

He might have escaped all these calamities if, instead of resigning himself to corrupt and interested ministers, he had followed the salutary counsels of the electors."

They closed this overwhelming announcement by demanding the immediate assembling of a diet to elect an emperor to succeed him on the throne of Germany. Rhodolph, not yet quite sufficiently humiliated to officiate as his own executioner, though he promised to summon a diet, evaded the fulfillment of his promise. The electors, not disposed to dally with him at all, called the assembly by their own authority to meet on the 31st of May.

This seemed to be the finishing blow. Rhodolph, now sixty years of age, enfeebled and emaciated by disease and melancholy, threw himself upon his bed to die. Death, so often invoked in vain by the miserable, came to his aid. He welcomed its approach. To those around his bed he remarked,

"When a youth, I experienced the most exquisite pleasure in returning from Spain to my native country. How much more joyful ought I to be when I am about to be delivered from the calamities of human nature, and transferred to a heavenly country where there is no change of time, and where no sorrow can enter!"

In the tomb let him be forgotten.

## CHAPTER XV.

MATTHIAS.

FROM 1612 TO 1619.

MATTHIAS ELECTED EMPEROR OF GERMANY.—HIS DESPOTIC CHARACTER.—HIS PLANS THWARTED.—MULHEIM.—GATHERING CLOUDS.—FAMILY INTRIGUE.—CORONATION OF FERDINAND.—HIS BIGOTRY.—HENRY, COUNT OF THURN.—CONVENTION AT PRAQUE.—THE KING'S REPLY.—THE DIE CAST.—AMUSING DEFENSE OF AN OUTRAGE.—FERDINAND'S MANIFESTO.—SEIZURE OF CARDINAL KLESER.—THE KING'S RAGE.—RETREAT OF THE KING'S TROOPS.—HUMILIATION OF FERDINAND.—THE DIFFICULTIES REFERRED.—DEATH OF MATTHIAS.

UPON the death of Rhodolph, Matthias promptly offered himself as a candidate for the imperial crown. But the Catholics, suspicious of Matthias, in consequence of his connection with the Protestants, centered upon the Archduke Albert, sovereign of the Netherlands, as their candidate. Many of the Protestants, also, jealous of the vast power Matthias was attaining, and not having full confidence in his integrity, offered their suffrages to Maximilian, the younger brother of Matthias. But notwithstanding this want of unanimity, political intrigue removed all difficulties and Matthias was unanimously elected Emperor of Germany.

The new emperor was a man of renown. His wonderful achievements had arrested the attention of Europe, and it was expected that in his hands the administration of the empire would be conducted with almost unprecedented skill and vigor. But clouds and storms immediately began to lower around the throne. Matthias had no spirit of toleration in his heart, and every tolerant act he had assented to, had been extorted from him. He was, by nature, a despot, and most reluctantly, for the sake of grasping the reins of power, he had relinquished



a few of the royal prerogatives. He had thus far evaded many of the claims which had been made upon him, and which he had partially promised to grant, and now, being both king and emperor, he was disposed to grasp all power, both secular and religious, which he could attain.

Matthias's first endeavor was to recover 'Transylvania. This province had fallen into the hands of Gabriel Bethlehem, who was under the protection of the Turks. Matthias, thinking that a war with the infidel would be popular, summoned a diet and solicited succors to drive the Turks from Moldavia and Wallachia, where they had recently established themselves. The Protestants, however, presented a list of grievances which they wished to have redressed before they listened to his request. The Catholics, on the other hand, presented a list of their grievances, which consisted, mainly, in privileges granted the Protestants, which they also demanded to have redressed before they could vote any supplies to the emperor. These demands were so diametrically hostile to each other, that there could be no reconciliation. After an angry debate the diet broke up in confusion, having accomplished nothing.

Matthias, disappointed in this endeavor, now applied to the several States of his widely extended Austrian domains—to his own subjects. A general assembly was convened at Lintz. Matthias proposed his plans, urging the impolicy of allowing the Turks to retain the conquered provinces, and to remain in the ascendancy in Transylvania. But here again Matthias was disappointed. The Bohemian Protestants were indignant in view of some restrictions upon their worship, imposed by the emperor to please the Catholics. The Hungarians, weary of the miseries of war, were disposed on any terms to seek peace with the Turks. The Austrians had already expended an immense amount of blood and money on the battle-fields of Hungary, and urged the emperor to send an ambassador to treat for peace. Matthias was excessively annoyed in being thus thwarted in all his plans.

Just at this time a Turkish envoy arrived at Vienna, proposing a truce for twenty years. The Turks had never before condescended to send an embassy to a Christian power. This afforded Matthias an honorable pretext for abandoning his warlike plan, and the truce was agreed to.

The incessant conflict between the Catholics and Protestants allowed Germany no repose. A sincere toleration, such as existed during the reign of Maximilian I., established fraternal feelings between the contending parties. But it required ages of suffering and peculiar combination of circumstances, to lead the king and the nobles to a cordial consent to that toleration. But the bigotry of Rhodolph and the trickery of Matthias, had so exasperated the parties, and rendered them so suspicious of each other, that the emperor, even had he been so disposed, could not, but by very slow and gradual steps, have secured reconciliation. Rhodolph had put what was called the ban of the empire upon the Protestant city of Aix-la-Chapelle, removing the Protestants from the magistracy, and banishing their chiefs from the city. When Rhodolph was sinking into disgrace and had lost his power, the Protestants, being in the majority, took up arms, reelected their magistracy, and expelled the Jesuits from the city. The Catholics now appealed to Matthias, and he insanely revived the ban against the Protestants, and commissioned Albert, Archduke of Cologne, a bigoted Catholic, to march with an army to Aix-la-Chapelle and enforce its execution.

Opposite Cologne, on the Rhine, the Protestants, in the days of bitter persecution, had established the town of Mulheim. Several of the neighboring Protestant princes defended with their arms the refugees who settled there from all parts of Germany. The town was strongly fortified, and here the Protestants, with arms in their hands, maintained perfect freedom of religious worship. The city grew rapidly and became one of the most important fortresses upon the river. The Catholics, jealous of its growing power, appealed to the em-



peror. He issued a decree ordering the Protestants to demolish every fortification of the place within thirty days; and to put up no more buildings whatever.

These decrees were both enforced by the aid of a Spanish army of thirty thousand men, which, having executed the ban, descended the river and captured several others of the most important of the Protestant towns. Of course all Germany was in a ferment. Everywhere was heard the clashing of arms, and every thing indicated the immediate outburst of civil war. Matthias was in great perplexity, and his health rapidly failed beneath the burden of care and sorrow. All the thoughts of Matthias were now turned to the retaining of the triple crown of Bohemia, Hungary and the empire, in the family. Matthias was old, sick and childless. Maximilian, his next brother, was fifty-nine years of age and unmarried. The next brother, Albert, was fifty-eight, and without children. Neither of the brothers could consequently receive the crowns with any hope of retaining them in the family. Matthias turned to his cousin Ferdinand, head of the Styrian branch of the family, as the nearest relative who was likely to continue the succession. In accordance with the custom which had grown up, Matthias wished to nominate his successor, and have him recognized and crowned before his death, so that immediately upon his death the new sovereign, already crowned, could enter upon the government without any interregnum.

The brothers, appreciating the importance of retaining the crown in the family, and conscious that all the united influence they then possessed was essential to securing that result, assented to the plan, and coöperated in the nomination of Ferdinand. All the arts of diplomatic intrigue were called into requisition to attain these important ends. The Bohemian crown was now electoral; and it was necessary to persuade the electors to choose Ferdinand, one of the most intolerant Catholics who ever swayed a scepter. The crown of Hungary was nominally hereditary. But the turbulent

nobles, ever armed, and strong in their fortresses, would accept no monarch whom they did not approve. To secure also the electoral vote for Emperor of Germany, while parties were so divided and so bitterly hostile to each other, required the most adroit application of bribes and menaces.

Matthias made his first movement in Bohemia. Having adopted previous measures to gain the support of the principal nobles, he summoned a diet at Prague, which he attended in person, accompanied by Ferdinand. In a brief speech he thus addressed them.

“As I and my brothers,” said the king, “are without children, I deem it necessary, for the advantage of Bohemia, and to prevent future contests, that my cousin Ferdinand should be proclaimed and crowned king. I therefore request you to fix a day for the confirmation of this appointment.”

Some of the leading Protestants opposed this, on the ground of the known intolerance of Ferdinand. But the majority, either won over by the arts of Matthias, or dreading civil war, accepted Ferdinand. He was crowned on the 10th of June, 1616, he promising not to interfere with the government during the lifetime of Matthias. The emperor now turned to Hungary, and, by the adoption of the same measures, secured the same results. The nobles accepted Ferdinand, and he was solemnly crowned at Presburg.

Ferdinand was Archduke of Styria, a province of Austria embracing a little more than eight thousand square miles, being about the size of the State of Massachusetts, and containing about a million of inhabitants. He was educated by the Jesuits after the strictest manner of their religion. He became so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his monastic education, that he was anxious to assume the cowl of the monk, and enter the order of the Jesuits. His devotion to the papal church assumed the aspect of the most inflexible intolerance towards all dissent. In the administration of the government of his own duchy, he had given free swing to



his bigotry. Marshaling his troops, he had driven all the Protestant preachers from his domains. He had made a pilgrimage to Rome, to receive the benediction of the pope, and another to Loretto, where, prostrating himself before the miraculous image, he vowed never to cease his exertions until he had extirpated all heresy from his territories. He often declared that he would beg his bread from door to door, submit to every insult, to every calamity, sacrifice even life itself, rather than suffer the true Church to be injured. Ferdinand was no time-server—no hypocrite. He was a genuine bigot, sincere and conscientious. Animated by this spirit, although two thirds of the inhabitants of Styria were Protestants, he banished all their preachers, professors and schoolmasters; closed their churches, seminaries and schools; even tore down the churches and school-houses; multiplied papal institutions, and called in teachers and preachers from other States.

Matthias and Ferdinand now seemed jointly to reign, and the Protestants were soon alarmed by indications that a new spirit was animating the councils of the sovereign. The most inflexible Catholics were received as the friends and advisers of the king. The Jesuits loudly exulted, declaring that heresy was no longer to be tolerated. Banishments and confiscations were talked of, and the alarm of the Protestants became intense and universal: they looked forward to the commencement of the reign of Ferdinand with terror.

As was to be expected, such wrongs and perils called out an avenger. Matthew Henry, Count of Thurn, was one of the most illustrious and wealthy of the Bohemian nobles. He had long been a warm advocate of the doctrines of the Reformation; and having, in the wars with the Turks, acquired a great reputation for military capacity and courage, and being also a man of great powers of eloquence, and of exceedingly popular manners, he had become quite the idol of the Protestant party. He had zealously opposed the election of Ferdinand to the throne of Bohemia, and had thus increased that

jealousy and dislike with which both Matthias and Ferdinand had previously regarded so formidable an opponent. He was, in consequence, very summarily deprived of some very important dignities. This roused his impetuous spirit, and caused the Protestants more confidently to rally around him as a martyr to their cause.

The Count of Thurn, as prudent as he was bold, as deliberate as he was energetic, aware of the fearful hazard of entering into hostilities with the sovereign who was at the same time king of all the Austrian realms, and Emperor of Germany, conferred with the leading Protestant princes, and organized a confederacy so strong that all the energies of the empire could with difficulty crush it. They were not disposed to make any aggressive movements, but to defend their rights if assailed. The inhabitants of a town in the vicinity of Prague began to erect a church for Protestant worship. The Roman Catholic bishop, who presided over that diocese, forbade them to proceed. They plead a royal edict, which authorized them to erect the church, and continued their work, regardless of the prohibition. Count Thurn encouraged them to persevere, promising them ample support. The bishop appealed to the Emperor Matthias. He also issued his prohibition; but aware of the strength of the Protestants, did not venture to attempt to enforce it by arms. Ferdinand, however, was not disposed to yield to this spirit, and by his influence obtained an order, demanding the immediate surrender of the church to the Catholics, or its entire demolition. The bishop attempted its destruction by an armed force, but the Protestants defended their property, and sent a committee to Matthias, petitioning for a revocation of the mandate. These deputies were seized and imprisoned by the king, and an imperial force was sent to the town, Brunau, to take possession of the church. From so small a beginning rose the Thirty Years' War.

Count Thurn immediately summoned a convention of six



delegates from each of the districts, called circles in Bohemia. The delegates met at Prague on the 16th of March, 1618. An immense concourse of Protestants from all parts of the surrounding country accompanied the delegates to the capital. Count Thurn was a man of surpassing eloquence, and seemed to control at will all the passions of the human heart. In the boldest strains of eloquence he addressed the assembly, and roused them to the most enthusiastic resolve to defend at all hazards their civil and religious rights. They unanimously passed a resolve that the demolition of the church and the suspension of the Protestant worship were violations of the royal edict, and they drew up a petition to the emperor demanding the redress of this grievance, and the liberation of the imprisoned deputies from Brunau. The meeting then adjourned, to be reassembled soon to hear the reply of the emperor.

As the delegates and the multitudes who accompanied them returned to their homes, they spread everywhere the impression produced upon their minds by the glowing eloquence of Count Thurn. The Protestant mind was roused to the highest pitch by the truthful representation, that the court had adopted a deliberate plan for the utter extirpation of Protestant worship throughout Bohemia, and that foreign troops were to be brought in to execute this decree. These convictions were strengthened and the alarm increased by the defiant reply which Matthias sent back from his palace in Vienna to his Bohemian subjects. He accused the delegates of treason and of circulating false and slanderous reports, and declared that they should be punished according to their deserts. He forbade them to meet again, or to interfere in any way with the affairs of Brunau, stating that at his leisure he would repair to Prague and attend to the business himself.

The king could not have framed an answer better calculated to exasperate the people, and rouse them to the most determined resistance. Count Thurn, regardless of the pro

hibition, called the delegates together and read to them the answer, which the king had not addressed to them but to the council of regency. He then addressed them again in those impassioned strains which he had ever at command, and roused them almost to fury against those Catholic lords who had dictated this answer to the king and obtained his signature.

The next day the nobles met again. They came to the place of meeting thoroughly armed and surrounded by their retainers, prepared to repel force by force. Count Thurn now wished to lead them to some act of hostility so decisive that they would be irrecoverably committed. The king's council of regency was then assembled in the palace of Prague. The regency consisted of seven Catholics and three Protestants. For some unknown reason the Protestant lords were not present on this occasion. Three of the members of the regency, Slavata and Martinetz and the burgrave of Prague, were peculiarly obnoxious on account of the implacable spirit with which they had ever persecuted the reformers. These lords were the especial friends of Ferdinand and had great influence with Matthias, and it was not doubted that they had framed the answer which the emperor had returned. Incited by Count Thurn, several of the most resolute of the delegates, led by the count, proceeded to the palace, and burst into the room where the regency was in session.

Their leader, addressing Slavata, Martinetz, and Diepold, the burgrave, said, "Our business is with you. We wish to know if you are responsible for the answer returned to us by the king."

"That," one of them replied, "is a secret of state which we are not bound to reveal."

"Let us follow," exclaimed the Protestant chief, "the ancient custom of Bohemia, and hurl them from the window."

They were in a room in the tower of the castle, and it was eighty feet to the water of the moat. The Catholic lords were



instantly seized, dragged to the window and thrust out. At most incredible as it may seem, the water and the mud of the moat so broke their fall, that neither of them was killed. They all recovered from the effects of their fall. Having performed this deed, Count Thurn and his companions returned to the delegates, informed them of what they had done, and urged them that the only hope of safety now, for any Protestant, was for all to unite in open and desperate resistance. Then mounting his horse, and protected by a strong body-guard, he rode through the streets of Prague, stopping at every corner to harangue the Protestant populace. The city was thronged on the occasion by Protestants from all parts of the kingdom.

"I do not," he exclaimed, "propose myself as your chief, but as your companion, in that peril which will lead us to happy freedom or to glorious death. The die is thrown. It is too late to recall what is past. Your safety depends alone on unanimity and courage, and if you hesitate to burst asunder your chains, you have no alternative but to perish by the hands of the executioner."

He was everywhere greeted with shouts of enthusiasm, and the whole Protestant population were united as one man in the cause. Even many of the moderate Catholics, disgusted with the despotism of the newly elected king, which embraced civil as well as religious affairs, joined the Protestants, for they feared the loss of their civil rights more than they dreaded the inroads of heresy.

With amazing celerity they now organized to repel the force which they knew that the emperor would immediately send to crush them. Within three days their plans were all matured and an organization effected which made the king tremble in his palace. Count Thurn was appointed their commander, an executive committee of thirty very efficient men was chosen, which committee immediately issued orders for the levy of troops all over the kingdom. Envoys were sent to

Moravia, Silesia, Lusatia, and Hungary, and to the Protestants all over the German empire. The Archbishop of Prague was expelled from the city, and the Jesuits were also banished. They then issued a proclamation in defense of their conduct, which they sent to the king with a firm but respectful letter.

One can not but be amused in reading their defense of the outrage against the council of regency. "We have thrown from the windows," they said, "the two ministers who have been the enemies of the State, together with their creature and flatterer, in conformity with an ancient custom prevalent throughout all Bohemia, as well as in the capital. This custom is justified by the example of Jezebel in holy Writ, who was thrown from a window for persecuting the people of God; and it was common among the Romans, and all other nations of antiquity, who hurled the disturbers of the public peace from rocks and precipices."

Matthias had very reluctantly sent his insulting and defiant answer to the reasonable complaints of the Protestants, and he was thunderstruck in contemplating the storm which had thus been raised—a storm which apparently no human wisdom could now allay. There are no energies so potent as those which are aroused by religious convictions. Matthias well knew the ascendancy of the Protestants all over Bohemia, and that their spirit, once thoroughly aroused, could not be easily quelled by any opposing force he could array. He was also aware that Ferdinand was thoroughly detested by the Protestant leaders, and that it was by no means improbable that this revolt would thwart all his plans in securing his succession.

As the Protestants had not renounced their allegiance, Matthias was strongly disposed to measures of conciliation, and several of the most influential, yet fair-minded Catholics supported him in these views. The Protestants were too numerous to be annihilated, and too strong in their desperation



to be crushed. But Ferdinand, guided by the Jesuits, was implacable. He issued a manifesto, which was but a transcript of his own soul, and which is really sublime in the sincerity and fervor of its intolerance.

"All attempts," said he, "to bring to reason a people whom God has struck with judicial blindness will be in vain. Since the introduction of heresy into Bohemia, we have seen nothing but tumults, disobedience and rebellion. While the Catholics and the sovereign have displayed only lenity and moderation, these sects have become stronger, more violent and more insolent; having gained all their objects in religious affairs, they turn their arms against the civil government, and attack the supreme authority under the pretense of conscience; not content with confederating themselves against their sovereign, they have usurped the power of taxation, and have made alliances with foreign States, particularly with the Protestant princes of Germany, in order to deprive him of the very means of reducing them to obedience. They have left nothing to the sovereign but his palaces and the convents; and after their recent outrages against his ministers, and the usurpation of the regal revenues, no object remains for their vengeance and rapacity but the persons of the sovereign and his successor, and the whole house of Austria.

"If sovereign power emanates from God, these atrocious deeds must proceed from the devil, and therefore must draw down divine punishment. Neither can God be pleased with the conduct of the sovereign, in conniving at or acquiescing in all the demands of the disobedient. Nothing now remains for him, but to submit to be lorded by his subjects, or to free himself from this disgraceful slavery before his territories are formed into a republic. The rebels have at length deprived themselves of the only plausible argument which their preachers have incessantly thundered from the pulpit, that they were contending for religious freedom; and the emperor and the house of Austria have now the fairest opportunity to convince

the world that their sole object is only to deliver themselves from slavery and restore their legal authority. They are secure of divine support, and they have only the alternative of a war by which they may regain their power, or a peace which is far more dishonorable and dangerous than war. If successful, the forfeited property of the rebels will defray the expense of their armaments; if the event of hostilities be unfortunate, they can only lose, with honor, and with arms in their hands, the rights and prerogatives which are and will be wrested from them with shame and dishonor. It is better not to reign than to be the slave of subjects. It is far more desirable and glorious to shed our blood at the foot of the throne than to be driven from it like criminals and malefactors."

Matthias endeavored to unite his own peace policy with the energetic warlike measures urged by Ferdinand. He attempted to overawe by a great demonstration of physical force, while at the same time he made very pacific proposals. Applying to Spain for aid, the Spanish court sent him eight thousand troops from the Netherlands; he also raised, in his own dominions, ten thousand men. Having assembled this force he sent word to the Protestants, that if they would disband their force he would do the same, and that he would confirm the royal edict, and give full security for the maintenance of their civil and religious privileges. The Protestants refused to disband, knowing that they could place no reliance upon the word of the unstable monarch who was crowded by the rising power of the energetic Ferdinand. The ambitious naturally deserted the court of the sovereign whose days were declining, to enlist in the service of one who was just entering upon the kingly power.

Ferdinand was enraged at what he considered the pusillanimity of the king. Maximilian, the younger brother of Matthias, cordially espoused the cause of Ferdinand. Cardinal Kleses, a Catholic of commanding influence and of enlightened, liberal views, was the counselor of the king. Ferdinand