

# ABSOLUTELY THE EMPEROR

*The Kaiser Makes a New Triumvirate of "I, My Great Grandmother and God"*

By PROF. O. D. SKELTON

THE political forces that are grappled in conflict in Germany were brought into dramatic juxtaposition last month. On one day the red flood which is sweeping the Fatherland reached its highest mark: the Socialists scored their eighth unbroken victory of the year by carrying the by-election in Zschopsau-Marienberg, turning a minority of 3,000 into a smashing majority of 10,000. On the next, the Kaiser, breaking the restless silence of two years, was inspired by his return to the old town of Königsberg, where his Prussian ancestors were crowned, to proclaim to the sceptical twentieth century the divine right of kings. Frederick William I., he insisted, was king by the grace of God alone, and not by Parliaments or meetings of the people. His great-grandmother, Queen Louise, was held up as a model of domestic virtues for the too ambitious women of these degenerate days. Finally the Kaiser proclaimed himself an instrument of the Lord, who would go his own way without heeding the views and opinions of the day. The speech was only of a piece with former utterances. "There is only one master in this country and I am he; I shall suffer none beside me," or, "We Hohenzollerns accept our crown only from Heaven, and are responsible only to Heaven for the performance of its duties." And not only was it consistent with his own opinions of other days; it was a sufficiently true account of historical fact and of the letter of the constitution. What it does not match is the new temper of a majority.

The dominant issue in Germany to-day, the issue in which all minor questions are merging, is the old one of responsible versus personal government. The Kaiser's utterance is important not merely as an expression of his individual opinion but as voicing the determination of the monarchical and semi-feudal powers in Germany and their bureaucratic instruments and allies, to resist all attempts at democratic control of the state. From the western point of view German political develop-

ment has halted at an anomalous stage. The Kaiser not merely reigns but governs. The Chancellor, head of both the German and the Prussian administrations, is responsible to his imperial and royal master alone. The Bundesrath or upper house, representing the federated states, has the lion's share of power, particularly in initiating legislation, and wields it under the influence of the Chancellor, backed by the solid delegation of the predominant partner in the Empire, Prussia. The Reichstag or lower house, elected on a basis of universal suffrage, has in the main only a negative influence in government; it may criticise the administration or amend the legislative projects laid before it, or even reject that portion of the supplies not provided for by permanent laws, but the Chancellor owes it no responsibility and may at any time meet its opposition by inducing the Bundesrath to exercise its constitutional power of dissolving it. The present Chancellor, Herr Bethman-Hollweg, was entirely on constitutional ground when in defending the Kaiser's speech he sneered at "the fiction, unknown to the constitution of Parliamentary government, depending on a fluctuating vote or on the absolutism of the masses."

Such a system of government, with the Chancellor responsible only to the Kaiser and the Kaiser responsible only to the Lord, could of course not have endured unless it had solid foundations in the interests and sentiments of important sections of the German people. It rests on the traditional monarchical sentiment which is rooted in a recollection of the national achievements of the Hohenzollern line from the Great Elector to the present Kaiser's grandfather. It is buttressed by the feeling that in international affairs it gives Germany an advantage in quick unfettered action over countries whose ministers are controlled by Parliamentary majorities. It fosters and is fostered

by a powerful, well-trained and highly educated bureaucracy. It has the unflinching support of the Conservative and Agrarian parties, content to trust rather to the identity of sympathies between King and Chancellor and themselves, than to a legalized control which would inure equally to the advantage of their opponents. And not least does it find excuse in the multiplicity of political groups which take the place of the two or three great parties traditional in the Anglo-Saxon world and make a stable parliamentary majority difficult to maintain. No where so nakedly as in Germany do party lines follow class-divisions: the Conservative and Agrarian parties draw their support from the great landowning classes, the National Liberals from the manufacturing and commercial class, the various Radical groups from the small shopkeepers and artisans, and the Socialists in the main from the organised workingmen. Poles, Danes and Guelphs are responsible for small factions, and the powerful Centre or Catholic party, the largest in the Reichstag, supported by the peasants of the south and the bulk of the Catholic workingmen, plays a frankly opportunist game with great adroitness.

In opposition to these forces a strong revolt is spreading directed against the Kaiser's autocracy, the non-parliamentary system of government and the parties which for the nonce provide the ministerial majority. The Kaiser's assumption of universal authority, his endeavor to regulate every sphere and every detail of national life from the shape of the buttons on his soldiers' uniforms to the type of music, drama, painting, poetry, religion, or aeroplane which should be adopted, and his recent indiscreet speeches, have strained even German patience and German admiration of the undeniable brilliance and versatility of William the Second to none. The growing sentiment in favour of a halt in naval armament, evidenced by the favourable reception accorded by middle and working class papers to Mr. Asquith's suggestion of a future understanding on shipbuilding programmes, makes in favour of those political parties least jingoistic.

The Liberal and Radical parties have attacked the present franchise vigorously, the Centre has given them a fluctuating support, while the Socialists have organised protest meetings attended by hundreds of thousands of workingmen. Yet the only result so far has been the introduction by the Prussian government of a tinkering measure which left unredressed the most serious anomalies, and the rejection by the Conservative majority of even this concession. Accordingly the democratic forces are roused to white heat.

Even more widespread has been the popular reaction against the Imperial budget of last year. Germany, like Britain, faced a huge deficit, amounting to \$125,000,000. In Germany as in Britain the party most eager for imperial expansion was the party least anxious to pay its share of the Dreadnought bills. But in Germany, unlike in Britain, the Conservative party, backed by the Centre, had its way, rejected the modest inheritance taxes the Chancellor suggested as the privilege of wealth, and to increased taxes on beer, spirits and tobacco, added taxes on tea, coffee, railway tickets, matches and other articles of daily use by the masses. This crass misuse of political power, the burdens of the new taxes, the pressure of the old food taxes imposed for the benefit of the same landlord class, the rise of prices, popularly attributed entirely to the budget and tariff impositions, has roused popular discontent to a height unprecedented in Germany. The Radical and Liberal forces stand to gain from this agitation, but it is the Socialists, as the most uncompromising opponents of the powers that be, who are reaping the chief benefit; friend and foe alike are forecasting an increase in Socialist members in the 1911 Reichstag from the present fifty to one hundred or even one hundred and fifty. With a Liberal-Radical-Socialist majority in the Reichstag, responsible government will be a long step nearer realisation. The movement will meet with hard-fought opposition from without, but perhaps the chief obstacle in the way of the success of such a coalition will come rather from the difficulty of getting the Socialists to work in harmony with the other more or less democratic parties. Every day, however, the German Social-Democracy is moulting its revolutionarism, becoming more and more willing to work for reforms here and now instead of waiting to enter the Promised Land the day after the overthrow root and branch of Capitalism. Growing experience of parliamentary life on the part of its leaders, middle-class accessions, working-class eagerness for immediate betterment, are driving the party along the path of opportunist reform. In any event the politics of Germany promise for the next few years to be of unusual interest. And in that struggle the peace of the world is at stake.

## CANADA TO ENGLAND

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By ARTHUR STRINGER

THE New World sunlight slowly wanes,  
The Nor'land summer closes,  
And all the maple leaves turn red,—  
Th' autumnal red of roses.

The youthful touch in time must pass,  
The green range back to golden;  
And back we fare from new-found homes  
To homelands that are olden.

For though we wandered far, and seemed  
To break the ancient tether,  
Time yet shall bring the Mother Land  
And far-flung Child together.

And hill by hill the maple leaves,  
As summer wanes and closes,  
Shall turn and burn and e'er become  
The red of England's roses.