

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE COURT OF VIENNA

CHAPTER I

A ROMANTIC WOOING

"TAKE care, cousin : if Black growls at you so much, you will have a bad name in the house ! "

The person thus addressed had stumbled over a snarling spaniel as he turned toward the terrace steps. He was a slim young man, with an expression on his face of mingled gaiety and pride. His upper lip, shaded by a slight moustache, curled ironically, and it was in a tone of exaggerated courtesy that he made his reply.

"Spare your fears for me, fair cousin. If I choose I know how to conquer the terrible Black. Thanks all the same for your anxiety about me."

He made a profound bow to the pretty girl who had spoken to him, went down the front steps of the château, and was soon lost to view in the cool darkness of the pine-woods in the park of Possenhofen.

It was an afternoon in May, 1853. The two actors in this short scene were the Princess Sophia, eldest daughter of the Duke Maximilian, and the Princess Ludovica (Louise) of Bavaria, and His Majesty Francis-Joseph the First, Emperor of Austria, Apostolic King of Hungary, King of Bohemia,