

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 con-

sternation 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 tumbled 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.

ANECDOTES OF RHODOLPH.—HIS DESIRE FOR THE ELECTION OF HIS SON.—HIS DEATH.—ALBERT.—HIS UNPOPULARITY.—CONSPIRACY OF THE NOBLES.—THEIR DEFEAT—ADOLPHUS OF NASSAU CHOSEN EMPEROR.—ALBERT'S CONSPIRACY.—DEPOSITION OF ADOLPHUS AND ELECTION OF ALBERT.—DEATH OF ADOLPHUS.—THE POPE DEFILED.—ANNEXATION OF BOHEMIA.—ASSASSINATION OF ALBERT.—AVENGING FURY.—THE HERMIT'S DIRECTION.—FREDERIC THE HANDSOME.—ELECTION OF HENRY, COUNT OF LUXEMBURG.—HIS DEATH.—ELECTION OF LOUIS OF BAVARIA.—CAPTURE OF FREDERIC.—REMARKABLE CONFIDENCE TOWARD A PRISONER.—DEATH OF FREDERIC.—AN EARLY ENGAGEMENT.—DEATH OF LOUIS.—ACCESSION OF ALBERT.

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."