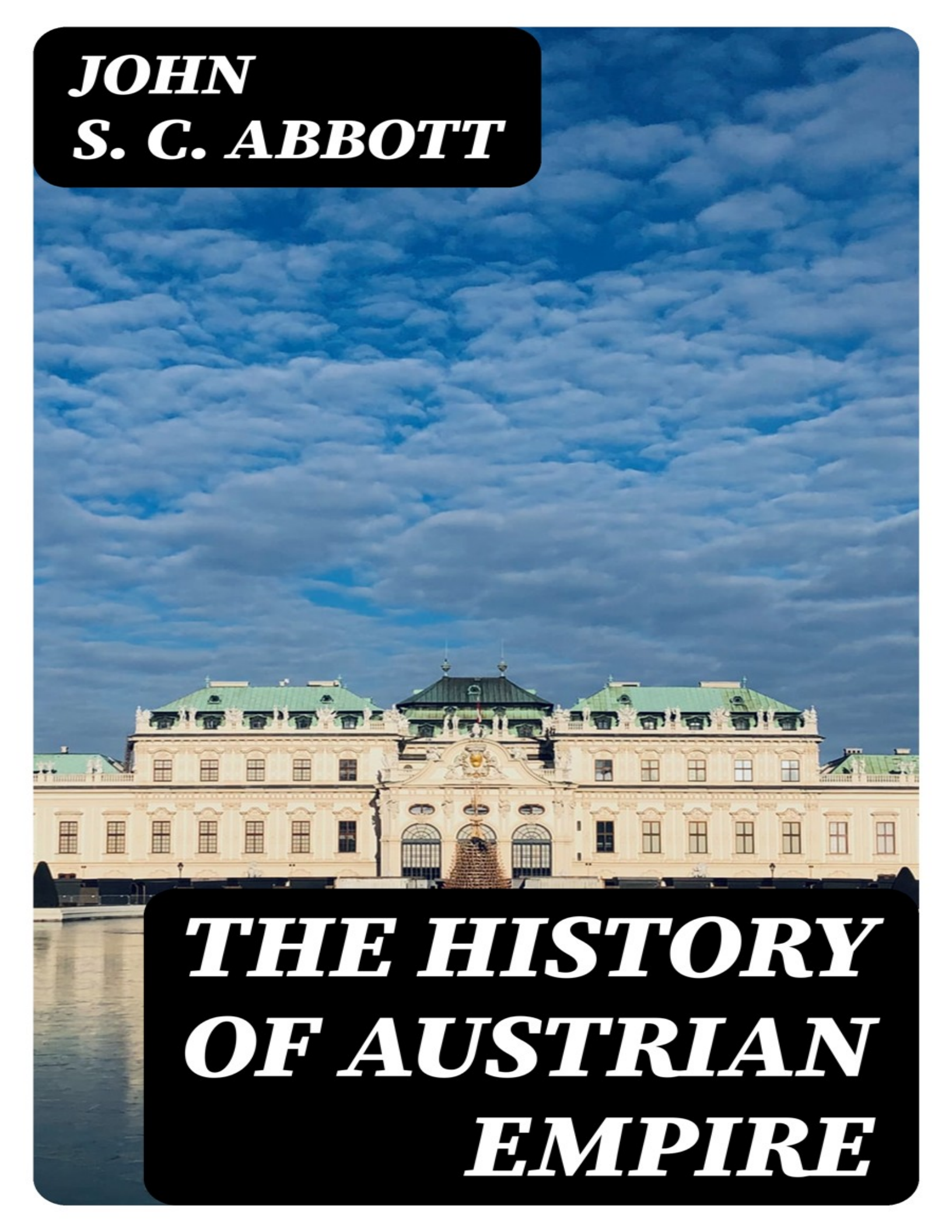




***JOHN
S. C. ABBOTT***

***THE HISTORY
OF AUSTRIAN
EMPIRE***

John S. C. Abbott

The History of Austrian Empire

EAN 8596547386780

DigiCat, 2022

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PREFACE

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The studies of the author of this work, for the last ten years, in writing the "History of Napoleon Bonaparte," and "The French Revolution of 1789," have necessarily made him quite familiar with the monarchies of Europe. He has met with so much that was strange and romantic in their career, that he has been interested to undertake, as it were, a *biography* of the Monarchies of Continental Europe—their birth, education, exploits, progress and present condition. He has commenced with Austria.

There are abundant materials for this work. The Life of Austria embraces all that is wild and wonderful in history; her early struggles for aggrandizement—the fierce strife with the Turks, as wave after wave of Moslem invasion rolled up the Danube—the long conflicts and bloody persecutions of the Reformation—the thirty years' religious war—the meteoric career of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII. shooting athwart the lurid storms of battle—the intrigues of Popes—the enormous pride, power and encroachments of Louis XIV.—the warfare of the Spanish succession and the Polish dismemberment—all these events combine in a sublime tragedy which fiction may in vain attempt to parallel.

It is affecting to observe in the history of Germany, through what woes humanity has passed in attaining even its present position of civilization. It is to be hoped that the human family may never again suffer what it has already endured. We shall be indeed insane if we do not gain some wisdom from the struggles and the calamities of those who

have gone before us. The narrative of the career of the Austrian Empire, must, by contrast, excite emotions of gratitude in every American bosom. Our lines have fallen to us in pleasant places; we have a goodly heritage.

It is the author's intention soon to issue, as the second of this series, the History of the Empire of Russia.

JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

Brunswick, Maine, 1859.

CHAPTER I.

RHODOLPH OF HAPSBURG.

From 1232 to 1291.

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Hawk's Castle.—Albert, Count of Hapsburg.—Rhodolph of Hapsburg.—His Marriage and Estates.—Excommunication and its Results.—His Principles of Honor.—A Confederacy of Barons.—Their Route.—Rhodolph's Election as Emperor of Germany.—The Bishop's Warning.—Dissatisfaction at the Result of the Election.—Advantages Accruing from the Possession of an Interesting Family.—Conquest.—Ottocar Acknowledges the Emperor; yet breaks his Oath of Allegiance.—Gathering Clouds.—Wonderful Escape.—Victory of Rhodolph.—His Reforms.

In the small canton of Aargau, in Switzerland, on a rocky bluff of the Wulpelsberg, there still remains an old baronial castle, called Hapsburg, or Hawk's Castle. It was reared in the eleventh century, and was occupied by a succession of warlike barons, who have left nothing to distinguish themselves from the feudal lords whose castles, at that period, frowned upon almost every eminence of Europe. In the year 1232 this castle was occupied by Albert, fourth Count of Hapsburg. He had acquired some little reputation for military prowess, the only reputation any one could acquire in that dark age, and became ambitious of winning new laurels in the war with the infidels in the holy land.

Religious fanaticism and military ambition were then the two great powers which ruled the human soul.

With the usual display of semi-barbaric pomp, Albert made arrangements to leave his castle to engage in the perilous holy war against the Saracens, from which few ever returned. A few years were employed in the necessary preparations. At the sound of the bugle the portcullis was raised, the drawbridge spanned the moat, and Albert, at the head of thirty steel-clad warriors, with nodding plumes, and banners unfurled, emerged from the castle, and proceeded to the neighboring convent of Mari. His wife, Hedwige, and their three sons, Rhodolph, Albert and Hartman, accompanied him to the chapel where the ecclesiastics awaited his arrival. A multitude of vassals crowded around to witness the imposing ceremonies of the church, as the banners were blessed, and the knights, after having received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, were commended to the protection of God. Albert felt the solemnity of the hour, and in solemn tones gave his farewell address to his children.

"My sons," said the steel-clad warrior, "cultivate truth and piety; give no ear to evil counselors, never engage in unnecessary war, but when you are involved in war be strong and brave. Love peace even better than your own personal interests. Remember that the counts of Hapsburg did not attain their heights of reputation and glory by fraud, insolence or selfishness, but by courage and devotion to the public weal. As long as you follow their footsteps, you will not only retain, but augment, the possessions and dignities of your illustrious ancestors."

The tears and sobs of his wife and family interrupted him while he uttered these parting words. The bugles then sounded. The knights mounted their horses; the clatter of

hoofs was heard, and the glittering cavalcade soon disappeared in the forest. Albert had left his ancestral castle, never to return. He had but just arrived in Palestine, when he was taken sick at Askalon, and died in the year 1240.

Rhodolph, his eldest son, was twenty-two years of age at the time of his father's death. Frederic II., one of the most renowned monarchs of the middle ages, was then Emperor of that conglomeration of heterogeneous States called Germany. Each of these States had its own independent ruler and laws, but they were all held together by a common bond for mutual protection, and some one illustrious sovereign was chosen as Emperor of Germany, to preside over their common affairs. The Emperor of Germany, having influence over all these States, was consequently, in position, the great man of the age.

Albert, Count of Hapsburg, had been one of the favorite captains of Frederic II. in the numerous wars which desolated Europe in that dark age. He was often at court, and the emperor even condescended to present his son Rhodolph at the font for baptism. As the child grew, he was trained to all athletic feats, riding ungovernable horses, throwing the javelin, wrestling, running, and fencing. He early gave indications of surprising mental and bodily vigor, and, at an age when most lads are considered merely children, he accompanied his father to the camp and to the court. Upon the death of his father, Rhodolph inherited the ancestral castle, and the moderate possessions of a Swiss baron. He was surrounded by barons of far greater wealth and power than himself, and his proud spirit was roused, in disregard of his father's counsels, to aggrandize his fortunes by force of arms, the only way then by which wealth and power could be attained. He exhausted his revenues by

maintaining a princely establishment, organized a well-selected band of his vassals into a military corps, which he drilled to a state of perfect discipline, and then commenced a series of incursions upon his neighbors. From some feeble barons he won territory, thus extending his domains; from others he extorted money, thus enabling him to reward his troops, and to add to their number by engaging fearless spirits in his service wherever he could find them.

In the year 1245, Rhodolph strengthened himself still more by an advantageous marriage with Gertrude, the beautiful daughter of the Count of Hohenberg. With his bride he received as her dowry the castle of Oeltingen, and very considerable territorial possessions. Thus in five years Rhodolph, by that species of robbery which was then called heroic adventure, and by a fortunate marriage, had more than doubled his hereditary inheritance. The charms of his bride, and the care of his estates seem for a few years to have arrested the progress of his ambition; for we can find no further notice of him among the ancient chronicles for eight years. But, with almost all men, love is an ephemeral passion, which is eventually vanquished by other powers of the soul. Ambition slumbered for a little time, but was soon roused anew, invigorated by repose.

In 1253 we find Rhodolph heading a foray of steel-clad knights, with their banded followers, in a midnight attack upon the city of Basle. They break over all the defenses, sweep all opposition before them, and in the fury of the fight, either by accident or as a necessity of war, sacrilegiously set fire to a nunnery. For this crime Rhodolph was excommunicated by the pope. Excommunication was then no farce. There were few who dared to serve a prince upon whom the denunciations of the Church had fallen. It was a stunning blow, from which few men could recover.

Rhodolph, instead of sinking in despair, endeavored, by new acts of obedience and devotion to the Church, to obtain the revocation of the sentence.

In the region now called Prussia, there was then a barbaric pagan race, against whom the pope had published a crusade. Into this war the excommunicated Rhodolph plunged with all the impetuosity of his nature; he resolved to work out absolution, by converting, with all the potency of fire and sword, the barbarians to the Church. His penitence and zeal seem to have been accepted, for we soon find him on good terms again with the pope. He now sought to have a hand in every quarrel, far and near. Wherever the sounds of war are raised, the shout of Rhodolph is heard urging to the strife. In every hot and fiery foray, the steed of Rhodolph is rearing and plunging, and his saber strokes fall in ringing blows upon cuirass and helmet. He efficiently aided the city of Strasbourg in their war against their bishop, and received from them in gratitude extensive territories, while at the same time they reared a monument to his name, portions of which still exist. His younger brother died, leaving an only daughter, Anne, with a large inheritance. Rhodolph, as her guardian, came into possession of the counties of Kyburg, Lentzburg and Baden, and other scattered domains.

This rapidly-increasing wealth and power, did but increase his energy and his spirit of encroachment. And yet he adopted principles of honor which were far from common in that age of barbaric violence. He would never stoop to ordinary robbery, or harass peasants and helpless travelers, as was constantly done by the turbulent barons around him. His warfare was against the castle, never against the cottage. He met in arms the panoplied knight, never the timid and crouching peasant. He swept the roads of the

banditti by which they were infested, and often espoused the cause of citizens and freemen against the turbulent barons and haughty prelates. He thus gained a wide-spread reputation for justice, as well as for prowess, and the name of Rhodolph of Hapsburg was ascending fast into renown. Every post of authority then required the agency of a military arm. The feeble cantons would seek the protection of a powerful chief; the citizens of a wealthy town, ever liable to be robbed by bishop or baron, looked around for some warrior who had invincible troops at his command for their protection. Thus Rhodolph of Hapsburg was chosen chief of the mountaineers of Uri, Schwitz and Unterwalden; and all their trained bands were ready, when his bugle note echoed through their defiles, to follow him unquestioning, and to do his bidding. The citizens of Zurich chose Rhodolph of Hapsburg as their prefect or mayor; and whenever his banner was unfurled in their streets, all the troops of the city were at his command.

The neighboring barons, alarmed at this rapid aggrandizement of Rhodolph, formed an alliance to crush him. The mountaineers heard his bugle call, and rushed to his aid. Zurich opened her gates, and her marshaled troops hastened to his banner. From Hapsburg, and Rheinfelden, and Suabia, and Brisgau, and we know not how many other of the territorial possessions of the count, the vassals rushed to the aid of their lord. They met in one of the valleys of Zurich. The battle was short, and the confederated barons were put to utter flight. Some took refuge in the strong castle of Balder, upon a rocky cliff washed by the Albis. Rhodolph selected thirty horsemen and thirty footmen.

"Will you follow me," said he, "in an enterprise where the honor will be equal to the peril?"

A universal shout of assent was the response. Concealing the footmen in a thicket, he, at the head of thirty horsemen, rode boldly to the gates of the castle, bidding defiance, with all the utterances and gesticulations of contempt, to the whole garrison. Those on the ramparts, stung by the insult, rushed out to chastise so impudent a challenge. The footmen rose from their ambush, and assailants and assailed rushed pell mell in at the open gates of the castle. The garrison were cut down or taken captive, and the fortress demolished. Another party had fled to the castle of Utleberg. By an ingenious stratagem, this castle was also taken. Success succeeded success with such rapidity, that the confederate barons, struck with consternation, exclaimed,

"All opposition is fruitless. Rhodolph of Hapsburg is invincible."

They consequently dissolved the alliance, and sought peace on terms which vastly augmented the power of the conqueror.

Basle now incurred the displeasure of Rhodolph. He led his armies to the gates of the city, and extorted satisfaction. The Bishop of Basle, a haughty prelate of great military power, and who could summon many barons to his aid, ventured to make arrogant demands of this warrior flushed with victory. The palace and vast possessions of the bishop were upon the other side of the unbridged Rhine, and the bishop imagined that he could easily prevent the passage of the river. But Rhodolph speedily constructed a bridge of boats, put to flight the troops which opposed his passage, drove the peasants of the bishop everywhere before him, and burned their cottages and their fields of grain. The bishop, appalled, sued for a truce, that they might negotiate

terms of peace. Rhodolph consented, and encamped his followers.

He was asleep in his tent, when a messenger entered at midnight, awoke him, and informed him that he was elected Emperor of Germany. The previous emperor, Richard, had died two years before, and after an interregnum of two years of almost unparalleled anarchy, the electors had just met, and, almost to their own surprise, through the fluctuations and combinations of political intrigue, had chosen Rhodolph of Hapsburg as his successor. Rhodolph himself was so much astonished at the announcement, that for some time he could not be persuaded that the intelligence was correct.

To wage war against the Emperor of Germany, who could lead almost countless thousands into the field, was a very different affair from measuring strength with the comparatively feeble Count of Hapsburg. The news of his election flew rapidly. Basle threw open her gates, and the citizens, with illuminations, shouts, and the ringing of bells, greeted the new emperor. The bishop was so chagrined at the elevation of his foe, that he smote his forehead, and, looking to heaven, profanely said,

"Great God, take care of your throne, or Rhodolph of Hapsburg will take it from you!"

Rhodolph was now fifty-five years of age. Alphonso, King of Castile, and Ottocar, King of Bohemia, had both been candidates for the imperial crown. Exasperated by the unexpected election of Rhodolph, they both refused to acknowledge his election, and sent ambassadors with rich presents to the pope to win him also to their side. Rhodolph, justly appreciating the power of the pope, sent him a letter couched in those terms which would be most palatable to the pontiff.

"Turning all my thoughts to Him," he wrote, "under whose authority we live, and placing all my expectations on you alone, I fall down before the feet of your Holiness, beseeching you, with the most earnest supplication, to favor me with your accustomed kindness in my present undertaking; and that you will deign, by your mediation with the Most High, to support my cause. That I may be enabled to perform what is most acceptable to God and to His holy Church, may it graciously please your Holiness to crown me with the imperial diadem; for I trust I am both able and willing to undertake and accomplish whatever you and the holy Church shall think proper to impose upon me."

Gregory X. was a humane and sagacious man, influenced by a profound zeal for the peace of Europe and the propagation of the Christian faith. Gregory received the ambassadors of Rhodolph graciously, extorted from them whatever concessions he desired on the part of the emperor, and pledged his support.

Ottocar, King of Bohemia, still remained firm, and even malignant, in his hostility, utterly refusing to recognize the emperor, or to perform any of those acts of fealty which were his due. He declared the electoral diet to have been illegally convened, and the election to have been the result of fraud, and that a man who had been excommunicated for burning a convent, was totally unfit to wear the imperial crown. The diet met at Augsburg, and irritated by the contumacy of Ottocar, sent a command to him to recognize the authority of the emperor, pronouncing upon him the ban of the empire should he refuse. Ottocar dismissed the ambassadors with defiance and contempt from his palace at Prague, saying,

"Tell Rhodolph that he may rule over the territories of the empire, but he shall have no dominion over mine. It is a

disgrace to Germany, that a petty count of Hapsburg should have been preferred to so many powerful sovereigns."

War, and a fearful one, was now inevitable. Ottocar was a veteran soldier, a man of great intrepidity and energy, and his pride was thoroughly roused. By a long series of aggressions he had become the most powerful prince in Europe, and he could lead the most powerful armies into the field. His dominions extended from the confines of Bavaria to Raab in Hungary, and from the Adriatic to the shores of the Baltic. The hereditary domains of the Count of Hapsburg were comparatively insignificant, and were remotely situated at the foot of the Alps, spreading through the defiles of Alsace and Suabia. As emperor, Rhodolph could call the armies of the Germanic princes into the field; but these princes moved reluctantly, unless roused by some question of great moment to them all. And when these heterogeneous troops of the empire were assembled, there was but a slender bond of union between them.

But Rhodolph possessed mental resources equal to the emergence. As cautious as he was bold, as sagacious in council as he was impetuous in action, he calmly, and with great foresight and deliberation, prepared for the strife. To a monarch in such a time of need, a family of brave sons and beautiful daughters, is an inestimable blessing. Rhodolph secured the Duke of Sclavonia by making him the happy husband of one of his daughters. His son Albert married Elizabeth, daughter of the Count of Tyrol, and thus that powerful and noble family was secured. Henry of Bavaria he intimidated, and by force of arms compelled him to lead his troops to the standard of the emperor; and then, to secure his fidelity, gave his daughter Hedwige to Henry's son Otho, in marriage, promising to his daughter as a dowry a portion

of Austria, which was then a feeble duchy upon the Danube, but little larger than the State of Massachusetts.

Ottocar was but little aware of the tremendous energies of the foe he had aroused. Regarding Rhodolph almost with contempt, he had by no means made the arrangements which his peril demanded, and was in consternation when he heard that Rhodolph, in alliance with Henry of Bavaria, had already entered Austria, taken possession of several fortresses, and, at the head of a force of a thousand horsemen, was carrying all before him, and was triumphantly marching upon Vienna. Rhodolph had so admirably matured his plans, that his advance seemed rather a festive journey than a contested conquest. With the utmost haste Ottocar urged his troops down through the defiles of the Bohemian mountains, hoping to save the capital. But Rhodolph was at Vienna before him, where he was joined by others of his allies, who were to meet him at that rendezvous. Vienna, the capital, was a fortress of great strength. Upon this frontier post Charlemagne had established a strong body of troops under a commander who was called a margrave; and for some centuries this city, commanding the Danube, had been deemed one of the strongest defenses of the empire against Mohammedan invasion. Vienna, unable to resist, capitulated. The army of Ottocar had been so driven in their long and difficult march, that, exhausted and perishing for want of provisions, they began to mutiny. The pope had excommunicated Ottocar, and the terrors of the curse of the pope, were driving captains and nobles from his service. The proud spirit of Ottocar, after a terrible struggle, was utterly crushed, and he humbly sued for peace. The terms were hard for a haughty spirit to bear. The conquered king was compelled to renounce all claim to Austria and several other adjoining

provinces, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola and Windischmark; to take the oath of allegiance to the emperor, and publicly to do him homage as his vassal lord. To cement this compulsory friendship, Rhodolph, who was rich in daughters, having six to proffer as bribes, gave one, with an abundant dowry in silver, to a son of Ottocar.

The day was appointed for the king, in the presence of the whole army, to do homage to the emperor as his liege lord. It was the 25th of November, 1276. With a large escort of Bohemian nobles, Ottocar crossed the Danube, and was received by the emperor in the presence of many of the leading princes of the empire. The whole army was drawn up to witness the spectacle. With a dejected countenance, and with indications, which he could not conceal, of a crushed and broken spirit, Ottocar renounced these valuable provinces, and kneeling before the emperor, performed the humiliating ceremony of feudal homage. The pope in consequence withdrew his sentence of excommunication, and Ottocar returned to his mutilated kingdom, a humbler and a wiser man.

Rhodolph now took possession of the adjacent provinces which had been ceded to him, and, uniting them, placed them under the government of Louis of Bavaria, son of his firm ally Henry, the King of Bavaria. Bavaria bounded Austria on the west, and thus the father and the son would be in easy coöperation. He then established his three Sons, Albert, Hartmann, and Rhodolph, in different parts of these provinces, and, with his queen, fixed his residence at Vienna.

Such was the nucleus of the Austrian empire, and such the commencement of the powerful monarchy which for so many generations has exerted so important a control over the affairs of Europe. Ottocar, however, though he left

Rhodolph with the strongest protestations of friendship, returned to Prague consumed by the most torturing fires of humiliation and chagrin. His wife, a haughty woman, who was incapable of listening to the voice of judgment when her passions were inflamed, could not conceive it possible that a petty count of Hapsburg could vanquish her renowned husband in the field. And when she heard that Ottocar had actually done fealty to Rhodolph, and had surrendered to him valuable provinces of the kingdom, no bridle could be put upon her woman's tongue. She almost stung her husband to madness with taunts and reproaches.

Thus influenced by the pride of his queen, Cunegunda, Ottocar violated his oath, refused to execute the treaty, imprisoned in a convent the daughter whom Rhodolph had given to his son, and sent a defiant and insulting letter to the emperor. Rhodolph returned a dignified answer and prepared for war. Ottocar, now better understanding the power of his foe, made the most formidable preparations for the strife, and soon took the field with an army which he supposed would certainly triumph over any force which Rhodolph could raise. He even succeeded in drawing Henry of Bavaria into an alliance; and many of the German princes, whom he could not win to his standard, he bribed to neutrality. Numerous chieftains, lured to his camp by confidence of victory, crowded around him with their followers, from Poland, Bulgaria, Pomerania, Magdeburg, and from the barbaric shores of the Baltic. Many of the fierce nobles of Hungary had also joined the standard of Ottocar.

Thus suddenly clouds gathered around Rhodolph, and many of his friends despaired of his cause. He appealed to the princes of the German empire, and but few responded to his call. His sons-in-law, the Electors of Palatine and of

Saxony, ventured not to aid him in an emergence when defeat seemed almost certain, and where all who shared in the defeat would be utterly ruined. In June, 1275, Ottocar marched from Prague, met his allies at the appointed rendezvous, and threading the defiles of the Bohemian mountains, approached the frontiers of Austria. Rhodolph was seriously alarmed, for it was evident that the chances of war were against him. He could not conceal the restlessness and agitation of his spirit as he impatiently awaited the arrival of troops whom he summoned, but who disappointed his hopes.

"I have not one," he sadly exclaimed, "in whom I can confide, or on whose advice I can depend."

The citizens of Vienna perceiving that Rhodolph was abandoned by his German allies, and that they could present no effectual resistance to so powerful an army as was approaching, and terrified in view of a siege, and the capture of the city by storm, urged a capitulation, and even begged permission to choose a new sovereign, that they might not be involved in the ruin impending over Rhodolph. This address roused Rhodolph from his despondency, and inspired him with the energies of despair. He had succeeded in obtaining a few troops from his provinces in Switzerland. The Bishop of Basle, who had now become his confessor, came to his aid, at the head of a hundred horsemen, and a body of expert slingers. Rhodolph, though earnestly advised not to undertake a battle with such desperate odds, marched from Vienna to meet the foe.

Rapidly traversing the southern banks of the Danube to Hamburg, he crossed the river and advanced to Marchegg, on the banks of the Morava. He was joined by some troops from Styria and Carinthia, and by a strong force led by the King of Hungary. Emboldened by these accessions, though

still far inferior in strength to Ottocar, he pressed on till the two armies faced each other on the plains of Murchfield. It was the 26th of August, 1278.

At this moment some traitors deserting the camp of Ottocar, repaired to the camp of Rhodolph and proposed to assassinate the Bohemian king. Rhodolph spurned the infamous offer, and embraced the opportunity of seeking terms of reconciliation by apprising Ottocar of his danger. But the king, confident in his own strength, and despising the weakness of Rhodolph, deemed the story a fabrication and refused to listen to any overtures. Without delay he drew up his army in the form of a crescent, so as almost to envelop the feeble band before him, and made a simultaneous attack upon the center and upon both flanks. A terrific battle ensued, in which one party fought, animated by undoubting confidence, and the other impelled by despair. The strife was long and bloody. The tide of victory repeatedly ebbed and flowed. Ottocar had offered a large reward to any of his followers who would bring to him Rhodolph, dead or alive.

A number of knights of great strength and bravery, confederated to achieve this feat. It was a point of honor to be effected at every hazard. Disregarding all the other perils of the battle, they watched their opportunity, and then in a united swoop, on their steel-clad chargers, fell upon the emperor. His feeble guard was instantly cut down. Rhodolph was a man of herculean power, and he fought like a lion at bay. One after another of his assailants he struck from his horse, when a Thuringian knight, of almost fabulous stature and strength, thrust his spear through the horse of the emperor, and both steed and rider fell to the ground. Rhodolph, encumbered by his heavy coat of mail, and entangled in the housings of his saddle, was unable to rise.

He crouched upon the ground, holding his helmet over him, while saber strokes and pike thrusts rang upon cuirass and buckler like blows upon an anvil. A corps of reserve spurred to his aid, and the emperor was rescued, and the bold assailants who had penetrated the very center of his army were slain.

The tide of victory now set strongly in favor of Rhodolph, for "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." The troops of Bohemia were soon everywhere put to rout. The ground was covered with the dead. Ottocar, astounded at his discomfiture, and perhaps fearing the tongue of his wife more than the sabers of his foes, turned his back upon his flying army, and spurred his horse into the thickest of his pursuers. He was soon dismounted and slain. Fourteen thousand of his troops perished on that disastrous day. The body of Ottocar, mutilated with seventeen wounds, was carried to Vienna, and, after being exposed to the people, was buried with regal honors.

Rhodolph, vastly enriched by the plunder of the camp, and having no enemy to encounter, took possession of Moravia, and triumphantly marched into Bohemia. All was consternation there. The queen Cunegunda, who had brought these disasters upon the kingdom, had no influence. Her only son was but eight years of age. The turbulent nobles, jealous of each other, had no recognized leader. The queen, humiliated and despairing, implored the clemency of the conqueror, and offered to place her infant son and the kingdom of Bohemia under his protection. Rhodolph was generous in this hour of victory. As the result of arbitration, it was agreed that he should hold Moravia for five years, that its revenues might indemnify him for the expenses of the war. The young prince, Wenceslaus, was acknowledged king, and during his minority the regency

was assigned to Otho, margrave or military commander of Brundenburg. Then ensued some politic matrimonial alliances. Wenceslaus, the boy king, was affianced to Judith, one of the daughters of Rhodolph. The princess Agnes, daughter of Cunegunda, was to become the bride of Rhodolph's second son. These matters being all satisfactorily settled, Rhodolph returned in triumph to Vienna.

The emperor now devoted his energies to the consolidation of these Austrian provinces. They were four in number, Austria, Styria, Carinthia and Carniola. All united, they made but a feeble kingdom, for they did not equal, in extent of territory, several of the States of the American Union. Each of these provinces had its independent government, and its local laws and customs. They were held together by the simple bond of an arbitrary monarch, who claimed, and exercised as he could, supreme control over them all. Under his wise and energetic administration, the affairs of the wide-spread empire were prosperous, and his own Austria advanced rapidly in order, civilization and power. The numerous nobles, turbulent, unprincipled and essentially robbers, had been in the habit of issuing from their castles at the head of banditti bands, and ravaging the country with incessant incursions. It required great boldness in Rhodolph to brave the wrath of these united nobles. He did it fearlessly, issuing the decree that there should be no fortresses in his States which were not necessary for the public defense. The whole country was spotted with castles, apparently impregnable in all the strength of stone and iron, the secure refuge of high-born nobles. In one year seventy of these turreted bulwarks of oppression were torn down; and twenty-nine of the highest nobles, who had ventured upon insurrection, were put to death. An earnest petition

was presented to him in behalf of the condemned insurgents.

"Do not," said the king, "interfere in favor of robbers; they are not nobles, but accursed robbers, who oppress the poor, and break the public peace. True nobility is faithful and just, offends no one, and commits no injury."

CHAPTER II. REIGNS OF ALBERT I, FREDERIC, ALBERT AND OTHO.

From 1291 to 1347.

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Rhodolph of Hapsburg was one of the most remarkable men of his own or of any age, and many anecdotes illustrative of his character, and of the rude times in which he lived, have been transmitted to us. The Thuringian knight who speared the emperor's horse in the bloody fight of Murchfield, was rescued by Rhodolph from those who would cut him down.

"I have witnessed," said the emperor, "his intrepidity, and never could forgive myself if so courageous a knight should be put to death."

During the war with Ottocar, on one occasion the army were nearly perishing of thirst. A flagon of water was

brought to him. He declined it, saying,

"I can not drink alone, nor can I divide so small a quantity among all. I do not thirst for myself, but for the whole army."

By earnest endeavor he obtained the perfect control of his passions, naturally very violent. "I have often," said he, "repented of being passionate, but never of being mild and humane."

One of his captains expressed dissatisfaction at a rich gift the emperor made to a literary man who presented him a manuscript describing the wars of the Romans.

"My good friend," Rhodolph replied, "be contented that men of learning praise our actions, and thereby inspire us with additional courage in war. I wish I could employ more time in reading, and could expend some of that money on learned men which I must throw away on so many illiterate knights."

One cold morning at Metz, in the year 1288, he walked out dressed as usual in the plainest garb. He strolled into a baker's shop, as if to warm himself. The baker's termagant wife said to him, all unconscious who he was,

"Soldiers have no business to come into poor women's houses."

"True," the emperor replied, "but do not be angry, my good woman; I am an old soldier who have spent all my fortune in the service of that rascal Rhodolph, and he suffers me to want, notwithstanding all his fine promises."

"Good enough for you," said the woman; "a man who will serve such a fellow, who is laying waste the whole earth, deserves nothing better."

She then, in her spite, threw a pail of water on the fire, which, filling the room with smoke and ashes, drove the emperor into the street.

Rhodolph, having returned to his lodgings, sent a rich present to the old woman, from the emperor who had warmed himself at her fire that morning, and at the dinner-table told the story with great glee to his companions. The woman, terrified, hastened to the emperor to implore mercy. He ordered her to be admitted to the dining-room, and promised to forgive her if she would repeat to the company all her abusive epithets, not omitting one. She did it faithfully, to the infinite merriment of the festive group.

So far as we can now judge, and making due allowance for the darkness of the age in which he lived, Rhodolph appears to have been, in the latter part of his life, a sincere, if not an enlightened Christian. He was devout in prayer, and punctual in attending the services of the Church. The humble and faithful ministers of religion he esteemed and protected, while he was ever ready to chastise the insolence of those haughty prelates who disgraced their religious professions by arrogance and splendor.

At last the infirmities of age pressed heavily upon him. When seventy-three years old, knowing that he could not have much longer to live, he assembled the congress of electors at Frankfort, and urged them to choose his then only surviving son Albert as his successor on the imperial throne. The diet, however, refused to choose a successor until after the death of the emperor. Rhodolph was bitterly disappointed, for he understood this postponement as a positive refusal to gratify him in this respect. Saddened in spirit, and feeble in body, he undertook a journey, by slow stages, to his hereditary dominions in Switzerland. He then returned to Austria, where he died on the 15th of July, 1291, in the seventy-third year of his age.

Albert, who resided at Vienna, succeeded his father in authority over the Austrian and Swiss provinces. But he was

a man stern, unconciliating and domineering. The nobles hated him, and hoped to drive him back to the Swiss cantons from which his father had come. One great occasion of discontent was, that he employed about his person, and in important posts, Swiss instead of Austrian nobles. They demanded the dismissal of these foreign favorites, which so exasperated Albert that he clung to them still more tenaciously and exclusively.

The nobles now organized a very formidable conspiracy, and offered to neighboring powers, as bribes for their aid, portions of Austria. Austria proper was divided by the river Ens into two parts called Upper and Lower Austria. Lower Austria was offered to Bohemia; Styria to the Duke of Bavaria; Upper Austria to the Archbishop of Salzburg; Carniola to the Counts of Guntz; and thus all the provinces were portioned out to the conquerors. At the same time the citizens of Vienna, provoked by the haughtiness of Albert, rose in insurrection. With the energy which characterized his father, Albert met these emergencies. Summoning immediately an army from Switzerland, he shut up all the avenues to the city, which was not in the slightest degree prepared for a siege, and speedily starved the inhabitants into submission. Punishing severely the insurgents, he strengthened his post at Vienna, and confirmed his power. Then, marching rapidly upon the nobles, before they had time to receive that foreign aid which had been secretly promised them, and securing all the important fortresses, which were now not many in number, he so overawed them, and so vigilantly watched every movement, that there was no opportunity to rise and combine. The Styrian nobles, being remote, made an effort at insurrection. Albert, though it was in the depth of winter, plowed through the snows of

the mountains, and plunging unexpectedly among them, routed them with great slaughter.

While he was thus conquering discontent by the sword, and silencing murmurs beneath the tramp of iron hoofs, the diet was assembling at Frankfort to choose a new chief for the Germanic empire. Albert was confident of being raised to the vacant dignity. The splendor of his talents all admitted. Four of the electors were closely allied to him by marriage, and he arrogantly felt that he was almost entitled to the office as the son of his renowned father. But the electors feared his ambitious and despotic disposition, and chose Adolphus of Nassau to succeed to the imperial throne.

Albert was mortified and enraged by this disappointment, and expressed his determination to oppose the election; but the troubles in his own domains prevented him from putting this threat into immediate execution. His better judgment soon taught him the policy of acquiescing in the election, and he sullenly received the investiture of his fiefs from the hands of the Emperor Adolphus. Still Albert, struggling against unpopularity and continued insurrection, kept his eye fixed eagerly upon the imperial crown. With great tact he conspired to form a confederacy for the deposition of Adolphus.

Wenceslaus, the young King of Bohemia, was now of age, and preparations were made for his coronation with great splendor at Prague. Four of the electors were present on this occasion, which was in June, 1297. Albert conferred with them respecting his plans, and secured their coöperation. The electors more willingly lent their aid since they were exceedingly displeased with some of the measures of Adolphus for the aggrandizement of his own family. Albert with secrecy and vigor pushed his plans, and when the diet met the same year at Metz, a long list of grievances was

drawn up against Adolphus. He was summoned to answer to these charges. The proud emperor refused to appear before the bar of the diet as a culprit. The diet then deposed Adolphus and elected Albert II. to the imperial throne, on the 23d of June, 1298.

The two rival emperors made vigorous preparations to settle the dispute with the sword, and the German States arrayed themselves, some on one side and some on the other. The two armies met at Gelheim on the 2d of July, led by the rival sovereigns. In the thickest of the fight Adolphus spurred his horse through the opposing ranks, bearing down all opposition, till he faced Albert, who was issuing orders and animating his troops by voice and gesture.

"Yield," shouted Adolphus, aiming a saber stroke at the head of his foe, "your life and your crown."

"Let God decide," Albert replied, as he parried the blow, and thrust his lance into the unprotected face of Adolphus. At that moment the horse of Adolphus fell, and he himself was instantly slain. Albert remained the decisive victor on this bloody field. The diet of electors was again summoned, and he was now chosen unanimously emperor. He was soon crowned with great splendor at Aix-la-Chapelle.

Still Albert sat on an uneasy throne. The pope, indignant that the electors should presume to depose one emperor and choose another without his consent, refused to confirm the election of Albert, and loudly inveighed him as the murderer of Adolphus. Albert, with characteristic impulsiveness, declared that he was emperor by choice of the electors and not by ratification of the pope, and defiantly spurned the opposition of the pontiff. Considering himself firmly seated on the throne, he refused to pay the bribes of tolls, privileges, territories, etc., which he had so freely offered to the electors. Thus exasperated, the