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The Powers of the German Kaiser

KAISER WILHELM is either a lunatic, an arch-criminal or an enigma. For the past two months he has been on the field as commander-in-chief of the German army; at Mainz, at Luxembourg, in East Prussia, at Posen. His ten Imperial coaches have trailed across Germany in the wake of the death-and-destruction machine. No photograph of the strangest war lord in the world has ever been published prior to that appearing on this page, since he started his "Diesel machine" of six millions at the job of trying to annihilate the rest of Europe, including the British Empire.

But Kaiser Wilhelm has been very busy and the world outside of Germany has been busy blaming him for the war. When people get tired blaming Bismarck and Bernhardi and Nietzsche and the feudal system and Von Krupp and Count Zeppelin, they turn for simple relief to the monarch with the withered arm, who proclaims that he is the vicegerent of God upon earth. Kaiser Wilhelm is the most dangerous emperor in the world. He is the man of whom the great French critic Renan said, when he was dying, that he should like to live twenty-five years longer to see what that interesting young man, the German Kaiser, would do with the world.

Now the world is beginning to find out. The emperor who commands the greatest army machine and the second greatest navy in the world; who for years shook the "mailed fist" in the face of Europe; who made Berlin a model of civic management; who bossed opera houses and art galleries, universities and editors, admirals and generals; that man has been already sentenced at the hands of enlightened critics of all persuasions to banishment, to military degradation, to the loss of his Imperial title—and even to the gallows.

Who and what is this man? How did he become so notorious? Louis XIV., the greatest absolute monarch ever known, was never like this man. Napoleon never was able in two months to make such a dint on the face of the world. Charles I., who lost his head to the Long Parliament because he was a tyrant, never had such power. No Czar of Russia was ever such a peculiar personal force. Why?

THE answer depends upon vastly more than the character of the man; and the character of the man is a very large part of the answer. To begin with, Kaiser Wilhelm is the grandson of the Emperor William I., who, under the manipulation of Bismarck, founded the German Empire by means of a war with Austria in 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. He took the German Empire from the hands of his celebrated grandfather and from Bismarck, to see what could be done with such a strange political force in an era of iron and electricity and gasoline. For twenty-six years he has been experimenting with that empire. In bringing it to its state of efficiency in the year 1914 he has done away with four Imperial Chancellors, one of whom created the Empire and another served him twelve years.

When Kaiser Wilhelm II. came to the throne of Prussia—not to the throne of Germany, for there is no such thing—he was a young man of considerable military ability, who, as Bismarck says in his *Reminiscences*, made up for the want of education by studying very shrewdly all matters of state and administration. The Iron Chancellor created the German Empire out of the North German Bund that succeeded the old German Confederation after the war with

Austria. By playing upon Europe as a skilful organist by pulling out stops plays a pipe organ, he had won for the German Emperor a place in the world that must have startled most of the German

one writer has called "the indirect crooked ways of Bismarck" had so moved the pawns on his "chess-board" of Europe that it became necessary to have a war. Bismarck decided upon France. His doctoring of the famous Ems telegram made it look as though Germany was forced into war.

War was declared by France. When France was badly beaten and the new Empire was formed from the twenty-four German states, with Prussia at the head, there was a dispute between King William and Bismarck over the title of the monarch. William I. insisted on being called "The Emperor of Germany." Bismarck insisted that he should be called "German Emperor."

A little story told by Bismarck throws some light on how the young ruler, after his accession in 1887, was sizing up the outlook. The Czar of Russia, on his way from Denmark to St. Petersburg, paid a call upon Bismarck and asked him if he expected to remain Chancellor under the new Emperor. Bismarck replied that his former relations as ambassador to all the great European powers, his long personal ministry under the old Emperor, his knowledge of Germany and of statecraft and of men and events, made him feel that he would be quite indispensable to the young Emperor. To his surprise, the Czar seemed doubtful. Bismarck surmised that he had some inkling of what was likely to happen. And the thing happened when Kaiser Wilhelm II. dismissed the Iron Chancellor, who for so many years had been the real uncrowned King of Prussia and Emperor of Germany.

BISMARCK, as he states, never believed in an absolute monarch, but a monarch who should be guided by ministers, criticized by parliament and press, free from the flattery of sycophants and petticoats. Kaiser Wilhelm II. was not that kind of man. He "dropped the pilot."

The German Emperor's career since that time has been one of unparalleled audacity and ambition. He has turned his Imperatorship into a rule by Divine Right, for which the son of James I., who coddled that illusion, lost his head in England. By the constitution of the German Empire he is made commander-in-chief of the army and the navy. He appoints commanders in charge of contingents, officers commanding more troops than a contingent and officers in charge of fortresses. He does not constitutionally appoint generals, but all such appointments are subject to his approval. His power over the navy is the same as that over the army. All officers, whether of army or navy, swear allegiance to the German Kaiser. He cannot declare war except to repel an invasion. He appoints and dismisses the Imperial Chancellor, who, besides being responsible for the administration, is also President of the Bundesrath. He appoints all the imperial officials. He has the right to convene, open, prorogue and close both the Bundesrath and the Reichstag. He has no power to dissolve the Bundesrath, which is therefore never dissolved. He cannot dissolve the Reichstag, except by consent of the Bundesrath, in which, however, as King of Prussia he controls all the Prussian votes.

Such a tremendous power in the hands of any but a safe ruler was enough to make any ambitious egomaniac use it as an instrument of absolute authority. The safeguards intended by Bismarck exist, but they do not always operate. There is always the distinction between the "theory" and the "practice." The German Kaiser had nothing to do with the theory. He looks after the practice; and the present war is a good example of how he does it.



THE MAN WHOM THE WORLD CAN NEVER FORGIVE.
The German Kaiser congratulating Gen. Von Emmich, the conqueror of Liege, who began the crime against humanity in Belgium.

kings, princes and archdukes who welded their dynasties into the new empire.

When the grandson of old King William of Prussia was a youth, the statesman who taught him what