

## THE FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE OF FERDINAND I

Volume 1: *Familienkorrespondenz bis 1526*. Edited by Wilhelm BAUER. Vienna: Holzhausen, 1912 (Volume 11 of the *Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs*), pp. VII – IX.

### FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR [WILHELM BAUER]<sup>1</sup>

The preliminary work for the publication of Ferdinand I's correspondences primarily consisted in the gathering of all pertinent letters and related additional material. However, it became clear after a year of research that adherence to the original plan would prove impossible. Even a cursory evaluation revealed an overflowing accumulation of materials which, through neither their content and worth, nor through their respective sources exhibited the required harmony to be unified as they were in a single volume. In many cases, it seemed, chance had dealt the cards. For certain time periods and personal relationships, the correspondences were found in fascicles, only for other weighty portions to be completely – or seemingly so – absent. Clarifications and supplemental material surely lay in some remote archive waiting to be found. The sites of these findings are not restricted to the public or private archives of Austria. Germany, Belgium, France and Spain also evidently hold considerable amounts of material, and even brief ventures into the Italian archives revealed a presence of Ferdinand I's correspondences.

Considering these circumstances, it would require different and more comprehensive resources to overcome these difficulties than those currently available to the commission. The commission was therefore faced with the choice of either compiling massive collections, which would have occupied the commission's activities for many years, without a single shred of the completed work being able to see the light of day for considerable time, or discarding part of the project.

Out of these options that came into consideration there arose the possibility of a publication of the family correspondence. As to their nature and their sources, compare my remarks in the introduction. However, it should also be stated here that they form a coherent, internally uniform substance. Similarly, it should not be denied that this choice comes with its own disadvantages. The family correspondences reach into the core of Habsburg politics and touch upon the most important questions. It is however exactly for this reason that they represent the greatest shortcoming for the publishers: of all the collections of correspondences, these were the most often consulted. Their relative accessibility raised the interest in publishing larger series or single pieces either in their entirety or in excerpts. This pertains especially to the letters contained in the present volume. Historical events such as the Battle of Pavia, the Diet of Speyer (1526) and Austria's acquisition of Hungary and Bohemia have understandably captured the attention of researchers.

Those who value editions based on the amount of previously unpublished content contained therein will perhaps be disappointed by the inclusion of already published material. Nevertheless, after careful consideration, the inclusion of letters already published in modern editions could not be avoided. This decision has been taken due to the necessity of maintaining a consistent approach in future volumes, which will move more into uncharted archival territory as the one presented here. The introduction has purposely been restricted to the general characterization of and an orientation to the material. For an annotated explanation of each individual letter, much more archival resources could have been utilized. This however belonged for the most part to the portions of Ferdinand I's correspondences scheduled to be published at a later date, and therefore shall not be preemptively included here.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Tanner Kauffman Gore, Christopher F. Laferl, and Michael Doyle Ryan.

The finalization of this volume was delayed by various unfavorable circumstances, the worst of which being a lengthy period of illness that debilitated me from all academic efforts for more than a year and a half. The work would have become even more backlogged had it not been for Dr. Karl Groll, who dedicated himself with understanding and devotion to the not always simple task of preparing transcripts. He helped me with the deciphering of the difficult texts from Brussels and supported me in both printing and proofreading. He also prepared the index. It is with a spirited gratitude that I remember all the good will and responsiveness that has met my research everywhere.

Thus, I am grateful for the benevolent interest shown by His Highness Prince Franz of Liechtenstein in the progress made by the commission, offering diplomatic intervention for the purpose of quickly transmitting certain codices from Brussels to Vienna.

To list all those to whom I feel a sense of obligation in thanking would be impossible. Be that as it may, I feel I must take a moment to express gratitude to all the members of the Imperial and Royal *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, the Imperial and Royal *Reichsfinanzarchiv* in Vienna, the administration at the *Archives Générales du Royaume* in Brussels and the *Archives Départementales* in Lille. In Brussels it was Édouard Laloire who accompanied my work with a tireless and amiable interest.

Dr. Wilhelm Meyer-Lübke helped me in both word and deed with the editing of the French texts. He even took it upon himself to read the first half of the proofs and offered his invaluable advice in the question of accentuation and punctuation. Here I wish to offer him my sincerest thanks.