

**MEMOIRS OF BERTHA
VON SUTTNER**

VOLUME I

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PREFACE TO MY ENGLISH AND AMERICAN READERS

It is a great gratification to me that the story of my life—which I cannot suppose to be of general interest except in so far as it is linked with the story of a world-wide movement—is now put before the great community of the English-speaking nations; for it is in these very nations that the origin of that movement is to be sought, and by them its final victory is being most efficiently hastened. I have been brought to a clear recognition of this fact especially by the days I have spent in the United States and in England in recent years. There I perceived with astonishment and admiration how in these two countries (especially in America) the peace problem, still largely antagonized or ignored on the continent of Europe, has not only met with widespread comprehension but also received already a positive and practical working out. Little of this is told in the present book; yet in it I have set down the fact that the reading of English scholars and thinkers (Herbert Spencer, Henry Thomas Buckle, etc.) was what opened my mind to take in the peace cause, and furthermore that a tract of the London Peace Association presided over by Hodgson Pratt, accidentally coming to my knowledge, gave the initial occasion for all that I have endeavored to do as a helper in the peace movement.

In the year 1904 I came to America on the occasion of the Boston Congress. Of the sublime impressions that I there received I give a brief and fragmentary account in the supplementary chapter

appended to this edition. In the year 1907 I attended the Interparliamentary Conference in London, and there had opportunity to hear Campbell-Bannerman speak; his proposals for the limitation of armaments, and for a League of Peace among states, bore renewed witness to the pacifist disposition of British statesmen. A year later, while the Peace Congress was being held in London, it was my privilege to meet the King and Queen of England; and in words that I heard from the mouth of Edward VII, and in those which he caused to be written to me by his private secretary, Lord Knollys, I have confirmation of the fact that the name by which he has passed into history, Edward the Peacemaker, is in full measure his due.

At the last moment, just as I am writing these lines, the question of the peace of the world has led to the taking of remarkable steps in America. The most prominent men in the Union—Taft, Roosevelt, Elihu Root, Knox, etc.—are coming forward with positive proposals for the organization of the world, and the House of Representatives has accepted a most significant law. Of this one of the greatest American workers for peace writes me as follows in a letter dated from Skibo Castle, June 30, 1910:

... The greatest news received lately is the passing of a bill by the House and Senate of the United States, establishing a commission to take measures to bring about a League of Peace among nations. Mr. Roosevelt is to be chairman. This means business. America is now in earnest. We hope she will no longer be dragd into enormous armaments. The good work goes bravely on.

Always yours

Andrew Carnegie

Yes, indeed: our brothers of the English-speaking race—especially those in the young New World—“mean business” when they

undertake anything. And their enterprises are not (as an old prejudice assumes) limited to the commercial and financial domain, but embrace the region of the highest human thought, and rest upon the deepest ethical foundations.

BERTHA v. SUTTNER

VIENNA, 1910

PART ONE
1843–1861

I CHILDHOOD

**My certificate of baptism · The revolution of 1848 · Landgrave
Fürstenberg · The Feather Ball · Castle Matzen**

What gives me some justification for publishing my experiences is the fact that I have met many interesting and distinguished contemporaries, and that my participation in a movement which has gradually grown to be of historic consequence has given me many glimpses into the political affairs of our time; and that hence, all in all, I have something to say that is really worth publishing.

Of course, if I meant to tell only of this period of my life, I should have to confine myself to the history of the past fifteen or twenty years, and wholly forego conjuring up pictures from my youth; and I should have to deny myself the writing down of those personal recollections which my whole changeful life has stamped upon my memory. But I will not deny myself this. Now that I have been induced by the above-mentioned reason to write my memoirs, it shall be a genuine record of a life. Once again shall the stages of the long journey come in due order before my inward eye, and from them what seems to me suitable for reproduction shall be photographed on these pages.

So, without further exordium, let us begin:

The beginning of all human life is birth. Where and when and in what environment I came into the world is most authentically

shown by my certificate of baptism. Here is the copy of that document:

CERTIFICATE OF BAPTISM

ad W.E. 200

From the Register of Births and Baptisms of the Parish of St. Maria-Schnee, Lib. XIII, pg. 176, it is hereby officially certified that in the year one thousand eight hundred and forty-three (1843) on the ninth day of June was born in S.C. 697/2, and on the twentieth day of the same month was baptized in accordance with the use of the Catholic Christian Church by the then parish priest, the Reverend Father Thomas Bazán,

Bertha Sophia Felicita Countess Kinsky of Chinic and Tettau, legitimate (posthumous) daughter of the Right Honorable Franz Joseph Count Kinsky of Chinic and Tettau, retired Royal and Imperial Lieutenant Field-Marshal and Actual Chamberlain, born in Vienna—a legitimate son of his Excellency the Right Honorable Ferdinand Count Kinsky of Chinic and Tettau, Royal and Imperial Chamberlain and Grand Steward and seigneur of the domain of Chlumec, by his wife the Honorable Lady Christine, born Princess Liechtenstein—and his wife, the Honorable Lady Sophia Wilhelmine Countess Kinsky of Chinic and Tettau, born Von Körner, born in Prague (a legitimate daughter of the Honorable Herr Joseph von Körner, Captain of Cavalry in the Royal and Imperial Army, by his wife Frau Anna, born Hahn).

The sponsors at the christening were Barbara Kraticek, lady's maid, and the Honorable Herr Arthur Count Kinsky of Chinic and Tettau. Midwife Frau Sabina Jerábek of S.C. 124.

Hereto witness the hand of the undersigned, and the parish seal.

Prague, Parish of St. Maria-Schnee, November 27, 1866

Dr. (illegible)

Minister at St. Maria-Schnee

At this christening service—though I vowed and abjured so many things in it—I was not present. For I do not understand by the word

“I” the living corporeal form in which it is contained, but that self-consciousness which is absent both in infancy and also at frequent intervals throughout life: in sleep, in fainting, in narcotic stupefaction, under the influence of drugs, and in a great many moments when one merely breathes and does not think, look, hear; when one merely continues his existence vegetatively until the I resumes its functions.

Prague, then, was the city where they set up my cradle, over which, as over all cradles, so much was unprophesied. But my mother, who at my birth was already a widow, soon moved to Brünn, and what I remember of childhood is events that took place in the Moravian capital.

There I see myself standing by the window—five years old—and looking down into the “great square,” where a noisy throng is in wild commotion. A new word strikes upon my ear,—Revolution. Every one is looking out; every one is repeating the new word and is greatly excited. What my sensations were I no longer remember, but at any rate I too was excited, else the picture and the word would not have impressed themselves on my mind. But there is no more to it. The picture does not arouse any comprehension; the word has no meaning. Thus appears my first experience of a historical event.

But my memory reaches farther back, and shows me a scene which I was concerned in at the age of three, and which stirred me far more powerfully than the political overturnings of the year 1848.

I am about three years old. It is a beautiful afternoon, and my mother and my guardian are planning to take me with them to a picnic in the Schreibwald. The Schreibwald, a favorite place for

excursions from Brünn, shines among my memories of childhood as the sum of all natural beauty, festive joy, woodland shade, mountain-climbing, social meals,—in a word, as the acme of that combination of delights known as a picnic. At that date, on the memorable afternoon, all these experiences were doubtless not yet part of my consciousness; perhaps it was the very first time I was to be taken to the Schreibwald; but to me the name was forever afterwards associated with the following event.

They dressed me in a white cashmere frock trimmed with narrow red braid. A superb thing—décolleté; I can still see before me the pattern of the braiding, I could draw it on paper. How the onlookers would marvel when they espied that! I felt myself beautiful in it, positively beautiful. And then my guardian, looking out of the window (I can see him too in his general's uniform), remarked that it was clouding up, it would probably rain. There followed a short session of the cabinet,—the general, my mother, and the chambermaid Babette,—and the decision was announced: the beautiful new frock might suffer harm.

“Put an old frock on the countess,” was my mother's command. But the countess declared most positively that she protested against it. I am in the new frock: *j'y suis, j'y reste*; with this plagiarism thirty years in advance of its original she made known her inflexible will. Perhaps, as a matter of fact, not so much with words as with shrieks and stamping of feet.

But consequently the next picture in this indelible picture gallery shows me the brilliantly clad, beautiful, and energetic creature laid on a large table, her face against the table-top, her red-embroidered frock lifted by the obliging hand of the tall army man who stood by;

and from the maternal hand, slap, slap, the first whipping, with its burden of despair and dishonor, came down on the object.

Yes, despair: that there could be such great woe in the world, and the world not go to pieces under it, was most likely incomprehensible to me. At last the wild sobbing subsided; I was stood in a corner and had to beg for pardon—the victim of such grievous outrage, beg for pardon into the bargain! But I did; unhappy I was, deeply unhappy, but subdued. To-day I do not know why this occurrence made such a deep impression on my soul; was it injured vanity on account of the ravishing frock, or injured honor on account of the disciplinary procedure? Probably both.

Still another picture is fixed in my memory. Oh, I must have been a very vain and pleasure-loving little ninny! My mother comes into the nursery; she is wearing a beautiful gown, such as I have never yet seen on her, and jewelry on her bare neck: mamma is going to the ball, and they explain to me that this is a festivity where all are dressed so beautifully as that and dance in rooms that are all lighted up. I want to be taken with her, to go to the ball too. “Yes, my little roly-poly is going to the ball too.” (I scream with delight.) “To the Feather Ball she is going.” With that the beautiful mamma kisses me and goes. “So,” says Babette, “now we will get ready for the Feather Ball.” And she begins to undress me, which I permit in joyful anticipation. But when, instead of being dressed in my best, I am put to bed and learn that this is the Feather Ball, I break out in wild sobbing, deceived, trifled with, humiliated.

I must delay a moment over the portrait of my guardian. It cast a friendly radiance over all my childhood and early youth. Friedrich, Landgrave of Fürstenberg, had been the comrade and friend of my

deceased father, and he faithfully fulfilled till his death the duties which he had undertaken as guardian and protector and watchful friend to the fatherless child. I simply worshiped him; I regarded him as a being of a higher race, to whom I owed and gladly rendered unconditional obedience, honor, and love. He was an elderly gentleman, past fifty, when I came into the world; and, such being the way of children in judging age, he seemed to me ever so old, but ever so dear. So smiling, so jolly, so lordly, so indescribably kind. That confectionery that he used to bring with him! those rich Christmas presents that he gave me! that care for my education, my health, my future!

Lordly—he was a lord in fact. A member of the proudest Austrian nobility, Master of the Ordnance, ultimately captain of the *Arrièregarde*, one of the highest positions at the court. He was never absent at any of the great court functions, and brought me such lovely bonbons from every imperial dinner. His lofty station inspired me with pride rather than awe. For me he was “Fritzerl,” to whom I said *du*; on whose knee I used to climb, as long as I was little, and pull his mustache.

He died unmarried. His life was so methodically ordered, it ran its course so free from cares and passions, between service and sociality, that the wish to change it never arose in him. In Vienna he occupied handsome bachelor quarters in the Inner City; in Moravia he had a domain where he often spent a few weeks of the summer to see what his factors were doing; but he preferred, instead of living in his own lonely castle, to spend the summer months as a guest at the homes of his old mother and his various sisters. He never took journeys. At the Austrian boundary monuments the world came to an end for him. Devotion, both churchly and military, had an essential place, I will not say

among the virtues of his character, but among the virtues of his station in life. He was never absent at any Sunday mass, any feast of the church, or any parade. He had an enthusiasm for Field Marshal Radetzky, whom he had known well personally. The glory of the Austrian army was in his eyes one of the most admirable constituents of the universe. Society (by this name he distinguished the circle in which he was born and in which he moved) was to him the only class of human beings whose lives and fates interested him; and he always attended all the great functions given at the houses of the Schwarzenbergs, the Pallavicinis, etc. In the Adelskasino he had his regular rubbers of whist with sundry friends of his own rank. He was fond of card-playing in general—not gambling games, for he was in the highest degree steady, but innocent games such as piquet, ombre, tarteln. This last he used to play with my mother at his twice-a-week morning visit to our house, and I was allowed to sit by to mark the points of the game with my little pencil. The various marriages in society interested him greatly; he had a troop of nephews and nieces who made more or less successful matches. He himself, though the male line was to become extinct with him, did not think of marrying. The reason was that he cherished an affection for a lady who, while she was the widow of an aristocrat, was not by birth capable of being presented at court, so a marriage with her appeared to be simply out of the question. He would not cause such a vexation to his family—and at bottom it would have been a vexation to him too; for everything that was out of the rut, outside of tradition, outside of “correctness,” went against his grain.

This figure stands before my memory as a type of the old-fashioned Austrian: a type of which there are doubtless some specimens still, but which, as is the fate of all types, is dying out.

Our country is now made up of Slavs, Germans, Croats, Italians, (it would not do at all to say Magyars, they would grievously resent it,) and a few more nationalities, but the collective name “Austrian” cannot again become a proudly patriotic conception until—if ever—all the different races, with individual autonomy, form a federative state as do the Germans, French, and Italians in Switzerland. A friend of mine—a middle-class man, but one who is made very welcome at court—was lately telling me of an interview that he had with the Emperor not long ago. In the course of a political conversation the Emperor asked him to what party he belonged: “To the one which has only a single adherent, that is myself.” “And what party is that?” “The Austrian, your Majesty.” “Well, how about me? don’t you count me?” rejoined Franz Joseph, smiling.

—To come back to the past and my dear Fritzerl. It is a good thing that he did not live to see the events of 1866. The defeats in Bohemia, the severance of Venetia,—it would have cut him to the heart. And he would have found it simply incomprehensible, as it were a calamity violating all the laws of nature, and especially all divine ordinance. In that conception of the world which characterizes the type that I refer to, an essential point is the belief that Austria is the center of the world, and that any disaster which befalls it—especially any disaster in war—means an unnatural neglect of duty on the part of Providence. Unless such defeats be meant as punishment, as merited chastisement for the spread of unbelief, the dissolution of morals,^u the dissemination of revolutionary ideas. Then, surely, there is no help but by introducing strict discipline, reorganizing the army vigorously; then perhaps the Creator can be reconciled and the history of the

world corrected by future reconquests. Fritzerl was spared these pains and these reflections.

If I said just now that there were still living some specimens of that type, I was probably mistaken. It is simply impossible that to-day the world is still mirrored in any head as it was mirrored in the heads of those who were born within the eighteenth century, who lived during the first introduction of the railway, who held the first photograph in their hands, who saw with some repugnance the displacement of oil lamps by petroleum. Essential to that old Austrian type (and it is the same with the old English and other old national types) is a certain limitation of experience and knowledge which to-day can no longer exist even in the most conservative circles.

That types alter from generation to generation, that outlooks, views, feelings change, is a fact of which one can best judge by one's self when one looks back into the past. For every man, though in most cases he hugs the delusion of being a uniform continuous ego with definite qualities of character, is himself a chain of the most diverse types. Every new experience—leaving quite out of account the bodily changes of blooming and fading, of health and disease—modifies the mental essence. How much one sees, whether with the bodily eye as a landscape or with the mental as an outlook on the world, is not a matter of stronger or weaker eyesight, but peculiarly a matter of horizon.

If I look back into my childhood and youth, I do not see myself as the same person, as having altered, but see standing side by side the most diverse girl forms, each with a different horizon of ideas and filled with different hopes, interests, and sensations. And if I set beside them the forms from my maturer womanhood, or my

present age, what have I (beyond the mere recollection, as faint as the recollection of pictures long since seen, or books long since read) in common with those phantoms, or they with me? Dissolving mists, flying shadows, a passing breath, is what life is.

My first love was no meaner a person than Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria. To be sure I had never seen him,—only his picture,—but I idolized him ardently. That he would marry me did not seem to me at all beyond the bounds of possibility; on the contrary, fate owed me something of the sort. Of course I should have to wait five or six years yet, for I recognized that a ten-year-old child could not be made empress. I should have to have bloomed out into a maiden of fifteen or sixteen, the most beautiful maiden in the land; the young sovereign would sometime espy me, enter into a conversation with me, be ravished with my qualities of mind, and immediately lay his august person at my feet. That was the time when I was convinced that the world had a fairy-tale fortune ready for me. I exerted myself sincerely to deserve it and to be ready to show brilliantly, when it came, that I had found my right place; learning, learning, practicing, practicing, amazing myself with my progress and knowledge. I was a real infant prodigy—in my own eyes. It is true that I spoke French and English well (from my earliest childhood I had had French and English *bonnes*), I played the piano remarkably well, I had read an enormous deal: the Abbé Fleury's *Histoire de France*, *Le Siège de la Rochelle*; Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas* and *Marie Tudor*; half of Schiller, Fladung's *Physics*; "Jane Eyre," "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"—those were the books (not children's books, it will be seen) in which I reveled at that age. Besides, I loved to dip into the cyclopedia and pluck blossoms of all branches of knowledge. From love of learning? I will not assert it; I think those lovely blossoms

seemed to me desirable only to make a wreath of for my adornment.

As an evil chance would have it, so soon as the year 1854—consequently I was only eleven years old—Emperor Franz Joseph espied his cousin Elisabeth, engaged in conversation with her, and laid his august person at *her* feet. I was not exactly unhappy (there are plenty more fairy princes), but thenceforth I took a lively interest in Elisabeth of Bavaria, sought for portraits of her, thought she bore some resemblance to me, and imitated her way of doing her hair. You see, my actual vehement passion for my young liege had died out some time since. *Chiodo caccia chiodo*; the Italians use this proverb to illustrate the fact that one love expels another.

On my eleventh birthday I had been taken to the theater for the first time. “The White Lady”^[2] was given. Ah, but that George Brown! (“What joy to be a soldier!”) Yes, that is the comeliest profession—next to that of opera tenor. For anything more captivating than that singer,—I still remember his very name, Theodor Formes, so the impression must have been deep,—anything more chivalrous I had never dreamed of. The prince destined for me must look like that. He would not even have to be a prince; only, if possible, in case he was not a tenor,—I would not have given Herr Formes the mitten,—at any rate a soldier. In telling this I see that I was a silly girl, to be sure, but not a genuine child. That is probably due to my not having had any playmate of my own age, but living only in the world of books, whose heroes were themselves not children but grown people, whose fortunes turned mostly upon love and marriage.

The most important thing in the universe, anyhow, was my little person. The course of the world was only the machinery whose

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