



THE HOUSE OF ROTHSCHILD IN FRANCE.

ONLY a few royal dynasties in the world have such an interesting history as that upon which the Rothschilds can look back. It begins in the picturesque and populous ghetto of Frankfort on the Maine, where old Anselm Mayer dwelt in the house with the red shield over the doorway. Here he lived with his wife, Guta Schnapper, and with his ten children. In his shop every imaginable thing was bought and sold, every possible object was stored up—old iron and more valuable metals, old clothes and old pictures. With a hawker's box upon his back, old Anselm trudged through the whole of Frankfort, as well as through the nearer and further neighborhood, buying and selling everywhere. As his five sons grew bigger, they also took up the house-to-house traffic.

But in this manner the profits obtained were paltry. Anselm Mayer felt himself called to greater things, and the opportunity was favorable to him. The story—as also the financial history—is a strange network of chances, of which one fits closely into the other. Elector William the Ninth of Hesse filled his coffers by the simple means of selling his subjects to foreign countries. England bought them gladly, and Mayer took over the part of broker in this, for the Elector, not exactly glorious business. He charged himself with the equipment of the soldiers, and despatched cargo after cargo of this human merchandise to the English ports, also conducting for the Landgrave of Hesse the financial operations arising out of the trade. Such was the beginning, if not strictly creditable, which led to later fortune.

Then came the disturbances of the Napoleonic wars. The riches of the house of Hesse-Cassel were entrusted to the care of Anselm with a view to their greatest possible augmentation. Anselm operated not too badly, and became banker to the "Holy Alliance." The funds for the wars which raged through Europe took their way through the old, unsightly house in the Frankfort ghetto. The old clothes vanished from the shop windows, the house with the red shield became

the money-market of the world, and the old man, behind whom formerly the street-dogs barked as he crept with his hawker's trash through the town, could take pride in the fact that he supported kings and countries in their financial difficulties. Yet riches and power altered him not; modestly he went through the streets of Frankfort, usually with a blue handkerchief wrapped round his neck and armed with a big umbrella, just as he had done in his hardest times.

When Anselm died, he bequeathed to each of his five sons the government of one of the greatest European states—in respect of finance. In the same way as Charlemagne divided amongst his sons the great States that he had conquered, and as Napoleon apportioned kingdoms to his brothers, so the quondam hawker from the Judengasse divided up amongst his sons the influence that he had conquered for himself through all the world. The eldest son chose Germany, Solomon decided for Austria, Nathan for England, Karl turned towards Italy, whilst Jacob took over for his share the ever-restless France.

More than 90 years ago, the last-named came, with a trifle over £40,000, to Paris, and his commencement was far from easy. His connections with the German and English governments were too well known, so that Napoleon caused him to be secretly watched by the police. The fall of Napoleon brought to all of the sons of the little, quiet man of Frankfort, great luck. Through the influence of Count Metternich, they were all created barons of the Austrian Empire. Jacob became Baron James de Rothschild. When he died, in the year 1868, his second son, Mayer Anselm, James de Rothschild, stepped into his place, dying only a few months ago, and confirming the old rule that the Rothschilds are a long-lived race. Many a Parisian will long remember the little, old man walking along the Boulevard Haussman to his bank building in the Rue Lafitte, his countenance bronzed and full of wrinkles, his

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heard shaven off the chin in the well-known Austrian fashion.

And well did this man know how to multiply the £40,000 which his father had brought with him to France! The wealth of the French house of Rothschild amounts to-day to ten milliards—four hundred million pounds sterling. What that sum means you may estimate when you reflect that the entire national wealth of France is reckoned at 200 milliards, so that Rothschild holds in his own hands one-twentieth part of the whole. Every year one-twentieth of the earnings of trade and industry flow into his pockets. To him belong the best mines of France; the public credits, the Bank of France itself, are controlled by the house of Rothschild, as are also the railways and the public waterways. Next to the Municipality, the Rothschilds are the greatest land and house owners in Paris; upon the Champs Elysées, the Bois de Boulogne, the Parc Monceau, and around the Gare du Nord, whole streets belong to the Rothschilds; their chateaux are scattered throughout the provinces.

And to these enormous riches, the fortune brought by Jacob, £40,000, has grown in less than 90 years!

It piled up insensationally, and without attracting notice from those who were unconnected with it. There it stands, great and indestructible, the twentieth part of the entire property of a rich nation in the possession of one family. And when we reflect that there are in the world five such huge Rothschild fortunes, well may our imagination of what great fortunes are, that seemed to us so simple, stand dumbfounded. An indestructible fortune—for even the destruction of France itself could not annihilate it. Each separate Rothschild may spend a part of the sums over which he is master, but no man can imagine to himself that he can scatter all, for in the end streams of it must unavoidably flow back to the source.

Baron Edouard, who has not long been chief of the house in France, is the first of the family there who was born a French citizen. His agile form does not show great physical strength; and, like all the Rothschilds, he has reddish hair. He occupies himself completely with his business, and has no time frequently to leave Paris. He has inherited in full degree the financial ability of his house, and not far from him dwells the most original of his race, Baron Leo Lambert de Rothschild, in Brussels. The latter is an odd, little, bearded man, and whoever sees him in his hunting costume on horseback might well laugh at his appearance; but wealth brings its possessors honor and distinction, and Baron Lambert is master of hundreds of millions.

The dynasty of the Rothschilds in France is not particularly numerous; it embraces, in all, about 20 persons. Since old Baron Alphonse was placed at rest in his marble mausoleum there remain only two sons of the first Baron, Edmond and Gustave. Gustave, the younger of the two, is over 75 years of age. His connections belong rather to foreign countries than to France. He occupies the post in Paris of Consul-General for Austria. His family lost confidence in his business ability after a loss he made, of no less than 23,000,000 dollars, in speculations some years ago in American railway securities. Since then they have excluded him from business on the Bourse,

and his hobbies are his conservatories and his horses. His town-palace is in the Rue Marsigny; his country seat is Chateau Laversine, near Craill. Old Baron Edmond is also enormously rich; a great part of his property is invested in the bank in the Rue Lafitte—that financial conservatory. He is the possessor of several magnificent palaces, his Parisian house being in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. To the same generation belongs the old Baroness Solomon—her house is in the Avenue Friedland, and there, where once stood the house of Balzac, stand now her stables.

The most important of that generation was, undeniably, Baron Alphonse. To him was Fortune favorable in all his undertakings. Whoever wishes to write his biography must write therewith, *volens volens*, a history of France since 1867, for he could always influence the policy of France according to his wishes. He took particular pride in the success which attended his efforts to conquer for his family the position and distinction which were his due.

About two years ago, he bore to the grave his nephew, one Baron Arthur von Rothschild, a weakling, who was said to have ended his life by suicide—but still a baron—for old Alphonse had more than once declared that all Rothschilds were born barons. Therefore, his funeral was to serve this purpose—to display to all the world the power and the glory of the house of Rothschild. So in the main thoroughfares through which the procession went the whole traffic was blocked for hours. For hours together the heart of Paris ceased to beat, and business stood still. For hours the endless train moved through the streets whilst the Parisians admired the pomp and splendor unfolded before them. Such were the obsequies of a Baron Rothschild in Paris, although the same Paris had coldly looked on while the beloved poet, Victor Hugo, had gone his road to his last resting-place upon a pauper waggon. Beneath it all was no empty ostentation of the Rothschilds; it was a strategic move at chess in the struggle for social pre-eminence.

One day I wandered in the direction of the Rothschild chateau on the Marne. The passengers fled to right and left, the vehicles stopped at the side—Baroness Alphonse drove at full gallop from her chateau to the railway station Lagny-Thorigny, whirling up white clouds of dust. The castle lies a few miles away from the station, and the whole of the land between belongs to the Rothschilds. And I came to the castle. The first Baron James had caused the architect, Paxton, to be brought from England, 13 years after the battle of Waterloo, and by him it was built in the style of the seats of the great English nobles. The interior of the house is interesting. Everywhere are marble statues from the historic chateaux of the old kings of France; the piano of the unhappy Marie Antoinette stands beside a mirror of the Pompadour. The salon is furnished in the most artistic style of the French masters of the eighteenth century. In the library the connoisseur finds the rarest and costliest books; the salon of tapestries is decorated with Watteaus in colossal gobelins. The vestibule is historical. Here for two hours the unlucky Jules Favre waited upon the Iron Chancellor to sue for peace for his defeated fatherland, whilst Bismarck sat comfortably with Alphonse de Rothschild and

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smoked his cigars. Bismarck's bedroom adjoins the salon. The visitors' book is interesting, too. On a page of it one reads: "In memory of the delightful 16th December, 1862. Napoleon." Upon the other side one finds the inscription "Wilhelm, 21st September, 1870," and underneath the heavy handwriting of Bismarck. Now Ferrières mourns and is forsaken. The new ruler of the House of Rothschild finds no pleasure in country life; perhaps, indeed, his weakly constitution forbids it. He gets satisfaction in his regular activity in the bank in the Rue Lafitte, where his luck rests, so the seat of the family is almost exclusively Paris.

Baron Henry de Rothschild is a symbol of a younger generation. Robust in physique, wearing a full beard, he is a friend of sport. He has studied medicine, and is said to be a distinguished surgeon.

And what will the future bring to the dynasty of the red shield? Undoubtedly the fortune will further grow. "My father left me a milliard (£40,000,000)," said the old baron Alphonse a few days before his death, "and I leave to my son ten milliards (£400,000,000)." And this multiplication of the wealth was the fruit of a little over 60 years. Assuming a like growth in the future, one may arrive at the idea that the time may come when one family will have absorbed the entire possessions of the French nation. The national economists contemplate helplessly how the small fortunes are sucked up by the great ones, just as a magnet attracts iron that comes in its vicinity. The Rothschilds have with sagacious caution taken into account in their calculations the political and economical changes that might take place in France. It is worth mentioning

that the socialistic newspapers and magazines in France are almost, without exception, supported by the family and its undertakings. Better than any others in the world did the Rothschilds understand how to keep on a good footing with the proletariat. When the old Baron died, on the 26th May last, the whole of Paris talked next day of nothing else but the Rothschilds, and the worker in his blouse was not ashamed to say: "They are very, very rich; they have everything—but they are the friends of the people."

The benevolence of the Rothschilds, wisely organised, has captured the working classes. Every year the family gives for the Rothschild Hospital, which was founded by them, tens of thousands of pounds, according to the requirements of the institution, and every year £3000 for the poor of Paris. They do not try to relieve misery for the moment by giving small alms, but their aim is to help the necessitous to means of living. By their financial support thousands and thousands of Jews, who are refugees from Russia, have been enabled to begin profitable undertakings in France. In Paris alone are over 10,000 such persons who have to thank the Rothschilds for their existence, and who are, therefore, indissolubly attached and devoted to them. Shortly before his death the old Baron Alphonse formed the plan of erecting dwellings for the poorest classes, and the present Rothschild is carrying out the plan at a cost of £400,000. In all public subscriptions the name of Rothschild constantly occurs in the first row, and in this respect the old Baroness Alphonse has earned for herself the greatest popularity.

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(Translated for THE LONE HAND by Octavius C. Beale.)