

## CHAPTER II

### Too Soon

I

1887-1888

**S**UDDENLY a prodigious hope dawned for the Prince.

When in the March of 1887 all Germany was flocking round the old Emperor, now concluding the fabulous ninth decade and approaching centenarianism, the Crown Prince, in the delivery of his speech, showed signs of hoarseness. A week later the courtiers were whispering the word of terror in the ante-rooms. By May the trouble in the throat had gone so far that six German physicians met in consultation, each a renowned specialist, among them Virchow and Bergmann, already, as Liberals, familiar figures in the sick man's household. Though Virchow's opinion was undecided, they resolved to try laryngotomy: that is to say, the external operation on the throat, attended with no risk either to life or articulation, which at the worst may render the voice rough and husky. The operation was to take place on the twenty-first of May, the patient and his consort fully acquiescing. Bergmann in particular, who was to operate, hoped much from Frederick William's constitution; moreover, statistics showed seventy per cent. in favour of success.

On the evening of the twentieth there arrived at the Palace of Potsdam Sir Morell Mackenzie, a prominent English specialist not very highly esteemed by the majority of his colleagues but whose work was not unknown to Germans. With him stepped Fate into the House of Hohenzollern.

Ever since William's unhappy birth, Victoria had stubbornly clung to the nonsensical idea that the German physicians were to blame for her son's disability. This *idée fixe* induced her—so all her surviving friends agree—

to underline her distrust of German therapeutics by calling in an Englishman for her husband. And since it was owing solely to his erroneous treatment of the patient that premature death ensued and that Prince William's accession was thus brought about, with that misfortune of that one paralysed arm are indirectly but indissolubly connected the most grievous political consequences. So, as in a classical tragedy, we watch this doomed dynasty, and with it the German people, move under the terrible hand of Necessity from one snare of the Olympian powers to the next; and with passionless logic there follows upon an apparently trivial oversight at the birth of a Prince the darkening of his counsels, the premature death of his father, his too-early accession, and everything which, resulting therefrom, destroyed the security of millions of men.

Mackenzie, after his first brief investigation, pronounced that the trouble was not malignant, that the operation would be dangerous and superfluous, and maintained to Victoria and the German physicians—and a few days afterwards to other persons (L. 390)—that he could “definitely cure the Crown Prince in six or eight weeks, if he will come with me to my clinic in England like an ordinary mortal.” Upon this, the patient withdrew his consent to the operation. The removal of a single specimen of tissue by the Englishman caused injuries to the larynx, which the German doctors attributed to *mal-droit* handling.

The abandonment of the operation undoubtedly resulted in aggravation of the cancer, and death in the course of a year. The result of a timely operation would in all probability have been survival for years, possibly for decades—thus setting another man on the throne of Prussia, and with him another course of policy. In their official statements to the nation, after the death of the sufferer, two physicians wrote:

Professor Gerhardt: “No statistics are adequate to measure the probability, in this individual case, of a

permanently favourable issue. For in no other was the disease so early perceived—I might go so far as to say, while actually in germ. The physical condition of the illustrious patient was the best imaginable; every kind of prophylactic was present or procurable.”

Professor Bergmann: “The operation which we proposed was no more dangerous than that for inserting a tube, which in any event, if our diagnosis of cancer was correct, the Crown Prince would undoubtedly have had to undergo in course of time. Thus what we had proposed was nothing more than would sooner or later have become inevitable.”

At the same time Bismarck wrote in his unmistakable style an article in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, the purport of which was that Mackenzie now declared that he too had quite clearly recognized the disease from the first, but that the Crown Prince had confided to him that he did not wish to be pronounced incurable, but on high moral and practical grounds desired to reign for a short time. A perversion of the truth! There existed no constitutional law whereby incurable disease excluded the heir-apparent from the throne of Prussia. “On the other hand, he gave us clearly to understand that he would not assume the sceptre if it were established beyond question that he was incurably attacked by cancer; which was in accordance with his fine unselfish way of thinking. As this was known, those who (for motives over which we had no control) desired to bring the Emperor Frederick even though incapacitated for government, to the throne, made it their object to deceive the exalted patient as to his condition. It is now established beyond question that an unimportant English physician of Radical political opinions took upon himself to play the Privy Councillor, and interfere directly in the history of the German nation.”

By this semi-official declaration Bismarck, before all the world, displayed his old enemy Victoria as nothing less than the indirect cause of the premature death of her husband; he plainly hinted that she preferred to be the

## VICTORIA'S MORAL CONFLICT

widowed Empress rather than the wife of an abjuring Prince, the victim of cancer. Her character, and her behaviour during the illness, lend some colour to this view of her ill-considered proceedings. It is true, moreover, that external pressure was brought to bear on her; and Bismarck himself details the English influences, wholly beyond his control, which urged the necessity of keeping the Crown Prince available for the succession, because his anti-Russian views were of infinite value to England (L. 97). But we must do Victoria the justice to say that she was certainly no tigress, but much the reverse—an emotional affectionate woman; and therefore not to be blamed for hoping against hope that her husband's life might be saved.

She stands indicted, nevertheless, for serious indiscretion. She summoned from her native land an undistinguished physician, simply because she attributed a shortcoming of Nature to the physicians of the land she had adopted. Or did she wish, in love and sympathy, to conceal his doom from her husband? On this supposition she should have sought, before the German doctors gave their opinion, to forbid their utterance of the fatal word; even that attempt, though condemned to failure, would have saved her in the eyes of posterity. If the Englishman spoke the truth, the Crown Prince then, for the first time in his life, came to a decision alone and in secret, hiding from his consort that on which for thirty years their mutual hopes had centred. But since the doctor described himself as "the confidant of both Their Highnesses," how much more likely was he to be hers, who had caused her countryman to be instructed beforehand in London, who was the first to speak with him at Potsdam, giving her wishes to be known or at any rate perceived! And had she not really something to fear from her son, if he, whom for so long she had morally ill-treated, should come to power before she did?

The course of events, moreover, sustains Bismarck's indictment. Through all that year Victoria maintained-



the fiction that the Crown Prince was only slightly ailing, that he was better, that he would soon be well—not only by numerous despatches and protests to the public at large, whom on political grounds there was perhaps good reason to delude; but with her personal friends and with her children she acted this part for thirteen months, during which her husband was visibly failing at her side. Immediately after the fateful decision in June came her mother's Jubilee. Was she to be absent from that? And was her eldest son to bask in that reflected glory? No—and against the advice of her most trusted friends Victoria forced her suffering, already wellnigh voiceless husband to ride high upon his horse in the London procession, in the hope of silencing by that parade the whisperings of rumour.

During this English sojourn Mackenzie declined to permit a prolonged supervision of the patient by Professor Gerhardt, and concealed the growth of the tumour from sufferer and physicians alike. "Whoever brought about the absence of Gerhardt, is responsible for the fatal turn of events," says Bergmann (whose documents in Buchholtz's biography we here follow). Then the English party prevented the Crown Prince's return to Berlin, and they wandered, without German physicians, from one spa to another yet when one considers the unremitting care shown by Victoria during all this time, one is again persuaded that she really thought it impossible her husband could be suffering from cancer.

At the beginning of November, a sudden change for the worse. A sojourn at San Remo, decisive position taken up by the doctors, *communiqué* in the *Reichsanzeiger* that the heir to the throne was attacked by cancer; nevertheless an operation was not to take place, for the patient did not desire it, and moreover it was probably too late. "Prince William is entrusted with the Regency."

From this day forward the Prince's every nerve was strained. He was now in point of fact Crown Prince, and had only to await the speedy departure of a nonagenarian,

“ ENOUGH TO RAISE ONE’S HAIR ”

and a fatally stricken, forerunner. And now the hatred of the parents for their son reached a commensurable intensity. Thirty years of waiting—and then, Nothingness! And this crude boy was to step into the vainly longed-for sovereignty like an idle stroller—not one hour of patience or of struggle! Frederick’s Regent? Then already he was looked upon as dead? “ I am not yet an idiot, or incapable! ” exclaimed the sufferer, when he heard of his relegation.

But soon afterwards, relapsing to the acceptance of his doom, his musings were on death and God alone. The lifelong patience he had practised he resolved to keep unto the end; and when a few days after the tidings, his eldest son arrived at San Remo, and the mother, standing on the steps, attempted to dismiss him, he perceived his father smiling to him from the terrace (L. 402). Henceforward, in these his last moments, we shall see the Crown Prince’s former arrogance but rarely blaze forth.

Victoria, on the contrary, was no less overwrought than her son. “ The circumstances are enough to raise one’s hair, ” was the Prince’s account on his return; his mother was declaring the German doctors to be humbugs and trying to hunt them away; “ she treated me like a dog ” (W. 333). A high-placed officer, coming from San Remo, described her in Waldersee’s presence as “ nearly out of her mind. It is even thought that she is intriguing with Orleans against Berlin. ” But at Christmas she wrote home: “ We were very cheerful, and indeed we had no reason for depression, for your father is getting on well. The only sad thing is the great age of your grandparents ” (E. 155). How cold they are, these phrases! What must the youthful son, who indignantly showed them to his friend, have thought of woman’s capacity for feeling when he read such a letter from his mother’s hand?

The same tone in Berlin. While the people’s prayers were demanded for the heir-apparent’s recovery, Society was dancing every night. Eulenburg depicts the general consternation at the change for the worse as prodigious;

but "the Lucullus supper" at Borckhardt's, where the conversation turned exclusively on the sufferer and on Victoria's shortcomings, "lasted from seven o'clock till midnight." Even his daughter Victoria danced through half the night, and declared: "It's all fuss about Papa."

Only the old, old Emperor cannot sleep. He never speaks of his son, but he thinks of him, feels himself deprived of his natural prop, and as he is just expecting a visit from the Tsar, repeats over and over again to himself, in the night-watches, the things he is to say and wants to say to him. "A dream in which the Tsar, with no one to receive him, stood waiting in the railway station, distressed him so much that he frequently told us of it" (E. 146). Where is my son? the old man muses. Who will take my place? inquires his sense of duty, with its ninety years upon it. For he knows that the times are very dark, that war and peace are once more in the balance.

Towards Christmas Bismarck for the first time brings the Prince into the Council Chamber. In a circle round the ninety-year-old Emperor sit Moltke, eighty-seven; Bismarck, seventy-two; Albedyll, sixty-three; Waldersee, fifty-six; with them Prince William, slim and restless, a youth who to-morrow may be all-powerful. In the freshly critical situation the Emperor desires to hear his Councilors' opinion about the war on two fronts, begins to talk about old times, and how loth he would be to draw the sword against the Tsar. "I said to him, 'If you were to make war upon us in alliance with France, you would be the stronger and could annihilate us. But, believe me, Europe would not suffer it to happen.'"

With silent consternation the circle hears these dangerous veracities from its supreme war-lord, reckoning the effect of such words at the Russian Court, where it is said that Prussia is feared. "I felt an icy shiver down my back," writes Waldersee. For the rest, the old man declares that if it comes to the worst he intends to go to the Western front. The gentlemen under eighty think "What absurdity!" "Go to war with a nonagenarian

## BEAT OF DRUMS

Emperor, a dying Crown Prince, and a Field-Marshal of eighty-seven!" (W. 345)

The Emperor treats the Prince "like a child" (E. 155), and bids him not talk about the proceedings. What does the Prince learn from this conference?

### 2

When his father's disease declared itself, he began to brood feverishly: he seemed to hear the approach of distant beating drums, the drums of power. In those days he opened his heart to his friend, who was staying with him. After he had listened to "Phili's" ballads, he took him into his "delightful bedroom," as the effeminate Eulenburg calls it, declared that the German doctors' diagnosis was correct, and spoke "gravely, but without any warmth of feeling. His father has always been a stranger to him, his mother is the Englishwoman hostile to the Fatherland; and his inheritance from that mother—a strong, inflexible will—now turns, in his devoted love for that Fatherland, against her to whom he owes its strength. I said to the Prince that the thought appalled me, that I held it to be an infinitely difficult task for so young a man to succeed the great old Emperor. The Prince was silent. His position is unalterably this . . . that the reign of the Crown Prince, that is to say, the Crown Princess, would mean the ruin of Germany."

Then, on the November evening of his return from San Remo, he talked very excitedly to the same friend ~~about~~ the question of the Regency; and when his brother Henry, who was heart and soul of the mother's party, vehemently opposed him, Prince William cried: "In any case it is very questionable if a man who cannot speak has any right whatever to become King of Prussia!" (E. 147). To his friend he said confidentially: "I am ready at any moment, I have thought out everything that I mean to do; at the decisive moment there's no time for thinking, so everything must be ready beforehand!" And when Eulenburg showed him, in his old castle, a screen on which

“ THIS SHALL BE A BIG ONE! ”

the peoples were depicted as a mighty river flowing from antiquity to the Napoleonic era, William looked only at the little stream which represented Prussia, and said: “ This shall be a very big one some day! ” (E. 138). About the same time he said to Puttkammer when they were together at a shoot: “ When I come on, I’ll have no Jews in the Press ”; and when the Minister happened to allude to the industrial ordinances: “ Then we’ll get rid of the industrial ordinances! ” (L. 410).

How panting, burning, is the eager spirit! And how unbridled is the heartless impatience that anticipates the death of his two elders! Ignorant alike of the rights of subjects and of international affairs, yet firmly convinced of his vocation to be useful to his country—so much too early called to power, he is almost a pathetic figure as, in contemplation of world-history, his young eyes gaze on only Prussia: “ *This shall be a very big one some day!* ”

And already everyone he encountered began the work of destroying him. Secretly, writes Lucius, “ all observers constantly remark upon his immaturity, which at the age of twenty-nine is truly extraordinary. ” But to himself and his intimates, who might repeat it to him, everyone loudly extolled his “ firm character, and great promise for the future. . . . The very people who had been intriguing against the Prince now see that he will soon be Emperor, and are looking out for favours ” (W. 327). His military rank, moreover, was prematurely enhanced by the impending crisis. At Christmas-time the old monarch was still refusing to promote his grandson, but later he yielded and made him a General on his twenty-ninth birthday. The Prince did not see that the order was instinct with distrust—he saw only that he, so young, had got so far; and began to tell himself that the promotion naturally ensued from his own qualifications.

The friend of his heart did nothing to enlighten him, did everything to destroy him the sooner by his adulation, for the Prince read any letter from this hand with something approaching worship. And he read in them that



## EULENBURG'S LETTERS

Eulenburg's children had said "how divinely handsome" the Prince looked in uniform; and that his friend, who writes like a lover, had at the New Year reception in Munich, surrounded by indifferent courtiers, "thought of Potsdam, of our sledge-drives, of our intimate companionship; and a sense of such ardent friendship came over me that suddenly I felt all the surrounding glitter as an unendurable affliction. How human is my nearness to you—and how it torments me to think that the social gulf between us, now bridged by our friendship, must inevitably become even wider, even deeper, when the Imperial Crown is yours!"

Observe the tone—the dulcet idyllic tone—which this expert in adaptability could use as cleverly as that of cynical brilliancy in the society of older men; and always gracefully phrased, for every one of these letters, which he selected for his Memoirs after many decades had gone by, are very intimate, written by his own hand, no copies taken; he prints them from the rough drafts he had preserved. Incidentally, he advises his friend on high political matters, which his subtle pen contrived to mingle so skilfully with dreamy fancies and gossip about things of art that they would not be tedious to the eager recipient.

That he was intent on his own advancement would be nothing against him, if he did not so continually represent himself as despising place and worldly advantages. He writes, on his appointment to be Councillor to the Embassy: "I tell this to your Royal Highness in a spirit of pure friendship, because I know that it will give you pleasure to learn that I have obtained a position which will enable me to be of use to my beloved monarch, and the Fatherland—and that is my best reward." Whereupon his friend promoted him to Ambassador.

Such was the nature of the man of whom William said about this time to Hinzpeter: "My bosom friend Eulenburg, the only one I have!" (E. 2, 46). Nowhere was there anyone to guide the Prince, to counsel him—or even seek to warn him.

One man alone is incorruptible—him the Prince tries vainly to impress. When on the first night of Eulenburg's romantic drama he comes, all nervous agitation, to visit the Prince, he finds him bent over the rough draft of a proclamation to the German Princes for the day of his accession. It is only November 1887 but the Prince is intent on having “ everything ready beforehand.” Instead of hindering this literary labour, Eulenburg (by his own account) edits it for his friend. His friend sends it to Bismarck:

“ I venture herewith to forward to your Serene Highness a paper which, in view of the not impossible contingency of the early or sudden demise of the Emperor and my father, I have drawn up. . . . It is a brief edict to my future colleagues, the German Princes of the Holy Roman Empire.” As it might not be agreeable to these princes to be subjected to so young a master, they must be left no time for brooding on the change. “ So it is my idea that . . . this proclamation should be deposited, sealed, in every Embassy, and in the event of my accession be at once handed by the Ambassadors to their respective Princes.” He hopes that the old uncles will not put a spoke in their dear young nephew's wheel. . . . “ As between nephew and uncle I can easily humour these gentlemen by various little attentions. And when I have once shown them the sort of man they have to deal with, and got them under my thumb, they will obey me the more good-humouredly. For obey me they must!”

This is the first constitutional effort of Prince William's brain, and also the first document approved and edited by Eulenburg. No one will ever know what cynical comment Bismarck may have made to his son, as he perused the tactless, ignorant pages. Nor did they come alone.

Hard upon them followed a second composition, concerned with various socialistic activities of these Princes, which he thought that Bismarck was opposed to: “ My veneration, high as it is cordial, and my heartfelt attach-

## BISMARCK SMILES

ment to Your Serene Highness . . . I would be torn limb from limb rather than put my hand to anything which could embarrass you . . . this would—I mean, *should*—be sufficient guarantee.” If war should come “you will not forget that here a hand and sword are ready, those of a man who is very conscious that Frederick the Great is his ancestor . . . and for whom his ten years’ strenuous military training has not been altogether in vain! For the rest, *Allerwege guet Zollere!*<sup>1</sup> In most loyal friendship,  
William, Prince of Prussia.”

The old man subtly smiles. The more extravagant the superlatives of veneration, the more doubtful he feels of the Prince’s sincerity. Is he trying now to win him over by soft nothings? He gives himself six weeks before he answers the two letters with his own hand, for “my hand does not serve me so well for letter-writing as of old. Moreover, my answer had to be nothing less than an historical and political essay.” He returns the proclamation to the Princes, “and would most respectfully advise that it be burnt without delay. . . . Even the single existing copy, which I keep most carefully locked up, may fall into the wrong hands.” How much more dangerous would be some twenty copies! What would the Princes say on learning that the proclamation had been drawn up during the lifetime of reigning monarchs, and kept in readiness for their deaths? For the rest, he is there to protect their constitutional rights. “But I seek my surest support . . . in a monarchy whose representative is resolved, not only diligently to co-operate with me in the work of government during times of peace, but likewise at more critical periods to be ready, rather than yield, to die upon the steps of the throne, sword in hand, contending for his royal rights.” Then he ironically advises against any sort of participation in Christian-Socialist activities, and concludes with a cold

<sup>1</sup> *Zollere* is a familiar way of speaking of the Hohenzollerns. This phrase may therefore be rendered as “A Hohenzollern every time!”  
[Translator’s Note.]

acknowledgment of the "gracious confidence" shown him.

There he sits—the old man in his study at Friedrichsruh; it is January, the room is overheated; he must drive the steel pen with his own hand as he writes the eight-paged letter to his master's heir, for not even to his son does he dare to dictate it. And, sitting there, he has a moment of pure insight. He warns the Prince against levity and indolence; and suddenly he seems to see him stand before his eyes in a moment of awful crisis, menaced in his rights, in his throne, and tells him solemnly that he had better die contending than give in! Ominous words, written by Bismarck, then seventy-three, to William the Second, immediately before his accession in the year of Our Lord 1888. What was to be their effect?

Instead of hearkening, the Prince brings the correspondence to a sudden end. In social affairs, he replies, his desire is to concede so far as to dissipate all mistrust. "If this fails, then woe to them whom I command!" A new note, this: a sudden fanfaronade! Then a courtly conclusion, as it were a bow, a clinking of spurred heels together—but there is a threat implied, based on the right which soon is to be his, the right to command while others "obey" him.

Meanwhile the sick man pants for breath beside the Mediterranean Sea. The old Emperor has fainting-fits. When the Crown Prince seemed like to suffocate on 9th February, and Mackenzie still refused to operate, an adjutant at last had the courage to confront him angrily with: "If you do not get Bramann here" (Bergmann's assistant, always in readiness) "you shall be summoned before a court-martial!" After vehement contention between Bramann and the Crown Princess, the patient underwent the operation for insertion of a tube, at which Bramann had to be both operator and anaesthetist, for Mackenzie was near to fainting and, as he said afterwards, "more dead than alive."

Between the old man sinking and his son expiring the

## THE CAMP-BED

final race begins—the last, the unseen, contest. Victoria trembles; “there is a strong current of popular feeling against her” (E. 146). She “scarcely seems a responsible being, so fanatically does she uphold the idea that her husband is not seriously ill” (W. 365). Prince William is beside himself, for he alone of all the children may not go to San Remo; he goes without warning, finds himself treated as in November, his mother demanding that he shall proceed to Rome, so as to confirm the better news of his father. Bismarck bids him come back.

“What a state we should all be in”—thus muses Waldersee—“if the Emperor were now to be taken from us; the most horrible complications are indeed unavoidable. It is true that the Crown Prince cannot govern, but under pressure from his vehement consort he could do a lot of harm. And she, precisely because she knows that her rule must be a brief one . . . will seek to safeguard her future. The question is how far Prince William will suffer things to go.” A few days later, the worst comes to pass.

In his little room the old man lies upon his old camp bed, in a white jacket with a red scarf round his neck; the Empress has been rolled in her chair to his bedside, members of the family and intimates are crowded in the narrow space; Prince William too stands near. The Emperor dies a soldier. In these last days of his life his fancy turns on war alone—war future and war past. “I am not afraid of war, if I am driven to it,” he says as if to himself. He thinks he is talking to the Tsar: “I hope he won’t break his word.” Repeatedly they hear him speak of the war on two fronts; then of the Fourth Battalion and the tactics of the French. Now his mind recurs to the French campaign, but not the last one, which is scarce twenty years gone by; he is back at the War of Liberation; “and there he stopped. He spoke the names of several officers belonging to that period, who had been with him there” (W. 269).

When Bismarck hands him the order for prorogation



of the Reichstag, and says the "W" will suffice, he answers with his old sense of duty: "I'll sign the full name," but he cannot quite manage it. Then suddenly he takes Bismarck, who is bending close to his ear, for his grandson, addresses him as if he were Prince William, and says: "I've always been pleased with you. You've done everything well."

With this arresting confusion of identities in favour of his grandson, the life of William the First comes to an end.

## 3

"In my profound grief for my father, at whose death it was granted not to me, but to you, to be present, I make known on my accession my absolute reliance on your being a pattern to all others in loyalty and obedience."

With this ominous invocation to Berlin the moribund began his reign as German Emperor. Simultaneously it was announced that the new Crown Prince was not to be entrusted with the Regency, but that the Ministry of State would be called upon, if necessary, to exercise that function. Not until the answer came from Bismarck was it pointed out to him that in his hatred for his son he had sought to act unconstitutionally. The third day, on his homeward journey, he received Chancellor and Minister at Leipzig. The proceedings were subdued, all the conversation was in writing; the entry to Berlin, of which he so long had dreamed, was voiceless as himself; and behind the corpse of his father, on the hour-long transit, it was not he that marched, but—alone, in front of all the Princes—his son William, the true inheritor.

With his strong sense of allegory and gesture William—now Crown Prince—must have felt that this progress through the Tiergarten, cutting across the dumbly saluting multitudes, was a symbol of succession. Not until the outlying Charlottenburg was reached did the son, through the closed window, salute the dead father—the grandson, the dying son.

In a little room at the Palace the Emperor Frederick received the oath of allegiance from those nearest him; the Lord Chamberlain went down upon one knee, the Ministers kissed the new master's hand—even Bismarck. Before the King of Prussia his arrogance was subdued—before him alone. The patina of conceptions old as time, the sense of dependence, long-implanted, ineradicable: these enforce that kiss upon the hand which seems a contradiction of his inmost being: it affronts his self-esteem in no wise, he feels like any knight. True, his old master had caught him in his arms, when on the seventieth birthday the Chancellor had bent to kiss hands; he of to-day accepts the gesture, savouring perhaps the pseudo-victory over his ancient foe with the ultimate vibrations of his failing energy.

But the contest was over; he knew himself to be a flame extinguished, and resigned all power to the dictator—even extended that power, for his ideas confined themselves to trifles such as the doing-away with epaulettes after the English fashion, and one of his earliest questions was: "Which pattern shall we choose for the new caps?" And when he learnt that they could not be ready before Whitsuntide, it was observed by Lucius that he clasped his hands together with a woeful look, as though feeling that he would not live to see them. The first desires of this Liberal were to make new Barons, Counts, and Princes, so that Bismarck ironized: "In order to remove the jealousy between the middle-classes and the nobility, the Emperor wanted to ennoble his entire people." When Bismarck himself was offered the title of Duke, and Herbert that of Prince, he urgently begged that this proposal should be abandoned, and accounted for his disinclination with all his cynicism: "Why, if I had two million dollars, I would have myself made Pope!"

Beyond this playing at power, the Emperor had no strength to go. To the Minister Friedberg, of Jewish parentage, he gave the Black Eagle; but after at first refusing, he signed the Socialist decrees, and yielded like-

wise on a European question. Then his desire was that the Battenberg Prince should come, in pursuance of the old English project, to Berlin for his betrothal to their daughter, Bismarck, however, who just then dared do nothing to offend Russia, wished to postpone the arrangement, and in his mortal weariness the sufferer at once gave in. "The consequence was a frightful scene between the Emperor and Empress" (W. 382).

So full of strife and hatred, so vibrant with convulsive reverberations, was the life of this family, was the youth of William the Second.

But the old spell-binder now succeeded in winning over, in mastering his deadly enemy. "I behave," he said to Lucius, "to the Empress like an enamoured dotard" That is to say, he put so much money in the excited woman's pocket that she never opposed him. Even the earliest days of her home-coming rustled with official papers. First, she made "exorbitant claims for her jointure" (W. 375): then was enraged because the old Emperor had remembered his grandsons, but not his grand-daughters, in his will; and most of all because he had left his entire private fortune—the twenty-two millions he had saved—in trust for the family, thus making it untouchable. Confusion and distraction ruled the day. Bismarck found a way out; the will did not speak of a trust, but of a "Crown Treasury" as administering the property. Legal opinion pronounced: "The son has power of disposal." Frederick at once made it over in equal parts to his wife and children (W. 403). With these eleven millions, which, according to other legal opinions, could have been sequestrated from Victoria, Bismarck broke down her opposition.

Thus were her revenues assured. Her honours were less so. There could be no question of a Coronation, and so the Englishwoman revived an Old-Prussian Custom—that of the Mourning-Court, at which she presided alone, thus savouring for once in her life the homage of the first men and women in the kingdom. Waldersee "was close

to the throne as she approached it. . . . She tried to assume a regal bearing, flung her head back, and took the two steps not slowly, but as it were at a leap. Despite the black veil, from my sidelong viewpoint I could get a good look at her face; and reading it, my impression was that she revelled in being the centre of attention."

Bismarck let her have her own way. Although he admired the Emperor's endurance and reviled the roughness of the English doctors and nurses, he forbore to intervene. "If everything I am told is true, and not exaggerated, it would take a Royal Commission to protect the Emperor against the Empress" (Ho. 430). With wine and other stimulants she had him strung-up to make public appearances, at the conclusion of which he would utterly collapse; when a tent was pronounced needful for the asthmatic man to sleep in, she made him wait until an English pattern came from over the sea. When Mackenzie, who would use only his own tube, one day anxiously summoned Bergmann to Potsdam, the latter found the Emperor suffocating. "In a few minutes the danger was removed by the insertion of the tube I had brought with me." Against the doctor's wishes, Victoria about this time obliged the invalid to drive in state to Berlin; finally, three weeks before his death, he was forced to assist at a wedding in Charlottenburg, where those sitting near him in the chapel could see and hear his piteous gasps for breath. "When he stood up, his tense bearing betrayed a fearful strain . . . then the Emperor left the chapel in three long strides. About a quarter of an hour later the guests saw him going by in an invalid-chair . . . he was in plain dress, utterly collapsed."

During these Hundred Days the hostility to their son mounted still higher; but this in itself contributed to strengthen his position. When in the early weeks there was again talk of his Regency, the attempt was frustrated, "because the wish to injure their son is clearly evident" (W. 372). But when the father, whom the son was scarcely even allowed to see, was obliged from sheer







“ IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER ”

impotence to capitulate, the heir felt himself strong enough to make conditions. As the Liberal group, which reckoned on Frederick, was a small one, all hopes were increasingly fixed on the Crown Prince; and the consciousness of this liberated in him only too much of the mother's imperiousness and self-will (W. 402), inherited by her from her own mother, and now active in her son.

After all that he had undergone, and still had to undergo, in his home life, no one can wholly blame the young man for the cold-heartedness of his anticipation, when walking up and down with his intimates, he merely observed: “ It's quite a good thing that my father has reigned for a while before me ”; then talked circumstantially of formalities and persons, precisely as Frederick had just been doing; and when Waldersee, unusually disturbed by such indifference, urged him to implore his father's blessing, the Prince replied: “ Oh, I have *that* all right. . . . But my mother will never let me be alone with him ” (W. 389).

About this time he said himself to his mother: “ It would have been a good thing if Papa had been killed at Wörth ” (which was nineteen years ago).

“ But, William, do you think nothing of the happiness he has had all the time—that I, that we all, have had? ”

“ No—even so; it would have been better ” (Dohme, *Deutsche Revue*, 37, 84).

It is not lovable, but it is comprehensible, in a Prince who had had little happiness from his father in those twenty years; and who, moreover, liked other people to die in romantic circumstances.

The invalid took a good turn; but the heir to the throne, with power coming ever nearer to his grasp, got haughtier every day. He gave Herbert Bismarck an appointment at the Palace for a quarter to two; when the latter drove in “ at two minutes past the three-quarters, the Crown Prince drove past him, saluting,” having left a message to say that he had to inspect his Hussars, and would His Excellency be at the Potsdam Station at ten minutes past

## HERBERT BISMARCK SNUBBED

five. So that their business would have had to be transacted in, at the most, three minutes. Then at the station, to Herbert: "I have no time to read documents." Herbert was not only Secretary of State, but had been for years his intimate friend; never before would the Prince, who had drunk deep with him through many a night, have dismissed him in a minute or two. But now, the Emperor's representative, he was prey to the old uncertainty of touch—he affected the overdriven young ruler; and with barely a word of apology, passed on after a casual salutation.

This avoidance of the son was aimed indirectly at the father; the Crown Prince declared that he would give Bismarck no voice in military matters, "and I think the good Herbert sets some store on the preservation of my friendship" (W. 375). On the Chancellor's birthday Prince William compared the situation to that of a storming regiment's: "Their leader has fallen, the next in command, though severely wounded, yet rides fearlessly on." These words put the invalid beside himself; he wrote his son a savage letter (W. 384).

All this was in April. In May, when his father was on the point of death, the son went further still—he began to interfere in foreign affairs. Bismarck infuriated him; for when he took to covering the documents with marginal notes as Frederick the Great had been wont to do, the Chancellor begged him to desist, because such remarks had to be registered, and this obstructed business. Then in an official communication, edited by Waldersee, the Crown Prince warned the Chancellor against Russia: "Doubtless if at Versailles we had deprived France of her fortresses and her fleet we should not now be menaced by this dual danger." "That," continues the writer, administering a judicial censure to the old statesman, "that was, from a military point of view, mistaken, though from a political one . . . at the moment, the right course"; but since then the two neighbours had cherished aggressive intentions against Germany. In this communication, "I consider that I am offering most necessary aid towards the

conduct of a pacific policy . . . William, Crown Prince of the German Empire and of Prussia.” Over this signature Bismarck’s pencil wrote in large letters the five cryptic words: “ It would be unfortunate, if——”

Here we have it, issue joined already. The Crown Prince, who was Regent only for current affairs and not empowered either in this matter or a constitutional one to intervene at all, no longer clothes his communications, as heretofore, in the form of respectful interrogatories. He designates his aid as “ necessary ”; and thereupon the old statesman appends to the swaggering official signature a dark saying wherein he discloses all that he appears to conceal.

The Emperor, remote from these contentions, was dying daily. Two weeks before the end he went with Victoria to Potsdam, their old home. There he had been born, there their young married life had first flowered; and now, at the end of his course, an emaciated figure, voiceless, his face gone to nothing, his breath febrile; in possession of a crown for which the waiting had been too prolonged, and which he must renounce all hope of wearing—*now* the Emperor Frederick rechristens the New Palace with the name of “ Friedrichskron.” . . . Shortly before, the old Queen had come over from England, desirous to guard her daughter’s rights and look after her own; the son-in-law wrote her his welcome on a sheet of paper; she troubled him but little; he sat at the window and heard the multitudes gather round the Palace-gates. His daily written question was of the official reports of his state; he was particularly touched by the sympathetic comments in the French newspapers. Once he had his horses brought into the garden, and tried to feed them.

Up to the last days Victoria played her chosen part; at the end of May she was still denying that it was cancer. Two days before his death, when the Palace and all Germany were expectant of the end, the mother and son had a “ violent scene ”: she would not suffer him to go near his father.

## FREDERICK'S DEATH

On the day before the Emperor died, Bismarck appeared at the Palace; Victoria led him into the sick man's room. He knew them both, and with a last effort of will he joined their hands and held them closely together with both his own. "To whom, in the world"—so felt the dying man—"shall I entrust her? My life is over; now she will have enmity around her. This man here is the most powerful of all, let come what may; upon him she shall build." Not a sign that he wished to see, to bless, or even to admonish the heir to his crown. Bismarck was the last to receive Frederick's confidence—the only man to whom he would entrust his much-loved consort.

Scarcely had the two left his room before it was the old story: steel upon steel. Victoria declared that she required a castle on the Rhine as her jointure-house—that her son would have to consent. "But it must be a house," she added, while her husband's dying gasps could be heard through the door, "where I can pull down and build and arrange to my own taste, without consulting the Home Secretary." Bismarck, for his part, though he was moved, said to an intimate: "I can't go in for sentimental politics just now" (Ho. 473). He went to the Emperor next morning, found him "very rational," and made his own principles of action clear to him (L. 465). When, in the forenoon of the following day, he was communicating all this to the assembled Ministers, there came the tidings of the end.

For twenty-four hours the Palace—an eye-witness, Robert von Dohme, the Emperor Frederick's friend, gives this account—had been filled with hitherto unseen officers, who demanded quarters and rations; then, some hours before the end, the new Master of the Household hastened to promulgate the new ruler's orders: "No one in the Palace, including the doctors, to carry on any correspondence with outside. . . . If any of the doctors attempts to leave the Palace, he will be arrested." Dohme asked the



old Master of the Household, already superseded, if the codicil regarding the Empress's inheritance, and above all the assignment of the sum for the landed property she desired, were in safe hands. "Fortunately Seckendorf had them in his desk; otherwise it would have been too late."

Shortly after eleven, death having but just occurred, the scene was thus transformed; it was as though a monarch had been murdered, and his hostile successor, long prepared, had seized upon the newly acquired authority. "Divisions of training-battalions approached the Palace at the double; round all the terraces was a regular system of guards with loaded guns. Major von Natzmer, one of the intruders of the night before, sat ready mounted, and the moment death was announced he galloped round the Palace, giving orders, inspecting guards. Suddenly the Hussars appeared at a trot; divisions established themselves at all the gates of the Park; the Palace was, in the military sense, hermetically sealed." The doctors decided to summon Virchow to a post-mortem, and when the Surgeon-General was about to convey the despatch, the guard on the terrace ordered him to "Halt!" on pain of arrest. Anyone who wished to leave the Palace had to have a permit from the new master's aide-de-camp; telegrams had to bear his visâ.

Thus everyone—to the doctors, the brothers and sisters, and even the mother of the new Emperor—was his prisoner. Vainly did the mother appeal to the young Empress; her son, suspecting that State-papers had for weeks been going to London, now stood sentry over the Palace in whose midst lay the dead Emperor.

For summoning of clergy, for a family-gathering, there was no time that day. "In the dead man's room . . . no ceremonial, no service . . . no thought of the religious aspect" (E. 169) The son, that he might indict his mother and grandmother, ordained the post-mortem; it ratified the German diagnosis of thirteen months ago. He himself walked up and down the park with Waldersee,

again conversing of individuals. Soon afterwards he was handed a sealed envelope, which by tradition had to be delivered to every King of Prussia upon his accession. It contained an adjuration from Frederick William IV to all his successors, calling upon them to abrogate at once a form of government which had been wrung from him by force.<sup>1</sup> The new Emperor burnt the document (Z. 104). Was he so profoundly convinced of his duty to protect that form of government that he would fain keep from *his* successors any cognisance of the dead monarch's wish?

Even before the funeral, the son demolished the wish of his father's heart. “ In case,” that father had written in his will, on the twelfth of April, “ in case I am . . . summoned hence, I wish to have set in evidence as my unbiassed personal opinion that I entirely acquiesce in the betrothal of your second sister with the . . . Prince Alexander of Battenberg. I charge you as a filial duty with the accomplishment of this my desire, which your sister Victoria for so many years has cherished in her heart. . . . I count upon your fulfilling your duty as a son by a precise attention to my wishes, and as a brother by not withdrawing your co-operation from your sister. Your affectionate Father ” (Hartenau-Archives, quoted by Corti, p. 336). Two days after his father's death, the son not only broke off the engagement, in which proceeding he had Bismarck's veto to appeal to, but in his letter of apology to Battenberg he pointedly alluded to “ the profound conviction previously held by my late deceased grandfather and father ”; this, solely because the marriage was the wish of his mother's heart.

“ With unprecedented haste ” the funeral was organized. The dead man was clad in his uniform. Foreign princes were not invited; and while the chapel was being decorated, the coffin stood among the hammering work-

Frederick William IV, King of Prussia (1795-1861), was opposed to the unification of Germany, and refused the crown offered him by the German Princes. His mind became deranged before his death.— [Translator's Note.]

men like a tool-chest. At the entombment, the short path to the church was guarded by troops. “ The troops were dignified, the clergy were laughing and chattering. Field-Marshal Blumenthal, with the Standard over his shoulder, reeling about, talking—it was horrible ” (E. 169).

The populace was not allowed to come near. Nor did the new ruler remember his people in his maiden proclamations. On the first day went forth an Army and a Navy Order, long prepared and needing only to have the hour of his father’s death filled in; the tone was somewhat over-virile, concluding with: “ Thus we belong to each other—I and the Army—we were born for each other and will cleave indissolubly to each other, whether it be the Will of God to send us calm or storm. You will soon swear fealty and submission to me, and I promise ever to bear in mind that from the world above the eyes of my forefathers look down upon me, and that I shall have one day to stand accountable to them for the glory and honour of the Army.”

Foreign countries were startled: though the new ruler might have warlike intentions, it was surely inconceivable that he would appear in arms on the opening day of his reign! As the European situation had for some time been threatening, the tone of foreign newspaper comments was uneasy. But the Emperor was not thinking of war when he wrote all this; he was thinking only of the Guards, the officers, the General Staff; for the thousandth time he was feeling, and more keenly than ever before, the eyes of all his soldiers fixed upon him. Would a critical glance fall on his arm? Would anyone notice how he passed the reins over? And so he was fain to pull on them the tighter—reins of the horse and reins of the government; “ hard-bitten ” was to be the first impression when that night his earliest imperial utterance should be discussed in clubs and messes, and next morning be recited in countless barrack-yards to the sound of the trumpet.

Three days later he did remember his people. All proclamations “ he wrote himself, rejecting any one else’s

suggestions." In that to his people he led off again with a boast of his father's victories, but continued: "Summoned to the throne of my fathers, it is with eyes raised to the King of Kings that I assume the sceptre, and I vow before God to be to my people a just and merciful Prince, to do all things in piety and godly fear, to keep the peace, to promote the welfare of the country, to be a succourer of the poor and oppressed, a faithful guardian of the right. . . . Upon this fealty . . . I count, well knowing that with all my heart I shall requite it, as the loyal sovereign of a loyal people, both unwavering in devotion to their common Fatherland."

Germany heard these fine phrases and was pleased. Many asked: "Is this a religious Prince, with his frequent appeals to God?" He was, in his way; for when here, and in countless future discourses, he appealed to his forefathers in heaven, who were looking down upon him—that represented his genuine belief. "Take my faith from me, and you take my King," said Bismarck, though his was a much more complex faith than William's, and it was only through the medium of love that he, who had been a pronounced atheist, became a believer. The principle is identical in both. Bismarck thus reconciled a subject's loyalty with his personal pride, William thus justified his regal arrogance; Bismarck could not have kissed the hand of his sovereign but for his belief in a divinely appointed order wherein he, for all his limitless self-esteem, came only second. William, as a Christian, could interpret that kiss, could interpret the power and the glory that were his, by the same means alone—that of a God-given order.

Unwittingly he misconstrued Charlemagne's reverential title of *Dei Gratia Imperator*, reversing its import; and while that Emperor of the past, kneeling to his God, thus read the meaning of his posture before Him to whom he owed all earthly power, this Emperor of the present, beholding men upon their knees before himself, held this to be so because he was ruler by the Grace of God. His overweening disposition, inherited from both parents,

uncorrected by a sensible education, aggravated by the oppressions of his youth inborn and ever guilelessly revealed—this had a double use for God, and one use was a wrong use. God was his shield against the megalomania which might have made him claim equality with pagan deities; but likewise against his people and those fellow-creatures, one and all, who were not born like him to kingship, and so were not like him endowed with authority by God. Throughout his royal life, William the Second felt like a king of antiquity who was High Priest as well, literally mediator between God and People; and from this consciousness he drew the most far-reaching inferences, especially with regard to kingdoms and republics.

The Weisser Saal in the Palace at Berlin shone by his orders, a week later, more brilliantly than it had ever shone before in the history of Prussia. He had the Palace-Guard dressed in the uniform of Frederick the Great's time; the Knights of the Black Eagle were bidden to appear in their scarlet mantles, so that he might wear one himself. Bismarck, who had refused to don this mantle, marched in his cuirassier's uniform at the head of the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), who "followed him like lambs" (M. 145); and when all were assembled he went himself to summon the Emperor, thus playing Master of the Household for the day. Enter the court-pages in their black knee-breeches, with knots of crape at the knees; then the Insignia of State, then Moltke alone, then the Emperor, in a long flowing crimson mantle—no soldier, we perceive, but a legendary king; more Eulenburg's than Waldersee's—this was his own idea, his own decision.

Most grave he was, his head bent ceremonially; and soon "he had another very effective gesture, when the Chancellor handed him the King's Speech. He grasped it, set his helmet on his head with a vigorous hand, and flung his mantle back; then, from his full height, he scanned the dumbly expectant audience." That was the great moment; he had been awaiting it through all the week. Now he began to read, at first indistinctly, deliver-



“ ME ”

ing the phrases jerkily and laboriously. “ Though the silence was like death, he could scarcely be heard.” But gradually his voice obeyed him, he was speaking more fluently when he came to the most important passage, that in which Bismarck sought to redeem the rodomontade of the first Army Order by a doubly emphasized pacific tone.

On this first of ceremonial occasions his opposition to Bismarck was unmistakably made clear, though they were Bismarck's own words that he was reciting; for, records the younger Moltke, “ when he came to the passage: ‘ I am resolved to keep the peace with everyone, so far as in Me lies,’ he uttered the word ‘ Me ’ on a note of such resonant beauty that it ran over the entire audience like an electric spark; there was so much in it—the full consciousness of sovereignty, and with that a ring as it were of warning: ‘ But woe to him who shall dare to offend Me.’ An extraordinary sense of power and self-reliance made itself felt in that single word, so that there was a general shout of rapturous applause.” The only sceptic in that moment was the author of the phrase, for Bismarck had made the speaker continue: “ My love for the German Army . . . shall never tempt me to disturb the tranquillity of the country, unless war is irremediably forced upon us by aggression. . . . Far be it from me to use this strength for aggressive purposes. Germany needs neither warlike glory nor acquisitions in any part of the globe, now that she has finally established her right to be a united and independent nation.”

Though Bismarck wished in this way to leave no doubt of the desire for peace, unattended by any menace or admonition, he had hoped that the Press would not accentuate the passage. And accustomed to a strict decorum at such inaugurative ceremonies, he was taken by surprise when, against all precedent, the Emperor strode across to shake hands with him after the Speech; but the logical chain of his emotions forged itself in the same moment, and for the first, and the last, time he kissed

the hand of the third and youngest of his sovereigns. At this spectacle, applause again broke out (L. 470).

## 5

What had William solemnly sworn as Emperor, and immediately afterwards as King? What bounds were set to his authority by the Constitution of the Empire and the State? To whom was he responsible?

When he was twenty-three there had been promulgated an edict of his grandfather's, wherein Bismarck caused the King to say: "It is My determination that in Prussia no less than in the legislative bodies of My realm there shall be no question of the constitutional right possessed by Me and My successors to the personal direction of the policy of My Government, and that no colour shall be given to the opposite opinion, which holds that the . . . inviolability of the King's person, or the counter-signature required by My Royal Ordinances, has any bearing upon the independent nature of the Royal decisions."

Avidly had the Prince drunk in these phrases, to which he was only too soon to appeal; and his approbation of Bismarck had naturally been increased, when not long afterwards in Parliament he heard him hold forth upon this edict: "If the Emperor has a Chancellor who feels unable to countersign whatever represents the Imperial policy, he can dismiss him any day. The Emperor has a much freer hand than the Chancellor, who is dependent on the Imperial will, and can take no step without the Imperial sanction. . . . In this place I can put forth no expression of opinion in which I do not know the Emperor to agree, and for which I have not his authority. . . . In the Constitution, the Minister is merely an almost negligible stop-gap. Whether this is in accordance with constitutional theory or not, is entirely indifferent to me. In principle the King decides upon the deep, smooth grooves in which alone the policy of Prussia, as part of the German Empire, can proceed. He ordains, by the light of his own convictions, how things are to be, and how the Prussian

representatives of the Federated States are to be instructed; the part of the Minister is merely to execute, to formulate. The Royal Will is and remains alone decisive. The real, the actual, Prime Minister in Prussia is and remains His Majesty the King."

Before he now proceeded to swear allegiance to the two Constitutions, we may be sure that the young ruler perused them, or at any rate those portions which concerned himself; though he afterwards maintained that he was not acquainted with them at all. What did he find in these "Constitutional" documents, of one of which Bismarck was the author, while the other he had not failed to interpret in the sense most pleasing to the King? A tissue of contradictions, whereby the responsibility was perpetually shifted from the King to the Chancellor-Premier, and by him shifted back on the King, until in the inextricable meshes it expired once for all.

Actually no one in Prussia or Germany was responsible in the democratic sense which to-day prevails in all European countries. In very truth, the Emperor-King was absolute; the only limitation to his authority was the right of the Houses to grant or refuse supplies; but even this had been set aside by Bismarck, who desired no "shadow-king." True, the Chancellor's counter-signature, which was necessary to the validity of the Imperial decrees, did make him responsible to the Parliament, but only on paper; no Parliament was empowered to remove from office, or even to censure, a Chancellor or Premier. "I shall stand in this place so long as I enjoy His Majesty's confidence": all the Imperial Chancellors and State Secretaries, all the Ministers in Prussia so spoke from the tribunes—and spoke no more than the truth. It was true that the Reichstag, together with the *Bundesrat*, had legislative rights; but the Emperor had the "Imperial-Competence," and invariably found a pliant Chancellor to countersign his decrees.

That this latter had to countersign his own appointment was the finishing touch to the blindman's-buff of responsi-

bilities. Armed with a counter-signature, more easily and unconditionally obtained than, in a great business-house, the like would be by the most senior of its representatives, the Emperor could appoint and dismiss all State officials, could summon, open, prorogue, shut, and dissolve the Reichstag at his pleasure. The direction of international policy was entrusted to him alone: there was no Imperial Cabinet to be consulted; the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary alone might advise, but must ultimately obey or see themselves replaced by one or another of their colleagues; the Federal Council was practically without influence, its sessional Committees were wellnigh an empty form.

Even that responsibility of the Chancellor's was confined to seeing that the Imperial decrees were in accordance with the Constitution and the Law; to introducing the measures, and taking all criticism on himself. On two important points the Emperor was even formally absolved from any counter-signature: personal expressions of opinion, and Army Orders, were signed by him alone. Relying only on himself, uncounselled if he so desired, fearing no contradiction, no impeachment, the Emperor declared war, concluded peace, held the supreme command in army and fleet; and thus could, acting by himself, compel the whole of his able-bodied subjects to take the field. True, it was necessary that the ever-pliant *Bundesrat* should concur in a declaration of war, but not if there ensued an attack upon the territory of the Empire, to which construction almost every instance lent itself; that the sovereign could make war even without money, in the refusal to grant which the rights of the Reichstag alone consisted, had been demonstrated by Bismarck.

And so the Emperor-King, in his oath, had sworn only to his own actual authority to decide all vital national questions "to the best of his ability"—and on what other principle does any reasonable human being proceed? None the less he remained, whatever the consequences, inviolable, unindictable, or, as it was expressed in other German National Constitutions, "hallowed." At the

beginning of the twentieth century, in the Old and the New Worlds, there was—besides the Tsar and the Sultan—no one who possessed such authority as William the Second.

The man to whom he owed it must indeed have been persuaded both of the personal weakness of his sovereign and of his own position and power, when he risked calling himself a stop-gap. This anti-democratic idea was congenial to Bismarck only so long as he could conceal his own authority behind it; were a self-willed king to arrive, such theories were bound to recoil, with tragic retribution, on their propounder. Bismarck had not only, as has often been said, cut the constitution to his own figure, but still more to the tractability of the monarch whom his formula had endowed with such might.

But now, in the new ruler, the consciousness of documentary rights was united with a prodigious self-esteem; and thus, possessed by the idea that he was the instrument of God, too suddenly and much too early called to supreme power, a man of thirty fell a prey to all the dangers of infatuation, of delusion; William was driven to an ostentatious display of his authority by the wish—perpetual still, even though perhaps unconscious—to betray no sign of physical weakness.

Frederick the Great, as the young Fritz, was in a similar position: he too disabled, he too prematurely raised to power, victim of like perils, rushed into his first war out of vanity and thirst for fame; and only long afterwards began, through sufferings and defeats, to be a man—and later still, with whitening head, to be a great man. When on his accession the most courageous counsellor and friend his father had had, the old Dessauer, begged that place and authority, and in the impending war the supreme command, might be left to himself, the youthful Frederick rejected the petition in the arrogant words: "Authority in My land is possessed by the King of Prussia alone. . . . I reserve to Myself the appointment in question, that the world may not suppose that the King of Prussia enters the field with his preceptor at his side."