

CHAPTER IV

CABALS

I

1890-1898

A TALL, well-grown man issues from the old-fashioned door of the Foreign Office. The hall-porter reverentially wishes the Herr Baron good-evening, for this man is in authority, always the last to leave the office—it is past nine o'clock again to-day. Upon the steps he turns up his collar, presses his hat down lower, thrusts his hands into the capacious pockets of his cloak, and without once looking round departs, keeping close to the wall as if to avoid encounters. His firm step, his robust form—he is only fifty-five—are not in keeping with such careful muffling-up; it is evident that he is not guarding against the cold, but against his fellow-beings; and anyone who should succeed in casting a lantern-ray upon his features would be surprised to encounter, from above the aquiline nose, a distrustful furtive scrutiny, with a hint in it of puzzled melancholy; and would see a countenance, grey as the eyes and the spade-beard, from which all colour has been drained by the air of close rooms. Nor would anyone imagine that to-day, as every day, he has a revolver in his pocket.

In spite of his age he has frequently of late resorted to a shooting-gallery, though he is not a soldier and has long given up the chase, so is interested neither in weapons nor in sportsmanship. His chosen gallery is a small unfashionable one, for there he can practise pistol-shooting incognito. . . . Perhaps, when on leave, he is fond of strange wild places? Or explores the underworld? Quiet little watering-places in August, the smallest of parties at Borckhardt's in Berlin—these are his recreations; never does he go to Court or great entertainments, scarcely to any other tea-table than that of one clever woman in whom

he has confidence. It is merely with an eye to all his social and official compeers that he proves his skill at fire-arms.

For distrust is the fundamental principle of the Baron von Holstein's being—a misanthropy and wariness amounting to malignity, from which no one is exempt. True, destiny has thrice struck at and wounded him.

At his ancestral home in the Mark he, as a boy, beheld his father perish in a blazing barn. Later, as some unrevealed experience, the young man's vitality was "sapped by terrible suffering." He who records this, a keen-sighted observer, perceived in Holstein's nature "a womanish trend, which caused him to avoid everything that might lead to conflict, fuss, or sensation. To conceal this, he wrapped himself in an apparent inaccessibility which was not in accordance with his true character. Holstein, so two of his oldest colleagues have told me, was never to be found when decisions likely to be productive of troublesome consequences were in question. Similarly, he had not the courage of his opinions when thoughts had to take shape in deeds. . . . His self-confidence always seemed forced" (Eckardt, *Caprivis Kampf*).

But though, according to this and many more outspoken indications from those who knew him best, he had certain perversions to conceal—even Hammann dwells upon his morbid tendencies—such effeminate uncertainty of temperament accounts only partly for his conduct in general. He was still a young secretary at the Paris Embassy when the Princess Hohenlohe, as her son writes, was often conscious of being watched by him on leaving the Palace, and was warned of his espionage: indeed, even earlier than this, Bismarck had caused him to be kept under observation at the Petersburg Embassy, and by that very means had become aware of his peculiar, subterranean talents.

So, later on, he seemed to Bismarck the fitting instrument for the surveillance of his second chief at Paris, Count Arnim, who was Bismarck's enemy; and confidential



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reports upon his chief were openly asked for and received from this secretary

But after Holstein had thus furtively paved the way in Paris for Arnim's terrible fall, Bismarck obliged him, during the legal proceedings, to give evidence on these activities. The stain clung to him, and was partly responsible for his embitterment. "The Bismarcks branded me on the forehead like a galley-slave, and thus got a hold on me."

By these dark methods Bismarck held Baron Holstein in the hollow of his hand, but so did Baron Holstein hold him; for it was odious to the Chancellor to keep him in the Foreign Office. He called him the man with the hyena-eyes, and vainly pressed upon him the position of Under-Secretary of State, so as to get rid of him in that way—the enigmatic Councillor declined any sort of promotion. "A troublesome passenger," said Bismarck afterwards, "but if one had tried to remove him from the coach, there was the risk of his beginning to blab in foreign parts." Indeed, Eulenburg professed to know on good authority that Holstein had seriously made a proposal to Bismarck of having the Crown Prince Frederick poisoned, and explained Holstein's frightful hatred for Bismarck by his having been told that the Chancellor had betrayed this proposal to his circle (E. 2, 383).

Though Bismarck, like himself, was caught in these terrible toils, that circumstance could avail Holstein but little against the All-Powerful. But the fiercer their mutual hatred burned (inflamed as it was by Holstein's now almost indispensable expertness in all questions of foreign policy), the more ardently did Holstein watch for any indications of a change, and scented the morn when, daily posted in all gossip as he was, he heard of Prince William's earliest differences with the Chancellor. Was the hour of deliverance to dawn at last? It was about this time that he withdrew from Herbert and allied himself with Waldersee, supplying him, by his insight into all important matters, with material for the instigation of the

FROM HIS LITTLE ROOM

Emperor; and so, in the event, he bore a large share in the responsibility for Bismarck's dismissal. The scene in the Secret Archives, whence he had spirited away the Russian papers from his whilom friend Herbert's keeping, was only the decisive victory in his campaign of 1888-90.

And now there he sat, practically the sole executor of Bismarck's testament, for when Herbert left there was no one in the Wilhelmstrasse who possessed Holstein's knowledge of affairs. His passion for politics could now take a straighter course, and the more because he remained—and he alone in that quarter—wholly devoid of extraneous ambition, despising rank, titles, decorations, refusing the post of Secretary of State that he might more surely retain the power attached to it. From his greatest weakness, dread of responsibility, he derived, in this form of indirect authority, his greatest strength.

Here was no ironical renunciator, bent on aiding the Fatherland in times of danger by unselfish counsels: here was a man impassioned for the *métier*, a supreme artist of the diplomatic chess-board, who loved the game for its own sake and could not give it up; but who shunned tournaments, because his aim was never to be in the newspapers. For years he avoided the photographic plate like an infectious disease; and while his colleagues courted rumour and the daily Press, the Emperor's favour and the Reichstag's, a dazzling position at Court and in society, or at the very least the eye of history, this one man moved among them, fearing and abhorring all these things. But because of this he concentrated all his tireless energy upon issuing, from his little room, ciphers and letters which should have preponderant influence in the European capitals, upon keeping Ambassadors, Ministers, and all such puppets dangling at the end of mysterious wires, hidden from the people and the peoples. Thus he would enjoy the diabolical triumphs of an invisible magician.

Hitherto his encyclopaedic familiarity with agreements and treaties had been placed at the disposal of a master who used him as a born subordinate; but now he was to

grasp the reins, direct the course, himself. There in his den he sat, the secluded wizard; for decades now he had scarcely ever left it, had studied the actual world, those countries other than his own, in nothing but the magic mirror of their Press—and thus, wholly unacquainted with the new men and the new conditions now prevailing there, he wove the costly tissue to the pattern of his own impressions.

These were strangely at fault. He reckoned with numbers but rarely with magnitudes, and in calculating imponderables he was prone to go wrong. Lucidly logical, but devoid of psychological insight, the solitary eccentric played the great European game as on a chess-board; and because none was his equal there, because he was an adept in all paths, all short-cuts, all mysterious byways, all the fine shades of diplomatic hints, *démarches*, and notes, the chiefs of every Embassy feared him and sought his approval. So it had come about that he, a Privy Councillor, not even a Head of Department, corresponded—and that not always privately—with most of the Ambassadors, himself sending them despatches in cipher, which he often withheld from his Chief and from the Archives, thus contriving to keep the Foreign Office informed only of what he wished to be known.

If he was at odds with an Ambassador, he would sometimes instruct the Secretary at that Embassy to come to an understanding with the foreign Power concerned—this over his Chief's head, and again without informing anyone but himself. If any one tried to oppose him and sent a formal official report of his own views, it was usually supplemented by a second communication which the Secretary of State could lay before the Privy Councillor: “directed to the Holstein psychology” (Eck. 2, 239). Hundreds of reports upon the gravest affairs bore, to guard against his jealousy, the superscription: “Private: Baron Holstein,” after which they passed into official circulation and thus reached the hands of the Secretary of State.

This singular position could not fail to develop his

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autocratic tendencies; he exacted obedience and secrecy, and one of his countless despatches to the Ambassador in London—Hatzfeldt, then dangerously ill—begins: “Extremely glad to hear from you again, but why, even if you were ill, you should have left me without your news for so many weeks, is incomprehensible to me.” Ambassadors, who never failed to ask and receive access to the Secretary of State at any time, he would keep waiting for days or fail to receive at all; when Alexander Hohenlohe at an interview happened to make use of the expression: “I should advise you,” Holstein refused to receive him again, though he was the Chancellor’s son and possessed his confidence, until at last the father discovered the reason and set things right.

If the mood took him he would send a long letter, of three closely-written sheets, and in no wise urgent, in cipher to London. Though he could frame brilliantly logical memoranda, such despatches were rather in the nature of soliloquies—slangy, beginning with “Well!” or containing such expressions as, “Monkey-tricks. . . . What is the meaning of this sort of policy. . . . Well, let us see what the difficulties are (Eck. 2, 213). When he went on leave he would lock up the most important papers, making any further steps impossible before his return, for he left no address when away; in his little house, situated in an unfashionably remote quarter of the city, he was never to be found at home.

As he suffered no contradiction, his circle grew ever narrower, and this enhanced his Olympian aloofness; he became more and more arbitrary, would select for the most important positions such men as from poverty or a doubtful past were everywhere, and in every sense, dependent, and therefore the more certain to be submissive; and ultimately disposed of all foreign appointments of any importance, or stopped the appointment of anyone else by his veto. After Bismarck’s fall he refused two candidates, removed an able Under-Secretary of State, and only consented to the appointment of Baron Marschall von

Biberstein because, being a novice in Imperial politics, the Baron would always be sure to refer to him. "I can't make Waldersee Chancellor," said the Emperor, "for Holstein declares he won't stay if I do" (W. 2, 260).

Holstein's passion for dethroning the mighty, for breaking up established groups, was even greater than for king-making. For years he sought to embroil Bismarck's sons with one another, and both with their father; then Eulenburg with his two highly placed cousins; ultimately Eulenburg with the Emperor. His distrustfulness amounted to persecution-mania. "Whenever," writes Hammann, "he suspected anyone of assailing him in his special sphere of authority, whenever he was a prey to passive or active apprehensions, whenever his hysterical jealousy took possession of him, he was as a man beside himself." Eulenburg and Bülow called him the Lynx; and Eulenburg says of Holstein's distrustfulness that if anyone happened not to bow to him, "this was enough to institute a persecution of the enemy which never came to an end. Even a word that somebody might somewhere have let fall . . . sufficed to establish a lasting enmity. . . . He never kept a servant long . . . for he was fully convinced that any one of them would let himself be bribed, would steal from him, or even murder him. . . . All his energies were concentrated on politics, and that in the region of intrigue. To be sure'—Eulenburg was bound to continue—"intrigue is always at the bottom of all political activities."

Because this judgment is true of Holstein, though not of political activity in general, Holstein's operations were harmful. For all his expert knowledge of affairs, he was essentially unenlightened; and therefore, penetrating though he was, his solutions of the three or four fundamental European problems were erroneous. Holstein perceived neither the fragility of the Triple Alliance nor the impending break-up of Austria; he declared everyone a simpleton who considered an entente between England and France to be possible, and everyone crazy who believed

in a similar possibility between France and Russia. These had been his theses and his prejudices for three decades; from them resulted, as the various questions arose, all his mistakes in details.

One problem only he judged rightly from the first—and that was the problem of the Emperor. Him he avoided, declining all invitations. "Once and once only," William states, "in the course of many years, did he condescend to dine with me at the Foreign Office", and then he had to apologize for his morning-coat, for he possessed no evening-dress. Holstein was one of the first to take the Emperor's measure; so early as 1892 he compared him to the Emperor in the second part of *Faust*, and predicted his fall, and even the Republic.

No wonder, for he was the Emperor's very antipodes. William always wanted the appearance of authority, Holstein never; William wanted to shine everywhere, Holstein nowhere; while the one liked to be the cynosure of every eye, unpacked his heart to all and sundry, was never alone, always egotistical and always optimistic, the other kept in the background, was inaccessible to most people, was always alone and always sceptical. William was the most frequently, Holstein the most rarely, photographed German of that period.

And yet they had one notable trait in common. Both wanted to avoid responsibility in all things, to throw the blame for every mistake on other people; both felt unsafe, and never went out unarmed—the Baron never without a revolver, the Emperor never without a policeman.

2

For a period of seven years the foreign policy of the German Empire was conducted by three men whose names were signed to no vital official document. Holstein, Eulenburg, and the Emperor were judicially without responsibility, the two first even morally so, for what servant can help influencing his master? For nine years more they remained in power; not supplanted, but

supplemented by a fourth—by Bülow. So that if the German Empire, for the first seven years after Bismarck's fall, was ruled only by irresponsible individuals, these were in time overshadowed by a friend who was their equal in authority. The political fountain-head, during these sixteen years, was Baron Holstein. "His judgment was, from the time of Bismarck's retirement to that of his own—that is, from 1890 to 1906—the preponderating one in all important questions of foreign policy. . . . Doubtless his policy would have been paramount, if the Emperor's intervention had not so frequently given State affairs a turn which did not represent Holstein's views."

This statement of Eulenburg's is corroborated in every particular, but especially by the documents, which almost uninterruptedly demonstrate whose voice prevailed in every conference of State. And if Eulenburg seeks to absolve himself by this assignment of responsibility, it is only on the practical side, of which he knew nothing; how great his personal influence was he states in arresting words: "There would have been a certain sense of impotence but for my part of mediator between a hyper-temperamental Emperor, who would fall like lightning from heaven upon the assembly at the Foreign Office, and a brilliant, domineering Privy Councillor of marked pathological tendencies, to say nothing of an Imperial Chancellor who . . . regarded the said part of mediator as a necessary evil."

Eulenburg himself—the brilliant Eulenburg, of marked pathological tendencies—was a necessary evil; for since between the Emperor and Holstein any personal intercourse was, so to speak, impossible, between Eulenburg and the Emperor it was natural; and Holstein's aberrant logic had to be refined upon by Eulenburg's psychological insight before the Emperor, in many instances, could come to any sort of a decision.

Hence, as the new star arose, these two irresolute beings perceived the advisability of a close alliance, for each felt that such an alliance would add an extra advantage to those

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he already possessed. Eulenburg, almost incessantly at Court and in society, disseminated and enlarged upon the eccentric's ideas, bound them in crushed-green morocco, and set them under people's eyes—became, so to speak, the publisher of Holstein's theories. Holstein regarded his new friend as a Court-minstrel who could lure the Most High with harp-music; Eulenburg his as an alchemist whose potions were indispensable at Court; each considered the other crazy, abnormal, and impossible. Nevertheless each had a certain respect for the entirely different gifts of the other, and when in his company was moved to a kind of compassion—not amounting to affection, but liable to be transformed into hatred at any moment, because both avoided all responsibility and in any given case would try to shift it on the other.

In 1889, indeed, when Eulenburg was still Secretary in Munich, he received the first of Holstein's secret letters—addressed to him, moreover, at Starnberg, “because for your sake I do not wish your present Chief to see my handwriting.” By 1891 Holstein was talking about “old pals like ourselves,” and saying “for an old bachelor it was a novel task to get up some amusement for your youngsters”; going on to praise his friend's execution of his ideas as masterly. Eulenburg's answers were of the most sentimental: “With Mussigny's incomparable and never-fading crimson-lake I paint in my heart your name, first known to me some years ago as that of a peculiar, unapproachable personage, never likely to unveil to a young Secretary of Legation, who was more occupied with poetry than with diplomacy. . . . But there is a destiny in all things. . . . I cannot now imagine what my life was like without you” (E. 2, 165).

With such siren strains he responded to Holstein's bardic chants, and yet it would be absurd to infer a relation arising from the abnormality of the two men. Eulenburg, in the middle forties, could charm this friend only by his part of intermediary in intrigues; and both the writer of this love-letter and the ten-years-older recipient laughed in

their sleeves while giving and taking. Not more than two years later Eulenburg comments: "Directly a situation becomes complicated, Holstein goes quite off his head. The imputation is positively grotesque. . . . I am no Holstein, but an Eulenburg"—regarding this as a superiority in itself, besides which he was poet and Count, Guardsman and musician. In the year 1894 hatred is plainly revealed: "If poor Caprivi (whom they're destroying between them) got hold of this sheet of paper, my friend Holstein's days would be numbered. But as we cannot—I had almost written, alas!—do without him, I shall . . . not show the aforesaid sheet to the good Caprivi. My God, how dramatic! . . . If I were anything but what I am, friend Holstein would fling me overboard."

In such an atmosphere of brooding storm, each hating his accomplice yet unable to sacrifice him, the political decisions of the German Empire were made during those seven leaderless years.

For Eulenburg indefatigably carried out the behests of friend Holstein in his intercourse with friend William, whom he could frequently meet and always write to. In this way, by "inspired" letters from the Count to the Emperor, they began in the year 1892 by bringing down the only man who still preserved his integrity, Count Zedlitz (E. 2, 66). High politics were likewise their province. If Holstein thought it politically undesirable for the Emperor to meet the Tsar at Danzig, Eulenburg had to discover personal reasons for detaining him. If Holstein wanted to incite the Emperor against the Conservatives, he caused Eulenburg to tell him of a letter received from the Conservative leader, which had never really been received at all. If a Russian Prince were expected, Holstein in his room at Berlin drafted the conversation, partly in French, which the Emperor was to have with the visitor, and transcribed it for his friend in Munich so that he might pass it on to Potsdam (E. 2, 76).

But it was not only Holstein who made use of Eulenburg. "Hundreds of letters" poured in on him, urging

him to warn or actuate the Emperor; by his choice among these pleas decisions were very much more affected than by the Chancellor's representations. Eulenburg's special gift was for the divination of reactions—in this his value consisted. He bore the guilt of many a perilous decision, in that he had caused important positions to be filled by his incompetent bosom friends; but against this we must set a number of admonitory letters from him, which may be regarded as genuine although submitted by himself, much after date, from the rough drafts, and only occasionally authenticated by the Imperial replies. Thus, at the end of 1891 he writes to the Emperor: "All parties without exception are offended by Your Majesty's phrase: '*regis voluntas suprema lex*'; it was liable to be exploited in a manner most insulting to Your Majesty."

A year later, after the speech: "I shall lead you to days of glory," Eulenburg writes: "Your Majesty's great eloquence and charm of delivery exercise a fascination over your audiences. . . . But on a cool consideration of the content, a different impression emerges—say, under the handling of a German Professor. The days when an Imperial phrase was inviolate, removed from the interpretation of dunderheads, are long gone by—and that precisely because Your Majesty's Imperial phrases are by yourself regarded in a different light, and are given too much, and too frequent, publicity." Telegraphic reply: "Best thanks for letter, which told me nothing essentially new. Am very wretched, though, and must abstain from work. Condition caused by over-strain and over-exertion. . . . Shall perhaps, when better, have to break away and take a change of air. Therefore all politics, home and foreign, are for the moment quite out of my thoughts so long as they keep the usual course. Best regards from yours, William."

We perceive that he was hurt, evaded the point, boasted of his exertions for the Fatherland, and looked forward to a change of air, from which he had but just returned. Friend Holstein applauded: For once at any rate it may

be said that there was one person who told the truth to William the Second. But I really believe that there was only one.” This is doubly false. Two or three more were to arrive who should venture so far, and that without the protection of friendship; but Eulenburg, the declared favourite, to whom at that time everything was permitted, told the truth far too rarely, concealed his apprehensions, and will be the more severely judged by history because he often saw aright, and kept silence about dangers which he perceived more clearly than any one else did.

However, he had early known the Emperor: we must not forget that personal affection made him leniently inclined. In 1890 Waldersee could still describe him as a devotee of the Emperor's, of whom he took an idealistic view; by 1892 he perceived in Eulenburg “ a transformation; his view is much modified, and he sees with apprehension the downward trend of affairs.” But when he was implored to speak the truth to his Imperial friend, he burst into tears: “ Ah no! I can't tell him anything unpleasant—I really can't! ” (W. 2, 374). When at that time he witnessed the Emperor's performance as Field-Marshal in the manœuvres, his head swam “ at the thought of the frightful confusion which would arise from any change in the Staff. . . . It brings back that fear of megalomania, which I combat incessantly. Here is scope for its development, and the young Emperor is daily exposed to it. Conscious of standing at the head of the most powerful army on earth, with the qualities of a gallant commander in the field, and crowned ‘ by the Grace of God ’: this is perilous indeed ” (E. 284). So clearly did he see the danger—and held his peace.

He continued to hold his peace when soon afterwards he noted down for his own perusal the more generalized truth: “ Unity of command is lacking, because His Majesty has no unity in himself. The Maison Militaire has been pompously inaugurated with Plessen at its head, who talks of nothing but gun-fire . . . I can tell no one what I really feel, because there is no harmony in any

BROWN BOOTS AND SILVER SPURS

quarter—and because it is impossible to attain that harmony. When one remembers such a master-spirit as the old Emperor was, how everyone put a shoulder to *his* wheel, which was that of the coach of State. . . . And now! Everyone snapping at everyone else, hitting at everyone else, hating everyone else, lying about everyone else, betraying everyone else. More frequently than ever before I feel as if I were living in a madhouse. Insane narrowness, insane controversies, insane arrogance. Bedlam—Bedlam—Bedlam!” (E. 2, 108).

The newly designed Court shooting-dress being not to his taste, he complains: “But why, besides all the rest, brown boots should be supposed to go with silver spurs is an enigma to me. . . . When the Emperor pays me a visit, imagine having to prance about in my old Liebenberg got-up like that—laying papers before him, in my own quiet room, with clinking heels; and as a climax, singing to my piano in high brown boots with silver spurs!! . . . I will *not* be dressed like the Imperial ‘household. I am something other than that” (E. 2, 111).

And yet, despite just perceptions, partly the fruit of common-sense, partly of wounded artistic sensibility, he never would leave this circle but rather consolidated his position in it with every passing year, for he held that “*l’amitié d’un grand homme est un bienfait des dieux.*” Soon the Emperor offered to “drink brotherhood” with him—that is, as from master to servant, for the sovereign said “*Du*,” but Eulenburg continued to write to him in the third person; and most deferentially; indeed, he was so entirely the courtier that even in letters to intimate friends he would write of the Emperor as He and Him, and in reporting the Imperial conversation would use a capital for “*Ich*” and “*Mein*” even in his rough drafts.

He charmed the Emperor, because there was nothing he could not do. After he had excelled in sport and song, shown himself a perfect host, led the conversation at table “so that the meal was spiced with gaiety, without being uproarious,” there would ensue “a discussion between me

and the Emperor of very important political questions, which from their confidential nature were, morally speaking, an extra added to all other responsibilities." Or after lunch he would be left alone in the *coupé* "with the beloved Emperor, whereupon a flood of objurgations broke over my head. . . . I could only catch his dear hand and press it, saying that Prussia was still powerful enough to have suffered no real damage. My emotion stemmed his anger, he felt at once that I understood him entirely, and that assuaged his grief." If we add to this the Berlin jokes, whereby according to his own retrospect he generally played upon the Emperor's moods, and "on dark days talked like Ristori and had a similar success" (E. 2, 381), we shall have an epitome of all the unmanly elements, of the combined sentimentality and theatricalism which were necessary for the Emperor's subjugation.

In such forcing-houses as this false sentiments encroach upon the heart; overbearingness and ambition transform themselves into sense of duty in those who cherish them; master and servant come really to believe that they are victims in the cause of the Fatherland. When at the end of 1896 Eulenburg had reason to fear, from attacks in the Press, that there was a desire to remove him from his Viennese appointment, he writes—not defending himself, but with suppliant duplicity, to Bülow: "Dear Bernhard, . . . Would the poor Emperor could be spared from having to sacrifice me! It would cause him great suffering. I feel distinctly that he cares for me more than ever." Or in lengthy communings with this same man, whom he had selected for Secretary of State, there are no such words as: "Soon it will be yours; then you will have the authority you have so long waited for"—but: "Apart from this, dearest fellow, that you really mustn't give up your work altogether, your health is infinitely important for the Emperor, the country, and the Government."

The Sovereign's favourite was courted by all. He was still only an unimportant Ambassador in Oldenburg when Marschall, who was shortly to become his superior in the

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service, that is, Secretary of State, wrote "begging you to aid me by word and deed, and when necessary, by unsparing criticism." True, Marschall knew that his Ambassador in Oldenburg might be Secretary of State at any moment; but Eulenburg knew quite as well why he fended off this promotion—he feared that the Imperial friendship "might be spoilt by the perpetual meetings and discussions" (Ho. 497). Why assume responsibility when one could enjoy authority without having to counter-sign? And why in the comfortable present, take upon one's elegant shoulders a portion of the grim German future? No—we fend off, we resign ourself: "The poor Emperor is getting on everybody's nerves; but it cannot be helped. When a marriage turns out badly, the couple can separate. But as between King and People that is not so easily accomplished, the unhappy union must go on."

Beyond his two or three intimates, no one had any idea that such swift realization had come to a man who perpetually flaunted his favoured position, and who therefore must have been looked upon as either very petty or very perfidious if he were to be regarded as seeing so clearly and yet holding his peace. So far as the Emperor was concerned, Eulenburg was neither petty nor perfidious; only weak and vain, only infatuated, and best portrayed by Bismarck. "Something of a Prussian Cagliostro. . . . A mystic, a romantic rhetorician . . . particularly dangerous for the dramatic temperament of our Emperor. In that high personage's presence he assumes adoring attitudes, which I believe to be perfectly sincere. The Emperor has only to look up, and he is sure to find those eyes fixed worshippingly upon him."

That he deserted Bismarck, despite his long intimacy in the household, is not, in him, so very blameworthy. He was the Emperor's, not the Chancellor's, affinity; for he felt, with his abysmal knowledge of himself, that he was "instinctively and profoundly repelled by forceful personalities. On the stage they are indispensable, in history

they delight me; but in personal intercourse they are unpleasant—indeed unendurable.” If, after this, he depicts his abandonment of Bismarck as a conflict between two friendships, there is none the less some truth in it; “for the Emperor was the weaker one in the decisive hour, despite his royal authority, and I could not bring myself to fail him in his unswerving conviction that my loyalty would be his buttress in that time of trial. I stuck to his colours—and that was to be my disaster.” Bitterly, in his old age, did he add the concluding words, for not till long afterwards was his lifelong friendship to be betrayed.

3

The man who “signed” for four of these years was a General; the only wonder is that this military State, during its half-century of existence, should have been officially governed by a uniform for so short a space of time.

Walderssee had fallen. Vainly did he try to stifle his ambition for the Chancellorship by perpetual asseverations in his diary that he would not for the world have been Chancellor. The Emperor had been clever enough to say gracefully: “You are too good for that”; and made him Chief of Staff when old Moltke, warned by Bismarck’s fate, retired of his own accord. But Holstein and Eulenburg had otherwise ordained. Walderssee seemed dangerous, for he too was clever and intriguing, while what they wanted was a harmless novice; hence they made a pretext of his piety, which Eulenburg’s mysticism had made unfashionable at that time, and represented to the Emperor that Stöcker was working in the Protestant interest and Walderssee in Stöcker’s. Thus both fell into disfavour. Walderssee ended by venturing on an unfavourable criticism at the manœuvres—woke from his dream of impartiality to find himself in command at Altona, was thenceforth an important eye-witness of events, and, a decade later, withdrew from the world-stage amid unmerited ridicule.

Caprivi was much better. Compared with Walderssee

he seems like the Old-Prussian General, duteous and genuine, brave and austere as the old Emperor had been—a contrast to the place-seeking, wire-pulling, intriguing, swaggering type of the new era. For a young man of narrow means the Guards was even in the 'sixties too expensive a regiment; if he managed, from the time he was Captain, to keep out of debt on his pay, not have to give up his horses, lead a secluded existence, deny himself all domesticity, he was entitled to boast of the achievement in his grey hairs; but in a life so puritanical such an one could have seen nothing of the world of which he might suddenly be called upon to rule a portion. To command and to obey—these were Caprivi's fundamental principles; and even as Imperial Chancellor he obeyed no less meekly than as General—that is to say, he obeyed his Supreme War-Lord.

Only in his obedience did he accept the position; he regarded himself as ordered to the Wilhelmstrasse as he might have been ordered to the conquest of a South-Sea island, and said in the early days to Bismarck: "If in battle, at the head of my Tenth Division, I receive a command which causes me to fear that in its execution by my men both the battle and myself will be lost, and if the expression of my honest doubts has no effect, there is nothing for me but to execute the order and go under. What's the odds? Another man done in—that's all!" So he leaped into the breach, with his bullet-head like a seal's, his clear bright eyes, and curt quiet movements; and there he stayed until he was thrust out from behind; then he went quietly and wrote no memoirs. He was without pretensions. "I feel as if I were groping in a dark room. . . . The great man overshadows me completely."

For all his genuineness, however, he could be guilty of enormities. Bismarck has nothing against him but "the wicked destruction of splendid old trees in the Chancery-garden"—unique in Berlin—which the General had had cut down so as to get more light in his room. People with

such paucity of imagination are certainly incapable of “ keeping five balls in the air at once,” and are likely to let go a Treaty of State whose very essence and operation belong to the realm of spirit. Caprivi was too good an officer to be apt, in his old age, for politics. Nevertheless in the cardinal question of England, he, the commonsense layman, displayed more insight than the specialists who succeeded him. “ With such a naval policy,” he said, “ they enfeeble our defensive power on land, and will end by bringing us into conflict with England, our only natural ally. . . . For Germany, now and in the immediate future, the only naval question is how small our Fleet can be—not how big.”

His interest was concentrated on land-defences: he aimed at larger cadres, but in compensation at a two-years' service. This was so original and daring that when he first propounded his views, one of the Staff replied with: “ If the Emperor hears of it, he will send for the police and have you arrested.” All the dangers of the uniform in the wrong place are revealed by this pleasantry. But while in everything else he was biddable, the General's courage was stimulated by his desire for more striking-power: he challenged the Reichstag, and did succeed in obtaining his cadres by a small majority. In this conflict of 1893 he was self-reliant, equal to his task, and thereby displeased his masters. But when he proceeded to advocate more reasonable social measures, and that in opposition to the secret conclave, these worthies made up their minds to destroy him.

Nothing was easier: they awaited the next occasion of displeasure, and then set to. October 1894: The Emperor receives Caprivi's adversaries from the Eastern Elbe district, who are demanding forcible measures against the Socialists. Caprivi begs to be allowed to resign, the Emperor assures him of his entire confidence, catches him by his sword-belt: “ You have promised to let yourself be shot for me. You must remain.” Whereupon Holstein, in his room, dictates an article to a journalist

POLITICS IN THE BUTTS

sworn to his service, which points out the contrast between Caprivi on the one side and the Emperor and Botho Eulenburg, Prussian Prime Minister, on the other, and exults in Caprivi's victory over them both on the Socialist question. Everything that Holstein has foreseen in due course follows: Eulenburg (*i.e.*, Eulenburg the Great) shows the Emperor the article at a shooting-party; the Emperor sends Lucanus to say that the Chancellor must repudiate it—he refuses, having in no wise inspired it. Follows dismissal, a few days after that touching appeal to his loyalty. Two hours later Caprivi is saying: "Now I am frolicsome and free! I am off to Switzerland. Do everything you can to restrain my Press from attacks on the Emperor."

Such assassinations, perpetrated by poisoned arrows from the background, and resulting in the highest positions of State being relegated to untried men, were at that time as likely as not to be brought off in the idyllic surroundings of a royal shoot. Eulenburg's pen, as apt as his heart for the things of intrigue, wherein according to his own testimony all politics essentially consist, can depict such scenes with mastery. After his cousin Botho too had asked, during lunch in the Liebenberg forest, to be allowed to resign, "the Emperor came to me with that peculiar pale, pinched look of his. I asked him whether the shoot was to go on, and went with him to his station. It was grey weather; everything looked dismal. . . . I have seldom seen him so upset. . . . 'Whom can you suggest? I have no idea whom I can call upon—don't you know of anyone?'"

"When I spoke to the Grand Duke of Baden about the possibility of a change, my friend replied by suggesting Hohenlohe as a stop-gap while we looked out for someone else, as we should have to do. . . . People like variety, Hohenlohe is something new, and at any rate no one can find fault with him, so far as that is ever conceivable in Prussia."

"I will write to Hohenlohe as soon as I have spoken

to Caprivi,’ said the Emperor. We talked of this throughout the drive, and of course only in French, on account of the beaters who were standing behind us. The sows that came running up to be shot, naturally bolted.”

Scene: The Most High, annoyed by the shoot being spoilt, upset because these troublesome Ministers will keep on asking to resign, and that at lunch. The Favourite, too astute to take the responsibility of advice, produces an uncle who has thought of another uncle, not perhaps exactly the right man, but a grey-haired stop-gap, a curiosity as it were, who will do for a change. Behind them, capable keepers, the only men about the place who know their job, in silent wrath because His Majesty is missing the best game, and jabbering French while he misses it. But even the Favourite, a minor poet, and therefore prone to generalizations, can see the irony in this rescue of the sows through Caprivi’s downfall, and does not notice how he spoils it all by the implication that the terrified game had no dearer desire than to die for their sovereign.

4

A few days later Eulenburg beheld himself and his confederates portrayed as poisoners in *Kladderadatsch*. For months the comic journal had been showing up the two friends, and with them Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter.

This blunt junior, with his bulldog face—which he lived up to by an eternal fat cigar and an ostentatious outspokenness—was an astute Suabian Holstein’s equal in political ardour, Eulenburg’s in knowledge of the world and greatly the superior of both in pluck. He was the normal one of the trio, a great lover of women, wine, and Havanas—a connoisseur indeed in the two last; in education, humour, and literary style a *Korpsstudent*, brutal yet not vicious, but above all a fighter, differing from his two friends in being unafraid of responsibility, resolute—in a word, a man.

As he could neither sing nor do conjuring-tricks, his

attraction for the Emperor was his humour, which in the two printed volumes of his private letters cannot be said to overstep at any point the limits indicated above; and thanks to this, Kiderlen was permitted to accompany him, from 1888 to 1897, upon his Norwegian cruises. While in the course of these ten summers he made fun in his private letters of the Emperor and the party in general, he was likewise inditing, under the master's eye, a series of travel-letters for three newspapers. "The Emperor always insists on my reading them aloud to him, then he contributes his own ideas, and copies go off to the Empress." Besides these Byzantinisms, which cramped his native intelligence, he made great play with the Emperor by dogmatic criticism of the deposed Bismarck, who in his day had discovered Kiderlen, and of whose early recognition the latter had been wont to boast.

The rôle of "Nature's gentleman," for which he had cast himself, the rough outer husk which he so easily assumed without possessing any sweetness of kernel, made him as great an object of interest to false democrats as the wise true-hearted woman whom, although she was not very much his social inferior, he hesitated for twenty years to marry. His want of deference and tact was looked upon as forthrightness; and if, when in festive mood, he talked about "Court-parasites and a pack of Court-women," why! that was just the "hare-brained youngster," and simultaneously the new Bismarck—for he aped his elder even in handwriting. In reality Kiderlen was neither hare-brained nor rough; he had no trace either of Bismarck's enigmatic character or of his high competence; but he *had* political dexterity, and being more of a worldling, he could make better use of it than Holstein in his cell could make of his. Holstein indeed could get on with him better, in practical affairs, than Eulenburg could; for Eulenburg only put up with him as the Emperor's protégé, but was secretly repelled in every sensitive nerve by Kiderlen's mere proximity.

For months Holstein, Eulenburg, and Kiderlen vainly

sought to detect the dangerous jester who made fun of them in fables and verses, depicting them wittily and with uncanny knowledge, in *Kladderadatsch*, as Friend Oyster, Count Troubadour, and Cock-sparrow. As each new number appeared, they would meet for consultation with Secretary Marschall in Holstein's room; if one was absent, the others would wire him the day's attack. They tried to suborn the editors; and when the text became more critical, wholly abandoning fantasy and humour, they despatched a General to the publisher of the journal, commissioned to threaten him with military legal proceedings, since he had been a lieutenant of the line, "discharged with the right to wear uniform"! But the publisher was not impressed, and threatened *them* with such darts "as kill in a few seconds." Then a little Rhenish newspaper charged the three gentlemen under their real names with inspiring virulent articles which, as Bismarck's enemies, they launched in Bismarck's Press, in order to widen the breach between him and the Emperor—and more feverishly than ever were the trio haunted by the question: "Who is behind all this?"

Their natures reacted variously. Eulenburg smiled and took no sort of action, secretly resolving, however, to separate himself from his two compromising friends. Kiderlen challenged the editor and wounded him: but Holstein strode furiously up and down his room, accusing the most utterly impossible people—the Secretary of State (his Chief), who must be trying to get rid in this way of the dual régime; then Herbert Bismarck, who was covering his tracks by the Rhenish article; then Count Henckel, because he had money in a paper which joined hands in the work—ultimately calling out that perfectly guileless gentleman, who refused his challenge. But Holstein, who was thirsting for blood, made Eulenburg put pressure on the Emperor to command Henckel to fight, whereupon Eulenburg feared "that Holstein will hate the Emperor now, if His Majesty does not admit the case against Henckel; and a Holstein-hate for the

Emperor would lead to very serious consequences." As a matter of fact, Holstein never did forgive the Emperor for vetoing the duel.

Meanwhile, as in a farce, the miscreant was sitting in the next room. He was, as they learnt long afterwards, one of Holstein's functionaries.

From their conduct in this affair we can confidently predict how these three diplomats will behave in any serious political crisis.

Still greater was the sensation spread far and wide abroad in the same year of 1894 as the result of a scandal at Court. For two years all ranks in Court society, from the Empress downwards, had been receiving anonymous letters in the same handwriting: telling of intrigues, cabals, instigations, and enclosing pornographic pictures in which the heads had been cut out and replaced by photographic ones. All these missives, like *Kladderadatsch*, were so well-informed about personalities that they could only come from the Emperor's immediate environment. Though the charges were exaggerated, they were in most instances founded on fact, so that the whole Court trembled at every fresh revelation; and there were more than two hundred. The most exalted personages were accused of the most heinous misdemeanours—illicit love-affairs, fraud, calumny; the Empress Frederick said maliciously: "One half of the Court is writing letters against the other half." As the Baron von Schrader was especially attacked, suspicion fell upon his antagonistic colleague, one Herr von Kotze, for both were Masters of the Ceremonies. The convivial Kotze was a universal favourite, much liked by the Emperor, who would often thee-and-thou him, and thus he was the envy of his superiors in general. So now they discovered the clues they were set on discovering, and further—the damning proof: two sheets of blotting-paper in his office, which when held before a looking-glass displayed the very remarkable and evidently disguised handwriting of the letters in question.

With this blotting-paper they convinced the Emperor.

Confronted with such documentary evidence, he instantly fixed upon the guilty person; and it was the work of a few moments to ordain the ruin of a well-trying friend and functionary, who had never been reproached with anything worse than frivolity and love of pleasure, armorial bearings, and decorations. He did not take into consideration the conviviality of the accused and the austerity of the accuser, ignored the latter's possible motives, ignored no less the fact that Kotze too had received these letters; he consulted no graphologist upon the blotting-paper, nor did he even try the obvious experiment of at once, and secretly, sequestering Kotze and then seeing if the letters continued to come; least of all did it occur to him to give the accused an opportunity of speaking, or invite the opinion of some trusted person—not one of these things did he do. In a quarter of an hour the man was repudiated. Returning in the best of spirits from his mother's country house, Kotze no sooner entered the Palace than he found himself arrested: "In the King's Name." Since as Master of Horse he came under military jurisdiction, they took him, an hour later, in a Court carriage, and in uniform, to the Military Prison.

Inquiry by the Military authorities. No evidence. Writing materials forbidden, his wife to have access to him only in the presence of an officer. Nevertheless, in a few days more letters were received at Court. *Now* a graphologist was consulted. The new letters, he pronounced, were from the writer of the old ones, but these had not come from the person who had used the blotting-paper. A week went by before the Adjutant-General released the Master of the Ceremonies, no evidence having been obtained. What did the Emperor do? Did he send for his old friend now? No—he washed his hands of the whole thing. When the scandal, carried far beyond the boundaries of the Court by his order of arrest, began to take effect upon the public, he declared: "I have nothing to do with this business. The investigation is now being conducted by the Judge Advocate of the Corps." Followed

hostilities between the Kotze and Schrader parties and families, a constant stream of aristocratic witnesses, a whirlwind of threats, of insults; for nine months this went on. At last, shortly before Easter, came full acquittal.

“What will the Emperor do now?” asked all the world. Receive the acquitted in full Court? Give higher rank, and fuller confidence, to a servant so horribly and so mistakenly assailed? By a title and decorations proclaim to all the world that to err is human, to be rash is possible, but that a king can make kingly amends? He took counsel with Kotze’s successor and adversary—what is to be done in such a situation? An innocent man cleared, a dead man resuscitated: very troublesome. Receive him? Out of the question. But some sort of token of favour! A breast-pin? A snuff-box? Have we got it at last? We have, your Majesty!

Next day, on behalf of His Majesty, an Easter-egg composed of flowers was delivered at Herr von Kotze’s abode. He never saw his sovereign again. But his enemy—the Baron von Schrader—him he killed in a duel. Nevertheless his life and his happiness, his reputation and his family’s privileges were gone, his name was brought into dishonour—from Siberia to Cape Town “Kotze” was synonymous with wanton calumny. And in this affair likewise, the real offender sat, unsuspected, in the next room.

According to Waldersee, it was a near relative of the Emperor’s.

5

The Court of William the Second, with its cold glitter—which we propose to ignore, though of its sycophants we shall have something to say—was not the favourite abiding-place of its master. The excitement of bedizements and banquets quickly palled; splendour repeated itself *ad nauseam*; the craving for publicity was only to be satisfied by the streets, by perpetual goings and comings, by entries on a much larger scale and with much more

resounding effects than at first. None the less, everything had to be kept up to the mark in Haroun-al-Raschid style, for the visits of foreign potentates who were to be dazzled by the power and glory of the German Empire, as symbolized by the Weisser Saal. Not only was gala dress supplied for six hundred Court lackeys, but so many were kept, in view of the great banquets, that none officiated on more than 139 and many on only 81 days of the year. The Grooms of the Chambers were on duty from 150 to 70 days in the year; the rest of the time they—mostly young men in the middle twenties—lounged away idly in Berlin.

The table appointments of the Palace were worth something between one and two millions (Z. 52). Once, when a touring automobile was out of order and the Count responsible represented the heavy expenses incident on taking reserve cars, the Emperor said angrily: "It doesn't matter what my wishes cost. I require everything to be up to the mark. You are answerable to me."

Reischach, who had superintended in the old Emperor's time, states that the royal stables under William the First had been regarded as a luxury—only their Majesties, the Mistress of the Robes, the Palace- and Court-ladies having carriages. Under William the Second, "we had to turn out something like two hundred teams every day, and these for the Mistress of the Robes, the wives of Court officials and the Ladies of Honour, the Adjutants-General and Aides-de-camp, the Heads of Cabinets, the Lord High Steward, the Masters of the Household, the Chamberlains on duty, the Prince's tutor, the two physicians, and the Grooms of the Stables, besides horses for the Household. . . . Most of these went out twice every day, and frequently three and four times. In the Royal Stables we had our hands full nearly the whole year round in Berlin, Potsdam, and the New Palace, and if a journey was ahead of us, we were often kept at it in three different parts of the monarchy at once." And if two Adjutants-General left Potsdam on duty, taking the train to Berlin,

CIGARETTE-ASH

his calculation is that even so twenty carriages would be requisitioned that day for the pair of them. As the allowance paid by the people to their monarch, and modestly termed the Civil List, mounted higher and higher by reason of the manifold demands for extra grants, the Emperor, who could economize for himself, was able to lay by four millions after only two years of his royal services (W. 2, 157).

The Court-Marshals had the heaviest task of all. The Emperor did not like to be asked many questions, but could be very ungracious if one had neglected to consult him about this or that. One scarcely dared to put more than two or three questions, and had to be very careful to choose the right moment for those" (Z. 52). The proud Augustus Eulenburg, a Master of the Household, aged seventy, had often to go out to Potsdam in the evening and spend the night there, so that he might, in the morning, meet his sovereign on the return from his ride, walk with him along the eighty paces to his room, and there and thus bring forward the most essential questions, although the Emperor was never for two hours in the day engaged in serious work. This arbitrariness increased:

"If at night in the smoking-room"—so Zedlitz relates—"some cigarette-ash chanced to fall upon the carpet under the Emperor's eye, it was: 'Of course; just like my Court-Marshals! Instead of taking care of my things, they do more to spoil them than anyone else!' And shaking his fist in my face, he continued: 'But I'll soon teach you what's what!' Although such attacks from the Emperor were by no means uncommon . . . this incident offended me very deeply. I felt immediately that, just because it did, I should find it difficult to take any notice of it; the Emperor always did these things as it were between jest and earnest, sensible people being supposed to see that after all it was only his fun. . . . That was precisely what gave the Emperor such power over those who surrounded him; everyone dreaded the incon-

siderateness he could show. And of course he always had the jeerers on his side."

Afterwards, the Court-Marshal did declare himself to have been offended. The Emperor: "I haven't the least idea what you're talking about." Explanation. "Ah, *now* I know what you mean." Further representation by the Court-Marshal that junior officers were present, while he was forty-four years of age. The Emperor: "But you don't look a day over twenty-eight. You mustn't be so thin-skinned!" Then, with a nod: "Come, it's all right!"

This admirable narrative of a just reproof is followed by one sentence which sums up the whole. Zedlitz concludes with: "Whereupon I bowed, and withdrew." The offender, king though he be, is for once called to account; he at first remembers nothing about it, then makes an irrelevant and ambiguous remark upon the youthful appearance of the complainant, advises him to acquire a thicker and more accommodating skin, and finishes with a nod and an affirmation resembling that of the Deity after his day's work of creation: "He saw that it was good." . . . Before him stands a Silesian Count of ancient lineage, not a stranger but a part of his daily surroundings. No matter; the monarch is nowise abashed, for he knows how such rare reproofs must always end—in a silent bow. .

How could it have been otherwise, when we consider the anxieties and terrors which undermined the vitality of these functionaries? Here is the programme of an ecclesiastical ceremonial at Metz: "Their Majesties were invited by the Bishop graciously to proceed to the chairs placed, in the Cathedral, on the right of the altar in the choir. On His Majesty's left the Legate, on Her Majesty's right the Lord-Lieutenant, were to take their places. It had as well been verbally agreed that both the Legate's and the Lord-Lieutenant's seats were to be somewhat behind, and a step lower. But completely disregarding this arrangement, the Legate, instead of taking his place on the left of Their Majesties, seated himself obliquely

ROMINTEN

opposite, under a sumptuous baldachin, on a chair which overtopped those of the Royalties" (Z. 35). The indignation at this was universal: such invectives were heard as in the Middle Ages would have given rise to many years of war. But what had the Legate at Metz to do, from his exalted seat? Had he to confer upon the monarch the anointed Crown? Or preach him a sermon? Nothing of the kind. "Thence he proceeded to confer the blessing," which, if placed a step lower than those who were to receive it, he could not, technically speaking, have properly done.

Happier than at Court was the Emperor at the chase. True, his shooting-estate, Rominten, one of the finest forests, belonged to the State, not to the Crown; but its 100,000 acres were transformed by the Imperial desire from a primeval forest with lakes and rivers into a sort of sportsman's chess-board—for every shoot was on the drive principle, his enjoyment consisting rather in the numbers easily despatched than in the more arduous outwitting of individual victims. "An army of foresters attended on bicycles, in carts, on horse, and on foot, so that actually every . . . point was under the keenest observation from first to last. . . . Besides this, most of the preserves were lavishly provided with carriage-roads, observation-posts, and shelters, . . . so much so that I often could not avoid a sense of regret at seeing so magnificent a forest turned into an artificial shooting-demesne" (Z. 39).

Even Eulenburg, so frequently present, says that "the shoots were horrible. This massacre of unfortunate creatures, utterly unable to escape from their fate of destruction, is no kingly recreation. Strangely enough, no one at Court has any sort of sense that it adds nothing to the glory of a sovereign to cause these hapless wild creatures to be driven into an immense enclosure, in the centre of which the noble sportsmen are posted, pouring their shots upon the panting desperate brutes, as they hurl themselves perpetually against the farthest hedges; and this never stops till all are dead or else dragging mortally

wounded on the ground, until at the end of the day they are put out of their agony."

As numbers were the sole aim, and the game was driven up to the gun's mouth, the Emperor, in three December days with Prince Donnersmarck, could proclaim his one thousand six hundred and seventy-fifth head; and in his forty-third year cause to be inscribed in golden letters on a block of granite: "Here His Majesty William II brought down His Most High's fifty thousandth animal, a white cock-pheasant." For the rest, the exalted sportsman sometimes had to turn his attention to the game when he least expected it, would be summoned from his royal labours by the cry of "A Stag!" and never knew that Tirpitz, when submitting papers, had arranged with the Head Forester to omit such signals during his conference (T. 138). It was really necessary, when questions of State had to be brought to Rominten for decision, and the only train to Berlin be caught, so as to speak next day in the Reichstag.

But happiest of all was the Emperor on his yacht. Safe from the submission of papers, surrounded by a little group of boon-companions, sheltered from every conceivable onslaught, far from wife and family, in a patriarchal little domain where he could keep an eye on everything, even the kitchen, look after everything himself—absolute monarch of all he surveyed, no democratic cheeseparings to be feared, on Sundays even acting parson; inaccessible, and yet able at any moment to flash his wishes along the wire to the world at large: thus blissful was his life in Greek bays and Norwegian fjords. With the latest news, conveyed to him telegraphically by the Foreign Office, he would dally so long that his tantalized companions got their friends to wire them the same information; and then the over-trumping of each other's tricks between the initiated on board was like that of a parcel of schoolboys on a country walk.

It was a kind of perpetual floating casino, and the tone was to match. In the mornings, "It amused him to make

members of his suite, including the oldest Adjutants-General, do open-air exercises and gymnastics on deck, and while they were bending their knees or squatting, he would take the opportunity of giving them such a push that they sprawled all over the place" (E. 2, 110). "The old boys professed to be greatly delighted by this attention, but clenched their fists in their pockets, and afterwards abused the Emperor like fish-wives." The mental recreations during these weeks of idle companionship are best described by Kiderlen: "As Chief Companions of the Yacht were designated: Count Waldersee as Punch-maker, von Hahnke as Chief Trencherman and Head-Conductor in E-sharp, Count Goerz as handy-man in all emergencies and member of the choir, Count Wedell as expert in Eti-Piquet-questions, Count Eulenburg as bard and ballad-maker; Dr. Leuthold, Aesculapian to the First Class. Von Senden was Navigating Officer under both tropics, but especially that of Cancer"—and so forth. Then he describes how Count Goerz had to go through his repertory of animal-imitations every evening. "The evenings were partly musical, partly devoted to conjuring-tricks by Hülsen; sometimes we had to get up something else. I have already done the Dwarf, and turned out the light to the Emperor's vast delectation. In an improvised sing-song I did the Siamese Twins with G; we were connected by an enormous sausage."

The company's ages ranged from thirty-five to sixty.

As he could never be alone, the Emperor spent the evenings, when guests were not present, with the Empress. Remembrances of his early youth, hatred for his mother, had made him apprehensive beforehand of feminine influences, and even in the beginning "he kicked against the pricks of marriage" (E. 89). Before long, too, he was irritated by his wife's piety—in and near Berlin she had forty-two churches built in ten years, which on a rough calculation is one every three months—and he was bored by the limitations of her Ladies of Honour. In these surroundings he could even be reticent, for liberty's sake;

and though he probably never indulged in dissipations, he would break away—so Zedlitz relates from his seven years' experience—"as often as he can; is always in the highest spirits the instant he departs, and best enjoys his life at a distance from family restraints. On his every return I noticed the depressing effect it had on him. He always wants to get away, but his consort does her utmost to prevent him. . . . This clinging affection is womanly and touching enough, but I was often inclined to think it ill-advised, for running after others always makes us wearisome to them. . . . His extreme restlessness, the perpetual need of something to look forward to, arises from the Emperor's dissatisfaction with the limitations of his family circle. His temper, always somewhat gloomy in the New Palace and at Potsdam, undergoes the most agreeable transformation from the moment any plan is in progress, for instance a journey, and most noticeably when stimulated by male society and the prospect of a complete change."

What went on behind closed doors in this conjugal relation of a gifted, highly nervous man with a sweet-natured, narrow-minded, devout country-girl was revealed to few, and by fewer still reported; compassion for the hapless consort of an hysterical autocrat disarmed all criticism. She saw through many an insincerity in the Emperor's sycophants; but when once she was complaining of the faked reports from the Kadinen Estate, and Count Eulenburg (the elder) begged her to let the Emperor hear the truth for once, she would only repeat: "Unfortunately I can't do anything; he would say 'Go away; you don't understand these things'" (Z. 74). From two dialogues at which the Court-Marshal was present—from two momentary states of mind—we can reconstruct many years of matrimonial tedium, wherein the wife is by far the most to be pitied. Two days before his birthday the Emperor once countermanded a dinner to thirty-four Princes, on account of the illness of one of his sons. The Empress: "But, William, surely you won't do that!"

EVENING-DIALOGUE

“The Emperor roughly pushed her away: ‘I decide these things—not you!’”

Shortly before that, on one of the few quiet winter evenings at the New Palace—no guests, only two Ladies of Honour and four gentlemen being present—the Empress sewing, he reading despatches or newspaper-cuttings, occasionally aloud, the others turning over illustrated journals at the big table, till close on eleven o'clock: “The Emperor had been reading to himself practically the whole evening, when suddenly he said to the Empress: ‘Do you intend to stop here all night?’”

“‘No, William; but I didn't like to disturb you, as you were so busy reading all the evening.’”

“‘Well, what else can I do, when this place is so frightfully boring!’” (Z. 94).

A conjugal dialogue which no dramatist could surpass.

Reverse of the medal for his subjects: A speech at Schleswig: “Her Majesty—the shining jewel always at my side! The embodiment of all the virtues proper to a German Princess, it is she whom I have to thank for being able to fulfil my exacting duties.” Commemoration Day of the Borussia Students; Imperial Speech: “Never before, in the whole recorded history of the German Universities, has any one of them been honoured thus. At beautiful Bonn, the Empress, the first Princess of the land, encircled by her illustrious ladies, is present at a Students' festival. . . . I hope and believe that all you young Borussians, on whom Her Majesty has smiled to-day, will feel that their whole lives are henceforth ennobled.”

6

General Head-quarters: thus, immediately after his accession, did the Emperor rechristen the old-time Maison Militaire, and this martial style might seem to point to mobilization; but it was no more than the rodomontade perpetually inspired by his duality, for he prized but scantily the counsels of his aides-de-camp. The desire for

security against external danger sprang rather from that sense of dangers within the realm which kept him in constant fear of popular revolts throughout his reign of thirty years; this was, again, the reason why he trusted no class, no party—none but his paladins. Officer of the Bodyguard this, and the Bodyguard as a whole, were ideas which in his mind regained their most literal meaning; he even established a Night Bodyguard for his own person. His Guards were, each and all, the men who in the hour of danger were to shield him with their own bodies; and no such danger could ever confront him on the battlefield, where modern commanders of troops do not appear in person—it could come only from the heart of his realm, from the Red Volcano in its midst.

So the motives urging William the Second to reliance on the Army were twofold; hence we should expect to find him shining in that sphere, where interest and ambition joined hands. In a hundred speeches he revealed himself, and amazed the nation. “As in 1861, so now—division and distrust prevails among the people. Our German Empire rests upon a single steadfast cornerstone—the Army. . . . If it should ever again come to pass that the City of Berlin revolts against its monarch, the Guards will avenge with their bayonets the disobedience of a people to its King!”

At first he went in for reforming everything—General Staff, manœuvres, uniforms; he wanted younger Generals; he personally interfered in every quarter, they were each and all bewildered. This lasted a year. Then came the unexpected: the group he most distinguished, his own special group, began to compare the Old-Prussian tradition with the New-German fashion, and got uneasy. So early as the May of 1890 Waldersee, as Chief of Staff, confesses:

“It is very painful to me to be told that the Emperor is visibly losing ground within the Army. The disaffection has been gradual, but is now decidedly more widespread. The causes? Marked preference shown for the Navy, as also for the Guards, and very little interest in

BAD BLOOD IN THE ARMY

the Line. . . . Considerably less courtesy to highly placed officers than his grandfather was wont to display. An artless love of playing at soldiers, unmistakably evinced by the incessant alerts, for no reason whatever. . . . Contempt for the judgment of experienced men. Frequent favouritism towards individuals, attributable only to personal sentiments, and on the other hand excessive severity towards others. . . . Indiscreet comments to officers upon their superiors in rank. Finally, the inclination to make himself popular at the expense of the Army. . . . I write this down, because it is over and over again conveyed to me from the most widely different quarters, and by the men who are best capable of judging. . . . The senior officers are not left long enough in their positions nowadays. . . . A very evil result of this is the sense of insecurity it awakes in them, and the consequent lack of pleasure in their work. That affair of the critique " [on the manœuvres] " is widely known in the Army, and has made bad blood there. . . . The Emperor . . . is severely blamed; they say, 'What will be the end of it, if there's no authority that counts!' If I hear of such grievances they must be genuine; for as I am supposed to be a particular friend of the Emperor's, most people are very cautious with me " (W. 2, 126).

This is the first dark saying we are given to reflect upon—it comes from the principal soldier in the Army. Some months later, during the Imperial Manœuvres of 1890, he resumes in still gloomier tone:

"Last year, even, it went off better. Now there is greater certainty of touch, but along with it, over-estimation of his own capabilities. . . . The Emperor is extraordinarily restless, tearing about in every direction, going much too far forward in the fighting-line, interfering with the Generals' leadership, giving innumerable, frequently self-contradictory orders, and barely listening to his advisers. He always wants to win, and so takes an unfavourable decision by the umpire in very bad part. I should know this, having once ignored that desire. . . .

His disposition of troops was decidedly bad; even the night before, it was clear that he must lose the battle, and there was marked satisfaction at this among their Highnesses and the suite. . . . If he insisted on taking the command in war, not merely as a matter of form like his father and grandfather, there would be a disaster."

The day after the critique the Emperor sent privately to ask Waldersee if he would care to take the Stuttgart Command. Moltke held that the Chief of Staff could not be dismissed "without injury to paramount interests." Three months afterwards Waldersee *was* dismissed, but quite graciously—the Emperor saying: "The Chief of Staff will be little more than a kind of amanuensis under me, and for that I require a more junior officer."

To make up for his failure in the manœuvres he turned his attention to tactical work, again without success. What was to be done, to prevent his being present at the critique? "It was adroitly conveyed to him that there were measles at Head-quarters. If he *had* been present, Schlieffen [the new Chief of Staff] would probably have been obliged to send in his resignation" (W. 2, 234)

To avert a third discomfiture next year—that is, in March 1893—"his aide-de-camp made confidential enquiries of Count Schlieffen as to his solution of the problem set, and worked upon this basis with the Emperor. Thus at the critique, the monarch could confidently uphold the Chief's views, and let it be perceived that he himself had hit upon precisely the right solution" (W. 2, 286).

Count Schlieffen, having got off once by measles and next by a vicarious breach of confidence, was now to be confounded by a new plan of campaign for the war on two fronts, drawn up by the Emperor. "The Emperor's idea is a simultaneous offensive against France, and in this view he has depleted the Eastern forces by something between two and three divisions. We are to attack their fortresses, and there is every prospect of a sanguinary repulse. Whereas we had a really good chance if, as I wished, we let them advance . . . and then cut them to pieces, as we

PROMOTIONS

could have done. . . . But Schlieffen will have to choose between his appointment and preventing the Emperor from carrying out his crude ideas" (W. 2, 318).

This particular war-game turned into deadly earnest—twenty years later the Emperor's scheme helped the French to win the Battle of the Marne.

Here is Eulenburg's opinion in the same year of the Military Cabinet: "The idea that an aide-de-camp is sacrosanct, the symbol of perfection in a human being, is one that I simply cannot get into my head. . . . Such men as these—and with them Senden, partly out of his mind, and Plessen! . . . It's really a blessing, after all, that in this witches' kettle, not to say mad-house, there should be something to laugh at" (E. 2, 248). Admiral von Senden-Bibran, once, through his own fault, severely snubbed in England, had imbibed a furious hatred for everything English, and tried to instil this into the Emperor "with mulish stubbornness, and a malignity and pettiness that years seemed only to increase." Adjutant-General von Plessen's insight may be judged by a later dialogue with the chief naval authority, to whom he said: "Now that England's at war, Germany must proceed against her."

"But we have no ships, Your Excellency!"

"That doesn't matter. Get a single division landed—and we're rid of England."

More protests from the Admiral.

"Well, if that won't do, we and Russia can march against Egypt and India!" (Eck. 2, 44).

Everything had to be militarized, including the Ministers. At a dinner in the beginning of 1889 the Emperor, in expansive mood, announced various promotions—told Gossler, the Minister of Education, that he was now a Major, and von Scholz, Finance Minister, that he was a Lieutenant. The latter took it as a joke, but three days later read with pure amazement the printed announcement that Sergeant von Scholz was now Lieutenant. It was only six months after William's accession, but already the *Germania* was in ironical mood. "Hard luck! The Chief

of the Prussian Ministry of Finance is fifty-five years old, and up to the present has had to be satisfied with the modest rank of sergeant. But now he has climbed so high as a Second Lieutenancy."

Not that such promotions by any means enhanced the Ministers' prestige in their sovereign's eyes, for at heart he held all officers of the Reserve to be a little ridiculous; such popinjays were not regarded as belonging to the *élite* of humanity. All the same, as military attachés they were privileged to disport themselves in the diplomatic sphere; indeed, their activities in foreign capitals quickly wrung this confidential minute from Eulenburg: "They are permitted to send letters and reports direct to the Emperor, who takes every word they say for gospel. He thinks ever so much more of these communications than of reports from any one of his Ambassadors who does not happen to have been at some time an officer on the active list. . . . These gentry, cavalry-captains or majors, are solemnly preparing themselves to step into an Ambassadorship one of these days. . . . Over and over again I can trace the influence of the military group, which represents a permanent camarilla, but is not recognized as such by the militarized German State. For if anyone lets fall a remark about military intrigues, up gets some General or another, twists his moustache, and says: 'I, General So-and-so, herewith declare that any such expression as "Aide-de-camp Politics" is a foul slander'" (E. 2, 245).

That this protest against a dual régime should come from Eulenburg enhances its piquancy. The favourite, jealous of all other favourites, informs posterity of a camarilla which at the worst was merely running counter to another one.

Such were the influences shaping the Emperor's home-policy.

"I know only two political parties—that which is for me, and that which is against me!" The motto of an absolute ruler. These words, spoken at the age of thirty, at a time when good intentions were at their highest and

CONTEMPT FOR THE REICHSTAG

infatuation was at its lowest, introduce the theme which for three decades he was to vary by alienation from all parties in turn. The Reichstag and the Prussian Diet (*Landtag*) were to him assemblies of ignorant headstrong persons whose political hues he could barely distinguish. When differences arose, his one idea was to send home for his Guards and let *them* take the recalcitrants in hand; from a *coup d'état*, which was openly urged on him, he was deterred only by the uncertainty of the issue.

His inmost feeling was made manifest in the year 1897, when he said to Baron von Stumm, in the hope that his words would go further: "If the Reichstag doesn't vote me my ships, there'll be such a row as there's never been before!" If everything had been "his"—ships, soldiers, subjects—this arbitrariness might have been in order. At first it was only in confidence that he revealed his heartfelt contempt. To the Tsar in 1895: "Both parties are about ripe for being hanged in batches." And on an official document in 1899: "Just what I've been preaching daily for years to those mutton-heads in the Reichstag!" On the visit to Ballin's ship in the Kiel Week he kept all the male guests standing, and talked the whole time with ladies only, because he had seen with disgust on the list of those present the names of Bassermann and Stresemann, two members of the Reichstag who had never attacked him. So profound was William the Second's disdain for the representatives of his subjects.

His early ambition of conciliating the Socialists had been buried in oblivion after the first attempt. Caprivi's fall and Bismarck's were caused by directly opposite reasons—Caprivi's because he was not in favour of emergency measures against Labour, Bismarck's because he was. Now it was clear to the Emperor that "the men" were not to be won over, that the class and the Party were identical, and so the class also became in his eyes the enemy of the State. Force alone could prevail. As the Socialist Press grew more and more critical, Plessen was soon saying to the Emperor: "We must turn on the

guns at once—that will put a stop to it.” This simple policy the Emperor repudiated with the trenchant reply: “Rubbish! I’ll have *you* call out every blighter that insults me!”

Count Mirbach, in the House of Lords, moved a proposal for a new franchise; Köller wanted a State prosecution of those Socialists who refused to stand when the Emperor’s health was drunk; the Die-Hard Press was for association of the German Princes in a New Federation whose aim should be the abolition of universal suffrage. At the same time, on Sedan Day in 1895, the Emperor described the Socialists as “a gang of men unworthy to bear the name of Germans,” and appealed to the sword against the “treasonable rabble”; “we must get rid of these elements once for all.” This speech was followed by other incitements to civil war.

All the more closely, one might suppose, he would now have attached the loyal Right. Were not the Conservatives his Triarians? They were the Agrarian Party. When in 1894 they defeated the Commercial Treaty with Russia, and in 1899 the Rhine-Elbe Canal Bill, on both of which the Emperor was keen, he became more rabid against them than even against the Socialists—the latter he had feared from the first, but the former he had regarded as a buttress against the enemy. Now his very Bodyguard was tottering, for the Guards and the Agrarians were of kindred blood. If the most ancient nobility was refractory, where was the Royal Authority? A wholly Frederician conception of affairs—only, just a hundred years too late.

First he appealed to tradition: “With a very heavy heart I have been obliged to recognize that by those who stand nearest to Me among the nobility My best intentions are misunderstood, and in a sense defied; nay, the word ‘Opposition’ has actually sounded in My ears. An ‘Opposition’ by the Prussian nobility is a thing in its very nature inconceivable. As the ivy clings to the trunk of the gnarled oak-tree, decks it with its foliage, and

FORMULA OF BANISHMENT

protects it when the tempest rages round its head, so does the Prussian nobility adhere to My House."

But the ivy, which never yet protected a single oak in a tempest, but has strangled many a one which it appeared to beautify, twined still more stifflingly about the gnarled orator: "If the nobility" (it was written) "are henceforth to venture on no opposition whatever, they will have—so far as their relation to Parliament is concerned—to renounce either their rank or their mandates, even in the House of Lords."

The Emperor was beside himself—proscribed the *Kreuzzeitung* at Court, deprived Count Limburg-Stirum, who had shown that it was the duty of the Lords to expostulate with the Crown, of the rank of Ambassador, and wired to one Dönhoff, who by voting for the Russian Treaty had broken his pledge to the Party: "Bravø! Done like a true patrician!" In the second skirmish he forbade a dozen "Canal-Rebels" to appear at Court, and according to Yagemann, forms were actually printed and the names filled in. "So-and-so is for the present banished from Court by reason of opposition not only to My policy but My Person." At the same time he suspended from office two Presidents and sixteen *Landrats*, but rescinded all these measures when alarmed by the increasing outcry.

While these things were going on the Emperor's friends stood by, apprehensively noting symptoms which they judged to be alarming; nor has anyone—if his rough drafts did not undergo subsequent retouching—analysed more skilfully than Eulenburg the causation and the inherent perils of the new regime. "The King of Prussia," he wrote to Holstein, "is empowered by the Constitution to rule autocratically. Does William the Second commit indiscretions? Does he promulgate decrees which overstep the limits of his rightful authority? . . . This is not the point at issue—which is, that Germany and Prussia will no longer suffer the Emperor to assert his private will and pleasure. It is melancholy to say it, but the establish-

ment of the German Empire—that is to say, the transfusion of Liberal South-German blood into Prussian veins, the amalgamation of the ruling Statesman with the slumbering Barbarossa—has been the ruin of the Old-Prussian monarchy. An autocratic sovereign, be his rights what they may, is no longer conceivable by a progressive educated people. Only those monarchs will be tolerated who accept the parliamentary forms of government. . . . If the Emperor is now assuming autocratic authority, he is well within his rights—the only question being: Who is going to win at that game? I fear that nothing but a successful war will give the Emperor the necessary prestige for that. . . . Another form it might take is that of Imperialism—logical, this, for the autocratic Emperor. But it would mean, if not for him for his successor, the end of the monarchy. . . . That His Majesty is by his very nature impelled to this attempt at restoring the system annihilated by the much-belauded amalgamation is, of course, elementary.”

Here the origin and outcome of the autocratic regime are set forth with admirable perspicacity; and only one thing spoils our relish for such unerring insight. It is that its possessor, the Emperor's bosom friend, imparted his views, not to him, but always to his affinity, Holstein. Who for his part was ready with a cynically prophetic rejoinder; he answered in a semi-official style, usually foreign to his private correspondence: “I do not conceal from myself that H.M. is living on his royal capital, and that what he is heedlessly squandering now will one day be sorely needed by his son—nay, in a few years probably by himself. One of the gravest portents of the imminent extinction of German Imperial sentiment is the fact that even *your* intelligence refuses to contemplate the issues for which the present erratic régime is too surely preparing the ground.”

Thus, after six years of the Emperor's rule, did those nearest him anticipate events, tip one another the wink—and hold their tongues.

The Russian wire was cut. A year after the ending of the Germano-Russian agreement, the Tsar—on his visit to the French fleet—had stood during the playing of the detested Marseillaise; in 1892 followed the military convention. At last, after twenty years of isolation, France had the allies she longed for. It was not till some time afterwards that Holstein disclosed the real reason for his veto on the Russian treaty—fear of Bismarck's return. "It would have been dangerous to let Prince Bismarck into the secret of such a transaction." These words sum up his character: the man was such an intriguer, so perfidious in every decision he made, that he believed everyone—believed even Bismarck—to be capable of imperilling the Empire by betrayal of a treaty for the sake of personal revenge! Because Bismarck like himself could hate, he thought that the Bismarcks can feel as the Holsteins feel.

Not more than a month after his dismissal Bismarck, in his newspaper, wrote in favour of Russia as against Austria's schemes in the Balkans, and said emphatically that it was "not Germany's business to further Austria's Balkan ambitions." The Emperor, on the other hand, said to his Generals: "Russia wants to occupy Bulgaria, and is claiming our neutrality. But my word is pledged to the Emperor of Austria, and I have told the Tsar that I cannot leave Austria in the lurch."

This was his article of faith. The friendship with Austria, which was ultimately to be the ruin of Germany, was—in so far as the Emperor was concerned—inspired by the feudal House of Habsburg, and would never have been manifested by him to a confederation such as Switzerland, in which the eight States would have been united not under a monarchy but a republic. As he despised republics, and could not regard a "shadow-king" as the Most High's equal—as he took his stand upon the supremacy of the "Monarch-by-the-Grace-of-God," his friendly feeling for the Habsburg and the Sultan was less

a political sentiment than a dynastic emotion, which kept him in permanent alliance with these two Imperial rulers; and with them only. Nothing in William the Second was more genuine than this disastrous idea of "fraternal loyalty," but only in so far as it attached the Emperor to a sovereign whom he reckoned as his equal; not at all because that sovereign ruled a partly German people. And so, as between Vienna and Petersburg, the Emperor's conscience was never at rest; this was why the son of that Tsar who had outraged him, and whom he had abandoned in defiance of Bismarck, was for twenty years solicitously courted—simply because he was an autocrat in the old style, a Tsar, an Emperor like himself. An Alliance of the Three Emperors, such as had been concluded in 1884, would have been for William the only really congenial arrangement. But as to republics! They were his natural enemies—they stirred the discontented among his people to emulation. Thus in the Tsar's alliance with France he saw more danger to the Throne than to the Empire. Accordingly he more than once spoke to the Tsar, and never more plainly than in a letter at the end of 1895, of the increasing danger to the monarchical idea in general which was implicit in alliances with republics:

"The perpetual presence of Princes, Grand-Dukes, Statesmen, Generals in full-dress at reviews of the troops, public funerals, dinners, race-meetings, cheek-by-jowl with the President of the Republic or in his immediate environment, causes these Republicans to imagine that they are quite respectable people with whom Royalties can consort and sympathize. But what would be the result of this sort of thing at home, in our own countries? Republicans are by nature revolutionary, logically to be regarded as people who will one day have to be shot or hanged. They say to those of our subjects who are still loyally inclined: 'Oh, we are not such very dangerous folk—you have only to go to France, and you'll see Royalists like yourselves walking about with revolutionaries. Why shouldn't it be the same with us?'

"Don't forget that Jaurès—not by his personal guilt—

HIS ARTICLE OF FAITH

now sits on the throne of the hereditary King of France and his Queen, both of whom the revolutionaries beheaded. The blood of Their Majesties still imbrues the land. Think—has it ever been prosperous or peaceful since then? Did it not stride from war to war in its great days, till it had drenched all Europe and Russia with blood, and in the end drawn down the Commune for the second time upon itself? Take my word for it, Nicky—the curse of God lies heavy on that nation! A sacred duty is imposed by Heaven on us Christian Kings and Emperors—to uphold the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings.” Then he goes on to tell of a Russian General who in Paris had recently replied to the question: “Would Russia break the German Army to pieces?” with “No; we should go under; but what matter? Then we should get the Republic!” . . . “That, my dear Nicky, is what I fear for you.”

Seldom did the Emperor so coherently, so lucidly, pursue a train of thought. That was because therein lay his article of faith. Why Their Majesties were deposed and beheaded he did not know, any more than he knew why the Russian General had so unmistakably found *veritatem in vino*. He did not foresee by what fateful devious ways his words were to come true for that same Tsar, when twenty years should have passed—still less that he himself would have to pay so terrible a reckoning. His vision was of public funerals and race-meetings, dignitaries in full dress, and whey-faced black-hearted bourgeois rubbing elbows with hereditary Emperors, and pluming themselves on being respectable. He was living in the world of 120 years ago, more like a descendant of the Bourbons than the descendant of Voltaire's friend; he regarded Jaurès in the Chamber of Deputies as Jaurès on the throne, and at the bottom of his heart considered all those people who desired to be something more than subjects as only fit to be shot down—except that hanging them would be more suitable.

That was why the Emperor continually hankered after

Petersburg, from which he had turned away at the time of Bismarck's fall; but the consciousness—never avowed—of remorse for an act of folly was complicated by fear and distrust, and so the path of return was thorny with perpetual entanglements of purpose. For four-and-twenty years the Emperor's Russian policy was symbolic of his vacillating temperament. In the beginning of 1891, "his anxiety about Russia is plainly to be seen. With others, as with himself, he regards a sensational development as always on the cards. . . . One day he thinks that everything looks promising for peace; the next, that war is staring us in the face. . . . This will lead to our utter undoing" (W 2, 204). Two years later, he was so incensed by the strengthening of the Dual Alliance, which he himself had made possible, that Caprivi was instructed to breathe fire and flame against Russia, whereupon Schuvalov, utterly distraught, remarked: "For eight years I have been working towards the amelioration of Russo-German relations. Now my work is destroyed."

The death of Alexander—whose contemptuous allusion to him, wrested from Bismarck's willing hand, he certainly had not been invited to forget—brought to the throne in the person of the weak muddle-headed Nicholas a man whom the Emperor could dominate, and whom (especially in letters) he played with as a cat with a mouse. These letters form his only continuous correspondence in the course of twenty years. Nicky and Willy (as they called each other), totally dissimilar both in virtues and failings, exhibit in their friendship as it were one of those tortuous relationships between a man and a woman, wherein she, mostly absent and living among his enemies, will nevertheless in moments of weakness inspired by fear, yield to the man's desire—only to avenge herself (and soon) when courage is renewed by absence, with malignities and infidelities—and this with good excuse, since he too, once they are apart, is no less treacherous to her.

By preference with England. But in this most ticklish of relations, it was the Emperor who played the woman's

THE ISLAND-KINGDOM

part. With imperishable hatred and imperishable desire he reviled and wooed the powerful Briton, His German Majesty for ever emulative of the British model—studying it from afar as it were through opera-glasses, and when detected assuming an air of pure indifference and perfect self-reliance; brusquely rejecting long-awaited advances as may a beauty, tardily invited to the dance, reject her would-be partner—because she wants to see him on his knees to her, because she seeks not love but triumph. All this because, do what he will, he never can forget that in the past this man and this man's family have been insulting to him—and he belongs to the family!

Vanity, so wounded in those youthful German-English days; ambition, vulnerable to his mother's rankling shafts; mistrust, for ever brooding on the possibility of these people's secret derision—these people whose calm power he admires, whose wise action he jealously appreciates, whose blood it is at once his pride and his misgiving to feel within his veins . . . such intimations of inferiority, of which at any price he fain would purge himself, and which, all through his life, even in his dreams could put him out of conceit with his power—it is to appease these emotions that he resolves to build his Fleet, to be the Sea-Lord of a great Sea-Power, for only so can he cry quits with the Island-Kingdom, with the Mistress of the Seas.

His mother's influence was in the wrong direction. Just imagine!" he said to Waldersee at the end of 1888, "my mother is going to England, and has sent me word by the Home Secretary that she won't see me before she goes, because I have disgraced the memory of my father" (W. 2, 19). The tension was so great that at the end of 1890, before the unveiling of a monument to the Emperor Frederick in England, neither the old Queen nor her daughter sent any intimation to the Emperor, who read of it in the newspapers and despatched an adjutant to lay a wreath upon the first memorial erected to his father. "She has no religion," was his next complaint. "She is

encouraging my sister in Athens to change her profession of faith—not that I should care if she turned Jewess! I gave her a handsome jointure and several castles, and much thanks I get for it. Lately she has even threatened me, and prophesied that my ‘autocratic behaviour’ would inevitably be my ruin!” When at that time she wished to visit the prematurely confined Empress, the Emperor would not permit her even to enter the house, but led her straight back to her carriage (W. 2, 167).

Just then, in the early ‘nineties, English opinion was still unanimously Germanophil, still strongly influenced by the tradition of Waterloo and the policy of Disraeli, who had always been in favour of Germany as against Russia. There was as yet no talk of German competition; Bismarck’s legacy, embodied in his approach to Salisbury, still “lay on the table” It was reserved, then, for William the Second’s dynastic sentiments to bring about the estrangement of two countries which had fewer reasons for antagonism than any other pair of nations.

The Prince of Wales, who was about twenty years older than his nephew, was as different from him as the plate is from the impression—everything in him was white where in the other it was black, and vice versa. The one seems to come out of a play by Sardou, the other out of Ibsen’s *Wild Duck*. Prince William’s youth had been empty of gallantries; Prince Edward’s age was even still prolific in them; the virtue and emotionalism of the Emperor presented a sharp contrast to the Prince’s notorious libertinism, and to the easy-going irony which took its toll of everything. The one always wanted to dazzle, the other never—rather did his royal station bore him; and while the nephew’s fantastic imagination craved for the return of the Middle Ages, the uncle asked for nothing better than Merry Old England. Neither nerves nor susceptibilities worried this man; a great respect for his own mother made it the more difficult for him to understand the nephew’s hatred for *his*—indeed, this Prince of Wales had even expunged from his heart that impatience

FIRST HITS AT EDWARD

which had embittered the existence of his brother-in-law Frederick, and had taken refuge in pleasure from the humiliations of inactivity. For all that, he was not only shrewder and more experienced, but in a certain sense more energetic, than his restless nephew.

These contradictions of temperament could have found no worse intermediary than Victoria. It was a distorted picture of his nephew which she painted for her brother, before they really knew each other; and she and Edward were so attached that till the day of her death they wrote to one another every week (Reischach, 135).

But even in his youth the Prince had included his mother's brother in his hatred for herself—at first, no doubt, simply because he *was* her brother. Even then he gave away his English uncle to the Tsar, which is the more surprising because that Tsar was by no means friendly to Prince William, and on the other hand was Edward's brother-in-law, and might retail it all to him. When his uncle was a guest at Potsdam in 1884, Prince William boasted of his antagonism in a letter to the Tsar: "The visit seems to be bearing fruit under the fostering hands of my mother and grandmother. But these English people happen to have forgotten my existence . . . and I swear to you that everything I can do for you and your country, shall be done. But it will be a long time first." A year later: "I don't in the least look forward to enjoying the Prince of Wales's visit—forgive me, he's your brother-in-law, after all!—for with his intriguing disposition he will certainly try to play some political game with the ladies. May Allah consign him to perdition, as the Turk says. . . . It's to be hoped the Mahdi will drive all these English into the Nile!" (Lee, 480).

Scarcely had he come to the throne when he made his uncle feel that *he* was only a Prince. At his first visit to Vienna, in September 1888, the young Emperor, knowing that Edward had announced himself for the same time, laid down as a condition that he must be received alone, even refusing Edward's offer to be present in Prussian



EDWARD VII

REGATTA-POLITICS

His uncle, who was unused to this kind of thing and disliked it, gave the Emperor's friends his frankly ironic opinion: "I can't precisely make out my nephew's Colonial game. I can understand a man wanting to buy diamonds when he hasn't got any, but if he can't afford the big ones, it is more practical to chuck a hopeless game. The Emperor's interest in ships is all very well, but when one sees him taking a hand in everything with that paralysed arm of his, as he's doing just now on deck, one can't help being afraid he'll do himself some damage" (E. 2, 81). Whether Eulenburg was prudent enough to keep this to himself, or mischievous enough to repeat it, certain it is that these poisoned shafts did sooner or later reach the Emperor and implant in his heart such wounds as never ceased to rankle. With every year his reception grew cooler; the Prince called his guest "the boss of Cowes," and said: "The Regatta used to be my favourite relaxation; but since the Emperor has been in command here, it's nothing but a nuisance. Most likely I shan't come at all next year" (Eck. 1, 207).

He had his trials, assuredly. In August 1893 a sudden coolness with France over the Far Eastern question seemed to point to war with England—couriers came from London to the Queen, the Emperor too had to be informed. During dinner with Edward the Premier's private secretary arrived with letters and reports: France, relying on her Russian friends, was aiming at an expansion of territory in Farther India. "When the Emperor had read the despatches he burst out laughing, clapped his uncle on the back, and cried: 'Well, now you can go to India and show whether you're any good as a soldier!'" (Eck. 1, 208). Whereupon he returned to the "Hohenzollern."

There he summoned Eulenburg to his cabin—and completely broke down. "I really never had seen him so lose his self-command. . . . Following on the visit of the French Fleet to Cronstadt, it was the second shock resulting from the non-renewal of the Russian Treaty." The Emperor said:

“England’s Fleet is weaker than the French and Russian ones together. Our little one would be no use at all. Our Army isn’t strong enough yet to fight on two fronts. That’s why the French have chosen their moment so cunningly! Our prestige is at an end, if we can take no leading part. World-power—without that, a nation cuts a deplorable figure! What *are* we to do?” Eulenburg and two other intimates soothed him, but when they were leaving, “he still looked wretched, white and nervous, biting his lips. . . . He felt himself suddenly driven into a corner, as it were, with his Big Navy talk, and politically speaking put in his place—which for one’s poor dear vanity is always a tough morsel” (E. 2, 83).

There was a yacht-race next morning, and the Emperor was exclusively interested in the steering and manning of his boat. Edward breakfasted and lunched on board, remaining there from ten o’clock to four, when reassuring news from London relieved the tension. He never heard anything of his nephew’s collapse, which was well, politically speaking; though from the human point of view it would have been better that he should know of it, thus (as we to-day) explaining the Emperor’s bluster as the bluff put up against his nervousness and sense of impotence. But as it was, his uncle regarded him as first impertinent and then indifferent; and as the nephew never asked what had been arranged in London, the impressions of the dinner and the breakfast and lunch next day were all that Edward had to judge by.

In the same week, the yachts were becalmed in a race round the Isle of Wight. As the Emperor was expected to dinner that night by the Queen, Edward tried to induce his nephew to abandon the race and so get back in time. Answer by flag-signal: “Race must be fought out, no matter when we finish.” When, after ten o’clock, he was announced to his aged, punctilious, dignified grandmother, he had offended her more keenly than any kind of note begging her not to expect him could have done; and had again exacerbated his uncle, to whose respect for his

HOLSTEIN'S SECOND BLUNDER

mother such remissness had hitherto been unthinkable.

In the summer of 1895 England was isolated. The Liberal Cabinet was dissolved, Lord Salisbury returned to power, and with him Chamberlain; friends were looked for, Germany first of all. In July Salisbury mooted the break-up of Turkey; Hatzfeldt was electrified by the magnitude of the scheme. What Bismarck had striven for through a decade—the delimitation of the Austrian and Russian spheres in the Balkans—was at length made possible; the Russian coolness with Germany might now evaporate, the Dual Alliance would lose its *point d'appui*—while England, at long last, would automatically join the Triple Alliance.

But the name of Salisbury was enough to awaken Holstein's distrust, because Bismarck had highly esteemed him. Even private letters from the Ambassador failed to convince him—here again he judged others by the light of his own duplicity, saw England as insidiously aiming at the destruction of the Triple Alliance and bringing the Balkans down on their heads. "England," he summed up, "is not yet ripe for an alliance: we can wait." He even refused the Ambassador permission to go any further. This point of view was suggested to the Emperor in the usual way; it corresponded only too well with his own feeling. He repeated it, word for word, to Rothenhahn, and added a heightening touch: "Anyhow we are in the agreeable position of being able to watch and wait, since no one in Europe can do anything without us." . . . And now, again on the way to England, he was requested to palter with Lord Salisbury.

Lord Salisbury did not arrive at Cowes at the appointed time, nor until an hour later, excusing himself by *force majeure*, a defect in the engine, no other boat available—all demonstrable reasons. But the Emperor, whom no sense of dignity protected from a suspicion of his not being regarded with sufficient deference, was offended, lost his temper, not only declined the proposal but derided the

Turkish scheme so that the interview came to an end "in very considerable agitation." Invited to a second, in which the Emperor evidently wished to efface the impression, Salisbury never appeared, wrote his excuses; and "the result," says Eckardstein, "was a deep-seated, lasting coolness between the Emperor and Salisbury. . . . The latter, years afterwards, repeatedly said to me, referring to the disastrous interview: 'The Emperor seemed quite to forget that I am not the King of Prussia's Minister, but the Prime Minister of the Queen of England.'" But Holstein, who had desired the issue, though not in that brusque form, ascribed the affair to a passing mood of the Emperor's—the same in which a few months later he despatched the Kruger telegram.

Personal jealousies were the driving or counteracting forces in these political doings. The nephew, at this precise juncture, got himself snubbed by his uncle because he wanted to take control of the Regatta; and revenged himself by entering for the Queen's Cup and withdrawing his yacht at the last moment, so that his uncle had to cover the course alone. Then he offended him again by telling him that he had never been a soldier. Is it astonishing that in such moods, which were reflected in the suites, each should hear what the other said of him? "He is an old peacock," said William. But Edward said more wittily:

"He is the most brilliant failure in history."

•8

At Bismarck's writing-table sat a man as slight and short as the Chancellor was stalwart, as elegant as he was negligent—punctilious, worn, and usually with bent head where Bismarck's would have been combatively lifted; but the finely domed skull, the quiet well-weighed speech were testimony to the old diplomat's abilities. He ate about half as much as did Bismarck, who thoroughly enjoyed his food. But at one point this Prince oddly repeated the other—for at seventy-five he took over the

EULENBURG'S REVENGE

was thriving in its background, his pace getting twice as fast, his megalomania coming to a head. In this period of most affectionate correspondence, he was calling his friend Eulenburg, in private, the "man with the cold eyes of a snake," and having it announced in the Press, simply to injure him, that he had been selected for Chancellor. He tried to establish with Hohenlohe "a system of intimidation of the Emperor," which the Chancellor would have nothing to do with (Al. 318); he sent in a fresh resignation every few weeks, not neglecting to clear out his desk on every such occasion; launched vitriolic articles against the Chancellor, repudiated their origin in a letter to Eulenburg, which he did not sign; burnt papers, withdrew from Kiderlen, whom he had but lately designated as the only possible Secretary of State; and in his strenuous ferocity made only one mistake, which by itself is enough to disqualify him as a diplomat—he trusted to Eulenburg's secrecy.

Eulenburg, however, revenged himself in knightly fashion. When Holstein wrote to him: "I expect that a crisis, if it comes, will come very speedily, so as to profit by the Emperor's present agitation and give him no time to quiet down again," Eulenburg took this confidential letter, sent it as it was to the Emperor, and added: "Holstein's concluding remark is very amusing. One would think that I struck terror into every heart when I appear upon the scene. . . . But from afar I can only implore Your Majesty to take no hasty steps." By this treachery he made the Emperor privy to Holstein's intrigues, while demonstrating his own innocence. Terribly was he to rue it, ten years later.

Meanwhile they stuck together, smilingly detesting one another. Holstein: "I can say of you that you've been a true comrade to me in all sorts of weather." Eulenburg: "Your concluding words touch me profoundly . . . they breathe a spirit of friendship which—perhaps I *do* deserve a little, but for which, all the same, I most truly thank you." A week later, in his diary:

HOHENLOHE

task of which Bismarck had been relieved, at seventy-five on the pretext of his advanced age.

“ I have made up my mind to keep calm, and let things rip. Otherwise I should have to send in my resignation at least once a week ” (W. 2, 365). Why, indeed, should this accommodating old man have perturbed himself? Of the blood-royal, uncle to the Emperor, his new place conferring no added distinction on him, long since becalmed upon the ocean of ambition, or stirred, if stirred at all, only by brief gusts of curiosity, he had to be asked twice before he would accept, and even then his wife had vainly besought both Emperor and Empress to let him off, Holstein had suggested him because he was “ safe ”—the Grand-Duke of Baden being ostensibly the discoverer, so that Eulenburg might mention him during that scene at the shoot. “ I have no one else,” said the Emperor.

Prince Chlodwig signed for six years. Dominated by Holstein, who found him easier to drive than the strait-laced soldier who had preceded him, he was counselled by his extremely able son Alexander, one of the last real Princes of the epoch. But Alexander was a decadent, no adept in the diplomatic sphere, Holstein was profoundly experienced and indefatigable; the Prince was high-minded and a man of the world, the Baron tortuous and an intriguer, the terror of all in the Foreign Office and the Legations—and so once more and yet more irresistibly, he was master in the Wilhelmstrasse.

The silent battle of each against nearly all the others went steadily on. Holstein hated the Emperor, the Emperor loved Eulenburg, Eulenburg was beginning to hate Holstein, Hohenlohe no longer hated, or loved anyone, distrusted all three, and no more proposed to edge anyone out than to be edged out himself. In the background an untried blood-horse was pawing the soil, eager for the moment when he should be let loose for his gallop. . . . Of the trio's methods of government, take this as an example.

The Emperor, who since his angry retreat from London



Friedrich Hohenzollern
2. 31. März 1899

HOHENLOHE.

had repeatedly threatened the English Military Attaché and had had reason to regret it, underwent a sudden change of mood at the end of the same year, 1895, and said to Colonel Swaine: "You might have forced the Dardanelles all right; I would have seen to it that Austria and Italy joined hands with you" (E. 2, 182). Holstein, instantly informed of this remark through Eulenburg, rightly divined with what celerity it would travel from Berlin viâ London to Petersburg, and there cause unpleasantness; for this same Emperor of theirs had always assigned Constantinople to Russia's tender mercies.

So this one dangerous remark was taken by Holstein as the signal for a little campaign. "It cannot go on like this," he wrote to Eulenburg, now Ambassador in Vienna. "To-day I warn you again. Take care that history does not in time regard you as the Black Knight who was at the Imperial wanderer's side when he turned into the wrong path!" This moving prophecy was followed by a comment—only too well justified—from the hidden ruler on the ostensible one: "The Emperor his own Imperial Chancellor—regrettable in any circumstances, but in these! An impulsive and, unfortunately, wholly superficial-minded monarch, who has no conception of public right, political precedent, diplomatic history, or the manipulation of individuals!"

And Holstein directed his fire towards Rome as well as Vienna—bombarded Bülow too, Ambassador in Rome, with his letters; suggested that Eulenburg should work on old Hohenlohe (who was shortly expected on a visit in Vienna) to write the Emperor a letter, and while repudiating all responsibility for intervention, enclosed a sketch for this letter. From Berlin he prompted Bülow in Rome to wire to Eulenburg at Vienna in French cipher, and himself wired at great length to Vienna, commenting on his own letters to both capitals.

When this attempt failed, Holstein altered his course. In the spring of 1896 he took the field himself against Hohenlohe, Eulenburg, and the Emperor. His courage

“Holstein’s proper place is that vacant box in the stable which is reserved for biters and kickers” (E. 2, 204).

They sulked and made it up alternately like two women. In the beginning of 1897 Holstein was sulking. He was hostile to Count Goluchowski, the new Austrian Foreign Minister, because this wealthy brilliant Pole, married to a Princess Murat, had snubbed the obscure Baron Holstein twenty years ago, when they were both secretaries in Paris. Now he scolded his friend for his good understanding with this Minister, whereupon Eulenburg in two ingenuously disingenuous letters threatened to retire. “When I am found fault with, my susceptible artistic temperament gets the upper hand. I flounder and do worse than before. So it will be very easy for you to scare me away. . . . But I am so intimate with you, have so much personal affection for you, that I could not long be angry with you. . . . Still, I do take my stand on this—that I simply cannot exist officially if I do not possess your confidence and recognition, and that of the Office as a whole. . . . My artistic temperament gets hold of me—and I am repelled by everything else, and flee from it. I am laying bare my very self to you. If you want to keep me—you must bear with me!”

By such convulsive tremors, working in two neurasthenics, was the foreign policy of the German Empire tossed and torn in those distracted years.

9

In the course of five years’ visits the Emperor had roused English feeling against Germany; by his conduct towards his uncle he had offended the Court, by that towards Salisbury the Cabinet; by his prattle he had annoyed society, by his menaces the Press, by his indiscretions the man in the street, who read of them in the papers. The situation in the Transvaal, where England was about to come to grips, stirred the Emperor to definite threats—in October 1895 he overwhelmed Colonel Swaine in Berlin with reproaches: ‘England has as good

HOLSTEIN IN THE NEXT ROOM

immediate consequence—that England would forcibly resist the landing of German troops overseas, would seize German transports; his dream was of victory without war. Nor did he perceive the moral and political impossibility of impartially intervening in favour of the Boers, and at the same time mobilizing. Despite the forcible counter-arguments of his Ministers, he persistently refused to be convinced; though at first he yielded, he still insisted on despatching an officer to clear up the situation, and was evidently bent on taking some sensational step against England. Warnings only made him more acrimonious; it was “an excessively animated and even dramatic conference.” As no resolution satisfied him, and everybody was at his wits’ end, the Emperor broke off the conference with the command to Marschall: “Ask Holstein.”

Holstein, as ever, was sitting in his room; he refused to come over at Marschall’s behest (for he never would meet the Emperor if he could help it), and referred Marschall to the Colonial Director, Kayser. Why did Holstein keep out of this affair? His aloofness from other men and from the Emperor was only one reason, and not the deciding one. He had before him the Secretary of State, in urgent quest of a solution which might in some way pacify the Emperor, robbed of his triumph as he was; he had listened to a rapid, half-whispered summary of the Imperial plans, and felt the gravity of a moment in which the ruler of an Empire was so offhandedly deciding its future. And out of his fortress was *he* to come, to take his place at that table, and in the Emperor’s very ear—or else in a protocol, which he feared more than he feared the devil—relieve Chancellor and Secretary of the responsibility which for twenty years he had avoided? Undertake to pacify the Emperor, whom he himself had set ablaze? Never! One asks one’s self, indeed, if, given Holstein’s nature, this may not be the explanation—that he wanted the Emperor to expose himself; having long desired to clip the wings of that solitary rival?

Meanwhile the Colonial Director had thought of a way

THE JAMESON RAID

as threatened her old friend, the German Emperor, with war—and this on account of a few square miles of territory, all niggers and palm-trees! Your attitude positively forces me to go in with the Dual Alliance. England must make up her mind whether she's for or against the Triple Alliance."

This singular method of offering an alliance (wherein the threat to join the opposite party was pure bluff) Hohenlohe hastened to transform by wire into something so very much milder as to be almost its contrary (A. II, 5). But Swaine's report was privately printed for the members of the Cabinet, and not for them alone, we may be sure. The Chancellor of the Exchequer described it as "the most significant document that has ever been sent us from Berlin."

None the less Holstein suffered the Emperor, until near Christmas-time, to solicit England to join the Triple Alliance—the monarch again brandishing the bright sword: "Otherwise you might easily find the Continent closed against you one of these days!" London made no reply, and this was what Holstein wanted—to put the English in the wrong, on no account join forces with them at such a time, show them they weren't wanted! These labyrinthine paths to an uncertain end, congenial to his cankered temperament, were quite the reverse across the water. But a few hours after Marschall, by Holstein's desire, had on the last day of the year threatened the new English Ambassador Lascelles as the Emperor had lately been threatening Swaine, there came from Africa a kind of justification. Jameson, an English doctor, with the connivance of Cecil Rhodes and the Johannesburg agitators, had raided the Boer Republic of the Transvaal from Cape Town.

That was a Happy New Year for Holstein—Albion caught out at last! Now he could act. Telegraphic orders to the Consul in Pretoria, to requisition crews from the German ship "Seeadler." Telegraphic inquiry to the Ambassador in Paris: "Will France look calmly on at

“ NOW IS OUR MOMENT! ”

these confiscations by England? ” Plan of a continental understanding (*Holstein's Memoranda*). Telegraphic orders to the Ambassador in London: “ Should Your Excellency be of opinion that this violation of national rights is approved [by the Government] you will ask for your passports. ” London lost no time—as Holstein must have foreseen—in repudiating any connection with the raid; nevertheless Hatzfeldt was obliged to send in his drastic memorandum. Then the news reached Europe of President Kruger's victory over the meddlesome adventurers. Hatzfeldt, that night, withdrew his memorandum, which chanced to be still unopened; nevertheless the withdrawal had an unfavourable effect in London.

Still happier was the Emperor: here was the ill-wind and it was blowing *him* good! Now for the championship of the weak, now for the German Flag in the Transvaal, now for Europe against England! On January 2nd he wired to the Tsar: “ Never will I suffer the English to oppress the Transvaal ”; and three days later said to the French Ambassador: “ At that moment the English Fleet was not in readiness. . . . If all the European States had joined hands with us, we might have done something worth doing ” (A. 15, 407).

On January 3rd he called a conference at the Imperial Chancery. There were present the Emperor, Hohenlohe, Marschall, Admirals Hollmann and Knorr. The Emperor, highly excited, opened the proceedings: “ Now is our moment. Germany can obtain the Protectorate of the Transvaal. ” The means thereto: mobilization of the Marine Light Infantry; troops for the Transvaal, a landing in Delagoa Bay; under this pressure, a conference for the neutralization of the Transvaal; at the conference, cry raised against England; issue—position of most-favoured-nation for Germany, hitherto England's prerogative. Both statesmen dismayed; Hohenlohe saying quietly: “ That means war with England. ” The Emperor flashed out the answer: “ Yes, but only on land. ”

So he had not reckoned with the most certain and

out: "Congratulate Kruger." Marschall breathed again—the sedative for the Emperor was found! The Director wrote, not omitting to append his initials; Marschall returned to the conference, proudly presented the idea as his own, with the argument that it was necessary to consider public feeling—then read the draft of the telegram aloud. I send you my sincere congratulations on having, without any appeal to friendly Powers, succeeded through the energy of your own people in opposing the armed raiders who have invaded your territory as disturbers of the peace, in restoring tranquillity, and in upholding the dignity of your Government in the face of alien aggression."

All was well—except that the Emperor, after his own flourish of trumpets, listened rather grumpily to this mild performance and said: "There ought to be something about their independence." Instantly "the dignity of your Government" was keyed up to "the independence of your country." Nobody pointed out that this independence had been definitely restricted by the 1884 conventions; it struck nobody that the faintest reference to the fact that the raid was a defiance of the English Government, which had yesterday repudiated it, would destroy the point of the whole thing. Marschall appended his signature, Hohenlohe avoided that ceremony, the Emperor countersigned, the draft was immediately despatched, and the conference came to an end.

No sooner had it done so than two men did their best to arrest events. The worthy Admiral von Knorr, who was hard of hearing, only now had a chance to read the telegram; he instantly perceived the danger, and implored the Emperor not to send it. And now, worked upon by vigorous predictions of the effect in England, he did actually yield, and again consulted Hohenlohe, only to learn that the message was already on the wires.

In the very same hour Marschall visited Holstein—their rooms were close together, like a faithful old married pair's—showed him and Baron Mumm, who happened to

THE FIRST CONSEQUENCES

be there, the telegraphic fruit of their deliberations; but now it was Holstein who was dismayed and urgently advised that it be suppressed. "You don't *know* what the Emperor would have done but for this!" cried Marschall, and described the first proposals. "So you see it was the very least we were obliged to concede him."

The effect was unprecedented. Never had the Emperor so stirred his people's soul as with these words, put in his mouth by a mere Director, and reluctantly signed as a feeble compromise. The nation applauded as with one voice. In London, it is true, German dock-labourers were bludgeoned, from offices and hotels Germans were dismissed by hundreds, the German clubs were closed. "It is difficult to speak calmly of this telegram," wrote the *Morning Post*. "The fitting retort would be the ordering of our Mediterranean Fleet to the North Sea. England will not forget it, and her foreign policy will in future be strongly influenced by the remembrance." Hatzfeldt, who had to bear the brunt in London, wanted to resign, "because of the incomprehensible insanity which has come over the Wilhelmstrasse" (Eck. I, 278). The Emperor, by his own account, received threatening and abusive letters from members of English Society.

The Prince of Wales was petrified. Doubtless he would fain have said to this nephew what had been said to another nephew in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*:¹ "With silence, nephew, be thou politic." The immediate consequences were: a minatory retort by Chamberlain to this "inadmissible intermeddling with a foreign Power's affairs"; five days after the telegram, establishment of a flying squadron in the North Sea; some weeks later, non-renewal of the Mediterranean Treaty, whereupon dissatisfaction with Germany was freely expressed in Vienna and Rome.

Some days after the telegram the Emperor wrote a

¹ These words are spoken by the dying Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, to his nephew Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York (*Henry VI*, Part I, act ii, scene 5).—Translator's Note.

letter of apology to his grandmother, assuring her that he had only desired to express his indignation with the rabble who had acted in opposition to the peaceful intentions and instructions of Her Most Gracious Majesty. . . . I challenge any gentleman to point out to me wherein this was in any sense offensive to England." No reply. "The Germans in the City," wrote the Ambassador to Holstein, after many another week had gone by, "can hardly get any Englishmen to do business with them. In the fashionable Clubs, for instance the Turf, the bitterness is beyond measure. . . . If the Government likewise had lost its head, or had desired war on any grounds whatever, public opinion would have been unanimously in its favour." Salisbury, he said, "was prepared for its coming either to a rupture with us, or . . . the breaking-up of the Triple Alliance in a measurable space of time. . . . More serious is the evident desire to draw nearer to France."

But the gravest effects of the telegram consisted neither in the applause of the one nation nor in the outcry of the other; but in the clever misuse made of it by naval circles in Germany. It was Tirpitz who gave the Kruger Telegram the credit of having, more than anything else, "shown the nation the necessity of the battle-fleet."

10

"Your Serene Highness is most respectfully requested to be good enough again to furnish a memorandum of the amount of your quarter's salary, increased on January 1st, for the eleven days from the date of your retirement from the Imperial Service up to the last day of March.

"Caprivi. Imperial Chancellor."

This was, according to Bismarck, the only document upon which he ever beheld his successor's signature. He was never consulted, he was visited only for non-political purposes. At first everyone was glad to be rid of him; and Hohenlohe in the summer of 1890 noticed, as a new thing, "that, individually speaking, everyone seems

SPONGES

bigger—feels more of a personage. While in the past, under the dominating influence of Prince Bismarck, individuals felt crushed and oppressed, they have now swelled out like sponges that have been put in water. Still prettier is the image that the Emperor, in his Memoirs, either invented or quoted—it was in those days just as if one had rolled away a block of granite in a field, and found vermin swarming underneath.

Nevertheless, the old man in the eight years of his banishment gave him much more trouble than in the days of their official differences; and Eulenburg in no way exaggerated when he wrote to his friend: “I don’t regard the change to a Republic as a negligible prospect. If Bismarck were now only fifty, it would perhaps be carried out after the Cromwellian model.” The few who knew him intimately declare that, despite his royalist convictions, it was only his age which, after all that had happened, deterred him from open revolt.

It did not deter him from opposition. A month after his dismissal he began in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, as also in speeches designed for consumption abroad, to promulgate such criticism as found—at any rate in foreign parts—a more attentive audience than the Imperial utterances could command. “Every Prussian,” he declared, “has the right to express his opinions freely, but God help him if he does!” With savage cynicism he must have felt how the weapon forged by himself against the people was now turned upon himself, who was but one of them—just like that other, by which he had conferred upon the monarch the right to strike, and had been himself struck down. For whichever way he turned, it seemed that someone was against him.

To the Germans, fonder of being told about heroes than about the hearts of men, the re-emergence of the old champion was at first distressing. They would have liked to picture him in the golden autumn of his life as happy between grandchildren and municipal addresses, but above all as cordially reconciled to his loved Emperor. And so

there was many an eager hand solicitous to smoothe things down for the nation; and at the same time pacify the monarch's wrath. To Eulenburg, whose nature made it easy for him to be on “ cordial terms with both sides,” it occurred, after a year of this, that the Emperor might offer the Prince the Palace of Bellevue as a habitation, if he should become a member of the Reichstag. “ If he refuses, he will accentuate the contrast between them; if he accepts, he would be, as the Emperor's guest, rather frowned upon by public opinion, should he make himself disagreeable.” To this courtly logic Holstein's sleepless distrust responded: “ The offer of Bellevue would be looked upon as a proof of uneasiness, and would make the enemy still more insolent.” This pair of psychologists failed to see that Bismarck might never become a member of the Reichstag, but would have plenty of plausible reasons for refusing the offer of the Palace.

But Holstein's mortal apprehension of Bismarck's return was reawakened, and in long letters he conjured his friend—this was at the end of 1890—as follows: “ The Emperor *is* actually talking about Bellevue—for God's sake come! Or write!” And Eulenburg did hasten to extinguish the flame he had himself kindled, by retailing Holstein's arguments in no less lengthy letters to the Emperor, and warning him that “ experiments of so dangerous a kind might lead to catastrophe, if the country were disaffected. . . . On the other hand, to pile arms before Bismarck would mean a most frightful fiasco for the monarchy.”

And yet his uneasy conscience could not get quit of the problem—intiguer that he was, who had betrayed his earlier patron to his newer one; and Eulenburg's second idea, imparted to his friend after the first had been abandoned, is simply and solely grotesque: “ When the Emperor next comes to Kiel, Prince Bismarck might be on the platform at Friedrichsruh for three minutes or so, and the Emperor might shake hands with him. . . . No compromise . . . an article in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*

soon afterwards . . . but they would have shaken hands. Simultaneously there should be a demonstrative recognition of Caprivi's services. . . . The offer of Bellevue I should have considered inadvisable only if the Emperor were to be a guest there—that would have looked like undue influence." Delicious—the way this courtier consigns his own idea to oblivion in a paraphrase, conceiving the situation of a host who should take no notice of his guest; but then reverts to the dear old method of the railway-station—three minutes or so; and in spirit peruses, next morning, the official despatch and simultaneously the account of the presentation of a ribbon to Caprivi, who is to receive the Order as a souvenir-medal on the platform at Friedrichsruh!

The Emperor had ears for nothing but what the Olympian gods might have to say to him about Bismarck's dismissal. The Tsar, *he* must know of it! He gave the Emperor his hand, when he heard the tale: "*Le Prince avec toute sa grandeur n'était après tout rien d'autre que ton employé ou fonctionnaire. Le moment où il refusait d'agir selon tes ordres, il fallait le renvoyer.*"

The half-gods had a harder row to hoe. What was one to do when one was, like Waldersee, Commander of the Forces in Altona; or, like Kiderlen, Envoy in Hamburg? Call on the veteran, or cut him? Kiderlen's visit to the Prince who had discovered him a few years ago, lasted thirty minutes, and he complained that he was not offered bite or sup—for only in the article of appetite had he any claim to be nicknamed the New Bismarck. Waldersee, who had first inquired of Eulenburg whether he might, should, or must, receive marching-orders: "Visit him, but don't breathe a word of politics where a coachman or a servant can hear it, to say nothing of a member of the family"—who would be sure to see that such a betrayal of the Emperor got into the newspapers. And the General, who had once enjoyed Bismarck's confidence, very cautiously doled out his visits, professed loud admiration, but took care that his Press denied any close inter-

course between them so that the old man remarked: "I always feel, at his visits, that he is or should be taking note whether it's time to order a suitable wreath."

In the third year of the boycott a concentrated effort was made.

At the beginning of June 1892 the Emperor sent Waldersee to tell the veteran that he would be ready for a reconciliation, but "the first step must, in all the circumstances, be made by the Prince. He must, in the most unmistakable fashion, and in writing, approach me directly with a petition or the expression of a desire to be permitted to resume personal intercourse with me." In answer to this message the old man told the intermediary: "I have been kicked out, and therefore cannot possibly beg to be readmitted, but must await an invitation." When the agent was gone, he doubtless exclaimed, behind closed doors: "The laugh's on my side!"

When he thus repulsed the Emperor, he had just heard of a minute to all the German Legations, directed against his utterances in the Press, wherein a distinction was made between the Prince Bismarck of the past and of the present—the implication being that the existing one was to be regarded as either feeble-minded or disaffected. Immediately afterwards Berlin was panic-stricken over a projected journey—the Prince was about to attend the wedding of his eldest son, and had announced himself to the old Emperor in Vienna through his personal friend the Ambassador, one Prince Reuss, requesting an audience. Upon this Holstein composed a minute to the Ambassador, which was applauded by Kiderlen and signed by Caprivi. The Ambassador was to take no part in the wedding ceremonies, was to show the greatest possible reserve at the visit, was to communicate this to the Foreign Minister in Vienna, was to prevent the audience with the Emperor: When the Ambassador in Vienna urgently pointed out the danger of all this, they wired back that he was the personal representative of the German Emperor and must not "show weakness" by any sort of cordiality. Simul-

A TERRIBLE DOCUMENT

taneously, a letter from the Emperor William to Francis Joseph:

“Bismarck is to be in Vienna at the end of this month . . . in order to arrange for systematic ovations by his admirers. . . . You also know that one of his masterpieces was the secret treaty *à double fonds* with Russia, concluded behind your back, and abrogated by Me. Ever since he retired, the Prince has waged war in the most perfidious manner against Me, Caprivi, and My Ministers. . . . All his craftiness and cunning are directed towards making it appear that I am the one who makes the advances. The climax of his programme in this affair is the idea of an audience with you. I would therefore beg of you not to increase the difficulties in this country by receiving that disobedient subject, before he has approached me with his *peccavi*.”

This letter belongs to the most terrible documents of a decadent epoch. The malignity with which the creator of the Empire is slandered by its ruler, with which the inheritor of the work of genius accuses its maker to a third party, so that he may not be the loser in the game—this tone taken by the master against the subject, the snarling tone of a weak man who has tried to lay low a mighty one, and hears him breathing still . . . all this, after a magnificent achievement, after a generation of inestimable services to the House of Hohenzollern, written by one Emperor to another—what an epoch, wherein such words must be inscribed on paper bearing the Imperial Crown, before a nation can be roused to wrath!

For the public excitement was unparalleled, at this affront to the most popular of Germans. Even on his way to Vienna half Berlin awaited him at the railway-station; and when the Prince, standing at the window, answered the demands for a speech with: “Is it for me to speak? My duty is silence!” a voice was heard to exclaim: “If you are silent, the stones will speak!”—a cry so stirring and so daring as perhaps had never before broken from a crowd in Prussia.

In Vienna—closed doors. The man who, even as an insignificant Junker of Hinter Pommern, carried in his heart and on his brow a conscious sense of power, before he had given any proofs of it—the man who for a generation had been then accustomed to awaken fear or reverence—this man, this Bismarck with his seventy-seven years upon him, now for the first time in his life encounters an embarrassed “not at home,” “away in the country,” “unfortunately prevented from coming to the wedding breakfast” . . . while the Ambassador, not man enough to leave home from one day to another, has gone to bed in a panic and given himself out to be ill. And now at last the old heart pulses young again, the doughty champion scents the fight. He has an open enemy to meet once more, and he begins his last of epochs with the one thought: Vengeance! And very actual shall be its first expression—he gives the editor of the *Neue Freie Presse* an interview, so that next day Berlin and Europe are reading these words:

“Naturally Austria has known how to profit by the weakness and inefficiency of our negotiators in the matter of the Commercial Treaty. This result may be ascribed to the fact that in our country such men have come to the front as I was careful to relegate to their native obscurity, precisely because they would be sure to change and upset the whole course of affairs. . . . Most assuredly I am now absolved from any personal obligations whatever towards the dominating personalities of the moment, as well as towards my successor. Every bridge between us is broken down. . . . In Berlin there is neither personal authority nor confidence. The Russian wire is cut—we are estranged.” In this way did the interview proceed.

The Berlin Government was beside itself. The bomb had exploded; Emperor and Ministers were unanimous for once in deciding on energetic measures of defence. The Government organ declared that Bismarck's utterances were offensive both to Royalist feeling and the respect due to the Emperor. His exposition of certain

incidents was so evidently erroneous "that all who have an intimate knowledge of them cannot but perceive with apprehension that the Prince's memory has begun to fail him completely. . . . And so the men to whom has been entrusted the honourable task of carrying on Prince Bismarck's work are confronted with the duty of protecting their efforts above all against him whose achievement they are called upon to uphold."

Two days later, Bismarck's rejoinder in his Hamburg paper. He wished to protect himself against the responsibility implied in the statement that "his work" was now being carried on.

In Berlin they were all of a tremble. Was the old man always to have the last word? A five-hour Ministerial conference; resolution—the minutes regarding the Prince to be made public. Oh, not the Emperor's letter—no one knew anything about that; but the minute to Prince Reuss, soon to be dubbed by Bismarck the "Urias-Letter," that in which he was deprived of intercourse with the German functionaries in Vienna. After five hours of discussion the Ministers had resolved to make *that* public! They, who were called upon to understand the sentiments of foreign peoples, to make alliances and friendships in the highest interests of the Empire—these broken-winded, beribboned, gold-laced Knights of the Order of Cowardice and Calumny knew so little of the hearts of their own people that they thought to injure their bugbear, and instead were to make him first the fetish, and then—what he had never been till now—the darling of the nation.

The nation rose as one man. In every region, every class, there was rejoicing when they read in Bismarck's organ, as his answer, that in the Foreign Office Archives of no matter what Great Power there would scarce be found a parallel to this communication. Not only his return from Vienna, but the whole summer through, was the occasion for such tributes as the Germans had never offered their Chancellor in the days of his glory. Bands of pilgrims marched to Friedrichsruh. Be sure that Bismarck

himself was the first to perceive the marvellous revulsion in his favour—he spoke of it at a torchlight procession in Munich: “In the past my energies were all directed towards arousing Royalist sentiment in the public. In the official world I was belauded, but the public would fain have stoned me. Now the public acclaims me, while in other circles I am timidly avoided. I believe this is called the irony of fate.”

More exultantly still did he shape to his purpose this ultimate, perhaps this most indelible, of his experiences, when he said at a birthday-procession in Kissingen: “For years I fought the Reichstag tooth and nail; but I perceive that that institution was debilitated in that very battle with William the First and myself. . . . I was eager to strengthen the Crown as against the Parliament—possibly I went too far in that direction. . . . We need the fresh air of public criticism. When the people’s representatives become powerless, the mere instrument of a more exalted will, we are bound ere long—if things go on as they are—to revert to absolutism unconcealed.”

Wide was the circuit, stern the experience, which led Bismarck to avowals such as these. His Royalist creed had made him for a lifetime the foe of democracy; his enmity towards his fourth and last King made him, in his old age, half a democrat himself. His party waxed commensurately—now for the first time it comprised Greater Germany. The Emperor had literally made a present of him to the common enemy.

The Emperor had lost the Great Game.

II

And yet he was resolved to win it, were it only in appearance. Was there to be a man in his German territories who could steal hearts from him, a rival *not* by the Grace of God, a foe of such calibre as to ensure, if he wanted it, the ever-dreaded revolt? What could be done? An illness arrived in the nick of time.

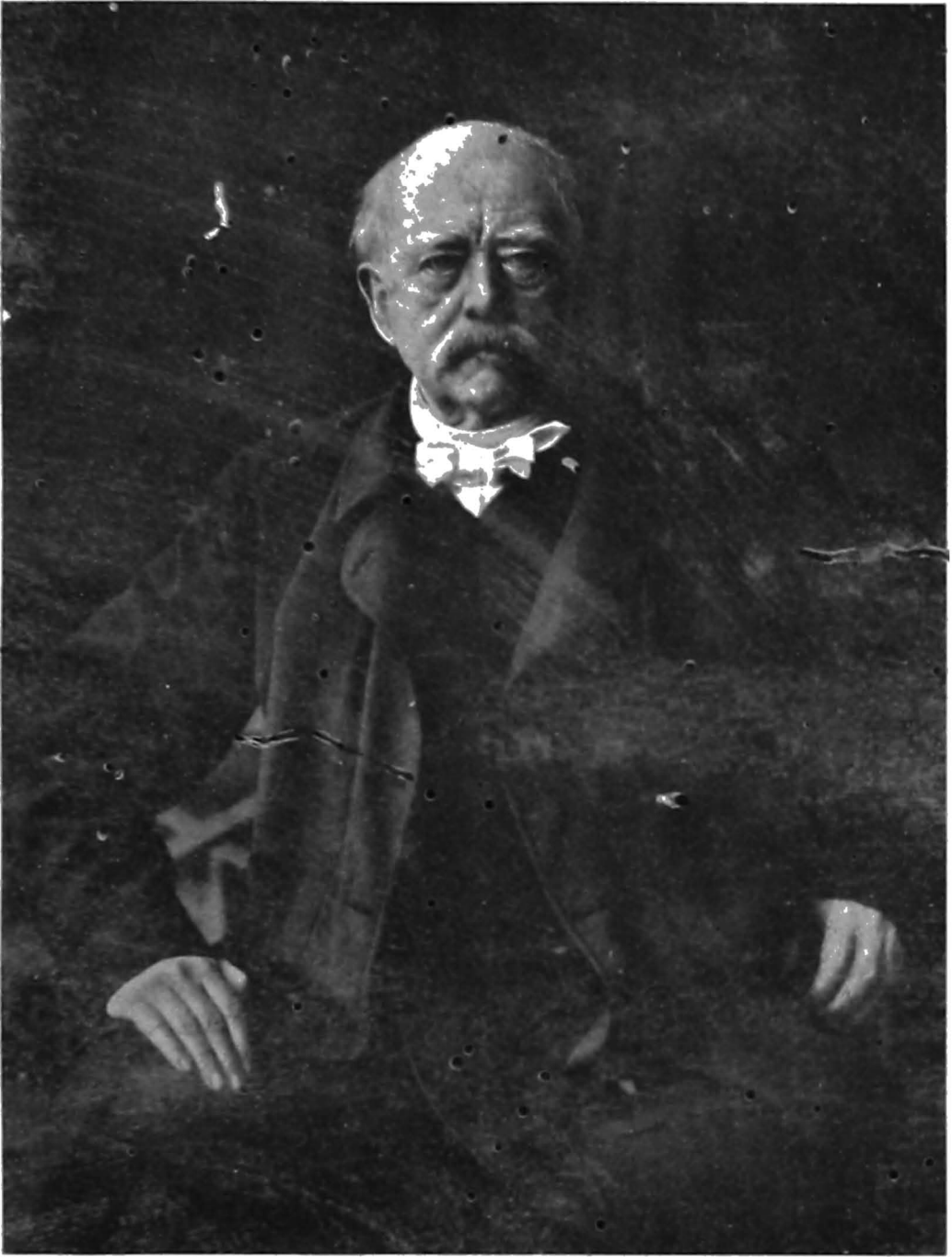
For weeks, in the autumn of 1893, the Bismarck irre-

conciliables had kept from the Emperor all knowledge of the old man's dangerous attack of pneumonia, lest a reconciliation should take place before he died. But when he did hear of it, the Emperor forgot principles, forgot defiance, took that first step which he had demanded of the Prince, and telegraphed: ". . . In the desire that your recovery may be really complete, I beg Your Serene Highness to change your winter-quarters from the somewhat unfavourable climate of Varzin and Friedrichsruh for one of My palaces in Central Germany. I will, after consultation with My Court-Marshal, designate the particular Palace to Your S.H." Snub indirect: "With the profoundest acknowledgment of Your Majesty's most gracious interest . . . but feel that my recovery will be best assisted by the domestic surroundings long familiar to me."

Despite this ominous repulse the Emperor would not give up; for it may safely be said that nothing in those years of the 'nineties caused him such uneasiness as the existence of three men—Bebel, Edward, and Bismarck. In them he saw the only dangers—to the security of his Throne, his Empire, and his popularity.

In the same winter of 1894, at a conferring of honours, Herbert Bismarck made his first reappearance at the Palace; and after dinner "his friends arranged that he should be in the Emperor's immediate proximity. But the Emperor did not speak to him, which caused great indignation in the Bismarck-party. . . . It had been hoped to engineer a *rapprochement*, and so make an end of Caprivi" (Ho. 509). Thus from the sphere of Court-politics emerged a pretext for another attempt, for it could be represented to the Emperor that his neglect of the son was an affront which made it advisable to approach the father once again.

The Emperor bit his lips, swallowed his rancour, and sent a second message—this time that personal invitation which Bismarck had demanded. Soon after the Honours dinner an aide-de-camp arrived at Friedrichsruh with a bottle of old Steinberger-Cabinet, together with an auto-



BISMARCK

graph letter, congratulating the Prince on his restoration to health and inviting him next week to the Birthday. As Bismarck wished to avoid the ceremonial banquet, the 26th was arranged for; but he did not allow the opportunity for another lunge at his foe to escape him. He invited the Emperor's most notorious opponent, Maximilian Harden, to his house—knowing that Harden would talk about it, and desiring that he should—and poured him out a glass of the wine with the remark: “ You wish the Emperor as well as I do myself.” Then he set off for Berlin.

... The Wilhelmstrasse echoed with the panic-stricken shriek: “ The lion is coming! ” Deadly terror ruled the distracted scene; and as the disaster staved off for four years was now to be an actuality in four short days, the principal actors had time only for cipher-telegrams. Holstein, Kiderlen, Marschall, all wired to Eulenburg long screeds, letters came flying after—he must prevent the worst, that terrible return to power. Caprivi owned that he had not been informed, “ made a resigned complaint ”; his adversaries exulted, Hohenlohe predicted that this would injure the monarchy—finally, on the last day, Holstein dived under, spluttering as he went: “ If Bismarck gets in again, either himself or his creatures, there'll be such slaughter as not one of us all will escape! ”

Still more ill at ease was the Emperor. Ought not the old man to have said *peccavi*? Was he not the enemy of the Empire? Nevertheless, William's love of theatrical display was so strong that even out of this defeat he had to make a spectacle. But to show the world that there came on a visit next day merely “ a Major-General with the rank of Field-Marshal,” everything was to be on military lines, the suite in uniform with epaulettes and high boots. He himself—admirably described on this occasion by the younger Moltke (M., p. 166)—ran from pillar to post, his nerves on edge, went up the wrong staircase, left questions of ceremony unanswered, wandered restlessly for a full hour through the rooms assigned to the Prince,

THE EMPEROR'S MORNING

which were still in the hands of the housemaids, disarranged the flower-vases—then went striding out to the Guard of Honour, wanted to know if each individual composing it was in his place—all indications of an embarrassment and anxiety for which we well may pity him. Truly, on this forenoon, the Emperor expiated all that he had done to the old man two years ago.

While the Head-quarters Staff were taking their places in the ante-room, and someone found an album with pictures from the play *Der Neue Herr*—which some malicious fairy might seem to have wished that Bismarck's eye should light upon to-day and here, and which Moltke hastily suppressed—the Emperor was pacing up and down in his own room next door, for he intended to be alone when he received the Prince. Was he then so uncertain of himself? Did he, never weary of feeling all eyes upon him, seek in this moment of capitulation to avoid the dozen or so of lookers-on who might observe a paling of the cheek, a quivering of the lip, and make a story out of it?

But what is this? A message from the railway-station: the Prince has just arrived, and his son is with him. Another little lunge from the veteran—the Firm of Bismarck is to be received, or none of them. “The Household was much exercised about the proper treatment of this *fait accompli*.” The Imperial solitary is disturbed in his pacing to and fro—he is found to be memorizing his speech. The Emperor, disconcerted, ordains that Count Herbert shall remain in the ante-room, shall not enter his room with the Prince.

But hark! the Linden is alive with cheering. The prisoner of state is fully escorted, well shut-in, both before and behind the carriage; beside him sits Prince Henry. The roaring swells to the skies, the carriage is in sight, everyone rushes to the window to see the Prince alight and cross the threshold. Only the Emperor stands, alone, behind the closed door of his room; he dares not trust himself at the window yet, he scarcely trusts his own ears,

for when till now in his thirty-five years of life has he heard his peoples' Hurrah! without the delight of feeling: “ It is all for me ”? When long ago the cheers were for his fathers, he was there too—a little Prince at first, and then a tall one. But to-day—to-day he feels quite out of it. His people, his own Court, are all agog to see the only man in his Empire whom he has not been able to get the better of; and he, the sovereign, who alone among the millions has the Grace of God upon his forehead—he stands and drinks the bitter cup of this great jubilation, head bent low within his room, like one who would transcend as though with antennae the few yards that divide him from the window. In these few minutes only one thought upholds him: “ At three o'clock I shall get it! ”

When Bismarck, in the uniform of the Cuirassiers, enters the ante-room on Prince Henry's arm, he is taller by a head than his escort. Presentations—a little incident. “ Colonel von Kessel ” “ Kessel? You've grown smaller since the old days. ” In truth, they all seem to him to have grown much smaller; but this he does not say.

Dead stop. A lackey takes his cloak and gloves. Dead stop, a longer one. “ Will Your Serene Highness go in to His Majesty now? ” A silent bow. The folding-doors divide. “ The Emperor, who was standing in the middle of the room, came quickly towards him with outstretched hand, which the Prince, with a deep bow, caught in both of his. Then the Emperor stooped and kissed him on both cheeks. The doors closed again; the two were alone. ”

Was it a Judas-kiss? By no means. It was only a stage-kiss.

Outside the crowd was shouting and cheering; *Deutschland, Deutschland* was sung. After the lapse of ten minutes the Emperor sent for the Princes; then followed lunch, alone with the Emperor, Empress, and Henry.

Three o'clock. The Emperor rides out with his suite—this is a game at which two can play. And how well he knew his subjects! They seemed to have gone mad—

THE CALUMET OF PEACE

through Linden and Tiergarten there surged on foot and on wheels a thankful people, cutting across the escort and shouting its admiration, its reverence—nay, its love—to the Emperor *in excelsis*. “Three cheers for the beloved Kaiser! The noble-hearted Kaiser! Our generous Kaiser!” The merest ritual of the occasion, the common-places of the gilt-edged manuals—platitudes of the heart strewn at the feet of their liege lord—the crown conferred by peoples on the sovereign crowned by Heaven. And the Emperor drinks it all in, he cannot have enough of it, he rides till dark has fallen—rides till six o’clock.

Then a quiet dinner in the Prince’s rooms with Herbert and the suite—no ceremony, splendid wines; the old man “in his low voice” telling anecdotes of the Empress Augusta, and how his black dog Tyras once nearly flew at the Grand-Duke of Weimar. Everyone laughs; they bandy good stories from the great days of Germany, until for the second time the Bismarck family announces itself in uncourtly fashion—during the *rôti* they are told that Count Bill is outside. The Emperor wants to call the dishes back for him—but Bill is gone, is followed, finally arrives with the coffee; so that in the end the old man sits for half an hour at any rate between his two sons, in the Palace of the Hohenzollerns. Nay, on this day of victory he does what he has never done before—he smokes (perhaps for the joke of “smoking the calumet of peace”) a cigarette with his Emperor.

There he sits, close on eighty, plagued with an intolerable high collar, lying back heavily in an armchair, absurdly unlike himself with his flimsy cigarette; and gazes, stimulated by the wine, around the room with eyes that frequently are somewhat dimmed—the look is that of Faust, the thoughts are those of Mephistopheles. Three feet away sits the slim Emperor in Hussar uniform, pulling at his moustache with nervous fingers, laughing a great deal, somewhat schoolboyishly. And he over there—yes, that is Moltke, but not a bit like his mighty uncle. And that’s Kessel, is it?—Kessel who has grown so much

“WELL!”

smaller; the lanky fellow is Plessen. “All of them scoundrels!” reflects the veteran. It’s a mercy that Herbert and Bill are here to purify the air! Is it really only four years ago? Have they not ruined more than twenty years can build again? Oh yes, the Emperor is full of good intentions—after all, it’s his House and his Heritage; how should he *not* have good intentions? Only he doesn’t know how things are done; and to-day, when he has talked about nothing but horses, the weather, and uniforms—to-day he could have got more good out of a few hours than out of years of other people.

The carriages are announced; return to the station with the Emperor; Bismarck sitting on his right. Departure. The Emperor, relieved: “Well! Now they can put up triumphal arches to him—I shall always beat him by a length!”

The visit had lasted eight hours, the enmity eight years. To-day was a short armistice. The veteran has four good years before him still. The end is not yet.

12

“Jupiter Ammon! Germany is groaning under the weight of Bismarck’s daemonic personality . . . overshadowing everything or else lighting up the country with flame which is not that of the sun. Impossible—whether in or out of office!” By this striking picture, Eulenburg consoles himself for the old wizard’s ascendancy.

The Emperor was groaning too. He did not perceive the one way by which he could have attached the Prince—by confidential questions, by asking for practical advice, which no one in the world was better able to give him. But that way was closed to him, for so he would have owned to the superiority which was oppressing him. Accordingly he did the exact reverse, was persistently unpolitical, and on his return visit in February produced for the Prince’s inspection two Grenadiers, one in the old, the other in the new, active service equipment, and on this occasion actually did ask his advice: “Which does Your

A LESSON

Serene Highness think the more practical?" The most infuriating thing he could have done—and Bismarck went on with his criticisms.

The veteran's eightieth birthday fell next year. A ceremonial visit, with troops, to Friedrichsruh. Grand entry of the Emperor on horseback, for this enabled him to speak to Bismarck as from on high. A golden sword of honour as "Germany's Tribute." Instead of a speech of thanks the ironical response: "My military position towards Your Majesty forbids me to enlarge upon my feelings. I thank Your Majesty." What he really felt in that pseudo-historical moment, he described next day: "While the Emperor, in his cuirass, reined in his tall horse and addressed me, I could not take my eyes off a drop of rain which was slowly running down his glittering armour."

When on a later visit and in a larger circle, Bismarck was speaking of the third Napoleon and his constitutional theories, and stressed the importance of the Guards, on whose protection he had counselled Napoleon to rely in all contingencies, the Emperor, who was sitting at some distance from the old man's armchair, interrupted by asking across the table: "Who was in command of the Parisian Bodyguard at that time?" Bismarck, always easily put out by an irrelevant question, answered: "That has nothing to do with it. Napoleon could rely on them in any circumstances. It doesn't matter who was in command. I remember . . ." And he went on with his story (M. 203).

The Emperor could never forgive him such lessons before witnesses.

With growing apprehension the octogenarian looked on at events in general. In Hamburg he said to Ballin, when going over a new Transatlantic liner: "I am rather overwhelmed, as you see. Yes, it is a new epoch—a new world all round." If he failed to perceive the full significance of this 'expanding "new world," he did see very clearly its danger for Germany. His premonitions grew

darker and darker; he said to Radowitz: "I see how my work will be undone by unskilful and shortsighted people" (W. 2, 357)

It was under the influence of such forebodings that in October 1896, during a crisis, he read some violent attacks in the Liberal Press on his having failed to come to an understanding with Russia in the past. This was not to be borne, and he caused an article to appear: "Until the year 1890 both Empires were in complete agreement on the point that if one of them were attacked the other should preserve a benevolent neutrality. This understanding was not renewed after the retirement of Prince Bismarck. . . . It was Count Caprivi who declined to continue the mutual insurance, when Russia was ready to do so. . . . Thence ensued the Marseillaise incident at Kronstadt, and the first approximation between the absolutist Russian Empire and the French Republic—in our opinion wholly the result of the ill-advised Caprivi-policy."

He knew what a storm would be raised by this disclosure, and in his eighty-second year was fain to let it loose. Holstein shook in his shoes—did Bismarck want to expose them to universal obloquy?—and got an article into the *Reichsanzeiger* about "violation of the most sacred secrets of State, and destruction of all confidence in German good faith among the Great Powers." A tactical error—for it was nothing less than confession of an intrigue which had never really existed. Vienna had long known all; and now Germany was ringing from end to end with the question: "Why was your successor so stupid?"

But the Emperor! Was this the return for his magnanimity? Did the old man propose to live for ever? "It was with difficulty that the Emperor was restrained from rash proceedings." He wrote to the Tsar: "I imagine that this last outbreak of Prince Bismarck's, and the disgraceful way he treats me in his Press . . . will cause the more clear-sighted to perceive at last that I had good reasons for removing from office this insubordinate base-minded man." After a swearing-in of recruits he actually

“ I AM NO TOM-CAT ”

spoke to a few hundred lieutenants of his overwhelming anxieties, and finished with an allusion to “ highly placed personages,” and “ high treason against Me and My country.”

What a rage he was in, and how well he might be! On the centenary of the old Emperor's birth Bismarck was punished by not being notified; and the Emperor made his own presence at a wedding conditional on the withdrawal of an invitation sent to Herbert Bismarck. But it was no good—as by some magic lure he was drawn, and knew he was, perpetually towards the insubordinate old man whom he could neither get the better of nor win unto himself; he simply was not able to let him be. With every year that added to his patriarchal age the figure grew more legendary—till at last, it seemed, the people would believe only what Bismarck answered for. The Fleet! If *he* would praise the infant Fleet, would tell the people it was necessary! One word from the veteran would mean a hundred votes for the Navy Bill. Let us then conquer ourselves in the service of the Fatherland—let us call the newest ship by his name: that cannot fail to flatter him!

Accordingly, in the summer of 1897, an invitation to the launching of the ironclad cruiser *Bismarck*. Declined on the plea of old age. Letter from Tirpitz, asking for an interview. Returned unopened with a note to the effect that the Prince could accept no letter without knowing from whom it came. A second letter. Tirpitz permitted to come. He finds the family at table; the Prince stands up, and remains standing until the guest has taken his place. Marked coolness. After the meal—the ladies gone—pipes, the chaise-longue. Then—as Tirpitz relates—Bismarck, without a preliminary word or hint, gives him an annihilating look and says: “ I am no tom-cat, to send out sparks when I'm stroked.”

A frightful moment—the Admiral ought to take up his despatch-case and go; but he finds a soft answer, and produces his papers and statistics. “ I know we want

more ships," snarls the veteran, "but not battleships." To all arguments he retorts angrily, unpropitiously. Then in the open carriage, driving through the rain, with bottles of beer to right and left of him, he speaks so unsparingly of the Emperor that Tirpitz begs, as an officer, to be allowed to intercede for him. "Tell the Emperor I want nothing but to be left alone, and die in peace. My work is done; I have no future, and no hope." The Princess had died the year before.

A quarter of this was quite as much as the Emperor could endure to listen to. Nevertheless he visited the Prince for the fourth time at the end of 1897. It was their last meeting (T. 93).

The old man was seated in his invalid-chair at the door of his house, when the Emperor arrived with his attendant gentlemen; the visitors had to pass one by one before the host, and so again at their departure. When Lucanus, who had brought him his dismissal seven years ago, approached in this procession and held out his hand, "a remarkable little scene took place which made a strong impression on us all. The Prince sat like a statue, not a muscle moving, gazing into vacancy, while before him writhed Lucanus—until at last he understood and took himself out of the way."

But at dinner, with strangers on either side, Bismarck revived under the influence of champagne. He looked at the Emperor sitting so close to him, in radiant health, not yet forty—and he himself so fabulously old! He felt that he might never see him again. Forgive him? Never! But what signified hatred, when his restless brain was fevered by the thought of all that he had achieved and was to leave imperilled? For eight years of so critical an European epoch they had not exchanged one political idea; in the four years of their renewed intercourse the Emperor had never asked him a single question—and what questions there were to be answered! So the old man flung away his pride—pride he hanged for once in his life!—the grave was before him, the Empire behind

THE LAST WARNING

him; and Bismarck began, entirely of his own accord, to talk politics.

But if the Emperor rejoiced in the veteran's attempt to regain some influence, it was only because it gave him an opportunity of showing the table that He was Master and the other merely an old *radoteur*. He left him unanswered, and asked conundrums.

"What is the difference between a mother-in-law and a cigar?" The Prince, confounded, listened for a while; then he began again—this time alluding to Germany's position towards France. Again the Emperor heard him not; he asked another conundrum. The company sat speechless. "Every time Bismarck touched on politics, the Emperor abstracted his attention." Moltke whispered to Tirpitz: "This is horrible." "We all felt it as wanting in respect to such a man."

And Bismarck thought: "Very well! If the Emperor is determined to know nothing and learn nothing, he shall listen to a warning as from a dying man—but it shall be spoken as casually as if we were sitting again at Biarritz, those thirty years ago to-day, and Napoleon was to be gently threatened, at table, with Prussia." And suddenly, "on some pretext or other, he came out with a remark which penetrated us all with its prophetic pregnancy:

"Your Majesty! So long as you have these officers around you, there is no doubt that you may do exactly as you please. But if ever that should not be so, it will be quite another matter.'"

"The apparent nonchalance," writes Tirpitz, "with which he brought this out, as if it meant nothing in particular, was a proof of great presence of mind—the master-spirit stood revealed in it." The Emperor seemed scarcely to have heard. At any rate, if he did grasp its import, he chose to ignore this last exhortation from his dying foe.

Six months later he was standing beside his coffin. For this visit to Friedrichsruh the Court functionaries had allowed twenty-eight minutes, including prayer and display

of emotion. There stood the Emperor, and he was thinking:

“Where is your everlasting, harassing criticism now? You're lying in that box, but I am standing here with my funeral-wreath, in the full bloom of health, the undisputed master. Jealousy and revenge—they were the only reasons why for these eight years you strove to irritate my people. And what was the meaning of your last threatening speech that day at dinner, in the room close by? Is not my Empire flourishing? Are not my subjects happy? Every year the royal might grows stronger, and more unafraid. Europe fears the greatest army in the world. Go to your grave! The victory is mine.”