

**AUSTRIA-
HUNGARY: THE
POLYGLOT EMPIRE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649751358

Austria-Hungary: The Polyglot Empire by Wolf von Schierbrand

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WOLF VON SCHIERBRAND

**AUSTRIA-
HUNGARY: THE
POLYGLOT EMPIRE**

PREFACE

First, a disclaimer. This is not a mere war book. There have, if anything, been too many of these. All necessarily suffered from the deficiencies of war books. The material had been more or less hurriedly gathered; personal prejudices warped judgment; the view was restricted, and so were the sources of information on which it was based; lastly, haste was again the dominant feature in the final task of writing. The result was, perhaps, readable, but could scarcely be termed dependable.

During the four years I resided in Austria—1912 till a few months ago—I enjoyed full opportunities of studying land and people at close range. Trips to Hungary and to the Austrian provinces enabled me to supplement or revise this knowledge on important points. The war came. Again there was a total shifting of scene, a complete alteration in modes of thought and action, in aims confessed. I lived close to these people, as one of themselves in most essentials; through trying days and weary months sharing with them the crust of bread as well as their joys and sorrows; looking into their hearts, hearing them speak and moan and weep. I saw some actual fighting. I witnessed some hunger riots. Of some of these things and others indeed, the book has a word to say.

Among the books that have appeared in the recent or more remote past dealing with the chief aspects of the Dual Monarchy, the author recalls none that set out along the same path or with the same purpose. This

purpose in the main has been: To afford the reader a sufficient outline of the process of growth and accretion active in creating the Austria-Hungary of to-day, of the natural resources of the land and of the vital characteristics of the many-tongued population. Next, to point out the chief problems of the polyglot nation, inherently owing to the peculiar genesis of the monarchy as a whole, problems so knotty and deep-seated that their non-solution hitherto has gone far towards wrecking the country as an independent political entity. And third, to define the most feasible (and perhaps the only) means of allaying or entirely removing these difficulties, as these means have gradually shaped themselves in the minds of the thinking and potential elements of Austria-Hungary.

Side by side with such matter as tends to elucidate this paramount object, there also appears information in the body of this book which may interest the reader for its own sake. A good deal of it rests on the personal impressions of the writer. Some readers may like the book the better for that.

One more remark. I think I may honestly claim for myself to be actuated by no conscious bias in dealing with political, social and racial questions discussed here. Certainly none has swayed my judgment in looking towards ultimate ends. The political reforms urgently called for, both in Hungary and Austria, to bring those two countries abreast of the times, abreast of the West, are not subject to opinion; they are demanded by the facts themselves. Neither has my sincere liking for and sympathy with the people of Austria-Hungary blinded me to their serious failings; failings, however, which, nearly all of them, do more harm to themselves than to others.

The scope of this work embraces much that, heretofore, has been handled not at all or else wholly in desultory

PREFACE

vii

fashion. I venture to hope that the book may do something towards modifying certain erroneous conceptions held by many Americans relative to Austria-Hungary. I do not pretend, however, to have exhausted the theme as a whole. Twice the space would not suffice for that. All the same, my book may fulfil a useful mission. With that hope I rest content.

W. v. S.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: THE POLYGLOT EMPIRE

CHAPTER I

GENERAL DESCRIPTIVE REMARKS ABOUT THE DUAL MONARCHY

Too little known by the outside world—Prediction that after the war American tourists and lovers of sport will become acquainted with some of the country—Beautiful scenery; the Carpathians, Transylvanian Alps, the Switzerland of Austria, the Tyrol, Styria and Carinthia, the Wachau, excelling the Rhine Valley, the cave wonders of Carniola, the "Bohemian Forest," wild and rugged Bosnia and Herzegovina, the picturesque Dalmatian coast, the Semmering, with its glaciers just a step from Vienna—Big game and fine sport everywhere; bear hunting and deer stalking, grouse, capercaillie and aquatic birds on the Narenta—Throughout the people are good-natured, simple, hospitable—Class distinctions and caste spirit—Körper and American aid—Many natural resources lying fallow—Water and electric power—Mining—Urban population—Vienna and Budapest—School system and higher education—The woman question—Marriage and the State—Illegitimacy—Statistics—War the great leveller—Distinctive traits of the population—Worthy of a brighter future.

AMONG the amazing things about Austria-Hungary is undoubtedly the fact that this beautiful region of the globe is so little known by the outside world. Of course there are guide books which tell more or less explicitly and correctly about every section of the Dual Monarchy.

2 AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: POLYGLOT EMPIRE

It is not that I mean. What I do mean is that, of that immensely large body of tourists and lovers of sport who annually, especially during the warm season, go forth to enjoy the excitement of travel, the rapid change of scenery, the bagging of "big game," the delight of varied natural attractions, the rubbing of elbows with races unknown to them before, the study of quaint and picturesque customs and manners, the imbibing of sights and things of beauty—that of this whole immense army, crowding in normal times all ocean steamers and railway lines and mountain paths, but such a sorry fragment finds its way to Austria-Hungary. For it can be predicated with every guarantee of truth that in all those essentials that make an extensive trip worth while to the discriminating or even to the careless and thoughtless throng, the lands forming jointly Austria-Hungary are among the most deserving and remunerative. Yet of all those shoals of Americans and British flooding each summer the continent of Europe for recreation, for instruction, or for the sake of re-establishing failing health, barely one or at most two per cent. deem it wise to make a special tour of the Danube lands. And even of this small percentage few extend their travels beyond brief passing visits to Vienna, Budapest and, at most, a couple of other points not too far off the beaten track. To any one who has had the exquisite pleasure of peregrinating at leisure the whole of Austria-Hungary this fact seems a marvel, especially when one remembers that in these days, when to sated eyes this terrestrial sphere of ours appears to shrink more and more, when the waste spaces and the hitherto inaccessible or unknown regions of the earth are rapidly dwindling or entirely disappearing, even journeys around the globe waxing stale, and when dangerous excursions to the interior of fever-haunted

DESCRIPTIONS ABOUT DUAL MONARCHY 3

Africa, to the ether-piercing mountain giants of Tibet or Peru are accounted commonplace, Austria-Hungary is still allowed to remain aside.

And I know whereof I speak. For before settling for a rather lengthy residence in Austria-Hungary I found it next to impossible to meet in this country with any one who could impart to me such enlightening information as I craved, reliable and detailed information, that is, on such points, for example, as are treated of in this book. Austria-Hungary herself has been asleep for the space of two generations, and the restless, eager world has swept by, overlooking in its programmes of travel a country which lay within easy reach, which offered the resources of civilisation, often of luxury and utmost comfort, yet was practically unknown. And the undeniable fact that in an age of frenzied publicity, when to proclaim the advantages one has to offer from the housetops is held both virtue and necessity, this somnolent, mostly silent and certainly unobtrusive Austria-Hungary has put her light under a bushel and has half good-naturedly, half contemptuously regarded all this wholesale advertising on the part of even exotic countries as mere "humbug," as indecent pushing, has had much to do with her being overlooked in the rush of travel. A certain aloofness, indeed, a certain disdain for modern methods of attracting the tide of sight-seers is very widespread throughout the length and breadth of Austria-Hungary. It often takes curious forms. Thus, I remember that not only on arriving in Vienna and proclaiming my intention of remaining there a good bit of time, but afterwards as well, a common query addressed to me, rather wonderingly, was: "And what made you choose Austria-Hungary as your objective?" And it always proved rather

4 AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: POLYGLOT EMPIRE

difficult to furnish a satisfactory explanation; to plead an excuse, so to speak.

Again, just to illustrate the odd view taken of the business of life, I will cite this little instance, trifling in itself but highly characteristic. During a brief midsummer stay in the Tyrol, a year before the war, I was housed at an inn in the Zillertal. Mine host wore a grey beard about a foot long. He was well-to-do, almost wealthy, as things go there. His broad acres included a charming hillside whence a lovely view reminded one in its filmy outline of a bridal veil; with knolls densely wooded and crystal brooks babbling in the silence. All it would have required to make this charming spot fit for great pilgrimage during the warm season was a hotel, verandas, a kitchen adequate to feed the multitude not too scantily, with prices yielding a fair profit. In chatting with this nice old boniface of mine I ventured to suggest something like this to him. He smiled, rather scornfully. "Yes," he then remarked, dreamily, "I've had plenty of offers—from exploitation companies, from summer guests of mine, from capitalists abroad. What is the use? I am quite content here. So is my family. It would only mean a lot of worry. It would mean that we should no longer be our own masters; that all these strangers (*Fremden*) would turn us out of house and home. And what for? I've got money enough, more than I need. No, no. To take in a few guests during July and August, that is well. They tell us what's going on in the world. But that is enough. That does not mean that we have to slave for other people, for people who don't care a rap for me or mine."

And I found that the views of this old man were shared by most of those in the romantic Alpine lands of Austria with whom I came in contact. The villagers were averse