

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