends that Count Aerenthal had contrived to win for himself, and that it was owing to his protection that this unscrupulous politician had succeeded in converting the Sovereign to the policy which he had inaugurated as soon as the foreign affairs of the Austrian Empire had been entrusted into his care.

Prince von Montenuovo hated Russia, and had always been a strong partisan of an alliance with Germany that might have enabled the former country to be definitely banished from the Balkans, and superseded by Austria allied to Bulgaria. He had been at school with the present King of that realm, and the sly Ferdinand of Coburg had taken good care to remain upon good terms with a man through whom he could obtain many an object it would otherwise have been impossible to reach.

During the whole time that the last Balkan war lasted, it was related that a weekly messenger travelled between Sofia and Vienna, and carried to Prince von Montenuovo news from his friend the King of Bulgaria. They were both lovers of intrigue, no matter in what shape and form, and they both understood to perfection how to carry them on with ease and secrecy at the same time. Russian diplomats in their guilelessness never suspected the game that was being played on the shores of the Black Sea and amidst the roses which bloom in the gardens of Euxinograd, the fairylike palace which the Coburg Prince has built for himself in view of the dark waters of the old Pont Euxin. They never guessed that one of the biggest conspiracies that has ever been hatched by one nation against another was being planned under their very eyes, and that its principal leaders were residing at Vienna, living in close intercourse with the old and unscrupulous Monarch who ruled there.

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand and Prince von Montenuovo had always been upon the worst possible terms. The heir to the throne could not stand the overbearing tone and manners of the Austrian nobleman, and on more occasions than one Ferdinand had made him feel that when he succeeded to the throne, he would remember the injuries which he had been obliged to put up with whilst he had not possessed the power to avenge them.

On his side the Prince had taken advantage of every possible occasion to humiliate the Duchess of Hohenberg,

and it was a current story in Vienna that one day, at some Court festivity, seeing her not in her proper precedence, he had sent a chamberlain to her with the request to move down to her right place. After this episode the consort of the Archduke had asked the Emperor to excuse her from appearing at the usual Sunday family dinners, to which she was generally asked, together with her husband. This adventure, which caused an immense sensation, led to the Duchess being awarded a special rank that at least put her out of the reach of such gratuitous insults; but the remembrance always rankled in her heart, and she made no secret of the fact that she intensely disliked the Grand Master of the Imperial Household, and that when she was in a position to do so she would repay him with usury for all the unpleasantnesses which he had caused her.

It is difficult to foresee how this antagonism would have ended had not the catastrophe of Sarajevo occurred, and removed with one blow the two great enemies of Prince Alfred of Montenuovo. Anyone but himself would have felt all his former resentments melt before such a terrible and unforeseen misfortune; but if the story can be believed, it is said that the Prince at once put forward all the exigencies of an etiquette which no one but himself would have ever remembered, and insisted on the funeral of the two victims of this tragedy being conducted in a manner which was a disgrace. Under the pretence that the Duchess of Hohenberg could not be treated as a member of the Imperial family,

he refused to Francis Ferdinand the post-mortem honours to which an Archduke was entitled, declaring that as it was hardly possible to bury him anywhere else and at another time than the devoted wife who had shared his fate, he would have also to be laid to rest with as much haste and as little ceremony as possible.

Even the intimate friends of the murdered couple were refused the permission to render to them the last homage that they could perform in regard to their persons.

The Emperor William II., who had at first wished to assist at the funeral ceremony, was informed that it was preferable that he should abstain from doing so. The two coffins were taken to a distant estate of the Archduke, where scarcely anyone was allowed to be present. Even the children of the Archduke were prevented from witnessing the funeral of their father and mother.

For once the Viennese aristocracy revolted against this decision, and the friends of the late Archduke signed a protest which they presented to the Emperor.

Prince von Montenuovo is married to a very pretty woman, a Countess Kinsky by birth, who at the time she was wedded to him was considered the most beautiful girl of her day. She is amiable too, very popular among a certain small set, but not liked in general society, as she is too exclusive in her personal acquaintances. The Prince and Princess are rich, but do not care for entertaining.

General Count Paar is a very different man from Prince Montenuovo. He is a type of an old soldier who

knows nothing beyond his duty, and who performs it with zeal and with accuracy. For something like fifty years he has never left the Emperor, and it is upon him that has devolved generally the sad mission to acquaint Francis Joseph of the various family misfortunes which have fallen to that Monarch's lot. When the Empress was murdered at Geneva, the first news of the crime was brought to Count Paar. When the drama of Sarajevo took place, it was again on Count Paar that fell the obligation to break the news to his Imperial master. Whenever any sorrow has overtaken the House of Habsburg, the faithful old soldier has been there to bear its first shock, and to try to lighten it for the one on whom it was to fall. He really loves Francis Joseph, of that there is no doubt; he loves him and he is devoted to him body and soul, and very probably if he survives him it will not be for long. The aged servant will soon find a resting-place not far from the Sovereign at whose side nearly his whole life has been spent.

In Vienna, where the General is a familiar figure, everybody knows and respects him; and he is a popular personage even among the street urchins that gather round him when they see him take his morning walk in the Prater, where until lately he used to ride a big chestnut mare, almost as old as himself. He has always a pleasant word for those he speaks to, and he has never used the incontestable influence which he wields on his Sovereign otherwise than to do good wherever he could. Intrigue is unknown to him. He does not care for Prince

von Montenuovo. In reality Count Paar is perfectly aware that, should it come to a struggle between them, it is not he who would win, and he is so attached to Francis Joseph that he puts up with many things simply in order to be allowed to remain with the old man.

Another man with whom the Emperor was upon terms of true intimacy was the late King Albert of Saxony. The friendship began at the time when Albert was still Crown Prince and had just won for his wife the Princess Caroline of Wasa. The couple had spent some weeks at Vienna, and Albert being about the same age as the Emperor, Francis Joseph had allowed himself to be drawn into friendship.

Albert of Saxony was more than once called upon to smooth differences between Francis Joseph and the Empress Elisabeth, and he had contrived to remain on good terms with both of them, which was rather an achievement considering their characters. King Albert himself had always been the best of husbands, but he was also a man of the world, who knew how to speak the language of the world, and how to appeal to the feelings of an angry, passionate woman. Elisabeth grew to like him and to confide in him too. After her death he was the only one among all the royal personages who had arrived in Vienna for her obsequies who was admitted into the presence of the Emperor and allowed to express to him his horror at the dastardly crime which had put an end so brutally to the existence of one of the noblest women who had ever lived.

Apart from his influence in the family affairs of the Austrian Imperial couple, the King of Saxony played a considerable part in the submission of Austria to the views of Germany. Prince Bismarck, at the time when he had been dreaming of the Triple Alliance, had already taken advantage of the good offices of King Albert to preach its necessity to Francis Joseph. The King was entirely German in his opinions, and, especially after the war of 1870, had accepted his position as vassal of the new German Empire with that thoroughness which he brought into everything that he did. He was extremely respected, and his sound judgment carried a great deal of weight along with it.

Without being brilliant King Albert had a clear head, common sense, and a keen appreciation of the necessities of the moment, which, if he had been less highly principled, might even have been called by the name of opportunism. He admired Prince Bismarck a great deal, the German army even more, and William I. above everybody else. His personality was one of the principal influences in bringing about the German *rapprochement* with Austria which, entirely superficial at first, was to become with time so strong that the statesmen who ruled at the Ball Platz became dependent for their inspirations on the Wilhelmstrasse, and followed its lead rather than their own immediate interests.

The great triumph of the King of Saxony was to make friends wherever he went, and to convince all whom he wanted to win to his side of the soundness of his judg-

ments of people as well as of facts. Even Prince von Montenuovo had to succumb to his personality, and to promise him to use his influence over the Emperor in favour of the policy which Albert outlined.

The Saxon Monarch had a grudge against Russia dating from the time of the war of 1866. When it had broken out the Court of Dresden had sounded the Cabinet of Petersburg as to the possibility of an intervention in its favour, and had met with an absolute refusal. Tsar Alexander II. professed such a great affection for his Prussian relatives that he would not hear of doing anything which might prevent the triumph of the troops commanded by his uncle of Berlin. On the contrary he gave the latter all the diplomatic and political support he could. Perhaps Alexander was not over-sorry to see humiliated and defeated that ungrateful Austria which had played his father false during the Crimean War. The entreaties of the Saxon Government left him absolutely unmoved, which was perhaps one of the greatest political mistakes of his reign, because the consequences of a Russian intervention after Sadowa, not perhaps in favour of Austria, but in that of the other confederated German Governments, might have changed the whole future course of history.

King Albert of Saxony, though he had become converted to the idea of the Prussian supremacy over the whole of Germany, had neither forgotten nor forgiven the rebuff which his own country had received at the hands of Russia, and it had a lot to do with the ardour

with which he threw himself into the plans of Bismarck and worked towards entangling Austria too into its intricacies. In that respect he played an immense part in the close union which afterwards drew the two Empires together.

With the death of the King, the best royal friend of Francis Joseph disappeared. The old Monarch was left entirely dependent upon his own resources and the counsel of the few people whom he allowed an entrance into the intimacy of his private life. He submitted to the will of Prince von Montenuovo, but he always treated him as someone infinitely below him, and even with Frau Schratt he did not depart from his attitude of Sovereign, even when he posed as a good old man on a visit to a friend of many years' standing. Francis Joseph had occasionally forgotten the promises which he had made, the duties which he had assumed, and the obligations entailed upon him by his high state, but he always remembered that he was a Habsburg; he had found it the most useful thing in the world, and one which allowed him to shirk with utter unconcern many of the responsibilities that rightly speaking were his.

Francis Joseph has ever been incapable of any great political conception, and therefore it became relatively easy for a man like the present German Emperor to override him. Under the pretext of showing continual deference to the friend of his grandfather, William II. kept himself in close touch with Francis Joseph, and never missed any opportunity to see him personally and

to exchange with him letters which, though often merely missives of politeness, yet always contained something to give to them more importance than would have seemed at first sight. He cultivated the society of the aged Austrian Monarch, bore with him, endured his conversation, and treated him with just that tinge of respect which, coming from a personage whose position was as exalted as his own, conveyed by its expression a most delicate flattery, certain to appeal to the vanity of the person to whom it was addressed.

William II. did something more than this. He took great care to keep as his Ambassador at the Austrian Court a man in possession of his entire confidence, who could work toward the maintenance of these good relations from which he hoped to obtain so many benefits in the future. For a long time that post was occupied by Prince Eulenburg, the hero of the sad scandal which caused such a sensation a few years ago, and one of the most intelligent men in the German diplomatic service.

When the question arose as to who should become the successor of Eulenburg, it was again a favourite of the Emperor who was sent, Herr von Tschirsky-Bogendorff, a man whose personal appearance did not in the least correspond to his intellectual and moral worth, because he was one of the nicest men imaginable, and no one meeting him for the first time could imagine him capable of directing the whole intrigue which after the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was to bring about the war for which the German Empire had been

so steadily preparing itself for so many years, but for which it had never been able to find an earlier pretext.

The advent at Vienna of Herr von Tschirsky gave a new activity to Austrian politics. He was a great friend of Count Aerenthal, of whom he had been the colleague in Petersburg, and he suggested to him most of the steps which made the tenure of office of the latter personage so sadly memorable. After his death, and the appointment of Count Berchtold in his place, the relations of the German Embassy with the Ball Platz became cooler. Its new head was upon good terms with M. Izvolsky, then Minister for Foreign Affairs in Russia, and he tried honestly to come to some arrangement with the latter concerning the everlasting Near Eastern question, which was always the one weak and dangerous spot in the general European situation. For a short time it had seemed as if the efforts of the Count in that direction were about to be successful; then came all the difficulties which developed in quick succession during the two Balkan wars, and at last the tragedy which gave a free field to the intrigues of the German Ambassador, and led to the great final catastrophe.

When it occurred Francis Joseph was thrown entirely on the Emperor William II. for support, and left at the latter's mercy. Can one wonder that under such circumstances he drifted toward the deep ocean in which the Austrian Empire, no matter what may be the result of the war, is bound to perish?

CHAPTER VI

FRAU CATHERINE SCHRATT AND THE EMPEROR'S FRIENDSHIPS

A GREAT deal has been written in Austria, and spoken in Vienna, about the former actress of the Burg Theatre, Frau Catherine Schratt, with whom the Emperor is supposed to be, even at this time, in most intimate relations. This last piece of gossip must be accepted with a considerable grain of salt, if one takes into account the advanced age of the two persons concerned. After all, the Emperor is eighty-five and Frau Schratt sixty, if not older.

But it is not a calumny to suppose that there was a time when Frau Schratt was something more to the Emperor than a platonic friend, and she has succeeded in keeping a firm hold upon her lover of former times—a feat the more wonderful in that the Sovereign was never famous for his constancy.

It would be almost impossible to recall all the love affairs which the Emperor has had. When he was young, and before his marriage, there was hardly any pretty woman in Vienna who had not seen him at her feet for a longer or for a shorter time. The Archduchess Sophy had rather encouraged her son's excursions into the for-

bidden land where every young man likes to wander, hoping thus to divert his attention from politics, the control of which she preferred to keep in her own hands. She had very quickly, however, come to the conclusion that, in love or not, the Emperor did not in the least mean to abandon one iota of the supreme power, and that, above everything else, he did not mean his mother to be able to boast that it was she who influenced or led the affairs of the State. This was a source of great disappointment to her, and it made her turn her attention toward arranging a marriage for the young Monarch.

As we have seen, she was quite successful in this last enterprise, and had the satisfaction of seeing her son lead her own niece to the altar. The pleasure which the fact afforded to her, however, was not to be long-lived. The newly wedded Empress did not get on with her mother-in-law; whilst the latter, for her part, did much to make the Empress's life unbearable. The Archduchess was one of those eighteenth-century Princesses bred to shut their eyes on what was going on around them.

Elisabeth had been really in love with the Emperor, and she had honestly believed that his passion for her would be a lasting one. When, therefore, she discovered, a few weeks after her marriage, that he was already sighing at the feet of a Polish countess who had attracted his fancy, she considered her husband's fickleness, not without reason, in the light of the greatest insult which could have been offered to her, and allowed Francis Joseph to notice the state of her feelings in regard to him.

The Emperor, in spite of his want of susceptibility, felt hurt, and his vanity suffered far more than his heart. He said nothing, but neglected the Empress more and more.

The infatuation of Francis Joseph for the Polish countess did not last longer than a few months. Then he turned his attention once more to the different young actresses, at the Burg Theatre and elsewhere, who were conspicuous by their beauty or attractions. Nearly all were honoured with his fancy, and his private valet, a Tyrolean Jäger—who was the only confidant of his master's different "escapades"—was kept very busy.

It was this man who had to escort the ladies to the Hofburg by one of the back doors, and who brought them back safely to their various homes. His discretion was absolute, and quite equalled that of Bontemps and Lebel, the famous valets of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. Actresses and noble ladies belonging to the highest circles of the Austrian aristocracy vied with each other for the favours of Francis Joseph, and none of them ever succeeded in establishing herself in his heart so solidly that he thought no longer about giving her a rival.

This was only achieved by a woman who could boast neither of ancestry nor position, neither of talent nor transcendent beauty. As an actress she had appeared at the Burg Theatre, but she attracted no notice there save that of Francis Joseph, who took a violent liking for her almost immediately for her frank, open expression, beautiful eyes, and pleasant mouth and smile. He felt

sure that, like so many others, she would instantly fall into his arms and consider herself as most honoured at having found favour with him. To his surprise he discovered that he had made a great mistake.

Catherine Schratt was an honest girl, with a keen sense of right and wrong, and indifferent to what would have been considered by many of her profession as the highest honour. When it was hinted to her that the Sovereign would like to see her otherwise than upon the stage, she began by declaring that she did not quite see how this could be managed, because she was not living in conditions that allowed her to receive him in her own house, and meeting him clandestinely anywhere was out of the question.

The reply was repeated to the Emperor, and greatly excited his curiosity.

One afternoon while sitting at home Catherine was surprised to see a tall officer thrusting himself into her presence. It was Francis Joseph, who, seeing that the mountain would not come to Mahomet, had thought it was high time Mahomet should seek the mountain.

This visit was the prelude to many others, and little by little the Monarch got into the habit of seeing every day the lady whose friendship had been so difficult to win. She proved very tactful, never asking him for anything, accepting his numerous gifts with extreme reserve, not troubling to put any questions to him, and showing perfect disinterestedness in all her relations with him. She was very clever in private life, though she had not

shown any particular ability on the stage—a career she had entered upon only out of necessity—and her gentle, soft manners, keen sympathy and general understanding of the difficulties of a position which soon became almost unique, won for her as much affection from Francis Joseph as his selfish heart could give.

A curious thing must be added here which may astonish many people, but which is none the less fact. The Empress, who soon became aware of her husband's new infatuation—as she always did all those he indulged in—had the curiosity to see Frau Schratt, and actually called upon her one day. The impression she produced upon her must have been most favourable, because from that day Elisabeth was the first one to encourage the Emperor in his sympathy for the actress, whose influence proved on more than one occasion most useful to her.

Catherine Schratt was full of admiration for the Imperial lady, and applied herself to remove as many of the causes of disagreement between Francis Joseph and his consort as she could. Yet she never meddled with intrigue, was neither mercenary nor callous, refused nine of every ten presents which were offered to her, and whenever she was called upon to give her opinion to the Emperor, she did so with strong common sense and keen intelligence. She was a remarkable person from more points of view than one, and soon she became such a power in the land that even Prince von Montenuovo, who easily got rid of most of the people

whom he disliked, found that in her case he had better keep quiet, and even try to propitiate her.

This, however, did not prove easy. Had Frau Schratt only cared to do so, she could with the greatest facility have influenced her Imperial friend against this overbearing, insolent favourite who was so generally disliked. But this was one of the matters she had promised herself never to interfere with. She did not care for people to say that she could at her will remove public functionaries, and she never allowed anyone to guess that she shared the universal feelings of antipathy which Viennese society nursed for the Grand Master of the Imperial Household. She was a woman who liked plain speaking, and it is related that she had found an opportunity to tell the Prince that she expected him to leave her alone, while in return for this she promised that she would not molest him in any way, and would refrain from ever expressing any judgment in regard to him to the Sovereign.

Catherine was known to keep her word, and Montenuovo had come very quickly to the conclusion that he had better not attempt a struggle from which he could only emerge defeated.

This was the peculiarity of the gifted, energetic and clever woman. She contrived to persuade everybody that she was not the kind of creature to injure anyone, provided she were left severely alone; and at last the whole of Viennese society, as well as the Imperial Family and the people who surrounded the Emperor, began to say

that she was the best person who could have been found to amuse the Sovereign, and to procure for him the illusion of a home in his lonely existence. Her presence at his side became a recognised fact which was never more disputed.

Having convinced the world that she was a perfectly harmless woman, Catherine began to assert herself, and, whilst seeming to do nothing, became in reality a great deal in the life of the selfish Austrian Monarch. He bought for her a lovely villa at Hietzing, a suburb of Vienna, which she furnished with admirable taste, helped by an unlimited amount of money. She also arranged for herself a cottage at Ischl, whither she repaired whenever the Emperor went to the little town which he loves so much and where he feels happier than amidst the splendours of the Hofburg or of Schönbrunn. It was then that both he and Frau Schratt enjoyed their real holiday, which no one and nothing ever came to disturb. Francis Joseph used to visit the actress every evening—even during the lifetime of the Empress, who, though she made at times sneering remarks at this intimacy of her husband with Frau Schratt, never objected to the long hours which he used to spend with her.

After the assassination of Elisabeth the influence of Catherine became even stronger than it had been before. She sought to comfort the bereaved widower, who, now that his wife was no more, suddenly developed a violent affection for her and declared himself inconsolable at her death. She humoured him, she read to him, she listened

FRAU CATHERINE SCHRATT

to him; she encouraged him now and then when she noticed that he thought it right to assume the attitude of one who had lost all interest in life, and she sometimes put in a word very softly in his ear about this or that matter, going so far sometimes as to slip in a remark on political affairs when she thought it necessary.

The Imperial Family had grown to like her—with the exception of the Archduchess Valerie, who, when she saw Catherine installed almost in her mother's place, began to demur and made violent scenes with her father on the subject, insisting that he should break off his association with the woman whom some people kept stating he had married secretly. At first the Emperor ordered his daughter out of the room, declaring that he considered it an insolence on her part to assume the rôle of a moral mentor in regard to her own father. Valerie replied that if such were the case she would retire to her castle of Wallsee, and never more set her foot at Schönbrunn or in Vienna. Francis Joseph stood in awe of his daughter. Besides, he was warmly attached to his grandchildren, perhaps the only human beings for whom he had really felt a disinterested affection. He resigned himself, therefore, and told the Archduchess that if such were the case he would consent to break off relations with Frau Schratt, but only upon one condition—that she would henceforward live with him, together with her family.

Valerie was delighted, and installed herself at Schönbrunn, but after two months of her existence there she implored her father to resume his old relations with

Catherine. She had discovered that to be the constant companion of a sour, disagreeable, and selfish old man, who expected her to be always at his beck and call, and who continually bullied and thwarted her, and reproached her for making him unhappy, was rather more than she could bear. So she returned to her own home, and left the Emperor free to renew his relations with the fascinating Catherine.

Perhaps "fascinating" is hardly the right word. Frau Schratt had never been handsome in her youth, and is at present a stout, middle-aged woman, with no pretence at all to a figure, white hair, and a fat face which occasionally turns red in the wrong place. But she is a delightful companion, and an amusing one, too. Her kindness is proverbial, and the amount of good which she has done is quite wonderful though it will never be known.

When the war broke out she at once established a private hospital, which she has kept up out of her private means and which she attends every day, helping to nurse the sick and the wounded, yet she still found time to spend some hours every evening at Schönbrunn, which the Emperor, since his last illness, leaves but seldom. Her activity, in spite of the years that have crowded upon her head, is the same as it was in those distant days when Francis Joseph first sought her acquaintance and threw her the handkerchief he has never asked her since to return to him.

The Duchess of Hohenberg was a great friend of Frau

Schratt, though she saw her but seldom. The two ladies sympathised with each other, and the consort of the heir-presumptive to the throne was credited with the wish of trying to arrange a secret marriage of the Emperor with the woman who had been such a good friend to him. But, although no one in his whole Empire would have been found to condemn him for such a step, Francis Joseph had far too great an idea as to his own importance even to think of giving Catherine this proof of the affection with which he professed she had always inspired him. He never forgot that he was a Habsburg, and the head of that illustrious House, and though he had given consent to many members of his family to contract morganatic unions, the possibility of his following their example never crossed his mind for a single instant.

It is very much to be questioned whether Frau Schratt would ever have consented to become the wife of the Sovereign to whom more than twenty years of friendship had bound her with such strong fetters that no marriage ceremony could have made them tighter. She was a very independent woman, and was far too clever not to realise that such a change in her position was far more likely to prove a burden to her than to add anything to her prestige. She liked her liberty, and the fact of her clinging to it gave her a far stronger hold on the mind, and on what existed of heart, of the selfish Francis Joseph than she could have obtained by accepting what he would have persisted to the end of his days in calling the greatest sacrifice he had ever been compelled to make. Her influ-

ence over him was principally built upon the circumstance that she could tell him continually that, whilst he had never done anything for her except giving her plenty of money—which she could easily have done without—she had given up her whole life to him and to his welfare, and had thus shown that she cared for him more than for anything or anybody else in the world.

A lot of amusing anecdotes circulate in Vienna concerning Frau Schratt, more or less true, and justifying the French proverb that it is only very rich people who find anyone willing to lend them money. Countess Larisch quotes a few; amongst them is one which I am rather inclined to think apocryphal. It is to the effect that Francis Joseph, having stayed rather later than was his wont with Catherine one evening, was surprised, as he was leaving the house, by a servant who had been newly engaged and did not know him yet. Seeing a strange man come out of her mistress's apartments, the servant raised the alarm, and upon being told the identity of the visitor, began singing the National Anthem in her confusion at finding herself face to face with her Sovereign.

It is one of these stories to which one feels inclined to apply the old Italian saying: "Si non e vero," etc.

It is not often one meets with a woman who, having the chance to obtain almost everything that she could desire in the way of money and rank—Catherine could easily have persuaded the Emperor to create her a countess or baroness—refuses to avail herself of the advantage, and prefers to remain in a relatively obscure,

and most certainly a false, position. Catherine's case would remain quite unexplainable if she had not taken care to explain that, being a lonely woman, without any ambition save that of getting from life all the comfort which she could, she preferred infinitely her personal peace to anything else, and did not care to arouse the gossip and ill-natured comments of the world on the subject of her personality. As she once told one of her few intimate friends, she had outlived all the disagreements of her equivocal position, and could legitimately aspire to be left to enjoy quietly the result of years of labour, and to minister as she liked to the wants and requirements of her old lover.

Yet she does not care for him a bit—perhaps this is one of the most curious features of their connection—and she never cared for him even at the time when they were both young, with some pretensions to good looks; but she pities him and looks upon him with compassionate eyes, notwithstanding the fact that he is a powerful Sovereign. Perhaps she realises better than most people the sad tragedy of a lot which was destined to see so many misfortunes, and to survive so many disasters, whilst remaining completely unconscious of the tragedy in which he was one of the most pathetic actors. She likes this old man who was loved by no one and has found so few friends. His utter indifference to everything which does not concern his own material wants only adds to her feelings of compassion for him, and so she clings to him as one clings to the remembrance of a good action

which one has performed once upon a time and about which no one thinks or speaks.

Frau Schratt is a good woman, and she has proved it all through her existence. It is, however, very much to be regretted that she could not use her power over the mind of Francis Joseph to induce him to act honourably in political as well as in private matters. It is also to be deplored that this undoubtedly clever woman never allowed her mind to stray farther and higher than questions of local interests, and that, through her fear of being thought intriguing, she deliberately disinterested herself from all that was not of immediate concern to her.

Perhaps, had she cared to try, Frau Schratt might have persuaded the old Emperor that he had reached an age where it is doubly sinful to rush into a war, the terrible consequences of which were bound to react in a most sad and terrible manner on the destinies of his own people. But Catherine is, above everything else and before everything else, German in her tastes, opinions, and points of view. She also was all through her life an admirer of that *welt politik* which Germany is doing its best to rush upon humanity, and she has always hated Russia with ferocity, partly on account of her strong Catholic convictions, which lead her to see in the Greek faith a manifestation of the power of the Evil One. The Jesuits are her friends, and her Father Confessor belongs to that Order.

Frau Schratt at present is preparing herself quietly for the time when the Emperor will be no more, and

when she will find herself at liberty to live her own life and dispose of it according to her personal inclinations which she has been obliged for such a long time to keep under control. She would not care to find herself compelled to renounce any of the material advantages which she has reason to believe she will be awarded by the will of Francis Joseph, and this is one of the reasons why she tries to keep in obscurity and to do nothing likely to damage her future prospects with the heir to the throne and with his wife. She applies herself to persuade them that she is an inoffensive kind of being, who will disappear out of the scene of her former successes the moment that the Emperor has closed his eyes, and that consequently they will have no reason to regret having shown themselves generous in regard to her. She speaks already of the retreat in which she hopes to end her days, and which she would like to be as peaceful and as free from annoyance as possible. If she is ever impatient at anything, it is at the time which goes by without bringing her the freedom for which she longs. She finds sometimes that Francis Joseph has lived a very long time, and that she is very tired. But tactful to the last, she restrains this manifestation of her sentiments even in regard to her own conscience, and quietly waits, and waits and waits.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAYERLING TRAGEDY

VOLUMES have been written on the sad subject of the tragedy in which perished twenty-five years ago the heir to the Austrian Empire, together with the poor girl who had linked her destiny with his. Romances without number have been built on the suppositions which have been made on all sides as to the causes of this extraordinary catastrophe. But so far the riddle has not been solved, and the mystery still remains as deep as it was on the day following upon the drama. I shall not attempt here to bring any new elements to bear on the sad and sordid story, and I shall begin by saying that I do not know anything more than the general public. But still there are certain deductions which can be made when one has known the actors of this sensational affair, and at all events it is not impossible to examine all the different versions which have been circulated, and to eliminate the improbabilities with which these abound.

This process may not bring one nearer to the truth, but, on the other hand, it can make one understand the psychological conditions under which the pistol shots that put an end to the life of the only son of the Emperor Francis Joseph could have come to be fired.

Photo : Szenes

THE CROWN PRINCE RUDOLPH

What I am going to relate is merely the result of my personal impressions and observations. I have known and spoken both with the Archduke Rudolph and with the Baroness Marie Vetsera, and so to a certain extent I can draw my own conclusions from the few facts that have come to my knowledge.

That there was less romance in it than has been said and supposed I feel absolutely convinced. Politics may have played a part in the tragedy, but if this was the case it was most certainly not to the extent that some people have tried to represent. I do not believe also that the Jesuits can have had anything to do with the affair. I am not fond of them, but I am firmly convinced that the sensational stories related concerning their share in the disaster, which, among other things, have appeared *in extenso*, repose on nothing else than the imagination of a writer desirous of making himself important by relating things which it is impossible to contradict successfully without awakening the remembrance of most painful incidents.

I also refuse to accept the theory that the Crown Prince was connected with the Archduke John Salvator, the future John Orth, in a political conspiracy against his own father. For one thing, he never was upon good terms with his cousin five times removed, and a correspondence which I have had the opportunity to see between the latter and a lady from whom he had but few secrets mentions Rudolph in terms which absolutely exclude any thought of there ever having existed the least

connivance between them. And, indeed, how could this ever be? If even the Crown Prince had conspired to usurp the Hungarian throne, what need was there for him to draw into this plot a member of a collateral branch of his family who had absolutely nothing to do with it, who besides would have been regarded with suspicion by those Magyar nobles who must have been included in the conspiracy, and who would not have tolerated any interference from the Toscana branch of the Habsburg family? They had never been popular, especially in Hungary, on account of the arrest of several rebels of 1848, who, having fled to Florence in the hope of remaining there unmolested, had been arrested by order of the reigning Grand Duke, and handed over to the Austrian police.

Then, again, John Orth was considerably older than Rudolph. There existed absolutely no link between them, except perhaps that of a violent dislike for each other. There is no ground whatever to suppose that they were associated in an attempt to bring about a revolution in Hungary.

The tone of the letters to which I have referred gives an emphatic denial to the conclusions which we are asked to draw about mysterious facts, the details of which, of course, are held back from us. Under such circumstances, it is easy to say whatever one likes, but perhaps not quite so easy to get impartial people to believe the statements.

Personally, I feel inclined, from certain things that have come to my knowledge, to think that the only

political side to this unfortunate romance was the desire on the part of certain people to get a hold upon the Archduke Rudolph, and to saddle him with a woman who might have acquired considerable influence over his mind, and perhaps have brought him to follow their lead in politics. The plot failed, but it was no fault of theirs that it did so, and to hide the game they invented all kinds of sensational stories simply to mislead the public into looking somewhere else than in the true direction for an explanation of the tragedy.

Now to return to what I personally believe led to the tragedy of Mayerling. I had occasion to meet Marie Vetsera at Cairo, where she was spending the winter of 1887, together with her mother and sister. Her father, Baron Vetsera, occupied an official post as Austrian Commissary at the Foreign Debt Office, and as soon as his family had joined him there, the remarkable beauty of his youngest daughter caused her to be immensely talked about.

Cairo was not at that time, and I believe is still not a place where a Puritan atmosphere prevails. Gossip flourishes in Egypt, a natural consequence of the relatively small number of Europeans who are standing residents at Cairo, and who spend most of their time discussing the merits of the many tourists and strangers who happen to visit the land of the Pharaohs during the winter season. Few cities are as gay as the Egyptian capital, and few offer more facilities for flirtations and intrigues of all kinds.

But even in Cairo the flirtations of Mlle. Vetsera gave rise to comment. She was extraordinarily beautiful, and seen in evening dress, with her lovely shoulders gleaming out of a black gown which set off their whiteness, she appeared positively splendid to the person who saw her for the first time, so dazzling was her face, with its wealth of dark hair shading a low brow, and the most magnificent pair of eyes it has ever been my fortune to see. Her supple, slender figure had something feline about it, so graceful was her every movement. She was one of those women who appeal to the physical senses of men from the first moment that they see them, and she gave one the impression that love, far from being a mystery, was known to her in all its details.

The Vetseras were reputed rich people. In reality it was not at all the case. Even at the period to which I am referring there were moments when the ladies of the family were short of money. They had all the most expensive tastes, and the girls had been brought up not to deny themselves anything which they might desire to have. Marie used to dress far more in the style of a married woman than in that of a girl. She discussed quite freely many things that a much older person would have felt embarrassed to speak about, and she used to boast of her many conquests with a zest which jarred on the sense of propriety of many people. She was of course immensely admired, but not at all liked by the feminine portion of Cairo Society. Of this she was quite well aware, but simply laughed and snapped her fingers

at the judgments which were passed upon her and upon her conduct.

During the six or seven months which I spent in Cairo, Marie Vetsera was the heroine of three love affairs. This accounts perhaps for the ease with which she contrived to ingratiate herself into the affections of the Crown Prince, and for the relative rapidity with which she led her intrigue with him forward to its dramatic end.

Baron Vetsera died in Egypt, and his widow and daughters returned to Europe, where I lost sight of them until their name came again prominently before the public. Then I remembered the lovely dark-eyed girl whom I had admired so much a few years before the world was filled with her name. The tragedy in which she entangled, far more than she was entangled herself, the young man who was to enter eternity so unexpectedly did not surprise me. I was only astonished that the Archduke had been weak enough to succumb to her attractions so quickly, for hers was a nature absolutely incapable of understanding the character of Rudolph, with all its mysterious intricacies, which he had inherited from his mother, together with the blood of the ill-fated House of Wittelsbach.

I met the Austrian Crown Prince just after his coming of age in 1878 or 1879. I do not remember exactly the year. It was during an evening party at the Austrian Embassy.

He was not married at the time, and must have been something like twenty or twenty-two years of age. He

did not strike one as a handsome fellow at all, but nevertheless was an eminently attractive one. The youthful face had an air of gravity which gave it an expression of being much older than was actually the case, and the reddish tint of his hair was decidedly ugly. But the eyes had a dreamy look, full of mystery and of eagerness at the same time, which could not fail to win him the sympathies of every person with whom he entered into conversation.

Rudolph gave the impression of being something quite different from what one expected, and a certain abruptness in his language set one wondering what causes for impatience and dissatisfaction he could have. His manners showed extreme politeness and courtesy, but were rather cold and not exempt from a shade of disdain, which to many women would have afforded a pretext for trying to break it down. He did not dance, excusing himself under the pretext of family mourning, which I remember was commented upon not over graciously by Society, who would have liked to see him spinning about the ball-room with one of its daughters on his arm. His air was entirely Austrian, and the characteristic lower lip of the Habsburgs was even more prominent in him than in other members of his family, a fact, by the way, which did not add to the pleasantness of his appearance.

So much for the physical side. Intellectually, the young Archduke was an extremely superior man, as I found in a conversation I had with him which touched upon serious subjects; literature, which he had at his fingers' ends; art and social questions; and I was im-

mensely struck by the universality of his knowledge and by the maturity of his thoughts. I was very young at the time, and probably would to-day have drawn him more than I could do then, so as to get an inkling as to his real views, opinions and ideas.

I remember to this day certain remarks that the Crown Prince made to me, which, judged by subsequent events, were of a nature capable of throwing a light on the yearnings of a soul that was dissatisfied with everything because it had always obtained all that it had wanted. For instance, as we were discussing a volume of the French Revolution by Taine which had appeared recently, he uttered these remarkable words: "I think that for many people of that time the death which they met and had to face was a great mercy. It saved them from awakening to their disillusions as to the gods which they had been worshipping." I looked up to him for an explanation: "Yes," he added, "these people, when they gave themselves heart and soul to the demons of demagogy, believed sincerely that they were working for the good of the community. Just fancy what they would have felt when brought face to face with the hideous reality, and saw that behind all these protestations of attachment to a great idea there lurked thoughts of personal revenge, and often pure love of gain, le 'Otes toi pour que je m'y mette' which rules us all, or nearly all, in our daily struggle for life. Far better die than go on living after such a disillusion."

Though more than a quarter of a century has passed

since this conversation, I can still hear the low, serious voice of the Crown Prince as he uttered these words that seemed to come from his very soul. He was usually very earnest in all that he said, and spoke slowly, as if he wanted to weigh carefully every syllable. One could guess that his was a passionate, sensitive nature kept under restraint.

Those who knew his mother affirm that he had a great deal in common with her. Both showed the same restlessness and aspiration toward better things than those which they had already, the same longing for something unknown and unobtainable, the same proud disdain and loathing for what they felt to be beneath them, and also the same hunted look in the eyes which revealed to an observant spectator that there was something not rightly balanced in their minds. For instance, the Archduke, whilst speaking to one, had the curious knack of suddenly stopping in the midst of a phrase, remaining silent for a few minutes, and then, without apparently noticing it, begin talking about subjects absolutely different from those which he had been discussing before. This led people to think that he wanted to be uncivil to them, and procured him many enemies, but I am convinced that he was not in the least aware of this peculiarity of his, and quite unconscious of the unpleasant impression which it produced on his listeners.

The education of the Crown Prince, though an excellent one from the intellectual point of view, had not developed noble qualities or taught him the joys of unselfishness. It is true he had, at least in his younger

days, that sense of duty toward the head of the House which is so developed in all the Habsburgs; but I question whether he had ever felt any real affection for the Emperor with whom he had never been upon good terms ever since he had been allowed to have a certain independence and a separate household of his own.

His relations with his mother have been discussed in many ways, and some people have said that these had never been tender, and that the Empress did not care for him in the least. Others have affirmed that he was the only being whom she loved, and that her affection for him was passionately returned. I think that both these versions are not exact, and that the truth lies between the two. Elisabeth had never been allowed to train her son according to her personal views, and, besides, had experienced in regard to him and to his sisters the curious feeling which in some rare cases makes a woman indifferent to the children whose father has become an object of dislike or of hatred to her. But later on, and particularly during the last years of the Crown Prince's life, an intimacy which was daily growing stronger had established itself between Rudolph and the Empress, especially since the latter had discovered the unhappy life led by her son with his wife, the tactless Princess Stephanie.

The Empress attempted to soothe the Archduke and to instil resignation to his lot; she tried to persuade him to avoid anything likely to lead to a scandal where he might have been irremediably compromised.

The fact that for a long time he had had no children of his own, and then that only one daughter had been born to him, was a source of great grief to both the Empress and her son. Rudolph felt aggrieved at the disappointment of his hopes, and he took this as an excuse to spend a great deal of his time away from her with companions of his own choice. In consequence the Princess felt affronted, and did not make a secret of the fact, so that the relations of the couple got worse and worse every day.

It was at this juncture that some people whose ambition made them desire to exercise an influence on the future Emperor threw the Baroness Marie Vetsera in his way, in the hope that she would succeed in getting hold of his imagination first and of his heart afterwards. The girl played most cleverly the game of those who had instructed her, one of the aims of which was to induce the Crown Prince to assure her future in such a liberal manner that afterwards she would be able to go on leading the luxurious existence to which she had been used, without any fear as to the morrow.

Marie Vetsera pretended that she was in love with Rudolph, declared that she would die rather than lose him, and entangled him so well that at last he did not know how to get out of the net. That he thought of a divorce from his wife is almost certain, but it is still a matter of much doubt whether, had he obtained his liberty, he would have forfeited it again for the sake of a girl he was too experienced a man not to have appreciated as she deserved; and surely this knowledge was sufficient

to prevent him from irretrievably compromising himself for her, and sacrificing all his future prospects?

What also seems to have been proved, and has been known among the small circle of people who are aware of the inner aspects of the tragedy, is the fact that, in order to strengthen her influence over the Archduke, Marie Vetsera got him into the habit of taking drugs, such as opium and morphine. This pernicious habit, which was the more dangerous for him as nervous diseases were hereditary among the Habsburgs as well as among the Wittelsbachs, was one of the principal causes of the drama, and at all events played a conspicuous part in its sordid details. Politics may have had to do with it, inasmuch as the Crown Prince was on friendly terms with certain Austrian and Hungarian statesmen who were known to stand in opposition to the policy pursued by the Government and to dislike the Emperor personally; but to conclude from this fact that he aspired to usurp his father's crown is going rather too far, and is not justified by all that we know concerning the character and the inclinations of Rudolph.

It is far more likely that, worn out by the abuse of drugs, he allowed himself to be carried away by one of the disillusions to which he had alluded in his conversation with myself which I have related, and had hoped to find in death the solutions of the mostly imaginary difficulties in which he fancied that he had become entangled.

There is also another point to be considered. If he had really loved Marie Vetsera, and the efforts of those

who had begun to get alarmed at the consequences of his connection with her had at last proved to him that she had not been an innocent girl when he had first met her, it is quite possible that, disgusted with the deceit which had been practised in regard to him and to his feelings, he had decided to break with her.

What goes somewhat to confirm this last supposition is the undoubted fact that his relations with the misguided woman who was to expiate so cruelly her unworthy ambition had become considerably cooler during the last weeks which preceded the tragedy. He had refused to see her at different times, and she had almost forced herself into his presence at last, thanks to complicity. She had followed him against his will to Mayerling, as has been proved by a note of his addressed to one of his personal friends, in which he said that he wanted to get a few days' rest at his shooting-box, so as to recover the equanimity that he wanted so badly after the unpleasantnesses which he had had lately. This does not point at all to any intention on his part of asking Marie to share his solitude. It is also certain that she it was who obliged the coachman Bratfisch to drive her to the place whence she was never to return.

If we put all these circumstances together, we find that what is most likely is that, when she forced herself upon Rudolph, the latter may have been moved by remnants of affection for her, and the usual consequences of such violent *rapprochements* had taken place. Perhaps when he had recovered his presence of mind, he had

Photo: Adele.

BARONESS MARIE VETSERA

expressed to her his disgust at her conduct; perhaps, also, maddened by the abuse of drugs, he had allowed himself to exercise some violence upon her; or, maybe, she had in her rage fired against him that pistol shot which was to end his days. Perhaps he simply was tired of life, and, in his desire to have done with it, had thought it better before he destroyed himself to kill the woman through whom he had suffered so much. Who knows? One thing however is certain, and adds to the riddle which surrounds this death. The head of the Crown Prince was shattered at the back, whilst the wounds of Marie Vetsera had been inflicted in the middle of her face. Whether there is any conclusion to be drawn from this circumstance it is not for me to say.

The body of Rudolph was taken back to Vienna, where in the silence of the night, previous to its being removed to the Augustine Chapel situated in the Hofburg itself, the Emperor, together with the Empress, came to kneel down and pray beside the coffin of their only son, that had been deposited in the room which he had occupied during his lifetime. What passed in the hearts and souls of the bereaved parents during this mournful vigil it is impossible to say. Perhaps in the anguish caused by this appalling catastrophe Francis Joseph repented of his harshness toward the young man who had thus perished so miserably, as also of the neglect with which he had treated the wife who was prostrate on the ground beside him, sobbing aloud the agony of her soul. After the Mayerling tragedy their relations became, if

not tender, at least much more friendly than had been the case before it had crushed them with its weight. But the heart of Elisabeth had received a wound from which it was never to recover, and the secret of the desperate act which deprived the throne of Austria of its heir-apparent is still to this day surrounded with as much mystery as was the case during the first hours that followed upon its horror.

There is a sordid side to it which, out of respect for the memory of the dead, ought to have been avoided. The body of Marie Vetsera was taken away from Mayerling under conditions which throw the shadow of eternal disgrace upon those who were responsible for them. The miserable girl, who had lost her life under such appalling circumstances, was buried with a haste that nothing justified or excused in the churchyard of the Abbey of Heiligenkreuz, in the neighbourhood of the shooting-box where she had met her end. There was no priest to say a last prayer over her remains, no friends to accompany her to her grave. Her two uncles alone were allowed to be present when the earth was shovelled over her mortal remains. She who had dreamt of a throne did not even get a tomb!

CHAPTER VIII

AMONG SOCIETY IN VIENNA

IT is most difficult for a foreigner to get to know Vienna society well enough to be able to come to any definite conclusions as to its moral and intellectual standard. For one thing, the highest circles of Austrian aristocracy are very exclusive, and do not easily allow strangers to penetrate into their intimacy. Even diplomats who have spent years in the Danube city have confessed to me that, beyond being invited to official dinners and parties at official houses, they have had but few opportunities to learn the inner socialities of Austrian society. Viennese society can be divided into those people who are admitted at Court and those who have not that privilege. Beyond any doubt the latter are the most entertaining.

The aristocracy has constantly intermarried with each other—at least, those members of it who belong to the families which figure in the second part of the *Almanach de Gotha*. All the Lobkowitzs, Auerspergs, Liechtensteins, Trauttmansdorffs and Schwarzenbergs are so closely allied that they can be said to constitute one large family, a fact which is further emphasised by the custom which prevails among them to use the familiar "Du"

or " Thou " whenever speaking to each other. This is not merely the bad custom which it is supposed to be. It also serves as a link between the people who consider themselves as somewhat superior to their neighbours, and thus assert this difference between them and common mortals.

The principal occupation of these privileged few consists in discussing the births, marriages and deaths of their acquaintances and friends and the sayings and doings of the Imperial family. They scarcely ever read; their knowledge of art is exceedingly limited; they have absolutely no general interests; politics remain to them a closed book except when they concern the welfare of the Austrian Empire, and even then occupy them from the arrogant, but not from the instructive point of view. They are all exceedingly religious, would rather die than miss going to Mass every Sunday. This fact does not make them more charitable in regard to their neighbours. They view mixed marriages with the greatest horror, and a Protestant alliance is to them a mortal sin; their greatest pleasures consist in the acquisition of a fast horse for the men, and pretty dresses for the women. They are always happy because they feel so contented with the world they have been born into, and the position which they occupy in it. When the ruthless hand of care touches them, they accept its blows with a pathetic resignation because their sorrows are only those which, in the course of nature, are bound to fall upon every human creature—loss of parents, children, friends, or money, and so forth. The storms

that shake the soul with passion, love, or remorse remain always unknown to them.

The Jesuit Father who generally rules the lives and the consciences of those born within that circle, has trained them into a state of perfect indifference to aught else but the selfishness which is the dominant feature in their comfortable characters. They can be ill-natured in a stupid, aggressive kind of manner, which hurts but does not wound those who are the objects of their sarcasm and disapproval. They like sometimes to harm those with whom they do not agree, but they immediately feel sorry for it; after which they begin doing it over again with a placid indifference to the evil which they perpetrate that allows them to feel and to remain as content as a quiet conscience and a good digestion allows.

Gossip is the favourite occupation of Viennese ladies of the higher classes. Every small incident gives them an opportunity to enjoy that pastime. In most cases the mistakes made by foreigners concerning the etiquette prevailing at Court or in Society constitute the chief objects of the criticisms of the fair beings who visit each other in the afternoon and meet at their dressmakers in the morning. Love affairs are not frequent, and whenever they happen are only mentioned in undertones as something absolutely shocking. Fashionable young men are supposed to seek their pleasures outside the pale of Society, and if they do make an incursion there are promptly discouraged, thanks to the publicity in which women live, which obliges them in a certain sense to

account for all their actions not only to their husbands, fathers and mothers, uncles, aunts and cousins, but also to Mrs. Grundy.

This, of course, applies to the very highest circle of the aristocracy, where anyone not a Serene Highness is refused admittance except on sufferance. There is a Smart Set at Vienna, as everywhere else, but it is looked upon with distinct disfavour by those who rule society and those Dowagers who turn away their faces with an expression of disgust and dismay whenever the names of these stray sheep are mentioned.

What is so unpleasant about Austrians is their manners. For one thing, they are all loud to a degree which takes one's breath away before one has grown accustomed to it. When you are in a Viennese drawing-room you feel quite deafened at first by the screams which greet your ears. Everybody shouts at everybody else, and the noise gets absolutely deafening whenever three or four people are gathered in one place. Both men and women smoke large cigars without the least compunction, and puff away in your face without suspecting that you may not like it. They all expect you to conform to their habits, to care for what they enjoy, to be amused by what interests them. In short, they believe you are born for them, but not they for the world.

Of course, this helps to make them happy, but it does not tend to favour sociability ; that can only subsist on the system of giving and taking—Austrians only take.

I have been told that in former times social life in

Vienna was very pleasant. It can hardly be called so nowadays. For one thing, most people like to live quietly, and though the aristocracy have their own palaces in Vienna, they rarely dwell in them, spending the greater part of their time in the country, where most of them possess splendid castles and estates, and where the men can indulge in their favourite occupation of shooting every kind of animal that comes within range.

The women do nothing, when they do not shoot; anything more deadly dull, indeed, than a country house visit in Austria does not exist in the whole of the world. Small talk even is only upon local subjects, and devoid of that spice which alone can lend some animation to it. An Austrian of the upper classes could not be witty, no matter how hard he tried. This ignorance and indifference to everything which is not immediately connected with their personal welfare have very much to do with the direction which Austrian politics has assumed during the last twenty-five years or so. Having been almost exclusively in the hands of men belonging by their birth to the high aristocracy, they have forcibly reflected the incapacity of those who directed them, as well as their prejudices, of which whole legions existed. Austria is atrophied, and her great misfortune consists in the fact that, though aware of it, she yet refuses to call to her rescue fresh strengths and fresh minds capable of pulling the creaking chariot of the State out of the mire in which it is embedded; its drivers merely look on, and feel happy without knowing why.

My readers may think me severe, but I would ask them to look around and see whether there is one single man on the horizon of Vienna society who could aspire to be called a statesman. All those who play a part of some kind in the public life of the country are Hungarians, not Austrians; and Hungary it will be who will say the last word when the question of the settlement of the difficulties that have sprung into existence with the present war will come to be discussed. The incapacity displayed by Count Berchtold and his colleagues will have to be remedied in the future by someone or other among Hungarian political men.

After the Congress of Vienna, the society of that town became more cosmopolitan, thanks to the strong foreign contingent which the deliberations of that famous assembly had brought to the Austrian capital. Little by little, however, this character was lost, and Viennese citizens became simply badly brought up Germans. Refinement disappeared, and the moral standard of the people fell to a parallel with their ideas of bodily comforts. Anything more dismaying than a guest's room, for instance, in a country house has never been seen. Its furniture consists generally of a narrow bed with sheets like pocket-handkerchiefs, and wash-basins like tea-cups. Everything else is built on the same scale.

It is easy to believe that under these conditions social life in Vienna does not offer many resources to the foreigner, even if he arrives there with the best of introductions. The Court gives one or two balls during

the winter season—at least, it used to do so until the war—and these are always widely commented upon, on account of the invitations issued. There exist any number of subtle distinctions as to who has the right to be asked to these festivities, and Spanish etiquette still prevails in all its strictness at the Hofburg. Those who cannot boast of the necessary quarterings and pedigrees giving them the entry into the palace have perforce to resign themselves to be excluded from these balls, no matter what may be their official and social positions. Husbands are asked without their wives, and wives, when they are the lucky owners of the Order of the Starred Cross, can be admitted without their husbands. At certain balls, even high birth is not sufficient to procure an invitation, and one must be a Privy Councillor or an Imperial Chamberlain to receive one.

This explains why almost every young man of the aristocracy holds the latter office, whilst upon her marriage every woman within that exclusive circle is given the decoration without which the doors of the Hofburg would remain closed before her. Receptions are simply the public acknowledgment that you have a father and mother worth mentioning, but not that you are a welcome guest on the strength of your own merits.

Among the Archdukes and Archduchesses the only ones who show some hospitality to their friends are the Archduke Frederick and his wife, the Archduchess Isabella, who partly to amuse their numerous daughters, and partly because they like to see people fill the

magnificent rooms of their splendid palace, hold a few functions every winter. These are mostly very well arranged, and less dull than the receptions at the Hofburg. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland also open the gates of their lovely Vienna residence to Society. Among all the Royal and Imperial personages who compose the upper ten of the city, the Duke and Duchess stand almost alone in treating their guests in that familiar manner which allows people to realise that they are made of the same clay as those who invite them.

Few, also, among the Court officials care for entertaining. Sometimes the great Chamberlain, Count Lanckoronski, throws open the doors of his patrimonial residence and receives in great state the whole Society of Vienna. He is a Pole and a clever man, with none of the cold haughtiness peculiar to Austrians, a great reader, and a pleasant companion, with a keen taste for art and literature, and consummate knowledge of the world.

Then once a year, on the 31st of December, the Princess of Trauttmansdorff receives with much ceremony all the ladies of note in Society and the wives of the diplomats. She is Mistress of the Imperial Household, accepting the New Year wishes of their faithful subjects on behalf of the Emperor and the dead Empress. This yearly reception is remarkable because the Princess is not permitted by the prevailing etiquette to shake hands with anyone, not even with the womenfolk of the Ambassadors, a circumstance which has always aroused the ire of these ladies, who make no secret of their indignation at

what they consider to be a piece of insolence. The Princess herself is quite miserable at being compelled thus to show herself discourteous, and has more than once applied to Francis Joseph for permission to ignore this superannuated rule, but without success. The Emperor seems to think that if she shook hands with anyone the dignity of the House of Habsburg would be compromised for ever.

It is by the help of these distinctions and customs, which, in spite of the march of time, are to-day what they were three hundred years ago, that the Austrian Court believes it maintains its dignity in the world. The aristocracy follows the example of the Court, and is imbued with the same spirit, with the result that both have outlived themselves, are no longer respected or feared, and produce the impression of something which, though very old, is still not venerable.

Lately a few young Archduchesses, having wedded common mortals in possession of great titles and considerable worldly goods, have brought with them in the families into which they have entered the etiquette that had prevailed in their single days. This has added stiffness to what was already a very stiff regime.

Very few private people entertain in Vienna except in a formal way, and of these also the number is limited. Public balls take place every winter, which, being always given for some charitable purpose, attract a considerable number, bringing together the different sets which compose the society of the capital. But the men and women

who have spoken with each other during a whole evening, danced and supped together at these affairs, scarcely bow to each other when they meet the next day, while each ignores the other entirely when they do not belong to the same coterie. A like remark can be applied to the love affairs of certain ladies of the upper set. They flirt wildly with men whom they refuse either to know or to receive at their own houses.

Finance has lately come very much to the front in Vienna. Formerly it would have been quite impossible for a banker to have been admitted into very select Society. But with the advent of the famous Princess Pauline Metternich things changed considerably. She brought with her to the Austrian capital the *camaraderie* which she had exhibited in Paris, and immediately surrounded herself with people who amused her, or who could prove useful to some of the numerous schemes in which she was continually indulging. She was so independent that it became easy for her to brave the customs prevailing amongst her set, and the first thing which she did was to invite the Baron Hirsch, and as many of his co-religionaries as she could find, to her hospitable house, much to the scandal of her friends. These friends, however, before long followed the lead which she had given, and began also to frequent the houses of the wealthy Jews and the financiers of Vienna.

The Princess had chosen for her particular friend the late Baron Nathaniel Rothschild. Hardly a day passed without his coming to see her. She used to call him

her Jew, "*mein Jude*," and by this piece of arrogance, to which it is surprising that the Baron submitted, she imagined that she made plain the difference which existed between her social rank and his, of which she remained at heart perfectly aware, though, just to spite and to annoy a Society she had never liked, she seemed to forget it. The Princess Metternich was a grande dame by birth, but—by the absence of cold haughtiness from her usual ways—it is to be questioned whether she would always have been considered as such anywhere else but in her beloved Vienna, where the cab drivers still sing her praises, and the waiters in restaurants speak of her as "Our Pauline."

In spite of her originality and enterprise—perhaps on account of these traits—the Princess Pauline never made a position for herself in Vienna which could be compared to the one which had been occupied half a century before her time by the Princess Lory Schwarzenberg, whose influence over the men and women of her generation is remembered to this day. After Princess Lory, another great lady, the Countess Clotilde Clam-Gallas, held an undisputed sway over the society of the Viennese capital, where her salon exercised a real power, and where it was considered a special privilege to be admitted. The Countess Clam was an exceedingly clever and intelligent woman, with little of Austrian narrowness. She took a keen interest in politics, and from time to time the statesmen in power did not disdain to consult her. When she died, there disappeared with her the last representative

of a generation that had looked beyond a big cigar and a pretty gown for its enjoyments. At present Society in Vienna is remarkable for the absence of outstanding personalities.

In the financial circles, however, as I have already mentioned, can be found men and women of talent and of excellent education. Young diplomats, above the fear of being compromised, frequent this special *milieu*, where most interesting people are to be met.

Then there are the Hungarian elements, which constitute a special set of their own. Here, beautiful women are to be met in plenty, considerable elegance prevails, and one can find individuals of unusual charm and attraction. The Princess Festetics, for instance, belongs to this set. She owes to her English birth and parentage most of the qualities which make her such an exclusively sympathetic and graceful woman. There is the Polish set, also entertaining, where perhaps one can meet with more seriousness than anywhere else in Vienna, and amidst which there are to be found women like the Countess Roman Potocka, who is quite certainly one of the most remarkable persons of her generation, and only inferior in intelligence and in knowledge to her own mother, the regretted Princess Radziwill, who died a few months ago. But all these are not Austrians, nor Viennese; they are foreigners, in spite of the fact that they are subjects of the Austrian Empire. One cannot speak of them or judge them as one would speak or judge of the pure-bred Austrians, whose boredom, insufficiency,

arrogance and ignorance, stamp the most exclusive society of the capital that owns Francis Joseph for its Kaiser.

Can one wonder, therefore, that, guided by such people, Austrian politics has become the despicable cult it is to-day? Can one feel surprised that a country where the upper classes have lost the sense of the duties which their position implies, where their sole occupations are of the emptiest, silliest order, has drifted into the position of a subordinate to the first strong element that gave itself the trouble to exploit it for its own profit?

Austria has ceased to exist independently; she is the satellite of Prussia; the Prussian spirit alone rules her and guides all her actions. She has a Sovereign, it is true, but he is a mere puppet in the hands of circumstance, as well as of men. She has a Government which inspires no respect, which is unable to guide itself, or to give its officials prestige. She has an army which must always implore and rely on foreign help to make a stand before its adversaries. She has a clergy, but what influence can this clergy acquire when everybody knows that it is entirely dependent on the aristocracy for its support, and troubles but little about the poor and the humble of this world? She has a nobility, but what esteem can this nobility pretend to, when it is hardly able to read and write, when it has learnt nothing and still believes itself in an age when it was sufficient to have had ancestors to be feared and considered?

When we examine all these facts, when we review the present situation in which Austria has placed herself

to-day, we can only come to one conclusion, and that is that when we catch ourselves thinking that she can be of some account in the final settlement of Europe, when it takes place, we make a gross mistake. Austria will not be considered by anyone, not even by Germany, whose lead she has so obediently followed. She will find out that she has sacrificed her independence to false and mistaken expectations.

CHAPTER IX

HUNGARY: ITS POLITICAL MEN AND SOCIAL LIFE

AMONG his many titles, the one of which Francis Joseph ought to be most proud is that of King of Hungary, but in reality this has never been the case. Although he affected great sympathy for his Magyar subjects, and although he showed them the greatest consideration upon every possible occasion, at heart he has never forgiven them for their rebellion in 1848. With the Empress it was different. Elisabeth had been popular in Hungary from the first day that she had appeared there in the glory of her womanhood and of her wondrous beauty. She had learned the Hungarian language, too, with much greater thoroughness than her consort ever succeeded in doing, and could talk to her subjects at Budapest in their own tongue just as well as she could converse with her Viennese subjects. Then, too, she spent some weeks every autumn at her shooting-box at Gödollo, where she could enjoy some hunting, an exercise which she preferred to all others. She also felt far more at her ease at Budapest than in Vienna, where she had to live under the sway of an etiquette which she hated with all her soul.

As I have stated already, it is a question whether the

reconciliation which took place between the Emperor and Hungary, and which ended with his solemn coronation on the plains of Buda, could ever have occurred had it not been for the intervention of the Empress Elisabeth, who had exerted all the influence which she possessed over her husband, as well as over the leading personages of the Hungarian aristocracy, to bring it about. Francis Joseph had submitted to it, accepted it, endorsed it, but had never rejoiced at it nor been sincere in his assurances that its accomplishment had given his heart one of its dearest wishes and desires. He feared the too great influence which, after his acceptance of the Hungarian constitution, the nobility and political men of that country might come to take in the conduct of the affairs of his Monarchy.

Francis Joseph would have infinitely preferred seeing the Magyars relegated to an inferior rank, and not able to interfere in the business of the State. The Emperor dimly perceived that Austria was bound within a certain time to become absorbed in its more vigorous partner, and that the Dual Monarchy might very easily end by being a one-sided affair, in which Hungary would have the better part. His previsions were not mistaken, but he could not bring himself to look kindly upon the new political constellation that formed itself around him, nor to forgive his Hungarian subjects for the important place which he felt himself compelled to award to them in matters of State. With his Prime Minister, Count Andrassy, whom in former years he

had condemned to death, Francis Joseph never felt at ease, and was not sorry when events turned out so that he had to part from him. Yet Count Andrassy was a great Minister, a great historical figure, though he was not a great man.

It was Count Andrassy who started the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on a new road, and inaugurated the Austro-German alliance. No one could have believed such a compact ever possible after the disaster of Sadowa, but he had the instinct to guess the greatness of the intrigue into which Prince Bismarck inveigled Austrian politics by drawing them into the sphere of German political activity and against Russia, which, with its influence over the Balkans on the one side, and over France on the other, was the common enemy of Teutonism.

Count Andrassy was an extremely clever man, with a brilliant wit and something dashing about him which gave a tinge of romanticism to his whole personality. He was not handsome, having a decidedly gipsy type of face, but I do not think I ever saw a man looking more elegant than he when in the Hungarian dress he was fond of wearing upon State occasions. He was a charming companion, and had the rare talent of making people forget his undoubted superficiality in regard to his general knowledge, while remembering only the genuine talents with which Nature had endowed him.

The Prime Minister could seize and appreciate the value of those grand political conceptions of which Prince

Bismarck was a master, and had enough perception to understand that it would be to the advantage of his beloved Hungary to enter into them. Without him the famous Triple Alliance—concerning which such torrents of ink have been spilt—could hardly have been concluded, as, notwithstanding the hugeness of his intellect and of his superiority, Prince Bismarck alone would never have been able to render it acceptable to public opinion in Hungary, even if Austria were prepared to swallow it, owing to her inability to understand with what danger it was fraught for her future. Count Andrassy was a power in the land of his birth and believed in by a large party. He had realised one fact, which, however, he was careful enough not to point out to other people—that in the end the Triple Alliance was bound to throw Austria into the German confederation, either before or after a Continental war, and that this incorporation would mean the complete independence of Hungary from the Habsburgs and their dynasty, a thing which had been the aim of Andrassy's whole life as well as of all his efforts as a politician.

Though no one understood or guessed what the Count had had in his mind when he had extended to Bismarck the hand of a friendship which at the bottom was both insincere and interested, yet the policy inaugurated by Andrassy was to mature after he had disappeared from the political scene, in the sense that as Hungary developed it became more and more independent of Austrian control. Finally, Hungary succeeded in imposing her own

statesmen and politicians on the Emperor Francis Joseph, obliging him to look toward people like Count Tisza or Count Apponyi for his advisers, and impressing him with the necessity of always consulting them, or any colleagues they might have, whenever he found himself faced by difficulties in the administration of the vast Dual Monarchy which owned him for its chief.

The Emperor, very decidedly, never appreciated nor liked that kind of thing, but he became used to it nevertheless, and soon Budapest secured a deciding voice in all questions concerning international politics as well as respecting the interior administration of the Empire. Budapest gradually became the master at the Hofburg as well as the Ball Platz, and this though she was still considered by many as merely being tolerated out of kindness and only allowed to remain on sufferance.

It is just as well to say at once that Hungary deserved the leading part which it had secured in the affairs of the Dual Monarchy. Hungarians are certainly more clever than Austrians; they are brought up far more practically and earnestly, and with infinitely fewer prejudices. They are a proud race, but have none of the overbearing arrogance, based on ignorance, which is such a distinctive feature of the Austrian character, especially among the upper classes. They are not so much under the influence of the clergy, and are broad and liberal in their opinions.

The cleverest diplomats that Austria has had during the last twenty-five years or so have been Hungarians.

Of course, I make an exception for Count Aerenthal, who was all that a Jew ought to be, and who, in spite of his affected sympathies for Hungary, would have infinitely preferred she had never existed. He was clever enough to be quite aware that the haughty Magyars had never accepted him as quite their equal, and that, moreover, they were not partisans of any policy of adventure in which they could not find their own immediate advantage. The only point upon which they were in accord was their undying hatred of Russia, which, however explainable on the part of Hungarians, savoured of ingratitude on the part of Austria. The leaders of the opposition parties in Budapest were all clever people, with an aim which was quite clear and distinct in their minds, thus contrasting vividly with the nebulous conditions which characterised the enterprises of the different statesmen having the direction of Austrian foreign politics, and who, with the sole exception of Count Aerenthal, always wanted something without in the least knowing what it was.

Hungary, as a matter of fact, had never accepted her union with Austria quite sincerely. She had been compelled to do so as a step toward the entire independence she was absolutely determined to obtain one day. She smiled, therefore, upon her secular foe, Austria, and consented to see the crown of St. Stephen put on the head of Francis Joseph. She made a great sacrifice in thus humbling herself before the man who had not hesitated to send to the scaffold the best among her sons,

but she fully meant to reap in the future the benefit of that absence of memory which she had affected. Little by little Hungary felt her ground, and every day took a few steps farther on the road which was to lead her to entire liberty. She did not approve—at least, her leaders did not—of the policy of aggression pursued in the Balkans by the Austrian Government, and she failed to see of what advantage to her own personal interests this policy could prove to be.

What Hungary did realise to the utmost was the possibilities of advantage to her aims which a European war might bring by effecting her separation from the Empire of which she was considered to form a part. Hungary hated the Habsburgs, and the Magyar aristocracy despised those Austrian nobles who refused to admit it on a footing of equality. By a curious anomaly many people who were received by the Emperor and by the Empress in their intimacy at Budapest, and treated by them there as their personal friends, could not be admitted into their presence in Vienna, no matter what high functions they might occupy in the hierarchy of their own country. Men like Count Karolyi, for instance—who had been ambassador in different countries, among other places at the Court of St. James's—failed to secure an invitation for his wife to a Court ball in Vienna, though she graced with her beauty all the festivities given at the Royal Palace at Buda. This was because the mother of the Countess (the Countess Erdödy) had not quite the requisite eminence of family

alliances and birth. These subtle distinctions, which belonged to another age, incensed the Hungarian aristocracy, and made it shun the Austrian capital unless absolutely necessary; they, moreover, widened every day the gulf which separated the reigning dynasty from its Magyar subjects.

When the war broke out in 1914 the Hungarians did not accept it with enthusiasm, in spite of their violent dislike for Russia. For one thing, Count Tisza and Count Apponyi, and others, thought that the hour for such a struggle had not yet arrived, and that it was a mistake to seize the pretext of the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand to open an era of strifes which might have the gravest consequences, not only for Austria and the Habsburgs, but also for Hungary itself. Their country was not ready to take her fate into her own hands and proclaim her independence. There was always the fear that should the war prove successful for the united armies of the Kaiser and of the Emperor Francis Joseph, the former, in order to dissimilate his own designs against the Austrian Empire, might lend a helping hand to the plans of Francis Joseph for subduing Hungary into a more acquiescent mood. This would not at all have suited the ambitions of those who had carefully watched, all through the years which had elapsed since Francis Joseph and his lovely consort had been crowned as King and Queen of Hungary, for the opportunity of reducing Austria to the condition of a vassal of Hungary. These men, of whom Count Tisza was one, never wavered one

single instant in the line of policy which they had decided to follow, and it is certain that at the end of the Great War Hungary will be the first to urge the incorporation of Austria into the vast German confederation, thus levelling her to the condition of Bavaria or Würtemberg. At the same moment Hungary will proclaim herself an independent kingdom, smiling upon the Slavs, and furthering the emancipation ideas of the Czechs. Whether this kingdom will still be ruled by a Habsburg or not remains a question to which I am afraid not many Magyars would care to reply to-day.

Count Berchtold was never a favourite in Budapest. For one thing, he had too much Austrian arrogance, and though he had married a Hungarian lady—the daughter of Count Karolyi—he had not made himself at home among his wife's compatriots. He was a stickler for etiquette, and the free and easy life led by Hungarian aristocrats in Budapest, as well as in their country residences, had not appealed to him.

The Count was the kind of man who likes to ride in a well-kept park, but who does not care for a long gallop in the country, where there is no one to see how well he can manage his horse. He felt more at ease in evening dress than in uniform, which tired him. Unfortunately, he allowed everybody to guess that such was the case, and this harmed his prestige and impaired his authority, as well as his influence. Hungarian statesmen, however, showed themselves merciful, and gave him plenty of rope to hang himself with. For many months after the war

broke out, Count Berchtold was allowed to do what he liked, but when it had been proved beyond dispute that he had been the unconscious tool of the German Ambassador, Herr von Tschirsky, Count Tisza intervened. Count Berchtold resigned, and Count Tisza repaired to Vienna, so as to be on the spot when the question of finding a successor to this honest but not far-seeing man arose. It was his advice and his policy which prevailed, and Baron Burian was appointed Foreign Minister and Minister of the Imperial Household, two functions which had been joined together at the Austrian Court ever since the days of Kaunitz and Marie Thérèse.

Burian is the instrument of Count Tisza and of the party to which the latter belongs. He will work exclusively for Hungary, and she will always remain with him the first consideration in all that he does. In working for Hungarian independence, he will also play into the hands of Germany, inasmuch as he will persuade Francis Joseph—if the Emperor is still alive when peace comes to be discussed—that the only chance for Austria is to enter resolutely and of her own accord the German confederation, putting her armies, her finances, her interior administration and her foreign policy under the supervision of her powerful neighbour. Thus would fall the haughty and disdainful Habsburgs from the proud position which they have occupied for so many centuries without ever filling it worthily, save in one or two exceptions.

Once Hungary becomes independent, the question will

necessarily arise as to who will be accepted by the nation as its King. Personally, my opinion is that it will prove exceedingly difficult for the Hungarians to get rid of the present dynasty, the more so that no one will know what to do with it after the war. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the present heir to the Dual Monarchy, the Archduke Karl Franz Joseph, will be called upon to assume the crown of St. Stephen. But he will have to make his choice between being a *Roi de parade*, following the dictates of the parties who will have allowed him to ascend the throne, or being dethroned within a short time. As he is a docile young man, I have no doubt that he will resign himself to his fate with good grace, accepting all the privileges but none of the responsibilities of a throne.

The question will then arise as to what Hungary will become under the new regime. Will she go on developing as a monarchy with which the world will have to count in the new grouping of nations? She will undoubtedly become an important factor, but whether it will be a troublesome one or not, it is difficult to say, especially for one who has not been recently in that part of the world and who has been deprived of any contact with the political men of a country that, whatever happens, will never become the friend of Russia, but may occasionally prove a dangerous enemy.

Society in Budapest is very different from that in Vienna. It offers far more resources to the foreigner, and is not at all so exclusive; on the contrary, it is most

hospitable. The Magyars are still, in a certain sense, children of the steppes, with all the generous and wild instincts which distinguished the semi-nomadic nations that once inhabited the vast plains where they dwell to-day.

The Magyar has much in his character that reminds one of the Pole: the same brilliance of intellect, the same versatility. He possesses, too, I must confess, the same indifference to promises made and friendships sworn; the same forgetfulness for everything that does not touch him or his feelings. At the same time the Magyar is generous, kind in his way, chivalrous occasionally, though cruel sometimes; and though untrustworthy, yet never deliberately false. His conceptions can be immense, and he generally succeeds in carrying them through. He is brave, and ever ready to avenge with his sword any grievances he fancies he has against his neighbour. He is mostly intelligent, but rarely cultivated, though remarkably well-learned men can be met with in Hungary. The upper classes are mostly sympathetic, and make you feel far more at home with them than the Austrians, in spite of the reputation for bonhomie which the latter enjoy.

Hungarian women are mostly pretty and fascinating, not given to over-strictness in the matter of conduct, but always ladylike; and, though indifferent to gossip, they contrive nevertheless to avoid any subject of scandal. One does not find in Hungary that type of woman who, through disappointment at not having been appreciated

by any man as his life's companion, revenges herself upon those who have not met the same fate, by tearing them to pieces with an hypocritical compassion that does more harm than any open hostility would do. One also finds but rarely dowagers interested in nothing else but the affairs which do not concern them, and ever ready to give advice for which no one cares. The maliciousness which is the distinctive feature of the upper classes in Austria is unknown in Hungary, where both men and women are too much occupied by various pursuits to waste their time in abusing other people. The *désœuvrement* of all the Austrian Serene Highnesses who are expected to adorn the balls and the festivities of the Hofburg does not affect Budapest society, who, even in the cases where it is not given to intellectual pursuits, prefers petting its children, its dogs and its horses to the pleasure of slandering those who do not deserve it.

In winter most of the Hungarian aristocracy repairs to the capital, where it entertains each other with much magnificence and great display of family diamonds, of which it possesses plenty. All the receptions given at Budapest are most sumptuous. They have also one advantage which is never to be met with in Vienna: they afford subjects of interesting studies to the foreigner whose good fortune brings him to them. He finds himself thrown amidst surroundings and people absolutely different from any he has had the opportunity to see before. One may or may not like Hungarians; indeed, it is hardly possible that their character will ever fully appeal to other

nations, who will find some difficulty in understanding natures where the greatest generosity is combined with an unusual degree of shrewdness, and some untrustworthiness in cases where they think that their own particular interests are threatened or endangered. But there is one thing which must be conceded to them: with all their faults, they are ten thousand times more worthy than the Austrians. Their policy, in those cases where they have been allowed to follow one, has been far superior in regard to morality than that pursued by the various Ministers whom Francis Joseph has called to his help, and even should one dislike Hungarians, yet it is impossible to despise them.

CHAPTER X

AMONG THE POLES AND CZECHS

THE Austrian Empire, as we see it to-day, is an agglomeration of different nationalities, each of whom would like to play first fiddle to a tune they all, without exception, heartily dislike. The German population is not really a very strong element, in spite of all its efforts to assert itself. After the Hungarians, whose separatist ideas are sure to be realised before long, the strong factors in the Monarchy are the Poles and the Czechs. The Slavonic elements, which comprise Bosnia, Herzegovina, a part of Croatia and of Bukowina, are not yet powerful enough to assert themselves; they seek protection where they can find it—in Servia, in Russia, or, occasionally, even in Turkey. Thus, while disturbing and dangerous to the peace of the world, in regard to the Empire they have always been treated as negligible quantities.

With the Poles and with the Czechs it is a very different matter. The former are subserviently faithful to the Habsburgs, who have toadied to them, caressed them, exploited them, and allowed them all the liberty which they cared to have, simply in the hope of being able through them to influence the inhabitants of the Polish

provinces forming part of the Russian Empire, and to inoculate them with rebellion.

Before the war, Galicia was perhaps the most contented province in the dominions of Francis Joseph. It had practically as much independence as it wanted, was administered almost entirely by Polish functionaries, and was allowed to speak its own language and to teach it in schools. All the large landowners of Polish origin and nationality were treated with quite exceptional deference, and found the doors of the Hofburg open to them, even when they did not possess numerous quarterings and unimpeachable pedigrees. The Poles, moreover, responded to the advances that were made to them, and showed considerable patriotism in regard to their financial contributions to the maintainence of the Monarchy from which they had obtained recognition of their rights. The aristocracy was, for the most part, intelligent, well trained and highly cultured. It could boast of brilliant men, lovely women, and unlimited wealth; and its castles and residences ranked among the finest in Europe.

A strong anti-Russian agitation was carried on in Galicia, and no pains were spared to stir up disaffection against the Tsar in Volhynia, Podolia and Ukraine in the South of Russia and in the provinces comprising the kingdom of Poland. It is well to understand this thoroughly in view of the great part which Poland is bound to play in the peace deliberations which, some day, must be engaged in. The Poles are devoted to Austria,

and their protestations of fidelity to Russia, except in a few isolated cases, spring from nothing but fear of being compromised, and the not unnatural desire to remain upon good terms with the wolf, as well as with the goat, which the wolf would like to eat.

Before the war broke out, and at a time when no one was even thinking about its possibility, I happened to discuss the situation of Poland with some Poles who, since they lived in Petersburg, might be expected to have acquired Russian sympathies, and I found that all of them were dreaming of the time when it would become possible for a new Poland to come to life under the protection of the Austrian crown, with an Archduke at its head. They already had one candidate for the post of Polish King—the Archduke Charles Stephen, who lived at the gates of the Polish town of Cracow in a beautiful castle called Saybusch, who spoke Polish like a native, who had only Polish servants around him. Further to cement his position, the Archduke had married two of his daughters to young men bearing some of the proudest of Polish names, one a Prince Radziwill, and the other a Prince Czartoryski, cousin fifty times removed from the head of that illustrious house, who was himself an officer in the Austrian army.

It was toward the Archduke Charles Stephen that the thoughts of aristocratic Poland were turned; it was he whom the Poles hoped one day to welcome as their King. The Habsburgs really have shown ability in their systematic efforts to win the affections of the Poles,

though, of course, they have been helped by Polish hatred for Russia and the House of Romanoff.

What I have just said does *not* apply to the Polish middle classes, who have not the same reasons for satisfaction with Austrian rule as their more fortunate brothers. They had the brunt of the burden to bear, but did not get *fiche de consolation*, as one says in French, to excessive taxation, in the possibility of being welcomed in the select circles of Vienna Society, and of being made much of at the Hofburg. They, together with the peasantry, saw the unpleasant aspects of the situation, and were not so much delighted with the Austrian Government as the latter would have liked them to be. On the other hand, this did not make the Poles more inclined to look toward Russia as a possible deliverer. On the contrary, it induced them to nurse dreams of independence, and to long for the day when their rights would have to be acknowledged. They would not, however, have shown themselves averse to the reconstitution of their old kingdom under an Archduke; and this is where the ability of the Austrian Government showed itself in quite an extraordinary manner. It contrived to assure itself of a preponderance in Galicia, so that even should this province happen to be torn asunder from the Empire and granted independence, it would find itself with a member of the Habsburg dynasty at its head, who could keep more or less intact the links which bound Galicia to the Austrian Empire.

The Poles realised this position, but it did not disturb

ARCHDUKE KARL FRANZ JOSEPH

their equanimity in the very least. They did not mind remaining under the ostensible protection of the Government, whatever it might be, which ruled in Vienna. On the contrary, this fact gave them a security for the future. What they required was the restoration of an old order of things which would allow each Polish citizen the right to intrigue against his fellows. For this is what the independence of Poland will mean, if it ever becomes a reality. It will open for Europe an era of trouble, such as we have witnessed in the Balkans since the war of 1877 called into existence an independent Bulgaria. Poland will prove a bone of contention for the whole of the European continent. It will remain a permanent danger to the security of the world, and cause endless trouble to everybody, owing to the character of the people, their restlessness, their conviction that each of them has as much right to rule his neighbours and his country as the other. Their secret and unavowed longing is for the restoration of their ancient constitution, which had for its first principle the institution of an elective monarchy that opened the field for every private ambition.

An independent kingdom of Poland, such as some people dream about, and such as the German Government would like to see come into existence under a Sovereign belonging to the House of Habsburg, would not have ten years' existence. For one thing, there would be found at once men belonging to illustrious families, that in the past have played a great part in the history of their country, who would put forward, either openly, or in

secret through their supporters, the rights which they would imagine entitled them to become invested with the kingly dignity.

Among these notables, Prince Czartoryski, the head of that family, would immediately step forward, and would find rivals in the Zamoyskis, Potockis, Lubomirskis, and all the other "skis," of whom so many abound in Poland; and one and all would work together, though against each other, for the destruction of the new State.

A lot has been said about Polish patriotism, but the only salvation for Poland consists in an autonomy under the protection of the Russian Government, which alone is powerful enough to protect it against outside aggression and against itself. If left alone and abandoned to its own instincts, Poland would rush to certain destruction.

But the Polish element is not the only one existing in Galicia. There are the Ruthenians, who have been the objects of a persistent Austrian persecution, which, especially in the years preceding the outbreak of the war, had assumed considerable proportions. The Ruthenians mostly belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, and their language is that Little Russian which is spoken throughout the Ukraine, from Poltava and Chernigov down to Kiev and the mouth of the Dnieper. They also have nursed since time immemorial the dream of seeing their own nationality win its independence. They have cherished the warmest sympathies for Russia, and when the Russian troops occupied Galicia and a part of Bukowina, they made no secret of their hopes of escaping,

by Russian intervention, from Austrian rule, and of being reunited to their countrymen across the frontier.

Austria will have to reckon with the Ruthenians in the final settlement. They will strongly object to being merged into a new kingdom of Poland, yet upon this the Polish party will certainly insist. It is to be hoped for the future peace of Europe that the claims of the Ruthenians will be recognised; otherwise there will be endless trouble, the revival of old religious controversies, and the awakening of even stronger political hatreds than those which already exist between the two rival nationalities, that are ever in dispute for supremacy in Galicia.

The old standing quarrel of the Ruthenian and Polish elements that has raged in Galicia so long as history can remember has had far more to do with the present war than the general public supposes. It has been one of the causes of the distrust and antipathy which exists between Austria and Russia, and has been further complicated by religious questions.

It must not be forgotten that the Ruthenians were the original possessors of Galicia, which the Poles wrested from them, together with a considerable portion of Ukraine, which, however, they had to return later on to Russia. Since their conversion to Christianity they have followed the rites of the Greek Church, notwithstanding all the attempts made to convert them by Roman Catholic clergy; and they have transmitted from father to son their hopes of being one day reunited to their brothers across the frontier in that "*Rousse*," as they call it, with

whom so many remembrances and so many traditions bind them. They have always disliked the Poles and they hate the Austrians and, in particular, the Catholic priests. During the last ten or twelve years a strong separatist movement has been gaining strength in Galicia among the Ruthenian population, a movement that has been undoubtedly encouraged by the various Slav committees in Russia, which have displayed considerable activity in regard to the propaganda they have carried on in favour of Russia. The Austrian Government, of course, became aware of it, and in its turn brought pressure to bear on the Ruthenians, imprisoned all the leaders of the so-called Russian party, and persecuted many people who seemed to be favouring the separatist movement in Galicia as well as in Bukowina.

It is very probable that Austria will try, in the event of a restoration of the independence of Poland, to insist on the Ruthenians being handed over. This ought to be opposed by the Allies by all means, because it is quite impossible to hope that the Ruthenians will submit to this end of all their aspirations and desires, and it is certain to start a continual warfare with the Poles. All these things would be fraught with many dangers to the peace of Europe. Galicia, it must not be forgotten, is not Polish, but Russian—at least, its southern part is—and to Russia it must return if one wants to avoid continual recurrences of political worries and quarrels, connected with the fight of its Ruthenian population for liberty and independence in all matters connected with

its language and religion, which bind it so closely to Russia.

After the Hungarian and the Polish questions, the one which perhaps has caused the most annoyance to the Austrian Government has been that of the Czechs. This is such a complicated matter that I doubt whether six persons could be found in the whole of Austria to explain it in the same way. At the bottom of the whole problem lies the separatist movement of the Czech element in Bohemia. The Czechs consider themselves as the rightful masters of Bohemia, and would like to see it granted the autonomy without which, they think, it cannot develop its material prosperity as it ought to do.

The Czechs claim to be considered as a separate kingdom, and would wish their King first to be crowned at Prague, then to reside a few months of every year in his Royal residence of the Hradschin, and afterwards to allow the country to be administered only by Czech functionaries. What would please them the most would be to become an independent kingdom, not governed from Vienna, and not obliged to endorse the quarrels of either the Habsburg dynasty or of Austria in general.

Unfortunately for these aspirations, the majority of great landowners in Bohemia are Germans, and will not hear of the possibility of being ruled by Czechs. They are strong unionists, and as their support is indispensable to the Government, the latter cannot afford to disregard their wishes. It is, therefore, compelled in a certain sense to allow them a free hand in the administration of

the province, and also to permit them to crush, as far as it is in their power, the hated and despised Czechs.

The Czechs, being aware of the fact, return this dislike, and thus a most strained situation has arisen, to which no solution is to be found—at least for the present. The Germans are the stronger, and their number includes the members of the most wealthy and powerful families of Bohemia, such as the Schwarzenbergs, the Thuns, the Clarys, and many more whom it would take too long to recall.

The Choteks, to whom belonged the Duchess of Hohenberg, have been credited with Czech sympathies, but this has not been proved, and very likely the Duchess was the only member of that family who ever indulged in any, for the reason that she would have liked to have the Czechs on her side when the question arose as to her future status in the world. At all events, she affected great affection for them, and liked to boast of her Czech origin, though she could not speak the Bohemian language, and had hardly ever lived in Bohemia before her marriage, her parents having almost constantly resided abroad.

The natural antipathy of the German landowners for the native population of the country, from which they drew the greater portion of their immense wealth, did not lead them to forsake it and to live in Austria. On the contrary, they all very much preferred Prague to Vienna, and the picturesque old city on the Moldau boasts of a winter season which is far more brilliant and animated

than that of the Austrian capital. The palaces of the Bohemian aristocracy are splendid, and the receptions given there would not disgrace any of the great cities in Europe; but the society which one meets is extremely exclusive and confines its circle of acquaintances to its own members, a fact which adds to the irritation with which it is viewed by the Bohemian or Czech families, who, in consequence, feel themselves scorned and belittled. Nowhere are the differences of social position felt more keenly than in ancient Prague; nowhere can one observe such permanent hatred amongst people who ought to work together for one common aim and for the furtherance of their mutual interests.

In Russia great hopes have been built on this state of affairs, and the belief exists that the Czechs, being Slavs, are in sympathy with Russia, and would not be averse to recovering their former independence by means of Russian intervention. This idea is essentially false. There is absolutely no affection in Bohemia for Russia, and the difference of religion alone would render a union between the two countries totally impossible, even if the Czechs did not fear Russia, in whom, so far from seeing a deliverer, they dread to discover an oppressor.

There are some people who think they are acting cleverly by preaching, to the few who consent to listen to them, a union of all the Slav elements in Europe under the protection of Russia. But no one takes them very seriously. The Czechs would feel very sorry indeed to be absorbed into Russia, and, from the geographical point

of view alone, I fail to see how such a thing could ever become possible.

What the Czechs wish to secure is autonomy, if not complete independence; the power to have a parliament of their own, and a limitation of the influence of the great landowners, who hitherto have controlled all local affairs, even those in which they have not been directly interested. Failing this, they would prefer, in case of annexation to any other country, to be reunited with Poland, should Poland ever live again. The fact that there are numerous Czech colonists in the South of Russia does not prove in the very least that these colonists are animated with kindly feelings in regard to Russia. They have simply migrated to Podolia or Volhynia because these provinces contain a considerable proportion of Poles among their inhabitants, with whom Bohemians have always been on most friendly terms, and in whom they have found a warm and ready support against the exactions and extortions of the Russian police and officials. That lately an active propaganda has been carried on among Czechs in favour of Russia is an undeniable fact, but this propaganda has not won followers. If the Russian Government thinks it can find supporters in Bohemia against Austria, it is vastly mistaken. Indeed, it is far more probable that the whole province would rise against Russian troops, should any ever appear on the banks of the Moldau or within the walls of Prague.

It must not be forgotten that, to the ignorant Czechs, Russians are idolaters and schismatics, whom they have

been told by their clergy to abhor; and the clergy is still all-powerful amongst them.

But putting aside the question of a union with Russia, upon which Russians would do wisely not to reckon too much, it is an undeniable fact that sooner or later—very likely as a consequence of the present war—Bohemia will recover its independence, and detach itself from the Habsburgs. Together with Hungary, it will achieve independence, though it is not likely to accept a member of the reigning Austrian dynasty as its King, but will either elect a foreign prince or else proclaim itself a republic. Francis Joseph has completely destroyed the last remnants of popularity which his House had ever possessed in Bohemia. By his utter disregard of the wishes of the Czechs, by the open manner in which he lent himself to the tyranny the German section of the population exercised, by the avowed protection which he has continually awarded to that portion of the aristocracy of the province which was of Austrian origin or in thorough sympathy with the methods of the Austrian Government, he has given to his Bohemian subjects the idea that he would never lend himself to any amelioration of the conditions under which they live. On the contrary, they believe he would seek to destroy all their aspirations toward autonomy. Nowhere has the tyranny of Austrian rule been felt more acutely than in Bohemia.

The separatist tendencies of the Czechs are daily increasing in importance and in activity, and soon will not consent to be checked or even kept at bay. Already

many voices are heard to say that the hour has struck when an effort must be made to force the Austrian Government to recognise the just claims of the Czech population. Very soon these voices will become so loud and so numerous that Francis Joseph and his Ministers will find themselves facing a situation with which it is not likely they will ever be able to deal. They will be confronted with the dilemma of submitting to the claims of the province of Bohemia, whose bid for freedom other parts of the Austrian Empire would immediately emulate, or of attempting once more to crush with its iron hand the aspirations of a people who knows its wants and how to get them.

Unfortunately, the latter decision is most probably the one they will take, and it will begin an era of civil wars that will end with the total disintegration of the ancient realm of the Habsburgs.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAST LOVE AFFAIR OF THE HABSBURGS

I HAVE already mentioned the Archduke Frederick, and said that owing to his enormous fortune he occupies a considerable position in the family circle of the Habsburgs. His marriage, too, was a romantic one, but it was perfectly "respectable," and, in spite of the difficulties that it occasioned at first, ended like a fairy tale, by the happiness of the people engaged in it.

The Princess Isabella of Croy, who won the affections of the youthful Archduke, as he was at the time, belonged to one of the proudest half German and half Belgian families who have been recognised as capable of matching with Royalty and of giving their daughters to Sovereigns, without the latter committing a breach of the regulations which rule the marriages of reigning houses. She was, moreover, a clever and enterprising lady, who determined from the very day that she was accepted as an Archduchess to become a power in the family that had received her, though not with open arms, at least with that cold courtesy which was all she had expected. Isabella, however, in no way applied herself to propitiate her nearest relatives; she set out to make a personal position for herself, not only among the employers and tenants on

her husband's immense estates, but especially in Vienna, where Society had viewed her arrival with a certain apprehension. Still, she soon made herself thoroughly at home, far more than in Hungary, where lived at that time her own eldest sister, the Princess Eugénie (or Nini, as she was familiarly called in Budapest) Esterhazy, the wife of the head of that illustrious family. Princess Nini had made herself so thoroughly and so immensely popular among the Hungarians that her sister's personality, Archduchess though she was, found itself overlooked in consequence.

Now this was the last thing which Isabella could forgive, and consequently she did not take kindly to the Hungarians, and avoided frequent visits to Budapest, in spite of the fact that she lived for a few years at Presbourg, where the Archduke had a military command. The early years of the couple's married life were spent at Presbourg, until the death of Archduke Albert put his nephew in possession of all his wealth, and caused him to transfer his residence to the palace in Vienna which, as well as the ancestral castle, now claimed him as its master.

But as years went on, and especially after the death of the Princess Esterhazy, who died in the flower of her youth, the Archduchess Isabella forgave the Hungarians. She struck up a great friendship with the Archduchess Marie Josepha, the mother of the future heir to the throne, as well as with the Emperor's daughter, Marie Valerie, and these three ladies formed themselves into a

kind of league against the Duchess of Hohenberg, the morganatic wife of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. They secured for themselves the good graces of the Emperor, who, when influenced by someone other than Frau Schratt, used to listen to his daughter. She, in her turn, often played the game of her two cousins, especially of Isabella, who, clever, brilliant, and of an enterprising turn of mind, soon became a personage of decided influence in the Imperial Family.

A number of children were born to the Archduchess Isabella. Six daughters came in rapid succession, to the despair of their parents. They yearned, though, for a son, who arrived after everyone had ceased hoping for his advent. When he was born, his eldest sister was already eighteen years of age. The question of her marriage had arisen more than once, and considerably preoccupied her mother. The Archduchess Isabella had been very ambitious in regard to her girls, and had nursed the dream of seeing one of them wed the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, her cousin, and the other the young King of Spain. Both these plans, about which she had plotted and schemed for years, fell through because, in spite of a stay of several weeks at Madrid as the guests of the Dowager Queen of Spain, a sister of the Archduke Frederick, the latter's daughter, Marie Christine, failed to impress Alphonso XIII., who already had in view the English marriage he was to contract later.

The young Archduchess ended by making a love marriage with the Hereditary Prince of Salm Salm, the

future head of one of the oldest and most illustrious families of which Germany can boast, and the heir to considerable riches. Her sister Marie Anne—whom her mother had wanted to wed the heir to the Austrian crown, when the Countess Sophy Chotek had carried him away, as it were, under her very eyes—became the wife of Prince Elie of Parma. Another of the young Archduchesses, Marie Henrietta, gave her hand to the present Austrian Ambassador in Berlin, Prince Godfrey of Hohenlohe Schillingsfürst, and now merely lives the life of a private lady of high rank.

It was another sister of these young Princesses—called Isabella, after their mother—who was by a strange freak of destiny to become the heroine of one of those romances for which the House of Habsburg has so often been famous, a romance that nearly ended the other day by making her renounce all the privileges of her birth to become the wife of a simple doctor, with whom she had fallen in love whilst nursing in a Red Cross hospital to which she was attached under the name of Sister Irmgard.

The existence of this Archduchess had indeed been an eventful one. She was wedded at the age of twenty-four to Prince George of Bavaria, whose mother, the Archduchess Gisela, was the eldest daughter of the Emperor Francis Joseph, whilst by his father, Prince Leopold, he was the grandson of the late Prince Regent of Bavaria. This young man had always had a queer reputation, and not many mothers would have cared to give him their girls; but, speaking from the worldly point of view, he

was one of the best matches in Europe: rich, young, handsome, and highly connected. He seemed to have been genuinely in love with his fiancée, who, being kept very strictly at home, was perhaps not so very sorry to escape the hard rule of her mother. The Archduchess Gisela, on her side, was delighted to see her son settle at last, after the rather adventurous life which he had led, and which had occasioned her considerable apprehensions.

Prince George had always been a favourite with his grandfather, Francis Joseph, who, delighted to find that he had become engaged to one of his cousins, gave magnificent wedding presents to the young couple and, moreover, settled a handsome sum of money upon them.

By command of the Emperor Francis Joseph, the wedding took place at Schönbrunn, being solemnised with that exceeding pomp which the Austrian Court alone knows how to display. The bride appeared quite lovely under the priceless lace veil that had formerly belonged to the Empress Elisabeth, and which the latter's daughter Gisela had given that same morning to her son's future wife. After a wedding breakfast at which the Emperor himself proposed the health of the newly married pair, they started for the Castle of Laxenburg, which had been put by the Sovereign at their disposal for the honeymoon.

What took place there is difficult to know or relate, and, after all, has nothing to do with the present tale. But at about four o'clock in the morning a dishevelled female figure knocked at the gates of the Vienna palace

of the Archduke Frederick, and insisted on being admitted, making herself known as the Archduchess Isabella, the bride of a few hours before. To her father and mother, who hastened to her, she would say nothing, but merely sobbed in an uncontrollable attack of distress, and implored them to take her back under their roof, and never to allow her to return to a husband with whom she declared no human persuasion could or would ever induce her to live, even for one single hour.

The consternation caused by this catastrophe was indescribable. Of course the Emperor had to be acquainted with it, and the old Sovereign's distress, for once, was very genuine. He tried to preach resignation to his niece, and, sending for his grandson, gave him a piece of his mind, telling him that it was his duty to see if he could not persuade the Princess to forgive the insults which he had put upon her, and resume her life with him. But all these efforts, added to those of the Archduchess Isabella—who did not care in the least to have her daughter returned to her like a bad penny—and of the Archduchesses Gisela and Marie Valerie, who came to lend her a helping hand, proved absolutely unavailing. The young bride refused either to be comforted or to listen to the exhortations which were poured on her from all sides, and she declared that if her parents persisted in their refusal to take her back, she would enter a convent.

It is difficult to say what would have happened had not the father confessor of the family interfered. He tried to persuade the young girl that it was her duty to

try at least to convert her husband to better principles; at all events, she ought to give him another chance before refusing definitely to remain with him. Isabella yielded, after having stipulated that she was to be given three months of liberty before resuming the existence which was so repugnant to her, after which she promised she would make an attempt to overcome the disgust and the loathing with which her husband of a few hours inspired her.

She spent the time of probation at a shooting-box of her father's in the Tyrol, where she led a quiet and free existence, and honestly tried to persuade herself to accept with resignation the sad fate which had befallen her, and to which she knew she could never reconcile herself entirely. When the delay for which she had pleaded had come to an end, her mother-in-law, the Archduchess Gisela, came to fetch her and brought her to Munich, showing her great kindness and sympathy. The whole Bavarian Royal Family awaited her, and showered upon her much attention and affection. With a breaking heart, she resigned herself to begin an existence which she loathed even before she knew what it would be.

The experiment did not last long. After one short fortnight the Archduchess Isabella left her palace by a back door one morning, before day had broken, and was driven in a cab to the railway station. She had only taken one small bag with her, and was absolutely unattended, even by a maid. The same night saw her arrive at Vienna, where she at once sought the one person in the Imperial

Family who had enough authority to protect her effectually, if she wished to do so—the Archduchess Marie Thérèse, her aunt. The young Archduchess related to her all the details concerning her conjugal life, which she had never dared to divulge to anyone before, imploring her at the same time to save her from a fate which she considered as infinitely worse than death itself.

Marie Thérèse was a good woman. She comforted her niece, consoled her, and assured her that no one would molest her so long as she remained under her roof. The next day she went to see the Emperor, and, in her turn, unfolded to him the sad story of the Princess Isabella's misfortunes.

Hard and callous as Francis Joseph generally showed himself in such cases, he had nevertheless to acknowledge that his beloved grandson had acted quite inexcusably toward his young wife; and when he heard his stern and rigid sister-in-law, whose Catholic principles stood so high, assure him that the only thing which he could do was to use his influence in Rome to get the marriage annulled, he could no longer continue the opposition which he had started at first. The Court of Bavaria was communicated with, and the late Regent, Prince Luitpold —who was still alive at the time—gave his consent to a procedure of divorce being started simultaneously at the Vatican and before the civil courts of Bavaria. This ended with the annulment of the union, and the young Archduchess was freed from the fetters that had bound her to a man who had never deserved her.

But this did not mean that she was allowed to live her own life, according to her personal wishes or desires. For one thing, the Archduchess Frederick, her mother, was not at all pleased to have back under her roof a daughter of whose conduct she had never approved, and who had disappointed all the hopes her brilliant marriage had raised. The Imperial lady understood very well that after such a scandal it would become extremely difficult to find another husband for the girl. She did not approve of female emancipation, and thought that the young Princess would have done better to content herself with a separation which would not have entirely torn asunder the links that had existed between her and her husband, and would have allowed her to retain the status of a member of the Bavarian Royal Family. It is true this would have shattered her life and have condemned her to a lonely and cheerless existence, but the haughty descendant of the Dukes of Croy did not care for this small matter, nor for the feelings of her own child. She had become a true Habsburg in that respect, which perhaps accounted for the great affection with which she was viewed by the head of that House, the Emperor Francis Joseph.

The young Archduchess Isabella soon found out that her life at home was anything but a pleasant one. On the other hand, she did not care to live always with her aunts and cousins, where she had the feeling that she was staying on sufferance. She was in a false position and felt it acutely—neither a maiden, nor a wife, nor a

widow; a sort of lost being whom no one wanted, and for whom no one really cared; alone with her wasted affections and her half-broken heart, and deprived even of the possibility of seeking outside amusements that might have made her forget, if only for a short time, the sad experience which had blighted her young life.

At last, tired out by the inaction and futility of her existence, she took a great resolution, and declared to her parents that she wanted to enter a sisterhood of nurses where she could use her faculties in tending the sick and afflicted. No one tried to prevent her. Her father, who felt in a certain sense guilty before her, did not oppose her determination, hoping that she would find some comfort in a new life where nothing could remind her of the past; and her mother was secretly delighted at being relieved of the responsibility of looking after a child with whom she no longer felt in sympathy, and whose presence at her side was nothing but a burden to her. The Archduchess parted from her relatives once again, but more happily than she had done on that bleak February day when her husband had carried her away to his own home after the ceremony of their wedding at Schönbrunn. She entered almost joyfully the hospital of the Rudolph community in Vienna, where she went through the regular course of studies required from every nursing sister in that establishment. She was known there, at her own request, only by the name of Sister Irmgard.

For something like a year she worked in the hospital,

and made herself generally beloved by the patients as well as by the authorities in charge. And when the war broke out she was one of the first who volunteered to go to the front to attend the victims.

It was during this trying time that the beautiful character of the young Archduchess came out in its full splendour. She followed the armies commanded by her father, the Archduke Frederick, and day and night worked, with a detachment of the Austrian Red Cross in a motor field ambulance, for the relief of the sick and wounded, denying herself any of the comforts to which she might have pretended, and never resting in her arduous duties. The whole army knew her and loved her, and wondered at the courage which led her to expose herself to all kinds of dangers, going so far as to fetch wounded men from the very line of the enemy's fire. She did not spare herself; she was always thinking about others, and many soldiers spoke and thought about her as a saint sent down from heaven to attend to their wants; to help them in their sufferings or to be with them in the solemn hour of their passage into another life.

One evening, after an unusually hard-working day, the Archduchess, on entering a field hospital to attend to some of her patients, was surprised to find a new face among the doctors assembled there. Upon inquiring who it was, she was told that it was the famous Vienna surgeon, Professor Paul Albrecht, one of the greatest celebrities in Germany. She went up to him and asked

him to examine more particularly a few of her patients in whom she felt especially interested. This first conversation led to many others, and at last the grave and studious man, whose busy life had not given him many opportunities to talk with ladies on other subjects than their personal illnesses and physical miseries, became more than interested in the pale, slight woman who was always ready to come forward whenever wanted, who never for a moment forgot the work of mercy in which she was engaged, and who submitted so joyfully to hardships and privations of every kind. They became friends, and often of an evening, when they both could enjoy a few moments' rest, they sat side by side talking about all the sad spectacles which were continually meeting their sight, and from which there was no escape wherever they turned.

The seriousness, intelligence and spirit of self-sacrifice of the young Archduchess deeply impressed the clever doctor, who had never expected to find such earnestness in a woman brought up as she had been amidst all the refinements of a luxury that did not leave her a single wish unfulfilled. He was virtually a Socialist in his opinions; he believed that every man and woman in the world ought first to think of their duties toward their neighbours.

Professor Albrecht had, indeed, nursed against the Habsburgs that kind of resentment with which they were viewed all over Austria, and from the height of the science of which he was one of the lights he despised the

useless kind of existence which they led, and which had never been known to be of real help to any of the thousands of people whose burdens they might so easily have lightened had they only thought about it. The Archduchess Isabella, with her sweet simplicity, was to him a revelation of womanly grace and loveliness, and it was not long before their friendship ripened into something warmer that was not yet love, but very near to it.

The Princess also was struck by the personality of the professor, and the difference in their ages did not frighten her, but seemed, on the contrary, to draw her nearer to him. They toiled together at the common task which they had undertaken with the same courage and the same energy, and at last the day came when the daughter of the Habsburgs asked herself whether she would not feel happier with the already grey-haired man, whose moral worth she had learned to appreciate, than amidst all the splendours of her parents' palace at Vienna, or the magnificence of the Hofburg. She soon decided the question for herself, and when she had made up her mind she did not hesitate in allowing the professor to guess that such was the case, and that should he care to ask her for the gift of her heart she would not hesitate to grant it to him.

They became privately engaged soon after, but the great difficulty was how to acquaint the family of the Archduchess of her decision to give up all the privileges and advantages of her exalted rank, as well as her position as a member of the Imperial House, and marry a man

who had nothing beyond his spotless reputation and the great name which he had made for himself in the world of science and chirurgery to recommend him; he had none of those qualifications of birth which were considered indispensable to the husbands of Royal Princesses. It was true that one of the cousins of the Archduchess, the eldest daughter of the Archduke Charles Stephen, had wedded a simple naval officer called Herr von Kloss, but he belonged at least to the Austrian nobility, and could boast of a "von" to his name.

The case was absolutely different here, because Professor Albrecht was essentially a *bourgeois* and a self-made man. This alone was more than sufficient to set loose all the indignation and fury of the Imperial Family. The Archduchess Isabella, in particular, was much enraged, and even talked of the necessity of locking up in a madhouse a daughter so far capable of forgetting herself. The only person who showed some kindness to the unfortunate girl was her father, the Archduke Frederick, who during all the long months when he had had the opportunity to watch his daughter fulfilling the mission of mercy which she had undertaken, and doing it without flinching and with a courage such as is but seldom seen in a woman, had grown to love as well as to respect her, and to regret the wreck of her life that had been the consequence of parental ambition and carelessness. He was not an intelligent man, and he had inherited all the selfishness of the Habsburgs, but something in his heart had been touched by the child's noble character,

and he decided to try to allow her to seek her happiness where she thought that she could find it, and he begged the Emperor to grant his consent to the Archduchess's engagement.

But he had not reckoned with Francis Joseph's cruelty and mercilessness. The Sovereign merely treated his nephew as a madman, and declared that if the Archduchess Isabella did not at once give up the idea of thus disgracing herself, he would do the same thing with her as he had done with the unfortunate Crown Princess of Saxony: forbid her to use her title or her coat of arms, and expel her from the bosom of her family. No appeal would touch him, and the fact that his niece's life was being thus sacrificed for the second time to foolish ideas of pride and of haughtiness did not seem to trouble him in the very least. It was with difficulty that he could be persuaded to allow the Archduchess to go on with her work in the field hospital; he wanted to have her locked up in one of her father's castles until, as he expressed it, she "comes to her senses again."

The Archduke Frederick had to return to his daughter with the bad news that his efforts had proved useless. She said nothing—perhaps because she felt that, in the circumstances in which she found herself placed, it would be almost akin to desertion to leave the post of danger at which she stood. Both she and the professor resigned themselves to the inevitable, but one may hope that after the war is over the young Princess will succeed in obtaining permission to marry.

CHAPTER XII

THE AUSTRIAN CLERGY

A GREAT deal has been written concerning the influence of the clergy in Austria. Some people affirm that no important political decision is taken by the Government without being previously referred to Rome and its functionaries. I think that this assertion is probably exaggerated, but that the Vatican is still a great power at the Hofburg is an undeniable fact, though it may not be quite so strong at the Ball Platz.

The bigotry of the Emperor Francis Joseph makes him turn toward his Mother Church in all those difficulties with which he finds himself confronted but fails to understand or to appreciate at their proper worth. Private letters occasionally pass between him and the Pope, and on one memorable occasion—that of the Conclave which followed upon the death of Leo XIII.—the Austrian Government, acting on instructions which it had received from a source the origin of which it is easy to guess, interfered in the deliberations of that assembly. It made use of the old right of veto which Austria had possessed from time immemorial, but which had fallen into abeyance for more than two hundred years, and objected to the election to the pontifical throne of

Cardinal Rampolla, who was suspected of Italian Irredentist as well as of strong French sympathies.

It is not generally known that it was the Emperor Francis Joseph who took the initiative in that grave step. The Government had not the courage to do so, as it seemed to savour too much of the mediæval ages, and also tended to create a precedent of unusual gravity that might have most serious consequences in the matter of the relations of the Austrian State with the Roman Curia. As a matter of fact, the only result which it had, apart from the failure of Rampolla's candidature, was the abrogation by the Vatican of the right of veto on the part of foreign Powers belonging to the Catholic community.

But to return to the conduct of the Emperor in that memorable incident. When he had made up his mind—or, as seems more likely, when others had made it up for him—that the elevation to the tiara of the former Secretary of State of Leo XIII. would prove injurious to Austrian interests (though why he would have found it rather difficult to explain), he instantly acted on this conviction with the energy generally displayed by weak characters if they once muster enough resolution to assert themselves. He invited the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna to the Hofburg in order to entrust him with the painful mission of interfering, in the Emperor's name, with the deliberations of the Conclave about to open.

The Prelate, however, absolutely refused to lend himself to such an intrigue, and declared that his personal relations with Cardinal Rampolla rendered it quite impos-

sible for him to accept the mission. Upon this, Francis Joseph summoned the Archbishop of Cracow, Cardinal Puzyna, who agreed with a certain pleasure to the painful and delicate task imposed upon him, because Rampolla had energetically opposed the pro-Austrian policy that a certain portion of the Galician clergy, with the Archbishop of Cracow at its head, had long been systematically pursuing.

The result of this intervention of Francis Joseph is known to the world. Its consequences will only be revealed later on, when the history of the last twenty-five years comes to be written in more detail than it is possible to do at present. We stand, to-day, too near to certain facts to be able to discuss them with impartiality. It is certainly not my intention to do so in this book, and I only mentioned the incident connected with the election of the late Pope Pius X.—which would never have taken place had it not been for the consternation into which the Austrian veto threw the members of the Sacred College —to confirm the general impression which prevails among enlightened minds as to the close attention with which everything that takes place at the Vatican is followed in Vienna, and of the great importance that is attached at the Ball Platz to the part that the clergy can play, and indeed does play, in the politics of Austria.

The Emperor himself is a most devout man. I fancy that he imagines he is pious, too; but that is another matter. Piety requires something more than the strict observance of the routine of religion. He likes to

speak of the trials and sorrows Providence has inflicted upon him, and of which, by the way, he feels inordinately proud. He is as vain of the misfortunes which have assailed him as a pretty woman would be of her lovely features.

The Emperor goes daily to church, and his devotion is imitated by the whole of the Austrian aristocracy with but few exceptions. In the generality of cases religion is either an affectation or a question of good breeding. At the same time it must be acknowledged that one meets, especially among the women, very fine types of religious convictions and of sincere as well as humble faith.

Certain religious usages have been laid down, no one knows by whom, but they are as immutable as the laws of olden times, which did not admit of any compromise. For instance, a mixed marriage is scarcely tolerated, and then only on the condition that its issue must be baptised into the Roman Catholic faith without any regard to sex. When the sister of the late Duchess of Hohenberg, the Countess Chotek—who had not sixpence in the world to bless herself with—was asked in marriage by the very rich Baron Wuthenau, a terrible storm shook the placidity of all her relatives, as the *fiancé* happened to be a Protestant; and it is related that her confessor was even asked to remonstrate with her on the very dangerous step she contemplated taking before, at last, she was allowed to accept him.

The clergy, though apparently not mixing itself in

the family life of the faithful, contrives nevertheless to influence it a good deal. Domestic chaplains, especially in country houses, are often to be met, and they are treated with the utmost consideration. Meat never appears at table on Fridays, and it would be considered a most heinous crime to miss attending Mass on Sundays. Indeed, in some households it is expected that all its members should attend Mass every morning.

Religious newspapers are most popular, while the Vienna *Fremdenblatt*—which is the only really serious and worth-reading daily paper in Austria—is considered as a most dangerous publication by the very pious dowagers of the aristocracy, and only smuggled in occasionally by the younger members of the family. Conversations are often directed toward not so much religious, as superstitious subjects, and the Pope is looked upon in the light of a divinity, something akin to the Mikado of Japan before the reforms which have civilised that country.

An amusing instance may be related in this connection. There was a young girl in Viennese society who, though renowned for her extraordinary beauty, was also known for her absolute lack of conversational and perceptive faculties. One day a young man of a rather frivolous disposition made a bet with some of his friends that he would induce her to speak continuously the first time he should happen to meet her. The bet was for a considerable sum, and was taken by several people. They all assembled a few days later at a ball which was being

given, and followed with immense interest the manœuvres of their comrade. What was their surprise to see that during the whole of a quadrille the young Princess X——y talked with the greatest liveliness to her partner, and indeed became quite excited during her conversation with him, which continued long after the dance had come to an end. When at last he left her, he was at once surrounded by his friends, who asked him to explain how he had contrived to animate that statue. "You want to know what I have done?" was the reply. "It was a simple matter after all. I began telling her all kinds of horrible stories concerning the Pope. She will never look at me again, but in the meanwhile she talked for once, and probably more than she had ever done in her life before or ever will do after." One may imagine the bursts of laughter which greeted this frank avowal on the part of the young man.

This anecdote, which is quite true, will give the reader an idea of the kind of education which the daughters of Austria's most aristocratic houses receive. Such a training is bound to exercise its influence not only on the daily existence of that class of people, but also on their political opinions, which in a good many cases are but reflections of those professed by the priests in whose keeping is their conscience. I hope this will not be looked upon in the light of any disrespect on my part for the Catholic clergy in general, where I am the first one to say that one finds admirable examples of all the virtues; but as a general rule priests, because they have

entered into Holy Orders, have not given up on that account any of their national qualities or defects.

The Austrian priest, like most of his compatriots, is a being with very little knowledge beyond that which is indispensable in his profession, very narrow ideas, and a limited amount of that higher education which is so important to acquire for all those who aspire to leave their mark in the world. I am, of course, speaking of the parish clergy, which has sole charge of the morals and training of the masses. Above it are to be met the Jesuits and other congregations, which abound all over the Austrian Empire. These control the higher classes, and have a real importance in Court circles. Between these two classes of clergy, by the way, exists a decided animosity, which nevertheless does not outstep the limits of politeness.

The Austrian is far too mild in character ever to become violent, even when his feelings are aroused. Consequently, the intervention of the priest in his private life, even when it is not welcomed, is generally accepted, and the latter knows very well how to make use of this circumstance to ingratiate himself.

It is a curious thing, but with the exception of the Polish Church, nearly the whole of the Austrian clergy is German in sympathies. The Polish clergy are so very anti-Russian that the feeling makes Austrians of them, in the sense that they always keep preaching to their disciples that the greatest misfortune which could befall them would be if Russia installed itself in Galicia. The

fear of such a possibility makes the Poles support with all their might the Austrian Government, even when the latter does things which do not appeal to their opinions or feelings.

In Poland the influence of the priest is a formidable one, if only on account of the fact that the peasants and artisans are entirely dependent on him for their political convictions, and always ready to transfer their allegiance to those whom he recommends them to obey. But outside Poland and Bohemia, where the Czech and the German elements are always at war with each other, the sympathies of the clergy are for Germany, in which it sees the best friend and ally that Austria ever had in the past or will have in the future; this notwithstanding the shadows of Sadowa and of so many other battles, in which the Prussian shot down his Austrian adversary.

Whether this is the result of conviction or that of clever intrigue it is difficult to say. It is sufficient that the fact exists, and as such it deserves particular attention on the part of the spectator desirous of ascertaining the details of the working of the machine which sets into motion the wheels of the Austrian Monarchy.

In the present war the part played by the clergy has been quite stupendous. For one thing, it was its task to explain to the people the necessity of taking up cheerfully its portion of the general burden, and of standing by the Government without flinching throughout the crisis. The murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was represented as having been the crime of the anti-Catholic

party in Servia, guided by Russia, who was aspiring to establish itself in the Balkan Peninsula. This was to the detriment of Austria and of the Roman Catholic Church, which had begun to take a strong hold in Bosnia and Herzegovina, thanks to the zeal of the Austrian officials, who, following the inspiration of certain members of the Society of Jesus and other religious orders, were doing their best to bring pressure to bear upon the Greek schismatics, so as to oblige them either to emigrate or else to enter the Roman communion. The anti-Catholics were also strong in Bulgaria, where Ferdinand of Coburg was intriguing for all he was worth in order to establish an independent Bulgarian Church united with Rome, who would joyfully consent to accept it among its flocks in the same manner that it had accepted the Armenians and the Greek followers of the Latin form of their rites. This scheme, which had been begotten out of the active brain of the Prince's mother, the famous Princess Clementine of Coburg, very nearly succeeded, and might have done so altogether had not the war stopped its progress.

To return to the conduct of the Catholic clergy when the war broke out, it must be noticed that whilst the Government did not use pressure in order to induce the clergy to support the Throne, by the influence which it wielded over the masses, the clergy, on the contrary, of its own accord, used all its power to direct the nation to follow the lead of the Government. During the few anxious days that followed upon the handing of the

famous ultimatum of Count Berchtold to the Servian Government, when serious people were hoping against hope that the terrible catastrophe of a European war might still be avoided by some kind of miracle, the parish priests all over the country were assiduously explaining to their parishioners that the time had come when the intrigues of the enemies of the true faith were about to be punished. God Himself, they said, required them to come forward to defend the threatened cause of justice and of civilisation. What could poor, ignorant people, who had heard nothing else beyond this call to arms coming from the mouth of the most respected authority they knew, do but believe all this accumulation of untruth and false representations? Before even war had been declared the whole population of Austria knew that it was about to begin, and rejoiced in the fact—after the fashion of the ancient martyrs who rejoiced at being put to death for their faith.

It must be acknowledged that nothing could have been cleverer than this demoralisation of a whole nation. Without it, it would have been next to impossible to persuade the Austrian soldiers to fight with anything like enthusiasm and courage. They are not brave, and initiative on the battlefield is unknown to them. They would much prefer staying at home than winning laurels of which they fail to see the use. Their mild disposition and kind nature abhors blood, and the sight of any suffering unmans them. Though they can be cruel on occasion, it is always in a spasmodic manner, which does not bear

the slightest resemblance to the cold and studied ferocity of their allies the Germans. Left alone, those good Austrians would probably never have thought about avenging the pistol-shot which killed the Archduke and his wife.

It required a strong effort on the part of those who wanted them to come forward in the bellicose attitude which was not theirs by nature, and this achievement it is to be doubted whether anyone outside of the clergy could have been successful in performing. The Silesian and Tyrolean peasants, too ignorant to seek anything outside the official reasons given for the great infamy their simple minds were far too untrained to suspect, marched forth, singing their national hymns, to be slaughtered in masses in the Carpathian passes and the Galician and Polish plains. In the rapidity with which the whole population of the Austrian Monarchy responded to the appeal of its Government, the work of the clergy could be traced at every step.

So much for the masses. But among the upper classes also an active propaganda for the war was made by ecclesiastics, whether belonging to the secular or to the regular branch of the clergy. The noble families who clustered round the Throne, and who up to then had but rarely been called upon to make any real sacrifices for a Monarchy of which they proclaimed themselves the warmest supporters, were catechised and encouraged and persuaded that at last the time had come for them to assert themselves and to come forward. By such con-

duct, they were told, they would be able, after the war had been brought to a successful issue, to persuade, and if necessary to claim from the Sovereign the acknowledgment of their past services, and also prominent places in the administration of the State, which lately had not been awarded to them quite so generously as had been the case at the beginning of the reign of Francis Joseph.

To tell the truth, what the clergy aimed at was the establishment of its own influence in a far more solid way than before. It wanted, and indeed had all along wanted, to return to feudal customs, which recognised but two powers in the land: that of the Church and of the aristocracy. It refused to acknowledge the right of existence to the middle classes, and still less that of having any part in the conduct of State affairs. It wished the re-establishment of the supremacy of its Order, working hand in hand with the nobility it had always flattered, and had carefully trained into insignificance. The clergy had never renounced the hope of a revival of the temporal power of the Popes. It firmly believed that in the event of a successful war, of which it failed to appreciate the inevitable consequences, it would become possible once more for the Emperor Francis Joseph to come forward as the defender of the faith. His reward for his support of German ambitions would be the right to raise the Church of Rome once more to the pinnacle at which it stood before the waves of progress had swept away its dominion.

There was also another point that appealed to the

imagination of the Austrian ecclesiastical authorities. This had to do with Hungary, which was far from being as devout and as fanatical as her sister Austria. The clergy had never been able to establish a firm hold in the minds of the proud Magyars. On the contrary, general indifference in matters of religion prevailed equally among the fashionable world of Budapest and among the peasantry and the lower classes of the provinces. Try as they could, the clergy found it impossible to interfere with the conduct of affairs in Hungary, and they had had to resign themselves to wait for the unexpected.

The war gave them their golden opportunity. The supreme ability of the Emperor William II. was shown in his persuasion of the Catholic clergy that its cherished ambitions were at last about to be fulfilled. For once the Church failed to grasp the true significance of the bait which was proffered, and rushed on to its fate, just as blindly as the Sovereign, just as joyfully as the diplomats who ought to have foreseen, and just as carelessly as the Ministers who had failed to avert the calamity which will demolish the throne of the Habsburgs.

CHAPTER XIII

LEADERS OF MILITARISM AND DIPLOMACY

EVER since the war broke out Austria has been boasting about her army, although she herself did not feel quite sure of the fact some two years ago. The world at large had long frankly doubted the existence of any troops worthy of the name, an attitude not without some reason, if one remembers that for something like three-quarters of a century the Austrian troops have been beaten invariably and ignominiously wherever they happened to be engaged in strife, no matter with whom. Indeed, when Prince Bismarck realised his long-cherished dream of drawing together the two Central European Monarchies, who had been antagonists for so long, the public had wondered what possible advantage he could find in such an ally, who would never be able to be of any considerable military use. But it was not military value that Bismarck wanted; he could do all that was requisite on that score, and events have proved that Austria could become very useful to her friend by assuming the responsibility of any action at a given moment. Without her it would not have been easy for Germany to find a pretext for declaring war upon the world, and in deciding upon Austria as a pawn, Prince Bismarck

read the future with unerring accuracy, owing to his experience of the past.

The first German Chancellor had never been a partisan of a war with Russia, and yet he must have guessed that a conflict was but a question of time, and that Prussia would never rest before she had reduced that dangerous rival to the condition of France after the unfortunate campaign of 1870. Otherwise, it is hardly likely he would have given himself such trouble to secure the co-operation of a nation whose safety lay in the fact that it would have been too much trouble for her neighbours to destroy her. Germany wanted a screen to cover many of her designs and dissimulate her many personal ambitions. Austria offered her an excellent one. To this end, and this end only, was the Triple Alliance concluded and renewed.

The wonderful diplomats who ruled in succession at the Ball Platz did not discover the fact, however, and Austrian vanity blinding them, they fully believed that their friendship was sought on account of its high value. The only one who guessed what lurked behind the sudden affection of Bismarck was Count Andrassy; but the latter did not in the least care what happened to Austria nor what her end would be—he worked for the good of Hungary and its exclusive interests.

Andrassy's successors, however, took themselves far more *au sérieux* than he had ever done. One of them, indeed, Count Aerenthal, really believed that Austria could secure for itself an independent position in the

European Concert, equal to England, France or Russia. This clever, dashing, miniature statesman had ambitious dreams, but by a curious anomaly, whilst aspiring to shake off the state of dependence in which Germany had kept her Austrian neighbour and friend, he yet, unknown to his own self, played the very game which Berlin wished, and by his bold annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina set fire to that spark which was to develop itself into the hugest conflagration which history has ever seen.

In doing so, however, Count Aerenthal did not in the least follow the direction of the German Foreign Office. This institution, so remarkable by its dearth of really clever men, was absolutely incapable of any of those Machiavellian combinations for which it had been famous in the days of Prince Bismarck and of his favourite, Herr von Holstein. But outside the Foreign Office and the officials that thronged in the various departments of the Wilhelmstrasse there was a far more formidable power in Germany—the General Staff. By its close relations with the Staff in Vienna, its members influenced Austrian politics in a subtle manner, which, though it did not allow itself to be suspected, had more to do than most are aware with the policy to which Count Aerenthal, supported by his Sovereign, had clung during his tenure of the Foreign Office.

The present war has certainly been brought about by the Prussian as well as by the Austrian military parties, who together worked out a plan of campaign which they fondly hoped would quickly put an end to their various

rivals by crushing them. The strangest thing about the whole matter was that each party, in working the scheme out, believed that it would turn to its own particular advantage and to the detriment of the other one. It was a comedy of dupes.

When I say that this was a comedy of dupes, I must explain what I mean. To begin with Germany; it had brought its army to a point of perfection which, as it believed, could not be improved upon. Its armaments were something quite formidable, its technical preparations marvellous. Besides being convinced that it had prepared itself for every military eventuality, it also knew that no one in Europe could compete with it for the moment, but that if it did not hasten to make use of its enormous advantages and superiority, they might in time not prove so great, for the simple reason that all the other countries who distrusted them were beginning to awaken to the knowledge of the peril which threatened them, and were also organising themselves in view of a possible war.

The German Staff knew very well that the Austrian army had got absolutely no backbone, and that it would find itself in the greatest difficulties if left alone to its own devices; the question of having to go to its help was but one of time. When it arose, German officers would have to take command of Austrian troops. Thereafter the fate of the Habsburg Monarchy would be sealed, because if there was one thing about which the German Staff felt absolutely certain, it was that once Austria's

defence was handed over to Prussia, the latter would never give up the hold it would thus secure over the military resources of its ally, and would reduce it to a condition of vassalage. Germany would thus have at its disposal an army about twice as numerous as before, and under the iron discipline of Prussia it would soon acquire those martial virtues which the Austrian command had proved unable to infuse into the people it had enrolled under its banner. This consequence of a war that was most undoubtedly wished for in certain quarters in Berlin would have put the final touch to the work begun by Bismarck, and strengthen the great Empire he had built by incorporating in it all the German elements in Europe.

This viewpoint explains also the favours lavished by the Emperor William II. on all Hungarian statesmen with whom he came into contact. Hungary was necessary to him in the accomplishment of this deeply laid scheme, of which he allowed it to guess sufficiently to come to the conclusion that, by helping it to mature, it would also work toward the recognition of its own entire independence.

In Austria, and especially at the Ball Platz, quite different hopes were indulged in. There, Germany, or rather Berlin, with its overbearing ways, had never been anything else but an evil which had to be endured, because one hoped that out of it considerable good would ensue. Circumstances had obliged Austrian diplomacy to go on its way hand in hand with the Wilhelmstrasse,

and after the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, Berlin had been far more anxious to see Servia punished for a crime still unproven against her than Count Berchtold and all his staff. It is an open secret that the first idea of the ultimatum which was presented at Belgrade had originated from the German Ambassador in Vienna, Herr von Tschirsky, who, if one is to believe the rumours that circulated among those in close touch with the Hofburg, had not only insisted upon the thunderbolt, but had even drawn out its broad lines. Whether he had done so in obedience to the inspiration of his immediate diplomatic chiefs, or under the influence of the General Staff, it is impossible for me to say. Perhaps it was due to both.

But even a weak and not far-seeing man such as Count Berchtold would not have given in so easily to the pressure put upon him had he not had also his own personal views in the matter. Austria, vain as she had always been, had an aim in view, and that was to shake off the yoke which Germany had laid upon her. She fully expected that her armies would not only prove of immense help to Germany, but also win so many laurels, and such victories over the Russian troops—which a mistaken and badly informed intelligence service had led her to believe were totally unfit to hold the field against her—that she would be able to shake off at last the semi-allegiance which had been imposed upon her by her formidable ally, and after the war obtain from the latter advantages as from an equal in strength.

A Military Enigma

When one thinks about all that took place during the memorable months that have since gone by, one fails to find an explanation for the complete eclipse the Austrian army has experienced. It is impossible to call the Austrian a coward, and any amount of trouble is taken over his military training. The men are not devoid of patriotism, the officers are eager to do their duty, and most painstaking. Their armaments are excellent, and, indeed, their big guns are quite equal to the famous German "Fat Bertha," about which such a fuss has been made. Their cavalry is very well mounted, and their infantry knows how to handle its rifles just as well as the Prussians. And yet with it all the Austrians have never been able to beat their enemies single-handed, and their successes have only been obtained when they have found themselves placed under the command of German officers.

One may well wonder at this strange fact, and the only manner in which it can be explained is the want of natural intelligence of the Austrian nation, combined with the inordinate vanity of all those who are entrusted with the mission of leading it either to triumph or to total destruction. Now, after eighteen months of war, it is still impossible to point out a single Austrian commander having made for himself a great name. Germany can boast of Hindenburg, Mackensen and Falkenhayn, and others; Austria can only point to Kusmanek, the commander of Przemysl, who gave up that fortress to the Russians.

In the matter of the calculations indulged in at Berlin

concerning the probability of obtaining the sole control of the Austrian forces, facts have fully justified them. In spite of his obstinacy, Francis Joseph had to recognise that it was impossible for his troops to stand the pressure of Russian arms, and when he had given his consent to the appointment of German officers—a consent which, it is not generally known, was only obtained by the threat of William II. to conclude a separate peace with the Tsar—Galicia was cleared of its invaders, and Warsaw and other Russian fortresses taken by the united forces of Prussia and of its allies. Germany took all the credit, whatever other factor caused the retirement. In the joy of these unexpected successes the Austrian Government forgot the important circumstance that, sooner or later, it would have to pay heavily for them.

Indeed, when one comes to examine the whole situation as it presents itself to the eyes of any impartial spectator, one wonders whether to be most surprised at the lightheartedness with which the Austrian diplomacy rushed into an adventure whence it had not the slightest chance of coming out with advantage, or the want of foresight of Austrian military chiefs, who believed that they were sure of victory. Another queer symptom in this whole business is that to this day Austrian statesmen have not grasped the humiliating position in which they stand in regard to Germany.

Unfortunately for them, the day of reckoning, perhaps less distant than they imagine, will nevertheless dawn, and expiation will be heavy; the sins of the present

will meet with cruel chastisement in the future, no matter what may be the outcome of the war. Were the Germans to become victorious, Prussia would thrust Austria aside with the utmost unconcern, after taking away from her all that was worth taking; Hungary and Bohemia would claim independence, and Austria would cease to exist, at least in her present shape and form.

Every day, however, makes it more certain that the Allies will win, when the fate of Austria will indeed be a sad one. Russia will, of course, take Galicia; Italy, Trieste and the Valley of the Trentino, together with the Tyrol; Servia will claim Bosnia and Herzegovina, with Croatia thrown into the bargain; whilst two new kingdoms, those of Bohemia and of Hungary, will arise out of the ashes of the Austrian Monarchy.

What then will remain to the Habsburgs of all their former proud possessions? What will they do, who will be put in their place, and what will be the fate of the few German provinces that their realm contains? These will form some of the most serious questions of the settlement.

Among the Austrians I fail to find a man capable of an attempt to save his Fatherland from the annihilation which awaits it in the near future. Not one among all the officials of the Ball Platz has, so far, given proofs of sufficient talents to enable him to cope with difficulties of the magnitude of those that await his country on the day when accounts have to be squared. Count Berchtold, who at least has some diplomatic experience behind him,

is neither a strong character nor capable of assuming a great responsibility. His right hand whilst he was at the head of Austrian Foreign Affairs, Baron de Macchio, who when the war broke out was sent to Rome in the hope of persuading Italy to remain neutral in the conflict, is hardly a tactful man; Baron Forgách, another high official at the Ball Platz, though an exceedingly clever Austrian, could not carry a situation; Count Szapary, who when the war broke out was Ambassador in Petersburg, lacks wise decision; the former Minister in Belgrade, Baron Giesl von Gieslingen, is the kind of man who is always ready to obey instructions given by his superiors; Count Szecsen de Temerin, who for something like four years represented Austria-Hungary in Paris, is a man of the world and nothing else; whilst Count Albert Mensdorff, whom London used to see on first nights occupying a seat in the omnibus box at the Opera, is too highly connected to be aught else but a favourite of royalty.

The only really capable individual I can see in the Austrian Foreign Office is Count Tarnowski, a Pole, who has had some decided successes at Sofia, and to whose activity can be attributed a good deal of King Ferdinand's resolution to throw in his fate with that of Germany and of Austria. But then Count Tarnowski is not the kind of man capable of holding his own in occasions of supreme importance. He is one of those people who can do excellent work, especially when it comes to wander in the domain of underground politics that has no secrets for

him; but it remains an open question whether he would ever be strong enough to fight in the defence of a desperate cause. And that the situation is a desperate one for the Dual Monarchy I do not think that anyone who has given himself the trouble to study the European situation, such as it presents itself after one year and a half of war, will doubt for an instant.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREAT DISILLUSION OF THE FUTURE

WHEN all the circumstances which I have tried to expose in the previous chapters are taken into account, the conclusion to which the reader is bound to come is that, no matter how the results of the Great War are discounted, or from what point of view one may look at them, one fact stands out prominently, and that is the coming annihilation of Austria.

Austria is diseased and corrupt. The curious thing in this general disease is the mentality of her people. It would be ridiculous to say that they are all bad, or stupid, or vicious. At the same time it would be hazardous to affirm that they are not all foolish, with but a few exceptions.

The Austrian has never been able to give himself a proper account of his qualities nor of his defects, either as a nation or as an individual. He has been born and bred in an artificial moral atmosphere which has made him take the night for the day and mistake black for white. He does it in all innocence and ignorance, but—and there the cloven foot shows—he will not admit that he may be wrong, that the lessons which he has learnt have not been based on something solid and true. His religion, which

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has never been properly explained to him, has imbued him with a feeling which is not faith—for faith supposes always some grandeur of the soul—but belief, which is something far different, for one may easily come to believe what one wishes, an impossible thing for the man who has realised the significance of the solemn Latin word *fide*.

The average Austrian is the kind of person who will insist, from the moral point of view, on sending his neighbour to church on Sundays, but who will never stretch out a hand of indulgence to a repentant sinner; who will fail to grasp that form of human suffering which proceeds from intellectual or religious doubt, and which causes such a harrowing distress to an intelligent mind.

Progress is a word devoid of meaning for Austrians, because those among them who have been educated think that it implies impiety and contempt for what their fathers held sacred and what they reverence themselves; whilst the lower classes have been taught by the clergy to fear it as an emanation of the Evil One himself. It is hardly to be believed, but there are to the present day villages in Austria where the inhabitants speak about the telephone installed in the post office as an invention of the devil, and would die rather than use it. I happen to know personally a case where a lady, having engaged a new housemaid, was implored by the latter's parents not to insist on their daughter speaking at the telephone, as she would be endangering the safety of her soul in doing so. Telegrams are still looked upon with suspicion, and

a railway train with apprehension. The lack of culture in some Tyrolean and Styrian villages is indeed astonishing, and yet the people who inhabit them are supposed to have political opinions, and to be able to say the last word as to what advantages Austria must obtain from the present war.

When these facts have been appreciated at their proper value, it is no longer to be wondered that the Government finds in the population an instrument as pliable to its wishes as it requires. It is mistaken, however, in fancying that the country has opinions of its own; it fails to realise that these opinions are almost always artificial, imposed by the clergy or the officials.

A friend of mine, who happened to be staying at a country house in Transylvania when the war broke out, related to me that the peasantry, when told that it had to prepare to start for the army, was quite convinced that it was going to fight for the restoration of the temporal power of the Pope. Had it not been persuaded that such was the case, it is to be doubted whether it would have shown so much enthusiasm as it eventually displayed.

This absence of comprehension as to what goes on around it renders the Austrian of the lower classes a passive, aimless being, liable to break down under the first provocation. It explains why, early in the war, when the Russians entered Galicia, the army, or at least what existed of the army there, made so feeble a resistance. Incredible as it may appear, it is a fact that sometimes five or six Russians sent on patrol service returned to head-

quarters with fifty, sixty, and sometimes one hundred prisoners, who had followed them not only with resignation, but even with pleasure. The Austrian troops at this stage of the campaign had but one idea in their heads —to see it come to an end. They did not care to fight, and preferred being taken captive to the risk of being killed.

The officers, again, gave their men no example of stubbornness. These indolent young fellows, for whom the military service had never appeared in any other light than that of an inevitable necessity, were not cowards by any means, but they simply did not see the use of being exterminated for the sake of a Government which they did not like, even when they thought it could do no wrong. The person of the Sovereign, too, was not popular among them, for the reason that the etiquette which divided Francis Joseph from his subjects made him so much above common humanity that the latter had ended by considering him so far from it that it was not worth while thinking about him at all. Francis Joseph, in the eyes of those whom he believes to be his faithful subjects, appears in much the same light as a strong room in a bank, something beyond the reach even of burglars with housebreaking aptitudes and tendencies.

So much for the population in general. With the aristocracy the same feeling is differently expressed. They also do not want to die; they care for the war no more than the people, and fail to understand or to grasp the colossal issues involved. But they believe with their

placid temperaments that when peace will be restored their former existence will begin again, though in greater prosperity, in consequence of the defeat of the Russians. They are persuaded, these good people, that they will win the war; but why or by what means they do not give themselves the trouble to think.

Austrian vanity is so great that it refuses to admit any of its own mistakes or errors, and shifts them to other people's shoulders with an ease and a rapidity quite worthy of admiration. To begin with the Sovereign and to end with the street-sweeper, every Austrian citizen is convinced, even when he sees his soldiers beaten, that the God who blessed the fortunes of Israel is on his side, and that He will make everything right in the long run. Common sense was never the strong point of any of the people ruled by the Habsburgs. On the other hand, they are very impressionable in all matters concerning their personal comforts, and allow themselves most easily to take their wishes for granted, without remembering that very often these turn out to be self-sown curses.

At the present moment the Austrians live in perfect security as to the future. They differ in this from the Germans, who already begin to realise that this war, for which they had prepared themselves with such perseverance, is assuming a most threatening aspect. The Austrians do not see the little black clouds now gathering on the horizon, and it is pretty certain that when the storm breaks it will find them quite unprepared to stand its fury, with no one to explain to them what they ought

to do, nor the reasons that have brought about the catastrophe. If the Allies succeed in beating the Austro-Prussian confederation, they will find that Germany will set her teeth together, suffer in silence, and prepare for revenge, but that Austria, on the contrary, will immediately fall to pieces.

This is the great disillusionment that the future has in store. To say that it has not been deserved would be untrue. The misfortunes of Austria are entirely the fault of those who have led her politics for the last forty years, and given to them such a false direction. Metternich and Prince Schwarzenberg saw clearly through Prussian ambition, and all the time they remained in office worked towards the annihilation of the kingdom of the Hohenzollerns, and humiliated them at Olmütz in a way they had never known before. Had they lived longer we may not have had to mourn the disaster of Sedan or the horrors of the present war. What Prince Schwarzenberg had been aiming at was to throw Prussia out of the German Confederation, or at least to annul her means of resistance, to paralyse her movements, and to reduce her to the condition of other small German States, like Saxony or the dukedoms of Baden and Hesse. This had been the labour of his whole life, and he very nearly accomplished the vast designs he had been nursing in that direction when he compelled Prussia to subscribe to the Olmütz Convention that settled for ever, as he and others with him believed, the preponderance of Austria over the whole of Germany.

After Prince Schwarzenberg came disorder, inaction, foolishness, incapacity, and the destruction of his great political ideal—the fixed resolution to maintain the dignity of Austria, and to prevent any encroachment of Prussia on its prerogatives as leader of the German Confederation.

Prince Felix Schwarzenberg was a great Minister, but he never possessed the confidence of his Sovereign. Francis Joseph was obliged to bear with him, but he neither liked nor trusted him. After him another great one arose in Germany, but, unfortunately for the peace of the world, he was born in Prussia. The Prince had seen clearly what the future held in store for Germany, and indeed for the whole of Europe, unless the Prussian monster was crushed.

But, unfortunately, Schwarzenberg alone had seen. After his death his warnings were disregarded, because they implied dissatisfaction with the views of those who came after him, and especially of the Emperor, who had never approved the line of policy followed by his Minister. Francis Joseph failed to see the danger which Schwarzenberg had repeatedly urged him to notice. He picked a quarrel with Italy that resulted in the war of 1859, which ended so disastrously for him and for his arms. Then he continued on terms of hostility with France, which lasted all through the life of the Second Empire, and which made him turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of some people who begged him to enter the field in her favour in 1870, an event which, if it had only taken place, would have considerably changed the whole

course of European politics. He saw nothing, noticed nothing, beyond the gratification of his own petty spites and revengeful feelings; and, in his rage at the loss of the battle of Solferino, he overlooked the disaster which was bound to overtake him and his Monarchy by the abandonment of the policy to which Prince Schwarzenberg had clung with such perseverance and obstinacy.

Other people, however, did not forget it, and Prussia was to keep its remembrance always before her eyes. With a perfidy of which Prince Bismarck alone was capable, she stretched her hand to Austria, after having defeated her at Sadowa, and so destroying all the work of Prince Schwarzenberg. And, belonging to the race of people who never forget an injury, and avenge it even after many years, she lured Austria on to her destruction with a smiling face and words of affection on her lips. A cleverer man than Francis Joseph might have been taken in by these false protestations. A vain and presumptuous one like he has been all through his life and career was hopelessly deceived.

When Francis Joseph ascended the throne as a young man, he might have done much good had he only possessed a small, infinitely small, portion of what is called a heart, and if he had not been imbued with the feeling of his own importance and of the inferiority of the whole world in regard to his person. As it was, his whole career has proved to be one of selfishness and of disdain for the miseries and the sufferings of his subjects.

To his immediate family the Emperor proved a tyrant.

He had a wife who was everything that was lovely and fair, but he made her life a hell, and then wept at her death without having had the grace to go and look for the last time on her mortal remains. He had a son whom he almost goaded into an act of madness. He had a nephew whom he disliked, and to whom he did not have the decency to award a respectable grave. He had relatives to whom he showed himself, in turn, cruel and despotic, whom he either relegated into exile like his brother, or deprived of their name and status in the world like the unfortunate Crown Princess of Saxony. He had friends whom he betrayed; Ministers to whom he did not tell the truth; mistresses whom he forsook; an army about which he did not care, though expecting it to do its duty; subjects whom he oppressed; allies whom he hoped he might forsake.

When one thinks of the hundreds of thousands of wives, mothers, orphaned children who weep over the loss of their dear ones, for whose death Francis Joseph is directly responsible, one can but hope that the great disillusion will come while the old Emperor is still alive, and that ere he dies he will recognise the evil he has brought to a world which he did not hesitate, when standing himself on the brink of his grave, to plunge into an ocean of suffering, distress, and pain.

CHAPTER XV

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

I HAVE come to the end of my task. Perhaps some of my readers will find that I have been hard on the people whom I have attempted to describe, that I have not judged them fairly or impartially. To that reproach I shall reply that I never meant to be indulgent. I fully meant to make this book a record of the iniquities and of the recklessness and foolishness of an ignorant and unprincipled nation that, by its hypocrisy, has brought terrible misfortune on the world. At the same time, though I have excused nothing, I do not think that I have denied any of the few virtues which I have observed.

Severe though I may seem, I am the first to recognise that the Austrians, had they only been properly governed and instructed, might have proved to be sympathetic people, inoffensive in their actions and in their manners. Unfortunately for them and for their reputation in history, they have had the misfortune to be ruled by a degenerate dynasty, which never looked beyond its personal advantages, and never once gave its subjects the example of fidelity to a given word or of gratitude for a rendered service.

The sense of self-importance which always pervaded

the Habsburgs has weighed heavily over Austria, and has been the cause of its moral downfall, as well as of the numerous material disasters that have overtaken it in the past. When King John Sobieski of Poland delivered besieged Vienna, and drove away from its walls the Turkish troops commanded by Kara Mustapha, the Emperor Leopold did not even find it necessary to thank him for having saved him, and forbade the clergy to receive him with any pomp or ceremony when he entered the cathedral of St. Stephen for the first time; he did not find a single priest to officiate at the service of thanksgiving he had wished to have celebrated. The Polish hero himself started singing the *Te Deum*, the words of which his soldiers took up after him, until at last a French monk, who happened to be among those present, mounted the pulpit and addressed a few words to the assembled multitude, which he began by the verse of the Gospel: "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." For this the monk was the very next day ordered to leave Vienna by the Emperor.

The latter at last received Sobieski in solemn audience, after long negotiations regarding the ceremonial, Spanish etiquette not admitting that an elective monarch should be granted the same honours as an hereditary one. When the King was ushered into the presence of Leopold, the latter did not even get up from his arm-chair, and the only words which he found to say were that "he felt sorry not to have been able to see him before," to which the Polish hero replied, not without malice, that "he re-

gretted the service he had been happy to render to him had been such a small one."

The incident is historic. Leopold had nearly seen his capital fall into the hands of the Moslems; they had driven him from a considerable portion of his dominions; he had lost the best part of Hungary, which had joined the invaders, and yet when, through an unexpected piece of luck, help on which he had absolutely no right to count had been sent to him, and the Turks had been routed so completely that they had had to fly, abandoning all their treasures, the Emperor did not find a single word of thanks for his deliverer, but began to put forward miserable questions of etiquette. Can one wonder that Sobieski, disgusted, turned his back on Vienna and on its Sovereign, and expressed to his friends his surprise at this extraordinary treatment?

This incident shows how the Habsburgs all through their history have been the same as they are to-day, that amidst their greatest trials, as well as during their most glorious days, they have ever allowed petty subjects to engross their minds, and have put before everything else the homage which they considered to be due to them and to their exalted position. Gratitude has been unknown to them, simply because they firmly believed that all the good that came to them was nothing but what they had the right to expect, and for which they need not return any thanks.

It is probable that if the present Austrian Emperor fell from a window of the Hofburg he would, instead of

rewarding, punish the man who lifted him up if the latter did not possess quarterings entitling him to lay hands on the sacred person of his Sovereign.

That this state of things should leave its impress on the nation is but natural.

Austria, apathetic and without initiative, has held in fatuous respect the grandeur of her ruling House, and has been blind to her own material interests, has delighted in her ignorance, in her want of experience, in her faculty for seeing everything to do with her existence as a nation through rose-coloured spectacles. She has never even imagined that there might exist about her, as about everything else in this world, sordid and ugly sides which ought to be suppressed so far as it was in human power to do so. She has been politically, intellectually, morally and physically pharasaical. Her joy at her own perfection has been such that she has forgotten that others might not see her in the same light.

This circumstance explains why in later years Austrian statesmen have been so inferior, and why Austrian political men have found it so difficult, when they did not belong by birth to the higher classes of Society, to make their voices heard. Lately the middle classes have come to the front rather prominently, and have tried to push themselves forward to the detriment of the old owners of the soil. In any other country their entering into the lists might have disturbed its equanimity; in Austria it has not been able to influence the course of events, nor to change anything of the general spirit which prevails

in those circles which alone hold in their hands the keys to the political situation. As a people they have learnt nothing, seen nothing, and failed to appreciate the gravity of the events taking place under their own eyes. It is easy to see that their end is but a question of time, and that not far distant.

As to what this end will be I have already prophesied. One thing is very certain—there can be no peace in Europe so long as Austria is allowed to go on existing under the conditions which have ruled of recent years. It is time that this tool in the hands of her powerful German neighbour should be denied the possibility of serving as an excuse for the latter's misdeeds. We have had enough intrigues; it is time that peace should be restored to the world, and this can never be so long as Austria is not rendered harmless. And the only way in which she can be made harmless is to rid her of an excuse for disturbing the world by any of the vagaries inspired in her by others or simply by her own want of intelligence and of common sense, by reducing her to the condition of a secondary State.

Who can deny that we should not have been plunged in the misfortune of the present war if Europe had been wise, and prevented the incorporation of Bosnia and of Herzegovina into the Austrian Empire? Further, there are Poland, Bohemia, Transylvania, Croatia, Dalmatia, Tyrol, Trieste, all eager to be delivered from her rule, and who, so long as they remain in her dependence, will furnish her with pretexts for making mischief in the

world. The dismemberment of Austria is as necessary as the destruction of Prussian militarism.

The Habsburgs have had their day, and they will sink into obscurity, and Austria herself will have to expiate the want of moral backbone that has been one of her worst defects. Her government will have to be modified, her middle classes called to take up their share of the burden; her aristocracy will have to give up its former prejudices and renounce many of its standing privileges; her clergy must restrict their action and influence to the limits beyond which interference becomes a peril for the State; and the instruction of her population will have to be considerably improved and widened.

The war will bring about many changes in poor bleeding Europe; it will destroy many things she reverenced, and will set up new beliefs in place of the old ones. What these changes and these beliefs will be it is impossible now to foresee, but it will certainly be possible for us then to write at the end of one great chapter in the book of history the words, *Finis Austria.*

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