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THE CURSE OF THE HOUSE OF HAPSBURG

How Misfortune Has Dogged the Steps of the Aged Emperor of Austria

"MAY Heaven and Hell blast your happiness; may your family be exterminated; may you be smitten in the persons of those you love best; may your children be brought to ruin and your life wrecked, and yet may you live on in lonely, unbroken, horrible grief, it tremble when you recall the name of Karolyi!"

This was the curse pronounced on the Emperor Franz Joseph by the Countess Karolyi, whose son was put to death by order of the Emperor for participating in the Hungarian uprising. The Countess is said to have shrieked out her curse at the Emperor when he appeared at a State ball in Vienna.

"It will come to pass!" she cried as the attendants dragged her away.

Were Prophetic

Surely her words were prophetic for death has come to the Emperor's best loved relations in a most tragic manner. To-day we find him tottering with old age, standing alone like some great tree which a storm has shorn of its branches.

"Nothing is spared me!" cries the venerable Head of the House of Hapsburg as he sits in his palace surrounded by every luxury which wealth can procure, the most pathetic figure in European history.

The recent assassinations of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, and his devoted wife by a nineteen-year-old fanatic Serb adds another chapter to the long line of Hapsburg tragedies which have shocked the world during the past quarter of a century and the sympathy of the world goes out to the old man who has suffered almost beyond endurance.

Origin of Hapsburg House

The House of Hapsburg has an interesting history—almost melodramatic in its romances, scandals and tragic deaths. Descendants of Rudolph of Hapsburg, a German Count born in 1228, and elected King of the Romans in 1277, the Royal family of Austria is among the oldest in Europe, for Count Rudolph in 1282 bestowed the duchy of Austria upon his son Albrecht, afterward Roman Emperor.

About 1740 the male line of the family died out with Emperor Karl VI and his only daughter Maria Theresa married Duke Franz, of Lorraine and Tuscany, who afterward became Franz I of the House of Lorraine and the founder of the Hapsburg-Lorraine family. Maria Theresa was succeeded in 1780 by her son Joseph II, and afterwards his brother Leopold II came to the throne and died after a two years reign. Leopold's son Franz followed and reigned until 1835. He was married four times and left a large number of descendants who form the present Imperial House.

Austria's First Kaiser

Franz I, as he called himself, was the first sovereign who assumed the title of Emperor or Kaiser of Austria doing so after being compelled by Napoleon in 1805, to renounce the Imperial crown of Rome, which has been practically in the Hapsburg family for more than three centuries. Before this he had already coupled with his title of Emperor of the Romans that of Hereditary Emperor of Austria. He was succeeded by his son, Emperor Ferdinand I, on whose abdication on December 2nd, 1848 the crown came to his nephew, the present Emperor Franz Joseph I, who is known as the Emperor-King of Austria-Hungary. The international relations of these countries is called the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Two States

It consists of two States—the Austrian Empire and the Hungarian Kingdom. The relations between the two are regulated by the so-called compromise of 1867, which makes Franz Joseph the common head of the two nations and known in Austria as Emperor and in Hungary as the Apostolic King.

The present Emperor came to the throne in 1848, was crowned King of Hungary and took the oath of the Hungarian Constitution June 8th, 1867. He was but eighteen years of age when his weak uncle, Ferdinand abdicated.

Was a Favorite

The father of Franz Joseph, the Archduke Francis Charles, would have been the next in line, but the royal family preferred young "Franzi," who had already made his mark as a student. Several times his mother, the Archduchess Sophie, had given him a hint of the honor which was to come to him and by her orders he received instructions in every branch of jurisprudence. He also became an expert shot and a fearless horseman.

The Archduchess ruled the father as well as the son, and she knew that the father was totally unfit for the crown. She finally worried her husband into declaring that he had seen a vision while earnestly praying for guidance in the matter. He then told the Court that the spirit of his father, the late Emperor Francis, had appeared and laid his hand on the head of his youthful grandson, Franz Joseph. This decided the family and young Franz Joseph became the ruler.

Reigned Over a Mixed People

Austria received him with frantic delight, and the day of his accession was one of joy throughout the land. The young Emperor even at that age had a remarkable conception of duty, which has served him well during his long and checkered reign. When first addressed as "your Majesty" he turned pale and murmured "Farewell to my youth!"

His foot was already on the thorny path which he has unflinchingly trodden for sixty-six years. During this time he has reigned over more than fifty million people consisting of Austrians, Hungarians, Bohemians, Serbians, Roumanians, British, French, Montenegrin, Turkish, Bulgarian, Serbian, and over three thousand Americans live in his domain.

His troubles began early in his reign, as a few months after he came to the throne dissensions arose throughout the land which were followed by external aggressions.

The Curse in 1853

In 1853 the list of tragic incidents which have marred his reign began when an attempt was made to assassinate him. Early one afternoon in February of that year the Emperor was taking his daily walk on the ancient bastions which used to encircle Vienna, attended by a single aide-de-camp, Count O'Dorrell. The two men had stopped to view the movements of the soldiers who were drilling nearby. Suddenly a man ran up the narrow steps leading to the bastion and dealt the Emperor a violent blow with a knife. The blow was aimed at the neck, but it struck the bone behind the ear and did not inflict a serious wound although the concussion caused partial blindness for a time. The man proved to be a Hungarian named Lehenzi—a tailor by trade. He declared that he was determined to kill the Emperor and had waited for the opportunity for some time.

Memorial Church

When the Emperor had fully recovered the people of Vienna, who have always shown a remarkable devotion to their ruler set about to build a church in commemoration of their youthful monarch's preservation, and the Votivkirche, a masterpiece of modern Gothic art, was the result. This beautiful church rears its slender, graceful towers on one of the widest streets of the Austrian capital and is always an object of

the greatest interest to the American traveler.

The Emperor was kindly disposed toward his subjects, even the Hungarian rebels, and tried to win them, but the Archduchess Sophie had formed the policy of his reign—a cruel, heartless policy which carried death and exile to many. She was heartily disliked by the people, and the historians regard it almost a miracle that she was not assassinated during one of the Hungarian uprisings.

Marries Princess Elizabeth

When "Franzi," as she affectionately called her son, was about twenty-three, she set about to find him a wife, so she sent him on a courting expedition to the home of the Duke of Bavaria, who had married her younger sister.

Among the daughters of the Duke was the Princess Helene, who was just nineteen, and the mother hoped that her son would fall in love with this princess, but she was destined to disappointment for he paid little attention to the Princess Helene and fell in love with her younger sister, the Princess Elizabeth, who was then only fifteen years of age.

A year later they were married and the beautiful princess charmed all Austria and Hungary as well. She bore the name of the patron saint of the latter, and when she came with the Emperor to Budapest the wildest enthusiasm prevailed. She studied their language and spoke it like a native.

The Good Angel

Even to-day she is known as the good angel of Hungary, and a special museum has been established where articles which at one time belonged to her are on exhibition.

Of a naturally vivacious disposition the new Empress chafed under the restraint of Court etiquette and did a lot of unheard of things which shocked the Austrian royalty, but delighted the pleasure-loving Hungarians.

For a time the couple led an existence of unclouded happiness. Four children were born as the result of their union. The oldest, the little Archduchess Sophie, named for her grandmother, died of typhoid fever in early childhood. The disease was contracted from drinking water sent from a Vienna spring. In some way it became uncooked and spoiled, but the nurse did not discover it until the child was taken ill.

Queen of Bavaria

The second child, the Archduchess Gisela, is now the Queen of Bavaria. The other two children were the Archduchess Marie Valerie, who became the wife of Franz Salvator, Archduke of Austria-Tuscany, and Prince Rudolph, the heir to the throne.

The Empress lost her health after the birth of the Crown Prince and had to spend much of her time away from the Emperor at the different "spas" of Europe.

Then the Archduke Maximilian was persuaded to go to Mexico to

(Continued on page 3)

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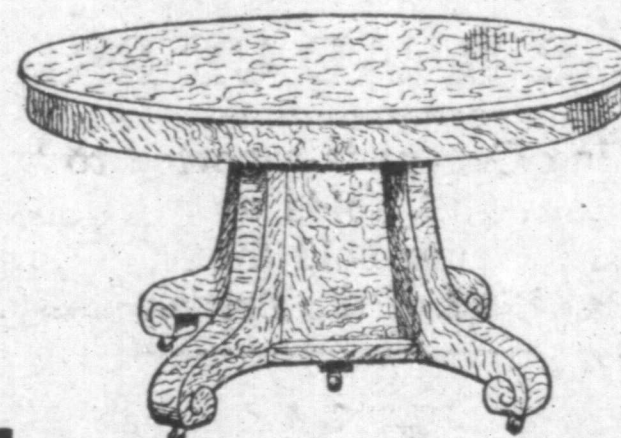
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