

CHAPTER VI

CATASTROPHES

I

1906-1909

THE coils woven of distrust and jealousy which the three rulers of Germany had cast around each other and the Emperor, were inevitably rent asunder at long last. Holstein and Eulenburg, in their widely separated spheres of hermit and courtier, were at once linked and alienated by the bonds of mutual interest and mutual hatred. Each wanted to get the better of the other; and as Holstein never met the Emperor at all, and Eulenburg no longer met him as his only friend, both courted the third party, who possessed high office and responsibility, and hence was always at the sovereign's side. Bülow stood between the pair, and was intent on freeing himself from their shackles.

He had the advantage of both in coolness of head. For while Eulenburg was aglow with a soulful exotic ardour for his friend, and Holstein with the craftsman's passionate absorption in the conflicting interests of European Powers, Bülow was moved by no other motive than to avert the lowering dangers conjured up by his master's temperament for as long as might be. He was more single-minded in the application of his energy and cynicism than were his two overburdened friends.

Bülow, on whom in the summer of 1905 after his greatest mistake—Morocco—the title of Prince had been conferred, could cherish only one personal desire at this zenith of his power. That was to isolate his two rivals from the Foreign Office and the Emperor, thus subduing office and Emperor, and with them the direction of affairs, to his sole influence. To this end, two months after receiving the princely title, he proffered his resignation on the Russian Treaty, and reckoned himself certain of

MUTUAL DESTRUCTION

the upper hand after that collapse of the whimpering Emperor. He had formerly supported Holstein in removing Eulenburg, though by almost undiscoverable methods; and now he helped Eulenburg in like manner to pave the way for Holstein's downfall—on neither occasion as initiator or even really as intriguer, but merely obeying his nature as an adventurer who takes the first path Heaven points him to.

But Heaven had ordained that first Eulenburg should be partly undone by Holstein, then Holstein wholly by Eulenburg and Bülow, then Eulenburg wholly by Holstein, then the Emperor partly by Bülow, and finally Bülow for good and all by the Emperor. Of this comedy the German people knew nothing, while their good angel stood mourning over the scene of ruin. The whole piece took three years in performance—from 1906 to 1909—first in strict privacy, then in an all too blazing publicity.

The origins dated far back. The conflict about Goluchowski, whom Holstein's wounded vanity caused him to detest, had completely alienated him from Eulenburg, who as Ambassador in Vienna considered himself to be protecting the Empire against Holstein, and wrote: "On Goluchowski, Frau Schrott, and me the whole Triplice depends at this moment." Holstein, for his part, showed the Austrian Ambassador in Berlin, who was at variance with his chief Goluchowski, the Emperor's hostile marginalia on this latter, so that they might be reported to Vienna. By doing this he committed high treason, being guilty of the communication of secrets of State to a foreign power. In the New Year of 1899 the final letters were exchanged between the whilom friends:

"Greetings and best wishes from the bottom of my heart," were sent by Eulenburg to Holstein in an astute composition which, with the object of re-attaching him and so strengthening his own position, concluded on the equivocal words: "We have put through so many stiff jobs together . . . we have been so to speak roasted and stewed by the same fire! . . . The older one grows, the

more one clings to familiar conditions." In his startlingly ironic answer Holstein regretted "that you didn't drive out to Semmering and enjoy yourself there. . . . So we bide our time, and drink each other's health in something or other—tea for choice! I hope that the frost prophesied by Falb will assist you and your family to a more cheerful view of life—in so far as that is not yours at present. With heartfelt greetings, Holstein."

These heartfelt greetings were the last deceptions practised on Eulenburg. It was with such supercilious malignancy that Holstein closed a correspondence of twelve years; the next letter he answered not at all, and was "not at home" to Eulenburg in Berlin. A year later he had, for all that, to see Eulenburg made a prince and thereby established in his position at Vienna; but he did not lose heart and contrived, on the pretext of important matters of State, to induce Bülow to put the first official affront upon his bosom friend. A sharply worded minute of March 1900 to Eulenburg, disapproving his policy, was signed by Bülow; and we can well understand Eulenburg's bitter comment: "That Bülow should lend himself to this dangerous folly is proof of his subjection to Holstein. I am beside myself at the picture thus suddenly disclosed to view!"

But when in the course of the same year Holstein set his creatures writing against the German Ambassador in Vienna, Bülow managed to keep in with Eulenburg, though he was simultaneously sworn to Holstein. For a period he resembled a man who by undiminished tenderness obliges his old mistress to accept his new one, and affects to hear both their complaints with gentle sympathy. "When I think," wrote Eulenburg, "that I never did Holstein anything but good, interceded for him, helped him whenever I could, and suffered a lot on his behalf—and now this enmity, this hatred!" In reality he had feared Holstein, helped him only when it helped himself as well, and never once suffered for him. His deceptiveness was turning, to his own hurt, into self-deception.

BÜLOW DESERTS EULENBURG

If at this time Holstein had the upper hand of Bülow, Bülow on his side had subjugated the Emperor, and while swimming in these somewhat turbid waters likewise played the distant Eulenburg on a long line. "Don't be so easily intimidated," he wrote in March 1902; "don't lose your nerve. . . . I often think of Achilles, whom our sovereign greatly resembles, and of whom Homer says:

His glory-loving heart knows neither fear nor retreat." Bülow's effrontery in offering this fustian to Eulenburg is accentuated by the latter's reply: "I assume that in your Achilles-comparison you were not thinking of the hero's heel."

Meanwhile his friend in Berlin was holding the new Achilles in a net of flattery; he even succeeded in eclipsing their common friend in the Emperor's esteem, and paving the way for his retirement. Without touching on politics, he felt safe in saying in his next letter to Vienna that Eulenburg ought to take more care of himself, "so as to ensure many more years of life in which to utilize your brilliant talents in the way that makes you really happy."

What? Can it be only nine years ago that Bülow, not yet admitted to the Holy of Holies, warbled that flute-like strain about their sister-souls to the new moon—and now his friend is to utilize his brilliant talents outside the temple whose doors he had opened to the writer! Bitter moments, those, for the king-maker, reading such counsels from his creature's hand. But Eulenburg knew how to score the dirge of his so plainly desired resignation for the ears of the Court. His climax swelled: "The state of my health is lamentable—that is the simple truth. I am completely worn-out by ten years of terribly exacting labour with our dear sovereign. . . . My doctor told me lately that if I didn't follow his advice, in a few years I should be a dead man. If I were to take this step, I might possibly be spared a while to my family." (Despite his terrible experiences, still in the future, he lived for twenty years after this period.)

In May the bosom friends spoke out at last; and

Bülow said: "The Prussian genius is hard and ruthless: subtle natures like yours . . . are not attuned to it." In reality it was not a question either of Prussian ruthlessness or a subtle nature, but of a sapient Chancellor who watched his neurasthenic sovereign like a family-physician. Eulenburg, who had known all about the case for fifteen years, is wellnigh touching when after this plain speaking he writes to Friend Bernhard, not yet quite worn-out by toil: "I will not be a burden on your friendship, and indeed I am no longer fit to endure the everlasting see-saw between dark moods and suspicions, friendliness and fine phrases." Only the Emperor's friendship and a lucky turn of events could have bridged the gulf; but now he felt "that in the light of my resolve, high office, politics, society . . . are losing hold on me, and yielding place to my music, my tranquil Liebenberg, the restoration to my family—all like words from heaven in my ears. To how few does God grant such a rebirth—the possibility of return to one's true individuality!"

Nowhere does Eulenburg so strongly move us to sympathy as here, when he seems to resign himself. All our compassion is his; after those fifteen troubled years we heartily wish him a serene old age with his music and his verses, refraining from any inquiry as to their quality. And still more when in the summer he lays down his offices of State; and breaks out, to Bülow, in a disavowal of all bitterness, "for at my beloved Emperor's side I see the only possible man—and round your head there floats and waves the mysterious veil of your appointed destiny. May God immerse it in the flowing river of his bounty!"

True, that round Bülow's head there floated, not at all mysteriously, only the zephyrs of party-feeling and the ventilating breezes of the Press; nor would a veil immersed in rivers of God's bounty do much waving—but if everything else were in order, if the favourite had really been wise enough to withdraw in good time to art and oblivion, our respect and sympathy would have followed him to his retreat. But it was all histrionic—a courtier and a favour-

EULENBURG'S FOREBODINGS

ite he could not voluntarily cease to be; and that was to prove his destruction. In truly prophetic words Eulenburg wrote to Bülow about this time, five whole years before his catastrophe, in such imploring agony as only he can give expression to, who has a baneful secret to conceal: "I know I can rely on you this once more. . . . That the Prussian country-gentry and my friends will anyhow empty yet another bucketful of poison and filth on the head of a broken, dying man I have no doubt whatever. . . . Your friendly succour will not fail me in that hour—I know you too well to question that."

Words of foreboding, words of supplication—instinct with anguished doubt of that friendly succour.

2

But Holstein the Destroyer was not long to enjoy the half-accomplished ruin of the king-maker. Eulenburg's intimacy with the Emperor was a guarantee for his continued favour, even though—possibly because—he no longer held high office; while Holstein's aloofness threatened him with complete extinction when once he should retire from affairs. And now at last the storm was gathering round his head also.

Morocco—that had been Holstein's great idea; and when with Bülow's help he had forced the Emperor to make the landing in Tangier, he had felt himself to be master of Europe. True, he by no means desired war—which might have destroyed, and at the best would have interrupted, his machinations; he merely wanted to uphold German prestige; that is to say, he reiterated the catch-word of "national honour," which in his view would have suffered by a reasonable discussion of Colonial questions. But abroad it was inevitably believed that Germany was picking a quarrel with France, at the moment when Russia's hands were full in Asia; and when the diplomats arrived in April with inquiries as to the aim of the imperial landing and oration, Holstein and Bülow

BÜLOW WITHDRAWS FROM HOLSTEIN

gave instructions to "play the Sphinx." To humiliate the French—that was the aim; Bülow, with this end in view, went so far as to suppress an offer from Paris for an amicable discussion of all Colonial questions at the Conference, for the Emperor's pacific inclinations made him uneasy.

In his den sat Holstein, watching over his potions. He had influence enough as Privy Councillor to insist upon a deliberation with the military and naval authorities, in the hope of gaining their suffrage; and while the Secretary of State was speaking against Holstein, Bülow sat in obligatory silence. When, in the spring of 1904, Delcassé said to Prince Lichnowsky that a pacific understanding about Morocco was desirable for France, and summed up the entire problem in the phrase: "*Lâchez l'Autriche, et nous lâcherons la Russie*," Holstein was so incensed by Lichnowsky's despatch that he caused it to disappear—at any rate it is not to be found among the documents. Holstein regarded anything done in opposition to him, or even apart from him, as reprehensible.

About this time Bülow at last began to withdraw from him. As Bülow's friendship with Eulenburg still subsisted at that date, it is as certain that Eulenburg was hand-in-glove with him as that Eulenburg's influence against the common enemy Holstein was used to the utmost. Bülow himself, after his seven years of predominance in affairs, had no more use for Holstein; and being prone to quotations from *Faust*, may now have said to himself of the one-time indispensable: "*Was kannst du, armer Teufel, geben!*" (Poor devil, what more can you give me!) Sometimes he had prevailed against Holstein, but he still was given to declaring "that was hell" (E. 2, 380). Moreover Holstein's downfall could only enhance Eulenburg's still powerful influence with the Emperor—so Bülow decided on ejecting the alchemist.

But with the most exquisite precautions! If Bismarck himself had not dared to get rid of him "lest he should blab in foreign parts," how much more must Bülow have

feared him, being—according to that dark saying of Eulenburg's—personally to some extent in his power. What Bülow now succeeded in—the achievement of ruining Holstein, and yet retaining him as a friend—is his masterpiece, enough in itself to rank him high among diplomatists.

A pretext was soon found—attaching itself to the person of the then Secretary of State, von Richthofen, whose removal from office Holstein after various intrigues had vainly demanded of Bülow. Upon Bülow's refusal Holstein tendered his resignation for the dozenth time. But on this occasion he also wrote to Hammann (*Bilder aus der letzten Kaiserzeit*, 29) in a most astounding strain, of course for Bülow's eyes: "For more than a quarter of a century I have sat in my office, never gone to Court, and never asked to play any prominent part in affairs. . . . During this period numberless exacting tasks have been carried out by me, which one might have supposed would have led the Emperor to regard me as a useful member of the Foreign Office Staff. But what became of all my . . . memoranda? It was only very exceptionally and very rarely that any one of them reached the Emperor's eyes as confidential minutes . . . the majority went straight to the Archives. It is no wonder that the Emperor seems to have come to the settled conviction that this unproductive Ministry is in a state of ossification. . . . The acceptance [of my proffered resignation] is a matter-of-course in the prevailing circumstances, as are the attacks and dishonouring conjectures which will be directed upon me from notoriously hostile quarters. I shall defend myself to the utmost, with all the means I have at my disposal. No personal considerations need now deter me. . . . The prestige of Germany has been destroyed in recent years, and our enemies are at present occupied in forming a ring against us. Complicated situations will arise, for which I would rather not assume the degree of moral responsibility attaching to every active functionary—therefore I prefer to bid you Farewell."

Here is the complete Holstein. After having persistently shunned the light of day, he complains of inadequate recognition from the Emperor he despised; because for once he is not able to get rid of an uncongenial Chief, he not only offers to resign but turns his official letter into a farce by his unveiled menaces, wherein he—the super-blackmailer—threatens to reveal secrets about highly placed personages, and addresses these threats not even to those concerned but to a third person; at the same time once for all declining any responsibility for the consequences of his own decisive steps. In these letters the German people can read not only the character but the modes of thought and action of that Baron von Holstein who for fifteen years so deeply affected the destinies of the Empire.

Bülow's retort was masterly. He wrote to Hammann: "Since Bismarck's dismissal there has been nothing—from the non-renewal of the Russian Treaty and the Far Eastern Triplice to the handling of the Morocco question; from the so-called Urias Letter to Vienna to the publication of the Swinemünde Telegram; from the coolness with England in 1896 to the differences of opinion with her about Shanghai—nothing of any importance in our Foreign Office procedure which was not advised by Holstein."

By the compilation of this catalogue, which is a summary of Germany's foreign policy from 1890 to 1904, Bülow may be said to have clutched at the coat-tails of the evasive Privy Councillor, while seeking to exonerate himself. The resignation was not accepted; but Bülow left the letter unanswered, so that it might hang over Holstein's grizzled head. After the holidays the Privy Councillor reappeared in the Foreign Office, resumed work and intercourse as before, and believed that all was well—for he felt sure of his ground.

His eccentricities were extravagant in the succeeding year. While Bülow was working for agreement in Morocco, Holstein was setting the Press by the ears and promulgating his so-called Hostage Theory, according to

BÜLOW'S ENERGY

which the French would be German hostages in a war with England. As this increased the tension with Bülow and Hammann, editor-in-chief of Bülow's Press, Holstein tried to insure himself officially against the future—played the house-tyrant pure and simple, and at the end of his career for the first time transgressed the inmost law of his being. For in the New Year of 1906 he demanded, with fresh threats of resignation, his immediate appointment to be Director of the Political Department, with control of the Press-service.

Bülow, who was ill in bed, refused to grant this controllership; but Holstein wheedled it out of him by promises of unswerving support. The next day Bülow said to Hammann: "I perfectly understand your moral prejudices against that blackmailer. When the Conference is over I will get rid of him, but I must keep him on now, for he might seriously injure the national interests by getting up wrangles in the Press" (Hammann, *Bilder*, 36). But when the question was to be brought before the Reichstag and a "Holstein-Debate" seemed imminent, by which the nation would for the first time have learnt something of their most influential official, Holstein's horror of the light of day once more prevailed over his autocratic inclinations, and he withdrew his demand.

The couple were still pulling along despite this disintegration of friendly feelings and common purposes and motives, when Bülow received information from Paris that France was prepared to fight if things went on as they were. His energy was now put to the test, and it magnificently answered. That March of 1906 gives us the measure of what he could have achieved in the July of 1914. From one day to another he wrested the documents of the Conference, which for months had been dominated by Holstein, from the omnipotent wizard's hands, fell upon them himself, and worked day and night to liquidate the Conference and clear up the threatening situation. That month of March, in which he displayed the full force of his capacity, was harassed throughout by the daily

conflict with Holstein, still in office and still unestranged, due for dismissal not to-day, but to-morrow; and Holstein's letters and threats of resignation must, as Hammann writes, have completely broken down the Chancellor's nerves.

At last, in the beginning of April, the Conference came to an end. The Entente had been put to the initial test at Algeciras, and was now a settled thing. Germany had lost at the Conference, but it was declared to have been a great success; and on the fifth the Chancellor was to lay the results before the Reichstag. Now was the moment for getting rid of the Unbearable. His last resignation was still in Bülow's desk, the Emperor was forewarned, and on the morning of that session Tschirschky, the new Secretary of State (violently objected to as such by Holstein), carried the latter's offer of resignation to the sovereign "by order of the Chancellor." The Emperor countersigned. Instantly Bülow informed Hammann that the Emperor had "gladly acquiesced in the resignation" (Hammann, *Vorgeschichte*, 151). Then he betook himself to the Reichstag, and half the Foreign Office followed him—it was to be a Grand Field-day.

Holstein sat solitary in his den, unwitting of the event. After wellnigh thirty years of strenuous activity he sat there for the last of days that day, a retired Privy Councillor with a pension and an Order. To-morrow and henceforth the flood-gates might be closed or opened—his hand would not be upon the levers. Maybe he felt uneasy. These last weeks had not left much doubt that he would have to go—and now to whom should he most usefully complain? Who was the most powerful of his friends? Was it not the English Ambassador? And while his Moroccan policy was being criticized in the Reichstag, and nothing (he knew) was to be looked for from Bülow's sapient lips but a speciously glittering obituary, the destroyer summoned the Englishman to his presence, told him of all the internal intrigues, and never reflected that his listener would not only write all home next day, but

BÜLOW'S SWOON

would recount the entire interview to the Secretary of State. So profound was Holstein's knowledge of human nature.

In that very hour, while Bebel was setting forth his indictment, the Chancellor suddenly fainted dead away in the Reichstag.

This fainting-fit was one of Bülow's happiest accidents—and inspirations. Of course his nerves and brain were overwrought, of course it was no put-up job; but that just then, in full tide of debate before a crowded House and galleries, precisely as the criticism took its most critical turn, this distressing accident should have come to pass, and not an hour sooner or later . . . that he should have demonstrated so publicly how much he was the victim of his zealous labour, literally broken-down at last—this is proof of such a sense of situation as could permeate not only the Governmental, but the nervous, system. Such subtlety of perception is rare even among diplomatists—among William the Second's diplomatists existent in none but Bülow:

For when next day that swoon became known to the public, not only were millions of unpolitical Germans led to look more kindly on the results of the Morocco policy, but even Holstein was obliged to believe Bülow guiltless of having let him go. His first thought on receiving news of the mishap by telephone had been: "This may lead to his retirement. Another Chancellor may be more submissive to me; in any event I must get back the old offer of resignation." But he was six hours too late. When he learnt next morning that he was relieved of office, Holstein stood incredulous before the incredible sheet of paper. When had the dastardly deed been perpetrated? A soothing falsehood was allowed to leak out: Tschirschky had fished out the letter while Bülow lay helpless, and had taken the responsibility of getting the Emperor to sign it. And Tschirschky *was* Holstein's chief. . . .

But Bülow came out of his swoon with a smile on his

lips. How easily he could now insist upon his innocence to his old friend! Had he not been prostrate, victim of his zeal? How should he how *could* he—? And as he dreaded Holstein's enmity and needed his practical advice, he left his relegated friend to ponder mutely over the question whether he would not prefer to retain some indirect influence in affairs and incidentally Bülow's friendship, to the execution of a revenge whose consequences were uncertain.

Holstein, always averse from any show of power, must have felt in his heart that the desire to continue on the lines of his former activity would prevail. If Bülow's share in his downfall was imponderable, Holstein's share in Bülow's decisions would be ponderable enough—so it would be well to say nothing about the former that he might retain the latter. And besides, a revengeful man needs one victim—not two; and one was ready to his hand. How very promptly Holstein, once suspicious, could change sides, we have seen in the instance of Marschall and Bülow. Now he clung to Bülow, to whom he had sworn allegiance nine years before over a glass of wine with Eulenburg; but on Eulenburg he directed the full force of his hatred and vindictiveness, and did not hesitate (nor was entirely unjustified) in stigmatizing this friend—long since estranged—as his mortal enemy, who had paved the way for his downfall with the Emperor.

When they had thus defined their positions Bülow, victorious and undespoiled, was master of the field; Holstein was officially defeated but indemnified by influence to come; the only one to lose—lose all—was Eulenburg. His doom was sealed.

3

Ever since his young days, as attaché, Eulenburg had complained in his diary and to his friends that politics came between him and his art, and said that only for his beloved Emperor could he have made such a sacrifice. When he retired after twenty years' service to the Empire,

he depicted himself as seriously ill and caring little for recovery unless, removed from all the turfnoil of a heartless world, he might live for his muse and his dearly loved family in tranquil Liebenberg. But no sooner was he restored to private life than he seemed all agog to place himself again at the Emperor's disposal, "so as to spare him any disappointment." He was with him during June 1903 in Norway, in September at Rominten, and received him as a guest at his own castle in the following November. In this and the immediately succeeding years he was the only diplomatist in the Emperor's entourage, and as such played a decisive part in the imperial counsels. Just as in his younger days, he conveyed the sovereign's wishes to the Foreign Office from yacht or shooting-butts, and saw him every autumn from 1903 to 1906 at Liebenberg, where on every occasion important questions came up for decision.

As the favourite pure and simple, he now used his unofficial influence almost exclusively in personal matters. Not that there were many old friends left to place. Most of them were already in the highest offices of State, and the new ones were not of courtly complexion; so it became chiefly a question of displacing. Why not, then, take a hand in deposing a slippery friend whom one had assisted to his throne ten years before? At any rate, Bülow felt himself to be menaced, felt that Eulenburg desired his downfall. And how should he not have been suspicious, when—still addressed as "dearest Bernhard"—he found in Eulenburg's letters from Rominten hints of the Emperor's disapproval of his policy, and read in that familiar writing how the Emperor had said: "If Bülow really puts his back into this business, it will show that he's still what he was"? And Eulenburg went on to say: "One thing is certain—he knows of absolutely no one that he could put in your place. I'm convinced of that, by the way he speaks of you in spite of this displeasure."

"Still what I was?" thought Bülow, and wondered only if Emperor and Eulenburg were still what *they* had

been. When later on he read in the Press of the Liebenberg camarilla, he said no word in the Reichstag to repudiate its existence, but merely one of warning—that this poisonous foreign weed had never been planted in German soil without great injury to prince and people.

The Morocco affair had drawn Eulenburg again into the sphere of high politics. One of his friends, who was on the secret list of the Berlin police as a pervert (Treskow, *von Fürsten und anderen Sterblichen*, 152) the Councillor to the Embassy, Lecomte, had been deeply initiated by his familiar circle into political conditions—that is, so far as his friends themselves were; and to him at the Foreign Office in Paris went Eulenburg's information as to the Emperor's pacific tendency. This was designed to discredit the Holstein mischief-making; and Lecomte was transferred to Berlin in the autumn of 1905, that he might be nearer to the source of information.

In the thirty years before the World War there was a rhythmic alternation of anxieties and menaces between all the great Powers; it was as the alternation of day and night in the two hemispheres—when one was in light, the other was in darkness. And so in this Morocco crisis, the declaration of a single Power: "The ruler of the State is in fact peacefully inclined," was enough to avert an immediate collision. In that respect, Eulenburg's influence was indubitably a thing to be thankful for. As Holstein, who had insistently maintained the contrary, saw that his influence must inevitably be destroyed by this pacific policy, it added a keener edge to his desire for revenge when the hour of his retirement sounded. Had he not always kept his hand in at assassinations? Now was the moment for the expert to bring down the amateur; now, in their sixties, the two friends were ripe for mutual slaughter. It was only a question of pluck, and that neither of them had yet had an occasion to display.

Neither the misanthrope nor the dilettante had ever welcomed such occasions. Holstein was risking nothing when immediately after his fall he despatched to Eulenburg

“ TILL DISABLEMENT ”

on 1st May 1906 an unspeakable letter: “. . . After many years, you have attained your end—my removal from office. And the base attacks upon me ought to be equally to your liking. . . . For certain reasons, it is undoubtedly dangerous to have anything to do with you.” Eulenburg reads this; hurries to Berlin, selects Varnbüler as a dashing second, they hold hurried counsel—it is to be exchange of shots till disablement or death. The Foreign Office is informed; Bülow is still lucky enough to be ill; Tschirschky sinks on a chair and foresees “one of the greatest scandals the world has ever known.” The letter, of which only the above-cited words have hitherto been made public, was in the opinion of Baron von Reischach, who was consulted, “Such as I have never before read the like of—full of the most vulgar insults. It threatened to make public the Prince’s obliquities if he ever again attempted to obtain an official position.”

Reischach inquired: “Will the Prince defy the worst consequences, and fight?” Varnbüler’s answer was: “Anyhow, we must get him up as a hero.”

These words from his friend and champion go some way to explain a protocol, signed by Holstein that same afternoon: “Prince zu Eulenburg having assured me, on his word of honour, that he had neither hand nor part in my dismissal, and has been in no way concerned in any of the attacks made upon me in the Press, I hereby withdraw the offensive remarks I made upon him in my letter.”

The more decidedly one deprecates the duel as the mere “cannibal-courage” of Napoleon’s derision, the more ludicrous must appear the offer and the acceptance of this explanation in an affair between two aristocratic officers and Excellencies, of whom the “one insulted” was Prince, Ambassador, and Guardsman. It was the disavowal of a private code of honour which these “very men and their fellows preached incessantly at the expense of peace-loving communities. Such insults as these would justify a war of annihilation, if regarded from the usual international standpoint—yet we see them suffered by a Prince and un-

retracted by a Baron, so that before the sun went down on his wrath, as the cliché has it, the Prince's honour might be whitewashed by a purely farcical "explanation."

But not yet was the revengeful Baron appeased.

For immediately afterwards Eulenburg received the Black Eagle as the one favour still owed him by his imperial friend. It was the last he ever was to have. He received it ostensibly as acknowledgment for a pretentious book about the Hohenzollerns which was on sale, with a preface by Eulenburg, in the format of a Romish mass-book, including a desk to read it on. In point of fact the Order was conferred for his services in the Morocco Peace, which could not, since he was now a private individual, be officially acknowledged. But when Holstein saw that, despite the mud-slinging, his enemy was still so secure in the imperial favour—he who had promised away nothing, and now was being given everything—his next step was to say and write to as many people as he could think of that Prince Eulenburg, Knight of the Black Eagle, had been called to his face a despicable person, and had not resented it. Court and Society were soon talking of the affair, but nothing actually happened. Then Holstein, who despite his shrewdness had little force of intellect, hit upon the expedient of seeking force of intellect elsewhere.

He found it in Harden, who had long opposed Holstein's influence, but in the Morocco affair had approved his aggressive policy, and besides had been attacking the camarilla in every form for twenty years. Harden, indeed, was better acquainted with matters of the Court than Holstein was, and may possibly now have received a few first-hand data or documents from the alchemist's kitchen as confirmation of his attacks—but these would not have been the first.

At the end of the year Harden opened the campaign in his newspaper—at first by dark hints comprehensible only to the initiated. So the group in question were alone in pricking up their ears, and they turned pale indeed when

EULENBURG'S FALSE STEP

they found themselves called by the intimate names used in strictest privacy by Eulenburg and Kuno Moltke, Town-Commandant of Berlin, and their friends. Eulenburg was the most terrified of all. The very first article, a purely political one, which appeared under Holstein's auspices in the *Zukunft*, left him in no doubt of the doom now hanging over him. "The campaign concocted between Holstein and Harden opens a most disturbing vista. I see in this not only revenge but something far graver, and cannot conceal my anxiety." So strong was his consciousness of being, certainly not a criminal, but a man punishable by a reactionary law as a pervert. He at once left the country, and caused Harden to be requested to discontinue the attacks. Harden promised silence if Eulenburg's political influence came to an end, thus demonstrating that he was working for a cause, and not, like Holstein, pursuing a victim. At Court everyone was overjoyed and excited—at last he was to go under, the eternal favourite! Only his friends knew that the situation could be saved by his accepting political oblivion.

And now Eulenburg took such a false step as reflects upon his powers of perception. Swiftly and completely he had realized Holstein's implacable enmity, and the means that would be taken to gratify it; as completely he now went wrong in estimating the degree of William's affection for him. He knew that his enemies held proofs of his guilt, and reckoned both the personal and the political opponent as inexorable; so that his return, after only a few weeks of self-banishment and without any official necessity, to the Emperor's side at Wiesbaden—posing as a pronounced invalid who was independent of office and henceforth devoted to art alone—can only be explained, when taken together with his manipulation of the Press, as the action of one who had disastrously miscalculated the Emperor's capacity for friendship. Eulenburg, who in this dilemma as in that with Holstein, had no desire to fight, was confronted in the New Year of 1907 with the choice of a final renunciation of politics and Emperor, or

reliance on the loyalty of his lifelong friend. He chose reliance, and he lost the game.

For instantly the attacks increased in violence. The group of friends were soon designated, not by enigmatic pet-names, but by their actual titles; at home and abroad the scandal swelled, and now at last the Emperor's subjects learned what manner of men had been the anonymous rulers of their ruler. Of offences against the penal law, such as Holstein's letter to his foe had cast in his teeth with immunity, nothing was said; for, as a politician, Harden had no desire to go beyond the psychical effects of abnormal susceptibilities—he had not the least intention of opening up the question of infraction of a penal law which every doctor held in derision. From the *Zukunft* the public learnt only the same kind of thing as Bismarck had said of Eulenburg and his group: "Effeminate natures, transcendentalists, visionaries, phrase-mongers—particularly dangerous for the Emperor's temperament." Everyone in the country, no one at the Court, was amazed; nor did anyone at Court come forward in defence of men whose failings were known to be correctly set forth. Yet not a single one of them dared tell the Emperor. It was not until May that the Crown-Prince brought him the articles, and information as to their effect.

Was the Emperor, in truth, the only one at Court to be surprised? A few years before this the Criminal-Inspector, von Meerscheidt-Hüllessem, had bequeathed him a sealed packet in which, as an enclosure stated, he would find a card-index, ranging over decades, of the names of over a hundred homo-sexuals belonging to the highest circles, together with the documents in proof—a most momentous legacy from a police-official to his sovereign. But when Lucanus delivered the packet and the Emperor had read the covering letter, he left the seal unbroken and merely said abruptly: "Police-business. Send the packet to the Chief Inspector" (Von Treskow, p. 115; who then received it). It was thus that the neurasthenic avoided knowledge which would, he divined, prove a trial to his

THE EMPEROR'S SHUT EYE

feelings—and it is testimony to both his cowardice and his folly. For that knowledge would have enabled him to purge his Court *sub silentio*; there would have been no Press reports, no scandals, for all the aristocratic names which were afterwards compromised appeared—with the spies and blackmailers involved—upon that unread list.

But in the last analysis, of what was the Court to be purged? The Emperor was not ignorant of any phase in the interrelated phases of perverted practices and unnatural tendencies. One Prince had been banished from Court, another had become a favourite there—simply because the one was at the end, the other at the beginning, of a long psychical development towards abnormal sexuality. And, moreover, is it conceivable that with his susceptible nerves the Emperor, after twenty years' experience, was unaware in what respect the men of his choice differed from those of his antipathy? Is it conceivable that he could not account for the difference between Eulenburg's languishing grace and Kiderlen's angular sturdiness, between the elegance of Kuno Moltke and the virility of Tirpitz, or that he should not have perceived that between a crudely perverted Colonel and a subtly abnormal artist there runs a devious path whereon no woman sets her foot? Had not Eulenburg often handed him those letters to read, in which the friends called one another "Beloved Phil, dearest Kuno," and sang the praises of friendship in sweetly plaintive tones?

But if it is certain that he must have divined these relationships, it is no less certain that he chose to overlook them. Of such packets he did not break the seal. And now his own son brings him an unsealed one. What! Before his Guards, his subjects, before King Edward and the Tsar, is *he*, the greatest gasconader of them all, to stand as the friend of effeminates? Has he fought down the secret consequences of his outward infirmity throughout his life only to be unmasked at fifty as the associate of epebes with whom he has never had anything whatever to do? Because a man sings beautifully, must

he necessarily be unclean? Better lose a battle than the campaign of a life-time!

And speedily he acts. Friedheim of the Police is summoned; he will know all about it (Von Treskow, 164). "This Harden is a damned scoundrel," says the Emperor. "But he would not dare make these attacks if he had not the material to go on. Bring me your Secret List." Next day he reads a part of the "material" he had shunned in other days; and there is very much more to be read there than ever came out in the *Zukunft*. In the evening he says to Bethmann Hollweg, whom he sends for as Home-Minister: "It has come to my knowledge that Eulenburg, Hohenau, Kuno Moltke, are perverts. I have no further use for them." Then to Zedlitz: "This must be made a moral example of before all the world, and without any consideration of persons."

No one is happier on this day than Count Hülsen-Haeseler, whom Eulenburg had of yore removed from Vienna by means of a malignant report; and who, lately appointed Chief of the Military Cabinet, had come across this letter among the documents and sworn vengeance on his favoured foe. Hülsen's appointment itself had been an affront to Eulenburg, whose influence was even then on the wane. . . . And now vanish, at a gesture, nearly all the persons named by Harden; some dismissed on the spot, some to appear before a military Court of Enquiry—two Counts Hohenau, both of them aides-de-camp, one a Colonel in the Cuirassier-Guards, sons of Prince Albrecht; together with Count Lynar, a third aide-de-camp, a Prince of Prussia, whom the Emperor deprived of his military rank; Kuno Moltke, Commandant of Berlin; and later, one Count Wedel, Master of the Ceremonies.

And Eulenburg? The only man whom in all his life he had ever called his bosom friend? The man for whom he had "glowed" in his youth? To whom quite lately he had given a free hand in criticism of his advisers? Whom he had made first a Prince and then a Knight of the Black Eagle? What was the first thing any decent friend—nay,

THE EMPEROR FORSAKES HIS FRIEND

even any sensible President of an Association—would have done? Had he not learnt from the rash accusation of Herr von Kotze that slander cannot be obliterated with Easter-eggs? In those days he was still young. Now he was nearly fifty; a long succession of officials, many individuals and private acquaintances, had been put to the proof in the meantime, and not one of them had he ever chosen with so confident a heart as this man, nor had he ever stuck so long to any favourite—it was exactly thirty years since they had first found one another. The Emperor was on his trial now—here was the crucial moment.

William the Second was not equal to Fate's crucial moments. In one short hour he abjured the man he had proved a hundred times. He never sent for him that he might ask him, face to face, to assert his innocence against these documents, which after all might have been forged; but even though they were genuine, how was it that he did not, after all the intimacy of their dialogues, long for one more—the last—in which to hear the confession of an abnormal, and therefore wholly guiltless, man; and having heard it, answer as a friend would have answered? "Now, because Fortune has heaped favours on you, you are being put to the torture; and even I, constrained by the world's slandering tongues, must let you go. Leave the country, keep a place in your heart for me, and though I should never see you again, be assured of my friendship."

What did he do, instead of this? He sent an adjutant, an enemy of Eulenburg's, to Liebenberg with a demand for resignation (the Prince was only *en disposition*) and forthwith signed it. . . . The scandal was stupendous. When Harden wrote a few days later that he had never alleged perverted practices, Zedlitz remarked: "How horribly we have given ourselves away! How recklessly and monstrously compromised the most prominent persons and the sovereign's best friends!" There was a momentary lull in the tempest, outside the Court; then the wind veered right round, and with it veered the sovereign—he who should have directed it. "I don't believe it either,"

he said then; "but Eulenburg didn't show enough fight." Not even then did he send for him to exculpate himself—he merely demanded, and that harshly, an assurance that Eulenburg was "uninvolved," otherwise he was to leave the country. His apostasy was complete.

And now began a series of lawsuits, trials in camera, self-advertisements—to all of which the Emperor had opened the door, when for human, political, and dynastic reasons he ought to have prevented them at any cost. "These lawsuits are the stupidest things the Hohenzollerns have done yet," remarked King Edward. "Instead of being salutary in effect, their result was an explosion of noisome and disgusting venom. The rôle of injured innocence was re-assumed by the instigator, Holstein; public opinion was equally hostile to him and to his victims; the monarchy lost all prestige, without the smallest advantage to democracy; and there arose such a chaotic complication of sympathies and enmities that ultimately a Prince, assailed for his political influence, was driven into a corner and forced to deny things which Harden, his very modern-minded assailant, had always been foremost in pronouncing to be private and beyond the cognizance of the law. Eulenburg was forced by the logic of the process into perjuries which neither Harden nor the Emperor desired.

And after all, the Emperor's environment was fundamentally unchanged—for Zedlitz, who saw everything at close quarters, declares "that the lawsuits did nothing whatever towards removing homo-sexuals from about the Emperor." The fluctuating course of these lawsuits was closely followed by the Emperor, himself as fluctuating as they. This time he read the newspapers—read the reports from beginning to end. "He has moments," writes Zedlitz in that November, "of profound dejection, in which he is convinced that the whole thing was an ineptitude. Then, in an impulse of affection for Eulenburg and Moltke, he conceives the fantastic idea that he is bound to rehabilitate them. . . . This plan has now taken firmer hold on him (I

write in December), and I am convinced that he means to carry it out . . . or at another time, when he is very much infuriated by an article, he will quite seriously think of demanding direct satisfaction, and say in complete good faith: 'If the newspapers don't stop this kind of thing, I'll send an aide-de-camp to blow the editor's brains out!' In short, he may be said to have lost his nerve." In the beginning of 1908 he was so relieved that he "would have dearly liked to embark upon an instant rehabilitation of a kind unparalleled in social history; but so far there have always been influences to prevail upon him, by warnings against such an exposure of the royal personality" (Z. 171).

This degree of instability, unusual even in him, demonstrates his affection for his bosom friend, together with the bad conscience to which Philip of Spain once gave expression in the words: "We have acted too hastily." It also shows a decidedly womanish susceptibility to any immediate influence. At any one of these moments the Emperor could have rescued his friend; and as nobody failed to foresee and expect the resort to perjury, he was the more bound to attempt it—nor, after all that he had done and said against democracy for the last twenty years, could he take his stand upon the principle of "no respect of persons before the law," for he had always upheld class-superiority in every department of the national life.

When it came to the indictment for perjury, it was too late for him to act. The Prime Minister was obliged to give an order of arrest; bail was refused, certificates of illness obtained, the Prince was incarcerated in the Charité, later to be—in the most horrible circumstances—carried in an invalid-chair and even prostrate in his bed, into court, there as a man of sixty to put a good face on his relations with young fishermen and soldiers, with whom he had had unlawful intercourse ten, twenty, thirty years before. He was saved by frequent swoons, nervous in origin, and therefore indirectly volitional; the further hearing was indefinitely postponed; and he returned to

his castle, where he lived a leisurely life for twelve years longer, without, when his health improved, making any further attempt to rehabilitate himself. He survived not only Holstein's death, but the abdication of the Emperor, which he had prophesied.

And Bülow's fall—that likewise he survived. Bülow, ten years before the scandals, had warned his friend of a secret protocol from Vienna, very injurious to him, and already handed over by Holstein to the police (E. 2, 323). Simultaneously with this warning, though, Bülow is said to have got the police to let him have this material about Eulenburg (Treskow, 130). When the Harden affair began, it is true that he advised his friend to go abroad—for he had knowledge of the documents; but he is said by those in the know to have looked favourably on the law-proceedings; later, he signed his name to the order of arrest.

The part played by Bülow in the affair is to this day obscure; he may yet think well to clear it up himself. But it is not difficult to imagine it—it would be easily explained by an atmosphere in which true friendship could not draw breath. The Emperor, Bülow, Eulenburg, Holstein had held the reins of government for ten years; and if Holstein insulted Eulenburg and challenged him to a mortal combat—if Eulenburg complained of Bülow's having a hand in his dismissal from office—if Bülow could suspect Eulenburg of being his secret enemy with the Emperor—if the Emperor could abjure first Holstein and then even Bülow, and sacrifice Eulenburg; his truest and oldest friend, on mere suspicion, without turning a hair . . . was Bülow bound, in such a region of mistrust and treachery, to any such duty as rescuing a very questionable ally from a hopeless situation, by a gesture of personal devotion?

When in the September of 1908 the legal proceedings came to an end, only two men were left standing on the field of battle—Bülow and Tirpitz. In Eulenburg and Holstein—who had literally assassinated one another—not all, but the most important, were politically dead of those

EPILOGUE

who had governed Germany without responsibility for what they did. At Court and in the Cabinets others had gained predominating influence; of these but little has been here set down, because the narration of so many intrigues would have made difficult reading.

Holstein, remarkable as a specialist under a leader, victim as he was of his suspicious temperament, could do nothing but injure the Empire as a leader unconfessed; Eulenburg, erratic in thought and feeling, knew his limitations better, never desired to lead, and did the Empire much more good by his frequent admonitions of the Emperor, and even by the nomination of Bülow, than he ever did it harm by the advancement of his other friends, and his infatuation for the Emperor. So that our desire for poetic justice is appeased by Holstein's downfall, while the Emperor's betrayal of Eulenburg stirs us to sympathy for so tragically disastrous an end to so brilliant a career.

Only a few weeks after his friend's catastrophe, the third and last—Prince Bülow—was himself to receive his death-blow.

4

For England the nineteenth century had come to an end in gloom and anxiety. First, when Chamberlain had taken the initial step towards a European alliance and held out a hand to Germany, only to receive a cold douche from Bülow; next, when the Emperor advised the Tsar through the Russian Ambassador to utilize the moment for an attack upon England in Asia, guaranteeing him the protection of his Eastern frontier by Germany.

Together with his exultant condolences, exaggerating the already considerable English losses in the Boer War, the Emperor sent to his uncle in London, in December 1899, some pages of "stray thoughts" and wrote: "I send a *précis* of various discussions in military circles here about the Boer War, in the shape of some reflections which will give you an idea of what our Army is saying and thinking.

I have set them down without commentary or partiality. Do what you like with them. Chuck them into the fire if you choose ” (Lee, 755)

Although only a curt cold acknowledgment was returned, the Emperor, in the beginning of February 1900, when the English troops were in a better position, sent a second collection of such stray thoughts—this time as entirely his own ideas, and with more pretensions to actual advice. “ They may possibly be . . . of some use, if you think so . . . for they are set down by a man who has been in active military service for three-and-twenty years, and has organized and led the German Army for twelve.” The last of these reflections ran: “ In the existing situation a military decision is not to be regarded as attainable. So that unless the absolutely indefeasible guarantee in question can be obtained by political pressure, it would surely be better to come to a compromise. Even the crackest football-team, when it is beaten after a plucky game, puts a good face on it and accepts defeat. In the great match England v. Australia last year, England took her beating quietly, and chivalrously acknowledged her opponents to be the better men ” (A. 15, 553-7).

This was quite the worst of William the Second’s stray thoughts. A dynasty related to his own was conducting an arduous campaign; the Emperor’s position, as evidenced by the Kruger Telegram, had at first been on the enemy’s side, and had afterwards altered only in appearance. He had gone so far as to advise an attack upon the British Empire while it was at war, and to promise assistance to Russia in the event of such an attack, at the same time declining the offer of an alliance with England. Nation and Emperor were at one in their sympathy for the Boers; and now, just home after a freezing reception in England, he not only sends unasked-for amateurish advice, pretends to be helpful, boasts of his long experience and sums up with a hint to “ give up the game—you are done for! ”—but he uses the terms victory and defeat as if he were writing of a campaign already decided, and incidentally compares

it to a football-match. What can the old Queen have said behind locked doors to her son of the unaccountable nephew whose letter lay before them, full of gratuitous insults? It was rather too little than too much for the uncle to answer that he repudiated the analogy of the football-match, for, " as you ought to know, the British Empire is at present fighting for its existence."

Seven years later, when the Emperor was paying a few weeks' visit to Colonel Stuart Wortley, he told his host of all he had done for England and how he had been misunderstood there; and when he saw the Colonel again during the Alsace Manœuvres in September 1908, at a time when English feeling against Germany was again exacerbated, he " expressed his personal desire that the utmost possible publicity should be given in England to the anglophile views held by himself and his House " (A. 24, S. 167f.; and also as source for the following statements). From what he further said, the Colonel immediately composed the rough draft of an interview with an unspecified interlocutor, which he proposed to publish in the *Daily Telegraph* as an attempt to pacify the Press and public opinion, submitting it beforehand to the Emperor. The Emperor pronounced the " article to be well written, and a faithful report of what he had said "; and sent it through the Ambassador von Jenisch to Bülow, that he might " suggest any desirable alterations on the margin of the existing English text." Bülow was to be sure to send it straight back to him, not through the Foreign Office, " keeping it a secret from as many others as is at all possible." This was to be done as quickly as might be. Jenisch—a diplomat indeed—fought shy of reading the article, confined himself to penmanship, and did as he was told.

When Bismarck, as a man of over seventy, had made protracted stays at Friedrichsruh, the youthful Emperor and the old Foreign Office officials had been wont to complain of the delay thus caused to business. Here was the beginning of October, yet no one was in Berlin; and

while the Emperor was shooting at Rominten, Bülow bathing at Norderney, Secretary-of-State Schön climbing at Berchtesgaden, a document in its locked attaché-case was liable to undergo some strange vicissitudes. True, it consisted merely of a few typed pages, and the Emperor had designated it as confidential; but the contents—merely a “Kaiser-speech”—seemed so hackneyed that the Chancellor was not tempted to read them; so off with it to Berlin with the superscription “Confidential” and the instruction “Revise carefully,” any corrections to be written on the margin. In Berlin it was opened by the deputising Under-Secretary Stemrich, who simultaneously opened his eyes at the covering-letter, took very good care not to read the typescript, and gave it to a Privy Councillor, saying, “It seems to me rather rocky—however, you’d better take a look at it and see what’s to be done.”

Councillor Klehmet was a conscientious person. *He* read the typescript, and at first felt “very dubious about the advisability of publication” but quickly took refuge in the reflection “that the Foreign Office as such is not entitled to place itself in opposition to the Emperor’s express wish, when the Chancellor, on his side, has conveyed no sense of uneasiness. . . . Such being the circumstances, I assumed that the Imperial Chancellor had already decided, or would decide, what was to be done.” Thus thought Klehmet; he studied the document, corrected two important mis-statements of the Emperor’s, and suggested, besides, a change in the diction.

Back it went to Herr Stemrich, who stuck to his resolve not to read it, but signed his name; thence back to Norderney, where the Ambassador von Müller, the Emperor’s right-hand man, received it and in his turn recoiled from reading. Taking a copy of Stemrich’s letter, he packed the whole thing back to Bülow. Bülow bestowed but a cursory glance on the typescript; signed it, however, as it stood with Klehmet’s corrections, describing these officially “as alterations which strike me as desirable.” Back to Berlin went typescript and all; the Secretary of State

received it, marked "Urgent"; but being just then summoned to the Chancellor, had nevertheless "no time to take cognizance of the contents," and handed it over yet again to Bülow, who remarked that he had seen to it himself. So back with it to Jenisch, from him to the Emperor, from him to the English Colonel—and behold it in the London newspaper!

So that the typescript had been read by Emperor and Councillor only—by the former with the paternal emotion of its author, by the latter with the detachment of a philologist; while in the meantime it had passed through the hands of five diplomatists whose moral duty, as politicians, it was to read it—a Chancellor, two Secretaries of State, two Ambassadors, of whom not one had been urged by a sense of responsibility, official zeal, or even mere curiosity, to examine what a fortnight later all Europe was to read as the authenticated words of the German Emperor:

"You English are like mad bulls—you see red everywhere! What on earth has come over you, that you should heap on us such suspicion as is unworthy of a great nation? What *can* I do more? I have always stood forth as the friend of England. . . . Have I ever once broken my word? . . . I regard this misapprehension as a personal insult! . . . You make it uncommonly difficult for a man to remain friendly to England. . . . During the Boer War, German public opinion and the Press were decidedly hostile to you. But what did we do? Mark my words! When the Boer delegates were seeking friends in Europe and were received with acclamations in France—who was it that called a halt and put an end to their proceedings? I alone refused to receive them."

"Then, when the campaign was at its height, we were invited by Russia and France to force England to make peace—we were told that the moment had come to humble England to the dust. But what was my answer? That Germany would draw the sword to prevent so base an action! . . ."

WILLIAM'S ENGLISH PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

“And that is not all. In your Black Week, when disaster followed disaster, I received a letter from my revered grandmother, which showed that her health and peace of mind were being undermined by grief and anxiety. Instantly I wrote her a sympathetic answer, but I did more than that! I told my aides-de-camp to draw up the most accurate statement in their power of the numbers and positions of both armies, as they stood at that period. I worked on these figures to the best of my ability, drawing up a plan of campaign which I submitted to the criticism of my Staff; then I sent it to England, where in Windsor Castle it awaits the impartial verdict of history. And let me remark on an extraordinary coincidence—my plan almost exactly corresponded with that which Lord Roberts ultimately adopted and carried through to the successful end. And now I ask you—is not this the behaviour of a man who wishes England well? Let England give a fair answer.”

Then he went on to speak of the Fleet, which he was not building against England, but for great contingencies to come “which are impending in the Pacific Ocean, and are not so remote as some believe. . . . Japan now has the upper hand. China's awakening is imminent. When that time comes, only great naval Powers will have a voice in the decision of events” (*Daily Telegraph*, 27th Oct. 1908).

This document began by commanding England to be friends: “And will you not my brother be, I'll break your head—so trust in me!” Then a false colouring was put upon the escape of England from her critical position; no reference was made to the fact that the Emperor had proposed to the Tsar not merely a joint mediation but an attack on the British Empire, and afterwards only refused to follow up that suggestion because he was afraid of the consequences. Next he designated a collection of common-places by the resounding title of a Plan of Campaign, upon which he invited the verdict of history; fibbed about the approval of his Staff, who had never seen the papers at all; and plainly hinted as his trump-card that his imposing

EFFECTS IN ENGLAND

“Plan” had enlightened the English Staff, and that Lord Roberts had conquered by following up William the Second’s suggestions—in short, the German Emperor’s ingenuity had saved England in her direst need.

When Metternich, whom no one had consulted, opened the *Telegraph* at this article, he said to the members of his Embassy: “Now we may shut up shop.” His despatches regarding its effect translated this speech into the language of diplomacy, and the full measure of his despair was compressed into one sentence: “We shall have to pursue an unequivocally pacific policy for a considerable length of time, if we desire to efface the impression.” English Ministers and Generals at first refused to express any opinion whatever about the article; the fury of the Press equalled that over the Kruger Telegram—twelve years of improved relations seemed to have gone by the board. From excited Tokio came similar despatches; in Paris, Rome, and Petersburg every pen was against the Emperor. But these were old stories. The effect at home was something new.

For the first time the German people revolted. For twenty years it had been silent, while the Emperor spoke: now it spoke, that he might learn to be silent. A torrent of such deep-drawn wrath broke forth as was not equalled in directness and sincerity between 1870 and 1914. Truly, the miraculous had come to pass—the most submissive nation on earth had uprising against its sovereign, and claimed redress. At that moment it could have demanded and obtained his abdication; not the Republic, but the Emperor’s son; for the movement was not socialistic—it affected all classes. It came to this: the subjects revolted against their sovereign, not on account of a lost campaign or a tyrannous ordinance, not even as against some particular encroachment seen to be injurious in its consequences; they revolted against his very nature, against the irrepressible loquacity which had now manifested itself in a manner that enabled them to estimate it as his duplicities had hitherto prevented them from doing.

For *this* was as good as a story—every citizen, every peasant, could see his Emperor drawing up the Plan of Campaign for his grandmother under the midnight lamp. It was both dangerous and ridiculous; and so the first storm broke upon the Emperor precisely ten years before the second.

That the political Left should explode was less surprising than that the comic papers were allowed to tear the Emperor to pieces, without being torn to pieces themselves by the censorship. In *Simplicissimus* the old Emperor was seen pleading for God's mercy towards his grandson: "After all, he is 'by the Grace of God'"; and God's reply was: "Now you want to put the blame on me!" A drawing by Zille showed a boy, "Little Willy," with the Emperor's features, squatting on a writing-table and smearing it and himself with ink, while Mother Germania and Father Bülow cried: "Didn't we tell you you weren't to play at writing letters any more?" In a third sheet a Court-Chaplain was lifting up his hands to heaven with the Bible-words: "O that I could put a lock to my mouth, and a seal to my tongue!" Again, on New Year's Eve a comic paper showed him giving himself a muzzle as a present. All this was permitted in German lands; and a lampoon had the refrain:

Majestäts-Belaidigungen
Tanzen auf Geheimratszungen.

In November 1908 the Germans might have been taken for a free and independent nation.

But the idea of abdication was much too revolutionary; it was mooted only by those who were conscious of their strength—by the Royalists themselves. "The Royal Idea is undoubtedly a precious possession," wrote a Conservative organ. "But the richest of heritages can be dissipated by wanton extravagance. . . . The sovereign's rights are counterbalanced by duties which to neglect

Insults to the Emperor-King
Even Councillors' lips can sing.

TALK OF ABDICATION

to undermine the very foundations of the monarchy." In these circles, but only in these, they went further still: "Among the German Ministers, convened for a session of the Federal Council's Committee on foreign affairs, there was talk of persuading the Emperor to abdicate" (State-Secretary von Schön, *Erlebtes*, 100). Eleven years earlier similar schemes had been among the secretions of Holstein's brain, and therefore confined to his own narrow circle; now the aristocracy of Bavaria and Saxony, of Oldenburg and Württemberg gathered in the embrasures of windows, biting their lips and talking of rough justice. They could have saved Germany!

Bülow stood in the midst, and did forthwith what he was bound to do—tendered his resignation and those of the responsible Secretaries of State. The Emperor was within his formal rights: he had not departed, this time either, from the path assigned him by the written word; he could with a good conscience have let the Chancellor go. But he kept him, though he need not have kept him—not out of loyalty, but fear. To stand forth naked now—too frightful was the prospect! Besides, here was the Chancellor's opportunity; he could clothe Emperor and catastrophe with his approval. And he did it, next day, in an official explanation which set forth the case for the Emperor in all its tragi-comic verity. The tug of war had still to be faced in the Reichstag. The Emperor, ill at ease, left Berlin. From the 4th to the 16th of November he was away; and having brought down the English bull, was occupied in doing the same for stags with Franz Ferdinand, and foxes with Prince Fürstenberg.

But amid all the fun he cast a lingering look behind. "The two days here," he wired to Bülow from Vienna, "have gone off very harmoniously and gaily. . . . The shoot went off splendidly; I brought down sixty-five stags. . . . I remember you in all my prayers, morning and evening. When has He ever failed to help us, though hate and envy might pursue! There is a silver lining to every cloud. God be with you! Your old friend, William

I.R." How cleverly he pushes home the guardian's position between God and friendship; how blind is this nation-arraigned monarch to any gleam of salutary perception! No—it is he who is despised and rejected of men; and in the meantime he enjoys himself and brings down sixty-five head of game.

On 10th November the Reichstag met, with all the appearance of a national court of justice on the sovereign. That day anything might have happened—solemn pledges, constitutional modifications, probably even the abdication, as already envisaged by the members of the Federal Council. And not one of them happened! The Germans, after a fortnight of agitation, were already their submissive selves again; no one ventured on the fatal word, not even the Socialists. The Emperor, whom custom forbade to attend the debate, was indeed phantasmally present, but the party-leaders did no more than sermonize him. The sternest reproofs came from the group of his Paladins, from Heydebrandt and Hatzfeldt. Others laid the blame on that Byzantinism which for twenty years they had fostered; motions for modification of the Constitution proved futile; the Reichstag did not even venture on the most deferential form of protest, an address—much less dared hint at the parliamentary system!

After that day the Emperor had no more to fear from his people. But Bülow had, from his Emperor. For in truth Bülow was, so to speak, the tragic hero in that Tenth of November drama. He was now to be punished for always pretending to be more of a fool than he was. He should either have championed the Emperor or abandoned him. He was in duty bound either to tell the Reichstag in Bismarckian fashion: "The Emperor acted with the best intentions, and constitutionally too; he has refused the Chancellor's proffered resignation, and so we intend to proceed as before, whether the nation likes it or not"; or else to have thrown in his lot with the Reichstag and the nation, left the Emperor in the dock, indicted him, and passed out of favour next day. That way was closed

to him, by reason of his deep-seated loyalty; so he decided on the other, and had prepared a speech in the Emperor's favour, in which, as Hammann states, he unequivocally defended him.

But at the last moment the statesman in Bülow—or perhaps merely the patriot—prevailed over the courtier. He over-estimated the Germans, when he feared to strain the bow so soon unstrung. By choosing this *via media* he lost ground with both the nation and the Emperor. He criticized the Emperor, said his expressions had been too strong, reduced the Plan of Campaign to a few commonplaces, soundly rated the Staff, and finally undertook to promise that the national uneasiness would “lead the Emperor henceforth to lay upon himself, even in his private conversations, those restrictions which are indispensable for consistent policy and the authority of the throne. . . . Were it not so, neither I nor any successor in office could accept responsibility for the consequences.”

A murmur of dissent from the Left—but the House was satisfied with this lame statement; no more was said.

On the same Tenth of November the Navy received the following minute: “His Majesty's orders are that the cheering on all ships is to be absolutely simultaneous with the raising of the caps. . . . At the command, ‘Three cheers for His Majesty,’ the flags will be hoisted. At the same moment those on parade will remove the right hand from the rails, and grasp the cap. On the first ‘Hip-hip-hurrah’ the flag-signal will fall; the cheer will then be repeated, the cap being held up at the full stretch of the right arm at an angle of about 45 degrees, and as soon as that cheer has ceased to resound, the cap will be carried on a sharp bend of the arm to the middle of the chest. . . . At the third cheer, the cap will be smartly resumed and the right hand replaced on the rails. These instructions are to be followed on the forthcoming occasion of His Majesty's presence at the swearing-in of recruits.”

Everyone who read these orders in the weekly service-gazette, and knew them to be if not actually inspired, at

any rate approved, by the Emperor, instantly felt happier and more at home than during the perusal of the nagging Reichstag speeches. Cheers for the master, "all together," at an angle of 45 degrees—that was the natural way for self-respecting subjects to behave; very different from unfruitful criticism of the good pleasure of that eternal boy—their Emperor.

He, on that same Tenth when they were all making speeches about him, opened the day by making a speech himself. Zeppelin's flying-experiments had hitherto been scorned by the Emperor, the War Office had refused to examine his plans and models, officers in general were forbidden to take any part in the Count's fantastic proceedings; only three months earlier the Emperor had called him "of all South-Germans the greatest donkey" (Z. 196). On this day he addressed him thus: "Our Fatherland may well be proud of possessing such a son, the greatest German of the twentieth century, who by this invention has opened a new epoch in the development of mankind. It would not be too much to say that we are living to-day through one of the most pregnant moments in the evolution of humanity." In Friedrichshafen, that is to say—not in Berlin, for there the mountain had brought forth a mouse.

At Donaueschingen, whence the Zeppelin flight started on the Tenth, lived the Emperor's new friend, who inherited Eulenburg's intimacy without his intelligence. "His established friends . . . now Prince Fürstenberg and General von Kessel, owe their favour to their funny stories. They are the sort of men who can keep it up, not only by the hour but by the day. The intellectual level is not a high one, and one must grant to Eulenburg that his conversation was decidedly more intelligent. But all these gentlemen's stories are so banal and coarse that they degrade the narrators, and still worse are the idiotic pranks to which they lend themselves" (Z. 231).

It was in this circle that the Emperor spent the most critical days of his reign. Zedlitz, who was on personal

AT DONAUESCHINGEN

service with him, states that the Emperor shed tears when he read the speeches in the Reichstag.. "This dejection very soon took the form of reading nothing more about the crisis, and seeking distraction from his troubled thoughts. He took an early walk, breakfasted with us at nine o'clock, stayed talking till half-past eleven, drove to the shoot, came back about five, took part in general conversation till nearly seven, then lay down awhile, appearing for dinner at half-past eight, and afterwards spent the evening with us till half-past twelve." On one of these evenings a music-hall troupe performed for the illustrious party, and soon the German people were reading its newspaper puff: "A performance, lasting two hours, took place before the German Emperor, Prince Fürstenberg, and Count Zeppelin, with sensational success, finishing at half-past twelve. The Emperor and the distinguished company applauded enthusiastically, and personally expressed their appreciation of the brilliant programme and its faultless execution." If the reader turned the page, he came upon the report of how enthusiastically the Reichstag had applauded *its* orators, and how a Ministerial Council, too, had lasted until half-past twelve.

But parting had to come—duty called, the recruits at Kiel were waiting to take the oath, and cheer according to the new regulation. The farewell-evening at Castle Fürstenberg was a magnificent occasion—the ladies in all their bravery, the gentlemen in green-and-black dress-coats with black knee-breeches, and as there had been a meet in the vicinity, some in hunting-pink.

"The brilliance and elegance of the party was really most remarkable," writes the Court-Marshal. "They assembled after dinner in the stately hall of the magnificent castle, an orchestra playing on the staircase landing. Suddenly Count Hülsen-Haeseler appeared, dressed as a ballerina (as he had done once or twice before) and began to dance. Everyone was vastly delighted, for the Count's dancing is superb, and there was something quite out of

the common in seeing the Chief of the Military Cabinet, got-up as a woman, perform a *pas-seul*. The Count had just finished a dance, and retired to the adjoining gallery to get a breath of air. I was standing within a few feet of the entrance when suddenly I heard a heavy fall. I hurried to the spot, and saw the Count lying full-length on the floor with his head in the embrasure of the window."

It was a heart-attack. The Emperor, who was standing talking by the fireplace, was informed, and hastened to the dying man's side. They tried to restore him; the music went on a while; a second doctor was summoned—in vain. The body was taken to the great dining-room; Kiel had to be abandoned; a telegram sent to the Empress: "Have lost my best friend"; then there were other telegrams, together with preparations for a mourning-service next day. The local clergyman, an old man, was sent for; and in the small hours appeared shivering before the Emperor, who was impressing upon him what he was to say in the morning when, from nervousness and the long standing, the clergyman suddenly fell fainting at the imperial feet.

The priest recovered; the General lay dead upon the improvised bier. They had hastily transformed him from a ballerina into a soldier—it was Dürer's Dance of Death come true. But the Emperor did not read the writing on the wall. He did not see that once again a mightier hand than his had pointed threateningly to follies and frivolities. Encircled by the anger and resentment of sixty millions of tranquil active fellow-creatures, one man sat, inactive and provocative, drowning his mortifications in music-hall songs and jokes, in shooting-parties and ballets, and allowing exasperating tales of Court-life to circulate among the people. Now, when finally one of his most prominent Generals had appeared as a ballerina before the highest society, disgracing the most illustrious class in the land, behold! the hand of Heaven was put forth; it struck the abject courtier to the earth—upon the wall of the castle at Donaueschingen flamed the great Mene Tekel, that now at last the roistering King might look into his heart.

MILD ADMONITIONS

But the King was looking into quite other places. How, for instance, was the great dining-room to be transformed in one night into an imposing mortuary-chapel? What were to be the travelling-arrangements in these altered circumstances? And when, in the middle of the night he upset all these arrangements for the third time, and was obliged to hear the deferential voice of the Court-Marshal, warning him that another postponement of two special trains would create difficulties, the mountebank he was took cover behind his simulated grief, looked wounded to the heart and said, with tearful eyes: "And it's at such a moment that you make difficulties for me!"

5

At home, the tutor was waiting with his lecture. *Simplicissimus* portrayed the Chancellor in mourning, staggering under the weight of a huge padlock, and murmuring: "How am I to explain it to my Emperor?" Bülow made his second mistake on this occasion. He could have got anything he liked just then, if he had turned the mood of dejection to good purpose, for "the Emperor's nerves are not equal to any serious emergency." But instead of intimidating him, Bülow confined himself to a courtly adumbration of the consequences likely to result from these rash exploits. The Emperor, in his enforced quietude, returned monosyllabic answers, showed no sign of desiring amendment or seeing any necessity for it; and finally gave a reluctant consent to the insertion of a statement in the *Reichsanzeiger* (which he later denied having given)—setting forth that he had granted the Chancellor an audience, for consultation on public opinion and the Reichstag speeches.

"His Majesty listened very gravely to the Chancellor's exposition, and expressed his desires as follows. While undisturbed by the—in his opinion—unfairly exaggerated strictures of public criticism, he regards it as his proudest imperial duty to ensure the stability of national policy through the exertions of constitutionally responsible

functionaries. His Majesty therefore expressed approval of the Imperial Chancellor's remarks in the Reichstag, and assured the Prince of his undiminished confidence."

The German people breathed again—now it was all right, signed and in order. Few were the anxious patriots who looked at one another and asked: "Is that all? Undisturbed? Unfair? Exaggerated? Constitutional?" Even the minimum demanded by the nation, a promise of amendment, was imperceptible behind the waving banners of the autocrat, just as were the shattered windows of the Francophiles at the entries in Alsace. All that it amounted to was that he had expressed approval of the Chancellor's speech, and had listened very gravely—this latter so prominently set forth that its effect was rather insulting to him than otherwise.

That was all Bülow asked. But that was quite enough to shatter a monarch who had been invariably pampered, on whom the sun had always shone; and there was more to come. The Emperor was informed of the Federal Council's plan, which had gone further than the Reichstag's attacks, even as far as abdication; and he collapsed, as neurasthenics often will, at thought of a danger past and gone. On the 24th the old Chamberlain Schulz came panting into the aide-de-camp's room and stammered out:

"His Majesty—has commanded me—to ring up the Imperial Chancellor immediately. I am to inform him plainly—His Majesty wishes him to know—that His Most High has been so completely unnerved by the recent incidents that he is compelled—to abandon all business of any kind, and entrust it to the Crown-Prince" (Z. 194).

A frightful moment for the aide-de-camp! A Chamberlain announces the Most High's withdrawal, the Chancellor is to be informed, the heir-apparent summoned. Had the officer sufficient sense of humour to savour this immortal scene? He merely said that Schulz could not possibly carry out this behest, and sent for the Court-Marshal, whereupon ensued a consultation between the

UNCHANGED

Chancellor and the two Cabinets. When, next day, the Crown-Prince arrived, his tearful mother told him what had happened, and was to happen. He found his father in bed, soothed him, and in a few days all was as before.

But why did the Crown-Prince refuse? Why did he not grasp the hand then—and never again—offered him; he who had had his fill of groaning over the Emperor's behests, and must have known that he would probably, his father's constitution being what it was, have to wait twenty years for the crown? He, too, was wanting in manful resolution—nowhere was to be found the courage that seizes the rope thrown by fate to plucky swimmers once, and only once; nowhere the spirit that is quick to accept responsibility, nowhere the love of action. That moment in November 1908, seized by a gallant-hearted Prince, might possibly have been of service to the Empire—certainly it would have been to the Emperor, who could then have resigned as a voluntary martyr, a wise man yielding to his wiser self; and thus, not only in the eyes of history, have greatly bettered his position.

Swift as the collapse was the recovery. Both were of the nerves; neither was fruitful. At the end of November he ordered a speech of the Chancellor's to be handed to him in the Berlin Guildhall, and ostentatiously "recited" it himself. There was more of contempt than of anything better in this gesture—a mere demonstration, at the best. Before a month was over, oblivion covered all. The eyes of his sycophants pleaded with him for return to the old groove. "If no one will protect me," he wrote on the margin of a cutting, "I shall have to protect myself!" By this womanish argument he very adroitly steered himself out of the troubled waters into the haven of autocracy where he felt most at home; and was soon threatening: "If anything like this occurs again, I shall not act constitutionally, I promise you!" (Z. 239). That he was in no sense altered, Zedlitz could report at Christmas-time from daily observation.

"In real essentials the Emperor is just the same as

before. . . . On our quiet evenings, when he often reads diplomatic despatches aloud to the ladies and aides-de-camp, he particularly delights in making fartical scenes out of anything mistaken or ridiculous that is done abroad, and describing them as ‘ very good ’ or ‘ quite right. ’ But if anything occurs that may recoil unfavourably on us, he writes in the margin: ‘ How foolish! ’ or something of the kind. He specially enjoys, nowadays, any attack from England; insists on seeing all anonymous letters, and feels that the famous interview is justified as regards the Fleet when he reads that the English advise him to give up his position as the head of a nation of sixty millions, to be instead the President of a Football-Club or Cricket-Club. . . . He really had the mortification of reading that” (Z. 199).

Immediately after Christmas came tidings of diamond-fields in South-West Africa, and he repeatedly declared that they were forty kilometres long and two broad, adding many other figures “ which got bigger every time, and his fantastic dreams correspondingly dazzling.” At this time he said, before some chance guests and the servants: “ Only a fortnight ago those mutton-heads [in the Reichstag] refused to believe the first news—they said it was impossible. Now we can see what rubbish these owls talk . . . and people whose ideas they can’t comprehend, and without whom they couldn’t stir a step, they throw mud at! . . . I’ll read no more newspapers; it’s nothing to me what those mutton-heads write!” Before the same witnesses he made such remarks about the Germans in America that Zedlitz dared not commit them to paper: “ If only a quarter of what he said were to become known, the alarm would more than equal the excitement over the Kaiser-Interview.”

His nervous temperament could not have achieved such oblivion of the past if he had not found a scapegoat. Hülsen was dead; but dozens of newly-helmeted heads had sprung from the Hydra, and a hundred forked tongues were hissing: “ Bülow has betrayed his King ” The

BÜLOW'S LEAVE-TAKING

watchword at Potsdam was: "Bülow was lying: he knew all about the interview, he passed it; and then abandoned his master to the storm." Thenceforth he was never spoken of but as one guilty of high treason. It was not until March 1909 that he succeeded in bringing the Emperor to speak out with him in the picture-gallery of the Palace, where he earnestly begged to be allowed to resign (Hammann, *Um den Kaiser*, 30).

The Emperor: "No, I have forgiven you. But you did not stand up for me properly in November. You had approved my interview both by letter and word of mouth."

Bülow: "I will ask Your Majesty to show me those letters."

The Emperor: "It—it was by word of mouth as well, when I came back from Rominten."

When Bülow reminded him of earlier rashnesses, the Emperor said he knew nothing about them; afterwards he declared that Bülow had admitted his error and begged for forgiveness; the Press even reported that Bülow had shed tears. In confidence, though, the Emperor said:

"I've done with that fellow Bülow. But he must put through the financial reforms for me."

Bülow spent his time in almost incessant consultation with Holstein, who was seriously ill, but still exercised considerable influence with him and with the new Secretary of State, by giving advice on high politics, sometimes even over the telephone. His practice in the composition of ostensible offers of resignation now bore some of its last fruit, for he drew up one for Bülow, eight pages long, in January, 1909. Nevertheless at the end of April, immediately before his death, he conjured the Chancellor to remain in office: "If you go, war will be inevitable." This was Holstein's only true prophecy.

But when in July the Probate Duties, and with them the *bloc* in the Reichstag, came to grief, Bülow took leave of office on the "Hohenzollern," the spot and the day of the year being identical with those on which he had formerly undertaken the management of affairs. In

Berlin the Emperor discussed with him the question of his successor, walking up and down in the well-overlooked Palace Garden, and dismissed him with a kiss and an embrace.

“Bülow shall be my Bismarck,” the Emperor had once rather boyishly exclaimed. Bülow *had* been his Bismarck that is to say, he was as much the superior of his master as Bismarck had been of the grandfather; only the degrees of greatness were different. Bismarck’s passionate energy had graven clefts and folds in his countenance; Bülow’s elegance had gone no deeper than dints and wrinkles.

His departure was the greatest of the four catastrophes. The downfall of Holstein and Eulenburg, the crisis brought about by the Emperor—these altered little in the usual course of affairs; but Bülow’s elimination “made war inevitable.” The best summing-up fell from Zedlitz senior in a letter: “To have kept the coach from overturning for so long, and to have skirted such abysses, was a service to be grateful for.”

When the attacks in the imperial Press increased by reason of the Emperor’s false representations about Bülow, he tried to obtain redress from his successor, and wrote a retrospective statement: “I knew as little about the interview beforehand as I had formerly known about . . . the Swinemünde despatch to Bavaria, or the telegram to the Prince of Lippe-Detmold . . . or the Hun-speech of the summer of 1900, or the pessimist-speech during the manœuvres of 1906. . . . I implored His Majesty never to say a word to the English which the Russians and French, the Japanese and Americans, might not hear. Over and over again I warned him that a susceptible and distrustful nation like Japan must not have its suspicions roused. I remember wiring to suppress a letter despatched several days before by His Majesty to Roosevelt, because it seemed to me to contain incautious references to Japan. . . . I was obliged to waste much of my time and energy in retrieving the rashnesses and indiscretions which had been committed.”

“ THAT SWEEP ”

For twelve years it had indeed been so; and even those who blame Bülow's English policy and much of his interior policy as well, are bound to pay tribute to his brilliant capacities and indefatigable zeal—the Emperor most of all, since he worked him harder than any one else could. What did he do after his friend's departure, on whose remaining he had made his life dependent four years earlier?

“ All the blame for the Eulenburg scandal is Bülow's, for . . . he had personal as well as other motives for desiring it. If at that time he had persuaded Eulenburg to remain abroad, there would have been no scandal at all. Even his famous speeches were written for him by Hammann, and he learnt them by heart, and Europe thought him a wonder. . . . Since Caesar Borgia there hasn't been so hypocritical and perfidious a man! ” (Z. 237).

And, as Kiderlen writes, when he was showing the King of Württemberg a picture of the Palace Gardens, he pointed to the spot where he had kissed and embraced Bülow, and said: “ There's where I gave that sweep the boot! ”