

The Kaiser's Memoirs

By **WILHELM VON HOHENZOLLERN**,
(Former Emperor of Germany)

As was natural, I had close and intimate relations in the regular course of events with the ministry of public worship and instruction. Her von Gossler and Herr von Trotter majestically considered the most important and prominent occupants of his post. In this ministry a co-worker almost without equal arose in the person of Ministry Director Althoff, a man of genius.

I had been made acquainted with the dark side of the high school system of education by my own school experiences. The predominant philological character of the training in the whole educational system as well, to a certain one-sidedness.

When I was at the Cassel High School in 1874-1877 I had observed that, although there was great enthusiasm for 1871-1871 and the new empire among the boys, there was, nevertheless, a distinct lack of the right conception of the German idea, of the feeling "civis Germanus sum" (I am a German citizen)—which I impressed later upon my people at the laying of the foundation-stone of the Stalburg. To create such sentiments and awaken them in the rising generation and to lay the foundations for them firmly in the young hearts was a task somewhat beyond the powers of the teaching staff, in view of the fossilized, antiquated philological curriculum.

There was great neglect in the department of German history, which is exactly the study through which young hearts may be made to glow, through which the love of one's native country, its future and greatness, may be aroused. But little was taught of more recent history, covering the years since 1815. Young philologists were produced, but no German citizens qualified for practical co-operation toward building up the flourishing young empire.

In other words, no youths who were consciously German were being turned out. In a small reading club composed of my classmates I often tried to inculcate the idea of the Greater Germany, in order to eliminate parochial and similar conceptions which hampered the German idea. Admiral Werner's "Book of the German Fleet" was one of the few works by means of which the living feeling for the German empire could

be fanned into flame.

New Goal of German Youth.

Another thing that struck me, in addition to the one-sidedness of the education in the schools, was the tendency among youths planning their careers in those days to turn their attention to becoming government officials, and always to consider the profession of lawyer or judge the most worthy goal.

This was doubtless due to the fact that the conditions obtaining in the Prussia of olden days still had their effect in the youthful German empire. As long as the state consisted, so to speak, of government and administration, this tendency among German youths in the shaping of their lives was understandable and justified; since we were living in a country of officials, the right road for a young man to select was the service of the state. British youths of that time, self-reliant and made robust by sports, were already talking, to be sure, of colonial conquests, of expeditions to explore new regions of the earth, extending British commerce, and they were trying, in the guise of pioneers of their country, to make Great Britain still stronger and greater, by practical, free action, not as paid hirelings of the state. But England had long been a world empire when we were still a land of officials; therefore, the youth of Britain could seek more remote and important goals than the German.

Now that Germany had entered into world economics and world politics, however, as a by no means negligible factor, the aspirations of German youth should have undergone a more prompt transformation. For this reason it was that I, during the later years of my reign, used to compare, with a heavy heart, the proud young Britons, who had learned much less Latin and Greek than was required among us, with the children of Germany, pale from over-study. To be sure, there were even then enterprising men in Germany—brilliant names can be cited among them—but the conception of serving the Fatherland, not by traveling along a definite, officially certified road, but by independent competition, had not yet become sufficiently generalized. Therefore, I held up the English as an example, for it seems to me better to take the good where one finds it, without prejudice, than to go through

the world wearing blinders.

With these considerations as a basis I won for my German youths the school reform against desperate opposition from the philologists, inside and outside the ministry and school circles. Unfortunately, the reform did not take the shape which I hoped, and did not lead to the results which I had expected.

The "Germanic Idea."

The Germanic idea in all its splendor was first revealed and preached to the astonished German people by Charnikand in his "Foundations of the Nineteenth Century." But, as is proved by the collapse of the German people, this was in vain. To be sure, there was much singing of "Deutschland über alles," but Germany, obeying the commands of their enemies, allowed the emperor to fall and the empire to be broken to pieces; and, placing themselves under the orders of Russian criminals vastly inferior to them in their own right, they stabbed their own army in the back while it was still fighting valiantly.

Had Germans of all classes and conditions been educated to feel joy and pride in their Fatherland, such a degradation of a great nation would have been unimaginable.

This degradation—which, it must be admitted, occurred under remarkable, extremely difficult, circumstances—is all the more difficult to understand in view of the fact that the youth of Germany, although it was impaired in health by overstudy, and not so toughened by sports as the English, achieved brilliant feats in the world war, such as were nowhere equaled before.

The years 1914-1918 showed what might have been made out of the German people had it only developed its admirable qualities in the right direction. The 4th of August, 1914, the heroes of Langemark, countless splendid figures from all classes, rise up from the chaos of the long war to show what the German can do when he throws away Philistinism and devotion to himself, with the enthusiasm which so seldom reveals itself completely in him, to a great cause. May the German people never forget these incarnations of its better self; may it emulate them with its full strength by inculcating in itself the true German spirit!

In the post of minister of justice I found His Excellency Friedberg, the intimate faithful friend of my father, whom I had known ever since my youth, when he was a welcome guest in the home of my parents. This simple, affable man enjoyed with me the same consideration which had been shown him by my parents.

In later years I had frequent and welcome dealings with His Excellency Beesler, who also enabled me to hear informal discussion at his house of many an interesting legal problem by prominent lawyers, and to come into touch with legal luminaries. I felt no particular inclination toward the lawyers in themselves—since pedantry, remoteness from actualities and doctrinaire leanings often assert themselves in the domain of the law altogether too much for my taste—but the completion of the citizens' law book interested me greatly.

I was present at sessions dealing with it, and was proud that this fundamental German work should have been brought to completion in my reign.

When I met the lord chief justice of England, while I was on a visit to that country, at the home of Lord Haldane, I asked that great jurist what he thought of the administration and interpretation of the law in

Germany. His answer ran thus: "You pronounce judgment too much according to the letter of the law; we according to the spirit and content of the law."

Legal Reforms Needed.

I have often pointed out how unfortunate it was that we have not been able to introduce, in police cases—connected with traffic, streets, etc.—the prompt procedure of the English "police court." For, in England, punishment in such cases is meted out on the very next day, whereas in Germany it often takes weeks, what with gathering of evidence and examination of witnesses, until, finally, some insignificant sentence is pronounced long after the case has been forgotten. I should also have liked to introduce into Germany the libel laws of the English, which are published in the press, which are customary in England.

I had worked for a while, when I was still a prince, with Minister of Finance Scholz, and had taken part in sessions wherein that famous man, His Excellency Meinecke, figured. Meinecke was under-secretary of state in the finance ministry and had, therefore, much to do with other ministries, since finances were an important thing everywhere. He had achieved a certain degree of fame because he—as he thought—was always able smilingly to find the best way out of tight places.

Scholz was faithful to his duty and able, but he did not succeed in the like particularly interesting and pleasant to me, nor was there any change in this state of affairs until the versatile Miquel took charge of the finance ministry. When Miquel reported to me concerning the Prussian financial reform, he suggested three plans: one modest, one medium, one ambitious. To the delight of the minister I decided, without hesitation, for the third. Both the monarch and the minister were satisfied with the decision when the reform was carried out.

The minister of the interior, Herr von Pückler, had been forced to retire during the 99 days, to the great sorrow of him who was then crown prince. He was an able, tried old Prussian official; one of those Fom-erans of the old school, filled with loyalty to the king—a nobleman through and through. Rumor had it that the Empress Frederick had driven him from office by a plot, but this is not true. The empress, with her inclination to English Liberalism, doubtless did not like the old-time Prussian Conservatism, yet she was not at all to blame for his going. Prince Bismarck pushed him aside, perhaps out of consideration for the Empress Frederick.

I was deeply interested in forestry and its improvement along practical lines, especially as new gold reserves could be created for the state by reforestation.

Next to Herr von Podbielski, the ablest minister of agriculture and forests was Freiherr von Schorlemer. Just as Herr von Podbielski bent his efforts toward creating great stretches of forests in the east, in order to keep off the east wind by a compact forest zone and thus improve our climate, and, at the same time, provide a natural protection against Russian attacks, so Herr von Schorlemer opened up the eastern forest reservations by extensive construction of roads, and by thus facilitating the transportation of wood helped Germany greatly in making headway in competition against wood from Russia.

Both ministers sought, in co-operation with me, to improve our splendid Prussian forestry personnel and better living conditions among them, and to help toward promotions in their ranks—all of which these officials, zealous in their work and faithful to their king, fully deserved.

The influx of large sums into the state's pocketbook depended indeed on the honesty, industry and reliability of these men. I expected much toward the restoration of the fatherland from the statesmanlike shrewdness and ability of Herr von Schorlemer, who was always quite conscious of the goal at which he was aiming.

He Studied Forestry.

I learned much about forestry from Head Foresters Freiherr von Hovel (Joachimsthal, Schorlemer) and Freiherr von Sternburg (Stittköhnen, Rominten) on my many hunting expeditions with these excellent hunters and administrators.

His recent death, which snatched him away in the midst of beneficial labors, is a serious loss to the fatherland.

Let me say a word here regarding a Russian curiosity in the domain of preserving wild game. The czar, who had heard a great deal about the fine hunters of the stage at Rominten, wished to have some of the same sort at Spala, in Poland. Freiherr von Sternburg was sent to the Spala hunting lodge in summer in order to give advice regarding this project.

He was received very cordially by a general, who had charge of the hunting there and lived at the lodge. Sternburg noticed that all the apartments, even those not inhabited, were always kept heated. When he spoke of the enormous waste of wood occasioned by this, the general shrugged his shoulders and remarked that one never could tell, the czar might put in an appearance some day after all. A gamekeeper, who was a German, was assigned to Sternburg, since the general did not know his way about on the reservation and was quite ignorant of game feeding.

In the course of his tours about the place Sternburg observed a number of places where meadows could be turned into pastures, or good feeding places could be installed. He drew attention to the need of such arrangements, having noticed that the deer had already begun to shed their horns to a considerable extent, thereby causing much damage to the trees.

But the gamekeeper shook his head sadly and remarked that he had already reported all that, but in vain, since the hay for the deer had to be brought by rail from the Black Sea and the shipments sometimes either did not arrive at all or were greatly delayed and arrived spoiled. Nothing would be done to alter this, continued the gamekeeper, since too many people made a good thing out of this transporting of the hay, which was paid for at huge prices.

Wooden Food for Deer.

He also told how—after he had called attention to the many splinters of wood found in the intestines of the deer, in order to prove that they were insufficiently fed, and that feeding places must be provided—a committee of animal doctors had been brought from St. Petersburg to investigate the matter. The said committee lived and ate for weeks in Spala at the czar's expense,

shot many deer, examined them and held sessions; and the upshot of all this was a report that the animals had wood in their stomachs, which proved that they could live on wood, for which reason feeding by deer would be superfluous, and the hay from the Black Sea would suffice to supplement the wood. And there the matter remained, in spite of Sternburg's visit!

When I heard this yarn, I involuntarily thought of an anecdote which Prince Bulow especially delighted to tell in connection with his sojourn at St. Petersburg. While there, he had attended the salon of Mme. Durnovo, where society used often to gather. One day a prominent general was complaining to the hostess that he had been trapped in a money matter, which had brought him much unpleasantness from "above." Apparently he wished, by his mournful description, to arouse sympathy for his bad luck, but Mme. Durnovo retorted, in her rough way: "Mon cher general, quand on fait des sautes, il faut qu'elles réussissent!" (My dear general, when you play dirty tricks it is necessary that they be successful.)

As secretary of state in the imperial postal department likewise, Herr von Podbielski, after I had chosen him and declined a number of other candidates, did excellent work, treading worthily in the footsteps of Stephan. Very practical; endowed with the business sense and a great knowledge of business; well versed and clever in financial matters; of innate administrative talent, and, at the same time, quick to fight; caustically witty; a good speaker and debater, he worked with zeal and skill, often as a pioneer, particularly in matters of world postal service, wireless telegraphy, etc. This former colonel in the 21st Hussars made a name for himself in the service of his fatherland which will never be forgotten.

An amusing contrast to his career is that of a Russian hussar officer under Nicholas I. This czar, being full of anger against the Holy Synod, had driven away the man at the head of it. Shortly afterward he inspected the Hussar Bodyguard Regiment, commanded by Col. Count Protassoff. The immense satisfaction of the czar at the splendid appearance and manoeuvring of the fine regiment found expression in the words, amazing alike to the commander and his men: "Thou hast manoeuvred thy regiment magnificently, and, as a token of my satisfaction, I name thee Procurator of the Holy Synod, which thou must put into good shape for me!"

Mention must be made here of another excellent and worthy man, Minister Moller. He came from Bielefeld, like

himself, and was bound to my old teacher by lasting ties of friendship. In the legislature he was one of the leaders of the National Liberals, by whom he was highly esteemed, as he was in the Reichstag, on account of his upright, distinguished Westphalian characteristics and his great experience in the commercial-political domain.

When Imperial Chancellor Bulow suggested Moller to me as minister I remarked that he was a party man and member of the Reichstag. The chancellor said that the National Liberals would be pleased at Moller's appointment. I observed that the state ministry of the Prussian King could not and must not be a party ministry, but must stand above the parties in entire independence of them; that I esteemed Moller personally very much, but, should he become minister, every member of the legislature would have the ambition to become one likewise; that, through Moller's appointment, the ambitions of the other parties to obtain ministerial chairs would also be aroused, and nobody could foresee the consequences; that, moreover, Moller would be greatly misused in the Reichstag, from which I did not wish to take him on account of his influence with all parties.

Despite these objections, and my advice against it, Bulow stuck to his idea. Moller became minister, and, as such, stood very well with the emperor, what I had prophesied occurred comparatively soon: Minister Moller was obliged to retire by circumstances partially connected with the inner workings of his party.

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