

CHAPTER III.

RHODOLPH II., ALBERT IV. AND ALBERT V.

FROM 1339 TO 1437.

RHODOLPH II.—MARRIAGE OF JOHN TO MARGARET.—INTRIGUING FOR THE TYROL.—DEATH OF RHODOLPH.—ACCESSION OF POWER TO AUSTRIA.—DIVIDING THE EMPIRE.—DELIGHT OF THE EMPEROR CHARLES.—LEOPOLD.—HIS AMBITION AND SUCCESSSES.—HEDWIGE, QUEEN OF POLAND.—“THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH.”—UNHAPPY MARRIAGE OF HEDWIGE.—HEROISM OF ARNOLD OF WINKELREID.—DEATH OF LEOPOLD.—DEATH OF ALBERT IV.—ACCESSION OF ALBERT V.—ATTEMPTS OF SIGISMOND TO BEQUEATH TO ALBERT V. HUNGARY AND BOHEMIA.

RHODOLPH II., the eldest son of Albert III., when but nineteen years of age succeeded his father in the government of the Austrian States. He had been very thoroughly educated in all the civil and military knowledge of the times. He was closely allied with the Emperor Charles IV. of Bohemia, having married his daughter Catherine. His character and manhood had been very early developed. When he was in his seventeenth year his father had found it necessary to visit his Swiss estates, then embroiled in the fiercest war, and had left him in charge of the Austrian provinces. He soon after was intrusted with the whole care of the Hapsburg dominions in Switzerland. In this responsible post he developed wonderful administrative skill, encouraging industry, repressing disorder, and by constructing roads and bridges, opening facilities for intercourse and trade.

Upon the death of his father, Rhodolph removed to Vienna, and being now the monarch of powerful realms on the Danube and among the Alps, he established a court rivaling the most magnificent establishments of the age.

Just west of Austria and south of Bavaria was the magnif

cent dukedom of Tyrol, containing some sixteen thousand square miles, or about twice the size of the State of Massachusetts. It was a country almost unrivaled in the grandeur of its scenery, and contained nearly a million of inhabitants. This State, lying equally convenient to both Austria and Bavaria, by both of these kingdoms had for many years been regarded with a wistful eye. The manner in which Austria secured the prize is a story well worth telling, as illustrative of the intrigues of those times.

It will be remembered that John, the arrogant King of Bohemia, engaged for his son the hand of Margaret, the only daughter of the Duke of Carinthia. Tyrol also was one of the possessions of this powerful duke. Henry, having no son, had obtained from the emperor a decree that these possessions should descend, in default of male issue, to his daughter. But for this decision the sovereignty of these States would descend to the male heirs, Albert and Otho of Austria, nephews of Henry. They of course disputed the legality of the decree, and, aided by the Emperor Louis of Bavaria, obtained Carinthia, relinquishing for a time their claim to Tyrol. The emperor hoped to secure that golden prize for his hereditary estates of Bavaria.

When John, the son of the King of Bohemia, was but seventeen years of age, and a puny, weakly child, he was hurriedly married to Margaret, then twenty-two. Margaret, a sanguine, energetic woman, despised her baby husband, and he, very naturally, impotently hated her. She at length fled from him, and escaping from Bohemia, threw herself under the protection of Louis. The emperor joyfully welcomed her to his court, and promised to grant her a divorce, by virtue of his imperial power, if she would marry his son Louis. The compliant princess readily acceded to this plan, and the divorce was announced and the nuptials solemnized in February, 1342.

The King of Bohemia was as much exasperated as the King of Bavaria was elated by this event, for the one felt that he

had lost the Tyrol, and the other that he had gained it. It was this successful intrigue which cost Louis of Bavaria his imperial crown; for the blood of the King of Bohemia was roused. Burning with vengeance, he traversed Europe almost with the zeal and eloquence of Peter the Hermit, to organize a coalition against the emperor, and succeeded in inducing the pope, always hostile to Louis, to depose and excommunicate him. This marriage was also declared by the pope unlawful, and the son, Meinhard, eventually born to them, was branded as illegitimate.

While matters were in this state, as years glided on, Rhodolph succeeded in winning the favor of the pontiff, and induced him to legitimate Meinhard, that this young heir of Tyrol might marry the Austrian princess Margaret, sister of Rhodolph. Meinhard and his wife Margaret ere long died, leaving Margaret of Tyrol, a widow in advancing years, with no direct heirs. By the marriage contract of her son Meinhard with Margaret of Austria, she promised that should there be failure of issue, Tyrol should revert to Austria. On the other hand, Bavaria claimed the territory in virtue of the marriage of Margaret with Louis of Bavaria.

Rhodolph was so apprehensive that Bavaria might make an immediate move to obtain the coveted territory by force of arms, that he hastened across the mountains, though in the depth of winter, obtained from Margaret an immediate possession of Tyrol, and persuaded her to accompany him, an honored guest, to his capital, which he had embellished with unusual splendor for her entertainment.

Rhodolph had married the daughter of Charles, King of Bohemia, the emperor, but unfortunately at this juncture, Rhodolph, united with the kings of Hungary and Poland, was at war with the Bavarian king. Catherine his wife, however, undertook to effect a reconciliation between her husband and her father. She secured an interview between them, and the emperor, the hereditary rival of his powerful neighbor the

King of Bavaria, confirmed Margaret's gift, invested Rhodolph with the Tyrol, and pledged the arm of the empire to maintain this settlement. Thus Austria gained Tyrol, the country of romance and of song, interesting, perhaps, above all other portions of Europe in its natural scenery, and invaluable from its location as the gateway of Italy. Bavaria made a show of armed opposition to this magnificent accession to the power of Austria, but soon found it in vain to assail Rhodolph sustained by Margaret of Tyrol, and by the energies of the empire.

Rhodolph was an antiquarian of eccentric character, ever poring over musty records and hunting up decayed titles. He was fond of attaching to his signature the names of all the innumerable offices he held over the conglomerated States of his realm. He was Rhodolph, Margrave of Baden, Vicar of Upper Bavaria, Lord of Hapsburg, Arch Huntsman of the Empire, Archduke Palatine, etc., etc. His ostentation provoked even the jealousy of his father, the emperor, and he was ordered to lay aside these numerous titles and the arrogant armorial bearings he was attaching to his seals. His desire to aggrandize his family burned with a quenchless flame. Hoping to extend his influence in Italy, he negotiated a matrimonial alliance for his brother with an Italian princess. As he crossed the Alps to attend the nuptials, he was seized with an inflammatory fever, and died the 27th of July, 1365, but twenty-six years of age, and leaving no issue.

His brother Albert, a young man but seventeen years of age, succeeded Rhodolph. Just as he assumed the government, Margaret of Tyrol died, and the King of Bavaria, thinking this a favorable moment to renew his claims for the Tyrol, vigorously invaded the country with a strong army. Albert immediately applied to the emperor for assistance. Three years were employed in fightings and diplomacy, when Bavaria, in consideration of a large sum of money and sundry other concessions, renounced all pretensions to Tyrol, and left the rich

prize henceforth undisputed in the hands of Austria. Thus the diminutive margrave of Austria, which was at first but a mere military post on the Danube, had grown by rapid accretions in one century to be almost equal in extent of territory to the kingdoms of Bavaria and of Bohemia. This grandeur instead of satisfying the Austrian princes, did but increase their ambition.

The Austrian territories, though widely scattered, were declared, both by family compact and by imperial decree, to be indivisible. Albert had a brother, Leopold, two years younger than himself, of exceedingly restless and ambitious spirit, while Albert was inactive, and a lover of ease and repose. Leopold was sent to Switzerland, and intrusted with the administration of those provinces. But his imperious spirit so dominated over his elder but pliant brother, that he extorted from him a compact, by which the realm was divided, Albert remaining in possession of the Austrian provinces of the Danube, and Leopold having exclusive dominion over those in Switzerland; while the magnificent new acquisition, the Tyrol, lying between the two countries, bounding Switzerland on the east, and Austria on the west, was shared between them.

Nothing can more clearly show the moderate qualities of Albert than that he should have assented to such a plan. He did, however, with easy good nature, assent to it, and the two brothers applied to the Emperor Charles to ratify the division by his imperial sanction. Charles, who for some time had been very jealous of the rapid encroachments of Austria, rubbed his hands with delight.

"We have long," said he, "labored in vain to humble the house of Austria, and now the dukes of Austria have humbled themselves."

Leopold the First inherited all the ambition and energy of the house of Hapsburg, and was ever watching with an eagle eye to extend his dominions, and to magnify his power. By money, war, and diplomacy, in a few years he obtained Fri

burg and the little town of Basle; attached to his dominions the counties of Feldkirch, Pludenz, Surgans and the Rienthal, which he wrested from the feeble counts who held them, and obtained the baillages of Upper and Lower Suabia, and the towns of Augsburg and Gingen. But a bitter disappointment was now encountered by this ambitious prince.

Louis, the renowned King of Hungary and Poland, had two daughters, Maria and Hedwige, but no sons. To Maria he promised the crown of Hungary as her portion, and among the many claimants for her hand, and the glittering crown she held in it, Sigismund, son of the Emperor Charles, King of Bohemia, received the prize. Leopold, whose heart throbbed in view of so splendid an alliance, was overjoyed when he secured the pledge of the hand of Hedwige, with the crown of Poland, for William, his eldest son. Hedwige was one of the most beautiful and accomplished princesses of the age. William was also a young man of great elegance of person, and of such rare fascination of character, that he had acquired the epithet of William the Delightful. His chivalrous bearing had been trained and polished amidst the splendors of his uncle's court of Vienna. Hedwige, as the affianced bride of William, was invited from the more barbaric pomp of the Hungarian court, to improve her education by the aid of the refinements of Vienna. William and Hedwige no sooner met than they loved one another, as young hearts, even in the palace, will sometimes love, as well as in the cottage. In brilliant festivities and moonlight excursions the young lovers passed a few happy months, when Hedwige was called home by the final sickness of her father. Louis died, and Hedwige was immediately crowned Queen of Poland, receiving the most enthusiastic greetings of her subjects.

Bordering on Poland there was a grand duchy of immense extent, Lithuania, embracing sixty thousand square miles. The Grand Duke Jaghellon was a burly Northman, not more than half civilized, whose character was as jagged as his name.

This pagan proposed to the Polish nobles that he should marry Hedwige, and thus unite the grand duchy of Lithuania with the kingdom of Poland; promising in that event to renounce paganism, and embrace Christianity. The beautiful and accomplished Hedwige was horror-struck at the proposal, and declared that never would she marry any one but William.

But the Polish nobles, dazzled by the prospect of this magnificent accession to the kingdom of Poland, and the bishops, even more powerful than the nobles, elated with the vision of such an acquisition for the Church, resolved that the young and fatherless maiden, who had no one to defend her cause, should yield, and that she should become the bride of Jaghellon. They declared that it was ridiculous to think that the interests of a mighty kingdom, and the enlargement of the Church, were to yield to the caprices of a love-sick girl.

In the meantime William, all unconscious of the disappointment which awaited him, was hastening to Cracow, with a splendid retinue, and the richest presents Austrian art could fabricate, to receive his bride. The nobles, however, a semi-barbaric set of men, surrounded him upon his arrival, refused to allow him any interview with Hedwige, threatened him with personal violence, and drove him out of the kingdom. Poor Hedwige was in anguish. She wept, vowed deathless fidelity to William, and expressed utter detestation of the pagan duke, until, at last, worn out and broken-hearted, she, in despair, surrendered herself into the arms of Jaghellon. Jaghellon was baptized by the name of Ladislaus, and Lithuania was annexed to Poland.

The loss of the crown of Poland was to Leopold a grievous affliction; at the same time his armies, engaged in sundry measures of aggrandizement, encountered serious reverses. Leopold, the father of William, by these events was plunged into the deepest dejection. No effort of his friends could lift the weight of his gloom. In a retired apartment of one of his

castles he sat silent and woful, apparently incapacitated for any exertion whatever, either bodily or mental. The affairs of his realm were neglected, and his bailiffs and feudal chiefs, left with irresponsible power, were guilty of such acts of extortion and tyranny, that, in the province of Suabia the barons combined, and a fierce insurrection broke out. Forty important towns united in the confederacy, and secured the cooperation of Strasburg, Mentz and other large cities on the Rhine. Other of the Swiss provinces were on the eve of joining this alarming confederacy against Leopold, their Austrian ruler. As Vienna for some generations had been the seat of the Hapsburg family, from whence governors were sent to these provinces of Helvetia, as Switzerland was then called, the Swiss began to regard their rulers as foreigners, and even Leopold found it necessary to strengthen himself with Austrian troops.

This formidable league roused Leopold from his torpor, and he awoke like the waking of the lion. He was immediately on the march with four thousand horsemen, and fourteen hundred foot, while all through the defiles of the Alps bugle blasts echoed, summoning detachments from various cantons under their bold barons, to hasten to the aid of the insurgents. On the evening of the 9th of July, 1396, the glittering host of Leopold appeared on an eminence overlooking the city of Sempach and the beautiful lake on whose border it stands. The horses were fatigued by their long and hurried march, and the crags and ravines, covered with forest, were impracticable for the evolutions of cavalry. The impetuous Leopold, impatient of delay, resolved upon an immediate attack, notwithstanding the exhaustion of his troops, and though a few hours of delay would bring strong reinforcements to his camp. He dismounted his horsemen, and formed his whole force in solid phalanx. It was an imposing spectacle, as six thousand men, covered from head to foot with blazing armor, presenting a front of shields like a wall

of burnished steel, bristling with innumerable pikes and spears, moved with slow, majestic tread down upon the city.

The confederate Swiss, conscious that the hour of vengeance had come, in which they must conquer or be miserably slain, marched forth to meet the foe, emboldened only by despair. But few of the confederates were in armor. They were furnished with such weapons as men grasp when despotism rouses them to insurrection, rusty battle-axes, pikes and halberts, and two-handed swords, which their ancestors, in descending into the grave, had left behind them. They drew up in the form of a solid wedge, to pierce the thick concentric wall of steel, apparently as impenetrable as the cliffs of the mountains. Thus the two bodies silently and sternly approached each other. It was a terrific hour; for every man knew that one or the other of those hosts must perish utterly. For some time the battle raged, while the confederates could make no impression whatever upon their steel-clad foes, and sixty of them fell pierced by spears before one of their assailants had been even wounded.

Despair was fast settling upon their hearts, when Arnold of Winkelreid, a knight of Underwalden, rushed from the ranks of the confederates, exclaiming—

“I will open a passage into the line; protect, dear countrymen, my wife and children.”

He threw himself upon the bristling spears. A score pierced his body; grasping them with the tenacity of death, he bore them to the earth as he fell. His comrades, emulating his spirit of self-sacrifice, rushed over his bleeding body, and forced their way through the gate thus opened into the line. The whole unwieldy mass was thrown into confusion. The steel-clad warriors, exhausted before the battle commenced, and encumbered with their heavy armor, could but feebly resist their nimble assailants, who outnumbering them and overpowering them, cut them down in fearful havoc. It soon became a general slaughter, and not less than two thousand of

the followers of Leopold were stretched lifeless upon the ground. Many were taken prisoners, and a few, mounting their horses, effected an escape among the wild glens of the Alps.

In this awful hour Leopold developed magnanimity and heroism worthy of his name. Before the battle commenced, his friends urged him to take care of his own person.

“God forbid,” said he, “that I should endeavor to save my own life and leave you to die! I will share your fate, and, with you, will either conquer or perish.”

When all was in confusion, and his followers were falling like autumn leaves around him, he was urged to put spurs to his horse, and, accompanied by his body-guard, to escape.

“I would rather die honorably,” said Leopold, “than live with dishonor.”

Just at this moment his standard-bearer was struck down by a rush of the confederates. As he fell he cried out, “Help, Austria, help!” Leopold frantically sprang to his aid, grasped the banner from his dying hand, and waving it, plunged into the midst of the foe, with saber strokes hewing a path before him. He was soon lost in the tumult and the carnage of the battle. His body was afterward found, covered with wounds, in the midst of heaps of the dead.

Thus perished the ambitious and turbulent Leopold the 1st, after a stormy and unhappy life of thirty-six years, and a reign of constant encroachment and war of twenty years. Life to him was a dark and somber tempest. Ever dissatisfied with what he had attained, and grasping at more, he could never enjoy the present, and he finally died that death of violence to which his ambition had consigned so many thousands. Leopold, the second son of the duke, who was but fifteen years of age, succeeded his father, in the dominion of the Swiss estates; and after a desultory warfare of a few months, was successful in negotiating a peace, or rather an *armeu truce*, with the successful insurgents.

In the meantime, Albert, at Vienna, apparently happy in being relieved of all care of the Swiss provinces, was devoting himself to the arts of peace. He reared new buildings, encouraged learning, repressed all disorders, and cultivated friendly relations with the neighboring powers. His life was as a summer's day—serene and bright. He and his family were happy, and his realms in prosperity. He died at his rural residence at Laxendorf, two miles out from Vienna, on the 29th of August, 1395. All Austria mourned his death. Thousands gathered at his burial, exclaiming, "We have lost our friend, our father!" He was a studious, peace-loving, warm-hearted man, devoted to his family and his friends, fond of books and the society of the learned, and enjoying the cultivation of his garden with his own hands. He left, at his death, an only son, Albert, sixteen years of age.

William, the eldest son of Leopold, had been brought up in the court of Vienna. He was a young man of fascinating character and easily won all hearts. After his bitter disappointment in Poland he returned to Vienna, and now, upon the death of his uncle Albert, he claimed the reins of government as the oldest member of the family. His cousin Albert, of course, resisted this claim, demanding that he himself should enter upon the post which his father had occupied. A violent dissension ensued which resulted in an agreement that they should administer the government of the Austrian States, jointly, during their lives, and that then the government should be vested in the eldest surviving member of the family.

Having effected this arrangement, quite to the satisfaction of both parties, Albert, who inherited much of the studious thoughtful turn of mind of his father, set out on a pilgrimage to the holy land, leaving the government during his absence in the hands of William. After wanderings and adventures so full of romance as to entitle him to the appellation of the "Wonder of the World," he returned to Vienna. He married

a daughter of the Duke of Holland, and settled down to a monkish life. He entered a monastery of Carthusian monks, and took an active part in all their discipline and devotions. No one was more punctual than he at matins and vespers, or more devout in confessions, prayers, genuflexions and the divine service in the choir. Regarding himself as one of the fraternity, he called himself brother Albert, and left William untrammelled in the cares of state. His life was short, for he died the 14th of September, 1404, in the twenty-seventh year of his age, leaving a son Albert, seven years old. William, who married a daughter of the King of Naples, survived him but two years, when he died childless.

A boy nine years old now claimed the inheritance of the Austrian estates; but the haughty dukes of the Swiss branch of the house were not disposed to yield to his claims. Leopold II., who after the battle of Sempach succeeded his father in the Swiss estates, assumed the guardianship of Albert, and the administration of Austria, till the young duke should be of age. But Leopold had two brothers who also inherited their father's energy and ambition. Ernest ruled over Styria, Carinthia and Carniola. Frederic governed the Tyrol.

Leopold II. repaired to Vienna to assume the administration; his two brothers claimed the right of sharing it with him. Confusion, strife and anarchy ensued. Ernest, a very determined and violent man, succeeded in compelling his brother to give him a share of the government, and in the midst of incessant quarrels, which often led to bloody conflicts, each of the two brothers strove to wrest as much as possible from Austria before young Albert should be of age. The nobles availed themselves of this anarchy to renew their expeditions of plunder. Unhappy Austria for several years was a scene of devastation and misery. In the year 1411, Leopold II. died without issue. The young Albert had now attained his fifteenth year.

The emperor declared Albert of age, and he assumed the

government as Albert V. His subjects, weary of disorder and of the strife of the nobles, welcomed him with enthusiasm. With sagacity and self-denial above his years, the young prince devoted himself to business, relinquishing all pursuits of pleasure. Fortunately, during his minority he had honorable and able teachers who stored his mind with useful knowledge, and fortified him with principles of integrity. The change from the most desolating anarchy to prosperity and peace was almost instantaneous. Albert had the judgment to surround himself with able advisers. Salutary laws were enacted; justice impartially administered; the country was swept of the banditti which infested it, and while all the States around were involved in the miseries of war, the song of the contented husbandman, and the music of the artisan's tools were heard through the fields and in the towns of happy Austria.

Sigismond, second son of the Emperor Charles IV., King of Bohemia, was now emperor. It will be remembered that by marrying Mary, the eldest daughter of Louis, King of Hungary and Poland, he received Hungary as the dower of his bride. By intrigue he also succeeded in deposing his effeminate and dissolute brother, Wenceslaus, from the throne of Bohemia, and succeeded, by a new election, in placing the crown upon his own brow. Thus Sigismond wielded a three-fold scepter. He was Emperor of Germany, and King of Hungary and of Bohemia.

Albert married the only daughter of Sigismond, and a very strong affection sprung up between the imperial father and his son-in-law. They often visited each other, and coöperated very cordially in measures of state. The wife of Sigismond was a worthless woman, described by an Austrian historian as "one who believed in neither God, angel nor devil; neither in heaven nor hell." Sigismond had set his heart upon bequeathing to Albert the crowns of both Hungary and Bohemia, which magnificent accessions to the Austrian domains

would elevate that power to be one of the first in Europe. But Barbara, his queen, wished to convey these crowns to the son of the pagan Jaghellon, who had received the crown of Poland as the dowry of his reluctant bride, Hedwige. Sigismond, provoked by her intrigues for the accomplishment of this object, and detesting her for her licentiousness, put her under arrest. Sigismond was sixty-three years of age, in very feeble health, and daily expecting to die.

He summoned a general convention of the nobles of Hungary and Bohemia to meet him at Znaim in Moravia, near the frontiers of Austria, and sent for Albert and his daughter to hasten to that place. The infirm emperor, traveling by slow stages, succeeded in reaching Znaim. He immediately summoned the nobles to his presence, and introducing to them Albert and Elizabeth, thus affectingly addressed them:

"Loving friends, you know that since the commencement of my reign I have employed my utmost exertions to maintain public tranquillity. Now, as I am about to die, my last act must be consistent with my former actions. At this moment my only anxiety arises from a desire to prevent dissension and bloodshed after my decease. It is praiseworthy in a prince to govern well; but it is not less praiseworthy to provide a successor who shall govern better than himself. This fame I now seek, not from ambition, but from love to my subjects. You all know Albert, Duke of Austria, to whom in preference to all other princes I gave my daughter in marriage, and whom I adopted as my son. You know that he possesses experience and every virtue becoming a prince. He found Austria in a state of disorder, and he has restored it to tranquillity. He is now of an age in which judgment and experience attain their perfection, and he is sovereign of Austria, which, lying between Hungary and Bohemia, forms a connecting link between the two kingdoms.

"I recommend him to you as my successor. I leave you a king, pious, honorable, wise and brave. I give him my