BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

THE FALL OF BUDA.

As a signal that the conference was at an end, the Emperor Leopold rose from his arm-chair. The president and vice-president followed his example, and the other members of the council bowed and retired. The Margrave of Baden and Count von Starhemberg remained standing by the green table, while the emperor, who had crossed the room, now stood vacantly staring out of a window, drumming with his fingers on one of the panes.

His two counsellors were perfectly *au fait* to the import of this drumming; it meant that the emperor's thoughts were with his army, which was still in the field, although three years had gone by since the siege of Vienna. During this protracted struggle both parties had fought bravely, but neither one had as yet prevailed against the other. In 1684 the Austrians had gained a brilliant victory over the allied enemy; but, in the course of the same year, the Turks, by their obstinate valor, had forced the Duke of Lorraine to abandon the siege of Buda, which, since then, had remained in their possession, and gave them entire control of Hungary.

The emperor's thoughts, then, were at Buda, while his fingers still drummed on the window-pane. At last he turned around.

"Any news from the army?" asked he, hastily.

"None, your majesty," replied the margrave. "Since the news of the junction of the Duke of Lorraine's forces with those of Prince Louis of Baden and Max Emmanuel, nothing further has been heard as to the progress of the siege."

"And that, of course, signifies that there is nothing good to be told," added Von Starhemberg. "If the Duke of Lorraine had met with any success, he would not have failed to send a courier with the tidings."

"Unhappily, since he has had command of the army, he has had many more reverses to communicate than victories," replied the margrave, with a sigh.

"You forget his brilliant victory at Gran last year," returned the emperor. "Away with your petty ill-will toward the duke! Forget your personal grievances in admiration of his heroism."

"Sire," replied the margrave, somewhat impetuously, "there are personal grievances which will not allow themselves to be forgotten. The Duke of Lorraine, in his dispatches, has not only accused me of neglect in the provisioning and arming of his troops, but has also declared me unqualified for my position, and has recommended another man as minister of war."

"And yet you retain your position," replied the emperor; "so that neither one of you has influence enough with me to injure the other. I have great confidence, nevertheless, in the judgment of my brother-in-law; and, if occasionally he is of opinion that battles are not to be planned on the green table of a council-chamber, but in the field by the man, who is to fight them—not in *theoriæ* but in *praxis*—I am inclined to think that he is right."

"One thing I hope that your majesty will do me the justice to remember," answered Von Starhemberg, in a tone of vexation. "It is this: the war department, at my suggestion, advised that Buda should not be assaulted, but that the passes lying behind the city should be seized, Stuhlweissemberg besieged, and Buda, by this means, cut off from all intercourse with Turkey. Thus it would have fallen without bloodshed; whereas we have nothing to expect, as the result of a second direct attack, but the news of a second repulse."

"Should the Duke of Lorraine be forced to raise the siege a second time, I hope that the war department will remember that it was I, and not my commander-in-chief, who rejected their advice. So that, if we should be unfortunate, mine be the blame of the disaster, for I ordered the attack."

At this moment the door of the council-chamber was opened with some precipitation, and the chamberlain of the day appeared on the threshold.

"What do you come to announce?" asked Leopold.

"Sire, a bearer of dispatches from his highness of Lorraine."

"Ah, *lupus in fabula*," said the emperor, with a smile. "Well—let in the *lupus*."

"Your majesty," interrupted the Margrave of Baden, "would it not be better for me to receive the dispatches, and communicate their contents to you? The news of another disaster will be a great blow: your mind should be prepared to receive it."

"I am prepared for whatever it may please God to assign," replied Leopold, reverently. "If the news be bad, it is my duty to confront it like a man; if good, let me taste it pure, as it comes from the lips of the messenger. Let him enter!"

The chamberlain stepped back, made a sign to the page in the anteroom, and both sides of the door were flung open.

"Our bearer is a person of distinction," said Leopold to himself. "Both doors are opened for a reigning prince, a grandee of Spain, or—"

Just then the bearer of dispatches appeared—a small, slight person, in a simple uniform, but his breast well covered with orders, both Austrian and Spanish.

"Prince Eugene of Savoy!" exclaimed Leopold, with evident pleasure. And he made several steps toward the prince.

"Prince Eugene of Savoy," muttered the margrave, with an ugly frown; for well he knew that such an envoy would never have been chosen to be the bearer of evil tidings.

Meanwhile Eugene rapidly crossed the room, and knelt before the emperor.

"You forget," said Leopold, raising him, "that a knight of the Golden Fleece is not obliged to conform to the court custom of kneeling. His order kneel before the Almighty alone. Moreover, as grandee of Spain, your highness has a right to appear with covered head."

"Sire, I came hither neither as a grandee nor a knight. I came as the squire of my noble lord, the Duke of Lorraine,

and as the soldier and subject of my emperor. Let me, then, greet my sovereign as my heart dictates."

With these words Eugene knelt again.

"Now," said Leopold, "rise, loyal subject, and satisfy my impatience. Tell me, in one word, has Buda fallen?"

"Yes, sire," was the exulting reply.

The emperor raised his grateful eyes to heaven, while his two councillors exchanged glances of dissatisfaction. Leopold saw this, and addressed himself to both.

"Gentlemen," said he, "pray remember that you were opposed to the siege of Buda, and that it was undertaken at the request of the Duke of Lorraine."

"Your majesty told us that you had commanded it yourself," answered the margrave. "The duke, then, has merely carried out orders!"

"Orders given because of his request. He proved to me that Buda could be taken; and, when I commanded this second attempt to reduce it, I merely yielded to his better judgment. But let us change the subject.—You are most welcome," continued he, to Prince Eugene. "And now let us hear the details of your glad tidings."

"Sire, the siege of Buda is an epic, worthy of the pen of a Homer. None but a great poet can do justice to the deeds of valor of the Duke of Lorraine."

"Try you, nevertheless," replied Leopold. "But hold! It were selfish to enjoy your narrative alone. The empress and the court shall partake of our happiness to day. Count von Starhemberg, oblige me by opening the door, and recalling the chamberlain."

The count reluctantly obeyed, and the chamberlain reappeared.

"You will announce to the ladies and gentlemen in waiting, that I request the presence of the court. I myself will conduct the empress hither." Then, with a wave of his hand to Prince Eugene, he added, "Await our return."

Not long after, the empress, conducted by her imperial husband, entered the room and took her seat. The ladies and gentlemen in waiting stood behind, and the margrave and Count von Starhemberg were on either side of the emperor.

"And now, Prince Eugene of Savoy," cried Leopold, "let us hear the details of the fall of Buda."

All eyes were turned upon Eugene, who, without boldness or bashfulness, calmly surveyed the brilliant assembly before him. In his plain, dark uniform, his black hair worn naturally and without powder, he presented a striking contrast to the courtiers in their magnificently-embroidered Spanish doublets, and huge, powdered wigs.

He began his narrative, by alluding to the fact that for one hundred and twenty years, in spite of six different attempts on the part of Austria to retake it, the ancient capital of Hungary had been in the hands of the Turks. He quoted the well-known saying of John Sobiesky, "Buda has drunk such torrents of Christian blood, that every handful of earth around its walls is red and moist with gore." He made a few brief remarks on the subject of the last unsuccessful attack, two years before; and then, with all the enthusiasm of a warrior-poet, he entered upon the narration of the seventh siege.

He spoke of the various stratagems, sallies, and skirmishes that preceded the final assault. On the 18th of June the city was invested, and by the end of July the allied army had effected an entrance, and captured so many streets that the besieged had been compelled to retire within the fortress. At the same time, combustibles were thrown into the magazine, which exploded with fearful destruction, and the Duke of Lorraine, compassionating the condition of the brave old commander, Pacha Abdurrahmen, sent a messenger, advising him to capitulate. Abdurrahmen, for all answer, informed the duke that Allah and the Prophet would shortly punish the audacity of the Christians, and, by way of anticipating Divine justice, he caused one hundred Saxons, who had been captured a few days before, to be hanged within view of the besiegers.

This vindictive act was the signal for a new assault, and the fortress was attacked on three sides. The assailants were several times repulsed, for the Turks fought like demons. Undismayed, they stood upon the walls, pouring fire and shot into the Christian ranks until the hair was singed from their heads, and their scorched clothes dropped from their bodies.

If the allies were heroic in their attack, the Turks were not less so in their defence. Finally the women, too, were seen, some carrying ammunition, some bringing refreshments to the gunners, while others, singing wild strains of Turkish embateria, hurled stones from the walls upon the invading army.

More than two thousand Austrians had fallen, but they had succeeded in establishing themselves within one of the bastions, and had thereby obtained possession of the prison-tower. The day following, however, Abdurrahmen sprung a mine, which killed one hundred of the imperial troops, and so terrified the others, that they retired in confusion, and the bastion remained in the hands of the Turks.

Once more the Duke of Lorraine offered terms to the besieged, which a second time were indignantly refused. For the grand-vizier had arrived with re-enforcements, and on a plain just behind the city of Buda his troops were drawn up in battle array. The besieged now commenced an attack upon the besiegers; one of their bombs burst almost at the feet of the Duke of Lorraine, killing and wounding several of his staff; another fell into a heap of hand-grenades, which produced a frightful conflagration.

On the first of September Abdurrahmen was again summoned to surrender. The white-haired hero presented two documents to the envoys, one of which was from the high-priest of the Prophet at Constantinople, the other from the Sultan. The first enjoined it upon the pacha, as a religious duty, to defend Buda as the key to the Ottoman empire; the other contained these few emphatic words: "Either fall as a martyr before the sword of the invader, or die as a traitor by the blade of the headsman."

"You see," added Abdurrahmen, calmly, "that no discretion is allowed me. I must prevail against you, or fight until I fall."

This decided the question of capitulation forever; and although the grand-vizier was there with his reserves, the Duke of Lorraine determined to storm the fortress anew. It was a desperate resolve; but, like Abdurrahmen, he had made up his mind to conquer or die.

At this point of his narration, Eugene paused for breath.

The emperor, perceiving that he was fatigued, made a sign to one of the pages in attendance, who thereupon placed a chair for him—a compliment never before paid by a sovereign of Austria to any man below the rank of a reigning prince.

"Prince Eugene of Savoy," said Leopold, "as a grandee of Spain, and a knight of the Golden Fleece, you have a right to be seated in the presence of your sovereign. Make use of the privilege, then; for if you stand much longer, I see that you will not have strength to finish your recital; and I would not abridge it by a word. It sounds like martial music to my enraptured ear."

"Sire," replied Eugene, accepting the chair, "'tis no wonder if the boom of the cannon sound like music to the son of Charles V.; above all, when it thunders to proclaim your majesty's success. On the 2d of September began the last assault upon the fortress of Buda. It was impossible not to admire the intrepidity of our enemies: to a man, they seemed to have sworn, like their commander, to defend the post or die amid its ruins. But your majesty's troops were as resolute as they. After a terrible conflict fought over the bodies of their slain comrades, they cut to pieces a detachment of Janizaries that had been sent to oppose their passage.

"'No quarter!' was the watchword of the Moslems. 'No quarter!' cried the Christians in return. 'No quarter!' shouted the Bavarians, as they mounted a breach in the fortress, and fought hand to hand with its frenzied defenders. The latter poured out in such numbers that the Bavarians wavered, and perhaps might have been repulsed, had not the gallant Louis of Baden mounted the breach himself, and called upon his men to follow. They obeyed; the Bavarians rallied, and the prince ordered a fresh attack. Thanks to his valor and able generalship, the Turks were forced back, and fled in confusion; some finding refuge within the walls, others, in their dismay, plunging into the moat. The Bavarians followed the fugitives, and now from every castle-window waved the white flag of surrender.

"To the hero of Buda, the brave Abdurrahmen, our commanders would gladly have granted an honorable retreat. But he refused mercy at the hands of his admiring antagonists. Alone he stood, sabre in hand, defending the breach against our advancing troops, until he fell, pierced by twenty balls, while the bodies of his slain foes lay like a monument of his heroism around him. With the death of Abdurrahmen the struggle ceased, and that night, as a last act of defiance, the Turks sprung a mine in the fortress, and reduced it to a heap of ruins.

"The next morning, the grand-vizier retreated, and the plan of attack, inspired by the genius of the Duke of Lorraine, had destroyed the prestige of the Sultan in Hungary. Scarcely inferior to this great commander was the ability displayed by Prince Louis of Baden, and Max Emmanuel. No man who beheld them can ever forget the sight of these two great heroes, handsome and brave as Hector and Patroclus.

"Sire, my tale is ended. Buda has fallen, and its conquerors have immortalized themselves."

"You say, your tale is at an end, Prince Eugene," replied the emperor, smiling. "But you have omitted something in your recital."

"What is it, your majesty?"

"You have not once mentioned the name of the Prince of Savoy; and yet he must have been there. You have exalted the genius of the Duke of Lorraine, and you have likened his two generals to the heroes of antiquity. It is said that the Prince of Savoy is the inseparable companion of Prince Louis and Max Emmanuel. Where, then, was he, while his friends were gaining immortality?"

"Sire, he was with them; but, as he did no more than his duty, I have nothing further to say."

"It is your duty, as bearer of dispatches from your commander-in-chief, to answer my inquiries, let them relate to whomsoever they will. Where were you, then, while your friends were astonishing you with their valor?"

"He was at their side, your majesty. Before the siege, the three friends had sworn never to surrender to the enemy. It was therefore natural that the Prince of Savoy should follow the example of his superior officers, and imitate their gallantry."

"But was he in no danger? Was he not wounded?"

"Sire, on such a day, no soldier could hope to escape from danger; above all, the officers who led them into action. The Prince of Savoy's horse was shot under him, and he himself was slightly wounded in the hand by an arrow."

"Where was he stationed on that last day?"

"He was ordered to skirmish with the enemy, and prevent them from making sorties on the besiegers."

"A hard task, for one so young."

"Yes, sire; for it condemned him to inaction, while his comrades were gaining glory. But before the close of the day, fate befriended him. The grand-vizier having made no attempt to join the besieged, the Prince of Savoy was so fortunate as to come in with his dragoons, just as the Bavarians were about to be repulsed from the breach."

"Ah! I thought so!" exclaimed Leopold; "and doubtless his appearance had much to do with the successful storming of the castle. And how did the Duke of Lorraine reward his gallantry?"

"Sire, he was rewarded far, far beyond his deserts. The Duke of Lorraine, in presence of the army, folded him in his embrace."

"That was well done. Come hither, Prince Eugene. I, too, would reward you as the Duke of Lorraine did."

Eugene hastened to the emperor, who folded him in his arms, and then led him to the empress.

"Your majesty," said he to his wife, "I present you a young hero, who for three years has been gaining renown in the service of Austria. I recommend him to your favor, and beg that you, too, will bestow some reward upon him."

The empress turned her soft blue eyes upon the prince, who bent his knee, and kissed the hand she extended to him. "I will pray for you," said she, "as long as I live; and, as a testimonial of my regard, I beg you to accept my husband's portrait."

Unclasping from her neck a heavy gold chain, to which was attached a miniature set in brilliants, she threw it over Eugene's shoulder with these words:

"Let the emperor's likeness be to you a souvenir of your past heroism, and may it inspire you for the future to serve him with loyalty and love."

"Your majesty," replied Eugene, "of my own free will I chose the Emperor of Austria for my sovereign; but from this day forth I am pledged to serve him as his native-born subject: and the chain so graciously bestowed by your majesty, I shall wear as emblematic of my fealty, for life."

The emperor signed to Eugene to rise, and addressed himself to all present. "Vienna, too, shall have her share in this day's joy. The crescent, which for more than a hundred years has proclaimed to the world that Austria's capital was once in the hands of the infidel, shall be taken down from the tower of St. Stephen's. We have won the right to displace the accursed emblem, and it shall once more give place to the symbol of Christianity!"

The crescent of which the emperor spoke, had been on the tower of St. Stephen's since the year 1529, when Vienna was besieged by the Sultan Soliman. His guns were being constantly directed against the tower; and the Viennese having sent a deputation to request that the Turks would not demolish their beautiful cathedral, Soliman consented to spare it on one condition. This was, that the cross should be removed, and the crescent take its place. In their extremity, the promise was made; and, from that day, the Christian church had borne the hated symbol of Mohammedanism.

At the fall of Buda, Leopold refused to be bound any longer by the promise extorted from his ancestors; and, in commemoration of the capture of this important post, a cross was erected on the tower, with this inscription: "Luna deposuit, et crux exaltata. Anno quo Buda a Turcis capta, MDCLXXXVI."

CHAPTER II.

THE FRIENDS.

With the capture of Buda, the campaign of 1686 closed. The army went into winter quarters, and the officers all congregrated in Vienna, there to indemnify themselves for past hardships by a few months of recreation.