

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 torred 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 DEFIED.—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."

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 Enns 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; Carinthia 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 electors, the pope, and the King of Bohemia, conspired to drive Albert from the throne. Their secret plans were so well laid, and they were so secure of success, that the Elector of Mentz tauntingly and boastingly said to Albert, "I need only sound my hunting-horn and a new emperor will appear."

Albert, however, succeeded by sagacity and energy, in dispelling this storm which for a time threatened his entire destruction. By making concessions to the pope, he finally won him to cordial friendship, and by the sword vanquishing some and intimidating others, he broke up the league. His most formidable foe was his brother-in-law, Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia. Albert's sister, Judith, the wife of Wenceslaus, had for some years prevented a rupture between them, but she now being dead, both monarchs decided to refer their difficulties to the arbitration of the sword. While their armies were marching, Wenceslaus was suddenly taken sick and died, in June, 1305. His son, but seventeen years of age, weak in body and in mind, at once yielded to all the demands of his imperial uncle. Hardly a year, however, had elapsed ere this young prince, Wenceslaus III, was assassinated, leaving no issue.

Albert immediately resolved to transfer the crown of Bo

hemia to his own family, and thus to annex the powerful kingdom of Bohemia to his own limited Austrian territories. Bohemia added to the Austrian provinces, would constitute quite a noble kingdom. The crown was considered elective, though in fact the eldest son was almost always chosen during the lifetime of his father. The death of Wenceslaus, childless, opened the throne to other claimants. No one could more imperiously demand the scepter than Albert. He did demand it for his son Rhodolph in tones which were heard and obeyed. The States assembled at Prague on the 1st of April, 1306. Albert, surrounded by a magnificent retinue, conducted his son to Prague, and to confirm his authority married him to the widow of Wenceslaus, a second wife. Rhodolph also, about a year before, had buried Blanche, his first wife. Albert was exceedingly elated, for the acquisition of Bohemia was an accession to the power of his family which doubled their territory, and more than doubled their wealth and resources.

A mild government would have conciliated the Bohemians, but such a course was not consonant with the character of the imperious and despotic Albert. He urged his son to measures of arbitrary power which exasperated the nobles, and led to a speedy revolt against his authority. Rhodolph and the nobles were soon in the field with their contending armies, when Rhodolph suddenly died from the fatigues of the camp, aged but twenty-two years, having held the throne of Bohemia less than a year.

Albert, grievously disappointed, now demanded that his second son, Frederic, should receive the crown. As soon as his name was mentioned to the States, the assembly with great unanimity exclaimed, "We will not again have an Austrian king." This led to a tumult. Swords were drawn, and two of the partisans of Albert were slain. Henry, Duke of Carinthia, was then almost unanimously chosen king. But the haughty Albert was not to be thus easily thwarted in his plans. He declared that his son Frederic was King of Bohemia, and

raising an army, he exerted all the influence and military power which his position as emperor gave him, to enforce his claim.

But affairs in Switzerland for a season arrested the attention of Albert, and diverted his armies from the invasion of Bohemia. Switzerland was then divided into small sovereignties, of various names, there being no less than fifty counts, one hundred and fifty barons, and one thousand noble families. Both Rhodolph and Albert had greatly increased, by annexation, the territory and the power of the house of Hapsburg. By purchase, intimidation, war, and diplomacy, Albert had for some time been making such rapid encroachments, that a general insurrection was secretly planned to resist his power. All Switzerland seemed to unite as with one accord. Albert was rejoiced at this insurrection, for, confident of superior power, he doubted not his ability speedily to quell it, and it would afford him the most favorable pretext for still greater aggrandizement. Albert hastened to his domain at Hapsburg, where he was assassinated by conspirators led by his own nephew, whom he was defrauding of his estates.

Frederic and Leopold, the two oldest surviving sons of Albert, avenged their father's death by pursuing the conspirators until they all suffered the penalty of their crimes. With ferocity characteristic of the age, they punished mercilessly the families and adherents of the assassins. Their castles were demolished, their estates confiscated, their domestics and men at arms massacred, and their wives and children driven out into the world to beg or to starve. Sixty-three of the retainers of Lord Balne, one of the conspirators, though entirely innocent of the crime, and solemnly protesting their unconsciousness of any plot, were beheaded in one day. Though but four persons took part in the assassination, and it was not known that any others were implicated in the deed, it is estimated that more than a thousand persons suffered death through the fury of the avengers. Agnes, one of the daughters of Albert, endeavored with her own hands to strangle the

infant child of the Lord of Eschenback, when the soldiers, moved by its piteous cries, with difficulty rescued it from her hands.

Elizabeth, the widow of Albert, with her implacable fanatic daughter Agnes, erected a magnificent convent on the spot at Königsburg, where the emperor was assassinated, and there in cloistered gloom they passed the remainder of their lives. It was an age of superstition, and yet there were some who comprehended and appreciated the pure morality of the gospel of Christ.

"Woman," said an aged hermit to Agnes, "God is not served by shedding innocent blood, and by rearing convents from the plunder of families. He is served by compassion only, and by the forgiveness of injuries."

Frederic, Albert's oldest son, now assumed the government of the Austrian provinces. From his uncommon personal attractions he was called Frederic the Handsome. His character was in conformity with his person, for to the most chivalrous bravery he added the most feminine amiability and mildness. He was a candidate for the imperial throne, and would probably have been elected but for the unpopularity of his despotic father. The diet met, and on the 27th of November, 1308, the choice fell unanimously upon Henry, Count of Luxemburg.

This election deprived Frederic of his hopes of uniting Bohemia to Austria, for the new emperor placed his son John upon the Bohemian throne, and was prepared to maintain him there by all the power of the empire. In accomplishing this, there was a short conflict with Henry of Carinthia, but he was speedily driven out of the kingdom.

Frederic, however, found a little solace in his disappointment, by attaching to Austria the dominions he had wrested from the lords he had beheaded as assassins of his father. In the midst of these scenes of ambition, intrigue and violence, the Emperor Henry fell sick and died, in the fifty-second year

of his age. This unexpected event opened again to Frederic the prospect of the imperial crown, and all his friends, in the now very numerous branches of the family, spared neither money nor the arts of diplomacy in the endeavor to secure the coveted dignity for him. A year elapsed after the death of Henry before the diet was assembled. During that time all the German States were in intense agitation canvassing the claims of the several candidates. The prize of an imperial crown was one which many grasped at, and every little court was agitated by the question. The day of election, October 9th, 1314, arrived. There were two hostile parties in the field, one in favor of Frederic of Austria, the other in favor of Louis of Bavaria. The two parties met in different cities, the Austrians at Saxenhausen, and the Bavarians at Frankfort. There were, however, but four electors at Saxenhausen, while there were five at Frankfort, the ancient place of election. Each party unanimously chose its candidate. Louis, of Bavaria, receiving five votes, while Frederic received but four, was unquestionably the legitimate emperor. Most of the imperial cities acknowledged him. Frankfort sung his triumph, and he was crowned with all the ancient ceremonials of pomp at Aix-la-Chapelle.

But Frederic and his party were not ready to yield, and all over Germany there was the mustering of armies. For two years the hostile forces were marching and countermarching with the usual vicissitudes of war. The tide of devastation and blood swept now over one State, and now over another, until at length the two armies met, in all their concentrated strength, at Muhldorf, near Munich, for a decisive battle. Louis of Bavaria rode proudly at the head of thirty thousand foot, and fifteen hundred steel-clad horsemen. Frederic of Austria, the handsomest man of his age, towering above all his retinue, was ostentatiously arrayed in the most splendid armor art could furnish, emblazoned with the Austrian eagle and his helmet was surmounted by a crown of gold.

As he thus led the ranks of twenty-two thousand footmen, and seven thousand horse, all eyes followed him, and all hearts throbbed with confidence of victory. From early dawn, till night darkened the field, the horrid strife raged. In those days gunpowder was unknown, and the ringing of battle-axes on helmet and cuirass, the strokes of sabers and the clash of spears, shouts of onset, and the shrieks of the wounded, as sixty thousand men fought hand to hand on one small field, rose like the clamor from battling demons in the infernal world. Hour after hour of carnage passed, and still no one could tell on whose banners victory would alight. The gloom of night was darkening over the exhausted combatants, when the winding of the bugle was heard in the rear of the Austrians, and a band of four hundred Bavarian horsemen came plunging down an eminence into the disordered ranks of Frederic. The hour of dismay, which decides a battle, had come. A scene of awful carnage ensued as the routed Austrians, fleeing in every direction, were pursued and massacred. Frederic himself was struck from his horse, and as he fell, stunned by the blow, he was captured, disarmed and carried to the presence of his rival Louis.

The spirit of Frederic was crushed by the awful, the irretrievable defeat, and he appeared before his conqueror speechless in the extremity of his woe. Louis had the pride of magnanimity and endeavored to console his captive.

"The battle is not lost by your fault," said he. "The Bavarians have experienced to their cost that you are a valiant prince; but Providence has decided the battle. Though I am happy to see you as my guest, I sympathize with you in your sorrow, and will do what I can to alleviate it."

For three years the unhappy Frederic remained a prisoner of Louis of Bavaria, held in close confinement in the castle at Trausnitz. At the end of that time the emperor, alarmed at the efforts which the friends of Frederic were making to combine several Powers to take up arms for his relief, visited his

prisoner, and in a personal interview proposed terms of reconciliation. The terms, under the circumstances, were considered generous, but a proud spirit needed the discipline of three years' imprisonment before it could yield to such demands.

It was the 13th of March, 1325, when this singular interview between Louis the emperor, and Frederic his captive, took place at Trausnitz. Frederic promised upon oath that in exchange for his freedom he would renounce all claim to the imperial throne; restore all the districts and castles he had wrested from the empire; give up all the documents relative to his election as emperor; join with all his family influence to support Louis against any and every adversary, and give his daughter in marriage to Stephen the son of Louis. He also promised that in case he should fail in the fulfillment of any one of these stipulations, he would return to his captivity.

Frederic fully intended a faithful compliance with these requisitions. But no sooner was he liberated than his fiery brother Leopold, who presided over the Swiss estates, and who was a man of great capacity and military energy, refused peremptorily to fulfill the articles which related to him, and made vigorous preparations to urge the war which he had already, with many allies, commenced against the Emperor Louis. The pope also, who had become inimical to Louis, declared that Frederic was absolved from the agreement at Trausnitz, as it was extorted by force, and, with all the authority of the head of the Church, exhorted Frederic to reassert his claim to the imperial crown.

Amidst such scenes of fraud and violence, it is refreshing to record an act of real honor. Frederic, notwithstanding the entreaties of the pope and the remonstrances of his friends, declared that, be the consequences what they might, he never would violate his pledge; and finding that he could not fulfill the articles of the agreement, he returned to Bavaria and surrendered himself a prisoner to the emperor. It is seldom that

history has the privilege of recording so noble an act. Louis of Bavaria fortunately had a soul capable of appreciating the magnanimity of his captive. He received him with courtesy and with almost fraternal kindness. In the words of a contemporary historian, "They ate at the same table and slept in the same bed;" and, most extraordinary of all, when Louis was subsequently called to a distant part of his dominions to quell an insurrection, he intrusted the government of Bavaria, during his absence, to Frederic.

Frederic's impetuous and ungovernable brother Leopold, was unwearied in his endeavors to combine armies against the emperor, and war raged without cessation. At length Louis, harassed by these endless insurrections and coalitions against him, and admiring the magnanimity of Frederic, entered into a new alliance, offering terms exceedingly honorable on his part. He agreed that he and Frederic should rule conjointly as emperors of Germany, in perfect equality of power and dignity, alternately taking the precedence.

With this arrangement Leopold was satisfied, but unfortunately, just at that time, his impetuous spirit, exhausted by disappointment and chagrin, yielded to death. He died at Strasbourg on the 28th of February, 1326. The pope and several of the electors refused to accede to this arrangement, and thus the hopes of the unhappy Frederic were again blighted, for Louis, who had consented to this accommodation for the sake of peace, was not willing to enforce it through the tumult of war. Frederic was, however, liberated from captivity, and he returned to Austria a dejected, broken-hearted man. He pined away for a few months in languor, being rarely known to smile, and died at the castle of Gullenstein on the 13th of January, 1330. His widow, Isabella, the daughter of the King of Arragon, became blind from excessive grief, and soon followed her husband to the tomb.

As Frederic left no son, the Austrian dominions fell to his two brothers, Albert III. and Otho. Albert, by marriage,

added the valuable county of Ferret in Alsace to the dominions of the house of Austria. The two brothers reigned with such wonderful harmony, that no indications can be seen of separate administrations. They renounced all claim to the imperial throne, notwithstanding the efforts of the pope to the contrary, and thus secured friendship with the Emperor Louis. There were now three prominent families dominant in Germany. Around these great families, who had gradually, by marriage and military encroachments, attained their supremacy, the others of all degrees rallied as vassals, seeking protection and contributing strength. The house of Bavaria, reigning over that powerful kingdom and in possession of the imperial throne, ranked first. Then came the house of Luxembourg, possessing the wide-spread and opulent realms of Bohemia. The house of Austria had now vast possessions, but these were widely scattered; some provinces on the banks of the Danube and others in Switzerland, spreading through the defiles of the Alps.

John of Bohemia was an overbearing man, and feeling quite impregnable in his northern realms beyond the mountains, assumed such a dictatorial air as to rouse the ire of the princes of Austria and Bavaria. These two houses consequently entered into an intimate alliance for mutual security. The Duke of Carinthia, who was uncle to Albert and Otho, died, leaving only a daughter, Margaret. This dukedom, about the size of the State of Massachusetts, a wild and mountainous region, was deemed very important as the key to Italy. John of Bohemia, anxious to obtain it, had engaged the hand of Margaret for his son, then but eight years of age. It was a question in dispute whether the dukedom could descend to a female, and Albert and Otho claimed it as the heirs of their uncle. Louis, the emperor, supported the claims of Austria, and thus Carinthia became attached to this growing power.

John, enraged, formed a confederacy with the kings of Hungary and Poland, and some minor princes, and invaded Aus-

tria. For some time they swept all opposition before them. But the Austrian troops and those of the empire checked them at Landau. Here they entered into an agreement without a battle, by which Austria was permitted to retain Carinthia, she making important concessions to Bohemia. In February, 1339, Otho died, and Albert was invested with the sole administration of affairs. The old King of Bohemia possessed vehemence of character which neither age nor the total blindness with which he had become afflicted could repress. He traversed the empire, and even went to France, organizing a powerful confederacy against the emperor. The pope, Clement VI., who had always been inimical to Louis of Bavaria, influenced by John of Bohemia, deposed and excommunicated Louis, and ordered a new meeting of the diet of electors, which chose Charles, eldest son of the Bohemian monarch, and heir to that crown, emperor.

The deposed Louis fought bravely for the crown thus torn from his brow. Albert of Austria aided him with all his energies. Their united armies, threading the defiles of the Bohemian mountains, penetrated the very heart of the kingdom, when, in the midst of success, the deposed Emperor Louis fell dead from a stroke of apoplexy, in the year 1347. This event left Charles of Bohemia in undisputed possession of the imperial crown. Albert immediately recognized his claim, effected reconciliation, and becoming the friend and the ally of the emperor, pressed on cautiously but securely, year after year, in his policy of annexation. But storms of war incessantly howled around his domains until he died, a crippled paralytic, on the 16th of August, 1358.