

CROWN PRINCE PLOTTED TO OUST HIS FATHER FROM GERMAN THRONE

Kaiser Menaced by Ambition of His Eldest Son; How Crown Prince Wilhelm Conspired With Rupprecht of Bavaria and General Von Falkenhay

Sting of Prussian Insolence.

One of the most remarkable and disturbing features of the German Empire, that huge agglomeration of kingdoms, principalities, duchies, and dependencies, is that, although the Kaiser is the titular head of the whole federation, yet, in point of fact his authority is by no means so welcome, or so securely established, as to make disruption impossible, even so improbable a contingency as to be dismissed from the cares and anxieties, manifold and multitudinous as they are, that beset that harassed man—the German Chancellor.

The Kaiser, it should be remembered, is the German Emperor; not the Emperor of Germany, and even during the present war some of the vassal states that go to make up Germany have come near towards revolting against the yoke which has been imposed on them from Berlin. Austria, Saxony, Hanover—all these have groaned and fretted beneath the sting of Prussian insolence, and at least on one occasion, during the past three years, they came near to breaking the tie which binds them and the German Empire together. That they did not do so was due to the failure of Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria to rise to the level of a great opportunity. In the chapter of secret history that I am about to relate, it will be found that, but for the Prince's obstinate perversity, the Kaiser might have been compelled to relinquish his throne, and Europe saved from the continuance of a ghastly and Jesuitical war.

The Spirit of the Belgian People.

The events to which I refer, events possessing an almost unique interest and importance to the men and women of to-day, took place some little time after the close of my last narrative. Prince Rupprecht was in Berlin. His failure to realize the almost impossible expectations of the German High Command had led, if not to his recall, at all events to the suspension of his command. To do the Prince justice, the failure was none of his fault. He had burnt villages, razed buildings, shot hostages, and threatened and menaced the entire population, exactly as the pundits who compiled the German War Book had laid down should be done by a conqueror bent upon imposing his will upon a prostrate population. And yet the spirit of the Belgian people remained unbroken! In formation concerning Rupprecht's movements still leaked through to the enemy. The Belgian army still opposed his progress; and the people, when they were not openly defiant, were secretly hostile. In a word, they were still unconquered, and likely to remain so, despite their ravaged land. Rupprecht and the German High Command had failed—and the cause of his failure lay in something beyond their power—in the strength and majesty of the patriotism and valor of the Belgian people.

But Potsdam and the High Command were blissfully oblivious of this fact. It was the Prince they blamed, and they had called him now to give an account of himself.

and of his work in France and Belgium to the War Lord himself, who, armed with plans, maps, and other details supplied him, had, as I subsequently learnt, prepared a searching cross-examination for the Commander who had not succeeded in breaking the spirit of the Belgians after many weary months of bitter war and savage, relentless persecution.

"William the Sudden."

As it happened, when Prince Rupprecht and myself reached Berlin we found that "William the Sudden" had for the nonce abandoned the task of investigating Rupprecht's conduct of the campaign, and had proceeded, instead, to the Eastern front, there to arrange, we were told, for the delivery of a smashing blow at Russia, but, though the Kaiser was absent, we found Berlin was full of generals and other functionaries, and it was obvious to both of us, from the cool politeness and studied detachment with which we were everywhere received, that the verdict had already gone against us, and that the Kaiser's satellites, who merely echoed the War Lord's opinions, were satisfied that Rupprecht was to be deprived of his command and disgraced.

The very fact that the Kaiser had made no proper provision for our reception pointed unmistakably in this direction; and the result that we were bowed, or cold-shouldered, in every direction.

The "meat upon the prince" was soon made apparent. He assumed a sternness and a hauteur that soon set the gossips of Berlin talking of a coming rupture between Berlin and Bavaria—a rumor that he did nothing to set at rest.

"Bavaria," he said to me one night when dining incognito at one of the most fashionable restaurants in the capital, "Bavaria is a sovereign, independent State, whose people will follow their rulers. And if those rulers elect to withdraw from the present conflict—so much the worse for Prussia!"

But though the words travelled far and wide, they succeeded not a whit in cooling the feeling towards us and, but for the welcome extended to us by two residents of Berlin, we might have been almost unknown strangers in the city, of whose hospitality the Kaiser was wont to boast in almost every speech he made. By a strange irony the first of those residents was none other than the Crown Prince of Germany himself, who, sent for in hot haste by the Kaiser, after one of his innumerable escapades, was now cooling his heels in Berlin, pending the return of his father.

Two Crown Princes in Trouble.

Little Willie had welcomed us with the vociferous and almost boisterous geniality that he could assume so well when it suited his purpose.

"We should be friends," he told Prince Rupprecht, wringing his hand heartily—"close friends. We have the same enemies, and ought to act together. The same people who poison my father's mind against me, take care to set him against you also. We must take steps to have them removed. Potsdam and the marble palace want a new broom badly. The Kaiser is proving unequal to the strain of war, and he must be made to listen to younger men who are more in touch with events. If needs be, he must be compelled. You and I can do it. You have Bavaria behind you, and I all Berlin and half Germany," and he went on in the boastful strain he so constantly assumes, dilating at length on his hold on the people.

Prince Rupprecht listened to this outburst with the cold and restrained hauteur which he has so often to assume that it has become a part of his nature. That he was greatly surprised, I do not suppose people of course, well known to Little Willie and his father have been for months, nay years, at each other's throats, and have not hesitated to use the most venomous weapons against each other. More than once the Kaiser has been actually in danger of losing his throne to the madcap son who has tried him beyond endurance, but whose popularity, strange and inexplicable as it is, renders him too powerful to be summarily dealt with. For the Crown Prince has succeeded in convincing huge masses of the German people that the Kaiser and the "old gang" have robbed them of victory, and that had matters been left in his hands, all would have been well. The Kaiser, on his part, while loathing to wound, is yet afraid to strike at the idol of the people.

An Evil Fate.

To those who know the Hohenzollerns, there is nothing new or strange about this. An evil fate has pursued the dynasty ever since the earliest days. Frederick the Great was sentenced to death by his own father, and lived to speak of his new-born successor with scarcely disguised contempt. The Kaiser himself was at variance with his predecessor, Frederick the Noble, who in his turn had been ruthlessly set aside by Bismarck and the King. From the earliest dawn of the dynasty down to our own day, of the house of Hohenzollern has been given by hatred, intrigues and treachery.

Hence the Crown Prince's speech caused us little surprise, and Prince Rupprecht accepted with avidity an invitation to dine with him that evening, that, as he hoped, was destined to be fruitful of remarkable developments, and which I do not think I shall ever cease to remember.

For one thing, the contrast between the two men was remarkable. The Crown Prince was, as it is his wont, truculent, loud-voiced, and imperious. Prince Rupprecht was soft and sardonic, listening to the other's glowing periods with a calm scepticism that I speedily detected.

"We young men," Little Willie was saying, "should learn to trust and know each other and act together. It is true, as I have told you, that the Kaiser must be made to adopt more vigorous methods, or to make way for more vigorous men." He drained his glass and then struck the table with his clenched fist, "It is time we acted," he said, "The people are sick with the sickness of hope deferred. They have been led to expect an early victory, and that cannot be secured for them unless and until the Kaiser listens to reason. We need a more vigorous submarine policy, which he has refused to add. 'Gad! if you and I had control over the German war machine we would have Europe at our feet within six months!'"

A Great Scheme.

The Crown Prince sunk his voice to a whisper: "To supplant the Kaiser," he said. "Already people are beginning to realize that he and his advisers are effete. Half the army are on my side. Let Bavaria come over to us," and he slapped Rupprecht on the shoulder, "and we shall be masters of the situation and able to dictate terms."

Whatever other details the Crown Prince had then in his mind concerning this plot against his father we were not to learn that evening, but for a moment or so later he was interrupted. Frau—one of the many ladies at whom, if rumor spoke truly, he had set his cap, joined the party, whose Bohemian character became now so obvious as to make the discussion of anything like high politics out of the question. Frau was a witty and vivacious companion, who had attracted the crown prince's attention while still a member of the corps de ballet, and though the first bloom of her youth had passed, she possessed a charm of manner and a natural distinction that obviously impressed both of their royal highnesses. For the moment they forgot the troubles of the German empire and ceased to part the Kaiser's garment. Both laid themselves out to please the Frau, who, quick-witted, and entertaining, was in welcome contrast to the ordinary, heavy, and somewhat unorthodox German woman. Fast and freely did the champagne flow, and one mad joke and wild story succeeded another. Every character in German political life was satirized and brought beneath the acid wit of the crown prince, who did not spare either friend or foe in his vehement outpouring of scandal.

That was by no means the last I saw of Frau. For the next few days Rupprecht devoted the whole of his thought, time and energy to the pursuit of the woman, who had cast so strong a spell over his affections that he seemed incapable of

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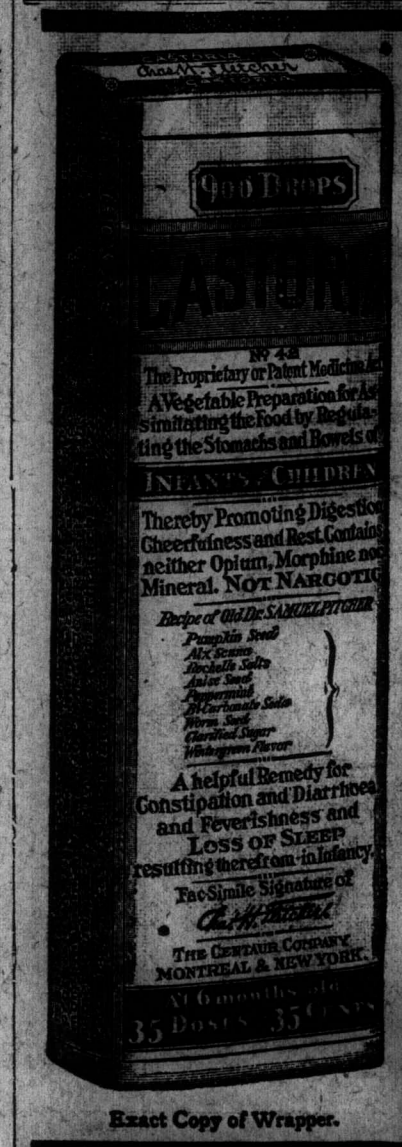
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blood, read out the cypher telegram from his innamorata announcing her success. Falkenhayn had agreed to throw in his lot with Rupprecht and the Crown Prince, and if need be was prepared, at the proper time, to lead out a section of the army against the Kaiser, whose power, already broken, would receive a mortal wound. (Continued on Page Sixteen)

BAN LADY DRUNKS.

(Associated Press.)

Hartlepool, England, Oct. 27.—Saloon keepers are making an attempt to prohibit women from consuming intoxicating liquors in the saloons. This is the only place in the United Kingdom where this attempt is being made.



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