

# A Dead Man's Empire

## Revelations of An Ambassador-at-Large

Transcribed by H. M. Egbert from the private papers of an Englishman who for a time was an unofficial diplomat in the most secret service of the British Government.

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The life of Emperor Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary has always seemed to me like one of those representations of the Greek dramatists, in which the hero, pursued by an avenging fate, struggles in vain against a tragic destiny that leaves him, in the end, utterly bereft of all that life has held dear for him.

Never has a monarch suffered so many blows from fortune. Called to the throne at eighteen, it was his fate to lose his Italian provinces, to suffer defeat from France and then from Prussia, to see Hungary become quasi-independent. His son, Prince Rudolf, died by his own hand under circumstances of the utmost pathos; his wife, Empress Elisabeth, fell the victim of an assassin's dagger; his heir and nephew, Archduke John, resigned his inheritance and disappeared; yet fate had still in store for him the murder of Sarajevo, war, and its ensuing miseries.

In my capacity as private and confidential emissary for the British government, with a commission to determine what forces were making for war in Europe, I had fired my headquarters in Vienna, the pivot-point of European politics. Although my mission was not generally suspected, or, rather, because of this, I was in close touch with political affairs and men.

I was returning to Vienna after a short trip home to England when my carriage was invaded, about ten in the evening, somewhere beyond the Swiss frontier, by a man whom I knew very well indeed, escorting a woman whom I had never seen before.

It was evident that they had taken the adjoining sleeping section, and had inadvertently entered mine at the Wetz station. A few words of explanation, and I had stepped into the corridor and shown them to their quarters. The man had not recognized me, but the sight of his face, which I could not possibly have mistaken, for reasons connected with a bygone experience when I was an attaché at Vienna, aroused in me the utmost astonishment and keenest curiosity. For I knew him perfectly well as being the snisning archduke and heir to the throne, who, when he resigned his rank and inheritance, had sailed on a tramp ship as Johann Orth, able seaman, to find his grave, as everybody believed, in the depths of the Sargasso sea.

The story of Johann Orth is common property. It is also known that persons have asseverated, from time to time, that they had met the archduke in distant parts of the world; but nobody of responsibility had ever believed the tale. I had not.

The man was so like his cousin, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and heir apparent, that, but for the experience to which I have referred, I should have mistaken him for the heir apparent himself. What was he doing here? Who was his companion?

As I stood at the door of my section the man opened the door of his and stepped into the corridor. He saw me, stared at me, and suddenly grasped me by the shoulders and dragged me into my compartment and shut the door behind him. Then he thrust out a huge, sunburned, toll-collected hand, and gripped mine with the clasp of a steel vise.

"Well met!" he shouted, calling me by name. "I could not have had a more fortunate encounter. You know me, eh? You are ambassador at Vienna now? Never mind! You will vouch for me in case my uncle has grown near-sighted? You will stand by me, as an old friend ought to?"

I did not know what answer to return to this outburst. The man's appearance was that of one who had been on a protracted debauch, and yet there was no smell of alcohol upon his breath. And soon I began to realize that it was excitement and apprehension that gave him his wild appearance, not liquor.

He poured out a story in a flood of words that left me gasping. And I had not the least doubt of him at any time.

He had escaped from the wrecked ship in one of the boats and landed on the shores of Brazil. In that country he had become a successful coffee planter, and none of his neighbors had guessed his identity. But to one who had lived so full a life the monotony became unendurable. Under various names he had traveled with his wife in many countries of the world, occasionally recognized and challenged, but always managing to conceal his identity, until the year 1912 found him ranching in California. There the woman for whose sake he had sacrificed his rank had died.

He had married again, an ambitious woman who somehow discovered the secret of his birth. She had urged him to return to Austria and regain his rank and inheritance. Her pleas had fired him until his resolution became as great as hers. And so they had started together on the maddest and most impracticable quest that was ever undertaken.

As he ended his story his eyes were

blazing, and he smote his clenched fist into the palm of his hand.

"And now I am going back," he cried, "and I shall force my uncle to acknowledge me as his heir. If he refuses I shall rally to myself a party in the state and seize the government. I have abandoned my rights too long. I know the world now. I know the fallacy of such a sacrifice as mine has been; above all, I know what Austria needs—"

He wanted me to accompany him into the Schoenbrunn palace and vouch for him to the aged emperor, even though I explained to him that I had no longer any official standing. It was not until we were within an hour's run of Vienna, after a session which had lasted till dawn, that I succeeded in getting him to listen to reason. Often during our talk his wife had come silently to the door and listened to us, but she had never spoken.

The archduke had assumed the name of Von Behring, and it was by this that I addressed him.

"I will do my best to gain you a hearing," I said, reluctantly, because I did not wish to be mixed up with the business. "But this only on condition that you follow my instructions. You must take lodgings in Vienna and wait till you hear from me—"

"I can trust nobody!" he cried wildly. "What is, of course, a possibility to be reckoned with," I answered, with a touch of irony which missed his mark.

"But consider, Herr von Behring, that if you appear at the palace gates and demand an audience you will certainly be treated as a madman. And even if you succeed in convincing anyone that you are really the man you claim to be, you will only bring down upon yourself lifelong confinement or—assassination."

He gaped at me. He had known little of the internal politics of Austria, which was, in fact, in one of those crises that can only be solved by death or organic reconstruction through war.

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne, and the only far-seeing statesman in Austria-Hungary, seeing that the dual monarchy was disintegrating, had planned to convert it into a triple monarchy, by the inclusion of a vast Slav confederation, including Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. In this plan he was assisted by his talented wife, formerly Sophie Chotek, a maid-of-honor, now duchess of Hohenberg. The marriage was a morganatic one, the archduke had been forced to withdraw all claim to his children's succession, and his wife was bitterly hated by the ladies of ancient family and the court clique that had the aged emperor's ear and was bent on destroying the Serb-Croatian element instead of utilizing it as a prop for the empire.

This clique consisted of the old nobility, of Count Forgach of the foreign office, Prince Montenegro, the court chamberlain and his aide, Count Paar; Baron Rauch, ban of Croatia, and others—a long list and a powerful one, and bent on thwarting the archduke's statesmanlike scheme by all possible means, not the least potent of which was the antagonism which the court ladies felt toward his wife. They could never forgive plain Sophie Chotek for having risen to be the wife of the heir apparent, and in spite of the morganatic nature of the marriage, undoubtedly the future queen of Austria-Hungary.

"You see, my friend," I said, when I had set out the situation, "your reappearance on the scene will not be the simple matter that you anticipate."

"No," said the woman at the door, speaking for the first time.

Her voice seemed to arouse the archduke from a reverie. Suddenly he pulled from his finger a gold ring, set with a splendid emerald.

"My friend," he said to me, "I shall do as you advise. Then take this ring and deliver it, with my address, to my cousin, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. When we were young men we exchanged rings and agreed that either should come immediately to the other's aid when the ring was shown him."

A little later we ran into Vienna. Having seen my strange companion and his wife comfortably housed in decent, but not sumptuous, quarters, I went to my own lodgings, where I found an invitation signed by Prince Montenegro, requesting my presence at a reception to be given that evening at the palace.

That simplified matters. Undoubtedly the archduke would be there, and I should have the opportunity of delivering the ring to him. Still, I did not like being mixed up in this business. I would have evaded it by any legitimate means, though I was interested in the unique situation. It is not often that a dead heir comes back to oust his successor.

The reception was one of those grand affairs of ceremony in which the Austrian court delights. His majesty appeared for a few moments, walking among the guests to exchange

a few words with the notables. I could not restrain a sense of intense pity to see that venerable figure, bowed with years and sorrows, upon whose shoulders rested so great a care, who knew that his death must be the signal for the break-up of his vast realm. When he had withdrawn a buzz of conversation arose, and I found myself accosted by a little friend of mine, one of the court ladies whose name I need not give. Suffice it that I had reason to know I could trust her, and she to confide in me.

She was deeply agitated, she held my arm tightly, and her eyes were fixed upon the end of the room.

Following her glance as a sudden cessation of talk became manifest, I saw the heir apparent making his ceremonial journey about the great salon, while the guests drew up along the walls. Upon the archduke's arm his wife, the duchess of Hohenberg, had placed her hand, and they were making the tour together.

There was no mistaking the significance of that action. It was a challenge to the world, a defiance of all morganatic restrictions. The heir apparent was claiming the equality of his wife. None dared defy him within those walls. Yet I saw looks of murderous hatred in the eyes of the grandes dames as they curtsied low before the couple. I saw Princess Lichtenberg, whose family antedates that of the emperor himself, glare daggers at the duchess and hesitate before bending her knees. And as they passed the heads behind them were craned forward, the faces distorted by scowls of malignity. Then we, too, had paid our duty, and the archduke and the duchess had passed on.

It was easy to see that trouble had been brewing in Vienna since my departure, three weeks before.

Then I was astonished to see tears in my companion's eyes. She sobbed convulsively and pulled me a little apart from the throng; she was so agitated that she could hardly find words to express herself.

"They are going to die!" she gasped at length.

"What! The archduke and—?"

"I tell you they will not live out the week," she answered.

"But have they not been warned?" I asked. "The police—"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Who are the police, that they should dare to oppose the wishes of the cabal in

power?" she answered. "The police know—yes, men her. They will supply the murderer. And even his name is known."

"Impossible!" I cried. "The archduke must be warned."

"He has been warned by anonymous letters," replied the little woman. "But whether he has received them or not, who can say? How can one tell him that gossip has decreed his death? Where all know, none knows. Only someone apart from court life can tell his highness."

"But how can I repeat such gossip to him with no proof?" I asked. I did not more than half believe the story. Such tales are always fitting through Viennese society. I went away rather abruptly, conscious of the resentful, anxious look on the little woman's face. Even then it did not occur to me that she had been making a supreme appeal to me, as the only one who could help.

Later in the evening I sent a request by one of the chamberlains for an interview with the archduke. The guests were thinning out, the reception had settled down into a few rubbers of bridge, varied by visits to the informal supper tables, where champagne and sandwiches were served. The archduke came out at once, looked at my card and at me, and then, to my delight, remembered me. For, in fact, the experience to which I have referred, in which I gained the friendship of his cousin, had involved himself as well.

He greeted me very warmly and asked how he could serve me. In answer I tendered him the ring.

He started back like a man struck by a bullet. I then explained, as concisely as possible, that I had been re-

quested to deliver it by a traveling companion, whom I thought I had recognized.

His highness, when he had recovered his self-possession, did not maintain the pretense. He seized me by the arm as my little friend had done.

"I always knew my cousin was alive," he said. "I have never doubted the rumors that reached our ears from time to time. If he had died he would have sent the ring to me on his deathbed. Poor cousin!" His manner changed, and he continued in a tone of the utmost gravity. "Mr. X—, never during the past ten years has there been a single moment when my wife and I would not most gladly have abdicated our rank and gone out into the world as my cousin did, to live like free men and women. Never a moment! And I would give everything in the world if only my cousin could resume his inheritance and let us sink into obscurity!"

He turned away, overcome by emotion, and grasped my hands in his.

"A thousand thanks for your discretion, my friend!" he cried. "I shall never forget it. And now I must see my cousin at once. I leave for the South early tomorrow. I cannot leave the palace. Can you bring him to me?"

As I left the small salon in which I had had audience with the archduke a figure moved swiftly away from the entrance, which was a small open space hung with curtains and having no door. The man seemed anxious to avoid me. I thought I recognized Count Paar, the court chamberlain's aide. However, I was satisfied that he could not have overheard our conversation. I took a hack at the palace entrance, and was soon at Von Behring's lodgings.

The sleepy porter admitted me, and five minutes later Von Behring and his wife, who had dressed hurriedly, came into the living room.

In a few words I explained the situation, and the pair accompanied me below, where they had waited. As I helped Madame Von Behring in I saw a man lurking in the shadows across the street. The light from a street lamp fell on his face. I thought I recognized him as a certain Macchio, a stool pigeon of the police, and my heart sank for a moment. We were certainly watched. However, I said nothing; we drove off, and, fifteen minutes later, we were at the east en-

trance, where an officer stepped forward, peered into our faces, and conducted us within the palace.

He led us along many passages, up a flight of stairs, and into an audience room. Bidding me wait there with madame, he conducted Von Behring into an inner room. We two waited perhaps half an hour in silence, until the door opened and three figures emerged.

Two were the archdukes; the other was the emperor himself, leaning upon the arm of Franz Ferdinand.

Von Behring, evidently greatly moved, beckoned to his wife, and the two stood beside the aged ruler in a window embrasure, and engaged in earnest conversation, carried on in low tones which were quite inaudible to me. I noticed that at times the emperor seemed uncertain, he peered and blinked into Von Behring's face; and once, after such a scrutiny, prolonged for nearly a minute, he suddenly folded him in his arms and kissed him on either cheek.

It was a strange and dramatic scene in the embrasure of the window, and I watched in fascination until Archduke Franz Ferdinand came up to me.

"Mr. X—," he began, "there is no man whom I can trust with as full a faith as I can you. I have proved you in the past, and whatever may be the cause of your presence in Vienna, I feel that I can do so now. You understand, better than anyone outside the court, what our position is."

He lowered his voice. "His majesty," he said, "is amenable to the immediate influence—you understand? The man who speaks last has his ear."

"Franz," called the emperor's tremulous voice, "come here a moment. Do you know, I am getting so old, I can-

not remember which of you two nephews of mine is to succeed me. My nephew John tells me that he has been away a long time, and I cannot remember having seen him for some weeks."

"His majesty forgets at times," resumed the archduke. "He will readily accept my cousin in my place. I hope that his advisers will fall in with the scheme, for any man except myself must be a relief to them in their designs. Well, I have talked with her highness, and it is our unshakable resolve to resign all our honors and withdraw into obscurity. I have arranged with my few friends to do their best for my successor. We do not expect to be heard of again."

"Now here is our plan," the archduke continued hurriedly. "Tomorrow—or today, rather, we leave for Sarajevo, where I shall deliver an address which will appease the Croatian people and crown my policy of conciliation. That will be my last official act and will checkmate our enemies. You will render me your aid as far as possible!"

I pledged myself.

"Then you will travel to Sarajevo on the same train, but not in my company," continued the archduke. "It leaves at an early hour. Only my personal aide knows that, for necessarily these things have to be arranged with secrecy. It is a special consisting of two coaches. My staff and I will occupy the first, and you will follow in the second with some of my friends. One of them will call at your hotel for you an hour before the train departs. At Sarajevo you will go to the house of M. Pasich in Bosnal street, and will remain there until we return from the town hall. M. Pasich is my friend and will be my host; by the time you arrive he will be in possession of all the facts. My cousin and his wife will join you there. We shall then exchange roles. They will return to Vienna at night, and you will accompany me in an automobile as far as the Servian frontier, where your duty will be ended. I can rely implicitly on you?"

"Fully, so far as lies in my power," I answered. "But though you two gentlemen resemble each other closely enough to enable the substitution to be effected at the moment, have you considered that—"

"I have," he answered, clapping his hand on my shoulder. "Fortunately that detail settles itself, for a heavy veil is the ceremonial dress in Bosnia. That dates from the time of the Turkish regime. So her highness the duchess of Hohenberg can very well pass muster for Madame von Behring. Now," he added, rising, "time is passing, and there is much to do. Our friends all understand their duties, and so I bid you good night, my friend. Expect my aide early in the morning."

He shook hands with me and I rose. The officer came out of the emperor's apartments and conducted me back to the palace entrance, where he took leave of me with a ceremonious salute.

Declining the offers of the hack drivers, I made my way home afoot. Truly we were playing into our enemies' hands that night. I was not a hundred yards from the palace entrance when I felt that I was being followed. I swung round to see the face of the spy Macchio peering at me through the fog of the night.

"Well, sir?" I demanded.

"I beg your pardon, he mumbled. "I thought you were a friend of mine—"

"And now that you are satisfied I am not, perhaps you will kindly take yourself off," I answered.

The fellow slunk away. He did not follow me to my hotel, to the best of my belief. But when I was at last in my room a cold reaction came over me.

I must have slept more soundly toward morning, for I started up at length to find that it was half-past eight. I dressed with haste and went down. Nobody had called for me. I ate a hasty breakfast and waited. The aide did not appear. Ten o'clock came, then eleven. Twelve struck. I was now thoroughly alarmed. Had the aide gone to the wrong hotel? I hurried round to Von Behring's lodgings, to learn that he and his wife had driven to the railroad station at half-past eight.

My fears deepened. Surely the aide must have blundered. When I discovered at the station that there were no signs of the royal party and that there was no train for Sarajevo until six o'clock that night I fell into a panic. From a friendly porter I gathered the information that a special had left at ten. Clearly I had been left behind. But was this Macchio's doing?

That day was a slow agony to me. It was not so much the thought of my failure which oppressed me as the gathering sense of some impending tragedy which I could not fathom.

When at last I found myself on the night train for Bosnia I could not stay in my compartment, but paced the corridor distractedly. A thousand questions intruded themselves upon my consciousness. Had the two cousins gone on the same train? Would their likeness not have become apparent to all? If I had slept little the night before I slept not at all that night, and watched the dawn come up across the Bosnian plains with haggard eyes until at last we pulled into Sarajevo.

The little town was gay with bunting. Flags fluttered from all the buildings. Evidently the archduke and the duchess had arrived. But the Von Behrings? That question only M. Pasich could answer. I found Bosnal street and located his house by the aid of a friendly policeman who had a few words of German. It was festooned with flags and flowers. The doors stood wide open. A servant admitted me without a question, and presently I found myself before my

host, a keen-eyed, bearded gentleman of middle age, who scanned my card inquiringly, then looked at me, and broke into an unintelligible jargon which was totally incomprehensible to me.

I tried him in French and German without avail. And I was sure that he had received no communication concerning me, and had no idea who I was or what my business was.

He offered me wine and cigars, excused himself and left me.

Suddenly, far away, I heard the music of a band. M. Pasich came back and began to speak. I do not know what he said, for at that moment the band stopped playing and, in place of it, a confused clamor arose. Suddenly the whole town seemed to go mad. Men rushed along the streets, screaming in Servian, Croat, and languages that resembled the bellow of beasts. My host ran from his house, followed by half his retinue, in their wake, forgotten. Far up the street I saw soldiers on horseback, galloping, and, behind them, a running, raving mob, surrounding a carriage. I joined the stream that surged toward them.

We met the oncoming mob as two ideas meet. Instantly the street was jammed, the rearing horses unable to proceed, stood like rocks lashed by whirlpools. The carriage halted.

I saw bloodstains upon the cushions. I saw a dead man propped against them, and the body of a veiled woman bowed over his own. The assassins' shots had found their bullets too well; there was no need to listen to the death-wail of the multitude.

My friend the aide was staggered when we met at the funeral ceremonies in Vienna. He glared at me and clapped his hand upon his sword; then, with a violent effort at self-control, he passed as though we had never met before. Yet, knowing the impulsive nature of the Viennese, I know that some day, if ever we meet again, we will discuss the matter and understand each other.

Here is my view: That the archduke, fearful even of his best-trusted friends, had sent a spy to follow me home from the palace who had seen me in brief conversation with the spy Macchio, and had reported the incident Franz Ferdinand, growing alarmed and believing me in the pay of his enemies, had instructed his aide not to call for me, and had sent no message to M. Pasich at Sarajevo.

Furthermore, at the last moment, he had changed his plans. He had remained quietly in Vienna and had sent his cousin, whom I shall call Von Behring still, together with his wife to read his speech at the town hall. By the time the train reached Sarajevo he was already in flight, with the duchess of Hohenberg, to some unknown destination.

Perhaps the intrigues against which he had fought so long had at last shattered his nerves and made him resign on shaking off the burden of his inheritance without delay. Perhaps my little friend had managed to convey to him some supreme warning which he had heeded for his wife's sake, unnerved by my supposed defection.

Certainly the spy Macchio had done his work too well.

And somewhere in the world, I am convinced, Franz Ferdinand and his wife, freed from the cares of state, are living as they have long wanted to live, unknown, absorbed in their domestic life, to be rejoined later by their children.

Because the faces that I saw in the coffins at the solemn service in Vienna were those of the man and woman whom I must still call by the name Von Behring.

The Neglected Species.

In the opinion of some persons, the new teacher was going almost too far in her attention to nature study. However, the children appeared to enjoy it all, and, so far, no parents had made open objection to the little talks on birds, insects and flowers with which the teacher diversified the routine of school work. So all went along quite comfortably until the afternoon when the fly and the flea were up for consideration.

Following the teacher's lead, the children had all grown enthusiastic over the astonishing acrobatic abilities of the fly—all except Robbie May who for some time had been staring moodily at his desk, casting only occasional glances at the teacher, and those unmistakably sullen.

His mood became so noticeable by the time they were all admiring the fact that the fly can walk on the ceiling, that the teacher paused and turned to the boy.

"What is the trouble, Robbie?" she inquired. "Aren't you interested in the talk?"

"Ye-es," granted Robbie, reluctantly polite. Then, warming up, "but I bet a fly can't hang by its knees, and every boy in school can do it, all 'cept Laurie Lee, and he's had the dipthery!"—Youth's Companion.

Waste of Energy.

Some years ago several deputies had a gathering at the home of Sheriff Lane in Gloucester. While looking about the house Mr. Lane called the attention of the visitors to an old clock, a great favorite of his. He told his friends of his great attachment to the piece of mechanism, getting quite pathetic at parts of its history, and ending by saying: "And, gentlemen, I have wound up that clock every night for so many years" (mentioning the number).

Here an old deputy turned the tide of feeling evoked by the story by saying: "Well, Lane, I always did think you were a darned old fool! That's an eight-day clock!"

### WORSE STILL



She—You used to say I was the dearest little woman you ever knew before we were married.  
He—Well, now I say that you are the dearest proposition that I ever heard of.

### FOND OF CHICKEN



Willie (aged six)—Say, paw, I wsh chickens were shaped like a dog.  
His Father—Why, Willie?  
Willie—Then it would have four drumsticks.

### LEFT-HANDED COMPLIMENT



Mrs. Westend—You'll not find me difficult to suit, Norah.  
Norah (the new maid)—I'm sure not, ma'am; I saw your husband as I came in, ma'am.

### BEFORE AND AFTER



She—This place used to be known as Lovers' Leap.  
He—And I suppose it is now known as Married Man's Leap.

### SHOCKING!



The Lady—Gracious! What on earth shall I do? Here's a man coming an' my garter's busted!