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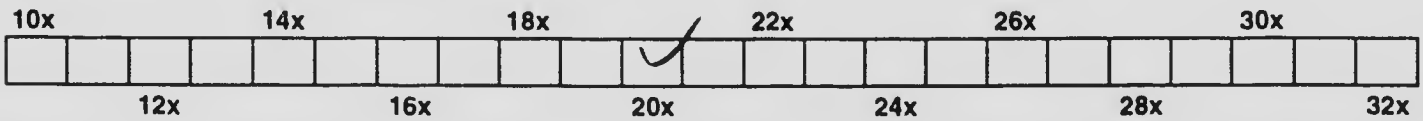

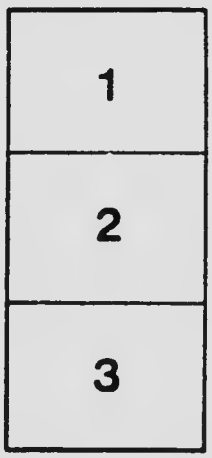

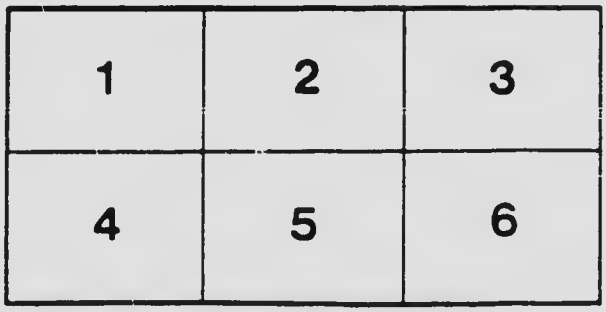

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE COURT OF VIENNA

FRANCIS JOSEPH, EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA

IN THE UNIFORM OF THE HUNGARIAN HUSSARS

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE COURT OF VIENNA

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA FROM INFORMATION BY A DISTINGUISHED PERSONAGE AT COURT

BY
HENRI DE WEINDEL

ENGLISH VERSION BY PHILIP W. SARGEANT

WITH PORTRAIT

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PREFACE

THE information which will be found in this book is now for the first time made known. The facts were communicated to me by a person of considerable rank at the Court of Vienna. I should have preferred that this person's name appeared in connection with the book beside my own. That, however, has been strictly forbidden. I can only take the opportunity here of expressing publicly my indebtedness to my anonymous collaborator.

H. DE W.

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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,

Dalmatia, Croatia, Sclavonia, and many other places.

The Emperor was twenty-three, his cousin twenty-one. Francis-Joseph had arrived that morning at Possenhofen, the home of Duke Maximilian, who, through his marriage with the sister of the Princess Sophia of Bavaria, wife of the Archduke Francis-Charles of Austria, had become the uncle of the Emperor, Francis-Charles's son. Up to the present uncle and nephew, it must be admitted, had had but little to do with one another. The cares of empire had fallen upon the young Sovereign at the age of eighteen, and plunged him, at a time of life when a man thinks much more about the gratification of his desires than of the destiny of nations, into the midst of a difficult and complicated political situation, leaving him little leisure. Moreover, as his character was one which led him readily enough in the direction of amusements close at hand, he did not waste the moments snatched from the affairs of State in family visits. Rumour already put to his credit a number of affairs of the heart, dexterously managed by him; and the young monarch was constantly dreaming of adding to the list of his sentimental victims.

Duke Maximilian, for his part, seldom thought of leaving the neighbourhood of Munich, the banks of the Lake of Starnberg, and the woods of Possenhofen, to go to Vienna, where the rigid etiquette accorded ill with his liking for a simple country existence. A noted horseman and a veteran sportsman, he lived with his wife, his four daughters and his three sons, in the rather modest state which the not over-magnificent establishment of Possenhofen allowed him to keep up, without leaving much margin. A good husband and a good father, the head of the ducal branch of the Wittelsbachs took delight in long hunting excursions about the wood and mountain

country which was his, and in his packs of hounds giving tongue through the forest. Much of his income went to the upkeep of his stables and kennels, especially his kennels. So great was his affection for his dogs that, like Frederick the Great—but like him in this point alone!—the Duke never went out without an escort of them, while in his study the best places on the chairs and couches were always occupied by his four-footed friends. He even gravely insisted that dogs had souls, and that their knowledge of mankind was far superior to ours. When, therefore, a new-comer found himself ill-received by the dogs of Possenhofen, he need not try to make a second appearance there. The dogs of the house, by barking at him, had put him in the Duke's bad books. And this was the meaning of the warning which the Princess Sophia had given her Imperial cousin.

If the young girl, as she lay back in her chair, with her brows somewhat knitted, looked as though she were reflecting on her conversation with Francis-Joseph, it must be confessed that his thoughts were not in the slightest degree concerned about it. He made his way through the wood with light and easy gait, rejoicing in the few minutes of solitude stolen from both State and family affairs.

But State and family affairs, nevertheless, threatened to intertwine themselves in the closest manner. Francis-Joseph was on Possenhofen soil that day at the instigation of his mother, who had concerted the meeting with her sister, the Princess Ludovica, and with a very clear eye to a betrothal; and the proposed bride—so much more interested in the affair than was Francis-Joseph—was none other than the poor Princess Sophia, who was so disturbed over the quarrel between her cousin and bad-tempered little Black.

The Emperor had not wished to vex his mother, and he knew that Sovereigns, as a matter of course, married young, and in obedience to the promptings of the hearts—of diplomatists. He knew, too, that the diplomatists would look with a favourable eye on a marriage with the Princess Sophia. He had left Vienna for Possenhofen, therefore, intending to ask for his cousin's hand. He even meant to urge his suit the same day, since Government business required him back in Vienna as soon as possible. He was aware why he had come. He had seen his cousin. She did not displease him, if she inspired him with no love. He was performing a duty, not following his taste, and his future Empress remained to him a matter of supreme indifference.

His mind was much less occupied with reflections on such affairs than with joy at his hour of freedom, when suddenly a little dog charged into his legs, frisking and gambolling as if refusing not to be recognized. From one of the paths in the wood was heard a woman's voice calling the indiscreet puppy back.

"Here, here! Come here!"

Francis-Joseph stood still, struck by the fresh tone of the voice, and he was still more struck when he found that the speaker was a girl of about fifteen, dainty, supple, and slight, who seemed to spring in proud purity like a living flower from the soil of the woods. Seeing the young man, she had stopped also, a straight little white-robed figure. Her beautiful eyes were clear and intelligent, and her long fair hair rolling over her shoulders, challenged the brightness of the day.

She was the first to break the silence.

"Please excuse Dick, . . ." she began, when Francis-Joseph stopped her. Taking from his head

his soft felt hat with a game-bird's feather in it, he came forward and said:

"No excuses for Dick, mademoiselle! I know the ways of the house, and that a guest whom the dogs receive well is always well received by their masters. This good little animal has my most heartfelt thanks."

"I hope that you may not be deceived, monsieur."

"That is my dearest wish."

"And I am sure that my father will follow the dog's example, and greet you with his best welcome." She made him a humorous curtsy, and, with a smile like spring, went on: "Besides, he could not do otherwise."

Rather astonished, Francis-Joseph hesitated, and then said:

"Then you must be . . ."

"The Duchess Elisabeth-Amélie-Eugénie of Bavaria, at your service, Your Majesty!"

She spread out her white dress in another curtsy, and gave a merry laugh. Francis-Joseph, who had taken her for some attendant in his uncle's household, and had begun to contemplate a little gallantry, stood embarrassed before the young girl, not at what he had said to her, but at what he had thought of saying. The embarrassment was all the worse for being entirely of his own causing, and all the more acute because it was known only to himself. He realized, however, that if he prolonged the awkward situation he would end by betraying a thought which he must at all costs keep secret; so, to break the silence and at the same time to give himself time to reflect, he said nothing more than:

"My cousin . . ."

"Are you my cousin?"

"Will you not give me your hand?"

She was very young, very untroubled, but a little haughty; for already the Princess Elisabeth had a great deal of pride in her bearing. She came nearer to him and held out frankly her little white hand, saying:

"Certainly. Here it is!"

For an instant Francis-Joseph held his cousin's hand in his, looking with a strange feeling of emotion into her clear young eyes, so pure and commanding, which never fell before his. Then, letting her hand go, he asked, with a change of tone:

"How is it that I have never seen you before?"

"As you have scarcely tried to, you cannot blame us."

"On the contrary, I know that I am to blame, and that I neglect my relatives too much. But that is not what I meant to say. I wanted to know why I did not see you at lunch-time to-day."

Elisabeth's eyes took on a slight tinge of melancholy.

"For the same reason that you will not see me at dinner to-night."

"Is it indiscreet to ask you this reason?"

Smiling again, the young Princess replied in mock humility.

"I will speak if the Emperor orders it."

"The Emperor can never order you, cousin, but a friend begs you."

He took her hand and led her to a stone bench, where, after she had seated herself, he sat down by her side.

"Now tell me. I am listening," he said.

"Well, it seems that I am too young to be present at family banquets."

"Too young? But, if I remember rightly, you must be . . . let me see . . ."

"Do not trouble, Sire. I am sixteen."

Elisabeth felt quite at home with this twenty-three-year-old Emperor, garbed in his Tyrolese costume, and stripped of all the majesty of empire. She began to talk as he had desired her to. It did not take him long to divine the truth in her frank, though not unguarded, conversation. It was necessary for Duke Maximilian and his Duchess to marry off the eldest of their four daughters, Princess Sophia; and, as it was a Princess of twenty-one that was intended for him, it was not thought convenient to introduce upon the scene of the betrothal the golden hair and flower-like eyes of Princess Springtime! But the more they opened the more the flowers in these beautiful bright eyes intoxicated the young Emperor's swelling heart, and about the Princess's dainty face her pale gold hair shed so sweet a light that he could think of nothing more desirable than to have its reflection always before him.

She went on talking, while he only heard now the music of her voice, without taking in for the moment the exact meaning of her words. He awoke at last from his dream to hear her say, as though in conclusion:

"And that is why Your Majesty will not see me at the family table to-night any more than he saw me this morning."

She rose up, and for the third time made a sprightly curtsy as she prepared to take her leave. Francis Joseph detained her. Successfully concealing the agitation which possessed him, he borrowed from the armoury of diplomacy a weapon for use in the game of love. From the outset he had comprehended the imperious and undisciplined nature of the young girl, and without forgetting prudence (since he had also discovered her superior intelligence and education),

he set himself to stir her to revolt against her father's orders to keep upstairs while her elder sister took part in the entertainments at the château. He told her that she was no longer a child, as they tried to make her believe, and without openly encouraging her to rebellion, suggested that he might intervene on her behalf to obtain her release from the régime of isolation. Then, while her gladness was shining out from the depths of her eyes, he rose, and, striking his forehead with a most natural gesture, cried out:

"I have an idea!"

"What is it?"

"Listen now," and, taking her by the arm, he guided her slowly toward the house as he explained his scheme. She was to go up to her room, put on a party-frock, and at the hour for dinner to come down to the terrace, where the family met before meals.

"And is that all your scheme?"

"Do not trouble about the rest of it. I have my part to play."

"But I shall be scolded!"

"Don't I tell you I have my part to play? Do you think that I wish to cause you pain?"

Elisabeth only wanted to be convinced. After her cousin's last pretext she said:

"Well, I will do as Your Majesty orders."

He released her arm, and, laying his finger on his lips, whispered:

"Till we meet?"

"Till we meet," she replied, and her white figure vanished lightly through the gloomy firs in the direction of the château.

Francis-Joseph, who up to now had known only the slight attractions of passing fancies, was under the domination of a totally new sentiment, and, to his

joy, was aware that his heart was really touched. In the presence of love he was no different from the shepherd tending his flock in the mountain pastures, and he felt an agonizing yet delightful necessity of giving vent to his happiness. Standing alone there in the great park, he was surprised to find himself, with tears in his eyes, singing like a child.

While the young Emperor unbosomed his newborn love to the firs of the park, the Princess Elisabeth had gone up to her room, and was putting on all her finery. Her lady-in-waiting caught her in the middle of her task, and was astonished. Ignorant of the art of lying, the Princess told her the truth frankly. She was dressing herself to go down to the dinner in honour of her cousin the Emperor Francis-Joseph. The terrified lady-in-waiting threw up her arms. What would happen? The Duke attached great importance to his authority. Had he by chance permitted the Princess Elisabeth to be present at the meal? Again Elisabeth told the truth. Her father had not permitted her to come to the feast. The poor lady begged and prayed her, but all in vain. Elisabeth's mind was made up, and consequently, as the lady-in-waiting well knew, it was made up once and for all. While the discussion was still going on, the dinner-hour arrived. Elisabeth came from her room, pursued by her lady, full of terrified lamentations. By accident the Emperor appeared suddenly before them. Offering his arm gallantly to his cousin, he led her on to the terrace, where the family and the guests were assembled. The tableau can be imagined. The Duke sprang up, his face dark with storm-clouds. Francis-Joseph averted the immediate danger by taking the responsibility on himself, as he had promised; and the Duke, making the best of a bad job, put up with the presence of his younger daughter at her elder

sister's side. History does not tell us whether the dinner was a merry one, though it is surely permissible to guess that there was an air of constraint about it. But the chroniclers make up for their silence on this point by telling us of the sequel.

When dinner was over, the Emperor managed to find himself alone with his uncle in the combined study and kennel of the Duke. In the presence of the dogs alone the following dialogue took place, the gist of which, rather than the actual words, can be guaranteed:

"Uncle," said the Emperor, "I have the honour to ask you for the hand of my cousin—not Sophia, but Elisabeth."

"My nephew," replied the Duke, "it is absolutely impossible."

"You refuse?"

"Definitely and entirely."

"Why?"

"Because my daughter Elisabeth is too young."

"I will wait."

"And also because it would be an insult to my daughter Sophia."

"But there could not be an insult if her hand was not asked for."

"No matter—I refuse.

"That is your last word?"

"It is."

"Then, in that case, I shall not marry either of them."

The next morning the Emperor left the château of Possenhofen as free as he entered it the day before.

* * * * *

Three months later, on August 18th, the birthday of the Emperor Francis-Joseph, there were festivities at Ischl, the residence of the Sovereign for the time

being. The invitations to the Imperial villa included many high personages, notably the Grand-Duke Maximilian from Bavaria, the Duchess Ludovica, and their three sons and four daughters. According to the yearly custom, the Imperial family went to morning service at the church of Ischl, which was crowded with worshippers when the family procession entered. It would be more exact to say that it was packed with inquisitive people, for the story of what had occurred at Possenhofen had spread abroad since May, and the presence at Ischl of the Emperor's uncle and, more still, of his daughters Sophia and Elisabeth, stirred to the utmost the curiosity of the aristocratic congregation. The murmurs which before the Imperial procession's entry had echoed among the pillars of the nave, regardless of the sanctity of the place, were suddenly checked as the Emperor crossed the threshold of the church. Every eye was fixed on the Princess Elisabeth and her elder sister. To the great surprise of all present, the Emperor's mother drew back to allow Elisabeth to go before her—the fair Elisabeth whose golden hair shone in the incense-heated gloom of the church of Ischl as three months ago it had shone in the chill shadow of the pines of Possenhofen.

The service continued after the usual rite until, at the moment of the Benediction, occurred something not provided for in the rite. The Emperor rose up from his footstool, took his cousin Elisabeth's hand, and stepped toward the altar with the beautiful girl. Then, at a moment when one might have caught the flutter in the air of a butterfly's wings, he was distinctly heard to address to the officiating priest the following words in a loud voice :

"My father, this is my intended bride. Give us your blessing!"

As he left the church the Emperor turned to his aide-de-camp, Colonel O'Donnel, who had saved his life a few months before from the attack of an assassin. He made a sign for him to draw near, and, while he gently pressed his fair *fiancée's* arm against his breast, he said to him, so low that only the Colonel and the young girl could hear:

"Colonel, you saved my life a few months ago. I feel that I must thank you once again, for never until to-day did I understand how great a service you had done me."

Such was the romantic betrothal, on August 18th, 1853, of the Emperor Francis-Joseph and the beautiful Princess Elisabeth. And thus did Elisabeth verify part of the prophecy of a gipsy at Possenhofen long ago, that she would wear a double crown—the crown of an Empress and the crown of a martyr.

Francis-Joseph, for his part, had made good his remark to his cousin Sophia on the terrace of the ducal château. He had overcome the enmity of the snarling dog of Possenhofen.

CHAPTER II

THE EDUCATION OF A PRINCE

Boyhood had not been for Francis-Joseph a period of nothing but joy; and even if we make allowance for a momentary outburst of sentiment, we may still admit that the Emperor did not stray far from the truth when he declared to Colonel O'Donnel that he had never appreciated life so much before the hour of his betrothal to Elisabeth.

Born at Schönbrunn on August 18th, 1830, Francis-Joseph was the son of the Archduke Francis-Charles, second son of the Emperor Francis I., and of the Archduchess Sophia, daughter of King Maximilian-Joseph of Bavaria. He was destined to the throne from the moment he was born. The eldest son of Francis I., the Archduke Ferdinand, had no issue by his marriage with the Princess Marie-Anne, third daughter of Victor Emmanuel, King of Sardinia, and so, after Francis-Charles, his son the Archduke Francis-Joseph was the heir to the Imperial and Royal crowns of Austria-Hungary.

The child was accordingly brought up in the shadow of the throne which must one day be his, and throughout the whole of his education there was but this one end in view. While other little boys, Princes or commoners, were spending their time playing at ball or horses, little Francis-Joseph was listening to lectures on his rights and his duties as shepherd of his

people. Education in the Austro-Hungarian Imperial family comprised two branches, sharply divided from one another. There was the military education, which delighted the child, though his serious study of it was not to come until later, and the education in languages, which he hated, and which commenced as soon as he could speak at all. As ruler of a country where a dozen languages and dialects flourished side by side, intermingling and running into one another, he must learn to express himself correctly in each of these tongues when the occasion arose. Therefore, in addition to German, French, and English, which his tutors tried to teach him simultaneously, Francis-Joseph was made to imbibe Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Ruthenian, Croatian, and Servian, to mention only the principal dialects. This would have been a hard task for anyone; for Francis-Joseph it was far too heavy. By a singular misfortune the poor boy was exceedingly deficient in the gift of tongues; yet, although all was to no purpose, they—and particularly his mother, a haughty, ambitious, and fiercely imperious woman—would not renounce the effort to force the child, with his intense dislike of languages, to become a perfect polyglot. Vain and thankless was the work of his preceptors, as they suffered under the ill-temper of the Archduchess Sophia; for neither indulgences nor impositions ever succeeded in making Francis-Joseph speak anything correctly except German and French. Even English impressed itself very slightly on the convolutions of his brain. Witness the story preserved at Vienna of his reply to King Edward VII. in 1903. The British Sovereign had come to pay a visit to the old Emperor in the Austrian capital. At the big official dinner, when speeches had to be exchanged while all the company stood on their feet to listen, King Edward rose

and proposed his toast in German. The Emperor of Austria followed with his toast—in French. The journals were at pains to invent many explanations, notably the one that Francis-Joseph was a strict guardian of tradition, and had fallen back upon the language of diplomatists. But the truth is far more simple. The Emperor, in spite of the years and years and years during which English grammar had been drummed into his head, would have been totally incapable of uttering ten consecutive remarks in the language of Shakespeare.

On this occasion Francis-Joseph's linguistic incapacity had no serious consequences. At other times, however, his shortcomings in this respect did him great harm. It can truly be said that one of the reasons (but one of the reasons only) of the hostility of the Hungarians toward the person of their Sovereign lies in his ignorance of their language. His first estrangement from them, a grave and lasting estrangement, dates from a very distant period. When he was quite a young ruler, Francis-Joseph made a tour of his dominions. His first visit was to Buda-Pesth, an official visit if there ever was one, accompanied by all the ordinary and extraordinary ceremonies which make such journeys burdensome. Notable items on the programme were the inspection of a military school and a call at a hospital. Speeches had, of course, to be made at both places; and, equally of course, they must be made in Hungarian, since Buda-Pesth could not imagine that the Sovereign was without a knowledge, or at least an official knowledge, of the national tongue. As he did not understand a word of Hungarian, and as he must speak, and not read, his speeches, to avoid hurting Magyar susceptibilities, the Talmas of this Napoleon had made him learn by heart two little addresses, with

the appropriate gestures to accompany the words. Rehearsals had taken place, and all promised well. The hour arrived. The military school's inspection came first. The Emperor, after smiling at the conventional addresses, of which he could not grasp a word, made his reply to the compliments which had been showered upon him. But he saw the faces of his hearers darken, instead of brightening, while stupefaction manifested itself on the courtiers' features. At the hospital the same looks, the same embarrassment, and the same coldness followed his words. The Emperor, speaking in sufficiently good Hungarian, accompanied by suitable actions, had praised at the military school the excellent care shown to the sick, and at the hospital the precision of the manœuvres executed in his presence! He had shuffled his speeches!

The Hungarians have never forgiven him for this unintentional mystification. As for the Emperor, no one in his suite has ever dared to reveal to him what he did. It would have been possible at the time, on the very day, to have stopped him, and with a single word to have prevented him from consummating his blunder. Not a single courtier made the attempt. But it must be admitted that it is not so much the contemptible spirit of courtiership which is to blame as the Emperor's own pride, arrogance, and obstinacy, which never allowed him to confess that His Apostolic Majesty was capable of error in any circumstance whatever.

All the efforts, therefore, spent on making a polyglot out of the future Emperor Francis-Joseph had only one result, but they were certainly successful in that: they made his boyhood and youth miserable for him.

The other branch of his education, the military side,

provided him with very real compensations. For centuries past, from father to son, from uncle to nephew, from cousin to cousin, the Habsburgs had handed down to one another a genuine love for all things connected with the Army. If we cannot say that the baby Archduke imbibed his military principles with his nurse's milk, at least we can assert that from his earliest days he was initiated into the joys of the profession of arms by his grandfather, the old Emperor Francis, father of Marie-Louise and father-in-law of Napoleon the Great. The first words which he uttered were not the usual baby-talk, but military commands. It would not be at all astonishing if one were to be told that, with the milk still on his lips and a bonnet on his head, Francis-Joseph used to cry "Shoulder arms!" before he could say "Papa!" At the age of four, under the instruction of his grandfather, whose study he hardly ever left, the child knew by heart all the words of command then in use in the Austro-Hungarian army, and could manœuvre like a Kaiserlick. Out of doors, when he met a soldier, he would stop him, and want to "play with him" as he played with the Emperor Francis's sabre at home.

Every day, in the intervals between his language and military lessons, when the little boy walked out, holding his grandfather's hand, in the streets of Vienna, the park at Schönbrunn, or the garden at Laxenburg, he kept up a string of questions about all the soldiers they met. One day at Schönbrunn he saw a sentry on duty at a doorway. Loosing his grandfather's hand, he went up to the sentry, and received a salute. So overjoyed was he at this sign of military respect for his tiny personage that he scampered back to his grandfather, and asked him for some money to give to the man. The old Emperor could

refuse him nothing, and complied with his request. Francis-Joseph trotted off quickly to the sentry again, and held out the money to him, saying: "Here, this is for you!" The regulations are very strict. A soldier on duty may never accept anything. Besides, the Emperor himself was present. With his rifle still on his shoulder, the sentry never moved. Upset and at the point of tears, the child stamped his foot, crying: "I want you to take it!" But the soldier remained motionless and silent.

Francis-Joseph turned round towards Francis. The Emperor of to-day—a jovial character, who was wont good-humouredly to exchange coarse pleasantries, in Viennese slang, with the populace—was laughing at the discomfiture of the Emperor of to-morrow. The tiny Archduke walked back to his grandfather, pale with rage at the opposition to his little will, and repeated through his clenched teeth: "I want him to take it!" Then the Emperor Francis accompanied his grandson up to the soldier, and, lifting the child to the level of the sentry's cartridge-box, put the child's hand into it with his gift.

This incident, which shows the child's great love for soldiers, his imperious temper, and Francis's indulgence to his grandson, was by no means disadvantageous to the sentry. In his simple and familiar manne the old Emperor got into conversation with him. Learning that this model soldier was the son of a poor widowed peasant-woman, wretched and infirm, who constantly lamented her loneliness, he gave him a sum of money sufficient to buy himself out of the army, which was possible in those days.

Another day the little Prince, still aged four, was walking along the vast galleries of the Hofburg, the Imperial Palace at Vienna, when suddenly at a turn he came upon two magnificent Hungarian Guards,

who gave him the military salute. Enchanted by the brilliant uniform, and still more enchanted by their salute, the child planted himself in front of them, and, assuming his piping voice of command, strained to its utmost, put them through various manœuvres. Then, standing them at ease, he went up to the taller of the two, and in a tone which admitted no reply, said:

"Give me your sword and belt."

"But, your Highness . . ." protested the man in hesitation, looking at his comrade for advice.

Francis-Joseph interrupted him violently, stamping his foot as usual:

"Give me them, I tell you."

The poor Hungarian submitted. The child bestrode the sword, turned the belt into reins, and, riding off like a witch on a broomstick, went full speed down the echoing corridors of the Hofburg, battering the sword against the tiled floors and the walls in his passage. History does not tell how long this ride lasted, but when he brought back to the Hungarian his sword and belt, the latter was in strips and the blade of the former terribly hacked about. The wretched man looked at his weapon in consternation, muttering:

"Well, I am safe to be punished when the Colonel sees this."

"You must tell him that it is the Archduke Francis-Joseph who did it."

"It would be much better to tell your father to buy me another," said the Hungarian, regaining his courage.

The child looked the impertinent fellow up and down, and replied haughtily:

"*I* will pay you for it when I am Emperor."

Then he stalked away majestically.

A year later the old Emperor Francis died. Fer-

dinand mounted the throne, and little Francis-Joseph passed under the absolute control of his father and mother, especially his mother. The Archduke Francis-Charles was little more than a good respectable bourgeois, full of himself, and asking nothing better than to be spared all worry; so, to have peace in his own house, and avoid giving himself trouble, he was glad to hand over to his wife, Sophia, the upbringing of the future Emperor. There were no more military games in the Imperial study; no more walks in the Laxenburg gardens or rides in the Hofburg galleries; no more merriment. The child was put by his mother under the charge of an austere woman, the Countess of Sturmfeld, and a rough soldier, Colonel Hauslab, who succeeded in making even his military training less pleasant for him. Four companions shared the studies of the future Sovereign —Counts Mark and Charles Bombelles, who were Portuguese by descent; Francesco de Coronini, an Italian; and Count Taaffe. The father of the two first-named, Count Henry Bombelles, was to exercise a great influence over Francis-Joseph, for it was he who was appointed a little later the tutor of the young Prince. (It may be noted in passing that the brother of Henry Bombelles, Charles Rénier by name, had married Marie-Louise secretly after the fall of the Napoleonic Empire.) Count Taaffe later in life presided for many years over the Austro-Hungarian Cabinet, and devoted the best of his energies—though it did not require much effort—to the maintenance of the narrowest reactionary principles in the mind of his master and friend. Only Francesco de Coronini broke away later from Francis-Joseph, throwing himself so vigorously into the party of opposition that he became leader of the Liberals in the Austrian Parliament—conduct which caused Francis-Joseph to

show very marked antipathy to him ever afterwards.

Between the years of five and thirteen Francis-Joseph's life was tamely and monotonously divided between the Countess Sturmfeld's lessons in languages and Colonel Hauslab's instructions in the military art. It was this dulness, heavy and unvarying, of his boyhood which ended by inspiring in the youth, and also in the man of riper years, that passionate craving for freedom which blinded his eyes to the fact that through it he spread around himself the most terrible sufferings, and brought about a most painful domestic tragedy. His early years were devoid of affection. His father was indifferent, his mother all ambition. He was doomed to receive no genuine marks of love. He was to meet with no disinterested feelings outside the friendship of Count Taaffe, which in time to come, owing to the Count's violently Conservative sentiments, was to prove so harmful to him.

When Francis-Joseph reached the age of thirteen, his mother put his education entirely into the hands of Count Henry Bombelles, a man who, with his son Charles, was certainly the evil genius of the Habsburgs and of Austria-Hungary for more than the last fifty years of the nineteenth century. Destitute of character, principles, convictions, or morals, a crafty hypocrite, and a tool in the hands of the Jesuits (who also swayed the conduct of the Archduchess Sophia), Count Henry Bombelles must be reckoned one of the principal causes, or rather the principal cause, of the serious defects of character and of will which made Francis-Joseph one of the most wretched of men, and his wife, the Empress Elisabeth, a martyr in the truest sense of the word.

The pleasures of the mind and the heart had played little part in the early life of Francis-Joseph. A keen

taste for the pleasures of the senses very soon showed itself, and Count Henry Bombelles, instead of setting himself to check it, on the contrary encouraged his pupil in the pursuit of third-rate adventures. Such conduct ran in the blood of the family, for Charles Bombelles, son of Francis-Joseph's tutor, when he became Master of Ceremonies in the Court of the Crown Prince Rudolf, earned his right to the infamous title of *Kaiserlicher und Königlicher Kuppler*. The father in 1845 gave a foretaste of what his son was to be later.

The worst part of the scandal is that well-informed persons do not hesitate to suggest that the Archduchess Sophia was aware of what was going on. Without definitely saying in so many words that she chose such a tutor for her son with full knowledge of the depths to which he could descend in his desire to please, they mention, as a strong presumption in favour of what they hint, that later she certainly tolerated the escapades of her son, then newly married, and did not shrink from reproaching the hapless Elisabeth for not overlooking her husband's lapses.

But what could have been the secret idea of the Archduchess Sophia in giving a free hand to Count Henry Bombelles, and in even encouraging him to lead her son on? Always a woman of ambition, and never a true mother, the daughter of the King of Bavaria dreamt of directing the destiny of the Empire. There was no reason for expecting then that Ferdinand would abdicate, and she could not guess that Francis-Joseph would come to the throne at eighteen years of age. She had, therefore, a motive for corrupting her son's will-power, in order to dominate him more completely, and one day to reign in his name.

Among the many preceptors who took charge, under Count Henry Bombelles, of the young Francis-Joseph between 1843 and 1848, the year of his accession, special mention must be made of Father Othmar von Rauscher, who became Prince-Archbishop of Vienna. He taught morals and philosophy to the three eldest sons of the Archduke Francis-Charles, and particularly to Francis-Joseph. The extent of his influence can be gathered from his pupils. A sworn liege of the Church, who identified his personal interests with those of Rome, he gave to the ideas of the future Emperor, fatigued by his pleasures, and like wax in the hands of a Churchman, a Centralist bent in politics which was destined to bring the path of Francis-Joseph across some almost unsurmountable obstacles to the government of his Empire. It cannot be said that Father von Rauscher assisted Count Henry Bombelles in his least reputable duties, but at least it is true that he shut his eyes, a method which is not new with ecclesiastics.

It must be added—and it helps us to understand better how Father von Rauscher desired to form the mind of a pupil who, after becoming Emperor, should never rebel against the authority of the priests—that it was Francis-Joseph's old tutor of philosophy who induced him in 1855 to make a Concordat with the Vatican. This agreement was for more than fifteen years a heavy burden upon Austria's home and foreign policy. Even to-day, so many years after its denunciation, its reactionary impress lies on the Austro-Hungarian Civil Code, as in the articles dealing with marriage and divorce, with the jurisdiction over priests, etc. It may be mentioned, particularly, that the "civil" law in Austria forbids marriage between a Jew and a Catholic, and that the same law—civil again—prevents divorced Catholics from remarrying.

Such, then, were the two men, Bombelles and Rauscher, whose regrettable influence moulded the young mind of Francis-Joseph.

Simultaneously with his pursuit of moral philosophy and of pleasure the boy Archduke followed his military studies. He served in turn in an artillery battery, in a cavalry squadron, and in an infantry battalion. He was interested in all, but most passionately in the cavalry work. It was not the strategical part of it, however, but the horsemanship, which attracted him. The joy of the moment, as always, appealed to him, and he became a fearless rider. He performed some wonderful feats in horse-breaking, which gave him a reputation among cavalry officers that has lasted to this day.

One fact will prove better than any number of anecdotes the importance which Francis-Joseph attached to proving himself a fine horseman. In 1851, three years after his accession to the throne, and when he was twenty-one years of age, the Emperor was visited in his capital by His Majesty Nicholas I., Tsar of All the Russias. While they were out driving through Vienna, a Cossack's horse took fright, bolted, and threw its rider. The Emperor in an instant, at the risk of breaking his neck, leapt from the carriage, seized the horse by the mane, sprang on its back, conquered it, and brought it back, sweating and quivering, to the side of the Imperial carriage.

From his earliest days, when we have seen the reason for his liking for the Army, Francis-Joseph has been a soldier heart and soul. A Prussian diplomatist, Steinberg, commissioned by his King to write a report on the Viennese Court, could say with truth concerning the Emperor: "He has an esteem and love which is passionate for all things military. He takes interest in nothing but soldiers and the Army."

The correctness of this report is borne out by the following: In 1853 the Emperor was attacked and wounded by a madman. His first words were: "It is nothing. I am only sharing the lot of my brave soldiers."

Francis-Joseph's great courage cannot be denied. He has given glorious proof of it many times on the battle-field. He received his baptism of fire at the Battle of Santa Lucia on May 6th, 1848, a little before his accession to the throne. At the end of April he had joined the Army of Italy to serve on the staff of a famous General, old Marshal Radetzky. The latter, to tell the truth, was none too well pleased at the arrival of the young Prince, whose presence at the front threw a great responsibility upon him. Still, the Archduke was there, and the best must be made of a bad job. The veteran tried at last to make him understand that the best place for taking in the whole fight was somewhere out of firing-range, and that it was in no way necessary for him to risk his life in order to realize the meaning of a battle. Radetzky might as well have been talking to a deaf man. He went on to speak about his own responsibility, and begged the Prince not to expose himself. The only answer he could extract from Francis-Joseph was this simple one:

"Now that I am here, honour forbids my leaving the place without fighting."

So he fought, and fought, too, with such spirit, ardour, and gaiety that Marshal Radetzky, though animated by no friendly feelings towards him, could not refrain from mentioning him in his "Memoirs."

"Of all my comrades," he wrote, "there was no one who shrank from danger; but among them all the young Prince Francis-Joseph distinguished himself most by his enthusiasm. He seemed positively to

mock at death. When a cannon-ball fell quite near him, he was no more troubled by it than a child is frightened at a blow from a rubber ball. Light-hearted as only reckless youth can be, he urged on his horse, galloping from side to side wherever danger threatened most, without dreaming for a moment that the head which he exposed so gaily would wear a few weeks later the Imperial crown."

On his return from the Italian campaign, the young Archduke revealed an unexpected effect on himself of the cannon's roar, for he expressed a wish to take music-lessons, after having always up to now shown unmistakable repugnance against the study of this "polite accomplishment"! Of course the Archduchess Sophia granted his wish, and Francis-Joseph set himself—without the slightest success—to practise scales and to spell the first little childish pieces of the period. It was in the course of one of these music-lessons at Schönbrunn, on October 6th, 1848, that the Prince heard the news of the events at Vienna which led to the abdication of his uncle, and made him, hardly more than a boy, Emperor of Austria-Hungary at a time of particular stress. He left Schönbrunn for Olmütz the next day, making the journey on horseback beside his parents' carriage.

At Olmütz events developed fast, and on the day that the crown was placed on his young head Francis-Joseph was so well aware of the seriousness of the situation that, when his mother hastened first of all to pay to him the respect due to Sovereigns, he exclaimed, forgetting the severe and useless lessons which had made a torture of his childhood:

"Good-bye to my poor youth!"

As he spoke tears—only too well justified by the future—filled the eyes of this boy of eighteen.

CHAPTER III

A DREAM THAT CAME TRUE

On a fine spring morning, March 13th, 1848, a body of Viennese students formed themselves in file in the centre of the old town, where the University then was. Their looks betrayed anything but lightness of heart. They marched gravely and calmly through the midst of the crowd, which cheered them as they went. In front of the Diet House they halted. One of them, a youth of delicate features and a pale complexion, wearing a black beard, was hoisted on to the shoulders of four of his companions, and began to harangue the crowd. No extravagances fell from the young student's lips. His talk was of freedom—freedom of the jury, freedom of the Press, freedom of conscience. His noble words echoed among the crowd to an accompaniment of loud applause. The speaker was a Hungarian medical man, house-surgeon to one of the Vienna hospitals, and he was destined one day to be famous as Dr. Fischhof. Within the building outside which the student stood sat the members of the Estates of Lower Austria. Under the presidency of Count Montecuccoli they were drawing up an address to the Emperor Ferdinand, which was to make a firm demand for the carrying out of various reforms. The crowd outside grew constantly more agitated, and a deep murmur ran through its mass.

Soon, like spray upon its surging billows, scattered cries came tossing up: "Down with Metternich!" "Down with the Emperor Ferdinand!" "Long live Francis-Joseph!" For the first time, the name of Francis-Joseph stirred the hearts of the people. The mob, which heaped insults on two men, had just found a third man to treat with honour. The Revolution was at hand.

Suddenly it became a fact. Dr. Fischhof had finished speaking. It was the turn of another Hungarian student, Dr. Goldmark, to act. He suggested breaking into the Diet House, and the crowd followed him. Making Fischhof their spokesman, the people required the members of the Estates to come with the Revolutionists to the Hofburg to demand the immediate execution of the desired reforms. Count Montecuccoli agreed to nominate a committee from the Estates to go on a deputation with twelve representatives of the people. While the crowd was engaged in selecting its representatives, a young man arrived with a copy of the speech which Louis Kossuth had delivered in the Hungarian Diet eight days previously. He read it out to the crowd, which listened in silence until he came to these words: "For the common good of us all, it is necessary for us to obtain a Constitution." He got no further that morning. The crowd had now an object in view, and the formidable cry ran through it: "The Constitution! The Constitution!"

At this moment a message was delivered from a window in the Diet House. All that the members would agree to demand of the Emperor was the yearly publication of the receipts and expenditure of the Empire. The crowd, which only half an hour before had been perfectly calm, was now mad with rage. It forced the representatives of the Estates to join in the

march on the Hofburg. Here the gates of the outer court were guarded by sentries, who allowed the representatives to go through, but presented fixed bayonets to the people. It was decided to proceed to Metternich's palace and make a demonstration there. Francis-Joseph's family, passing by in a carriage, had a warm reception. Meanwhile, the evil geniuses of the Emperor Ferdinand—Metternich and, worse still, the Archduke Albert—persuaded the Sovereign to give the formal order calling out the troops. Vienna now presented the appearance of a besieged city. Patrols marched through the streets, forcing their way with difficulty through the packed ranks of the mob, while the shop-fronts were all hastily shuttered.

These military precautions produced a very different result from that expected by the Archduke Albert. The Viennese knew of this method of intimidation, but they only knew of it by hearsay. Such steps had never actually been taken against the inhabitants of the Austrian capital. A frenzy of excitement broke out. The word "barricade" sped from mouth to mouth. After a body of Italian Grenadiers had fired blank cartridge at the demonstrators to drive them away and to open the way to the Diet House, which they were ordered to clear, the mob in its rage seized upon everything which came to hand to obstruct the roadway and oppose the troops. The whole civil population was rising against the military element under the command of the Archduke Albert. The Commandant of the garrison, old General Matauschek, at this point made his appearance, mounted on horseback. He urged the mob to disperse, but in such unhappily chosen language that a gigantic man, emerging from the crowd, stepped up to the old General, and struck him so violent a blow with a staff

that he fell dead on the spot. His corpse was carried away. It was now the turn of the Archduke Albert, head of the Army of Lower Austria, to come upon the scene, followed by two Generals. He also harangued the mob, momentarily appeased by Matauschek's death. He might have got a hearing had he not let drop this unfortunate phrase at the very instant when a few voices had begun to appl ud him timidly: "You had better be quiet and go home." A fresh explosion of popular fury took place. Stones, blocks of wood, and projectiles of every description were hurled at the Archduke, who fled precipitately, with the two Generals still in attendance.

Blood calls for blood, and the corpse of old Matauschek, the Revolution's first victim, must have company. A regiment of Pioneers came out from the inner courtyard of the Hofburg under command of a Colonel, and drove back the demonstrators at the point of the bayonet. The rebels fled, unchecked by the vain eloquence of the advocates of resistance. But the irremediable was bound to happen. The Archduke Albert, whose pride had been outraged, had given orders to the troops to show no mercy. Agreeing on this point with Metternich, he wished an example to be made. The Colonel, obsequious to his chief, was ready to provide whatever was asked of him, regardless of the terrified attitude of the mob. The troops poured a volley into the back of the fugitives, and the road was stained with the blood of many of the demonstrators. Four men and one poor old woman were stretched lifeless amid a number of wounded. The Archduke Albert had had his revenge, but the agitation was entering upon a violent and momentous phase. The townspeople of Vienna had cast curious eyes upon the demonstrators as they

passed, and had exhibited no great anxiety to protest against the rule of absolutism, which, as a matter of fact, was no great burden upon them. But now these same townspeople, ordinarily so peaceful, were aroused. They came out into the streets, armed themselves by plundering the gunsmiths' shops, and joined the mass of students and working men. It was a real Revolution, and no longer a riot.

The demonstrators ceased to give way to the troops. Furious fights took place in the streets of Vienna, around the Hof quarter, where the Arsenal was; in the Hohemarkt, where stood the Law Courts; and even in the neighbourhood of the Hofburg, or Imperial Palace. A rather curious occurrence took place at the last-named place. A Sub-Lieutenant of artillery was in charge of the main door with his men and two guns. At 9 p.m., while the demonstration was proceeding violently, the Archduke Maximilian of Este came out of the Palace, and gave the order to "fire into the mob, and give the scum a taste of the cannon." The action of the Austrian Archdukes was as consistently disastrous as that of the Russian Granddukes. The Sub-Lieutenant remarked that the demonstration did not seem so serious as to call for desperate measures. The Archduke repeated his order in a furious tone. The Sub-Lieutenant replied that only the Emperor's order could force him to take such a step. The Archduke then personally commanded the artillerymen to fire their guns, whereon the Sub-Lieutenant took his stand at one of the cannon's mouths, and declared that if his men obeyed the Archduke the first victim of their obedience would be their own officer. The men did not stir, and Maximilian of Este returned to his rooms in the Hofburg foaming with rage. The Sub-Lieutenant expected the worst consequences of his act, but eight days later,

on March 21st, 1848, the *Official Gazette* had the following announcement:

"The brave man who on the evening of March 13th prevented a catastrophe by twice refusing to obey the order which had been given him to fire on the crowd, and who placed himself at one of the cannon's mouths, declaring that he would be the first victim if his men fired, is Sub-Lieutenant John Pollet."

The *Official Gazette* spoke the truth. A catastrophe had actually been averted, for Hans Küdlich, one of the foremost combatants of March 13th, writes in his "Memoirs": "If Pollet had executed the command of Maximilian of Este, the sequel would have been the assassination of the Archdukes and the burning of the Hofburg."

While, however, thanks to the conduct of Sub-Lieutenant Pollet, the disturbance was subsiding in the neighbourhood of the Hofburg, it was growing worse around Vienna. The working men of the suburbs, plunged in the acutest distress by the introduction of machinery in place of hand labour in the weaving industry, which employed more than two-thirds of them, naturally held the "Government" responsible for their troubles; so, when the noise of the rising in the centre of the city reached them, their exasperation drove them to take up at once the cry of "Revolution." But the gates of Vienna had been closed, and against the ramparts of the city's fortifications the mobs of working men broke in sullen waves.

The worst excesses began to be committed. On the night of the 13th the gas-lamps were torn down, the pipes were uprooted, and fire applied, and flaming trenches burnt around the city, into which were driven soldiers, Custom-House men, and everyone who fell to hand wearing a uniform. So threatening did the situation become, especially in the wretched suburbs

of Mariahilf and Gumpendorf, that the Court took fright, and met the working men's rising by granting a portion of the demands of the students and townspeople. On the night of March 13th-14th, scared by the fiery blaze from the suburbs, whose reflection could be seen even on the walls of the Imperial study, the melancholy Ferdinand, hesitating, timorous, and epileptic, almost weak-witted, found in his very terror strength to take a step which he imagined to be the outcome of his own free will. He dismissed the Chancellor, Metternich, and Baron Sedlintzky, head of the police; sent the Archduke Albert to the Army in Italy; and allowed the students and townspeople to enrol themselves as University and National Guards. Doubtless there was no question of giving the principal guarantees demanded by the Revolutionary party, such as liberty of the Press, abolition of the censorship, and establishment of the Constitution. But the first step had been taken in the direction of concessions, and, thanks to the proletariat, the middle class had won a triumph. Their gratitude (though it would be foolish to express any surprise at this, seeing the ferocious selfishness of all bourgeoisies) revealed itself in a manner which was at least unexpected. In alarm at the threatened intrusion of the Fourth Estate into their political affairs, the townspeople and students employed for the maintenance of law and order the weapons which the Emperor Ferdinand had given them under pressure of popular demand. On the following day they used their first cartridges against the proletariat which had procured them for them. Almost all the victims of March 13th belonged to the middle class. Those of the far more bloody days of the 14th and 15th were amongst the ranks of the working men; and, on the 14th at least, nearly all the working men Revolutionaries who were

killed or wounded fell before the fire of the University and National Guards.

Nevertheless, an Imperial Edict should have quickly opened the eyes of these "gentlemen of the Third Estate." It was to the effect that the Sovereign, "finding himself disappointed in his hopes for the restoration of order, nominated Prince Alfred of Windischgrätz Governor-General of Vienna, with full powers over all civil and military authorities."

The Emperor had sent away Metternich* and the Archduke Albert, but he had put Vienna at the mercy of the most terrible reactionary of the day, whose very name was a policy. The bourgeoisie, who had been allowed to play at soldiers, had not found out at once that what was being given them with one hand was being taken away with the other. The appointment of Windischgrätz, the frantic opponent of all progress and pitiless butcher of the small and weak, could not fail to remove the scales from their eyes. They had suffered the counter-Revolution to organize its forces, and now they must take up arms afresh against it, in spite of the fact that the Emperor had granted on the night of the 14th the abolition of the censorship and the freedom of the Press.

Therefore, on the morning of March 15th, when the University and National Guards were ordered to turn out against the working men, the students and townspeople were found to have taken from their arms the white badge of law and order, and replaced it by the red badge of the Revolution. Once again Ferdinand took fright, and at 6 p.m. he signed the grant of a Constitution, promising to summon to a central Parliament deputies from all countries within the Empire.

At nightfall a Hungarian deputation led by Kossuth reached Vienna, relying on the Revolution there

* Metternich had fled to England.—*Translator.*

to support their claims to a Constitution for Hungary. They found the town all decorated, illuminations in the windows, rockets streaking the sky, and in the streets improvised orchestras leading the dance on the pavements still wet with the blood shed that very day.

March 16th dawned on a totally changed Empire. Absolute rule had given place to constitutional government. Three days' revolution had sufficed to bring about this complete reversal of conditions, destined to have the most serious consequences. Up to now absolutism had only maintained its sway through the strength of will of two Sovereigns of superior calibre—Joseph II., brother of Marie-Antoinette, and Francis I., father-in-law of Napoleon. It was already known that the case was not the same with the epileptic Ferdinand, whose illness left him for days at a time without will, memory, or consciousness. His condition had even become so bad that in 1836 it was found necessary to attach to him a Council of Regency. But what a Council! Its members were that mere cipher Francis-Charles, father of Francis-Joseph, and the Archduke Louis, another brother of the Emperor, with Metternich, the Chancellor, and Kolovrat, the Minister. These men were old and worn out, incapable of understanding the necessities of their day, and solely occupied in fighting one another. Under the direction of the Archdukes, a whole worthless crop of official weeds choked up the flower-beds of the Government.

The situation in Austria-Hungary in 1848 was the same as the situation nowadays in Russia under the rule of the Grand Dukes, supported by an army of corrupt and lying officials. The Empire of Austria maintained at that time no less than 25,000 first-class officials, assisted by 95,000 officials on promotion. All these were drawn from the aristocracy, and the

State spent on them annually over £640,000 in retiring pensions alone. The inferior posts, reserved for the middle class, were so badly paid that those who held them, to save themselves from starvation, had to rely almost entirely on bribes, which were practically a State institution. The case was the same with the Judges, who invariably pronounced in favour of those who paid them best. Another grievance against the system established by the Council of Regency arose out of the school organization of the country. To quote merely the figures, whose evidence is the most eloquent of all, while Prince Metternich drew a regular salary of nearly £22,000, the budget of the Department of Public Instruction amounted to £3,000 for a country where the children numbered over 5,000,000. The schoolmasters, although mere State functionaries, had no claim to a pension, and had to be content with salaries of little over £10 a year in the towns and £6 in the country. As for the Universities, they were entirely under the control of the Church. The Church was all-powerful, especially the Jesuits, those terrible black monks whom Maria-Theresa had expelled, and the Bavarian Caroline-Augusta, wife of Francis I., had recalled. At the epoch of the Viennese Revolution the main support of the Jesuits was another Bavarian, Francis-Joseph's mother, Sophia, who, trained by them, had veiled her narrowly reactionary spirit under an appearance of Liberalism.

The defensive armour of the absolutist system was completed by the censorship and the police. The censorship attacked everything, however remotely suggesting the idea of freedom. Nearly all foreign literature was mercilessly condemned, and the national literary output might almost be said to be confined to Mass-books and almanacs. There lies before the writer of these lines an Austrian Government notice,

dated 1840, wherein it is stated that Thiers's *History of the French Revolution*, and the works of Victor Hugo, having been introduced into Austria, "the police call on the public instantly to denounce anyone having in his possession these works, whose circulation is forbidden throughout the Empire." This same police, on the other hand, took no trouble to punish evil-doers, the budget of £135,000 being devoted entirely to the maintenance of the political spy system.

An examination of contemporary reports and memoirs does not produce the impression that the state of affairs was any more enviable in the realm of finance. Everything was in the hands of the big international financiers, who were absolute masters of the situation, and fully justified the saying that "financiers support the State as the rope supports the man who is hanged." Baron Rothschild had the monopoly of the early railways; the Greek banker Sina had the monopoly of the sale of corn, and got up famines; and as the bigwigs got what they wanted in return for their complaisance, the Government shut its eyes and allowed things to go on. And while the Hebrew plutocracy organized the plunder of the public finances, the poor Jews were harried, insulted, and attacked. Napoleon's dictum nearly half a century earlier was well justified now: "Austria is no longer a monarchy, but an oligarchy, and an oligarchy of the worst kind."

The Revolution of March, 1848, the outcome of this condition of affairs, was, nevertheless, desired and prepared for by a section at Court, headed by members of the Imperial family and inspired by the *dea ex machina* of the party, the Archduchess Sophia. What did this party want? Hostile to the power of Metternich, and working, though unwittingly (for such an

idea was kept by the Archduchess Sophia to herself), to put the Imperial and Royal crown upon the young head of Francis-Joseph, the Court Opposition was eager to proclaim that if the Emperor Ferdinand was incapable of exercising his functions he must abdicate.

It is no secret that during March, 1848, the Hofburg witnessed violent scenes, in which the contending parties were Metternich and his allies, including the Archdukes Albert, Louis, and Maximilian of Este on the one hand, and on the other the so-called "Liberals," guided by the Archduchess Sophia; and the latter, thanks to the Emperor's terror on the night of the fires in the suburbs, succeeded in forcing the Chancellor's resignation.

With Metternich out of the way, the "Liberals" were, nevertheless, far from indulging in liberal actions. The Archduchess Sophia's friends belonging to the Jesuit Order had no such intentions. It was her doing that Prince Windischgrätz was invested with dictatorial powers. Moreover, her affection for the people being purely a matter of profession, she supported rather than opposed the proclamation of a state of siege.

Still, it was advisable that the Liberal fiction should be kept up by the Government. Accordingly, on March 17th a responsible Ministry was formed. Unfortunately, the president in this Cabinet, which had been nominated "to satisfy the wishes of the people," was none other than Count Kolovrat, Metternich's assistant in the famous Council of Regency. Count Taaffe, Baron Kribeck, and Count Ficquelmont, all three of them notorious reactionaries, were also members of the Cabinet. The first measure proposed was the eagerly expected Press Law. It was brought forward on April 1st, a date which furnished the only excuse for a law whose effect was to re-establish the

censorship abolished on March 14th. A good joke, perhaps, but not to the taste of the Viennese. Popular rejoicings began to abate, and the students even went so far in the course of a riotous demonstration as to burn the Press Law in front of the Ministers' residences. The working men were again aroused. Up to now they had received all the kicks and no halfpence. Their state was as miserable as before. A contemporary wages list reveals some interesting figures. At the chemical works the daily rate of pay was, for men, 7d.; for women, 2½d. to 3¼d.; for children under fourteen years of age, 1¼d. In the match factories the men received 4d., the women 2½d., the children 1½d.; in the sugar refineries, where the hours were fifteen to sixteen daily, the men 6d., the women 2½d., the children 1¼d. Evidently, therefore, there was no gold-mine for the people of Vienna, and it must be added that the agricultural labourers flocked to the capital, where more than two-thirds of the inhabitants were out of work. The peasantry was also ready for revolt, their earnings being as small as their burdens were heavy. A taxation return of Lower Austria shows that a farmer who had made during the summer of 1847 a profit of 83 florins 28 kreutzers found himself taxed during the same period to the extent of 57 florins 51 kreutzers—69 per cent. of his gains. So, while Vienna was once more seething, a revolutionary movement showed itself in the country, especially in Galicia. On April 25th there were even barricades erected in Cracow, and during the day fifty-seven were killed and over one hundred wounded.

Again the Government took fright, and the Emperor was authorized by a Family Council to bestow on the Empire a genuine Constitution. The decree was published in the *Official Gazette*. The Constitution was based on the two-chamber principle, with a

Senate composed of Princes of the Imperial family, of life-senators nominated at the Emperor's discretion, and of 150 elected for a term by the great landed proprietors, and a Chamber of Deputies of 383 members. A decree of May 11th settled the mode of election. There was one deputy to every 50,000 inhabitants, and the vote was refused to all working men earning daily or weekly wages, all servants, and all people receiving public assistance—in fact, to the greater part of the town population, and to a considerable proportion of the agricultural labourers. Such a Constitution was powerless, therefore, to check the popular agitation. Furthermore—and here we see the handiwork of the "Liberal" party, guided by the Archduchess Sophia, who was thus paving the way for a movement which to-day threatens the very life of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy—the Constitution applied only to Austrian territory, and left Hungary and the Italian provinces under the absolute rule of the Emperor-King.

At Vienna the demonstrations continued, although Kolovrat's Ministry had been replaced by another, quite as reactionary as the first, however. The principal demands were for the complete retirement into private life of the Archduke Louis; the departure from Court of the Emperor's mother, whose unpopularity arose from her open adherence to the policy which the Archduchess Sophia secretly recommended; the disgrace of the Archdukes of the House of Este, all avowed reactionaries; and, lastly, the dismissal of Count Bombelles, tutor to the Prince, in whom rested the confidence and hopes of the Empire, the young Francis-Joseph. A Central Committee was chosen by the people, which was to exercise control over the acts of the Government. The Committee was suppressed, whereon the turmoil was such that the troops were

called out. But now the soldiers fraternized with the people, and the Government authorized the Central Committee. Everything appeared on the way to settlement, when on the night of May 17th-18th the news was heard that the Emperor had left Vienna with the Imperial family, and was taking refuge at Innsbrück. The word "abduction" was at once mentioned, and rightly. This coup, like most of the proceedings at this troublous period, betrayed the hand of the Archduchess Sophia, steadily preparing *her* counter-Revolution.

At Vienna demonstrations had been given up for barricades, and barricades for street skirmishes, for which anything served as a pretext. If the Government took a step which annoyed the bourgeoisie or the populace of Vienna, up went the barricades, shots were fired, and the Government reversed its action. The Emperor's return was much desired by Vienna. At last it was promised for June 26th, the opening day of the Chambers. At Innsbrück, meanwhile, the Archduchess Sophia and the Jesuits worked steadily at the organization of the counter-Revolution. It was necessary to put Ferdinand in such a position that the only way out of it would be abdication. With this object in view, the heterogeneous races of the Empire were stirred up against one another. Before the Constitution came into being, the question of nationalities hardly arose, all having one constant and absorbing object in view in their struggle against absolutism. The Constitution changed all this, favouring Vienna and the German element at the expense of the Slavs. The seed sown by the agents of the Archduchess Sophia in the minds of the victims of this arrangement sprouted so well that on June 1st a Slav Congress met at Prague, setting up the standard of Czech Radicalism against the Radicals of Vienna, and open-

ing between the two races a breach which nothing henceforward would close, and which at the present time jeopardizes more dangerously than ever the continued existence of this mosaic-work Empire, whose component parts disunite, separate, and gape apart more every day. The Government expressed the wish that the Emperor should establish his Government permanently at Prague. There was even talk of a Czech provisional Government, in opposition to the German Government at Vienna. The Viennese protested at Court, but in vain, for the Court made no move. There was some discussion about sending to Prague, as representative of the Emperor, the Archduke Francis-Joseph. This mission did not take place, and affairs took a bad turn at Prague, where the Czechs were exasperated by the provoking attitude of the troops sent to their town, under the command of the already mentioned Prince Windischgrätz.

Barricades were erected in Prague also, whereon the Prince-Governor without hesitation proclaimed a state of siege, and bombarded the town. An unconditional surrender followed, and great were the rejoicings at Vienna when it was given out that the bombardment had been intended to punish the Czech capital for its anti-German tendencies. The Archduchess's policy was succeeding. The racial crisis was entering on its acute phase, and the hapless Emperor Ferdinand's position was growing untenable.

June 26th arrived without seeing the Emperor's return to Vienna. His place was taken by the Archduke John, a frank reactionary. Once again the Archduchess Sophia's policy turned out very well for her. Vienna complained of the Emperor's absence, and still more of his substitute. "If only the Archduke Francis-Charles had been sent to us, or his son

Francis-Joseph!" was the cry. It must not be forgotten that the Archduchess's husband and son always represented in popular eyes the Liberal sympathies of the Habsburg family.

In spite of all protests, and nearly a month after the original date, the Archduke John solemnly declared the Reichsrath open on July 22nd. At the second sitting a Radical deputy called for the Emperor's return. Four days later the Minister of the Interior replied that the Emperor declined to come to Vienna, but that he promised to send his brother, the popular Francis-Charles, as soon as the Assembly should have passed the laws of the Constitution. Now Francis-Charles was welcome, but the Emperor's presence was also required. A sharp and heated debate took place. At last, when wrath against the Sovereign had mounted higher and higher, a deputy declared, amidst applause: "Hitherto the people have shown boundless patience, but there are limits to everything. Had any other nation received such an insult, the Sovereign guilty of inflicting it would have been removed long ago. Take the examples of history—Charles I., James II., Louis XVI.!" An address to the Emperor was drawn up and passed, demanding his return to Vienna. On August 12 he came back, and was received with icy coldness by the city. His suite were even greeted with hostile shouts in the streets. Hated already by the Czechs, Ferdinand now was confronted by the armed hostility of the Viennese.

A fresh revolutionary movement began, and in spite of the existence now of a fierce racial question, the news of a rebellion in Hungary was well received in Vienna as a blow to the Emperor. When, therefore, on October 6th, the troops were about to leave the capital on a campaign against the Hungarians,

their departure was blocked by the people. At the North Vienna Station, where the troops were to have entrained, the rails had been torn up and the telegraph-lines cut by the rioters. Orders were given to the men to leave Vienna by the Tabor Gate, and take the train at a small station on the other side of the Danube. When they reached the bank of the Danube, they were obliged to halt, for the rebels had blown up the bridge. Quite a battle now took place between the troops and the people. Fighting was general on the ramparts, in the town, in the very cathedral, where ninety-five dead bodies were found at the foot of the high-altar. The General in command of the troops was killed. The War Minister, Count Latour, who was discovered hiding in a cupboard at his official residence, was dragged out of doors and hanged on a lamp-post. Finally, the Arsenal surrendered, and the rebels won the day.

During the riots the Emperor left Vienna a second time, and went to Olmütz, from where he hurled his troops against his capital, under the command of the butcher Windischgrätz. The siege began on October 22nd, and on the 28th, in spite of the fact that the Hungarians made common cause with the Viennese against the Emperor Ferdinand, and marched on the capital to meet the Imperial troops besieging it, Vienna was obliged to surrender unconditionally.

The Emperor showed no generosity. Between the months of November, 1848, and April, 1849, 1,375 persons were thrown into prison and 532 shot. Vienna, nevertheless, remained in a state of martial law, and paid for defeat by losing the right of housing the Reichsrath, which was removed to Kremsier, in Moravia.

Ferdinand's position, in spite of the troops' decisive victory, had become impossible. He realized

that his unpopularity (so well worked up by his sister-in-law, without whom nothing would have been heard of it) left no road open before him save that of abdication. Accordingly he abdicated.

The Revolution had blossomed at the springtime of the year. Its child, young Francis-Joseph, was invested with power at the springtime of his life. The Archduchess Sophia's dream had been realized.

CHAPTER IV

AN UNREALIZED AMBITION

THE governing idea of Francis-Joseph's reign was the organization of a central power sufficiently strong to rule over the different races owning allegiance to the sceptre of the Habsburgs, were they Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Croats, or Tyrolese—to mention only the chief among the infinitely various peoples constituting the unfriendly brotherhood of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. To-day there are more rents and leaks than ever before in the ship of State, which, at the age of eighteen, Francis-Joseph, under the guidance of the Archduchess Sophia, freighted with his ambition, and that ship's journey is ending on the rocks. The old Emperor, on his seventy-fifth birthday, could not be present at a review held in his honour at Buda-Pesth, for fear of a bad reception. Yet these same Hungarians had looked upon him as the perfect ruler a few months before he ascended the throne. Louis Kossuth, indeed, on March 3rd, 1848, while directing the Hungarian Revolution against the Government of the Emperor Ferdinand, uttered these words:

"The heir to the House of Habsburg, the Archduke Francis-Joseph, on whom rest the nation's hopes, will one day have a splendid throne, based upon the liberty of the people. But it will be impossible for him to keep this throne if the existing

system continues. Gentlemen, I am persuaded that our dynasty's future fate depends upon a cordial alliance between people and Sovereign, and for this alliance the cementing power of a Constitution is necessary. In calling for a Constitution I am taking a point of view which is entirely that of our dynasty. God be praised that this point of view is in accord with the interests of our beloved country!"

The February Revolution in Paris had just deprived Louis-Philippe of his crown, and the Hungarians heard with an almost childish enthusiasm the echoes which reached them of this rising. The explanation of this enthusiasm is to be found, in the first place, in the romantic and heroic past of the Hungarian nation, but still more in the almost hostile attitude which, since the time of Joseph II., the Habsburgs had taken up against Hungary. The Habsburgs reigned over Austrian territory "by grace of God" and as absolute masters. The Hungarian Constitution, on the other hand, was a kind of restraint upon their absolutism, for which they took their revenge in an affectation of disdain. The Austrian Emperors were wont to entrust the duties involved by the Hungarian crown of St. Stephen to the hands of a brother or a near relative, to whom they gave viceregal powers and the title of Prince Palatine. Joseph II., brother of Marie-Antoinette and son of Maria-Theresa, was the first who aspired to reduce the Hungarian Constitution to a nullity, as far as facts were concerned, and to set up at Vienna a central monarchical power, including all the various lands over which he reigned. It was this ambition, relentlessly pursued by his successors, which provoked the events of 1848 in Hungary, as well as the separatist movement in the Italian provinces. The Hungarians replied to the claims of the Emperor of

Austria by demanding the extension of their Constitution and the grant of constitutional government to the different races living with them under the shelter of the same Empire.

This was all that the Hungarians were asking for, and when Louis Kossuth, as Deputy in the Diet, uttered the words quoted above, he had no suspicion that his simple speech was destined to set him, fifteen months later, at the head of the Republic of Hungary. His speech, however, was to cause a considerable stir in the internal politics of the Empire, for it incited the Austrians to claim a Constitution on their own behalf, which they did, as we have seen, on March 13th and 14th.

But the Hungarians, inflamed by the burning words of their Louis Kossuths, Alexander Petöfis, and Maurus Jokais, determined to demand from the Emperor the following concessions: A general amnesty for political offenders, the abolition of the censorship, liberty of the Press, a national guard, national army, and national bank. Under the leadership of Stephen, Archduke Palatine, a deputation proceeded to Vienna to present the requests of the Hungarian nation to the Emperor Ferdinand. Influenced by the revolutionary movement in Vienna, the Emperor accorded on the eve of their arrival a Constitution to Austria. The Hungarians were therefore full of hope when they reached the Hofburg. They left it radiant with joy, for the Emperor had just promised to give them satisfaction. Moreover, they put reliance in the "Liberal" influence exercised by Francis-Joseph's mother. How they deceived themselves, or, rather, how the Archduchess Sophia was able to deceive them! On March 23rd a scheme for a Ministry was submitted to the Emperor, in which the portfolio of finance was assigned to

Louis Kossuth. It was not until the 29th that Ferdinand's decision was made known. He accepted the Ministry, but docked of two portfolios, those of war and of finance—the national army and the national bank—which were both to remain in the Austrian Cabinet. Hungarian hopes were entirely shattered, for this refusal cut off the head of their separatist scheme.

Ferdinand had promised to satisfy them. What had happened? Once again the Archduchess Sophia had appeared on the scene. She had favoured the Viennese revolutionary movement with the object mainly of procuring the disgrace of Metternich, the chief obstacle to her desire to make Ferdinand addicate—not, as was popularly believed, because of her Liberal views. The truth was that Francis-Joseph's mother was a convinced Centralist, and intended her son to mount the throne of a great homogeneous Empire, not one made up of fragments. It was for this reason that she had intervened to prevent her brother-in-law from conceding the Hungarian demands.

The Archduke Stephen, however, was to give battle to the Archduchess Sophia. He made a solemn promise to the National Assembly and to Count Bathyany, future President of the Hungarian Ministerial Council, to make further representations to the Emperor. He kept his word, and returned victorious. On April 11th the first Hungarian Cabinet made its state entry into Buda-Pesth.

Fully aware of the danger threatened by this administrative dualism to her maternal ambitions, the Archduchess Sophia refused to give up all as lost. The Hungarian Constitution existed, but its power must be made illusory. She therefore incited the Austrian Government to make the Hungarian

War and Finance Ministers subordinate to the central power of the Empire. Soon the whole Austro-Hungarian Army was again receiving its orders from Vienna, while the Austrian Finance Minister was burdening the Hungarians with a portion of the public debt without consulting the Cabinet of Buda-Pesth. This was not enough for the Archduchess. She had already conceived the Machiavellian idea of getting rid of the Austrian revolutionary movement by stirring up the racial passions of the various peoples of the Empire, and she made use of the plan again with regard to Hungary. At the very moment when the Hungarian Diet had voted the necessary credits for the Italian War—not because Hungary was interested in this war, but out of gratitude to the Emperor—the Archduchess's party was all but openly inciting the Croats and Serbs against the Hungarians. Jellachich, Governor of Croatia, who was to play so big and so dishonourable a part in the Hungarian Revolution, refused, at the instigation of the Court of Vienna, to obey the Cabinet of Buda-Pesth. He demanded in the name of the Croats the independence of his province and the formation of a separate Government. As Croatia was an integral part of the Kingdom of Hungary, this was a rebellion, and almost a case of high treason. The Hungarians demanded the dismissal of Jellachich. The Emperor replied by confirming Jellachich in his post.

At the same time Transylvania rose against the Buda-Pesth Government, which had no power to put down the movement by force of arms, seeing that, in spite of the Imperial promise, and thanks to the Archduchess's plot, the Hungarian Army, for all that there was a Hungarian War Minister, was under the control of the Austrian War Office—in fact, if not in

principle. Count Bathyany, therefore, asked Parliament to call on the country to raise a body of volunteers. Ten thousand men responded to the appeal. But Jellachich continued on his career, and now put himself entirely at the disposal of the Court of Vienna, being rewarded by nomination to the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial troops garrisoning Hungary and Croatia. Three hundred thousand florins were assigned to him for the upkeep of these troops, and the irony of the situation was carried so far that Buda-Pesth was informed that this item must come from the Hungarian treasury. In reply to this stroke, the Hungarian Diet voted 42,000,000 florins for the establishment of a National Army of 200,000 men. The Emperor refused to sanction the vote. The Archduchess Sophia even succeeded in having the door of the Imperial Cabinet shut upon a deputation which had come from Buda-Pesth to obtain the Emperor's assent to the formation of the Hungarian Army. The situation became serious. The aspect was that of revolution when Louis Kossuth began to circulate Hungarian bank-notes called "Kossuth notes." Yielding to the insistence of the Finance Minister, Count Bathyany resolved to publish a call to arms. It was high time. A few days later, on September 11th, Jellachich invaded Hungary at the head of the Imperial troops. The Archduke Palatine went to meet him, but with a flag of truce. Jellachich refused any discussion of terms. The Archduke Stephen realized that Jellachich was not there as a Croatian rebel against Hungary, but as the commander of the Imperial forces and with the Emperor's mandate. The Prince Palatine dared not venture on a conflict with the Imperial family of which he was a member. He resigned his office and left Hungary. The last tie between the House of

Habsburg and the country of Kossuth was severed. An Imperial rescript named Count Lamberg, an Austrian, Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian national forces. Buda-Pesth's answer was to throw Count Lamberg into the Danube. But Jellachich was marching on Buda-Pesth with 30,000 men. The Hungarian Government sent to meet him General Moga, at the head of a volunteer army. Jellachich was beaten near Stuhlweissenburg. He asked for a three days' armistice, which Moga was mistaken enough to grant him. During the three days Jellachich took flight, leaving behind only 5,000 men and twelve guns, which Moga captured. The Hungarian General's second mistake was to set free all his prisoners on a promise, which they never kept, to bear arms no more against Hungary.

Instigated by the Archduchess Sophia, Ferdinand appointed Jellachich Royal Commissioner in Hungary, instead of Count Lamberg. At this moment it was learnt that the Viennese had prevented the Imperial regiments from leaving the capital to fight against the Hungarians. The joy was delirious, and Louis Kossuth, that political poet, was the first to raise the hasty cry "To Vienna!" awakening a tremendous echo from the throats of all Hungarians. The Committee of Defence ordered General Moga to march upon revolutionary Vienna, besieged by the Imperial troops. The Hungarian General's forces, as we know, arrived too late. Vienna had surrendered to Prince Windischgrätz, who made his celebrated reply to the envoys sent to him, whom at the same time he quietly made prisoners: "One cannot treat with rebels." Jellachich was now with Windischgrätz, and the two together defeated Moga, the Hungarian General being so seriously wounded that he was totally incapacitated, and was obliged to

resign his command. His hope of assistance from the Viennese had proved as false as their hope that the siege would be relieved by his intervention. Kossuth appointed in Moga's place at the head of the Hungarian Army a former Austrian Lieutenant, Görgey, no bad tactician, but a politician rather than a soldier. He began by removing from the Army a certain number of volunteers who did not appear to him sufficiently trustworthy. This was a grave error, particularly at a moment when the Army's ranks were already depleted by desertions, in consequence of Prince Windischgrätz's proclamation treating the Hungarian volunteers as rebels, and styling all the officers in Kossuth's Army traitors to the Emperor.

Such was the situation of affairs when, on December 2nd, 1848, in the great banqueting hall of the Archbishop's palace at Olmütz, Francis-Joseph assumed the Imperial crown, without a single representative of Hungary being present. The proclamation of the new Emperor, whom Louis Kossuth had a few months before extolled as "the hope of the nation," spoke openly of "domestic traitors," and expressed the aspiration of "maintaining the unity of the Empire, and joining together in a single body all the peoples of the Monarchy." If this proclamation bore the signature of the Austrian President of Council, it did not bear that of his Hungarian colleague, whom the Emperor Ferdinand had recognized but a few weeks previously.

Hungary's answer was not long in coming. The National Assembly announced that it regarded Francis-Joseph as a usurper, and that it was impossible to recognize as King a Sovereign who had not taken the oath prescribed by the Hungarian Constitution. Francis-Joseph, having made up his mind, with his mother's help, to persist obstinately in his Central-

ist policy, replied with an insulting proclamation, in which he branded as traitors, guilty of the crime of *lèse-majesté*, not only the Committee of Defence, but also the Hungarian National Assembly. All hope of a peaceful understanding was at an end. The "Central Government" at once adopted the tactics so dear to the Archduchess Sophia, and acted on the motto *Divide ut imperes*. First the Serbs, then Transylvania, and again Croatia, were stirred up against Buda-Pesth. Blood began to flow, and atrocities were committed. In the little town of Szalatna, Transylvania, where 1,200 Hungarians had taken refuge, the duties of hospitality were so strangely understood that the men had their eyes knocked out, their noses and ears sliced off, and they were burnt alive; while the women and young girls, after being outraged and having their breasts cut off, were beaten to death. It is important to note that the Austrian garrison looked on quietly at this horrible scene.

Fights took place on a small scale throughout the unhappy land of Hungary, while the Army was mishandled by its chiefs, often jealous of one another, and occasionally traitorous. Nevertheless the Hungarians, in spite of Windischgrätz's entry into Buda-Pesth, determined to carry on the struggle all the same, and won a few victories. Francis-Joseph recognized the difficulty of the situation, and was ready to make concessions. He recalled Windischgrätz, with whom no terms were possible for the Hungarians, and appointed in his place General Welden, who had no connection with politics in the past. An understanding might have come about had not Kossuth, doubtless fearing onerous terms, and certainly urged on by his ambition, gratuitously made reconciliation impossible by causing the Hungarian

Republic to be proclaimed on April 14th, 1849, in the great Lutheran church at Debreczen, he himself being hailed as head of the Republic.

This time Francis-Joseph, who had attempted one revolt against the warlike advice of his mother, was unable to draw back, and success was destined to fall again to the Archduchess Sophia. Of course the Austrian troops at the disposal of the Empire were very few, for the greater part of them were occupied in Italy. But the foreign troops at hand, offering the young Sovereign help in suppressing liberty in his dominions, and in destroying Constitution nearly 1,000 years old. Nicholas of Russia, fearing a Republic on his borders, made an offer of 200,000 men, and Francis-Joseph was obliged to accept it.

The feeling which during the Hungarian Revolt now was truly worthy of admiration. Every able-bodied man in the country came forward to defend the threatened freedom of the land. Everyone was enrolled—even boys of fifteen, even women. At first Görgey, whom Kossuth had called to the Ministry of War, refused the help of the latter; but they made their way into the ranks by stratagem, and proved themselves so useful that Görgey was obliged to give way. One of these Amazons, who was named Marie Lebstock, gave proofs of such courage and such powers of initiative that she was granted the rank of Lieutenant.

Such enthusiasm, especially at the outset, is almost invincible, and Hungary's volunteer army triumphed over the regular forces of the Imperialists. On May 15th Görgey laid siege to Buda-Pesth, after defeating the Austrian General Hentzi, and on May 21st the Hungarian capital, but recently captured by Windischgrätz, fell into the hands of the national troops. On the following June 5th the Hungarian Assembly and Government were established there

once again. The rejoicings were beyond all measure, and the Republic became a religion of which Kossuth was the Messiah. So great was the joy, in fact, that the enemy were forgotten.

The Italian War was at an end. The Austrian Army, reinforced by the troops from Lombardy, crossed the Hungarian frontier on the west, while Paskevitch, at the head of 200,000 Russians, crossed it on the east. Buda-Pesth was still rejoicing when the cry of terror was heard: "The Russians are coming!"

Kossuth, with his absurd optimism, invited the Powers to protest against the invasion of the Hungarian Republic's territory. The Powers turned a deaf ear to his appeal. While Kossuth was busy with his oratory, the allies continued on their way. The Russians occupied Transylvania, while the Austrians hauled down the Hungarian tricolour from every fortress on the east. The Emperor Francis-Joseph was present in person at the battles of his army against his former subjects. Before long the National Assembly and the Government were compelled to leave Buda-Pesth a second time, and take refuge at Szegedin, in Southern Hungary. Görgey, bought over by the Russians, who had promised him a good round sum, was planning the capitulation of the National Army. He demanded, before he would do anything, that Kossuth should retire from the dictatorship, and resign it to him. To save "his country," Kossuth yielded to Görgey's conditions, and fled to Turkey. Before he left he buried with his own hands the Hungarian crown, the old crown of St. Stephen, in the neighbourhood of the frontier village of Orsova. When it was recovered later, the little cross on the top was found bent on one side. From this time onward the arms of Hungary

have borne a crown with a cross bent toward the left.

To return to Görgey, on August 11th he took up the dictatorship. Immediately he opened negotiations with the Russian General Ruidiger. At Vilagos Görgey surrendered to him eleven Generals, 1,426 officers, 30,889 men, 144 guns, 7,967 horses, and sixty standards, all of which passed through the hands of the Russians into those of the Austrian General Haynau. General Ruidiger merely asked for a safe-conduct for Görgey, who managed to leave the country without danger.

The repression of the rebellion was terrible. Those hanged included twenty-five Generals, the members of the Government and of the Committee of Defence, and thousands of other Hungarians. For several weeks Hungary was like a vast execution-ground. Francis-Joseph pardoned a few of the prisoners at random. He occasionally made a lucky selection, notably in the case of Count Julius Andrassy, who became in later years President of the Hungarian Ministerial Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and whom Francis-Joseph had to thank for the Triple Alliance.

The executions, however, were not sufficient. The Archduchess Sophia's idea of transforming Hungary into an Austrian province was carried out, and with the greater ease in that Francis-Joseph, always attentive to his mother's advice, had meanwhile suspended the Austrian Constitution. For several years Hungary was dealt with like a conquered country, undergoing terrible oppression, including the treatment of any Hungarian speaking his national tongue as a traitor.

A nation can be oppressed, but it can scarcely be destroyed. Francis-Joseph, who is aware of this fact to-day in Hungary, was to find it out more quickly in

Italy. From 1848 the separatist movement became marked in the Italian provinces attached to Austria, Lombardy, and Venetia, which rose at the first sign given by King Charles-Albert of Sardinia. Old General Radetzky was able to check the movement by forcing the King of Sardinia to sue for an armistice after the Austrian victory at Custozza. On March 12th, 1849, Charles-Albert took up arms again. He was beaten, again by Radetzky, twice in four days—first at Mortara, then at Novara. For ten years the Italian inhabitants of the Austrian provinces bore the heavy yoke of the Government of Vienna, which proved itself a tyranny toward subjects already only too disposed to break away, and drove them still farther in that direction. The more it was attempted to Germanize the Italian provinces, the stronger and livelier the national sentiment grew. It is true that Napoleon III., for political reasons, encouraged this feeling. Even at the New Year's reception of 1859 Napoleon had, while greeting the Ambassadors, made a remark frankly hostile to the Government of Francis-Joseph. Finally, on April 29th in the same year, war broke out between Austria-Hungary and Italy, the latter being supported by the troops of the French Empire. Radetzky was no longer there, and it was all in vain that Francis-Joseph himself took command of the Austrian forces. He was beaten at Magenta and Solferino, and lost Lombardy. The echo of these events in Austria was tremendous. In order to secure domestic peace, the Emperor was compelled to promise his people a new Constitution, which was proclaimed on February 26th, 1861.

In 1864 the War of Schleswig-Holstein took place, in which Austria supported Prussia. Simultaneously a state of siege was proclaimed in Hungary, where the insurrection of Poland had inspired fresh

hopes of shaking off the yoke of the Habsburgs. Next racial spirit sprang up again in the remaining Italian provinces of the Empire. Finally, an estrangement showed itself in the relations between Prussia and Austria. In 1866, much against the wishes of Francis-Joseph (whose reply at Villafranca in 1859 to Napoleon's suggestions about the Rhine had been, "Your Majesty, I am a German Prince!"), war was declared between Austria and Prussia. It was Bismarck's wishes, not Francis-Joseph's, which carried the day. Bismarck, indeed, was desirous of putting an end, once and for all, to the ambition which Francis-Joseph betrayed of adding to the Austrian Imperial crown the crown also of that German Empire of which the Iron Chancellor dreamed. In spite of the Austrian successes* on land at Custozza, by sea at Lissa, both due to the strategic knowledge of the Archduke Albert, the defeat of Königgrätz forced Austria to submit to peace. Aspirations of uniting the crown of the German Empire to those of the Empire of Austria and the Kingdom of Hungary on the Habsburg escutcheon had to be abandoned for ever. Italy, also, profiting by the critical situation, and once more supported by Napoleon III., obtained Venetia. At one stroke the German Empire in the North and United Italy in the South were established at the expense of Austria-Hungary.

The lesson was not wasted. Francis-Joseph realized, when freed from the ill-omened influence of his mother, that Centralist principles cannot be applied to an empire made up of scraps and fragments. He had, indeed, seen the Hungarians ready to unite their fortunes with those of Prussia, and this was one

* *I.e.*, over the Italians, who were Prussia's allies in this war.—*Translator.*

of the reasons which most certainly urged him to hasten negotiations for peace.

Two consequences of the recent occurrences were clear to him: firstly, the need of reforming the Administration, and of making the Army fit for other purposes than the parade-ground; and, secondly, the necessity of conciliating Hungary. With the latter object in view, he decided to have himself crowned King of Hungary. The ceremony took place on June 8th, 1867, in the cathedral of Buda. When the Primate of Hungary had received the oath which Hungary had waited twenty years to hear, a long cry of joy rang through the vaulted roof: "Eljen a Kiraly! Eljen a Kiraly!" (Long live the King!).

Finally, on December 23rd of the same year, the "King of Hungary" signed a compromise regulating the rights and mutual relations of the two countries. The ambition of the young Francis-Joseph, which was still more the ambition of his mother, the Archduchess Sophia, after passing through so much storm and stress, came to a lamentable end.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST ACT OF A TRAGEDY

DRAWN up in rough array along the bank of the Danube lines of peasantry, men and women, were gazing anxiously upstream. Then men, picturesquely clad in short jackets, tight breeches, and little round felt hats with turned-up brims, manœuvred among groups of women whose shawl head-dresses terminated in wide stiff wings upon their necks. Suddenly a cry burst forth, ran along the ranks, and broke out into a roar: "Here they are! here they are!" Beating the water with a wheel on either side, a steamboat came into view, cutting a white trail of foam through the swirling blue waters. Already could be read in shining gold letters on the prow the name "Francis-Joseph." At a distance from the gathering of peasantry a fleecy cloud of smoke shot out, pierced by a ball of flame, and a loud report rent the air. A movement was seen on board the steamer, and a woman's figure, tall and slim, was observed to hurry forwards to the ship's nettings. In the interval between two salutes a volley of cheering went up from the bank, and the little hats waved in the peasants' hands. The slight figure responded with graceful acknowledgments.

She had been sitting in a dream, her eyes lost in space, on the hurricane-deck of the "Francis-Joseph," but at the first sound she had leapt quickly to her feet, crying: "What is happening? What is it?"

Undisturbed in his calm repose, and without ceasing to puff lazily at his huge pipe, the Duke Maximilian of Bavaria replied: "They are the subjects of your new Empire welcoming their future Empress."

"Their respect for me is shown in rather violent fashion, don't you think, father?"

The cheers from the river-bank grew louder and louder as the steamer came on. Elisabeth, whose bright hair shone brighter still in the sunlight, watched with amusement now the picturesque scene before her eyes. The Duchess Ludovica broke in: "Their cheers are for you, my daughter; you must acknowledge them."

Elisabeth, with a docility not devoid of pride, bowed gracefully. On the river-bank there was a perfect frenzy of joy. The "Francis-Joseph" steamed majestically on its way, while the cries of the peasants furnished a strident accompaniment to the thundering bass of the cannons.

Gradually all the uproar died away in the distance.

"Where are we now?" asked Elisabeth.

"Near Linz, one of the chief towns of your new Empire, madame," answered the Duke Maximilian.

His words stirred the young girl's heart, for they recalled to her that romantic encounter in the park at Possenhofen, and it was with a softening of her voice that she replied:

"Madame? Not yet!"

"Oh, very soon. . . ."

"Three days off," said the Duchess. "In three days you will be Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary."

"Queen of Hungary! I do not know why, but somehow that title is dearer to me."

"Take my advice," interrupted the Duke, "and

don't mention that too loud in the presence of your husband."

Elisabeth was about to ask why, but she stood between two dreams—yesterday's and to-morrow's—and so she suffered herself to be lulled by the ship's gentle rocking, closed her eyes, and sank back into delicious self-communings.

At Linz, the capital of Upper Austria, while the cheering broke out again on both banks of the river, a gorgeously-clad officer stepped on board. It was the Emperor come to meet his *fiancée*, or, rather, it was not the Emperor, but Francis-Joseph the lover, offering his heart to the beautiful girl of Possenhofen. The official welcome, the Emperor's visit to the Duchess Elisabeth, was to take place next day, April 22nd, 1854, at the gates of Vienna.

It was at some distance outside Vienna that the steamer's journey ended and Elisabeth came ashore. The first kiss which she received was that of her aunt, the Archduchess Sophia, mother of the Emperor—a formal, cold, and almost hostile greeting. This was not the bride, it must be remembered, whom the Archduchess had chosen for her son, and Elisabeth bore the blame from her aunt for the disappointment for which Francis-Joseph was alone responsible.

The young girl was conducted in very simple state to the "Theresianum," a building used at the time as a high-school for the aristocracy. She spent there the day of the 22nd and the following night. Next day she made her state entry into Vienna. The city was all gay with flags, banners, hangings, floral decorations, and triumphal arches. As she crossed a bridge she was told that it bore her name, and a deputation from the Municipality came forward to offer it to her formally. To-day the Empress is dead,

and the bridge has been pulled down. The same night, still further in her honour, St. Stephen's Tower and all the churches of Vienna were illuminated. On the evening of the 24th the marriage was celebrated with no great display, for it is only at middle-class weddings in Vienna that there is much display. The ceremony took place at the Church of St. Augustine, and the blessing of the Imperial pair was delivered by Monseigneur von Rauscher, Prince-Archbishop of Vienna, the former professor of philosophy and morals to the heir-apparent.

If the ceremony was devoid of pomp, it was also because it was the desire of the young couple, and especially of Elisabeth. The marriage took place at a time of great scarcity—it might almost be said of famine. Francis-Joseph and Elisabeth presented from their privy purse £16,000 for the purchase of corn for the starving peasants, and it was further decided to expend on the sufferers the money intended for the public festivities. The comparative simplicity of the wedding was due to this even more than to the wish to conform to Viennese aristocratic prejudices.

On the night of the marriage, while rejoicings continued throughout Vienna outside the Hofburg, the bridegroom and bride left their capital for a trip through Moravia and Bohemia. There is nothing to be told about the details of their journey. No untoward incident seems to have been recorded, and all appeared to pass off fairly satisfactorily, except that there was too much ceremony for Elisabeth's liking. It is, however, definitely known that after their return to Vienna grounds for disagreement between husband and wife became manifest. The unhappy Empress-child was setting her feet upon the first steps of her Calvary. We must be just to Francis-Joseph, and admit that it was not so much he who drove her

along this dolorous way as the Archduchess Sophia and the crowd of vassal courtiers of the Emperor's mother. It must be remembered that the age of this proud, haughty, and clever girl was but seventeen when the Imperial crown was put upon her head. She had, therefore, no experience to fit her to struggle against petty court conspiracy, and, what was worse, the cruel Machiavellian designs of her mother-in-law. Instead of coming forward and making known the desires of her heart, she took refuge in an attitude of hostile dignity, to which both pride and timidity contributed their shares. Love had brought her to Francis-Joseph, and it was the realization of this love, above all, which she innocently craved. Her hopes were for charming sensations and romantic satisfactions, and she thought that the story which had opened so poetically would continue like a real fairy-story. The truth was soon borne in upon her, in the harshest manner, that fairy-stories cannot be expected to materialize. On the very threshold of her life as woman and Sovereign she was met by disillusion. She had believed at Possenhofen, and even as late as on the boat which carried her to the capital, that she was about to become a Queen—was it for this reason that she vaguely preferred Hungary, which offered her this title, to Austria, with her austerer title of Empress?—a little golden-haired Queen, beautiful and adored. She was a Queen in name, but she was bound to recognize that the Archduchess Sophia meant to keep the power. As for love, it took her no long time to discover that this same Archduchess, although she had become her "mother," was doing her best to rob her of the fickle heart of Francis-Joseph.

Scarcely had she returned from the wedding journey—the journey which she had hoped would be so sweet and tender, and had found so full of official

etiquette—when annoyances began to be hers at the Hofburg. The whole Court, taking its cue from the Archduchess Sophia, learnt to seize every opportunity to vex, wound, and humiliate her, whom they were already calling, on the initiative of the Archduchess, "the little goose from Bavaria." Never was a name less justified, though it pleased the shallow, carping fancy of the courtiers. Poor Elisabeth, with her simple middle-class upbringing, could not take long to feel the effects of the ill-will of those around her. As soon as she opened her mouth or made a gesture, she heard ironical whispers around her, and was greeted with polite sneering smiles. And, then, there was the terrible Spanish etiquette of the Austrian Court, the full rigour of which she was by no means allowed to escape.

A few hours after her return from the Moravian trip she wished to have a moment alone with her husband, and left her apartments to go to the private study in which she knew she would find Francis-Joseph by himself. In the antechamber an usher stopped her, and, in the presence of several courtiers who had followed her, respectfully barred the way to the door of the Imperial study.

What did he mean? she inquired. She was going to her husband, and expected to be allowed to pass.

"I beg Your Majesty's pardon," said the usher, with a ceremonious bow, "but Your Majesty cannot enter into the presence of His Majesty the Emperor without being announced."

As Elisabeth protested and tried to pass on, a gentleman-in-waiting came forward and corroborated what the usher had said. Vexed, ashamed, and hurt, the young Empress was compelled to wait, feeling all the while that the courtiers were laughing at her, until she had been announced and could enter at last

her husband's room. She complained bitterly to him, but the Emperor also took the other side, and defended the necessities of "etiquette." In the evening, when news of the affair had spread over the palace, the girl-Queen had to submit to a disguised lecture from her mother-in-law, who requested her, in the presence of the whole Court, to conform herself henceforward to the customs of the household.

This etiquette it was which first caused her the most suffering, and along this narrow path she was made to walk slowly toward the broad road of sorrow which was to be hers, without relief, until that most tragic of all days when she died.

This etiquette it was which always stood in the way of her wishes and her freedom. She loved to jump on horseback, and, giving reins to her steed, to take long solitary rides over the country; but it was objected that she could not go out by herself, and that she must behave in seemly and orderly fashion when she rode. She was passionately devoted to walking, but the Empress, she was told, was not at liberty to indulge in such vulgar occupations. Then, since she adored her husband, she would have liked to be alone with him at least at meal-times; again etiquette forbade, and the table was never without the presence of officials.

It was a case of etiquette, etiquette, and always etiquette! This was the petty means, torturing and cruel, which the Archduchess Sophia employed from the very first to crush any possible resistance on the part of her daughter-in-law. The effects of her system were well foreseen by this Bavarian Princess of the Italian school. Too proud to complain, too inexperienced to resist, the unhappy Empress drew back into herself, and rebelled no more. The Archduchess Sophia thus attained her object, which was

to maintain the ascendancy which she exercised over Francis-Joseph by every means in her power. If she had consented to her husband's renunciation of the crown in favour of his son, the reason was obvious. As wife of an old and enfeebled Emperor, her chances were slight of remaining Empress long, and her son would grow up, assume authority, and reach the throne at an age when the spirit of a Prince is less amenable to a mother's control. On the other hand, as mother of an eighteen-year-old Emperor, her ascendancy was preserved, and she ruled under the shadows of her son's crown. She had therefore urged her husband to waive his rights, instead of keeping him on the throne which normally would have been his. Her calculations were correct, as the first years of Francis-Joseph's reign proved. Under the direct inspiration of the Jesuits, whose tool she always was, and sheltered behind a son whose absorption in the pursuit of pleasure she had encouraged, she was the sole director of Austria-Hungary. Only once did this son, so uncontrollable by others, but so pliant in her clever hands, break away from the dominion of his mother. This, as we know, was when he married. The Archduchess had chosen for him the Princess Sophia, a sweet, characterless creature, who inspired him with no love; and he had brought to her in Vienna the Princess Elisabeth, an intelligent, liberal-minded woman, whom he adored. The Archduchess trembled, but soon recovered herself, and prepared a terrible plan of campaign against the enemy. The first part of this plan at least succeeded, for after a few months the young Empress abandoned all resistance.

This very lack of resistance, taking refuge in a haughty silence, was turned to account by the Archduchess, when, calling her an insignificant "little

goose," she proceeded to the second part of her plan, which was to separate the Imperial couple. Had Elisabeth at the beginning, refusing to be stopped by the first obstacle, confided in her husband, the great unhappiness of her life might doubtless have been avoided, or at least very much alleviated. Had she complained of the thousand little wounds to her pride which she suffered at Court and in the compulsory daily intercourse with her mother-in-law, it is probable that Francis-Joseph with the aid of his love, would have sought and found, in conjunction with her, a method of protecting this poor little Fairy Springtime both against the courtiers and against his own mother.

Elisabeth preferred to revenge herself on her foes by so marked a disdain that, instead of helping her, it became a weapon for them to use in injuring her in her husband's estimation. Although it was she who had cause to complain of them, it was they who actually complained of her.

To explain satisfactorily the reasons of the profound and rapid disagreement between two people who had married for love, it is necessary to touch on a delicate question, which, so far from being peculiar to this case, arises in many apparently happy unions, and turns their promise to bitter ashes, owing to the difference in education between the young of the two sexes. Like almost all girls of her day (and like most girls of to-day also, which is no credit to us!), Elisabeth had been brought up in total ignorance of life and of the material side of love, which to her was a poetical, romantic, and purely ideal affair. She asked of love, in fact, its most difficult gift. Moreover, as was natural, this very attitude produced, in the depths of her innocent heart, a seed of jealousy which was ready to grow rapidly under the stimulus

of her first sentimental disillusionment. Francis-Joseph, on the other hand, more than most young men of his day and ours, thanks to his mother's Machiavellian policy, had only too thorough an acquaintance with love's material aspect. He knew too much and she too little, and the terms on which they met were not equal. His desires asked of the young girl who had awakened his passion on their first encounter in the park of Possenhofen something which she was unable to give him, while in his love-making there was not enough of the charming quality to make him a good teacher of her youthful and inexperienced mind. Marriage to him was a disappointment, to her an awakening. Still, she loved him, with such love as was possible to the fresh and innocent heart which she had surrendered to him; and in this heart, unsatisfied and craving for the love which could not be hers, jealousy sprang up.

Once more the Archduchess Sophia, a woman of the world in every respect, was on the watch to profit by the least misunderstanding, and to strain it to the breaking-point. As she had in the bright light of the throne-room waited for her daughter-in-law's blunders against etiquette, so she spied out, in the shadow of the antechamber, her shortcomings in love. She looked for the auspicious moment, which could not be long delayed; and as soon as she felt her son was ready, she threw in his way those temptations which he had never been wont to resist. As a young man, she had encouraged him in intrigue; as a husband, she urged him to infidelity.

A certain mystery envelops the first steps in the plot. The mother wished her son to return gradually to the habits of his bachelor days, and to such an extent as to put him beyond the influence of Elisabeth's tears when she should discover the truth. A

city and a court like those of Vienna could not fail to provide more than sufficient distractions for a pleasing and gallant young Emperor like Francis-Joseph. The maternal task, therefore, if we may use such a phrase here, was met by no difficulties of accomplishment. It must be admitted that the son aided the mother, who soon guessed that he was ripe for his first marital infidelity. There was much talk in high Viennese society at this time—it was January, 1855, when the young Empress was first pregnant—of a very beautiful Italian Countess, as striking a brunette as Elisabeth was sweetly fair. Whence she had come and how she had succeeded in getting an introduction in the most exclusive houses in Vienna nobody could say. All that was known about her was her charm, which was irresistible. As to the part played in the story by the Archduchess Sophia, evidence is again lacking. Only this is certain, that, while Elisabeth's condition confined her to her private apartments and her mother-in-law presided officially over entertainments at the Hofburg, the Italian lady appeared at a grand Court ball. Naturally the beautiful stranger was introduced to Francis-Joseph, who devoted himself so nearly exclusively to her during the whole evening that next day semi-official report assigned a favourite to the Emperor—the first since his marriage. As was to be expected, and as, moreover, the Archduchess Sophia anticipated, it did not take long for the news to reach the poor Empress. Within twenty-four hours some kind person, with one of those tongues with which kind persons are always gifted, informed her mistress, in honeyed tones and with countless reticences which made the communication still more grievous, how peculiarly attentive Francis-Joseph had been to the beautiful Italian at the Imperial ball. So violent was Elisabeth's sorrow that she fell

ill, and had to keep her bed for nearly a week. She did not abandon, however, her attitude of silent dignity, the cause of so many pains to her.

The day when she rose from her bed one of her ladies of the bedchamber was helping her to dress in her favourite boudoir. She was very sad, and paid little attention to the echoes of the Court tittle-tattle which her lady was retailing to her.

"Have you heard the great news, madame? It is only one day old."

"What great news?"

"Her Imperial Highness the Archduchess Sophia has a new maid of honour."

"Yes? No doubt she wanted one."

"She's a real jewel, as far as beauty goes. But I think you have not seen her yet, though she is the one topic of conversation in Vienna."

"And who is this perfect jewel?"

"The famous Italian Countess."

The Empress swayed heavily against her lady, on the point of falling; but she had strength enough to say:

"The Italian woman? That adventuress?"

Elisabeth was so pale that the other was about to call for assistance, when, crying, "No, no, it's no good—but this must not be, this cannot be!" the Empress raised herself with a violent effort, took a few steps toward the door, and, without a word, fell fainting on the floor.

Once more she was put to bed, where she remained several days in so critical a state that fears were entertained for her life and that of her unborn child. A few weeks later, however, on March 5th, 1855, she gave birth to a daughter, who received the name of Sophia. The young mother was only eighteen, but

already she had shed all the tears of which her heart was capable.

Elisabeth must assuredly have been born under an evil star. With almost all women motherhood is followed by a lofty and perfect joy, which is really the pride of the flesh over the new lease of life which it has obtained. The young Empress found in her child-bearing not happiness, but disillusion. It is ordained that Queens shall have no right to the same glad transports as other women. They are, more than any others, man's bondwomen, and must offer to their lords offspring made in their image before they receive the thanks which are bestowed on the majority of mothers in recompense for the sufferings of childbirth. Now it was not a male child with which Elisabeth presented her husband, and she realized that the little one born of her would drive still farther from her the man whom she continued to love; while a son and heir—so she hoped, at least—would have brought him back, loving and repentant, to the fruitful beauty of her young motherhood. Still, maternity in the majority of cases is the strongest of all sentiments, and Elisabeth was no exception to the general rule. She sought refuge in an intense love for her child, a feeling which was all the more necessary to her since the Emperor, in his disappointment at the sex of the infant, drifted farther and farther away from her.

Yet her refuge in this love, in spite of all her efforts to cling to it with fast-shut eyes, could not bring back peace to her heart. A terrible anguish gained possession of her, and she believed that the husband to whom she had failed to give a son would divorce her, as Napoleon had once divorced Josephine. The idea haunted her—haunted her so strongly that one day, in her imperious need of revealing her sufferings, she

poured out her unhappiness to the person who was sitting with her at the moment, who happened to be her mother, the Duchess Ludovica. The middle-class Duchess, an easy-going methodical woman, more fitted for making pastry than for calming a crisis of the soul, understood nothing of what her nerve-sick daughter told her. Instead of soothing Elisabeth, she scolded her, and finally addressed her in some such terms as these:

"What are you complaining about? What would you say if you were in my place? I have always lived in an almost precarious position, and had to count every penny to make both ends meet. Your father left me the work of keeping up the house, but never let me express an opinion. I was at once his cashier and his chattel. I never got anything out of it. Still, I was not unhappy, and I have no grievance against either your father or life."

Elisabeth tried to explain to her mother with what a psychological crisis she was struggling, and told her, too, the daily annoyances with which she had to put up, and how she suffered from the constant ill-will of the Archduchess Sophia. This let loose the tempest. Ludovica would not at any price come into conflict with her sister Sophia. She remembered her girlhood, and knew that she was bound to be defeated in the struggle. She declared that it was all a case of pure imagination.

"As for me," she continued, "I consider that you have reached the height of human happiness in becoming Empress. Just think of it—for a little Bavarian Princess, with no dowry; it is a splendid dream! You are free; you are surrounded by every possible luxury, and I cannot understand why you cannot bow to the necessities of your position. People must learn to grow accustomed to their surroundings,

and it gives me great pain to see you trying to pose, without a real reason, as a saint and martyr. Reflect upon it, and I hope that you will see that the faults must lie—partly, at least—on your side. You know that in life we must make compromises."

The Duchess got up, and, in response to her daughter's "You are right, mother; I will reflect upon it," rewarded her with a kiss on the forehead, saying:

"That's right; I am pleased to see you growing reasonable."

The door shut behind the Duchess, and as soon as she was left to herself, the Empress, "grown reasonable," burst into sobs.

Yet Elisabeth was but on the edge of the inextricable thickets of her life, whose cruel thorns tore her heart at every step forward. One affair, above all others, forced upon her the hateful difficulties of her position. When the ceremonies after childbirth had been concluded and she reappeared publicly in the Hofburg, she discovered that not only had the Emperor a favourite, but the Court had also adopted one for her. Count L., a fine-looking young hussar officer, popular in the smoking-room, and an indefatigable dancer, was much appreciated by the Archduchess Sophia, and, of course, by the Emperor. He must, in consequence, have met with a cool reception, if nothing worse, from the young Empress, but was adroit enough to succeed in the end in gaining her confidence. He showed her attention, amiability, and kindness, but never gallantry, thus putting her suspicions at rest, and, being in addition a perfect horseman, was soon accepted by his beautiful Empress, who failed to see her mother-in-law's hand in all this scheming, as the usual companion in her rides, which for the moment the Archduchess Sophia ceased to

find reprehensible. Gradually her need of someone to talk to, which even her mother so unkindly denied, drove the Empress to drop her fatiguing mask of reserve for the benefit of her attendant cavalier, and she did not hesitate to take him to some extent into her confidence. Elisabeth was both marvellously beautiful and unhappy. The rôle of consoler was an agreeable one, and Count L. knew that in his attempt he would not be abandoned by the Emperor's mother at least. So, one summer's night, while there was a small gathering at the château of Schönbrunn, the Empress had come out on the terrace by herself to drink in the fresh night air, when Count L., following her, suddenly threw himself at her feet and made a violent declaration of love to her. Elisabeth drew back, and, when he seized her hands, broke away from him and re-entered the house without a word. With her usual habit of silence, she thought that disdain would be sufficient. Nevertheless, when she got back to her apartments she told her maid of honour, Countess X., what had happened. The latter, misunderstanding the Empress's tone, candidly confessed that a beautiful woman could but be pleased at so bold a tribute to her charms. Elisabeth was thunderstruck, but realized at once that in such a society an attitude of disdain was not enough. She sought Francis-Joseph without delay, and informed him of the affair, adding that she demanded the immediate dismissal of the insolent Count. Although very much annoyed, as he knew that his mother would be displeased, Francis-Joseph granted the Empress's request. Next day, in obedience to an Imperial command, Count L. left the Court to go on distant garrison duty. Sure of having done her duty, and all the more so because the young hussar officer had not entirely failed to touch her desolate heart, Elisabeth

regained, with her proud carriage, a greater self-confidence. Her action must certainly meet with approval. But a fresh disillusionment awaited her. Two days later she received a visit from the Archduchess Sophia, who, without any preamble, proceeded straight to the object of her call.

"I have come, my daughter," she said, "to express to you my great displeasure."

"What have I done, my mother, to vex you so much?"

"You have compelled the Emperor to banish from the Court an officer with a great future before him."

"Count L.?"

"Yes; Count L. Do you know that you have ruined his career?"

"But, my mother, you are aware that he grossly insulted me."

The Archduchess began to laugh. Like the maid of honour, she could not see why a woman should consider herself insulted by a tribute to her charms. She explained shortly to her daughter-in-law that she looked upon her attitude as "absurd and naïve," and gave her to understand that if a similar incident occurred in the future she must not make a scene over "such follies."

The Archduchess Sophia's scheme had failed, and she proceeded to look about for another way of compromising her daughter-in-law, so as to gain a surer advantage over her when circumstances should favour her. At a Court ball the following winter in Vienna a group of young officers were amusing themselves by making spiteful remarks about all the women present. The Empress's name came up.

"Have you noticed what a horror our fair Elisabeth has of low necks?" asked one.

"Yes, that's true. Her ball dresses are almost as high as a charity schoolgirl's."

"So the eye has no distractions to take it away from the golden masses of her hair."

"Ah, poet! No, the truth is more simple. That pretty corsage is like a balloon: there is nothing but air inside!"

An officer of the Imperial Guard, standing in the group, had been showing signs of impatience, and now interrupted the wretched chatterer with a command to be quiet. A duel followed, in which the offender was wounded. It is easy to understand what capital the Archduchess Sophia and all the Court made of this incident. This was quite sufficient to invent a lover for the "little Bavarian goose." Elisabeth was deeply hurt by the insinuation, but once again, after the failure of her speech, she shut herself up within herself and uttered not a word. Tortured by jealousy, outraged in her modesty, and morally isolated from all around her, she began to show a sullen face to Francis-Joseph, and to assume what the Duchess Ludovica had called a martyr's pose. The Emperor in consequence drifted entirely away from her. A feverish spasm of maternal love seized on her, in which she sought refuge for her nerves. But Fate was cruel to her, and at the age of two the infant Sophia succumbed to an attack of smallpox.

Amid the merrily racing waters of the Viennese Court, Elisabeth's heart had no longer even a spar to save it from the sorrow in the depths beneath. Robbed of her living husband, of her dead child, and of all her illusions, she was left in tremendous solitude in the midst of the Empire upon which three years before she had entered, in all the golden glory of her sixteen years, borne over the gentle waves of the Danube amid the ringing cheers of a whole nation.

CHAPTER VI

IMPERIAL AMUSEMENTS

WHILST Elisabeth sadly shivered in the gloom of the Hofburg or in the park at Schönbrunn, Francis-Joseph divided the time which was not taken up by public affairs between the two pleasures which seemed particularly dear to his heart—sport and the theatre. There was a common appeal to him, indeed, in the two pastimes, for both gave his senses the free play which they craved. Sport was for him a means of bodily expansion, bringing with it a fierce and violent satisfaction. The theatre, not attracting him on the artistic, literary, or intellectual side, raised his spirits, and he was not above interesting himself in the interpreters of the rôles played before him.

Sport calls for attention first. The Habsburgs from the remotest days had been enthusiastic disciples of Nimrod. Consequently Francis-Joseph, champion of tradition, could not but conform to the ways of his ancestors. Very early in life, with the same kind of stirring of the heart which he experienced in war in the Italian campaign, he took his gun in his hand, and went out to kill in the most game-stocked regions of his game-abounding Empire. It may be said that there is no country in Europe which gives such scope as Austria-Hungary for all the branches of the huntsman's art. In addition to ordinary straightforward sport like that with hare, rabbit, and partridge, the

chase of such big game as stag and roebuck is particularly well provided by this part of the world, while certain tracts of it have their own interesting features. In the Styrian Alps and in the Tyrol there is abundance of chamois and black-cock, the pursuit of which calls for bodily strength as well as cunning, owing partly to the roughness of the ground and partly to the peculiar shyness of the quarry. In Hungary there are fox, wild duck, and wild goose; and in the Carpathians the noblest game of all after lion, namely, bear, which Francis-Joseph did not fail to hunt.

His enthusiasm for the chase not only procured him the excitement which was to be found in such violent exercise, but also gave him the opportunity of coming in close contact with the various races making up his composite Empire. While at Court he was haughty, imperious, and scornful; on his country trips, on the other hand, he showed himself, ordinarily at least, simple, light-hearted, and affable. It may be said that if he is beloved by the Alpine peoples, it is because the Tyrolese and Styrian mountaineers have seen him, not a stiff and starched figure in full General's uniform, surrounded by the pomp of Empire, but a gay and smiling sportsman in the costume of the Tyrol, with bare knees showing between his leather breeches and his coarse knitted stockings, and his head covered with a little green felt hat adorned with a tuft of chamois-hide or a black-cock's plume.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Francis-Joseph's good-fellowship was genuine. If such a quality did by chance exist somewhere in him, his mother, and the tutors chosen by her, the Bombelles and the Rauschers, had devoted themselves so sedulously to repress it that only the slightest traces of it remained. In the Alpine districts a whole string of legends has been invented and passed on from mouth

to mouth, designed to portray His Imperial and Royal Majesty as a man of simple character, modest demeanour, big heart, and witty good-fellowship—all characteristics which particularly appeal to the inhabitants of these regions. It would be waste of time to repeat these legends, which give an entirely false picture of the Emperor. The real truth is shown in an authentic story now about to be told, which also explains shortly how the "good-fellowship" of Francis-Joseph came to be believed when, actually, nothing was so dear to him as the uncompromising exercise of his authority.

In 1852, three years after his accession to the throne, the Emperor was out with his gun on the outskirts of Mürzzuschlag, near Vienna, where he owned some shooting in the middle of other preserves. As was his wont, he was alone, having sent away his bearer so as to get the full egotistical enjoyment out of his favourite pursuit. In his excitement he failed to notice that he had crossed the boundary of the Imperial property. Suddenly, a few paces ahead of him, a magnificent pheasant got up. Francis-Joseph took aim, and was about to fire, when a loud voice broke upon his ears: "If you shoot that pheasant, I'll put a charge of lead through you!"

Lowering his gun and scarlet with anger, Francis-Joseph asked who it was who dared to speak to him thus.

"I do, my young fellow," said a big man in shooting costume, as he emerged from the wood.

Francis-Joseph was on the point of revealing that he was the Emperor, but restrained himself in rueful amusement over the unforeseen incident. But it was with his customary haughtiness that he replied:

"What have I done wrong, my fine fellow?"

"Don't take the trouble to be humorous, or you will

tire yourself. You are shooting on my property, that is all, and you are well aware of the fact. Come on now, follow me to the house, where I will write out my statement of complaint. And, meanwhile, give me your gun."

"Suppose I decline?"

"If you decline, all is quite simple. You come from the Imperial preserves, and I shall complain to the Emperor."

Francis-Joseph could not check a smile as he asked: "Are you acquainted with the Emperor?"

"No, I am not; but you need not look clever. His Majesty is fond of shooting, and he cannot refuse to be just. He will understand my position."

"Very well. You are right, and I admit that I am to blame."

The Emperor handed over his gun, and followed the surly sportsman without further talk to the house, or rather the farm.

Now this country gentleman was Baron N., and in the hall they met the Baroness, a sweet and gracious young lady, who, for all her fragile appearance, seemed to dominate her big burly husband. The Baron told her what had happened, as he led the way to his room. The young Emperor assumed his most winning air, while he constrained his handsome features to wear a submissive, pleading, and sorrowful look. The lady of the house was not proof against these wiles, and when Francis-Joseph had extenuated his mistake, saying that he had sinned through ignorance and his devotion to sport, she intervened to ask that he might be forgiven. The Baron held out until she begged him, in a soft, musical voice, not to refuse her request. Then he caught her in his arms, and in spite of her embarrassed struggles planted a sounding kiss upon her neck, and, turning to his

prisoner, said, with a loud clumsy laugh: "You ought to thank Heaven, young man, that the Baroness presented me with a son only three weeks ago. But for that you wouldn't get off. Shake hands now."

Francis-Joseph put his hand into the Baron's great horny fist, and peace was declared. The Baron proposing a drink to show that no ill-feeling remained, a move was made to the dining-room. As the glasses chinked, tongues became looser, and after a long talk the Emperor (who had made himself out to be an officer in the Imperial Guard), learning that the baptism of the son and heir was to take place in fifteen days' time, offered to be the godfather. The offer was accepted with good will, and as soon as the young sportsman had taken his departure the little house rang with praises of his genteel manners and unaffected affability.

This estimate was doomed to be soon upset. On the day of the baptism there was a gathering at the farmhouse of all the N.'s family and friends. They were waiting for the promised godfather, when, preceded by the Imperial outriders, a state coach drove up to the door. The young sportsman got out in full General's uniform, followed by two aides-de-camp, while a footman announced "His Majesty the Emperor!" The confusion of the Baron and Baroness can be imagined. Had he now been friendly and natural, Francis-Joseph could have changed their embarrassment into gladness; but he took good care not to, and did his best during his visit to increase his poor hosts' trouble. To give just the finishing touch to the gentleman farmer's discomfort, he actually reminded him, before all the company, of his threat to put a charge of lead through him, and of his declaration that if the gun were not handed over to him at once he would complain to the Emperor.

It is certain that Baron N., who had been a devoted subject to the unknown Francis-Joseph, whom he had only seen in that pleasing aspect in which he showed himself to the mountain peasantry, became his enemy from the day when he realized that the seeming good-fellowship was only a mask over a haughty and offensive arrogance.

Some of the mountaineers, too, and one of them in particular, made a still more rude discovery of the truth. During the war with Prussia in 1866, while the Austrian armies were being decimated at the Imperial whim, and the country, in consequence of this same infatuation of the Emperor, was passing through a terrible domestic crisis, there was a grand battue organized by the Court in the Styrian forests, in which the Emperor, the members of the Imperial family, and all their suites took part. For several days an astounding quantity of game was slaughtered, and the day's successes were celebrated at night in the most uproarious fashion, with floods of champagne, at the Styrian shooting-box.

One morning Francis-Joseph, wearied of a kind of sport which was not at all to his taste, escaped from the rest of the party, and, with his gun under his arm and his pipe between his teeth, followed a little pathway through the wood. There was but one thing to vex his soul: he had no light for his pipe. A faint smell of tobacco smoke caught his envious nostrils, and led him to the bank of a rushing streamlet which turned the waterwheel of a mechanical saw-mill. An old man was in charge, who sat smoking over his work. The Emperor called to him sharply, and asked for a light. The old man did not stir until Francis-Joseph in annoyance stepped up to him and rapped him on the shoulder, repeating his request, or rather his command. The smoker then struck a light with

his tinder-box, held it out to the Emperor, received it back, put it out, stowed the box in his pocket again, and returned to his job without uttering a word. The Emperor, whose curiosity was aroused, began to make himself more agreeable. Assuming the familiar pose which he could adopt on occasions, he seated himself on a tree-stump, and began to question the old man about his work. But the same silence continued.

"Oh, so that saw of yours has cut off your tongue, you old blockhead!" said the Emperor at last, as he got up.

The old man rose in his turn, and measuring his interlocutor from head to foot, let drop these words:

"From your tone, I see that you belong to the Imperial shooting-party. Perhaps you are even an Imperial huntsman?"

"I am."

"Well, I don't want to have anything to do with people who amuse themselves and get drunk, while the poor people are toiling and starving to death to pay for the soldiers whom it is the Emperor's pleasure to have killed on the battle-field."

Francis-Joseph turned terribly white. It was the first time that anyone had dared to tell him so brutal a truth. It was the first time that he had heard "the voice of his people," and its resounding tone was doubtless unpleasant to the man who, a few days previously, had spoken in a military order of the day about the exalted duty of getting killed for one's Emperor. He seized the rash old man's arm as he was about to turn his back on him, and, standing face to face with him, demanded in a furious voice whether he knew to whom he was talking.

"No; but I don't care who it is."

"It is your Emperor who is before you."

He expected the old workman to collapse, but it was a flash of anger which lighted up his eyes as he replied:

"If you are really the Emperor, I am glad of it, for whatever may happen to me, at least I have been able before I die to tell you what I think, and what many think with me."

Pale with wrath, the Emperor shook his fist at the insolent speaker, and then turned his back on him and plunged into the forest. Next day the old man, an honest and conscientious labourer, who had nothing but his work to live upon, was brutally dismissed by the owner of the saw-mill at the Emperor's request.

Another story shows Francis-Joseph in a different light, it must be admitted—shows him passionate, violent, and imperious, yet at least just upon reflection. But (and this "but" is of some importance, it will be seen) the incident was of a different character, and the Emperor's justice was rather the outcome of shrewd calculation than the prompting of simple good-heartedness.

One Whit-Monday, on a clear and sunny spring day, Francis-Joseph left Vienna at early dawn to shoot at Mürzzuschlag. He was to be back the same night, and the order had been given to the station-master at Mürzzuschlag to have the Imperial train ready to leave for Vienna at 5 p.m. The traffic on the mountain line of the great Südbahn (built by the French engineer Boutoux) was already very heavy on ordinary days; consequently, it was quite congested at this brilliant holiday-tide. All Vienna had taken advantage of the fine weather to spend the hours of freedom in the mountains, and numerous excursion trains, in addition to the ordinary service, were coming and going in all directions. A change in the time-

table, especially in the evening, when the visitors to the mountains were returning to dinner in Vienna, must inevitably have resulted in a shocking accident. Now, it happened that the Emperor, having had a bad day's sport, wearied of his favourite pastime before the appointed hour, and reached the station a little before 4.30. He was in a very bad temper, and immediately sent his aide-de-camp to the station-master with an order to put on the Imperial train at once. The Südbahn's official raised his hands to heaven at such an idea, and swore that it was impossible to carry out the Emperor's wish. It was in vain for the aide-de-camp to declare that the Emperor was furious, and did not mean to wait, and that any disregard of the order would cost the station-master dear. The latter insisted that, with the best will in the world, he could not possibly despatch the train to the Vienna terminus before the appointed hour. Having spoken, he proceeded to sign the order for departure of a train for Trieste, while the aide-de-camp went back to the Emperor. Francis-Joseph, we know, could not see beyond his own desires, and the least obstacle in his way stirred him up to the point of exasperation. The train for Trieste had not yet left when a stir was seen on the platform. The Emperor marched straight up to the station-master, who was at the moment signing the guard's papers. The official, alarmed but firm, assumed the military attitude, saluted, and stood waiting.

"I wish to leave at once," said the Emperor.

"Your Majesty, in spite of my earnest desire to obey your orders, I cannot possibly do so."

"Why?"

"My responsibility for the traffic prevents me."

"And I, your Emperor, command you."

"I beg your Majesty's pardon, but I cannot fulfil the command."

Francis-Joseph turned round to his suite, who were listening, pale with excitement, to the conversation. With a short, dry laugh, frowning brows, and an ugly look in his eyes, he said to them:

"I must say, gentlemen, the position is at least strange. You are witnesses of an unprecedented event. Your Sovereign is the prisoner of a railway official." Still keeping up his ironical tone, he asked the station-master, who remained standing like a soldier: "And when, sir, shall we be permitted to leave?"

"Your Majesty's train will leave the platform at five o'clock sharp."

"Come, gentlemen," said the Emperor; and he strode back to the waiting-room between a double line of curious witnesses, all respectfully removing their hats as he passed.

At five minutes to the hour the station-master came to announce that His Majesty's train was in the station, and at five o'clock precisely it left Mürzzuschlag without the Emperor deigning to acknowledge the salute of the trembling official, whom only the fear of the probable accident had prevented from obeying the angry monarch.

On the up and down lines between Vienna and Trieste the guards were already spreading the news of the altercation at Mürzzuschlag, and no one entertained any doubt that the luckless station-master would lose his post as a reward of his strict adherence to his duty. Francis-Joseph, in the meantime, sat silent amid his silent and nervous suite, close to the window of his special car, and was approaching Vienna at full speed. Every moment trains literally packed with passengers met his, and at all the stations

were compact and joyful crowds surging over the platforms and filling the buildings with their riotous mirth.

Three hours after the Imperial train had left Mürzzuschlag the station-master, who was expecting a letter of dismissal from his petty officer next day, received a telegraphic message announcing to him that he was made Knight of the Imperial and Royal Order of Francis-Joseph by the direct appointment of the Emperor, who, according to the message, "had personally noted the precision and attention to discipline exhibited by the station-master in the exercise of his difficult and most responsible duties."

The fact was that, Francis-Joseph's character being such as it was, the station-master had merely been lucky, first because the Emperor on the journey back to Vienna had allowed the decisive lesson to sink into his mind; and, secondly, because the scene had taken place in public. The Emperor loved to astonish the crowd. He had long been fond on his solitary shoots, without an escort or a companion (for he was too good a sportsman to care for the official battues, which he mostly avoided), of playing the part of Haroun-al-Rashid. He would take his walks, in huntsman's [illegible] among peasants, labourers, shepherds, and [illegible]ers, passing himself off as a keeper, talking [illegible]em in the common tongue, garnished with slang, chinking his glass with theirs, and then would suddenly dazzle the poor fellows' eyes with a revelation of his rank. On this particular day, with his decoration of the station-master, Haroun-al-Rashid had once more, in a somewhat different way, dazzled the crowd.

It has already been said that in conjunction with sport (and with military affairs, which were his intensest joy) the theatre was Francis-Joseph's chief

taste. He had no particular preference for one style more than another, it must be confessed; but apparently French comedy, especially the works of Scribe and Pailleron, appealed to him more than the German drama. No German house put on so many French pieces as the Imperial Theatre at Vienna—the Burgtheater, to give it its proper name.

If Francis-Joseph, however, showed no great liking for anything outside French drama, he certainly had very violent antipathies. The great German classics, including the revolutionary Schiller, found no favour with the Imperial critic. Even Grillparzer, Austria's greatest dramatic poet, was for a long time systematically banished from the stage of the Burgtheater by the Emperor's orders. It is true that in his "Bruderzwist im Hause Habsburg" (The Imperial Brothers' Strife), an historical play dealing with the life of the Emperor Rudolf, he had shown scant mercy to Francis-Joseph's ancestors, and the Emperor never forgave him for this.

Nowadays the Burgtheater is under the direction of one of the most enlightened pioneers of the drama in German lands—Dr. Paul Schlenther; but, in spite of this, the chief house of the Empire is oppressed by Francis-Joseph's despotic will, and a harsh exclusion from its boards is the lot of the great modern playwrights when they select a realistic or (*horribile dictu!*) a social subject. Thus Ludwig Fulda's "Die Sklavin" (The Slave), which deals with the modern woman's aspirations and with free love, was forbidden at the Burgtheater by the Emperor's express command, after a single performance. The same fate befell, in 1904, Gerhardt Hauptmann, author of "Hannele" and "The Weavers." These are only two examples from a whole series of suppressions of the most paltry and reactionary kind, which have led

to the Viennese public giving the Burgtheater the nickname of the "Komtessentheater"—a name which conveys nothing in translation, but means something like "the theatre for young ladies." And this is the special theatre of the Emperor, who exercises over it a personal censorship, having no connection with the Mrs. Grundy of the Vienna censorship of plays, which is harsh enough, but infinitely less harsh than that of the prudish Francis-Joseph!

The Burgtheater has, of course, a director and a manager, and for the posts have been chosen men of liberal views and literary tastes, as the name of Dr. Schlenther proves. Still, it is none the less true that the artistic convictions of these distinguished men are as nothing compared with the will of the Emperor, who, moreover, looks upon all the directors and managers of the Imperial houses, whether of the Burgtheater, the Vienna Opera House, or the Buda-Pesth Opera or National Theatre, as nothing more than employees to whom he pays salaries.

Of these houses the Burgtheater, whose expenses are entirely paid out of the Imperial privy purse, is under regulations not unlike those of the Comédie-Française, with the exception, however, that the actors and actresses are not members of a society, as at Paris. But from the point of view of their duties, if not of their rights (about which he does not care), the ordinary comedians of His Majesty Francis-Joseph are very like the ordinary comedians of France under the Third Republic. The Burgtheater's artistes are divided into two classes—probationers and pensioners. The probationers sign contracts for limited periods, the pensioners make an agreement covering the whole of their lives. No one but the Emperor in private audience can release the latter from their engagement, and then only on the condition that they

go to no other Vienna theatre. Francis-Joseph has taken a passionate interest in the Burgtheater, which for nearly a score of years now has been housed in a wing of the Hofburg itself. Many of his most intimate friendships have been with artistes of the Imperial theatre, and one of them has greatly influenced his life, and remains unbroken to this day. This is his friendship with Madame Katharina Schratt, an actress of great talent, who has achieved the improbable in retaining his regard for so long.

It is rather remarkable that the ballet has never interested a man like Francis-Joseph, when Viennese dancers have by no means failed in the point of good looks. But as serious music appeals to him very slightly, he had paid very little attention to the Opera House. In the days when he paid occasional visits to the Hofoperntheater he liked to see a striking chorus on the stage. So it is perhaps because of his æsthetic (?) susceptibilities that he forsook the Vienna Opera House. Amongst his intimate friends he would often say how little he cared to see the famous singer Frau Wild; but she was enormously stout, and far nearer ugliness than beauty. Francis-Joseph could not understand, therefore, why the public should applaud her.

In addition to the Imperial theatres, where he has a large Court box, as well as a small private one close to the stage, the Emperor used to go often to the Theater an der Wien, a house famous in the history of operetta at Vienna as the birthplace of all Strauss's productions. During the first thirty years of his reign this theatre was the home of a collection of comedy divas remarkable alike for talent, faces, and figures, and the connection between the Palace and the Theater an der Wien was very close. One of these ladies in particular, Marie Geistinger, the idol of the

Viennese public, for whom she created the leading parts in the operettas of Offenbach, Strauss, and Suppé, was a lively and impulsive person, who was very fond of talking to her friends—and their name in Vienna was legion—of her acquaintance with the Emperor outside the walls of the theatre.

As has been said, there was something in common between the Emperor's tastes for sport and for the theatre, only at the latter place he substituted an opera-glass for his gun.

CHAPTER VII

THE EMPRESS'S FLIGHT

ELISABETH lay in a long chair near the window of her room. The book which she had been reading slipped from her hands, and, with her head among the cushions and her eyes far away, she peopled with her dreams the autumn landscape before her, bathed in the vague and tremulous light of the setting sun. In the park of Laxenburg the great trees, swathed in mist, stood out in shadowy bulk against the pale gold of the sky. A vast silence was abroad, the birds had ceased their song as night drew near, and the gentle murmur of a small jet of water in a fountain was heard as though it were a loud sound in the general stillness around.

A cautious rap came at the door, so cautious that Elisabeth, whose ears were straining to catch the thousand tiny voices of the silence, did not hear it. A louder rap followed. Surprised and disturbed (for the knock broke in upon her dreams), Elisabeth was just about to answer the door, when it turned upon its hinges, and revealed a visitor contrary to all the rules of etiquette—the Dowager Archduchess. Elisabeth was rising when, with a sign as she shut the door, the Archduchess Sophia motioned to her not to move. She took a seat close to the Empress's long chair, and opened at once:

"I have come, my daughter, to have a friendly talk with you over serious matters."

Elisabeth had vaguely divined that a battle was preparing, but she was resolved this time to make a stand against the terrible Archduchess, and she replied with merely the suspicion of a tremble in her voice:

"I am listening, my mother. What is it all about?"

"Will you allow me to start from the beginning?"

"I am at your disposal."

"Don't be alarmed; I will not take advantage of you. Well, this is the point. After the two girls, little Sophia, whom we lost, and the Archduchess Gisela, who is two years and a half . . ."

"Two years and three months."

"You have borne a son . . ."

"Yes, the Archduke Rudolf, born here on August 21st, 1858—that is to say, fifty-four days ago."

"You reckon very accurately, my daughter," said the Archduchess, with a softness in her voice. Then, with an abrupt change of tone, she went on: "But it is to be regretted that you reason so ill."

Elisabeth rose up, gripping the back of her chair. Mastering her anger, she said: "I do not understand you, madame. What is it you wish to say?"

"Merely this: This afternoon you had an interview with the Emperor, and obtained from him a promise that your son's education should be entrusted to you personally."

"Well, what then?"

"What then? I cannot agree to it."

"But, madame, he is my son."

The Archduchess rose in her turn. "He is not *your* son," she said; "he is the heir to the throne."

The two women stood face to face, reading in each other's eyes the hatred which the approach of night almost hid.

"So, madame," said Elisabeth, breaking the

awful silence, "you deny me the sacred right which the lowest woman of the people is allowed. She may guide the first steps and thoughts of her child, while I . . ."

"You cannot do so, because you are the Empress. That is just the reason. And, further, I must tell you, my daughter, that your--liberal ideas would be fatal to one who must some day ascend the throne of the Habsburgs. The tradition must be carried on, and your unfortunate tendencies would not strengthen that tradition in the mind of your child. Therefore I have firmly decided that you cannot bring up your son yourself."

"But the Emperor has given me permission to do so."

"And I will not allow it."

Elisabeth had let herself sink upon a couch, with her hands clasped between her knees, her head bowed, and her eyes wet with tears.

"I know, madame," she said, "what your influence is over my husband; I know it because I have had such painful experience of it. Therefore I do not oppose you: I only beg, as you see; and you see also, for the first time, that I humble myself even to tears before you."

"I know that you hate me."

"Why should you care, when I bow myself before your power? I will strive no further against you, madame, I swear it; but I beseech you, leave me my child, my dear little Rudolf, to be the solace of the melancholy and desolate life which you have made for me."

A short ironical laugh was the answer to this anguished prayer.

"A solace," said the Archduchess, "but for what? You should be the happiest woman in the world.

This is your fancy picture of yourself again as the misunderstood and forsaken wife. So you ought to be forsaken! It would serve you right for the weariness and boredom which you spread around you with your perpetual martyr's pose. Put off this funereal face, my daughter. We are alone here, and you know well enough that these ways do not appeal to me."

"You are right, madame. For the moment I imagined that one mother might address herself to another without fear, and that perhaps, however far apart we were from each other, we might find a common bond in maternity. I had forgotten that your violent egotism crushed every other feeling in you."

"You are insulting me."

"Am I? But at least, since the unhappy opportunity is mine of telling you what I think, I will go on to the end, whatever it may cost me."

Elisabeth proceeded to reproach the Archduchess for the abominable upbringing which she had given her son, and, to her listener's great indignation, showed a clearness of sight which fairly frightened her. It seemed to the Archduchess as if it were her conscience which was accusing her of the crime of treason against motherhood. She recovered herself, and cut short the indictment against herself by leaving the room, shutting the door furiously behind her. She went straight to the Emperor's study, and in a state of great agitation told him the last part of the scene which she had had with Elisabeth. She gave her own version of it, of course, declaring that Elisabeth had violently accused the Emperor of being a bad husband and a bad ruler, reinforcing these same accusations with a heap of insults against her, the Dowager-Archduchess. So well did she succeed in stirring up her son against the unhappy Elisabeth

that the same night he retracted the promise which he had made to her, and a few days later handed over the little Archduke Rudolf and his nurse to the charge of a governess chosen by the Archduchess Sophia, who was, before many years had passed, to follow the plan which she had adopted in her son's education, and to give the young Prince as superintendent Count Bombelles, a worthy son of the Bombelles who had trained Francis-Joseph.

Elisabeth had devoted all her capacity for love to her son, and we can imagine her despair, her wretched, helpless despair. She had a daughter, the Archduchess Gisela, but strange to relate in one endowed with such emotional qualities, she did not love that daughter. Indeed, it may be said that she never loved her. When her first-born's little coffin, all covered in white roses, had disappeared into the tomb, Elisabeth had a sensation of so profound a void that she had thought her heart would never beat again. The birth of a second daughter, in place once more of the hoped-for son, had been a fresh disillusion, and had in no way succeeded in reawakening her tender instincts. She continued to weep for the little dead Sophia, and could not see close at her side the living smile of little Gisela. That poor child, whose entry into the world had certainly not been through the gate of love which was open later for her brother Rudolf, and later still for her sister Marie-Valérie, was always left in the cold in her mother's heart.

Rudolf's birth, on the other hand, rescued Elisabeth entirely from her sorrow, and with one stroke lifted her to the summit of maternal joy. The son had come, the long-desired son. Doubtless Elisabeth had no hope that the birth of this boy-child would bring Francis-Joseph back to her, but she was filled with a deep, sweet pride at having brought into the world

one who was to mount the Imperial and Royal throne of Austria-Hungary, and to reign over a great people. She hardly gave a further thought to the little white coffin, and forgot that she had wept over the burial of her heart. Her dead daughter and her estranged husband only appeared to her now like dim memories of old. She had a son. This son was to be Emperor, and through him all the joys of love and pride would be hers. But, knowing as she did what influence mothers can exercise over Sovereigns, as over other men, she wanted him trained by herself to goodness, honesty, and fair dealing. How hard she would strive to develop the conscience in the child whom she had brought into the world! Her whole life was beginning afresh, for the day of her son's birth was the birthday also of her happiness.

So she had thought, reckoning without the mother-in-law whose cruelty was to rob her of her child's mind as she had already robbed her of her husband's heart. And now, while night enveloped in its darkness the great trees in the park of Laxenburg, she wept the most bitter tears, perhaps, which she had ever shed in the course of her anguished life.

We know the results of the evil education which the Dowager-Archduchess gave to Elisabeth's son, the dissolute life of this weak Prince, and his tragic, self-inflicted death. Instead of the Archduchess Sophia bearing the blame for this, the Empress was held responsible. People were not wanting to insist, in country, town, and Court, that if the Empress had devoted herself to her son's education the catastrophe which put an end to this spoilt existence would never have occurred. Whatever may be thought about it, Elisabeth most certainly was affected by this suggestion, for those about her did their best, during her lifetime, to torture her heart and soul. But she never

betrayed herself, and the cruellest hints never wrested a complaint from her. When her favourite child s terrible death bound her living to the rack, she had nothing but words of solace for the husband against whom she had every right to turn the hateful accusations made against herself.

But at present we are far from that tragic period which was to reveal such nobility of mind and generous philosophy in the daughter of Duke Maximilian of Bavaria. For the moment we see Elisabeth only as a poor lonely woman, struggling to shake off the yoke under which she was soon doomed to fall again, exhausted by the violence of her effort. Married life had for her no further promise, but, as she dreamed of no other romances since the day when she meet Francis-Joseph in the park at Possenhofen, she continued to love, in the depth of her soul, the husband who inflicted on her so much suffering. During 1859, in which year Austria was fated to lose in the Italian campaign one of her most beautiful provinces, Lombardy, a new growth of affection and pity sprang up in the parched soil of Elisabeth's heart. Francis-Joseph, who had a strong love for his country, and, as we know, a special taste for the pursuit of war, went forth to fight with his troops, and, with no thought of the value of his life, courted danger with single-minded, glorious courage. Time after time Elisabeth, in her prison at the Hofburg, trembled at the visions of battle in which her husband's bravery made him play so perilous a part. Her anguished heart leapt within her breast as fear and admiration mingled with memories of its old surrender to the power of love.

One day in particular she thought her emotions must overcome her when she heard how, in one of the bloodiest battles of the whole campaign, Francis-

Joseph had put himself at the head of a cavalry charge, leading the way to victory with the simple words: "Forward, my brave men! I, too, have a wife and children to lose!" While she trembled and rejoiced in turn, she almost found it in her to expect, at the end of the war, a repentant husband returning to her arms. As years later she was to weep with him over the loss of their son, so now she offered him tender consolation when he came back to assuage, with all the pride at his command, the wound which his country, and he with his country, had received.

Her last illusion, or rather her temporarily revived illusion, was destined to be shattered by the heedless cruelty of Francis-Joseph as soon as his passion came into play. Why should a new infidelity have wrung Elisabeth's soul more than those which had preceded it, many of them, indeed, still more unkind? Doubtless because the pain was doubled by its infliction on hopes newly born after the death of the old. Moreover, the heart cannot hold out for ever, and suffering does not strengthen it by repeated blows, but ends by breaking it, as was now the case with Elisabeth.

In the year 1860, when the Empress in all her brilliant beauty had just reached her twenty-third birthday, an event took place which overwhelmed her with such disgust that she took on her own initiative a step which man-made law would not give her the power to take. A few weeks after the Emperor's return to Vienna, which occurred at a period of great internal disturbance in the Empire, the first appearance was made at the Burgtheater of Frau Roll, an unknown actress from the provinces, with no claims to fame except an astonishing beauty of face and figure. What surprised Vienna most was that it was impossible to discover the introducer of this wonderful beauty to the stage of the Imperial theatre. There were

rumours about a high personage, of course, but with nothing to confirm them. Besides, his grief over the loss of Lombardy seemed so great, and the state of affairs was so grave, that no one could credit suggestions of frivolity. The question, therefore, remained unanswered during the winter season of 1860-61, although no one was talking about anything else. At last the end of the season arrived, when it was learnt that the beautiful actress was to spend her holidays at Ischl, where the Imperial family was also stopping. The rejoicings were great, for Ischl is a small place, where everyone meets everyone else, and Frau Roll could scarcely conceal her private affairs from the eyes of the curious. So it turned out. Less than a week had passed before, to the general astonishment, the name of the lady's mysterious protector was discovered, and was wafted to the Empress's ears. Without delay Elisabeth went to her husband and told him that he must make a choice—either Frau Roll must leave Ischl within twenty-four hours, or she would depart herself. The next day Frau Roll left the Imperial resort. It must be added that she did not go very far. But Elisabeth, although she was not duped, did not refer to the painful subject again. She merely waited, with that obstinate patience which a fixed idea inspires, until some new incident, and one that would not put her as now in a ridiculous light, should arise to justify her in declaring that she would no longer live with her husband.

She had not long to wait. The opportunity came in November, 1861. Francis-Joseph left Vienna one morning with certain gentlemen of his Court for a day's shooting at Mürzzuschlag, meaning to return the same night after the riotous banquet which always wound up these excursions. But night came, and the Emperor did not return. Next day, toward even-

ing, the shooting-party reached the Südbahn Station, but without the Emperor. Vague excuses were made that Francis-Joseph was tired or unwell, and would remain another day at Mürzzuschlag to recuperate. One of the courtiers, Count K., was less discreet than his companions, and, yielding to the persistent curiosity of his newly-married wife, let her know after dinner that it was not through weariness or illness that the Emperor had remained behind, but in order to pursue an affair not at all to his credit with a young peasant-girl

As soon as she had got her choice piece of scandal, the Countess K. made for the Empress's apartments, where etiquette obliged Elisabeth to dispense tea every night to the ladies of her Court, including the Countess, who was a maid of honour. She had promised her husband not to breathe a word, but he had given her an example of indiscretion which she followed faithfully. In the midst of a group of frivolous friends she related her tale, with embellishments, to an accompaniment of stifled giggles and exclamations. The Empress, who was chatting with a neighbouring group, did not lose a word of the story. She turned pale, but did not otherwise betray herself. When the tale was told, she went up to the Countess K., and after talking to her on indifferent matters, broke off to say, in the most natural way in the world :

" You must excuse me, ladies, if I cut my reception rather short to-night, but I am tired and want a rest."

The usual hand-kissing took place, and the Empress's fingers did not tremble as the Countess K.'s lips touched them. But hardly had the door closed behind the last guest when, with a break in her voice and dark rings of anguish about her eyes, Elisabeth called to her the old nurse whom she had brought

with her from Possenhofen, and bade her fill a travelling-bag with the necessary clothes, and get ready to depart with her.

"Are we going for long?" asked the nurse.

"For ever!"

"Oh, Miss Lisbeth! . . ."

"Go and do as I tell you."

A quarter of an hour later the two left the Hofburg unnoticed, called a carriage, drove to the southern terminus, and caught the first train leaving Vienna. It was not until next day that the Archduchess Sophia learnt from the Empress's chambermaid that she had not spent the night in her apartments. Then, making instant inquiries, she discovered the Countess K.'s exploit, and, feeling sure of the flight of the "little Bavarian goose," at once warned the police. Before an hour had passed she was informed of the Empress's departure on the Südbahn, either for the palace of Miramar or for a longer journey from Trieste, where the Imperial yacht lay. A telegram was sent to Trieste to stop the Empress's departure at all costs, and to prevent the yacht from putting to sea. At the same time a special train was despatched to Trieste, carrying a high Court official. The Empress was indeed at Trieste. She had proposed to board the yacht at once, and start for some foreign port, no matter where. The captain had received his warning in time, and made a slight breakdown in the engine-room the excuse for a day's delay, in accordance with the Dowager-Archduchess's orders.

It was on board the yacht, however, in Trieste Harbour that the high official found the Empress. What passed between them is unknown. It is probable that he attempted to dissuade her from her journey by pointing out what scandal it would bring down upon herself, especially as she would not be

there to defend herself. If this was the actual trend of his remarks, they can hardly have appealed to a woman so convinced of the justification of her conduct and so disdainful of what people said about her. What she was more likely to fear was that her flight might be attributed to her terror of an explanation with her husband and her mother-in-law. Anyhow, next day she returned to the Hofburg before the news of her flight had become public. A terrible scene followed between the three actors in this drama. It is asserted that Francis-Joseph, confessing his misdeeds, but dreading scandal still more, fell at Elisabeth's feet begging for pardon in terrified tones, and promising, like a child, never to do it again. It is even said that he dared for the first time in his life to brave his mother's anger, reproaching her for her harshness and injustice to Elisabeth, and accusing himself of weakness and cowardice. Nothing could shake Elisabeth's decision. All that she would agree to was that her departure should be given an official character. She refused for the present to play the part of Empress before a Court whose cruelty to her was equalled by her contempt for it.

The same night Dr. Skoda, the well-known Viennese professor of medicine, was summoned to the Hofburg, and, despite his reluctance to carry out the Imperial wishes, was induced after a long discussion to sign a report declaring that the Empress's lungs were affected, and that she must leave Vienna as soon as possible for a milder climate. Next day Elisabeth, escorted to the station by the chief Court dignitaries, left Vienna for Antwerp, where a yacht was awaiting her with steam up, ready to take her to sunny Madeira.

Francis-Joseph accompanied her in the train as far as Bamberg, in Bavaria. When he had left her,

Elisabeth sat gazing through the window at the mists of night falling upon the autumn landscape. The Bavarian forests lay before her eyes, forests like the woods of Possenhofen, where was born that dream which was now all shattered, and the dusk of autumn which enshrouded them was like that of the night at Laxenburg when her son was stolen from her. In a corner of the carriage sat the old nurse, fearful of breaking in on the silence of the unhappy woman she had reared, the Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, who wept with soft, low sobs over the ruins of a life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE IMPERIAL WANDERER

"UNLESS he is seeking for death, madame, I don't believe that anyone would try to ride the dangerous brute, whom I only keep as a curiosity."

"Who can tell? Anyhow, my dear Count, please remember that I mean to see this wonder, and that I shall be at your stables to-morrow at two o'clock."

"I will take care to remember so pleasant an appointment, and it is unnecessary for me to say that Your Majesty will be a most welcome visitor."

The Empress Elisabeth sat in the dining-room of her favourite Hungarian château of Goedoelloe. Behind her back her lady-in-waiting was signalling to Count Festetics, a big owner of horses in the neighbourhood, that he must not pursue this topic. Several times he had tried to turn aside from his story, which concerned a three-year-old in his stables that had already not only cut open his rider's head, but also killed with a kick a groom rash enough to come near him. Each time he broke off, the Empress had contrived that the Count should be brought back to the exploits of this savage beast, whom so far no one had been able to mount or even saddle without taking his life in his hands.

It was the end of the summer of 1863, nearly two years, therefore, since that autumn afternoon when

Elisabeth of Austria had left the Hofburg with the intention of returning no more; and, indeed, she was hardly seen there again until the second half of 1867, when she returned to married life, with the result that on July 31st, 1868, she gave birth at Ischl to her third daughter, and fourth and last child, the Archduchess Marie-Valérie. That period was an interlude (if an interlude of some duration) amid the stages of the Empress's mournful wanderings.

After leaving Vienna, Elisabeth had spent but little time in Madeira. Scenery soon palled upon her (for her weariness was in her own soul, not in her surroundings), and she started upon a fantastic cruise on the Imperial yacht, which had been put at her disposal. She visited the Norwegian coast, then made for Corfu and the Mediterranean, and finished with the Adriatic and Venice. Venice satisfied the artistic tastes which had grown so strong during her solitary rovings, and it was there that Francis-Joseph met her in May, 1862, with a view to keeping up what remained of appearances, and bringing her back for a time to Vienna. She spent only a few days at the Hofburg, but did not immediately travel very far away, contenting herself with preparing for herself a home of incredible luxury, but of original and refined taste, surrounded by a fairy-like park, at the hunting-box of Lainz, a nursery for deer and wild-boars until she took possession of it. Here in a few weeks she got through fabulous sums of money, for with her constant craving for change she had fallen a prey to a wild passion for spending. When Lainz was at last fitted up, she discovered that it was too near Vienna, and henceforward she had but one desire—to leave her new residence for another, wherever it might be. To find employment for her nervous energy while awaiting the move upon which she had

set her heart, she devoted herself to a long course of physical culture. She began with gymnastics, to the horror of the Court of Vienna, and then, in her mad love for horses, signified her wish to take lessons in the *haute école*. Her teacher was the head-huntsman of the Court, a Frenchman named Gebhardt, until much later she met with that celebrated horsewoman who became her intimate friend, Eliza Renz.

Gebhardt, whose reputation in this difficult art extended all over Europe, showed no enthusiasm when he was first called upon to gratify what he called "a mere amateur's caprice." It was not long before he was compelled to make amends by confessing that his pupil was a natural rider, gifted beyond belief. Not only did she reach in very short time a perfection which would have caused envy in many horsewomen who were idols of the ring, but she had also, beyond all doubt, a mysterious power which tamed the most stubborn of animals. In her own circle she was already known as "Madame Orpheus," in recognition of her ability to make the most vicious horses bow before her will, almost with the utterance of a word. She was so sure of herself that she was fearless of danger, or rather one might have said that she actually courted the most evident perils. Many a time her terrified companions trembled at the mad feats which she performed on horseback. We can understand, therefore, the emotion of Elisabeth's lady-in-waiting at the alluring tale of Count Festetics as he painted for the daring "Madame Orpheus" the picture of this untamable steed who dealt out death around him.

At this period the Empress had left Lainz and recently settled down in a new home at Goedoelloe, in Hungary, the land of horses and horsemen above all others, and the land of chivalry also—another point

which appealed to the bold and romantic imagination of the Empress errant.

On the day following the conversation with which this chapter begins Elisabeth presented herself at the hour she had appointed at the stables of Count Festetics. The latter had received a communication from one of the Empress's relatives, and had made up his mind not to show her the dangerous animal. He showed so little anxiety to lead the way to the stalls that she said to him:

"Well, are we not going to see this terrible steed? You know, my dear Count, that I came to-day expressly to see him."

"Forgive me, Your Majesty; he will be brought out to you. I would not trouble you to go inside the stables."

"As you will," was all that Elisabeth replied.

The horse, or rather a horse, was then brought out to her.

"Is this the famous charger who deals death to all who come near him?" she asked, with a smile. "How is it that they have been able to tame him for this one day, and bring him out here?"

"I will explain, Your Majesty. . . ."

"Oh, I understand! He is a bad mount, but a good courtier."

At the Count's long face she broke into a laugh.

"Come, my dear Count, don't be so gloomy with me," she said. "You would make a bad courtier, for you do not know how to lie. It would be better to take me to the horse about which you were telling me yesterday."

As he stammered a protest, she put on her most imperious tone, though without raising her voice, and said: "I wish it."

The Count could but bow in submission, and the

party entered the stables. The Empress, quietly resolute and without a trace of fear, though in the depths of her eyes there glowed a disquieting little spark, stepped inside the box and approached the horse. He was a magnificent beast as he stood there, twitching and quivering throughout his frame. The Empress uttered a few soft words in a musical voice, and, marvellous to relate, the horse stopped trembling. He even deigned to take a lump of sugar from her little hand. As she left Count Festetics that day, the Empress said to him, not without a shade of gravity in the mockery of her speech:

"Within a week, Count, I will ride this horse that kills all who get on him."

"I beg Your Majesty not to think of it. It is far too dangerous a sport."

"But come, he used to kill also all who came near him, and did not I go near him?"

"You did."

"And he does not seem to have killed me. Besides," she added in a low voice, more to herself than to the others, "it would be no commonplace death."

For a whole week she spent a few minutes daily with the horse. On the eighth day she saddled him with her own hands, led him from his box and out of the stable, and quickly sprang into the saddle. The beast whinnied, tossed his head, pawed the ground, reared up, and burst into a gallop. When he came back, still bearing his Imperial rider, the untamable steed was walking quietly as she murmured to him and patted his neck. She rode him back that day to Goedoelloe, so proud of her wonderful victory that she had asked Count Festetics to give him to her.

It really seemed—and the little Court at Goedoelloe, knowing its responsibility, was in terror over it—

as if the Empress went in search of the most terrible dangers, not merely for the sake of the excitement, but with some object which she would not confess. It was quite enough for something to be declared impossible to make her attempt it as soon as she heard of it. There was, for instance, her visit to the mountain chapel of Mariazell, a feat which nearly cost her her life. Mariazell is a remote place in the Styrian Alps, and is almost inaccessible. A chapel had been built there recently in honour of some miraculous virgin. The neighbouring mountaineers make a yearly pilgrimage thither on foot with great difficulty. A few, because they are cripples, just manage to have themselves carried up on the backs of mountain mules, accompanied by a guide.

No horse had ever reached the chapel, as Elisabeth learnt during the course of a stay which she made in this region. Next morning, to the astonishment of the country-folk, the Empress started for Mariazell on horseback, followed by a groom on a mule. For part of the route the faint goat-track leading to her goal ran over tree-trunks roughly squared and unprovided with a handrail, across a precipice many hundred feet high, at the bottom of which a torrent roared. Elisabeth urged her mount along, in spite of his resistance, until suddenly one of his hind-feet slipped between two logs, and his terror, already aroused by the sound of t e torrent, caused him to rear up. The peril of the situation was all the greater because, owing to the narrowness of the improvised bridge, Elisabeth could not jump from the animal's back. All at once she felt herself lifted violently from the saddle and carried back to the cliff which she had just left, while the horse plunged into the ravine. The groom, seeing his mistress in danger, had snatched her from the jaws of death. Such had been the poor man's

fright that, when he had set the Empress on her feet, he turned ghastly white and fainted away. Elisabeth, calm and indifferent to the most awful dangers, tended him with her own hands—a beautiful Doña Quixote waiting upon her heroic Sancho Panza, whose mule was peaceably browsing on the scanty vegetation which forced its way up between the stones of the track.

On her return to Goedoelloe after this Alpine excursion, and before she went to Normandy for a short sojourn, the wandering Empress took up again her study of the *haute école*. She soon abandoned it for a very inadequate reason, which she could have got over but for her unvarying kindness of heart. For her "performances" it was necessary to have music, and the place of a band was taken by a piano. One of the maids of honour hastened every time to play for her mistress, but unhappily always played so badly that Elisabeth's musical ears were tortured. She could have taken another pianist instead of the one whose notes were so false, but this would have pained the unharmonious lady, and her mistress preferred, therefore, to give up her favourite pursuit. She consoled herself by visits to the Czikos, that race of Hungarian herdsmen who look after huge droves of horses like those which are to be met in Bolivia or on the Pampas. The Czikos, like the South American Indians and the Patagonians, are wonderful adepts with the lasso. The Empress fell in love with the sport, and with her incredible quickness at learning soon became a first-class expert in the difficult game.

She now left Hungary for Normandy. She had rented from a M. Perquer a comfortable châlet near Petites-Dalles. This Châlet Sostot was locally known as "the château." Here she lived in great retirement, under the name of the Countess

Hohenembs, and the country people were unaware that the black-robed lady whom they saw out riding every day wore on her pale brow a diadem far heavier than the heavy golden plaits which encircled it. With the queer recklessness which marked her, she narrowly escaped never returning from this neighbourhood, for in leaping a boundary wall between two fields her horse stumbled, and threw her with such violence on to the stony ground that she lay unconscious until picked up by some fishermen, who brought her back, still motionless, to her own people. It was not until this day that the countryside discovered who was the strange lady whom all had learnt to respect and whom all the children loved, so sweet and tender had she, the mother robbed of her son, always shown herself to the young ones of others.

Wherever she appeared in her wanderings, always in her robe of black, the "Countess Hohenembs" left behind her the name of a good fairy. The Arabs are not quick to recognize in the women of other races any qualities save those of an instrument of pleasure, but even they could not withstand her mysterious fascination. In Algeria, where she made quite a long stay on more than one occasion, she won for herself among the natives a superhuman reputation. The Arabs, admiring both her incomparable skill in taming horses and the perfect grasp which she had of their language, put such trust in Elisabeth—the white lady with the sun locks—that they grew into the habit of looking on her as a kind of justice of the peace. With her gentle firmness of manner, her sweet reasonableness of speech, and her delicate soundness of judgment, she was unrivalled in her success in reconciling those who came to lay their cases before her. So striking was the charm which

surrounded this exceptionally gifted woman that she gained the confidence of a race which despises women even more than the Arabs, and is, too, even more hostile to Europeans than they, the Gipsies. Almost all of them knew her without being aware, for the most part, who she really was, and all respected and loved her, as the Norman fishermen and children did. She delighted in visiting the tribes and going from tent to tent, and many a time she put a friendly end to quarrels which threatened to lead to murderous complications. More than once she risked her own life, and no one else would have returned alive from some of the excursions which she made in serene confidence.

Being no longer under Court control, and freed from the cruel despotism of the Archduchess Sophia, the Empress could indulge in all the sports which pleased her. Walking, as we know, was one of these once forbidden pursuits. In the course of one of her long journeys in the depths of Hungary, she was resting on the edge of a wood after a tramp of many miles. She caught the sound of moans coming from the wood, at first very faint, but soon turning to loud cries and then to absolute howls of pain. Catching up her short black skirt in her hands, she ran to the spot whence the noise was coming. In a clearing a whole band of gipsies was sitting in a semicircle on the ground, in the centre being the chief and the "grandmother of the tribe." The grandmother is the oldest woman of the band, the only representative of the weaker sex to whom the gipsies pay honour, though, to make up for this, her authority is even greater than that of the chief himself.

In the middle of the clearing a woman, stripped of her clothes and with blood all down her back, was writhing in the bonds which fastened her to a tree.

Two men were gravely and calmly flogging her, turn and turn about, with freshly cut twigs. Without giving a thought to the fact that it was a veritable sacrilege to interfere in a solemn scene of gipsy life, and heedless of the risk to her life to which her boldness exposed her, Elisabeth threw herself between the woman and her torturers, and boldly ordered them to stop the savage punishment. The "grandmother," who recognized the Empress, immediately took her under her protection, and tried to draw her away quietly. But Elisabeth stood her ground, and pleaded so well that she obtained forgiveness for the woman, who had been suffering the usual penalty which the gipsies inflict on those unhappy wives who, ill-treated by their husbands, seek consolation and forgetfulness elsewhere.

The wandering Empress also visited Great Britain, where she made many friends among the aristocracy. Here, again, it was a sport which attracted her—to wit, fox-hunting. In one of these hunts, which involve much hard riding, she met with an adventure which was at least picturesque. She was following a fox in the neighbourhood of Maynooth College, in Ireland. The fox, which was running in the direction of the college, suddenly darted through a hole in the wall, and shot into the midst of a game of football. Hardly a moment later a horse leapt over the wall, ridden by a woman in dripping garments. In her pursuit of the fox Elisabeth had swum across a river, and, still following him, she had jumped the wall of Maynooth College—a pretty jump of four feet.

The head of the college was most attentive, and, having nothing better to offer her, gave her a Doctor's robes to take the place of her wet clothes. Elisabeth asked to be allowed to keep the robes, adding,

with her amiable tact, that she regretted that she could not acquire with the robes the knowledge of the pupils of the college.

This was, indeed, no mere graceful sally on her part, for all through her life she showed a passionate desire for ever learning something new. Up to the very day of her death she went on perfecting herself in the knowledge of the tongues of the numerous countries which she had visited and continued to revisit. She spoke with the utmost purity German, French, English, Italian, Modern Greek, Arabic, and Hungarian, and these are only the languages with which she was acquainted in all their intricacies. Just as in sport she sought for a physical exercise to distract her somewhat from her ever-present troubles, so, too, in the labours of the brain, she sought for a mental exercise of like tendency.

Her abilities were such that her various teachers were always surprised at the rapidity of her progress. Her Greek teacher, Dr. Christomanos, was loud in his appreciation. Still more so was her Hungarian tutor, Dr. Max Falk, who is now editor-in-chief of the *Pesther Lloyd*. And Hungarian is, perhaps, of all languages, the most difficult to learn, because it has no points of similarity with any other. She studied also, and with success, mathematics, philosophy, and poetry. Her devotion to Heine is well known. Down to the day when she fell a victim to the assassin's knife, she never missed sending once a year a bouquet of white roses for the poet's tomb, and she made many solitary pilgrimages to the cemetery of Montmartre in Paris, where Heine sleeps his last sleep.*

* In the temple at Corfu, mentioned on p. 203, the Empress Elisabeth erected a statue to Heine, which the German Emperor, the present proprietor of the Achilleion, has just (in May, 1909) sold for £500, making the temple into a memorial chapel for the Empress herself.—*Translator.*

It is very curious that Elisabeth, unhappy and melancholy as she was, could never understand Schopenhauer's pessimism, which seemed to her inconsistent with the beauty and kindliness of Nature. Doubtless she did not care to be plunged deeper into the mourning which enveloped her mind. Besides, it can be seen that a woman of her superior character was capable, amid her sorrows, of not arguing from particular to general and concluding that life was necessarily evil because it treated her cruelly. It is probable that this was among the reasons which prevented her from yielding to the temptation of suicide, a temptation which certainly haunted her. She exposed herself to death so often, so carelessly, and so gratuitously, that we cannot but hold that she sought for it. An off-hand remark of hers explains why it was that she did not take her life.

"To die," she would say, "is to put an end to oneself, and one's end should be accompanied by perfect serenity. There can be no beauty without serenity, and death should come to us in beautiful guise."

Suicide, mere brutal suicide, seemed to her ugly. But what of suicide "in beautiful guise"? One evening in Brittany she thought she had attained it, and it was not her fault that the chance slipped by. She had rented a house among the cruel rocks of Finisterre, on a lonely point of the coast swept by the sea and the winds. It was an old ruined château, which appealed to her romantic soul by the legend which it bore over its door:

"A perfect knight, be sure 'tis so,
E'er striketh high and speaketh low."*

* "*Un chevalier, n'en doutez pas,*
Doit férir haut et parler bas."

The tottering castle had been roughly and hastily fitted up, and, after the outlay of a lot of money, the ruin was handed over to her in a more or less presentable state for the summer season.

Here Elisabeth spent days and nights of delight in almost complete solitude, her suite being reduced to the very minimum. One night she was awakened by the bellowing rage of the ocean—that rage which it is wont to display so terribly on this shore of the Bay of Shipwrecks. Elisabeth rose from her bed and went down to the beach. All the village was out, watching, as the grey dawn spread over the tempest-torn sky, a ship going to its doom, impaled on a reef. All hope had ben abandoned of saving the poor wretches, whose signals of distress could just be seen. Silent and very pale, with the same strange light in her eyes as on the day when she drew near to the murderous horse of Count Festetics, Elisabeth suddenly, with a proud and hopeless gesture, threw herself into the sea.

She was saved by one of her maids of honour, Countess C., an excellent swimmer, who was only able to bring her to shore after a great struggle.

The unhappy Elisabeth had hoped on this morning, as she had before in the stables of Count Festetics, to meet death in beautiful guise!

CHAPTER IX

FROM TRAGEDY TO FARCE

In some of the principal theatres of the small French provincial towns it is the custom for the same company to act in one evening plays of such widely different kinds as, for instance, "La Tour de Nesle" and "Le Chapeau de paille d'Italie," or, to take more modern examples, "Les Deux Orphelines" and "La Dame de chez Maxim's." Grave and gay are freely mingled, and comedy alternates with melodrama for seven or eight hours at a stretch on the boards of these houses, where the audiences take huge delight in regular exhibitions of dramatic hard labour. Francis-Joseph's family seems to have treated the gallery which watched the drama of its existence to a similar entertainment. Tragedy and farce took it in turn throughout one grim, unbroken stretch of the second half of the nineteenth century to excite the tears and guffaws of the spectators. Some of the masterpieces, for one performance only, were played, partly at least, with open doors; but for most of them there was only a limited and (if one may say so) a privileged audience.

Tragedy first. The plot, in the Habsburg family drama, is based on State policy, which is closely bound up with the religious question. The Catholic Empire of Austria could only seek alliances for the scions of its Imperial house among the reigning

Catholic families, who were all, like the Habsburgs and for the same reasons, degenerate and blemished. Marriages, in fact, had all to be made with near relations, because there were only five reigning families within the pale of the Church—the Habsburgs in Austria, the Wittelsbachs in Bavaria, the Bourbons in Spain, the House of Savoy in Italy, and the Albertine line in Saxony. There were also the Coburgs in Belgium, but, owing to its having a less unspotted origin than the other Catholic royal houses, any connection with Leopold's family was disclaimed by the proud lineage of Habsburg. As such trivialities have a grave importance for those who live in the midst of them, it must be stated that the Belgian Coburgs are satisfied to trace their beginnings to Leopold I., who came to the throne in 1831, whereas the Habsburgs carry their origin back to Everard III., Count of Nordgau, Lower Alsace, in the year of robbery, rape, and murder, 898. Further, for political reasons, no marriage has been possible for more than a century between the Houses of Habsburg and of Savoy. The two families in which degeneracy was most marked, because of the more frequent unions between their members, were those of Habsburg and of Wittelsbach, those precisely to which belonged Francis-Joseph and Elisabeth respectively. So persistent had been weddings between the two houses that the marriage of the Emperor of Austria and of the daughter of Duke Maximilian of Bavaria might be looked on almost as incestuous through the closeness of blood-relationship. Both Francis-Joseph and Elisabeth brought charming presents to each other among their wedding portions: he hereditary epilepsy, she hereditary madness. The point has not been cleared up whether, during her last visit to Corfu, Elisabeth was not attacked by mental disease; but it is definitely

proved that Francis-Joseph is an epileptic, like the Emperor Joseph II. and like his own grandfather Francis I. To conclude for the moment this lamentable account, it must be added that the Emperor transmitted his complaint to his son, the hapless Crown Prince Rudolf, and that his youngest daughter, the Archduchess Marie-Valérie (who also married a cousin, Francis-Salvator, Archduke of Austria-Tuscany), is epileptic like her brother, father, and two ancestors.

The consequent anxiety felt by the Emperor about his own family can be easily imagined. Even if we omit the worst catastrophe of all, that of Mayerling, where the Crown Prince Rudolf lost his life, tragic occurrences still appear numerous throughout the Emperor's troublous life. The most agitating of these, especially because of the undying terror which it inspired in the Empress, was the mysterious death of Ludwig II. of Bavaria, Elisabeth's cousin, a Wittelsbach, and therefore a member of the most degenerate of the Catholic houses of Europe. What makes the Berg tragedy particularly awful is that it seems almost certain that Ludwig not only killed himself, but also committed murder before doing so. The eccentricities in which he indulged proved that the wearer of the Bavarian crown was attacked by mental disease. It had even to be admitted that his madness was such that it might grow dangerous to other people, and that it was necessary to keep the King in confinement. Of course he was not taken to an asylum. As happens in such cases, King Ludwig was housed in turn in his favourite palaces, the posts of chamberlain and gentlemen-in-waiting being filled by a well-known alienist, Professor von Gudden, and by a number of male nurses. The nurses wore Court liveries, to put the royal patient off the scent; but it

was difficult to deceive Ludwig, and in order to prevent his escape (a desire which became an obsession with him, so well aware was he of his imprisonment) it was seen to be necessary to keep a very close watch upon him. Although he was free to walk in the parks attached to his palaces, he never went out without finding himself followed by two attendants, of muscular appearance, dressed as footmen.

King Ludwig was, indeed, dreaming of taking refuge in France or in Switzerland, after escaping from his prison disguised as a Count. Every evening in the summer he took a constitutional after dinner, in the company of Professor von Gudden, followed by the two footmen-nurses. One evening, the day after his arrival at the château of Berg, when he seemed calmer than usual, he made a complaint, not about the watch kept upon him (for madmen never make these errors of logic and common sense), but about the presence of the two footmen.

"These men interfere with my peaceful appreciation of Nature," he said, loudly enough for them to hear. "Do you not think that we might disregard for one night the regulation which attaches them to our person, and send them back to the house?"

"I must confess, Your Majesty, that I had not thought about it, and that they do not trouble me in the least."

"Well, they worry me, and I beg you to communicate my wish to them."

King Ludwig was a man of unusual muscular strength, but Professor von Gudden was considered, not without reason, a regular athlete. Trusting in his biceps, therefore, he humoured his royal patient's whim, and sent away the nurses. On receipt of the order, the two men went back to the house, but, in spite of the exacting nature of their day's duties, they

did not go to bed, for the King's madness had recently grown more pronounced. A quarter of an hour passed, then half an hour, and yet the others had not returned from their walk. The nurses began to feel anxious, and resolved to go back to the spot where they had left the King and the doctor. A few yards away from it, on the bank of the lake, they saw two pairs of legs stretching out of the water on to the grass. Running forward, they pulled out the two bodies. The mad King Ludwig of Bavaria and the alienist doctor, Professor von Gudden, were lying side by side in death, suffocated by drowning. Ludwig's body was in a peaceful attitude, while the doctor's limbs showed signs of a desperate struggle. Von Gudden, immediately after the nurses' departure, must have been treacherously seized by the maniac and hurled into the water without having time to utter a cry, for the two attendants would certainly have heard him. Then, as his convulsed body showed, his head must have been held under water by Ludwig until his heart's action ceased. Next the mad King lay down at the doctor's side, and, with the fantastic patience which only maniacs can show, drowned himself in his turn in a foot and a half of water.

When the news reached the Viennese Court, this awful death made a great sensation, and the Emperor was profoundly stirred. But it was the usually calm Empress who was most terribly agitated by it. The tragedy made her remember that she was also, like Ludwig II., a Wittelsbach, and that she was under the curse like him, either in her own person or in those of her descendants. Although, therefore, she had never loved her cousin, she fell seriously ill in consequence of his death. It seems, too, that she had a warning of his death at the time of its occurrence, a phenomenon in no way more surprising than those of

wireless telegraphy and telephony, though the manner in which the waves of thought act is different and less familiar. The Empress was at the time stopping on the banks of the Lake of Starnberg, near Possenhofen, directly opposite the château of Berg. On the night of the tragedy she went to bed early, and fell asleep at once. Suddenly she began to dream, and a picture appeared to her of Ludwig II., with his features distorted, his hair plastered down on his forehead, his lips blue, his eyes glassy, and his clothes disordered and so wet that great streams of water ran out of them over the floor and began rapidly to creep up the walls of the bedchamber. This nightmare vision of the drowned man bringing with him death—a death like his own—startled Elisabeth out of her sleep, and caused her to utter so terrified a scream that it brought her attendants running to her. She told them of her dream, trembling all the while. They had great difficulty in calming her. In the half-waking state which follows slumber, dream life and real life seemed to blend, and the rest of the night it was necessary for her favourite waiting-woman to hold her hand, like a frightened child's, before she could get off to sleep.

Next day she heard how her cousin had died by drowning the previous evening. She asked for a boat, and was swiftly rowed across the lake to the château of Berg, where she was the first of her family to reach the side of the dead man, whom she had not seen for so many years. On the way from her residence to the house of death, while the boat glided over the still waters in which her cousin's life had passed away, Elisabeth gathered water-lilies, which she laid beside the body when she arrived at Berg. She then asked to be left alone with the dead. A whole hour later she was found unconscious, with her arms crossed, face downwards on the floor. Many fruitless attempts

were made to bring her round. At last she recovered her senses, when, with a terrified glance at the people and objects about her, and a nervous trembling from head to foot, she cried in tones of utter horror:

"Take him away, take him away . . . quickly. He is not dead. He sat up just now, and told me he was pretending to be dead . . . so that they should not torture him any longer."

And Ludwig's cousin fainted again.

Yet it is known that Elisabeth had not much affection for her kinsman. He had, indeed, acted very badly once to her elder sister, the one whom the Archduchess Sophia had selected for Francis-Joseph's wife, and who afterwards married the Duke of Alençon. Ludwig was at that time courting his cousin, and was very anxious that she should be allowed to share the crown of Bavaria with him, giving her in the meantime a ring, which he made her swear never to take off. Now, in spite of his jealous disposition, he had in hand, nevertheless, another affair as well as this engagement. The lady involved was an ex-actress, who had no wish that her royal friend should get married. Knowing this morbid jealousy, she conceived a bold plan, which she carried out with equal audacity. She had managed to get into the good graces of Ludwig's *fiancée*, and stole from her the ring, which she proceeded to give to a young officer in the royal household, a notorious breaker of hearts. Ludwig noticed the ring on his officer's hand without saying a word; but the very same day he broke off his engagement. A few months later Ludwig was being rowed by moonlight over the waters of a deep lake, dressed in the garb of Lohengrin, with the ex-actress at his side. In a spirit of foolish and dangerous bravado she confessed to him what she had done to break off the marriage between him and his cousin

Sophia. Suddenly Lohengrin sprang upon Elsa, and calmly threw her into the lake. One of the boatmen jumped in after her, and managed to bring the indiscreet chatterer safe to shore.

This violent and ungovernable man, so jealous and unreflecting, was therefore inclined to murder, and was, in particular, haunted by ideas of death by drowning from of old. Like all really insane persons, also, this Wittelsbach was mad from his birth, and Elisabeth, being a Wittelsbach, was in constant dread, from the day of Ludwig's death, of herself succumbing one day to the hereditary curse.

This was not the only nor the earliest tragedy which befell the already trouble-stricken household of the rulers of Austria. If the principal actor in its most mysterious drama was the madman who perished by drowning, the first tragedy centred about a consumptive young girl who was burnt to death. This hapless heroine was the only daughter of the victor of Custozza, Francis-Joseph's uncle, the Archduke Albert, the man really responsible for the Revolution of 1848. Her grandfather was the Archduke Charles, the first to break Napoleon's long series of victories. The Archduke Albert was a soldier of the old school, a feudal *grand seigneur*, and the richest landed proprietor in Europe. He treated his peasantry like his soldiers, and like the Viennese townsfolk in 1848, with extreme harshness, yet not without occasional traces of justice. Under his rough exterior he sometimes gave proof that an almost generous heart beat in his warrior bosom. Of all the Habsburg family, he was the only one who, from the first days of his Imperial nephew's marriage, frankly espoused the cause of the unfortunate Elisabeth. His attitude was such that he had an open rupture with his sister-in-law, the Archduchess Sophia. This sentimental

porcupine adored his daughter, even though, in his inmost soul, he would have preferred a son to carry on his family. Having only one daughter, he lavished on her frail form all the inarticulate affection of a rugged heart. Unhappily, the young Archduchess, like every Habsburg, suffered from one of the family taints, and had a weak constitution, showing in particular a distinct tendency to bronchial and lung troubles. She was guarded with the most assiduous care, and everything that could be done for her in the matter of climate, surroundings, and medical attention was called in to fight against the consumption that threatened her.

The young girl herself was less careful than others about her own health, and she had an absolute passion for cigarette-smoking, which was very dangerous to her in the state of her respiratory organs. She was obliged, therefore, to smoke in secret. One beautiful summer evening at Schönbrunn she was leaning out of her window challenging the twinkling lights of heaven with the more earthly glow of her cigarette. Her frail shoulders were scarcely veiled in a dressing-jacket of white gauze and lace, as she surrendered herself deliciously to the enjoyment of the warm night and the forbidden indulgence. A crunching sound on the gravel path reached her ears, and she cautiously put her hand over her little red star. A dark shadow drew near the window and stopped. The little red star disappeared behind the white robe. The Archduke Albert, the cause of the shadow which alarmed her, stood talking for a moment to his daughter, when suddenly he noticed smoke rising up behind her. Before he had time to warn her, the hapless girl found herself a mass of flames. The cigarette had set light to her gauze jacket. She ran shrieking down the galleries of the palace, the flames blazing up as the

current of air caught them, and fell to the ground. When help came, under the burnt fragments of her lace and her under-linen, her body was covered with horrible wounds. She was plunged into a bath full of oil, and in this strange carriage was brought to Vienna. There, in spite of all the pains lavished on her by the most famous physicians, the victim of her own carelessness succumbed in a few days to sufferings which left her not a single minute of repose.

We need do no more than mention the case of the Archduke Laszlo, son of the Archduke Joseph, who was accidentally shot on a hunting expedition. The tragedy of Mexico comes next, and here it is necessary to make a brief extract from the pages of contemporary history.

About the year 1860 the Republic of Mexico, after contracting debts to certain European countries—especially France, England, and Spain—appeared to have forgotten all about them. Accordingly, on October 30th, 1861, the three Powers named came to an agreement designed to compel Mexico to fulfil her obligations. At the beginning of January, 1860, a Collective Note from the three countries demanded from the Mexican Government reparation for damages inflicted on their subjects, whose goods and belongings had not been respected. On the following February 9th the allied troops disembarked on the soil of the Republic, under the command of General Prim. Owing to the unfriendly eye with which the United States looked upon this action, Spain and England withdrew their forces after April 14th, leaving France alone to carry on the military operations began two months previously.

The idea of setting a Habsburg upon the restored throne of the Empire of Mexico was already in the mind of Monseigneur La Bastida, former Archbishop

of Mexico, whom the Republicans had driven out and deprived of his ecclesiastical possessions, to the value of £20,000,000. The French Government welcomed the Archbishop's suggestion, hoping to turn it to profit, and negotiations took place between the Tuileries and Miramar, the residence of Francis-Joseph's brother-in-law, the Archduke Maximilian, and his wife, the Archduchess Charlotte. It took no less than eight months to persuade the Archduke to accept the distant throne which was offered to him. Bazaine, however, who had succeeded General Forey in the French military government in Mexico, succeeded in re-establishing a certain amount of order in the country. On the strength of this apparent pacification, and by guaranteeing to support the Austrian Prince with "a moral and material guarantee by land and by sea," France at last induced Maximilian to set sail for his new Empire. Led astray by the illusive mirages which had been conjured up before his eyes, he reached Mexico ready to find awaiting him a land blazing with gold and ringing with popular enthusiasm. But the gold was destined for the Tuileries and the Mexican priesthood; while as for popular enthusiasm, it took the form certainly of shouts, but of shouts hostile to the Imperial pair who landed at Vera Cruz on May 24th, 1864.

The reign lasted for three years, succumbing under the heavy burden of that budget which had so dazzled Maximilian's eyes in the seclusion of his palace at Miramar. Bazaine had temporarily conquered the evil instincts of the Mexicans, and crushed by fear the tendency towards treason which is a fundamental part of their character. Maximilian's good-natured soul gave new opportunities to these instincts and tendencies. Mexico needed a Louis XI. or a Cromwell, but found a Louis XVI. And, like Louis XVI., Maxi-

milian was doomed to fall a victim to circumstances and to his own weakness. It must be added that the third Napoleon's Government contributed by its conduct to the catastrophe. In spite of promises and undertakings, the Sovereign at the Tuileries gave no moral support to the Sovereign in Mexico, and at the end of 1866 he even withdrew from him his material support (represented by the Army of Occupation) when confronted by a more definite threat from the United States. It was an error of the French Government to persuade the Archduke Maximilian to accept the throne of Mexico, but it was a betrayal of trust to recall the troops whose duty it was to uphold the unfortunate Emperor.

The Empress Charlotte had already come back to Europe. It was known that matters were going from bad to worse in Mexico, and that the Revolutionaries were arming against their Sovereign. Charlotte made a desperate appeal to Maximilian to return, which he was about to answer by embarking at Orizaba, when, yielding to the wiles of the Clerical party, who saw the ruin of all their hopes in his departure, he accepted a delusive offer of soldiers and treasure to enable him to fight the National and Republican movement. Napoleon III. should, and could, have intervened at this moment to save by main force the life of his companion in a venture which had turned out ill. He did not do so, and the last act of the tragedy commenced. Undecided, and with no one else's decision to take the place of his own, weak, and with no outside strength to sustain him, Maximilian went all unwitting to meet his death. On June 15th, 1867, on the Cerro de la Campaña, looking down on Queretaro, the poor Emperor perished miserably, abandoned by all, including those who had enticed him on the fatal adventure. At nine in the morning, under the blazing sun,

he fell pierced by the bullets of the Revolutionaries, who shot with him his Generals Miramon and Mejia. He suffered by the decree which he himself had signed in October, 1865, prescribing the death-penalty against anyone caught with arms in his hands.

The event which caused Maximilian's death also caused the loss of his unhappy wife's reason. The Empress has been mad from that day to this, hiding her condition from the world in a lonely and gloomy palace.

This sorrowful history, revealing at once the weakness of a man's character and the cowardice of State politics, is, except for the mystery of Mayerling, the last of the tragedies of the Imperial House of Austria. We come now to what we may call (and the title is suggestive of melodrama) "The Affair of Johann Orth." The story concerns the Archduke John, a scion of the Tuscan branch, a person infinitely more reputable than the majority of his cousins.

The Archduke John naturally entered upon a military career. A Colonel at twenty-four, Brigadier-General at twenty-six, and Lieutenant-General at twenty-seven, this rapid promotion, common to all members of his caste, must be admitted to have been less scandalous in his case than in that of other Archdukes. Indeed, he gave evidence of strict attention to his work, sound abilities, and genuine understanding of the art of war. His fault—or, at least, the thing which ruined him—was that he combined with these desirable qualities a remarkably critical mind and an unswerving loyalty. These shortcomings (in an Archduke) led him to publish, in 1883, a concise and bitterly critical pamphlet dealing with the regulations prevailing in the Austria-Hungarian Army. Its title, "Drill or Education?" is a sufficient indication of the liberal tendencies of the work. The Emperor

sent for the Archduke John, gave him a severe lecture, and banished him from the Court, where he was then living, to take up a command at Linz, in Upper Austria. At this period the Bulgarians, after Prince Alexander's abdication, were looking for a Prince willing to rule over them. The Archduke John, on whom military inactivity weighed heavily, made an incursion into politics, and suggested Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, who accepted the invitation, and was himself accepted by the Bulgarians, in spite of the official opposition of the Court of Vienna. The Emperor sent a despatch relieving the Archduke John of his post at Linz. The Archduke replied with a despatch placing in the Emperor's hands his resignation from the Army. He developed next a great taste for the mercantile marine, took the study seriously, and soon passed successfully at Hamburg his examination for Captain in the foreign trade. In October, 1889, he resigned his title of Archduke, with all the rights and prerogatives pertaining thereto, and adopted the name of plain Johann Orth, after a château belonging to his mother on the shore of the Lake of Gmunden. A few months later he took to share his lot a pretty actress whom he loved, Fraülein Margaret Stübel. With her he started on a sailing-ship, which he christened, after her, the "Saint Margaret," from Hamburg for Buenos Ayres. Making tnat port his base, he sailed next to Valparaiso. Thence he set out on a third voyage, and from that day to this nothing more has been heard of Johann Orth. As was only to be expected, a legend has grown up about him and his mysterious wanderings. He has been pictured as a gentleman-farmer living a homely life on some sierra in South America. What gives the lie to this hypothesis is the fact that his mother, who was dearer to him than all the world,

has never heard a word from him. He would have let her know at least that he was still alive. It would seem more probable, therefore, that, being an inexperienced navigator, he ran into a reef while rounding Cape Horn, and that the "Saint Margaret," in spite of the religious and sentimental protection of her name, went down with all hands. This explanation is less mysterious, romantic, and attractive than the tale of the gentleman-farmer, but, unluckily, it is also far more probable.

If it is necessary to speak at this point of the more recent scandals in the Tuscan branch of the family, everyone must recall the stir made by the flight of Her Royal Highness Louise of Saxony, daughter of Ferdinand IV., Grand-Duke of Tuscany. After marrying the Crown Prince of Saxony (who became King, subsequently to his matrimonial mishap, owing to the death without issue of his uncle Albert), the Princess Louise left the Court of Dresden in the company of her children's tutor, a young Belgian named Giron, and took refuge in Geneva. At the same time Louise's brother carried off an actress, Fraülein Adamovitch, whose talent was slight, and set up house with her on the right bank of Lake Leman, at Montreux. Accustomed as she was to play small parts on the stage, this lady continued the habit in real life; for the tremendous scandal of the Princess Louise's flight completely threw into the shade the second-rate scandal of the Prince's elopement with the singing-girl.

The curtain now goes up on the third part of the show—light comedy and coarse farce—the principal actors herein being two brothers and a nephew of Francis-Joseph. And first we have, by reason of his seniority, the Archduke Charles-Louis, third brother of the Emperor. He has been married three times—first to Margaret of Saxony, at Dresden, on November

4th, 1856; next, to Anonciada of Bourbon-Sicily, by proxy at Venice on October 16th, and in person at Rome on October 21st, 1862; and lastly, to Maria-Theresa of Braganza, at the château of Henbach on July 23rd, 1873. But, in addition to his three marriages, the adventures of the worthy Archduke appear to have been without number. One story, at least, shows that the wooings of this *grand seigneur* were not always marked by extreme delicacy.

A blue-eyed and fair-haired young woman, of elegant carriage and simple dress, was once returning to her home in the heart of the "Latin Quarter" of the Austrian capital, when a man approached her. He had the upturned moustache, frock-coated figure evidently built up by corsets, the swaggering walk, and, in fact, all the characteristics of a cavalry officer. The usual conversation followed, suggestive on his part, indignant on the girl's. She sent him about his business, showing him plainly that he had "made a mistake." Next day there was a knock at the door of the rooms where the blue-eyed one lodged. Suspecting nothing, she opened the door, to discover the frock-coated cavalry officer of the previous evening. She was about to shut the door in his face, but he gave her no time.

"Please don't shut me out; I have a most important message for you."

"I can take no message from you."

"Still, listen to it; that binds you to nothing, and I am sure that you would regret not giving me a hearing."

He stepped inside with deliberation, and told the girl that her grace and beauty had attracted one of the highest personages in the Empire, who was quite ready to lay at her feet his love and all the advantages which would of course accompany it.

The young girl was by no means dazzled at the vision, and declared she had a friend, a medical student, whom she loved and had no desire to betray. Her visitor's advice to her to reflect upon the good fortune which she was despising only elicited from her thanks for his "kind intentions," and a request to bring the conversation to an end.

Two days later the gentleman reappeared, this time in the uniform of a Colonel of hussars; and now he promptly revealed the name of the person for whom he was acting—the Emperor's own brother. He expected a sensation—and he received one, for the door was promptly slammed in his face.

This unceremonious act had a speedy sequel. Next morning the girl was summoned before the police, and informed, as she was a foreigner living a secretly immoral life, she must leave Vienna and Austrian territory within twenty-four hours. It was not yet noon when the student in his turn, though he had received no summons, entered the office of the *Polizeirat*, or Counsel for the Police Department. He explained that the lady just expelled was his *fiancée*, and that he hoped that she would not be molested. The *Polizeirat* put on a haughty air, but the student was not frightened, and declared that he did not intend to be separated from his love. He went on to make such comments on the conduct of the Archduke Charles-Louis that he was promptly arrested. He took this very calmly, however, and with a polite smile remarked that he thought it right to warn the official that the American Ambassador was aware of his visit, and would know where he was to be found if he did not turn up at the Embassy, with his *fiancée*, at four o'clock that afternoon. Moreover, the Ambassador might not be as discreet as he had been.

Finding that he was an American citizen, the

Poliseirat admitted that the case wore a different aspect, and, needless to say, neither was the student kept under arrest nor was the lady expelled from the country.

The ways of the Archduke Charles-Louis, however, appear to have been modelled on a book of manners for gentlemen when they are compared with the conduct of his son, His Imperial and Royal Highness the Archduke Otho-Francis, Major-General commanding the Tenth Cavalry Brigade in the Austro-Hungarian Army. This gallant officer, who reached the age of forty in April, 1905, was one of the wildest revellers in the Habsburg family. Married at twenty-one to a Saxon Princess, Marie-Josèphe, plain and bigotedly religious, he was at the time Colonel of a dragoon regiment quartered at Enns, in Upper Austria. This regiment had the reputation of being the smartest of all cavalry regiments; and, of course, the cavalry is the smartest of all branches of the service in all countries. Hence the idle, roistering life of the dragoon officers at Enns. The Archduke Otho was just the Colonel for this brilliant band of warriors, the real "father of his regiment," as every good Colonel ought to be. His recorded exploits are more numerous than the stars of heaven or the sands of the sea, and it is therefore difficult to make a choice among them. A tale must be selected at haphazard.

One night, when the merry company had drunk almost as much as usual in one of the restaurants of Enns, it was decided to "have the next one somewhere else." As the move was being made, 2 a.m. struck, and when the gentlemen reached the café where they had arranged to break up the crockery, they found the place closed in obedience to the municipal regulations. A thundering knock on the door produced no answer, so they picked up some stones and

started to hurl them through the windows. This seemed too quiet a proceeding, however, and they proceeded from stones to revolver shots. When not a pane was left whole, the gallant band, still with their Colonel at their head, set to work to burn down the building. At this point a cavalry picket arrived on the scene, summoned by the proprietor of the café, who was unaware what distinguished assailants had been honouring him with their attentions, and then it was discovered that the men had been called out to arrest their own officers!

Shortly afterwards, when this affair had been hushed up, the noble Colonel, accompanied by his most promising officers, was out riding in the neighbourhood of Enns, when the party met with a peasant's walking funeral. The Archduke offered his subordinates a bet that he would jump his horse over the coffin as it rested on its bearers' shoulders. The bet was taken, and the Archduke jumped, to the great terror of the four bearers, who dropped the coffin on the ground. Public opinion was this time revolted, and to such an extent that an echo of its wrath was heard even through the baize on the doors of the Imperial study. The Emperor's religious susceptibilities were affected, and, having summoned his nephew before him, he was so carried away by anger as to strike him. He also recalled him from Enns to Vienna, though it must be added that he promoted him as he recalled him, giving him the rank of General.

At Vienna the young officer had better opportunities of showing his originality. One of the most charming of his schemes came to him after making a night of it at Sacher's famous café. He was at the time living at the Augarten, one of the Imperial parks with a house in it, which had been allotted to him. He determined to take all his friends home, and up to

the Archduchess Marie-Josèphe's room. However, on the threshold he was met by an old servant, who declared that his master should not enter without killing him first. The Archduke drew his sword, and in his drunken fury would have run the old man through had not one of the officers with him, soberer than the rest, prevented the execution of this crime.

Monstrous as they may appear, these stories are absolutely authentic. They may be verified from a speech made by the Deputy Pernerstorfer in the Austrian Reichsrath in the course of a debate on the civil list. It is true that, forty-eight hours later, Herr Pernerstorfer, while returning home by night, was attacked by some masked men, and so violently handled by them that he was forced to keep his bed for several weeks.

A later exploit of the Archduke occurred in 1904. An evening spent in quenching his thirst at the above-mentioned restaurant had so warmed him that he considered himself justified in adopting a cooler costume. His sudden appearance from a private room, dressed in nothing but a shako, a belt, and a sword, over which he stumbled just as the British Ambassador, his wife, and two daughters were passing down the corridor, led to diplomatic representations, so grave was the incident considered.

There is certainly no lack of interest in these performances of the Imperial comedians. The entry on the scene of the Emperor's fourth brother, the Archduke Louis-Victor, an old gentleman who has beaten the family record, would be still more sensational, were it not that the author would find it difficult to speak of his exploits without recourse to the decent obscurity of, say, the Latin language. It must suffice to say that the Archduke was a constant frequenter of the luxurious Turkish baths at Vienna known as

the *Centralbad,* where he often met others of the same character as himself. One day in 1903 he made a mistake, and received a couple of stout blows in return for his remarks, while a number of men present who sympathized with the offended party took the opportunity of administering to the offender so sound a thrashing that he was carried home half fainting. The Emperor, who was not at all pleased with his brother's vagaries, assigned to him as his residence in future a house in the small town of Meran in Southern Tyrol, where his eccentricity has no great scope.

Such, then, is Francis-Joseph's family, which has been playing its part on the world's stage for over half a century. It must be confessed that in the matter of variety of performances, in public and still more frequently in private, the Imperial troupe can give points to those provincial companies who represent, in alternate acts on one and the same evening, the most diverse of dramas, melodramas, comedies, and farces.

CHAPTER X

THE CROWN PRINCE

FROM his earliest infancy the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, son of an epileptic father and a mother in whose blood ran the taint of madness, was of a puny, sickly, and excessively nervous appearance. Little Rudolf, in addition to—perhaps because of—his poor physique, had all the marks of the most perfect type of spoilt child. His grandmother, the Archduchess Sophia, who had assumed control of his upbringing in the manner which has been described above, gave him nine years of physical and moral training of equally disastrous kinds. The child became daily more and more feeble and more intolerable. Then the Emperor, who was suffering from the separation from his wife, conceived the idea of bringing her back to the Hofburg to entrust her with the care of her son. No doubt his sentimental grief over his wife's absence was small, but he appreciated the evil consequences of the partial dissolution of the Imperial marriage. Moreover, Elisabeth's conduct was so dignified and so unassailable, in spite of the malicious rumours sedulously spread by some of the Dowager Archduchess's friends without a shadow of proof, that a considerable section of the Viennese aristocracy, although it would probably have been fiercely hostile to the Empress had she been in their midst, was beginning to exhibit platonic sympathy for her in her absence.

The moment seemed opportune to Francis-Joseph to recall Elisabeth to Court. It was plain that she would not have yielded to a husband's appeal or to an Emperor's command, but he hoped that she would listen to a father's prayer. In the name of little Rudolf, deprived of a mother's care, he begged her to come back to her place beside her child. His calculation was correct. Although she had sworn never to return to married life, she returned to it so effectively that, having re-entered the Hofburg in 1867, she gave birth to her fourth and last child, the Archduchess Marie-Valérie, at Buda-Pesth on April 22nd, 1868. From that time until 1874, when her son came of age, she was to spend the greater part of her life at the Imperial palaces.

Her home-coming, however, did not seem at first either a happy or an easy task; for the child was not merely indifferent to a mother whom he had never known, he was hostile to a mother whom he had never understood. Once more success had crowned the wicked work of the Archduchess Sophia, now grown old and already close to the grave; for she died five years later, on May 28th, 1872. It had been no haughty self-sufficiency, as in the case of her own son's education, which had driven the Dowager Archduchess to bring up so badly a child whom she could not expect to see wearing the crown. The no less detestable motive of jealousy was what influenced her. She could gain no personal advantage by perverting Rudolf's mind; her only end could be to alienate him from his mother. First of all, she delighted in sowing, in a soil only too well prepared, the seed of an unhealthy self-will. She indulged the child in the most reprehensible of his whims, gratuitously explaining that all desires, whatever they might be, were legitimate in a Prince destined to rule over one

of the largest Empires in the world. She defended her conduct by insisting that it was wrong to thwart so sickly and nervous a little creature. When Rudolf, badly brought up but very attached to the grandmother whom his small will could sway, was thus made ready to believe all that she told him, the Archduchess Sophia got seriously to work. She did her best (which meant a great deal) to calumniate the absent Elisabeth, representing her to the boy as an indifferent mother, who only cared for the satisfaction of her own desires. Still more artfully, when she felt that her influence over Francis-Joseph was weakening as she grew older, and that the day was coming for the return of "the other woman," she impressed on the child that, if his mother came back, there would be an end of play and freedom, an end of the fine times of pleasure and indulgence which his grandmother procured for him. He would have to be "good." In short, to the child's eyes the tender mother who, in her lonely, wandering life, so often wept as she thought of her little son, was represented in the light of a monster and a bugbear.

For Elisabeth, as she crossed the threshold of the Hofburg, one bright star of hope was shining in the grey heavens—that with her rights as mother would come back the opportunity for pouring out the wasting treasures of maternal love. Her heart was beating furiously, her tears were ready to flow, and her lips and arms were yearning to lavish embraces, as she cried rather than said to Rudolf:

"Kiss me, darling. This time mamma has come back for good."

The poor woman imagined that a shout of joy would be the answer to her loving speech. Instead, the child came forward coldly, scowling, sullen-eyed, and tight-lipped, and did not even return her kisses.

Suddenly she recognized the quarter from which the blow came. Wounded though she was, she did not give way to despair. She had returned, she meant to stay, and since there was to be war, she would fight for victory to the utmost of her strength.

A point of which she did not dream was to favour her most remarkably in the struggle upon which she was entering. Rudolf, from his earliest days, had been strongly attracted by feminine beauty, and delighted in nothing so much as the company of pretty women. His mother's loveliness made a great appeal to him. In spite of the sorrows which she had gone through, at the age of thirty her fair beauty had blossomed out most wonderfully, and she was more ravishing than ever. Her physical charm influenced the child more than can be described, and it was not long before he was the devoted servant of his lovely mother. There was an element (far more common than our foolish prudery is wont to admit) of the lover's feeling in the neurotic passion of little Rudolf for her—a fact which he always remembered whenever his abrupt and unstable disposition allowed him to take anyone into his confidence. The mother moreover, with a faint comprehension of this vaguely lover-like affection which her son had for her, was not embarrassed at it, but recognized in it a kind of homage to her womanly qualities, and built upon this material basis the moral superstructure of her intense love for her son. Her feelings were no more different from those of other mothers than Rudolf's affection was different from other sons'. A simple law of nature governed both mother and child.

Nevertheless, the self-willed and capricious boy, much spoilt and badly brought up, was often in rebellion against Elisabeth. Her sensitiveness was morbid, and his gusts of temper were such as to cause

despair. Sometimes an argument, carried as far as it could go, would reduce him to a most obstinate condition of mind, from which five minutes later he would emerge as emotional as some nervous little animal. One of the most convincing instances of this was seen in a small affair which the Empress was fond of telling to her intimate friends. She was in her sitting-room at Ischl, reading, when Rudolf broke in excitedly, followed less impetuously by his elder sister, Gisela, the child, it will be remembered, whom Elisabeth did not love. Both of them had been picking bunches of wild flowers, and had brought their gay spoils to their mother. Elisabeth kissed them both by way of thanks—Rudolf lovingly, Gisela less warmly.

"Mamma," asked the young Prince, "how is it that I am more loved than my sister?"

Elisabeth started. "By whom do you mean?" she asked.

"Oh, by everybody!"

"You must not say such things, Rudy. You are not more loved than your sister."

"Oh yes, I am! Don't you think I am nicer than Gisela?"

More with the intention of giving her son a lesson than from her heart's promptings, Elisabeth took Gisela in her arms and kissed her on the forehead. Rudolf shook his head with a knowing air, and, without waiting for an answer to his question, went on:

"It's no good; no one will believe that you like Gisela as well as your Rudy."

"My Rudy seems to me a very vain little man," said the Empress, half in earnest, half in jest. "That is a very ugly fault, and God does not love conceited children."

"Ah well," said the child, "I am quite sure God

loves me. I love Him very much without seeing Him, and He, who sees me, cannot help loving me."

"And if He sees you capricious and disobedient and naughty, as you sometimes are, how do you suppose, Rudy, that God can love you?"

The boy stood haughtily in front of his mother, with a sullen look in his eyes and a frown on his forehead, and, thrusting his hands deep into his trouser-pockets, said determinedly:

"It is God who made me what I am, and He must be content with what He has made."

He flew off in a rage, furious at the picture which his mother had drawn of him. A few minutes later, taking no further notice of him, Elisabeth sat down at the piano, and began to sing one of Schubert's songs in her sweet, deep, musical voice. Music was her almost invariable refuge from troublesome thoughts. As she sang, the child trembled with emotion. When the last notes of the song had died away, she looked round, to see him standing near her, with his big earnest eyes full of tears. He caught hold of her arm passionately and cried:

"Forgive me, mamma; I am sorry . . ."

There was still lurking a trace of the rebellious and conceited child under the surface of the charmed and tamed little animal, so Elisabeth could not refrain from asking:

"What are you sorry for, Rudy?"

"For what I said. When you sing, you know, I always feel I am getting more good."

After this revelation of the depths of his emotional little soul, he threw himself upon her neck and smothered her with kisses.

The grandmother's influence continued to show itself in the midst of all these violent sulkings, passionate fits, and fiery gusts of temper. The

dominant trait in Rudolf's character, indeed, was to be found in the importance which he attached to his own small personality, to the rights which his rank conferred upon him, and to the respect due to him. Young as he was, he was as well up as anyone at Court in the rules of etiquette and the prescribed ceremonial. The remembrance of his dignity as the future Emperor never ceased to haunt him. One summer afternoon, in the park at Schönbrunn, Rudolf and Gisela were "playing at weddings" with some little friends, sons and daughters of high personages at Court. Rudolf, of course, who always took the lion's share, declared that he would be the bridegroom. There was no thought of changing this arrangement when once it had been made, but there now arose a serious difficulty.

"Whom shall I choose as my bride?" he asked.

"Me," "Me," "Me," cried a dozen shrill little voices.

Rudolf reflected, and then, with perfect gravity, he said: "I don't see anyone here except Gisela who is worthy of me, because none of the others are of royal blood. And I can't marry you, Gisela, because you are my sister."

"What does that matter?" she said. "This is only a game."

"You can't do some things even in games."

"Well, choose someone else."

"I tell you, they aren't of royal blood."

"But it's only a game," repeated Gisela.

"No, it is impossible."

So there was no more playing at weddings that day at Schönbrunn.

The Empress was terribly distressed at this turn of mind, which robbed Rudolf of all the ingenuous charm and naïveté of childhood. It was out of

harmony, moreover, with her liberal views and general reasonableness of soul. She strove hard, therefore, to give a new turn to her son's imagination. But, assiduously as she laboured, she succeeded in obtaining very little result—for the most part, in fact, a result contrary to what she desired. If she was able to conquer the boy's heart by charming his eyes, she was powerless to change the direction of his will by taming his spirit.

She did not have recourse to mere words, but tried also the effect of giving him surroundings quite different from those in which he usually moved. Thus, when Rudolf evinced a violent interest (all his interests, indeed, were violent) in horticulture, she had a corner of the garden given to him, and insisted that he should cultivate it himself, providing him with a teacher and assistant in the person of a polite and well-brought-up little boy, son of one of the grooms at Schönbrunn. She watched personally that Rudolf should treat John like a friend, not like a servant. The success of her experiment cannot truthfully be said to have been great. The Crown Prince proved intractable in this respect, and all that the Empress gained by her attempt at the suppression of caste was to procure quickly for the unfortunate little John a bad time at the hands of his pupil. Rudolf gave orders, and John worked. He worked all day, and then next morning Rudolf would gratuitously undo all his labour. Having planted once, with great toil, a number of rose-bushes, John found them a few hours later all pulled up and thrown in a heap. This was Rudolf's way of seeing if the roses were taking root!

Nevertheless, the little Prince was proud of what he called *his* garden. He often brought his mother to see it; and when she thought it would certainly look

much better if it were more daily kept, Rudolf stamped, as his father used to do, and cried:

"It's John's fault. You can't think what trouble I have to put it to rights after John has been in it."

And then Rudolf thoughtlessly (so one hopes, at least) gave a severe lecture to poor John, who forced back his tears and never said a word.

These childish doings give an insight into Rudolf's character. Throughout life he always blamed others or else Fate, for all his vexations as for all his faults, and never looked for the real source of the evil, which lay in himself.

The Empress's maternal love was not checked by the unfortunate experience in the garden, nor by many others equally unfortunate, though she was much upset by her ill-success at the Christmas fête at the Hofburg. After a short period of attempting to make her son more docile, She invited to the Palace fifty boys and fifty girls, all children of the people, not only because she adored children herself, but in order to bring Rudolf, Gisela, and the little Marie Valérie, then three years old, in contact with the poor. In the banqueting-hall of the Hofburg had been placed a huge Christmas-tree, reaching almost up to the lofty arched wooden ceiling. About the tree, with its colored candles, ribbons, and flowery garlands, were tables covered with presents both useful and ornamental—warm clothes, toys, etc. The children were ushered in with their parents, and the party began. In spite of the disgust of Rudolf, who declared that these people "smelt unpleasant," Elisabeth obliged him, with the Archduchesses Gisela and Marie-Valérie, to distribute the presents among their poor little visitors. In the next room was a buffet loaded with plates of bread and butter, cold meats, *güge-upf* and rare fruits, brought by the

Empress at great expense from the South of France and Algeria; and she insisted on her three children making a second distribution of these good things also. The ice was now broken, and the dining-room was filled with shrill cries and merry laughter, although the scandalized Rudolf continued to show unconquerable disgust.

Once again poor Elisabeth had failed, especially as all Vienna jeered with the Dowager Archduchess at the democratic follies of "the little Bavarian goose," and among the people all whose children had not been invited openly talked of the Empress's affectation and pose.

But the Empress clung firmly to her ideas, and would not admit herself beaten. On the contrary, the struggle sharpened the spirit of contradiction in her, and she resolved to brave public opinion. At the Vienna Exhibition of 1873, one year after the Dowager Archduchess's death, there was a "Cairo house" on view in the Egyptian section, with a little Arab boy in charge. The model, which was a very successful feature of the show, was offered, with its young guardian, to the Empress Elisabeth by the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, when the Exhibition closed. After her frequent visits to Algeria the Empress had a strong esteem for the Arabs, and she took a great liking to this boy, even nursing him herself through a long illness. When he was restored to health, she made him playmate in the games of the little Archduchess Marie-Valérie. Viennese high society was much shocked at the association of the Princess and the slave. As soon as the Empress heard of this, she took Marie-Valérie and the little Arab to a well-known photographer, and got him to photograph the two children sitting arm-in-arm. She further permitted the photographer to display the picture in his window,

and to sell copies t the print-dealers in the Austrian capital. Of course there was a great deal of gossip over this. In fact, it was the topic of the hour, and an unpleasant caricature of the photograph appeared, which threw the Emperor into such a rage that he had the parody seized and the original picture withdrawn from the shop-windows.

This was the last exhibition of Elisabeth's maternal influence. A year later, on August 21st, 1874, the Crown Prince, being sixteen, attained his majority according to the regulations of the House of Habsburg. Advantage was taken of this fact to withdraw the Imperial children again, and this time finally, from their mother's care. Shortly after, the Empress, who for seven years had practically settled down, began again her life of wandering.

The Crown Prince was given at once a Court of his own, which delighted him vastly. He was less pleased, on the other hand, to find himself attached a few months later as Lieutenant to the 36th Regiment of the Line by Imperial order. His promotion was rapid, for in 1880 he was already a General. But if Rudolf's mother was pained at the haughty ways and terrible vanity of her son, his father, who lived for the Army, was equally pained at his indifference to military matters. Just as Elisabeth had striven without success to give a democratic tinge to the boy's proud spirit, so Francis-Joseph struggled in vain to convert the young man into a soldier. He, too, had recourse to fruitless schemes to gain his end.

Visiting Prague at the beginning of 1880, the Emperor was received at the railway-station by the officers of the garrison, of whom his son was one in the capacity of Colonel. Rudolf had not seen his father for several months, and therefore expected to be called before him at once. Francis-Joseph, however, seemed

not to notice his presence. After receiving the Commanding Officer's report and passing in review the guard of honour, he had the superior officers presented to him in order of rank. When Rudolf in his turn came before him, the Emperor said to him with the utmost military stiffness, which calmed all inclination to sentiment:

"I have nothing to say to you for the moment, Colonel. Have you any report to make to me?"

Receiving a negative reply from the Archduke-Colonel, he allowed him to pass on, without betraying by his conduct that he had just been speaking to his son.

Such proceedings did not inspire Rudolf's heart with a love for the Army, any more than the Christmas party at the Hofburg had aroused in him the slightest affection for the people who "smelt unpleasant." The discipline, regulations, and ceremonial of the profession of arms became more and more hateful to him. He looked on his duties as a kind of forced labour from which he could not escape, and as nothing more. His young mind, like Elisabeth's, was most strongly attracted by the sciences, and he also had a passionate liking for travel. When his military service permitted it—and, indeed, more often—he fled from the barracks into the wide world. His travel-letters, written to his mother and since published in part, express in exalted and poetical language the vivid emotions which he experienced as he looked on the grand sights of Nature. The love of scenery went farther with him than with his mother. Her motive was the need of sensations; but he, had he been allowed to follow his own bent, would have become an explorer. So great was his craving for expressing himself that, not content with writing long letters, he published various works, notably, in 1883, a slim book of impressions and studies entitled

Fifteen Days on the Danube, and, in 1884, a stout volume, illustrated with photographs taken by him on his journey, and called *A Journey in the East*. In the latter there is much to do with his favourite science of ornithology. Another work of quite a different character, which was only brought to a completion after Rudolf's death, was inspired by him, and included the fruits of his own active labours. This was a monumental book on *The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Words and Pictures*, and to it contributed, under Rudolf's direction, the greatest writers and the most learned men of his country. In connection with this he was in continual relation with the worlds of science, literature, and art, with the University, and also with the Press—a word of ill omen in Austria. He recognized that professors and learned men were not all pedants, writers and artists not all Bohemians, and even journalists (in spite of Bismarck's opinion, which Viennese society adopted, like that of Berlin) not all failures and ne'er-do-wells.

From the young Prince's incursions into new circles there came about a transformation in the Court receptions. There began to be seen there a society less superficially brilliant, but intellectually vastly superior to what used to be met there before. It was a strange spectacle to see advanced thinkers like Brehm and Homeyer rubbing shoulders with gilt-laced and narrow-minded courtiers. The latter, of course, looked with a wrathful eye upon the new-comers, and "words" ensued, which were not always to the advantage of the Court folk. One night Brehm was ironically addressed by one of them after he had committed some small breach of regulations:

"I did not know that men of science were so well acquainted with the laws of etiquette," said the courtier.

"I did not know that gentlemen of the Court were so ill acquainted with the laws of politeness," was the stinging reply, delivered in the most civil of tones.

The courtiers, however, in the end carried the day. The Emperor even forbade his son to continue his acquaintance with certain savants such as Brehm, whose lofty humanitarian views were considered dangerous for the future Emperor.

Still, it may be admitted that the appearance of Liberalism occasionally exhibited by the son of the militarist Francis-Joseph, when he had the opportunity of airing political opinions, was due partly to his mother's persistence in checking his childish arrogance and partly to his acquaintance with the learned men and writers whom he collected round him. It must not be concluded that Rudolf's mind was genuinely Liberal. We may feel sure, indeed, that this supposed Liberalism, which is attributed to him now that he is dead, would have made not the slightest change in the politics of Austria-Hungary if Rudolf had come to the throne. The truest reason for the Crown Prince's advanced tendencies was to be found in the Emperor's extremely Conservative ideas. It is an almost inevitable law that heirs-apparent, the Kings of to-morrow, but the unemployed and powerless Princes of to-day, should assume an appearance of activity by going into opposition against the policy of the reigning monarch. Not to mention King Edward VII. (who as Prince of Wales favoured a different policy from that of his mother), we may quote the Crown Prince Frederick of Germany, a Liberal, while William I. was a Conservative, and William II. a Conservative, while his father Frederick was a Liberal. Such as the little amusements of Courts, which may be alluded to because they are symptomatic; but one must not waste time over them.

Moreover, we have the Archduke Rudolf's life before us to prove that his views about liberty and justice were never for anything more than show, even though he might be of superior intellectual power to Francis-Joseph, the feudal *grand seigneur,* with his neck permanently fixed in the narrow *cangue* of caste prejudice. Above all things, and in this respect following his father's example, Rudolf was, apart from his flights into the republic of thought, a gay liver. Only Rudolf, puny in his childhood, weakly in his youth, and in his manhood a prey to alcoholism, morphia, and neurasthenia, failed miserably where his father, epileptic but robust, had the strength to resist.

CHAPTER XI

RUDOLF'S MARRIAGE

FRANCIS-JOSEPH, with the hereditary instinct which prompted him to wish to see his race perpetuated in the direct line during his own lifetime, took upon himself early the duties of marriage-broker for his only son. Nor was his conduct dictated solely by his avowed desire to become a grandfather as soon as possible. He also feared the effect on Rudolf of the life of debauchery on which he embarked so young, with the assistance of his friend and master of ceremonies, Count Charles Bombelles, and therefore wished there to be no delay in finding him a wife.

The difficulty which attended the choice, less than twenty years previously, of an Imperial consort for Francis-Joseph, was present once more in the selection of a princely bride for the Archduke Rudolf. By some peculiar mishap it seemed as if Catholic Princesses of royal blood and marriageable age were all out of the way when the Austrian Court required one to raise to the rank of Crown Princess. The choice appeared very poor and the shop-windows most meagrely dressed. There were still Wittelsbachs available, for there were always some of them on the market; but the Empress Elisabeth found the fears which tortured her so more than sufficient that she would not willingly consent to exaggerate them by a new marriage between a Habsburg and the family

from which she sprang. Her fears and wishes alone would not have been enough to turn the Emperor aside from one of these almost incestuous unions, but Rudolf, warned and guided by his mother, set himself against such a match very decidedly.

Francis-Joseph then suggested to the heir-apparent Mathilda of Saxony. The young man's journeys in search of a wife were beginning. He went obediently to Dresden to make up his mind in twenty-four hours as to whether the lady proposed appeared to him to fulfil the conditions requisite to assure his lifelong happiness. The first interview was enough to prove the contrary. Such bigotry ruled in the Court of Dresden, in the hands of Prince George of Saxony and his Spanish wife Marie-Anne, that he was immediately afflicted by a discomfort which he could not conceal. The odour of the vestry was unpleasing to his senses, to which the scents of outdoor life were so intoxicating, while he was no more taken by the young Princess, silly and plump, whom they exhibited to him in a semi-ecclesiastical sort of attire. To a man whose undisguised adoration of Elisabeth's beauty made him declare that the only type he could love was that of his slim and graceful mother, a little, stout, round-figured woman like the Princess could make no appeal. So Mathilda of Saxony was the first to be left on the bargain-counter by him.

On his return from Dresden to Vienna he was sent to the Madrid marriage-market. Here there were two ladies to bid for the custom of His Apostolic Majesty in days to come. His Majesty, however, showed not the slightest disposition to acquire possession of either Infanta, Maria de la Paz, or Eulalie-Francesca, the two daughters of Queen Isabella, who were offered for his selection. Queen Isabella, as is well known, possessed neither good looks, nor grace, nor fine

figure, nor distinction. The two Infantas were exactly like their mother, and it was easy for him to guess from Queen Isabella what either of the brides proposed for him would look like in a few years' time. Much annoyed, he took his departure for the Austrian capital again.

Had Francis-Joseph made up his mind to drive his son in the way that a keen sportsman such as he drives a covey of partridges, giving him not a moment's rest? Rudolf was scarcely allowed to alight at the Hofburg before he was stirred up afresh and sent flying toward Brussels. The threefold disappointment at the Courts of Saxony and Spain left no more immediately available Princesses except at the Belgian Court. Of course, the Coburgs were of a very inferior descent as compared with the Habsburgs, but there was no choice; and, besides, there was at least no danger here of mingling two stocks too frequently united, although Marie-Henriette, wife of Leopold II., had been an Austrian Archduchess. So Prince Rudolf set out for Brussels, where he was shown the Princess Stéphanie. Her sixteen-year-old immaturity gave scant promise of her magnificent development at the age of twenty-five. She was tall and thin, with the pallor of some forced plant; her eyelids were red, her lips colourless, her hair flaxen, her movements clumsy and ungraceful, and her manner timid and spiritless. Rudolf was not at all charmed; but at least she made him smile. He confessed to Count Bombelles that the sight of this tall girl, as smooth and straight as a broom-handle, made him think of the first of his potential brides, the little round Mathilda of Saxony, and brought before his eyes the picture of a cup-and-ball, with Mathilda as the ball and Stéphanie as the stem of the cup.

He returned to Vienna for the third time, quite

decided to remain a bachelor for the present. But he saw that his father was so upset by his resolve, and he was so pestered to marry, that at last he gave way. He did not claim to make a love-match (and his parents' example scarcely encouraged him to do this), and could only have wished to marry a beautiful wife. Since, however, such were not to be found in Catholic Courts, the only ones to which State policy allowed him to go, he must therefore wed at random. Having every intention of continuing after marriage his wild life, he fixed his choice light-heartedly on the Princess Stéphanie.

The betrothal was celebrated at Brussels on March 7th, 1880. The news was received in Austria with joy. In the Empire of the Habsburgs, so profoundly imbued are the people with the monarchical spirit that they have the affairs of the Imperial family almost as much at heart as their own. As for the Emperor, he was radiant. But if the hearts of Emperor and people were glad, one person at least did not share in the general rejoicings—the Empress Elisabeth. The day of his betrothal, indeed, was for her the first step in a new stage of her martyrdom. In the first place, her frank, loyal, and open heart had no welcome for the bride, whom she knew to be mindless, obstinate, underhand, jealous, coquettish, and vain. Then, having no fear of love-matches (for she knew that the ruin of her own was due to a woman who had been laid in the grave eight years ago), she would have wished for her son a marriage in which affection held out some promise of happiness, and would have helped the daughter-in-law of her choice to save Rudolf. So bitterness reigned in her heart, while circumstances were preparing to fill her poisoned cup of sorrow to the very brim.

The first pang was caused by Francis-Joseph's

thoughtlessness. It is distressing to think that he ventured to utter, in Elisabeth's presence, the following response to the complimentary deputation from the city of Vienna on the occasion of the Crown Prince's betrothal :

" Our son's betrothal fills Our heart with a joy which is all the profounder because this is a case not of an act of policy, but of a genuine affair of the heart. For it is in love, and in love only, that we must look for the foundation of all married happiness."

It was with a kind of terror that Elisabeth listened to these words. She had occasionally had fits of hatred and attacks of disgust for Francis-Joseph, but she had not altogether ceased to love him. On this occasion he crowned his work of destruction by showing himself to his wife's eyes in an aspect which she had never yet seen. She despised him, and her contempt was reinforced by an anger to which, unhappily, she could not give vent, for she was bound to remain calm and dignified as the Emperor went on with these false words :

" Our consort, Her Majesty the Empress, is acquainted with the bride, and like Ourselves, is enchanted at this touching union of two loving young hearts."

Elisabeth's suppressed anger was all the greater because that very morning she had written to her son as follows :

" My Son, my poor dear Son,

" It terrifies me to see that you do not understand what frightful misery there is in store for you from this marriage which you are undertaking so light-heartedly, and without the slightest feeling of love to guide you. Your father desires you to marry. It is in his capacity of ruler of a great Empire that he

looks upon the political aspect of such an affair. But I, dear boy, who am your mother, and nothing more than your mother, have every right to look in a very different way upon so serious a question as your marriage. What I look at in my son's marriage is the kind of life which it guarantees in his home, the amount of happiness which it will bring, the future which it promises for my dear Rudy. And I cannot but conclude, after mature consideration, that Stéphanie is not at all the wife for you, and can never be so."

So deeply (and, it must be admitted, so justifiably) convinced was Elisabeth that this match would be for the unhappiness of her son, without bringing happiness to the young bride either, that she did her utmost to break it off. Nevertheless, in the month of May, 1881, Her Royal Highness Stéphanie, Princess of Belgium, set foot on Austro-Hungarian soil. She was met by her intended husband at Salzburg, on the same frontier which one day she was to cross again on the arm of another man, the choice of her heart—Count Lonyay. There is great irony sometimes in the most trivial details. Thus, at Salzburg, the first triumphal arch which she passed under in Austrian territory bore the inscription, "*Tu felix, Austria, nube*"—although there was never any felicity, for her or for Austria, in the nuptial act which she was preparing to complete. At Schönbrunn she was received by the Emperor, who had not yet met her, and the same day a grand State ball was given in her honour.

Next day one of the most cruel tortures of Elisabeth's martyrdom was to take place. The official entry into Vienna was made over the Elisabeth Bridge, the same where, in precisely similar circumstances, the unhappy Empress, then only the Emperor's *fiancée*,

had received her wedding present from the municipality of Vienna on April 24th, 1854. In a State coach, drawn by eight horses, Elisabeth went over her own former tracks, seated at the side of her son's *fiancée*. She was not even spared the ordeal of the halt, on the bridge which bore her name, to hear addressed to another the same words which had been addressed twenty-six years earlier to herself, on the threshold of that married life in which she had hoped to find all the warmth of love, and in which, as she now looked back, she could see nothing but cold grey ashes. About her the banners streamed in the breeze, the horses pranced, the gold of uniforms and caparisons sparkled in the sun, and the joyous peals of bells mounted up to the blue sky. She closed her eyes to hide her tears, and kept them shut after the procession had started again. It reached the Imperial quarter and the Hofburg. The way was led by the resplendent figures of the Imperial Guard and the Court officials in full dress, mounted on horseback. Next came the Austrian Guards; then the Hungarian Guards, with their two leopard-skins apiece—one for the horse and one for the man's shoulders. Last rode the State carriages and the great Imperial coach, which all belonged to Charles VI., father of Maria-Theresa, all of crystal and gold, decorated, inside and out, with paintings by the most celebrated artists of their day.

When the procession stopped at the Hofburg the cannons thundered, the bells rang out, and the cheers of the populace went up on every side. Somewhat taken by surprise, but flattered in her vanity, Stéphanie mounted to the great Hall of Ceremonies, where stood the Emperor, surrounded by a group of officers in brilliant uniforms.

The day had been hard upon the unfortunate Elisa-

beth. The morrow, May 10th, was to be more cruel still. At noon, while the bells pealed from every steeple, she entered the Augustinian Church and knelt with Francis-Joseph in the same place where she had knelt with him at her own wedding twenty-six years before. How confidently had her young mind then, so eager to learn the meaning of life, looked forward to the future; and now what disillusion reigned in her heart, and communicated itself to her still too active mind! These twenty-six years, whose dawn had seemed so bright and joyous in her eyes, now looked all dark and gloomy at their close. Nor could her melancholy heart be cheered by the sight of the couple at the altar's foot, for she knew the tragic gulf between them, and all too rightly feared the sequel of this loveless marriage. When the two young people bowed their heads to receive the blessing from Prince Schwarzenberg, Archbishop of Prague, poor Elisabeth burst into tears, while the Emperor, far from trying to comfort her, looked profoundly annoyed. Rudolf turned his weary face toward his mother, and Stéphanie, whose appearance was that of a victim led to the slaughter, grew paler than ever.

The wedding was none the less an occasion for a great display of liberality. The [illegible]nic schools, twenty-two in number, each received a gift of 10,000 florins from the Emperor, who presented like sums to the colleges for officers' daughters, and also set aside 20,000 florins for the poor of Vienna. But he put the crown upon his serene cynicism in an order of the day addressed to his friend Count Taaffe. Elisabeth's stupefaction was renewed as she read this notable paragraph:

"The treasure of love and faith which We, together with Her Majesty the Empress, have bequeathed to Our well-beloved children will be to them a guarantee

of happiness. They can but strive to preserve this legacy of conjugal affection which We devise to them, that it may be a happy omen to them on the threshold of that new life which We pray Heaven may make tranquil and kind to them."

Elisabeth was not a superstitious woman, but it seemed to her as if Francis-Joseph were tempting Providence, and it made her tremble.

The young couple spent but a brief honeymoon at the Palace of Laxenburg. Rudolf soon realized how right his mother had been when she wrote to him in March, 1880, that Stéphanie was not at all the wife for him. He endeavoured, in answer to Elisabeth's prayers, to be a tolerable husband—or, at least, he so endeavoured during the first months of his marriage. He took up his study of natural history again, and interested himself once more in literature. He hoped, in default of any other means, to create a bond between Stéphanie and himself by interesting her in his researches and writings. But the effort was vain. Stéphanie and Rudolf spoke different languages. When he talked of science, art, literature, philosophy, and travels, she replied with balls, receptions, dinners, social entertainments, and frocks. The Crown Prince, hoping, nevertheless, to guide his wife toward less utterly frivolous ideas, invited to Laxenburg savants, artists, and writers. Such "commoners" provoked in Stéphanie nothing but disgust. The intellectual conversations held in her drawing-room attracted her no more than her husband's studies. Rudolf, for his part, could not take the slightest pleasure in his wife's chatter, and he refused to transform his home to the satisfaction of Stéphanie, who dreamed of it as all awhirl with crowds and noise. Stéphanie complained and sulked. Rudolf said nothing, but took himself off. Hunting had always had a charm for him, and

he returned to it again, preferring to spend weeks at a time at his little château of Mayerling rather than go back to Laxenburg, which he abandoned to the social ambitions of the stranger on his hearth.

Gradually Rudolf returned completely to his bachelor life. When he went back to Vienna with Stéphanie, it was to make a very short stay there. He left almost immediately on a sporting tour in the game districts, first of Styria, then of Hungary. During the time which he did spend at Vienna he went out every day to play cards at the Jockey Club, or else shut himself up in his study to work, or to discuss with a few of his friends subjects quite above Stéphanie's head. Stéphanie lived her own life. Three years transformed the girl whom Rudolf had compared to the stem of a cup-and-ball to an attractive and desirable woman, with a white skin, good figure, and voluptuous curves. She knew she was pretty, and loved to be told so. Her great preoccupation was, in the first place, with her toilet. That completed, she wished to be seen; and when seen, she could not do without gallants to court her. They came in great numbers, and in the midst of a worshipping circle of her adorers Stéphanie was radiant with joy.

So both husband and wife lived lives apart, running on parallel lines which nothing could bring together. But if there was no harmony, neither was there any open quarrel, and all went well, comparatively speaking, until the day when Stéphanie, after two years of married life, became mother to a girl, to whom was given the name of Elisabeth. During her recovery Stéphanie, rendered more ambitious by her social victories, dreamed of conquering her husband's heart. It was doubtless boredom which prompted the idea. But the attempt failed, and Stéphanie was very out

of humour over it. Not having intelligence enough to recognize her own errors, she attributed her defeat to circumstances. She laid on hunting the whole blame for taking her husband away from her, whereas Rudolf's devotion to hunting was really the consequence of his previous estrangement from her. Every time, therefore, that he went to Mayerling, Stéphanie, like the clumsy diplomatist she was, had violent scenes with her husband. If she was lacking in self-control, Rudolf, on his side, was little distinguished for his patience, and harsh words passed between them.

When he came back, instead of undoing the mischief of these quarrels by a conciliatory attitude, she would sulk for whole days at a time, and steadfastly showed to Rudolf, already so little attracted to her society, a sullen, scowling, and unfriendly face.

And now the most unfortunate of ideas came into her head. To punish her husband, she locked her bedroom door against him, fully persuaded of her own desirability. Rudolf, one would have said, was only waiting for this to give way to indulgences which he had temporarily ceased. He did not break open his wife's door, but opened the hall door and went out deliberately to find pleasanter surroundings.

Stéphanie's heart was not broken over this. At this period of her life she was almost incapable of love or of wounded affection either. But the vain woman in her was hurt in her pride. A furious jealousy, all the lower and baser for not being inspired by love, burned within her, and flashed out with terrible and indecent violence. Rudolf could not approach nor speak a word to another woman, nor even venture to cast a glance at a pretty face, without bringing upon himself noisy quarrels. The Empress Elisabeth, in spite of her heart's griefs, in spite of her poor love's

sacrifice, in spite of Francis-Joseph's weakness and the cruelty of the Archduchess Sophia for so many years, had never let her complaints be heard in the Hofburg. Living a life of martyrdom, she had never raised her voice in public against her torturer. The same discretion was not shown by Stéphanie, the loveless wife, stirred to jealousy by her pride and to fury by her smallness of mind. The corridors of the old Palace echoed with loud imprecations. The sentries heard ugly words issuing from the fierce lips of the Crown Princess. The footmen even picked up of a morning, in the rooms of the Heir-Apparent and his wife, fragments of valuable vases and pretty trinkets, innocent victims of the mad jealousy of the beautiful Stéphanie. In so acting the unfortunate woman was consulting her interests very ill, for, the more violent she showed herself, the more Rudolf found in her conduct justification for unfaithfulness to come. Moreover, there no longer existed the family and State reasons which might just have kept the future Emperor at his wife's side. The doctors had declared that all hopes of further children for Stéphanie must be given up after the little Elisabeth's birth. She could not carry on the male line of the Habsburgs, and therefore was like an official who had failed in his duty. The husband had already ceased to care for his wife, and now the Habsburg cared no more for her who could not perpetuate his name.

Consequently, in spite of the furious cries which woke the sleeping echoes of the Hofburg, in spite of the broken fragments of old china and Dresden ware which littered the carpets of his rooms, the Crown Prince persisted in searching for distractions for his libertine heart both outside and inside the Palace walls. These affairs continued to occupy him throughout the rest of his seven years of married life, and

would be too many to enumerate, concerning as they did women of all ranks, from his coachman's wife to a Princess of royal blood.

One morning Francis-Joseph was working in his private study in the Hofburg, when the door opened, and the usher announced that Her Highness the Archduchess Stéphanie wished to know if she could speak to His Majesty. Francis-Joseph knitted his brows, gave a tired shrug to his shoulders, and then in a weary voice told the usher to show her in. Stéphanie entered like a whirlwind, and was about to speak when he pointed to a seat near his desk and began :

" I would thank you, my daughter, to show a little more self-restraint before the servants."

" That matters a great deal !" cried Stéphanie.

" That always matters, above all; and I shall be much obliged if you will not forget it so often. Now what is it? Is it about some new folly of my son's that you have come ?"

" Yes; and this time it is past all bearing."

" I seem to know that phrase. Where have I heard it before ? "

Stéphanie's features grew rigid, and she hissed rather than said : " Don't mock me, father. It is serious this time. I tell you that the conduct of your son . . ."

" Pardon me, of your husband."

" How much is he of that ? Anyhow, I can put up with no more of his insults. Do you know that he is at this moment at Abazzia with Madame K. ?"

" Who is Madame K. ?"

" Wife of the manager of the F—— Navigation Company. Why, she is not even pretty; she is old, fat, ugly, plastered like a wall, and covered with paint ! And he shows himself everywhere with her—

on the front, down on the beach, in the hotel dining-room. And do you know to what hotel they have dared to go? The Hotel Stéphanie!"

"It is the best there."

"It may be, but it bears my name. The Archduchess Stéphanie's husband at the Hotel Stéphanie with his mistress. . . . Can you imagine it?"

She struck the desk with her first, crying: "Oh, it's too much, too much!"

The Emperor laid a hand on his daughter-in-law's, held it still, and said: "Yes, I know the cup is full. Well, I must beg you, this instant, to let it run over without making such a fuss, and, above all, without bringing me into the affair."

"To whom would you have me go?"

"To whomever you wish, but not to me. Besides, these confidences which you make to me are shared by your chambermaid, your attendants—all kinds of people, as well as me. I want no more of them from you in future. This is the third attack of the kind which I have had to put up with in a fortnight. It is too bad. I have lectured my son, and I can do no more. I cannot force him to remain in your room, can I? That is the wife's duty, not the father's. I may add that there is nothing except love—and that you have been unable to inspire him with—to keep him at your side, as we have no longer any hope of seeing you carry on the family."

Humbled at last, Stéphanie murmured: "Can I help that?"

"Well, I certainly cannot," replied the Emperor. "Besides, it is not a question of whether it is anyone's fault. It is a fact, and facts cannot be gainsaid. Finally, I beg you, once and for all, to spare me all such gossip as you come here to retail to me about my son. I warn you that I will listen to you no more

unless you bring evidence of real, uncontestable facts."

In her mad rage at the lesson which Francis-Joseph had just administered to her, Stéphanie wrote at once to her father, asking for permission to return to Brussels. She received in answer the following brief and precise telegram:

"It is your duty to stay with your husband."

King Leopold, who could never understand sentiment in others, could scarcely support his daughter in the circumstances. He knew too well what sort of rejoinder he would be likely to provoke from his son-in-law if he were to risk a remonstrance with him on the subject of women.

Stéphanie, however, never able to see very far in front of her, was pondering on the last words of her father-in-law: "I will listen to you no more unless you bring evidence of real, uncontestable facts." In her passion for destroying, one after another, every chance of reconciliation between her husband and herself, she dreamed of surprising him *in flagrante delicto*. She descended to the vulgar course of bribing Rudolf's servants, and employing private inquiry agents to catch him. The Crown Prince, on his return to the Hofburg, began an affair with a certain Fräulein H., a very charming vocalist at one of the small Viennese theatres, with whom he often dined at Sacher's before taking her to the stage-door in one of the two-horsed private cabs—a speciality of Vienna—driven by his favourite coachman with the odd name of Bratfisch ("Fried Fish"). After leaving her, and spending three or four hours at the Jockey Club, he would drive to her house. Stéphanie learnt of his proceedings through her private inquiry agent,

and one night she had a Court carriage made ready at 1 a.m., with coachman and footmen in full livery, and drove to Fräulein H.'s house. Here she got out, and, telling the men to wait for the Prince, went back to the Palace in a cab. When Rudolf came out of his friend's house, he found the Imperial carriage at the door, and with it quite a crowd of passers-by and people of the neighbourhood, who saluted him respectfully—or apparently so, for they knew who lived at the house. Rudolf was in a terrible rage, which grew greater when the Emperor, bound by his promise to Stéphanie, sent for him and reprimanded him. A violent scene followed in the Crown Prince's rooms, and henceforward there was a breach, which nothing could heal, between husband and wife, now irreconcilable foes.

This did not prevent Stéphanie from continuing her spying. Rudolf, after the affair of the carriage, had given his father a promise to see Fräulein H. no more, and he had a profound respect for his word. He was attracted, however, by a young Princess, the nineteen-year-old daughter of one of the principal families in the Empire, and very few believed that his feeling was quite platonic, as he affirmed it to be. His constant visits to Mayerling made Stéphanie feel certain that he met the Princess there, and one day, learning from her detectives that the Princess had just left for Mayerling, she took a carriage and drove to the same spot. When she reached the château, the servants, not recognizing her under a thick veil, refused to let her in. The altercation brought on the scene the Crown Prince's valet, when the Princess Stéphanie revealed who she was. They were obliged to let her pass, and she reached her husband's apartment, to find him—alone. She was too late.

A terrible scene followed, for Stéphanie paid no

attention to the servants who had collected in the neighbouring room. At last, after her direct accusation of an intrigue with the Princess had almost provoked him to strike her, Rudolf seized her violently by the arm and pushed her through the door, which he locked in her face. The upset in the household was fearful. Stéphanie refused to cease warfare, and wife and husband strove their hardest to wound each other as much as possible.

Then happened an even fraught with the most disastrous consequences for Rudolf's already demoralized life. While out hunting he contracted a sharp attack of rheumatism. His doctor gave him injections of morphia. The Crown Prince, finding in them not only relief from his sufferings, but also oblivion, went on with the injections after his recovery, and before long became a confirmed morphinist. Already neurasthenic and utterly exhausted, Rudolf supplemented morphia with ether and alcohol, and so signed his own death-warrant. In a year the Heir-Apparent of Austria-Hungary became a mere shadow of himself. Morphia ceased to relieve his physical sufferings, and while he puzzled over the inextricable moral tangle which confronted him, he plunged into a life of folly, helping to deaden the pain of his sick soul. For the last two years of his life there was but a series of repulsive debauches. Many are the elegant little restaurants of the suburbs of Vienna which remember the orgies of the Prince and his friends, Count Charles Bombelles, the Duke of Braganza, Count Hoyos, and Rudolf's own brother-in-law, Prince Philip of Coburg, who later had his wife locked up because in her misery she preferred the refined love of Lieutenant Mattachich to the repulsive brutality of her drunken husband. The revels were joined by the drivers of the two-horse

cabs, including always Bratfisch. It should be said that the drivers of these cabs (which are known in Vienna as "comfortables," and are very expensive to hire) are often real artistes—singers, whistlers, musicians, and reciters—and have sometimes as big a reputation as the Montmartre *chansonniers* of Paris. This peculiar Viennese type attracted Prince Rudolf, who often took them to guide him on his nightly excursions, and to share in his heavy potations of champagne, or, if it was the season, of *Heurigen*—unfermented wine. There was worse to follow; and the venerable trees of the Prater often saw by night the mad dances of princes, nobles, cabmen, and their vile companions of the other sex, in the most primitive of costumes.

These disgraceful revels took place two or three times a week, and completely shattered so weak a constitution as the Crown Prince Rudolf's. He could only keep himself going by repeated injections of morphia, inhalings of ether, and draughts of alcohol, which took the form of strong brandy drunk in rummers; for champagne had no more effect upon him. The senior male line of the Habsburgs was coming to a close in one furious drunken debauch.

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTERY OF MAYERLING

ELISABETH, whose morbidly acute mind had divined that her son's marriage would turn out ill, saw her worst expectations exceeded by the reality. Her son —her Rudy—whose presence had brought her a little peace in the midst of her ceaseless, anguished struggles, grew now to be the cause of new terrors for her. She still remained the "little mother" to him, even after his marriage, and would gladly talk to him as she used to when, a sensitive child, he clung to her with the burning tears in his eyes as she sang Schubert. Did he not, with her, become once more a little child through the fact of his mental trouble and physical suffering?

One night in the carnival season of 1887 he was preparing to go to the ball. He looked weary and ill, and dark fever-rings encircled his eyes. She remonstrated with him gently:

"What, Rudy, are you going out again to-night? You are foolish, dear. Look in the glass, and you will agree with me that it is unreasonable to run after amusements with a face like yours."

"I know, mother. I have already seen the dreadful sight in the glass. But, still, I must go out."

"More follies, I suppose."

"No; official duty. I am going, by Imperial command, to represent the family at the Polish Ball."

"You should have asked the Emperor to send someone else instead. I don't know why, dear, but I have a terrified feeling about something. . . ."

"Oh, mother, you must have met the White Lady in the galleries of the Palace! Or has a flight of ravens hovered over the Hofburg?" said Rudolf, with an ironical smile, alluding to the two legendary signs of a death in the Habsburg family.

Elisabeth kissed him on the forehead, and walked sadly towards her own rooms.

Once more fact was mournfully to justify the fears of the Empress's second-sight. At the Polish Ball, the most elegant of the carnival season, and always graced by some representative of the Emperor, Rudolf set eyes for the first time on a young girl who exercised an irresistible attraction on him. Tall, slight, and willowy, with graceful contours and a beautiful neck, she had a delicate, pale amber face, with great, dusky, voluptuous eyes, under the night of hair so silky and dark that it looked almost blue in the brilliant light. She had all the splendour of twenty-five, combined with the springlike freshness of her eighteen years. Rudolf obtained an introduction through Prince Philip of Coburg, who was acquainted with the lovely stranger. During the whole of the evening, in defiance of all rules of good manners, Rudolf danced with her under the furious eyes of the Archduchess Stéphanie, and when he had left the ballroom he had obtained a promise of a meeting next day.

This promise sealed the doom alike of the Prince and the stranger; for the lady of the black tresses was none other than the Baroness Marie Vetschera, the heroine of the tragedy of Mayerling. Her grandfather, a Greek financier of the name of Baltazzi, had commenced his financial career in the banking-

house of Laffitte in Paris. Having made a small fortune there, he went to Constantinople, where he quickly improved his position enormously. He left an inheritance of £1,000,000, to be divided between his two sons Hector and Aristide and his daughter, the widow of an Austrian diplomatist, Baron Vetschera. The two brothers and their sister came to Vienna, meaning to force their way into the salons of its exclusive society. Being very rich, bearing an aristocratic name, and frequenting the Turf, the Baroness Vetschera, with her brothers at her side, soon established relations with fashionable circles in Vienna, and played her cards so cleverly that in the end she procured for herself invitations to the houses of an aristocracy which is more distant towards strangers than any in Europe. When the siege was over and the citadel had capitulated, the Baroness Vetschera vanished for a few months. One fine day she reappeared with two lovely girls, of twenty and eighteen years respectively. They were her daughters, whom she had brought from Constantinople to be launched into Viennese society in search of marriage and fortune.

These Orientals, whose father had started from nothing, and had left a million at his death, these commoners who had already carried the trenches of high Viennese society, these gilded adventurers, knew no limit to their ambitions. On the night of the Polish Ball, after Prince Rudolf had been introduced to her, the beautiful Marie Vetschera had gone to her mother and uncles, who held a rapid consultation. The decision was prompt, and Marie, returning to her Imperial partner, never left his arm again that evening. What was the scheme of the Baltazzis and their sister? They were aware of the domestic quarrels of the Heir-Apparent. Perhaps they dreamt,

in their reliance on the girl's irresistible charm, of separating Rudolf from Stéphanie, and placing the heavy Imperial crown on the head of the Baroness Marie, granddaughter of the once penniless Baltazzi. They were the more justified in such hopes in that Rudolf, exhausted by his excesses, was bound to be as wax in the hands of a young and beautiful woman, who could easily teach the arts of love.

Anyhow, the promised meeting came off at the house of a lady who had been a friend of Rudolf, and in a few days' time Marie Vetschera was on the most intimate terms with the Heir-Apparent. Although the beauty and her relatives were as discreet as possible, it was not long before all Vienna knew of the affair, for the Prince, exhibiting his usual want of delicacy, openly paraded his new conquest—in this case a conquest of which he was the victim.

Never had his over-excited nerves been stirred to such an extent. During the last months of his life, under the influence of his quasi-senile passion, although he was but thirty, Rudolf gave the impression of a man suffering from mental disease. His eccentricities were most extraordinary. At the Prussian grand manœuvres, to which he was invited on the suggestion of his intimate friend, Prince William (now the Emperor William II. of Germany), he had a violent altercation with the Grand-Duke Vladimir, who represented his father the Tzar Alexander III. The Emperor William I. and the Crown Prince Frederick were obliged to intervene personally to prevent a hostile encounter between the two Highnesses, and to apologize for the Archduke's conduct as a temporary aberration of the brain. A little later, at the funeral of William I., a fresh quarrel broke out between Rudolf and another Russian Grand-Duke, provoked by the former. It

was necessary to explain to him that any sequel to so grievous a scandal would embitter the sorrows of the Emperor Frederick, before he would apologize to the Grand-Duke, whom he had grossly insulted.

The Crown Prince William, not long after, wrote, at Francis-Joseph's request, a letter of friendly remonstrance to his friend on the dissipated life which he led. Rudolf, quite enslaved to his last charmer, would hear nothing from anyone but her, and, after writing an insolent letter to William, broke off all relations with his boyhood's friend, five months his junior.

We now come to the period of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The Emperor chose the Crown Prince Rudolf and Princess Stéphanie to represent him in London. Rudolf, who usually protested against such duties, on this occasion accepted with obvious pleasure. Stéphanie, whose ever-wakeful jealousy took the place of intelligent penetration (when it did not incite her to the worst of blunders), was alarmed by her husband's good-humour, and discovered that the Baroness Marie Vetschera had left for London before them. Thereupon she refused to go. There was a great scandal. Francis-Joseph, and even Elisabeth, who generally took no part in her daughter-in-law's affairs, intervened to induce her to reconsider her decision. All was without avail. In spite of prayers and lectures and threats, the Crown Princess was immovable, and, to the consternation of the Empress, who feared that something irreparable might happen, Rudolf left the Westbahnhof for Paris on his way to London.

Before his departure from Vienna, the Heir-Apparent had a second time treated his wife with violence, and would have struck her in public but for the interference of a lady-in-waiting. It was not

difficult, therefore, for the Baroness Maria Vetschera, when he met her again, to persuade him that only a divorce could procure rest for his overtaxed brain and excited nerves. His first proceeding on his return to the Hofburg was to send by a trusty messenger a letter to Pope Leo XIII., begging for his intervention to annul a marriage which had become hateful to him, and adding that he relied upon His Holiness to influence the Emperor to consider the possibilities of a divorce in his family and a second marriage for his son.

Pope Leo was no lover of useless trouble, and did not see fit to intervene in the manner requested. He contented himself with transmitting Prince Rudolf's letter to the Archbishop of Vienna, Dr. Ganglbaüer. This former Prior of the Benedictine establishment at Kremsmünster, son of a peasant family, had not acquired in his unworldly post the diplomatic delicacy which prelates usually have. He asked for an audience with the Emperor, and, without formalities of any kind, handed him Rudolf's letter. The story was current that the letter came back from Rome through diplomatic channels, and that Count Kalnocky, Minister for Foreign Affairs, gave it to the Empress. According to this version, it would be Elisabeth who delivered her son over to the fury of the Emperor. But this is not the truth. It was no one but Archbishop Ganglbaüer who took the step the consequences of which were to be so deadly.

There is no more probability in the other version than in the melodrama which has been invented by someone as a prologue to the mystery of Mayerling. It has been pretended that Francis-Joseph, in an absolutely private interview with his son, revealed to him the fact that he was himself Marie Vetschera's father. The truth, which actually led up to the tragedy, is infinitely more simple.

The Emperor, when the Archbishop paid his visit to him, was already greatly exasperated against his son. The evening before the German Ambassador, Prince Reuss, gave a big dinner-party, at which Prince Rudolf and Princess Stéphanie were present. The Ambassador had been foolish enough, at Rudolf's express request, to invite also the Baroness Vetschera and her two daughters. Stéphanie turned a ghastly white when she saw them, and stupefaction reigned supreme over all present—not so much at Marie Vetschera's presence as at a point in her dress. The formal etiquette of the Viennese Court only allows married women to wear diamonds. Rudolf's mistress had come in a low-cut dress, with a magnificent diamond collarette on her beautiful neck and a diadem of the same forbidden stones on the perfumed masses of her night-black hair. The scandal was increased by her conduct and Rudolf's throughout dinner. Rudolf sat on the right of the Princess Reuss in his capacity of Imperial guest, for here again he was the Emperor's representative. But, instead of paying attention to his neighbour, he did not address a word to her, talking unceasingly, across half a dozen people, to Marie Vetschera, who sat at one of the ends of the table. So now it was not only Stéphanie's complaint which reached Francis-Joseph, but an echo of the complaints of high Viennese society, and, worse still, of the German Embassy.

It seemed to the Emperor, who had not long ago derided such a suggestion on the part of Stéphanie, that "the cup was full," and he made up his mind to act with the utmost energy. The result of this energy, of which he gave the Empress no warning, was to bring the curtain down on the tragedy.

On the morning after Dr. Ganglbaüer's visit—

January 29th, 1889—Rudolf was sent for by his father, and solemnly ushered into the Emperor's private study. There were present in the room with the Emperor the Cardinal-Archbishop of Vienna; Count Taaffe, President of the Ministerial Council; and Count Kalnocky, Minister for Foreign Affairs. On Francis-Joseph's desk lay Rudolf's letter to Pope Leo. This is all that is known for certain about the details of the interview, although it is known to have lasted quite an hour and to have been of a violent nature, for the baize on the double doors could not drown the loud tones of the speakers' voices. Rudolf came out of the room with pale, distorted features and trembling hands, and, having closed the door behind him with extraordinary nervousness, made for his own apartments, staggering like a drunken man. A quarter of an hour later he was found in a dead faint in his study.

It is also known that his friend Edgar von Spiegl, the celebrated Viennese journalist, who was to have seen him that morning in connection with their collaboration on the book about the Monarchy, was not admitted when he presented himself at the appointed hour, a fresh appointment being made for the following day. Finally, at 11 a.m., Prince Rudolf was to have presided over a military conference at the War Office, in his capacity of Inspector-General of Infantry, but postponed this conference also to the following day, writing out a telegram which he gave to his confidential valet, Loschek, to send off. The same trusty man was given a long letter to deliver personally at the home of the Baroness Marie Vetschera. On his way back Loschek went to Bratfisch and brought him to the Hofburg with his cab. The Crown Prince got into his favourite driver's vehicle, in the company of Loschek, and set out for

Mayerling, his usual asylum at times of crisis, after sending a message to the Emperor that he would be back the same evening to be present at a dinner-party of the whole Imperial family at the Palace. At the same time he sent word to his friends Prince Philip of Coburg and Count Hoyos to come and see him at Mayerling, where he would have a serious communication to make to them.

Everything points to this communication having to do with a breaking of his relations with Marie Vetschera—a step for which the Emperor had extracted a promise from his son's enfeebled will, in the solemn presence of three witnesses that morning, and which Rudolf, the slave of his plighted word, both as Prince and as a soldier, had written to reveal at once to the lady interested.

A few minutes after Bratfisch's cab had left the Hofburg a slight, elegant young woman, of a dark complexion, hailed a modest "comfortable" in one of the streets of Vienna, and called out to the driver: "The Südbahnhof." While passing through the Wiedner-Hauptstrasse, she stopped the cab, went into a cutler's shop and bought a razor, which she had carefully stropped, and set out again for the Southern station. The [illegible] took ticket for Baden, stepped into a first-cla[illegible]age, alighted at the station marked on her ti[illegible] got into one of the few conveyances waiting there, and had herself driven to Mayerling. On the way she several times put her head out of one of the windows, of which she kept the glass lowered, in spite of the great cold. She looked up and down the road, especially behind her. Suddenly, when quite close to the hunting-box, she stopped the driver, paid him his fare, and waited with her head and shoulders leaning out of the window. Another vehicle was coming up rapidly, drawn by

two fine horses. It was Bratfisch's cab, carrying Rudolf and his faithful valet. The dark lady made a sign to Bratfisch, who halted his horses. She got out of her cab, went up to the Prince's, and seated herself at Rudolf's side, and the journey to Mayerling continued. On his arrival at the château, Rudolf's first care was to send a telegram to his father to let him know that he would not be back that evening as he had promised, alleging that he did not feel very well.

The dark lady was none other than Marie Vetschera, as the evidence of the Vienna cutler and the Baden coachman positively shows. But if precise and well-authenticated statements enable us to follow the first steps in the tragedy of Mayerling up to the moment when Marie Vetschera met her lover in Bratfisch's cab, what followed is infinitely more difficult to reconstruct, for the family archives of the Hofburg have kept their secret to this day. No doubt there were several direct witnesses—Loschek, Prince Philip of Coburg, Count Hoyos—and witnesses of secondary importance, such as Bratfisch, two footmen, and a few servants on duty at Mayerling. Not one of these, however, has ever broken silence: Loschek and Bratfisch, actuated by affection; Philip of Coburg and Count Hoyos, by respect for the Imperial dignity; the footmen and servants, by bribes and by threats, which might easily be put into execution to make them dumb. Moreover, they were scattered to the four corners of the Empire, furnished with new names and new posts.

Many versions of the story accordingly spread about. We may set aside at once those which tell of a duel, a murder, or, again, an accidental death. On one point the statement of the cause of death was quite precise. It was a case of suicide. The state-

ment was drawn up and signed by Professor Hoffmann, pioneer of medico-legal science at Vienna, a man of upright and loyal character, with an almost fanatical love of truth. An attempt was made to induce him to sign a statement attributing the death to a sporting accident, but he refused. On this point, at least, we are in a position to be quite positive, that Professor Hoffmann's statement, buried in the Habsburg family archives, decides, without any possible hesitation, in favour of the suicide of His Imperial and Royal Highness Rudolf, Archduke of Austria, born at Vienna on August 21st, 1858, died at Mayerling on the night of January 29th-30th, 1889, in consequence of having blown his brains out with a sporting-rifle.

On January 29th, therefore, Rudolf, having written to Marie Vetschera to notify her that he was about to break with her finally, met her (after she had furnished herself with a well-sharpened razor) on the road to Mayerling, and arrived in her company at his hunting-box. Next morning in Rudolf's bedroom at Mayerling two dead bodies were found on a disordered bed—Rudolf with his head blown off, Marie Vetschera strangled.

What exactly happened between the moment when the Baroness got into Bratfisch's cab beside her lover and the moment when they were found so brutally done to death on their bed? It would be possible to run through the various conjectures to which the tragedy has given rise. But it seems more interesting, and also more honest, to attempt to deduce the truth with the aid, firstly of logic, secondly (and especially) of the statement to the present writer of an old gentleman who was at the Viennese Court at the time of the tragedy, and was in very close touch with the Emperor personally. As this statement is in

accord with the logic of the case, we gladly accept it; and if we do not insist that it is officially authenticated, at least we may say that the reading of it carries such conviction that it must be admitted to be very like the truth.

All things point to Rudolf having abandc his original intention, as shown in his messages .. his two friends, and having made no "serious communication" to them. The evening passed like any other with the quartette—that is to say, that while the Baroness looked calmly on, the three men drank as much champagne and spirits as they could hold. According to Loschek's evidence, Rudolf was in a state of advanced intoxication when he retired about ten o'clock, in company of Marie Vetschera, who was holding him up. An early shooting expedition had been decided on for the next day. The start was to be made at 6 a.m. At five, therefore, Loschek, who had been awakened during the night by the report of a gun, which he put down to one of the gamekeepers, entered the Crown Prince's dressing-room. He used not to call his master, as Rudolf, suffering from insomnia, always arose promptly at the hour agreed upon. But at half-past five Loschek thought it his duty to give a light knock on the door. There was no answer. He knocked more loudly. Still there was silence. He tried to turn the handle. Contrary to all the customs of the house, the Prince—or he Baroness—had pushed the bolt. Loschek we to warn Philip of Coburg and Count Hoyos, who, after some fruitless calls, burst the lock and entere he room. What a sight it was that met their known. It seems that in addition to the gu wound in the head the Prince was frigh mutilated, and that the bed was covered with blo

This, then, is what is supposed to have happene

In the bedchamber Rudolf forgot, in his intoxication, the oath which he had sworn to his father, and succumbed to the terrible bewitchment of Marie Vetschera. They then went to sleep. But after his drunkenness had worn off, Rudolf was attacked again by insomnia, and began to think how, through the Baroness, he had broken his word as an officer and a gentleman. He must have awakened her, and, in one of the fits of hallucination which frequently came over him, made accusations against himself, and declared that he was going to leave her, never to see her again. In this state of mind he must even have begun to dress himself. Marie Vetschera must have drawn him to herself again, and finding him for the first time in his life proof against all her seductions, the cruel daughter of the East must have finally made a frightful attack on him with the razor which she had bought in Vienna. Mad with pain, Rudolf threw himself upon his mistress and strangled her, and then, taking his sporting-rifle and putting a drop of water on the charge to render its explosion the more shattering, put the muzzle in his mouth and blew his head completely to pieces.

This explanation accounts for the otherwise improbable purchase of the razor in the Wiedner-Hauptstrasse and for Rudolf's act, for morphinists never have the strength of mind to commit suicide, except under very special instigation, of a purely physical kind. And Rudolf was a morphinomaniac if there ever was one.

We now leave hypothesis, and return to certainty. The Prince of Coburg and Count Hoyos, having closed the door on the two corpses and padlocked it, extracted from the only direct witness besides themselves, the valet Loschek (who was deeply attached to his master, and was weeping), a promise that he

would never reveal the truth to anyone under any pretext. After this precaution, Prince Philip, who was aware of the Emperor's violent antipathy towards himself, begged Count Hoyos to take the fatal news to the Hofburg. Count Hoyos had a carriage got ready, drove to Baden, took the first train leaving for Vienna, and reached the Palace early in the morning. There, not daring to approach the Emperor, he asked for the Empress. As soon as Elisabeth saw the Count in her apartments at so early an hour, in shooting attire, and with [illegible]ard face, she uttered the cry of a mother wounded in the person of her offspring:

"Something has happened to my son!"

Count Hoyos bowed his head in assent. So as not to betray the tottering of her knees, the Empress sat down, and, pointing out a chair to her visitor, said in a voice which she strove to make firm: "You may speak, Count. I am strong. Do not be afraid. I am ready to hear all."

With eyes half closed, the mother, so tender and so nervous, listened to the terrible story as though she were only the Empress, without a quiver or a tear. When the Count had ceased speaking, she seemed at last to be making a great effort to get her words out. Ye[illegible]he asked:

"[illegible]ou have told the Emperor nothing yet?"

"No madame; but if Your Majesty wishes . . ."

"No. I thank you for coming to me first. It is from me only that the Emperor can hear such tidings."

All unaided, hardly even stumbling, she reached Francis-Joseph's rooms. The Emperor was working, with his officer in attendance. She begged him to dismiss the officer for a minute; and the Imperial couple were alone, face to face, as they had not been for years.

When Count Hoyos was summoned to his Sovereign's presence an hour later, he found the Empress, as pale as marble, but calm and dignified, holding the Emperor's hand in hers. He, poor man, looking ten years older, was leaning over his desk, his eyes all red, his face bathed in tears, gulping down short broken sobs. He made the Count tell the tragic story again, interrupting him with deep moans and cries of despair. When the tale was ended, a great silence followed, broken only by the Emperor's loud weeping.

The Empress was the first to speak again. Forgetting every grievance, and even the fact that she, in her heart, held her daughter-in-law partly responsible for what had happened, she said simply: "The Archduchess Stéphanie must be told."

Francis-Joseph tottered, on the arm of his wife, through the vast galleries to the Archduchess's apartments. She was at her toilet, and sprang up in surprise at such a visit. The looks of the Imperial couple forced her to suppose that something terrible was in store for her. She was only told the facts (and it was Elisabeth who told her) with the greatest delicacy. She fainted away, nevertheless. Francis-Joseph knelt at his daughter-in-law's side, and spoke to her as though to a child. Elisabeth took it on herself to send him away. "You are suffering so much, Francis," she said; "you must try to get some rest." Then she remained alone with a daughter-in-law whom she had never loved, a woman whom she blamed for wrecking her dear Rudy's happiness, but for whom at the present moment she felt nothing but the deepest compassion.

It is impossible to describe all that she was during this terrible time to her husband and her daughter-in-law—these two persons who in their different ways

had rendered her so unhappy. The Emperor, in spite of his usual indifference, felt this so much that he tried to express it in an order of the day addressed to the public. "What I owe" (his words ran) "in this period of grief to my beloved wife, and what profound consolation she has given me by her presence and her example, I could never describe nor express. It is to her, and to her alone, that I owe it that I have not succumbed to despair."

In this awful tragedy, which completed the shattering of her heart and her life, the pity which Elisabeth lavished on Francis-Joseph had a double motive. In the first place, she saw an object of the intensest compassion in the wounded man, expiating so cruelly his faults and accusing himself of his son's death; and, secondly, she conceived it her duty to be gentle to the head of a family into which she had introduced the germ of madness—long a fixed idea with her, which Rudolf's death served to confirm.

It was on a dismal winter afternoon, with a wan sky above and a heavy clinging mist below, that Rudolf's coffin left Mayerling, the home of sport and of love, drawn on a black, unornamented hearse by two slow-stepping horses, and escorted only by six gamekeepers, carrying tapers, whose little yellow flames flickered out in the wind. Two days later the unhappy Prince's body, amid the Requiem Masses of all the churches in the Empire (except at Ischl, where the Vicar refused to pray for a suicide), was resting at Vienna, in the Capuchin Monastery, amid the memorials to all his ancestors in the vault of Neuermarkt.

The body of the Baroness Marie Vetschera was not removed until two days later. It was taken by night to Trieste, whence it was despatched at once to Venice, lighted only by the lanterns of the boatmen.

It was from Venice that the Baroness Vetschera first heard of her daughter's "sudden death." The body was then brought, by daylight this time, to Bohemia, where the Vetscheras had a family vault. Here sleeps her last sleep the beautiful girl who paid with her life for the ambitious dreams which were conceived about her. The golden gleam of the Imperial crown had never lighted up the black night of her hair.

On the ground of the little château of Mayerling a convent was built by order of the Emperor and Empress. Expiation for the crime is performed by nuns of the Trappist Order, whose rule enjoins on them eternal silence, except to say to one another, when they meet in the cold shadow of the cloister: "My sister, we must die."*

* On October 12th, 1908, a monument to the late Crown Prince was unveiled at Buda-Pesth by the Emperor Francis-Joseph, having been presented to the town by a committee of citizens and executed by Signor Ligeti. The reports represent the Emperor as evidently deeply moved at the ceremony.—*Translator.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE END OF A MARTYRDOM

ELISABETH had once hoped to find in her love for Rudolf at least a semblance of repose. Now, after Mayerling, the very life-springs of her heart seemed to have dried up, and wearily she returned again to her feverish, wandering existence of yore.

At the time of the tragedy she was still beautiful, though her charming blue eyes shone out rather sorrowfully from under her heavy crown of golden hair; and she looked after her appearance carefully, dressing with great taste, if without coquetry, and not disdaining to adorn her beauty with jewels which heightened its effect. With Rudolf's death there passed away for ever this very legitimate desire of inspiring pleasure. In future, down to her last day, the Empress wore nothing but mourning, and her jewellery lay buried as securely in their crystal caskets as Rudolf's body in its iron sarcophagus in the vault of the Capuchins.

Like her son in his coffin and her jewels in their caskets, the Empress hid herself away from the world. To secure for herself freedom to live as she would, safe from the contact of husband, daughters, and daughter-in-law—and, still more, from the condolences of all acquaintances, intimate or distant—she retired to her Hungarian château of Goedoelloe, where for long months she dwelt, plunged in the pro-

foundest silence. She neither spoke nor slept. For the last nine years of her mortal life, until that day when the assassin's knife brought her release, it may be said that Elisabeth knew not sleep. Her long martyrdom was exaggerated by prolonged insomnia. To ease her sick nerves she would take most fatiguing solitary rides about the neighbourhood of Goedoelloe. The peasantry, the Czikos, and the gipsies, as they met her on the roads, in the pasturages, and in the fields, respectfully saluted the lady, all in mourning, sitting upright in the saddle, with set features and dark-ringed eyes that gazed out into space, while her horse galloped furiously over the vast Hungarian plain.

On the first anniversary of her son's death she returned to Vienna, when for the first time since the affair she opened her lips. But not for long. Having visited the funeral vault, she went with the Emperor to the Trappist nunnery at Mayerling, and was present at a Low Mass celebrated at an altar erected on the exact spot where had stood a year before the bed of love and of death. During the whole service she maintained the same proud, frozen attitude of body and fixity of gaze which were hers until the end of her life, making even her relatives doubt whether she retained all her faculties.

This problem of her mental condition has never been solved. She was obviously abnormal. Naturally expansive, soft-hearted, and impressionable, she had been obliged all through life to put constraint upon herself, for since the first days of wifehood and motherhood she had never met with anything except antipathy and enmity on the part of her relatives. Thrown back upon herself, she had seen in the agonies and the deaths of those who were dear to her the agony and death also of her desire for love, so superabundant and so repressed. And insanity—her

great terror—and death continued to strike at those about her. Before we come to the period of what has been called Elisabeth's own madness, we may pause to glance at the devastation wrought by sorrow, mental alienation, and death among those about her.

First there were her sisters: Sophie, Duchess of Alençon; Marie-Sophie, Queen of Naples; and Mathilda, Countess of Trani. The Duchess of Alençon met with a horrible end in the charity bazaar fire at Paris in 1897. The Queen of Naples, widow of Francis II., was driven from her estates by the revolution which united her country to Italy. Mathilda, Countess of Trani, widow of the Prince of Bourbon-Sicily, was also driven into exile, and, like Marie-Sophie, welcomed death as a deliverance.

Next there were her cousins, Ludwig II., and Otho, the present King of Bavaria. We have seen what was the end of Ludwig, the madman who killed his physician and himself. Otho appears to be still more insane than the unhappy brother whom he succeeded. His royal robe is a strait-jacket, and he has to be shut up in a completely padded room, lest he should dash his head against the walls. He does not walk, but crawls; does not talk, but barks.

We have already spoken of her brothers-in-law, Maximilian (with the madwoman he left behind him, the Empress Charlotte), Charles-Louis, and Louis-Victor.

Then there were her children, Gisela, Rudolf, and Marie-Valérie. By some strange freak of fate, she had no love for Gisela. Rudolf died at Mayerling, and Marie-Valérie is epileptic.

As if to set off the family tragedies, worthy of a Shakespeare's pen, there were the political disasters, Solferino, Sadowa, and the treaties of Villafranca and Prague.

The old Emperor held out; but we should not be astonished to learn that the mind of the unhappy Empress, crushed also by domestic troubles, showed less power of resistance against adversity.

Those who came in contact with her during the last years of her life, however, and especially her two Greek teachers, Professor Rhoussopoulos and Dr. Christomanos, who succeeded him, insisted firmly that the Empress retained her faculties admirably. Both teachers have even published Memoirs in support of this view, although it is true that some have claimed, without the possibility of proving their claim, that they were both physicians attached to an Imperial patient.

The first-named Professor, in his "Memoirs," deals particularly with the political conversations of the Empress. Especially notable is the following confidence which he reports her to have made to him one day:

"It is claimed that a Republic is the best form of government. Such a view seems to me very plausible, but I do not, nevertheless, think a Republic possible for Austria-Hungary, owing to the great number of different races in the country."

Professor Rhoussopoulos adds that such an opinion was not at all surprising in an Empress whose library included a complete and possibly unique collection of all the revolutionary and anarchist books and magazines published in all languages, which her polyglot accomplishments enabled her to read.

The other Professor speaks of her philosophical conversations, recording in particular typical expressions which prove the persistence during a great part of the Empress's life of a fixed idea such as we have seen in its early form during her stay in Brittany. Once she said in the course of a conversation: "The

instant that the love of life has departed from a human being, death's cold hand has already touched him." Another time, during an extremely violent storm off the Algerian coast, she said to Dr. Christomanos: "Are you prepared to die an ordinary death, or do you believe that death may be an heroic act? I am convinced that it is possible to die, morally speaking, long before one ceases to breathe." And a third time, with nothing to prompt her remark, she murmured: "It is useless to seek for a charming death. It is enough to know that the soul has died in beauty."

At this period, after a stay at Schönbrunn (to which and to the Hofburg she paid a number of visits between her journeys, during the closing years of her life), she made a long sojourn at her palace in Corfu, the Achilleion, that villa which she had built by the Italian architect Carito, after her own plans. She was doomed never to see it again.

The Achilleion, which will remain famous in history, is perhaps the extravagant Empress's greatest folly in luxurious and artistic prodigality. Built on the site of a sumptuous house which Elisabeth bought only to pull down, the villa cost no less than £3,200,000. Perched upon a rock commanding the sea, it has two stories on the side lapped by the waves, and, in addition, a ground-floor only on the land side. The base of the building, therefore, follows exactly the natural formation of the rock and the ascent to it. A colonnade of twelve marble pillars fronts the blue expanse of the sea. By every one of these pillars stands some precious example of ancient statuary, each piece bought by Elisabeth in Rome and transported by her from the Italian coast to Corfu on board her yacht "Miramar," on which she made so many distant cruises. The wall behind the colonnade is decorated with frescoes by Italian masters. Through

the hall, where a huge canvas depicting "The Triumph of Achilles" is displayed, the private apartments are reached by an immense marble staircase. The antechamber, all in red, contains a wonderful piece of mosaic work. In the first room, which was the Empress's study, the furniture is in the best style of the Empire period. The grand drawing-room, which comes next, is also Empire, and has a great black marble fireplace, ebony furniture embossed in gold and tapestry of peach-coloured silk. Next come a very simple bedchamber, a dressing-room upholstered in blue silk, a completely fitted gymnasium, and, lastly, a bathroom, in the centre of which, sunk in the floor, is a large white marble tank. The drawing-room and bedchamber open out upon a terrace which projects right over the sea. On the floor below are a big drawing-room in yellow and gold, a dining-room, a smoking-room, and a number of other apartments; for the Achilleion has no less than 128 rooms. We must not omit to mention the chapel, in Byzantine style, with a masterly copy of Munckaczy's "Christ before Pilate," and many valuable antiques brought by the Empress from Pompeii, Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco.

One cannot be surprised, therefore, at the fabulous cost of the villa, and still less after visiting the garden and park. The former is a dream of beauty containing no less than 25,000 rose-bushes, of the rarest kinds, merely on the terrace in front of the entrance to the building. These roses, being constantly in flower, owing to the exceptional climate which Corfu enjoys, are a joy to the eye and a delight to the nose. Beyond this forest of roses stretches a park wherein mingle with the scented shrubs of Europe the palms of Africa and the fantastic growths of the tropics, while the limpid air is musical with the sad plashing into marble

basins of tiny jets of water. More marble pillars rise into view—a little Greek temple, all rose and white, springing from the luxuriant greenery, and looking down into the blue of the waves below. In this charming temple's shelter Elisabeth, at the time of her last voyage in 1896, used to sit for whole days, a solitary crape-clad figure plunged in the depths of her grief, facing the immensity of the ocean.

A little harbour, guarded by a miniature light-house, gives access to the villa from the sea, a red marble staircase being let into the solid rock. At the base of the stair is another little temple, containing a memorial erected by the pious Elisabeth to her favourite poet, Heine.

When leaving the Achilleion towards the end of 1896, Elisabeth had a presentiment that she would never see it again. Tears rose to her eyes, burning with the strange light kindled by perpetual insomnia; and, as she watched from the bridge of the "Miramar" the sea swallowing up the white speck which was her splendid folly, she let drop these slow words: "Just as we desire to marry in our lifetime a beloved daughter, to secure her happiness, so we ought to sell before our death a beloved home, to make sure that a worthy master follows us."

Elisabeth was not destined to see this wish realized, hard though she strove; for there was no purchaser to be found for so fantastically costly a villa. Shortly before her death she had all her furniture from the Achilleion brought to Lainz, which was easier to reach than Corfu. She was burying her dream in its grave.

After her departure from Corfu, as her artistic frenzy abated, she became more cruelly aware of her physical decline. Her incurable insomnia was exasperated by unbearable nervous attacks. She

dreamed of curing herself by a diet of nothing but fruit and milk. This treatment weakened her so much that she was obliged to give up her favourite sport of riding, being unable to sit her horse. In 1897, after a season at Biarritz, which did not improve her health, she went to Paris and put herself into the hands of a nerve-specialist. A new manner of existence began for her, marked by changes from climate to climate and from doctor to doctor. The first specialist prescribed massage for his patients. But massage did not suit Elisabeth. She tried several other systems before finally quitting Paris to return to the Hofburg, where Professor Nothnagel took charge of the Empress's health. Where she had dieted herself he gave her more nourishment, obliging her especially to take underdone meat, which inspired her with extreme disgust. In the end she regained her strength, but nothing could bring back the sleep which had fled from her for ever on January 30th, 1889.

She left Vienna for San Remo, where, ten years earlier, another Imperial martyr, the Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia, passed a few months of his life in unbearable torture, before ascending the throne of the German Empire for a reign of one hundred days. From San Remo she made several excursions into France. At Villefranche one day, as a gardener was carefully trimming some beds of magnificent carnations, he perceived a lady in mourning watching him attentively through the grating of the garden-door. He took no notice of her until she began to speak to him. Then, rough fellow as he was, he lifted his head, for the sweet voice charmed his ears.

"I must seem to you very unceremonious," said the lady, "but those flowers are so beautiful, and I love them so much, that I cannot resist asking you for one or two."

The man hesitated, for his orders were very strict. His master did not allow anyone to pick his beloved carnations.

"May I have them?" the sweet voice went on.

The gardener succumbed to the charm like any other man, picked the two most beautiful blooms, intoxicating with their scent of cloves, and passed them through the grating to the unknown lady. Half an hour later, while Elisabeth was waiting at the station for the train to San Remo, she saw approaching at a run the same gardener, carrying a bunch of lovely carnations. When he had heard of the incident, the owner of the garden, who was the Mayor of Villefranche, had rifled his flower-beds and despatched the sweet-scented spoil to the Imperial traveller, whom he had recognized from his man's description.

Profoundly touched by this delicate attention, the Empress took one of her visiting-cards and pencilled on it: "Thanks from the bottom of my heart for your sweet and charming kindness, which has made me very happy." From that time, whenever she went to Villefranche, she made a point of visiting the Mayor, who loved flowers like herself.

A different sort of welcome was hers at the watering-place of Nauheim, in North Germany. The Northern Germans are not a courteous race, either naturally or by training. Inquisitive to the worst degree, they soon made a stay at Nauheim impossible for Elisabeth, whose greatest desire was to escape notice. The report had been circulated that the Empress of Austria had lost her reason. So, to get a look at this poor, mad Sovereign, crowds formed up in front of her residence, and when she went to the baths her attendants had literally to force a way for her through the masses of sightseers.

Elisabeth next expressed a desire to settle in Switzer-

land. The Emperor, who was on a visit to his wife at Nauheim, as soon as he heard of the plan, advised her strongly against it, inspired by the counsels of his Court and the police reports. Elisabeth being troubled about the motives of his interference, Francis-Joseph told her that he had bad reports from Switzerland, where there was great activity in Anarchist circles, and the lives of royal personages could not be safe. A little spark flickered for an instant in her eyes, the same little spark which might have been seen in their depths on the day when she rode the restive horse of Count Festetics, and again on that stormy morning on the Breton coast when she threw herself into the raging waves. But she answered quietly, as her eyes regained their usual calm :

"I am a poor woman, Francis, who have no concern in politics. I have therefore nothing to fear. If I tremble when I hear talk about Anarchists, it is only on account of the Emperor that I tremble."

She had many times, indeed, shown that she did not fear the Anarchists by deliberately going to meet danger. Some years before, when Francis-Joseph and Rudolf were going to Trieste to open an exhibition there, there was an agitation among the Irredentists, and an outrage was feared. She insisted on accompanying her husband and son, saying that if she were present no crime would be committed. A little later the correctness of her view was proved at the trial of the Anarchist Oberdank. In the course of the evidence it came out that an attempt was to have been made on the occasion of the Imperial visit, and everything points to the presence of the Empress alone preventing it.

Subsequently, when out for a country walk in England, she met a poor woman carrying a baby, who roused her pity. Without making herself known,

she several times brought assistance to her in her home. She never met the husband until one day, as she left the wretched dwelling, she came upon him, with a gun on his shoulder. Instead of thanking her, he began to revile the rich, the nobility, kings and all. Elisabeth broke in :

"You have every right to be an enemy of the monarchy. But, unfortunately, such ideas don't help you to keep your family."

"What's that to you? It is just these blackguards in crowns who prevent us from living!" shouted the man. Then, brandishing his gun, he added: "I wish I had one at the end of my gun!"

"Your wish is granted: I am the Empress of Austria."

She looked steadfastly for one minute into the eyes of the furious man, and then, without hastening or giving a glance behind her, she went on her way.

Once again before she met Luccheni and his knife, she had an affair with another Anarchist. She was stopping at Mentone. As she strolled out to Cap Martin, a man appeared from behind a rock and demanded alms. Elisabeth took from her purse a silver coin, and held it out to the beggar. As soon as he saw that the purse contained gold, he planted himself in front of her, saying :

"Aha! the lady is rich. And is this all she gives me?"

"There are others, too, who need help."

"Oh yes! Still, if I wanted, I could get all the lady's money. I should only have to take the pretty purse and drop the lady quietly in the sea."

"Bah!" said the Empress, with a smile; "I can swim, and should only risk a wetting, while you would be in danger of the scaffold."

The man was startled. After reflecting for a

moment, he thrust out his dirty hand, loudly expressing his admiration for her courage. Elisabeth shrugged her shoulders and turned her back on him. At this moment a footman came up at a run, exclaiming:

"What is the matter? Is this person insulting Your Majesty?"

"No," said the Empress. "Let him alone."

She gazed into the sea, while the beggar went up to the footman and asked him in a low tone whether she was "a Majesty."

"Yes, the Empress of Austria," replied the other. "And now you be off!"

"Didn't you hear your mistress, flunkey?" asked the beggar haughtily. "Let me alone. It's nothing to you that this Majesty of yours and I have had a talk. She is an Empress, you say? Well, I'm an Anarchist! I don't care a hang for tyrants, but a woman like that . . . I wouldn't touch a hair of her head, not for a thousand pounds. Good-day, lady," he added respectfully, and disappeared among the rocks.

The Empress was justified in saying that she did not fear Anarchists, since one of them had thus paid his unconventional tribute to her courage. She disregarded, therefore, the anxiety of Francis-Joseph, and started for the shores of Lake Leman. She settled down not far from Geneva, at the Grand Hôtel de Caux, situated in a pine-wood clinging to the mountain-side below Montreux. Here she began to feel better, and seemed to be regaining her former health. Early in September she heard talk of the hothouses specially constructed for the cultivation of rare orchids at the Baroness Rothschild's château of Pregny, on the other side of Geneva. She knew the Baroness, having met her in Paris at the house of her sister, the

Queen of Naples. She made up her mind, therefore, to pay a visit to the orchid-houses at Pregny. She engaged a room at the Hôtel Beaurivage, at Geneva, intending to break her journey there on her return, and left the Grand Hôtel de Caux. She went through Geneva to Pregny, and came back to the Hôtel Beaurivage, meaning to leave next morning by the lake-steamboat "Genève" for Territtet-Montreux. That evening she took a walk in the town, dined, and retired early to bed. On the following morning, September 10th, 1898, after bathing and dressing, she took another walk in Geneva, accompanied by the Countess Sztaray, her lady-in-waiting, sending her suite to the station to catch the train for Territtet, and then, still accompanied by the Countess, left the hotel for the steamer-wharf, whither an old footman had already gone, carrying the Empress's travelling-bag and cloak.

When the two ladies left the hotel, a young workman, who had been watching the arrivals and departures for over an hour from the seat where he was sitting on the path to the wharf, jumped up suddenly. Waiting until the travellers had reached the pathway, he walked straight in front of them, and, passing by the Empress's side, struck her so violent a blow in the breast that she fell to her knees. At this moment the Countess Sztaray was a little in advance, waving to the men on the boat not to lift up the gangway until they should reach the wharf. She turned round to see Elisabeth rising from the ground and the young workman running off down the Rue des Alpes. Taking him for a thief, the Countess pointed him out to the passers-by, who set off in pursuit. He was caught by two cab-drivers at the instant that he was about to take refuge in the Square des Alpes and hide himself among the bushes.

The Countess Sztaray returned to the Empress, and, with the help of a bystander, set her on her feet. Very pale in the face, the Empress told the man not to trouble himself, thanked him, and, taking her lady's arm, went on to the wharf. Replying to the Countess's questions, she declared that she was not hurt, or, at least, if she were, that the injury was very slight. On the steamer she sat down, but hardly had the boat left the wharf when she fainted. They carried her on to the upper deck, imagining that she had a heart-failure, caused by her suppressed alarm. The steamer went on, leaving a white track behind it in the blue waters of the lake, while around the big red lateen-sails flashed out against the background of snowy mountains. On the lower deck a gipsy band, taken on board for the first part of the trip, began to strike up a captivating *czardas*.

The Empress grew paler and paler, and nothing could restore her to consciousness. The Countess Sztaray unfastened her mistress's dress, untied the knot and loosened the laces of her corset. On the chemise, just below the left breast, she perceived a tiny stain of blood. She tore open the chemise, and discovered a little triangular wound, from which issued a drop of blood. "A doctor! quick, a doctor!" she cried. "The Empress is hurt." There was no doctor on board. The steamer began to turn. Then the Empress opened her eyes, and in a far-away but calm voice asked:

"What is the matter?"

"Are you in pain?" was the Countess's anguished reply.

Elisabeth seemed to listen to the frenzied sounds of the *czardas* of her beloved gipsies, and she answered gently: "No."

A sad, sweet smile hovered over her lips, her hands made a gesture of thanks to Heaven, and her eyelids closed upon two glad eyes that would open no more. Elisabeth died in beauty.

At the wharf a stretcher was made from two oars, some sailcloth, and a cushion, and the Empress was laid upon it to be carried to the Hôtel Beaurivage. All the efforts of the doctors summoned to her bedside were unavailing to call her back to life, and at three in the afternoon, without regaining consciousness, the Empress of Austria breathed her last.

In response to a hasty summons, Elisabeth's suite returned to Geneva. Baron Berzeviczy, Grand-Marshal of her Court, after telegraphing to Vienna, watched for the last time at his mistress's side. To a journalist who, on the day after the murder, expressed his surprise at the wife of Francis-Joseph going about unattended by a body-guard, the Grand-Marshal replied, with a shake of the head and a despairing gesture: "A body-guard? No, that was impossible with the Empress. Her Majesty could never bear police about her, even—or especially—where it was most dangerous for a Sovereign to take risks."

Elisabeth, Empress errant, heroine of the incidents at Goedoelloe, Finisterre, and Cap Martin, knew why she acted thus, but her secret is buried with her in the tomb.

The Emperor Francis-Joseph was at Schönbrunn when his aide-de-camp, Count Paar, who had just received a cipher despatch from the Countess Sztaray, communicated the terrible news to him. He sank into a chair sobbing. When he was able to speak, he said to Count Paar, who was silent in the presence of such grief—grief mingled, perhaps, with remorse at having been so bad a husband to her who had become once more dear to him in her last years:

"This is the most cruel hour of my whole life."

The old Emperor began to weep again. A few hours later Count Goluchowsky, Minister for Foreign Affairs, reached Schönbrunn with the official intimation.

On September 13th, at 7 a.m., the Emperor's representatives reached Geneva. They were Count Francis Aüersperg, his Chamberlain; Count Bellegarde, Marshal; the Countess Harrach, Grand-Mistress of the Court; and the Countess Festetics, lady-in-waiting to the Empress. A private religious service was held in the death-chamber at the Hôtel Beaurivage in the afternoon. Next morning, at 8.30 a.m., in brilliant sunshine, the funeral procession left for the station by way of the quay and the Rue du Mont-Blanc. The coffin of the martyred Empress was put into the carriage prepared for it. Everywhere along the line —at Lausanne, Fribourg, Berne, Zurich, Buchs, Salzburg, and Linz—the church-bells tolled the knell, while pickets of soldiers turned out with flags to salute. Finally, on Sunday, September 17th, after having been exposed to view for twenty-four hours at the Hofburg Chapel in a coffin with a glass top, the body of the unfortunate Elisabeth was placed in the vault at the Capuchin Monastery, close to the coffin of her well-beloved and unhappy son Rudolf. The murdered mother was sleeping her last sleep beside her son, the suicide.

Meanwhile the assassin's identity had been established. He was an Italian, born in Paris in 1873, and known by the name of Luccheni. He professed Anarchist views. He had come to Geneva to kill the Duke of Orleans; but the Duke not being there, and the Empress of Austria happening to be on the spot, he killed her. He committed the deed with a kind of triangular file familiar to shoemakers, which he had

carefully sharpened. The file had passed under the fourth rib, breaking it and penetrating right into the heart, which it pierced. The Anarchist had made no mistake about the Empress.

The present writer had the fortune to see Luccheni just eight days after the murder. Many subterfuges and repeated applications were necessary before a letter was successfully obtained from the Attorney-General to the Judge in charge of the case, M. Lechet. A very vivid recollection remains in the writer's mind of what happened.

On reaching M. Lechet's room, I expressed my wish to see Luccheni. The magistrate, who had the appearance of a retired police-officer, scratched his head, pulled at his long white goatee beard, and remarked:

"To see Luccheni! Oh yes, I understand; you would like to see him. But I ought to tell you, I think, that he has a perfect horror of journalists."

His goatee got another pull and his head another scratch before M. Lechet said:

"Well, see here. He is very quiet and well-behaved, but he doesn't like people to visit him. I will have him brought out to you."

A few words scribbled on a printed form were given to an attendant. As I waited I grew bolder, and asked the Judge if it would be possible for me to have a couple of lines in Luccheni's handwriting. Once more M. Lechet was perplexed, but once more he gave way. M. Baretta, one of the ushers, was sent for, and commissioned to obtain the autograph. The usher in his turn showed his perplexity.

"What pretext can I make?" he asked anxiously.

"Tell him the truth," replied the honest magistrate.

"He will never do it for a journalist. He can't bear them."

This was certainly true. But now we were informed that Luccheni was here. We went out to see him standing between two policemen, with a faint, artless smile in his half-closed eyes and on his small mouth, shaded by a slight, reddish moustache. Luccheni, still smiling, took off his hat. M. Lechet went up to him.

"Will you be so good, Luccheni, as to give me a few lines in your handwriting and your signature?" he asked.

"What for?"

"Someone I know wants them."

"No, no. It's another journalist, I am sure. No, no."

M. Baretta broke in. He could speak Italian, and to him only Luccheni consented to tell anything about himself. The autograph was for himself, he said. So Luccheni agreed to sit down in the usher's chair and write four lines, while M. Letchet went to fetch three cigarettes as a reward for him.

"Thank you very much, *M. le zouze*" (*juge*), he said, with his curious pronunciation of French.

"That's all right, that's all right."

As I held out a match to Luccheni, I rapidly interviewed him.

"What did I kill her for? That's easy to guess. I said to myself: 'You never worked, you never unhappy. Me always work, always unhappy. So'" —making the gesture of stabbing—"'there's one for you, and here's one for me!'"

A door opened, and, while the Judge and usher looked at him in almost admiring wonder, Luccheni passed through, still smiling, accompanied by his two policemen.

I have added nothing to this account, I have not embroidered or embellished it, and this is exactly how

I saw Luccheni and the men who had him in their custody.

Although he expected it, or said that he expected it, Luccheni was not executed, for the death-penalty does not exist in the canton of Geneva. Condemned to solitary confinement for life, he occupies, in the Episcopal Prison, an underground dungeon, with nothing in it except a mattress and lighted only feebly from above. His name exists no more. He has become No. 1,144. No. 1,144 lives in absolute solitude, interrupted once a week only by a brief visit on the part of the chaplain. The death-penalty being abolished, a worse has been found. Surely the gentle Empress, could she return to life, would beg for mercy to her murderer!

The great Hungarian poet, Maurus Jokai, in an obituary article on Elisabeth, mentions an anecdote, which is worth quoting as corroborating all that we have said about the Empress:

"At one period in her life Elisabeth wrote some verses in Hungarian on the subject of the raven, the bird of ill-omen which plays a great part in the history of the Habsburgs. According to the Imperial poetess, a flight of ravens was hovering over Olmütz when Francis-Joseph received from his uncle's hands the crown which was destined to inflict upon him such miseries. A raven followed Maximilian and Charlotte, and refused to be driven away, on their last walk in the park at Miramar before their departure for Mexico. When Maria Christina got into the carriage to drive to the railway-station on her way to receive the crown of Spain, which was one day to be so grievous a burden, a raven flew over the horses' heads and never ceased wheeling round the carriage until it had finished its journey. This was the subject of the Empress Elisabeth's Hungarian poem. Now,

two days previous to September 10th, 1898, when she was preparing to start for Geneva, the Empress was taking a walk at Territtet with her reader, an Englishman named Becker. She had brought some fruit with her, and as she sat on the grass to rest, she cut a peach in two and held out half of it to the reader. In an instant a raven flew down, brushing her white forehead with his black plumes, and snatched from her hand the portion of peach. She laughed, and, recalling her poem to the rather disturbed Becker, said: 'Don't be alarmed. If anything happens to me, it will not be the bird's fault. Besides, you know how I feel about death. I fear it not at all. When the soul is dead, it matters little when the body follows it. And my soul has long been dead!' "

CHAPTER XIV

SHATTERED PRINCIPLES

THROUGHOUT his life Francis-Joseph has stood forth as the champion of tradition, and if he has not himself always been scrupulous in respecting it, at least he has insisted on others doing so. The tragedies and misfortunes of his house, although a great part of the responsibility for them rests upon him, have passed over him almost without touching him. But to the scandals which have tarnished the fair name of the Habsburgs he could not be indifferent, for, where the honour of his name was damaged, the old Emperor's violent pride and haughty arrogance were grievously hurt. To prevent the misdeeds of his relatives spreading within the bounds of the Empire, he passed, or procured the passing of, laws to restrict the freedom of the Press. He could not, however, similarly muzzle writers in other countries, nor prevent the entry into his territories of publications from abroad. And so, to his great annoyance, stories of the scandalous proceedings of members of the Imperial and Royal House of Habsburg came back to Austria-Hungary with comments and embellishments (of which they stood in little need) acquired during their circulation in other lands.

Gradually, as years went on, his appetite for the struggle grew less. His principles doubtless remained

the same, but his vital forces grew weaker and less able to uphold those principles and carry them through to victory. With bitter sorrow he saw his dignity assailed by his relatives and connections, and his power assailed at the same time by the domestic quarrels in his Empire, which rent it asunder while diminishing the authority of the monarch. The veteran fighter's energies declined. Weariness began to overtake him at the slightest opposition, and, notwithstanding the grief of the discovery, he felt that his deepest and most secret ambitions were those which made for peace.

On one point, however, the Emperor remained unshakable. He would consent to no compromise regarding what he proudly called "the laws of the House of Habsburg." In virtue of these laws he retained such rights, in particular, as that of choosing husbands for the Princesses and brides for the Princes of his house. In spite of the mournful examples furnished by his system of marriages between close kinsfolk, he would not consent to abandon it, but continued to impoverish the race in the cause of tradition.

Even this last principle, to which Francis-Joseph clung as if to the only branch remaining sound in the general decay of the ancient family tree of the Habsburgs, was destined to be shattered before his eyes by the fragile hand of a girl, and that in 1890, when he had not yet reached, as he has to-day, the period of physical weakness. His eldest daughter, the Archduchess Gisela, had, through her marriage with Leopold, Duke of Bavaria, given four grandchildren to her Imperial parents, two boys and two girls. Francis-Joseph had a great affection for his grandchildren, and especially for his granddaughters, Elisabeth and Augustine, the elder of these, Elisa-

beth, being his chief favourite. The children were often seen at the Court of Vienna, on their grandfather's invitation. When the Princess Elisabeth had just entered her nineteenth year, she asked, during a visit to the Hofburg, for a private interview with the Emperor.

"Is it such a great secret, then?" asked the Emperor, smiling through his heavy grey moustache and whiskers.

"You can tell that, grandfather, by my not daring to tell mamma."

"Good Heavens!" cried Francis-Joseph rather anxiously. "So it must be very serious?"

"Very serious, grandfather."

The Emperor took his granddaughter into that famous study at the Hofburg which had witnessed so many family scenes, courteously put an arm-chair for her, and when she had seated herself, sat down himself at his desk.

"I am listening," he said.

The young Princess closed her eyes, tried to still with her hand the beatings of her heart, clutched the arms of the chair, and then opened her eyes again, with a look of great resolution in them. All she said was:

"Grandfather, I am in love, and loved in return."

"You are eighteen, dear child, and that is very natural. And, since I feel sure that my own little granddaughter cannot have misplaced her affections . . ."

"He whom I love is worthy in all respects of my affection. He is young, handsome, brave, and as true as his own sword."

"And what is Prince Charming's name?"

"He is not a Prince."

"Not a Prince?"

"No; he is Baron von Seefried, Lieutenant in the Bavarian cavalry."

"You are mad."

"I haven't told you all, grandfather. Otho is a Protestant."

"A Protestant!" shouted the Emperor, springing up with his arms uplifted in the air—"a Protestant!" and he fell back in his chair. He passed his hand crossed his forehead, damp with sweat. Then with a smile, but with a trembling voice, he added: "This Baron of yours frightened me. But as he is a Protestant, that is over. It is impossible, my child—absolutely impossible. In future, however, you must be more careful in your jokes, you know."

He got up and walked towards the door, deeming the conversation at an end now that he had announced his Imperial decision. The Princess Elisabeth laid her little hand on her grandfather's arm and softly whispered that it was too late: she was already Otho's. A hollow groan was the Emperor's reply. He began to walk furiously up and down the room, pulling at his whiskers, while the little Princess sobbed quietly to herself. At last he stopped in front of her, and, taking her lace handkerchief from her hands, dabbed her eyes with it, saying:

"Come, don't cry any more, darling. You have done wrong—very wrong. But I cannot scold my dear little granddaughter when there are tears in her pretty eyes."

"Truly, grandfather, you forgive me?" asked the girl between two sobs, with the rainbow of hope shining in her eyes.

He felt that he must forgive. And he proceeded to unfold his plan, the only solution which seemed to him possible, never dreaming that he was making a monstrous suggestion in his endeavour to "save the

face" of the Habsburg family. A husband must be found for her in some minor Archduke of the blood, or perhaps in some penniless Catholic noble of high rank, who would take the Princess with a large dowry. Such a thing had been known before. One of the Princess's own cousins had, a few years previously, been married to a poverty-stricken old Czech noble, Count V., after an affair with a famous actor at the Theatre Royal, Munich. The Count was given a fortune with his wife, the actor an engagement at the Burg-Theater.

Elisabeth of Bavaria listened without a word to the Emperor's proposal. She was no longer weeping. She walked to the door, opened it, and saying, "Grandfather, you must reflect," went out of the room.

The Empress happened to be at the Hofburg. The young Elisabeth bared her heart to the elder. The Empress brought up as the last resource against her husband the argument—never used by her on any other occasion—drawn from the tragic consequences of Rudolf's marriage of policy. Francis-Joseph learnt also that, if he adhered to his decision, the Princess was prepared to elope with her Lieutenant. As he was little to be moved by appeals to sentiment, it must have been this which made him surrender, surprised to discover a will capable of opposing his own.

To cut the story short, there took place at Genoa on December 2nd, 1893, with the consent of the Emperor (sacrificing the last of his principles), the wedding of Elisabeth-Marie-Augustine, Princess of Bavaria, and Otho, Baron von Seefried-zu-Buttenheim, Lieutenant in the reserve. This was the first misalliance to which the Emperor had given his consent. It is also, perhaps, the first really happy marriage in the family, for it has no place in history.

From that day to this nothing has been talked about the little household which hides, in the modest château of Znaim, in a small Moravian town, a happiness which makes a bright spot in the gloomy darkness of the Habsburg annals.

On the other hand, the Emperor had taken a revenge in anticipation by marrying Elisabeth's sister, the Princess Augustine, to her cousin, the Archduke Joseph-Augustus, who ill-treats her.

His own younger daughter, the epileptic Marie-Valérie, he compelled to wed, in 1890, one of her first cousins, the Archduke Francis-Salvator. It would seem as if he regarded the perpetuation of the family taint as a sort of tradition.

The young Elisabeth's boldness did not shatter his powers of resistance nor make him cease from directing the family alliances. Thus, he compelled his cousin, the Archduke Joseph (who died in June, 1905), to accept for his daughter, Maria-Dorothea, the proposal conveyed by the Princess Clementine of Belgium from Prince Philippe of Orleans, King of France *in partibus*. The Archduke Joseph was not enthusiastic, nor did the Archduchess appear so either. The bridegroom's character and prospects were none too good. But for some unknown reasons—perhaps for the pleasure of imposing once more his failing will—Francis-Joseph overbore his cousin's opposition; and a fresh victim was offered up to the arrogant obstinacy of the Emperor. It is well known that the unfortunate Maria-Dorothea has a very unhappy life, and has several times expressed a desire to free herself.

This was the last manifestation of Francis-Joseph's uncompromising principles. Since then he has been obliged to give way, step by step, before the waves of the great ocean of natural love, ever mounting higher and higher as his life draws to its close. The shock

given to him by his granddaughter was followed by an attack from his son's widow. The life of the Archduchess Stéphanie was a very melancholy one after Rudolf's death. The hatred with which she inspired Rudolf pursued her from beyond the grave. His will stipulated that his only daughter Elisabeth should be brought up by her grandparents, and that she should not be allowed to cross the Austro-Hungarian frontier before she came of age. Thereby Stéphanie was compelled to forego either a second marriage or the society of her daughter. Francis-Joseph, although he had no love for his daughter-in-law, and was unjust enough to blame her alone for an event in which he himself had a very large share—namely, Rudolf's death—was troubled by this uncharitable will, and conceived the idea of making things right by giving a second husband to Stéphanie in the person of the probable new Heir-Apparent, Francis-Ferdinand, eldest son of the Archduke Charles-Louis. There were two obstacles in the way—one that Stéphanie could bear no more children, and the other, still more serious, that Francis-Ferdinand suffered with his lungs, and was obliged to leave, first for the South of France, and then for a long cruise in the tropics. He came back cured, but Stéphanie's heart was no longer free.

The widow lived a very retired life at Laxenburg. By a mitigation of Rudolf's cruel will, for which the Empress's interference was responsible, she was allowed to have her daughter with her, and to look after her education. Their existence was unnoticed by anyone until one fine day it attracted the surprised attention of the outside world. A little more than a year after the Empress's death there were present at a Court reception the Archduchess Stéphanie and her daughter, the Archduchess Elisabeth, now in the fresh springtime of her sixteen years. By "the

rules of the family" Elisabeth was of age, and was making her début in Society.

A little later Stéphanie asked for an audience with her father-in-law. She informed him that she loved a Chamberlain in her own household, Count Lonyay, a Hungarian noble of no exalted rank, and that she wished to marry him. The Emperor demurred; but Stéphanie was as determined as the young Bavarian Princess had been, and asserted her right to be happy, declaring that hitherto she had bowed to others' wills, but now she was resolved to obey her own. The old Emperor no longer inspired fear. He was entangled and powerless in the nets which Love cast about him. Again he was forced to surrender. He even put a bold face upon it, and, having once made up his mind, played his part capitally. At the very moment when he, the head of the proud and ancient line of the Habsburgs, abandoned his principles, a man whose family dated back less than a century had the audacity to remind him of them. While Francis-Joseph yielded, Leopold II. opposed Stéphanie's mis-alliance. The King of the Belgians intervened in the name of tradition! He had calmly sacrificed his daughter in the past to State policy, by forcing her to a marriage which displeased her, and was doomed to turn out so ill. We have seen his brief and concise telegram in reply to Stéphanie's appeal to be allowed to return to her father's home. On Rudolf's death, although he was the richest of all Sovereigns, he was so mean as to allow his daughter an income of £2,000 only, leaving her dependent otherwise upon parents-in-law who had no love for her. Now, claiming an imaginary right, and speaking on behalf of principles, he, such as he was, wished to prevent his daughter from getting a little love and happiness out of her life. But Stéphanie, strengthened by the consent of the

head of the Habsburgs, insisted upon the union dear to her poor heart, which the sun of love rose so late to gladden. Leopold took his revenge by cutting off the allowance of £2,000, and forbidding her to bear the title of Royal Highness. Francis-Joseph, however, was watching over her, and replied by authorizing the Countess Lonyay to retain the rank of Imperial and Royal Highness which her marriage with the Archduke Rudolf had once given her. As for her father's allowance, his suppression of it troubled Stéphanie very little; for, if Count Lonyay's quarterings are poor, his wealth in lands and rent-rolls is great.

In order to prove that it was through weariness at the struggle, not with a good grace, that Francis-Joseph gave way, it must be added that, although since Stéphanie's marriage he has admitted her to the Court when she comes to see the Archduchess Elisabeth, he has never consented to receive Count Lonyay. Even when the marriage of Stéphanie's daughter was celebrated a few years later, Count Lonyay, though invited to be present with all the rest at the religious ceremony, was not one of the guests at the Emperor's luncheon-party at the Hofburg.

The Emperor's first two surrenders to the might of love were destined to cost him more dearly than he imagined. The third attack on his principles was made by the new Heir-Apparent, the Archduke Francis-Ferdinand. After his return from the tropics the Archduke was nominated Inspector-General of Infantry, thereby taking up one of Rudolf's posts; and on several occasions he was entrusted by the Emperor with the task of representing the Imperial family. He was thus semi-officially recognized as future occupant of the throne, to which the official

heir was his father, the old dotard Charles-Louis. Many times Francis-Joseph, in his fear lest he should see the power pass into the hands of Charles-Louis's second son, Otho, the "coffin-jumper," discussed with his nephew the question of the marriage which was to establish a new line of heirs to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Francis-Ferdinand always managed to turn the conversation by some rhetorical artifice. His repugnance against the subject seemed all the more strange because he was not known to have any liaison. But his secret, jealously as it was guarded, was soon to be revealed. After Stéphanie's marriage, taking heart at Francis-Joseph's behaviour in the circumstances, Francis-Ferdinand unburdened himself to the Emperor personally. He had also given his heart entirely to someone below him in rank, and would have despaired of ever admitting his desire of regularizing the affair had he not been encouraged by Stéphanie's example. The former Heir-Apparent's widow had married Count Lonyay. Why should not the Countess Chotek become the wife of the new Crown Prince?

Accustomed though he was becoming to these shocks, the Emperor on this occasion was more violently upset than ever. Stéphanie, indeed, was not a real member of the Habsburg family; she was a Coburg who, on the Archduke Rudolf's death, returned to the Coburg's. Her marriage, moreover, had nothing to do with Imperial politics. The case was entirely different with the Habsburg Francis-Ferdinand, heir to the Imperial throne. The law respecting the reigning house is precise. In the Austrian Constitution it is formally laid down that:

1. Every union contracted between an Emperor of Austria, or an Heir-Apparent to the Imperial throne, and a woman who is not a Princess of the

blood royal excludes the latter from the titles of Empress or of Heiress-Apparent; and

2. No children born of such a marriage can claim, in any circumstance, to occupy the Imperial throne.

On this point, whatever it might cost Francis-Joseph's pride, the matter could be arranged. It was sufficient for the Heir-Apparent to declare solemnly, on behalf of his affianced bride and the future issue of his marriage with her, that neither she nor they would ever lay claim to the Imperial title, or to any rights over the throne of Austria. But side by side with the Austrian Constitution there was the Hungarian, which recognized the wife of the King of Hungary as Queen of Hungary, whatever her origin, and the children of the said King, whatever their mother might be, as heirs, by the very fact of their birth, to the Apostolic throne of Hungary. Wherefore the situation was as follows: If he married the Countess Chotek, and had by her male issue, Francis Ferdinand (provided that he did not abdicate in favour of his brother Otho, whom the entire Empire would have rejected with disgust) would become, on the death of his uncle Francis-Joseph, Emperor and King, while his wife at the same time would assume the Hungarian crown, but not the Austrian. Further, on the death of Francis-Ferdinand himself, his eldest son would ascend by right the Royal throne of Hungary, while the Imperial throne of Austria could never be his.

Thus before the terrified vision of the Centralist Francis-Joseph rose a spectre of revolution, and behind it the threat of a definite rupture between Austria and Hungary. Nevertheless, and in spite of this awful dream of ruin of all things, past, present, and future, the old Emperor, after a very short resistance, gave his consent to the morganatic marriage of the

Archduke Francis-Ferdinand and the Countess Chotek —a consent which outraged beyond all remedy his principles as *grand seigneur*, his arrogant pride as Prince of the blood royal, and his profound veneration for the immemorial traditions of the Habsburgs.

It has been the fashion in France to attribute too many events to "the hand of the Jesuits." But if this mysterious and daring "hand" has been too often invoked by Frenchmen where it has not been at work, it must be admitted that it is still all-powerful at the Catholic Court of Vienna—as powerful as at the Catholic Court of Spain. And it is this hand that we are obliged to detect in the marriage of Francis-Ferdinand and the Countess Chotek. Francis-Ferdinand, a man of limited brain-power and narrow mind, is very clerical in his sympathies. As for the Countess Chotek, although she is ambitious and more intelligent than her husband, she is entirely under the domination of the priesthood, and particularly of the Jesuits. They know that with her help, when the Heir-Apparent comes to the throne, they will have absolute control of the affairs of the Empire. They used their influence on the Emperor, therefore, and what a few years before they could never have obtained from him they now wrested from an old man, who, for all his violent obstinacy, is ready to-day in sheer weariness to let the will of others replace his own tottering will.

The object which the Jesuits had in view in bringing this marriage to pass has since been clearly revealed in the ultra-clerical proceedings of the princely couple. The Countess Chotek, who should have been induced to efface herself by her position of morganatic wife, has nevertheless put herself at the head of several religious societies. She has even persuaded her husband to accept the title of Patron of

the *Katholischer-Schülverein,* or Catholic School League, which was founded by the Jesuits as a counterpoise to the *Deutscher-Schülverein,* whose objects were the establishment of undenominational German schools and the defence of the law concerning schools against the attacks of the clericals.

The Countess Chotek, indeed, at the instigation of the Jesuits, to whom she sold herself, succeeded in making Francis-Ferdinand enter the political arena and do what no Crown Prince has ever dared to do —openly combat a law passed by the Reichsrath and approved by the Sovereign. The case is all the more serious because it made so big a stir in political circles generally. All through his life Francis-Joseph manœuvred so as not to take any part in the quarrels which rent the Empire. The Czechs on the one side, and the Germans on the other, were constantly at variance, without the Emperor ever betraying his preference for one or the other. But Francis-Ferdinand, by becoming Patron of the *Katholischer-Schülverein,* ranged himself definitely under the flag of the Czechs (his wife is a Czech by birth), and declared war against the entire German section of the Empire. Politically, this was a most grievous error, and one whose consequences it is impossible to estimate.

When giving his consent to the marriage, the Emperor insisted that the Crown Prince's renunciation of rights for his wife and children should be ratified by the Hungarian Diet. The majority, at that time very devoted to their Sovereign, voted as Francis-Joseph wished. The majority has since changed its views, and at any time the Hungarian Diet might by a new vote expunge from its Constitution this special law, passed to oblige him. The old monarch once more sees before his frightened eyes the threefold

menace of a bloody revolution, a foreign invasion, and a dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Already defeated by a young girl, by his son's widow, and by the Jesuits, Francis-Joseph was to be forced for a fourth time to desert his principles through the action of another young girl. The Princess Elisabeth, Rudolf's only daughter, the Emperor's direct descendant—she whom he loved the most tenderly, trusted the most completely, and pictured as restoring the glories of the Habsburgs by some brilliant alliance which should wipe out all the shame of the unworthy unions to which he had agreed—the Princess Elisabeth it was who wrested from him his heart-broken consent to a fourth misalliance. Elisabeth, following her mother's example, wedded a mere cavalry officer. But he, at least, adored her. She became Princess Windischgrätz, and, in spite of all evil rumours, passed to a life of peaceful happiness at Prague, where her husband was on garrison duty.

It is Love, the Love once triumphant in the heart of the young Emperor Francis-Joseph, which in his declining years has won its victory over the cherished principles of the haughty old man. In the cause of Tradition he trampled on Love. Love's revenge over Tradition has been won through woman, working her will around and about him.

CHAPTER XV

A BANKRUPT POLICY

WORSTED by his own family and by the power of Love, Francis-Joseph, the feudal Sovereign, almost a figure of legends, has been compelled to abandon his principles and surrender to the forces of youth and of life. He has ever allowed to be dissipated that Olympian cloud with which he loved to surround the radiance of his Imperial and Royal throne. To-day he is nothing more than an old gentleman of simple life, middle-class manners, and insignificant conversation. Nothing distinguishes His Apostolic Majesty from common mortals, unless it be his unswerving fidelity to the policy which he has always championed. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the crisis of its fever of separatism, is suffering from the same disease which attacked it in 1848, with the kind help of the Archduchess Sophia, burning to gratify her ambitions. In fact, there has been no change in the position of the Empire unless it be that central government is appreciably weaker than before, and that its foes are obviously much stronger.

Francis-Joseph's political ideals are, quite as much as his epilepsy, an hereditary disease in the Habsburg family. When Francis I., after his defeat by Napoleon, renounced the title of German Emperor to assume that of Emperor of Austria, he was only realizing the dream of the mild Joseph II., son of

Maria-Theresa and brother of Marie-Antoinette. Yet what a folly is this "Empire of Austria," so dear to the hearts of Francis-Joseph and his mother! It is only necessary to look at the map of the realm which the Emperor claims to sway with one sceptre in order to realize the vanity of the idea. To the west lies the mountainous region of the Tyrol, inhabited by German peasants; to the north, Bohemia, Silesia, Moravia, industrial or mining countries populated by Czechs; to the south stretch the fertile lands occupied by the Italians, Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs; to the east the vast plain of Hungary, with its Magyars, and Galicia, with a population peculiar to itself.

To this conglomeration there has just been added a new element of discord by the definite annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From the international point of view, this annexation has involved Austria-Hungary in great embarrassments, and may in the future involve her in more still. It is almost sure to be followed by discordant notes in the domestic harmony of the Empire. Bosnia-Herzegovina is in itself a region ripe for the development of intestine quarrels, for three races live there side by side in mutual hate—the Mussulman people, the Croats, and the Serbs. The constant outbreaks of strife in this unhappy land, which its nominal rulers, the Turks, never succeeded in stopping, decided the Powers at the Congress of Berlin to entrust Austria-Hungary with the policing of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It cannot be denied that the Imperial Government succeeded in that task to outward appearance at least. The military rule—a rule of iron, like all of its kind—reduced the warring races to quiet, and they no longer massacred each other except in treacherous darkness, unseen and unheard.

Austria-Hungary, moreover, spared no pains to

produce a very effective state of prosperity in the country whose administration had been committed to her care. Under the protection of the bayonet, and the cannon, agriculture, manufacture, trade, and education, developed. The three sister-races, therefore, which so hated one another, had no reason to complain against an occupation which was "only provisional"—a phrase which satisfies peoples as it does individual men. But with the annexation all has changed. The lie has been exposed, and what was going on so well yesterday to-day threatens to come to an end.

The Mussulmans, who tolerated a temporary protection, now secretly refuse to recognize the official domination of "the Giaour" when they can no longer comfort themselves with the agreeable fiction that Austria-Hungary is only the vicegerent of the Turk. Doubtless they appear to have submitted, but they will miss no opportunity of counter-plotting against their rulers.

As for the Serbs, the annexation shatters a dream cherished for centuries by the race—that of the union of them all under one government. Effectually separated as they are to-day from their brothers in Servia and Montenegro, they passionately look forward to the accomplishment of one sole object—the formation of a Serb Empire out of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Servia, and Montenegro. The two last-named countries have the same aspiration. Austria-Hungary, therefore, is no longer threatened on her south-eastern frontiers by external enemies only, but also by a foe which she has introduced within her own bounds, and which will not hesitate to make common cause with the foe without. This dream of reunion has inspired with courage the Serb minorities in Croatia and Slavonia, which up to now have felt themselves

too weak to hazard a serious effort, seeing that they have been cut off from their Servian and Montenegrin brethren by Bosnia-Herzegovina, which, though policed by Austria-Hungary, nevertheless remained a Turkish province. That motive has vanished now that Bosnia-Herzegovina has become Austro-Hungarian, and to-day the Greater Servian agitation sullenly threatens the integrity of the Empire.

Furthermore, there is a serious risk of a division between Austria and Hungary over the annexation. As soon as its political and economic aspects come up for settlement, there must be an irreconcilable divergence of opinion, for both portions of the Empire are bound to claim that the new territory shall be incorporated with them. From the historical standpoint, Hungary's case will be just, but economically Austria will be in the right. It is Austria who provided, during the thirty years of occupation, the funds necessary for the administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In order to avert an immediate conflict, before which both parties must recoil, the attempt is being made to transform Bosnia-Herzegovina into a kind of Austro-Hungarian Alsace-Lorraine, that is to say, a province of the Empire under separate government, belonging properly to neither Austria nor Hungary. We may see an open wound in the side of the Dual Monarchy which will one day gangrene and infect the blood of the whole Empire.

The important point, however, in a book like the present one, is to discover what part the old Emperor has played in the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. If, on the one hand, viewed historically, the responsibility for this stroke of policy falls upon him, as still master at least in name, yet, on the other hand, this responsibility is very much diminished when one learns that he opposed with all his strength

the carrying out of the annexation. Francis-Joseph recognized better than his ambitious Foreign Minister, Baron Aehrenthal, what dangers to European peace and to the security of the Empire were involved in the act. But the aged Emperor's will is no longer supreme in the balance of government, and the word of his nephew, the Crown Prince Francis-Ferdinand, is now sufficient to incline the scale. Francis-Ferdinand has undertaken to restore to the Empire its old prestige, and is ready to pay any price to secure Austria-Hungary's place in the Concert of Europe. He has not hesitated, indeed, to play a solo whose discordance could but break up the harmony of that Concert.

The future alone can show whether the policy of the irrepressible Archduke, who dominates Austria before the death of her Sovereign, has been good or evil for the fortunes of the Empire.

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It is time to return to the consideration of the principal types in the human patchwork of Francis-Joseph's Empire. There are at least nine independent races, with aspirations of their own, and no desire to come to terms with their neighbours. Joseph II. conceived the mad idea of uniting them all under one flag. His desire was thwarted by the passive resistance of the various elements. Then followed the Napoleonic Wars. Under the influence of the tremendous movement throughout Central Europe, the hostile races drew together, in temporary forgetfulness of their quarrels and dislikes, feeling the necessity of combining against the common foe. But this union was not destined to endure. Already in the reign of the Emperor Ferdinand separatist tendencies revealed themselves in appreciable force, and,

as we have seen, Francis-Joseph's reign commenced in the midst of a revolution in which the spirit of race federation played its part.

We have seen, too, the cause of this state of affairs. Ferdinand, incapable and barely possessed of full consciousness, could not be on his guard against tendencies of which he knew nothing; while Metternich, whose time was taken up in suppressing by all possible means the slightest aspirations towards freedom, paid no attention to the movement which, in the sixty years since that day, has brought the unhappy Austro-Hungarian Empire to its present pass. The Archduchess Sophia, it will be remembered, in her desire to procure Metternich's disgrace and Ferdinand's abdication, played a double game. Centralist as she was, she stirred up the separatist agitation by inciting the different races of the Empire against one another. But she succeeded at least in making Ferdinand's throne impossible for him, and in setting the Imperial crown on the head of a boy whom she might still continue to rule, and with him, the Empire. She brought to a favourable conclusion her twofold scheme, recking nothing of the consequences likely to result from so dangerous a policy.

Arising first out of Hungary's Chauvinism, the "question of nationality" started a blaze in the home of absolutism; and while the various peoples, separated by the feuds which the Archduchess Sophia stirred up, thought they were fighting for liberty and constitutional government, they were only upsetting one ruler to put another in his place. So the product of the great revolutionary movement of 1848, which cost Vienna so much blood, was nothing, except the long, barren reign of Francis-Joseph.

In the earlier chapters dealing with the separatist movement we have seen how Prussia and Italy showed

Francis-Joseph his danger by snatching from him some of his fairest provinces. But he did not, or could not, understand their warning.

As soon as he was on the throne and had succeeded in crushing, with the help of Russia, the Hungarian revolution, Francis-Joseph forgot his grand promises of constitutional government and political liberty. As early as January 1st, 1852, he revoked the Constitution of 1849, abolished the ancient Diets, and set up a reactionary system with the frankly avowed object of forcibly bringing about a fusion of the different races. What a strange idea this seems! Austria-Hungary contains 11,000,000 Germans as against 9,000,000 Hungarians and over 22,000,000 Poles, Czechs, Slavonians, etc. How could any man commit the error of trying to melt them all down in a crucible to make one race? Francis-Joseph has committed another error also, no less serious, in failing to understand that a sternly centralizing policy cannot fail to increase the want of harmony already existing between the divers peoples.

It is to this point that we must look for the cause of all the conflicts which, since the beginning of Francis-Joseph's reign, have left the hapless country without a moment's peace. It is true that, after a twenty years' struggle, the Emperor made a partial surrender to his subjects' demands, and tried to reconcile their views to his. Once more, however, one of the Habsburgs' hereditary failings came out—that of never carrying ideas to a logical conclusion, and of resting content with half-measures. The Constitution of 1860, which gave the Empire a Parliament, created also Diets in every province. But this apparent generosity satisfied neither Germans, nor Czechs, nor Hungarians, nor anyone else. The first session of the new Parliament, which opened on May 1st, 1861,

was graced by the presence of no Deputies from Bohemia, Hungary, Transylvania, or Croatia. When finally, in 1867, Francis-Joseph made up his mind to divide the Empire into two parts, Austria and Hungary, the evil had grown beyond cure. While a large party in Hungary found it difficult to be contented with the compromise which, in spite of the establishment of an Hungarian Government, kept Hungary still bound to Austria as far as finance, foreign affairs, Customs regulations, and the army, were concerned, the Czechs of Bohemia and the Poles of Galicia claimed for themselves the same rights and privileges which Francis-Joseph had granted to the Hungarians. If he had been crowned King of Hungary, why could he not be crowned King of Bohemia and King of Galicia? If he had granted Hungary a Parliament and a separate Government, why did he not consent to Parliaments and Governments for the Czechs and the Poles? This struggle has lasted forty years, and has grown more severe. Neither Poles, nor Czechs, nor Slavonians, nor Italians have abated their demands. It must be noted that the problem was easy for the Emperor to solve at the beginning of his reign, for at that time the national demands were as modest as national sentiment itself—and that was like a mere infant wailing at the baptismal font of Liberalism. To-day the problem is quite different and beyond solution. If Francis-Joseph had, fifty years ago, abandoned his dreams of centralization, and had forborne to check for twenty years the justifiable growth of nationalist sentiment, the demands of the various races would never have reached such a point as they have reached nowadays, involving, that is to say, nothing less than the complete dissolution of the Empire. The Hungarians, who in 1848 only asked for personal government, are already setting about

the destruction of the only bond which now binds them to Austria—the Army. If Francis-Joseph, driven into the last ditch by the increase of the enemy's forces, were to grant to Hungary an army of her own and Custom-houses on her frontiers, the relation between the two sections of the Dual Monarchy would be one of name only. In Hungary political life proceeds at too fast a pace, and carries everything before it; whereas in Austria, on the other hand, the Parliamentary machine ceased to work more than a dozen years ago, owing to the fierce strife between the Centralist and Federalist parties.

It must be admitted that the Emperor, while a shadow of his power still remained his, tried to retrieve the mistakes which he had committed during forty years. The struggle of races could only be mitigated by reuniting the interests which they had in common. The state of warfare was partly due to the fact that a limited suffrage sent to Parliament the representatives of an aristocracy and of a bourgeoisie, both unacquainted with the needs of the people, and both championing their class-interests instead of watching over the interests of the general public. Francis-Joseph recognized that nothing short of universal suffrage could bring about any amelioration of such a state of affairs and create a Parliament less unrepresentative of the totality of the nation. He obtained from Parliament itself the right of conferring popular suffrage. The result did not take long to become manifest. The Czech and German Nationalist parties, which had hitherto divided the assembly between them, were rent asunder as soon as the ballot came into force. Henceforward there were but two great parties face to face with one another—the Socialists and the "Christian Socialists," of whom the latter, in spite of their Catholic and Monarchist programme,

were none the less a popular party because of their complete preoccupation in economical questions.

It was not to be expected, however, that a Parliament transformed by universal suffrage could cure all the ills to which the Class-Parliament had given birth. The Nationalists of the various races have not laid down their arms, but, thanks to the reforms carried by the popular assembly, the struggle has become less fierce between them, even the quarrel of half a century between the Slavs and the Germans having lost a little of its bitterness. Unhappily, though universal suffrage has been granted to Austria, it has not been accorded to Hungary, and this has led to a continuance of the warfare between the two sections of the Empire.

What will be the end of it all? The respect which the peoples of the Dual Monarchy feel for their aged Sovereign has up to now delayed the final blow which threatens to shatter the ancient Empire into fragments. When Francis-Joseph disappears, can the situation continue which he has created by his obstinate devotion to an impossible policy? Across the Northern frontier the descendant of Frederick the Great covets the provinces which his great-grandfather did not wrest from the heiress daughter of Charles VI. On the other side of the Carpathians the Czechs and Poles listen in their hearts to the enchantments of Panslavism, singing of the union of all the Slav peoples of Eastern Europe.

For centuries the Habsburgs have built up, piece by piece, a mighty Empire. For centuries the Habsburgs have declared their ambition to weld the heterogeneous pieces into one strong and compact mass. Francis-Joseph inherited the task at the beginning of a new era. Had he understood it thoroughly, he might, perhaps, have gained his end. He might have

found in democratic and social ideas a means of overcoming the differences of the various races of his Empire, with nothing in common between them except an ardent desire for liberty and progress. The hypocrisy of his mother, the ambition of his family, and his own ambition, drove him to use one race to crush another. To-day all the races are embroiled with one another, and with their Sovereign in addition. All that we may hope for now is that the end of Francis-Joseph's policy may not mean also the end of the Empire.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CLOSE OF A LIFE

LIFE has been harsh to Francis-Joseph, and often about the Hofburg, while the ravens so closely connected with the Habsburgs' legendary history have been hovering and croaking, the dogs in the kennels have responded with the howls that presage death. How many storms have shaken his home, how many scandals have disgraced it, how many tragedies stained it with blood!

He came to the throne as absolute monarch of an immense Empire, stretching all over Central Europe, and to all appearances united. He has seen himself stripped of his fairest provinces by war, and to-day he fears to see Hungary detach herself from his crown. He, who would rather have abdicated than share the smallest fraction of his authority, is reduced to the condition of a constitutional ruler, having no power himself, and leaving behind him no hope for his successor.

Making a marriage of love, he destroyed his happiness with his own hands. All has fallen in ruins about him. The ranks of his family have been mown down by the scythe of Death the Reaper, awful and unforeseen. Wife, son, and brother—all have gone. Only the evil weeds are left standing. In tremendous solitude Francis-Joseph lingers on in the chill and gloomy rooms of the stately Hofburg.

Yet he is alive, and grief seems to have left no very severe marks on him. He even appears to have found among the wreckage about him material for the building of a shelter to protect his deep-rooted egotism, his coldness of heart, and his narrowness of mind. He bears his seventy-nine years bravely, and, save for his more frequently recurring attacks of epilepsy, carries himself well under the burden of his misfortunes.

Fond as he once was of ceremony, nowadays he has made for himself a quiet, bourgeois life, like that of some old bachelor who takes delight in the mere fact of living. Many of his pleasures have been cut off, but those of the table, which were always a weakness with him, afford him compensation. His day's menu is surprising. He goes to bed early and rises early—between 4 and 5 a.m. Immediately an attendant, who is waiting for his master's s.. .mons, brings him a first breakfast, of respectable dimensions. The Emperor then rises and goes to his study to work. At eight o'clock he has a second breakfast, which consists regularly of soup, joint, vegetables, entremets (the great triumph of Viennese cookery), and dessert. His private secretary now appears, and the morning's mail is opened. At noon there is a third meal, similar to the second. Then follows either a short walk in the park at the Hofburg or at Schönbrunn, according as the Court is at one place or the other, or a drive; for his favourite exercise of riding is now forbidden, or almost entirely so. Between four and five in the afternoon is the fourth meal. One guest, and one only, is present at that—either an aide-de-camp or some high Court dignitary. This dinner consists of at least six courses—thick soup, beef (which always comes next to the soup), fish, a roast (fowl or game), entremets, and dessert. The Emperor has one abundant helping of each dish, and generally a second

also. At eight in the evening there is the fifth meal, of tea, bread and butter, and cold meat, and at 9 or 9.30 this well-fed monarch goes to bed to seek in sleep recuperation of the strength which he has not wasted.

If he eats a great deal, however, he drinks little, although the cellars of the Hofburg are among the finest in Europe. There may be met the best vintages of Lower Austria and of Hungary (so rich in vineyards), of Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, Moselle, and the Rhine. There is even to be found genuine Tokay, rarest of all wines, the vineyards of the Hegyala from which it comes having been totally ruined by phylloxera. So near such treasures of the grape, the Emperor is content to wash down his meals with Pilsener beer, only allowing himself at the end of his dinner a glass of excellent Bordeaux.

His meals are served on very beautiful silver dishes. The famous golden table-service (of which the central epergne alone is worth £6,400) is hardly ever seen, because big dinner-parties are now very few at the Hofburg, and State banquets are no longer given.

In the huge dining-hall, where the footmen are more numerous than the guests, and where, since the Empress's death, no more flowers decorate the table, the Emperor is fond of describing to his only companion the gorgeous days of the grand State dinner-parties; and it is not without emotion that the old man peoples the solitude with the imaginary crowds of old. He still seems to hear the three raps on the floor from the stick of the Grand Chamberlain, the Imperial master of ceremonies, to announce the entrance of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress. Then, as though by magic, the doors open noiselessly, and the brilliant crowd, so noisy but a moment before, become suddenly silent. Their Majesties are passing. Under the soft light of thousands of wax candles, the bare

shoulders of the ladies bow in a profound reverence, while their lovely bosoms, gorgeous with the diamonds which throw into relief the charming tints of their flesh, swell within the sheaths of their corsages. Francis-Joseph, successor of Charlemagne, sighs. Those days are past, and he must no more think of such things.

The only remaining pleasure in which he can still indulge as of old, apart from that of eating, is the chase. Of course he can no longer climb the crags in pursuit of chamois or black-cock, but his hand and eye remain sure, and his shot fails not to reach the roebuck or the stag imprudent enough to venture within range of the Imperial gun.

Riding has become a difficult task for him. This is doubly painful to him in at once depriving him of a favourite exercise and separating him from the great passion of his life—the Army. Twice a year, however (or until very recently), he hoists himself—or, rather, is hoisted—into the saddle. Once on the back of a gentle mount, selected for the purpose, this shadow of a once brilliant horseman is fastened to his saddle. Stiff and upright, with a vain pretence of strength, Francis-Joseph takes part in the spring review on the *Schmelz,* Vienna's Champ-de-Mars, and, later on, in the closing ceremonies of the autumn grand manœuvres. He is all bruised when lifted from the saddle, but at least he can imagine for a moment that, once more a soldier, he is also once more in reality what he was of old—the Emperor.

How many of the things he loved are forbidden to him now! He used to love smoking unceasingly long, very dark cigars, manufactured expressly for him by the Austrian Tobacco Excise, and known by the name of Virginias. Such heavy cigars were found to affect the action of his heart, and he is now condemned to

smoking a light cigar, a Trabuco, for which he does not care.

Vienna society no longer talks of the Emperor's conquests over the hearts of the fair sex. In place of the dashing gallant of yore, so fickle and so bold, it only sees an old gentleman, faithfully attached to an old lady, and when the Emperor's past is talked about, the gossips answer, with a mocking smile: "Ah, yes, Herr Schratt!" Such is the bourgeois nickname which they have given to the once haughty Habsburg. We have already told how once he fell very much in love with a great actress at the Burg-Theater, Katharina Schratt, Vienna's Bernhardt and Réjane combined. Such was the intelligence, charm, and sweetness of the lady that, after the passion had burnt itself out, there still remained behind in the ashes a lasting flame of friendship—a most unusual occurrence in Francis-Joseph's affairs of the heart. The great actress combines with her really immense talent for the stage a high degree of culture, a nimble wit, and a spontaneous candour which is a special mark of Viennese feminine character; and the combination makes her a woman worthy of adoration. She was formerly a friend of the Empress Elisabeth, and it even seems that it was through Elisabeth that she first made the acquaintance of Francis-Joseph.

When the Archduchess Marie-Valérie is not at the Hofburg, with her tribe of children, and the Archduchess Gisela, now an old lady, is not spending a few weeks there while her husband is away hunting in Styria (and the visits of both Archduchesses, especially of the latter, are few), the Emperor spends most of his evenings with the retired actress in very quiet and simple surroundings. He makes no secret of this, and he would be wrong if he did nowadays. In the past he used to pay his calls upon her in a carriage belong-

ing to the Court, and in the Colonel's uniform which he nearly always wears. In the same carriage and the same uniform, " Herr Schratt " (who is known as " the Colonel " at Frau Schratt's house) visits his old friend to-day. Several times a week he invites himself to dinner, coming as friend, and not as Emperor, and carefully leaving his crown and sceptre in the hall. He likes to discuss household matters, and gravely goes into the question of the menu with the cook, who, on her part, has no cause to complain over the interest taken in the affairs of the kitchen, for a particularly successful entremets is always worth a handsome and truly Imperial tip to her. It is only in this respect that " Herr Schratt " remembers at his old friend's house that he is the Emperor.

Frau Katharina, on her side, who was as much a brilliant queen behind the footlights as he was a haughty Emperor under the lights of the Hofburg drawing-room, is most attentive to his comforts. The two play at Philemon and Baucis, a Philemon and a Baucis of the modest provincial middle-class type. In the winter, as soon as Francis-Joseph arrives, he finds waiting for him the best arm-chair in the room, and a good foot-warmer, prepared for him by Frau Schratt herself, with which to restore the heat of which the weather and his years have robbed him. After a few minutes of unimportant conversation they sit down to table, facing one another across the lamp, and Frau Schratt keeps a watch lest her friend, whose appetite is not always reasonable, should eat something to bring on the inevitable indigestion. The meal finishes as simply and as cosily, with Francis-Joseph smoking the Trabuco which he cannot bring himself to like.

Then are heard two rings at the bell. It is two visitors come to make up a four with " the Colonel " at *tarok*, an Austrian variety of whist. It is always the

same two, both very old friends of Frau Schratt—Herr Palmer, head of the Austrian Bank, and another banker, equally rich, but—who would have believed it?—a Jew by race and religion. The Catholic Emperor and the Jewish banker, be it said, are on the best of terms (how the Countess Chotek would gasp at the idea!), and the *tarok*-players are bound together by a friendship which nothing can disturb.

Here is a true tale to prove this: One evening after dinner Francis-Joseph searched for his cigar-case in all the pockets of his uniform. All was in vain: he had left the case at the Hofburg. Frau Schratt after a moment's pause, said "Do not worry yourself, my friend." She went into an adjoining room and returned with an already opened box of splendid Havanas, which she held out to him.

"So cigars are smoked here, dear friend?" asked the Emperor, with a somewhat surprised smile.

"To-day is not the first time," replied Frau Schratt calmly.

"And whose are these magnificent Havanas?"

"This is Herr Palmer's box."

Francis-Joseph hesitated a moment, then took a cigar, and remarked whimsically: "The fellow must make a lot of money to be able to treat us with expensive cigars."

The game of *tarok* took place as usual that night, with the same stakes—nothing more than a few silver coins; and when the Imperial carriage arrived at its regular 8 o'clock sharp, Frau Schratt saw her old friend carefully shown to the door.

Often then, does "Herr Schratt" make his short journey between 4 5 and 5 o'clock from the modest home of his old friend to the cold and stately Hofburg. Short as is the journey, it none the less calls back to mind a sorrowful picture of the Emperor's past life;

for the carriage passes the Capuchin Monastery, where, in the Habsburg vault, his son and wife lie buried, and the Augustinian Church, where both he and Rudolf were married.

It may be that sometimes in the night, as he drives past the church, he thinks of that dim wood where he looked for the first time on Elisabeth's gleaming tresses. It may be, too, that he seems to hear in the darkness the mocking voice of his cousin Sophia saying to him on the terrace at Possenhofen :

"Take care, cousin. If Black growls at you so much, you will have a bad name in the house!"

The dogs have never ceased from that day to growl at Francis-Joseph.

But does "Herr Schratt" ever think of such things?

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