

CHAPTER IX

EXIT

Oct.-Nov. 1918

FIVE continents were demanding that one man should leave the stage. The most level-headed of the victors could not see any end to the War without the sacrifice of that ruler to whom it was falsely attributed; a great nation could not expect justice from the most merciful of its enemies unless it parted with the man whose words for thirty years had kept Europe on tenterhooks. A system which he was held to have devised and ruled by, though he had only inherited it and was incapable of working it, was now to be ended—both abroad and at home the best minds were resolved on that; representatives of peoples, allies, adversaries, joined in the chorus: "The man must go!" Even those statesmen who knew all about the manifold causes of the War, their own share in it, and the names of those who were really most to blame, could no more indict Isvolski before the world at large than they could indict Count Berchtold or Nicholson—nowhere would the man in the street have known what they were talking about. The Emperor was to be deprived of power, because it was he who had once gone sabre-rattling all over Europe.

No one wanted his head; no one even wanted his crown. No one demanded the Republic from vanquished Germany, for many kings were averse from it; not even Germany's own Socialists demanded it. All they wanted was that he should give the crown to another, possibly a kinsman; this was indeed the heartfelt desire of the most royalist Germans, who were trembling for their dynasty. In the interior there was little hatred for the Emperor; walking unprotected with Ludendorff down any street in the land, he would even now have been in no more danger than his General. How should a nation which in thirty years had

failed to fathom its sovereign and so had borne with him, have blamed him for a war which he had not let loose, which he had never wished for, and had several times prevented? All he had done was to make war easier for the swash-buckling leaders in every country of Europe, by the thirty years of his characteristic attitude and its effect. In the autumn of 1918 it was still only a skin-deep knowledge that the Germans, as a nation, had of their Emperor.

Hence it was reason, not passion, which urged part of the nation to join in the cry for abdication; and moreover the idea of a sacrifice, a martyrdom for the people, flattered the German spirit, always in love with tragic endings. Nor was it now too harsh a demand—two of his friends, Ballin and Max von Baden, testify to that. At heart he would have been glad to escape responsibility for the evil days that were inevitably to come.

He was sixty now, and had reigned for thirty years. After that comment on the newspaper-cutting in January, after his two years of complete relegation, it was psychologically speaking quite on the cards that—despite his former autocracy—he would be the first to abandon a forlorn cause with a flourishing royal gesture for all the world to wonder at.

With night in his heart, Prince Max von Baden—one of the last real paladins—suddenly drawn into the vortex, took over the Chancellorship with its dread implications. As a friend and cousin, he could not but perceive that no one so well as he could set the stage for the withdrawal he was to press upon the Emperor. The Prince himself was risking everything, for he was of royal blood, his father's heir, and a General; and if he leaped into the breach to beg for enduring peace-terms, his only hope was in the effect of some speeches which had shown him to be more modern-minded than his colleagues. There had been hundreds of fine phrases about sacrifice for the Fatherland—this Prince was the first to act upon them when he, who had never talked about sacrifices, took the much-coveted Chancellorship. Immediately before the downfall of the reigning



MAX VON BADEN

Houses of Germany he gave history to know that there was at least one Prince who could spring to the helm of a foundering vessel, if at worst he might steer the wreck into harbour. Foreseeing the odium that would be his only thanks, this Prince of the House of Zähringen once more confronted the Kingdom of Prussia. He was like another Mirabeau.

First, for three days he opposed the two Generals' demand for simultaneous peace-overtures and armistice; then, for five weeks, their pernicious influence on the Emperor. He was clear-sighted enough to perceive the ultimate possibilities—of bargaining with the Emperor's person for endurable peace-terms, but along with those, for the continuance of the dynasty. Loyal sentiment unfortunately prevented him from saying this straight out to his cousin, though his colleagues advised him to do so. If Prince Max had been even more emancipated at heart than he actually was, if he had sacrificed traditional feeling to the tradition itself, he would (so all the actors in those weeks declare) have brought the Emperor to abdicate.

The Emperor was as little desirous as the Chancellor of continuing the fight. When on 2nd October, after his return, he sat beside Hindenburg (Ludendorff absent) in the Imperial Chancery, and heard his cousin urge that no precipitate overtures for an armistice should on any account be made before a speech in the Reichstag had prepared the political world for the will to peace, he entirely misconceived the probable effect of a sudden cabled appeal for help to Wilson, and so sealed his own fate. "With full conviction he declared (S 298) that no obstacles ought to be put in the way of the High Command with regard to this question. He thus, as War-Lord, took the entire personal responsibility, at this critical moment, for the despatch of an offer of armistice."

Nevertheless, the new Chancellor made a further attempt; and next day ventured, as the chief civil functionary, to confront the Generalissimo with five bluntly-phrased questions, expressly restricting his answers to the military

WILSON'S NOTE

situation. Hindenburg stuck to his demand for an immediate armistice. On the 3rd the Prince even took upon himself to father a pious fraud—he told the world that the German front was unbroken, thus incurring the odium of acting on his own pacific inclinations instead of the necessities of war. In these October weeks he had to contend with the Generals, the Socialists, and President Wilson; and was further entrusted with the task of persuading the Emperor to abdicate. He naturally believed that he would prevail upon that unstable nature in its present state of depression, and had even prepared the Reichstag speech in which he proposed to give the people the cue for the sacrifice of their Emperor.

For Wilson had written: "If the Government of the United States must deal with the military masters and the monarchical autocrats of Germany now, or if it is likely to have to deal with them later in regard to the international obligations of the German Empire, it must demand not peace negotiations but surrender. Nothing can be gained by leaving this essential thing unsaid" (23rd October). Capitulation or negotiation—the Germans were thus given to understand that the alternatives were bound up with the Emperor's person. This had been known to the German Government since Wilson's first Note of the 14th, and also by confidential communications from all the capitals of Europe; and it was only the Supreme Command who indignantly declared they must fight on in defence of their military honour, although so early as 17th September they had known that these conditions were imposed by England and America (*Kommentare zum Waffenstillstand*, Nrs. 76c and 86c).

From Brussels the German Ambassador advised immediate abdication; otherwise Germany would be playing the French and English game against Wilson. This was to invade Germany. The Ambassador at Berne wired in the same sense, and could even quote similar advice from the Federal Council. Prince Max and his adherents proposed that the Emperor should recommend his grandson

to the loyalty of the nation and the Army, the protection of the Field-Marshal and incidentally of God—thus retaining the Socialists in the Government, and depriving the Spartacists of their strongest argument. Every day the telegrams from German representatives abroad grew more urgent, their import being that unless swift action was taken Wilson's position towards the Chauvinists in his own country would be made impossible. So the Ambassador at Berne reported, and voices from all countries reached his ears. On the 25th the Prussian Ambassador at Munich wired in the same sense.

But the Emperor, who might have flinched before the threat of coming responsibilities, was bound by his nature to regard any external pressure as an outrage; and Wilson's first Note inspired a mood quite as stubborn as that of ten years ago, when they had told him of the Conservatives' desire for his withdrawal. "Don't you see?" he said furiously to Niemann. "The object of this is to bring down my House, to set the Monarchy aside!" After the second Note, by Niemann's account, "the imperial couple's indignation gradually turned to ineffable contempt." Solf, the new Secretary-of-State, said to the Emperor when he demanded protection against the Press that the highest circles had long been speaking freely of the abdication; and if the Emperor recalled the November days of ten years back, he must have remembered how on a far less insistent and exclusively German cry, he had been ready to abdicate. As he relates in his Memoirs, "the rolling-up of this question of abdication" had no sort of "effect in upsetting the apple-cart with the Cabinet." His old friendship with the Chancellor, who himself kept silence, tended rather to make official relations more agreeable.

As the Emperor—deprived of authority in every direction—sat through these weeks in the New Palace, he was ruled (as one of the principal actors testifies) by one sensation only—boredom. Politics he left to the Left; with the new Ministers, when he received them, he spoke only

KIDNAPPED

of their native towns and their sons at the Front. To his first Socialist Minister he did say, on his appointment: "With Herr Ebert too I should be glad to co-operate. . . . I have nothing whatever against Social-Democracy ~~except~~ its name. The name, you know, *must* be changed." Step by step, at the expense of all dignity—that was his plan.

But it was precisely these improving relations with the *bourgeoisie*, this giving-in which made the Generals kidnap him.

For it was a kind of kidnapping, when the Emperor left Berlin with his Adjutants-General on 29th October. The secretly meditated step was unknown to the Chancellor until six o'clock that evening. He instantly, though ill in bed, offered to go to Potsdam at once; despatched Solf to the Home-Secretary, to Prince Augustus William, to Delbrück, the new Chief of the Civil Cabinet, who all three sheltered behind official and other reasons for taking no active part. On this occasion the Chancellor's pedigree was accountable for a grievous shortcoming—now was the moment to keep the Emperor in Berlin, though it were by force. If he was to be the prisoner of Head-quarters, why not the prisoner of the Government? The nation would have heard as little about the one as the other.

Meanwhile the Emperor had been infected with distrust for the Prince's "South-German" point of view. He took refuge in bitter remarks that no one had any use for him here, and that he ought to be putting things right at the Front, now Ludendorff had been dismissed. Disastrous! For the metropolis, staggering towards Revolution, believed that the Emperor was going to set his troops on Berlin, while others said in print that he was running away like Louis XVI. In reality it was no flight, for he had lost all power of decision; it was the imprisonment of the Supreme War-Lord by his Generals.

Vainly did the Chancellor, next day, implore him to return to Berlin. Then it was decided to make an official request for abdication. When a Grand-Duke and a Count had proclaimed themselves ready to undertake this mission

and then drawn back, the citizen Home-Secretary Drews, went alone by order of the Cabinet to Spa. The Emperor received him in the garden of his villa, leaning on a crutch-stick like Frederick the Great, and interrupted him at the first word. "You ought to have remembered your oath, and refused to undertake such a commission!"

The Minister: "As Minister it is my duty to keep my Sovereign informed even of disagreeable matters."

The Emperor: "I don't need that! I am alive to the entire situation."

The Minister: "May I then regard my task as accomplished, or does Your Majesty command me to speak on?"

The Emperor: "Speak on!"

This garden-dialogue was something new for William the Second. Again he had thought to intimidate his opponent by a show of energy; but on this occasion he was confronted by an upstanding man who knew how to answer him. And so what Eulenburg and Moltke had experienced happened over again—~~instantly~~ the Emperor gave in and listened. In case of need he ordered Plessen to follow them as they walked up and down—three paces off. While the Minister spoke, and he spoke for half an hour, the Emperor grew calmer, interpolated questions, then stood still and said: "All my sons have given me their word of honour, that they will never take over a Regency. . . . As a Prussian King and a successor of Frederick the Great, it is my duty to remain at my post."

With these words, which betrayed his fear of his own sons, he left his Minister standing and turned away. Practical reasons, such as solicitude for the Army, the retreat, his distracted people, swayed him far less than tradition, a royal gesture like that of the great ancestor whose crutch-stick he had borrowed for support. But for all that, he spoilt his exit of the moment—this Drews knew more than he would tell, so almost instantly he came back to him. Drews was now conferring with the Generals; the Emperor inquired: "Do you anticipate violent outbreaks?"

The Minister: "Beyond all doubt. Their success will depend on the steadiness of the troops."

On this question all three Generals were quite easy in their minds—six able regimental commanders had ~~been~~ ordered to Berlin and "where the Guards are, Democracy is not." After hot argument between Drews and Gröner, who to the Emperor's delight impugned the Government, Drews begged to take leave.

The Emperor, jovially: "Certainly not—do stay! This plain-speaking has been very good for us all. Won't you dine with me?"

This cordial invitation, which the Minister could only get out of on the plea of pressing business at home, was an appropriate climax to an interview begun in true Court-theatre style—an interview in which the Minister sought to induce the monarch to go because he was no longer trusted, and the monarch assured the Minister that *he* was—and stayed.

Meanwhile, at the end of a war which had begun with the defection of allies, the last of these were likewise falling away, and making overtures for separate peace-terms. The Poles, the Alsatians, announced their defection from the Empire in the Reichstag; every day the Front was pushed farther back; in Kiel there was mutiny because the troops would not let themselves be sacrificed to the Fleet in an aimless war of prestige; Munich and Stuttgart were calling upon their kings to abdicate; and on the 6th the German representatives were received by Foch in the Forest of Compiègne with the insulting words: "What do you want?" On the 7th the Socialists laid down an ultimatum demanding an abdication, on the expiration of which they would leave the Government—in other words, would head the Revolution.

The Chancellor, sending this news to Spa, took the opportunity of also tendering his resignation, and warned those at Spa of the danger of a military Dictatorship, which must ensue and would inevitably lead to civil war. By every means he sought to gild the pill of withdrawal for

“ OPERATION IN THE INTERIOR.”

the Emperor—first, there was to be a general election, a National Assembly; then the abdication, which need not at the moment go beyond a promise—in the meantime a delegation of power, the struggle confined to the voting-booths instead of spreading through the streets, the Royal Idea rescued by a democratic cutting of the Gordian knot. Bavaria and Württemberg, he said, would become Republics either to-day or to-morrow. Answer from Spa on the 8th: “His Majesty emphatically declines to consider the dynastic question raised in Your Grand-Ducal Highness’s proposals, and regards it as your duty to remain at your post.”

On the evening of the 8th at Spa, there was a Council of War between Hindenburg, Gröner, and Plessen on the march to Berlin. Plessen in favour of it, the other two against. According to the official memorandum, the Supreme Command had even then knowledge of disobedience to orders among certain units, “which are reckoned as the flower of the troops, and to whom was entrusted the task of protecting the rear of Head-quarters against the mutineers.” All the highly placed officers, summoned from the Front to report, spoke of this temper among the armies. Yet neither of the two Generals dared to tell the Emperor these facts: silently they acquiesced in his command “to begin an operation in the interior.” It makes one think of a surgeon preparing to operate on himself for cancer. For this mood of the Emperor, resolute on sacrificing neither his authority nor his person but on marching against the revolutionary capital, the responsibility is solely the Field-Marshal’s, who had counselled him for two years and had now brought him back to Head-quarters. Although he regarded the “operation in the interior” as impracticable, he did not advise against it; although he felt that all was lost, he did not counsel abdication. Torn between his emotions as a General loyal to his Emperor, the head of a defeated army, and a German averse from shooting down Germans, he let the whole day pass without a word of counsel, for he did not

A DUEL OVER THE TELEPHONE

realize that the Chancellor's cry was that of a drowning man.

The latter got into telephonic communication with the Emperor that evening; their dialogue lasted twenty minutes.

Prince Max (9th November, p. 7) "The abdication has become a matter of necessity, if civil war is to be averted, and the Emperor's peace-mission to reach a favourable conclusion. If that succeeds, Your Majesty's name will be revered by history. If it fails, the Reichstag's demand will be made and carried. We can no longer rely on the troops; Cologne is in the hands of Councils of Working Men and Soldiers; on Your Majesty's daughter's castle at Braunschweig the red flag is flying; Munich is a Republic, in Schwerin a Council of Soldiers is sitting. I see two alternatives—abdication, renunciation of the throne by the Crown Prince, and a Regency for your grandson; or abdication, nomination of a Regent, and a National Assembly. The Committee of the Reichstag demands the latter, and it seems to me the better of the two, because it offers any chances there still are for the Monarchy. Whatever is done must be done quickly; the effect would be lost if blood had been shed. With the Socialists' help the situation might still be saved in this way—otherwise the Republic confronts us. The sacrifice must be voluntary—so only will Your Majesty's name live in history."

Thus, through the telephone spoke the Spirit of History; thus were politics and pathos, regimental numbers and historical renown commingled in the dialogue of one Prince with another, the object of which was that the listener at one end of the wire should be induced to renounce the authority which he had delegated to the speaker at the other. The desire of sixty millions was concentrated in this one voice, which could address the Emperor as that of a kinsman. But at the far end sat the Emperor, pale biting his lips, as Eulenburg had seen him do for lesser perturbations; and he spoke back: "Nonsense! The troops will stand by me. To-morrow we march against the

interior!" Even on this last of royal evenings William the Second did the wrong thing, because he had taught those around him to palter with harsh truths. "If," writes Prince Max, "the Supreme Command had told the Emperor on the 8th of November the truth about the Army which they kept from him till the morning of the 9th, I do not doubt that the Emperor would have promised to renounce the throne on the evening of the 8th."

In the course of that night four members of the Reichstag gave the Supreme Command to understand what was to be expected on the morrow. If the abdication was not known in the morning at Berlin, the leaders would not be able to keep the workers in the factories. All this was, at Spa either not believed or looked on in a personal light. Prince Max was distrusted, as opposed to the Hohenzollerns, as heir in reversion to the throne and his "weak-kneed Cabinet" was decided.

On 9th November; at ten o'clock in the morning, the Imperial Government was informed that the Alexander-Regiment and the Jüterbog Artillery had gone over to the workers; likewise even the Naumburg Rifles, who had been drafted into Berlin expressly for protection. These reports followed hard on one another to Spa—where in the Emperor's villa one telephone, it is true, was "always engaged," but the other "was disconnected." That disconnected telephone was the last false kindness shown by a dense-witted Court to its sovereign. Weakly the grotesque symbol of a disconnected authority wavered and swung there—the imperial instrument declined to receive the tidings of that Ninth of November.

At that very hour Hindenburg, Gröner, and Plessen were with the Emperor, together with the hastily summoned Count Schulenburg and two officers. The topic to be discussed was: "Statement on the operation in the interior commanded by the Emperor." A garden-room, a wood-fire in the grate, and the Emperor (Niemann, 134), "who was shivering, leaning against the chimney-piece." Uniforms sprinkled with stars, well-drilled attitudes, prac-

GREAT ONES IN CONFERENCE

tical serious faces, lists of numbers—a session like a hundred sessions presided over by the Emperor throughout the War; only this time the Front was east, though the standing army was west. While in Berlin soldiers who were working-men were fraternizing with working-men who to-morrow would be soldiers, while men who for four years had been throwing fire-grenades were joining hands with the men who had fashioned them in a general impulse which had more of the heaviness than the excitement of intoxication—each and all driven by the craving to see peace once more around them—the great ones on whom yesterday their lives had depended were considering how best they might shoot down these rebels. Among these great ones stern composure reigned. Nobody's voice was louder than usual. Nobody spoke out for the unity of the nation which now, after all that had been, it was proposed to lacerate afresh. Not a single one of them! Outside the door hung the disconnected receiver

The only disagreement was about the methods. Hindenburg begged to be released from the conference, because "it was inexpressibly painful to him to be obliged to dissuade his sovereign from a course of which he most gladly and sincerely approved, but of whose successful accomplishment he could only say, after profound reflection, that he held it to be impossible." Less feelingly, but in the same sense, spoke General Gröner. But Plessen was now, as in Eulenburg's time, "all for gun-fire"; with him was Schulenburg, though out of sixteen representatives of his Army-Corps twelve had yesterday replied in the negative to the question of the troops' reliability, and none had given a positively affirmative answer. Schulenburg sketched out his scheme of advance to the Rhine, and for an incentive suggested that "the Army should be told that its sister-service, the Navy, had attacked it from behind under pressure from Jew-profiteers and shirkers, and was holding-up supplies." The Emperor, at first in favour of the assault, grew irresolute after Hindenburg's statement and true to himself, sought for a compromise: "I want to

spare the Fatherland a civil war; but after the armistice it is my desire to come home to peace at the head of the returning Army.”

Had he not solved the problem? No bloodshed, no danger for the Empire; none for the Emperor; but instead, an entry through the Brandenburg Gate. But behold! Gröner quietly stood up—Gröner whom that very day the Emperor had approvingly called “ Brave Suabian! ” and clapped paternally on the back; and Gröner told the truth at last. “ Under its leaders and Generals the Army will march quietly and steadily home, but not under the command of Your Majesty. It is no longer behind you.”

A terrible moment. Had the revolt reached even to the sovereign’s writing-table? He made a few steps towards General Gröner: “ Your Excellency, I demand a written statement of this opinion! In black and white I will have the announcement from all the Generals commanding that the Army is no longer behind its Supreme War-Lord. Have they not sworn it me in their military oath? ”

Gröner: “ In such a situation the oath is a mere fiction.”

When the truth of those words broke over him, the Emperor’s world fell to pieces in his heart. For thirty years he had been intent on strengthening the iron cordon around him; in thirty days it was shattered. There had not been a word of abdication in that session, though this was a preliminary condition of the Armistice.

Meanwhile the session had been interrupted by the incessant wires from Berlin to the Supreme Command. The officers were consulted; from three selected Army-Corps came the anticipated negative. One of the Colonels informed the Emperor. While he was speaking there came a message from the Commandant of Berlin: “ All troops deserted—completely out of hand.” It was eleven o’clock then.

There he stood, hard-pressed between the thronging wires from Berlin, and the dispassionate No of his officers.

The hour had come—long-dreaded, held in check by all the arts of rhetoric. The paladins were wavering; no soldier

BISMARCK'S GHOST

sprang forward to shield the heaven-throned Prince from his rebellious subjects. Was Bismarck's ghost not seen to hover in that room? It had been his last of warnings to the Emperor twenty years ago it was: "So long as you have these officers around you, there is no doubt that you may do exactly as you please. But if ever that should not be so, it will be quite a different matter." They had been drinking champagne; after that dinner they did not again see one another. And not till now, in this last inglorious moment, did the Emperor, hemmed in, decide to lay down his arms. "His Majesty was profoundly affected by these statements, and evidently resolute to make a personal sacrifice for the sake of averting civil war." But Count Schulenburg preferred his own scheme for the salvation of the monarchy. He now propounded the fantastic idea that the monarch should abdicate as German Emperor, but not as King of Prussia. As Hindenburg and even the Crown-Prince, who now arrived upon the scene, approved the grotesque suggestion, the Emperor caught at this way of escape—neither imperial nor royal though it was—like a gambler who should hope with his last throw to win back all that he has lost.

The Chancellor spoke again from Berlin. He would be obliged to resign, the monarchy was not to be saved unless the abdication came without an instant's delay. The Emperor ordered Hintze to answer by the announcement of his semi-abdication. Schulenburg again interfered, insisting on a formula for this momentous step, to be signed by the Emperor. Meanwhile the movement in Berlin was gathering force; no one in the Wilhelmstrasse could be sure that in ten minutes the mob would not be upon them with machine-guns. One more anguished appeal to Spa: "It is a question of minutes!" Schulenburg replied: "So momentous a decision cannot be made in a few minutes. His Majesty is resolved; he is at this moment formulating his resolve on paper; it will be in the hands of the Imperial Government within half an hour." Not a word did the Count say of his own scheme for destroying all the effect

by the retention of half the sovereign's authority. "Of an abdication only as Emperor and not as King of Prussia," writes Prince Max, "not one syllable was said in the telephonic conversations of 9th November. nor on any previous occasion." Nor could anyone in Berlin have had any inkling of such a wanton destruction of the German Bund, which would have deprived the Constitution of all meaning and the abdication of its essential significance; for it was not of the German Emperor that men desired to be rid, but of William the Second.

The Chancellor sat in his house with the rest of the Cabinet, and waited for the announcement; the Socialists had departed—they were leading the masses. At any moment Unter den Linden might hear the Republic proclaimed. The announcement came not—three Generals, a Minister, and a King, found it too hard a task to put those two or three sentences together. Now the Chancellor was confronted with the choice of leaving the first step to the streets, or himself formulating the officially conveyed intention to abdicate, his one aim being to save the dynasty. So he did what as Chancellor, Prince, and friend, he was bound to do. He formulated the officially declared intention of his sovereign as an unequivocal resolve, and in doing so overstepped his province only in one respect, namely, under the pressure of necessity he also announced the Crown Prince's renunciation of the throne:

"The Emperor and King has resolved to relinquish the throne. The Imperial Chancellor will remain in office only until . . . the questions connected with the abdication have been regulated by the establishment of a Regency. His intention is to propose to the Regent the nomination of the deputy Ebert to the Imperial Chancellorship, and to lay before him the draft of a Bill for immediately proclaiming a General Election for the National Assembly, which will provide a Constitution for the country, and will apply itself to a final decision on the form to be henceforth taken by the German State."

Prince Max could not now help the dynasty by this

“ I REMAIN KING OF PRUSSIA ”

proclamation; it came four weeks, four days, four hours, too late. Scheidemann had in the same hour proclaimed the Republic. Only to one person did the Prince, doing this, render the greatest of services—the Emperor. When all had forsaken him, this Chancellor alone stood by him; here at last was the scapegoat he needed for all his errors. It was Prince Max who procured the Emperor a tranquil eventide of life.

The Emperor had no sooner heard of the Prince's edict than he was possessed, for all his impotency, by a momentary mood of resistance. “ Treason! Barefaced, outrageous treason!” he cried out, for this was the Fifth Act (Niemann, who was an eye-witness, p. 140). Then “ the monarch in feverish haste filled one telegraph-form after another with a manifesto of protest.” His telegraph-forms had not deserted him—they were his last adherents. He proclaimed that he remained the King of Prussia. Admiral Scheer and Rear-Admiral von Levetzow depict the scene. Its irony needs no underlining.

“ Before the Emperor stood the Field-Marshal, General Gröner and General von Marschall being a little to one side. On our entrance the Emperor said: ‘ Field Marshal, will you please repeat to Admiral Scheer what you have just said to me.’ ”

Hindenburg: “ The Army and the troops are no longer behind His Majesty. There are no loyal troops left. Would to God, Your Majesty, that it were otherwise! ”

The Emperor: “ If it is as the Field-Marshal informs me, I cannot well allow myself to be arrested! There is nothing for it but to abdicate as Emperor. I remain King of Prussia. But that the gentlemen may learn how I am served by my Chancellor—Prince Max von Baden proclaimed my abdication both as Emperor and King this morning, without my knowledge and without my authority. That is the way I am served by my last Chancellor! ”

Scheer: “ The effect on the Navy will be incalculable, if it has lost its Supreme War-Lord.”

The Emperor, gloomily: “ I have no Navy now! ”

He went out, with a shake of the hand for everyone. Not a word about leaving Spa; he had elected to stay with the troupe.

The whole confused, pathetic scene, with its theatrical climax, could only have fittingly ended with a shot behind the scenes, or else a ride to the battle-front; for between this 9th and the 11th, hundreds more were slaughtered there. Delbrück came rushing over on purpose to die at his sovereign's side; the Junkers of Pomerania told the Empress, that day, of "a similar intention," and Solf had ere this felt sure that they must count on the Emperor's doing something of the kind. When later on the Emperor, in conversation with Niemann, repudiated equally, on moral grounds, a challenge to the Almighty and self-murder, he was speaking privately, and no one has any right to criticize his views; but his second argument is extremely interesting: "What would be the good of playing the stage-hero? The days are gone when the Royal General could lead his Triarians to the field of slaughter with his sword in his right hand."

Were these the lips which for decades had boasted of that battle with the sword in the right hand, which had promised himself that "stage-hero's" part, for four years now imposed upon his subjects, lying on the field in hecatombs? Had he not perpetually appealed to the Great Frederick? Frederick had always carried poison about him.

Every one of his subjects was free to prefer life to an heroic death, but not He, not on that day. William the Second only was not free to choose on that Ninth of November.

He stood helpless before reality. A bad exit or death—those were the alternatives. Though Hindenburg and Hintze warned him of his danger with the Army, he persistently clung to the thought of a storm-battalion which was supposed to be still reliable.—there was talk of an officer's guard. "I will fight to the last moment," he said towards nightfall, "if even a few of my friends stick to me

—even if we're to be slaughtered, every one!" In the most primitive fashion, as he had seen done upon the stage, he ordered munitions and arms to be brought into the villa, as if he proposed to entrench himself there. On receiving news of the Empress he exclaimed: "My wife is sticking it out—and they want to persuade me to go to Holland! I never will. It would be like a captain deserting the sinking ship." (Niemann, p. 143).

Suddenly, even as he was provisioning his little fortress, he caught sight of the royal train standing outside, or perhaps he only remembered it. Had it not carried him through all countries, an ever-obedient steed? And there it stood, dazzling in its white and gold, spotless, well-oiled, well-coaled, on feather-springs, noiseless, ever-ready—the Emperor's true home. Only when in movement, in gliding rocking motion, only when faring onward, was life a thing of beauty. . . . And he flings everything to the winds, and goes to the train to sleep; and Hintze is heard to say that he will leave for Holland to-morrow. At nine o'clock he summons Hindenburg to the train—no, he does not intend to go; the Crown Prince is to be told; he will speak to him to-morrow morning.

When Niemann, whom Plessen had summoned to the train "in case they left that evening," arrived with his baggage—how did he find his War-Lord? "In the train I found the Emperor already at dinner with his suite. I had been afraid that the excitement of the previous hours would have made him lethargic. But not at all. He looked up at me with all his animation; his face was calm and resolute. They told me that the Emperor had quite changed his mind about going to Holland."

By this time the whole suite had known for twenty-four hours that he would take flight; but decorum was preserved. So that when at ten o'clock Grünau, "by order of the Field-Marshal," pleaded in common with Plessen and Marschall for "Holland without delay," there was no more beating about the bush. "After brief reflection, the Emperor consented." But to show himself master

just once more, to let no one be able to say that he was "afraid of his life," he found the fitting phrases: "Well, it must be so! . . . But not before to-morrow morning!"

What else could the Field-Marshal, who loved the Emperor, have advised when all was over? After the crawling, the despicable, retreat from power there was only this back alley left for escape. But would not the uniform speak—the uniform he had worn for fifty years? Would not the spirit of his forebears cry out for the wild-fire deed, the hot-headed splendour, the old Hohenzollern knightliness? A thousand speeches in the past—now one speech in the living present! Ten words to his assembled officers: "To the front! To battle!" and with the Old-Prussian Hurrah! a human rampart would have closed around him in a minute. A prince in arms would have done honour to the dead, and saved the living.

But he only took a sheet of paper and wrote to his son, to whom he had given his promise to stay. "Dear boy." . . . After all he had made up his mind to go. . . . Quite simply, quite unaffectedly. But when he came to the signature it occurred to him that the scene was historic; and with ceremonial stiffness he signed the artless page: "Your stricken father." When his son came to see him next morning, he was gone. Nobody held the Emperor back—the saddest of all epilogues.

In the grey of dawn he and a few of the faithful had driven westward in motors. There was no time to make any arrangements, nor did they dare to use the wires, already tapped in every quarter. And so it was virtually the first and last escapade of his life.

The frontier was not far away. The cars drew up. The frontier-guard in his Dutch uniform refused to let German officers pass. His officer was sent for. For a moment he thought he must be dreaming; then he knew what to do: Telephone to The Hague. For the present he conducted the gentlemen to a little iron waiting-room. But before those at The Hague—the Ministers and the Queen—could make up their minds, six hours went by

HIS GROANING LAND

The Emperor had never before had to wait six minutes. Possibly a train with a crowned guest might be a few moments late, or a message at the manoeuvres might fail to arrive on the tick of the clock. That day he was pent in that iron box for six hours; and if he had much to atone for, in those six hours part of the pilgrim's burden of sin fell from him.

The window of the little waiting-room looked east. Directly outside, he could see the Dutch colours, the frontier-posts; four paces farther on, the Black-White-and-Red of Germany. The Emperor looked at the posts; then looked backward at his land, at his life.

There, beyond those frontier posts, a great people is groaning. Those are the Germans, Emperor William, whom you have governed for so long. Pacific and mighty, rich in thought and rich in music—so they have always been; so they still are at heart. But over them was flung a glittering veil of illusion; their eyes were dazzled by the sheen of gold and gems; they learnt ambitions, jealousies—ambition for predominance and jealousy of other lands; these thirty years have swept them, breathless, from their steadfast course. Too soon they took the semblance of their youthful Emperor—too well he pleased them; and they urged each other ever farther onward, ever growing richer, till there came the days of *Hubris*. Flatterers all, they thronged about their sovereign's throne; each would be first to snatch the quick-won prize, and for their folly they are called upon to pay—for the arrogance which set all Europe against Germany.

The land is groaning now. More than a million of her sons—the half of her youth—lie prostrate, rotting in alien soil. Hark to the mothers' tears, the fathers' execrations; see this brave famished people cower to the victor's lash!

Are these the glorious days you vowed to bring your people? Which of your promises have you kept? Though Nature and upbringing wronged you, what have you done with your many gifts in that festival you made of life? In the service of your phrases, your pretensions, this great-

Der zwischen dem Zaren Nikolai II und mir abgeschlossene Vertrag schuf die Grundlagen für ein freundschaftliches und friedliches Zusammengehen Russlands und Deutschlands, was beiden Herrschern am Herzen lag. Seine Wirkungen werden vermehrt durch die russische Diplomatie (Luzanow, Tscholiki), die hohen russischen Militärs, die bedeutenden Parlamentarier und Politiker vornehmen machte. Weltkrieg, erfüllte ihre Hoffnungen nicht, warf ihre Pläne über den Haufen, und tratete dem Zaren sowie mir den Thron. Die furchtbaren Folgen des Weltkrieges für Deutschland sind das weitere Leben, das der Heil beider Länder in der Zukunft besteht, in freiem Zusammenleben, wie vor dem Fall, nach Wiederherstellung der beiden Imperien. Für Ihre Zuerkennung Ihrer Memoiren besten Dank

Wilhelm
K.R.

Dresden 1. VIII. 1924

people has been led astray; and when for once it warned you, you derided it.

After four inactive years—four years of sacrifice for all but you—you have refused your people the last service which, in history's eyes, might still have saved you; and for scurvy lips are breaking now the soldier's oath you swore before your grandsire—the oath inviolate; you dinned that in their ears a thousand times. Now, in their direst need, you wash your hands of them—wife, children, subjects; in your craven fear you cast away the honour of your fathers. Chaos is upon your land; and while millions stare privation and slavery in the face, one man, the man who stands for all, steps into his luxurious car and rolls away to ease and comfort in a neutral country.

At last! The officer, saluting, comes into the waiting-room. "The gentlemen may pass." With leaden heart the Emperor goes to his car; he even forgets, to-day, to hide his withered arm under his cape. A soldier sits in front, escorting the distinguished prisoners. The engine throbs—the car drives on into the alien land from which there will be no home-coming.

Fainter, ever fainter. . . . Soon the Emperor can scarcely hear the groaning of his land.