

MARIA THERESA

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Maria Theresa by J. Franck Bright

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J. FRANCK BRIGHT

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I

Foreign Statesmen

MARIA THERESA



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BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE subject of this monograph, the political work of Maria Theresa, runs over into a second volume, which will appear under the title of "Joseph II." Perhaps a few words are necessary to explain this departure from the general plan of the series. Its justification depends on the close continuity between the two reigns. For fifteen years Joseph was associated with his mother as co-regent; and during that time his influence was constantly increasing. To attempt an account of her political action, without taking into consideration the character and views of her son, would involve a wholly inadequate treatment. The reign of Joseph, when left as sole ruler of the empire, was but a working out and fulfilment of the initiatory measures of the preceding reign. Over almost the whole period, in foreign affairs at all events, the influence of one minister, Kaunitz, is predominant; in fact the two reigns are occupied with the rise and fall of his political system. They stand by themselves as an episode in European history.

Whatever political connections were subsequently contracted were subjected to the new and overwhelming forces called into life by the French Revolution. The same continuity is visible in the internal policy of the two sovereigns. Again the period has a unity of its own, in the great effort of monarchical institutions to justify themselves and to satisfy without constitutional upheaval the requirements of a new and progressive age. It is therefore thought better to treat the period as a whole, and thus to avoid the incompleteness and needless repetition which must inevitably have resulted if the two reigns had been treated independently.

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