

# Revolutions : Social and Political

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## ARTICLE TWENTY-TWO

THE ever amusing task of selecting a ruler had, in Spain of 1870, the added zest of tragedy; which according to authority is the acme of humor. Considering the trouble mankind invariably encounters on these happy occasions it is passing strange that he has never considered or developed some other method of choosing a monarch. Say, the one who could suck his thumb the longest, a practice for which most of them are exceptionally well endowed, mentally.

But we must take the world as we find it, and so the Spaniards, having had enough experience with their own ruffraff to forbid any further experiment, were searching Europe for a fit and proper person to sit in authority over them. Their late and unlamented Queen Isabelle having been driven with her dissolute gang across the sea in 1868.

They finally decided, after great care, to invite Prince Leopold Hohenzollern to graciously rule over them.

This arrangement had the approval of the King of Prussia as head of the house, and the Prince himself, as the interested party: and as Spain was quite satisfied it might be supposed all requirements were fulfilled. But no, that supreme and last handiwork of God Almighty's hand, man, had other things to consider. France, observing the perfectly proper means to preserve peace on her frontier, objected to the Prince so closely connected with Prussia controlling the destinies of Spain. So the idyllic scenes in Campriere were rudely interrupted by the stern realities of Statescraft.

The French Ambassador, Benedetti, was instructed to inform His Majesty of Prussia that the acceptance of the Spanish offer would be considered as an hostile act against France. Bismarck, Roon and Moltke now anticipated the working out of their plans, and fully expected to take the field.

King William, however, was disposed to view the matter more lightly, and finding no insult in the demand, nor any considerable importance in the project, agreed to withdraw the candidacy of Leopold.

Quite in keeping with the materialist conception of history, the destiny of millions lies in the hollow of one man's hand, or at any rate, several men may, at times, possess the power to send millions to doom and disaster.

The French Government was not content with this diplomatic victory, which exalted their falling fortunes and gave them a respite from the gathering storm; and which left Bismarck and his friends in disgust, if not in disgrace. They insisted upon a further and more humiliating renunciation, considering the moment propitious for engaging Prussia in a quarrel into which the other German states could not enter, if they entered at all, with any enthusiasm.

In the recently resurrected French Assembly, war speeches and insults to Germany were wildly applauded, and the information was delivered that the army "was ready to the last button," which was doubtless true, but buttons, like buts and ifs, are of slight importance in the hour of battle.

Bismarck relates how he hurried to the king for final instructions to assemble the Reichstag for the purpose of mobilization, and on his way, joyously executed a thrust "in carte and tierce" at an imaginary enemy when passing an old clergyman friend, but before he could enter his carriage received telegrams instructing him to deal with Benedetti.

The pleasure was entirely French, and Bismarck decided to resign rather than provide it, inviting Roon and Moltke to dine with him in a farewell supper, during which they received further humiliation from French arrogance and Prussian indolence.

The old King was at Ems "taking the waters" for his health. Benedetti proceeded thither with the French ultimatum. Gramont, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs instructed him carefully; he

must not take any evasion, such as, which was quite permissible, in his office as King of Prussia he had no interest in the future actions of a Prince, even of his own house; and that anything but complete and public renunciation would be considered unfriendly, and would compel France to regard Prussia with suspicion.

The king did precisely this. Speaking as the head of the House of Hohenzollern he would advise the withdrawal, and upon receipt of a letter from Prince Leopold's father formally renouncing his son's candidature would present it to the ambassador, so that he might communicate its contents to Paris.

Benedetti reported so, and advised that the matter rest there. But in the meantime Gramont had a conversation with the German Ambassador in Paris, and had stated specifically the nature of the reply from King William, which France would consider satisfactory. The conditions were too humiliating, and when Benedetti returned to press the King for an assurance that Leopold would never again permit his name to appear as a candidate, this communication had so offended His Majesty that he refused to discuss it further. He and the King parted cordially, and everything was lovely.

Napoleon had by this time lost some of his ardor, and peace settled over Europe, with the warriors screaming, "Let me go, or I'll fight!"

And so the table at which Bismarck and his two friends were to sup was spread the evening of July 13, 1870; the proceedings which ended in this melancholy manner commenced on July 4th. While they dined a code message arrived which being deciphered, drove all thoughts of meat and drink from their venerable heads.

"The succulent sauer kraut unregarded lay;

"The fragrant wienewurst was scorned."

As Goethe sang, or was it Goethe?

In order to understand the powers and influence of a great man during a crisis, it will be necessary to give in full the text of the Telegram of Ems, and its results. And further, to emphasize the altogether idiotic occasions which drive men to murder feasts; and sometimes happily, to the sweeping away of centuries of social litter, cobwebs, and dust.

"Count Benedetti spoke to me on the promenade, in order to demand from me finally, in a very importunate manner that I should authorize him to telegraph at once that I bound myself for all future time, never again to give my consent if the Hohenzollerns should renew their candidature. I refused at last somewhat sternly, as it is neither right nor possible to undertake engagement of this kind a tout jamais. Naturally I told him that I had as yet received no news, and as he was earlier informed about Paris and Madrid than myself, he could clearly see that my government once more had no hand in the matter.

"His Majesty has since received a letter from the Prince, His Majesty having told Count Benedetti he was awaiting news from the Prince, has decided with reference to the above demand, upon the representation of Count Eulenburg and myself, not to receive Count Benedetti again, but only to let him be informed through an aide de camp: That His Majesty had now received from the Prince confirmation of the news which Benedetti had already received from Paris, and had nothing further to say to the ambassador. His Majesty leaves it to your Excellency whether Benedetti's fresh demand and its rejection should not at once be communicated to our ambassadors and the press."

Of all the memorable scenes in history, we know of none which match the poignant grief of these unfortunate sufferers, or the unrestrained bitterness and merciless brutality of fate's decrees. David's lament for Absalom. The parents on the walls of beleaguered Milan, shooting at the advancing enemy through the bodies of their own children, held as

hostages, whose heroic young voices rose above the battle's din, invoking their fathers to save the city and forget their parenthood.

What a damnably exasperating enigma this human creature is. We fain would laugh, but when we remember such sufferers as Bismarck and his cronies a tear starts from our eye, rolls down the back of our neck, chilling us to the very marrow.

The multiplication of instances would never indicate in the slightest degree the unutterable misery of these unfortunates.

No exile's grief was ever half so sad;

Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

Bismarck was the first to recover from the shock. He asked Moltke to what extent could the army be depended on for immediate action. Moltke replied that no advantage could be obtained by any delay. Even if they could not prevent invasions there was no fear of the outcome. Delay would not add anything to their advantage. He then proceeded to edit the telegram which came from his deft hand in this form:

"After the news of the renunciation of the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern had been officially communicated to the imperial government of France, by the royal government of Spain, the French ambassador at Ems further demanded of His Majesty the King, that he would authorize him to telegraph to Paris that His Majesty the King, bound himself for all future time never again to give his consent if the Hohenzollerns should again renew their candidature. His Majesty the King, thereupon decided not to receive the French ambassador again, and sent to tell him through the aide de camp on duty that His Majesty had nothing further to communicate to the ambassador."

Bismarck remarked that the difference between this abbreviation and the original text of Alreken's telegram "was not the result of stronger words but of form," which implied an end to all further negotiations and contained a calculated insult.

Moltke, upon hearing the revised version read, cried, "Now it has a different ring. It sounded like a parley, now it has a flourish like a challenge."

Bismarck thereupon made a detailed explanation: "If execution of His Majesty's order I at once communicated this text, which contains no alteration in, or addition to the telegram, not only to the newspapers, but also by telegraph to all our embassies. It will be in Paris before midnight, and not only on account of its contents, but also on account of the manner of its distribution, will have the effect of a red rag on the Gallic bull. Fight we must if we do not want to act the part of the vanquished without a battle. Success, however, essentially depends upon the impression which the origination of the war makes upon us and others; it is important that we should be the party attacked, and this Gallic overweening and touchiness will make us if we announce in the face of Europe, so far as we care without the speaking trumpet of the Reichstag that we fearlessly meet the public threats of France."

The day Bismarck's version of the Ems telegram appeared, Paris went wild. The streets were thronged, all but impassable; and the cry "to Berlin!" was in every mouth. Anyone suggesting the possibility of any terminus nearer than Berlin, would have been lucky if he had held together long enough to breathe his last breath.

Here we have a situation, a positive fact, which cannot be in any way denied, of the greatest importance to the student of history; and of the gravest significance to the human race; or at any rate to that portion which does the producing and the fighting. Two autocratic monarchs adverse to war, the one, King William of Prussia, contemplating with pride the splendid close to the most inauspicious opening of a long life. Old, weary and pious, longing

(Continued on page 8)