

## CHAPTER V

BÜLOW

I

1898-1908

WITH every year the power of the alchemist increased. Holstein from his den could call to office or hurl from it those whom he had elected or condemned; and by this choice of high officials he shaped the international policy of the Empire to the pattern he had from the first resolved that it should take. This Privy Councillor's predominance is the clue to German foreign policy throughout the next ten years.

That this was not black magic, truly, yet that dark influences did control the game, it would seem that a few men realized even then. The historian, who cares nothing for piquant revelations but much for the practical consequences of certain personal peculiarities, will be content with the revelation afforded by two passages which, in two volumes of memoirs, resemble arresting black asterisks among a series of brilliant pictures. "No Imperial Chancellor," writes Eulenburg, "could have dispensed with Holstein. Even Bülow could not let him down—to be sure, there were particular reasons for that; because the noose Holstein had put round his neck was not to be got rid of, with the best will in the world" (E. 2, 385). And again Waldersee: he "would have supposed that Bülow would instantly have shelved Holstein, but the bottom-truth is that Holstein has a hold on the Emperor. The 'why' is more than I should care to entrust to this sheet of paper" (W. 3, 171). In the thousand printed pages of his most secret diary there is no other such implication—or rather the editor has replaced many passages by asterisks, so that in these also Waldersee may have set down for himself what posterity is not permitted to learn.

And yet Holstein was, in no sense intimate with the two

men who were most to influence the next decade; the Emperor he never would see, Bülow he never knew well until he was nearly sixty. We must therefore postulate a certain kind of knowledge stowed away in Holstein's intriguing brain, and used for the putting-on of pressure in government affairs; for although Holstein was deeply engaged in money-matters, there seems to have been no question of money between these three oddly linked men.

For years Holstein had striven to prevent Bülow's emergence. The new favourite had long been made known to the Emperor by the old one, and it was years since Bülow had ecstatically succumbed, in the course of many visits, to the Emperor's fascination; but Holstein would suffer only small fry as his superiors, was quite content with Marschall and Hohenlohe as the drivers of his chariot, and it was only to please Eulenburg, whom he could not do without, that he consented to some slight contact with Bülow. But Eulenburg, whose effeminate nature always craved for a masculine one to admire, and who now was driven to regard the Emperor as little more than the object of a maternal kind of compassion, beheld in Bülow the man of his heart, and was resolved to lead him on to that authority which his own timidity had never allowed him to accept.

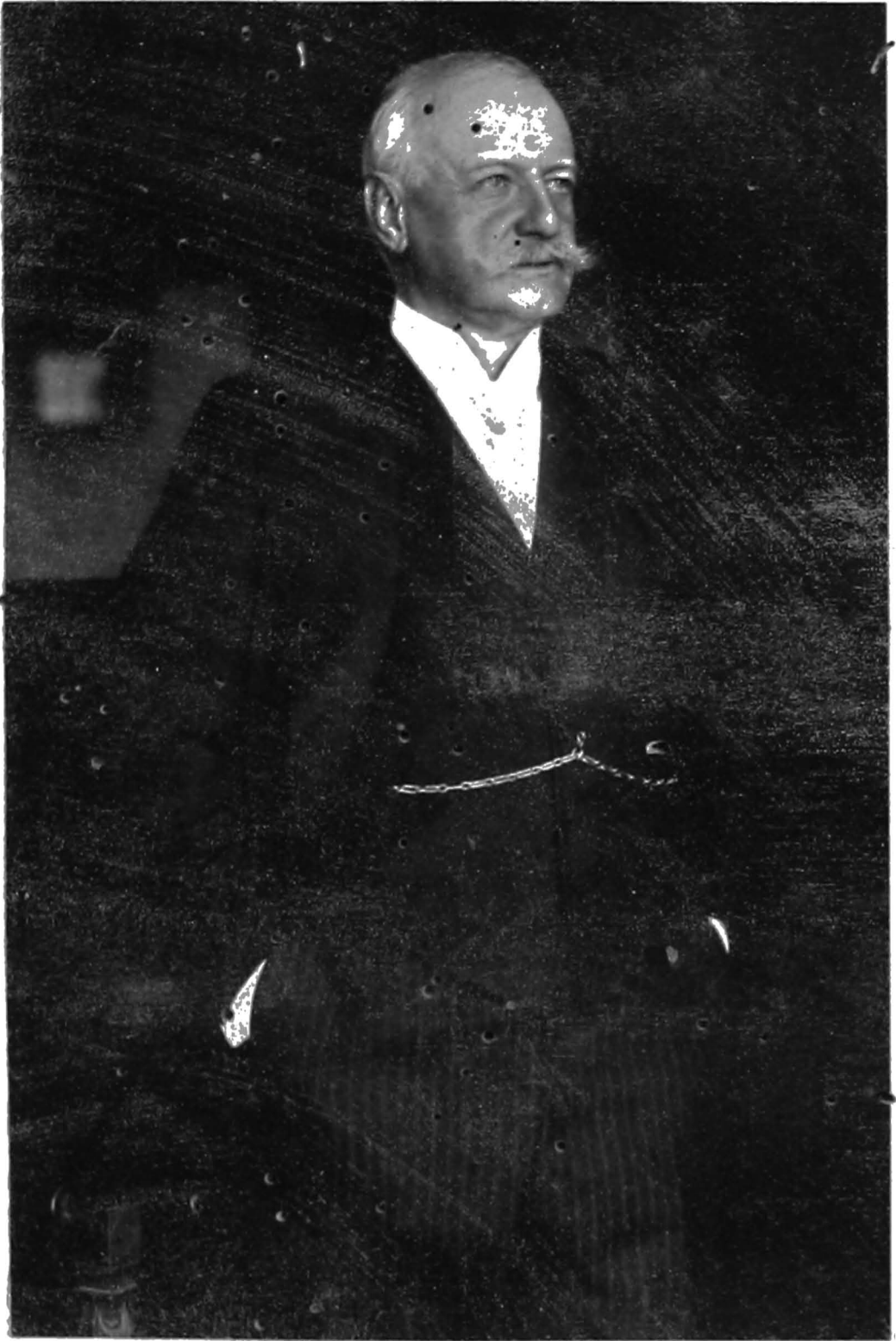
They had discovered one another in Paris when neither was much more than thirty, and this friendship was in fact the most fruitful one that either ever had. Eulenburg was attracted to the Emperor chiefly by his power, possibly too out of sympathetic friendship; to Holstein, from first to last, only by the deliberate calculation that it was better to intrigue with him than against him—the former was ten years his junior and inferior to him in every respect; the latter ten years his senior and immensely more adept in politics. Bülow was of his own rank and training, but in contradistinction to his other friends was the only one of his elective affinities in whom he could find (as he instantly did) the born statesman; and so Eulenburg, who always did well for his friends, never thought of any one but



## WHAT BÜLOW WAS

Bülow for the Chancellorship. To Eulenburg Bülow owed his whole career—which, when all is said, remains the only statesmanlike one of William the Second's reign.

Bülow indeed combined nearly all the discrepant qualities which were divided between Holstein and Eulenburg. He united Holstein's knowledge of affairs with Eulenburg's psychological insight, Holstein's capacity for work with Eulenburg's dexterity; and while as a politician he was no less acute than Holstein, he rivalled Eulenburg in his aptitude for giving the right courtly aspect to his permutations. He was the first since Bismarck's day to possess political talent along with that readiness to assume responsibility which for the other two had been their lifelong bugbear. As he was less sophisticated than either, more optimistic, and more human-hearted too, he was immune from Eulenburg's cloying sentimentality and Holstein's goblin malice. His brilliant talents, none of which seemed typically German—rather for the most part Latin—made him appear like some fabulous many-coloured bird in the drab Prussian aviary, and the more because even his weaknesses were un-Prussian. Unsystematic and unprejudiced, always making new friends, nobody's enemy, captivating but entirely without effeminacy, rather indeed something of a graceful cynic, he was like a highly polished ball that rolls upon the level, meeting with no obstacles and reflecting in its glassy surface a bright picture of the world around—in miniature, it is true, and just a little distorted. Above all he knew how to captivate the man on whom he depended. Though he thought no better of the Emperor than Holstein did, he courted him in the Eulenburg fashion; but having none of Eulenburg's genuine affection for him, was able to flatter him far more grotesquely, and gradually encircled him with an artful trellis-work of flowery language through which he, himself unseen, could peer continually, reading the master's mood upon his features. Between Holstein's aloofness and Eulenburg's fervours, neither of which was always effective with the Emperor, Bülow soon



BRÜNING



sailed before the wind—his cunning adulation eagerly lapped up by its guileless object. If Eulenburg had long been the subordinate-familiar, Bülow was the familiar-subordinate, who put forth no claims to the master's fidelity, who could be paid by the gift of authority; while the friend of his youth wanted nothing, and therefore ventured now and then to assume the tiresome aspect of a mentor.

Was it any wonder, then, that the discovery soon outshone the discoverer—that the Emperor found Bülow's temperate glow so congenial that ere long he somewhat forsook the Eulenburg hothouse? From this arose the first catastrophes.

Bülow was indeed the equal of his friend in adaptability; but he knew that he was playing a part, while Eulenburg had long lost sight of the distinction between the natural and the artificial. Even in their letters, Bülow's false sentiment is visibly false; Eulenburg's, on the contrary, is genuine for all its spuriousness. When after ten years of friendship they reached the *Du* stage in 1893, Bülow "made a night of it" on paper:

"Listen—outwardly unlike in so many ways, we are inwardly each other's true affinity. Not only because we have so many memories both sweet and sad in common, but because in the depths of our souls we think and feel alike, and in the daily round are one another's complement. Our spirits, like two sisters, crossed the mysterious bourne of being; only we were given differing raiment and variously hued pinions. If the Heavenly Powers conferred on you the magic gift of bewildering and brilliant talents, I can nevertheless from the storehouse where so gradually I have heaped up treasure, furnish many a commodity that will assist you—drawn into the political arena as you have been, against your will but for the good of our Emperor and Country—to enrich the temple which with lighter but surer hand than mine you now are building up. You are perhaps more Germano-Hellenic, like the Second Part of *Faust*, I more Prusso-Latin; you

“ MY PHILIP! ”

more knightly, I more soldierly. . . . But if your head touches the stars, your feet are firmly planted on this good round earth of ours; and if I am rooted in the soil, I can at least look upward to the star-sown empyrean. . . . You with your infinite delicacy of feeling, a beautiful falcon in a forest filled with foxes, bristling swine, and cackling geese. . . . How glorious was that Saturday night of ours! Never, so long as I live, will it fade from memory. Past and present, visible and invisible—all combined to create such a mood as belongs only to moments of consecration. . . . May the Everlasting Might which guides your steps uphold you always, my Philip! ”

Eulenburg had inhaled the fumes of this kind of incense for a lifetime, without suffocating; but Bülow swung such censers only on high-days and holidays. He could speak the Bayreuth jargon as fluently as five other European languages—almost without thinking, yet never at a loss for a word; and despite this languishing nocturne, he certainly was at this time genuinely attached to his friend. The truth is that he was as sound as a bell; he could drink with the Agrarians, do battle with the Socialists, everywhere concealing his inmost self, whereas Eulenburg wore his like a buttonhole on all occasions; and he managed to turn all his acquirements to such good account that experts in every sort were sceptically inclined to regard him as a lexicon wherein great erudition was set off by a stupendous power of memory.

And now, while Bülow was making ready with Eulenburg's help to climb into the balloon for his ascent with the Emperor, Holstein was tugging at the rope from below and using all his force to wind it round the boulders of his cavern. He had now to contend with a pair of allies who were much too wary to do anything towards disabling him. “ If Holstein knew how we trust one another, he'd smash up the whole game ” (E. 2, 226); and earnestly did Philip instruct Bernhard in Holstein's hatred for the Emperor. Such confidences were responded to by Bülow with sovereign skill; he too was always writing for posterity,



and took good care not to put dangerous reflections on paper. "Not only do I admire Holstein's intensity and power, but he has made me fond of him. Though many would not understand this, *you* will not mistake me. I love that tragic nature of his. I would never abandon him—I should like to help him. But for us there is a great difficulty in the fact that Holstein flies off at such a tangent whenever he thinks his system is threatened, or even likely to be obstructed. . . . In high quarters, or even against yourself, there is little he would not be ready for, if he did not believe His Majesty and you to be his indispensable allies against his own confederates and his numerous gang of enemies. . . . Holstein must feel sure of us—that is a cardinal necessity."

Under these specious phrases—which might fall into the hands of some spy though the Embassy-bag were never so carefully padlocked—the cautious Bülow, in his letters to his dearest friend, disguised his fear of the crafty Holstein whose teeth they were to draw before they could begin in earnest. Dreading some personal treachery from Holstein, who in his eyes was neither tragic nor lovable, he took from Eulenburg's Thesaurus the turns of phrase that would be most effective, and not forgetting the potential illicit reader, gained by that very precaution the sympathy of his correspondent who, for all his flowers of speech, made no mistake about his meaning.

Meanwhile, Eulenburg was pleading his cause before the sovereign, as did the fabled Princess that of her heart's elected. "Anyone who is blind to Bernhard's knowledge and capacity in political affairs," he wrote as early as 1892 to the Emperor, "is simply an envious fellow. . . . I am glad that Your Majesty has an eye for talent, and in the decisive moment will attribute the portentous disapproval on the said fellow's countenance to its true motive." In this way he began by removing his friend from the obscurity of Bucharest to the wider sphere of Rome. In the year 1895: "Bernhard is the most valuable functionary Your Majesty possesses—the predestined Imperial

“ BÜLOW IS TO BE MY BISMARCK ! ”

Chancellor of the future ”; whereupon at the end of 1895, the Emperor (E. 2, 225) proclaimed as his incontrovertible decision:

“ Bülow is to be my Bismarck ! ”

2

But once again the Emperor had forgotten Holstein. He did succeed in surmounting that obstacle, but by a means entirely unknown to himself.

In the beginning of 1897, a year after the Kruger Telegram, a new danger emerged from one of those negligible quarters of the globe where the European Powers find pretexts for their mutual jealousies. Crete revolted against the Turks, and was supported from Greece. On this the Emperor, in defiance of his Ministers, officially informed the foreign diplomats that Crete must be shown her place. The Great Powers were to blockade the Piræus on the Turks' behalf. Hohenlöhe was powerless, Holstein infuriated; Marschall tried to quell at least the uproar at home by promising the Reichstag a debate on the Cretan question. Thereupon the Emperor, feeling himself disavowed, wired from no one knew where in a white-hot rage: “ This should not have been thought of without My express commands. The decisive step towards the settlement of this question had been taken by Me, directly and personally, and it is I alone who have to give an explanation to the Reichstag. . . . On my return to Berlin the Reichstag will be summoned to the Palace, and will be fully instructed with reference to My previously promulgated Imperial communication, on the attitude of My Government towards the Cretan question ” (A. 12, 348).

It might be supposed that at these words from Caesar, Chancellor and Secretary of State would instantly beat a retreat. But not at all. They only got Holstein to wire for help to Eulenburg: “ You must be aware of these disturbing events—disturbing on account of the excitable strain in the Emperor's telegram. The few who have seen it are one and all equally uneasy (E. 2, 216).

Eulenburg tried, like an old doctor who had seen other purple-clad lunatics at large, to tone down the impression: "I too think the telegram in question excitable, but . . . the excitement is not of an alarming nature, either psychologically or otherwise"—the whole thing being, he declared, merely the result of the Emperor's defective education in these matters. A few days later, the latter made the famous speech in which he described his late grandfather as the creator of the Empire, any others concerned being no more than his hodmen.

At this time the Empire was plunged in gloom about the strained relations with Vienna, which were at bottom an outcome of Holstein's hatred for Goluchowski; then came the rejection of the first Bigger Navy Bill; then State-Secretary Marschall's libel action against his detractors, which the Emperor disapproved of—everything was at sixes and sevens. In only one respect were the Foreign Office and the Emperor completely in accord—each thought and said that the other was crazy. "The existence of Baron von Holstein, who is a rare fool, is not sufficient camouflage for a dummy Foreign Secretary, either for me or anyone else," the Emperor said in confidence at this time (E. 2, 231). What Holstein was simultaneously thinking about the Emperor, Eulenburg reported to his friend in Rome: "Unfortunately I must tell you that the relations between H.M. and the Office are very nearly impossible: this, because that Office quite frankly considers H.M. to be mad!!" (March 1897)

But Eulenburg was showing his good sense in two respects: publicly defending the Emperor, and privately warning him. "It is not unlikely that Your Majesty's personal intervention may prevent the machine from working. I must repeat that harmony between Your Majesty and the Office is a very urgent necessity." After this letter he spoke to the Emperor, and in May 1897 was sent by him to arrange for an armistice in the Wilhelmstrasse.

It was late at night; all the confederates were sitting in Holstein's room. Hohenlohe was resolved to go if the

## HOLSTEIN'S DINNER

Emperor sacrificed Marschall; they were considering how to muzzle His Majesty. While Eulenburg was addressing the party, there arrived, "smelling of wine and spluttering, Kiderlen from a drinking-bout. . . . Holstein said the Emperor would have to submit blindly, and dismiss Lucanus. His Majesty would have to be treated as the child or the fool he was. . . . Alexander Hohenlohe agreed; and Kiderlen, the skunk, spat poison along with the saliva from his dribbling jaws—disgusting! The Emperor was to choose between complete submission, and the Chancellor's *belle sortie*. . . . I have seldom had a deeper sense of loyal love for my good noble-hearted sovereign, who towered like another Siegfried before my inward vision! It was only by tremendous self-control that I repressed such words as would have made an irreparable breach between me and the dragon-brood around me" (E. 2, 233)

At such moments Eulenburg's loyalty to the Emperor is wholly to be believed in; and if we delete the Siegfried and the other superlatives, which mean nothing in him, his behaviour did him credit as a friend, if not as a man of affairs; for he knew that Holstein would be estranged once more, and Bülow's emergence imperilled.

And then the whole thing ended in broad farce.

As thus: Marschall wanted a decoration for a Privy Councillor, who had been falsely accused of the authorship of that article in *Kladderadatsch*, and so had fallen into disfavour. The moment Holstein heard of this, he put two and two together and felt he had the clue to the mystery—it was Marschall who had got up those attacks! In the twinkling of an eye, Marschall's champion was transmogrified into his deadly enemy. Here, in his own room, brooded treachery! There was only one thing to be done—join hands with the friends whom he so profoundly distrusted. That night he invited Eulenburg to dine with him at Borckhardt's, and inquired in his note what wine the guest would prefer, for it was to be a very special occasion.

At dinner he told Eulenburg all—as this latter lost no time in telling Bülow. “He was in a state of quivering agitation. . . . All his powers of hatred were suddenly and catastrophically directed against Marschall. Simultaneously there emerged a tender, wellnigh impassioned affection for me and you. Yes! and as suddenly he was whole-heartedly on our side in his view of the situation—Emperor, public opinion here, Foreign Office, and all. The revulsion has this much to recommend it—that, if the cup is not to pass from you, if you *are* to be summoned to power, you will find Holstein in a totally different frame of mind and will be able to work with him. . . . His view is that we must stake all on keeping you on with Hohenlohe, and making you Chancellor when he retires. . . . You see, whatever happens now, Holstein won’t move a finger against you and me. . . . I am very much impressed by this surprising turn of affairs. I am inclined to regard it as a Divine dispensation which will smoothe the way admirably for your appointment, inevitable in any event. . . . I am yours, dear fellow, in anxious sympathy.”

After God had so unmistakably revealed himself between a decoration, a comic paper, a bottle of Chamberlain, and the persecution-mania of a Privy Councillor; and the mightily relieved king-maker had floated over the Alps a missive of congratulation to his friend, wherein the joy of seeing the way clear at last was transformed into a cup that might not pass from him and was proffered with anxious sympathy—the whole affair turned out to be a mare’s nest. The candidate for an Order was not that enemy at all. Holstein made up his quarrel with Marschall, but now he had gone too far to draw back. The Emperor was not to be appeased—Marschall had to go.

Enter Bülow.

### 3

The honeymoon lasted a very long time. “Bernhard—glorious chap!!” wrote the Emperor in his tempestuous fashion at the end of 1897 (E 2, 240). “He has done



## BÜLOW'S RAVINGS

splendidly, and I adore him! . . . What a joy it is to have to do with a man who is devoted to one, body and soul, and wants to understand one too, and *can* understand one!" In the summer of 1898: "From the moment Bernhard arrived everything went right; everything was in his hands. The Privy Councillors are quite out of it. Who ever talks about Holstein nowadays? . . . Since Bülow took the reins, one positively doesn't know even the name of any one of his councillors."

More interesting is the anti-strophe. Bülow, in August 1897: "His Majesty as a personality is charming, touching, irresistible, adorable; as a ruler, by reason of his temperament, his lack of discrimination and sometimes even of common judgment, his tendency to let his desires prevail over calm and sober reflection . . . he will stand in the very greatest danger if he is not surrounded by prudent and, more especially, loyal and trustworthy servants. Upon this it will depend whether his reign is to form a glorious or a melancholy page in our history. With his individuality either is possible."

So instantly did Bülow's intelligence perceive the power of influence upon this erratic monarch. But after they had defined their positions with "glorious chap" and "very greatest danger," Bülow reverted at once to his cautious calculations, and wrote his friend only such letters as could be shown at the Palace. At the beginning of 1898: "I hang my heart more and more every day upon the Emperor. He is so remarkable! Together with the Great King and the Great Elector he is far and away the most remarkable Hohenzollern that has ever existed. He combines in a manner that I have never before seen the most sound and original intelligence with the shrewdest good sense. He possesses an imagination which can soar on eagle-wings above all trivialities, and with it the soberest perception of the possible and the attainable; and—what energy into the bargain! What a memory! What swiftness and sureness of comprehension!"

One might think the man had taken leave of his senses.

But to be familiar with his style is to perceive the sublimity of his cynicism. Bülow could dash off these rhapsodies by the page, whenever he felt inclined; and they were of course intended to be shown by his friend to the Emperor. He could have given no clearer proof of his swift assessment of the Imperial endowments than his conviction that William's vanity would swallow such coarse fare as these preposterous parallels. Other intelligences, more remote from this atmosphere, were confounded. Ballin said: "It can't possibly last long; the Emperor is much too clever not to see that Bülow is perpetually humbugging him." But Waldersee, who had known him longer, comments on this: "I was of a different opinion; the Emperor can never have too much of that kind of thing" (W. 3, 176).

Bülow almost openly defended his technique. "After all, I could not begin by annoying the Emperor with contradictions—I had first of all to consolidate my position." But that is the point—a little contradiction in the first week might certainly have annoyed the Emperor, but might also have made him more tractable. Bülow, who never liked saying No, was not very likely to begin by saying it to his sovereign; but, trusting to his master's volatility, he did eventually do pretty well as he thought best, and only seldom forgot what sparks may be struck out of a neurotic autocrat. On such occasions, indeed, he did encounter "an annihilating look, which sooner or later would be followed by an outburst in which His Majesty would brusquely express opinions that brooked no discussion of any kind. The moment this look and tone were seen and heard, a devout silence would fall upon the master-spirit before him, who in his own good time would discreetly put in a word" (Z. 37). Zedlitz, for years a subtle observer of Bülow's behaviour at Court, in another passage deplors the fact that he too would never say anything but smooth words to the Emperor: "If he had even once shown the least reserve, or let it be seen that he was, as he actually *was*, independent of his

## ADMIRAL OF THE ATLANTIC

position, he might have done great things, for personally speaking no one could have replaced him with the Emperor. Unfortunately that was not in his nature."

Thus his influence, instead of being productive, tended rather towards placating and restraining the Emperor. The State Papers are full of instances. Take an interview with the Tsar on board the "Hohenzollern." The Emperor: "I wish you would assume, from now on, the title of Admiral of the Pacific. I shall call myself Admiral of the Atlantic." Nicholas, either alarmed or embarrassed, shook his head. Bülow, sitting by, turned hot and cold. What was to be done? Something, and at once! In a second or two he had pulled himself together, and smilingly said: "That title would be peculiarly appropriate to Your Majesty, since Your Majesty is a declared lover of peace: hence Pacific!" The Emperor several times recurred to the subject, and on his departure signalled: "The Admiral of the Atlantic salutes the Admiral of the Pacific." Nicholas merely answered: "Bon voyage!" Then Bülow begged the captain to order all the officers and crew to hold their tongues about the signal. But the Russians told the story—every word of it.

Bülow's great achievement was to restore, after the seven years of chaos, as much tranquillity to the Foreign Office and its policy as the Emperor would permit of. "No more explosive despatches," writes Eulenburg, well satisfied: "No frantic letters from Holstein. . . . I am possessed by the feeling that after terrible storms I have at last steered the ship we may call 'The Emperor's Reign' into at least a tolerably safe harbourage. If I honestly ask myself whether the vessel would have reached this haven after these nine years without my help, I am bound to answer No." Eulenburg is entirely justified in this view; but still more in the uneasiness which, none the less, still haunts him when he reflects on the destiny of his Imperial friend. "It always makes me uncomfortable," he writes to Bülow in the beginning of 1899, "when I think that you are our dear good master's last card. No other can—

and still less will—do all for him that you are doing . . . the affection of a loyal servant, which has taken in you the form of a father's love for an unruly child."

During these early years of office Bülow's intimacy with Eulenburg was still so close that the latter sent him a kind of journal of an Imperial trip; and Bülow answered: "I say, write, and do nothing political without thinking of you." But Bülow did not long hold aloof from Holstein; he managed to get over that wish of Eulenburg's by giving the impression that at the Foreign Office he alone was master. "The motto of the main group," he wrote to his friend immediately after his appearance there, "may now be said to be *A bad conscience makes us afraid.*' Holstein is elegiac ('For twenty years I have felt like a father to you'), Kiderlen reminds me of an earwig. . . . Of course the group has not yet abandoned all hope of their ideal future: Hatzfeldt Imperial Chancellor, Kiderlen Secretary of State; in the background the muzzled Emperor" (E. 2, 240).

Eulenburg knew better, but he held his peace. He knew why Bülow could not hold aloof from Holstein; and while the Emperor was exultantly saying "Who ever talks about Holstein now?" the initiates were all talking about him—except Bülow, who was for ever talking *with* him.

## 4

Three times in the next few years the English sought an alliance with Germany; three times the decision lay with the Emperor who dominated foreign affairs precisely as Bismarck had before him—nothing was done without his approval, and this was never a mere formality.

Chamberlain took the first step. "It is an attempt at political organization of the civilized world. It is the dazzling scheme of an English merchant, whose modest imagination embraces both hemispheres. . . . Heretofore . . . Europe had been the vantage-ground for political ambitions and manœuvres. If Great Britain . . . joined

## BISMARCK'S DREAM

hands with Germany, America might throw in her lot with them; and thus a World-Group would have been formed, against which no other Power would venture to measure itself. . . . The scheme was a practicable one' (Fischer, *Holsteins Grosses Nein*).

Two years after the Kruger Telegram, in the March of 1898, Chamberlain made the first advance to the German Ambassador, Hatzfeldt (A. 14, 197).

Isolation is a thing of the past, he said; England is about to take far-reaching decisions, and inclines towards Germany. "This would have been equivalent to England's joining the Triple Alliance, and could have been consolidated by an arrangement for which our conditions were to be formulated." They were requested to decide without delay.

What was now within reach had been the dream of Bismarck—that England should be obliged, by continental developments, to seek German support. Prophetic indeed were Bismarck's words in that instruction to Hatzfeldt of January 1888: "The question here is not that of greater striking-power in the event of war, but of precluding war. Neither France nor Russia will break the peace if they are officially informed that, should they do so, they will have England against them from the first. . . . If it were now established that England was protected against French aggression by a German, and Germany by an English, alliance, I should regard peace as ensured for so long as such an alliance subsisted. I believe that the effect would be alleviating and tranquillizing throughout the whole of Europe. . . . In my judgment, England gains nothing by carrying her policy of isolation so far that every continental Power, for example Germany, is obliged to make arrangements for safeguarding its future without regard to England."

Nothing but pressure from England was wanting to make Bismarck's authoritative opinion successful in obtaining this last and most valid guarantee of peace—a few more years in office and he would have won England



over. Now, three months before his death, the ripe fruit fell to those who had presumptuously wrested the Empire from his mighty grasp. And they refused it.

For Holstein was against the alliance. Bismarck had declared that it was nonsense to suppose the Russo-English antagonism would last for ever; hence Holstein was bound to declare that a collision between them was "in the nature of things," that this made a Franco-English alliance an impossibility, and that the desirable part for Germany was "that of umpire." And now was Germany to "pull the African chestnut out of the fire for England"? Never! It was all English devilry, "delirium and bluff"; they wanted to estrange Germany from Russia. So in this matter also he attributed his own perfidy to others, vindicating thus his own political propensities.

Bülow would not have submitted these arguments of Holstein's to the Emperor, if he had not been well aware of his morbidity about England; and the Emperor was indeed delighted: "So they've come off their high horse, have they? No grabbing at them though—let them wait!" He wrote: "The proposition arises from their uneasiness about the results of our Naval measures. By the beginning of the next century we shall be in control of an ironclad armada which, in combination with others, may be an actual danger to England. Hence the design either to constrain us to an alliance, or, as with Holland in the past, to annihilate us before we are strong enough to resist. If England were in good faith, the agreement would be an excellent one for our future, and we should be assured of colossal commercial advantages."

The refusal, couched in the form of a postponement, was attributable, therefore, to the Emperor's disbelief in the honesty of English intentions—that is to say, it was the psychological fruit of his unhappy youth and the vexatious domestic experiences of his manhood. The secondary motive was his wish for the Fleet, that instrument and symbol of jealousy, which could only be obtained

## THE ASTUTE LETTER

from the Reichstag in the event of friction with England, never if he were in alliance with her. On the ground that Germany needed the assent of both parties in the English Parliament, and was even less sure of that to-day than she had been two years ago, Bülow procrastinated over the negotiations; and when London offered the desired debate in Parliament, he declined on the pretext that it would alarm Russia.

Meanwhile the Emperor seized his pen, and in May 1898, all unsuspecting, wrote to the Tsar—having suddenly conceived the idea of obtaining preferential treatment from him on the ground of his personal feeling against England. Taking as his starting-point their inherited friendship, he confided to him that England had twice approached him with an offer of alliance, had been coolly dismissed, but nevertheless had repeated her offer for a limited period, and with enormous advantages for Germany. “Before I give my answer I wish to let you know, my valued friend and cousin; for I feel that it is, so to speak, a matter of life and death. . . . Now I beseech you . . . to tell me what you can and will offer me, if I refuse, before I . . . give my answer. Your proposals must be clear and frank and free from mental reservations, so that I can consider them in my heart and lay them before God, as I am bound to do, since the blessing of peace for my country and the world is at stake. . . . By this letter, dearest Nicholas, I show you that I put my entire faith in your absolute secrecy—not a word to anyone. . . . The next generation is in our hands!”

The solemnity of this fatuously astute letter is best perceived in the apostrophe to “Nicholas,” whom in all other circumstances he called “Nicky.” Let it be further said that this production, which tells with vast exaggeration of prodigious offers, and implies that a decision, which had in fact been made, still hangs in the balance, was eleven years afterwards to be demanded back by the Emperor from the official archives (A. 14, 250). Equally astute, but less solemn, was the rebuff which arrived in a few days

from Petersburg. In this the recipient—merely Willy—is overtrumped with the information that England shortly before had made hitherto unprecedented offers to Russia, thus seeking indirectly to disturb her friendly relations with Germany. Therefore Nicky can neither advise nor respond.

The Emperor was incessantly haunted by the thought of all this. Between his longing to refuse the offered hand, that he might build a fleet himself, and the uncertainty whether this great alliance were not for ever lost to him, the conflict of conscience raged within this weakling who would fain have been a Hercules, and drove him to attacks upon England, boastings against England, that so he might in some sort indemnify himself. Angry remarks to the English Ambassador about Salisbury were reported to London. Then, when his grandmother refused the Emperor's offer of a visit on her eightieth birthday, he poured out all his mortification in a letter to the aged Queen. "Your Minister has treated us as if we were Portugal, Chili, or Patagonia . . . and all on account of a ridiculous island [Samoa] which can't be worth a pin to England compared with the thousands of square miles she annexes right and left every year without encountering any protest" (May 1899).

The Queen had frequently in the last ten years taken her grandson's part against her son—her strong dynastic feeling constraining her. But now even she had had enough; and she answered: "Dear William. . . . I must tell you frankly that your letter has very much astonished me. The tone in which you write of Lord Salisbury I can only ascribe to a passing nervous irritation. . . . I doubt if one monarch has ever before written in such a tone to another, and this to your grandmother regarding her Prime Minister! I would never dream of such a thing; I never even disparaged Prince Bismarck, though I knew what a bitter enemy of England he was. . . . Your visit to Osborne, not to Cowes, I will take as my birthday-visit, since I could not receive you on the day itself. Your loving grandmother, V.R.I." (A. 14, 620)

## FRESH PROVOCATIONS

Except in the last adjective she was telling him the unvarnished truth. But he was glad to be allowed again to visit England after four years' absence, for since the Kruger Telegram the English Press had taken a threatening tone about visits from the Emperor, which in its turn reacted upon the German Press. It was all the more plucky of Chamberlain, in Germany the best-hated of men, to bring forward his proposal. Now the Emperor entered his "Meteor" for the regatta, as of old; was the absent victor, and Edward in the evening made the speech of ceremony on the hero of the day. The next morning a telegram from the Emperor was opened in the Royal Yacht Club. It was one dire insult: "Your handicaps are simply appalling."

Instantly the English temper veered round. "He really drives one to despair," said Edward to Eckardstein. "Here am I taking the greatest trouble to rehabilitate the Emperor after all those incidents . . . and the first thing he does is to throw mud at us. . . . You know the effect such remarks will have, our people being so sensitive, and so proud of their fair play in sporting matters!" (Eck. 2, 29). And then, when the Court functionaries were making arrangements for the visit, Edward expressed a desire not to see Admiral von Senden, who had offended him the year before, in the Emperor's suite. "I'll take whom I choose!" said the Emperor, and took von Senden.

Such were the mutual tempers when in the autumn England welcomed, after some years' absence, the Emperor, the Empress, and Bülow.

## 5

In November 1899 the Press took the tone that public opinion in both countries was still so excited that any official reference to politics would be unwise; and so the reports dwelt only on the facts that the two monarchs had kissed one another on both cheeks, and that the Emperor had shot one hundred and seventy-eight pheasants, three hundred and twenty-eight rabbits, and one partridge.

Even the solitary partridge, figuring among the record slaughterings of the royal shoots, was liable to be regarded as the attempt of some anglophobe to reveal the nakedness of the land to German readers. England, harassed by the Boer War, was seeking a friend; Chamberlain and his group adhered to Germany, and tried yet again to attach her before resorting to the alternative. In two long interviews he expounded the situation to the Emperor, other members of the Cabinet did likewise; the Chancellor too was interpellated—finally Bülow expressed the desire that Chamberlain would make a public speech on the subject of their mutual interests. “Hence,” wrote Chamberlain, “my speech of yesterday, which I hope will satisfy Bülow.”

The day after the Emperor's departure the Englishman had publicly spoken at Leicester of the new scheme. “That far-seeing statesman [Disraeli] long ago desired that we should not remain isolated on the Continent; and I think the most natural alliance is that between us and the German Empire. . . . A concert—an alliance, if you will—anyhow, an understanding between these two great nations would in actual fact be an assurance of world-peace. . . . Thus a new Triplice between the Teutonic and the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon races would be a still more momentous factor in the future of the world.”

Frantic was the answering cry. The bloodhound of the Transvaal is upon us, he would fain tear the Triplice to tatters, would fain exploit German friendship in Paris—all inspired by Holstein, who fed the Press. Though he was warned by Hatzfeldt and other well-informed persons in England, Holstein's opinion was: “I am opposed to this friendship-agitation . . . and am the more distrustful because the threatened understanding between Russia and France is mere English delirium. A reasonable arrangement with England will, in my judgment, be attainable only if the sense of urgency becomes much more general there than it is at present.”



## GERMANY'S SECOND NO

Bülow knew better. "Feeling in England," he wrote after his return, "is much less anti-German than ours is anti-English." Even Court circles, he said, were impressed by the grand conception of a World-Alliance of the Three Empires; for now, fighting simultaneously in Egypt, the Transvaal, and China, England needed a powerful ally. But Bülow was no less dependent on Holstein than on public opinion, which was in great part shaped by the latter. He did not dare, as Chamberlain was doing now, and as Bismarck had done in the 'sixties, to modernize national opinion by teaching it to envisage unfamiliar groupings; and he answered the speech he had himself requested the Englishman to make by a rebuff in the Reichstag, deferential in its tone towards France and Russia. "Our policy is purely German. Whether and when, how and where, we may be constrained to safeguard our position in the world . . . to abandon the reserve we have hitherto practised, depends upon the course of events . . . and that no individual Power can determine." But to determine that course was precisely what the statesman was there for; the "permutation" of which all Europe was talking should have been dared in Germany, and dared with a fearless hand. What use for Bülow afterwards to cause England to be informed that his speech had not meant what it said, that he had been obliged, in making it, to think of the agitation in Germany and of the Navy Bill?

"I will not," wrote Chamberlain privately, "express myself on the way in which Bülow has let me down. Anyhow I must abandon all further negotiations in the matter of the alliance. . . . It really grieves me very much indeed . . . but for myself I grieve a good deal too. Everything was going well; even Lord Salisbury was quite amicably inclined again, and of one mind with us with reference to the future relations of England with Germany. But alas! once more it was not to be" (Eck. 2, 125).

To let the sands twice run out—that was the Emperor's revenge! But already he was trying once more to satisfy

his will-to-power, and, making use of the recent dalliance and England's necessity to instigate the Russians against the English. At the New Year of 1900 he expressed to the Russian Ambassador his admiration at the rehearsal for mobilization on the Afghan frontier. "The Emperor saw in this the confirmation of his own opinion that only Russia could lay low the power of England. This theme led him on to declare warmly that if ever our august sovereign should decide to lead his armies against India, he himself, the Emperor, would guarantee that there should be no trouble in Europe—he would stand guard over our frontiers." After this communication, which the Ambassador made public by the Emperor's explicit permission, from Petersburg to Paris and the other capitals the question ran whether London should not be called upon to conclude her war—in other words, whether continental pressure should not be exercised, even at the risk of a World-War.

But when in the beginning of March the Ambassador approached the Emperor in this sense, William drew back with the remark that he must first make inquiries in London. For in the meantime he had likewise betrayed Russia to England, had warned Edward in letters of February: "I want a strong, unhampered England. It is eminently necessary for the peace of Europe. Be on the look-out" (Lee, *King Edward*, 768). At the same time he was condoling with him in frequent despatches, and with vast exaggeration, over the English casualties. He wrote with unconcealed satisfaction of the "Black Week," and said "Your losses, as they are made known, little by little, are quite appalling and find every sympathy with our Army" (Lee, 755). The impartial reflections on the military situation which he added to one of these letters were not to be generally known for many years, but even that was years too soon.

But not even yet was the alliance entirely a thing of the past. In London three Germans were working for it; and although the sagacious, but old and somewhat failing,

## DEATH OF QUEEN VICTORIA

Count Hatzfeldt spared Holstein's and the Emperor's nerves in his despatches, he *did* emphasize—as did the fearless Baron von Eckardstein, who moved more freely in society, and was *persona grata* with Chamberlain and the Prince of Wales—the magnitude of the opportunity. Then the affair was taken in hand by Count Wolff-Metternich. He, for ten years Ambassador after Hatzfeldt's death, reopened the question, first in the form of an alliance, later in that of a permanent entente; and further kept up a fire of despatches, some of historical importance, against the Naval Policy of the Centre Party in Berlin—until the Emperor silenced this warning voice as he did all others.

The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 brought about a reconciliation between the Emperor and England. His arriving in time to find her still alive, and then remaining on to be present at the funeral and the ceremonies of accession, had its effect upon English sentiment—that is to say, upon the whole nation. “Thank you, Kaiser,” said an isolated voice in the street, when he was received by a silent crowd. The dying Queen did not recognize him; with the poignant irony which belongs to deathbeds, she called him Frederick, taking him for his father. Relations between the nephew and uncle were more amicable, in the intimacy of emotion; for the first time for years they talked confidentially. The Emperor, at the moment in an anti-Russian humour, seemed more approachable than before; and for the third time in the course of three years Chamberlain expounded his desires. “The period of splendid isolation,” he said at this time, “is over for England. Our desire is to discuss all questions of international policy, especially those of Morocco and the Far East, with one or other of the great national groups. It is true that there are voices in the Cabinet in favour of joining the Dual Alliance; the rest of us are on the German side” (Eck. 2, 236).

But the Emperor was no sooner home again than his mood veered round. The Big-Fleet party got at him—



OUT OF UNIFORM





for the third time he decreed a reserved treatment of the question, and seized the earliest opportunity to give his uncle, the new King, some advice and criticism. This was in April, when he designated Edward's Ministers as "unmitigated noodles." "What would your Emperor say," remarked the King to Eckardstein, "if I allowed myself to call *his* Ministers such names! For years I have believed, and believe even now, that we are natural allies; together we could act as the world's police and keep the peace indefinitely. Undoubtedly Germany needs colonies and a wider sphere of influence, and she can have them both. . . . But these perpetual buckjumps of the Emperor's are more than anyone can put up with. That's why some of my Ministers have lost all faith in him, and in Bülow too. I have always tried to restore their confidence. But everything comes to an end at last" (Eck. 2, 298).

Shortly after this, a prominent champion of the alliance, Baron Alfred de Rothschild, wrote: "No one here is any longer taken in by Bülow's fine empty phrases . . . for that matter, your Government doesn't even yet seem to know what it wants. . . . Chamberlain, who has been dining with me to-night, has utterly lost heart; he won't have anything more to do with Berlin. 'If they're so short-sighted,' he says, 'that they can't see it's a question of a new international constellation, I can't help them'" (June 1902). And so it came to pass that the same Chamberlain who had ignored all previous friction, now angrily repudiated attacks in the German Press on the undoubted brutalities of his troops in the Transvaal, and made a speech comparing the behaviour of his soldiers with that of other European armies, including the Germans in the war of 1870. Whereupon a fresh storm arose in Germany. Bülow, though warned by the well-informed in London, could not resist the temptation of going with the stream instead of stemming it; and answered in the Reichstag that Germany would suffer no criticism of her soldiers. "Whoever attempts it will find he is biting on iron!" The deafening applause which greeted this

## BETWEEN TWO STOOLS

speech was paid for by the final breaking-off of negotiations. Chamberlain complained: "Bülow let me down before, two years ago—now I've had enough of it. There can be no further talk of coalition." Three months after, in February (1903), he began conversations with Cambon, which two years later led to the Entente Cordiale.

### 6

"In Berlin there is now more widespread apprehension . . . that one of these days we may fall between two stools. Unfortunately the Emperor *has* made love to all the Powers in turn, and of course they all know he has. Moreover he is terribly imprudent in his utterances—when he wants to stand well with England he says the most impossible things about Russia, and vice versa; then each tells the other what he said. . . . He is convinced of his own infallibility and astuteness; when anything goes wrong, others get all the blame. Sad to say, he is not a bit more conscientious about work, rather the reverse" (W. 2, 368).

A year later, when Bülow took charge, Waldersee followed up these political forebodings with others of a military kind. "People are taken in by the frequent violent speeches. . . . Our opponents are still of opinion that we may fall upon them any day, and as yet have no idea that it is we who are in the position of dreading attack from *them* at any moment. One of the most unfortunate ideas is that of protecting our long Eastern frontier by fortresses. . . . An offensive is the only thing there, and our having abandoned all idea of that is disturbing indeed. What would the Field-Marshal of immortal memory say if he could hear of it! . . . Unfortunately very powerful influences are at work in that direction: the immense sums made by Iron Industry over steel-clad turrets, gun-carriages, armour-plates, etc., induces the magnates to encourage the Emperor's fancy for that kind of thing. The Emperor met with no opposition when he depleted the Eastern army in favour of the Western" (W. 2, 401).

As a matter of fact, the Emperor did not in the least believe there would be any conflict with Russia. Ever since Nicholas had been Tsar he had danced attendance on him. He had talked himself into a hate for the yellow races, all on account of Russia; in 1895 he sent the Tsar his painting: "Peoples of Europe, guard your most precious possessions!"; but at the same period received the very yellow Li-Hung-Chang with marked consideration; and told him that China and Germany were natural allies. In the aforesaid painting the mild Buddha was transmogrified into an idol presiding over a bloody holocaust, Russia and Germany standing sentinel over the apostles of the true Gospel in the Far East. "I designed this drawing in Christmas-Week, under the glitter of the Christmas-tree candles," he wrote to the Tsar in Eulenburgian style, after he had ordered this chocolate-box cover from a Court-painter. Soon the representatives of Germany in Tokio were complaining that such pictures, fluttering all over the globe as they quickly would be, would put an end to friendly feeling in Japan. Besides, the universal question was how those Christian sentinels accorded with the Sultan's amity and the three hundred million Mohammedans, whom the Emperor had, in Damascus, described as his friends when hanging a miracle-working lamp over Saladin's tomb.

When after a Japanese victory in China it was thought well to call upon the conqueror to hold her hand, the Emperor took a personal stand against Japan. No sooner had the slogan of the Yellow Peril sounded in his ears than his heated imagination beheld yellow armies and navies overrunning Europe; Russia was the only Power who could tackle these. This idea of keeping the Tsar busy in the Far East, so as to disembarass Germany's eastern frontier, had become a foible of the Emperor's, and was later on to facilitate and expedite the outbreak of the Japanese War. So long ago as the April of 1895 he had promised the Tsar to cover his rear if he took the field in Asia, and this without the knowledge of the Foreign Office.

## THE TSAR HAS IT FRAMED

When in process of time he sent him the painting, and heard from his Ambassador that it had given pleasure and was to be carefully framed, the Emperor wrote in the margin of the despatch: "So it works! That is very gratifying." None of his utterances is more pathetic than this. Here he does definitely show as a dreamer who was incapable of seeing things as they were. One Emperor sends another a politically suggestive painting; the recipient is embarrassed, his Ministers laugh, cascades of bon-mots ripple round the drawing. What do they do? "Very beautiful," they say, and get the thing framed. This most guarded of acknowledgments is enough to irradiate the monarch—*qualis artifex!*—and he is so guileless as to indite, for all his representatives to read: "So it works!"

It worked by making the Empire completely dependent on the Tsar's dubious authority in Court and realm; it worked by implicating Germany in the moral responsibility for the Russo-Japanese War, to which she had encouraged Russia; it worked by estrangement of the anglophile Japan. "We had staked all upon a card which was not even in our hand" (Brandenburg, *Von Bismarck zum Weltkrieg*).

In the next few years there were trumped-up meetings with the Tsar; in 1897, "one has been brought about by hook or by crook. As before, he is dancing attendance on his exalted cousin—nay, one might use a harsher expression. . . . Truly it is only to be explained by the fear of war" (W. 2, 374). In the year 1898 he sent the Tsar another picture by the same Court-painter Knackfuss, representing Germany's fraternization with Russia; at this, Bülow ventured only to look a little aghast. With a persistency which no Prussian interest urged on him, the Emperor pursued his correspondence with the Tsar at this time (it lasted altogether twenty years) and awaited his answers like a suppliant at Court. "This morning came at last an anxiously awaited letter from the Tsar. There was great delight and excitement about it. These letters are

always long expected, and never come soon enough. Often the joyful anticipation of such a letter will last for months" (Z. 101)

When in the beginning of 1904 Russia declared war, it was with difficulty that the Emperor was kept neutral; he allowed the Tsar to coal at Kiao Chao, and when Japan protested he was furious and made threatening references to England. About that time he wrote down his political programme—August 1904—as a marginal note to a despatch, which was to go to all his representatives. "For the instruction of all my diplomatic functionaries! . . . This will be the decisive battle between the two religions of Christianity and Buddhism, between Western civilization and Eastern semi-civilization. It will be the battle which I prophetically delineated in my painting, wherein all Europe, acting as the United States of Europe, was to assemble under German leadership and defend, as we are bound to do, our most precious possessions. . . : It is instinct which implants in Japanese bosoms the same feeling towards us which Caesar had towards Casca, and Wallenstein towards Butler! . . . Therefore our sympathies are rightly Russia's! Therefore it is of the most vital importance that the Baltic Fleet—when it is ready and trained—should sail to reconquer the mastery of the sea and wrest it from Japan. . . The future of Russia, and indirectly of Europe, is at stake! I know well that we shall one day have to fight to the death with Japan, and I am making my preparations to that end! The Russians . . . later on, will assuredly aid us in repulsing Japan; but it would be better if they could give them a sound thrashing now."

In this document all the elements of his being are fused into a unique amalgam which is the authentic William—the fervour of the Crusader, the lawlessness of the pirate, the rant of the star-actor in a Grand Historical Melodrama, the craving for hegemony, the infatuation of the deluded, while as a finishing-touch the Germans are twice likened to classic murderers. Nor was his steadfast faith



## DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE

at all shaken by the issue of this bout between the religions, for he said to the recruits: "We must not conclude from the Japanese victories that Buddha is the superior of our Master, Christ."

Behind all this lay political calculations. Would not Russia be at his disposal in any event? If she won the war, Germany would have counselled and supported her; if she lost it, she would be weak enough to be forced into an alliance. This last idea was elaborated by Holstein, and in October, 1904 was laid before the Chancellor with the argument that the combined pressure of Russia and Germany would oblige France likewise to join in! "Two Empires—so Holstein's ingenuity reasoned—which had allied themselves only for the purpose of sooner or later crushing a third, were assuredly neither to be separated nor individually won over; but together they would be ready to appear upon the third party's platform as expiators of their error by reversing the original aim of their alliance. Thus Holstein's scheme provided for an alliance which was, after a year and a half, to be a substitute for, and improvement upon, that which the same intelligence had rejected in the shape of the counter-insurance. According to this scheme, the Emperor was to make a "defensive and offensive alliance with the Tsar for the preservation of European peace"—with which humbug, indeed, the majority of alliances were precluded in the Europe of the past. In the event of an attack upon either of the two Empires, each party undertook to assist the other with all its available forces; the arrangement was to become valid, a year of grace intervening, from the time when the Japanese concluded peace. The Tsar was to inform France and propose her adhesion.

"No one knows anything about it," wrote the Emperor to the Tsar, "not even my Foreign Office; the work was done by Bülow and myself alone. The point is this: If you and I stand shoulder to shoulder, the principal result will be that France must frankly and formally join us, by the mere fulfilment of her obligations to Russia; and this

is of the greatest importance to us, especially in consideration of her fine harbours and her useful Fleet, which would then be completely at our disposal." Then he proceeded to designate the heads of the Republic with which the Tsar was allied as "Clemenceau and all the rest of the ragtag and bobtail." That was the reason why they must first be of one mind between themselves, for as those Frenchmen "are neither Kings nor Emperors, I cannot put them on the same footing in a confidential matter like this as I can you, my cousin and friend."

If in this letter we substitute "Trusts" for "Countries" and suppose it to be written by the heir of a coal-magnate to his principal rival in business, and sent without consulting anyone whatever, it is clear that no general manager could retain his position in that colliery. Bülow indeed *had* read the original paper, but not the letter; instead, it was read by the ragtag and bobtail in Paris, which was neither King nor Emperor, but merely intelligent and hostile. Before long came the answer from the Tsar which anyone might have expected—he would be obliged to begin by showing such a proposal to his Paris "*compagnon*." As this was impossible, Holstein's masterpiece vanished into the Secret Archives.

## 7

Six months later it was resurrected in a form which Holstein, on another occasion, called "Operetta-Politics." The Emperor had devised a scene, the like of which he never in the whole course of his existence had the bliss of figuring in again. Russia was finally defeated in the naval battle near Tsushima in May 1905. "Kings are easily caught in the depths of such doldrums," thought the Emperor, and arranged for a secret meeting of their yachts in Finnish waters. He started without delay, had the contents of the pigeon-holed document wired to him the day before the rendezvous, copied them with his own exalted hand, altered them at a critical point, and prayed—in the absence of Bülow—to the Lord "that He may

## IN THE BAY OF BJÖRKO

lead me and guide me according to His will, for I am but the instrument of His hand, and will do what He gives me to do, however arduous the task.

Next day, on board the "Polar Star" in the Bay of Björkö, he was embracing Nicholas, who undoubtedly must have been glad, in his then situation, to sink upon the heart of a friend. As soon as they were alone, they established the fact that "France had flatly refused to dance to our tune, and evidently had no intention of ever fighting in the cause of the two Empires." Then the talk turned on England, and they outdid one another in reviling her. The Tsar—so the Emperor quickly informed Bülow (A. 19, f. 458)—described King Edward, in English, as the greatest mischief-maker and the most disingenuous and dangerous intriguer in the world; whereupon he gave the Emperor his English word of honour that never in his life would he combine against him with England. Followed a junketing on the "Hohenzollern," which lasted till broad daylight.

On awaking next forenoon the first step was yet another interview with God, who, before the Emperor began to haul in his dear friend, was consulted after the manner of the Moravian Brethren and caused him to open at the pregnant text: "He shall reward every man according to his works." The work being now certified as pleasing to God, the Emperor stepped, full of joyful anticipation, into his boat "with the treaty in his pocket." Another embrace, this time on the rope-ladder, and then "an excellent lunch in the saloon." ("An historic lunch," thought the Emperor.) As the Tsar spoke sceptically of the French, the Emperor ventured to express a suspicion that Edward had possibly made another of those "little arrangements" which were a foible of his, behind Russia's back with her ally. "The Tsar hung down his head very dejectedly, and said: 'That is too bad. What shall I do in this disagreeable situation?' I felt then that the moment had come! As his ally, without informing or consulting the Tsar, had taken a free hand in policy, *he* was of course

at liberty to do the same. How would it be if *we* were to make a little arrangement, too? . . . Germany had begun to be quite good friends with the Gauls, and now all obstacles are removed.' ”

“ Oh yes, to be sure. I remember well, but I forgot the contents of it. What a pity I haven't got it here.' ”

“ ‘ I possess a copy, which by an extraordinary chance I happen to have in my pocket.’ The Tsar caught me by the hand and drew me out of the saloon into what used to be his father's cabin, then he shut all the doors himself. ‘ Show it to me, please ’—and his dreamy eyes lit up. I drew the envelope from my pocket, unfolded the paper on Alexander's own writing-table, right in front of the Empress-Mother's photograph . . . and laid it before the Tsar. He read it once, twice, thrice. I sent up a fervent prayer to the good God that He would be with us in this moment, and guide the young monarch aright.

“ There was a dead calm; only the gentlest murmur from the sea, and the sun shone bright and clear into the pleasant cabin, while right before my eyes lay the “ Hohenzollern ” in her dazzling whiteness, and the Imperial Standard fluttering high in the morning-breeze. And I could read there, on its sable cross, the words ‘ *Gott mit Uns* ’ and as I read, the Tsar's voice said beside me:

‘ That is quite excellent. I quite agree! ’ . . . My heart beat so hard that I could hear it; but I pulled myself together and said, quite casually as it were: ‘ Should you like to sign it? It would be a very nice souvenir of our interview! ’ ”

“ He ran over the pages again. Then he said ‘ Yes, I will.’ I flung back the cover of the ink-bottle, handed him the pen, and he wrote, with a firm hand, ‘ Nicholas,’ and gave the pen to me. I signed my name under his; and when I stood up he folded me in his arms, much moved, and said: ‘ I thank God, and I thank you. It will be of most beneficent consequences for my country and yours.’ . . . Bright tears stood in my eyes—and indeed, my brow and spine were quite wet with perspiration—and I thought:

‘ Frederick William III and Queen Louise and Grand-papa and Nicholas I—they surely have been near us in this hour? They have been looking down on us, at any rate, and joy has filled all their hearts!’ ”

“ When I drew the Tsar’s attention to the fact that it would be well to have counter-signatures, as is the custom with such documents, he quite agreed and we instantly sent for Tschirchky to come over and Admiral Birnrow to come down. . . . We gave them both a résumé of the treaty, and the old sailor mutely caught my hand and kissed it reverentially. And so the morning of July 24, 1905, at Björkö is a turning-point in the history of Europe, and a great relief for my beloved Fatherland, which will at last be emancipated from the Gallic-Russo strangle-grip.”

This letter, filling seven sheets, is one of his most pellucid revelations of character—more natural, more guileless, than the Directions to his Diplomats. Here we have a vivid, starkly veracious narrative of a successful exploit, written to an intimate, without a trace of the “ Kaiser-pose ”: a tale that might be told at a cavalry-mess by a twenty-three-year-old subaltern, and nothing is really astonishing about it except that the teller is a forty-three-year-old monarch. Here is the inspiring consciousness of good intentions and clever management, the sense of having acted for the highest good of his country; here that arsenal of jesuitical pretexts and provisos whereby he so easily excuses the psychic pressure he has exercised; here the omnipresence of God—all taking the place, for him, of Constitutional Right, Secretary of State, and diplomatic insight. We are in presence of a believing Christian who, after a night of jollification, devoutly turns up a text and reads good omens on the Imperial Standard fluttering in the morning-breeze, putting his trust in these and in the signature of a defeated, deserted monarch, trapped in the cabin of his yacht, while from high heaven above look down their ancestors, allied of old as these to-day, and no less mutually treacherous, we may be sure. His tears of joy are as authentic as the



ruthlessness with which he constrains the helpless weakling to betrayal of his allies; the oriental dodge of the counter-signatures is as natural to him as the historic thrill at the sight of the antique writing-table; the murmur of the sea is as actual as the luncheon; the cold sweat of suspense as the kiss of friendship.

Only one thing is amazingly unconvincing, and that ~~the~~ thing for which he was notorious the world over—his sense of drama. His introduction of the subject of the treaty, his description, twice touched in, of the perfect nonchalance and ease with which he took the decisive steps—all this gives a picture of such clumsiness as must have made Bülow, the adept recipient, feel himself indeed a master as he read. If we did not already know it from a hundred posturings and rantings, the artless chicanery of this letter would be enough to reveal all the diletantism of the man who was so perpetually represented as a consummate actor. It was nothing but amateur theatricals on board the "Polar Star," very much as on that July evening on board the "Hohenzollern"; the level of the Siamese Twins was not exceeded; and if to-day, when both Emperors have made their exits, this scene were represented on the boards of a theatre, the simplest soul in the audience would reject it as incredible.

And that was what history did with it. Bülow at once discovered that the Emperor had materially impaired the value of the treaty by his independent clause, arranging for support "in Europe" only. He consulted Holstein, and they agreed that he should base his request to be allowed to resign on this clause—one of the cleverest moves ever made by this expert in human nature, for in the existing mood of benignity he was certain of risking nothing whatever, but rather consolidating his position and gaining to some extent the upper hand of his sovereign. It pierced the Emperor to the very heart. His refusal (A. 19, f. 496) has not its equal in the length and breadth of William the Second's correspondence.

First comes a boast of his achievement. "If Bismarck

## COLLAPSE

had succeeded in this . . . he would have been beside himself with joy, and would have made all the nations acclaim him." Then began reproaches and lamentations for Bülow. "To be treated like this by my best and most intimate of friends . . . it has dealt me such a terrible blow that I feel quite broken, and cannot but fear I may have a serious nervous attack. . . . No—you shall not do this, for both our sakes! We are elected by God, we were made for each other. . . . You yourself are worth a hundred thousand times more to me and the Fatherland than all the treaties in the world. . . . To please you, and because the Fatherland seemed to demand it of me, I consented as it were to ride (with my disabled arm too!) a horse I knew nothing about, and if it has brought me within an inch of my life, *you* are accountable! . . . And now, because I'm in this quandary, you, for whom I did the whole thing, want to let me down like this!! No, Bülow—I have not deserved it of you! . . . Why, it would be a disavowal of your whole policy, and I should be a laughing-stock for the rest of my life. But I should never survive it! . . . Telegraph 'All right' as soon as you get this, and then I shall know you're not going. For the day after I receive your resignation, the Emperor will no longer exist! Think of my poor wife and children!"

Only once again are we to see the Emperor in a like state of collapse—in November 1908; but Eulenburg and other intimates describe this nervous breakdown as typical, when external events unexpectedly overwhelmed him. Then all the bluster perpetually and obstinately imposed upon a body and a will which were unequal to the burden, would evaporate, revealing all, and more than all, the underlying weakness—it was as though an inflated balloon should strike and burst, the gas escaping in the twinkling of an eye, and then should sink and lie, a little flaccid wisp, upon the ground. These are the moments in which the observer is constrained to sympathy—a man of habitual pretensions loses grip upon himself; the theatrical hero casts his skin, and emerges as a pitiable

being, frightened, trembling, yet even while he trembles asserting himself, claiming his rights, throwing all the responsibility upon his friends, who are shamefully leaving him in the lurch.

So that instead of Bülow being brought down by the treaty, Bülow stayed, and the treaty lapsed. For what was bound to happen in the next act? The Tsar, when he got home, was drastically called over the coals. Lamsdorf, "in the greatest agitation," showed Witte the document, pointed out that Russia would have to defend Germany, if Germany had to fight France, though for fifteen years they had been vowed to do that for France against Germany. "These details," said Lamsdorf with blighting irony, "no doubt escaped His Majesty in the flood of the Emperor William's eloquence"; and forthwith he delivered up the secret of the cabin to Paris, whence it took flight to London, so that Edward was soon acquainted with his nephew's schemes, designed to league the Continent against him. How agonizing for Nicky! After the nuptial embraces in view of the ocean, the ancestors, and the flags—what a come-down to have to write to the Emperor and say that unfortunately he "had not had his papers at hand," and must first consult France: should she refuse, the treaty would become invalid in the event of France going to war with Germany. That meant: "It was a summer-morning dream, and my Ministers have waked me with the words: 'The Dual Alliance is the Dual Alliance.'"

Thus was the hero of Björkö twice robbed of his laurels. The consequences of his adventure were increased distrust in France, who sent a General to keep an eye on the Tsar; revulsion of feeling among Germanophiles in Petersburg, who considered it a piece of foul play; reinforcement of the anti-German group, who moreover attributed the lost campaign to the Emperor's advice—even Witte, long inclined towards Germany, seceded; and early in the following year the most formidable of her adversaries took the reins—Isvolski.

## A DOCUMENT OF 1924

The Emperor's false sympathy on the "Polar Star" turned to envenomed hatred (A. 19, 528): "Enclosed I send you yet another precious production from the schoolboy ideologue who sits upon the throne of Russia. The latest phase of the Russo-Gallic alliance . . . makes it clear that Paris will always have a *contre-coup* to let fly whenever the two Emperors attempt to approach one another, and that the Tsarlet will always, on the plea of their immemorial alliance, go in off the deep end. That he should get out of it by talking about 'my' Triple-Alliance-Idea, as if *I* were to get any particular advantage out of it, is really something a little more than childish innocence! And all this served up under the snivelling mask of eternal heartfelt friendship!"

How well the last phrase described himself, he quite failed to perceive.

William the Second regarded the Sea-Scene at Björkö as his masterpiece: long after his fall, long after 1918, he starred it in a rejected dedication of his *Memoirs* to General Suchemlinov—a dedication which is interesting for other reasons as well.<sup>1</sup>

It runs:

"The treaty concluded by the Tsar Nicholas II and myself at Björkö laid the foundations for a pacific and amicable coalition between Russia and Germany, which both monarchs had at heart. Its effect was destroyed by Russian diplomacy (Sasanov, Isvolski), by the Russian High Command, and her most prominent Parliamentarians and politicians. The World-War, so greatly desired by them, falsified their hopes, made havoc of their plans, and cost the Tsar as well as myself our thrones.

"The terrible consequences of the onslaught on Germany both for Russia and the world at large enforce the lesson that the future welfare of both countries depends

<sup>1</sup> This document, hitherto unknown, is given at the end of this book as a specimen of his handwriting.

upon such loyal co-operation as was theirs a hundred years ago—that is, when once both monarchies have been restored.

“ Best thanks for sending me your Memoirs.

• “ William, I.R.

“ Doorn, I. viii, 1924.”

## 8

“ La Conférence serait, Dieu aidant, d'un heureux présage pour le siècle qui va s'ouvrir. Elle rassemblerait dans un puissant faisceau les efforts de tous les États qui cherchent sans sermon à faire triompher la grande conception de la Paix Universelle sur les éléments de trouble et de discorde. Elle cimenterait en même temps leur accord par une consécration solidaire des principes d'équité et des droits sur lesquels reposent la sécurité des États et le bien-être des Peuples ”<sup>1</sup>

This peroration to the famous Peace-Manifesto wherein the Tsar, in August 1898, convoked the world to the First Hague Conference upon disarmament, was answered by the Emperor in these words: “ Can we picture a monarch, a Supreme War-Lord, disbanding his illustrious historic regiments, consigning their glorious flags to arsenals and museums, and thus delivering his cities over as a prey to anarchists and democrats? ”

Yet these two spheres of thought were less remote from one another than they seem. The Tsar's humanitarian impulse happened to be, at that time, in accordance with the views of those surrounding him, who otherwise would have put a spoke in his wheel; but the Emperor was timorous at heart, despite his trenchant rejoinder. Behind

<sup>1</sup> “ The Conference would, under God, be of most happy augury for the new century. It would unite in powerful co-operation all the Powers now unobtrusively engaged in the attempt to make the vast conception of Universal Peace prevail over the elements of unrest and discord; and at the same time would cement their accord by hallowing and consolidating those principles of equity and justice whereon repose the security of States and the welfare of nations.”



“IMBECILITY! BEDLAM!”

their glittering phrases both monarchs were uneasy. At the Conference it was soon made manifest that genuine Pacifists there were none, except the United States. The time was not ripe. Europe, for her awakening, needed the stench of ten million corpses.

But from the very first day no one was more explosive and cynical than William the Second in his opposition to the ideas with which, at the end of the old century, it was sought to formulate the political conceptions of the new one. Even now he was less afraid of alliances outside the Empire than of the insurrection of the Reds within it; he could listen more tranquilly to the ocean roaring round the coasts of Germany than to the subterranean growlings in the interior. Hence his allusion to anarchists and democrats, certain to destroy his cities if his soldiers were withdrawn. The troops, the troops! The mailed fist to protect him, the big guns that with a turn of the wrist could be swung round to shoot inward instead of outward, the bullets that would spatter, if need were, upon the heads of his mutinous subjects! When during the Tramways-Strike of 1900 riots broke out on Dönhofsplatz in Berlin, he wired to Head-quarters: “I trust that at least five hundred will be snuffed out by the time the troops return to barracks” (Z. 75).

This fear of his subjects, which never left him, was here as elsewhere one with the desire to make clear to all resolute Germans—in other words, to the greater part of the nation—that their Supreme War-Lord could and would show his teeth. Prussian drill, and his un-Prussian pusillanimity, combined to make the Emperor too derisive of the pacifist ideal. That the other Powers should have interpreted this as martial ardour was an inevitable misapprehension, since they knew nothing of the reverse of the medal.

In Germany itself the few psychologists who had strayed into Court circles could detect his uneasiness in the very violence of his comments, written and otherwise. “Sheer imbecility! Bedlam!” he wrote on a statement

of the Russian Minister's; and on the proposal that all the Powers should refrain from calling more than a certain percentage of their peoples to arms: "If he suggests that to me, I'll box his ears!"

He sent to the Conference as his expert adviser a bellicose Professor, despite a caution from Prince Münster, who accompanied him; and directly the heart of the matter, the Court of Arbitration, was approached, there was no holding him at all. Here the Emperor was undoubtedly at one with national sentiment. Half Germany was laughing, and Holstein for once expressed what all were feeling when he too pronounced against "such a ludicrous institution" (A. 15, 189)—suitable for little nations, not for great ones, since "the State has no higher purpose than the protection of its interests. These, however, for Great Powers, are not necessarily identical with the preservation of peace." And Bülow quoted Holstein by the page in his communications to the Emperor—who wrote, beside Russia's announcement that she would always be ready to submit to arbitration: "*I never will!*" And beside the word Peace-Bureau: "*O herrjeh! Manageress, Frau von Suttner! . . . The East-Prussian Frontier is sealed with a chain of fortresses and quick-firing guns, and behind that is infantry with Maxims. . . . I take a part in this Conference-comedy, but I keep my dagger in my belt for the dancing afterwards!*" (A. 15, 196).

He did not stand alone. In this instance his diplomats' reports, which all said the same things, were written not for his eye only, but for the hearts of the people. By his word "Comedy" the Emperor gave the signal for recalcitrancy to his representatives at the Conference. When at The Hague, on the motion of the United States, there was an attempt to declare private property on the high seas to be inviolable, and the Emperor wrote "No" in the margin, Bülow forwarded this word as "His Majesty's Orders" with the comment: "The question is . . . accordingly decided in the negative."

## BERLIN ELATED

That fighting-men should be in opposition at the Peace Conference was a matter-of-course. The British Admiral Fisker was no better than the German Colonel von Schwarzhoff—both were sent there to make trouble. The former said: "Might is right"; the latter wrote: "Thanks to our remarkably skilled leaders . . . the Russian Disarmament Proposals have been finally negatived to-day." But in London the Premier, Lord Salisbury, was contending, as a declared Pacifist, with his military group; in Berlin, the Chancellor and the Cabinet were militarized. In this way the ultimate result was that Germany was in conflict with almost all the other Powers—the grouping of the World-War was adumbrated in the deliberations over the World Peace.

For instance, Münster wrote (A. 15, 285): "Nearly all the delegates have worked themselves into a state of enthusiasm over the arbitration-proposals which is incomprehensible to me; they will, to win us over, agree to yet further concessions, merely to get the Court going"; and so he advised a formal assent. But Holstein would not, and even succeeded in procuring "a chilling reception" for the American delegates who came in person to Berlin to persuade the Emperor and Chancellor. So the German refusal stood alone, after (as the report states) "the arbitration-proposals had found eager support." And how elated was Berlin! The Emperor laughed, and wrote on the report: "Because none of them can mobilize as quickly as we can! And that's why we were to be handicapped!"

The Germans, in fact, so upset the apple-cart that Bülow proudly stated (A. 15, 302): "Scarcely more than the name is left . . . by reason of the clause inserted on Germany's demand, whereby compulsory arbitration is debarred in all instances where the vital interests or the honour of a State are affected. . . . The idea of arbitration is in every respect unattractive. Through Your Majesty's firm and decisive attitude it has, however, been possible to persuade the remaining States to abandon all that was of importance in the idea."

In like fashion, nineteen hundred years ago, had the Tetrarch made his report to Caesar upon the suppression of the dangers threatening to arise from the new Galilean teaching. These leaders of Europe, brought into contact with a spiritual ideal, passed by on the other side, and thought with *démarches* and protests, clauses and annotations, to get a vast conception, to parody an apostolic gesture by the antics of a clown. The danger past, a reflective epilogue is supplied by the Emperor: “ To think of the immensities that dreamy youth was playing with, in that silly prank of his! ” But soon he reverts to his old part of the soldier trusting in his God, and retrieves with it his native speech, for he concludes: “ In practice I, at any rate, will henceforth rely and call upon God and my bright sword alone! And damn their resolutions! ” (A. 15, 306).

9

For executing this intention he found, within a year, an appropriate opportunity in China. The Boxer Riots had supplied European rapacity with a pretext for a crusade against the heathen, whereby a yellow port or two might sample the ennobling influences of Western civilization. “ Then I may count on you for China? ” said the Emperor to Waldersee. In the summer of 1900 he was undergoing one of his recurrent phases of extreme excitability (W. 2, 448). The Partition of China was then a novel idea.

It was not for some days afterwards that he heard of the assassination of his Ambassador at Peking. That the death of this “ gentle Mortimer ” was eminently opportune, he soon made manifest by the frantic haste—more headlong even than usual—with which he arranged for a punitive expedition. *Weltpolitik*—that was the watchword; and where more easily acted upon? And in a periphrase sufficiently astounding for its style alone, the Emperor just then exclaimed, at a launching: “ The ocean is indispensable to Germany, but the ocean makes its own demand, which is that on it, and on the other side of it, no great decision shall be taken without the German Emperor. ”

## PEKIN

So in all haste an expeditionary force, and an iron-clad squadron into the bargain, were ordered to China. "Honestly speaking," wrote Moltke, who was in the Emperor's suite at this time, "it is pure greed—we want to cut our slice out of the Chinese cake. We want to get money, make railways, set mines going. . . . We're not an atom better than the English in the Transvaal" (M. 243).

The political question offered greater difficulties, for as the Emperor was at Wilhelmshöhe, the Chancellor on his Russian estate, the Secretary of State at Norderney, the Under-Secretary of State at Berchtesgaden, Holstein, who reigned alone in Berlin, was unable to restrain his sovereign from taking his own measures, and failed to convince him of the danger of provoking England. While he, against his will, was obliged to receive Waldersee—his whilom enemy, then his friend, and then once more his enemy—in order to give him political instructions before he sailed, Bülow was enraptured with the new Commander of the Forces. He saw his only rival for the Chancellorship disappear across the ocean—for Hohenlohe was eighty, and about to retire for good and all.

Great days for the Emperor—State-drives and speeches, flags, cannons, and the drums of war were in prospect, and no need to diminish the Home Forces. And then Peace played another trick on him, or tried to do so. On the evening before the festivities of departure came the tidings that the allied troops had taken Peking, and that the Imperial Court of China had fled. "Naturally," writes Waldersee, "this was at first a great disappointment to the Emperor. He had got it firmly fixed in his head that his Ambassadors and all their *personnel* had been assassinated long ago; the Allied advance on Peking, till now regarded as impracticable on account of the rainy season was, directly on my arrival, to begin under my supreme command, and mine would be the glory of capturing Peking. That dream was over; the Ambassadors were alive, there had been practically no rainy season . . .



and Peking had been taken without much sacrifice of life " (W. 3, 6).

What! Was the great idea to be ruined by petty side-issues such as retarded rains and assassinations? No—there could be no going-back in this! The very next day the Emperor addressed the Marines on parade: " You must know, my men, that you are about to meet a crafty, well-armed, cruel foe! Meet him, and beat him! Give no quarter! Take no prisoners! Kill him, when he falls into your hands! Even as, a thousand years ago, the Huns under their King Attila made such a name for themselves as still resounds in terror through legend and fable, so may the name of German resound through Chinese history a thousand years from now, and may you so conduct yourselves that no Chinaman will ever again so much as dare to look crooked at a German! "

The mounting excitement in each successive speech of the Emperor's could hardly be ascribed to the murder of the Ambassador, of which he had known for three weeks, because he had laid his plans for the raid before he heard of it. Moltke sufficiently accounts for that. Anyhow, Eulenburg, whether he knew of this speech or only foresaw it, had in the meantime secretly summoned the journalists and given them, in his own cabin, a quite different Imperial oration to take down. But one of them " slipped through the official fingers, and he snapped up a bit of the speech—before long, it was all made public."

Its effect endured for twenty years. Nothing made it easier for Germany's enemies, even in peace, to demonstrate that the Germans were barbarians at heart than did this speech of the Emperor's; and when in the World-War nation after nation was led to believe that in the middle of Europe sixty million Huns had their habitation, and worshipped the new Attila as their sovereign, it was not only the right instincts of the German people that were misapprehended, but also the wrong instincts of the Emperor. And so, after the lapse of a thousand years, that reckless, daemonic, savage robber-chieftain among

## THE WORLD-MARSHAL

kings was insulted by being likened to William the Second. In the dual fallacy of this parallel lies the explanation of the dual misunderstanding, all over the world, of Germany. A great and peaceable people, conscious of its subjection to a boastful little monarch, was obliged to pay for the claptrap of its vainglorious sovereign, who only degraded them with the title of Huns that he might ape an Attila.

He began by aping hegemony. The troops of all Europe under a German Field-Marshal—that was his dream; and when the Tsar, urgently consulted about Waldersee, wired his acquiescence, the Emperor proclaimed to London that his friend the Tsar had offered the supreme command to Waldersee. Whereupon the Tsar said to the German Ambassador that it was “only out of fraternal feeling for the Emperor” that he did not disavow this representation; while Salisbury “could not understand why the Emperor was so set upon a German General having the supreme command, since it always implied great risks for any Power which undertook it” (Eck. 2, 187). Bülow and the Office were superseded; the Emperor wanted “to direct the whole business as a purely military affair—from the saddle, as it were,” wrote Eulenburg, imploring Bülow for help (E. 2, 258).

Waldersee on his departure was given (as he states himself the marshal's baton, a saloon-carriage to Naples; then the very best cabin on the boat, together with two hundred bottles of champagne, fifty bottles of spirits, and two bodyguards, on whom the Emperor impressed these commands: “If the Field-Marshal ventures too near the fighting-line, your duty is to hold him back—if necessary, to catch hold of his bridle!” Then the Emperor urged the commander of the forces to be sure to squeeze out a big indemnity, for he needed money for his Fleet. Scarcely had the “World-Marshal” vanished to the accompaniment of plaudits from German railway-platforms and laughter from the rest of Europe, than the Tsar despatched a collective Note to the Powers, bidding them withdraw their troops to the coast, for all danger to Europeans was

at an end. The poor Emperor reviled this as such "want of consideration; such a complete misapprehension of the circumstances, and such a lack of even superficial judgment as are positively devastating."

When Waldersee set foot in China six weeks later, he could still hold a grand parade, uninterrupted by the rains. The foe was either beaten or extinct, no quarter was given, no prisoners were taken—all the Emperor's behests were strictly carried out.

Meanwhile the effects abroad had had their counter-effects at home, and German princes and German Parliamentarians revolted at last. The Emperor, they declared, had undertaken the campaign without asking the Reichstag for the wherewithal. In these circumstances the hoary Hohenlohe preferred to make his final exit; and Bülow, the new Chancellor, was clever enough to imitate Bismarck's speech of 1866, and save the situation by demanding an indemnity—this time, it is true, without a victory behind him. In his fear that something might still be on the cards, he wired to Eulenburg: "As you long ago foresaw, the danger of a coalition between the German Princes and the Reichstag against H.M. is immediate. . . . Find some pretext for writing to the Emperor, or better still, wire him at once, advising some caution in his speeches until the Chinese question is settled in the Reichstag" (E. 2, 258). Whereupon Eulenburg did warn the Emperor in this sense, and the Emperor retorted that he would say what he liked. . . .

By such arts had Ministers and friends to restrain their sovereign's eloquence, so as to bring about a belated harmony between the results of his brilliant ideas and the opinions of the legislature.

## 10

When Tirpitz said that the Kruger Telegram had awakened the nation to the necessity for a Fleet, he was mistaking a symptom for a great event. For twenty years the animosity between Germany and England, which was

## THE FLEET AND BISMARCK

almost entirely dynastic, had led to a steady increase of armaments in both countries, and this in its turn to increased animosity. In the European competition born of the distrust of every individual Power for all the others, the German Fleet-building was, psychologically speaking, the most negligible factor; for if the two monarchs in question had not been personally jealous of one another, the German paladins would never have had to don the tarpaulin over the cuirass.

Bismarck, who was the last to call a halt before embarking on the battle-fleet and world-power, protested to his dying day against a policy whereby Germany was risking her security in Europe for dubious acquisitions in Africa and Asia. If in this he was blind to the new potentialities in the merchant-service, he saw clearly enough the dangers attendant on a battle-fleet, and never would listen to the contention that Germany needed such a fleet to protect her Colonial possessions. Had not he, relying solely on continental power, obtained the first German colony from England without possessing a single ship? Moreover he knew that France and Russia, which had never been first-rate naval powers, were none the less classed with England as great powers; and he derided the further argument that Germany had come "too late" for her share in the undeveloped continents, which as a matter of fact had been passing from hand to hand for centuries.

Throughout a decade Bismarck had striven in vain for what his successors were offered in the year of his death; and when they thrice refused the alliance with England, it was the Emperor's antagonism for England which thrice turned the scale. He could not get over his grudge—he was unchangingly hostile; and this was because he did perceive her to be a higher type of the modern State, yet refused to acknowledge it. Nothing excited him like English attacks on himself—they flattered him by making him feel a martyr. He had the deck-house of the "Hohenzollern" hung with English caricatures, and always insisted on seeing hostile English articles, such as were

kept from him if of German origin. Thus he was for ever reopening the wounds which, dealt in his youth, had never been quite skinned over. Just as Prince William, when a young officer, had tried to avenge himself for his mother's slights by a brilliant display of regimental leadership, so now this most indelible and painful of his experiences was a perpetual goad impelling him to a similar display in his uncle's country. From his childhood onward to the days of the race of naval armaments—from 1872 to 1912—one long chain of resentments had been forged in William the Second's heart, disastrous alike for him and for the German people.

When England deeply offended, frowned on him after the Kruger Telegram, he asked for the first large loan—three hundred million marks—and negotiated on his own responsibility with the Vulcan Shipyard Company. Even then, in January 1896, Waldersee wrote: "The Emperor seems to have gone quite off his head with excitement about the Big Navy Bill." Hohenlohe would have nothing to do with it; he said that "so far as one can see, it is a practical impossibility—still-born, in fact" (E. 2, 213); while Eulenburg made it a principle, as he says, never to mix himself up in any warlike matters. The sagacious and very popular Admiral Hollmann was obliged to retire. But in the Emperor's suite was still that Admiral von Senden-Bibran, hostile to England for personal reasons, whose political insight is best revealed in his answer to a friendly caution: "What business is it of England's? I suppose we may build as we please!" To his unremitting pressure, daily brought to bear upon those who surrounded the Emperor, Eulenburg attributes very great influence.

The incidental music most congenial to the Imperial ears was supplied by the *Flottenverein*, which worked up general enthusiasm in every possible quarter, and was already adumbrating an expansion of the "Great German Federation": "Firstly, the existing little German Empire along with Luxemburg; secondly, Holland and Belgium;



thirdly, the German part of Switzerland; fourthly, the Austrian Empire." These things were mooted not only in German beer-houses and newspapers, but in the Palais Bourbon at Paris. But so long as the politicians held aloof; and only fighting-men and the bourgeoisie prattled—so long as the Emperor was without a Grand Vizier—the whole thing was, in Hohenlohe's words, still-born. What was needed was a Court-Admiral with Waldersee's intelligence and malleability.

Then Tirpitz came on the scene. The Emperor always had a good eye for the sort of men he wanted; in this instance he certainly fished out the most talented officer in his Navy. Even in the Army Tirpitz scarcely had his match in energy, sagacity, and courage. Here was a man who, unlike all those hitherto surrounding the Emperor, disdained to flatter him, knew what he wanted, and was prey to no corroding vice—a specialist, who combined a genuine passion for his calling with the profoundest knowledge of it. Tirpitz had only one failing—he told lies. At Court he was called the Story-Teller.

He had to lie—the German battle-fleet had to be built, if the diplomats were ever to come to an understanding with England. To this end he invented two slogans: Emergency-Fleet and Danger-Zone. Such a fleet would deter England from creating the "emergency"; and Germany had only a few years of the Danger-Zone to get through, during which her building would be objectionable to England and therefore dangerous to herself. These slogans were in everyone's mouth, and only the sceptics said among themselves that England would surely keep pace with Germany, and the "Zone" be everlasting. Tirpitz himself believed not a word of it all; he was a sailor, and as such what he really wanted was a fleet strong enough to challenge England in, say, twenty years' time.

To gain this end in the face of all opposition he was forced to lie. If, like the British Admiral Fisher, he had—even in the most secret of sessions—thumped the table



THE EMPEROR, TIRPITZ, AND MOLTKE



and shouted that Germany intended to annihilate England and supplant her in the empire of the world; if he had played the rabid sea-dog, the buccaneer, the pusillanimous Emperor would soon have had no use for him. It was only by diplomacy that he could prevail against the diplomats. Tirpitz did not follow in their devious tracks to keep himself in power, as all others did, but to realize in the face of opposition a scheme in which he thoroughly believed. A fervent German and a fervent fighting-man, he pinned his faith to his own phrases about "the German people nearing the zenith of maturity," or "the military spirit of Prussia, on which the national existence and the national welfare was founded in the past, and must be founded in the future."

To everyone acquainted with the temper, history, and position of England, Tirpitz's idea could only appear absurd, since the strongest naval power could not possibly allow the strongest military power to build an approximately equal fleet without endangering her own existence. Without a fleet, Germany could get on with England—with a fleet, it was out of the question. Hence England offered the alliance at a time when, as Tirpitz writes, Germany could not be sure "whether the bid for real sea-power ought to be risked, or whether the whole undertaking ought to remain a demonstration on a point of principle." Tirpitz won the Emperor's support for the battle-fleet in a couple of speeches, was appointed Secretary of State in the summer of 1897, obtained Hohenlohe's assent to his first Navy Bill in September, and when Bülow took over the Chancellorship in November, confronted him with nothing less than a *fait accompli*. Bülow would have had to be an expert to discern the future of fleet-building in the aspect it then presented.

For from the very first it was necessary for Tirpitz to lie. Only seven ships of the line were asked for, but in this skeleton proposal there lay well-nigh imperceptibly provision for thirty-eight; and in the later estimates the new leviathans figured as smaller types. At the time these

## “ STERN NECESSITY ”

deceptions were known to a few initiates, not to the people's representatives. Nevertheless Tirpitz had great difficulty in restraining the Emperor from premature bragging. When in the autumn of 1899 the second Navy Bill struck the first *blow* of *Weltpolitik*, he tried in vain to prevent an Imperial speech at a launching. The Emperor was incapable of quiet, long drawn-out achievement; he must always create a sensation, and that at once; so instead of (like the Japanese, for instance) unobtrusively building up sea-power, he delivered that resounding oration, with its rallying-cry: “ Stern necessity demands a mighty German Fleet!” When Tirpitz, after this, wanted to keep back his as yet incomplete new estimate until the Reichstag assembled, the Emperor urged him on. It was not in every instance that Tirpitz yielded; he was not much afraid of disfavour, holding that in his position “ a state of slight disfavour ” was the most desirable one. According to Ballin, “ he was far from congenial to the Emperor, who only put up with him because he had the same ideas in policy.”

It was in vain that the Emperor was advised to “ guard our Fleet as a precious, indispensable secret, and let the English hear and see as little as might be about it.” Beside these words of Bernstorff's he merely wrote: “ Out of the question!” Doing the exact reverse, he once more revealed the deep-lying motive. “ The Fleet alone gives me the prestige I require in England,” he said in 1904, and made up his mind to show Edward his new glories without delay. When at last, for the first time in many years, the latter came to Germany, the Emperor on his yacht at Kiel was in a tremendous state of excitement. “ He personally superintended the smallest details in the decoration of the ‘ Hohenzollern.’ An immense awning was stretched over the promenade-deck, there were marvellous arrangements of flowers, little fountains and waterfalls tinkled and splashed refreshingly in every direction. A dinner for one hundred and eight persons, and a tea-party for two hundred and twenty, were given in



honour of the King. The Emperor took all these matters so seriously that he was fully dressed three-quarters of an hour before the festivities were to begin, walking restlessly up and down the deck, and scarcely able to endure the waiting" (Z. 78)

But at last he could parade the entire German fleet before King Edward. That was his moment: now he could impress the detested uncle who had said, five years ago: "Let him play with his Fleet." But unfortunately he impressed him too deeply. For the King soon forgot flowers and tea-party, waterfalls even; but not the strength and the modernity of the ships he had been shown. Perturbed and reflective, he went back to his island. Two months later, the Press and the House of Commons began the campaign against German fleet-building—the Navy Scare—and this time the statesmen gave the signal. Lord Fisher proposed to do with this German Fleet as of yore with the Danish; the King promised Delcassé English ships against Germany; Mr. Arthur Lee, the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, envisaged a surprise attack and for the first time in fifty years sent a squadron to the Baltic, there was open speculation as to the possibility of landing one hundred thousand English in Schleswig. The ball had been set rolling—henceforth there was to be no stopping it.

All this the nephew regarded as his uncle's malignity. After supper he once said to a small circle of nine: "The King is setting the whole Press on me, out of personal spite—paying them with English money. He is a fiend! No one would believe what a fiend he is!" (Z. 153). His favourite confidant was the Tsar; to him he described Edward as the arch-intriguer, the wrecker, and wrote in August 1905: "I have ordered my fleet to dog the British, and as soon as they cast anchor to lie alongside, give them a dinner and make them drunk, so as to worm out as quickly as we can what this [their North-Sea cruise] may signify; and then they are to make off at once. . . . Don't tell anyone, for the secret must be well kept. Ta-ta! I've really finished now. Willy."

When shortly after this, his uncle passed through Germany without letting him know, and the Emperor—in October 1905—caused inquiry to be made if “he wants to pick a quarrel with me, that he traverses my realm without giving me any sort of notice,” the Ambassador did say in reply that the King was displeased by the way the Emperor was calumniating him all over Europe, and so could not have made any attempt to see him (Z. 132). At this time everyone abroad had ceased to take seriously anything that the Emperor said. The Master of the Household, just then, asked the English Ambassador why he was so definitely cool to them all nowadays, and was answered in a tone of some amusement: “If I had reported to London all that your Most High has said to me of late, we should have had war not once, but twenty times” (Z. 133).

The Emperor was happy. When the next estimate had secured six more armoured cruisers, he said: “I’ve taken in the Reichstag properly with the new Bill! They hadn’t an idea of the consequences when they let it through, for *this* Bill lays down that I am to be granted anything I choose to ask for. . . . Now I’ve shot them sitting, and no power on earth can prevent me from getting the very utmost that can be got out of them. The dogs shall pay till they’re blue in the face!” (Z. 159).

## II

Of the many Prussian provocations which between 1890 and 1906 led to the encirclement of Germany, there was one—and an important one—for which the Emperor was not responsible. In the year 1904 he laid stress, first to King Edward and then to his own advisers, upon his *desinteressement* in Morocco. He realized from the first the danger of any intervention in that French quasi-colony, and for weeks, even to the last moment, was opposed to the landing in Tangier. Ardently desirous of reconciling France, he had never at any time taken a menacing tone towards Paris, and would much rather

have spared her than humiliated her in Africa. The responsibility is Bülow's, who wanted to "do in" Delcasse by this coup, with him were Holstein, who branded any compliance as "another Olmütz or Fashoda," and Herr von Kühlmann, the *charge d'affaires* in Tangier, who suggested the Emperor's visit. Nothing in the Morocco imbroglio was done by the Emperor's desire; it will not, therefore, be treated of here. But why, we may ask ourselves, did this autocrat ever allow himself to be driven into that great error?

Here we see him under a new light. When his desire for a demonstration was opposed by his Ministers, his nervous craving would instantly increase—speeches, despatches, interviews, invitations given and accepted, journeys, were defiantly and hastily projected, just to show his henchmen that such was the royal will and pleasure! Eulenburg and Bulow alone could put the brake on the Imperial motor. The easier method with him was to substitute one activity for another, since to be doing, continually and visibly, was his insatiable demand; and after all it was much the same to him whether he wired to Kruger about the Protectorate, or only to congratulate him. On the other hand, it may be said that until 1909 it never was really necessary to urge him to action.

At this particular time—between 1904 and 1905—the Emperor was in one of the phases of depression which followed and preceded those of extreme excitement; and it was precisely then that his diplomats were trying in every way to humiliate France. At the end of the year 1903, so prolific in boastful speeches, he underwent an operation for a polypus in the throat. Had he inherited the disease which had killed his father, and of which his mother too had lately died? The question obsessed him; a strain of melancholy seemed to take possession of his tormented mind, and was a blessed relief to his overwrought nervous system. In such moods we shrink from noise and blusterings; we perceive more clearly the problems inherent in prolonged negotiations, the question-

## THE EMPEROR'S BEST SPEECH

able advantage of perpetual leaps in the dark. So early as the New Year of 1904 he forbade the despatch of a German ship to Morocco; and a year later, it was only by Bülow's argument that France would represent any other course as weakness that he was induced—even then with difficulty—to consent to the landing in Tangier. Indeed, he made at Bremen, immediately before his departure, one of his best speeches, which stands alone among hundreds.

“When I came to the throne, after my grandfather's mighty reign, I swore in my military oath that so far as in me lay I would put aside bayonets and cannons, yet keep them always burnished and in good repair, so that jealousy and rivalry from without should never call us away from the completion of our garden and our stately House within. My study of history led me to take counsel with myself, and inwardly to vow that never would I strive for a vain empire of the world. For what was the end of all the great so-called World-Empires? Alexander, Napoleon, all the mighty conquerors—had they not waded through blood, and left behind them subjugated peoples who cast off the yoke as quickly as might be, and brought those vaunted Empires to decay? The world-dominion of my dream consists above all in this—that the new-made German Empire should everywhere be regarded with the most absolute confidence, should enjoy the reputation of a tranquil, fair-dealing, pacific neighbour; and that if ever, in the future, history should tell of German world-dominion or a Hohenzollern hegemony, neither of these things should have been founded on conquests by the sword, but on the mutual confidence of nations animated by a similar ambition. . . . Her material frontiers round about her—and the frontiers of her spirit nowhere to be traced!”

But suddenly, after these finely conceived phrases, he broke out into: “The fleet is launched, and in building. . . . Its spirit is the same as that which inspired Prussian officers at Hohenfriedberg, Königgrätz, and Sedan; and

with every German warship that leaves the docks another guarantee of peace on earth is launched upon the waters. . . . The duty of our German youth . . . is to hold fast to the conviction that our Lord God would never have so striven for our German Fatherland if He had not meant great things for us. We are the salt of the earth, but we must make ourselves worthy so to be. . . . Then only shall it be written of the German people as you may read upon the helmets of my First Regiment of Guards: *Semper talis!*' Then . . . we shall stand, our hand upon our sword-knot, and our shield upright before us on the soil, and say: '*Tamen!* Come what will!''

Arresting antithesis! The incessant challenger sets forth to speak the things of peace to the whole world eight days before, for the first time in all his life, he is unwillingly to challenge—and, self-suggested, there arises to his inward eye a mystic Empire of the Spirit and the Prince of Peace, and he is orator enough to clothe his vision instantly in the fine symbol of the garden. He who for a lifetime had been ever for appearances, never for the truth of things, undergoes a profound revulsion of feeling—for the space of three minutes William the Second shows as a prince inspired by a wise and generous ideal; and, for sure, in those three minutes he was glad at heart. But then he looks around him; there they are—the uniforms, the scintillating Orders, the stiff backs, drilled poses, fierce moustaches; and confronted by the rigid system, his uneasiness takes refuge in bluster, his uncertainty of the effect he may have made in a resolve to make a more sensational one—and out they foam again, the names of battles, armoured cruisers launched and building, blazoned helmets, and the German God in the machine, who is to prove his loyal solicitude for German interests, since "we are the salt of the earth." Sword-knot and shield and "Let them all come"! Before he knows it himself, the Emperor who began *andante* is strutting to the quick-step of Up and At 'em.

Under the heights of Tangier, prostrated by a stormy



## TANGIER

passage and the thought of Spanish anarchists, he wanted to turn tail an hour before the landing; and only one suggestion availed to overcome his reluctance—that of “derring-do” and “an historic entry.” Even when the dripping Kühlmann presented himself, the Emperor was still reiterating: “I won’t go ashore!” At last, when his aides-de-camp had made a trial trip, he did pluck up courage; but though Bülow had wired, ordering “a horse warranted steady,” the appointed steed was so uncourtly as to put an end to his composure once for all. The whole grotesque imposture of Colonial protectorates is laid bare when we see the monarch of one country, who desires to take another country down a peg in its prestige, paying an operatic call on a black Sultan’s uncle, and guaranteeing that potentate in his full rights of sovereignty in order to diminish the influence of a rival.

The artificers of this set-piece were in high feather, for as Delcasse in Paris saw in the display the provocation he was meant to see, his colleagues fastened eagerly upon this pretext to get rid of his autocratic rule, and by their submissive attitude awakened the drowsy Eumenides of France. “Prestige,” that blazon upon Satan’s scutcheon, was shrieked from every journal, every throat, in Paris. “We have been humiliated by the Germans”—the conciliatory mood of France, perceptible even in school-books, was a thing of the past; armaments duly increased, and at the Conference on the Morocco Question the Entente became at last an actuality. “Our policy”—so Brandenburg pronounces—“was a petty one, dictated partly by uneasiness, partly by greed and considerations of prestige. Once more, great perdurable things were forgotten in trivialities.”

And here, in Algeciras, where England first threw in her lot with France, while Cambon was coming to an understanding with Grey over Belgium—here the naval rivalry was at the heart of all. In sundry estimates for what was called the renovation of the Fleet, Tirpitz disclosed his secret scherme for German eyes—but, unfortun-

ately, English eyes as well—to take stock of. No more mystery now; so many ships to be built up to 1917-20; and England, thus threatened, could not but be alert to build in defence. When Bülow tried to slow down, it was too late.

He is to be excused, and not only by the layman's ignorance. No sooner was he appointed than the scheme confronted him; and ten years later, at the height of his power, he opposed it. “ If in our naval competition we laid more stress on defence, the principal reason for tension between us and England would be removed, and possibly it would also be better for our own security.” Thus actuated, he recommended submarines and coast-defences; and in August 1908 wrote to the Emperor: “ A young tree has to be protected from the storms which might uproot it. If our fleet-building progresses at this rate, it is unlikely that the royal couple will visit us.” He wrote likewise about the risk of a war on three fronts. Still graver were Metternich's warnings from London—if Germany declined some arrangement about the fleet, the danger of war with England would be sensibly increased.

But what good was the defensive to the Emperor? Resolute not to attack, he yet longed to stand “ in glittering armour ” before his blood-relations; and while Tirpitz went on building battleships, the Emperor's faint heart beat high and he contemned all cautionary talk of the increasing sensation created by the Pan-German spectacular drama, as with every ship it mounted higher till at last the very bourgeoisie were in a flutter. What! Germany be told how many ships she might be graciously allowed to build? Did England pay for them, then? This talk about unending competition in armaments? “ It is all nonsense; England is exaggerating on purpose,” wrote the Emperor. “ We are legislating for forty ships of the line in 1918-20. Tirpitz and I have decided that this number will be entirely adequate, and the Reichstag has passed the estimates. . . . Neither he nor I have the faintest shadow of an intention of . . . over-stepping this

programme for ships of the line. . . . A big estimate in 1912 or later is not in our views, and exists only in the imagination of Britain, which has gone stark staring mad. . . . From 1920 onwards we shall be in a position to make our own terms with them." These are such asseverations as frail ladies make—only this one adventure, and then we will for evermore be good!

But the majestic figures were too small for Tirpitz, and soon it was known in high quarters that he had fresh schemes up his sleeve. "A show-estimate," so Admiral von Pohl, the Admiral commanding in the War, sums up "a show-fleet, a prestige-policy, was what Tirpitz chiefly wanted; so the small cruisers and the torpedo-boats have fallen below standard in size and armament." And so it was vain indeed for the Emperor, in February 1908, to assure Mr. Arthur Lee in a personal letter that his intentions were wholly pacific; it only created a scene in the English House of Commons. Lee got into trouble, for the King expressed displeasure at the exchange of letters between a monarch and a subject; Lord Roberts declared that a German invasion was in sight; and Metternich, assailed by the Press, persistently and emphatically declared that it was England's bounden duty to preserve her supremacy at sea. "Well, they will just have to get accustomed to our Fleet," was the Emperor's reply, "and from time to time we must assure them that it's not for use against *them*."

About this time, in the summer of 1908, two intelligent Jews put their heads together, and tried without false sentiment or any sentiment at all to do what two influential business men might settle the affair. Ballin and Cassel—independent-minded intimates of their respective monarchs; the Englishman more of a *grand seigneur*, the German of a self-made man; Cassel enjoying the freedom of a land which not long since had entrusted the government of the State to a Jew; Ballin contending with the thralldom of another, where he had to be for ever on his guard against racial insults; Cassel in a part he well knew

how to play, Ballin in the painful position of him who has to deal with something unfamiliar and embarrassing.

Cassel: "It is our anxiety about Germany's growing Fleet which urges us to the Entente. We shall have to ask Germany, once for all, when she intends to cease building."

Ballin: "The question would of itself mean war."

This blustering answer had been arranged beforehand with the Emperor. Bülow said the same thing in a circular letter—and then it occurred to these two gentlemen that what would suit them was what they had refused eight or ten years ago. "The simplest solution is an alliance with us," wrote the Emperor. "Then all our troubles would be over. For the English to think we will attack them is delirious nonsense! We should never be such idiots. That would be *harakiri* pure and simple."

When Metternich, thus emboldened, frankly declared in July 1908 that the English Ministers were all for peace and only wanted a reciprocal diminution in the Navy Estimates, the Emperor was infuriated and wrote in the margin: "A veiled threat! We will suffer no dictation! Ambassador has exceeded his instructions!" Further: "It must be made clear to him that an arrangement with England at the expense of the fleet is no desire of mine. It is a piece of boundless impudence, a mortal insult to the German people and their Emperor; it must be imperatively and finally discountenanced. . . . The Law will be carried out to the last fraction; whether Britain likes it or not is nothing to us. If they want war, let them begin it—we are not afraid! . . . I must beg that the Ambassador will henceforth take no notice whatever of this kind of vapouring!"

Thus the Emperor, having "properly taken in the Reichstag, so that the dogs would have to pay," assumed the pose of an evangelist not only before the world at large but even in the privacy of marginalia: "for this is the fulfilling of the Law" Bülow, who sent only a very emasculated version of this reproof to the Ambassador,

## INTERVIEW WITH HARDINGE

did advise a reserved attitude towards England, taking his stand on "Emperor's Orders." And now came the critical moment. Bülow, without being exactly a lion, nevertheless took refuge in his lair when the King of England arrived on his visit, though the King brought Hardinge with him, and arranged that Lloyd George should be in Berlin at the same time, to discuss (despite all menaces) the question of the Fleet once more. Lloyd George needed some arrangement, in order that he might put through his Land Bill without being held up by the fleet-building trouble—otherwise the Cabinet foresaw angry debates. And so the English came. They wanted to compose all differences; they came with the best egotistic intentions.

At Friedrichshof, in that August of 1908, the King said not a word to his nephew on the subject; but Hardinge, after dinner, went straight to the point. In the course of the conversation he said: "Would it not be possible for both countries to make a mutual arrangement for limitation of armaments?"

The Emperor: "Only in accordance with our requirements."

Hardinge: "An agreement is conceivable whereby both might cease to build, or build at a slower rate."

The Emperor: "That is a question affecting national honour and dignity. We should prefer to fight!"

Whereupon Hardinge flushed as red as the ribbon of the Order of the Eagle (first-class) which he was later to receive.

The Englishmen went home, feeling that there was nothing more to be done; but the Emperor wrote a jubilant report to Bülow, and received for answer yet another cautionary letter, saying that the danger of war was increased by this failure to come to an understanding, and that a war with England might have disastrous consequences for Germany. The Emperor only reiterated his opinion that every English proposal for a limitation of armaments was a hostile act.



This was the moment for Bülow to resign. September 1908: how was it that his amazing intuition—one of his finest faculties—did not enable him to foresee what would happen two months later, and unpropitiously for him? Had he gone then, it would have been as a warning prophet.

At the end of the year the question again became acute. Metternich had written, disputing the Tirpitz theory of rivalry and English jealousy with an energy rarely shown in ambassadorial communications to the Emperor, who was their reader-in-chief. He said that "the cardinal question in our relations with England is the growth of our Fleet. This may not be very agreeable in the hearing, but I see no purpose in concealing the truth, nor could I reconcile it with my duty to do so." He warned Germany against believing that either increased taxation or fear would drive the English people into her arms; on the contrary, they would redouble their precautions. Tirpitz answered that they would soon be short of money, and would then cease to build. Immediately afterwards Lloyd George's Land Bill was passed, and building still went on. Then Bülow put the incisive question to Tirpitz: "Can the German nation fearlessly survey the prospect of an attack from England?"

The Admiral was silent for the space of a fortnight. Then he wrote to say No, and advised acceleration in fleet-building, which would frighten England off. Bülow retorted that that was no answer; Germany's best course was defence of the coast, and at the very utmost three battleships a year. Tirpitz threatened to resign, in that event—he could well risk it, being the Emperor's mouth-piece. Bülow, who had proffered his resignation on account of a couple of words in the Björkö Treaty, could not now venture on a similar step, for here lay the Emperor's vulnerable point. Even Brandenburg sums up with: "The Emperor's personal feeling that Germany would be humiliated by such an admission . . . was the decisive factor."

Between an importunate Admiral, a Cassandra-like Ambassador, a too soft-spoken Chancellor, and complete liberty to decide the vital question by his casting-vote, the Emperor could do no other than obey his own profoundest instincts and emotions. They were those of his wounded adolescent pride.

## 12

“ I am fully conscious that the Kings of Prussia could not have achieved their historical triumphs if they had not had such a people as ours behind them, by their officers and soldiers, their officials in all classes, disciplined to such a pitch of excellence as scarcely any other people has attained.” Despite the disfigurement of this phrase by the word “ disciplined,” the subject is at any rate honoured with the title of “ people.” It is the Birthday-speech of 1901. Two months later, a young man at Bremen threw a fragment of iron at the Emperor, which scratched him slightly in the face. Followed investigation—the perpetrator was pronounced to be quite irresponsible for his actions. Nevertheless it made a deep impression; there was great dejection, presentiment of the ever-dreaded revolt. A fortnight later the next speech said: “ My Alexander-Regiment is called upon to act to some extent as a body-guard both by day and by night—to be ready, if occasion arises, to fight to the death for the King and his household. And if the City of Berlin should ever again as in the year 1848 revolt against its sovereign, then, Grenadiers, you will be called upon to drive those insolent and unruly subjects in couples before you with your bayonets.”

In the following year *Vorwärts* began a series of revelations about “ Krupp in Capri,” wherein his long-known degenerate tendencies were reported in detail. Krupp, as it happened, was then with the Emperor for the Kiel Week; and people wondered whether he would bring an action. He killed himself. The Emperor said at the funeral: “ I repudiate these attacks on him . . . a German

of the Germans . . . his honour so assailed. Who were the men that made this infamous attack upon our friend? Men who till then had been looked upon as Germans, but who are henceforth unworthy of that name; and these men come from the German working-classes, who owe so infinite a debt of gratitude to Krupp.” Though the working-classes were not of the same opinion, it was contrived to get up a reverential response, which they afterwards publicly repudiated. Krupp’s widow, however, abandoned her action, the Attorney-General having stopped the proceedings.

At the next elections the Socialists lost several seats, but in those following regained them twice over and entered the Reichstag as the strongest party, numbering one hundred and ten. What were the Emperor’s reflections on this? In January 1908 there really were disturbances in the capital. The Emperor summoned a guard of one hundred and fifty to the Palace, and blustered to his aides-de-camp: “ If I had known of this disorder on Sunday, I would have called out the Alexander-Regiment and cleared the streets myself!” Whereupon a courtier told some terrified novices: “ He doesn’t really mean it; the Emperor talks like that, but nothing ever comes of it ” (Z. 187). Again, when thirty wounded were reported, the Emperor said: “ I am very well satisfied with the conduct of the police. But next time they must strike, not with the flat, but the edge of the sword!” (Z. 185).

From these two utterances we can forecast the Emperor’s behaviour in a revolution. Ferocious commands, but no foot set outside the Palace, which is filled with armed guards; the desire and the behest for more blood in the streets (by no means any in the Palace)—so that he might at any rate dye the end of his reign in blood, though he had at its beginning shrunk from anything of the kind. But if the body-guard had revolted . . . ?

Even the Federal Princes were looked upon by him as little more than a bigger body-guard. “ For I must be obeyed,” as he had said in his juvenile letter to Bismarck

## THE "UNCLES"

about setting a precedent for the uncles. In reality a *fronde* was gradually forming against him, impalpable, but every bit as strong as that of the Socialists. It was the oldest of these Princes who first realized the danger inherent in the Emperor's personality. So early as the December of 1888, he of Lippe-Detmold said, with all the discretion proper to a miniature-monarch: "The Emperor has wellnigh despotic tendencies, yet with them very Liberal ones, an amazing power of memory, and swift apprehension. So it is better not to make any unconsidered observations in his presence, for they stick and may have unforeseen results, given his tendency to rash decisions."

When in the year 1891 he wrote in the Golden Book of Münster "*Regis voluntas lex*," the earliest murmur arose—the only debatable question being whether this challenging phrase referred to himself or to the two crazy Bavarian kings. Soon afterwards, on a question of fleet-building, he wired, not in cipher, to Eulenburg his Ambassador: "Don't be put out by the clamour of the idiotic Bavarian loyalists, who never fail to make fools of themselves. . . . How often have I laughed over the incredible folly of the good Bavarians!" The horrified Eulenburg most respectfully begged him to send any future messages of the kind in cipher.

The Federal Army, which was under the Emperor's command, was bound to be a source of jealousy. The excellent King of Württemberg, who resembled the Emperor only in name, had expressed himself so angrily at some manœuvres in the autumn of 1894 about the command in Stuttgart that the Emperor left in a hurry. Much the same thing happened in Bavaria; and when in consequence of the perpetual cropping-up of the question of German primacy a German Consul, receiving Prince Henry in Moscow, spoke of the "King and his retinue," the Bavarian heir-apparent said for all the world to hear at the Moscow banquet that the German Federal Princes were no vassals.

It was thus that the "old uncles" interpreted obedience.

The smallest state had the biggest grievance. When in the summer of 1908 the new Count-Regent of Lippe-Detmold claimed the title of Serene Highness and the military royal salute for his family, the Emperor sent a curt refusal. To a courteous "petition and representation," the euphemism in which he clothed his complaint against the High Command, the Regent received the following reply: "Your letter received. Orders of the High Command are given with my approval. . . . To the Regent, as Regent, I have nothing more to say. Except that the tone in which you have thought fit to address me, I now forbid once for all."

Then the least of Regents in the country uprose against the greatest, and was so manful as to enter a protest in the shape of a circular letter to all the German Princes. In each of the twenty capitals the excitement was much greater than the Princes' common sense of dignity allowed them to make public; every one of them was horrified—this impertinent tone might be used to any of the Kings to-morrow! Followed a protest in the little *Landtag*, a debate in the *Bundesrat*, a judgment in the Imperial courts. The Emperor had as good as refused recognition to the Regency in the person of the Prince's son, had forbidden the swearing-in of recruits. Intervention of Court Jurists, who circumstantially demonstrated that right was wrong, till the case went hopelessly against them; and the Emperor was for the first time in his life, though it were but by German Princes, forced to give in.

## 13

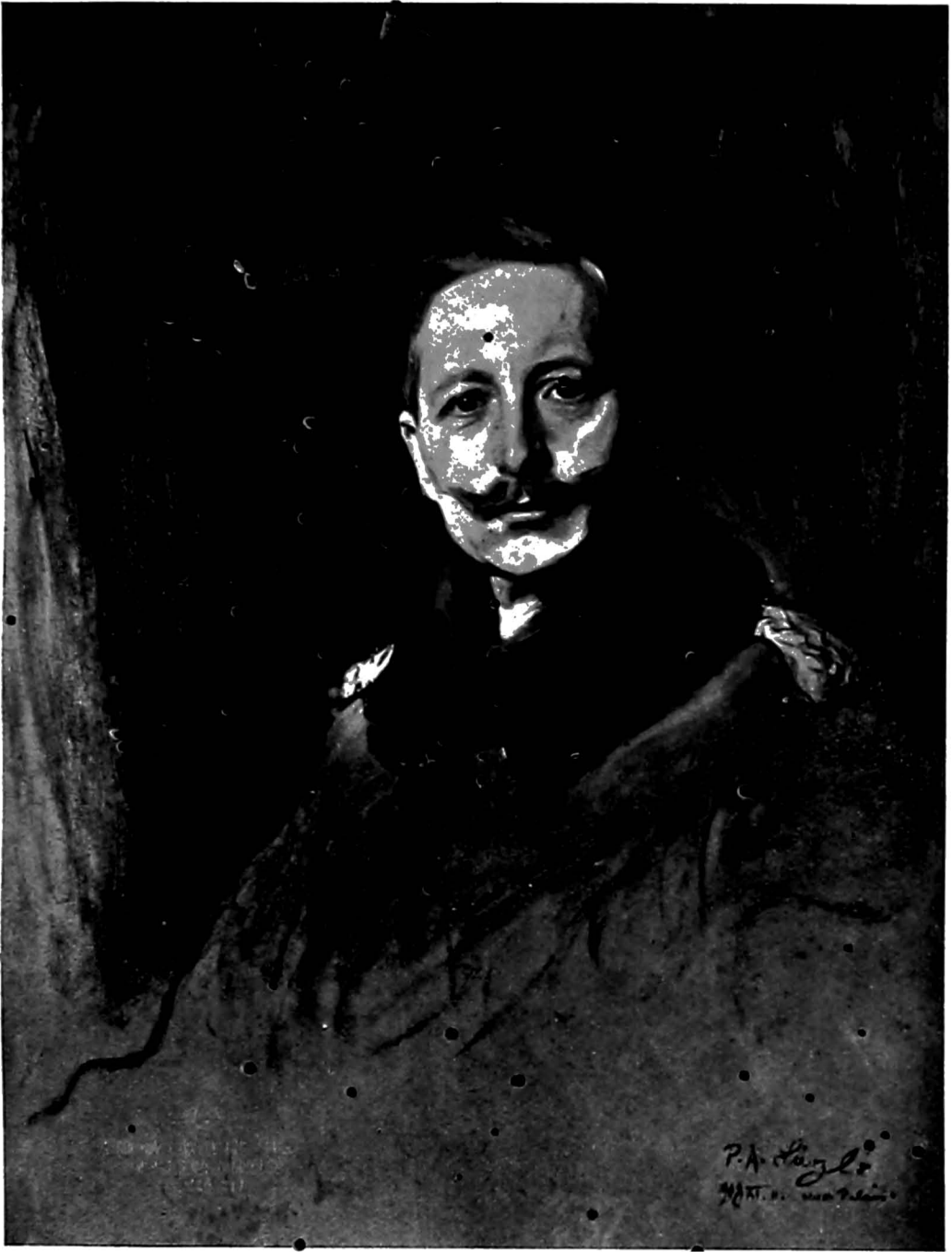
His nervous temperament had long been the theme of private discussion, and after his abdication was publicly analysed by psychologists. Now that we have reached the middle of his life, and of our delineation, we propose to enlarge upon this subject. In the year 1919, patriotic Germans sought to prove that the Emperor was mentally



## HIS NATURE

deranged, in the hope of convincing the enemy that he was innocent of responsibility for the war. That effort was superfluous, for with this eminently unheroic monarch there could never have been any question of set purpose, but only of how far his recklessness had involved him. Not until now has the discussion of his nervous condition been to the point. As a private individual, William the Second would not be declared legally irresponsible in any court of law, by a physician who knew his business. It is true that such gifted and complex natures as his are never normal—they are always on the dividing-line; but while it may please the psychiatrist to write him down as a case of neurosis, the psychologist will be particularly careful to avoid this "flight into illness," and will seek to account for him simply and naturally as the inevitable product of heredity and environment, unmodified by controlling and counteracting influences.

The only questionings of his normality which have any importance are those of early date. Waldersée wrote, when the Emperor was thirty-two: "It is said that many people, and especially doctors, are quite openly debating whether—possibly in connection with the ear-trouble—there may not be some very gradual process of mental derangement" (W. 2, 228). When he was thirty-seven: "Since the Scandinavian trip the old affliction in the ear has set in again, and depresses him badly. His nerves have repeatedly broken down since this reappeared. . . . If any great political disappointment were now to occur, which is always on the cards, it would mean a complete collapse" (W. 2, 374). In his forty-fourth year his physician Leuthold reports: "We must have recourse to a stay in one of the spas, under a strict regime." But Eulenburg, warning Bülow, writes as follows: "I want to give you a hint of the gradual alteration in the mental and psychical condition of our dear sovereign. . . . It is difficult to convey the idea, but you will understand the bearing of my letter. . . . I may add that the crisis would certainly not—as so many fear (or hope)—take the form



AFTER THE PAINTING BY LASZLO

of mental derangement: but that of nervous prostration."

Now, when so sagacious and intimate a companion—one of more than twelve years' standing—apprehends nothing worse than nervous prostration, it is clear that the crucial pathological question is: How will the Emperor react to the greatest crisis of all? Neither at the beginning nor the end of the war was he even for a moment mentally deranged. After all that has befallen him, he is now a vigorous, hale, and unaltered man, of close on seventy.

The gifts of high-strung natures are his, beyond a doubt. Two of those who knew and judged him best, and long were near him though not actually of his Court, maintain to this day that his talents are exceptional. Certainly he did, from the English side, derive a measure of intellect and talent which for a century had been rare indeed among the Hohenzollerns; but otherwise the inherited attributes were ill assorted, for there was not a trace in him of his two genuinely noble grandfathers, while from his parents he took only their weaknesses. Frederick's affectation and vanity, Victoria's ambition and self-will, were blended into the uneasy self-consciousness of a slightly deformed man who was for ever in the public eye. All his tendencies towards Caesarism were born of his anomalous resolve to seem case-hardened, though it is true that they became more spontaneous as his authority increased.

The vivacity of his unstable temperament supplied his quick brain with those happy thoughts which struck everyone by their raciness and aptness. They have something of the born demagogue's preghancy. "The trident of Neptune belongs by right to German fists"—that is unforgettable. At the opening of a Polytechnic: "Mathematics and physical science have shown mankind how we may force the door of God's stupendous workshop." At the inauguration of a Naval College: "Think of your work not only as a means of accumulating knowledge, but also as a literal interpretation of the words Duty and Energy. . . . Character comes first here." Or they would

## WALDERSEE'S TESTIMONY

take the shape of such charming things as this, in a birthday-letter to his grandmother: "How incredible it must seem to you that the tiny weeny little brat you so often had in your arms, and dear Grandpapa swung about in his napkin, has now reached the forties, just the half of your prosperous successful life. . . . It is to be hoped you are not ill-pleased with your queer and impetuous colleague" (Lee, 740). With what a tenderly ironic smile the Queen must have read these words, irresistible despite the incessant conflicts!

Delighting as he did in the part of munificent caliph, he would bestow orders and titles with a delicate appreciation of the fine shades possible in certain instances, which enchanted many besides the recipients. To arrange for a performance of old Menzel's concerto for the flute at Sans Souci; to send the victorious flag as a birthday-present to the nonagenarian Moltke's house—these were very attractive little inspirations. And there were political ones as well. When Carnot was assassinated, the Emperor amnestied two French officers, imprisoned for espionage, and sent them home as a token of his sympathy for the country. He was opposed to duelling, and obliged his officers to discourage that evil practice; in the year 1907 he even attempted to mitigate the penalties for *lèse-majesté*.

When reason and instinct could occasionally play their part so well, and that in the face of contrary advice, why not oftener? His gifts and perceptions might have made this monarch a valuable one, if they had not been perpetually thwarted by wilfulnesses and resentments, misgivings and affectations. No one has better analysed these dangerous tendencies than Waldersee, who as Chief of Staff has to say of him at thirty—that is, in the summer of 1890: "The Emperor has no steadiness of purpose in any department, and does not really know what he would be at. He is easily influenced by anyone with a spark of intelligence, and goes off at the most disconcerting tangents. He has only one motive in everything he does—popularity-hunting. Concern for his personal safety

has something to do with this; but, besides, he gets more conceited every day. I thought the Emperor Frederick a very vain man, given to dressing-up and showing-off, but he was nothing to the present monarch. He positively hunts for ovations, and nothing delights him like a frantically cheering mob. As he is very much taken up with the idea of his own capabilities, which unfortunately is a good deal of a delusion, he will swallow any amount of flattery. He likes to play the Maecenas, and squanders money quite recklessly. All this has developed so quickly that I go from amazement to amazement. He can be most fascinating, and wins hearts wherever he goes—and doesn't stay." (W. 2, 137)

His most conspicuous traits, then, were already in evidence at thirty—vivacity, vanity, arbitrariness, instability, charm, extravagance. Everything that was repellent in his behaviour can be explained by the nervous self-assertion to which his infirmity impelled him from his earliest years. "He could not bear to be looked straight in the eyes" (Al. 359); cultivated a loud shrill laugh, while in society his voice took on a disagreeable stridency. Though he was always trying to conciliate the French, he had himself painted for the Paris Embassy as a Garde du Corps in a black cuirass and the royal purple, with a Field-Marshal's baton in his hand, so that Waldersee said the verdict of twenty years hence would be that if he had done great deeds it was an admirable picture, and if he had not it was simply laughable. But Gallifet, standing before it, said to the Ambassador: "Pour vous dire la vérité, ce portrait-là, c'est une déclaration de guerre!" (Eck. 1, 240).

The effect of this pose on international peace was first perceptible in Russia, where in the early days the Emperor's utterances were taken seriously by politicians. Waldersee writes in 1892: "It is a fact that Russia is increasing her armaments, because there it is believed that we are aggressively inclined. Unfortunately there can be little doubt that . . . our Emperor is to blame for this. He has



## INCREASING ARROGANCE

repeatedly given expression to a most incautious anti-Russian views—for example, how he would like to give the Russians a beating. . . . I do not doubt that these remarks have been still more frequently made in the family circle, and of course have gone further. . . . My conviction is that all these sayings are the outcome of uneasiness, just as a child will scream to keep up its courage. . . . But as our monarch would not on any account have this suspected, he gets more and more obstinate and violent about trifles, and talks himself into the idea that he is a very mettlesome person ” (W. 230).

Pusillanimity and vanity united to foster that spirit of absolutism which like a cataract flooded every channel of the administration. So early as 1891 Waldersee writes: “ No one may say a word to him; he gives forth his own views with absolute confidence, and apparently means to permit of no opposition.” About that time the Emperor said in public: “ There is only one ruler in this country, and that is myself.” Two years later he had come to saying: “ I intend to put through this Army Bill, cost what it may. . . . I’ll see that drivelling Reichstag damned, if it opposes me ” (W. 2, 274). He had much the same view of the rights belonging to the Federal States—in the year 1895 he gave orders to the independent Free Town of Hamburg as to where, and with what escort, it should receive him as its guest. Four years more and he went a good deal further. “ How graciously condescending!” he wrote on a despatch from Petersburg. “ Nicholas must have talked something like this to Frederick William IV. But I’m a damned different proposition. Heels together, if you please, Herr Muraviev, and stand to attention, when you address the German Emperor!” (A. 14, 554).

But even that was not the climax. “ The Emperor is more autocratic than ever,” writes Zedlitz in 1906. When he came home from a pleasure-trip to Palestine, he ordered Berlin to be hung with flags for his re-entry as if it were from a victorious war. A medal struck for the



THE EMPEROR AND EMPRESS AT JERUSALEM



consecration of the newly built church at Wittenberg had to bear his image instead of Martin Luther's. When his physician was commiserating him for his "little cough," the Emperor suddenly drew himself up, looked sternly at the doctor, and said: "A great cough! I am great in everything!" (Z. 174). He was only half serious, but the jest reveals more than he intended. A proposal from the Ministry of State to amnesty prisoners on the birth of his first grandson was returned with the comment: "It is for the Ministry to wait until the Sovereign conveys his wishes." When Wissmann came home from Africa, and in beginning his verbal report made use of the chivalrous phrase: "For my speedy success I have principally to thank the ability of my officers," the Emperor interrupted him. "They are *My* officers"—and left him dumb-founded.

But in these modern days of half-gods, whence shall a monarch procure the emblems of divinity? It might please Alexander to proclaim himself the son of Jupiter, but Napoleon said that the very fishwives would laugh in his face if he made such pretensions. In a word, how shall an Emperor turn himself into a Field-Marshal? He began by a hasty promotion of his two foremost men (one of them after a failure in the manœuvres) to be Generals-Commanding with the rank of Field-Marshal, which Moltke had not been granted after either Königgrätz or Sedan. When he promoted himself to Adjutant-General at the Centenary Celebrations, he gave out that William the First had appeared to him in a dream and appointed him to that rank (Jagemann, *Aus 75 Jahren*); thus accounting by a mystic apparition for a senseless promotion, that he might bedizen himself with a particular stripe of gold lace. Then in May 1900 he assumed the Field-Marshal's badge, after having issued orders that the two most senior Generals were to beg him to do so. But he imagined that with the rank he had automatically acquired the discernment of a Field-Marshal, for he was soon saying at the manœuvres: "I don't require a General Staff; I can

## RUDENESSES

do very well by myself with my aides-de-camp." This led to interference in the conduct of the manoeuvres. "Schlieffen's aides were beside themselves, but they had to submit and listen patiently when the Emperor found fault with the General Staff before a large gathering" (W. 3, 225).

Another form of this absolutism was the rudeness to friends, guests, and intimates which Zedlitz observed year after year. The Emperor tweaks an old Major's ear, and gives him a staggering slap on the back. On the way to the shooting-butts he greets the War Minister and the Chief of the Military Cabinet with the words: "You old donkeys think you know better because you're older than I am!" (Z. 68). Even ladies—the Princess Fürstenberg at Donaueschingen, the Princess Leiningen at the Strassburg Viceregal Palace—were "beckoned up for His Majesty to take in to dinner. The Grand Duke Vladimir got such a thwack on the back with the Marshal's baton that it resounded again. Of course it was supposed to be in fun" (Z. 69).

At a Silesian shoot in the autumn of 1904 he held Colonel von B. down in the snow for a long time, "and then covered him all over with snow to the great amusement of the onlookers—just as one schoolboy will bully a weaker one. The whole shooting-party and hundreds of beaters were watching. Count Roger Scherr-Dobran had a still more unpleasant experience. I may remind my readers that he is a Prussian Chamberlain, a member of the Upper House, has two sons officers in the Hussars of the Body-Guard, is fifty-three years old, and as a great landed proprietor is much looked-up to in Silesia. The moment he saw him the Emperor said, very loudly: "What, you old swine, have you been asked here too?" The bystanders, including the ladies, could hear this apostrophe quite distinctly. The Count was naturally most indignant, and said so to those of his acquaintances who were near him" (Z. 91)—instead of there and then putting the Emperor in his place before them all.



Or he would play the autocratic head of the family, and tell "very amusingly" now the Grand-Duke of Weimar had come, officially announced, on the night before his wedding to say that he could not get married next day, for his future bride had insulted him. Whereupon the Emperor: "When I . . . the German Emperor . . . come to your wedding . . . you can't come saying, the evening before, that you won't get married. You have sworn me fealty in your military oath, and I command you to be married to-morrow." After this misinterpretation of the oath he proceeded to persuade the bride, but waited in her ante-room while she dressed so as to conduct her himself to the carriage, lest she should give them the slip (Z. 113). From the hell of this marriage, which both parties were desirous to avoid at the very last moment, the lady was released, after two years of it, by her death.

The Emperor's view of art-patronage was likewise autocratic, and has been much derided; but is now the less to be emphasized because it was the only department where his follies did no real damage. Art and Literature were in fact more invigorated than otherwise by their conflict with the sovereign. On this subject, moreover, he presented us with some of his most priceless sayings—for instance, the critical remark to Tschudi about Leistikow: "I know the Grunewald—I'm a sportsman myself." The only German who will live both in the history of Art and of William the Second's Court—Menzel—owed his Black Eagle Order to an accidental choice of subject rather than to his mastery. But the naïve follies uttered, ordered, unveiled, and installed by the Emperor in the domain of art pale into nothingness before the disastrous results of his absolutism in the political department.

His love of absolutism and his faith in the Divine Right of Kings were separate though similar sentiments. The former was born of his physical disability, the latter of his profound belief—the absolutism was temperamental, the belief fundamental, and therefore more genuine. When

he wired to the Tsar in 1905: "We have clasped hands and sworn before God, and He has given ear to our vow. So I hope that the treaty will have a good effect," he was honestly impressed by the solemn sense of a covenant between two God-appointed sovereigns; and we are merely looking at the ludicrous reverse of the medal when next year we find him declaring that "the thought of a consequential aide-de-camp of our colleague, the wood-cutter Fallieres, cheek-by-jowl with you, is tremendously amusing."

Before the inauguration of the North Sea Canal, the Lloyd and Hamburg-America interests were in rivalry about the royal ship—Ballin wishing to have at any rate some of the Princes as guests on his vessel. "That is impossible," said the Emperor; "such gentlemen cannot be brought into contact with other persons—they must keep together" (W. 2, 343). He really believed this, ridiculous as it is. It was the same feeling which made him sceptical—forebodingly sceptical—about Shakespeare's Richard II, the only monarch whose destiny his own was closely to resemble; and this too caused him to circulate an English article upon the King's superiority over Parliament with the comment: "May My Ministers keep in mind old Homer's saying: 'One master, one King!' and take earnest note of the conclusion of this article." And again this conviction led to the following—on a diplomatic despatch which said that no one could see far into the future, he wrote: "That gift has been known to exist! In sovereigns often, in statesmen seldom, in diplomatists almost never."

Upon this theme of ancestry he played variations for thirty years, deducing his own greatness from the long line of his forbears. The Siegesallee in the Tiergarten testifies to this; but its marbles had to suffer the proximity of Kant and Bach behind their insulted royal backs. Though the Emperor, in his earliest speeches, was addicted to invoking Frederick the Great, he soon perceived that there were certain contradictions between the world of that time and his own, and hastily fell back upon his nearest ancestors.

Thus he tried to turn the noble and unpretentious image of his grandfather which was cherished by the nation into that of the great conquering Emperor, and spoke of capable advisers "who had had the honour of being permitted to carry out his ideas, but were merely the henchmen of his exalted will." An article in which Bismarck was described as the founder of the Empire came back with the delicious comment: "Grandpapa was that!" (Hammann, *Um den Kaiser*, 80).

God, he said in a letter to Hollmann about his Christian faith, sometimes reveals Himself in great natures: "Hammurabi, Moses, Abraham, Homer, Charlemagne, Luther, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, the Emperor William the Great"; and to this schoolboy list he added, in complete good faith, the commentary: "How often my grandfather expressly said that he was only an instrument in the Hand of God!" He was evidently determined to canonize his grandfather, for (as he said in a speech), "if that sublime ruler had lived in the Middle Ages, he would have been sainted, and pilgrims would have come from far and wide to adore his relics." Even his poor father, who as Crown Prince had never gained a victory, and to whom as Emperor no time was given in which to prove his quality, had to be framed in gold. "When the rosy dawn of the German Empire filled the skies, it was his to realize, as a full-ripened man, the dreams of his adolescence. Wielding the German sword, the son wrested the Imperial Crown of Germany from the field of slaughter, and conferred it on his sire. He struck the decisive blow—we owe it to him that the Emperor's armour was forged of such impenetrable steel." Nay—indirectly, through God-given Princes, even the subject masses could be numbered among the elect, as in this boast, which he always deprecated from any other nation: "And so the Creator has ever kept this nation in His sight—the nation elected by him to bestow the gift of peace at last upon the world. . . . That God should choose a Prussian—that must mean great things!"

Here is the logical origin of the German God.

His nervous temperament was not so obviously revealed in these quasi-intellectual aspects of him as in the sexual sphere. The whole domain of the will was out of equilibrium; one asks one's self what were the latent causes?

The only serious testimony to an inordinate degree of sexuality in the Emperor is Bismarck's; but neither he nor other informants, far removed from the category of Court scandalmongers, imply that it extended beyond his conjugal relations, which began at so early a stage of his manhood. Herbert Bismarck, indeed, did say in the first few years after his accession that they "would have to find a mistress for the Emperor, and that might make it easier to govern the country" (E. 247). In the mess of the First Regiment of Guards, "it was forbidden to talk bawdy in the Emperor's presence; but with the Hussars of the Bodyguard this order was relaxed, and the young ruler, who was always ready for a joke, was as much delighted by this new diversion as a child by a new trumpet. He blew it incessantly, and will probably go on blowing it for the rest of his life—and yet it means nothing, really, in him" (E. 220).

That these words come from Eulenburg adds greatly to their significance. The Emperor, despite his ever-increasing absolutism, despite his temperament, his love of change, and his indifference towards his consort, never showed any desire to take a mistress; but again and again chose effeminate-natured men as his friends. There can be only one explanation of the undoubted fact that this deficiency never took any active form of perversity; and once more, we find it in the old subjective trouble—he could not bear to be suspected of any weakness. Now Eulenburg's group, though they were mostly family-men, were none of them entirely normal; if the Emperor were not akin to them, why did he surround himself with such types? His craving to seem energetic and virile protected him from any erotic accentuation of the womanish,

capricious, loquacious nature which could be enthusiastic about rings, bracelets, Orders, and jewellery of every kind; and subconsciously he revolted against the very same weakness in himself by which Eulenburg had enchanted him in his twenties. In the bawdy of the messes he could drown the unacknowledged sensibility which might have made him lead a life resembling that of his friends in its refinement, but would certainly not have added any virility to his decisions. William the Second, incessantly eluding his deficiencies, incessantly bent on being first and foremost the Prussian officer, fought down all his inherent dissimilarities, because he longed to be a wholly typical male.

But with so unstable a nature as his, he could not be that. Hinzpeter, who had trained him and had considered him a girlish sort of boy, made shrewdly cynical remarks about him behind his back: "It is not at all necessary to let the Emperor carry out an idea; the thing is always to have some excitement for him. Unless he has some novelty in prospect, he gets apathetic" (W. 2, 174). His uncertain moods influenced his attitude towards functionaries, other monarchs, and the people. Take his relation to Windhorst. In March 1890. "If Windhorst comes near the Palace, I'll have him arrested." In December: a long talk with Windhorst at the Imperial Chancellor's, who had been told to invite him. In January 1891, when Windhorst had an accident: "Would it be going too far if I let an aide-de-camp enquire for him?" Immediately afterwards, reading the list for the next Court ball: "Why isn't Windhorst's name here?" (W. 2, 184)

These shifting moods injured himself more than anyone else, because at first men of all parties believed in him, and afterwards all felt that they had been taken in. He was a fervent Lutheran, yet would say smooth things to Bishops about the Pope, and behaved to him with such deference as no Protestant monarch had ever shown before. Or in the end of 1889, when he could still adorn his speeches



## JOURNEYS AND SPEECHES

with the idealisms of youth: "It will take me all my life, no matter how long it may be, to repay the devotion you have just shown me. Often I wonder if I am worthy of my task, and then it is always like a tonic . . . to hear that you have confidence in me." Who that heard could feel aught but "What a faithful servant of the State!" Three days later, on no pretext whatever: "It will come to this in Berlin—that the Social-Democrats will be in the majority; and they will at once proceed to plunder the citizens. It is nothing to me. I shall have loop-holes cut in the Palace walls, and we'll see how much plundering will take place!" Thus the effect of the earlier speech was destroyed.

The disastrous political results of this instability were manifold and evident. That was why the choice between Russia and England never got made, for according to his mood he alternately betrayed each to the other. To take only one example, let us recall the Emperor's telegram to the Tsar in August 1905. "The arch mischief-maker of Europe is again at work in London. Delcasse's revelations . . . point to a projected war against our two pacific nations. They are positive bandits!" Nine months later: "I really hope that the exchange of ideas between Uncle Bertie and myself, which turned exclusively on the maintenance of international peace, may be of service to you and your great Empire."

Other symptoms of this unbalanced nervous condition were his favourite occupations—journeys and speeches. The perpetual journeys—symbol of a heart in flight from itself and from tranquillity—were early, but in vain, opposed by his physicians; the speeches too, which often took place four times a day, were an outlet for his febrile nervous energy. The moment when, at the festive table, everyone stood up and gazed at him with eager eyes, when literally all were hanging on his lips—the silence, the sense of universal absorption in his every utterance, the idea that next morning all the capitals in the world would be conning the words that now fell from him: he could no more do

without this than without the constant succession of entries and processions, receptions at city-gates and guild-halls, full-dress and maids-of-honour, fallings of veils from statues, glidings of vessels from slips, tuckets and marches-past, hurrahs and flags, flowers and the grand farewell at the railway-station. In the year 1894 there were one hundred and ninety-nine goings and comings; in seventeen years five hundred and seventy-seven public speeches were delivered, which means a Kaiser speech every eleven days.

Another aspect of the womanish element in him was his love of baubles. His favourite toy was the Army—new devices, chin-straps, belts, changes of uniform succeeded one another incessantly through twenty years. The Conservative *Schlesische Zeitung* reckoned, in 1903 thirty alterations in the course of fifteen years, not counting badges, and said that at the utmost five had been of any real utility. About this time the Emperor introduced a new regulation for gun-drill, after endless pains had been spent on getting rid of the so-called gun-exercise in order to give the infantry more time for things that were of greater importance. "I might," sums up Waldersee, "describe the attitude of the Army as one of resignation. We often ask each other: 'What's the object of *that*?' " (W. 3, 192). But the most explicit outburst over these frivolities comes from the chief soldier in the Army, the younger Moltke, in the year 1905:

"Next Sunday we have another great Flag-Nailing in the Museum. We are still of opinion that victory in a life-and-death combat is won by a bit of coloured bunting. . . . I tremble, looking on at all this humbug, in which the real thing . . . is completely forgotten. People are bedizened with straps of gold lace as badges of their prowess, and all it does is to hinder them in the use of their weapons; everything is done to excite ambition, nothing to inculcate a sense of duty. uniforms get more conspicuous every day, instead of being designed for invisibility in the field; drill is nothing but a theatrical entertainment.

## THEATRICALISM

Decorations': that is the order of the day; and behind all this gimcrackery grins the Gorgon-head of War, hanging over us like a thunder-cloud. And no going-back upon this road—it gets worse and worse every year!" (M. 337).

Reading so grave an indictment by the most responsible of his Generals, we take refuge in the thought that Henry V, in the moment of pressing danger, cast aside all his frivolities and became a soldier and a king. Perhaps, we reflect, these are no more than the results of having nothing particular to do, as we behold the Emperor frequently change his dress twelve times a day, attend a performance of the *Flying Dutchman* in naval uniform, unveil the hunting-groups in the Tiergarten in the Court hunting-dress, have his bath-room fitted with a vent like those used in the Navy, and send his Chamberlain all the way to Petersburg to show the Tsar how to fasten the cuirass of the regiment of cuirassiers which had been lent him.

But how did it go when things turned serious? When at the end of 1904 Russia, disastrously defeated, was gnashing her teeth, the Emperor wrote to the Tsar. "Here's luck in the big game!" But what his own heart felt when war came threateningly close is revealed in a comment by Zedlitz, of March 1909: "Just now the Emperor's whole interest is concentrated on a more or less necessary mobilization. Unfortunately quite irrelevant matters hold the stage, such as a greave on his helmet, a special contrivance for fastening the chin-straps, double seams on the trousers, a perpetual overhauling of his wardrobe with Daddy Schulz [his Chamberlain]—on these subjects the Emperor will hold forth for hours at a time."

Just as in the Army he was all for show—for drill and uniform—so it was as an actor that he everywhere surveyed the scene in which he was to play. Here lies his affinity with Eulenburg; but one is inclined to think the Emperor's theatricalism more genuine, because he was so much more naive. It led him into similar absurdities, as for instance when Moltke died at the age of ninety-one, for-

gotten by the Emperor, though tardily pensioned. It was little more than a memory which died with him; but the Emperor, who lived in a perpetual stream of telegrams, since his moods and behests were not to be subjected to the limitations of time and space, in this one said no word of sympathy for the survivors, recalled no traits of the great soldier, dying with so many years upon him—no, all he was concerned with was: “What does a sovereign say on the death of his oldest General?” And he declaimed over the wires: “Am wellnigh stunned! Returning in all haste. Have lost an army; cannot realize it!” And on the way to that secret rendezvous at Björkö, did he not wire to the Tsar: “Not a soul has the slightest idea! All my guests think we’re bound for Gothland. . . . Have important news for you. My guests’ faces will be worth seeing when they suddenly behold your yacht. Tableau! What sort of dress for our meeting? Willy.”

The actor’s power of sinking his own personality in that of the character presented was to this extent the Emperor’s—that he could be a different person to everyone: as imperial with the Tsar as he was democratic with Cecil Rhodes, American with Roosevelt, French with Saint-Saëns and Massenet. Almost everyone was enchanted with him at first; Gordon Bennett, who met him at Kiel and instantly detested him, may be said to have been wellnigh unique. If he hit the right nail on the head when he described journalists as snippet-snappers, he might himself be called a journalist; for, says Zedlitz, “he was very clever and quick at getting a superficial notion of any subject (for instance, a new theory of the Origin of Being), and was able to talk about it as if it was his own discovery, or as if he was a professor of astronomy and had spent years and years in an observatory. Even the most renowned experts were taken in, and would praise his acquirements, his astonishing capacity for work, and his phenomenal powers of apprehension” (Z. 211)

These histrionic tendencies were still more evident in the sermons for which life on board afforded him an

opportunity—though he occasionally took the pulpit on land as well, as at Wernigerode in 1906. Among the yacht-sermons is one delivered at Heligoland, when the first ships had started for the Far East. He preached on a text from Exodus (xvii, 9): “Why do the heathen Amalekites so furiously rage together in the Far East? Because their aim is, by force and cunning, by fire and sword, to prevent the penetration of their land by European trade and the European spirit. And once more has gone forth the Divine Command: ‘Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek.’ . . . But to us who must stay at home, constrained by other sacred duties—to us it is said: Hear ye not the behest of God, which bids ye: Go up upon the mountains! Lift up your hands to Heaven!’ Mighty are the prayers of the righteous. . . . Ours shall be not only a great fighting-force, but we will have our praying-force as well—our great, our holy force of suppliants. . . . And will not our soldiers be strengthened, be inspired when they think: ‘Thousands, nay millions, bear us in their prayerful hearts at home!’ The King of all Kings cries: ‘Forward, volunteers! Who will be the Empire’s suppliant?’ O, that we may say this morning: ‘The King hath called us, and all of us, all of us are come!’ Let not one of you be missing! He who can pray is a man indeed!”

This performance, which should arouse professional envy in the breast of every Salvation Army captain, belongs to the inception of the Operetta-War, and rings most villainously false. Not for spiritual things did the Germans go to China but for sordid things—for gold, not good; it was not God who sent the troops, but a sensation-loving sovereign; and not sacred duties but the protest of the Powers kept the others back. Millions were there indeed; only they were laughing, not praying. But he, in his bombastic ardour, must needs make Heaven to the pattern of himself and his conception of a king—from God’s mouth must issue the Prussian slogan: “Forward, Volunteers!” It was this militarized theocracy which not



long afterwards made him, at the Hamburg banquet, cry in a voice that pealed along the glittering table to the jewelled, scandalized assembly: "Eyes front! Heads up! Look to the skies! O, bend your knees before the Great Ally who never yet forsook the Germans!"

Of his theatricality were born his affectations. These were not only the majestic moods which were for ever at the disposal of photographers, ranging from portentous gravity to gentle seriousness, and from a kindly smile to a defiant scowl; there were other poses, no less indicative of character. After a male choir competition he told the principal German conductors not only how the choir ought to have sung, but also that nearly every piece had been set too high, and "should have been, in most instances, half or three-quarters or even a fifth of a tone lower"—which a musician, even if he agreed with it, would certainly never have so expressed. Or again, when he was not yet thirty, Moltke (who was twelve years older) being announced by his new rank of Major, the Emperor looked up—and affecting the prematurely aged ruler, worn by his sublime reflections and anxieties, exclaimed: "Good God! Are you a Major already? We're getting old. When I think that I first knew you as a young pup of a subaltern!" (M. 148)

The third and the most marked manifestation of neuroticism was his poltroonery—a flagrant contradiction of the Attila pose. It was the hard-shelled Conservative President of the Chamber, the old Junker von Köller, who said to Hohenlohe: "God preserve us from war, while this Emperor is on the throne! He would lose his nerve; he is a coward at heart" (Al. 338). The Hohenlohes, father and son, were much struck by this remark from such lips at so early a stage; later, every one was to know the truth. No one can be blamed for possessing such a temperament only it is disturbing in the Supreme War Lord of the most militant of nations. Again the disastrous concatenation—a crippled man, more unfitted (as his tutor declares) to be an officer than any other in the country, yet condemned to

## COWARDICE

that profession unless he was prepared to follow the tradition of his family by renouncing the Crown, since in Prussia an incurably civilian temper was a more cogent reason for that renunciation than an incurable cancer; and thus, through life, forced to affect a courageous spirit of which Nature had deprived him in the hour of his birth! Here lies the tragic element in the life of William the Second, with all its immediate effects upon the nation.

For just because he never dared acknowledge even to himself this timidity of the weakling, and concealed both from his nearest and the world at large the inward trouble of his soul, there was born of his inherently defensive nature a semblance of aggressiveness. That was why he so continually seemed to hurl defiance at other nations, when all the time he dreaded war far more than his less boisterous colleagues; and that was why, at home, the self-same man alarmed the bourgeois by his perpetual fulminations against the Red Terror within the Empire.

Hence only Junkers might enter the Guards, and only these might enjoy quick promotion—an arrangement which embittered the line-officers; hence “in his fear of anarchists, he thought of having an armoured turret built in the proximity of the Palace, which should command the Spree and all its bridges”; but at the same period, February 1891, declared in a speech to the Brandenburg *Landtag* that he would lead Germany to days of glory (W. 2, 233). Hence too, whenever he suffered from colic, he would fear poison; Zedlitz tells of three such occasions: “I have been poisoned, beyond a doubt! There must have been something in the food!” (Z. 134). His dread of illness was so great that when the Empress was nursing one of the Princes through inflammation of the lungs, he never would come near her except in the open air, and utterly refused to visit his son, though there could be no possible danger of infection (Z. 109). His nervousness about people with whom it was scarcely possible for him to avoid some intercourse was shown with regard to General von Bissing. The General was dismissed as a result of

one of his Army Orders, but not, as an aide-de-camp had advised, confined to barracks "Bissing is such a hot-headed fellow. If I had put him under arrest, he would very likely have shot himself" (Z 182) Did the Emperor really mean "himself"?

The war was to put it all to the test

## 15

Some very matter-of-fact traits controlled the more neurotic ones. Of the romanticism which so many attributed to him there is hardly a trace. In his ceremonial gestures the Emperor was as little romantic as any other kind of actor—he rehearsed, he studied, every one of them. Mantles and Orders, pages and Court-Marshals, Frederician uniforms and piqueurs—everything was organized; an eternal boy had got up the entertainment, there were the puppets at the end of their wires, and all was for his pleasure. The whole thing was pageantry; he had no illusions about it. The fastest motor-car, the swiftest aeroplane, were much more fascinating to him than the purple of the royal mantle and the servants' powdered heads which were *de rigueur* for his banquets. The romanticism of Ludwig of Bavaria had not one of these features. The true romantic seeks solitude; this Emperor feared it, fled it. Ludwig, all alone in his gilded nautilus-boat, would row to his grotto—William fared forth in his steam-yacht with a score of boon companions. He did not want, like Ludwig, to ride forth from his gates as a knight—he wanted to ride in at them; and the gold helmet, worn by both, meant totally different things to each. "The Knights-Hospitallers' Ceremohial," writes Zedlitz, "was very stately and magnificent, if one could have got over the touch of mummery about it, something essentially insincere. . . . That may be, however, because it had been rehearsed about four times, for an hour and a half each time, in the Emperor's presence" (Z. 154)

For such diversions he was indefatigable; not so for affairs of government. All the memoirs and statements

“ HE HAS NEVER LEARNT TO WORK ”

agree about the Emperor's increasing indolence. In 1889 Hinzpeter writes of him at this time as if he were still under tuition: “ I have talked to the Emperor about the Labour question in the hope of inciting him to work at it, for he has never learnt to work ” And next year Waldersee: “ All who have to do with him are worried about his complete loss of interest in any sort of work. Distractions, amusements, fiddle-faddlings with the Army and especially the Navy, journeys or shooting-parties—these come first with him; so that in fact he has hardly any time left for work. He reads little . . . scarcely ever even writes, except marginal notes on reports and despatches, and approves most highly the official interviews which take the shortest time. It is really scandalous how the Court gazettes deceive the public about the Emperor's industry—according to them, he is hard at work from morning till night.”

In the spring of 1894, when he was at Abbazia, negotiations were going on with England about the pact and with the Vatican about Italy, in addition to Reichstag business; and Eulenburg, who was deputy there for all the Ministers, writes as follows: “ Every moment fresh despatches come in, which I have to attend to; then I have to return to the Emperor, and there is always some change of dress to be made. In the mornings, lounge-suit; for lunch, black morning-coat; then if we're going on board, yachting-dress, if to tennis, tennis-dress . . . so that I often dictate despatches while I'm washing my hands. Afterwards I have to submit papers; and everything that had been balanced to a nicety at one's own deliberate walking-pace has to be taken at a breakneck gallop with the Emperor. . . . He listens to all my political counsels because I play tennis with him, and between rallies and in breathing-times have a good-humoured Imperial ear at my disposal—ready to yield in uncongenial matters because he is in high spirits. *Ludere pro patria et imperatore!* It's a mad world!” (E. 2, 111).

Between April and December, 1901, the King of Prussia



THE EMPEROR ON BOARD SHIP





did not see any one of his Ministers except Bülow, Gossler; and Podbielski (W 3, 175) The tutor of the royal children complained that, though he was daily in the Emperor's company, he never could get a serious talk with him about their education; and when on the "Hohenzollern" a sermon was delivered on a text from Psalm xc: "Yet is their strength but labour and sorrow," Moltke wrote: "How true *that* is, we all feel in our enforced idleness. All, unfortunately, except One."

Again, at another period, January 1910, this is the picture Zedlitz gives of the Emperor's day. "The worst of it is that he is getting more and more out of the habit of doing anything of the slightest importance. He gets up late, breakfasts at nine . . . always with three hot courses; it is only with great difficulty—and then very much against his will—that one can pin him down to business for a couple of hours, and those he usually spends in giving his own views to his advisers. Then comes luncheon at one; he drives out at two, then tea, then a sleep, and before the evening-meal at eight he will go through some signing of papers. As a result of the afternoon-sleep, which often lasts three hours, the Emperor sits up regularly every night till twelve or one o'clock, and then his favourite company is a set who listen reverentially to anything he chooses to talk about. So that his life is in fact one continuous idleness. And compare this with what the gazettes say of him! . . . Nine months' travelling; only the winter-months at home. Where is the time for quiet reflection and serious work in this perpetual good-fellowship?" (Z. 212, 230).

When Lyncker at about this time took over the Military Cabinet, the Emperor said to him in a pathetically pleading tone: "But, dear Lyncker, you won't bring me nothing but musty papers, will you? Now and again some funny little story or another!" This is a shocking example of his aversion from anything practical, for the speaker was a man of fifty, who still was called the young Emperor.

But he was practical enough about money-matters—

## MONEY-MATTERS

not only for personal gain, as in the sale of the painted pottery made on his Kadinen estates. Wealth, as such, impressed him deeply; his unromantic spirit respected this modern form of power—riches, no matter how acquired, were a sufficient attraction. Despite a sensible regulation in the year 1890 or thereabouts that the promotion of officers was not to be dependent on their financial circumstances, his own social intercourse was confined to the rich regiments which could outdo one another in the splendour of their "Kaiser-dinners"; and he added greatly to the officers' expenses by the constant changes in coats, tunics, top-boots, gold-lace, sword-belts, and the like. For example, in 1894 he ordered all officers to procure the new sash; in 1895 he reverted to the old type, in 1896 devised a third, while in 1897 there was a fourth variant.

From the thrice-augmented Civil List he saved all he could for himself, and in the year 1918 this had reached the sum of eighteen million marks. In the quarterly estimates, which amounted to over five millions, there figured as the Emperor's "Privy Purse Expenses" 440,000 marks; as "Current Donations" for the institutions 4,188 marks; for individuals 3,000 marks, among them items such as from ten to five marks quarterly for the children of court-servants and for superannuated gardeners. The sovereign who dispensed these gratuities possessed seventy-three palaces and country-estates.

Never before had the representative of an old royal house been so indiscriminate in accepting the hospitality of the rich. Not only was he the guest at Kiel and in Norway of dollar-kings, but he actually had Marienburg redecorated for the reception of a twenty-six-year old son of Vanderbilt's. When he invited the Berlin Town-Councillors to a beer-party, he would send round a subscription-list for the Fleet, which none of them could avoid signing. In those circles, a title was not so much conferred as sold.

But he had a good eye for business abroad as well.

In October 1904 he wrote to the Tsar: "This reminds me of my former suggestion that you should not forget to give orders likewise for new ships of the line, so as to have some ready when the war is over. . . . My private firms will be glad to receive instructions." And three months later, after condoling with him over the Port Arthur affair, continued "Now . . . I trust you won't forget to remind your functionaries of our great firms at Stettin, Kiel, etc. I am sure they will supply you with splendid types of battleships. I hope you will kindly accept the pair of vases from our Royal Manufactory as a Christmas gift." This certainly does credit to his patriotism, and no less certainly to his vigilant eye for business.

Intercourse with the sovereign was made very difficult for his servants by the fact that they never knew how they stood with him—his humour might change at any moment. The highest officials had to be as careful as those of Louis XIV. A certain glint in the eye would be the precursor of a sudden outbreak of nervous agitation—at which times Tirpitz, for example, "would let everything slide for the moment. A tête-a-tête interview was the only hope, for if a third person were present, his real opinion would be affected by the craving he always had to show that he was Emperor. It was this which made the Cabinets so powerful" (T. 135). For as one of the three Chiefs of Cabinets was nearly always present at the Ministers' interviews, and was afterwards left alone with the Emperor, he had only "to watch his opportunity . . . to get his own way" Hülsen, Müller, and Lucanus thus did what they liked in great questions of policy. Waldersee's is the most memorable remark on the art of managing the Emperor: "It is very difficult to restrain him, but mere child's-play to set him going."

What the Emperor himself demanded of those about him is symbolized by his treatment of his horses. "My first impression," writes Reichach, Chief Master of the Horse, "when I watched the Emperor riding, was that it would be no easy task to find the right mount for His

## MINISTERS AND HORSES

Majesty, for he demanded a great deal from his horse Gentle action, no shying or jibbing, smooth in the gallop—and moreover, steady as a rock at the march-past of the troops, as well as during the critique at the manœuvres (often lasting an hour) when the map, spread open on the horse's neck, would several times be smartly struck. . . . The greatest problem was how far to exercise the horses beforehand, so that they should not be too fresh. If the exercise was insufficient, the horse was very liable to be restive; if excessive, the going would be slack."

Bülw alone possessed all these qualifications. He could both gallop and stand still, at the word of command; he never jibbed; he stood like a rock during "the critique"; he was not over-fresh, and yet was never slack. When finally he was for once restive, he was replaced by a steady-going old grey who could only trudge round in a circle, but upon whose long neck the Emperor could hit his maps as hard as he liked.

How well he understood the art of cajoling when he chose, it was Waldersee's lot to experience. What did the Emperor do when he wanted to remove him from the command of the Army because Waldersee had defeated him at the manœuvres? First he suddenly transferred the then Commandant at Altona on some transparent pretext, so as to have the post vacant; then on his birthday gave Waldersee a glittering decoration, "to show everyone what good friends we are." Next he expressed a desire to see such brilliant talents in command of a division; and when Waldersee, on this, begged to be allowed to resign, he explained how important Altona was. Three days later at another interview, it was entirely a question of the great value of his friendship. "I want to show the whole world what it means to be the friend of the German Emperor. Whoever says one word against you shall be demolished!" Finally, "he took my hand with the most affectionate of gestures and pleaded with me: 'You *do* accept, don't you? Your Emperor beseeches you!'" As Waldersee was not to be mollified, and gave utterance



to home-truths he changed his tone and got pathetic: "It is all so saddening—I have had so many other disappointments. My best friends are forsaking me." When Waldersee at last accepted, the Emperor kissed him three times and vowed eternal friendship.

A grim, defiant Waldersee would have been injurious to him—hence decorations, affection, pathos, and three kisses.

But amid all this absolutism, now harsh, now cajoling—what hours of loneliness, embitterment, rancour! What a secret loathing he must have felt for the incessant ceremonial, the frivolities of decade after decade; and how he must have longed to revenge himself on those who smiled through it all! "Often," relates Zedlitz, "the Emperor does seem to feel the isolation of his autocratic state, and to realize that his best friends only let him treat them as he does for the sake of their personal advantage. Then he gets gloomy and taciturn. I have noticed that at such times he takes a pleasure in making all about him, even the Empress, believe the exact contrary of what he really thinks and feels, and this about the gravest matters. Indeed, in these moments he seems to find a curious satisfaction in wounding others. This happens to most people, just when they think themselves most secure in his favour; then the blow falls all the more severely, and the Emperor takes a corresponding pleasure in its effect" (Z. 110)

These penetrating observations on the Emperor at the end of his forties are testimony to the ever-changing moods of an autocrat whom vanity, cold-heartedness, and perplexity of soul had condemned to a lonely misanthropy, while yet he could not live without society and smiling faces round him. So it was that he became himself one of the pessimists whom he had forbidden to exist in his kingdom

Who were the first to take the measure of this man? Who warned the German people—who the Emperor himself? The answers to these questions will help us to

## EARLY CRITICISMS

understand how it was that a single individual could prevail against a whole nation.

The nation is not answerable at the outset—those immediately surrounding the Emperor are solely to blame. For if it is certain that among the sixty millions of his people, even including the Socialists, there was no one who fathomed either his nature or his conduct, it is no less certain that among the hundreds of persons who came into closer contact with him there was not one who entirely misread him. What Bismarck and Bülow, what the Hohenlohes, father and son, thought of him—what Eulenburg and Holstein, Waldersee and Moltke, Kiderlen and Tirpitz, Zedlitz and Hammann wrote of him either to each other or for themselves—is clearly shown in the present pages; but these are merely fragments of perception, always cautiously presented, as it were by shrugs and glances. And moreover these twelve observers were profoundly diverse and very variously actuated; each was at enmity with the other, the sole bond of union being that all were in the Emperor's service. Behind these few whose letters or memoirs we possess, stand a hundred others, equally aware, whose written or verbal testimonies have not yet become historical documents.

Again, the verdicts of his enemies one and all are excluded from this study—Richter's and Bebel's, King Edward's and the Tsar's; for political interests at home and abroad may have obscured or exacerbated the judgments of these men. Such observations were swiftly made—they all date from the first years of his reign; and they persisted unchanged to its close. This, and the absence of any noteworthy private evidence to the contrary, seem to indicate that we shall have no further contributions towards our knowledge of William the Second, and that the psychological side of the case is concluded. The following passages, supplementary to those already given here, are chosen only from the most outspoken judgments of those who stood nearest him—his best friend, his principal soldier, and his mother.

“Psychologically,” writes Eulenburg to Bülow during the Scandinavian trip of 1899, “psychologically, there is not the slightest change. He is the same explosive creature, if not even more violent and unaccountable, from his sense of being more experienced—which in fact he is not in the smallest degree. . . . A powerful man shapes the age to his pattern; a weaker spirit will be ground in the mill. When so markedly egotistic a nature dominates a realm, the consequences can be nothing but catastrophic; and we are heading straight for a period which will decide whether the age or the Emperor is the stronger. I am afraid it will not be he. . . . There is so much I would like to say to him, but I am struck dumb by the Caliph, who a moment before seemed a good Haroun al Raschid mixing with his people.”

Waldersee, who had been one of the most intimate friends of the young Prince William, writes so early as 1890: “His extreme vanity soon led him to imagine that he was really among the most remarkable of men. . . . It is now evident that the Socialist movement, instead of being checked, has on the contrary been much invigorated. Even the Emperor feels anxious now; people who know him well say: ‘Anxious about his personal safety.’” In the summer of 1895: “His versatility turns out to be mere superficiality; his private life is narrowly watched, and the general conclusion is that he spends most of his time in amusing himself” (W. 2, 291). Ten years later, when Waldersee was again in full favour, a Field-Marshal and the Emperor’s representative at King Edward’s Coronation: “Will the Emperor’s reign increase the power of the German Empire, or destroy it? Our monarch, so richly gifted, so full of the very best intentions, has undertaken far too much, and has alas! not yet accomplished anything, but merely created such confusion as no one can see the end of. I would swear that among all his counsellors . . . there is not one—not one—who does not survey the future with profound apprehension; and most of the Federal Princes are equally uneasy.” In the

## HIS MOTHER'S FOREBODINGS

summer of 1904: "It is grievous to see how our monarch is paving the way for the Revolution. . . . The forces of destruction grow more brazen every day, and he offends and embitters the great majority of those whose interest it is to uphold the State. . . . Even at forty-four, the Emperor has not yet realized that the cheers of the mob mean very little. On the contrary, they greatly delight and impress him, though for years now the school-children have been put up for these demonstrations. . . . I have quite given up the hope that the Emperor may change his course—only some great reverse will bring that about" (W. 2, 205 f.).

His mother said: "Don't for a moment imagine that my son ever does anything from any motive but vanity" (Z. 111). And wrote: "One cannot believe that history will not have to tell of retribution and judgment. . . . But we may have to go through—Heaven knows what! A king bears no charmed life, and every day that dawns may be disastrous. Indeed, that seems almost indicated, and it is terrible to think of the dangers that surround us. But there is a special Providence for children—and scatter-brains! One can only pray that insight, patience, prudence, and foresight may come in time, and that too grievous a price may not have to be paid for wisdom. To me it seems that the monarchy is about to be put to the test, and I tremble lest the issue be a woeful one" (Victoria to her friend the Baroness von Schrader in 1893).

That none of these should have undertaken to warn the nation is not surprising. They all belonged either to the nobility or to the governing classes; and moreover, any individual action would have been more disturbing than salutary. And Bismarck, who alone by nature and training was equal to the task, was far too old, at eighty, to give free rein to the revolutionary element which in him contended with the royalist.

Those men who did undertake to speak the truth were one and all of the opposition. It was easy for Bebel and Richter to give tongue in the Reichstag, and if they were

interrupted every minute by the President they could always go on again, and never suffered for their audacity. When in 1892 Ludwig Fulda in his *Talisman*, and in 1894 Professor Quidde in his *Caligula*, uttered a warning note, they at once attracted universal attention; and the Emperor was so ill-advised as to deprive Fulda of the Schiller Prize and to threaten Quidde. In their footsteps followed Mittelstädt and Baron von Guhle; Mommsen protested against an attack on the liberty of the German Universities. Count Reventlow wrote in 1906, Doctor Liman in 1913, in tones of fearless admonition; many democratic journalists were unafraid and critical, and August Gaul refused to put spread wings on a drawing of a crouching eagle. But more strenuously than by any other was the truth about the Emperor set forth by Maximilian Harden, who was more than once imprisoned for his writings, and whose criticisms profoundly influenced the middle classes.

Of those near him who saw aright and in general held their peace, and those who saw and did speak from a distance, there were only a very few who, coming into close contact with him, ever spoke out to the Emperor himself. That there are no witnesses to these occasions is only natural; but it makes our credence dependent on our view of the narrator.

There is only one instance of a manly opposition before witnesses—in February 1894, after a dinner at Caprivi's, when the Emperor was trying to put through the Commercial Treaty with Russia and said to his guests, who were the leaders of the Agrarian Party: "I have no desire to go to war with Russia for the sake of a few hundred Junkers. The Tsar would be so offended by a rejection of the Treaty that we should have war in three months at longest. If we have, I shall simply abandon the right bank of the Vistula." Whereupon he was answered by Baron von Levetzow, President of the Reichstag—a quiet taciturn man, who now, before this large gathering, spoke in clear decisive fashion to the Emperor: "The loyalty of the Conservatives is beyond all dispute, even if the



Party should, on consideration of the Treaty, deem it their duty to vote against it." The Emperor said no more. But Levetzow described the day on which he had had to say this as the saddest in his life.

In the course of thirty years three men, by their own accounts, spoke out *in camera* to the Emperor. Of these three, Waldersee's story is discounted by his character of "Court-General"; Eulenburg's statements—unsupported and therefore to be taken with a grain of salt—are nevertheless too lifelike to be all invention; and he was frank enough, even if we reject half of what he says, to be credited for telling the truth on some occasions at any rate. The indirect report we have of Hüllmann's outspokenness, and still more Moltke's direct narrative of his own protest, are both in full accordance with the Emperor's character, and strike one as undeniably authentic. In all, the most important point is the Emperor's reaction. Ballin, too, was outspoken in trivial matters—at Kiel he procured a farewell audience for Dernburg, and so on; but he did not stand out for the truth in important naval decisions. Mommsen, despite his lamentable colleagues, saved the honour of German science when after an inspection of the Sanktburg he, though a guest at the imperial table, made fun of the Emperor's admiration for the Roman Caesars; and Ernest von Mendelssohn in 1905 remonstrated with the Emperor for selling his Russian Bonds, and was punished by never again being invited to Court.

When Waldersee was about to resign the command of the Staff he represents himself as having said to the Emperor: "In these last two years [from 1888 to 1890] the Army has deteriorated. The ideal relations between the Supreme War-Lord and his corps of officers, inherited by Your Majesty, have been disturbed; and the lightning-changes in the higher ranks have been most injurious to discipline." The Emperor seemed startled, and said: "No one has ever spoken to me like this before!" Then he went on trying to persuade the hesitant General not to resign. There was an end to home-truths for that day.

It was a much easier task for Eulenburg, the bosom friend who admired and loved the Emperor. How often he wrote words of wisdom we have already seen. He was really the one person who was allowed to speak frankly to the Emperor. When in August 1897 he warned him against personal intervention in the matter of the Navy Bills, lest the people should come to look upon the whole thing as their sovereign's private pastime, the Emperor's answer was: "Sincerest thanks for your most valuable and interesting letter. I am glad to have your frank opinion, and particularly grateful to you for it—since if you wouldn't speak out, who on earth would? . . . So in future I shall hold my jaw, and use it exclusively for eating, drinking, and smoking" (E. 2, 251). He must have been in a very good temper before he could have written of himself in so wholesome a strain of irony—the only instance of this in the Emperor's life.

Two years later—in July, 1899—during the Scandinavian trip, there was another publicity scare, this time about an imperial telegram referring to "an inflexible will." Eulenburg—by his own report to Bülow (E. 2, 253)—was admonitory in a dialogue on board. "The Government . . . might be forced to resign in the event of some dangerous situation arising and becoming uncontrollable—and that, as well may happen, in consequence of some incautious proceeding of Your Majesty's. Circumstances might then create a national movement in the direction of abdication or a Royal Commission. A mechanism like the German Empire is a subtle, intricate piece of work—a masterpiece of the kind we put under glass. . . . Careless handling of so precious an object might incense the nation." The Emperor looked very grave, and asked with whom such ideas could originate. Eulenburg avoided giving names, but did say: "Cardinal Hohenlohe, whom Your Majesty revered, said very earnestly to me immediately before his death: 'I know that you are absolutely devoted to the Emperor, and moreover in a position to give him really outspoken advice. Tell him to be very careful!'"

## MORE ADMONITIONS

I know, for a positive fact that the idea of declaring him to be irresponsible for his actions has been widely discussed, and that very many persons, among them highly placed ones, would be willing to support such a proceeding. You must warn the Emperor! . . . Very much against his usual custom, the Emperor did not break off this conversation with a joke or some strong language *à la* Royal Regiment of Guards. No—he was very thoughtful for some time.”

Ten days afterwards, on a walk by the fjord at Regen:

Eulenburg: “The head and front of the offending is the serious conflict between Your Majesty’s personality and the views of the nation. Your Majesty is undoubtedly modern-minded; you might even be called progressive; but that side of you is invalidated by an excessive public display of energy. By your speeches and telegrams Your Majesty gives the impression of desiring to revive the idea of the absolute monarch. But there is not a single Party in the Empire which will ever again accept that idea.”

The Emperor, tartly: “I claim the right of free speech, like any other German. I must say what it is I want, so that reasonable people may know whom they are to follow, and how. If I said nothing, the really ‘willing’ members of the middle-class would not know what they were supposed to do. . . . *You’re* only afraid that I may show the Reichstag who is master!”

Eulenburg: “You know very well you are far too modern-minded, and far too intelligent, not to see that Germany will never again consent to do without a Parliament.”

The Emperor: “Then it will have to be a modified form of Parliament—not what we have now.”

Eulenburg: “There may be something to be said for that, but even so it would have to keep the established course. And that course becomes impracticable when the majority of the nation is in conflict with its Emperor.”

The Emperor: “If that were true, it would come to a

Revolution—and one way or another we'll eventually have to face that! Everything points to it; so we may as well accept the challenge."

Eulenburg: "Which the coalition of the European Powers is waiting for, in order to attack us.

The Emperor: "Oh, if they'd only see what I really mean by my exhortations! But the Germans are too limited and short-sighted for that; they are absorbed in petty squabbles . . . I, an absolute monarch! Have I ever taken a single step which could be said to infringe the Constitution? How on earth do people get hold of such ideas?"

These significant statements are taken from Eulenburg's long letters to Bülow, and it is true that they are printed from his drafts, which he may have revised in later years. Thus they may have been twice touched up; but they cannot be all invention. They reveal William as more than anything else the man of good conscience who is convinced that he is doing his utmost for his people; but also as the monarch who suffers his best friend to tell him truths, and ponders them. The pity is that by next morning he is in a different mood; and if we can commend the oriental autocrat for not showing any resentment towards the truth-teller, we cannot go so far as to affirm that he is convinced. We are shown in these dialogues, which probably were unparalleled in the Emperor's experience, a monarch full of good intentions, brilliant intelligence, and such incurable superficiality that the truth does not alarm him enough for him to keep it in mind.

What Admiral Hollmann ventured to say is not related by himself, and is therefore the more worthy of our credence. Hence it may be true that at the end of 1903 he said to the Emperor, after the latter had undergone the operation on his throat, that he was surrounded by sycophants. "Your Majesty's whole environment, including some of the Ministers, submits to such treatment as only sycophants will put up with." At first the Emperor

## MOLTKE'S HOME-TRUTHS

listened quietly; then he broke off the interview with the words: "That's enough now" (W. 2, 220).

His most remarkable hour in the Palace of Truth was that imposed on him by the younger Moltke (M. 305 f.), who, on being selected for the position of Chief of Staff, said to himself: "It's now or never!"—and opened the interview by telling the Emperor that he could not accept the post until he had frankly expounded his views. Then he proceeded to criticize the manœuvres, which always concluded by making prisoners of an army of half a million in a few days. "Your Majesty is aware that the forces led by yourself invariably make mincemeat of the enemy, so that the campaign is by way of being decided at a single blow. This kind of war-game, in which the enemy is so to speak delivered over to Your Majesty, is bound to instil most erroneous ideas which would inevitably be disastrous in real warfare. . . . And I regard it as still more unfortunate that this arbitrary treatment of the war-game prevents every one of the officers concerned from taking any real interest in it. . . . But what I most deplore, and am bound to mention to Your Majesty, is that the officers' confidence in their Most Supreme War-Lord is profoundly undermined by this proceeding. The officers say to each other: 'The Emperor is much too shrewd not to see that everything is arranged for him to win, and so he must like it that way.'"

The Emperor: "I had no idea of this—I never dreamed that both sides did not fight on equal terms. I have always been in absolute good faith. Tell Schlieffen that at the next manœuvres he is not to treat me any better than the enemy."

Moltke: "Count Schlieffen says: 'When the Emperor plays, he must win.' . . . Your Majesty ought really not to command at all, but stand above both parties. . . . If the decisions of the Generals commanding are constantly to be affected by Your Majesty's expressions of opinion, their initiative will suffer, they will lose keenness and confidence."



The Emperor: "I have always given the Generals commanding a free hand." (Moltke adduces an instance of interference.) "Oh yes, that was because he wanted to retreat with his division, so that there would have been no fight at all on the day."

Moltke: ". . . The whole Army knows now that Your Majesty simply dictated to a General Commanding what he was to do with his division, and that could add nothing to the General's prestige. . . . But Your Majesty would not be in command of a division in the field."

The Emperor: "I take the command so as to show the Generals how I want things done."

Moltke: "Your Majesty could tell them that at the conference. . . . In that way Your Majesty would not be in view of the troops, and this is of the greatest importance—for the soldier who has seen his Emperor at the manœuvres will never as long as he lives forget it. Your Majesty will graciously forgive me for having expressed myself more freely than Your Majesty is accustomed to."

The Emperor: "Why didn't you tell me this long ago?"

Moltke: "Well, everyone can't come to Your Majesty saying 'I approve or disapprove of this or that.'"

The Emperor: "But you are Adjutant-General, so you can always come." Then he gave Moltke his hand and said: "I thank you." When they had talked over the next steps, he shook hands again, went out into the drawing-room where the guests had long been waiting, and throughout the evening "was very silent and reflective. I hated doing it, but God knows I had to. . . . However, he was just as friendly afterwards."

Result at the next manœuvres, eight months later—the Emperor did not take the command, "though it was a bitter disappointment to him," nor did he interfere, but gave great praise to Moltke. "He never resented it when I frankly opposed him."

Again, three years later, Moltke states that the Emperor had done, and even said, what Moltke had advised; "he

## ITS LASTING EFFECT

was sensible from first to last, and his critique was the best I ever heard him give—everyone was delighted with it.”

This shows that manly, practical resolution could impress him. During Moltke's indictment he professed a guileless astonishment, scarcely defending himself at all; then twice shook hands with him, and was silent and reflective for the rest of the evening. But eventually he did as was right, forgetting his vanity for the sake of the cause; and the effect of these home-truths lasted for three years, while Eulenburg as counsellor lived as it were from hand to mouth. Nor was Moltke by any means a fire-eater—he was if anything too much of an intellectual; but he was not the Emperor's friend. That was why he prevailed. Eulenburg sought to influence him by heart-to-heart talks, Bülow by the arts of the courtier, and both were content to take short views; but here was a stranger who must be deferred to, because it would never do to lose him.

If we add to this the statements of Ballin, Metternich, and others, who all thought the Emperor responsive to skilful handling, it is clear that the verdict of history will hold his advisers more responsible than himself, for it was their business to confront him boldly, and turn his timorousness to good account.

But in the last resort it was not the business of some twenty persons only. It was a duty laid upon the nation.

## 17

And throughout thirty years the flatteries of his subjects—from every class and every circle, in every place and every region, at banquets and burials, on holidays and working-days—were ceaselessly outpoured before this sovereign, and differed only in the degree of their fulsomeness. The sovereign believed them all. “Anyone who can read men's faces—and I think I can. . . .” When he was forty he said that at a banquet in Hanover; and being such a reader of men's faces, he discerned in all of

them a genuine devotion. It was like a levee—an interminable levee which went on for thirty years—of Germans defiling before the throne of William the Second, and flattering him by speech or silence so that they might bask in his reflected sunshine.

First came the nobility of the land, outbidding one another in shooting-parties, splendour, and blatant adulation, all for his sovereign pleasure. "When at Rominten Prince Dohna brought word of a good quarry, he would manage to look as if he had come rushing headlong to tell so momentous a piece of news, and was almost breathless with excitement and hurry" (Z. 84). Once he besought the favour of being allowed to put the same sort of bells on his cows that the Emperor's wore at Rominten. When Count Ballestrem delivered the Birthday-speech as President of the Reichstag, he made no admonitory allusion to the Emperor's fresh encroachments—rather he egged him on by saying: "Our Emperor understands the spirit of the age, for has he not said, 'I do not intend to be what is called a constitutional ruler, who reigns but does not govern.' I do not think our Emperor would look kindly on anyone who assigned him that rôle."

The most illustrious were followed by the most immaculate. "When in every sermon" (such is the statement of the Court-Marshal) "delivered or composed by any Court-Chaplain, and afterwards read by the Emperor, there are never-failing references . . . to the monarch's virtuous way of life, it is only natural that a priggish self-consciousness, not far removed from the most objectionable Pharisaism, should make its appearance. Only those who are acquainted with the private goings-on at Court can really estimate the horrible lip-service paid by these sycophantic chaplains. I have often been absolutely revolted by it" (Z. 79). After one of these "detestably Byzantine sermons," at the opening of the Reichstag in 1907, even Admiral von Müller said that there could be only one opinion as to its unsuitability. Immediately afterwards the Emperor remarked: "I haven't heard so

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fine a sermon for a long time—it was really excellent” (Z. 179).

Next in the procession of flatterers came the Imperial Chancellor. So early as 1893 Bülow wrote to Eulenburg: “I was deeply moved, when I was allowed to kiss his hand and thank him for the graciousness he had shown me.” Five years later, he designated him, in a memorial, as *arbiter mundi*. “Bülow is utterly ruining the Emperor,” said Ballin. “With his perpetual adulation he is making him overestimate himself beyond all reason” (W. 3, 220).

The Ministers followed in his footsteps. When they were invited to the sovereign’s dinner-table, “they would stand in a semicircle before the Emperor, all assuming a more or less military bearing. The Emperor, after his brief welcome, would say a laughing word or two to one or another, now and then asking some question, which would be answered as if on parade. . . . One was reminded of a Colonel with his non-commissioned officers.” When Marschall as Secretary of State presented a report on the Bagdad Railway, which was being constructed by the Deutsche Bank, he called it “Your Most Gracious Majesty’s magnificent undertaking.” In the year 1904 Waldersee sums up (2, 299): “No matter how severely he condemns persons and political parties, it is all received with compliant smiles and bows. The Ministers are there to obey. What we have is literally a Cabinet-Government, subject to the Emperor’s autocratic will. In most instances he simply conveys this to the Ministers through Lucanus.”

And hence it was not only their reports to him which dripped with the nectar of “*Allerhöchst*” and “*Alleruntertänigst*”; they filled their instructions to their subordinates with these honeyed phrases, because such documents were frequently requisitioned for the Emperor’s reading, and he might be angry if there were any shortage of superlatives. In their selection of newspaper-cuttings, which they all, but especially the Foreign Office, had to lay before the Emperor, they took care that he saw nothing unpleasing. Some half-dozen men, on a rough calculation, were

supposed to draw the curtains and let in the light; but they opened them only half way, or a little less, or not at all, and so showed him or withheld from view the events and public temper of the day—always on the principle: “His Majesty requires sunlight.”

These cuttings, ranging through decades and prepared in the Home-Ministries, display two or three well-censored political articles, then as many reports of accidents and crimes, then Berlin gossip, then an account of an exhumation, the forgery of a picture, or some new medical discovery; then a description of an Imperial Ceremonial, a Military Tournament, or something else patriotic. The Empress, but not the Emperor, was a regular reader of the *Lokalanzeiger*—the Emperor would not look at the German newspapers, because in his youth he had come across attacks in *Vorwärts* and *Kladderadatsch*. He confined his newspaper-reading to the *Fürsten-Correspondenz*, which did not bely its title.

Next in the procession came the ambassadors. They would frequently be sent copies of the imperial marginalia, so that from these censorial comments they might learn the master's state of mind; and telegrams would go forth with advice for the drafting of their reports in the imperial sense. Wires flew from Berlin to Rome or Constantinople with the information that a rapturous description of the Emperor's recent visit was looked for by His Majesty. During the Petersburg Revolution of 1905 the Ambassador there waited a week before sending any information whatever, lest the Most High should be alarmed. When a freezing reception in England, such as that in 1899, was got over without any violent unpleasantness, the much-relieved Ambassador reported to Berlin for the imperial eye: “After the numerous expressions of satisfaction, pleasure, indeed delight, which have been imparted to me, I confidently anticipate the best results; and this includes the Royal Family one and all. The personal intercourse with our illustrious sovereign had no less marked an effect on Her Majesty's Ministers. Balfour declared that he



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had never known a more thrilling experience than that of the hour during which . . . he was under the spell of His Majesty's personality. . . . If His Majesty had appeared in London he would have been assured of the most spontaneous and enthusiastic welcome. Though Press and public were obliged to maintain some reserve, they have in general managed to convey anything but an impression of coolness" (A. 10, 422).

When in 1895 there were ambitions for a harbour in China, and the Emperor asked the Ambassador, von Heyking, which one he had in view, the answer was "I had thought of Amoy." On being asked by Tirpitz why he mentioned a place that he knew nothing about, Heyking replied: "I had to give His Majesty a definite answer." At Washington the Ambassador, Speck von Sternburg, publicly announced that the Emperor's was "not only the most remarkable universal intelligence in the world, but that he was thoroughly modern, and comprehended the spirit of industrialism as well as its technique, while he was equally a master in the plastic arts and music."

Next in the starry procession came the officers, at their head the Generals and Admirals, all with the watchword: Obedience. The Emperor devises "an ideal battleship, impregnably iron-clad, rapid, and armed with torpedo-tubes, which would take the place of the torpedo-boats. . . . The construction of this was attempted. We proceeded in conformity with orders received, and when it was clear that no useful result could possibly be obtained, this production came to be called the Homunculus" (T. 134). After a gala dinner to the Staff the Emperor was told that the older Moltke had been, in reality, no great General—all he had done was to carry out his sovereign's behests. "The remark was meant for the Emperor alone. So who can wonder that he should come to think very little of his Staff!" (W. 2, 208).

"At the Imperial Manœuvres, completely contradictory commands to the troops would arrive on an average three times a night. No one dares to point out that this

upsets the men, that important dispositions of troops are disturbed, that colossal marches result, and that the commissariat is confronted with great difficulties by reason of the requirements thus created. In the actual encounter modern conditions are ignored, the one aim being to make an imposing display; the Staff rides through the firing-line, the artillery follow, and the cavalry attack is as feeble as if they were still armed with flint-locks. Everyone sees this, more or less; but no one dares to say anything—certainly not the Chief, Count Schlieffen.

“While no one wants to cut his own throat by venturing on a critical remark, there are on the other hand plenty of highly placed and most aristocratic persons to assure His Majesty that it has all been so interesting, instructive, and generally magnificent. . . . Mute, grave, and expressionless, Count Schlieffen goes about his business of carrying out the Most High's behests. . . . From this absolute silence and implicit connivance . . . it has gradually come to rank imposture. In the parades and marches the squadrons are deftly and unobtrusively strengthened with men who have been kept in readiness unseen. The Emperor thus inevitably acquires the conviction that such an immense force of cavalry will be able to carry out the most colossal demands day after day. In reality, only a few horses are fit, and that only by overworking them, to get through the day's work; the others are changed in the manner indicated above” (Z. 97, 42).

But the flatteries of the uniforms went far beyond what mere obedience dictated. At Danzig in the autumn of 1904 General von Mackensen, on being presented to the Emperor at the railway-station, kissed his gloved right hand. Instantly this gallant gesture became the fashion, and in the mess of the Hussars of the Bodyguard a lieutenant, honoured with a behest, kissed the hand of the Most High (Z. 84). An old General, who had been through many wars, publicly celebrated a visit of the Emperor's to Aix with the words: “I have been present on many an historic occasion, but I remember none which

## THE CITIES GENUFLECT

excited such great enthusiasm." An officer challenged an editor who had allowed the Emperor's "Sang an Agir" to be described as the work of a dilettante. When in 1890 the Emperor had given the wrong solution of the Staff's tactical problem, he spoke (by Waldërsee's account) "to every officer he met on the promenade in the Tiergarten, trying to gain adherents for his erroneous view. Of course there were some people compassionate enough to agree with him." A military essay presented to the Emperor, on Frederick's defeat at Hochkirch, concluded with "Under Your Majesty's command nothing like this would have happened" (E. 2, 319).

The cities followed on. In every province of the Empire, the railway-stations and town-halls, the barracks and public monuments, were in a state of perpetual decoration, expectant of Their Most Gracious Majesties' arrival; at the Brandenburg Gate, and many another gate, stood the frock-coated Lord Mayors; obelisks and festoons sprang out of the ground in one place to reappear next day in another. In Alsace it had become so much a matter of routine that the holes alongside the pavements for the Venetian masts were left open once for all. The streaming flags, the broad thick garlands of pine-branches, served a double purpose in Alsace, for they concealed from the all-penetrating Hohenzollern eye the flagless houses of the Francophile citizens. The city of Görlitz was not the only one to be deprived of the imperial manœuvres and their benefits to trade, because of a democratic municipality. Hamburg, for a visit of the Emperor's, created an island in the river Alster; and when the cities of Cologne and Crefeld wanted to write their names with a K, and were supported by the opinions of two Professors, the voice of the Most High rang out on a stentorian C, and the tribunal of imperial judgment instantly dismissed the cities' petition on the plea of expense.

The private functionaries followed on. His Dutch-tile manufactory needed a considerable subvention every year, by reason of its cut prices; but the Emperor was shown

the lists of orders, and thus convinced that it did immense business. His Kadinen estate was represented to him as a model of good husbandry. "It's horrible," observed the imperial proprietor, "to see how little the farmers do for their men! Why don't they build them houses, as I do at Kadinen? Then labour would not trend westward as it does"; and he told the English Ambassador that every schoolboy and girl on his estate had saved eight hundred marks "in the course of this last one year." And he was delighted when they told him that he had a cow there which yielded forty litres of milk a day—for "here no one shrinks from pouring more milk into a cow than could by any possibility be milked out of her. . . . Strange," concludes Zedlitz, "that the Emperor must everywhere have someone who deceives him!" (Z. 179).

Friends and intimates duly followed. "The bombast, blatancy, and fulsomeness of this composition" (by Lauff) "are almost indescribable. The most exalted personages of every way of thinking were disgusted, and said so in private. But of some I have to admit that when His Most High expressed satisfaction with the thing, they instantly abounded in admiration and endorsement of his view. This lightning-change, and above all the shamefaced glance at anyone near by who had heard the directly contrary opinion of a moment earlier, was certainly comic enough in its way" (Z. 48). Eulenburg writes of the Scandinavian trip in 1903: "The contrast between the years and the convulsive merriment of the guests is what I find most painful. These men are without exception persons who have reached high office . . . and they are all utterly worn-out. But they retain sufficient energy to put up a show of gaiety, wit, even talent. . . . It very much disgusts me. I can't stand these Excellencies nowadays—always on bended knee; nor can I stand punning and such, like from nine o'clock in the morning onwards" (E. 2, 303).

The compilers of "Emperor-Books" came next. *The Emperor and Our Boys: What the Emperor's Speeches*

## THE ARTISTS GENUFLECT

*teach our German Boys* appeared in 1905 with two prefaces. From that by a Court-Chaplain: "There are men whose words are their deeds, and among these we all reckon our Emperor. . . . His words stand for deeds . . . they exhale a profoundly practical knowledge of life." From the editor's preface: "Fervent thanks are due to the Almighty for having given us an Emperor impervious to the wiles of flattery or base servility; one to whom the teacher, conscious of his sacred task and earnest in fulfilment of it, gladly points as an august example. . . . The lofty, one might say the religious, sense of duty and responsibility, the tireless zeal and unremitting diligence, the glad recognition of the services of others, the amazing energy displayed in mastering every kind of subject-matter—all this, combined with the magic spell of an irresistible personality, forms a whole of such arresting authority that no German youth can be unaffected by its ennobling influence."

When a clever Frenchman, the artist Grand-Carteret, realized all this, he resolved to get his caricatures into Germany and wrote an open letter, in which the Emperor was thus made game of: "As Napoleon once was for the whole world, so Your Majesty is now—simply 'the Emperor.' All is said—you are Caesar. . . . The gaze of Europe is now directed ceaselessly to the banks of the Spree. You are the idol, the Jove of our age. . . . The world rings with your slightest utterance. . . . Utter then, O Your Majesty, the behest which will bestow on caricaturists that emancipation which the world awaits from you!" Being a reader of men's thoughts, he uttered the behest; and the foreigner's book appeared in Germany, while German truth-tellers were expiating their audacity in fortresses and prisons.

Among the artists came next in order the manufacturers of Hohenzollern pieces—imperial portraits, allegories, poems—all of whom deferred to the genius of His Serene Highness in the matters of tone and colouring, the construction either of cathedral or drama—the record in this



group being held by the architect of the church built in memory of the Emperor William I. An architectural feature (two intersecting semicircles) which in the original plan made the cross on the church-spire look as if it were surmounted by a star, and on that account greatly delighted the Emperor, naturally was missing when the building was carried out in stone. The Emperor observed its absence and was much annoyed, for it was precisely the redundancy of cross and star together which had fascinated him. Herr Schwechter, who had designed the church, was too servile to explain, so were the clergy; and thus for twenty years a "morning-star" in iron gleamed above the cross.

The men of the middle-class who had business connections with the Court followed on. "However independent they may actually be, they all turn courtiers in the Emperor's presence; and many of them soon get even worse than those who are more inured to the atmosphere. If there is any question of serious displeasure they make as little show of their real convictions as any of the others" (Z. 62). Slaby, a prominent physician, "now, alas! passes all bounds in his flatteries and lip-service." He pointed out to the Emperor how in the end he had always triumphed over his opponents. "Yes, that is true," was what the Emperor answered. "My subjects should always do what I tell them; but they *will* think for themselves, and that's what makes all the trouble" (Z. in the autumn of 1904).

They were all in the procession of flatterers—every one of the independent spirits who never once told the Emperor the truth that they afterwards wrote down for their own satisfaction: Ihne, Harnack, and Delitsch, Helferrich and Krupp, Dorpfeld and Bode, Kopp and Faulhaber, Tschudi and Begas, the younger and sometimes even the elder Rathenau; while the renowned scholar, Deussen, in his speech to the Emperor in 1891 expressed the conviction "that the Emperor will lead us from Goethe to Homer and Sophocles, and from Kant to Plato." But Lamprecht,

## ONE CLASS LEFT OUT

Germany's leading historian, doubly answerable for truth, broke out into the following ludicrous dithyrambs so early as 1912, in a peroration on the phenomenon presented by William the Second. "His is a personality of primitive potency, of irresistible authority, for which . . . the whole domain of emotion and experience is perpetually opened anew, as for the soul of a creative artist. . . . Self-reliance, fixity of purpose, ever directed to the loftiest aims—these are the distinguishing marks of the Imperial personality."

But the procession of bent backs and eyes that would not see—what figures hover lightly round it, whose are these airy forms, some with cymbals, some softly beating on the drum, that creep through keyholes, float through windows, hindered by no Master of the Ceremonies? They are the Press of the Emperor and his creatures. In *their* faces he can read, when the raptured procession is over, "the sentiments of the people"—smiling, he can say to the President of the Upper House: "It's extraordinary! They go wild about me everywhere! Oh, I know very well what is said and thought of me among the people!" And while the newspaper-cuttings drop from his fingers, the eyes that for so long have gazed unwearied on the glitter and the genuflexions close in dreams at last, and once again he sees them pass before him: the Princes and Generals, Chaplains and Professors, Ambassadors and Ministers, manufacturers and architects, Lord Mayors and artists, Cardinals and Jews, intimates and acquaintances—all enraptured, all full-filled with gratitude and praise.

Of one class—one only—he has never read the face in that procession. The working-man did not present himself. He was not qualified to come to Court.