

**FRANCIS JOSEPH I. HIS
LIFE AND TIMES; AN
ESSAY IN POLITICS**

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Francis Joseph I. His life and times; an essay in politics by R. P. Mahaffy

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"History does not teach principles, but prudence."—BURKE.

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HIS LIFE AND TIMES

AN ESSAY IN POLITICS

BY

R. P. MAHAFFY

(WITH AN APPENDIX ON RECENT EVENTS)



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PREFACE

THE following pages contain an attempt to summarise the events of the life of the oldest, and in one sense, the most important of European sovereigns, and to pronounce a fair judgment as to the part which he has played in the history of his country. The brevity of this book shows at once that a great deal has been left out; and it contains little that is not familiar to those who have followed the story of Austria-Hungary in the last fifty years. I intended to publish it on or about December 2, 1908, when the Emperor-King should have been sixty years on the throne; and I hoped that the occurrence of that anniversary would have given it a chance of being read. Since the book was written, events have occurred in Europe which have directed English attention in an unusual degree to Austria-Hungary. These events have not made it

necessary to alter or omit anything ; indeed they are to a great extent explained by the facts in this book and by the view which is presented of the life and work of the Emperor-King. In order to bring it up to date, an appendix on recent events has been written. This addition was, however, not composed in the leisure of the Long Vacation as was the case with the others, and may show signs of hasty preparation. Yet I hope it will serve to correct the false impressions which are abroad in this country as to the Emperor-King's recent action.

My first acquaintance with Austria-Hungary was made in 1889, when I had just left school ; but in 1894 I went to Hungary on a commission for a friend, the late Mr. J. G. V. Porter of Belleisle, in the County Fermanagh, who desired to have a report on the Hungarian Constitution. I was at Budapest in the summer of 1894, when the Civil Marriage crisis was at its height, and met there many of the leading men in Hungary, from whom I learnt what it would be hard to learn from books. In 1896 I again visited Austria-Hungary as the correspondent of a London

newspaper. In both years I had occasion to travel about the country, and saw a good deal of it. The friendships then made have been interrupted in some cases by death. Those which have been preserved have enabled me to hear frequently from a country which, for politicians, is the most interesting in Europe.

It is difficult to write a book which necessarily deals with many matters of controversy without taking a side. The view presented in the following pages is on the whole favourable to the Magyars and their claims, in the past, if not in the present. I have no doubt that the view held by the Hungarians, for which they fought nobly in 1849, and which received a striking vindication in 1867, was the right one; but I am aware that some people think otherwise, and regret that the Compromise of 1867 was ever concluded. In modern times the Hungarians have advanced claims which cannot be fully satisfied without grave danger to the military strength of the monarchy. Moreover, they are constantly charged with needless persistence in the use of their language in Hungary. Critics ask why they could not have been content to keep the German

language which they had in 1867, and which is one of the great languages of the world. I do not think that it was possible for the Hungarian leaders of 1867 to say, "Now that the oppression for which German stood is gone, we will keep German and not revive Magyar." Such a course would in theory have been the best ; but in such matters the best course is often impracticable. On the other hand, I think that the Hungarian leaders of to-day ought not to persist in a policy which must lead to the division and weakness in the army of the monarchy ; and I do not believe that, in the future, their fellow-countrymen would think worse of them if they abstained from the full prosecution of their claims. I do not give this opinion without some diffidence, for I know it is contrary to the view held by many prominent men in Hungary. But they must remember that compromise has been of good service to them in the past. If their predecessors had held out for the maximum of concession, Hungary would not now be what she is.

I owe much more than formal thanks to Dr. Friedjung's admirable, if somewhat elaborate,