

a correction on behalf of two men who are now unable to make it in defence of themselves, Lamsdorff and Witte. The Kaiser assumes—probably not without what seemed to him satisfactory evidence—that as he had initiated Bülow into his scheme and the progress that he was making, so Nicholas II. had kept his Minister of Foreign Affairs posted as to what was going on. Now if that had been done—and the Kaiser seems to have been told that it was—Witte also would have been apprised of it by his devoted friend, Lamsdorff, who kept nothing from him, whereas Lamsdorff himself in July, 1905, was absolutely ignorant of the transaction. Witte's papers passed through my hands and I know that he had no inkling of what had been agreed upon until after he quitted the Kaiser at Rominten and returned to Russia. His anger when he had read the treaty knew no bounds, his action was prompt and vehement, and it made the Kaiser his bitter enemy for the remainder of his life.

The Russian Tsar still stood shivering on the brink of the Rubicon repeatedly proclaiming his resolve to make the plunge. He has so much to say on the subject of the treaty that he cannot trust any one to cipher it. He prefers to write an autograph letter.¹ The Kaiser replies enjoining the strictest circumspection "No third power must hear even a whisper about our intentions."²

What took place between the Emperors during the ensuing two months there are no available telegrams to show.³ Down to Monday, 24th July, 1905, the draft of the secret treaty remained a draft. I know that the Tsar positively affirmed this to Lamsdorff, his minister, in answer to a question as to whether the four clauses of the treaty, which was actually signed on that day, exhausted Russia's liabilities as incurred without the minister's knowledge.

The question was necessary because of rumours that were rife about a secret "Nicky-Willy scheme" to proclaim the Baltic a closed sea to all warships except those belonging to the countries whose shores are washed by its waters. It was whispered that the plan had been mooted at Björke and some people—for a while Witte was one of them—believed that

¹ Confidential Despatch sent on 10th/23rd November, 1904.

² Confidential Despatch, 27th November (10th December), 1904.

³ From 12th December, 1904, until 14th February, 1905.