SOME SEILERN MEMOIRS

BY

JOSSLEYN HENNESSY

JOHANN FRIEDRICH SEILERN I : 1645 – 1715
First Austrian Court Chancellor

JOHANN FRIEDRICH SEILERN II : 1676 – 1751
Second Austrian Court Chancellor

CHRISTIAN AUGUST SEILERN : 1717 – 1801
Ambassador to the Court of St. James

HUGO SEILERN : 1840 - 1886
Composer and Businessman

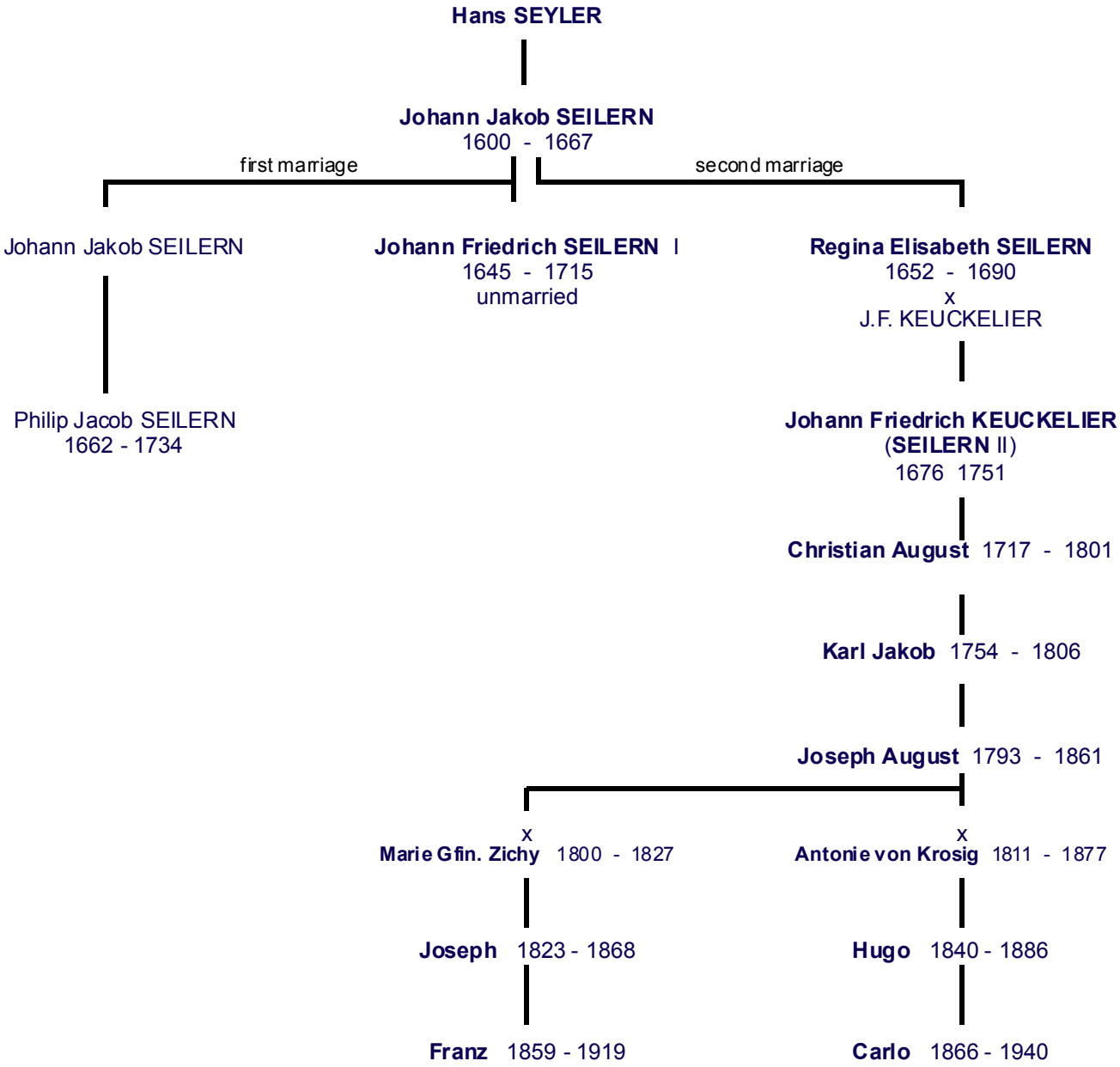
The layout of this book was designed by Jossleyn Hennessy.

The book was set in Aldine Roman 10 point on 11 point and printed by Chelsea Printing Services, 186 Campden Hill Road, London W.8.

ODYSSEUS PUBLICATIONS 95 LINDEN GARDENS
LONDON W2 4EX
TEL: 01-229 5205

Intentionally left blank


17
N. Grafendipl. 1713.
05.
Gefn. v. Herren von Heilern
H. R. v. Goldegg's Wappensammlung.
Blatt.



This genealogical tree traces the ancestry only of those mentioned in this book, with the exception of Joseph August's first marriage.

THE READER'S understanding of the first three essays will be enhanced if he keeps at hand

(1) an historical atlas with maps of 17th and 18th century Europe, and

(2) a genealogical tree showing the claimants to the thrones of the Holy Roman Empire and of Spain.

JOHANN FRIEDRICH SEILERN I : 1645 – 1715

From Poor Scholar to Chancellor

HUGO SEILERN: 1840-1886

Composer and Businessman

Illustrations

Sources and Bibliographies

I
WHO WAS JOHANN FRIEDRICH SEILERN?

THE CAREER of Johann Friedrich Seilern (1645-1715) - confidant of three emperors and "architect of the Austrian monarchy" - coincided with the drive of Louis XIV (1643-1715) to establish a French hegemony over Europe. The resistance to Louis XIV was led by William III of England and three Holy Roman Emperors. In this long struggle, which settled the destiny of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy until 1918, Seilern the Empire's ablest diplomat and eventually Chancellor to the emperors Leopold I, Joseph I and Charles VI, played a key role.

To tell the story of his career is to trace a dramatic theme in the orchestration of Europe between 1669 when, at the age of twenty-four, he undertook his first diplomatic mission as envoy of Karl Ludwig, the Elector of the Palatinate, and 1715 when, having drafted the Pragmatic Sanction, which secured the succession of Maria Theresa to the emperor Charles VI, he died laden with honours as Chancellor.

There were few developments of international importance involving the Grand Alliance against Louis to which he made no contribution. His personality is a fascinating riddle, because most of the surviving documents about him were written by his enemies such as Louis XIV's sister-in-law the Duchess of Orleans, whose claims to the Palatinate he defeated, or by foreign envoys frustrated by his diplomacy. Was he the dishonest, treacherous careerist whom the Duchess of Orleans depicts, the waspish pedant described by Louis XIV's diplomatists, or the pious, selfless statesman mourned "above all for his integrity, uncommon amongst highly-placed personalities" described by the Venetian ambassador in Vienna in what might be called "a minority report"? Yet no biography of him exists in the English language and he barely achieves passing mention in the standard histories.

A biography was written in 1923 by Dr. Gustav Turba, the leading authority on the Pragmatic Sanction, but Turba was interested in Seilern as a lawyer, his 350 pages read like case reports of interest to law students, and he cites the texts mostly in the original Latin or archaic German; he is about as readable as Bishop Stubbs' Latin and Anglo-Saxon Constitutional Charters.

A second source is Heinrich von Srbik's Wien und Versailles 1693 1697, published in German in 1944. This is readable and contains information about Seilern but is concerned only with his secret negotiations with the French in the years preceding the Treaty of Ryswick. I do not read German but I have combed through Turba and Srbik with the patient aid of my friend Eleanor Alder, whose mother tongue is German, and these two authors are the basic sources for this essay. I do, however, know French and I have checked Turba and Srbik against the French and English

diplomatic archives of the period, which has enabled me to modify some of their perspectives and to add new facts. I have also read widely in the history of the period, so that what follows is based on a mixture of the secondary and original sources.

II

ORIGINS OF THE SEILERN FAMILY

THROUGH THE LAND registers and baptismal records, the Seilerns can be traced to Hans Seyler, who became a resident of Speyer in the Palatinate on February 2, 1581, and who belonged to the honourable Guild of Butchers of that imperial city. His son, Johann Jakob (1600 - 1667), bought a property in Ladenburg where he was appointed Court Dyer to the Elector of the Palatinate, became a landed proprietor and mayor of the town. He is described as the "black dye specialist". In the Middle Ages black was in universal demand but with existing techniques it was difficult to ensure uniformity of colour and fastness of dye for the woollen and linen habits of monks and nuns, and the silks, satins and velvets of courtiers, princes of the church and the nobility, so that the insistence with which the epithet "black dyer" is applied to Hans Seyler suggests his high reputation in the art.

Johann Jakob was twice married. By his first wife his sons included Johann Friedrich (1645-1715) and by his second wife he had a daughter named Regina Elizabeth (1652-1690). Regina Elizabeth married Johann Friedrich Keuckelier, who made his name as a silk embroiderer, became a landowner and a Customs and Excise officer of the Palatinate. Johann Friedrich Seilern never married but he had a strong family feeling and he desired that the wealth that he had accumulated, the estate of Aspang that he had bought and the Imperial earldom to which he had been raised, should remain in his family. Leopold I showed his appreciation of Seilern's services by readily according that his stepsister's son Johann Friedrich Keuckelier should take his name, title and estate with succession to the heirs of his body. Thus although the Seilerns today descend from Johann Friedrich Keuckelier (Seilern II 1676-1751), their ancestor in common with his uncle Johann Friedrich Seilern (Seilern I 1645-1715) is Johann Jakob Seilern (1600-1667), father of our Seilern and grandfather of Johann Friedrich Keuckelier.

The Keuckeliers trace their descent from Arnold de Keuckelier, tapestry maker, a Calvinist Fleming, who in the sixteenth century fled from the persecutions of the Duke of Alba, Governor of the Spanish Netherlands, whose "Tribunal of Blood" in the course of five years executed eighteen thousand Calvinists and drove one hundred thousand to emigrate **(Hugh Trevor Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, P. 32ff)**. The Keuckeliers settled in Heidelberg, capital of the Palatinate.

Johann Friedrich Seilern was born in a time of troubles. The Thirty Years War, which the Peace of Westphalia ended when Seilern was three years old, had left the Palatinate, and Germany as a whole, devastated. It has been calculated that the Empire probably numbered about twenty-one millions in 1618 and less than thirteen and a half millions in 1648.

The religious scene must have been confusing, to say the least, for any sincere Christian. In the span of the eighty-nine years between 1560 and 1649, the official religion in the Palatinate was jerked between Catholicism, Lutheranism and Calvinism no fewer than seven times. Everywhere the true faith was not what you believed but what you were compelled to believe.

Born and bred a Lutheran, Johann Jakob Seilern had no option but to conform to Catholicism before he could become Mayor of Ladenburg and his son, Seilern I, could not have been baptised except as a Catholic in 1645. Within four years, Karl Ludwig had reintroduced Calvinism and our Seilern was perforce educated a Calvinist. He partook for the first time of the Lord's Supper as a Calvinist in 1660 when he was fourteen years old. He remained a Calvinist as long as he was in the Elector's employ. Before he could join the service of the Holy Roman Emperor, he had, however, no alternative but to be received into the Catholic Church. On April 2, 1676, when he was thirty-one, Seilern was one of a batch of sixty-nine Protestants who left the house of the Jesuits in Vienna for the Church of St. Ignatius and returned home as Catholics.

III

KARL LUDWIG, ELECTOR OF THE PALATINATE: 1617-1680

THE CALVINIST Frederick V (1596-1632), Elector of the Palatinate, married Elisabeth, daughter of James I of England. A pawn on the European chessboard, he accepted the throne of Bohemia only to find himself at war with the Emperor Ferdinand II. He was defeated in the same winter. His sobriquet the "Winter King" was his sole title to glory. He died in 1632, an exile.

The Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War, restored Frederick's eldest son Karl Ludwig to the Palatinate. Although displaying the eccentricities which were the privilege of a seventeenth century absolutist, Karl Ludwig was an enlightened ruler.

One of his first acts after his restoration in 1649 was to restart the Neckar school - the Palatinate equivalent of Eton. The school, which admitted boys from the age of fourteen, was open to the sons of any Palatinate citizen who could pass the stiff entrance examination. The Elector provided scholarships for those whose parents could not afford the fees. Numbers were limited to forty and the entrance standards were high, because Karl Ludwig regarded the school as the training place for the civil servants, teachers and clerics needed in his principality. His interest in the school was such that he acted as chairman of the Board of Governors, as school visiting inspector and often even as examiner-in-chief of candidates for admission.

Many teachers saved themselves time and trouble by making their pupils learn textbooks by heart. Karl Ludwig forbade this wit-destroying practice. Nor did he allow the boys to be mollycoddled. They had to make their beds, sweep and clean. The school sought to cultivate patriotism to the Palatinate. On the occasion of his birthday, the Elector listened to a speech of congratulations from the senior boy and himself presented to those who had done well in their examinations golden guldens adding up to the total years of his age. The Elector took pride in the school and few state guests managed to avoid a personally conducted tour.

Johann Friedrich Seilern, who after being compulsorily baptised a Catholic, attended a Lutheran preparatory school, because his father was a Lutheran, took Calvinism in his stride at the Neckar school when Karl Ludwig admitted him in 1659.

In search of talent for his public services, Karl Ludwig attended the school's final examinations and Seilern may have been one of the boys whom he singled out for personal questioning. Evidence that Seilern was an outstanding scholar comes from an unimpeachable source: the Elector's daughter, Liselotte, later Duchess of Orleans, who had special reasons for hating Seilern, readily conceded that he "had shown great eagerness to study and had learnt well."

From the Neckar school, Seilern entered Heidelberg University, of which Karl Ludwig was also the patron. The enrolment promoted Seilern from the status of a commoner's son to that of "an academic citizen and gentleman," which carried with it the privilege of hunting in a special reserve of the forest. The rector of Heidelberg from whose hand in April 1661, Seilern received in exchange for his solemn oath and formal handshake, a ceremonial sword in recognition of his new status, was the eminent J.F. Boeckelman (1633-1681) from Westphalia, professor of both Roman and German law. Young Seilern not only attended his lectures but also took part in his dialogues on law published in 1664. In this book Seilern, now on the verge of becoming a lawyer, is the interlocutor. In the same year Seilern achieved another distinction - the publication of an essay on the difference between the common law and Palatinate law in matrimonial affairs - an aspect of the law in which his expertise was to be of service to the Elector and eventually to earn him the enmity of the Duchess of Orleans.

The professors of Heidelberg under whom Seilern studied were few, because Karl Ludwig's resources were limited, but their distinction did honour to his judgement; in addition to Boeckelman, they included the philosopher Sebastian Ramspeck from Basle, the logician and Greek scholar Fabricius from Speyer, the mathematician and physicist Leuneschlos, who had taught in universities in Holland, France and Padua, and above all the great Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694), whose *Elementa]urisprudentiae Universalis* had so impressed Karl Ludwig that he had created for him at the early age of twenty-nine a new chair of international law at Heidelberg. Posterity confirmed Karl Ludwig's choice: Pufendorf's book was a standard work for three centuries. Seilern maintained throughout his life the friendship with Pufendorf that he began as a student, and it was to Pufendorf's influence that Seilern owed his life-long urge to widen his juridical and historical knowledge.

Under Karl Ludwig's encouragement Seilern went on from Heidelberg to France, probably to Orleans, and thence in 1665 to Padua, where the greatest professors of Roman law were teaching.

On his return to Heidelberg in June 1666, Seilern became the Elector's librarian, with time off to continue his studies under Pufendorf. Busy diplomat that he was to become, such leisure as Seilern had he spent in reading jurisprudence and philosophy; indeed, when at the age of fifty-nine he was First Austrian Court Chancellor, the Venetian ambassador said that he was more a philosopher than a courtier and that when he encountered hostility or friction he was apt to offer to retire into private life - an offer which three emperors preferred to disregard.

IV

FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO PALATINATE PRIVY COUNCILLOR

KARL LUDWIG not only had the gift of spotting talent, he believed in giving youth its chance. He considered that a man was not too young for a job if he could do it. In less than a year young Seilern's duties as librarian had receded and he was the Elector's Private Secretary. Within three years, Karl Ludwig was entrusting him with diplomatic missions. In addition to his native German, Seilern's studies had made him fluent in Latin, still the language of diplomacy, although Louis XIV was beginning to spread the use of French, which Seilern had learned at Orleans. At Padua, he had picked up Italian. In 1669, 1670 and 1671 Seilern went on missions to the court of Frederick III of Denmark to negotiate for the hand of his daughter for the Elector's heir. Seilern wrote the official letter requesting the Princess's hand and drafted the marriage contract.

Louis XIV's ambitions - epidemic and wholesale - which were to keep Europe almost continuously at war amidst fluctuating alliances and fortunes from 1667 until his death in 1715, had already spread tremors, uncertainties and suspicions in England, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, France and the Empire. The Palatinate was by feudal allegiance part of the Holy Roman Empire and by geographical situation uncomfortably athwart the highway of France's diplomatic skirmishes and military advances into the Low Countries and the heartland of the Empire. Accordingly Karl Ludwig seized the occasions of Seilern's missions to Denmark to send him to Sweden, to neighbouring German states and to Vienna. Thus while still in his mid-twenties Seilern met Charles XI (1660-1679) of Sweden, Frederick the Great Elector of Brandenburg (1620-1688) founder of the Prussian Army, perhaps the ablest princely diplomat in Europe, with whom it must have been a liberal education for a young man to converse. In Vienna, Karl Ludwig's apple-cheeked Plenipotentiary Envoy and Confidential Secretary of State had accreditations to the Imperial General Montecuccoli, the successive Privy Council Presidents, Count Leopold Wilhelm Koenigsegg, Prince Schwarzenberg, Prince Wenzel Lobkowitz, the Duke of Sagan and others. In Brunswick, he made a life-long friend in Karl Ludwig's sister, the kindly, gay, gifted and intelligent Sophia, wife of the Duke of Brunswick who, in 1692, became first Elector of Hanover; their son was George I of England.

In 1650, Karl Ludwig had married the Princess Charlotte daughter of the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel. He was besotted by his wife and if she had been Madame, de Maintenon, plain in looks but beautiful in intelligence, she could have been the influential partner of a man who was far from negligible. Unfortunately the Electress Charlotte was capricious without being clever. Her scenes of jealousy were melodramatic, exhausting and public. She was one of nature's most beautiful nitwits. When Karl Ludwig - whose passion and prowess, even in old age, rivalled those of

his first cousin Charles II of England - threatened Charlotte with a child a year, she knew no better remedy than to deny him her bed.

The inevitable was that Karl Ludwig sought consolation. Baroness Luisa Degenfeld, one of his wife's ladies-in-waiting, was as beautiful as Charlotte" and as intelligent as Charlotte was not. Whereas Charlotte denied Karl Ludwig without thought of the consequences, Luisa established a nice balance between ardour, tenderness, religious scruples and honour, which enabled her successfully to insist on marriage. The Electress refused a divorce. The Elector countered by pronouncing her denial of conjugal rights to be legal desertion and that this released him from his marriage vows.

In the meantime, he drew public attention to the virtues of the most honourable Baroness Degenfeld and to his decision to live with her in honest Christian marriage by virtue of the jurisdiction, spiritual and temporal, which the Treaty of Westphalia had recognised as appertaining to territorial sovereigns.

Before witnesses, Karl Ludwig and Luisa exchanged ceremonial affirmations, written and verbal, that they were man and wife before God and the world.

Karl Ludwig took care to notify the Electress of his marriage to another woman; he assured her that in consideration of the two children that she had given him - the Prince Karl, heir of the House of the Palatinate, and his sister Princess Elisabeth Charlotte - he would continue to treat her as a princess, would leave her the use of half of his castle and see to her maintenance. Nature, repenting, allowed Charlotte for once to reply with dignity:" "I shall consider myself as a widow whose husband is still alive. I shall be a non-person (“une personne de nulle valeur”) . Your concubine will have no cause to complain of me."

An impressive difference between the conduct of Karl Ludwig and his collateral kinsman, Henry VIII of England in parallel circumstances, forces itself on the attention. Both men were the religious heads of their states. Both tired of their legitimate spouses. But Henry VIII used his prerogatives to push through (a) divorces of Katherine of Aragon and Anne of Cleves and found clerics willing to recognise the ecclesiastical validity of these divorces, and (b) sentences of death on Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard. Karl Ludwig shrank from official proceedings against Charlotte, probably because he feared to jeopardise the legal inheritance of his heirs, and it never occurred to him to have her judicially murdered. Moreover, although what one might call their sense of good morals, or perhaps religious etiquette, compelled him and Luisa to go through a marriage ceremonial, they could find no cleric willing to admit its ecclesiastical validity: the Calvinist minister Heyland confined himself to recording without comment the vows exchanged between them. When Luisa's brother joined her in a strong protest, demanding that further independent theologians should strengthen Heyland's attestation, one divine after

another excused himself, and all that Karl Ludwig could secure were two additional clerics to witness, without comment, what he and Luisa had sworn before them.

Karl Ludwig was not content with this. What to do? Where the clerics left off Seilern took over. By what the Imperial Court in Vienna conceded was a ***tour de force,*** Seilern persuaded the Emperor to agree to a formula which satisfied honour all round without jeopardising good morals (at least no further than they had been).

Some historians argue that the Peace of Westphalia (1648) by according the princes of Germany the right to make foreign alliances completed the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire as an effective state. Without, for the moment, venturing too far down the meta physical vistas which" this argument opens up, we may note that the historical interest of the mission to the Imperial Court which Karl Ludwig entrusted to Seilern is that it reveals that the princes who lived within the Empire's shadow felt that it retained authority and were glad to avail themselves of its jurisdiction. Let us see why.

In his capacity as sovereign lord of the Palatinate, Karl Ludwig was satisfied with his self-pronounced divorce from Charlotte and his self-solemnized marriage with Luisa, but whether the Empire was a reality or a ghost the Palatinate was still part of it and he could not help feeling that under the Empire's Roman law his heirs and successors might challenge the legitimacy and the legal rights of his children by Luisa Degenfeld. How could he ensure recognition of their status without petitioning the Emperor to confirm the validity of his marriage and thus raise the question as to whether or not his was the ultimate authority in the Palatinate? There is no evidence that Seilern was the first person to think up a way out of the legal *impasse,* but it remains true that he alone put one successfully forward in Vienna and since, " despite his youth, he was one of the leading experts on the customary law of the Palatinate and the Roman law of the Empire, the chances are that he it was who drew Karl Ludwig's attention to the possibilities of the course that the Elector pursued.

For over two centuries there had "existed in the Palatinate the feudal title and estate of Raugraf, which was in the Elector's gift. This title he now, with the express consent of his heir Prince Karl, bestowed upon the Baroness Degenfeld and, "all her issue which we have begotten and which we are still to beget with her, and to their legitimate heirs."

V

FIRST DIPLOMATIC TRIUMPH

KARL LUDWIG sent the twenty-six-year-old Seilern to Vienna in September, 1671, to inform the Emperor that while there could be no doubt about the validity of Luisa's Raugraf patent "it would, however, please me and all the interested parties if your Imperial Majesty could see your way to confirm, renew and enhance my decree with your Imperial authority." He concluded by deftly implying that the Emperor's gracious confirmation would console him for the dangers and difficulties that he had faced in his loyalty to the Empire and that it would more than ever bind him and his heirs to the Emperor's service.

On the one hand, Karl Ludwig maintained that his own decree was unassailable while, on the other, he couched his petition for the Emperors' grace in the language not of the law but of the heart. This twofold stance, taken together with the dismissed Electress's enmity towards the Baroness, well-known in the Imperial court, could only create the impression that Karl Ludwig was worried lest, after his death, his union with the Baroness and his decree (despite Prince Karl's consent) might be disputed.

Karl Ludwig's petition embarrassed the Emperor's advisers. As Catholics, they had no desire to become involved (a) with the Calvinist Church over questions of ecclesiastical law, (b) with all Churches over questions of public morals and (c) with authorities on feudal custom and Roman law over the rights of Karl Ludwig's heirs that might be raised by the Electress and by Luisa. They feared hornets' nests. They thought they saw how to avoid them. Blandly, Count Koenigsegg, the Imperial Vice-Chancellor, asked Seilern whether it would not provide greater security for the Degenfeld children if the Elector were first to legitimise them (which he was legally entitled to do); thereafter the Emperor would confirm their Raugraf title. The catch in this was that the Emperor's confirmation would then apply only to those children whom Karl Ludwig had already begotten and not to those as yet un begotten. The subtle distinction was that if the Emperor agreed simply to confirm Karl Ludwig's decree conferring the Raugravate on all Degenfeld's children, "begotten and to be begotten" he would, contrary to ecclesiastical law, be condoning the Elector in future sin **(Catholics will recognise that Karl Ludwig would, in effect, be let off without the "firm purpose of amendment" without which the sinner is not absolved from his sins.)**, whereas by confirming the Raugravate on those children whom the Elector had legitimised, the Emperor would have regard to past sins only. If the Elector thereafter persisted in his adulterous bed, his future children, born in sin, would be illegitimate. Naturally, the Emperor's advisers did not spell their reasoning out but it did not escape Seilern and he was equal to the occasion.

If, Seilern said, the problem was simply to make children legitimate, that was within the Elector's rights and the Emperor was not concerned. But, he said, illegitimacy did not arise since the Elector's union with the Baroness was, in accordance with his faith, valid, because his first wife had been guilty of desertion. As to the Emperor's proposal to raise the Baroness's children to the rank of Raugraf, Seilern accepted this without comment but, imitating Koenigsegg's blandness, he suggested that the Imperial patent should follow the wording of the Palatinate patent and confer the title on children "begotten and to be begotten".

The Imperial Privy Councillors shrugged indulgent shoulders and when the draft of the patent appeared it referred only to the existing children. The councillors doubtless expected that the ancient forms and ceremonies, accumulated in the eight centuries since Charlemagne, with which the Imperial Council conducted its business would awe the Palatinate's apprentice envoy and that if they countered his arguments by reiterating their fundamental position, he could but acquiesce in what would present itself as the inevitable.

If that was their thought, they did not know their man. Without bothering to refer back to the Elector for further instructions, Seilern held his ground. He produced a draft of his own (still extant in his handwriting) in which he removed Karl Ludwig's crude reference to children "still to be begotten" and substituted the subtle variation the Emperor "confirms, and ratifies without exception for *all* their begotten children" and, went on to include in the Emperor's confirmation "Electoral bestowal" (as opposed to the Imperial bestowal which the council proposed) of the *Raugravian status* on the Baroness herself *as well as* on her legitimate heirs and descendants.

The Emperor accepted this draft.

This was a triumph. Seilern had secured what Karl Ludwig had maintained from the outset, i.e., that because the Emperor was not concerned with the Palatinate marriage laws, the Imperial patent must refer neither to the marriage nor to the legitimacy of the children, yet the Emperor must, in all circumstances, enhance the existing ***Raugravian status*** of the Baroness *and* her children present *and* future. Thus, if illegitimacy there had been, Seilern's formula tacitly rectified all its legal consequences.

Why did the Emperor accept Seilern's draft? The answer seems twofold.

In the first place, the year was 1672. The peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1668 had given Louis XIV a strong base for future military advances, and everyone knew that he had signed the treaty only to gain time by insidious diplomacy to drive wedges into the coalition against him. Leopold I was therefore seeking alliances against France with the Elector of Brandenburg, the Dutch Republic, Lorraine, Spain and the states of the Empire. The Palatinate occupied a key geographical position in any war with France and the Emperor had every reason to seek Karl Ludwig's good will. Doubtless he

thought that the Palatinate was worth any number of legitimised bastards, whether in hand or in the bush. Secondly, Seilern's presentation of his case - stubborn and resourceful - and his disconcerting youth made a lasting impression on the Imperial councillors.

After the Raugraf mission to Vienna Seilern was continuously occupied in negotiations of high importance to the Palatinate until, three years later in October, 1675, he handed Karl Ludwig his resignation. Although Seilern's contract provided that notice could be given by either party, it had never occurred to Karl Ludwig that he might be on the receiving end. He was furious at Seilern's "impertinence", and for the six months' period of his notice he kept Seilern under arrest.

VI

GERMAN "FREEDOM"

OR IMPERIAL "DESPOTISM"?

THE reasons for Seilern's break with Karl Ludwig reveal the motives and ideals which determine his career, provide the key to his character, and explain his attitudes towards the outstanding central European problem of his time.

All his actions show that Seilern was not one of those who work conscientiously enough for their employer but whose real life begins when they leave the office. On the contrary, Seilern identified himself wholly, loyally and tirelessly, first, with the interests of the Palatinate until he could stand Karl Ludwig's policies no longer, and thereafter with the Holy Roman Empire until the day of his death.

It is reasonable to suppose that in his youth Seilern looked upon the problems of his native principality, the home for a century and more of his forebears on both sides of his family, in much the same way as Karl Ludwig.

The Calvinist Karl Ludwig had, other than prudence, no special reasons for loyalty to the Catholic Emperor. Leopold I's predecessor, Ferdinand II, had driven Karl Ludwig's father from the throne of Bohemia and had made him, his queen and his children wandering exiles. In the Thirty Years War which followed, Ferdinand had striven to absorb the Empire's Lutheran and Calvinist principalities and he would have transformed the Empire into a single Catholic unit if Sweden and France had not intervened in support of "Protestant freedom" and "German liberties". Ferdinand had handed the Palatinate over to the Catholic Elector of Bavaria, who would have kept it permanently if, at the Peace of Westphalia, France had not stepped in to ensure that although Bavaria retained the Upper Palatinate, Karl Ludwig should be restored to the Lower. It was true that Karl Ludwig was indignant at being robbed of half his principality and that in restoring him to Heidelberg Louis XIV had not the faintest interest in the "German liberties" or "Protestant freedom", for which he had ostensibly crusaded, but had been guided solely by what was politically expedient, yet it was equally true that if Louis XIV had not bestirred himself, Karl Ludwig would have remained an exile: half a Palatinate was better than no Palatinate.

For the Empire, Westphalia was a peace of exhaustion. For France, it was an opportunity to recruit her forces to pursue her aim of absorbing the Spanish Netherlands and pushing her frontier, via Lorraine and Alsace, up to the Rhine (which flows through the Palatinate). Karl Ludwig's loyalties seemed to conflict with his interests. He was a potentate of the Empire and owed feudal allegiance to the Emperor, but LeopoldI's centre of gravity was five hundred miles away - a great distance in an era when armies footslogged it along winding dirt-tracks - whereas Louis XIV was next door.

Moreover, while the Emperor's capacity to raise and pay for armies was apt to be uncertain, that of Louis XIV was unmistakable. Karl Ludwig, like all the bigger German princes, was ever on the alert to preserve his prerogatives against erosion by the Emperor and for this purpose friendly relations with France had both diplomatic and military value.

As a German, Karl Ludwig's initial impulse was loyalty to the Empire, but in the light of the foregoing considerations he did not feel inclined to go out of his way to make sacrifices in the cause of patriotism. Just as long as Leopold showed readiness and ability to protect the Palatinate, Karl Ludwig would stand by the Empire - not a day longer.

The division of Germany among three hundred principalities, bishoprics, free cities and statelets, whose upkeep as separate units was administratively ridiculous and economically wasteful, inflicting heavy burdens on the masses, was a standing invitation to foreign mischief-makers. Obviously what were needed were wholesale mergers. Nor, since nature abhors a vacuum, could they be avoided. Who, however, should be responsible for the take-over bids? On this question the historians differ.

One school considers that the Holy Roman Empire represented the "German idea": it had the history, the traditions and the culture which could have provided the framework of German unity. Had Sweden and France not intervened, it is probable that the war which broke out in 1618 would have ended around 1629, leaving Ferdinand II in what the opposing school of historians call "despotic" control of a unified and Catholic Empire. If you are a Protestant such an outcome perhaps horrifies you, if a Catholic you may heave a sigh of regret that it was not achieved. As the (obviously Protestant) historian James Bryce ***(The Holy Roman Empire, 1915 edition, p. 383***) says "Soon after [A.D. 1613] Gustavus Adolphus crossed the Baltic and saved Europe from an impending reign of the Jesuits" - clearly (in Bryce's view) a fate worse than death. But *for those living in 1630,* the victory of one religion rather than another could have made little difference. On this C.V. Wedgewood is enlightening (***The Thirty Years War***)

> The Calvinists exhorted all true believers to violence and took special delight in the more bloodthirsty psalms. But the Catholics and Lutherans were not innocent and force was everywhere the proof of true faith. The Lutherans set upon the Calvinists in the streets of Berlin; Catholic priests in Bavaria carried firearms in' self-defence; in Dresden the mob stopped the funeral of an Italian Catholic and tore the corpse to pieces; a Protestant pastor and a Catholic priest came to blows in the streets of Frankfurt on the Main, and Calvinist services in Styria were frequently interrupted by Jesuits disguised among the congregation who would tweak the prayer book from the hands of the worshipper and deftly substitute a breviary.

Taking the long view, the division of the Empire among three religions by the Treaty of Westphalia prevented once and for all the German-speaking peoples from coming together as a single nation. The Emperors turned gradually away from the idea of a consolidated German state in Europe towards a multi-lingual Empire of Germans, Italians, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Serbs, Croats and other folk eastward. As for the majority of non-Austrian Germans, we can now see that the question was not *whether* their principalities should be united but *by whom*. They had to live through three centuries of intermittent internecine strife before their unity was achieved (with just as much force as the anti-Austrian historians charge against Ferdinand II) by the king of Prussia between 1864 and 1871.

Whether the Germans would have been happier, and Europe more peaceful, had the Habsburgs united Germany in 1630 than they were during the half century of Hohenzollern rule which ended in the disaster of the First World War is a matter of feeling and opinion. James Bryce says ***(The Holy Roman Empire, 1915 edition***) :

> So far from being fit subjects for undistinguishing invective, the Hapsburg Emperors may be contrasted favourably with the contemporary dynasties of France, Spain or England. Their policy, viewed as a whole from the days of Rudolf I downwards, had been neither conspicuously tyrannical, nor faltering nor dishonest.

But - Bryce cannot help adding from the viewpoint of a nineteenth century liberal -

> the Hapsburgs endeavoured to reconcile their non-German interests with the interests of the Empire only so long as it seemed possible to recover part of the old Imperial prerogative.
>
> But when such hopes were dashed by the defeats of the Thirty Years War, they hesitated no longer between an elective crown and the rule of their here4itary dominions, and comported themselves thenceforth in European politics not as the representatives of Germany but as heads of the great Austrian monarchy. There would have been nothing culpable in this had they not at the same time continued to entangle Germany in wars with which she had no concern ... in order that some scion of the house of Habsburg might reign in Spain or Italy.

There is a hint here that Bryce equates absolute monarchy with tyrannical or arbitrary government, but as Ragnhild Hatton points out **(*Europe in the Age of Louis XIV, Ch. III passim*)**, Europeans of the seventeenth century might fear that absolutism would become tyrannical but they classed only two countries as having rulers who governed without the restraint of law, namely, the Ottoman Sultan and the Muscovite Tsar, who disposed of a subject's life and property according to personal whim and not according to law.

Discussion of the form of government and on the merits and dangers of monarchies (sovereign or limited) and republics was rife all over Europe. Political theorists agreed that all forms of government rested on a contract between ruler and subject; they disagreed on the amount of central power necessary to prevent anarchy on the one hand and to curb the over-mighty subject on the other. "Better one king than many" was a common saying among those who had suffered civil disturbances, oppression or anarchy in times of royal minorities. It was not accidental that those countries which had experienced several minorities within living memory like France and Sweden were drawn to absolutism. Hatton has no difficulty in providing evidence and reasoned argument to establish that to think of "absolutism" as regressive or reprehensible is anachronistic. Those, like Seilern, who favoured it and worked for it in the second half of the seventeenth century, regarded themselves as in step with progress, alive to the practical problems of the day, for order against chaos, for good administration in the interests of the whole nation rather than of anyone class, for the mobilisation of the resources of the state and for the exploitation of trade opportunities in Europe and overseas. The mechanism of government differed in limited monarchies and republics on the one hand and absolute monarchies on the other. Under absolutism, there were groups and factions, rivals for power holding different views on how to achieve desired objectives, which contended for the ear of the ruler. In this Seilern, as we shall see, was fortunate, for he gained Leopold's confidence increasingly from 1685 - his fortieth year. Wherever limitations on sovereignty existed, organised political parties developed which had, at times, decisive influence on policy and increasing control over who was to hold office. Would-be reformers or those ambitious for office in limited "non-despotic" states fought their battles in the public arena in parliaments or diets as well as in the corridors of power. Whereas those, like Seilern, in "absolute" states worked indirectly, their differences being vetted, resolved or filtered through the decision making power of the crown.

Constitutional government says Hatton[6], whether in the limited monarchies or in the republics or commonwealths, was in some measure regarded by go-ahead administrators as "old-fashioned" and as weakening the state by party strife. The example most glaringly before their eyes was that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: with immense territories, large population and ample resources for trade, the country was sinking in power and prestige and increasingly presented an anarchical face to Europe.

All that we know of Seilern's three masters, Leopold, Joseph and Charles, suggests that they saw themselves in the paternalistic role of the first servant of the state, mediating between the different classes of society and seeing that justice, in so far as this was possible, was done but as Hatton says, the greatest obstacle to such just paternalism was vested interests, usually of those individuals who had bought offices or inherited rights and privileges, which they were unwilling to forego. Administrative reform, essential for the imposition of a fairer tax burden, was, for example, blocked

by long-established practices, chief of which was the bought or farmed office, which existed in all countries. The ***vénalité*** often assumed to be due to absolutism was, in fact, a legacy which absolutism abhorred, but which it was forced to tolerate because no ruler had revenues adequate to pay all his office holders.

The Thirty Years War left the princes of the Empire the only powers to which the disorganised and demoralised townsfolk and peasants could turn. Authority seemed essential for the survival of any body politic; it was more practically effective than self-government; its civil servants offered more stability than elected officials. That was why the public acts and personal character of individual rulers such as Karl Ludwig, Leopold I or Louis XIV, and of statesmen such as Seilern or Windisch-Graetz were of an importance, influence and significance, which it is unrealistic to praise or blame in terms of today's rulers or statesmen, who move between photographers from one press conference to another, and whose policies must take the swings of public opinion polls (with all their limitations) into account.

We seem to have wandered far from Seilern, but these speculations are relevant if we are to understand why he decided to quit Karl Ludwig and to seek the service of the Emperor.

As already said, it is probable that at the start of his career Seilern's views on religion, the Palatinate, the Empire and France were in line with those of Karl Ludwig, but in the ten years in which he travelled widely visiting the courts of Copenhagen, Stockholm, Hanover, Vienna and others, exchanging views with the leading statesmen of Europe, his actions imply that Seilern shed his parochial Palatinate outlook. More and more he came to understand the intricacies of the relations between these states and the Empire, to grasp the futility of a stardust of principalities and the grandeur of the possibilities of a united Germany under the Emperor.

VII

THE ROMANCE OF THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

FROM THE PANORAMA of the centuries we now narrow our focus to the years 1671 to 1675. While Seilern was initially preoccupied with the negotiations for the conventional marriage of Karl Ludwig's son to the Danish princess and for Karl Ludwig's idiosyncratic marriage to Luisa Degenfeld, the increasing aggressions of Louis XIV caused him to spend more and more time in professions of Palatinate loyalty to Leopold I, coupled with urgent demands for financial aid and military protection, alternating with desperate pleas that the inadequacy of the Imperial response and the "tergiversations" and "treachery" of Karl Ludwig's Imperial neighbours must leave him with no choice but to sue for a separate peace, culminating even in not particularly veiled hints that the Palatinate might be compelled positively to ally itself with France.

To be fair to Karl Ludwig and to Leopold, each, caught between two fires, was struggling against odds. Louis XIV's objectives were to annex the Spanish Netherlands, Franche Comté, Alsace, Lorraine and Savoy and to reduce the Dutch Republic and the Rhineland principalities' to satellites. Against his ambitions only Spain, the Dutch and Leopold stood firm. Protestant Sweden and the England of Charles II were unpredictable allies. When they combined, Louis hastened to offer a deceptive peace, magnanimously calling off further military advances, but taking care to retain territory already captured and to keep forces in being to be regrouped in due course for further conquests, in preparation for which he shovelled out bribes and subsidies to break up coalitions and to buy new allies. Charles II of Spain was weak. Leopold had the men, and some of the money and guns, but he was handicapped by the cumbersome overlapping of the administrative machinery of the Empire with the Habsburg dominions and" above all, having to fight on two fronts - west and east. Louis XIV's bottomless bribes encouraged the Hungarians to rebel on Leopold's back doorstep, while further east his ambassadors intrigued with the Turks.

For his part, Karl Ludwig could not forget that he had spent thirty years in exile and was only just beginning to restore the Palatinate to something of its former prosperity. Louis XIV was uncomfortably near, Leopold I uncomfortably far. Karl Ludwig's assessment was that Louis would prove the ultimate victor and that he therefore was the man to be appeased before it was too late.

On the other hand, Seilern's travels and conversations had given him (a) insights into the personalities and capabilities of the Emperor's advisers, especially Marshal Raimond Montecuccoli who, despite inadequate resources, was putting up a brilliant defence in the Rhinelands against the prestigious French Marshal Turenne and (b) a broad grasp of the international scene. Seilern came to the conclusions that whether

or not Ferdinand II's "despotic" aims had been reprehensible (**In fact, as John Stoye points out in *The Siege of Vienna,* although Ferdinand deprived the Estates of political independence, he gave the individual members opportunities to re-acquire power in government service. Some became councillors in the government of Lower Austria. At the same time, he allowed the Estates to assess and collect the taxes, which meant that the authority of the Emperor and of the Estates of the Duchy were interdependent; they governed together).** The Emperor since the Peace of Westphalia was no longer the enemy of German "liberties" and that the terms of the Treaty had left the body of the Empire and the mass of the German-speaking peoples vulnerable to Swedish and French aggression, which was not some distant hazard but present and threatening.

Seilern left no detailed analysis of his motives for quitting Karl Ludwig but from hints in recorded conversations and from the policies that he pursued once in the Imperial service, it is clear that he disagreed with those German rulers who regarded Sweden as their natural ally and France as their natural protector against the Emperor. What he had heard and seen in Vienna had reassured him that the power of the Empire was not as diffused and defused as the timorous princes on its peripheries thought. Certainly Seilern could not be sure that he was not embracing a lost cause. He could not have foreseen the victory of John Sobieski, King of Poland, and Charles, Duke of Lorraine, who were to drive the Turks from Vienna in 1683, nor the dedicated resolution of William of Orange, eventually to be backed by the rising power of England, nor the magnificent partnership of Eugene, Prince of Savoy, with John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, nor the gradual exhaustion of France, which would leave the Austrian Netherlands intact for another century and staunch the flow of French ***louis d'or*** to the Turks and the Hungarians, enabling the Turks to be driven from the heart of Europe and the Hungarians to be incorporated in the hereditary lands of the Habsburgs.

But even more important than any material assessment of the Empire's strength, the evidence of Seilern's life demonstrates that he rejected Karl Ludwig's appeasement of France as humiliating submission to traditions and ideals alien to the Holy Roman Empire and the German peoples. This was a question of feeling. Seilern obviously felt something that - even though the last Imperial Habsburg departed in 1918 - lives today: the romance of the Habsburg Empire which enthrals those who experience it and is incomprehensible to those who do not (**Among historians, for example, see C.A. Macartney *(The Habsburg Empire)* and Edward Crankshaw *(The Fall of the House of Habsburg)* who obviously enjoy the romance of the Empire, while A.J.P. Taylor *(The Habsburg Monarchy)* docs not.)** In the ultimate analysis, all loves, loyalties and patriotisms spring from the heart, and Seilern's heart was in the Empire in whose service he was to spend the remaining thirty-nine years of his life.

I conclude this chapter with two reflections on Karl Ludwig.

The first is that, as a footnote to Seilern's ten years with Karl Ludwig, we may observe that furious as the Elector was with him for handing in his resignation and arbitrary as was his action in making Seilern spend the six months of his notice confined to a room in the castle of Heidelberg, Karl Ludwig followed neither the precedent of his uncle Charles I in signing the death warrant of the disgraced Strafford, nor Louis XIV's cruel habit of incarcerating in the Bastille for life, or sending to, the galleys, those who displeased him.

The second is that, as a footnote to Seilern's judgment on Louis XIV as the "protector of German liberties", we may observe that despite Karl Ludwig's policy of appeasement, which he fancied that he had consolidated by securing the hand of Louis XIV's brother for his daughter Liselotte, Louis XIV in 1687 sent eighty thousand men to devastate the Palatinate for good and all.

VIII

IN THE EMPEROR'S SERVICE

SEILERN'S FIRST IMPERIAL post was as First Secretary to the envoys who represented the Emperor in the negotiations (1678-79), which resulted in the Treaty of Nimwegen - a characteristic exhibition run of what, if you are a French historian such as A. Legrelle,' you regard as Louis XIV's supreme diplomatic virtuosity, but which strikes me as versatile skulduggery. For in 1673, seeing that the Dutch were momentarily without allies and utterly unprepared for war, Louis fell on the unfortunate republic, which saved itself only by opening its dykes. Leopold reacted. With difficulty he pieced together an alliance against France from among Europe's intimidated princes. Leopold's character is hardly known to English readers but perhaps the quickest way to introduce him is to say that he had all of William III of England's virtues, his grasp that Louis XIV's conception of *La gloire* **(The ambivalence at the core of the word *gloire* is penetratingly brought out in the French of Racine. For Racine *gloire* means not only "glory" but also "reputation" (as in *Il ne manqua pas de sa gloire:* He was true to his reputation) and "pride" (as in *Sa gloire le perda:* His pride was his ruin)** was to lord it over Europe like a shark among minnows, his stubbornness in rallying the opposition to Louis XIV in the face of divisive suspicions, jealousies and short-sightedness, his ability to pick out able advisers and generals and none of William's unattractive vices. As a man Leopold was phlegmatic, conscientious and pious, as a husband he was faithful and domesticated.

His league against Louis was not strikingly successful in the field but its plodding tactics exhausted France by 1678 and Louis thereupon, seeing that he could gain nothing further by war, hastened to profess that his sole desire was ever to live at peace with his neighbours, and by clever diplomacy at Nimwegen between August, 1678, and February, 1679, he retained what he had conquered. Peace reigning, Louis set to work to open up opportunities for further aggrandisement.

Seilern had watched the war from a militarily and diplomatically forward position, because Karl Ludwig had been a shilly-shallying member of Leopold's league. Seilern's first hand knowledge of developments in the Rhineland had made him a natural choice to work with the Bishop of Gurk, Count Franz Ulrich Kinsky and Privy Councillor Theodor Strattmann, who constituted the Imperial mission at Nimwegan.

Seilern's immediate chief was Kinsky, with whom he was to collaborate happily for many years, but the beginnings at Nirnwegen were inauspicious. Kinsky was erudite, absent-minded and irritable, and as an aristocrat by birth probably (in accordance with the habit of the period) looked down upon Seilern as an upstart who had risen too rapidly and needed to be taught his place. Fifteen years later Seilern recalled in a letter to his colleague Privy Councillor President Count Oettingen that

Kinsky had been brusque and used language which "I perhaps interpreted more harshly than had been intended and therefore took to heart more than was necessary ... You, however," he continued, "have always treated me with great politeness and kindness" - an addition which implies that Seilern was sensitive to politeness and perhaps too sensitive to harshness. Indeed, according to Karl Ludwig, "insults were not even required to make Seilern really furious; bluntness was sufficient." Karl Ludwig's observation is questionable evidence, because stung by Seilern's resignation, the Elector sought to reduce him by bullying and to scare him by keeping him under arrest. Seilern stood up to Karl Ludwig. But at Nimwegen it would have been unwise to answer harshness back and to seek a new employer so soon after having achieved entry into the elite Imperial service. Moreover he soon discovered that Kinsky did not reserve his scathe for him but distributed it impartially around. So Seilern controlled his 'resentment - with happy results, for Kinsky came to have high regard for Seilern's abilities; he and Seilern found that they had profound interests in common: both were scholars, both were dedicated to the Empire; they became friends and allies.

After two years in Nimwegen the three Imperial plenipotentiaries were bored stiff and anxious to get away. Kinsky insisted that Seilern was perfectly able to tie up remaining loose ends, exchange the formal ratifications and wind up the embassy accounts - responsibilities which kept him alone in charge for the next eight months until he handed over the Imperial copy of the Peace Treaty to Vice-Chancellor Count Koenigsegg on March 7,1680, in Prague where the Emperor was holding court.

Seilern had hardly time to unpack before he was posted afresh. The Marquis of Grana, appointed ambassador to Madrid, was due to leave and Seilern was assigned to him as secretary. We do not know on what day they left Prague but travelling by imperial coach they had reached Basle by March 27, Lyons (April 9), Avigno (April 11), Beziers (April 15), thence over the eastern Pyrenees and into Madrid on May 15 - a total of some 1,300 miles. From Basle to Madrid was approximately 1,000 miles, so they must have lumbered along at twenty miles a day, which was good time, considering that March and April could still be wet and that rain would turn dust into quag.

Seilern's story is one of success; he started life endowed with nothing but intelligence and education. His two years in Madrid throw light on the secret of his success: they were marked by no special developments and a thirty-five year old bachelor secretary of embassy, with ample leisure, might have taken life easily. Seilern, however, thought otherwise. He was a man who must always be studying. What was there to study in Spain? First, the language. And then? To what special uses could the language be put? In 1680, Seilern could not foresee that the nineteen year-old king of Spain, Charles II, would have two wives and no children, but his actions suggest, first, that the thought crossed his mind and that it led him to wonder who would inherit the throne. Charles's elder sister, Maria Theresa, was Louis XIV's

Queen; Margaret, his second sister, was Leopold's Empress. Maria Theresa had conditionally renounced any rights to the Spanish throne. Margaret had renounced nothing. Would Louis XIV claim the Spanish throne for his wife's heirs? And Leopold? Who put forward what claims to the throne would depend partly on the personal "House" customs of the Habsburgs, partly on the laws of the Empire and, not least, on those of Spain. By the end of his two years in Madrid, Seilern had mastered the Spanish laws of succession so that when Leopold I wanted to prepare a Family Pact, whereby he and his elder son Joseph renounced their claims in favour of his second son Charles (later Charles III of Spain and VI of Austria), simultaneously laying down that if the male line of either of his sons became extinct, the male issue of the other should succeed to the possessions of both via primogeniture, that female issue was to succeed in default of male and Joseph's line always to take precedence over that of Charles, he would, in the ordinary course, have had to seek out three or four lawyers and interpreters, specialists in the languages and overlapping jurisdictions, to identify and reconcile the complicated legal issues and to draft the Family Pact of 1703. The selection of such lawyers would in itself have been a problem, because the consultations and decisions affecting the rights of a dozen Habsburg dignitaries, from the Archdukes down, would have had to be kept absolutely secret until the right moment. But Leopold was fortunate in that there was one man already high in his employ, whom he trusted and who had the requisite legal and linguistic knowledge - Roman, Spanish and Habsburg. Seilern, by then aged fifty-eight, was summoned from Regensburg where for the previous fourteen years he had represented the Emperor in the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire. He arrived in Vienna on November 29, 1702, and by September 12, 1703, he had completed the job and no Habsburg who was not supposed to know anything about Leopold's pact suspected a thing. A Hindu proverb says that luck is one half of success. The American proverb - luck is a lazy man's estimate of a hard-working man's success - seems more apt.

We now return to 1682, when Leopold appointed Grana to be Viceroy of the Austrian Netherlands. Seilern accompanied the delighted Marquis to Brussels but himself went on to Vienna where the Emperor rewarded his steady work with promotion to membership of the Imperial Privy Council. Between 1682 and 1684 Seilern's name is shown as attending every Privy Council meeting.

The times were even more out of joint than usual.

For over a century the Turks had occupied the greater part of the kingdom of Hungary. In 1683, they decided to launch a forward policy on their frontier with the Empire.

One factor that decided them was the ubiquitous Louis XIV. The ink was still wet on the Treaty of Nimwegen when Louis found means to reinterpret its terms in his favour. The Treaty laid down that the districts and towns surrendered to France included their "dependencies". This opened a field for controversy as useful as it

was wide. Louis's agents came up with claims over Upper and Lower Alsace, which made French vassals out of nobles who held directly from the Emperor and turned Imperial towns into French towns. He enforced these claims by bribes, threats and troops. The victims were defenceless unless the European powers helped them but these, having just signed a treaty of peace, had demobilised and were unprepared to go to the aid of people whose plight seemed far away. Leopold was tied down by a rebellion (cheered on by the Turks) in that slice of Hungary that remained under his rule. The French ambassador in Istanbul hastened to point out that the dispute over Alsace between Leopold and Louis offered a marvellous opportunity for the Turks to march against Leopold.

Then having, as John Stoye says, tightened one screw, Louis sought to tighten another. In April, 1682, he withdrew his forces from Luxemburg, which they had been blockading, and ordered his ambassadors throughout Europe to publicise this as a gesture of solidarity for peace between Christians threatened by infidels in the east. One ambassador, however, was told the truth: to Guilleragues in Istanbul, Louis explained that his real reason for withdrawing from Luxemburg was to threaten the Emperor with all the forces at his disposal. Guilleragues feared that the Turks intended to expand into Poland, not Austria, and he therefore emphasised to the Turks that Louis might judge it necessary to go to the aid of Sobieski whereas for Leopold French aid was out of the question. Louis pulled out every diplomatic stop to push the Turks into Hungary, so successfully that the threat to Austria from the east grew stronger month by month in the second half of 1682. Louis announced that if his "generous" offer to negotiate a settlement of outstanding problems in Alsace were ignored, it would lapse on the last day of November.

Although by then Leopold knew that an immense Turkish army was being assembled, he never considered surrendering to Louis. The campaign season for 1682 was over but he set about raising armies and seeking allies to meet the dangers of 1683.

If you draw a straight line from the mouth of the Danube in the Black Sea in the east to the mouth of the Seine in the west, and another from Danzig in the north to Palermo in the south, the lines cross in Vienna - the heart of Europe. Leopold's ambassadors sped as fast as coaches could lumber through the mud and snow of winter to the princes of the Empire pointing out that they would all be threatened if the Turks established themselves in Austria. The Low Countries and the Rhineland states were paralysed by Louis XIV but the princes of Franconia, the Upper Rhine, Saxony, Hanover, Bavaria and a section of loyal Hungarians and not least the Pole, Sobieski, saw the danger and mobilised to join the Imperial forces.

How Sobieski, as commander of all the allied forces, co-operated with Charles of Lorraine to raise the siege of Vienna and drive the Turks in disarray out of Europe once and for all in September, 1683, is as well known as it is an heroic story.

It is also well known that the meeting between Leopold and Sobieski was embarrassing. The Polish king and his troops had played an important part in the fighting, but so had Charles of Lorraine and the Imperial allies, and the latter were angry because the Poles had looted the Turkish camp, destroying invaluable munitions of war and carrying off plunder, and because Sobieski had entered Vienna in triumph as if he alone had saved the city. Accounts of the meeting between him and Leopold differ in detail but agree that Leopold's attitude gave offence, whether intentionally or through a misunderstanding, and that Sobieski withdrew in wrath like Achilles into his tent, leaving his Chancellor to take his place to review the troops in company with the Emperor.

But there is one point which I have found in no history book, and which is of special interest to the Seilern, Zaluski, Mather and Hennessy families for whom I am writing.

Sobieski's Chancellor was Bishop Andre Chrysostome Zaluski (1650 - 1711). He had just been appointed Canon of Cracow in 1674 when he was given the mission of announcing the election of John Sobieski as King of Poland to the courts of France, Spain and Portugal. The skill with which he accomplished his task established his reputation. He became Bishop of Kiev and in 1683, aged thirty-three, he was one of the Polish plenipotentiaries, who negotiated the treaty between Warsaw and Vienna, which prepared the way for Sobieski's dash to save Vienna.

Did our ancestral kinsmen, Seilern and Zaluski meet? In his capacity as one of the Privy Councillors to the Imperial Chancellery, the negotiations between Imperial and allied princes would have been within his domain and he may have seen communications from Zaluski and even drafted replies - research in the Viennese archives would establish this but it seems doubtful that they met because in 1683 Seilern was hardly senior enough to have dealt in person with the Polish Chancellor.

After the Turks had fled, the Imperial army went into Hungary to reorganise the territories, which had been in foreign occupation for over a century, and in October and November, 1684, Seilern was sent on a mission, whose purpose is not known, to the army in Hungary. On his return, he had the pleasure of finding that on October 28, 1684, the Emperor had issued in his favour a patent of knighthood of the Holy Roman Empire.

He also found that he had been posted as chargé d'affaires in Paris.

IX

SEILERN VERSUS THE DUCHESS OF ORLEANS

KARL LUDWIG'S DAUGHTER Liselotte, after a diplomatic con version from Calvinism to Catholicism, had in 1671 married Louis XIV's brother, the Duke of Orleans.

At first sight it seems curious that the Calvinist German Karl Ludwig should have been ready to see his daughter married to a French Catholic, brother of the living menace to everything German, and curious that Louis XIV, who regarded himself not merely as the Sun King of France but as the premier crowned head of Europe, should have allowed his brother (following the death in 1670 of his first wife Henriette, daughter of Charles I of England) to marry the daughter of the junior most Elector of the Holy Roman Empire.

Karl Ludwig's motives are transparent. His alliance by marriage with the House of France would surely' ensure that the Palatinate would not again become a campaigning ground for French armies, and it would also enhance his prestige vis-a-vis Leopold and the Empire. The outcome was to prove him mistaken.

When the possibility that Philip of Orleans might marry Liselotte was mooted, Louis doubtless looked at the map of his northern frontier. Such a marriage would advance French influence to the Rhine, inserting a wedge into the Empire, whence he could threaten a cluster of Imperial territories to the east and north while to the north-west and west he would be within striking distance of the Spanish Netherlands, whose existence he regarded as an eyesore. Moreover, Karl Ludwig's sole heir, Karl, was a sickly youth of twenty. Should Karl die without an heir, Louis saw the possibilities of claiming the succession on behalf of the Duchess of Orleans as Karl's sister, in which case the eldest son of the Duchess would, or at least should, in due course succeed as Elector of the Palatinate, which would give France inside influence on the election of the Emperor and perhaps break the prevalent supine acquiescence in the now hereditary claims of the Habsburgs.

Whenever a marriage between princes opened up the possibilities of a disputed succession, it was customary to require the person concerned to renounce his or her territorial claims with the most solemn oaths, and Liselotte duly did so.

In 1685, Karl died childless. His nearest eldest male relation, Philip Wilhelm, Duke of Pfalz Neuberg, succeeded him.

At once Louis protested to the Emperor and claimed the Palatinate for his sister-in-law - a claim which challenged both the laws of the Empire and the customs of every princely house in the Empire and, indeed, in Europe in an age when princely marriages affected the destinies of kingdoms and when disputed successions could

mean war or peace for millions, the French challenge was of the utmost significance, and Seilern realised that it must be fought from the beginning and resisted to the end.

Without waiting for instructions he acted. His grasp of the juridical issues at stake was unique. He had studied under Pufendorf, the greatest living authority on the law of the Empire and on international law: he had defended Karl Ludwig's House rights before the Emperor; he had studied Spanish House custom and law in Madrid; he had kept the minutes of the confidential discussions in Karl Ludwig's cabinet *concerning Liselotte's contract of marriage with the Duke of Orleans.* He had no need to refer to documents. He had all the necessary information in his head.

The late Dr. Gustav Turba (on whose diffuse biography of Seilern I have relied for many facts) was a lawyer and he revelled in the ramifications of House custom and Imperial law on feudal and allodial property. What follows is but the kernel in non-technical language of the legal thrusts and counter thrusts that he describes in Liselotte's case, which dragged on its meticulous way for the seventeen years 1685 1702.

As chargé d'affaires and not a plenipotentiary, Seilern had no right to audience with the king. His channel was the Papal Nuncio and through him he pointed out that while the Duchess of Orleans might have claims to a share of certain movables, such as money, jewellery and other allodial goods (**an allodium was property held not of a superior but in absolute ownership as opposed to feudal tenure.)** she had, in accordance with (1) the laws of the Empire and (2) the customs of the House of the Palatinate no territorial claims whatsoever. Louis's lawyers retorted that although the Duchess had renounced her claims, her renunciation

- was invalid because they had witnesses to prove that she had not touched the Bible when taking the oath - a nice legal point, characteristic of Louis XIV's farsighted attention to detail – and
- had lapsed because it was conditional on the receipt of the Duchess's dowry, which the hard-up Karl Ludwig had failed to pay before he died.

Seilern replied, first, that her brother Karl had paid the dowry in full and that, on receipt of it, both the Duchess and her husband had renewed the renunciation of their claims. Secondly, whether or not they had sworn with their hands on the Bible he neither knew nor cared, because both Imperial law and Palatinate custom were clear that feudal inheritance went by agnate primogeniture, so that renunciation on the part of the Duchess was unnecessary and irrelevant.

When in 1685 Louis XIV startled the courts of the Empire by claiming the Palatinate for the Duchess of Orleans, Leopold I was still heavily engaged in reorganising the vast Hungarian lands recovered from the Turks and in mending the fences of his distant and far-flung frontiers on Moldavia, Wallachia and Bosnia.[2] The last thing that

he wanted was war on his European front door. His first reaction may, therefore, have been one of relief when Louis, with one of his famous professions of goodwill to all men, suggested that the palatinate dispute be referred to the arbitration of the Pope, Innocent XI. Louis expected that Innocent would be as amenable to French influence as his predecessor and that he could obtain all that he wanted by deploying his diplomatic forces. Leopold saw, however, that like all Louis XIV's generous gestures, this one had a catch in it, i.e. that he, the Emperor, was the supreme judge in the dispute between his vassal the Duke of Pfalz-Neuberg and the Duchess of Orleans, but he knew that Louis would never allow the case to be pleaded before him. For his part, Leopold could not acknowledge the Pope's jurisdiction over the Palatinate. Here was a dilemma.

Besides his official concern, Leopold had a personal interest in the Palatinate, because he had married Eleonor, the Duke of Pfalz-Neuberg's daughter. Since it is to be presumed that all princes marry for reasons of state, we may speculate that among Leopold's motives for marrying the Elector's daughter was to ensure that the reigning prince in that outpost of Empire on the French frontier had a strong interest in upholding the Empire. Certainly Philip Wilhelm now listened to the advice of his son in-law, who urged him to play for time. He might begin by handing over that part of the allodia which were not being contested and this Philip Wilhelm did in October, 1686. As a half way out of the dilemma of the Pope's mediation, Leopold further advised his father-in-law to agree to the Pope's "limited mediation" without mentioning a "decision".

In view of the importance of the dispute to all the princes of the Empire, the Emperor instructed Seilern, as the acknowledged expert, to quit Paris to go as Envoy Extraordinary in the Rhineland, with Heidelberg as his headquarters. From there he could both advise the Elector and counter French intrigues in neighbouring principalities.

As Louis intensified pressure not only in the Palatinate dispute but in others, Leopold sensed that France was once more leading up to war and he initiated negotiations, in which Seilern played his part, which ended in the defensive League of Augsburg, joined by Spain, Sweden, the Dutch Republic, Saxony, Bavaria and Savoy. Even the Pope gave his secret support.

The Pope's friendliness encouraged the Elector to accept his mediation on the disputed parts of the allodia (as distinguished from the feudal entails over which the Emperor alone had jurisdiction). The Elector had, however, misgivings that the Pope and the Roman Curia would not be conversant with the Empire's constitutional law and princely House rights. Everyone in Vienna and Heidelberg agreed that Seilern was the man to advise the Pope. On May 15, 1687, he arrived in Rome, officially as Minister of State for the Palatinate, but *de facto* as Crown representative of the Emperor and the German princes. The Pope accorded him a two-hour audience. His legal expertise impressed the Curia and his personality won their respect and

what (from the fulsome records extant) sounds like their affection. Seilern handled himself with such tact that he scored his triumph without ruffling the feelings of the Palatinate's resident charge d'affaires, Pierucci, who reported that Seilern had fulfilled his mission "admirably". The Pope admitted that Seilern had convinced him of the justice of the Elector's case and had demonstrated (as the Pope expressed it) the "non-reasons" put forward on behalf of Liselotte.

Convincing evidence of the Pope's friendliness towards Seilern is provided by Louis XIV who, as soon as he heard that an ill-Papal-wind was blowing against France, countermanded *his own proposal* that the Pope should mediate.

The Elector was so pleased with Seilern that he did all that he could to persuade him to leave the Imperial service and join the Palatinate. He offered him the post of Chancellor to his son's administration, but although the chance to live at home amongst his relatives tempted him, Seilern's heart was in the Emperor's service, because it enabled him to promote the interests of the German people as a whole. Respectfully, he refused the Elector's invitation. Afraid that the Elector would use his influence with the Emperor to bring pressure on him to join the Palatinate, Seilern wrote urgently to his colleague and friend the President of the Imperial Privy Council, Count Wolfgang Oettingen-Wallerstein, to pull every string to keep him in the Emperor's service. The Elector yielded to Seilern's wishes, and it is pleasant to record that he and his son continued to show him warm gratitude for having saved the Palatinate from the clutches of Louis XIV; for example, in a letter dated 1706 written to Seilern after he had become First Austrian Court Chancellor, Prince Johann Wilhelm signed himself "I am the Herrn Court Chancellor's most well-disposed, most obliged and, with all my heart, most loyal servant, as always, Johann Wilhelm, Elector."

It was not to be supposed that the Sun King would ignore the Pope's "treachery". What to do? Louis at that moment was engaged in a war of nerves against William of Orange and Leopold to make permanent the Truce of Regensburg of August 26, 1684, by virtue of which he was occupying Luxemburg and other territories for twenty years. His power was now at its peak and he decided to counter by a fresh invasion the reluctance of his opponents to concede his demands. Several lines of invasion were possible. It was probably the Pope's recalcitrance over the Palatinate that decided Louis to strike there: his revenge coincided with his convenience. Some may therefore argue that Seilern's victory in Rome was Pyrrhic, that Louis proved that might was right and that he had the last word in Liselotte's dispute. His invasion of the Palatinate has, however, been held to be Louis's greatest blunder. Had he struck at Holland, William of Orange would not have dared to cross to England, the Revolution of 1688 might not have occurred, and in the years to come William and Leopold would not have had the all-important military and financial strength of England behind them. Be that as it may, what is certain is that the invasion of the Palatinate mobilised the hostility of the hesitant German princes. Louis himself thus

provided Leopold with the foundation stone of the Grand Alliance which ultimately united all (except Portugal, Russia and a few Italian states) the powers of Europe against France. From this time on, the balance in Europe swung from France in favour of the Empire. France, instead of being supported by a multitude of allies or friendly neutrals stood alone amidst enemies. The fears that prevailed during and after the Thirty Years War, which had induced many German princes to see France as the protector of their "liberties", now turned them towards the House of Austria.

Louis soon found that his forces could not hold the Palatinate. Accordingly, he ordered its methodical devastation, to the grief of Liselotte herself, who did not desire that her claim should be enforced by the sufferings of her compatriots. Louis detailed men to strip, on Liselotte's behalf, all the furniture, tapestries, silver and valuables from her father's castle at Heidelberg and then to blow it up. Its ruins stand a memorial to Louis's reply to Seilern and the Pope.

The mills of God grind slowly and the Curia's final verdict was promulgated only on February 17, 1702. Of course, the Curia found *de facto* for the Elector's House customs and the Empire's constitutional law, but the fruits of Seilern's persuasiveness were that the Curia's *de jure* verdict ignored Liselotte's territorial claims: she was awarded 300,000 Roman scudi in compensation for "everything - for whatever reason and by whatever right - she can request on the occasion of the succession to the estates and the inheritance of her father and brother." This meant that Seilern's diplomacy had ensured that the Pope had not intervened between the Emperor and his vassal on a matter of feudal right and he thus avoided violation of the Imperial constitution and the Elector's House custom.

So it was that a year before the fundamental Austrian Family Pact, which Seilern drafted for Leopold in 1703, a *cause célèbre,* defended in accordance with his arguments, was decided in favour of the autonomous rights of ruling German houses.

Liselotte never forgave Seilern. She spread scandalous and scabrous stories about him to the day of his death and after. She accused him of having stolen confidential documents from Karl Ludwig to take with him into the Emperor's service - an accusation which Karl Ludwig, furious as he had been with Seilern, would surely have himself made if he had had the least cause to suspect it. Liselotte alleged that Seilern boasted that he was Karl Ludwig's illegitimate son - an accusation for which she is the only witness. Had Seilern made such a boast it would have been common gossip in Vienna, whereas there is no mention of it. Liselotte's rancour survived Seilern's death. When she heard that he had suffered a stroke which had deprived him of speech some days before he died, she gloated that he had been unable to make his peace with God in a death-bed confession and must have gone straight to Hell.

X

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE TREATY OF RYSWICK

ON JUNE 28, 1688, Seilern arrived in Regensburg as the newly appointed Imperial Deputy Commissioner in the Diet. The Principal Commissioner was the senior diplomatic post in the Emperor's service and Seilern served successively as second-in-command to Gottlieb Windisch-Graetz, the Margrave Hermann of Baden, Prince Ferdinand Lobkowitz and Count Johann Philip Lamberg.

Seilern stayed on as Deputy Commissioner for fourteen years and the length of his continuous experience there, together with the many occasions when he was alone as the Acting Principal Commissioner, enhanced his prestige among the commissioners of other states and his influence with his own principal commissioners. Ultimately he became Principal Commissioner himself and Governor Plenipotentiary of the Imperial city with it.

First, the background: the Nine Years War (1688-1697) had entered a stalemate in which neither the Grand Alliance (England, Holland and the Empire) nor France scored decisive successes but in which both suffered increasing exhaustion, with the balance tipped against France.

William III's aims were:

1. To secure his recognition by Louis as King of England and his repudiation of the Stuarts' right to the English throne;

2. to ensure the partition of the possessions of Spain so that they were neither united wholly with the Empire nor with France.

Leopold's aims were:

1. To secure the restoration from France to the Empire of the dependencies in Alsace.

2. to ensure the Spanish succession to his second son, the Archduke Charles.

Louis XIV's aims were:

1. To retain all the dependencies that he could, although, provided that he could keep the bishoprics of Metz, Toul and Verdun, he regarded many as expendable; above all

2. to recuperate his resources in preparation for the European crisis that must break on the death of Charles II of Spain, who would leave descendants of his grandfather, Philip III, in Paris, Vienna and Munich but not in Madrid.

Early in 1694, Leopold, his confessor Menegatti and his Chancellor Windisch-Graetz thought that the moment had come to sound Louis XIV. Count de Velo, a Venetian, was chosen because Leopold liked him, because he was a friend of Menegatti, and because he had a personal link with the court of Versailles. Windisch-Graetz was less enthusiastic about him; he was suspicious that Menegatti and Velo as Italians - non-Germans - would sacrifice the Alsatian territories of the Empire for the sake of peace. Consequently he persuaded Leopold that Velo must be accompanied by an expert and that the man for the job was Seilern, who had the legal knowledge and the experience, and who, moreover, was a dedicated upholder of the German Holy Roman Empire.

Windisch-Graetz instructed Seilern on May 10, 1694, that he had been chosen for "the most secret and important matter which has ever been handled at our court" and of which only himself, Menegatti, Velo and the Emperor were aware; he was to apply for leave of absence from Regensburg "to attend to family affairs" and to travel to Switzerland under the name of Baron Greiss.

Louis XIV appointed the Abbe Morel as his agent and instructed Amelot, his resident at Solothurn in Switzerland, to engage rooms in conditions of the utmost secrecy for the negotiators. For untoward reasons, rooms were successively engaged at inns in Solothurn, Frauenfeld, Lindau and Schaffhausen, thus attracting local attention, before the first meeting which was held at yet another place - Diessenhofen.

What follows is pieced together from the reports that Seilern sent to Windisch-Graetz, Velo to Menegatti, the Frenchmen to Louis, and the Dutch and Electoral secret agents, who subsequently trailed them all.

Velo had no difficulty in creating a good impression on Morel. ·He was all out to secure a personal triumph. He was accommodating and promised confidently and optimistically that the Emperor would accept his recommendations. Morel reported to Paris "I have rarely met a more lively, alert and witty Italian."

Seilern, on the other hand, knew better than to seek quick results. By going into the attack at once, demanding that the Dauphin should renounce all claims to the Spanish throne and dismissing out of hand the French claims to Alsace, he created in Morel's mind the impression that he was indifferent to the success of the negotiations and that these were therefore the Emperor's minimum demands, whereas Seilern was, of course, seeking to force the Frenchman to reveal what Louis's true arms were.

Morel describes Seilern as "difficult in mood and schoolmasterly in manner ... irascible with flashing eyes ... a bizarre personality." This, as we shall see, was also how he later struck Stepney, the British ambassador, who disliked him intensely. Was Seilern therefore a poor diplomat? Three Emperors did not think so: they gave him ever-increasing responsibility. Whether one agrees with his technique or not and

although he did not always gain immediate results, he invariably advanced the imperial cause, and however much his opponents disliked him they respected him and took him with the utmost seriousness.

Morel, however, was irritated by Seilern's "long lectures". He was contemptuous because Seilern was socially an upstart, because he considered him badly dressed, parsimonious because he had only two servants, and because he drank no wine. "Over study, over work, over abstinence and his mania for economy have addled his brain." In Paris, Louis read between the lines of Morel's reports. He saw that Velo and Morel were lightweights and that however excessive Seilern's demands might seem they opened up lines which should be followed. Having armed the Count Louis de Crecy with fuller instructions than he had given Morel, Louis sent him to Switzerland to take charge of the negotiations. Crecy, one of France's shrewdest diplomats, a member of the French Academy, a man of culture, finesse and inexhaustible patience who, as Saint Simon says, knew how again and again to re introduce a rejected point in a new guise, could stand up to Seilern as an equal. As the French envoy at Regensburg he was, moreover, well acquainted with Seilern and took his eccentricities in his stride.

He encountered one even before he met Seilern. The negotiations between Seilern and Morel had taken place at Diessenhofen. In the interval Seilern had packed up and moved to Steckborn. In vain Velo tried to persuade Seilern to resume at Diessenhofen. The Frenchmen had to swallow their pride, and go to Seilern - that "fanatical pedant" at the Steckborn inn where, having scored this initial prestige victory, Seilern remained one pace ahead to the end.

As an example of Seilern's methods, we may study what the French historian Legrelle **(La Diplomatie Française et la Succession d'Espagne, p. 387)** calls a "very important document" that Seilern submitted to Crecy and Morel. If it seems the production of a legal pedant, it should be remembered that Louis XIV kept legal experts to comb treaties to uncover drafting ambivalences which would enable him to regard his signature as disengaged (**The point mentioned previously concerning Liselotte's alleged omission to touch the bible when taking her oath, and see also the drafting of the Pragmatic Sanction).** It was therefore important to pin Louis down by covering every conceivable possibility. Here, then, is Seilern's text translated from the Latin in which he wrote it:

> In order not to create any possible future germ of division and to avoid any difference which might emerge between His Imperial Majesty and His Most Christian Majesty, their heirs and successors, and in order to remove all sources of differences as far as possible, His Most Christian Majesty repeats, renews and confirms again in the most complete way, simply and on the good faith of a king, in his name as in the name of his son, the most serene Dauphin, and of all his successors, the unqualified renunciations, irrevocable and perpetual, made by his most serene mother and father in the contract of

their marriage of August 20, 1612, and by him and by his late most serene spouse in the contract of their marriage of November 7,1659, or of any other veritable date (**A nice point in case either Seilern had got the date wrongly, or the marriage certificate had been incorrectly dated, or if the marriage had begun in one day and ended in another, or there had been a mistake in the calendar, etc., etc., any of which errors would, in Louis's eyes, have rendered the renunciation invalid.)** on the subject of the succession to all and each of the kingdoms and estates, their constituents and parts, and all which could ever be, or could have been, claimed under title of heritage or succession, and under whatsoever name, even as though all the legal and other clauses were here inserted and repeated word for word, or that on each there had been a new oath personally sworn. His Most Christian Majesty promises by the same token in good faith and on the word of a king, that neither he nor his successors will at any time intervene in any way in what can concern the succession to the said kingdoms or states of the said dominion or part of the same, but that they will accept or allow all that could happen by divine Providence, the dispositions, pacts and renunciations accepted by the most serene House of Austria; that the present article will in fact be ratified by the most serene Dauphin, for himself and his successors, at the time stipulated for the ratifications which will be laid down hereafter, with the specific declaration that the said first renunciation, which is now repeated, and the present promise which is joined to this, must be considered truly ratified by all whom it concerns, accepted and registered in the Parliament of Paris or any other where it is customary to register or accept similar acts, by virtue of the acceptation itself of peace or the publication thereof which will be made in the kingdom of France, even though there should not as a consequence of peace have been any formality observed concerning it, or that there should have been any solemnities, writings or declarations, public or secret, made to the contrary: any such will cause not prejudice but will be wholly and fully nullified insofar as the present article 'is concerned, so that all that could be done, alleged or imagined (**The supreme touch, this**) to the contrary, even if it were in a form which would require that special or more ample mention should be made to abrogate or annul them - they shall be made null and void.

Legrelle comments that Louis's reply to this is:

> Of the highest importance, because it takes the Spanish question into a new phase. Louis offers to renounce for himself and for his children, in a manner that seems absolute, the heritage of Charles II of Spain. At the same time, he only goes halfway along the road of the Emperor and of peace. He is willing to renounce for himself and his heirs all the rights of his wife, Maria Theresa, but he leaves provisionally in suspense the recognition of the rights that Leopold puts forward on the part of Maria Margaret (**Leopold's first wife, the**

second daughter of Philip IV of Spain, mother of Max, Elector of Bavaria, and grandmother of Prince Joseph Ferdinand, whom William III and Louis XIV agreed in the Partition Treaty of 1698 to recognise as heir to the Spanish throne. His death in 1699 thrust the succession problem back into the melting pot.) The designation of Austria as the universal heir remains subordinate to proofs of the sincerity of Leopold's reconciliation with Louis. In other words, Louis makes the Spanish throne the ransom of Alsace and, above all, Strasbourg ... From this it emerges that France, without in any way recognising Leopold as heir, without even renouncing anything concerning the rights of Bavaria, showed herself accommodating concerning Spain, and Seilern later admitted that agreement had been brought 'much closer' at Steckborn.

After this subtle analysis of Louis's calculations by Legrelle, it seems difficult to allege tortuousness against Seilern.

Owing to France's exhaustion, Louis was ready to go a long way to avoid a breakdown, nor did he wish the Sultan of Turkey, whom he was urging to harry the Empire in the rear, to know that he was engaged in peace talks with the Emperor. Louis therefore gave his envoys graduated demands, opening with the stiffest. If Seilern resisted stubbornly they were empowered to offer concessions to make agreement possible. This was immediately clear to Seilern and confirmed him in his tactics. On the other hand, Velo in his eagerness for an agreement, which would secure him a personal triumph, was exasperated by Seilern's apparent boorishness. He began to denigrate Seilern behind his back and to assure the French that Seilern was out of touch with feeling in Vienna. The French archives' show that "this pleasant person, who was good company", was all out to placate the French. He told Morel that the emperor would be satisfied to re-establish peace on the basis of the Treaty of Westphalia only nominally for the disputed Alsatian towns and feudatories; he implied that, providing the Emperor was recognised as their sovereign *de jure,* France could enjoy *de facto* sovereignty, and he made other gratuitous and unauthorised concessions.

Thus tipped off by Velo, Crecy opened negotiations with Seilern by reading out a demand for full sovereignty over Alsace. Seilern reacted almost with apoplexy. As one paragraph succeeded another, his face flushed, his eyes flashed, he began to gesticulate with increasing passion. At the end, he had apparently a struggle to find his voice before he finally gasped *Sono arabiatissimo* ("I am furious"). He insisted that the terms of the Westphalian treaty must be applied to Alsace. He threatened to break off negotiations.

The meeting ended in dismay. Velo dashed off an angry note complaining of Seilern to Menegatti: in order to dissuade Morel from breaking off the talks (which, of course, he did not intend), Velo alleged that Windisch-Graetz himself had declared that Seilern had the gift of causing negotiations to fail.

For his part, Crecy was determined that if the negotiations had to fail he would manoeuvre to put the blame on Seilern. On September 2 he therefore handed Seilern a new memorandum. Velo too, without consulting Seilern, had also drafted one. When Seilern saw Velo's proposals he declared them to be "horrible". So great was Seilern's anguish (real or pretended) when faced with these two memoranda that he brought the conference to a standstill by covering his face with his handkerchief "for nearly a quarter of an hour in order to rest his spirit and get his breath." On the other hand, he then kept the discussions going until he had exhausted his opponents and rendered them speechlessly hoarse.

Thereafter Seilern retired to his bedroom - but not to sleep. He drafted a memorandum demanding an answer, unequivocal and immediate, concerning Alsace. He then gave instructions that he was to be called at a very early hour and went to bed, presumably to sleep the sleep of the just. The next morning he knocked up the Frenchmen's still shuttered inn and, "hardly leaving them time to jump out of bed", handed the bleary-eyed Crecy his new memorandum, keeping up a spate of angry accusations that Crecy's memorandum was obscure and open to diverse interpretations; he wound up by reproaching him for wasting his time and threatened to return to Regensburg.

There followed a series of verbal rough and tumbles, after which Seilern's "Either or" line - either France would restore all the Alsatian dependencies or he would return to Regensburg - was put up to Louis XIV. Behind Seilern's back Velo continued desperately to reassure the French that the Emperor's confessor, Menegatti was the only person who really had the Emperor's ear, that he was full of good will towards the French, and that the door to further talks was wide open, when Seilern slammed it. Without another word he left on September 6 for Regensburg.

XI

SEILERN AND THE EMPEROR IN A CLOAK AND DAGGER FARCE

MEANWHILE the fat had got into the fire and was beginning to sizzle.

Seilern's deputy in Regensburg had informed the Emperor that Seilern's absence had attracted speculation and started a rumour that he was engaged in secret talks. Leopold became agitated. Windisch-Graetz hurriedly wrote to Seilern telling him to write to Regensburg from Heidelberg (where his relations lived) that he was ill. This was too little and too late, because in his anxiety to keep Seilern's mission secret, Windisch-Graetz had not warned Franz von Neveu, the Imperial representative in Switzerland, that envoys from Vienna would be visiting Switzerland. Neveu, able and alert, had a network of spies and kept in contact with Prince Ludwig of Baden, Commander of the Imperial troops across the frontier guarding against a surprise French invasion. The comings and goings around Solothurn, Frauenfeld, Lindau, Schafhausen, Diessenhofen and Steckborn, the despatch of couriers to and fro across the frontier and indiscretions on the part of the negotiators themselves (**More had put it abroad that he had come to buy a few thousand cows, whereas any yokel could see that ',the Abbe would probably not know one end of a cow from the other. Seilern had shown his Imperial passport to an agent of the magistrates who had questioned him.)** stirred Neveu to action. These "conspirators" were obviously inspecting the lie of the land in order to map out an invasion route. When therefore Seilern crossed the frontier on September 6, the locals saw him arrested and taken to the guardhouse. Seilern's protests that he was a Frankfurt businessman cut no ice and after some hours under arrest he felt compelled to show his Imperial passport and letters addressed to him by the Chancellor. This wrought a miracle: the curiosity of the locals was awakened by seeing the stranger escorted obsequiously from the lock-up and speeded on his way in the commandant's own carriage!

Seilern arrived in Regensburg on September 10 simultaneously with the news of his arrest and liberation, which spread like chaff before the wind. Some speculated about secret peace, talks, others that the crusty old bachelor had at last fallen for a woman. This second rumour arose because Menegatti in his letters to Velo, some of which Neveu had intercepted, always referred to "the marriage negotiations" and Neveu had reported both to Windisch-Graetz in Vienna arid to the Prince in Baden.

When Windisch-Graetz heard all this, he clenched his fists and called Neveu a "thoughtless ass".

Meanwhile Velo continued the negotiations on his own although he had no power of attorney. He outdid himself in indiscretions and contradictions, so that Louis actually

regretted that Seilern had left! Crecy said that he would discontinue the negotiations unless Velo got full powers or unless Seilern took his place. Moreover, Louis's envoys, who at first had not been able to praise Velo too highly, turned on him.' They now suspected that he had been stringing them along and they let him have the rough edge of their tongues. They sneered at his "pathetic speeches intended to make them toe the line"3 and at his "ridiculous and dubious love affairs". They gleefully reported to the Sun King (who must have been duly edified!) that Velo had been "stopped"4 in Schaffhausen on one of his amorous expeditions. Unexpectedly, Velo did receive the Emperor's power of attorney but with instructions strictly to adhere to Seilern's strategy! The negotiations collapsed and, to crown all, Velo's associations with these French "suspects" led to his arrest and detention by the local Imperial commandant.

Zurich was now echoing with contradictory rumours of the "secret peace talks ... plans for the French invasion of the Empire" and the "nest of spies" in the vicinity, which Lord Galway, Commander of the British troops in Piedmont reported to William III, Soon even the news gazettes were full of Seilern, Crecy, Morel and Velo. The Foreign Offices of Madrid, Venice, London, the Hague, Stockholm, and of the alarmed Electors of the Empire initiated enquiries in Vienna, while in Switzer land the Papal Nuncio in Lucerne, the ambassador of Savoy, the English minister in Berne and three foreign envoys in Solothurn all pressed bewildered enquiries on the Swiss government. Rumours multiplied the numbers of agents. Certain Barons Krais, Greiss, Greyss and Greif had all held conferences with the envoys of France, Florence, Savoy and Venice. The startled abbot of St. Gallen learnt that he had been holding secret meetings in Milan. A mysterious Swedish baron had conferred with Amelot. Fabulous sums of money were being transmitted from Paris to Switzerland and Vienna.

The first man patiently to unravel the tangled Seilern skein was Schwebel of the Dutch embassy in Switzerland. He visited all the places in which "Baron Greyss" had resided, questioning innkeepers and postmasters. He identified Seilern, Velo, Crecy and Morel, established that the French had sent letters to Versailles, pinpointed that Seilern had corresponded with Windisch-Graetz and Velo with Menegatti, that the negotiators had been overheard in stormy sessions, and that Ludwig of Baden and Neveu had intercepted some of their letters. The town clerk of Diessenhofen knew from his brother, who worked in the post office, that a coded letter sent from Vienna had been picked out and passed on to Neveu who, after an interval, had returned it for delivery. Despite the remorseful Neveu's feverish efforts to retrieve his *gaffe* by sabotaging his detective work, Schwebel pieced together names and dates beyond dispute.

Borgomanero, the Spanish ambassador in Vienna, remonstrated with Leopold in barely diplomatic language. Driven into a corner, the Holy Roman Emperor tried to lie his way out and (perhaps to his credit) showed himself an amateur in deceit. He

said that he had been astonished to hear of these conferences, that "he had no part in them, knew nothing about them and would never take the slightest step towards France without his allies and above all without Spain." Amazed, the ambassador asked who, then, had issued Seilern's imperial passport (since these were normally signed by the Emperor). Leopold weakly said that he would try to find out.

The Emperor's attitude put Seilern in the doghouse with his friends and superiors Kaunitz and Kinsky, to whom he was compelled to tell cock and bull stories which were insults to their intelligence. Seilern sensibly urged Windisch-Graetz to inform William III why the Emperor had been willing "to listen to" French peace offers. Windisch-Graetz refused to budge and persuaded the wavering Leopold to stick to the untruth. He reprimanded Seilern for replying half-heartedly to Kinsky. He ordered Seilern to "refute everything matter-of-factly to their faces" and himself told Kinsky that the whole affair was a cooked-up mass of lies.

Matters had now developed to a point at which the Emperor, Windisch-Graetz and Seilern could hardly utter a lie before it was exploded by Schwebel's reports which, as he followed Seilern's trail, began cumulatively to trickle into the allied envoys in Regensburg, Vienna, London and the Hague.

The Spanish ambassador returned to the charge: Seilern's talks with the French were, he said, now established fact. Bluntly he told the Emperor that if the Imperial court had been negotiating with the enemy behind the backs of the allies, the grave consequences of so flagrant a violation of the Pact of the Grand Alliance would have to be faced. If, however, Seilern had acted without authorisation he was guilty of a crime, which must be punished so that all suspicion might be allayed.

Windisch-Graetz considered that the only way out was to deny everything and that Seilern should think up an explanation as to how his visit to Switzerland (now admitted) to see his relations, or for his health, or for God knew what, had been seized upon by the French - cashing in on the absence from Regensburg of so prominent a diplomat - to build up a plot to sow dissension among the allies. Except for the truth, he gave Seilern a free hand to say whatever he liked. Windisch-Graetz then called upon Neveu to obtain written testimony from the Steckborn innkeeper that Seilern had never stayed there and that his arrest (also now admitted) had been a case of mistaken identity.

Daily, however, the noose tightened round the necks of the Emperor, Windisch-Graetz and Seilern.

Frederick III, Elector of Brandenburg, alarmed at rumours that the Emperor had sold out to France the Empire's Protestant interests, gave Simeon von Bondeli, his envoy in Switzerland, an unlimited expense account to establish that Seilern had been negotiating with the French. Bondeli persuaded Moritz Hanhardt, the innkeeper of Steckborn, to go to Regensburg where Metternich, the Elector's envoy received him.

Since the names and addresses of all those entering were recorded at the city gate and circulated to envoys, Hanhardt's arrival set all Ragensburg buzzing.

Hanhardt accurately described Seilern as of medium height, some what thin in face, not exactly handsome but a clever conversationalist, who took his main meal at midday without wine and went to bed supperless. He went to church regularly and was generous with alms to the poor. Metternich put Hanhardt on his mettle by pretending to be unconvinced, meanwhile inviting his guest to take a look at the town. He instructed an aide to take Hanhardt at an appropriate time to an inn opposite Seilern's residence. In due course Hanhardt saw Seilern leave his house. At a distance Hanhardt followed Seilern to church, where he identified him at close quarters and Seilern spontaneously confirmed Hanhardt's profile of him by distributing alms to the poor. Hanhardt was so delighted that he clapped his hands and gave a shout of triumph. Metternich took down Hanhardt's signed statement of Seilern's doings in Steckborn, the contents of which were soon known not only to Frederick III but also to every allied court.

Leopold and Windisch-Graetz must share the responsibility for making themselves the laughing stocks of diplomatic Europe. There was, in truth, no need for them to have felt unduly embarrassed in having been discovered in secret negotiations because at the moment that William III asked for explanations about Seilern, he omitted to mention that he himself was negotiating secretly with the French. Further, within weeks, envoys of no less a person than Leopold's father in-law, the Elector of the Palatinate, began negotiations which were the direct sequence to those in Steckborn, since a passage in Louis's instructions to his agents said "What should make His Majesty's desire to re-establish the peace of Europe absolutely clear is that he agrees to what is said in Seilern's memorandum concerning his renunciation for himself, Monseigneur and his successors to the Spanish succession…. "

In fact, Leopold and William continued one secret negotiation after another in various parts of Europe, each driven by the desire to keep one pace ahead of the other; and in each of these we find mentions that imply that Seilern's memoranda had laid the foundation for further advance.

The cumulative outcome was the peace conference at Ryswick in 1697, which assembled envoys from all the courts of Europe. Detailed negotiations were almost impossible at such unwieldy gatherings - in which much time was taken up in entertainments and in disputes over protocol and precedence - so that the real terms were for the most part invariably hammered out in previous small secret conferences, precisely such as those between Seilern and the French at Steckborn and William Ill's envoys and the French at Maastricht.

However farcical Seilern's public position may have been in 1695, nobody in the Imperial, allied or French camps dreamt of laughing at him at Ryswick, where, although he was not the senior Imperial envoy, his was the strategy and his the

tactics of the Imperial diplomacy, and the points that he had made at Steckborn were developed in the treaty. Louis XIV was compelled to disgorge some of his ill-gotten gains and to abate many of his claims including that of Liselotte to the Palatinate, which he bartered for a lump sum that the Elector considered reasonable.

XII

SEILERN: AN UNSOLVED ENIGMA

SEILERN IS ASSOCIATED with the controversial article in the Treaty of Ryswick that was fraught with evil consequences for Germany, and which clouded his reputation.

At the moment of signing, on the approach of midnight, the French ambassadors brought forward a new clause, adding to the article, which provided for the return to the Empire of certain French conquests, that the Catholic religion was to remain in force in the returned localities. As the French had introduced Catholicism into many Protestant parts, this clause angered the Protestant delegates: they denounced it as infringing the religious peace and the constitution of the Empire laid down in the Treaty of Westphalia, and they refused to affix their signatures to it. The French threatened to continue the war against any prince who withheld his signature beyond the six weeks allowed for ratification. Seilern, the other Imperial Plenipotentiaries and Catholic delegates signed, and various Protestants followed for fear of French aggression. When the Treaty came before the Diet for ratification, the Protestants appealed to the Emperor against this "flagrant breach" of the constitution but the Emperor and the Catholic states refused to risk war for what they affected to consider as of little importance, and the foreign powers followed their lead. The Protestants assumed connivance between the Emperor and Louis over the clause, the responsibility for which, without proof, they attributed to Seilern. Their hostility was based on mere suspicion but Dr. Turba's researches in the 1910s unearthed a report in Seilern's own hand dated November, 1696 (i.e. a year before the signature of the Treaty), recommending a secret agreement with the French to maintain the Catholic religion in all territories into which it had been introduced; the French should bring the clause forward at the eleventh hour with threats to continue war if not accepted, and the Imperial envoys should .appear "reluctantly compelled to give way" for the sake of peace.

Turba's discovery makes such nonsense of Seilern's previous record that further research in the diplomatic archives in Vienna and Paris seems required.

Consider: Seilern had been in Heidelberg in October, 1685 when Louis's revocation of the Edict of Nantes sent a flood of Huguenot refugees into the Palatinate. Louis had demanded the extradition of certain Huguenots. Seilern, as the Emperor's Rhineland Envoy, acted immediately in their defence. He reported to Vienna that Louis's demand was probably intended (a) to Warn Protestants still in France that they could not escape even if they fled abroad, (b) to scare away the many skilled artisans who had set up in the Palatinate to mutual advantage and (c) to make the Catholic Elector and Emperor obnoxious in the eyes of their Protestant subjects, and in those of other Protestant countries, by compelling them to yield to the French demands.

Since the Treaty of Westphalia recognised Calvinism, Lutheranism and Catholicism it was inevitable in the stardust of German principalities, many of which were ecclesiastical often with overlapping jurisdictions, that problems in religious relations should frequently spring up in the Diet at Regensburg. Tolerance and tact were required if confrontations with divisive consequences for the Empire were to be avoided. Shortly after Seilern was recalled from Regensburg, it chanced that the Cardinal Archbishop of Mainz (**The arch-chancellor of the Empire**) proposed a commission to mediate in some complaints against Catholics; the Lutherans distrusted the Arch bishop and feared that mediation would "bring many fresh unpleasantnesses" and they "greatly regretted that Baron von Seilern has been recalled just at this time." On another occasion Seilern seemed to be defending himself against the suspicion of being too pro-Protestant, since he thought it prudent to write to Vienna insisting that his sole aim was "the interests of the Imperial service and the fatherland."

There is no evidence that he avoided the company of Protestants, or that he persecuted the Lutheran faith of his father, brothers and sisters, or the Calvinist faith of his Keuckelier nephews and nieces. On the contrary, he was not ashamed of his Protestant relatives. He did not hesitate to help them after the French had destroyed their homes and to intervene with high authorities in support of their interests. He was the godfather of his Keuckelier and Luis nephews, whose Calvinist christenings he attended. He agreed with his tutor and lifelong friend, Samuel Pufendorf, who, in his classic *On the Condition of the Empire,* had laid it down that reasons of state did not justify religious persecution.

William Coxe, in his great *History of the House of Austria,* says that the religious article in the Treaty of Ryswick did great harm to the Emperor and to the Empire. It weakened the Germanic body by furnishing new causes of conflict between Catholics and Protestants; it alienated from the Emperor many faithful subjects. The conduct of some Catholic princes, who extended the interpretation of the article to mean the retention of the Catholic religion wherever French troops had passed, however fleetingly, and wherever an itinerant priest had once performed divine service provoked Protestant anger.

Was it zeal for Catholicism that caused Seilern to propose this article? Although he was pious, nothing in his life suggests that he, who had lived through two forced conversions, was a zealot. Of course, the article pleased the Elector of the Palatinate and the Emperor, with both of whom Seilern was intimately associated, but he had no need to curry favour with either. He was too big a man, and his position - especially from 1685 onwards when he was successfully contesting the claims of Liselotte - was too solidly established for him to feel insecure. And he himself was on record that Germany's religious divisions were one of the· Empire's weaknesses. Here is an enigma whose solution should attract some young graduate seeking a subject for a doctorate.

XIII

FIRST AUSTRIAN COURT CHANCELLOR

WE now approach the climax of Seilern's career. Hitherto his work, while of increasing importance to the Emperor, has differed little from that of a thousand other successful diplomats, who have struck the contemporary headlines without breaking into the pages of history.

But in the years between his arrival in Vienna on November 27, 1702, and his death on January 15, 1715, Seilern makes history. Every historian of the House of Austria records the facts, indeed not to do so would make the subsequent history of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy incomprehensible, but few historians glance at the factor other than in a footnote. In a way this is to be expected, because while, for example, everyone has heard of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), whose repercussions were felt throughout Europe and whose ripples reached even North America, and of the Reform Act of 1832, which launched Britain down the path from oligarchic democracy to the dictatorship of the trades unions, no historian records who drafted these portentous documents. What lack of imagination! Was it, for example, one man or a committee who drafted the Edict? Was he one of those who had advised Louis XIV that the Edict had become obsolete, unnecessary, on the ground that there was hardly a Huguenot left who had not abjured Protestantism? (R. Hatton, ***Europe in the Age of Louis XIV***) Or was it nothing to him that Louis was using his troops to convert Huguenots to Catholicism by billeting them on Huguenot homes, where the soldiers, co-operating enthusiastically, smashed furniture to the night-long roll of drums for the joy of destruction and the glory of God? Or was he just a dust laden legal expert? And the draftsman of the English Reform Bill of 1832? He was, in fact, a committee of four. (Diana Spearman, ***Democracy in England, p.85***) These four wise men probably foresaw, as did most of their contemporaries, that the bill opened the door to ultimate suffrage, but did they foresee that that would mean teenage voters educated on an assembly line? Did they foresee that fear of public opinion (e.g. the teenage mass) would prevent governments from taking action that they knew to be necessary? Or did they draft the bill with pens dipped in rapture, dreaming of electoral largesse shovelled out to them by their salaried representatives in Parliament?

Such fascinating riddles do not surround Leopold's Family Pact of 1703 and Charles VI's pragmatic sanction of 1711. We can ascertain Seilern's ideals and hopes when he drafted these documents and we are also in a position to see to what extent they were realised.

But if we are to grasp the significance of Seilern's achievement, we must understand the historical background of the post to which in 1705 he was appointed - First

Austrian Court Chancellor - because its functions and the steps towards his appointment illustrate the problems of the Habsburg rulers.

The Emperor's realm was made up of (a) the Holy Roman Empire which, after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) had year by year moved away from Imperial control towards a loosening federation - and (b) the hereditary feudal dominions of the Habsburg family, which included Lower Austria (the Archduchy proper), Upper Austria, Tyrol and the Vorarlberg, Further lands and towns in South West Germany, and Inner Austria (the three duchies of Styria, Carinthia and Carniola).

Happily we need not study the intricate incoherencies of the Holy Roman Empire's constitution. All we need to note is that, in the first place, the word "empire" is misleading because it suggests a vast administered territory like the empire of the Third French Republic in Africa. The Holy Roman Empire was not, however, a single unit or series of units administered from a central colonial office: it was an association of peoples recognising a common collection of Roman laws, feudal customs and relationships. It was essentially an idea - a way of life: the nearest approach in modern times to the Holy Roman Empire as it was after 1648 was the British Empire and Commonwealth as it was after the Imperial Conference of 1926, which acknowledged that the four British dominions were independent but united under the Crown by common allegiance; because of her prestige, history and resources, Britain continued to exercise great influence throughout this loose federation; London for long remained its Mecca; overseas Britons referred to the United Kingdom as "home"; the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council remained the Commonwealth's supreme court of appeal; Britain continued to bear the main responsibility for Imperial defence, investment and trade. Many foreigners found the system incomprehensible: they either thought· that, the Empire was ruled from London or that its links were so tenuous that the Empire did not exist. The analogy between the Holy Roman and the British Empires should not be pressed: the differences were substantial. What each, nevertheless, had in common was a number of dedicated individuals, who believed in the idea of each and were able to hold each together, as working systems, over an astonishingly long period.

The Chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire was the Archbishop of Mainz, the senior-most of the eight electors. It was he who appointed, theoretically as his representative, the Imperial Vice-chancellor in Vienna. The Emperor could recommend candidates but the Archbishop had to agree to them. In practice, it was through the Imperial Vice-chancellor and the Imperial Privy Council (Aulic Council) that the Emperor dealt with the princes and the affairs of the Empire, including relations with other powers.

The Emperor was two persons in one: (a) the *guardian* of the laws, customs, interests and policies of the Germanic principalities that constituted the Empire and (b) the hereditary *ruler* of the Habsburg lands. Before the Treaty of Westphalia, no clear distinction existed between the central administrative boards for the Empire and

those for the hereditary lands of the Archduke of Austria. The first tentative step towards separation of the administrations was the creation in 1620 of the Austrian Court Chancellery.

The Treaty subtly changed the relation of the Emperor to the Empire. The bigger princes now saw themselves as guardians of their own rights and in conflict with the Emperor, whose functions they now held to be residual or marginal. By contrast, the smaller estates and Imperial towns clung to the Emperor's protection against the encroachments of their Imperial neighbours and of Louis XIV. The Emperor sought to bypass conflict with the bigger states by transferring business wherever possible from the Imperial Vice-chancellery to the Austrian Court Chancellery. Furthermore, as we saw on page 28, the Emperor insensibly turned away from the idea of a consolidated German state in the West towards a multi-lingual Empire in the East. This enhanced the importance of the Emperor in his capacity as head of the House of Austria, and caused the prestige of the Imperial Chancellery to slip, that of the Austrian Chancellery, to rise.

Even so, the haphazard way in which the institutions had grown up meant the absence of clear-cut divisions of responsibility between the Imperial and the Austrian Chancellors, so that a strong personality could still enhance his relative prestige by insisting on the traditional functions of his office, which all too frequently overlapped with those of his colleague and rival.

The evidence suggests that Seilern was recalled to Vienna because the Emperor felt that the fifty-seven year old diplomat's proven abilities singled him out as one of the few, countable on the fingers of one hand, qualified for the very highest offices in the state.

If so, one would have supposed that the Emperor who, every time that a vacancy occurred, had to make a choice from among half a hundred mediocrities, would have lost no time in giving Seilern an office. We have seen the Emperor's difficulties in appointing a man to an Imperial office. Surely, however, he would have a free hand in the Austrian Court service, but even here his freedom of manoeuvre was limited. In the first place, there were not, as today, civil service rules laying down a retirement age. Moreover, official pensions were negligible, the perquisites of office abundant - and the Emperor shrank from dismissing an old and trusted servant. The result was that men more often than not died in office from old age. Vacancies lagged decades behind while queues for promotion grew longer. Secondly, the Emperor had to take into account the intensity of competition for a job. To fill a third grade vacancy was comparatively straightforward. But the highest offices were glittering prizes - objects of ambition, intrigue, and jealousy. Appoint a man who was not acceptable to service opinion and a cabal of disgruntled colleagues could frustrate his work and detract from his value to the Emperor.

Seilern's career illustrates these points. Everyone had long recognised his abilities and we have seen that as far back as 1682 (when he was thirty-seven) he had been made a Privy Councillor of the Imperial (Aulic) Council. Much of his time there would have been spent on disputes between principalities or on petitions from Princes, similar to that from Karl Ludwig which he had himself presented eleven years earlier, but he was too big a gun for such rabbit shooting so he was sent off on missions abroad.

Next, in February 1694, after the death of Count Koenigsegg, there were rumours that Seilern (then in his forty-ninth year) would succeed him as Imperial Vice-chancellor, but the smoke lifted to reveal a dead fire. Leopold showed his appreciation of Seilern by summoning him to Austrian Court Privy Council conferences, i.e. committee meetings of his closest advisers; he was the equivalent of a minister without portfolio, a position with few opportunities for the perquisites necessary to compensate for the low salaries paid. Evidently the time was not yet ripe to give him an office at court, because in February, 1697, he was sent to the Ryswick peace conference.

In 1702, Leopold once more recalled Seilern to Vienna and made him a member of the Privy Council of the Austrian Court. Once again he became a sort of confidential minister without portfolio.

After the death on January 11, 1705, of Imperial Vice-chancellor Kaunitz, the three Norns at long last decided that the time had come to work seriously on the weaving of Seilern's rope of fate. Leopold gave the Archbishop of Mainz the choice of four names from which to fill the vacant Imperial Vice-chancellorship. He stressed that the office required a man who besides being hard working, energetic and of a certain age and standing, should also have wide knowledge and experience: of the names which he submitted he underlined Seilern precisely because "of his great knowledge and experience of the affairs of the Empire." The Imperial Chancellor wasn't having any. In his view, the ideal candidate was Count Friedrich Karl Schoenborn; he had all the qualifications outlined by Leopold "even though he was only some thirty years of age," and by a chance, extraordinary but happy, he was a member of the Archbishop's own family. But if the Imperial Chancellor could refuse, the Emperor could stonewall. Two reminders from the Archbishop went unanswered. Then on May 5,1705, Leopold died. The Archbishop lost no time in bringing the high qualifications of his relative to the attention of Joseph I who, considering discretion to be the better part of a bad job, accepted him.

The Norns picked up Seilern's rope once more.

Count Julius Friedrich Bucellini, the Austrian Court Chancellor, was long past the job. Leopold had begun to entrust to Seilern cases which should have gone to Bucellini. Even before Leopold's death, Joseph's· eagerness for reform led him to dismiss Bucellini with a golden hand shake. He may have been inspired to this step

(unprecedented except in grave offences) by his confidant Prince Karlpietrich Otto Salm, who not only had a high opinion of Seilern but two special reasons for now pushing his claims with Joseph. First, like Seilern, Salm was dedicated to the Imperial idea. Secondly, he was the leader of a party in Vienna, which hated the Austrian aristocracy, and all non-Germans. He therefore approved of Seilern both as a German and as a "bourgeois upstart", who would put the noses of the aristocracy out of joint. Good selling point as this was in Salm's eyes, Joseph had to reckon with the opposition that the appointment of a mere baron, a commoner by birth, would provoke. Moreover courtiers by birth cherished the art of clothing the unpalatable in disarmingly smooth phrases, whereas Seilern was known for his readiness to present truth in the nude. He was regarded as short on flexibility and long on stubbornness. Further, Joseph had committed himself to giving the post to Count Philip Ludwig Sinzendorf, whose aristocratic antecedents were impeccable. He had been Envoy Extraordinary in Paris from 1699 to 1701 and after the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession had become Envoy at the court of the Palatinate and with the allied Dutch and English armies in the Netherlands. Sinzendorf had (according to the Venetian ambassador) in this capacity managed, with the help of Leopold's nephew Johann Wilhelm, Elector of the Palatinate, to extract from his heir, Joseph, a written promise giving him first claim on the office of the First Austrian Court Chancellor when it fell vacant. Thus Joseph was already bound by his word; Leopold's deathbed warning never to give such promises was on the late side. Moreover, Joseph was aware that Sinzendorf's appointment would be acceptable and that Seilern's would provoke resentment and he shrank from beginning his reign by rousing court opinion against himself. Nevertheless Prince Salm, now *Obersthofmeister* or Lord High Steward, the principal officer of the Imperial Court (as distinct from the Austrian Court) energetically inter ceded for Seilern and found ingenious means to allay Joseph's fears. The Emperor, he pointed out would have to spend much time in travelling and he ought to have his Chancellor in attendance. Yet the Chancellor's absence should not bring the affairs of the Chancellery in Vienna to a standstill. Clearly there should be two Chancellors, one in Vienna, the other on tour with the Emperor. And Salm persuaded Joseph that while each should be *known* as the First Court Chancellor, Seilern should be first both in name and in fact. He stood head, shoulders and waist above Sinzendorf. He had been an Imperial Privy Councillor thirteen years earlier than Sinzendorf. He had been summoned to the Austrian Privy Council as a minister without portfolio and, now in his sixtieth year, he had forty year's experience of diplomacy and politics from one end of Europe and the Empire to the other, compared with some fourteen years on the part of Sinzendorf. Lastly, Salm reminded Joseph of the comment that his father Leopold had made when the court had criticised the appointment as Chancellor in 1667 of Dr. Johann Paul Hocher (1616-1683). "There are," Leopold said, "plenty of aristocrats about, and I can create as many more as I like - but efficient men are rare." (**Hocher justified Leopold's choice. He silenced criticism by his integrity as a man and his abilities as a statesman. See Schwartz and Coddington, *The***

***Imperial Privy Council in the Seventeenth Century**).* This was the final strand that the Norns had woven for Seilern.

On the morning of June 3, 1705, Seilern and Sinzendorf were sworn in at the Hofburg. On June 5, both Chancellors received a memorandum drafted by Salm and signed by the Emperor stating that Seilern was the senior Chancellor and that the main responsibilities were his. Sinzendorf's duties essentially concerned matters of court, military and political protocol, all matters not usually dealt with at the ordinary full or secret councils, and he was to accompany the emperor on tour. Finally Seilern was to receive three-fifths, Sinzendorf two-fifths of the revenues allocated to the Chancellery. As it turned out, Sinzendorf was continuously absent from 1706 to 1713 either on missions or in attendance on the Emperor, so that the direction of the Austrian Court Chancellery fell to Seilern, whose office thus, in modern terms, approximated to that of Prime Minister responsible for the Habsburg dominions. According to the Venetian ambassador (who was interested in Seilern as a graduate of the University of Padua),Salm had the first position, Seilern the second. If so, this was not because Salm's official responsibilities were greater but because he had been Joseph's mentor before his accession, and up to 1708 he remained the Emperor's chief advisor and the most powerful man in Vienna: Bu t power went to his head: he became domineering and temperamental; thereafter his influence declined rapidly. After dismissing Salm in 1709, Joseph formed an inner cabinet limited to Trautsohn, Prince Eugene, Sinzendorf and Wratislaw. When Wratislaw died, Starhenberg took his place. When he was in Vienna, Prince Eugene presided at these cabinet meetings; otherwise Trautsohn presided in his capacity as Imperial *Obersthofmeister.* Seilern, for his part, was both First Austrian Court Chancellor and *Geheimer Kanzler des Gesamtmonarchen* or "Privy Councillor of the Total Monarch" (than which, one imagines, nobody would have had the nerve to ask for more!). And as Turba says, "Seilern's efforts were so many-sided" that the third monarch under whom Seilern served, Charles VI, raised him from a barony to an Imperial hereditary Earldom as Reichsgraf on November 5, 1712, with succession to his adopted nephew.

Seilern's faith in the idea of the Empire had registered with the Emperor. From the time when he had acted for the Crown against Liselotte's claim to the Palatinate, Seilern's insistence (reminiscent of the elder Cato's refrain *Delenda est Carthago)* that security and peace must be sought not in assurances from France but in fortifying the frontiers "and above all in weakening the Crown and the might of France", had sunk in, as the text outlining the reasons for Seilern's elevation to the rank of Reichsgraf in 1712 emphasises: "Seilern has served the best interests of the House of Austria and of the German fatherland in general".

Seilern's national status illustrates the idiosyncrasies within the Holy Roman Empire. He was born in Ladenburg, a subject of the Palatinate, and remained so during his imperial service until October 1, 1705, when the nobles of the *Landtage* (Provincial

Diet) of Austria below the Enns "accepted and admitted" him and his nephew "as fellow countrymen" after he had sworn for himself and his heirs "completely to submit himself to the decrees of the *Landtag,* to accept its franchises, usages, laws and justice and to be most humbly obedient, devoted and loyal to the Emperor and all his Imperial Majesty's descendants and reigning Austrian Archdukes". Thus did the Seilerns become Austrians.

The last thirteen years of Seilern's life were filled with responsibilities without respite from early morn to late at night: the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) overlapped the Northern War (1700 1721), which ended the pretensions of the Swedes to establish them selves as the dominant Russo-Baltic power, and the Hungarian rebellion (1703-1711) led by Franz Rakoczy II. Only once during these years was Seilern away from his desk: in October and November, 1704, he was in Hungary, not on leave but as co-plenipotentiary directing policy in the pacification of Hungary.

Nevertheless upon the routine of cabinet meetings and desk work there periodically intervened one of those gorgeous baroque ceremonies in which the Holy Roman Empire and the House of Austria expressed their personalities and their aspirations.

Today's republics put on "shows" on their national occasions but they cannot compete with the ancient monarchies, because they are self-conscious, aware that neither symbolism nor ritual appeal to republican crowds. One has only to consider the possibility of a ritual investiture of a President in the Stephansdom, Westminster Abbey or the White House to see its impossibility: the politicians assembled fresh from the mud, sweat and jeers of an electoral campaign could not believe in what they were doing. What are needed are courtiers - hereditary Earl Marshalls, Chamberlains, Lords and Ladies in Waiting, Garter Kings at Arms, Heralds Extraordinary, Rouges Dragons Poursuivants, who look the parts, because they are not acting a charade for tourists but being their real selves. Those who take part in, or who watch, age old national ceremonials return to the daily round inspired by a holy communion, rejoicing in their heritage, thrilled, exalted, by the history that they have seen, heard and felt.

November 8, 1712, was such an occasion in Vienna - the day when the Estates of the Realm of Lower Austria took a solemn oath of fealty to their new Emperor Charles VI. They had been bidden to fulfil their customary obligations by a letter from the Emperor, countersigned by Seilern, informing them that following the death of the Emperor Joseph I all the hereditary kingdoms, principalities and lands had devolved on Charles VI "as the immediate and legitimate heir". On November 6, the Archducal gems and treasures had been solemnly brought from their keeping-place in the sacred precincts of the five hundred and nineteen year old Augustinian monastery at Klosterneuburg to the Imperial Palace in Vienna, amongst them the ceremonial regalia including the bejewelled octagonal crown (made in 962 for the coronation in Rome of Otto the Great), carried on its velvet cushion in the

celebrations by the hereditary cup-bearer. On November 8, the Emperor, the Court and the Estates of Lower Austria marched in solemn procession to the five hundred and sixty-one year old Stephansdom where a *Missa solemnis* was sung. In the musical history of the mass, the Viennese period of Haydn's fourteen masses, Mozart's fifteen and Schubert's seven stand out, but they belong to a few decades later, and it is likely that the mass sung on the occasion of the Estates oath of fealty was either Palestrina's unaccompanied counterpoint or more probably the passionate mystic mass of the Spaniard Tomas Luis de Victoria. The choir of the Hofmusikkappelle[6] had flourished since Maximilian in 1498 had recreated Rudolf's original choir.

The *Ite missa est* having been intoned, the procession reformed, the Emperor on horseback with the cavalcade of the Estates clattering behind, to return to the palace. Next to the apothecary's shop at The Golden Stag on the Graben, three fountains began to spout *heuriger* wines. We read that "capons and all kinds of other roast meat and *Semmeln* were tossed to the people". One pictures appetising missiles thrown high into the air in order to give the populace ample chance to catch them. What merry collisions and joyous shrieks there must have been!

XIV

LEOPOLD'S FAMILY PACT

AND CHARLES'S PRAGMATIC SANCTION

WHAT WAS LEOPOLD I's FAMILY PACT? Why did he consider it necessary? How did it differ from the Pragmatic Sanction of his son Charles VI? Why, in each case, did the emperor choose Seilern to draft these documents?

Leopold and Charles chose Seilern, first, because, as we have seen, he was the only man in the empire who had at his finger tips the required knowledge of Roman law and of the House customs of the Habsburgs of Austria and of Spain. He needed neither legal assistants nor Spanish or Latin interpreters. Secondly, it was essential that parts of the pacts should be kept secret and both emperors had absolute confidence in Seilern. He acted as the dynasty's notary; the members of the family one by one swore before him; he drafted all the documents in his own hand.

Why was Leopold's Pact necessary? (**This summary is based on *The Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties in 17th and 18th Centuries,* a collection of original documents, edited by C.A. Macartney and on as much of Gustav Turba's legal minutiae as it is possible for a layman to unravel**.). The situation in 1703 was that the hereditary succession in the male or female line was already assured in the German-Austrian and Bohemian provinces. The Hungarian estates had, however, continued to maintain their right to elect their king, and not to crown him until he had sworn to respect the national liberties. His coronation oath still admitted the *jus resistendi* granted by Andrew II in his Golden Bull of 1222, authorising Hungarian resistance to any measure taken by the king which the Hungarians regarded as a breach of their liberties.

In 1687 Leopold had convoked a Hungarian diet, which he was in a strong enough position, having just rescued the country from the Turks, to compel to accept the hereditary succession in the male line, and to renounce the *jus resistendi.* Leopold's elder son, Joseph, was then duly crowned, taking the oath to the constitution thus amended.

On November 1, 1699, Charles II, the last reigning Habsburg of the Spanish line, died without male issue and Leopold claimed the Spanish throne. England and the Netherlands were willing to support the candidature of Leopold's younger son, Charles III (of Spain), later VI (of Austria), against Louis XIV's second grandson Philip, Duke of Anjou, on condition that the crowns of Spain and Austria were never united. Leopold consequently renounced Spain for himself and Joseph. He nevertheless instructed Seilern to draw up a Family Pact, laying down that if the male issue of either of his sons became extinct, the male issue of the other son should, via

primogeniture, succeed to the possessions of both. Female issue was to succeed in default of male.

These were principles for which Seilern had fought successfully in the course of Liselotte's case. There was here a meeting of minds between Leopold and Seilern. Joseph's descendants were always to take precedence over those of Charles. This proviso was kept from all the archdukes and archduchesses -to some of whom it was disadvantageous - except Joseph and Charles. Only when these two brothers had sworn to observe it did the solemn proclamation of the Act of Session of the Habsburg's Spanish monarchy to Charles, and the Declaration of his Accession as King of Spain, take place in another chamber of the Favorita Palace in the presence of thirty-five Privy Councillors. This "session" and "declaration" involved Seilern in some tricky drafting, because to preclude contestation, he had to be sure that the terms accorded with the laws and customs of Spain, the Empire and both the Austrian and Spanish branches of the family. He must have heaved sighs of relief when the successions of Joseph and Charles to the Austro-German-Hungarian lands went through, in turn, without dispute. Charles's succession to Spain was contested by Louis XIV, not by the family. Leopold died on May 5, 1705, and Joseph succeeded him.

Historians of the Family Pact and the Pragmatic Sanction refer, as far as my fairly widespread reading goes, to the "renunciations" that those excluded were called upon to make, but this is inaccurate because, owing to Seilern's meticulous drafting, those concerned were invited to *accept under oath the legitimate succession,* so that by the terms of the Family Pacts those other than Leopold's legitimate heirs, and by the Pragmatic Sanction those other than Charles VI's legitimate heirs, had no right to the crown and therefore had nothing to renounce.

The significance of this distinction emerges in the marriage contract that Seilern drew up for Leopold's second daughter who, on July 9, 1708, married John V of Portugal. A clause in which she accepted (i.e. recognised) the legitimate succession to the Austro-Hungarian dominions attracted the attention neither of the five archduchesses (three daughters of Leopold I and two of Joseph) nor the minimum of three Privy Councillors with whom it was necessary to discuss the contract. But the clause was loaded, because by using the word "accepting" Seilern concealed from them that their friends might argue that they were being excluded. So was the secret of Leopold's Pact kept. Clearly all is fair in love and courtsmanship.

When Joseph died in 1711, Charles was still fighting with failing chances of success to retain the crown of Spain but, abandoning the struggle, he returned to Vienna to be crowned Charles VI of the Austro- Hungarian monarchy. He then wished to modify his father's Pact for two reasons: (1) To reverse Leopold's proviso that Joseph's descendants were always to take precedence, over his (Charles's), (2) To make absolutely sure that the hereditary dominions should never again be shared out as they had been between Maximilian, Ferdinand and Charles, the sons of

Ferdinand I (1558-1564), but should remain a single indivisible heritage, and (3) To sew up beyond dispute the Habsburg succession to the restive Hungarian lands. He therefore instructed Seilern to draft a document whereby his possessions should pass undivided in primogeniture first to his male issue and in default thereof to his female issue; in default of these again to Joseph's line in primogeniture, and then to the lines of Leopold's daughters.

Accordingly on April 19, 1713, Seilern, with due ceremony, in the presence of Charles VI, the five Archduchesses (who, if they were quick in the uptake, now for the first time had a chance to appreciate their position accurately) and the Privy Councillors, read out his newly drafted Pragmatic Sanction.

So, as Turba says:

> Seilern had a decisive influence on the motivation and establishment of the procedure for the solemn promulgation within the circle of the Privy Councillors, as well as on the attestation by a notary of this promulgation. Thus Seilern was the author in 1703 and 1713 of the "Law" of the House of Austria, elevated to a Pragmatic Sanction, concerning the succession to the throne and government of the House of Austria.

The Pragmatic Sanction is a complex legal document on whose subtleties the industrious Turba dilates over five volumes. One is inclined to wonder whether Seilern or his commentator Turba was the greater legal pedant but this is unjust to both. The object of the Pragmatic Sanction was to ensure that the Habsburg succession was *automatically* recognised by the princes within the Empire and the Austro-Hungarian domains, because the least hint of internal dispute would arouse the predatory instincts of foreign potentates. Since human beings are always anxious to find plausible reasons to justify their desires, it was important to try to draw up a document which would close all loopholes. Louis XIV, as for example, we have seen, surrounds himself with historians and jurists skilled in supporting his claims by arguments borrowed from family and public law and from historical precedent. They applied magnifying glasses to the texts of treaties, demonstrating the practical application of Louis XIV's observation: "There is no clause so definitive that its interpretation cannot be twisted." But at least the effort could be made to make any twisting as obvious as possible. Louis XIV's example is not unique: it is only the most notorious.

Fortunately we can take Turba's five volume word for it that Seilern did as good a job of drafting as was humanly possible, with the result that all the dominions (other than Hungary) - Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Carinthia, Styria; Carniola, Gorizia, Gradisca, Trieste, Bohemia, Moravia, Upper and Lower Silesia Tyrol, Eger, the Vorlande, Transylvania, the Austrian Netherlands, Lombardy and Fiume - successively acknowledged the Pragmatic Sanction. Some tried to bargain for conditions, but in accordance with Seilern's advice the principle was firmly upheld

that the rule of the House of Austria was not based on a renew- able contract of election but was to be confirmed under oath at each succession "as deriving as of yore", where "deriving" meant "eternally valid".

There remained the special case of Hungary. Here Seilern had to battle because the Hungarians claimed it to be their right to elect their king, and although the country had been pacified after the expulsion of the Turks and in 1687 Leopold had compelled the Hungarian Diet to accept the hereditary succession in the male line, the Hungarians had not recognised the right of succession in the female line; they now used this omission to try to loosen their relationship with their king as much as possible.

We may here recall that, smarting under Leopold's repressive policies, the Hungarian Prince Rakoczi raised the standard of revolt in 1703. Louis XIV sent him officers, subsidies and even regiments. Such were Rakoczi's initial successes while the Imperial armies were fully occupied in fighting the French in Bavaria, Flanders and Italy that Leopold's allies feared that Rakoczi, aided by the French, would either overrun Austria from the rear or that to defend himself Leopold would have to bring home substantial forces badly needed in the West. Accordingly, the Allies in November, 1704, persuaded Leopold to open peace negotiations with Rakoczi at which the Dutch and British ambassadors in Vienna acted as mediators. Antagonism between Seilern, who led the Imperial delegation, and the ambassadors was complete from the beginning, because in Seilern's view the ambassadors wanted peace at any price, whereas he considered that he had a strong negotiating position. In the light of hindsight we can see that the battle of Blenheim had, on August 13, 1704, dealt as fatal a blow to Rakoczi as it had to Louis XIV. It is, however, clear from the reports of the British Mediator, Sir George Stepney, that he did not realise this and was convinced that peace with Rakoczi was all-important for the allies. Whether or not Seilern grasped the significance of Blenheim does not emerge from the documents, but it can be said that he certainly behaved as though he had and that in the long run his refusal to compromise with the rebels was justified by after events. Rakoczi, for example, convened the famous meeting of nobles at Onod in 1707 at which the leaders not only renounced their allegiance to the Habsburgs but also sought to establish an aristocratic republic with nobles as powerful and a ruler as subservient as in Poland, which ended in the elimination of Poland as an independent state. Moreover, the Imperial armies soon gained the upper hand in Hungary without weakening the allied effort in the West.

We now revert to the drafting of the Pragmatic Sanction.

In the end Turba lists among Seilern's achievements in regard to Hungary that he secured (a) recognition of the Habsburg female line, (b) the elimination from the coronation ceremony of any mention that might recall the elected kingdom and (c) that the ceremonial that he devised for Charles VI in 1712 endured until the last

Hungarian king was crowned on December 30, 1916. In return, however, for having withdrawn their support from the rebel Rakoczi, the Hungarian Diet secured two points which, at the time, seemed unimportant: the first envisaged that Hungary should recover her right to elect her king if the lines of both Charles and Joseph became extinct - a remote possibility; the second, which, again, seemed of little note but which, we can now see, was ominous for the destinies of the Habsburgs, was that Hungary secured that her king must be an archduke or archduchess of *Austria.* This was intended to ensure that the monarch possessed sufficient resources to defend Hungary against foreign invasion; the emphasis was thus on the far-flung dominions of Austria. The Hungarians remembered the long years of their subjection to the Turks in which the Habsburgs had been so involved in defending their Empire in the West that they lacked the reserves of strength to protect Hungary. It is ironical that by this second point Seilern, whose whole object in life was to build up the German Holy Roman Empire, should' have added to the forces that were turning the Habsburgs away from the German Empire towards a new multi-lingual empire (**This point also acquired a new significance in the twentieth century after the heir presumptive to the throne, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, had made a morganatic marriage by which his issue did not rank as archdukes**).

XV

SEILERN IN THE

EYES OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

SEILERN LEFT A FORTUNE to his nephew. The salary of the Austrian Court Chancellor had been 2,000 florins a year, but what this sum represented in real buying power is uncertain. The probabilities are that it was not worth a great deal, if for no other reason than that official salaries throughout Europe were notoriously inadequate, added to which in Vienna they frequently remained unpaid for years. Officials had to make up their salaries in other ways. It was the accepted practice throughout Europe that if you wanted something done that required official action you paid a fee to the official concerned. There was nothing dishonourable in this, unless the official exacted exaggerated fees, failed to carry out his bargain or accepted bribes from a foreign power. Louis XIV offered bribes on a huge scale in virtually every court in Europe and found few to refuse them. The Habsburgs made up for their inability to pay adequate and regular salaries by selling crown lands cheaply or giving them away. They were also extraordinarily generous. "These princes," wrote Molin, "more magnanimous in giving than economical in conserving, had, through gifts, despoiled their own house of unbelievable capital and treasure and have made their servants rather lords of material wealth."

In the light of these facts, it is noteworthy that Seilern was universally respected for his integrity, upon which no doubts, apart from Liselotte's slanders, were ever cast.

We have seen the adverse opinions of Karl Ludwig, who said that Seilern was ridiculously touchy, of the Duchess of Orleans, who accused him of treachery to her father, and of the French envoys in the peace negotiations in Switzerland, who found him waspish and eccentric. But there was also a "minority report".

Ambassadors were in a good position to judge the characters of the statesmen and officials of the country to which they were accredited. They were professional observers, whose occupation it was to ferret out all that was going on. Moreover a venal official might of be of special service to them. The Venetian ambassador's estimate of Seilern is therefore worth having: Daniel Dolfin reported -that Seilern was pious, ready at the slightest trouble to leave the Court; he loved justice and was of great integrity; he was always above interest and ambition.

Sir George Stepney, the English ambassador, said that the Emperor did nothing about Hungary without consulting Seilern and he criticized Seilern severely for his brusque intransigence towards the rebels. Yet Stepney admitted that Seilern could appreciate viewpoints other than his own, even if he was apt to stick to his opinion once he had formed it, and he added that during his whole life Seilern had always taken care to confine his dealings with foreign ambassadors to his office and not to

meet them socially. The significance of this is that it shows Seilern's concern to avoid becoming too familiar with an ambassador and thus either unwittingly to betray some confidence or lay his reputation open to the suspicion of being in the pocket of a foreign power.

Another Venetian ambassador, Pietro Grimani, had a poor opinion of Vienna's officials but in the week after Seilern's death, he wrote that Seilern was mourned for his merits, his efficiency and "above all for his integrity, uncommon amongst highly-placed personalities."

Joseph's *Obersthofmeister,* Prince Salm, called Seilern "the most honourable man at the Viennese court." Salm's comment is arresting, because he was a good friend to Seilern and, as we saw, struggled successfully to get him the appointment of Chancellor, but he must soon have found collaboration with Seilern difficult, because Salm was bitterly hostile to Prince Eugene, against whom he led intrigues while Eugene was a Privy Councillor and Commander-in-Chief, whereas Seilern strongly supported the Prince - testimony not only to Seilern's judgement of character but to the consistency of his imperial German policy.

We may conclude by quoting the letter of condolence that the Emperor Charles VI wrote in his own hand to Seilern's nephew, adopted son and heir:

> Dear Count Seilern!
>
> Because Almighty God has been pleased, by taking your cousin (**so the Emperor calls him**), to deprive me of a very dear and loyal servant, whom I shall never forget, and you of a dear and good cousin, I must not fail to send you these lines in your bereavement, assuring you that I shall never forget your cousin's merits and since I was unable to recompense him in proportion to his deserts I shall show my gratitude to you as his successor. I shall always and in everything bestow my favour and gratitude on you, and since I cannot replace the cousin who took care of you, you will find the same care from me to you in everything.
>
> I shall also appreciate it - since you will no doubt know where your cousin kept his most secret papers, above all concerning my service - that you immediately put them under lock and key and send me the key, awaiting my further instructions.
>
> Vienna, January 8, 1715.
>
> CARL
>
> (By his own hand) To the Count von Seilern, my Vice-chancellor.

There is no need to assume that the Emperor's conclusion betrays that his sole real object was to make sure that his secrets were safe, for his regard for Seilern was well known and his final sentence in fact reveals the extent of his trust and confidence in Seilern and in his nephew.

JOHANN FRIEDRICH SEILERN II: 1676-1751

XVI
THE SECOND SEILERN AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR

CATHOLIC convert though he was, Johann Friedrich Seilern 1645-1715 (Seilern I), as we have seen, far from turning his back on his Lutheran and Calvinist relatives, remained on affectionate terms with them and gave them the support of his influence. He was a good brother and a good uncle. He adopted, first, Philip Jakob Seilern (1662-1734), the son of his brother Johann Jakob, and secondly, Johann Friedrich Keuckelier (1676-1751), the orphaned son of his stepsister Regina Elizabeth, *née* Seiler (1652-1687).

All that we know of Philip Jakob is, first, that Seilern secured from the Emperor the privilege that he should inherit his title as baron, and secondly, that he was a devout Calvinist, since he dedicated a bell in the Calvinist church of St. Peter in Heidelberg. He died unmarried and passes out of our story.

Johann Friedrich Keuckelier, from the age of fifteen and a half following the death of his father, was his uncle's life-long companion and took his name.

In 1692, Seilern removed his nephew from the Heidelberg Calvinist grammar school and took him to Regensburg where he was converted and went to the Jesuit school of St. Paul. While Seilern was busy at the Ryswick conference Johann Friedrich attended the university of Utrecht. This was the only period during Seilern's life that he was separated from his nephew, who entered the imperial service and acted as his aide, travelling with him everywhere and assisting in all his assignments, presumably with steadily increasing responsibilities.

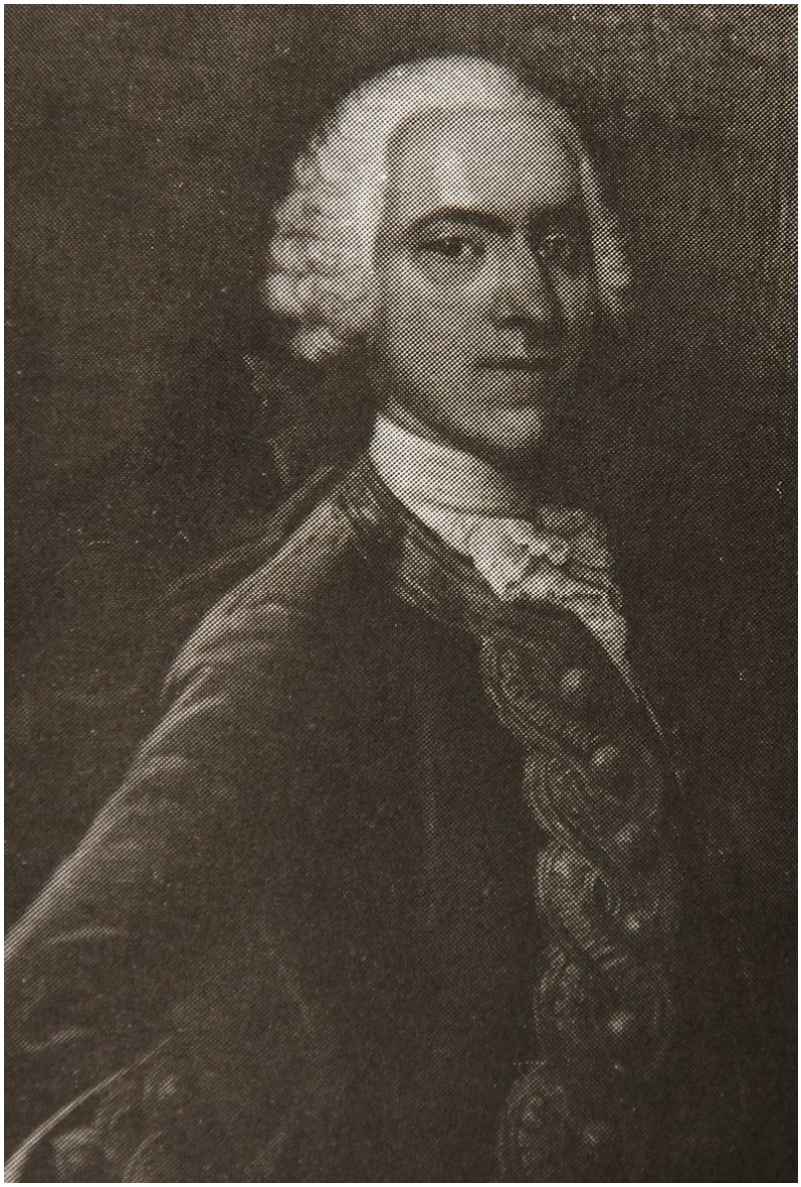
Bachelor uncle Seilern seems determinedly to have warded petticoat influences off from his nephew, because he remained unmarried until his uncle's death. Then, however (being thirty-nine years old), he caught up on time lost by marrying, within six months, Anna Maria Countess Lengheim in the chapel of the castle of Petronell near Vienna. The marriage suggests that the Seilerns kept up with their Palatinate homeland, because Anna Maria was a lady-in-waiting to Leopold I's widow, Eleonor of Pfalz-Neuberg, whose father and brother ruled the Palatinate in succession to Karl Ludwig's son. As we saw, Prince Johann Wilhelm had a warm regard for Seilern and must, of course, have been acquainted with his nephew.

A study of Johann Friedrich II's life awaits some scholar. It should be interesting because, as we have seen, Charles VI held him in high esteem, allowing him to inherit his uncle’s title as Count Seilern and Aspang. He continued in the innermost corridors of power, becoming first Austrian Court Chancellor in 1735 at the relatively

early age of fifty-six. In the last five years of Charles VI's reign it would have fallen to Seilern to struggle with the financial embarrassments of the Austrian lands in general and the problems in particular of the fiercely independent-minded Hungarians. He was in a key position during the first three years of Maria Theresa's reign in which Frederick II of Prussia seized Silesia and the War of the Austrian Succession (1743-1748) broke out. He died in 1751, leaving eleven children. His third son, Christian August, continued the Seilern line that had begun with Hans Seyler's arrival in Speyer in 1581.

III

CHRISTIAN AUGUST SEILERN: 1717-1801
AMBASSADOR AT THE COURT OF ST. JAMES



Christian August Seilern

XVII

THE DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND TO CHRISTIAN SEILERN'S EMBASSY

CHRISTIAN AUGUST SEILERN (1717-1801), following the footsteps of his father and great uncle, entered the Imperial service in 1737. Successively he was royal envoy of the Elector of Bohemia (the Emperor) to the Imperial Diet at Regensburg, ambassador in London, governor of Lower Austria, and from 1779 Supreme President of the Judicial Service until he resigned in 1791; he must have been an active participant in the reforms of Joseph II. He was the patron and friend of Joseph Sonnenfels (1733-1817) theorist of "enlightened despotism".

These activities would repay investigation in the imperial archives, but since I know no German I must leave this to some Austrian scholar. All that I offer here is a sketch of the six years of Christian Seilern's Imperial embassy in London in which he made a contribution to the peace of Europe, as well as figuring in a cloak and dagger farce which, if it did not achieve the notoriety of his great uncle's adventures in Switzerland, at least kept the chancelleries of London, Vienna, Madrid, Paris, St. Petersburg and Berlin buzzing like a swarm of bees, more bewildered than angry, throughout the summer of 1769.

If we are to understand the significance of Christian's conversations with the English secretary of state and of his misadventures, we must glance at the diplomatic background.

In the forty-eight years since the death of Johann Friedrich I, the European diplomatic scene had been transformed. First and foremost the Hohenzollerns had emerged to confront the Habsburgs. On May 31, 1740, Frederick (subsequently "the Great") seized Silesia. Saxony Bavaria, France and Spain joined Prussia to partition the Habsburg lands. Here was the classic France-versus-the-Empire situation and Britain and the Netherlands sprang to Austria's aid, but the alliance did not run smoothly. Britain complained that the Austrians demanded extortionate subsidies and failed to provide the agreed quotas of troops. Austria retorted that Britain never gave her adequate support and that, finally tiring of the war, she had forced on Austria the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle whereby all conquests had been mutually restituted - *except* Silesia. This Peace left Maria Theresa bitter at Britain's "desertion" and filled with hatred towards Frederick.

France and Britain now engaged in a scramble for empires in India and America. Britain's strategy had hitherto been to supply subsidies *(la cavalerie de Saint Georges)* to France's enemies in Europe, thus weakening French strength overseas, while the Royal Navy swept French men-of-war from the seas and her merchant marine earned the money to pay for it all. When in 1754 war with France threatened in America, Britain assumed that Austria and the Netherlands would play their traditional role.

But by now Maria Theresa's adviser on foreign affairs was Wenzel Anton Prince Kaunitz-Rietberg (1711-1794), a dandy and scented exquisite, who stood head and shoulders above the statesmen of Europe in his far-sighted assessment of the contemporary scene. He argued, first, that Louis XV 'was not the menace that Louis XIV had been. France no longer had the resources to stir up the Turks against Austria's Hungarian back door. The Rhineland and Italy were relatively stable. Secondly, Silesia: must be prised from Prussia. In this, Austria could rely on the help of Frederick's neighbours Saxony and Russia, but Britain had proved a broken reed. Thirdly, he reckoned that the distant Austrian Netherlands cost Vienna more to defend than they were worth. So he offered them to Louis XV's son-in-law, Don Philip, in exchange for the three duchies assigned to him on Austria's Italian doorstep. Louis XV grasped Kaunitz's point: since Britain was France's real enemy and Austria had hitherto been Britain's most powerful ally, here was a chance to deprive her of Austria's support.

Casting about for aid against France, Britain found Frederick in alarm at threats from Russia. Hence a defensive alliance in January, 1756. The French, furious at this "betrayal" by Prussia, their traditional protégée, hastened to accept Kaunitz's proposals for a defensive treaty. In September, Frederick, feeling that a Russo-Austro-French trap was about to be sprung on him, "defensively" occupied Saxony and called on Britain to honour her word. So began the terrible Seven Years War which, in complete reversal of the alliances for which Seilern had worked, lined up France, Austria, Russia and Saxony against Prussia and Britain. That these circumstances in which Britain had been forced into an "unnatural" alliance with Prussia against her "natural" ally Austria seemed fortuitous, served to conceal from British, and many continental, policy-makers the changes in the balance of power in Europe that had eroded the classical free-for-all against France.

When the Seven Years War (1756-1763) finally petered out, all the protagonists were angry with Britain. Prussia saw Britain's cessation of subsidies as a betrayal just when a punitive victory over Austria seemed possible. Austria considered that Britain had twice betrayed her: in the war of the Austrian Succession and again by backing Prussia in the war just ended.

Thus it was that when Christian Seilern arrived in London in October, 1763, Britain had not a friend in Europe.

The Secretary of State with whom he had to deal was John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich, best known to history for his invention of the sandwich (which enabled him to eat without missing a hand at the gaming table), for his debauchery and for his connexion with the notorious John Wilkes to whom he had once rashly said "You will either die of the pox or on the gallows". "That, my lord," Wilkes replied, "depends on whether I embrace your lordship's mistress or your lordship's principles."

As Secretary of State, however, Sandwich was industrious, able, and shrewd. The exchanges of correspondence with British ambassadors abroad suggest that they

and Sandwich were conscious of Britain's isolation and that they regarded the resumption of "normal" relations with Austria through the arrival of Seilern in London eight months after the end of the war as the foundation of sound policy. Sandwich must fervently have hoped that Christian would prove to be a sympathetic personality with whom it would be possible to talk freely and to establish personal relations of confidence and understanding. And so, fortunately for both men and for both countries, he turned out to be, even though the state of play on the international chess board and the instructions that Kaunitz gave Christian did not allow him to achieve any spectacular results.

Kaunitz was the supreme diplomatist of the eighteenth century. He did not allow the bitterness that he felt towards Britain to cloud his judgment. He noted that within weeks of the war's end, Britain had made overtures for the exchange of ambassadors. Why, he asked himself, this haste? He saw that, since Franco-British relations in India and America had virtually never ceased to be on a war footing, Britain was again a suppliant for Austria's favours. The obvious course might have been to agree to an alliance insisting once more on the stiffest terms, but the mood in Vienna had changed. Two frustrating struggles against Prussia had sickened Maria Theresa of war and reconciled her to the loss of Silesia. She readily listened to Kaunitz's advice to avoid any entanglement that could lead to a third war. In the present state of Anglo French relations an alliance with Britain would involve Austria in war with France but France, no longer a menace, was now Austria's ally. Yet - wait a minute - France had signed a family pact of mutual aid with Spain in 1761 and it was just possible that this might threaten Austria's possessions in Italy. Moreover just as Britain was making precautionary overtures to her traditional but alienated ally Austria, so Kaunitz suspected that Prance was making overtures to her traditional but alienated ally Prussia - next-door neighbour to Poland and to Hanover of which the elector was the king of England. Nor had Kaunitz any intention of turning the Bourbon family pact into a Habsburg-Bourbon pact, for this also would sooner or later involve Austria in war with Britain. Thus Kaunitz was fundamentally pro-peace and anti-war which, in the circumstances, meant walking a tightrope. That was why he deprecated the aggressive attitude towards Britain of the French foreign minister, Choiseul, lest this should arouse discontent in Britain against the unstable Grenville ministry and bring back the activist Pitt, whose policy towards France was *Delenda est Carthago* based on friendship with Prussia.

Accordingly Kaunitz instructed Christian not to conceal Austria's determination to stick to her French alliance as a defensive measure, intended to preserve the peace in Europe. While "showing every possible goodwill, friendship and respect" for the British, Christian was gradually to percolate into Sandwich's head that what Austria regarded as Britain's failure to honour her obligations in 1740 and 1756 had weakened Austria, destroyed the "old system" and made it impossible for Austria to be as useful an ally as she had been. In other words, Christian was to establish the

friendliest personal relations and to smooth out any issues that might push her into the arms of Prussia.

Christian carried out these instructions to perfection, building up goodwill for himself and for Austria with George III, and with Sandwich and his successors.

XVIII

CHRISTIAN NEGOTIATES WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE

JUST as Johann Friedrich I had a vitriolic enemy in Liselotte, who left posterity a damning picture of him, so his great-nephew Christian had a compulsive detractor in Horace Walpole, who delighted to hold him up to ridicule and contempt.

Christian gave Walpole openings to exercise his wit because he seems to have been a serious minded individual, who bowed rather than shook hands, smiled rather than laughed, pursed his lips rather than smiled at a doubtful remark, and was sensitive to anything that could be interpreted as an infringement of his precedence over all other ambassadors in his capacity of envoy of the Holy Roman Empire - a sensitivity which, in view of the Empire's ambiguous status in Germany, was regarded as a positive requirement on the part of imperial representatives everywhere. We have seen that Seilern I had found it necessary to display it during his years in Regensburg.

Here are typical squibs that Walpole let off:

> To the Earl of Hertford, December 2, 1763:
>
> Oh! But there is a ten times more delightful man - the Austrian minister; he is so stiff and upright that you would think all his mistresses' diadems were upon his head and he was afraid of their dropping off ...
>
> To the Earl of Hertford, December 2, 1765:
>
> Poor Madame de Seilern, the imperial ambassadress, has lost her only daughter and favourite child, a young widow of twenty-two, whom she was expecting from Vienna. The news came out this day se'nnight (**seven nights a week**) and the ambassador, who is as brutal as she is gentle and amiable, has insisted on her having company at dinner today, and her assembly as usual.
>
> To Lady Mary Cooke, June 27, 1771:
>
> I had begun an epistle and put myself into one of M. de Seilern's most exalted attitudes ... Mr. de Belgioiso (Austrian ambassador after Seilern) is a sensible man and not half the paste board about him that Seilern had.

On the other hand, however ridiculous the public figure of Christian that Walpole built up, the Secretary of State's despatches depict him as easy to deal with, respected and popular with the king, with Sandwich and with his successors.

Not long after Christian's arrival an incident occurred which prompted Sandwich to invite Christian to see him. During the Seven Years War Britain had accumulated in Prussia depots with supplies of all kinds. These remained British property, but, to

repair the ravages of war, Prussia had, without asking permission, helped itself to the contents of several of these depots. Feelings between the two countries ran high and the policy of Frederick and the attitude of his ambassador in London towards Britain were the exact opposites of that of Kaunitz and Christian. Despatches from Sandwich to British ambassadors in Germany insisted, *inter alia,* that, where the depots had been seized, war claims would not be examined "until the reasons for such unprecedented acts of violence shall have been explained, and the loss and damage thereby occasioned ... fully compensated". To this the Prussian ambassador in London replied by demanding prompt payment of claims, and did not scruple offensively to tell Sandwich that "if we *chicaned* his master with regard to these demands, he would know how to do himself justice".

Sandwich saw in this an opportunity to reveal to Christian on what terms Britain stood with Austria's enemy and to initiate his policy of *rapprochement* with Austria. Here are extracts from his despatch describing to Lord Stormont, British ambassador, in Vienna, his interview with Christian:

> My Lord (Most Secret) ... Situated as this country is, we are, thank God, out of the reach of any molestation from His Prussian Majesty; therefore I cannot conceive how he can effect what he calls doing himself justice but by offering some insult upon His Majesty's Dominions in Germany.
>
> In consequence of this idea, I received the King's orders to sound Count Seilern as to the support we might hope to receive from his Court in case the King of Prussia should be so bold and unjust as to attack a German Electorate on account of a dispute with the Crown of Great Britain. I accordingly had last Saturday a long and very serious conversation with the Imperial Ambassador …
>
> I began by telling him how much it was to be wished that the union which formerly subsisted with the House of Austria might be re established; that we were the natural allies of each other; and that, though untoward events have unfortunately made a breach between us, I still hoped time and a good disposition on each side might bring things back to their original state; that I was sensible this could not be done in a day but that I hoped it might be brought about; and I doubted not (from the good intentions which he expressed) but that he would willingly co-operate in so salutary a work.
>
> He seemed much pleased with the language I held and told me that, whenever I pleased, he would talk to me at large on this subject; that I did justice to the disposition of his Court, and to his private sentiments; and that though I very properly said what I aimed at was not the work of a day, yet that time and discretion might bring about what we wished.

I then told him that I was extremely happy to hear this language; and that therefore I was persuaded I might entrust to him a matter of a most secret nature, and which I had the King's orders to consult him about. I told him the nature of our dispute with the King of Prussia, and the sort of hints which had been dropped on his being resolved, as he called it, to do himself justice; that these threats could mean nothing but an insult upon the Electorate of Hanover; and that I wished to know what part his Court would take if such an event should happen. I added that I trusted to his honour, and to that of his Court, that what passed between us upon this occasion should go no farther as it would be very improper that France and Spain should know the interior of our affairs, particularly such as related to any differences we might apprehend as likely to break out with the King of Prussia. He assured me of the strictest secrecy both on the side of his Court and from himself; and that, whatever turn this matter should take, he would be answerable no prejudice should accrue to us from the confidence now reposed in him; that I might easily conceive that in an affair of this magnitude he could give no other answer than that he would send an immediate account of what had passed to his Court, and wait for their orders; but he would not scruple to tell me, as a private man, that he had no doubt but that if the King, my Master, in such a situation as 1 apprehended was to ask the Emperor's assistance, that it would be very readily granted. He added that Count Kaunitz, and all the well-intentioned people at Vienna, were greatly pleased at the triumph of the present Administration, who were considered there as persons who knew the true interests of their country and would have firmness enough to support that system; that I could not but be aware of the cruel treatment the House of Austria met with from the King of Prussia; that it must always remain in their minds; and that, as soon as our predilection for that Prince was perceived, they thought themselves obliged to apply for assistance elsewhere; that this was the sole motive of their late conduct; but that it did not make them forget their former obligations to this country (**This garbled version of the origins of the diplomatic revolution of 1756 was in accordance with Kaunitz's instructions to Seilern**).

I believe I have now told Your Excellency the substance of what passed between Count Seilern and myself, and I must observe upon it that there seems to me an opening for the most friendly communication with the Court of Vienna and a prospect by that means of recovering an ancient, natural and, in my opinion, most useful alliance.

Your Excellency will (I doubt not) make every proper use of this most serious and secret information; will observe the impressions M. Seilern's representations shall have made; and will talk, in the most effectual and confidential manner, to Count Kaunitz ... and particularly will use your best endeavours to engage the Emperor to promise to assist His Majesty in the most efficacious manner, in case any insult should be offered to his German dominions ...

Note that although Sandwich's despatch shows that Christian reciprocated in the most friendly way, all that he in fact conceded was that "time and discretion *might"*

bring about a *rapprochement* and it is clear from subsequent exchanges of despatches that Christian closely followed his instructions to attempt no brutal re-education of British thinking on the European situation but to percolate Austria's attitude gradually into Sandwich's head. His expression of pleasure at the triumph of the present Administration was a hint that Austria would be disturbed if George **III** were to request the warlike and pro-Prussian William Pitt to join it.

In 1764 Prussia and Russia signed a treaty by which Prussia agreed to support Poniatowski, Russia's candidate for the vacant throne of Poland. Russia's alliance with Austria's enemy constituted a potential threat and Kaunitz sought to tighten his links with France, but fearing that this might induce Britain to seek reinsurance by closer ties with Prussia and Russia, he sent Christian to see Sandwich, who recorded:

Whitehall, June 19, 1764.

Sandwich to Stormont.

My Lord, I had a conversation a few days ago with Count Seilern of which it is proper Your Excellency should be informed that you may sound the dispositions of the Court where you reside, and let me know whether you think there is still any reason to hope that their union with France and Spain is not so close as the world in general imagines it to be.

Count Seilern asked me whether I believed the reports that had prevailed of a new treaty signed between his Court and those of Versailles and Madrid? I answered that we had no authentic account of any such transaction but that upon the whole I rather gave credit to the report, at which I was truly concerned as it would oblige us to form other connections; that we did not precipitate things in hopes that the House of Austria, our old and natural ally, might come round to her ancient System but that as soon as we saw those hopes were quite desperate, it was requisite for us to take care of ourselves by entering into other measures. He answered me that he was convinced that no such treaty as we supposed was formed with France and Spain, that he could assure me he had no knowledge of any such transaction, and that the frequent conferences which M. Starhemberg (**Austrian ambassador in Paris**) had had with the French ministry related chiefly, if not entirely, to pecuniary discussions which, I must be aware, was the inevitable consequence of their connections with that Court during the last war. He seemed much to wish that we should not engage ourselves too far with other powers till we were fully satisfied of the real sentiments and situation of things at his Court, and he assured me he would write without loss of time to give them an account of what had passed between him and

me. I told him I much approved of his language and intentions, that it was not yet too late to re-establish things on the foot I wished to see them between our Sovereigns but that matters were come to a crisis that would not allow of much more delay.

Your Excellency will, I doubt not, make the proper use of this information, I shall therefore only add the assurances of etc.

SANDWICH

Christian's assurance that he knew of no such treaty was literally true, since Kaunitz did not seek to join the Franco-Spanish pact because that would involve Austria in war with England. All he wanted was a defensive agreement whereby France would come to Austria's aid if attacked by Prussia or Russia.

Note the discreet negative way in which Christian put his opening question to Sandwich, avoiding any suggestion that Austro-French negotiations could or should lead Britain to reinsure elsewhere; note equally Sandwich's more positive yet diplomatically worded warning that any Habsburg-Bourbon pact must lead Britain to do precisely that.

Just as Britain was nervous about any tightening of Franco-Austrian links, Austria was jumpy about any closening of Anglo-Russian relations. Accordingly Sandwich reports to Stormont the approach that Christian made on this subject:

Whitehall,January 8,1765.

(Most Secret) Count Seilern came to see me a few days ago ... and I have the satisfaction to inform Your Excellency that his language seemed calculated to show that the dispositions of his Court are such as ought to lead us to hope that with proper management they may be turned in the end to the renewal of the Ancient System; and though this must be a work of time, and depend upon events, it would be great indiscretion in us were we not to do everything that prudence requires to pave the way for a reunion of measures with the House of Austria and to remain in a situation to profit of those events whenever they happened.

Count Seilern began by asking whether the report was true that we had signed our treaties with ... Russia, that I could not but believe that the attention of his Court was fixed upon us, and that their conduct towards their/resent allies would principally depend upon the system that should be embraced by this country; that he had orders to repeat to me the assurances of a general good disposition of his Court towards their ancient ally: that, in consequence of those dispositions, they were absolutely resolved not to join in the Family Compact, and though strongly pressed they had hitherto refused their

consent to the accession of the Court of Madrid to the Treaty of Versailles (**The Treaty of Alliance between Austria and France signed in 1756**). But that if they were still pressed and ... we came to a conclusion with Russia, they possibly might at last yield to the solicitations of their allies on that point, but that I might be assured that this treaty was merely defensive, and that they would not even in that case enter into new engagements or stipulate anything that was directly or indirectly contrary to the interest of this country, and he repeated these words again, desiring me to pay particular attention to them.

I told him that I had not the least difficulty in owning the state of our negotiation with Russia: that we had two treaties depending, one of alliance, the other of commerce; that the latter was quite a matter of trade and 'no way regarded them, that the other was formed upon a principle that might turn out greatly to the advantage of the House of Austria as well as the rest of Europe, and that it was calculated for the renewal and not the destruction of the Ancient System: that possibly M. Seilern and his Court might imagine that this Russian connection might lead us to a reunion with the King of Prussia, but that if they did they would be entirely mistaken, for that it was an absolute resolution to keep clear of any such engagements; that this was the present disposition of this Court; that though I could not answer for what might happen hereafter, so much I would venture to say, that it was in their power to profit of the state of things at this time, and to render any future engagements of that sort utterly impracticable; that it was impossible but his Court must see with pleasure a union between England and Russia, un embarrassed with the King of Prussia, and that if we should hereafter be the means of bringing Russia with us and removing the coldness I feared now existed between the two Imperial Courts, we should not, I imagined, be the less acceptable ally to them, or deserve less approbation from those who wished well to the peace and independence of Europe.

M. Seilern seemed much pleased with these declarations, and told me that he was sure they would have a good effect at Vienna, that on this plan our alliance with Russia could not but give pleasure to the Austrian Court, and might be productive of very salutary con sequences. He seemed indeed in the whole of this conversation to show much satisfaction in every expression of mine which intimated our intention to keep clear of the King of Prussia and lead to a re union between our two Sovereigns, and on my repeating to him that I hoped what had now passed between us would prevent their precipitating anything with regard to the accession of Spain to the

> Treaty of Versailles, he appeared to be of opinion that it would be very likely to have that effect, as our declarations could not fail of being particularly agreeable to his Court and well timed ...

This declaration of Sandwich to Christian is interesting in that it is exactly complementary to Christian's declaration of June 19, 1764,5 to Sandwich.

Just as Christian truthfully insisted that any Austro-French *rapprochement* was purely defensive and that it involved no entanglement with the Franco-Spanish pact, and just as Sandwich had warned him that any such link must induce Britain to seek a counter-balancing alliance elsewhere, so now Sandwich truthfully insisted that any alliance with Russia would be purely defensive and involve no entanglement with Prussia, and now it was Christian's turn to warn Sandwich that any positive link must induce Austria to seek a counter-balance elsewhere. Note, too, how Christian opened his talk with Sandwich, not by going brashly to the point of his enquiry but by general suggestions (calculated to put Sandwich in a receptive mood) that Austria might be led towards the renewal of the old Anglo-Alliance so dear to the heart of the British Secretary of State.

XIX

CHRISTIAN - THE ROSENKAVALIER

IN August, 1769, Kaunitz astounded Ben Langlois, the British Charge d'Affaires in Vienna, by revealing to him that he had heard that the courts of Russia, France, Spain and Britain had decided to challenge the Emperor's right to precedence over all the crowned heads of Europe. Countless inkpots were emptied in despatches, and scores of diplomatic couriers galloped overtime, before the origin of this report of a cabal against the most prestigious sovereign in Europe was traced.

To grasp why the report caused consternation in Vienna, we must remember that to kings and their ambassadors throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, precedence, protocol and ceremonial were important to an extent incomprehensible today. This was particularly true of the hierarchy of the Holy Roman Empire, because of the constant struggle, from the Emperor himself downwards, to resist the efforts of France from without, and of the greater German princes from within, to undermine the Imperial authority. The wrangles over precedence and protocol often exasperated the participants but never struck them as farcical.

There was, for example, jealousy at Regensburg between the Arch bishop of Mainz, the ex-officio Chancellor of the Empire, and the Imperial envoy, each of whom regarded himself as the supreme authority in the Diet of the Empire. Thus, when Cardinal Lamberg was appointed Imperial envoy in May, 1700, he found that there had existed for the past ten years underground warfare over the ritual to be observed for the first official reception of the Imperial Envoy. The Imperial Court maintained that the Electors' plenipotentiaries should approach the reception hall via the main staircase of the Reichschurch of St. Emeran, which at first sight seems reasonable enough, but the plenipotentiaries retorted that in 1690, 1692 and 1693 they had entered via a side cloister and this was now their established right. Well, if they preferred the back entry to the front door, why not let them have it? Johann Friedrich Seilern, on behalf of the Imperials, pointed out, however, that the back door had been a temporary route precisely because the ceremonial had not been fInalised between him and the plenipotentiaries. The plenipotentiaries angrily insisted that while the *hoi polloi* might use the main staircase, the Electoral dignitaries must enter through the back door. Deadlock. Since neither side would budge, Lamberg decided to force the issue. In order to give the Electors the least possible time to concert their opposition, he entered Regensburg "incognito in a small shuttered carriage" on July 22. The plenipotentiaries, although taken by surprise, fought back: tempers sputtered sparks - in vain. So with ostentatious pomp, Lamberg retired to his bishopric eighty miles away, hoping that by attrition the plenipotentiaries would come to their senses. Meanwhile the affairs of the Empire were at a standstill. Again Lamberg returned to Regensburg. Still the plenipotentiaries remained obdurate. The affairs of Empire continued to pile up and two years later, because of French intrigues and the difficulties over the Spanish succession of the Archduke Charles,

had reached high proportions. So in April, 1702, Lamberg gave way and on July 12, three and a half years after Lamberg's appointment, Johann Friedrich Seilern, as the Emperor's second envoy, ceremonially called upon him, thus making the official acquaintance of the colleague with whom he had been in close consultation all these years. Thereafter both having received together the ceremonial visits of the electors' plenipotentiaries - who entered through the back door - the log-jam of the Empire's official business was at last broken and business began to trickle through.

In the courts of Europe, the envoys of the Holy Roman Emperor had precedence over all others; the envoys of kings followed in established order and mere republics brought up the rear.

The Emperor's status and authority sprang from the prestige and antiquity of his Empire. Thus, the princes of the Empire recognised the Elector of Brandenburg as King of Prussia only because the Emperor had conferred the sovereignty upon him, and even the Russian Czarina Elizabeth (1741-1762) had thought it prudent to consolidate her uncertain position by securing her recognition as Empress from the fountain of European honour (**The Czarina's action was mentioned by Langlois, the British *Charge d'Affaires* in Vienna, in a despatch quoted on page 97 below. No specialist on Russia whom I have consulted had heard of it. Have I uncovered a hitherto unnoticed scrap of Czarist and Holy Roman history?)**

With the foregoing in mind, we can savour the diplomatic mystery which baffled the courts of Europe throughout the summer of 1769 a mystery for which the classic malapropism might have been tailored: "I smell a rat. I see it hanging in the air before me. If it is not nipped in the bud it will burst into a conflagration, which will deluge all Europe". Here is an outline of the facts from the first smell of the rat:

On Monday, June 5, there was a ball at St. James's Palace. *The St. James's Chronicle* reported:

> The company at St. James's made a most brilliant appearance, particularly the foreign ministers; the equipages of the French and Russian ambassadors were entirely new and made a most magnificent appearance; but the Imperial ambassador's dress was esteemed the richest there - a suit of rose coloured silk with diamond buttons and button holes; the buttons in his hat were amazingly large and the loop was composed of small brilliants disposed in a very elegant figure. It is supposed that the whole of his dress cost near £40,000.

So far so good, but in its next issue, on June 8, the *St. James's Chronicle* reverted to the ball under the headline DISPUTE AT COURT. There is, explained the newspaper, a box in the ballroom reserved for ambassadors in which the Imperial envoy takes precedence. On Monday night the Imperial and Russian ambassadors were chatting together in it when the French ambassador stole up behind and,

without warning, thrust his leg between them. The ambassadors turned to see what was happening:

> which, making an opening, the Frenchman stepped in and instantly called the Spanish ambassador, who was a little way behind him, and then placed that ambassador next to himself. The thing was done in a moment while the Russian was lost in surprise. By this means the Russian ambassador was at the distance of two persons out of his place, or at least what he thought was his place, being the ambassador of an Empress … a few sharp words passed. The word *impertinent* was heard distinctly … The Russian ambassador then went to the lower part of the room and sat between two ladies. Here he was when the King came in, who went to him, talked with him for some time and took particular notice of him, but did not take any notice of the French ambassador. When the King was gone, the Russian went up to the French ambassador and told him 'that it was a dispute that must be ended between man and man', which Lord Halifax (the Secretary of State) overhearing went after the King to acquaint him further with what had happened, but when his Lord ship returned, the Russian was going hastily down the stairs after the Frenchman and his Lordship in vain tried to stop him. Some words passed between the two foreigners at the bottom of the stairs ...
>
> A little after midnight, a foreign gentleman, attended by a domestic, was seen in the Park ... he asked the sentinels if they had seen a gentleman - describing the dress and person of the Russian ambassador - and finding they had not he went.
>
> A few minutes after, another foreign gentleman came and asked the sentinels if they had seen a gentleman - describing the dress and person of the French ambassador. They told him which way he went. Upon which the enquirer followed the person he asked after. By accident they missed each other. Next morning Tuesday, Lord Rochmont went to the Russian ambassador in the name of a great person (King George III) and desired no further notice might be taken of the affair. The Russian ambassador replied 'he should be very glad to oblige the great person in everything where his honour was not concerned'.
>
> On Wednesday, the French ambassador waited on the Russian and apologised for his conduct at Court last Monday, saying he hoped it was not considered as a personal affront offered by himself to His Excellency as nothing was further from his intention, but he had it in command from his Court to acknowledge no superiority and therefore he could not' yield precedence to him on such an occasion. Here the matter stands at present. But it is already more than suspected the

> affair will not end here. Though a trifle in a certain sense, yet it has a very serious complexion.

The picture of the dim figures of the French Count de Chatelet and the Russian Count Czernichew flitting at midnight from tree to tree in St. James's Park is a scene out of a Molière farce. The *St. James's Chronicle* was right in suspecting that the affair would not end there: the Foreign Secretaries and ambassadors in London, Vienna, Paris, Madrid and St. Petersburg began to exchange thousands of words in despatches.

The British Charge d'Affaires ciphered that the Austrian court was convinced that the Russian ambassador meant to dispute the precedence of the Imperial ambassador. Kaunitz said that there was reason to suspect that such was the Russian's intention wherever the opportunity offered "and that Count Seilern, who had orders to be upon his guard, had dexterously frustrated him for that time by entering into the ambassador's seat by the upper end of the bench instead of the lower; from thence he (Kaunitz) took occasion to talk of the ambitions and views of the Empress of Russia and of her pretended project of a Greek empire in opposition to the Roman empire".

The Secretary of State lost no time:

> With regard to the suspicion entertained where you are that the Russian ambassador here might have it in view to contend for the *pas (**Prendre le pas*** is the French idiom for "to take precedence over") with the Imperial, I may assure you that he has not hitherto expressed the least intention of it. On the contrary, on the late disagreeable occasion he shew'd a particular complaisance to Count Seilern in making room for him to seat himself above him, which you may take a natural opportunity of mentioning ...

After several further lengthy exchanges, we find Langlois reporting:

> Soon after I received the honour of your Lordship's letter of July 21, No.2, I took an occasion to speak to Prince Kaunitz upon that part of it which regards the late dispute between the Russian and French Ambassadors. He told me it was true that such a suspicion had obtained here and said that I had done very well to procure further ***éclaircissement**,* and added with some earnestness 'but I should be glad to know, and you are in a position to ascertain, if it is true that Count Czernichew said to M. de Chatelet that he had orders from his Court not to yield the *pas* to anyone except the ambassador of His Majesty the Emperor, because this would throw light on many things'. Here we were interrupted and not comprehending well what he meant ... I determined not to write to your Lordship on the subject till I had an explanation of it, as I had made some unsuccessful attempts

> to renew the conversation in order to profit of the opportunity I had of talking to him alone last Saturday and learn his meaning without asking him directly ...
>
> ... After some pause he answered by saying that as he had always spoke to me with confidence and openness, he would satisfy me about the reason of his curiosity by telling me that they had received advices from different quarters that the Courts of Russia, France and Spain, and even our's, had formed a project to dispute the Emperor that rank which, he said, he has enjoyed time immemorial and by the voluntary consent of all the powers in Europe: that the Spanish ambassador had already twice by order of his Court given the most positive assurances that if any such project existed, they never either had or ever would take any part in it. He said not a word of France but added 'I have as yet taken no steps in regard to Russia, because I wanted to have better proofs of the fact than I have had hitherto, but if I find upon further enquiry sufficient grounds for this suspicion, I will immediately request a very explicit declaration from Russia of her intention, and if she does not disavow the ever having had any such views I will advise the Emperor immediately to lay his complaint before the Diet, and to declare that as when the Germanic Body granted the title of Empress to the late Czarina, she engaged herself through them by signing a reversal (in which circumstance, however, I believe he is mistaken) never to ground a claim on this concession to any rank superior to what she had enjoyed and that it being notorious that that Court had acted contrary to that engagement by setting up such unwarrantable pretensions, His Imperial Majesty would henceforth refuse the granting her that title any more and propose to his co-estates to do the same ...

After earnestly assuring Kaunitz that he must be misinformed, Langlois concluded: "I hope I leave you convinced that these suspicions are void of all foundation."

To which Kaunitz replied with doubly negative diplomatic caution:

> 'You say I did not give too much credit to them at first, certainly all you have said will not make me more disposed to believe them'. As I had told him my motives for taking up originally the defence of Russia upon this subject, he thanked me at coming away for my good intentions, 'For', said he, 'you may depend upon it that our wish is to live at peace with all our neighbours and Europe in general.'

Alarmed that Kaunitz feared that the peace of Europe might be at stake, Langlois went on to implore Rochemont to track down the mystery to its origin. For his part ceaselessly following every trail, Langlois next reported (1) a clue and (2) an hypothesis that seemed worth investigating:

If Count Seilern is not the first suggestor of the suspicion ... at least he is very busy in keeping up the alarm. I have learnt by accident that he writes to them here very long despatches on the subject and they take the thing so seriously and warmly to heart that this week a courier was sent to Count Mercy (Austrian ambassador) at Paris with instructions relative to this affair, of what nature I have not been able to learn, but perhaps they may regard the measures to be taken in order to assure themselves whether or no that Court has been engaged in that supposed concert, for, as I told your Lordship when Prince Kaunitz mentioned to me Spain's having twice declared our having no part in it, he said not a word of France ...

I am somewhat to inclined to think that the Imperial Ambassador's punctilious jealousy has conjured up this phantom and that he has worked up his imagination to believe it real, and is now warming that of his Court into the same persuasion. If this alarm does not come from that quarter, it must be a paltry intrigue of France, who, sure that she could always clear herself of the suspicion, inserted her name among the rest the better to conceal her designs which (in case she is the author of this report) I take to have been to push this Court in the moment of resentment to a hasty and peremptory demand of an explanation from Russia, which, upon such groundless suspicions, she would have been warranted to refuse, and the effect of this must naturally be the indisposing these two Courts still more towards each other and augmenting the coldness and indifference between them ...

I have the honour to be,

With the greatest truth and respect My Lord,

Your Lordship's,

Most faithful

Most obedient humble servant

Ben Langlois

These exchanges between Vienna and London, which reveal the leisured and stately prose and the discreet and courteous subtleties with which these diplomats conveyed their thoughts to each other, conjure up a period picture of a vanished era in striking contrast with today's hustling dollar diplomacy in which "open agreements are openly arrived at" in the glare of televised press conferences and newspaper headlines, creating conflicts in public prestige for which it is far more difficult to find face-saving formulas than if they had been negotiated behind the closed doors of secret diplomacy.

At long last, having combed the courts of St. Petersburg, Paris, Madrid, Vienna and London for clues, Rochemont traced the source of the all-European *brouhaha:*

Cipher from Rochemont to Langlois, Whitehall September 29,1769:

> … I found that it was owing to Count Seilern's having mistaken a wish thrown out on the occasion of the dispute between the Russian and French ambassadors that there should be no ceremony at all at the Court **(On hearing of the incident, George III had sought to**

smooth matters out by saying that a Court ball was a private occasion, in which protocol was dispensed with.) which was certainly very different from any intention of disputing the rank of the Emperor on any occasion and in every place *where ceremony was observed.* Count Chatelet likewise, on it being given him to understand that balls at Court were looked upon as places of no ceremony declared that if there were a Pell Mell in which the Imperial Minister was comprehended he had no objection to it but if the minister of the Emperor had place he should insist on being *next to him, (***Note that the French ambassador did not claim precedence over the Imperial ambassador but over the Russian.)** which probably occasioned the persuasion that France had joined in the design. You will take the first proper opportunity of explaining this matter, as His Majesty would be very sorry to have such an impression remain on the mind of His Imperial Majesty, and I flatter myself that in a conversation I have had with the Imperial ambassador I have so entirely satisfied him that he will likewise contribute to efface it.

His Majesty at the same time entertains so high an idea of the character and good inclinations of Count Seilern that he is satisfied he had no intention to misrepresent things or produce any coolness between the two Courts.

With the receipt of this despatch in Vienna and the dissemination of its contents, the Courts of Europe uttered huge sighs or (since French was the language of diplomacy) *oufs* of relief that the threat of a vast Anglo-French-Russian-Spanish conspiracy against the Holy Roman Emperor stood revealed as a mare's nest that Christian Seilern had innocently built by misunderstanding a soothing remark by George III.

Throughout the years of Christian's embassy, Britain was courting Austrian aid against France, but as she had nothing to offer in return, and was as determined to keep free of European entanglements as Austria was convinced that her alliance with Prance was her best insurance against aggression from Prussia, and disturbance of the *status quo* in the Austrian Netherlands and Austrian Duchies in Italy, the net result was that nothing happened (barring the near heart-attacks brought on by the fracas at the Court ball) in Anglo-Austrian relations. Nothing that is, except cultivation of perfect goodwill which, after all, is something.

It is pleasant to record that the missions of Lord Stormont in Vienna and of Christian in London ended with an exchange of honours for each. On behalf of George III, Maria Theresa ceremonially honoured Stormont, who reported:

> The Empress was pleased to compliment me upon the distinguished mark of the King's favour I had received and said she was doubly

> glad that I had received it whilst I was at her Court and was pleased with the King's having asked the Emperor to perform the ceremony; she looked upon it as a mark 9f His Majesty's friendship, and then added that she had determined to give Count Seilern the Grand Cordon of the Order of St. Stephen, and should ask the favour of the King to knight and invest him, which, she flattered herself, His Majesty would not refuse.

In a final dispatch Stormont said:

> ... The Empress was pleased to speak to me of the letters she had received from Count Seilern expressing in the strongest terms the grateful sense he has of all His Majesty's goodness. 'I assure you', said she, ***"Il en est pénétré***", and then added in a somewhat lower voice: 'I know, my Lord, the justice you do our sentiments, and the faithful, and at the same time favourable, accounts you sent. *On peut s'en rapporter à vous*. Je vous en suis sincèrement obligee' ...
>
> . . . I said that I knew Count Seilern's whole conduct made him very acceptable to His Majesty and had gained him the most general esteem ...

And so in a rosy hue of Anglo-Imperial goodwill, the curtain falls on the embassy of Christian August Seilern, the diamond-studded Rosenkavalier.

IV

HUGO SEILERN
1840 - 1886

Hugo Seilern

XX

HUGO SEILERN'S HERITAGE

WITH JOHANN FRIEDRICH AND CHRISTIAN SEILERN we strode across Europe, taking in diplomatic manoeuvrings between the great powers in which the destinies of peoples were at stake. Johann Friedrich strove with vast forces. Christian watched and reported them. Their personalities are dwarfed by the grandeur of events. Now, with Christian's great-grandson, Hugo, we descend from the heights to attempt the closer study of an individual.

The Seilerns quitted the seats of power largely because Prince Schwarzenberg (1800-1852) the greatest aristocrat in the Empire, who staged the abdication of Ferdinand I in favour of Franz Josef and became the eighteen year old emperor's *eminence grise,* distrusted the aristocracy and devised a system which excluded them as a class from government, instead of employing and strengthening their political sense which, despite his dislike of England, he admired in the English aristocracy (for an outline of Schwarzenberg's aims, methods and achievements, see Edward Crankshaw's ***Fall of the House of Hapsburg***, Chap. IV).

The exclusion from government of any section of society - whether upper, middle or working class - is a self-denying ordinance, because it narrows the spheres of talent - of which, in all countries, the supply is limited enough - from which the state can recruit. One of the stock arguments against hereditary monarchs and aristocrats is the alleged mediocrity of so many kings and aristocrats, but twentieth century experience provides no evidence that presidents and ministers chosen by popular vote, men who get jobs because they have the special kind of book learning required to pass examinations, and dictators who smash and grab their way to and from power, effect more than a change in the strata from which average men are recruited.

The fact is that the average man in any class is by definition mediocre[2] and, this being so, experience suggests that with mediocrities recruited from an hereditary monarchy and aristocracy the chances are that the average son of an aristocrat - who from his earliest years has listened to men with experience of politics, diplomacy and administration from the inside (as opposed to theoretical knowledge acquired from books on constitutional history or sociology written by academics) - will be better adapted to office than the son of a man born into a bourgeois or working class family. The argument is not that the sons of the *hoi polloi* should be excluded - on the contrary, a country has need of all the above average, hard-working, imaginative, brilliant upstarts, like Johann Friedrich Seilern, that it can unearth, but that it should not automatically prefer an untrained mediocrity from an artisan family to a trained mediocrity like Christian Seilern (note a variation of this arguments by which Crankshaw throws light on the sixty-eight year reign of that ordinary man the Emperor Franz Joseph. see Edward Crankshaw's ***Fall of the House of Hapsburg*** *p. 85ff)*

If Hugo Seilern had been born half a century earlier, the chances are that he would have found outlets in the service of the state. To say that, because he was born in 1840, his talents were largely frittered away is a subjective judgement, but trace any history book to its sources and you will find it to be an anthology of subjective judgements, and it is relevant that Hugo was himself conscious that his aristocratic predilections restricted his choice of paths to those which, in his circumstances, increased the prospects of frustration and narrowed the possibilities of constructive action.

Ida Seilern (née Zaluska) 1841 - 1916

XXI

HUGO'S MARRIAGE - A LOVE MATCH

THE SOURCES for Hugo Seilern's life are the autobiography of his daughter, Idela (1864-1944) and many yellowing letters written by him, his wife and his relations, which, despite tantalising gaps, provide vivid snapshots.

To the biographer, hindsight is an advantage in that it furnishes a ready-made balance sheet which enables him to some extent to assess the strengths and weaknesses of his subject, but it is a liability because it leads him to give the reader knowing nudges to emphasise the ironies of fate's deadpan distribution of hopes sometimes realised or (as with Hugo) more often frustrated; and because it tempts him to give brilliant colours to interpretations of events which in their time unfolded themselves colourlessly, impersonally, higgledy-piggledy; for example; from hindsight it looks as though Hugo's marriage was a disaster which distorted his own personality and those of his daughter and son; moreover the surviving documents mostly describe it from his point of view; hindsight therefore tempts us, on the one hand, to put the entire blame on his wife Ida (1841-1916: *née* Zaluska) and, on the other, to wonder how he came to marry such an "impossible" woman. Hindsight makes us forget that to make a marriage it takes not one individual acting but two personalities interacting.

It is, therefore, with an effort that we try to see how Hugo Seilern and Ida Zaluska may have struck each other when they first met, when each saw only the surface of their personalities as each wanted to see them, and before the intimacies of marriage had lowered their guards to disclose the anxieties, guilts and inner conflicts of which they were unconscious.

Sometime around 1862, the twenty-nine year old Polish Count from Austrian Galicia, Charles Zaluski, on whom his superiors in the Imperial diplomatic service already had their eye, met the handsome twenty-four year old Hugo Seilern, probably at some musical soirée because both played the piano and composed. Hugo had professional ambitions; he was to study under Liszt and to publish compositions to which the maestro listened constructively. Charles Zaluski, who also composed, was the third of a family of ten brothers and sisters, whose father had died in 1845. His mother Amélie (1804-1858: *née* Princess Oginska) had bequeathed fifty thousand florins to each of her children but, recognising special qualities in Charles had left substantially more to him on condition that he should look after his brothers and sisters. Throughout his life he was his family's philosopher and benefactor. Doubtless he assessed Hugo financially and socially as a future brother-in-law. Whether or not he knew that Hugo was dependent on his mother for an allowance, he could see that his family was comfortably off.

Hugo's father, Josef (1793-1861) had two families - by his first wife Marie (1800-1828, *née* Countess Zichy) and by his second wife Antonie *(1811-1877, née* Baroness Antonie von Krosigk).

Antonie had provided for her own clutch of three daughters and four sons by building at No.7 Heumarkt, in Vienna, seven houses containing one hundred flats which enclosed courts and gardens; nicknamed the "Seilern barracks" it provided each of her children when they married with a flat and an income; on Antonie's death each inherited one-seventh of the property.

Socially, the Seilerns were linked by marriage to some of the first families of the Empire, including the Auerspergs, Brenner-Felsachs, Hardeggs, Hornsteins, Ledochowskis, Lengheims, Loudons, Normanns, Oettingens, Solms, Stuergkhs, Szechenyis and others. They moved in court circles; they entertained.

In Hugo, Charles Zaluski appreciated a man of culture, familiar with such thinkers as the French philosopher Taine - who had recently published his *French Philosophers of the Nineteenth Century* (attacking romanticism and the idealist philosophies of Kant and Hegel and expounding down-to-earth positivism and the biological sciences) - and the Englishman, Henry Thomas Buckle, who had abandoned narrative history to interpret man as part of the natural order which, in its other aspects, science had already done so much to reveal. Hugo absorbed much of the humanist outlook which these thinkers substituted for traditional spiritual values.

Not least, Hugo had delicacy of feeling, infectious enthusiasm and, that indefinable quality, charm. He struck Charles as an admirable husband for his favourite twenty-year old sister Ida.

How may Hugo have seen Ida Zaluska?

The Zaluskis were, in fact, an older family than the Seilerns. They had been to the fore in Poland for five centuries and had intermarried with the Czartoryskis, Oginskis, Lubomirskis and others. Ida had an acceptable dowry. She was beautiful. Her daughter says that "of medium height, her silhouette was graceful, her figure generous, and *elle avait un decolleté ravissant."* She had a magnificence of dark chestnut curls. She dressed elegantly. She appreciated the effect that she created by arriving late at balls - her coiffure and toilette radiantly fresh when others were showing signs of fatigue. Hugo found her gaiety and allure irresistible. They married in Vienna on October 10, 1863.

Hugo, the Austrian, and Ida, the Pole, conversed in fluent French, as did all their contemporaries in the same social strata: the Austro-Hungarian empire endowed its subjects with a cosmopolitan outlook.

XXII

GENTLE ZEPHYRS AND LASHING SKIES

HUGO AND IDA started out upon a peripatetic existence, moving between furnished flats, *pensions* and summer-long visits to cousins in Poland. What was at first a convenience to a young couple looking for a home became a settled way of life. Since Hugo had an allowance of 1,200 Thalers a month, sufficient to enable a couple to live modestly in a free flat in the Heumarkt, and since his ambition was to establish himself as a composer, it would have been natural to live in Vienna, then the centre of the Western musical world and where, in addition, Hugo and his family had a wide circle, but for a mother and daughter-in-law to live in the same building requires a self-control of which neither Antonie (von Krosigk) nor Ida were capable. Ida soon put the "Seilern barracks" out of bounds.

Hardly had the curtain risen on her marriage when Ida revealed that behind her fascinating façade persecution mania lay concealed. She saw slights where none were intended and indulged in tantrums. If Hugo responded with silence she went on about his indifference, insisting that words which escaped in a moment of anger were forgiveable but that composure meant cold malice; if Hugo riposted with heat, Ida relapsed into day-long sulks. Arguments lost sight of their points of departure and became meaningless wounding exchanges. Again and again my mother describes such exhausting scenes that from her earliest years she overheard or herself endured. Hugo suffered mostly in silence, but Antonie Seilern, generous, warm-hearted, whose instinct was to spoil Hugo whom she loved dearly, and Ida towards whom she was full of good will, and the adored little Idela (**Hugo's daughter was christened Ida. Grandmother Seilern called her Idchen (pronounced as in German), her father called her Idela, her Polish cousins Ideczka (which means "little Ida" and in phonetic English is pronounced Idetchka**) her first grand-daughter, was assertive, quick-tempered and quite unable to tolerate Ida's moods - although once Antonie had boiled over she was eager to kiss and forget. Relations were soon strained, to the lasting loss of Idela and her brother Carlo (born 1866), who lived largely cut off from their numerous and well-disposed Seilern cousins, uncles and aunts.

From prolonged bouts of self-inflicted torture Ida found relief in migraines and other maladies, which required prolonged "cures" in watering places, whither Hugo did not accompany her, because he, too, needed to recuperate. My mother recounts that her grandmother "hid her disappointment, her sadness at finding us at an hotel and not with her. I realised this when I saw her slightly embarrassed manner. Poor *Bonne Maman,* who loved me so much, who took such pleasure in having me around, and in buying me toys and pretty dresses." Idela's autobiography and Hugo's lyrical love letters show that he loved his wife and that he never entirely abandoned hope of winning her heart and of making a home with her and his children.

In the extracts that follow I have cut out much of the repetition of slapdash letter writing, as well as purely topical references such as shopping requests or times of

train departures, but I have left in much that may at first strike some as an excessive amount of what individually may be unimportant items, because I feel that they build up like the multifarious details of a pre-Raphaelite picture, which reveal the lights, shades and depths of Hugo's complex personality.

Here is a letter written by Hugo on February 1, 1868, from Lubien (via Lemberg), the home of Baron Branicki, just over four years after his marriage:

> My very dear Ida, In vain I await a letter from you to tell me where you are and where to address you. Yet I have many - and indeed important things to tell you. I will therefore take a chance and send this to Biarritz. The question at issue is our next home.
>
> The Baron de Branicki, with whom I have formed a sincere and frank friendship, has on several occasions urged me to visit him in his home at Lubien and to see whether I would like the countryside, and he has urged me to make a home there. He has several properties and several country houses, of which one is at Humic. None are completely furnished or arranged. He offers me this establishment in so friendly a way that I have discussed the possibility at length with the family, who all advise me to take advantage of the lucky chance of acquiring a pleasant and attractive home. In order, however, to retain my independence, I said that I would take up 50 arpents (about 50 acres or 20 hectares) of land as soon as I had your views about all this. The house could not be more comfortable or nicer. I risk absolutely nothing, because with 50 arpents one can never make a loss of any importance, especially because along with the land I should have the cottage and a fine garden. Michel and Lena and Emma and Teofile (Michael Zaluski: Ida Seilern's eldest brother and his wife Helen Brzostowska. Emma Zaluska: Ida Seilern's eldest sister and her husband Téofile Ostaszewski). seriously urge me to do this deal with the kind Branickis, and I should frankly be happy if you agreed with this plan. I will wait 10 or 12 days for your reply, after which I shall have to begin to organise everything for our next stay. I think that you could leave Biarritz at the beginning of October and come direct to Leopold. I go from here to Vienna to talk to my mother and to ask her to send me my furniture, kitchen equipment, etc.
>
> I await with the greatest impatience detailed news of you and my dear children. I hope that you all arrive safely and that you yourself are well advanced in your cure. I embrace you with all my heart and commend myself to your own good heart.
>
> Your Hugo

Nothing came of this plan to farm and Hugo joined Ida in Pau.

This and other letters suggest that Hugo lived through alternating ups and downs of surging optimism and depression, and a tendency to act on impulse, e.g. while the

record shows him to have been adapted to town life - parties, company, music, theatres, business enterprise - one cannot see him coping with the in-and-out-of-season burdens of a small landed proprietor and farmer (who could believe that fifty acres guaranteed a living!)

Here are extracts from a fragment of a torn letter overflowing with sadness, patience, tenderness and yearning for Ida's love. He was to write her such letters to the end of his days. French connoisseurs of love would say that Hugo *avait Ida dans la peau* -- was besotted by her - Freudians that she was an obsession, romantics that his love persisted like a flower in the desert.

> My very dear and much loved little wife, I should have so many things to tell you, because my heart is heavy indeed and crushed - everything that I tell you ought to be, it seems to me, the most beautiful of poetry, because my heart overflows with love and tender concern for you. How my heart would bleed if it did not long to *soothe your troubles* or at least to share them. But you no longer *have confidence in me,* you feel the lack of my support, and that upsets you because you have not yet unlearned to love me and your heart instinctively feels this void - this lack of something on which to lean.
>
> May your confidence in me return one day - then I will look after your happiness …. Look after yourself and don't grieve. You know that I love you …. a woman never makes a mistake in the long run on that point. The future can therefore only bring us always nearer together. I embrace you with all my heart, as well as our good, dear and charming children.
>
> Ever your devoted Hugochen
>
> P.S. Don't be scandalised, my very dear little wife, by the state of the envelope of my mother's letter. I only took the seals off to enclose it more easily. I did not dream of reading a word.

A letter dated May 16, 1870, is characteristic of Hugo's delight in his children:

> After you had left, the good children could hardly dry their little eyes and compose their anxious little faces. However, the soup began to recall them to themselves, and soon the frolicsome little creatures were laughing and joking, just as we like so much to see and hear them. At 5 o'clock I ordered a picnic basket and the three of us set out in glorious weather. How cheerful and happy the poor children were to run with Papa along the paths, which meant that each fear, each prayer, caused new emotions, and provoked important questions. We covered 2 kms via Liscor and the hillsides. I naturally had to explain several times to Ida (Idela) that Mama (Ida) could not return tomorrow but would probably be back next week. I left it to her to explain all that to Charlot (Carlo Seilern) who seemed to understand it all out of respect for his learned sister. The next morning we went to the park and into town, and busily admired the dolls and the

wealth of California. Yesterday was our good Charlot's birthday (On May 16, 1870, Charlot was four years old and his sister five years and nine months) so I had a cake with 5 candles, of which 4 were white, and one bigger green one in the middle, which created a big sensation and is likely to be a long-remembered birthday. Today Charlot and I are going to choose a horse. The good children really are charming. I enjoy hearing them alive and about all day as I enjoy the gentle and musical twittering of the little birds in the sky, who send you into a pleasant reverie with their pure voices ... And into the bargain, they are in excellent health, thanks no doubt to the care, conscientious and affectionate, of Mademoiselle. We can congratulate ourselves on having found this young woman. Always calm and kind, she looks after the children with constant care and yet knows how to keep them as disciplined and punctual as we want them to be ...

In a letter dated June 26, 1872, from Eichstrasse 3, Baden-Baden, written (like all his letters) in French, Hugo addresses Ida as *Vous* and *Madame* - an icy formality between husband and wife, which is lost in English. Ida had been seriously ill for several months in 1871/72 and Hugo seems to have had an inkling of the truth when he hints that she should look for the causes of her illness in her mind rather than her body.

I acknowledge receipt, Madame, of your last letter of the 17th, which reached me through Fanny (Ida's younger sister who married Count Zelenski; her only child Rose, married Perponcher, who had estates in Silesia), I deplore above all that your health continues to leave so much to be desired, and I seriously wonder if those who look after you and who advise you - if indeed, you yourself - realise the cause of your illness. For it is clear that to cure something one must go back to the cause and get rid of that first, then only can one attack the effects in their small details and repair any damage etc.

The air of the mountains might strengthen you if it were not too bracing and too full of oxygen. As for a light hydrotherapeutical cure, I can express no opinion in the absence of further details. In short, I distrust hydrotherapy in your case and in order to be reassured I should like the advice, opinion, and judgement of the doctor who looks after you. The most important thing in my view is to get accurately *your temperature* which is in exact relation to the vitality of your nervous system and which also indicates *absolutely* the highest degree of reaction of which your body is capable. A doctor who fails to make these observations, and who does not base his treatment on such facts, will do you more harm than good and make your illness incurable. He will be acting in the dark ... And then the action of cold water is so effective and direct on the nervous system that one must know how to adapt it and to proportion it by an almost inspired quick look over, backed by long and learned experience.

> You'll easily understand how all this worries and preoccupies me ... for I hope that you will be ready to believe at least in the great solicitude that I feel for you, and in my keen desire to see you completely cured and returned to health.
>
> I feel this so strongly that I would like to look after you myself and watch over your doctor's treatment with absolute devotion. However, that, unfortunately, cannot be and what is the good of mere words when what is wanted above all are actions.
>
> So reassure me on all this and write to me with the trust and frankness which alone could satisfy my interest in you. I have certainly not the right to reproach you, or even to point out the cold and indifferent tone which characterises your letters ... but it is also impossible for you to guess that my heart suffers from your coldness and indifference, which from my point of view are unjust ...
>
> Just a word more on what I said at the beginning of this letter: go back to the causes of your sufferings and formulate them without bitterness or passion but with trust and frankness. Perhaps you are making a mistake or are exaggerating, if so, so much the better for you ... once the causes are mastered, the effects will soon disappear ...

Hugo's relations with his wife zig-zag bewilderingly between irrevocable ruptures, exercises in formal politeness, and vividly - often poetically - expressed outpourings of tenderness, selfless devotion and passionate love. Opening their pages at random through the years, it is an even chance whether one encounters gentle zephyrs or lashing skies. One is led to suspect that Hugo and Ida each had something that filled a need in the other. They could not live together, but neither could they decide definitely to part. Is this far fetched? But consider the incredible number and length of letters that they exchanged - two, three or more a week - and Hugo refers to a letter from Ida of sixteen pages which appear to have been concentrated woe, for which he commiserates with the "dear little woman". That each must have spent several hours a week writing to the other at least implies that they enjoyed doing so, that these exchanges left each with a sense of satisfaction, that each provided the other with an audience for their woes and a target for their reproaches. No actor is complete without an audience. No archer has sport without a target. The content of Hugo's letters is a mixture of reproaches, discussion of common family interests, thoughtful remembrances of anniversaries, references to his presents to Ida and the children and his devotion to her and to them. Unfortunately none of Ida's letters survive, but we deduce from Hugo's replies that if she was touchy and more inclined to recrimination than he, she at any rate shared their family concerns, accepted the passionate expression of his love and herself very occasionally wrote an affectionate letter which sent him into an ecstasy of delight.

So perhaps after all they were a well-suited couple. Perhaps no other woman would have complemented Hugo's psychological make-up by making him suffer as she did; perhaps no other man would have borne with her talent for suffering as he did. We do not know the occasion of the breach with Hugo's mother mentioned in the next extract. His references to the advice of other members of the family doubtless reflect Ida's habit of broadcasting appeals to them whenever she felt that her sense of outrage needed soothing.

> Baden, August 21, 1872. (August 22 was Hugo's birthday.)
>
> Before replying directly to your good letter of the 17th, may I thank you with all my heart for your good wishes for the 22nd. I know them to be true and sincere and I therefore regard them as a good augury. They will bring me happiness.
>
> By this time you will, I hope, have received my two letters of the 19th and 18th and my little parcel of the 17th. In these two letters I have set forth all my heart's thoughts and hopes.
>
> Today, now that you insist that I make a decision, I can only repeat:
>
> I love you, dear Ida, with all my heart and can find my happiness only in you: my happiness is in your keeping. If you still love me, if love banishes from your heart all distrust and discouragement then listen to your heart and take with confidence the hand which I loyally hold out to you.
>
> Let it not be because of the opinions or the advice of some member of the family, let it not be any feeling of self-sacrifice or of reason, which urges you to forgive the past and entrust your future to me ... I accept as my judge your heart only ... It is a cry from your heart that I hope to hear.
>
> If, however, you do not feel strong enough to live with me, if, alas, you no longer love me, I hope that you will always regard me as a most sincere and devoted friend, and that you will be good enough to let me know the place which suits you best for your permanent home.
>
> I hope that you will not grieve me by accepting my mother's invitation to go to Vienna. I cannot possibly approve of this plan, and even more my duty and conscience are absolutely opposed to it. You can inform my mother that I am absolutely decided about this. I regret that I cannot do so myself, seeing that my mother has taken care to conceal her real intentions towards me and has stooped to intrigue against my happiness and that of my children. It is, therefore, to be assumed that I am unaware of her proposition.
>
> For the rest, in all this I wish to be, and to remain, wholly independent of all influence and advice. I am responsible to my own conscience and heart alone, and the sole appeal that I make is *to your heart*!
>
> How wonderful it would be if you would only listen to your heart. I would propose to you to come and establish yourself here in Baden towards the end of September. Baden is charming. The juries (for the musical and other

artistic competitions) close for good in October and society here will therefore be the most distinguished, select, and agreeable.

In addition, the educational facilities are incredible here - for Charlot the excellent university of Strasbourg is one hour away, and then 14 hours to Paris, 4 hours to Frankfurt, 2 hours from Switzerland. You cannot be more centrally situated.

Well, I do not want to build castles in Spain and abandon myself to pipe dreams!

I await your reply impatiently and commend myself to your good heart.

I embrace my good and charming children and will write to them soon. I have just received their charming letter. Greetings to all and to you, dear Ida, who are all my happiness and my future.

Hugo

Here is a letter from Hugo to his brother-in-law Charles Zaluski:

B. Baden, Aug. 26, 1872.

Very dear friend!

It is my fault that our correspondence has languished a little in recent days.

I have been keeping up a pretty brisk correspondence with Ida and without wishing to make any mysteries with you, I did not think that the moment had yet come to bring you up to date on our exchanges.

Rightly or wrongly, I only put one question to Ida: Do you love me and do you believe in my love?

Any understanding, any future, in my view, depends on the answer.

I should not accept with the same confidence and enthusiasm a reconciliation which was the consequence either of pure and simple reasoning, or of the advice of some other member of the family.

I feel so strong in my love and in my anxiety for my little family that I am not ready to accept anyone's intervention, whoever it may be. A reconciliation with Ida depends solely upon her - upon her heart! As for my mother, I wish to know nothing at all about all the intrigues that she has hatched against my happiness. Neither her character not her judgement inspire any confidence in me. I shall therefore follow my own convictions in everything that I decide.

My confidence in you, excellent friend, my great and deep gratitude towards my brother-in-law have, I hope, enabled you to realise that you are the exception and that not only will I always accept with pleasure your advice and help but that I count on it, too, and invite it. I am very encouraged by the interest that people take in me. Johann Strauss and

Brahms like to play with me and are so far kind as to be willing seriously to study my scores and to correct here and there my imperfections. Next week Strauss will play my ***Fantaisie Valse*** which I've just finished for a big orchestra.

In 1872, Strauss, the younger, the "Waltz King", was forty-seven years of age, and Brahms, who had just become artistic director of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, was thirty-nine. The best known photograph of Brahms has accustomed us to a patriarch with thickets of shaggy beard, but when Hugo played duets with him, he was clean-shaven, shy, and pensively handsome, looking younger than his age (**see photograph p.97 in the English edition of Karl Gerringer's Brahms: His Life and Work**).

Another virtuoso pianist, famous alike in Europe and America in his day, who enjoyed playing with Hugo was Alfred Gruenfeld (1852 - 1924). Count Hans Wilczek (1837-1922), well-known in both Vienna and cosmopolitan European society, mentions in his memoirs that, in company with Gruenfeld he often used to visit the Viennese song writer Gustav Pick, "where my friend Hugo Seilern used to play fourhanded with Gruenfeld."

In 1871, Ida had been gravely ill. For several months, she hardly left her bed. Her nightmares and hallucinations imply a nervous mental illness. In the course of 1872, she became well enough to travel and, with her two children, she visited Hugo's mother, *Bonne Maman* Seilern in Vienna, and the Zaluskis in Iwonicz, returning to Naples at the end of the year.

Hugo's insistence to the children that they must be good, obedient and helpful in order not to worry their mother must, coming from him, have been confusing to them, because their mother had taught them to regard their father as the man who persecuted her. Idela records that in this year, she and Lolo **(Carlo)** discussed marriage. Idela said she would like to marry a "Pole if possible, or else an Italian, or a Frenchman, *even a German,* but I will *never* take one who would drive me mad like *Maman's* husband" - a terrible image for a child of eight to have formed of her father.

One of the biggest eruptions of Vesuvius ever experienced occurred in May, 1872, hence "that terrible Vesuvius".

Baden Nov. 12, 1872.

My dear and good children,

You have each of you written me charming letters and I waited till today to thank you for the great pleasure you have given me, because I have been hoping to learn from ***Maman*** your address at Naples.

I must, however, resign myself to writing yet again through ***Bonne Maman*** who will forward you this letter from Vienna. This detour will make these few words of love and affection which I send you travel a long time indeed but they will get to you in the end and that is all that matters!

May I first of all, my dear children, say how pleased I am at the immense progress that you have both made in your handwriting. That proves to me

that you want to please your good and excellent mother, who loves you and looks after you with so much love and devotion.

I know that you love her tenderly, that you try hard to be good, obedient and helpful in order never to cause her grief or worries which would upset her health, and that is the most important thing in all the world, isn't it my dear and well-loved children?

How can I not embrace you and hug you to my heart, how can I not heap up on your dear heads all the fatherly good wishes that the innocence and confidence of your candid gaze inspire in me, evoking from me blessings and sacred intentions for your future happiness. ***Bonne Maman*** has sent me your photos, which I have framed and never stop looking at. It is my greatest joy to gaze on your pictures for hours and to guess what I cannot see. Why have you lowered your eyes, my good little Idetchka? I love your eyes so much. And you, my little sailor, you are growing into a little man, so nice and so intelligent. How you have both grown! How well you look mentally and physically!

And now you are in Naples under that lovely blue sky, with those fine green trees and that beautiful and vast sea, that terrible Vesuvius, while Papa is in a country where it is very cold. There are already two feet of snow and a very cold wind.

You must write to me soon - detailed letters, telling me all about your two selves and ***Maman***. Everything interests me: your amusements, your toys, your little friends, your walks, your lessons, your books, what you eat and even if you filled 8 pages that would still leave out a dozen things that would interest me!

Once more I hug you both to my heart. Kiss for me the hand of your good and dear mother.

Your ever devoted

Seilern

Two sad ***Madame*** and ***Vous*** letters:

Baden. Dec. 29, 1872.

Madame,

I have just re-read a long letter that I wrote you for the New Year. I prefer, however, not to send but to burn it ... I am still not well and I can only recover slowly and with much difficulty from such violent shocks and griefs caused by the unhappy negotiations of last summer ... One's heart dies with difficulty.

I tell you that I am unwell to excuse myself for the brevity of this letter. To write tires me and frays my nerves ... after this long letter, which I have just burnt, I am exhausted and incapable of new emotions ... I therefore again beg you to excuse me.

Nevertheless I lay aside my fatigue to send you my best wishes in time for the New Year. I hope that your plans and your ideas about the future will be realised. As to the children, I hug them to my heart and wish them every good and happy thing imaginable. Please explain to them that Papa is unwell and that he will write to them very soon ...

Pray accept the expression of my ***most sincere*** and ***devoted*** friendship and of my most affectionate feelings.

Seilern.

An undated fragment:

You mistrust my constancy and fear new emotions!! Why not confide in me all your qualms, your moments of weakness?

We have been talking in riddles for more than three months. Charles Zaluski has strongly encouraged me along the way that he knew was the way of my heart ... What more can I say to you, prove to you, offer you?

As to the ring (**which he had presumably sent to Ida with his love but which she had rejected, proposing to pass it on to Idela**), dear Ida, I will never consent to your proposal even though I adore our charming Idetchka. In sending it to you, I confided a secret to it, which you have not wished to guess. Don't fear that because of that you would be placing yourself under an obligation to me if you accept it; you would simply be making me happy. If, however, you are absolutely determined to refuse my small gift, kindly return me the ring as your final answer.

I embrace our dear children with all my heart and beg you to accept from me all that is most devoted and affectionate.

Hugo

XXIII

HUGO'S FRIENDSHIP WITH LISZT

-

THE FLEETING ZENITH OF HIS LIFE?

AND SO TO HUGO'S FRIENDSHIP WITH LISZT.

In 1873, Liszt was the pride of "Germany's Athens" - Weimar, capital of the Grand-Duchy of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach.

> It is impossible to believe the force and the magical prestige that attached to the name of Liszt in the eyes of all young musicians during the first years of the Imperial epoch of Napoleon III. .. Both as man and artist he seemed to belong to the world of legend. After having been the incarnation at his instrument of all the flourish *(le panache)* of the Romantic Age, while he left behind him the glittering trail of a meteor, Liszt had vanished behind the curtain of clouds which hid the Germany of that time, so different from the Germany of our own day: a Germany made of little kingdoms and autonomous duchies bristling with battlemented castles, and preserving, even in the Gothic character of its handwriting, the imprint of those Middle Ages which had vanished forever from our midst ... The majority of the pieces that Liszt had so far published seemed impossible of execution to anyone but himself, and were so in very truth, if one considers all the processes of the old method of piano playing which prescribed absolute immobility, elbows touching the body and all action of the muscles limited to the fingers and the forearm. We knew that at the Court of Weimar, disdaining his former principles, Liszt occupied himself with the highest forms of composition, dreaming of a rebirth of the art of music ...

This passage, translated by Sacheverell Sitwell from Saint Saens' *Portraits and Souvenirs,* gives an idea of Liszt's renown during the years at Weimar, whereas the supreme pianist of Europe, he became the Grand Duke's musical director. Sitwell continues:

> The prestige and renown of Liszt were, in fact, enormous, and all the force of his personality was, from now onwards, directed upon unselfish ends. This greatest of all virtuosi, who had been earning thousands of pounds a year, and whose financial prospects may be said to have been unlimited with another forty years of public career still before him, gave all his services and all his energy to Weimar for the paltry salary of £200 a year (S. Sitwell, biography of Liszt, ,p.150).

Music's debt to Liszt is extraordinary. He originated the concepts of a "piano recital", "symphonic poem", Hungarian and other "rhapsodies" and of the dissolution of tonality (as in his *Bagatelle* and *Jeux d'Eau à la Villa d'Este),* which Debussy was to develop further. He founded the modern orchestra as we know it; he was the first

modern conductor. He unearthed and produced the operas of Gluck and half a dozen other forgotten composers. He took down from the shelf Beethoven's *Fidelio,* which was unknown to the contemporary public. He publicised Schubert, he sponsored Berlioz and the first productions of Wagner's operas. He launched himself as a composer with his *Années de Pélérinage,* his twelve great *Etudes,* his *Mephisto Waltz, Dante Sonata,* symphonies, symphonic poems and a host of other items. He impelled his patron, the Grand Duke Karl Alexander generously to say of him "Liszt *was* what a Prince *ought* to be". He established a school of pianism for *les jeunes matadors du piano* (as he delighted to call his Weimar pupils).

> There could be nothing more delightful in the imagination than the atmosphere of those months of spring in this little town. Young men and women of talent, and of the most impressionable age, were gathered together here round this person of legend. He had given no concerts for thirty years, he would not play for money; but his counsel and advice and the wonderful stimulus of his personality, were at the service of the young. No one came away from seeing him who was not the richer for that experience. He would criticize, he would comment, and there was always the hope that he would play. The magic of his technique was unimpaired and ... those who, heard him in such circumstances could never forget the impression of even a few bars played by his hands. His pupils, of whom there were sometimes twenty or thirty in the town, would bring him their pieces to play every afternoon, while on Sunday mornings, between eleven and one o'clock there were regular concerts amounting to a whole piano recital by Liszt, according to his mood.

His pupils included many who were to become part of the history of music; the conductors Hans Biilow, Hans Richter, Arthur Nikish; the pianists Arthur Friedheim, Sophie Menter, Karl Tausig, Pachmann, Mozkowski and Frederic Lamond; the composers Cesar Franck,Smetana, Dvorak, Vincent d'indy, Grieg and MacDowdl sought his advice and owed the first publication of their music to him. These are but a few of the many whom he taught, advised or helped.

Not least among this galaxy in Liszt's esteem was Hugo Seilern, although fate decided that after a number of charming and accomplished compositions, he was never to be able to develop his talent to the full.

Lewis Carroll's wry rule "jam tomorrow and jam yesterday but never jam today" expresses a human truth: few recognise and consciously savour hours of happiness while actually living them. Moments of happiness in Hugo's life were intermittent but his letters reveal that for him two mainsprings were his children and his piano. His letter of May 16, 1870 (p108) showed him rejoicing in his children. Now comes one (Weimar, August, 1873,) which gives us a glimpse of a moment of triumph consciously enjoyed which may have been the zenith, pitifully fleeting and innocent, of the forty-eight years of Hugo's life.

> My very dear and well-beloved little wife …

First of all let me tell you I have chanced to arrive in the middle of big preparations for a festival of music that Liszt is organising and conducting on September 7. Liszt received me on the day of my arrival in so friendly and fatherly3 a manner, and introduced me and commended me everywhere so kindly and flatteringly that from the very first moment I found myself on intimate terms with this group of great musicians, literary men, and artists of all kinds- with whom at this moment Weimar is overflowing_

Naturally, indeed I would say as of right, I attend all the rehearsals, *matinées*, evening receptions, etc. etc. In a word, by his keen interest Liszt has included me among the elite: the Grand Duke, the Court, the Meyendorff, Beust, Laen salons etc. - all came forward to give me a charming welcome. I am invited to the celebrations that the Grand Duke is giving (the day after the great festival) in honour of his son's marriage.

The emperor and empress (sister of the Grand Duke) of Germany will be present. There will be a grand concert and Liszt will play, among others, two big compositions accompanied by the orchestra - a concerto by Weber and an Hungarian Rhapsody by himself. I shall have to appear in court dress with a sword but for a *protégé* of Liszt nothing is difficult in Weimar and everyone hastens to offer me a sword and three-cornered hat ... I accept all this with enthusiasm because thus I can study Weimar in depth in a few days and rejoin all the more quickly my sweetheart whom I miss above everything else.

The artists and Liszt's pupils meet every day in his place at 4 p.m. I don't need to tell you that I never miss a meeting. The pupils (already great virtuosi) begin by playing one after the other, mostly compositions of Chopin and Liszt. Then Liszt sits down at the piano to explain some new composition and to correct any small mistakes made by one of the pupils. There is no need to tell you what immense pleasure and instruction Liszt gives his silent and attentive audience. He did me the honour of playing my Prelude twice and of praising it greatly. You can imagine how this honour raised my prestige among these great artists ... I was the only person who felt small, indeed ignorant and insignificant, among these leading lights, among men who know so much, who create and work on an un believable level. On the 8th or 9th Liszt intends to conduct my Prelude for full orchestra. He has made a few small corrections in my score, which has therefore become doubly precious to me – inspired by you, my darling, annotated and approved by Liszt.

Monday, September 1, 1873.

Saturday night, introduced by Liszt, I visited Madame la Baronne de Meyendorff. She is a widow with three sons, about 15 or 16 years old, who is enthusiastic, and even more than enthusiastic (it is said!) about Liszt. The fact is that the Great Master is full of attentions to her so that he spends long hours

at her place and she at his. This alone tells you that she is a very distinguished woman and as Liszt was telling me this morning (He came to spend an hour with me at my hotel) a richly gifted woman, highly educated, and remarkable in character and mind. Distinguished manners, born Princess Gortchakoff, a typical Russian lady in the good sense of the word, rich, still youngish (35 or 36), she is clever enough to have made a big position for herself at court and here (for that matter, Liszt has helped a lot, I think). On that evening, the young Servais4 (great talent) began by playing a grand cantata, the Death of Tasso (Oeuvre couronné at Brussels and a Frs.16,000 Prix de Rome). A remarkable composition from all points of view - broad, spontaneous, very dramatic, the orchestra admirably controlled and sonorous, the solos and choruses finely inspired, played for three quarters of an hour. Liszt turned the pages for the young musician and was obviously interested in this composition which, in fact, he already knew as he had criticised and annotated it with the composer.

After that we had a splendid supper … game and delicacies of all kinds, the best wines, champagne - everything - things that I looked at without touching except for two cups of excellent tea of the kind you drink in well-appointed Russian houses.

Then we returned to the salon. The ladies allowed us to smoke. We talked. We grouped and re-grouped without embarrassment as men and women of the world put everyone at their ease.

At length Liszt sat down at the piano and played for a whole hour as only he knows how to play.

He had a magnificent Bechstein under his fingers and he drew from it sounds and harmonies previously unknown to the human ear - sounds which intoxicated, transported, or shook you to the deepest depths of your heart! How I thought of you, my darling, how I missed you then ... But you will see and hear all this: Liszt comes every year at the end of March to spend several months at Weimar. Shall I tell you of a little triumph that I had that evening? Perhaps it will please you.

A good half hour after Liszt had ceased to play, the talk turned by chance to Vienna, the exhibition, Strauss and his lovely waltzes: 'Who can play us a Strauss waltz? Ah! *you*, my dear Count.' Liszt turned to me. 'You are Viennese, you will give us that pleasure!'.

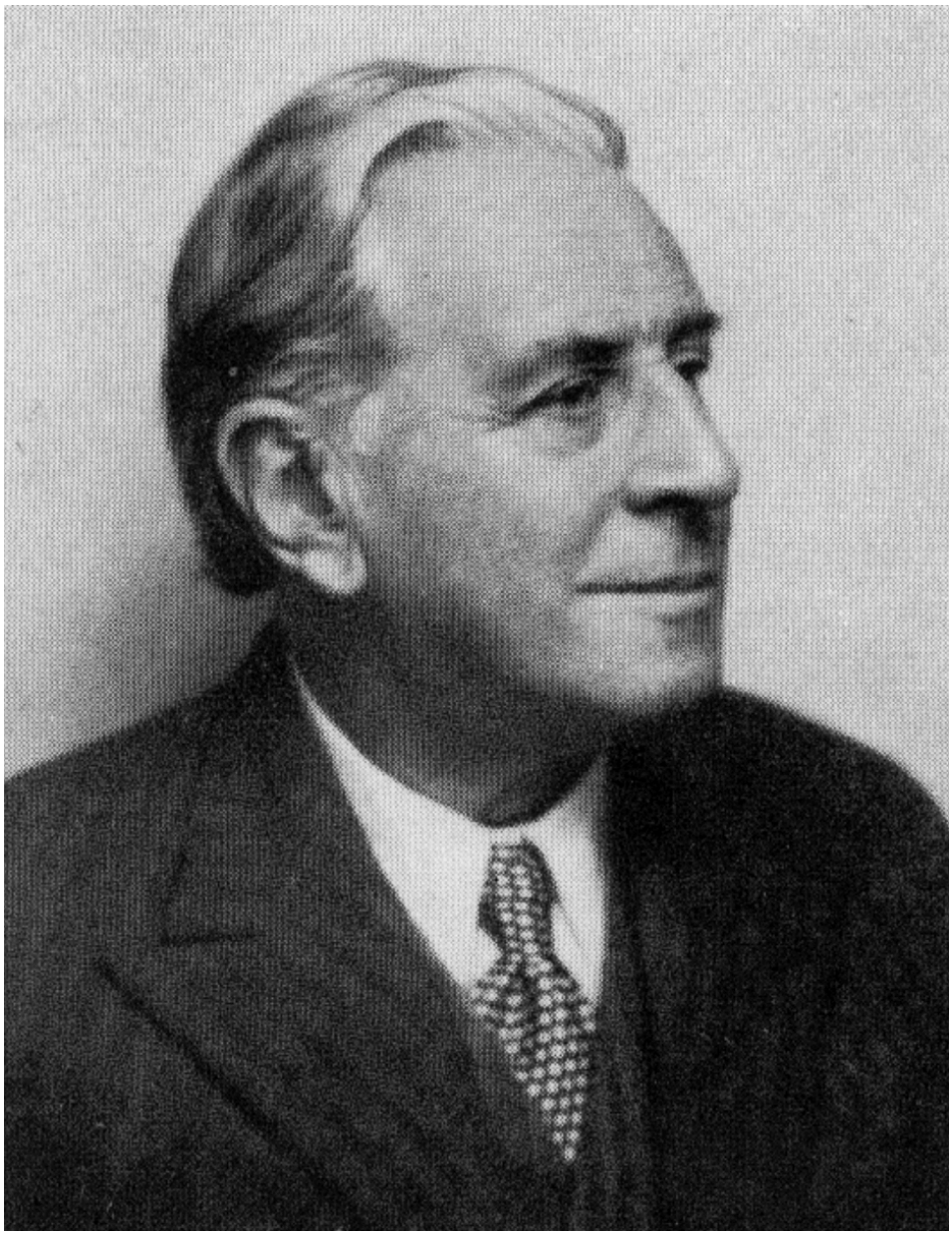
To refuse would have been affectation on my part, especially as he was asking for entertainment and not "eine musikalische Leistung".

So I bravely sat down at the piano. I began by improvising a little introduction and then little by little I accentuated the unique rhythm of the Viennese waltz until finally I led into my favourite waltz Neu Wien.

Liszt was sitting with Madame Meyendorff on the settee behind me. Everyone was listening and as I played on I gradually forgot all these people around me and played with conviction.

Then Liszt rose quickly to sit next to me, and he said with deep sincerity 'But this is inspired, dear Count. … I listen to myself when I play but I have never heard waltzes played on the piano with your rhythm and life, … Now admit that arrangement was not by Strauss. …' Liszt had guessed ... the better to get across the effects of the orchestra and to give more sonority and certain rhythmic effects I play waltzes, and especially *Neu Wien,* in my own way ...

I had a terrific success. Everyone gathered round me and I had to play the end of the waltz again and then play others ... The event was trifling and of no importance but it gave me pleasure all the same, and the party broke up in a gay and joyous mood.



Carlo Seilern. (1866 – 1940)

XXIV

HUGO FORESEES THE AFTERMATH OF THE FRANCO-PRUSS IAN WAR

THE seven weeks war between Prussia and Austria in 1866 had revealed Prussia's military efficiency and ended in Austria's defeat at Sadowa. Bismark organised North Germany into a confederation. France alone stood as a bulwark against further German unification under Prussia until her defeat at Sedan on September 2, 1870. Here is a fragment of a letter that Hugo wrote from Baden on the third anniversary of Sadowa:

> ... the crushing effect of the bloody drama. Must heaven blush with human blood in order that the passions and ambitions of men may be satiated? It is terrible. It is ghastly. And will the decisive victory of either side not cause a deep wound which will not cease to bleed for a century? The glory which people seek to attach to the heroes of battle changes in name and nature, transforming itself into disgust, terror. Humanity will become so revolting that one ought to halt its propagation and seek consolation for its existence in a near and complete end. You do not need courage to die but you do indeed need it to live. The war of 1866 killed my prayers and hopes for my country, the war of 1870 will end in universal desolation and mortal misery, ..
>
> Baden, Sept. 2, 1873
>
> I am worried and upset today. These noisy celebrations, the savage rejoicing of the people on the anniversary of the battle of Sedan offends, fills me with repugnance, disgusts and revolts me. Must humanity fall back eternally in these odious mistakes? Cannot the sciences, the arts - in a word, civilization - eradicate these barbarous inclinations, these ferocious appetites from the human heart?!? Some street boy seizes a flag and puts himself at the head of a band of other street boys to shout 'Long live Germany! Long live the emperor! ***Down with France!'*** Everyone cheers! The crowds, drunk with what feelings I can't guess, shriek and howl, and carry this ghastly wretch shoulder high. I close my window and shut myself in. I should like to have boxed that standard-bearer's ears and cursed that crowd of stupid people. Does not one of those fools drunk with a pernicious joy think of the thousands of hearts broken that day at Sedan, of all those weeping mothers and sisters seeking in vain on the battlefield the bloody remnants of a son or a brother?
>
> The [German) people, who have certainly done great things, whom I admire because they concentrate in themselves the learning of the whole world, because they are simple and hardworking, this people for the moment I

hate and despise, because today they brutally trample on a great grief, one which as such should be sacred to every generous and noble heart. Yes, that's what these heavy louts, these barrels of beer, lack: generosity, nobility, and 'spontaneity of feeling. They are what they are coldly, without ***élan,*** without any initiative ... calculatedly, deliberately. I needed a scapegoat. It was at the admirable Baroness Gablenz's that I found him. There was there a fat German, who (in parenthesis) gave absolutely remarkable musical evenings, his hair parted over his ear, his red, puffed and bourgeois face, the signet ring on his second finger, his great-grandfather's frock coat, his devil-may-care waistcoat, his belly a real fortress, his feet a battle-field - there you have some details of his carcase, I skip the rest, some even grosser - but for all that I am sure he is a decent chap! I spoke pretty frankly (though more discreetly than I write now) of the anniversary that all Germany celebrates so solemnly today. He tried to defend in principle this national demonstration, spoke to me of Hegel and of the incompatibility of the German and French character and all sorts of other subtleties and speculations. The fact is that I listened with admirable patience, curious to see just how far the good man could work himself up. He was a locomotive, my dear, and his huge red-brick moustache swept his handsome face which was overwhelmed by a holy anger. Happily his immense reservoir of beer gave him something to lean on: without that I think he would have fallen into a faint. 'Monsieur,' I said at last, interrupting him (from pity and because I wanted to go home to see my 'own face in the looking-glass for a change), 'Monsieur, I understand why Germany needs a day of national rejoicing: so many efforts, so much scholarship, even so much blood, call for a solemn remembrance. But why don't you celebrate the day on which peace was signed? You could thus have brought together all these great German ideals, aspirations, and enthusiasms, without wounding so many noble hearts, without wickedly fanning the hatred of a nation which you perhaps despise too much and probably at your own expense. Celebrate ***peace!*** Let your 38 million throats cheer for peace and the world will cheer with you, will rush to answer your generous and human call.' While I was speaking I had taken my hat and made my farewell bows and I was still speaking when I reached the street in order that I should not hear the ***Wacht am Rhein.*** Well, here at last I am alone, or at least alone with you, dear angel, you who understand me - don't you? -who sympathise with my ideas ...

XXV

TRAGIC LETTERS

ALAS, AFTER THIS INTERVAL of relaxed exchanges between Hugo and Ida came another zig-zag.

> Weimar, September 10, 1873. Very dear and good little wife,
>
> Your letter of the 7th just received has caused me much pain. How I suffer thinking of you discouraged, unwell and sad! Alas! Circumstances do not favour us at the moment and we must, as you rightly say, establish ourselves definitively as soon as possible. That is the essential condition for your rest and health. I would like to feel that you had a little more confidence in me, that you were convinced that my greatest and only happiness is to ensure yours and that nothing could prevent me from doing whatever I can for you and the children.
>
> It seems to me, however, that we should not take a decision lightly but should calmly and prudently weigh up the pros and cons of any place we choose. I therefore fee that we should spend this winter in Naples where we can study at leisure different places that might be suitable. We have to consider two points: the first is your health and wellbeing; the second the children's education; and lastly (a subordinate matter) my modest talent.
>
> How I long to embrace you at this moment, to hug you to my heart, to convince you of my love and devotion. Oh that as time goes by you could gain a little confidence in me! Alas, dear little woman, I know my big faults well enough to realise how little I deserve it. But I love you so sincerely, so wholeheartedly, and with so much pride, that I feel entitled to ask you at least to trust my heart.
>
> Why do you insist on judging me by the stupid squabbles which are really only evidence of my excessive nerviness and anxiety. My heart plays no part in all that, and in my innermost self I deplore and disown these upsets which suddenly spring up over trifles. You must not therefore give yourself over to discouragement nor above all decide anything while under its influence.
>
> You are a woman - the embodiment of the essence of womanhood such as the great poets and finest intelligences dream of. You are the ivy which lives only by clinging for support, which shrivels and dies when alone. You understand happiness only in the intimate union of two hearts. Fundamentally you are not of an independent character and you'll never

be happy alone. Your maternal love and your sense of duty doubtless give you the strength of will needed to struggle alone and without support against life's difficulties. But that is not happiness! It is a consolation which brings calm but never happiness. A mother can live for her children, she can never live by them. These young hearts and wakening intelligences, these young imaginations, can neither understand nor share the emotions nor satisfy the heart's needs of the woman who gave them life. A gap of twenty years, a lifetime of experience, struggle and disillusion forever separate the child from its parents. The new generation creates its own new world and new attachments.

It is only in the man whom she loves that a woman can find happiness and the development of her faculties - the chief end of life!

I understand and approve of those women who concentrate all their faculties, all their hope - their whole life - in the love of a man. It is only within this all-embracing feeling that she can achieve big results, can rise above life's difficulties, attain the fullest development of her nature, so fruitful, poetic and inspired! See how those who have understood the human heart best, see how Shakespeare makes a woman love, how he fuses her existence with her lover in a union which makes her follow her man even into crime.

I have said enough on this inexhaustible subject, eternally old, eternally fresh. My heart seeks only for new ways to win you, to mingle your life with mine - a desire which, I hope, will make you more indulgent towards me.

Don't, then, let yourself be overcome by a discouragement largely due to your state of health. We'll see what's .to be done and all necessary will be done for your health, your welfare and happiness!!!

I await your reply and will arrange everything as you may wish.

I leave Weimar on the 20th to go with Liszt to Wartburg (an hour away) where he is to direct a big fete on the 21st. I therefore count on joining you on the 22nd or 23rd ... I cannot live without you and this separation of three weeks already seems a lifetime.

The date of the following tragic letter is missing but it looks as though Hugo wrote it after receiving Ida's rejection of his pleas in the foregoing letter.

... I must then do violence to my heart and spend the whole winter in Weimarl on 100 Thalers a month. You no longer love me, dear Ida, That is a misfortune, a disaster, but we must organise accordingly for the sake of our good little children. Without me, you will be serene, perhaps happy

and able to rejoice in the independence of your feelings, as you tell me so cruelly. In my grief could wish I did not love you, so that I could feel comfortable in my isolation, and try out myself this fine independence of heart! Heart! Vain word, fashioned and moulded according to logic. Impressions, feelings these are the true keys to the enigma!

I am mortally sad. I often think that I might be happy in isolation and that hard work might make me forget what work is - That work which is not work for you because I have no career.

At this point by a natural association of ideas with work, Hugo goes on to speak of his music:

If only you could have been there when I conducted my Prelude. The whole orchestra rose to applaud me. Liszt and his fellow artists begged me to play it again. I saw several women with tears in their eyes - had they guessed with what love for you this little composition overflows? I will compose no more - a shop-counter or a copy - clerk's job - that's my proper place.

Enough of this! Such Jeremiads are useless. I'll write to ***Maman*** to settle our income definitively. I'll ask her to send me 100 Thalers a month, so that you can have 1,100. Dispose of me as you will. If you want me to come, say so, In a word if you decide, out of charity, to give me a little love, you will rediscover in the depths of your heart a little of that generosity which made you so poetic in times gone by ...

Write soon and try to love a little one who loves you with all he has to give.

Hugo

Weimar, Sept. 20, 1873.

My good and darling Ida,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 16th.

Need I tell you that it has saddened my heart profoundly and that I need to reflect most deeply over our situation if I am not to despair entirely of our future and our happiness. My last letters have been unable to persuade you in the least ... even my feelings seem to you to be out of harmony with yours, and to make no sense to you. But these same letters were so overflowing with my love for you, with my desire to know you to be happy and myself to be happy through you. How far apart your heart must be

from mine to remain indifferent to my appeal. Independence of opinions and principles but at the same time harmony and mutual help are, I believe, the foundation for married happiness ... Is it really you, dear angel, you whom I have known so poetic in love, so convinced of the need for each to identify with the other, is it really you who write the things you do? Your heart would be entirely adrift from mine, stricken by a tragic love, if you cannot answer differently from the way you do to my pleas ... Once more I tell you how I wish that I could act now as my heart dictates: a loving heart does not deceive itself: what you need is a settled home, a domestic fireside, a comfortable private life, quiet and routine - and that as soon as possible. Italy's good climate could certainly do you good, but it will only be when we have a settled home that you will recover your health, and that your good heart, so tortured and restless, will recover its poetry and youth.

As a matter of fact I believe that the place and the climate are of little importance. What you suffer from are your nerves. Once your nervous system has been calmed and rested (got into equilibrium) all will go well like an enchantment.

Although I am the head of the family, I am not entitled to give my opinion: I lack the means, my education and my mother's unfortunate prejudices, suspicious and restless character, make it impossible for me to create a home for you. Then, again, in present circumstances, I'm satisfied with the *status quo.* I have, for nearly four years, had just enough money not to die of hunger. My mother has arbitrarily taken over property which is supposedly mine, and thinks she has the right to give me or to withhold the money from me according to the whim of the moment and the day. As long as this is so I cannot be held responsible for any financial problem, or for any project, which calls for arithmetic, money, or a budget ... What's more, my poor mother does not shrink from terminological inexactitude to attain any end about which she has made up her mind. Thus, I have asked her for fifty Thalers as an advance on my income for October, because I had unforeseen expenses (as you can see from my accounts which I enclose). I did not even mention you and your finances. With a stranger, I would call that an act of treachery. As for the budget for which you ask me, you forget that, thanks to my mother's arrangements, I do not control the least thing. Fanny certainly does not ask for her 900 francs as crudely as I gathered from your letter. She helped me in the past in Paris when I was in difficulties. I accepted then (and do not regret it today) with the very clear understanding that if circumstances did not allow me to repay her on the due date, she would be good enough to wait a second year. I have a letter from Fanny confirming this. I proved my goodwill

towards her by placing my watch-chain at her disposal. There is nothing more that I can do for the moment.

XXVI

HUGO'S LOVE FOR HIS CHILDREN

THE TRAGEDY OF HUGO SEILERN'S LIFE was twofold: his love for his wife and yearning for her affection were matched only by his love for his children and yearning for them. His enjoyment of his son and daughter and his concern for their future (which show up again and again in his letters) and for his wife's treatment of them, provoked an anguished conflict within him. Ida's rejection of him as a husband seems to have created feelings of guilt within him: he felt that it was his inadequacies which had driven her away, that the situation was somehow his fault. He grieved to think that he and his children would become strangers, that he had forfeited his right to a place in their hearts. Simultaneously and contradictorily his letters reveal bitterness at Ida's unreasonableness, resentment at her lack of heart and indignation at her manner of bringing the children up. Hugo considered that whereas Ida treated Idela as though she had the stomach of an ostrich and the hide of a rhinoceros, she favouritised and coddled Carlo. He reacted by treating Carlo with excessive severity. He used to say that Idela ought to have been the boy and he called Carlo an omelette, because he was timid. Carlo was, for example, scared of dogs and took to his heels the moment that he saw one; dogs therefore naturally ran after him with joyous yelps till the screaming Carlo found refuge in the arms of his tearfully commiserating mother.

Around 1872, Hugo began to think that Carlo ought to be sent away to a boarding school. His mention of this idea to his family reached Ida, but since Carlo was then barely six, the prospect was not immediate.

Hence the following extract dated June 26, 1872:

THOUGHTS SENT TO MY WIFE CONCERNING THE EDUCATION OF OUR DEAR CHILDREN

> Correct the causes and not the effects of their faults and never cease to help the child to understand and fight their cause. Only treat as a fault that which is contrary to virtue, and allow the lapse of time, and increasing age and experience to make clear to the child what is weakness in practical life without being contrary to virtue. Try to train the children as soon as possible to use their own independence in feeling and judgement. This will, little by little, develop the perfectibility. of their characters. I think it is unwise to present to children the idea of perfection itself as a model for conduct. Perfection is an effect, a consequence, which one can only understand in the light of one's own reflection and experience.
>
> The two dangers of this method are, I think, self-complacency (which begets arrogance) and intolerance, Do not seek then to perfect a feeling

or a judgement, which, although imperfect, is not bad or blameworthy in its origin. Take special care in such cases to observe and to develop in the child moderation and charity towards his neighbour. When he is old enough, a child must understand that every man can be linked to his neighbour in two ways, which I would call (1) relations of responsibility and (2) relations not involving responsibility.

In (1) truth in everything is an obligation, and one is even responsible for any faults that one passes over in silence.

In (2) truth in relation to faults can easily become intolerance and Don Quixotry. It is preferable to say nothing, although you must never lie, flatter, or aid and abet (what you consider wrong). Enthusiasm in a child must be resisted from the moment that it dissipates itself and I would say metaphorically as it flits from one thing to another. Enthusiasm must always be supported by work and study. The love of the beautiful and the good is not, and must not be, enthusiasm. Without study and work, enthusiasm for art, for example, quickly turns into a passion and will only allow the individual to be superficial and sensual.

From one conclusion to another I am led to believe that the knowledge, the studies, and the work of a child should be restricted and deep rather than wide-ranging and general.

In general, Nature gives a man only one talent, only one more or less outstanding natural aptitude, which a simple and conscientious education must try to identify as early as possible. Thus for Nature, work is the goal of life and a man must concentrate on his special talent, his natural aptitude.

You do not look for his talent or aptitude in a child's vivid imagination. Talent manifests itself in earliest youth in work: education must protect and perfect this work without distracting from the goal in view. Difficulties wisely deployed often give more strength and independence to the talent, which aids and encourages the child.

A good man is never commonplace. Virtue is the world's most beautiful art. I should not therefore consider it a misfortune if a man showed no natural aptitude for art in the usual meaning of the word (meaning pictures or music).

One of the essentials for success in education is health.

Essential for health is the balanced exercise of the body and its members. Hygienic hydrotherapy and gymnastics seem to me best for these purposes. I should make them habitual.

Anyone in charge of education must thoroughly understand the word 'habit' and familiarise himself with the effects of habit.

Habit results from frequent, or rather from constant, repetition of the same thing. In youth, habit is more rare and less striking than in old age, when it gets to the point of becoming second nature. Habit plays a powerful role, stronger, I think, than willpower.

Habit is, I think, therefore an important factor in the material and, as it were**, *physical actions*** of life. Habit is a reef, a danger, and even often a vice in matters of ***morals*** and ***intellect***. For example, to be in the habit of rising early, washing, taking long walks, to quench one's thirst with water rather than with wine, to be one's own valet to keep one's clothes clean and mended etc., etc. To have the habit of such things, even to be a slave to them, is a very important attribute. I admire the English in these matters.

On the other hand, habit in the judgement and understanding of men and affairs is a misfortune, good only for stick-in-the-muds and fools. I have noticed a bizarre and almost contradictory effect on individuals who apply habit and routine to their judgements. Thus in some, the most convincing arguments or prejudices have no effect, because habit has made their minds so void that they resist all intellectual effort and therefore all progress. In others, every bad book, every charlatan modifies, changes and creates new and often completely contradictory opinions: just like kaleidoscopes these people wake up every day with one set of opinions and go to bed with another. Their habit is to leave the task of forming opinions to others. That has nothing to do with idleness: a most active man can succumb to the pernicious influence of habit.

The way to teach children things of which their young and inexperienced minds can neither conceive nor appreciate their true meaning, the teaching, for example, of the mysteries of religion or of prayer as formulae for certain moments of the day - does not all this necessarily develop mere habit?

As a general rule, I do not think it helpful to the young to inculcate one's own experience of life, to explain to them and induce in them one's own way of seeing and judging things. In the first place, a child must often think and judge things differently simply because his judgement corresponds to his phase of development, his age, and his situation. So one ought to look after the normal and progressive development of young intellects and the educational course must guide, help, watch over this gradual progress, which is often imperceptible, and one must never

hurry them, nor give them ideas ahead of the stage of their development.

How awful is a child old beyond his years!

Public education and colleges for girls inspire no confidence in me - a girl should never leave her mother.

For boys, on the other hand, I prefer public education, but I do not like colleges. I do not want my boy to go to a college.

Public education reflects the general characteristics of a nation. It therefore differs from country to country. Just like the individual; I believe that each nation has its characteristic talent and natural aptitudes.

I would for example, educate a sailor, a business man or a scientific agriculturist in England, a painter in Italy or in Spain, a scientist or civil servant in Prussia, a musician in Leipzig, a doctor in Vienna, an engineer in Switzerland.

In art courses, the fundamentals must be laid solidly and perfectly.

It is therefore a very great and very deplorable mistake to hand over the initial courses to mediocre and poorly paid teachers. An outstanding scholar or an inspired artist is not necessarily the best teacher. You need a great teacher for the introductory courses, and you need a great scholar or artist for advanced studies.

The spectacular vices of man, like gambling, debauchery, drink, etc., etc. are only the consequences of a bad education - they originate in a lack of balance in the moral or physical faculties of the individual. Education must ward off the causes in time and if a vicious tendency reveals itself the only battle should be against its causes. Beware of fighting the effects, the vice itself - you will only add to it the' charm of forbidden fruit.

In my view, the chief and almost universal causes of vice are lack of will, lack of occupation, and lack of ***health***. Exercise and develop in everything, on every occasion, the will of a young man or girl. Try to fix and concentrate all the faculties, all the interests of the pupil in one and the same channel adapted to his nature and his talent! Maintain his health by exercise, and fatigue and by all his habits and you will triumph over the most deeply rooted vice, all the more so because your triumph will be indirect.

The proverb 'Youth must amuse itself', which undoubtedly covers these small excesses, does not seem to me really blameworthy. A woman and a mother will never understand that a young man is not worth much and will never be a complete personality unless he has stolen a few kisses here and there, if he has not once or twice emptied a glass of wine too many. I except and absolutely exclude gambling. Even so, you must not forbid it but cunningly keep the young man away from all occasions (of gambling). In England, in Prussia, and in several other countries, a gambler's life is rare because it is forbidden and prohibited by public opinion.

I knew a young man who had such an exceptional horror of gambling that he could not see cards without disgust. I wondered why, so I asked him. 'It is only natural,' he said. 'My father compelled me daily for years to make up a fourth at Whist and scolded me like a professional each time I made the least mistake. I play Whist extremely well but only as my greatest punishment.' Did that father not act thus towards his son on purpose with wise foresight?

Another fairly analogous example occurs to me. My mother's brother was somewhat given to women as a young man and his father felt that he was too careless in his choice of a woman, so one day he invited his son to accompany him on a visit to a friend. This friend was the senior doctor in a hospital. Warned by the father, the doctor received them in a ward in which deplorable and unfortunate victims of debauchery lay suffering on their beds. For the young man this visit to the hospital seemed a matter of chance. It therefore was, as it were, by chance that the doctor took his guests round the hospital, showing the young man one by one all the horrors, all the irreparable misfortunes that spring from debauchery.

My uncle was so impressed and frightened that he could never afterwards get rid of those horrible visions, which completely cured him of his weakness.

Such experiments are, however, somewhat risky. It is always better to fight vice by attacking the causes. Might not his father have so crippled my uncle's imagination as to make him a misogynist and rob him forever of all the poetry that a woman can, and should, inspire in a young man?

A problem with which education scarcely concerns itself in a full and complete manner is marriage. How many young men, how many girls, in fact; are there who know the nature, the duties, the dangers of marriage, who understand the qualities and virtues which a woman and a man should bring to marriage and, above all, what are the special

> qualities which must complete and merge in you your own qualities, and counterbalance and modify your own faults?'
>
> That, people say, should be the business of the parents! What a deplorable mistake! Is it the business of parents to initiate their young people? Can, should, the apprenticeship of this great science take place at the same time as the young people should be practising it? Would that not set at risk forever the happiness and the future of the family? For a marriage to be happy, it is not enough that a good man should be united to a virtuous woman. Nature and instinct must also compel a balance.

The blotches, numbers of crossings out, and references to his tears and the ending of the following fragment suggest deep emotion.

> ... my promise must suffice you that I shall not go to America and that I will live, by myself ***alone,*** a poor but honest life.
>
> Teach my children love of and respect for work. This is, I think, one of the greatest needs for a happy, useful and virtuous life. All my other counsels on education are summed up in three words: Love them doubly.
>
> Despite myself, I am moved and it is with happiness that I let fall this tear dragged from me by this final farewell to all that I have really loved on earth. This tear was the last sigh of my agonising heart, which is now dead for ever. May the kiss that I place on your pure forehead never be effaced!
>
> I kiss again and again and I bless my darling and well beloved with all my heart.

The next letter - written with the cold exasperation of ***Madame*** and ***Vous*** - is further evidence of Hugo's concern for the future of his children, particularly Carlo. The ordinary natural father has ambitions for his son: to the extent that he has achieved success in life, he may feel that he has provided his son with an above-average start, which should open doors to even higher opportunities than he had. To the extent that he has failed, he may be anxious that his son should listen to him to benefit by his experience. If a father allows his ambitions for his son to be egotistical and self-congratulatory identifications with himself, he is doomed to disappointment, but if they' are other-regarding he may have the good fortune to be able to take pride in his son's triumphs. Which of these emotions Hugo cultivated cannot be known, but events showed that he felt one or a mixture of both strongly enough to compel him to an action which led to a crisis in which Ida involved the whole family. The following letters begin a slow crescendo from gathering clouds to a thunderclap:

Paris, March 24, 1873.

I acknowledge receipt of your last letter of March 21. Its reserved and cold tone has pained me greatly, I must admit. But at least I can thank you for your frankness and honesty and for the dignified and delicate way in which you notify me of the kind of relations that you wish to maintain with me henceforth.

My concern for you and my affection are too deep for me to be able to change course and I take the opportunity to assure you once again of my disinterested devotion.

Having thoroughly established this point, let us turn without delay to one which should always help to keep us in agreement: the education of our children.

It is not necessary to repeat what I have said so often, i.e. that I have absolute and complete confidence in your devotion and in your motherly heart in all that concerns the day to day tasks of looking after the children's welfare, and in all that love and instinct can do in education-all that could not be entrusted better to anyone else.

Education has, however, a practical side: it is an art and a science. To develop the faculties of the mind, to be able to adapt to the duties of the world and of society, one must examine these questions in their causes and effects, just like the doctor who wishes to conserve and develop a man's physical faculties.

Here love and instinct, devotion, and common sense are no longer enough, by which I mean that you will necessarily need advice and even guidance to get satisfactory results.

The theory so widespread among most parents that 'There is no need for our children to grow up into extraordinary beings, providing that they grow up decent and responsible citizens, i.e. honest and useful' seems to me hateful, monstrously wrong and useless.

You will, perhaps rightly, tell me that even though you agree that you need advice, you have no confidence in mine, and that in any case our separation would make it difficult to give.

Such an argument would, however, be unrealistic. My rights as a father will, I hope, be as sacred to you as they are to me. All that is needed is that we should agree on how we understand them, and here I feel specially obliged to speak frankly. I will therefore not conceal from you that I have gathered from your letter that you mean to spend your summer in Galicia and then return once more to Naples and that this decision upsets me enormously. I

have no right to oppose your trip to Galicia, even though it would displease me more than anything else. You might think this is to be just a matter of my touchiness, which would certainly not help us to agree.

As for your return to Naples, I hope that you will readily grasp my reasons against it. Above all it becomes ever more urgent that Charlot should be educated in one fixed centre. I do not like the idea of a boarding school for him. I would like him to go to a day school, eating and sleeping in the home of his father or his mother.

You, I am sure, would not wish any more than I to see the children educated in a country as primitive and backward as Naples. I have no prejudices about nationalities or bias about modes of education, but it does not follow that I wish to make Italians of the children, still less Neapolitans. Besides, I consider Naples to have a sorry, debilitating and weakening climate, especially for delicate constitutions. The customs and civilisation of its inhabitants amply prove this. Finally, the distance which would separate me from the children would be far too great to enable me to fulfil my duties conscientiously and to keep close watch on their studies and progress. It is above all in solving that problem that I hope you will be good enough to help me.

I certainly do not wish to oppose you in anything and I stick to my resolve to leave the children to you and to do all I can to ensure you as quiet and happy a life as possible. But, you, on your side, Madame, will, I am sure, make some small concession to the father of your children. And in this connexion, I am anxious that you should consult no one else but me: experience has amply demonstrated that a third party has never been a good counsellor in a marriage and has only made understanding more difficult and complicated.

I await your reply in order the better to adapt my ideas to yours. Moreover, Charlot's day schooling would begin in the autumn after the holidays, so that we have plenty of time. My limited means do not allow me to make any ambitious plans and for the moment I think of staying in Paris. I am renting an unfurnished flat by the year and reckon on setting myself up little by little as my purse allows.

I am very busy and hard at work - to write music is not usually regarded as a serious or even respectable occupation among those who derive their principles and ideas from the conventions of aristocratic Europe - the number of such persons is, for that matter, fortunately extremely small and they have neither authority nor influence in social and political life. Here, in Paris, we composers constitute a close and united company: the Duke of Massa, the Marquis d'Ivry, Count Castillon, etc., all in the front rank of musicians, whose

works are publicly played at the ***Conservatoire*** and by the greatest artists like Rubinstein, etc.

I am lucky in that a composition of mine for orchestra is to be performed next Sunday, the 30th, before a most brilliant audience. That is why I am very busy with rehearsals.

I embrace the dear and good children and beg you to accept all my gratitude and devotion.

Seilern

When I took up my pen to write today I had intended to rebut several rumours which have reached my ears. A *propos* of the children, I've done nothing, because I attach no importance to these rumours. I seize the occasion to reassure you completely about my intentions. While I have the greatest interest in the education of the children, I assure you that I will always respect you as a devoted and indispensable mother and that I shall always choose the mode of education which will separate you from neither of the children. By doing so I shall lose the children's love for me, but I shall, I hope, win your happiness and your gratitude.

I shake your hand and commend myself to your kind remembrance.

All yours, Hugo **(note Hugo was 32 years old at the time)**

Paris, April, 1873

I was about to write to you, dear Ida, when I received your letter of April 4. I begin by thanking you for your 16 pages, written with so much devotion, even at the cost of your sleep, and I cannot find words for the emotion and admiration that they have produced in me.

Before replying, however, to the various questions that you raise, let me return for a moment to the feelings which prompted me a while ago to take up my pen. I have been deeply wounded and hurt in these recent days and I even told ***Maman*** about it in my letter on April 3.

I do not know whether, or rather I doubt that, the reasons for my grief can interest you. On the other hand I do not suppose you will be indifferent to the actual point of what I have to complain about, and I feel it part of my duty towards you to repeat it.

I have, then, been hurt to see you dispose of my existence and my future with - if I may say so - a complete egoism and an ingratitude which are unworthy of you. I can at a pinch put up with the egoism, because that is the

fundamental basis of feminine human nature and the secret of feminine charm. The feelings of a woman spring from her egoism: love, with all its devotion and self-sacrifice is the result. Thus, without egoism, a woman has no love to give. Do not protest!

It is not I who says this - it is just psychology.

Your ingratitude, however. hurts me more. You know very well, dear Ida, that we were agreed that I should take Charlot back on May 15, 1873. I have your signed letter before my eyes. May 15 approaches. What have I done?

Being aware that I have failed in my obligations to you, that I have not known how to ensure your happiness - and that (I can say it with my hand on my conscience) chiefly from lack of education and experience: I thought myself obliged to offer you amends. I have begun by sounding your feelings towards me and all my recent letters reveal my sincere desire that you should accept the hand, strong in my affection for you, that I stretch without ulterior motives out to you.

Charles's (**Zaluski, brother-in-law**) mediations of last year - a bit clumsy and over-subtle - have not put me off at all, and I find myself high and dry again, as before, with the same good humour and naivety.

In addition to that, I had intended another compensation, which is also the greatest sacrifice of which I am capable - I refer to my promise and intention to leave you the two children - a promise which I gave without even referring to my rights.

Do you really think me such a Bohemian and so unnatural as to abandon my children without turning a hair? Can I be happy far from the darlings, who no longer even know their father, and who instead of learning to love him learn quite simply to forget him? I appreciate, and have always appreciated your noble-minded and loyal efforts to keep the thought of me alive in our children, but I also know that love in general is kept alive mostly by cherishing it, and in children in their earliest years, love is largely founded on habit.

You will now understand what an effect your various arguments produced in me and how distressed I am to hear you talk of lack of scruple in what I have done which (you say) proves that I make such a habit of ignoring your needs, wishes, feelings, etc., that I never take them into account in what I say or plan.

You would, I suppose, have preferred that I should write you very politely in a few words: 'I have the honour to warn you, Madame, that I shall come to take

Charlot on May 15 at such or such a place?' In my love for the dear children and in my desperate loneliness, I would certainly have preferred that myself.

You will consequently understand how badly you have misinterpreted my letters and what, in contrast, was the real state of heart and mind in which I wrote them.

As to my confidence (your first point) in your general system of education, in your noble efforts, and your perfect devotion, I have always said the same things and shown the same admiration and satisfaction.

I did not think I would upset you by telling you that a mother does well to turn to a man for advice, above all to the children's father. If you had read that passage more attentively, with the eyes of your heart, you would certainly have guessed what was at the back of my mind, my secret longings, which - but I don't need to go over all that again ...

My plans for Charlot's education naturally depend on your views and excellent advice. There are two countries which, in my view, provide the best education for boys: Germany and England. We should choose together and our love for our children will be sure to guide us to the right decision. But don't you believe it to be essential that a child should *think* and speak the language, in which he will have to do his lessons with an ease which he can only acquire by living in the country itself, and for which one or two years are not too much to acclimatise him?

To learn German and English in Naples is a totally different matter. Add to these two languages French, Polish, Italian, and even Neapolitan, and think of the muddle created in these young heads. They will have a colloquial knowledge of all these languages and be able to think in none, besides at their age one does not study languages grammatically. A child learns simply by memory, which he develops inordinately without realising it, and do realise, dear Ida, that too much mere memorisation, learning by rote, harms the imagination, systematically kills it and ends by making the individual dull, routine, and unimaginative. The entire Latin race suffers from just that.

If only I could talk to you for whole days on this and many other subjects, I think we should get to understand each other well enough, and it would be the children who would benefit by this the most - do believe me. But since that is impossible, at least be good enough no longer to misinterpret my words and my intentions so unkindly, and do believe that you will always have in me the most devoted and grateful friend.

There remains one last question which you mention in your letter - but I'm pressed for time just now and will come back to it when next I write. Today I will only tell you that if I could assure your happiness and put it on a secure

basis by taking up some profession, I would willingly abandon the exclusive study of music in favour of some full-time occupation. But in my actual position music is everything to me, happiness, consolation, compensation. I might add that it is not so easy to find a good job as you seem to think. Jobs at 150 francs a month in small offices, clerical copying jobs, small journalists, agencies etc. would be easy to get, but must I forget my self-respect, position, tastes, habits and social relations to plunge into a world of republicans and partisans of the Paris Commune? Would you yourself like such a status for the husband whose name you bear?

I leave you now, dear Ida, commending myself to your kindly remembrances and to your excellent heart. I embrace both our good children tenderly.

Ever yours Hugo

XXVII

HUGO "KIDNAPS" HIS SON

IN 1875 WHEN CARLO was nine years old, Hugo evidently thought that he had outgrown the Dame's school at Vevey that he was attending and that the best place for him would be Schepfental, a prestigious school in Germany, with a reputation for toughness, in which the food was plain "to the point of austerity" (a characteristic which an older generation grimly shared in many other schools); throughout the year the boys never wore overcoats, went hatless in scarlet jackets and grey trousers and washed at a pump in the yard. Did Hugo consult Ida about his choice? We do not know. It is, however, certain that had he done so she would have reacted tearfully and might, as she had already had on occasion, have disappeared with the children without leaving Hugo an address. Whether or not this suspicion is justified, the fact remains that without warning Hugo collected Carlo from Vevey. He may have felt so strongly that Carlo was being hopelessly spoiled and have shrunk from discussion about another school, fearing that it would merely have poisoned the air with endless embittered exchanges. We have an impressionistic account of what happened from a letter (December 20, 1875) from Madame Giers, the proprietress of the school, who responds with indignant sympathy to Ida's self-pity:

> Dearest Countess,
>
> I have received your letter of the 12th which I have read and reread and I cannot tell you how I suffer with you from the unspeakably cruel decision that M. le Comte has taken in relation to you and to your, and our, dear little Charlie. How can he deprive you of his letters and him of yours, thus robbing you of all the excellent influence that you have always had on the dear child, and separating you so cruelly. No! It is horrible and I cannot tell you how as a mother myself I sympathise with you and the dear little boy. I would like to find a way of getting you his news ... Do you think a letter written from here would be kept from him? I could have it written by one of his little friends. If God allowed a reply I would at once forward it to you. Imagine! I have not seen him since. He had come back about July 25; lessons resumed on August 3. I left for Schinznach on the 6th. M. le Comte arrived like a tempest, a whirlwind, at 6 p.m. and left the next day for Vienna. All this without giving previous notice as should be done: since the term had begun, the Count is responsible for the whole fee due.

Whether, since Madame Giers was absent when Hugo arrived, the use of the words "tempest" and "whirlwind" are warranted as the devil's due, or are merely evidence of

Madame's excitable imagination, will never be known: A father's right to remove his son from a school may be admitted, but if, as Ida charged, he then intercepted letters between mother and son, he put himself gravely in the wrong, even though he was exasperated at seeing Carlo become, as he believed, a snivelling mother's darling. It is significant, however, that several references suggest that Carlo was happy at Schepfental and that, considering his home life, he did surprisingly well there, earning good conduct marks and writing cheerful letters home. Perhaps he found the austerity of Schepfental a relief from his mother's emotional upheavals.

In later years Idela believed that her mother could have persuaded Hugo to send Carlo to a school that she preferred to Schepfental if she had been able to talk the matter over quietly. That, however, was outside her gamut, and the manner of Carlo's removal from Vevey gave her the chance to deafen all Europe with cries of woe, to all the Seilerns, all the Zaluskis, to friends and acquaintances, not even omitting the astonished and embarrassed Austrian ambassador in Florence **(first capital of Italy after it's unification in 1865**) that her husband had kidnapped her son.

XXVIII

CHARLES ZALUSKI - SUAVE DIPLOMAT

THE following letter from Charles Zaluski suggests that Charles had evidently replied to his sister's (Ida) denunciation of the kidnapping of Carlo by urging her to do nothing irrevocable, whereupon she had accused him of being unable to understand or sympathise with her sufferings:

> Allow me to tell you first of all, much more to reassure you than to justify myself, that I have never ceased to share your sorrows nor to suffer from all that has caused you grief. I had a presentiment of what has just been inflicted upon you and my presentiment, alas, did not deceive me. It was to prepare you gradually for this veritable kidnapping of little Carlo, which I foresaw in my heart but that a remnant of confidence in Hugo's delicacy of feeling allowed me still to doubt, that I wrote to Emma **(Ida's elder sister)** instead of communicating my fears direct to you. I even keenly reproached myself for having perhaps alarmed you unnecessarily and yet I was convinced that I must ward you off from some extreme decision. Please realise that the discretion, moderation and patience that I have never ceased to observe in my relations with Hugo, the real interest in him that I have shown him ... had no other motive or aim than to make your position easier, to save you from additional ill usage and to make the most of the chances that time or a happy change in Hugo's character could, and still may, have in store for you. My affection for Hugo and my unswerving respect for his mother seemed to me to be such as would arouse a response in them which would to some extent protect you, but which they have trampled under foot by hurting you as they have. I am the first to condemn their recent behaviour as indecent. You may pass this letter to Hugo if you think fit. I do not conceal my reprobation for such lack of feeling and brutal egoism. But what I feel is not the point. What is now needed is to consider carefully what the next step should be. My experience suggests that legal action would be regrettable … Not that you would not win your case - on the contrary, if necessary I will undertake to conduct it. But is it not our duty to meet with kindness and forbearance reprehensible behaviour in those to whom we are joined by such sacred bonds? Besides I have a hope that we can arrange matters in a friendly way with Hugo and his mother, because in their heart of hearts it is impossible that they should not recognise the wrong they have done you. By avoiding the scandal of going to court we shall show a regard for their feelings for which they will be tacitly grateful.
>
> Well, anyway I must be unfettered if I am to help you in any legal measure that events may compel you to take, but I am pleased that you do not

> think of this for the moment and that you intend to stick to conciliatory means. You mention Count Charles Seilern (**Hugo's elder step-brother Karl Marx Seilern 1825 - 1905**). I do not know how far his intervention would be expedient. I do not know him well enough to be able to judge of his feelings and character. What I do know inspires confidence, but that I should write to him strikes me as difficult. It would be much more natural that you should address him without an intermediary. You alone can explain the situation. But I must warn you that any kind of family mediation will produce keen resentment and sarcasm in your mother-in-law's **(Antonie von K. 1811 – 1877)** drawing room. Hugo reproaches you deeply for having turned to the Laudons in moments of distress. And, dear Ida, you yourself should beware of the effects of your sensitiveness. I say this solely out of my love for you. That in your letter you have judged me unfairly shows that you can deceive yourself. You act on the impulse of the moment. This is indeed sincere, but it perhaps does not always display the practical bit of wisdom essential in life ... Be in all things prudent and indulgent.

Ida was fortunate in a brother who could tell her home truths so considerately, but one wonders whether Charles's very delicacy did not defeat his own ends. Did Ida grasp his diplomatic hints? Here are the comments on Charles's letter that Idela made many years later:

> This letter reveals my uncle's fine feelings. His advice is excellent but does not hit the nail on the head - he does not see the true cause of his sister's unhappiness. To be sorry for oneself, to believe oneself a victim, to act as a victim, is unwholesome, does not produce the results sought and often becomes exasperating when one sees before one a person whom one loves and admires, whom one wants nothing better than to love, and for whom one is ready even to make great sacrifices - and sees her assume the airs of a victim, discovering bad intentions where there were none.
>
> That was the great error - the deplorable weakness - which wrecked my poor mother's existence and made her suffer when she had more reasons for happiness than many other women … Uncle Charles could have influenced Mama - he guided her well in the choice of a husband - if he had realised the true state of things ... It was my father rather than my mother who was the victim, because he married for love and his love lasted long. I write this with all due reserve, because it was difficult for me to understand many things. I was too young, separated from my father for many years, exposed to the influence of my mother, whom I sometimes saw suffering. I could not see things clearly.

> Drawn to my father by his charm, by his personality, whose worth I sensed, and by his lively and remarkable intelligence, I yet could not be myself with him, more especially when I had become a young woman, after my mother had burned into my mind complaints, criticisms and false interpretations throughout so many years.
>
> My father was a liberal in religion, I was then pious, not in the least intolerant or bigoted, but his attitude created a barrier between us. I remember talks with him during our walks. He admitted the aid, the support that faith can give those who had it, but he condemned the lack of charity shown to those who had none. After all, he argued, convictions impose themselves on us, we do not choose them. 'One must condemn the sin and not the sinner,' he once said to me. He was certainly an unhappy man. Such diverse impressions, conventional ideas, opinions formed in me by my education and by our circle of friends - all this made me feel ill at ease - prevented me from being natural with my father.'

Idela caught a glimpse of the depths in her father's personality when as a girl she once entered the bedroom where he lay sick of a fever, suffering from hallucinations. He wept aloud in despair, lamenting because his love for Ida found no echo.

> Even if, comments my mother, Ida had no love for him, she could have shown him the amiability and sympathy that his character deserved, even though he had gambled away his wife's dowry ... I am convinced he would have ceased to gamble if the woman he adored had not held aloof from him.
>
> I realised all this vaguely. I myself witnessed more than one proof of his great love - vigorous as his health, his intelligence; tenacious, persistent for years.
>
> I felt drawn towards him, but what ***Maman*** said, and the tears that I saw her shed, stopped me from giving rein to my feelings. His personality had real charm. Intelligent, gay, witty, liberal and broad minded, he put life and go into any party. But at home he often felt a constraint that paralysed his natural high spirits. He of course knew that his wife criticised him to his family, his friends and his children. He never criticised ***Maman*** before us and I'm pretty certain he never complained of her to anyone.

Idela's feelings towards her father were confused by discovering that he was a Free Mason, a fraternity which she had heard spoken of at her convent school as allied to the devil. From the viewpoint of the Catholic Church, Free Masonry is Pantheism,

opposed to the belief in a personal God and subversive of all legitimate authority. From their own viewpoint, Free Masons are deists, who uphold a particular system of morality expounded in allegories and illustrated by symbols. These matters of theology were beyond Idela's grasp at the age of fifteen and she did her best to take on trust her father's affirmation that Free Masons were a religious and charitable brotherhood, sworn to aid each other regardless of nationality or class.

Three years later a letter from Charles Zaluski, written from Vienna on May 4, 1875, rings the curtain up on a theme that became recurrent during the next years - Ida had begun to dramatise herself in a tragedy in which the heroine is driven to divorce her husband.

> My very dear Ida ...
>
> Let me begin by making it clear that I wish neither to influence you, nor, still less, to prejudice your decisions. When talking to Hugo and his mother I maintained complete reserve as far as you are concerned. I assume only that you would like to be informed through me and to know what my impressions are. I found Hugo on the best of terms with his mother. This good understanding would have given me keen satisfaction if it had not seemed to me based on putting on you alone all the responsibility for whatever lies ahead. It is therefore important that I should warn you of the attitudes that I found in those with whom your lot and that of your children is indissolubly linked.
>
> Your mother-in-law imagines things as much as her son and that is what makes their feelings so unstable and undependable. The wrongs that Hugo does are forgiven. That is all right. But they are also forgotten, which is not at all fair.
>
> 'Debts,' the Countess said to me, citing many examples, 'cannot be a cause for a judicial separation between husband and wife. Wives have shared the lot of husbands exiled or in prison for debt. Hugo has calmed down, become gentle, easy and pleasant to deal with. The family dotes on him and he gives all his evenings to the family! Ida should come and set up near us, in a small flat separated by several floors from Hugo. Little Charles should be sent to a school master who is already bringing up several children of good family and gives them recognised Austrian courses. Charlot is now old enough to begin them.'
>
> On your behalf I asked for a little breathing space, a separate existence essential for your health. The Countess lost all patience and replied that if you insisted on a complete separation, the court

will have to decide the fate of the children, and I do not know what else. In short, she intends, if you do not fall in with her latest plan, that you will be placed in the wrong. Nevertheless; she seems to me animated by really good and affectionate intentions, providing she is allowed to arrange matters. Frankly, this is perhaps what it would be wisest to do; it would avoid big embarrassments and the disadvantages of your isolated situation. The Countess wants to preserve appearances but would leave you free to lead your private life. You would have the two children with you.

Dear Ida, I realise that all these ideas are only expedients and that you will always have to put up with unpleasantness, poor little girl! But let us not take life tragically: gentleness, patience and self denial always end by achieving respect - and I have noticed this respect for you in the Countess and in Hugo - while at the same time giving one the greatest of boons: inner serenity.

As for Hugo, the only aim of the friendship that I have always had for him is to cultivate in him those better feelings on which your security depends and, I do not yet despair, a happier future for you. That is the pure and simple truth! Draw from it whatever conclusions you think fitting. I have taken, and shall take, nothing on myself, I repeat, and I have established such frank relations with the family that I would not shrink from telling the Countess and Hugo all that is in my heart. I will do so if an opportunity presents itself, at least with Hugo, and he had better first bind himself to the mast of his ship, like Ulysses, because my heart is heavy with storms.

At the same time, I must admit that our meeting was entirely friendly. He reproached me good humouredly enough for having so exaggerated his illness as to make his family think that he had lost his senses.

He and his mother are also annoyed with you for the disturbing telegrams that you sent Loudon and Fanny, but when all was said and done, I could not discover, apart from that, *any other* cause for reproach against you. Dear Ida, I am much consoled to think that in the midst of so much suffering, physical and spiritual, that is all they can rake up against you!

Darling and charming sister, with a little good will you will easily end by entirely winning over people as changeable and as light hearted as Hugo and his family, and if you do not raise them to the level of true love and saintly affection, you could at least reign over them by your grace and your charm.

> I do not know how long I will stay in Vienna. I will write you again if I have any new impressions to give you. Write to your mother-in-law rather than to me and may our adorable mother inspire you.
>
> Charles

Years later Idela commented on her uncle's letter:

> Uncle Charles's letters are admirable: so well written and so logical. If he had had the pluck to tell his sister that she had the situation in her hand, that she had the power to make life tolerable at least if not pleasant and happy. She always thought herself to be a victim, a martyr. It was certainly not a Christian attitude, but so many people do not see that to practice religion is not at all sufficient: to live like a Christian is the essential. My father had no religion at all but, with the exception of his gambling and other weaknesses due to the abnormal circumstances of his sad married life, he was more of a Christian than his wife.

After the kidnapping episode, Hugo and Ida met only at long intervals and (perhaps because of this) relations, though changeable as an English April day, were reasonably amicable when they did meet: they dined out, went to theatres, and Hugo took the children to concerts and circuses.

XXIX

HUGO - BATTLING BUSINESSMAN

A NEW PHASE in Hugo's life began when on June 15, 1877, his mother (Antonie v. Krosygk) died. While she lived she appears to have allowed him about 1,200 Thalers a month. I surmise that this sum equalled one-seventh of the income from the Neumarkt, because Hugo mentions that it varied from time to time and this could have been as the expenses of managing the flats varied. I surmise further that the income had legally been his mother's because it was she who paid him his share. Thus, he was dependent upon her and, as we have seen, she did apparently withhold funds at moments of friction. Alternatively she may periodically have subtracted sums to payoff Hugo's debts, to which we have seen references. These 1,200 Thalers had to cover Hugo's expenses and pocket money living in one furnished flat, pension or hotel, and of Ida and the children in another. In the letter cited on page 124 Hugo mentions that he was keeping 100 Thalers a month for himself and sending Ida 1,100. (Carlo's education at Schepfental cost Frs. 2,400 a year.) But after his mother's death, he received his seventh of the revenues direct. Her will further provided that if he and Ida lived together, he was to inherit her flat and its contents - furniture, linen, silver, etc ... If, however, they lived apart, the contents were to be sold and the proceeds shared among the seven heirs, so that if they occupied the flat, their situation would become easier, because instead of having to meet the costs of two households, they would live rent free. While the surplus available after living expenses would not be luxurious it would be comfortable and they would cease to have the worry of constant overdrafts at the bank.

All this Hugo explained to Ida in a letter written from Vienna on June 28, 1877. Besides outlining the financial advantages of sharing a flat in Vienna, he emphasised his regret that Idela was being brought up abroad amidst foreigners, exposed to influences which must separate her more and more from her father, her country and the social circles and family connections which were hers by birth. Reason and family affection pointed to setting up house in Vienna and Hugo expressed the hope that Ida's instinct and family feeling would support his request. He added that he hopes that a sentence that she had written him on hearing of his mother's death - 'I wish to see you again to stretch a hand out to you over this newly opened tomb' - was not due to a passing feeling but to mature reflection and by the wish to unite her life with his.

Accordingly Ida and Idela joined Hugo at the Heumarkt but Hugo soon left for France to work on several inventions on which he spent much energy seeking to raise finance and to interest industrialists.

The first was a ***fumivore,*** a smokeless furnace, designed by an Austrian named Pütz jointly with another named Winiker. Now that industry is powered by electricity, oil,

gas or atomic energy, it is difficult for a new generation to visualise the clouds of smoke that, as long as coal was the main source of power, hung over industrial conurbations, spreading soot and pollution. The once famous "pea-soup" fogs of London are, for example, now unknown.

Once again Hugo's letters swing between optimism, exhilaration, disillusion and depression.

Paris. October 5, 1877.

> Hotel des Capucines, 37 Boulevard des Capucines.
>
> My adored little wife ...
>
> Please tell me if you have received the Frs. 150 and the hat - and if it pleases and becomes you. Myself, I imagine that it suits you admirably and I can see you looking sweet in it.
>
> Let us talk a little about our affairs. On the whole, I am satisfied with the steps that I have taken and I think all this will shortly take shape and produce momentous, or at any rate acceptable results.
>
> The French are very intelligent but also full of red tape. I soon saw that they are slow to abandon the beaten track ... I naturally adapt my plan of campaign accordingly.
>
> I have to flatter and cajole those who may be useful or necessary to me, get them used to me, and familiarise them bit by bit with the invention that I am promoting, and thus imperceptibly awaken their interest in an affair which, they come to realise, I consider to be absolutely up their street. I began with the musicians - that was easy; they put me in touch with journalists, engineers, etc., etc. Then I remembered that our dear Karl Maximilian **(Hugo's elder step-brother 1825-1905)** was a friend of Baron Maurice Hirsch. At the end of ten days I had become a friend of the family and flatter myself that I am welcome, even regarded with affection. I spent five days without mentioning business, and now the Baron is really interested in the invention, which he told one of his friends is excellent. 'Count Seilern,' he said, 'will make a packet with it.' We will see, little woman, and when I think of that possibility I always have the same feeling which lifts up my heart and which translates feebly into the words 'Since she loves me what more can I want?' Is it really true, my pet, that you love me - me who loves you so tenderly and with such great happiness!!
>
> But back to business. My plans are not confined to the Baron, it is rather the Prefect of Police whom I am after now, and it'll be bad luck

if I don't succeed in getting his authorisation for a public trial in Paris, to which I can invite all those industrialists who might see something in this invention but who lack guts, courage and initiative.

Here is a characteristic mixture of business, affection, family interest and news:

Paris. October 16,1877.

Very dear little wife,

What a charming diplomatic agent **(Ida was living in the Heumarkt)** you make! Without being superstitious, I believe that your help in this business will definitely bring good luck, and if one day we make our pile you will have the substantial share that you have earned. I have so many things to tell you that I hardly know where to begin and I have little time for myself and am therefore compelled to dash this off. The feeling I have most at this moment, and that I hasten to share with you, is happiness and great relief about our good little Lolo **(Carlo)**. The child has definitely golden qualities. He is now as well settled and as sure of himself as a successful young man of eighteen **(Carlo was eleven when this was written**) full of determination, good will and so on. Five days ago I received his first conduct notes and I could hardly believe my eyes. He, who last year was bottom of the class in history and geography, is now among the top few. This charming child does all this for love of us and to deserve the little holiday I promised him if he were good. So it is now definite; we'll take back with us to Vienna this jewel of a child, and my misgivings for his character in Vienna's frivolous atmosphere have completely vanished: if he were in danger a word from his excellent mother would work miracles and nothing could counter her influence which will make of him a fine upstanding man of heart - and that is saying a lot for Charlot because great things are developing in his rich and privileged nature. The boy makes me forget business and all I have to tell you! I interrupt this to scribble you a brief line and will continue this letter when I get a moment.

October 23, 1877.

Well, this is a long time, but if you knew how much I have had to do all these days and how many jobs Pütz and I have on handl I have been, and still am, exhausted. Things are going well. Pütz is now installed in M. Dietz's office, where they are designing new blue prints of the apparatus. During these days the translations[4] of the prospectus and the blue prints will be lithographed. Thursday or Friday Pütz will begin to build his first model.

As the days have gone by, I've come to realise I absolutely must have the elder Pütz's power of attorney ... so that I can negotiate with all these people. It would be impossible to sell one of these machines in France without the authorisation of the inventor or his representative. I hope Pütz will have enough confidence in me. For the good of the venture he must send me a power of attorney by return. Without that, success would be postponed at least for a long time and might even be jeopardised, because people would suspect some lack of confidence on our part.

I'll be seeing Rothschild shortly. All I hear from Vienna about Rothschild's offers don't seem serious to me. I know him too well not to know how cautious he is in such circumstances. Besides an offer of Frs. 100,000.makes no sense. We could not hand over the whole affair to him for that amount and he would never agree to a subordinate position. He wrote me a really nice letter yesterday and I am sure he is as interested as he is friendly - but there's a big gap between that and buying us out for a million ...

Write soon and try and make them send me that power of attorney ***as soon as possible*** … Your Hugochen

Paris, November 22, 1877.

Dear little Ida ...

Reports about the young Pütz are very satisfactory and it appears they are very pleased with him at Fourchambeault. Today or tomorrow he will finish the job so I have only just time to clear things up in Paris before leaving for Imphys for the trials. Before I leave I've got to get together here with the various men who are going to Imphy to watch the trials. I must in any case get to Imphy before them, to make sure that the machine is in perfect working order. Since I left Vienna, I have felt sad and have had to struggle against waves of depression, and on top of this the weather in Paris is awful - rain, mud up to one's ankles, nothing but wet and cold, etc., etc., while I could be so happy if I were with my good little wife, our charming little Idela and our excellent Max **(who was living in the Heumarkt as was Hugo's family)** Today I've sent you by the sleeping car conductor (give him a florin) two bottles of Bravard's concentrated dyalised[7] iron. All the doctors speak highly of i't. Read the prospectus. Consult Pachner. I believe it will do both of you all the good in the world. .. In politics, nothing new in Paris. The unrest is less today;

a banker told me this morning that the Marshal will be compelled to keep the old Ministry, because no-one from any party can form a new one. It's the Budget which remains the Gordian knot of the moment ...

Paris, November 30, 1877.

My best beloved Ida,

I scribbled you a line in haste this morning from the restaurant, because I didn't know if I'd have enough time to write before the mail left. I find myself, however, with half an hour in hand and happily I take up my pen to talk to you a little, my good little wife … First, for four days I am without news of you. Did you receive my letter and the Bravard iron?

At this moment I lead a life full of bustle and fatigue. Besides current jobs, I've still to revise the translation and rewrite the wording of all the patents. I've been to a leading patent lawyer to check up that the patents were in order. It was lucky I did, because at the drop of a hat we might have lost our French rights. The patents were so badly drafted that the lawyer advised me to rewrite them completely, taking into account the requirements of the law. I had to have several conferences with the engineers to ensure the clearest accurate description of the invention, because the law says that a patent is void if the invention cannot be constructed from its description. In addition, there are still a mass of details that fill my time and cost the earth. My expenses will exceed Frs. 1,000 **[perhaps a £100 in 1973 values]**. As soon as all this is finished [leave for Fourchambeault with the group who are to watch the trials. They will spend the night at Nevers but I go on direct to arrive a few hours ahead. That'll be next week, I think. Naturally it'll only be after the trials ... that the contract with the Company interested in the patent will be signed and that'll certainly be my toughest, gravest moment. Happily Rothschild is keenly interested and has promised me his full co-operation, and put at my disposal all the best men in his Company to ensure an acceptable and advantageous contract. In any case I'll insist on a payment in advance, and then I think the best thing would be if you and Idela were to come to Paris for Christmas.

But there was no joyous reunion with Ida and Idela in Paris. Unforeseen delays cropped up. A letter dated January 15, 1878, reveals that the trials had not yet been held.

> ... The group and I leave Thursday at 4 p.m. for Fourchambeault ... The whole of Friday will be given over to the trials ... We take with us two engineers, one of whom will stay down there for eight to ten days. Back in Paris on Saturday, we will immediately set up a workshop for our chief engineer and get ready for big trials on a *bateau mouche*. The consortium will make its mind up, I think, in three weeks ... I've every reason to believe they'll take it and I'll be nicely flush with cash. Anyway I'm hard at it to push matters on, having but one single aim in mind - to join my good little wife as soon as possible ...

This letter is followed by fifteen days of ominous silence. Alas! a letter of February 2, 1878, reveals that the exhilarating Pütz affair had become the Pütz disaster.

> My beloved Angel... Far from you and my dear Idela - and with this disastrous Pütz affair on my hands - I'm disheartened and discouraged.

But then the eternal optimist takes over:

> Happily I have several other excellent affairs which will, I hope, compensate for all the big troubles that we've had to endure up to now. Your good letters, so full of kindness, good sense and loyalty, support me and give me new courage **(At first sight one rejoices to think that Ida has, after all, a heart and that one has been too hard on her, but even when laudably attempting to comfort Hugo, she evidently cannot prevent a note of reproach from creeping in.)** Do I need to tell you how grateful I am? I do however seem to divine in your letters a certain discouragement which I should call almost exaggerated. Certainly fate has not been as kind as we, and principally you, dear angel, had the right to hope. On the other hand, we must remember that we each in our different roles fulfill an absolute duty and that happiness in marriage can never be jeopardised as long as we do so. You can well imagine how happy I should be if my means allowed me to bring you to Paris with Idela. But I am horrified to find that my finances are barely sufficient to wind up my affairs here. I ought very soon to beat a retreat back to Austria, alas only for a little while, because I should lose too much if I gave up the struggle which is far from being desperate. A return trip to Vienna will, however, cost less than if I borrowed the money for Winiker's upkeep. I'll try to raise funds at a reasonable cost.

> Anyway I have to go to Vienna for a big puddling affair (**in the manufacture of iron, puddling is to stir molten iron in a reverbatory furnace to expel the carbon and convert into malleable iron**) that I've signed up ... An affair that will take me to Berlin, Aix-la-Chapelle and back to Paris ...

The second "excellent affair" that had sent Hugo's spirits soaring was an invention to print colours on wool:

> Last week we visited a big spinning mill at Cramoisy ... where they carried out for me searching tests on a colour printing machine ... successful beyond our expectations and if further research on production costs, competition, markets, etc., etc., is favourable, we'll at once set up a small workshop. We are naturally very cautious and would rather miss a good job than embark lightly on a bad one ... If you happen to see Winiker tell him frankly that I've no money left to support the Pütz affair and I'm absolutely determined not to advance a sou ... Salomon **(the lawyer in charge of the estate of Hugo's mother)** should have paid you the interest of the Leben capital.
>
> If you think Idela's health and yours would benefit by six to eight weeks in the South, pack up at once. This is not the moment to economise one or two thousand florins at the expense of the health of my two best beloveds. On the way back from Rome we'll rendezvous in Paris where we'll stay for the Exhibition. Don't make unnecessary sacrifices, dear angel, have faith in my love and in our star …
>
> Alas for Hugo's faith in their star! My mother says that when she, Ida and Carlo were staying in the country near Schepfental in 1877: Papa was in business and hoped to make our fortune. We expected him every day and went to meet the stage coach. As soon as we saw it we said 'Perhaps Papa arrives with the first million.' He arrived, but without the million.

According to R.L.Stevenson's apophthegm "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive and the true success is to labour". The last nine years of Hugo's life from 1876 to l886 (in which he backed several ill-starred inventions, enjoyed congenial business relations with the English partners of the Oak Extract Company, for which he travelled widely, had, despite their disappointments, many happy hours - and not only with business schemes but even with Ida and especially with his children.

Eighteen seventy-eight celebrated the opening of the Great French Exhibition for which the Palais du Trocadero **(pulled down for the exhibition of 1937 to make way for the Palais de Chaillot)** was built. Paris was more than ever *la ville lumière* -

brimming with life, bustle, pleasure, and gaiety in which a small gathering of the Seilern and Zaluski clans participated.

Presumably because he thought that his affairs would keep him in France, Hugo had transported from Vienna to Paris the furniture in his mother's flat, but Ida at once dashed any hopes that she would live with him. She had the furniture. He lived in one hotel after another. Either Salomon, the Seilern lawyer in Vienna, did not hear about this or he winked his eye at it.

Also in Paris at this time were Fanny Zelenska (Ida's youngest sister) and her daughter, Rosette, close to Idela age, and Max Seilern newly married to Marie Hohenwart, who joined in many an outing with Hugo, the two Idas and Carlo.

Idela tells us that Hugo gave himself over to his wife and children, visiting them daily, escorting Ida to the Vaudeville to see *Coco* and other farces "not for children", taking out a subscription for Idela and Carlo to the once famous yellow-covered *Journal de la Jeunesse,* taking them to the circus, to the Hippodrome to see the Roman chariot races, to the *revue-féerie* a grand spectacle, the pantomime, *Puss in Boots,* to concerts at the Trocadero, often to the Great Exhibition, to see the South American gauchos do acrobatics with their lassoos and horses, and to dine out like grown-ups in restaurants. Sometimes of an evening they wandered along the brightly lit Champs Elysees, window-gazing at the glittering shops, sitting at cafes to watch the crowds and - oh joy! to eat ices. At other times Papa used to play them his own compositions and improvise by the hour. To Idela's special delight, he often invited her to play duets with him: she records sight-reading a Haydn symphony scored for four hands. Relations between Hugo and Ida seemed good.

It was decided to remove Carlo from Schepfental to send him as a day boy to the gymnasium at Wiesbaden, where he would live with the Gallenbergs, close friends of the Seilerns.

> Papa did all he could to make our stay in Paris interesting and happy ... I knew nothing of his finances ... He showed us his textile colour printing machine at the Exhibition. A year or two later he lived in misery in one small room, sometimes with only an egg for supper. Poor Papa! He wanted to win his wife's heart, to share her life, to live *en famille.* I understood this vaguely without having a bench mark. Why did they live apart? What went on in their hearts? *Maman* did not forgive him. What one does not forgive when one is touchy are blows to one's vanity ... *Maman* practiced her religion in the way that so many Christians do who go to Church, pray, lead one life on Sunday and another on week days. They say: Forgive us trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us - but they do not forgive ... Papa was a Freemason but he was more of a

> Christian than *Maman.* She passed happiness by. One should only feel sorry for her.

Idela rings the curtain down on 1878 - this relatively happy year - thus:

> In January, 1879, *Maman* brought a divorce action against Papa **(Hugo was 39 at the time)**. When the judge asked him what reproaches he had to make against his wife, he replied 'None'.

The French matrimonial court did not grant Ida's suit and one suspects that the whole affair was like the final bars of a Liszt rhapsody, a bravura emotional demonstration, and that, had her suit succeeded, she would have been appalled to fmd herself cast off from her moorings to drift alone.

Whatever the cause of the set-back of the *Pütz fumivore* in France, Hugo still believed in it, because when, some years later, he had settled in Munich, he took it up again. He interested both the Court and the city authorities. Wide publicity was given to a public trial on the October Common. Stands were erected in a circle round the furnace with its tall chimney. *Le tout Munich* assembled. A military band played, Prince Luitpold, attended by the court, the mayor, high government officials, representatives from the scientific departments of the university, business leaders, filled the stands, together with their wives in garden party frocks. Hugo, wreathed in smiles, bustled about welcoming the great, ushering the very great to their places. The sun shone in a blue sky. The stands were full to bursting point, the crowd was excited and expectations at the highest when the engineers set match to the enormous fire that had been built.

> For a few minutes nothing happened.
>
> The smokeless era appeared to have dawned.

But then - 0 grief! - accompanied by joyous Strauss waltzes from the band, smoke - grey, yellow and black - rolled in clouds from the chimney, followed by a rain, a veritable downpour, of soot, which blacked out the whole scene. The ladies opened their dainty summer parasols, men took out handkerchiefs to wipe their faces making themselves look like chimney sweeps. Within minutes gauzy summer frocks were transformed into funeral weeds. An epidemic of coughing

And there, in the centre of the ring, next to the infernal machine, stood Hugo - abandoned to Homeric laughter.

Black tears ran down his cheeks.

One after another the spectators saw his point and soon the vast crowd, from Prince Luitpold downwards, was laughing. The experiment, which was to have changed industrial history, went up in swirls of smoke and gales of laughter.

That, at least, was the story which -- years later - Carlo used to tell after dinner. To what extent he may have embroidered it I cannot say, One fact, however, survived any embroidery: the *Pütz fumivore* made nobody's fortune.

XXX

THE OAK EXTRACT VENTURE

WE SKIP TO THE WINTER of 1883 when we find Hugo and Ida sharing a villa at Hietzing, outside Vienna.

Hugo was now an active and apparently salaried partner in the London-based Oak Extract Company. His assignment was to explore Europe to find a site suitable to manufacture tannin (a vegetable extract used in leather making). what was wanted were oak forests near cattle farms with good communications. Hugo eventually found the right combination at Zupanaja in Transylvania. The partners went to inspect Zupanaja and Idela recounts that they were travelling on horseback across swamps where on occasion the horses were chest-deep in water. "My dog!" Hugo suddenly exclaimed. "How can she keep up in all this? Where on earth can she be?" The dog, a white bull terrier bitch called Miss, was found being towed through the water by clinging to the tail of Hugo's horse. Dog and horse were friends. Miss slept between its legs.

Miss was a character. She was sociable as long as Hugo was present, but if he were out she would lie on his slippers next to his bed and allow no-one to enter, which was trying if the maid wanted to do the room. On such occasions Idela was sent for. Miss would growl threateningly. Paying no attention, Idela would get behind her, pick up the scruff of her neck and remove her. Miss accepted this from no cone else - not that anyone had the nerve to follow Idela's example. Periodically Miss suffered from indigestion, which gave, rise to wind. Hugo would say reproachfully "Miss - you little gasometer!" Whereupon Miss would hang her head in shame while giving faint apologetic wags of her tail. She had been trained as a carriage dog to run under her master's carriage, and a day came when seeing a space under a stationary tram, she arranged herself in it prepared to trot under the tram. That was her end.

Here are extracts from a letter of May 3,1883, which finds Hugo in London for the affairs of the Oak Extract Company:

> We have to push matters ahead fast in order to complete the factory before the winter which always brings floods, which makes communications almost impossible ... London is without question one of the most curious and interesting cities. The English have a genius for hard work and for co-operation: they know how to handle each other with admirable tact in a group, and how to make the best of the abilities of each individual so well that they nearly always reach those jointly accepted decisions which make' them so strong and so practical (**The constructive propensity for team work was indeed a British characteristic while the public schools were in their**

heyday. The new generations who attend Comprehensive and Secondary Modern schools have not the same understanding of what is meant by a cooperative effort - team work - which they identify with kow-towing to authority - the worst offence they know. W.S.Gilbert put that in perspective when he said "When everybody is somebody then nobody is anybody").

Since it is 'not done' in England to talk business after 6 p.m. I've been able to enjoy several most interesting dinners, soirees, and theatres. I went with my friend Alfred Lafone to the Savoy Theatre where I saw an operetta, ***Iolanthe*** which is not without interest. I don't know if you'll grasp my meaning when I say, that it is Art in a white tie: music, singing, acting and dancing are all 'correct', regulated without leaving anything to individuality. The triumvirate of producer, composer, and author have talent enough for everyone. Unfortunately only the producer was able to persuade me of his talent, and even this was modest. The composer's melodies and harmonies strike me as streamlined factory productions rather than artistic creations: they are of an absolutely irritating correctness and tiresome finish. The author has the good fortune to escape my criticism because I understood nothing of his dialogue ...

One can see how Hugo came to form this opinion of what was the original production of *Iolanthe.* The plot is of a tightly knit complexity which amuses by its fancifully paradoxical contrasts of life in fairyland and in the British House of Lords. It is full of peculiarly English jokes and topical satire and aims at a series of knowing chuckles at "insider" quips rather than broad guffaws. If all this escapes you, the matching wit of Sullivan's music must equally be missed.

Hugo's simile of "white tie correctness" is interesting because as a piece of operetta history one recalls that Gilbert and Sullivan pioneered in England the disciplined chorus work and touches of realism in the acting of operettas first introduced by Bizet in *Carmen* at the Paris Opera Comique eight years earlier and which were still only making their way. Prior to *Carmen,* the chorus came forward in a body on the stage and, standing like a church choir, with their arms hanging slackly to their sides, sang gazing fixedly at the conductor. Bizet had great difficulty in persuading the chorus of cigarette girls in Act 1 not to come on in a solemn body but in chatting, and laughing twos and threes and to act out *jeux de scene,* pre-arranged stage business while singing. Hugo would have been accustomed to the pre-Bizet, pre-Gilbert operettas in which the appeal was essentially aural and in which stage "business" was elementary.

XXXI

CHARLOTTE WOLTER AT HOME

NEAR TO THE SEILERNS in Hietzing lived their friends Count and Countess Charles O'Sullivan. The Count had been a witness at Hugo's marriage. The Countess was Charlotte Wolter, the greatest tragedienne in the German language of the nineteenth century.

Although I **(note: Jossleyn Hennessy)** was born in 1902, five years after the death of "the Wolter" (as by continental usage she was known), some of my child hood's earliest memories are of the stories that my mother told me about her. Idela vividly conveyed the profound impression that the Wolter's personality and acting created, so much so that, aided by the signed photograph that she gave Idela, I have always felt as though I knew the Wolter myself.

Lotte Wolter was born in 1834 the daughter of a humble clerk. He died leaving his wife penniless with ten children. The widow married a poor sweat-shop tailor. She took a job as a dresser in the Cologne theatre; here Lotte from the age of eleven or twelve helped her mother. Fascinated by the contrast between the misery in which she lived and the glamour of the stage, Lotte used to watch the plays night after night from the wings. She got her first part as an extra at the age of sixteen. According to Idela's recollections of what the Wolter herself told her, she worked her, way to Vienna, where she got herself walking on parts at the Burgtheater; The director, struck by her personality, the beauty of her contralto voice, and her naturalness, offered her private lessons in acting because she was too old to enter the Conservatoire. She worked hard, served her apprenticeship on tour to such effect that when, eight years later, she was engaged at the Burgtheater she went from triumph to triumph. Count O'Sullivan, son of the Belgian ambassador in Vienna, fell in love with her. He married her in secret' lest she should suffer from the opposition of his family. On his father's death, he set up house with his wife in the beautiful villa at Hietzing, which he filled with *objets d'art.*

Charles O'Sullivan was as remarkable a character as his wife. A man of private fortune, a leader of Viennese society, a patron of the arts, an amateur painter, who designed many of his wife's costumes, a warmhearted husband, he and his wife lived in a happy partnership. A girl without education, her German tinged with a working class Rhineland accent, O'Sullivan lovingly gave her polish, introduced her to the usages of society and opened her eyes to music and painting. He was her most persistent and her most helpful critic, she a willing listener. He weened her from melodramatic overacting and by disciplining her talent transformed her from Lotte Wolter into "the Wolter".

Idela, who first met the Wolter in the O'Sullivan villa before she saw her on the stage, recalled that although then in her fiftieth year she was still beautiful, a striking brunette

with large black eyes, regular features and a faintly aquiline nose. On the'small side off the stage, her lack of inches was forgotten in front of the footlights. Inhabitants of the sensitive egocentric world of the theatre more often than not are prodigal with their "darlings" and given to gushing. The Wolter, although she could tear passion to tatters in the fifth act, was, Idela told me, in her own home an essentially calm and self-possessed person. Her gaze was level, intelligent, observant, interested. It was impossible to embarrass her. When an underbred woman, meeting her in the salon of a great lady, once intimated surprise at finding her in such company, the Wolter said quickly "Yes, I am of the people," adding with a wicked glance at the woman, "You and I get into the queerest places nowadays, don't we?" Far from making a secret of her working class origin, she was proud of it. She kept up a voluminous and affectionate correspondence with her numerous brothers, sisters and cousins in the Rhineland, and helped those in need.

> O'Sullivan was always to be seen in the same seat every night that his wife played until the day came when, stricken with creeping tuberculosis, he could no longer go out. Thereafter Hugo kept him company at home until his wife returned from the theatre, where she played about twice a week.
>
> 'We used to receive,' says Idela, 'complimentary tickets. I found these hours in the theatre entrancing - an intellectual feast, deepening one's sensitivities, exploring the depths of human psychology through the great poetry of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing and Grillparzer. I also saw the Wolter in modern plays such as ***Wahn und Wahnsin*** (Madness and Folly) and Sardou's ***Fedora***. Papa and I used to take an hour to walk the six kilometres from Hietzing to the theatre. We came back by tram.'

The Wolter's greatest triumph was in the role of Adelheid in the play that made Goethe a national figure in Germany: *Goetz von Berlichingen.* The *Vehmgericht,* the legendary secret court that set itself up in the fourteenth century to punish wrong-doers who escaped the Emperor's justice, condemn Adelheid to death for the murder of her husband. In the finil1 scene, night finds Adelheid, who knows that the *Vehmgericht* are coming for her, alone in an upper chamber of her castle. She becomes aware of approaching hoof beats. From behind the curtain she peers out of the window. She sees the masked Avenger dismount. She extinguishes the light. She clutches her throat. Her lips move but no sounds come. She cannot speak. Her whole body is seized with terror. Motionless as a statue, the Wolter manages by her very rigidity to spread her fear across the theatre. Moonlight streams in through a white silk curtain across the entrance. Measured footsteps ascend the stairs. A small shadow appears on the curtain. Larger and larger, and more terrible grows the shadow, as if emerging out of the ground, until _ framed in the doorway - it reaches full height. The curtain is torn aside. There, dagger in hand, stands a masked Hgure.

> Now Adelheid finds her voice. She utters scream after scream - the Wolterschrei - the death scream of a woman alive with terror. The Avenger

strikes her down. Her scream chokes in her throat.' She falls to the floor, inert. Rapid curtain.

Audiences sat spellbound through this scene. Idela said that it was a full second after the fall of the curtain before they released their feelings in thunderous applause.

Those who have the curiosity to look up Goethe's play will find the meeting of the *Vehmgericht* at which Adelheid is condemned, but not her execution. Nor did Goethe ever see this scene because, years after his death, it was specially devised for the Wolter not, as was often said, by Charles O'Sullivan but by Franz Dingelstedt, director of the Burgtheater in 1869.

O'Sullivan accepted *Goetz* as a splendid vehicle for his wife, but, according to Idela, he considered her fmest artistic creation to be the role of the Countess Orsina in Lessing's *Emilia Gaiotti,* a major drama of the German period.

Here is a letter to Hugo from Count O'Sullivan dated Vienna, November 10, 1885:

Dear Friend,

I would so like to know what's become of you and what fun you are having. The years slip gently by, but all of a sudden we realise that we're slipping by with them and that we must say 'Goodbye!' here and there before it is too late. We are in town since November 5, and I would not mind if we had a little more room. But in my bitsy-piecy of a bedroom I'm like a squirrel in a cage. I lack air and space. My health is as deplorable as ever and I haven't a trouser button that holds! What a curious thing the human machine is! I don't do much now and life seems a bit sad compared with what it was in the good old times we had together. In the theatre - nothing new. Poor Hofmann has been overcome by all his crosses and quickly replaced. I don't know Bezecny his successor. He plays the piano and can add up figures, but he never used to frequent the theatre and knows nothing about it. They ought to have put you in charge! You would at least have known how to pick us out charming plays with pretty women! In painting, the Wereschagin exhibition has got itself talked about, chiefly because the Archbishop wanted to remove two canvasses depicting episodes in the life of Christ. They had the sense to leave them to let the public gaze their fill at these wicked pictures. They'll turn from them pretty discomfited. I am not much abreast of what's going on in music. Prince Metternich **(note: this would have been he son or other relative of the statesman of 1773-1859)** now President of the Musikverein will be able to tell you all about it. He is organising more concerts than ever - and what names! Rubinstein, Patti, Nilsson! Apropos of music, have you heard Bruckner's Quartet *(adagio)* which has so enchanted all the Germans? Is it really so remarkable? Are you still making music or only paper for music? **(Hugo had invented a roller with an ink supply with which a composer could rule**

lines of treble and base staves simultaneously) Try to come here for a bit this winter and take me out to some balls, with a mask or two. That would give a lift to my morale which is pretty low! My clock's been slowing down tiresomely in the past few years. The death of my poor friend Canon[3] has left a big gap in my life. I no longer have an interesting studio to visit. Everything is going bit by bit until the crumble will be complete. But before the final catastrophe, let's have a little more fun! **(note: when this was written, O'Sullivan had three more years to live, Hugo a year and eight days).**

Your old friend, O'Sullivan

The more that one studies this letter the more light does it seem to shed on the characters of O'Sullivan and his friend Hugo.

At first sight, O'Sullivan seems utterly despondent, but when I summon up the rudiments of graphology that Hugo's daughter Idela taught me, his handwriting, far from suggesting despondency, reveals a strong will, clarity of judgement, steadiness of purpose and, incidentally, a warm, kindly heart, with an outgiving disposition, fond of the good things of life. Read the letter aloud and his verbal despondency seems irony, wry self-mockery. His letter and his handwriting support Idela's observation that he was cultivated and witty. Here he is relaxed, in his carpet slippers, writing to the friend whom he had known since they were young together more than twenty years ago.

Now consider Hugo. We know him from (1) his own letters, mostly written under the stress of strong emotion, to his wife, (2) his daughter's autobiography written under the stress of emotions strongly divided between each of her parents, with a glimpse from (3) Charles Zaluski, who stood in a special relationship to him and to his wife. These sources concentrate our gaze on certain aspects of his character to the exclusion of all others.

From O'Sullivan's letter, however, we divine another Hugo - a man capable of inspiring a lifelong friendship, a man to whom O'Sullivan feels that he can unburden his heart without fear of being misunderstood, a man with whom O'Sullivan knows that he can share his interests in the theatre, drama, painting and music, with whom he can crack intimate jokes, a man with whom he has spent many an evening alone. O'Sullivan and the Wolter knew "everyone" in Vienna: their acquaintances were beyond count, their friends were but a handful, of whom Hugo was one.

Although Hugo's business interests can have left him little time to compose, he continued to move in the artistic and musical worlds.

Thus, by organising musical evenings in Hietzing and public concerts, he had the satisfaction of launching Sophie Menter on a career in the front rank of pianists. I find her mentioned in the *Oxford Dictionary of Music,* in Sacheverell Sitwell's biography of Liszt, while Bernard Shaw jovially wrote on April 25, 1890:

> To the superb Sophie, solid, robust, healthy, with her mere self-consciousness an example and sufficient delight to her, playing Schumann was like bringing a sensitive invalid into the fields and making him play football for the good of his liver. You could hear Schumann plaintively remonstrating in the orchestra, and the piano coming down on him irresistibly, echoing his words with good natured mockery, and whirling him off in an endless race that took him clean out of himself and left him panting.

Bernard Shaw, while enthusiastic over Paderewski, said on May 16,1890:

> His execution of the Liszt rhapsody was by no means equal to Sophie Menter's.

On June 18, 1890, Shaw added:

> Sophie Menter produces an effect of magnificence which leaves Paderewski far behind; but she balances the powerful bass of the instrument against the comparatively weak treble so as to produce a perfectly rich, full, and even body of sound, whilst with Paderewski the bass and middle elbow the treble into the corner in a brutal fantasia on the theme of the survival of the fittest. Again, Madame Menter seems to play with splendid swiftness, yet she never plays faster than the ear can follow, as many players can and do: it is the distinctness of attack and intention given to each note that makes her execution so irresistibly impetuous.

What pride Hugo could have taken in Menter's successes had he lived to applaud them!

XXXII

HUGO AT THE COURT OF BAVARIA

FOR REASONS that my sources do not reveal, Hugo moved early in 1884 to Munich, where he opened a workshop. We have only a vague idea of what he produced in it. Besides promoting other people's inventions, he was himself fertile in thinking up gadgets. He designed a pipe with a removable tube and filter against nicotine - a commonplace today but unique at the time. His friend Brahms, from the moment that he rose at 5 a.m. to compose, used to smoke black cheroots and brew himself endless cups of coffee, because no one else made it strong enough for his taste. For him Hugo designed a coffee pot hinged on an upright hoop over a methylated lamp. Brahms can be seen using it in the illustration in the *Oxford Companion to Music.* Hugo made a music stand with a pedal to turn the pages. Hugo's Workshop Regulations included rules that would make today's trade unionists blench. Working hours were 5.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. with a quarter of an hour's break in mid morning and mid-afternoon and an hour off for lunch. The first rule was that every worker was expected not merely to do his job properly from a sense of duty but also with the ambition to rise in the world. Secondly, he was to accept orders, admonitions and reproofs "with the necessary attention and politeness". A worker who was quick could leave the workshop as soon as he had completed his allotted task without waiting for closing time - a regulation that would cause a riot in today's "keep in line with the slowest worker" flat. On the other hand, if the foreman announced overtime after hours or on Sundays or holidays, the worker "must obey without argument". A worker who "in any way disturbs the peace must submit to the foreman's discipline and such disturbances, if repeated, will lead to dismissal".

All the workers, who included one woman, Elise Deibl, signed a statement that they had read, understood and would obey the regulations.

Perhaps because of these rules, Hugo led a happy team. He and his workers got on well together. Idela told me that; one Christmas, Hugo went to a party at which crackers, toys, costume jewelry, mouth organs and so on were distributed - hardly the sort of things that an adult would bother to take away, but Hugo, having filled his pockets, took a long circuit in the snow to give them to the children in the homes of each of his workers.

Since he employed a foreman and nine craftsmen, his output and sales must at least have paid for raw materials and wages, but little more, because, whatever had happened to the income from the Heumarkt, he was now living m poverty, lodging with his foreman and his wife, Franz and Babette Kofler, in a working class district. His room was just large enough for a bed, a chest of drawers, a table and - of course - a piano.

Together with Idela, Ida took a flat elsewhere in which there was a grand piano on which Hugo and his daughter used to play duets. Carlo was at the Theresianum **(note: after the emperor Charles VI died in 1740 in his Favorita Lustschloss, his daughter Maria Theresa, haunted by its sad associations, moved elsewhere and turned it into a school for the nobility. Amongst its responsibilities was to provide pages, of whom Carlo was one, for Court ceremonials).** Among Idela's closest friends was her cousin Julie Pallavicini, a Lady-in-Waiting at the Court of Prince Luitpold, the uncle of King Ludwig II and de *facto* ruler of Bavaria. Idela describes Julie as charming, gay and natural. She ensured that Idela's name was included among the debutantes to be invited to the Court ball that was to open the Carnival season, Idela recalls "When my cousin told me that the Prince wished me to make my debut at his ball, I said that my parents had as yet no intention of launching me as a debutante.[2] 'You will receive an invitation, which is a command that you cannot refuse,' Julie replied smiling."

Hugo was a little vexed. To attend the Court one had to be *hoffähig,* i.e. possess sufficient armorial quarters of nobility to be appointed a chamberlain. Hugo was a little contemptuous of what he called "the chamberlain's key to entry". He was a liberal and a democrat. He took no interest in the ways of the Court. "However," says Idela, "he put a good countenance on things as he always did, and became a chamberlain so as not to spoil my debut and my pleasure." What's more, Hugo was chosen by the Princess Ludwig **(note: Maria Theresia, daughter of the archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Este, Heiress and last of the Estes, she married Ludwig III)** to take her into supper - not bad going for a man who was "a little contemptuous of the ways of Court"! And Idela, for one whose parents did not go out in society - *"Maman* never even offered a cup of tea and always sent word that she was out when anyone called" - fared equally well: she returned home happily laden with gifts from the cotillon.

Today the great Wittelsbach palace is a bombed out ruin. When Hugo took Idela there, it was alive. The ballroom, three storeys high, shimmered in the light of candles from an enormous lustre. The scores of splendidly gowned young women - the debutantes all in white _ and the gay colours of the men's uniforms made a brilliant spectacle, which Idela never forgot. Although the central heating was laid on several days in advance, the ballroom was so vast that it remained cool for any who were not gyrating in fast moving waltzes or polkas, so the galleries were snowy with ermine furs keeping decolleté mothers warm. And "What a royal supper in a beautiful hall!" Idela writes. "What pyramids of fresh strawberries between baskets bursting with oranges, pears, pineapples and grapes! What an orchestra!"

Hugo and Idela enjoyed themselves so much at the carnival ball that Hugo allowed himself and her to be invited in due course a second time - to the next New Year ball, the climax of the season.

Ida Marie Hennessy (1864 – 1945)

(daughter of Hugo Seilern and Ida Zaluska, Carlo's sister)

XXXIII

DEATH AND A VISION

AFTER THE USUAL TOUR of pensions in Italy and France and visits to the cousins in Poland, Ida and Idela, some eighteen months later in June 1886, passed through Munich.

The Hugo who met them at the station had lost so much weight that his clothes hung loose upon him. He could hardly speak. For some time he had suffered from a hardening of the tongue which, although his doctor did not tell him, was an incurable cancer. His wife and daughter visited him in the bedroom that he rented from his foreman, Franz Kofler. Hugo suffered but as usual did not complain. Since he could talk only with difficulty he played the piano to them. He refused to accompany them to spend the hot summer by the lake at Tegernsee, saying that he could not spare the time from his work for the Oak Extract Company and his inventions. Hugo was as unlucky in business as in love. His enterprises, which seemed so full of promise, ended in disasters. The Oak Extract Company was no exception: fire destroyed its factory in Transylvania.

When they returned in the autumn Hugo's malady had a deeper grip.

He was a skeleton. His face was yellow. He could not speak. He wrote what he wanted to say. Calmly, courageously he continued to look after his business by day and to play the piano in the evening. Eventually it was possible for him to take only liquid food. The end approached. Carlo came from Vienna. Hugo's look became void of expression. For long periods he recognised no one. Once he rose from his bed and went down into the courtyard. He did not have his latch key. He rang the front door bell. Babette, the foreman's wife, hurried him back to bed. It was a bitter November night. He developed bronchitis. In a lucid moment he asked Idela to buy tickets that they might go together to a forthcoming concert. She consulted the doctor, who said "Impossible!" Nevertheless to comfort her father Idela bought the tickets and gave them to him. On November 18, 1886 before daybreak Babette came round to Ida's flat to tell her that her husband was dead. He was forty-six years of age.

In a closed carriage, Idela followed the body to the mortuary. She does not explain if it was taken there to comply with some law or whether Hugo had bequeathed it to the medical profession. Almost all her memories of her father were sad. Not least was her last sight of him: one among rows of dead bodies. Mass was said over an empty coffin under a catafalque. Although Hugo had never taken part in the social whirl and had led a busy and somewhat scattered life, he made friends everywhere and it is pleasant to record that many crowded the church.

Throughout her life Idela was haunted by her relationship with her father. In old age she wrote the following which she entitled *A Vision:*

> Escorted by light clouds which reflect its last rays, the sun has just disappeared. Shadows slowly creep over the landscape, climbing up the trees with their trembling crests of golden leaves.
>
> I am alone in my room. Familiar objects fade gradually into the darkness. My thoughts float aimlessly. They skim memories, faces, carry me back over the years ...
>
> Noiselessly the door opens. My father appears, dressed in black, his figure slightly bent, his smile sad and sweet. He stops, looks at me uncertainly - a question in his eyes. I fling myself into his arms. I hug him with all my heart.
>
> 'At last you come! Have you felt what I feel? I have called you so often, wanting with everything in me to tell you what I never told you when we were together. Why did I not? The misinterpretations of your feelings disconcerted me, shut me up. The idea that you had made *Maman* unhappy troubled me. Your atheism **(note: as a Freemason Hugo believed in a divine spirit; he was not an atheist)** shocked my religious convictions: youth is so easily uncompromising. Life has taught me that prejudices or convictions, even if antagonistic, should not be allowed to seal the heart, to dismiss pity.
>
> 'I did, however, notice that *Maman* sometimes was unjust to you, misjudging your motives. She listened only to her resentment when she was upset or angry. She should have listened to her heart, for she had a good heart.
>
> 'How I remember and admire the dignified silence with which you received the hard and humiliating things she said to you in front of me, the significance of which I did not always grasp. I was so naive then.
>
> 'With what dauntless courage you faced the agonies of your last illness!
>
> 'I was unhappy because I was ill at ease, not simple and natural with you, because I failed in affection and sympathy towards you, because I was not gay and cheerful with you, especially when you were ill.
>
> 'Saddled with morbid emotions, completely without bearings, the wings of my initiative clipped, I had lost the ability clearly to distinguish the true from the false. I could not find the way to your heart. Father, we let happiness go by, all three of us.'
>
> My father's figure straightens itself. His clothes are no longer black. His face is radiant.

I am alone. The silence of the night enfolds me. Outside the stars twinkle. Sad, but relieved of the burdens which weighed me down, I think of the miseries and sufferings which human beings create out of nothing with so much waste of energy and precious faculties, with a persistence that weeps aloud at being compelled to perpetuate vile and cruel actions. Poor humans, who chase mirages, who sacrifice happiness to chimeras, to shabby sentiments.

NOTE: At the foot of the foregoing Idela wrote "Page found among the manuscripts of a friend deceased." And on the back: "If this is ever published, I do not want it known that it was to me that this vision appeared.' ,

I suspect that she did not want it attributed to her because, with that charity so characteristic of her, she did not wish to seem to be casting reproaches on her mother. I have, however, taken it on myself to disregard her wishes because I feel that her Vision honours her own memory and that of Hugo.

SOURCES AND SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY:

JOHANN FRIEDRICH SEILERN I

SIR GEORGE STEPNEY'S reports on Seilern's negotiations with the Hungarian rebels are in SP80/24 and SP80/28 in the British Public Record Office. In SP80/26, Stepney reports Seilern's appointment as First Austrian Court Chancellor in June, 1705, and outlines his responsibilities.

Of the books that I have consulted the following are the most interesting:

Reichsgraf Seilern Dr. Gustav Turba. Heidelberg, 1923.
Readable only by those who understand seventeenth century legal German.

Wien und Versailles 1692-1697 H. Ritter von Srbik. 1944.
History of the House of Austria 1218-1792 William Coxe. 1847. 3 Vols.
A mine of information, much of it not available elsewhere in English.

The Age of the Enlightened Despot: 1606-1780 A.H. Johnson, 1918.
A useful bird's eye view.

The New Cambridge Modern History Vols V and VI. *The Hapsburg Monarchy* H:W. Steed. 1913
An interesting personal impression. Introductory chapters useful for our period.

The *Holy Roman Empire* James Bryce. 1864. Voltaire said that the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy nor Roman, nor an empire. Bryce explains why it was all three. Still valuable on the period up to 1648. Thereafter interesting as .exemplifying the nineteenth century liberal attitude towards monarchies and democracy.

La Vie Privee d'Un Prince Allemand F. Aussaresse and H. Gauthier-Villars. 1926.
Readable biography of Karl Ludwig. Much interesting information about (1) Karl Ludwig's petition to Leopold I to conftrm Luisa Degenfeld in her title, and (2) Liselotte's marriage to the Duke of Orleans, but no mention of Seilern.

Europe in the Age of Louis XIV R. Hatton. 1969.
A mine of information, social, economic, international, literary, with chrono logy, genealogies, maps, etc., superbly written, profusely illustrated.

The Siege of Vienna J-W. Stoye. 1964.
Authoritative, readable.

Prince Eugen of Savoy Nicholas Henderson. 1964. Mentions Seilern as belonging to the inner group of the emperor's cabinet.

La Diplomatie Française au Temps de Louis XIV C. Picavet. 1930.
Interesting, unbiased.

La Diplomatie Française et la Succession d'Espagne A. Legrelle. 1888.
Useful for the many original documents quoted but Legrelle evidently regards Louis XIV as uncanonised through oversight and England as perfidious Albion. Quotes Seilern's despatches.

The European Nobility in the 18th Century, essays edited by A. Goodwin. *1953*. Suggests that the Austro-Hungarian nobility had power and privilege, the British power without privilege.

La Diplomatie Française d'Henri IV à Vergennes Pierre Rain. 1945.

A good bird's eye view.

The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789 D.B. Horn. 1961.
Throws light on the administrative background and practical problems of diplomats such as Sir George Stepney with whom Seilern negotiated.

The Imperial Privy Council in the 17th Century H.F.Schwarz and J.I.Coddington. 1943
Explains the administration of the Holy Roman Empire and of the Habsburg Territories.

Hungary in the 18th Century H.V. Temperley. 1910.

The introduction is useful for our period.

The Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns in the 17th and 18th Centuries, edited by C.A. Macartney.
Original documents on Seilern's period, including the Pragmatic Sanction.

Hungary: A Short History C.A. Macartney.
Useful both for Seilern's period and the aftermath of the Pragmatic Sanction.

Germany in the 18th Century W.H. Bruford.
The social and literary background.

Receuil des Instructions aux Ambassadeurs de France depuis les traités de Westphalie. 1884.
Reports of Royal Historical Society MSS Commission, Buccleugh Papers Part II. 1903.

British Diplomatic Instructions. 7 vols. Camden Society.

Clio Series of Bibliographies. H. Hauser for the 17th century .

Guide to *Diplomatic Archives of Europe* D.H. Thomas and L.M. Case. 1959.
us Sources de l'Histoire de hance 1610-1715 ed. E. Bourgeois and L. Andre. 5 vols. 1913-26.

The Holy Roman Empire Friedrich Heer. English translation.
A lyrical mystic's vision of the empire - the romantic view run mad. Beautifully illustrated.

Catholics and Unbelievers in the 18th Century R.R. Palmer. 1939.
Brilliant.

CHRISTIAN AUGUST SEILERN

My special thanks arc due to my friend Noel Blakiston, late head of the British Public Record Office, for his kindness in personally putting me on the track of the following diplomatic despatches:

1. The clash between the Russian and French ambassadors is in SP 80/206.
2. Despatches between London and Vienna by, or concerning, Seilern are in SP 80/199, SP 80/200, SP 80/202, SP 80/203, SP 80/205, SP 80/206, SP 107/104.
3. The file of the *St. James's Chronicle* of 1769 containing reports of the incident at the court ball between the ambassadors is in the library of the British Museum, reference No. 563, b. Burney.