

# The Kaiser's Memoirs

By WILHELM VON HOHENZOLLERN,  
(Former Emperor of Germany)

IN the Algeras conference the outline of the great war was already visible. It is assuredly not pleasant to be forced to retreat politically, as we did in the Morocco matter, but Germany's policy subordinated everything to the great cause of preserving the peace of the world.

We tried to attain this end by courtesy, which was partially resented. I recall the journey of my mother, the Empress Frederick, to Paris. We expected a tolerably good reception, since she was an English princess, and went, as an artist, to be the guest of French art. Twice I visited the Empress Eugenie—once from Aldershot at her castle of Fernborough, the other time aboard her yacht, in Norwegian waters, near Bergen. This was a place of politeness that seemed to me perfectly natural, something that was still out of the ordinary, but was done with the best intentions. I brought French female and male artists to Germany. All this sort of thing, of course, was a trifle in the great game of politics, but it at least showed our goodwill.

With regard to Russia, I went to the utmost trouble. My letters, published in the meantime, were naturally never sent without the knowledge of the imperial chancellors, but always in agreement with them and largely at their desire. Russia would doubtless never have got into a war with Germany under Alexander III, for he was reliable. Czar Nicholas was weak and vacillating; whoever

had last been with him was right; and, naturally, it was impossible for me always to be that individual.

I made every effort with this czar also, to restore the traditional friendship between Germany and Russia. I was moved to do so not only by political reasons but by the promise which I had made to my grandfather on his deathbed.

I most urgently advised Czar Nicholas, repeatedly, to introduce liberal reforms within his country, to summon the so-called great duma, which existed and functioned even as far back as the reign of Ivan the Terrible. In doing so it was not my intention to interfere in Russian internal affairs; what I wanted was to eliminate, in the interests of Germany, the ferment going on in Russia, which had often enough been deflected before to foreign conflicts, as I have already described. I wished to help toward eliminating at least this one phase of the internal situation in Russia, which threatened to cause war, and I was all the more willing to make the effort since I might thereby serve both the czar and Russia.

The czar paid no heed to my advice, but created a new duma instead which was quite inadequate for coping with the situation. Had he summoned the old duma he might have dealt and talked personally with all the representatives of his huge realm and won their confidence.

When the czar resolved upon war against Japan, I told him that I would assure him security in the rear and cause him no annoyance. Germany kept this promise.

## Grand Duke's Visit.

When the course taken by the war

did not fulfill the czar's expectations and the Russian and Japanese armies finally lay before each other for weeks without serious fighting, the young brother of the czar, Grand Duke Michael, arrived at Berlin for a visit. We could not quite make out what he wanted. Prince Bulow, who was then chancellor, requested me to ask the grand duke some time how matters really stood with Russia; he said that he, the prince, had received bad news and thought it was high time for Russia to bring the war to an end.

I undertook this mission. The grand duke was visibly relieved when I spoke to him frankly; he declared that things looked bad for Russia. I told him that it seemed to me that the czar ought to make peace soon, since what the grand duke had told me about the unreliability of troops and officers appeared to me quite as serious as the renewed internal agitation.

Grand Duke Michael was grateful for my having given him an opportunity to talk. He said that the czar was vacillating, as always, but he must make peace and would make it if I advised him to do so. He asked me to write a few lines to the czar to that effect for him to deliver.

I drafted a letter in English to Czar Nicholas, went to Bulow, told him what the grand duke had told me, and showed him the draft of my letter. The prince thanked me and found the letter suitable. The grand duke informed the Russian ambassador in Berlin, Count Osten-Sacken, and, after he had repeatedly expressed his thanks, went direct to the czar, who then had peace negotiations begun.

Count Osten-Sacken told me, when next we met, that I had done Russia a great service. I was glad this was recognized, and felt justified in hoping, on account of this, that my conduct would contribute toward bringing about friendly relations with Russia.

In acting as I did I also worked toward preventing the possible spread of a Russian revolution, during the Russo-Japanese war, across the frontiers of Germany. Germany earned no thanks thereby; however, our conduct during the Russo-Japanese war is another proof of our love of peace.

The same purpose underlay my suggestion which led to the Bjorko agreement (July, 1905). It contemplated an alliance between Germany and Russia, which both the allies as well as other nations should be at liberty to join. Ratification of this agreement failed through the opposition of the Russian government (Isvolsky).

It remains to say a few words about America. Aside from the Gentlemen's Agreement already mentioned, which assured America's standing beside England and France in a world war, America did not belong to the entente cordiale created by King Edward VII at the behest of his government, and most important of all, America, in so far as it is possible at present to judge events, did not contribute toward bringing on the world war. Perhaps the unfriendly answer given by President Wilson to the German government at the beginning of the war may have

had some connection with the Gentlemen's Agreement.

## American Factors in Defeat.

But there can be no doubt that America's entry into the war, and the enormous supplies of ammunition, and, especially, of war materials, which preceded her entry, seriously hurt the chance of the central powers to bring the war to a successful termination by force of arms.

It is necessary, however, to avoid all emotional criticism of America also, since, in the great game of politics, real factors only can be considered. America was at liberty (despite the Gentlemen's Agreement) to remain neutral or to enter the war on the other side. One cannot reproach a nation for a decision as to war or peace made in accordance with its sovereign rights so long as the decision is not in violation of definite agreements. Such is not the case here.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that John Kenneth Turner, in his already mentioned book, "Shall It Be Again?", shows, on the basis of extensive proofs, that all Wilson's reasons for America's entry into the war, were fictitious, that it was far more a case of acting solely in the interest of Wall Street high finance.

The great profit derived by America from the world war consists in the fact that the United States was able to attract to itself nearly 50 per cent of all the gold in the world, so that now the dollar, instead of the English pound, determines the world's exchange rate. But here also no reproach is at all justified, since any other nation in a position to do so would have resorted to attracting to itself this increase of gold and of prestige in the world's money market. It was certainly regrettable for us that America did not do this stroke of business on the side of the central powers.

But just as Germany objects with perfect justification to having had her peaceful labors combated by the entente, not with peaceful, but with warlike means, so also she can and must enter constant protest as she is already trying to do by means of published material—against America's violation of the right at the close of the world war.

Personally I do not believe that the American people would have consented to this. America's women, particularly, would not have participated in the denial of President Wilson's fourteen points, if they could have been enlightened at that time as to the facts. America, more than other countries, had been misled by English propaganda, and therefore allowed President Wilson, who had been provided with unprecedented powers, to act on his own initiative at Paris—in other words, to be beaten down on his fourteen points. Just as Mr. Wilson omitted mention, later, of the English blockade against which he had protested previously, so also he acted with regard to his fourteen points.

The German government had accepted Wilson's fourteen points, although they were severe enough. The allies likewise had accepted the fourteen points, with the exception of those on reparations and the freedom of the seas. Wilson had guaranteed the fourteen points.

## Fourteen Points Abandoned.

I fail to find the most important of them in the Versailles instrument, but only those expressing the entente's policy of violence, and even part of these in a greatly falsified form. Relying on Wilson's guarantee, Germany evacuated the enemy territory occupied by her and surrendered her weapons—in other words, made herself defenseless. In this blind confidence, and the abandonment of the fourteen points on the one side, and in the outbreak of the German revolution on the other, lies the key to our present condition.

According to Turner, the fourteen points, as far back as the drawing up of the armistice terms, were, to Wilson, no more than a means of making Germany lay down her arms; as soon as this end was achieved, he dropped them.

Already a very large part of the American people has arrayed itself against Mr. Wilson and is unwilling to be discredited along with him. I am not dreaming of spontaneous American help for Germany; all I count upon is the sober acknowledgment by the American people that it has to make good the gigantic wrong done Germany by its former president. For the atmosphere of a victory does not last forever, and later on, not only in Germany but elsewhere, people will remember the unreliability of the American president and look upon it as American unreliability.

That is not a good thing, however, for the American people. To have the policy of a nation branded with the stigma of unreliability is not advantageous. When judgment is passed hereafter on American policy, people will forget that Mr. Wilson, unversed in the ways of the world, was trapped by Lloyd George and Clemenceau.

I have met—particularly at the Kiel regatta—many American men and women whose political judgment and caution would make it impossible for them to approve such a flagrant breach of faith as was committed by Mr. Wilson, because of its effect on America's political prestige. It is upon such considerations of national consideration, that I base my hope, that Germany's burden will be lightened from across the ocean.

Besides the injustice in the abandonment of the Fourteen Points, it must also be remembered that Mr. Wilson was the first to demand of the German reigning dynasty that it withdraw, in doing which he hinted that, were such action taken, the German people would be granted a better peace. Before the government of Prince Max joined in the demand for my abdication of the throne, which it based on the same grounds as Mr. Wilson—that Germany would thereby get better terms—(prevention of civil war was used as a second means of bringing pressure on me)—it was in duty bound to get some sort of a binding guarantee from Mr. Wilson. In any event, the statements made, which became continually more urgent and pressing, contributed toward making me resolve to quit the country, since I was constrained to believe that I could render my country a great service by so doing.

## Accepted "Sight Unseen."

I subordinated my own interests and those of my dynasty, which certainly were not unimportant, and forced myself, after the severest inward struggles, to acquiesce in the wish of the German authorities. Later it transpired that the German government had obtained no real guarantees. But, in the tumultuous sequence of events during those days, it was necessary for me to consider the unequivocal and definite announcement of the imperial chancellor as authoritative. For this reason I did not investigate it.

Why the entente demanded, through Mr. Wilson, that I should abdicate is now obvious. It felt perfectly sure that, following my being dispossessed of the throne, military and political instability would necessarily ensue in Germany and enable it to force upon Germany not easier but harder terms. At that time the revolution had not yet appeared as an aid to the entente.

For me to have remained on the throne would have seemed to the entente more advantageous to Germany than my abdication. I myself agree with this view of the entente, now that it has turned out that the Max of Baden government had no substantial foundation for its declaration that my abdication would bring better terms to my fatherland.

I go even further and declare that the entente would never have dared to offer such terms to an intact German Empire. It would not have dared to offer them to an imperial realm upon which the parliamentary system had not yet been forced, with the help of German Utopians, at a very moment of its final fight for existence, to a realm whose monarchic government had not been deprived of the power to command its army and navy.

In view of all this, heavy guilt also lies on the shoulders of the American ex-president as a result of his having demanded my abdication under the pretence that it would bring Germany better terms. Here also we certainly have a point of support for the powerful lever which is destined to drag the treaty of Versailles from where it lies behind lock and key. In Germany, however, Mr. Wilson should never be confused with the American people.

In setting forth my political principles in what follows, I am actuated solely by a desire to contribute toward proving Germany's innocence of having brought on the world war.

From the outset of my reign German policy was based upon compromise of the differences which it found existing between nations. In its entirety, therefore, my policy was entirely peaceful. This policy of peace-

ful compromise became apparent in internal politics, at the very beginning of my reign, in the legislation desired by me for the protection of the workers. The development of social legislation, which placed Germany at the head of civilized nations in the domain of governmental protection, was based on a like foundation.

The fundamental idea of a policy of compromise went so far within Germany that the strength of the army would have remained far less than universal compulsory military service and the size of the population made possible. Here, as well as in the matter of naval construction, the curtailments demanded by the Reichstag were put up with by the crown and the government. Already at that time the question of Germany's capabilities of defence was left to the decision of the people's representatives. A nation that wished and prepared war would have adopted quite different tactics.


## Inadequate Preparedness.

The more apparent the Entente's policy of encirclement and attack became, the more the means of protecting our welfare should have been strengthened for defensive reasons. This idea of natural and justified self-protection, by means of defensive measures against a possible hostile attack, was carried out in a wretchedly inadequate manner.

Germany's desire for peace, in fact, was unable to develop this protection by land and sea in a manner compatible with her financial and national strength and with the risk which our welfare was bound to run in case of a war. Therefore, we are now suffering not from the consequences of the tendency toward aggression falsely imputed to us, but actually from the consequences of a well-nigh incredible love of peace and of blind confidence.

The entirely different political principles of the Entente have already been described by me, also our continuous efforts to get upon friendly terms with the individual Entente nations.

I do not wish to ignore completely the least important work done by Germany, also included within the framework of politics on a large scale, which was always inspired by the same purpose; to effect compromise of existing points of conflict. The Kiel regatta brought us guests from all the leading nations. We sought compromise with the same zeal in the domain of science by means of exchange professors, and foreign officers were most willingly allowed to inspect our army system. This latter



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might be adjudged a mistake, now that we can look back, but, in any event, all these points are certain proofs of our honest desire to live at peace with all.

Moreover, Germany did not take advantage of a single one of the opportunities that arose for waging war with a sure prospect of success.

I have already pointed out the benevolent neutrality of Germany toward Russia at the time of the Russo-Japanese War.

At the time when England was deeply involved in the Boer War we might have fought against England or against France, which, at that time, would have been obliged to forego help from England. But we did not do so. Also, while the Russo-Japanese War was in progress we might have fought not only against Russia, but also against France. But we did not do so.

In addition to the Moroccan crisis already touched upon, in connection with which we set aside the idea of going to war, we also gave evidence of our desire for peace by overcoming the Bosnian crisis by diplomatic means.

When one considers these plainly visible political events as a whole and thence the declarations of Entente statesmen, such as Poincare, Clemenceau, Isvolsky, Tardieu and others, one is bound to ask one's self, in amazement, how a peace treaty, founded upon Germany's guilt in having brought on the World War, could have been drafted and put through. This miscarriage of justice will not stand before the bar of later history.

Blames France for 1870.

A Frenchman, Louis Guetan, delegate from Lyons to the Society for the Rights of Man, recently made this statement:

"If we once look upon events without prejudice, with complete independence and frankness, without bothering about which camp chance placed us in at birth, the following is forced upon our attention first of all: The war of 1914 is a consequence of the war of 1870. For, ever since that earlier date, the idea of revenge, more or less veiled, has never left us."

"The war of 1870, however, was prepared and declared by the French government. The French Empire, indeed, needed it very badly in order to contend against interior troubles and its steadily growing unpopularity with the public. Even Gambetta, the wild tribune of the opposition, exclaimed: 'If the empire brings us the left bank of the Rhine, I shall become reconciled with it.' Thus, it was a war of conquest, nobody bothered about what the conquered populations might have to say about it. 'We shall bend their will to ours.' Thus it is written in the law of the victor."

"And now, suddenly, the opportunity for doing this was to escape France. In view of the political difficulties and dangers of war caused by his candidacy, Prince Leopold declared himself ready to withdraw. That is bad. Without a pretext there can be no war."

"It was the same with France as with the milkmaid and the broken pinner in the fable, only instead of 'farewell, calf, cow, pig, hens,' it was 'farewell, bloody profits, glory, victory, left bank of the Rhine, even Belgium'—for the latter, too, lay on that left bank of the Rhine which France coveted. No, that would have been too hard, the disillusionment would have been too great, the opportunity must be created anew."

(Continued on Page 17.)

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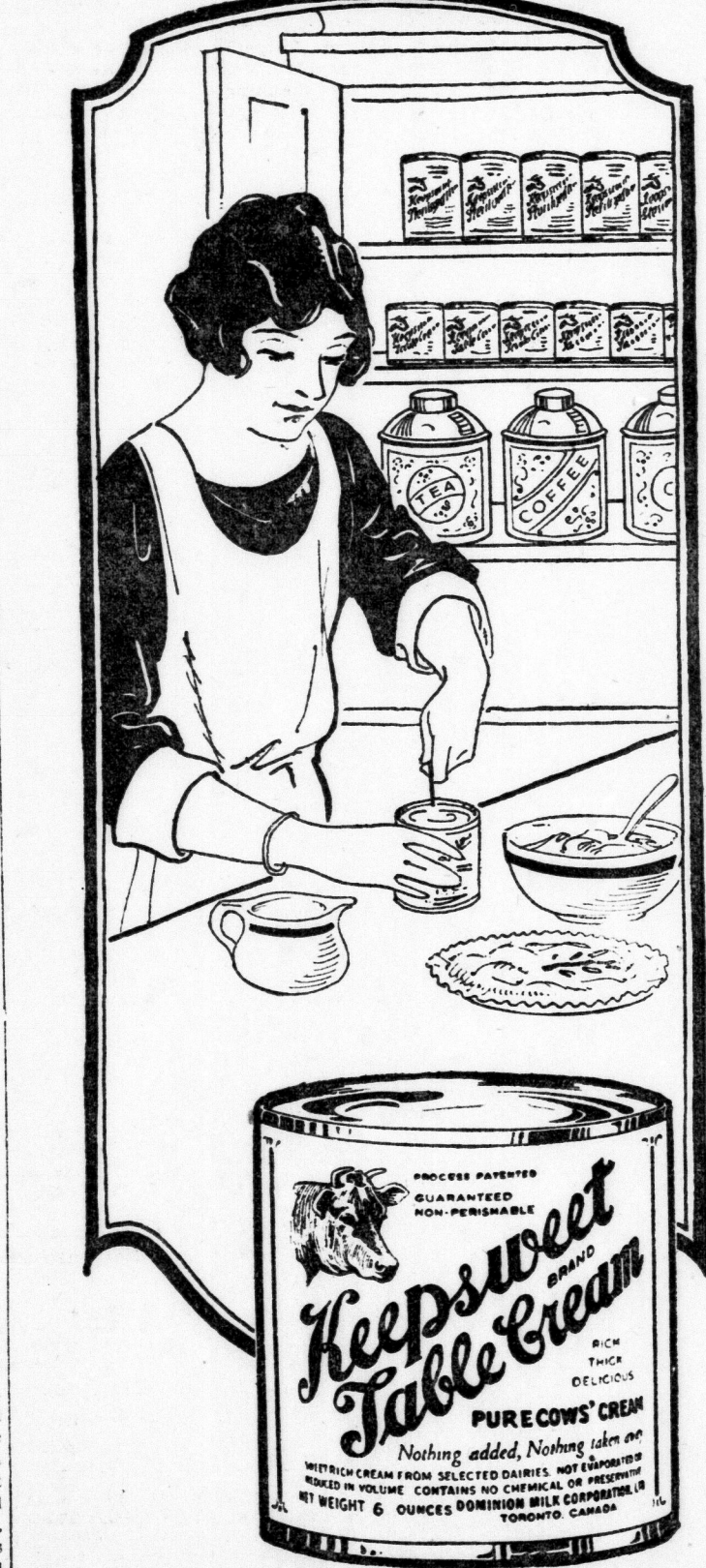
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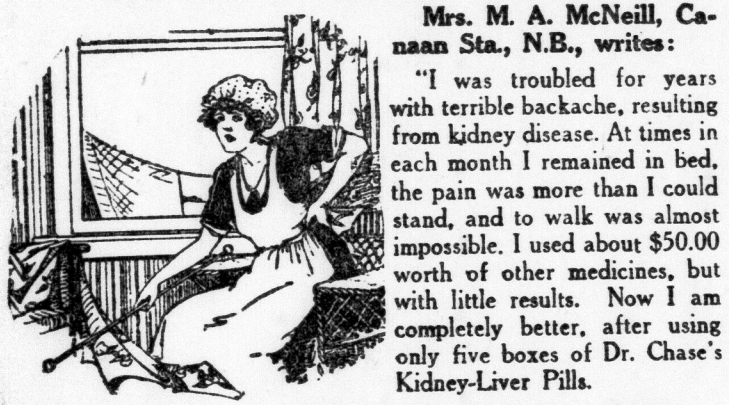
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