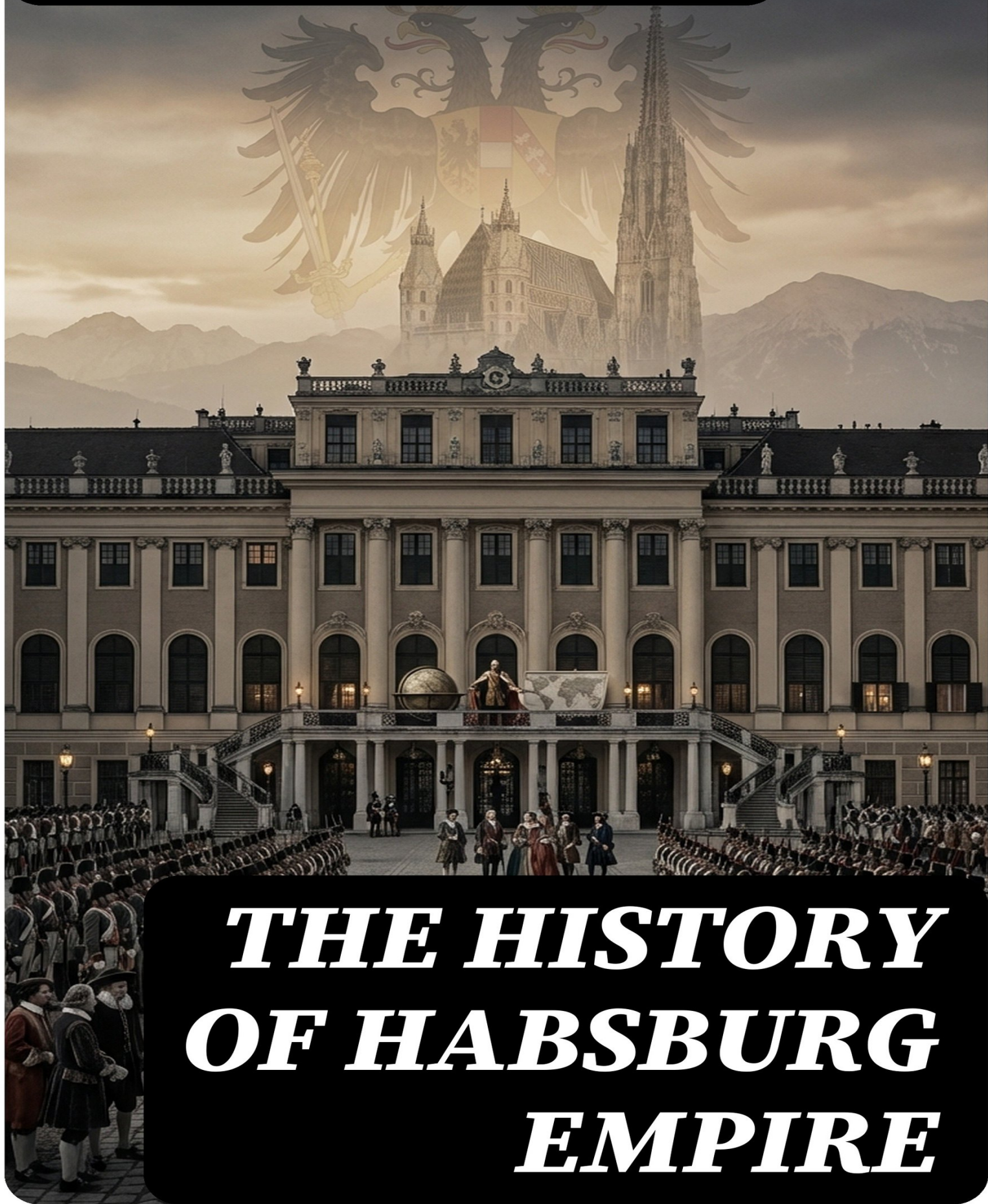


JOHN S. C. ABBOTT



***THE HISTORY
OF HABSBURG
EMPIRE***

John S. C. Abbott

The History of Habsburg Empire

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Tyler Ashford

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Introduction

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At the heart of *The History of Habsburg Empire* lies the gripping drama of a dynasty that sought, across turbulent centuries, to bind a mosaic of peoples into a single political fabric, forever negotiating the uneasy trade between faith and expedience, lineage and merit, ceremony and command, while wars, marriages, and revolutions pressed upon its borders and its conscience, making the House of Austria a stage on which the perennial questions of sovereignty, identity, and survival were argued in coronation halls and on battlefields, and where the quest for order continually met the unruly energies of a vast, multilingual realm.

John S. C. Abbott's work belongs to the tradition of nineteenth-century narrative history, written for general readers and framed by the political and religious questions that animated his age. Centered in Central Europe yet stretching across continental diplomacy, his account surveys courts, fortresses, monasteries, and frontier towns to trace how the Habsburgs accumulated, governed, and defended their dominions. Composed in an era that prized moral clarity and instructive biography, the book reflects a popular Anglo-American impulse to render the complexities of European power into vivid, accessible prose. Its setting is as much diplomatic chambers as it is mountain passes and river valleys.

Readers encounter a chronological panorama that begins with the dynasty's formative ascent and follows its consolidation of lands through inheritance, negotiation, and

force. Abbott's voice is steady, didactic, and occasionally admonitory, favoring clear narrative arcs and character sketches that illuminate motive as much as event. The style privileges cause and effect, linking court decisions to social currents and military outcomes, while the tone remains earnest about the moral burdens of rule. Without dwelling on specialist debates, the book offers brisk pacing, memorable vignettes, and a guiding hand that helps nonexpert audiences navigate shifting alliances, confessional rifts, and the strains of imperial administration.

At its core, the book interrogates how legitimacy is constructed and defended when a throne rests upon diverse languages, legal customs, and confessions. Abbott returns to the mechanisms of dynastic power—marriage, treaty, ritual, and campaign—to show how sovereignty is both enacted and narrated. The push and pull between provincial privilege and centralizing ambition recurs, as do the entanglements of conscience and policy that shadow rulers in moments of crisis. Geography emerges as destiny: mountains, plains, and rivers shape strategies as surely as doctrines do. Throughout, the historian underscores the cost of security, measuring stability against the toll extracted from subjects and elites.

For contemporary readers, this history matters because it dramatizes dilemmas that still animate plural societies: how to balance unity with local autonomy, how to arbitrate competing identities, and how to reform institutions without dissolving the bonds that make cooperation possible. The Habsburg experience, as narrated here, sheds light on the formation of international orders, the management of frontiers, and the perils of ruling by coalition. It also clarifies how narratives of destiny and sacrifice justify policy, reminding us that political legitimacy is sustained as much

by stories as by statutes. In an age of fractured publics, such lessons travel well.

Equally instructive is the book's nineteenth-century lens, which invites readers to notice how moral categories, religious assumptions, and a preference for decisive leadership shape the portrayal of events. Abbott writes with confidence about intention and consequence, a habit that aids clarity but can compress contingency. Approaching his narrative critically means reading for selection as much as emphasis—what receives detail, what remains schematic, and how character becomes a proxy for structure. Such awareness enriches the experience, turning the volume into both a chronicle of an empire and a case study in how historians of a previous era organized the past.

Approached with patience for its sweeping scope and attention to the recurrent motifs of alliance, confession, and administration, *The History of Habsburg Empire* rewards with a sustained meditation on endurance amid change. Readers will find not a technical monograph but a spacious narrative that privileges coherence over minutiae, a choice that makes the breadth of European upheavals graspable without specialist training. Its lasting value lies in the tension it preserves between an empire's grand design and the particular lives gathered under its banner. In following that tension, the book offers perspective on power's possibilities and its limits in complex societies.

Synopsis

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John S. C. Abbott's *The History of Habsburg Empire* presents a sweeping narrative of the dynasty's ascent, governance, and trials across central Europe. Writing as a nineteenth-century American popular historian, Abbott arranges his account chronologically, combining political episodes with portraits of rulers and the societies they shaped. He emphasizes the interplay of dynastic ambition, religious conflict, and strategic geography, tracing how a family rooted in medieval frontier holdings came to wield continent-spanning authority. The book's through-line follows the consolidation of Austrian power, the burdens of empire amid rival claimants and neighbors, and the persistent challenge of holding diverse territories under a single crown.

He begins with the medieval roots of the Habsburgs in the Upper Rhine, noting the family's rise from regional counts to kingship. The turning point arrives with Rudolf I's election as King of the Romans and his victory over Ottokar of Bohemia, securing the Austrian lands that anchored Habsburg authority along the Danube. Abbott treats feudal structures, dynastic partitions, and rivalries among German princes as both obstacles and instruments for expansion. Through inheritances and firm administration, the house consolidates its position in Austria and Styria, establishing a base from which later generations would contend for broader leadership within the Holy Roman Empire.

In Abbott's telling, the late medieval and early Renaissance eras underscore the Habsburg strategy of

expansion through marriage and alliance. Maximilian I's unions link the dynasty to the Burgundian and Low Countries inheritance, exposing Vienna's court to western wealth and conflicts while complicating governance across distant provinces. Abbeys, city estates, and noble diets appear as negotiating partners and periodic antagonists, foreshadowing later struggles over sovereignty. Abbott charts the steady, sometimes precarious balancing act between local privileges and central authority, presenting administrative continuity and dynastic foresight as the means by which the Habsburgs transform a patchwork of fiefs into a more cohesive imperial apparatus.

With Charles V, Abbott frames the ideal and limits of universal monarchy. The Habsburg patrimony sprawls from Iberia and Italy to the Empire and the New World, yet cohesion is strained by distance, recurrent wars, and an emerging religious divide. The narrative follows the partition that assigns the Austrian core and imperial responsibilities to Ferdinand I, while the Spanish inheritance forms a parallel branch. Confessional conflict intensifies as Lutheran and Catholic realms collide, and the Ottoman advance presses the Danube frontier. Abbott presents these pressures as forging a more distinctly Austrian Habsburg mission: regional guardianship, imperial stewardship, and pragmatic accommodation.

Abbott's account of the seventeenth century centers on rebellion, religion, and resilience. The Bohemian crisis and the broader Thirty Years' War test Habsburg capacity to impose order while maintaining legitimacy among varied estates. Generals and statesmen rise and fall amid shifting alliances, and the settlements that follow redefine power within the German lands. To the southeast, recurrent conflicts with the Ottoman Empire repeatedly draw Vienna

into siege and counteroffensive, sharpening the dynasty's military identity and extending its influence in Hungary. The period, as Abbott narrates it, solidifies the dynasty's recovery after devastation and sets patterns of centralized rule carefully negotiated with regional elites.

In the eighteenth century, the succession of Maria Theresa introduces a new phase of reform and endurance. Facing challenges to her inheritance and territorial losses that recalibrate the balance with Prussia, Abbott emphasizes administrative overhaul, fiscal reorganization, and a tempered assertion of royal authority. He presents Joseph II's ambitious program—religious toleration, legal rationalization, and efforts to streamline governance—as an experiment that meets both practical limits and principled resistance. Across these reigns, the narrative highlights a state grappling with enlightened ideas while defending traditional prerogatives, striving to harmonize dynastic cohesion with the claims of diverse nationalities and corporate bodies.

Abbott concludes with the age of revolution and reordering. The Napoleonic upheavals compress imperial horizons, precipitating the end of the Holy Roman Empire and ushering in a new imperial style centered on Austria. Through Metternich and the Congress of Vienna, the monarchy recasts itself as the keystone of European stability, even as industrial change and national movements unsettle established arrangements. The 1848 revolutions and the accession of Franz Joseph frame the final chapters as an ongoing contest between reform, authority, and plurality. Without foreclosing outcomes, Abbott leaves a portrait of a composite polity whose resilience and contradictions continue to instruct.

Historical Context

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John S. C. Abbott's survey of the Habsburg realm unfolds across Central Europe's core—Austria, Bohemia, Hungary, and the imperial cities—where the Holy Roman Empire, the Roman Church, and regional Estates structured power. Beginning with medieval origins and the election of Rudolf I in 1273, the dynasty leveraged imperial law, feudal bonds, and ecclesiastical alliances to consolidate rule. Vienna emerged as a political and military hub on the Danube. Court councils, diets, and princely privileges defined governance, while frontier marches buffered Christendom from Ottoman advance. This institutional setting frames Abbott's narrative of dynastic ascent and contested sovereignty across a multiethnic monarchy.

Through calculated marriages and inheritances, the Habsburgs assembled a composite dominion. The Burgundian legacy entered via Mary of Burgundy's marriage to Maximilian I; Spanish crowns and the New World flowed to their descendants, culminating in Charles V's vast transcontinental monarchy. This accumulation reshaped European diplomacy, fusing courtly patronage with legal claims over disparate lands. Abbott emphasizes dynastic mechanisms—capitulations, succession compacts, and feudal rights—that bound territories despite linguistic and cultural diversity. The resulting duality between a universal imperial ideal and stubborn provincial autonomy becomes a recurring tension, situating Habsburg policy within the era's balance-of-power politics and confessional competition.

Religious upheaval profoundly shaped the Habsburg story. The Protestant Reformation fragmented authority within the Holy Roman Empire, empowering city leagues and territorial princes. Habsburg rulers, notably Ferdinand II, pursued Catholic restoration, provoking resistance that escalated into the Thirty Years' War. Landmark episodes such as the Bohemian revolt and the Battle of White Mountain marked efforts to reassert royal control. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 curtailed imperial prerogatives and affirmed territorial sovereignty, yet consolidated Habsburg dominance in their Austrian and Bohemian lands. Abbott situates faith, statecraft, and military coercion as intertwined forces, tracing how confessional policies molded governance and allegiance.

Frontier conflict with the Ottoman Empire anchored Habsburg military and fiscal policy. After the Battle of Mohács in 1526 and the ensuing succession crisis, Habsburg claims in Hungary met sustained Ottoman pressure. The sieges of Vienna in 1529 and 1683 became emblematic defenses, the latter followed by a Holy League campaign that reversed Ottoman gains. Subsequent treaties expanded Habsburg control in Hungary and Croatia, deepening the empire's multiethnic composition and reliance on frontier institutions like the Military Border. Abbott underscores how perpetual war shaped taxation, fortification, and noble privilege, entwining defense imperatives with the monarchy's centralizing ambitions and regional compromise.

In the eighteenth century, Maria Theresa defended her succession in a Europe-wide conflict and then pursued administrative consolidation. The War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War exposed structural weaknesses, prompting reforms in taxation, education,

military organization, and provincial administration. Her son Joseph II advanced an ambitious program—religious toleration, curbs on monastic wealth, judicial rationalization, and measures easing serf obligations. Yet central decrees met entrenched estate privileges and local legal traditions, revealing the limits of enlightened absolutism across diverse crownlands. Abbott presents these rulers as emblematic modernizers whose policy experiments tested cohesion in a sprawling, multilingual polity.

Revolution and Napoleon recast Habsburg authority. In 1804 Francis II proclaimed the Austrian Empire, and in 1806 he dissolved the Holy Roman Empire under French pressure. After defeats like Austerlitz, Austria reemerged as a conservative pillar of restoration. Under Metternich, Vienna hosted the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815), brokered a European concert, and policed dissent. The Carlsbad Decrees (1819) imposed censorship and curbed university activism, reinforcing surveillance across German states. Abbott chronicles these developments to illustrate how dynastic survival entailed administrative rigor, diplomatic balancing, and ideological control, aligning Habsburg policy with a continental effort to contain revolution and preserve dynastic legitimacy.

In 1848, liberal and national revolutions convulsed the monarchy. Uprisings in Vienna, Prague, and Milan, and a Hungarian bid for autonomy, forced concessions before military reprisals restored control. Emperor Ferdinand abdicated; Franz Joseph assumed the throne amid crisis. Russian intervention helped suppress the Hungarian war, and the regime imposed centralized “Bach” neoabsolutism with expanded bureaucracy, police, and fiscal reforms. Railways and state-led modernization advanced unevenly, while nationality questions persisted. Abbott interprets

these upheavals as a clash between imperial order and emergent popular sovereignty, framing Habsburg resilience as both administrative adaptability and dependence on coercion and international alliances.

Abbott, an American popular historian writing in the 1850s, addressed a general readership with a moralizing, accessible style. Published in 1859, his survey predates the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise and reads the monarchy through themes of faith, authority, and reform. Drawing on contemporary European histories and chronicles, he frames dynastic policy in terms familiar to antebellum audiences—liberty versus despotism, Protestant-Catholic rivalry, and the perils of revolutionary excess. The book thus reflects transatlantic debates over constitutionalism and national self-determination while critiquing court absolutism. Its narrative mirrors mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-American perspectives as it interprets the Habsburg past for a democratic public.

The History of Habsburg Empire

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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[1].—Rhodolph of Hapsburg.—His Marriage and Estates.—Excommunication[2] 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[19].

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[3], 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.

59 A French noble title borne by members of the Noailles family; in the War of the Spanish Succession a Duke of Noailles commanded French forces in Spain and is here the marshal reported 'on the march' to intercept the Austrians.

60 Refers to James Stanhope, 1st Earl Stanhope (c.1673–1721), a British general and statesman who led allied troops in Spain and was captured at the action around Brihuega in 1710.

61 A variant spelling used in older English sources for Francis II Rákóczi (often rendered Rákóczi; c.1676–1735), the Hungarian noble who led the anti-Habsburg uprising (Rákóczi's War of Independence) in the early 1700s.

62 Passarovitz (often spelled Passarowitz or Passarowitz; modern Požarevac in Serbia) was the town where the Treaty of Passarowitz was signed in July 1718, ending the Austro-Ottoman war and ceding Belgrade and parts of Serbia and Wallachia to Austria.

63 The Pragmatic Sanction was Charles VI's legal decree (promulgated in the early 18th century) to secure the hereditary succession of his daughters to the Habsburg lands and which he spent much of his reign trying to obtain other European powers' recognition for.

64 The Order of the Golden Fleece is a chivalric order founded in 1430 by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy; it became one of Europe's most prestigious orders and later produced competing grand-master claims by the Spanish and Austrian courts.

65 André-Hercule de Fleury (1653–1743), a French cardinal who became the chief minister and principal adviser to King Louis XV in the 1720s–1740s and shaped French foreign policy during that period.

66 Stanisław Leszczyński (1687–1766), a Polish noble supported by Charles XII of Sweden who was briefly king of Poland (1704–1709) and was the father-in-law of Louis XV; his 1733 election provoked Russian and Austrian intervention.

67 Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736), a prominent Habsburg general and statesman noted for his military leadership against the Ottomans and in European wars, who commanded Austrian forces in the campaigns described.

68 A reference to Francis Stephen (1708–1765), then Duke of Lorraine who married Maria Theresa; he later became Grand Duke of Tuscany and, as Francis I, was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1745.

69 An older spelling of the Sea of Azov, a shallow inlet northeast of the Black Sea at the mouth of the Don River, which in the period was strategically important for access to the Black Sea and Mediterranean.

70 An elite infantry corps of the Ottoman Empire originally composed of conscripted youths (devshirme) that became a powerful military and political force within the Ottoman state, later abolished in 1826.

71 Belgrade is the fortress city on the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers (now the capital of Serbia) that for centuries marked the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier; its loss and subsequent diplomatic settlement in 1739 (the Treaty of Belgrade) was a major humiliation for Austria in this period.

72 “Count Neuperg” in the text refers to an Austrian plenipotentiary and military agent involved in the 1739 negotiations with the Ottoman Empire who was accused by Emperor Charles VI of exceeding his powers and was temporarily imprisoned pending the emperor’s death.

73 “Molnitz” in the chapter denotes the engagement fought on 10 April 1741 in Silesia (commonly spelled Mollwitz), where Prussian forces defeated the Austrians in a significant early battle of the War of the Austrian Succession.

74 The Crown of Saint Stephen (Holy Crown of Hungary) is the medieval coronation crown and chief symbol of the Hungarian monarchy, traditionally used in coronations and preserved as a national regalia.

75 A diplomatic principle used in 18th-century European statecraft that sought to prevent any single country from becoming dominant by encouraging shifting alliances to maintain an equilibrium among great powers.

76 Charles Louis Auguste Fouquet, duc de Belle-Isle (1693–1761), a French marshal who commanded French and allied troops during the siege of Prague and led the famous winter retreat of 1742 described in the chapter.

77 An older form of the name Eger (German) or Cheb (Czech), a fortified town in western Bohemia; in this period it was a key stronghold whose capture helped restore Habsburg control in 1743.

78 A contemporary spelling of Parc-aux-Cerfs, the private retreat at Louis XV's court used to lodge his mistresses and favorites; it became a symbol of the king's personal life rather than a formal state residence.

79 A French phrase meaning a mass levy or general raising of the populace for military service; here it denotes the Hungarian summons to arms by the nobility and crown.

80 "Marchioness of Pompadour" refers to Jeanne-Antoinette (Jeanette in the text) Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour, who was the influential chief mistress and political patron of King Louis XV of France and exercised significant cultural and diplomatic influence in the 1740s–1750s.

81 The "order of Maria Theresa" was a military order of merit instituted by Empress Maria Theresa (formally established in 1757) to reward outstanding military leadership and bravery among Austrian officers.

82 Empress Elizabeth (Elizabeth Petrovna, 1709–1762) ruled Russia from 1741 until her death on 5 January 1762; her death precipitated a rapid change of alliances in the Seven Years' War when her nephew succeeded her.

83 The book's reference to "Paul III." appears to denote the emperor who succeeded Elizabeth in 1762 — commonly