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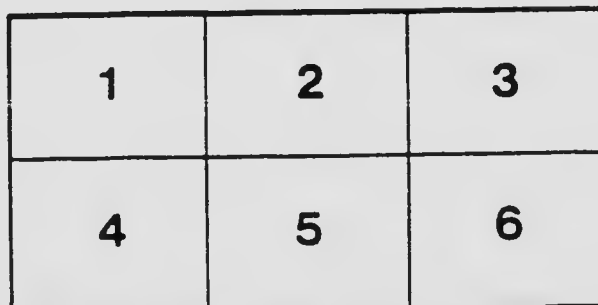
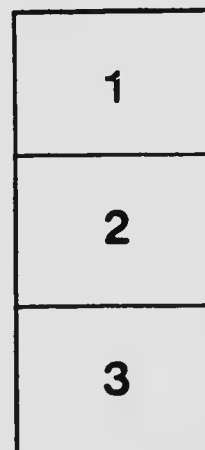
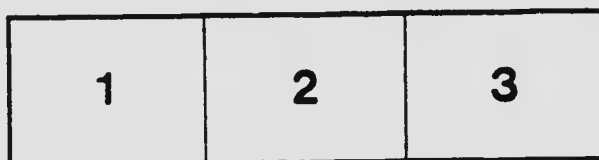
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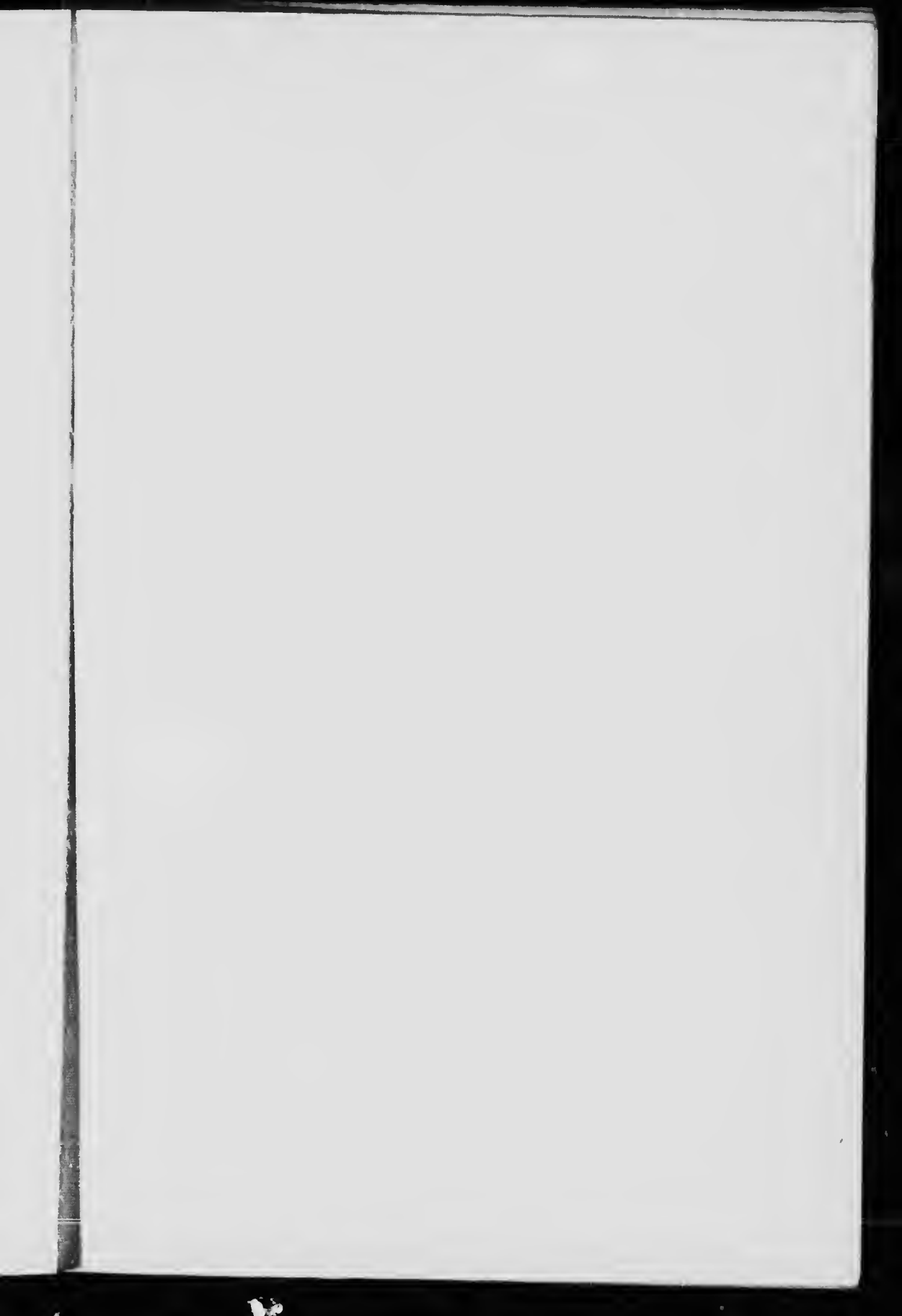
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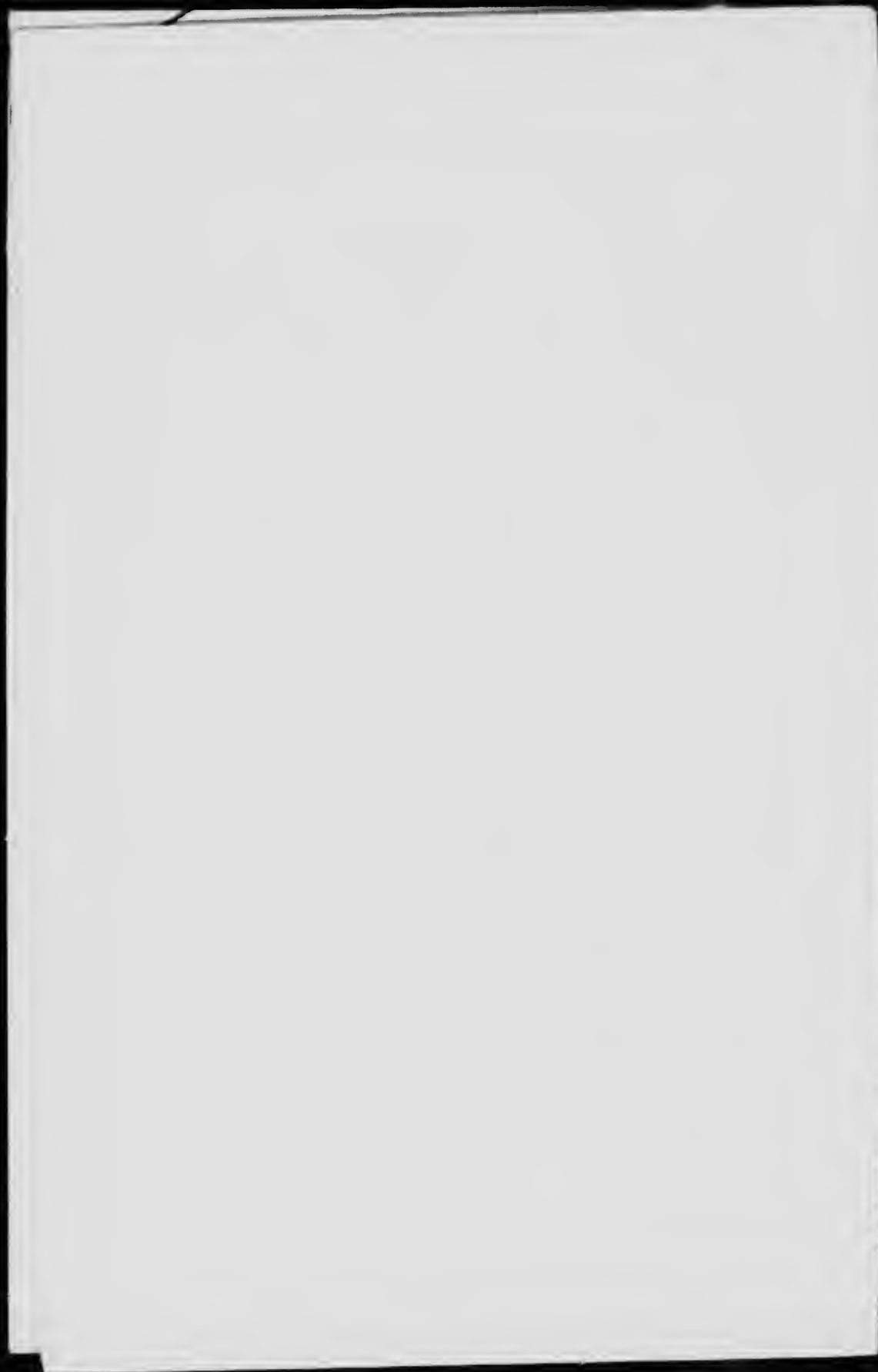
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THE BERLIN COURT  
UNDER WILLIAM II









Photo VORGT

EMPEROR WILLIAM II.

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# The Berlin Court Under William II

By  
Count Axel von Schwering

*With Photogravure Illustrations*

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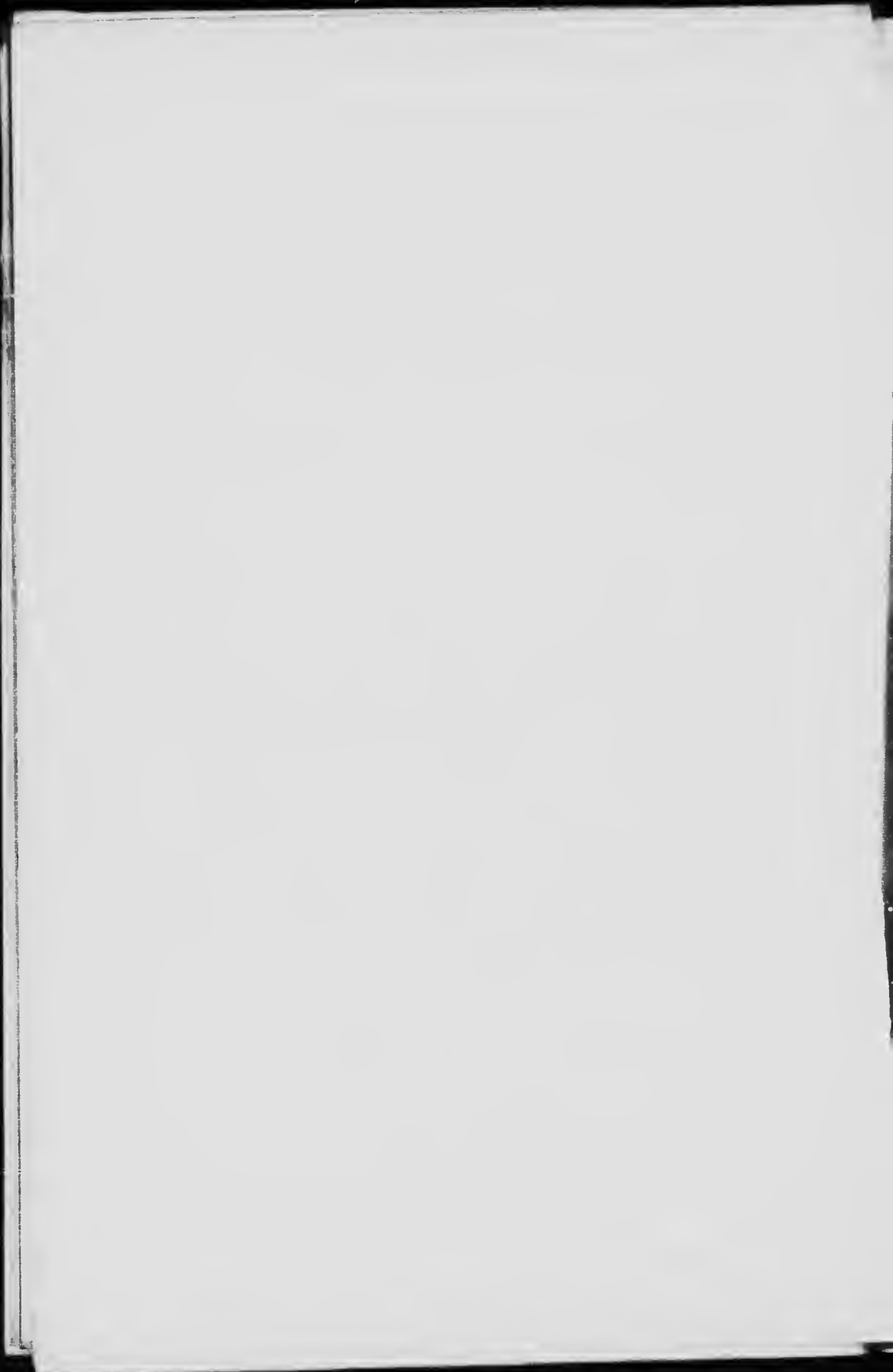
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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE work here presented is issued under an assumed name, in accordance with the expressed wish of the distinguished author. Otherwise, it would not have been possible to make public the bulk of the information which appears in its pages, a remark which applies particularly to the Diary of the episodes that led up to the war.

The high personage, through whom this remarkable document came into our possession, declares that the intimacy which existed between the author and his Imperial master was so long-standing and close as to render it both logical and legitimate to believe all the details given in the Diary.

In order to preserve its intensely human note the Diary has been retained in the original first-person style in which it was written.



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# THE BERLIN COURT UNDER WILLIAM II

## CHAPTER I

### EMPEROR WILLIAM II

**F**EW personalities have been discussed with greater vehemence than that of William II., third German Emperor, and ninth King of Prussia. Few sovereigns have occupied the attention of the world as he has done ever since he was a boy, even at a time when it seemed that he would have many years to wait before he could wear the diadem of the Hohenzollerns.

How much more important, therefore, it is to examine his personality at the present moment, when events are casting a sinister aspect on many of his public actions. It seems only the other day since he greeted an English deputation at Potsdam as "Gentlemen and Brothers," and yet as I write there is a growing feeling that his protestations of love and regard for England and the English have been nothing but deliberate dissembling on his part.\*

\* This was written in the summer of 1914.

## The Berlin Court under William II

There is no doubt in the eyes of his country he is a hero, the Master Man, who has made Germany a dominating factor in the statecraft of Europe. But there are some even among his friends, who are greatly perturbed by the recent aggrandising trend of his policy. Twice in the last three years has the German Empire been brought to the edge of war, and when the dark clouds which loomed in the horizon rolled away it was declared that the Kaiser's love of peace had prevented the threatened catastrophe. There was another explanation—not so complimentary—that the Kaiser did not think the moment yet propitious for the great adventure which would involve civilisation in the most awful conflict in history. Is the Emperor William a man who has long contrived to seem what he was not, to speak of high ideals which he did not possess, of humanitarian plans that did not exist? Are all these actions and words part of a comedy he is playing—a comedy which I sometimes fear is destined to end in tragedy? I know he is a man of good, even noble, impulses, and loves to perform generous acts. Though he cares for his own ambition beyond everything, yet he cherishes a deep and true affection for his wife and children and the country over which he rules with almost despotic sway.

What he is, circumstances and the teachings of men with misguided ambitions have to a great extent made him; and though volumes have been written about William II., yet it seems to me that only a

## Characteristics of Temperament

man like myself, who has known the Kaiser since his childhood, can describe him with impartiality and justice. To some he appears as a god, whilst others see in him a menace to the peace of the world.

It seems to me that few, so far, have given themselves the trouble to study his character in relation to the circumstances which went to its moulding, or to take those circumstances into account when trying to understand what, at first sight, appear to be mental intricacies. One of his self-deceptions is that, above everything else, he is a man of duty; and he takes care to keep always before his eyes what he considers to be his duty. There is no hesitation about him, and he is a strong man, partly because in a distant past, not forgotten by him, he was weak, and allowed others, stronger than he was at that period of his life, to lead him and to persuade him into doing things which he deeply regretted in later years. This regret at what could not be altered had more to do with the gravest step he ever took in the whole course of his life—the dismissal of Prince Bismarck—than the world knew or could guess. It may not be without interest if I attempt to give some details of the circumstances when I come to touch on that part of the public career of the present German Emperor.

At present what I want to do is to take him from the time of his early years, to consider the environment amidst which he was brought up, and to

## The Berlin Court under William II

examine the details of the position in which he found himself placed when he reached manhood, and out of which he emerged as a Sovereign.

William II. was the son of remarkable parents. Both the Emperor Frederick and the Empress Victoria belonged to rare types. They sincerely endeavoured to develop in all their children the essential qualities of their own characters, and to make them earnest, good, reliable, highly principled men and women. They instilled in them their own love for truth, and they always put the noblest examples of self-denial before their eyes.

The education of the Royal children was conducted on the simplest of lines, but under the most strict regime. Respect for discipline was continually impressed upon them, which perhaps became one reason for the dissensions that arose later on between the then Crown Prince and Princess and their eldest son, who reproached them for not observing in regard to the old Emperor the principles of obedience which they had enforced upon their own family.

Whilst the present monarch and his brothers were small boys, and indeed from their earliest years, their parents tried to train them in ignorance of the advantages of the high position they were ultimately to occupy, whilst always keeping before their minds the many obligations towards others that it entailed upon them. The idea was a good one, and can only honour

## William II. when a Boy

those who attempted to realise it. Unfortunately, the Crown Prince and Princess were not happy in their selection of the people whom they called to their aid. The tutors whom they chose for their sons were not the right people for the task of bringing up scions of a Royal House, and in particular Herr von Hinzpeter, by his sustained and fulsome flattery, exercised a regrettable influence over young Prince William, who, quicker in intellect than his brothers, was also more open to outside impressions, and more convinced as to his own qualities, not to feel friendly to those who praised them. This tutor was an ambitious man, who nursed serious hopes of one day ruling over Germany under the name of his pupil, whom he understood so little that he never gave a thought to the possibility that he might prove rebellious.

When William II. was a mere boy, the relations of his parents with the old Emperor, and especially with Prince Bismarck, were not of the best. The Crown Prince was disgusted with the systematic manner in which he was kept from any participation in the affairs of the State, and did not, moreover, agree with the principles on which the government of the country was being conducted. His leanings were decidedly Liberal; his personal feelings far too gentle to admit the ruthless policy with the help of which Prince Bismarck had reconstituted the unity of Germany. He admired the Chancellor; he was grateful to him; he recognised his immense services and his devotion

## The Berlin Court under William II

to the Hohenzollern dynasty; but there was never at any time the slightest trace of sympathy between the two men. Unhappily, the future Emperor Frederick tried to transmit his feelings to his son, which was a mistake, both from a political as well as a personal point of view.

Prince William, as he was called at the time, had always been his grandfather's favourite. The venerable monarch liked to pet the bright little boy, who always ran to meet him with joy; and the relations between the old man, bowed down under the weight of his years, and the merry child remained always tender and affectionate. The youth, before whom the book of life was opening, had the instinct to turn to his grandfather, and to ask him to help his inexperience in deciphering it. This alone would have been sufficient to ensure the Emperor's love, even if other reasons had not contributed to win it for him. We all know the pleasure which old people find in being able to get juniors to accept their judgments and opinions, and the impatience which they feel when they find that the generation next to their own sees quite different points of view from those which they consider to be the only right ones.

This sense of impatience was always more or less noticeable in the relations between the aged Emperor and his son. William I. became vaguely alarmed as to what would happen, after he was gone, to the colossal work he had performed. He felt no security as to its



## His Grandfather's Favourite

ultimate fate, feeling, as he did, that very probably the government of both Germany and Prussia would be conducted on quite different lines from those which he had adopted in conjunction with the famous Minister who had worked with him to secure the greatness of his country and his dynasty.

Whilst holding his grandson on his knee, he talked to him more seriously than he would have done under different circumstances; he tried to instil into him his feelings of dignity, independence, and sense of the greatness of the mission with which Providence had entrusted him; and his words fell on fruitful ground. The boy, when he became a youth, thought far more of his grandfather's words than of his parents' lessons. The teachings of the monarch whom the whole country revered, as well as those of the great statesman whom it admired, had taken root and borne fruit, the natural independence of the Prince's character making him more inclined to listen to them than to the idealistic dreams of his father, whose nature was so different from his own. At heart he despised his parents, though he would have felt very sorry to have to admit it. If ever misunderstandings existed anywhere, it was in the Prussian Royal Family during the last years of Emperor William I.

Notwithstanding, strong ties of affection bound these people together. Although diametrically opposed in their opinions, yet they held the same principles, were devoted to the same duties, and were ready to sacri-

## The Berlin Court under William II

vice all that they held dear for the sake of their country, whose greatness and welfare they all had so much at heart. Nevertheless, these differences existed, and perhaps the very care which was taken to hide them from the world helped to make them more acute, in the same way that every passion waxes stronger in proportion to the necessity of keeping it secret. The boy, who every day of his life witnessed little outbursts of impatience from his father and mother, who saw them fret under the restraint imposed upon them and get weary of their state of dependence, began to think seriously of what would be his own fate when, in his turn, he would find himself confronted by the authority of a father who was at the same time his Sovereign. Around him hopes were entertained by intriguing people that he might be made a tool for furthering their own mad schemes and keeping in check the ambitious plans of Frederick, which were entirely opposed to their own. The Crown Prince and his wife were, unfortunately, unpopular among the followers of Prince Bismarck, and though Frederick was liked by the Army, he failed to inspire affection in its officers, who mistrusted his chivalrous nature and scoffed at his ideals, which were quite different from those of a Prussian Junker.

In Prince William these people hoped to find a worthy successor of the great Electors of Brandenburg. Whence that hope arose it would be difficult to say; it was more instinctive than anything else,

## Prince William at Bonn

because at that time there was no reason to think that Prince William would soon become Emperor; but the feeling was there, and it was fanned most cleverly into flame by the artifices of Prince Bismarck, who, fearful of seeing his work destroyed, sought to find a defender for it in the person of the young man who seemed destined in time to ascend the throne of the great Barbarossa.

I have said that the education of William II. had been conducted on false lines. What I meant was that it had lacked that unity of thought and conduct which would have been essential to turn his mind and intelligence definitely in one direction or another. As things turned out, Herr Hinzpeter only developed in him a feeling of restlessness under every kind of restraint. Later on, when he was sent to the University of Bonn, he found himself thrown into the society of young men of his own age, who naturally looked up to him as their future Sovereign, and tried in their turn to imbue him with their own warlike instincts and thirst for more laurels, more glory, more successful battlefields; and he listened to them, too.

He enjoyed at Bonn far more liberty than he ever had in Berlin, and it was there that for the first time he found himself in a certain sense his own master. He got into contact with the world, and in that respect the resolution to send him there was a wise one; but, on the other hand, his stay at the University developed critical faculties which he did not know later on how

## The Berlin Court under William II

to apply with sufficient discrimination, bringing them to bear upon many questions it would have been wiser for him to leave untouched.

Whilst he seemed to be devoting his whole time to his studies, he was, however, carefully looking around him, making plans for the future, and endeavouring to shape his existence as an heir to a throne who would be obliged by the force of circumstances to witness many things he did not approve of in the very least. He had seen his father under such circumstances, and he felt convinced that later on he would find himself in a similar position of difficulty. He clung to his grandfather for protection, though he vaguely guessed that this was the one thing for which he would not easily be forgiven when the old man closed his eyes for evermore. That conviction did not tend to make him tender in regard to his father and mother, and it is scarcely surprising, therefore, that when a day came on which the question arose of his taking his father's place in his father's lifetime, that he should have felt tempted to be a party to the scheme, regardless of the consequences.

He was married when barely twenty-two years old to an amiable, but not remarkably pretty, woman, with outstanding qualities of heart and mind. Notwithstanding all that has been asserted to the contrary, he has made her an excellent husband, kind and attentive, treating her with the greatest courtesy

## How William Flattered Bismarck

and respect. At the beginning of the union many things were said concerning his flirting propensities, but I do not believe these were justified. At least I feel sure that the rumours that have attributed to him intrigues with ladies belonging to the highest German society had no foundation in fact. At that period of his life Prince William was very careful what he was about, being well aware that certain people would have been only too glad to find him in fault in regard to his conjugal fidelity—a matter upon which his father laid great stress, having been himself a model of what a husband should be.

It was about this time that the present German Emperor gave proofs of the rare power of repression which is the most striking feature of his extraordinary character. Whilst apparently entirely absorbed in his military and other duties, he contrived to keep a sharp look out on all that was going on around him, and also to form for himself opinions concerning the people with whom he came into contact. He took their mental and moral standard quite mercilessly and with a spirit of observation most extraordinary in a man so young. He also did his best to learn the different ways in which a great State ought to be governed, and quite won Prince Bismarck's heart by asking him to initiate him into the intricacies of Imperial administration by allowing him to study economic and political questions under his guidance. The mighty statesman felt flattered at this mark of deference from his future

## The Berlin Court under William II

Sovereign, and he often remarked to his circle of intimate friends that it was exceedingly rare to find a youth of the age of Prince William so willing to bow to the experience of his elders. The young lion had flattered the old one into submission in the sense that he had contrived to imbue him with the conviction that his work was going to be continued, and ran no risk of being spoilt after he was gone.

That last idea was very soothing to the vanity of Prince Bismarck. Can it be wondered, therefore, if he nursed the idea when the illness of the poor Crown Prince was pronounced to be cancer, that it would be more to the advantage of the German Empire if Frederick could be induced to resign his rights to the Crown in favour of his eldest son?

Here we touch upon that most delicate subject, the San Remo tragedy. So much has been written about it that there seems nothing more to be penned. Certain things, however, have never come to the knowledge of the public in connection with it, and amongst them is the legend that Prince William, when he arrived on a visit to his parents, during their sojourn at the Villa Zirio, brought with him an act of abdication for his father's signature. This is absolutely untrue.

As I have already tried to make plain, the present German Emperor had inherited in a considerable degree that sense of duty which has always been characteristic of the Hohenzollerns. Had such a

## Settling Prince William's Position

mission been entrusted to him, he would have refused it, though not perhaps with indignation.

The fact is that the Emperor William I. never contemplated the idea of dispossessing his only son of the rights that his birth had conferred upon him, and Bismarck knew him far too well ever to have dared to make such a suggestion. Again, there never existed in the family statutes of the Hohenzollerns—and this is confirmed by Prince Bismarck in his memoirs—a clause about which certain newspapers made such a fuss, and which was said to restrict the rights of any member of that family who should be attacked by an incurable disease. It was a pure invention to assert that such was the case. That William I. was desirous of sparing the feelings of the Crown Prince as much as he could is proved by the text of one of his last letters to Prince Bismarck, which it may not be out of place to reproduce here in its entirety. It was written on the 23rd of December, 1887, when it was already known that the days of Prince Frederick were numbered, and was a reply to a proposition that the Chancellor had made to initiate Prince William into current State affairs in view of the probable change in his position. This is what the Emperor thought about it:

“I am glad to have this opportunity to explain to you the reasons for my silence, in reply to your proposal to initiate my grandson into State affairs in view of the sad state of health of my son, the Crown

## The Berlin Court under William II

Prince. I am quite agreed with you as to this necessity, and would have liked it to have been done, but do not well see how it can be managed in view of the great difficulties which stand in the way.

“ You are already aware that the very natural decision which I had taken, upon your advice, to grant to my grandson William, in such cases when I should be prevented from doing so, the right to sign for me the decisions of my civil and military cabinets, with the mention ‘ By order of the King,’ violently angered the Crown Prince, who asked whether it was intended in Berlin to pass over altogether the rights which his birth had conferred upon him. I think it likely that my son, after having thought the matter over, has reassured himself on that point. But it would be most difficult for him to do so if he were to learn that a greater access to State affairs had been granted to his son, and that he had also been given a civil aide-de-camp, as frequently I used to call my own advisers.

“ At that time the situation was quite different from what it is at the present day, because the King my father might have had reasons to designate a successor to the then Crown Prince. Yet, though my inheritance of the Crown was long foreseen, I was not initiated into the affairs of the State until I had reached my forty-fourth year, when my brother appointed me a member of the Ministry, with the title of Prince of Prussia. It then became an urgent matter for me to



## Initiation into Statecraft

have at my side a man well acquainted with the management of State affairs, because it was necessary for me to be prepared before each sitting of the Cabinet in regard to the matters to be discussed. I used to receive every day the political dispatches after they had passed, according to the number of the seals upon them, through four, five, or six different hands.

“To provide a statesman as companion to my grandson, as you propose, simply for the purpose of political conversations would be a measure that we could not possibly explain by the necessity of preparing him for a determined object, as was the case with myself. It would only anger and distress my son still further, and this must be avoided at all cost.

“I therefore propose to you to maintain the old method which has been followed in regard to Prince William until now, and in order to initiate him into the various details of government of which he is still in ignorance, to leave this initiation to specially defined ministries that could be grouped together two by two. In that way my grandson could, if he liked, go during the course of the winter to the Foreign Office, and would also be authorised to frequent the Treasury. After the New Year he would no longer be allowed to do so, and might perhaps have a spell at the Home Office. It would perhaps also be necessary to give him the chance of looking into things at the War Office. Thus, continuation of the present

## The Berlin Court under William II

course of action would not, I feel, irritate my son quite so much as the one which you suggest, though, as you may remember, he is also energetically opposed to that. Please to let me know your opinion on this matter."

This letter proves that whatever may have been the opinion of his entourage as to an abdication by the Crown Prince in favour of his eldest son, the old Emperor himself never gave the idea a thought. Indeed, he would have been the first to raise objections to such a plan, even had Frederick III. been inclined to make this sacrifice. William I. loved his heir in spite of the differences that had so often arisen between them, and he would have suffered in his pride as well as in his affections had any steps been contemplated by which Frederick would have been set aside.

Beyond this, he was actuated by the curious feeling that he himself was so strong and healthy that he would probably survive the stricken Frederick, and that consequently the vast inheritance that he would leave behind him would pass directly to his grandson. This conviction, whilst it made him most gentle and kind toward the sick man, also awakened a greater interest in the grandson whom he thought a worthy successor of his policy, and for whom he felt an ever-increasing solicitude. This point of view has, I believe, never been sufficiently appreciated by

## The Affection of Withered Age

the public, which could not easily grasp the fact that this old, old man did not realise that his time was also getting near, but on the contrary was trying to reconcile himself to face the heavy trial he believed was going to befall him, when his only son and heir would precede him to the tomb.

All those who had occasion to approach the Emperor during that painful winter, when the Crown Prince was fighting against his dreadful disease under the orange trees that surrounded the Villa Zirió on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, were struck by his apparent resignation, and were surprised to hear him propose plans for a future in which the Prince, whom he had been accustomed to consider as his heir, had no part. It was perhaps this fact that originated the idea that William I. desired that the Crown should pass directly into the possession of his grandson.

Nothing of the kind was in his mind; he believed himself to be in good health, he felt fresh and vigorous, and the signs of old age that had begun to be apparent in him, and which others had noticed, he did not or would not observe. On the other hand, he was very well aware that there existed no hope of saving his son, and that all the latter could expect was a short prolongation of an existence which was more a martyrdom than anything else. It was therefore natural, though no one seemed to realise it at the time, that the old monarch should turn all his attention and give all the affection his withered, aged

## The Berlin Court under William II

heart was still capable of feeling, to the young, active, energetic, brilliant Hussar officer in whom he saw himself revived, and whose charm had influenced him. as, indeed, it had influenced all who came into contact with his dashing character.

It is to this resignation to an apparently inevitable event that must be attributed the extreme tenderness with which William I. viewed his grandson. Unfortunately, this was not understood by the outsiders, who, as is generally the case in every such great tragedy, tried their best to embitter it. They took advantage of certain facts, the causes of which they did not realise or guess, to turn them to their own profit, and went from one person to another carrying tales, mostly construed out of their personal, generally false, impressions, which not only did considerable harm, but also brought about a complete misunderstanding between the very people whom their common misfortune ought to have bound more closely to one another.

It is a fact that both the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess were embittered against their eldest son because they had been told that he sought to anticipate his father's birthright, and was lending himself to an intrigue the object of which was to wrench the sceptre from his dying hand. It was but natural under these circumstances that both Frederick III. and his Consort should feel hurt at what appeared to them—as, indeed, it would have seemed to anybody

## A Silly Rumour

—to be an act of abominable ingratitude on the part of their firstborn. As a consequence, it was not surprising that when Prince William arrived at San Remo he was received coldly; more, indeed, as a rival and competitor than as a dutiful son. The Crown Princess especially was incensed against him, and her indignation was proportionate to the immense love she bore her husband. Doubt against her own child had been so deeply instilled into her mind that she did not even seek an explanation from him, or try to find whether all she had been told about him were true.

Prince William had never thought of putting himself into his father's place. Indeed, it is extraordinary that anyone could have suspected him of doing so. He knew that a very short time would see him Emperor, and therefore there was no need for him to compromise himself and to hurt his father's and his mother's feelings and pride by rising in rebellion against them.

Whatever may have been his faults and mistakes at that period of his life, he certainly was no fool, and it would have been folly to jeopardise his future reputation for the sake of reigning a few months earlier. Besides, he, too, shared his grandfather's conviction that the latter would outlive the Crown Prince; therefore there would have been no sense in insisting on despoiling his father of rights which the whole world believed he would never be able to enjoy. It must

## The Berlin Court under William II

not be forgotten that the death of William I. came as a complete surprise to his family, and that no one, when it took place, had given a thought to the possibility of his being replaced by his own son instead of his grandson upon the throne.

This alone ought to dispose of the absurd rumour that a plot had been hatched between Prince William and Prince von Bismarck against the sick Crown Prince. One may well wonder of what use such a plot would have been in face of facts already so patent to the most observant, that only blind malice could have given birth to the fable. But the friends of the Crown Princess, eager to sow dissension between her and her firstborn, brought her long tales about the latter's intrigues, until at last they so embittered her mind that she really believed in his utter ingratitude. Horrified at conduct she considered to be monstrous, she not only refused to have an explanation with him, but when he arrived at San Remo treated him with such contempt and harshness that he left the next day with lacerated feelings, persuaded that his mother was the most dangerous enemy he possessed.

Can it be wondered that, in such circumstances, the inexperience of Prince William prevented him from seeing that he was the victim of a dark intrigue; and that, in his turn, indignant at the unjust suspicions respecting his intentions, he should have returned to Berlin in anger and with wounded feelings, and

## William in a Rage

should have sought relief in the sympathy which the Chancellor of the Empire, Prince Bismarck, so generously proffered ?

It seems that there took place a memorable scene at the Royal Castle of Charlottenburg a few days after Frederick III. had arrived there from Italy, following the old Emperor's death. The new Crown Prince was alone with his mother, and some instinct which he could not control made him address himself to her, with the request that she would tell him in what she thought him guilty in regard to her and to his father. The Empress, indignant at what she considered to be pure insolence, turned round and upbraided him for having attempted to dethrone the latter. Surprised and pained at the accusation, Prince William began denying it with energy, at which the Empress simply shrugged her shoulders and replied that one lie more or less was, after all, a simple matter to one who had carried ingratitude to such an extent. The young man, furious at the remark, went out of the room banging the door behind him, and muttering that he would remind her of those words when he was master.

Now that time has done its work, and that more than a quarter of a century has gone by since the events took place, one can but wonder at all these misunderstandings and their dire results ; but at the moment people seemed to have lost their heads entirely, so overwhelmed did they feel by the series of misfortunes that had come upon them. It is therefore

## The Berlin Court under William II

scarcely surprising that a young man of the age that the present German Emperor was then should have felt more or less at a loss, and have committed errors through not knowing how to make sufficient allowance for suspicions that were based more on appearances than preconceived ideas as to the motives of his actions. What he did seemed to others to be hard-hearted or cruel, whilst in reality they were merely unreasonable acts prompted by unreasoned impulses.

He was barely twenty-nine years old. He had been reared in the idea that many years of waiting were to be his before he found himself in possession of the throne to which he had been born. Finding himself suddenly faced by the most tremendous responsibilities, he lost his equilibrium.

He was but little more than a boy, and he saw himself the object of flattery from people whom he had been taught to look up to and respect, including even the great statesman whose every word was law. It was more than sufficient to turn his head, and to give him an ill-balanced sense of his own importance, which was bound to lead him into errors and imprudences; this, unfortunately for his future reputation, he has not completely realised to this very day.

Nevertheless, those first months of the year 1888 form a period of his life of which William II. does not care to talk or to be reminded.

Now that years have gone by and he himself is the father of a numerous family, William II. understands



## Death of William I

better, perhaps, the circumstances in which he played such a sorry part, and very probably he has not retained kindly feelings in regard to those whose advice led him into a course of conduct that was tactless, to say the least of it. But in those months during which his position changed from a Prince of Prussia to that of German Emperor, he lost the sense of proportion, and, overwhelmed by the newness of everything that was befalling him, he overestimated his position, as in like circumstances many others have done in the past and will do in the future. He tried to show that he was strong, whilst in reality he was merely the plaything of strong people, or at least of those who had more experience than himself. He strove to subdue his feelings, but was not always successful, and gave way to emotions which he endeavoured to hide by an expression intended to show determination of character, which in fact resolved into one of cruelty. The importance of the great events in which he was sometimes a willing—and more often an unwilling—actor proved too much for him and his years.

There was one day in his life which changed him from a young man into an old one. That was when he stood beside the small, narrow camp bed on which the first German Emperor was breathing his last, covered by the military cloak under which he had always slept on the battlefields. Beside him stood Prince Bismarck, whose eyes were filled with tears that,

## The Berlin Court under William II

strong and imperious as he was, he did not attempt to conceal. The aged, infirm Empress Augusta had been carried into the room in the arm-chair which she had never left for years, and she was holding in her own the already cold hand of her husband, the dying Emperor. The Royal Family surrounded her, whilst in a distant corner of the room a few old servants were silently weeping for their beloved master who was passing from all earthly cares. The dying man opened his eyes, and let them fall on the figure of his grandson as the latter bent over him. "You must always keep upon good terms with the Emperor of Russia," he murmured; "there are no reasons against it," thus giving way to the anxieties he had always felt on a question upon which he knew that his grandson held opinions entirely contrary to his own. These were almost the last words he was heard to utter, and very soon after he had delivered them his spirit took its flight.

At the tragic moment of the passing away of the founder of the new Empire, the absence of his only son and successor could not but make itself felt, and those present at the last earthly moments of William I. were conscious of a premonition that the angel of death who had just entered the room would soon be claiming another victim. The Emperor was no more, and the other Emperor who would have to pick up the burden was far away, seeking on milder shores the health that, alas! would nevermore be granted to him.

## Emperor Frederick and his Son

What was more natural, then, than to turn toward the young man who was destined in the course of time to reign? Prince Bismarck was the first to approach him and to ask him for his instructions. These were characteristic. "The garrison must be informed at once of the demise of its Emperor," said the new Crown Prince, "and then . . . you must wire to San Remo."

The telegram was sent, and the very next day Frederick III., together with his Consort and their daughters, started on his return journey home, to the throne which he was going to occupy for so short a time. At San Pier d'Arca the King and Queen of Italy were awaiting the new Sovereign, and a heartrending interview took place between the two monarchs—an interview from which Humbert returned with tears in his eyes and profound sorrow in his countenance. At Leipzig all the Prussian Ministry, with Prince Bismarck at its head, had come to meet the Emperor, and it was the Chancellor who was the first to greet him and offer him his good wishes for the future. Frederick III. was deeply moved, and when he saw the faithful servant of his father, he opened his arms to him and pressed him to his breast. But the Empress simply looked on; she did not possess that spirit of forgiveness which made her husband eminently attractive.

It was only at Charlottenburg that Prince William, now Heir Apparent to the throne, met his parents.

## The Berlin Court under William II

He was awaiting them on the platform of the little railway station, dressed in full uniform, rigid and stiff, but with an emotion that he vainly tried to subdue. He kissed his father's hand, and helped him to alight, but he did not say a word; and when he advanced towards the Empress to greet her she turned her head aside, and seemed to busy herself with the Emperor, without making any sign that she noticed her son. He bit his lips, but kept silent, also turning to his father, whom he accompanied to the brougham that was to take him to the Castle of Charlottenburg, where he had wished to reside until he could be removed to Potsdam, at all times his favourite residence.

It was at Charlottenburg that the last act of the tragedy which had begun at San Remo took place. During the two months which the new Emperor spent there the tension between him and his heir became more acute than ever, being unfortunately aggravated by the ill-natured people to whom I have already referred, who did their best to bring about a complete rupture between the Crown Prince and his parents. The former was very well aware then that his time of probation would be very short, and that a few weeks would see him on the Throne. He had a resentful character, and he contrived to let his mother know that he would always remember the unjust suspicions she had entertained in regard to him and his intentions; and he put himself boldly at the head of the party that declared itself in opposition to the new

## An Unfilial Act

Sovereigns, whose reign had begun under such tragic circumstances.

Strange to say, the visit of Queen Victoria to Berlin, instead of increasing the irritation between the Empress and the Crown Prince, considerably allayed it. The Queen, as the old Emperor William had done before her, entertained a warm affection for her grandson, who on his side was very fond of his grandmother, whom he respected and feared at the same time. For one thing, she was a reigning Queen, and he always had great reverence for the persons of monarchs; then she loved him, and made allowances for the vivacity of his nature and temperament. When she arrived in Germany to take a last farewell of her son-in-law, the Emperor Frederick, she used her best endeavours to make her daughter understand that in the unhappy strife which was worrying her husband's last hours she was perhaps just as much in fault as Prince William. The latter was soon made aware of what Queen Victoria had said and done, and remained grateful to her for evermore.

What would have happened had the Royal drama lasted very much longer it is difficult to imagine; but when, in his turn, the Emperor Frederick had passed away, his successor allowed his feelings, which he had been obliged to keep in check whilst his father lived, unfettered sway, and at once took measures that surely might have been spared to the heart-broken, widowed Empress. He caused all the doors

## The Berlin Court under William II

of the New Palace, where his father had expired, to be closed, and forbade anyone to leave its precincts. When, late in the evening, the Empress Victoria tried to come out on the terrace to breathe a little fresh air, she found a Hussar officer stationed at the door leading thereto, who respectfully but firmly obliged her to return to her apartments.

One may well wonder what could have induced William II. to act so brutally to his own mother. It is probable that he could not to-day explain what they were; indeed, it is most likely that his ill-treatment of the widowed Empress proceeded merely from the desire to show her that henceforward he was the master, and meant to be considered as such. It is also possible that on this occasion he gave the world a glimpse of that arrogance which, though habitually obscured, is the dominating feature in his character.

This desire for domination over everybody and everything, this thirst for absolute power, has never left the Emperor. He wants to control human beings as well as events, to assert his own personality in everything that he touches, and in all the things in which he is concerned, be it ever so remotely. Whilst he was young this feeling led him to commit his worst mistakes, but as his age increased and somewhat sobered the extreme excitability of his early years, he exercised more restraint on himself. Not, however, with invariable success; even in recent years, the calm of Europe has been ruffled on more than one

## An Early Indiscretion

occasion by hastiness of speech and action on the part of the Emperor.

When he ascended the throne everybody believed that he would prove a mere puppet in the hands of Prince Bismarck, whose pupil and admirer he was supposed to be, and who had done his best to bring forward all his good points and to instil into the public mind of Germany the conviction that her interests would not suffer through the change of reign. William, on his side, had never missed an opportunity of demonstrating his great admiration for the statesman to whose efforts, ability, and wisdom the Hohenzollern dynasty owed so much. He had been extravagant in his expressions of gratitude to him, and had carried his apparent submission to his late grandfather's counsellor farther than he ought to have done had tact presided over his actions at that time.

A good many people still remember his famous toast as Crown Prince on Prince Bismarck's birthday, when he declared that now Prussia only looked to the Chancellor since its late chief was dead, and the present one lay wounded and incapable of presiding over its destinies. The speech, which was the first of a long series of indiscretions, caused a sensation at the time it was uttered, and was most unfavourably commented upon. It was considered as lacking in affection as well as reverence for the dying Emperor Frederick, and even among the personal friends of the Crown Prince it was felt that it had

## The Berlin Court under William II

not bettered his position. Even Bismarck expressed himself in that sense, and remarked that he felt sorry to have been made the object of such tactless praise.

The Empress Victoria was wildly furious, but her indignation was subordinated to her intense love for her husband. She contrived that the latter should not hear of his son's misguided language, so that he should not have added to his sufferings the bitterness of learning that neither his state of health nor the moral anguish he was enduring had excited the compassion of his own child, who had not hesitated to affirm in public that his father was no longer able to uphold his country's flag.

The self-control exercised by the Empress on this occasion cannot be too highly praised. She showed herself a true and devoted wife, and gave proof of an almost superhuman strength of will which was the more remarkable that her nature was essentially impetuous, almost as impetuous as that of her son, and it would have been natural had she let loose the indignation she must have felt. But though she did not open her mouth on the subject to Frederick III., she called the Crown Prince into her presence, and told him plainly what she thought of his conduct. The interview was a stormy one, and after that day years passed before mother and son spoke together again; even the death of the Emperor did not throw them into each other's arms, as even the enemies of the Empress Victoria expected it would.





**EMPERESS FREDERICK OF PRUSSIA**  
(Photograph taken in her study at Carlsruhe, Baden)



**EMPEROR FREDERICK III OF PRUSSIA**  
(Photograph taken at Sanssouci during his last illness)



## Bismarck's Promise

I have been told by a person who was present at the death-bed of the Emperor Frederick III. that nothing could be more poignant than the closing scenes of his earthly career. The Sovereign who had so bravely fought against his cruel illness had been getting gradually weaker and weaker, until at last inflammation of the lungs set in, and it became evident that the end was near. Frederick himself felt it, and knew, perhaps even better than the doctors who attended him, that a few hours was all that was left to him in this world. He could not speak, and for the last three days he had not the strength to take nourishment, which had to be artificially administered. Toward morning on the 15th of June, 1888, he fell asleep for a few hours, but it was more unconsciousness than sleep. The Empress was kneeling beside him, and holding his hand whilst he lay with closed eyes and laboured breath.

At about ten o'clock some consciousness returned, and, seeing Prince Bismarck, he made him a sign to approach, when, by a last effort he lifted the fingers of his Consort and put them into those of the Iron Chancellor. The action, simple as it was, deeply stirred all those who witnessed it. It looked like a dying man's appeal to the man whom he knew would remain at the head of the German Empire after he was gone, to watch over the wife he was leaving behind him exposed to all kinds of dangers and perils. Bismarck, the stern, cold statesman, for once lost

## The Berlin Court under William II

his usual composure. He bent over the living monarch, and, as if to reassure him and to promise him that his last wishes would be respected, he kissed the cold hand of the Empress Victoria, saying, as he did so, "Sire, you may rely on me." Frederick's head fell back exhausted on his pillows, and shortly afterwards he passed away.

The Empress dropped down on the bed, and remained for over half an hour with her face hidden beside the dead body of her Consort, sobbing convulsively. Her son, the new Sovereign, remained standing beside her, without moving a muscle of his impassive face. And when at last it became necessary to remove the desolate widow from the remains of the husband she had loved so devotedly, it was Prince Henry who led his mother to her own apartments.

A few hours later she reappeared, holding in her hands the sword of the late Emperor and a laurel wreath with which she had come to meet him after the triumph of Sedan. She laid the wreath upon his breast, and with trembling fingers entwined those of the dead man around the sword; then she fell once more on her knees, and stayed there until the morning light broke into the room, heralding the dawn of a new day. Victoria raised her head, and looked for the last time on the beloved features; then she slowly turned away.

The funeral of Frederick III. took place a few

## William II. Ascends the Throne

days later, but his widow did not attend it. She had left the New Palace, so full of mournful memories, and had retired into a little country house which Frederick had built for her at Bornstedt, near Potsdam. It was there she spent her first sad days of widowhood, before leaving Berlin and its neighbourhood for a long time.

Her brother, the then Prince of Wales, arrived for the obsequies of the Emperor, and visited her in her retreat. She was tenderly attached to him, and his presence was the only ray of comfort that was granted to her in her misery. Her son never went near her. He accused her of having appropriated the papers and documents of his late father, and resorted to the most unwarrantable measures to compel her to give them up. During that trying time the Empress bore herself with the utmost dignity. She never complained, never uttered a word of blame. But she refused to see her son, and, though ultimately she forgave him, she seemed never to forget.

When Emperor William II. ascended the throne, he had much indeed to think of. He had to begin his *métier de Roi*, to consolidate his own position. He was very well aware that, so far, the world had not formed a very high opinion as to his moral standards, and that his conduct in general had not won for him many sympathies abroad. He found himself controlled at home by the iron hand of Prince Bismarck, of whom

## The Berlin Court under William II

he understood well enough it was yet too early to rid himself. His other Ministers looked upon him with a certain uneasiness; his subjects wondered whither he was going to lead them; the Army was still distrustful of him; and, though he was very popular among the young officers of his own regiment of Hussars, he well knew that this popularity was not of a nature to do him any good. He had not, however, the slightest intention of allowing those comrades of his past to imagine they would be given any voice in the future. William II. had always had a very sure instinct as to the latitude he should allow to others, and had such a keen sense of the dignity of his position as a Sovereign as no monarch before him—with the exception of Louis XIV. of France—had ever possessed. With all his impetuosity his nature was earnest, thoughtful, and serious; and he was, like all the Hohenzollerns, imbued with strong autocratic feelings.

He took his place in the concert of European crowned heads without ostentation, but with an ease that was surprising in so young a man who had not even had the experience which comes from a period as Heir to the Throne, for he had only occupied that position for a few weeks. He succeeded two Sovereigns, one of whom had had great weight in the councils of Europe, to whom the whole world had looked up, and who had enjoyed universal respect for longer than many people cared to calculate. It was a heavy inheritance; and if those who watched his first steps

## Bismarck and His New Master

rather expected him to prove somewhat of a failure, they can be excused the impression.

It must be owned that during the first years of his reign the young Emperor gave some cause for alarm both to his friends and foes. His eager, passionate, impulsive nature led him but too often into mistakes, owing principally to his mania for making speeches which were singularly tactless and out of place. Finding himself absolute master of his actions, he admitted no observations whatever regarding the steps he chose to take. Restless and desirous of continual change, he justified the nickname that had been given him in Berlin, where it was commonly said that the first German Emperor had been an old, the second a wise, and the third one a travelling Sovereign ("Der greise Kaiser, der weise Kaiser, und der reise Kaiser"). He used to rush about from one place to another, startling all those whom he visited by the vagaries and apparent eccentricities of his demeanour, but keeping nevertheless all his wits about him, carefully observing all that he saw, and forgetting nothing that he heard. He was quite alive to the fact that whatever wise or unwise measure his Government adopted, it would be attributed, not to himself, but to Prince Bismarck; and whilst at first he had found it convenient not to be held responsible for the conduct of German politics and German affairs, it soon worried him to be considered in the light of a nonentity.

He had apparently admired the great Chancellor,

## The Berlin Court under William II

though, considering what followed, one may well doubt whether the admiration was so great as he tried to represent. He had never liked Bismarck, and had only had recourse to him, and put himself under his protection, because he wanted to have a shield between himself and his mother, whom he suspected of wanting to put him aside as far as she could. Moreover, he fully realised that it would be a great feather in his cap if Prince Bismarck expressed confidence in him and his intentions. Acting on this feeling, he spent the first year after his accession in wandering about Europe, paying visits to all the foreign courts, even to that of the Sublime Porte. He succeeded in concealing his impatience from his Chancellor, who thought that under the young monarch he would be allowed even more liberty than had been the case during the reign of the aged Emperor William. Bismarck, indeed, rather rejoiced to find that his new Sovereign seemed willing to depend entirely upon him for the conduct of State affairs, and had not exhibited any desire to keep them under his own control.

Of the various visits undertaken by William II., the most important two were those which he paid to the late Tsar at Peterhof and to Queen Victoria at Windsor. The last-mentioned was memorable for more than one reason. The Queen, as already mentioned, was extremely fond of her eldest grandson; she admired his genuine qualities, and her immense experience of mankind had made her very quickly



## Queen Victoria Chides William

discern the real worth of his character, without paying undue attention to his exuberances.

She had deplored more than anyone the painful scenes which had accompanied the death-bed of the Emperor Frederick, but she was too just not to have made allowances for the provocation which William II. had had to endure, not so much from his mother as from some people among her immediate friends. To these, indeed, can be attributed in great part the sad events which the palaces of Charlottenburg and Potsdam had witnessed, and which had left such terrible traces in the hearts of all concerned.

Certainly the Queen did not approve of all the actions of her grandson, but neither did she give unqualified praise to all those of her daughter. When she saw William II. she spoke to him quite openly on these matters, and she it was who opened his eyes as to the conduct of certain people whom he had not suspected of wanting to bring about dissension between himself and his parents, so that when he left England it was undoubtedly as a wiser man. It was after his visit to Queen Victoria that he began to reflect seriously on his former conduct, to perceive how very liable to reproach it had been, and to find rising within him an intense aversion to all those who had encouraged him in his ways. It is a question whether his latent dislike of Prince Bismarck did not then become more definite, and whether it was not during his conversations with his grandmother that he made up

## The Berlin Court under William II

his mind to dispense with the services of his Prime Minister.

Another consequence of the young Emperor's journey to British shores was the nature of the relations that established themselves from that day between him and his uncle, the then Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII. When the latter had attended the funeral of the Emperor Frederick at Potsdam he had not spared his reproaches to his nephew, and, forgetful of the latter's new position, had treated him as if he were still the boy whom he had been used to scold to his heart's content not so very long before. William II. said nothing, but thought a great deal; and whilst paying that first visit to Queen Victoria after his accession, he in his turn treated the Prince of Wales with a cool courtesy tinged with undisguised contempt which infuriated the latter, and made him realise the great difference in rank that now separated them. The Prince in his turn never forgave his nephew for it; and when, later on, he himself ascended the throne of Great Britain, he initiated a policy which brought about that important political event, the understanding between England, France and Russia. Whatever may be done and said, it was essentially an act which could only be viewed with hostility by the present German Emperor.

On his return from Windsor, those who knew him well remarked how considerably he had changed. Many of those who had been his companions when he was

## The Quarrel Begins

a dashing young Hussar officer he now treated with marked coolness; whilst, on the other hand, he tried to bring his mother round to a more charitable opinion of himself.

The marriages of his three sisters gave him an opportunity for showing some affection for the widowed Empress, of which he hastened to take advantage; and without expressing it in so many words, he tried to make her feel that he regretted all that had happened. It was also noticed that the influence of Herr von Hinzpeter was on the wane, and that he was no longer consulted on every important matter. Toward Bismarck, too, the attitude of the Emperor was modified. He began to assert himself, to attempt to take part in the conduct of the affairs of the Government; and once, when the Chancellor had expressed himself affronted at William II. for declaring that before signing any paper he wanted to read it and to grasp its contents, he coldly replied to Bismarck that he meant for the future to give up his apparent indifference regarding public matters, and intended to discuss them with his Chancellor, so as more fully to understand what he was expected to do.

At the same time he developed great interest in all that was going on in his country, devoting special attention to social and humanitarian objects, and putting himself at the head of a movement just then started for the amelioration of the condition of the working classes. He studied these different questions

## The Berlin Court under William II

with an assiduity that was quite remarkable in so young a man, consecrating to their examination a considerable amount of time, until he had quite grasped their import. He made up his mind that the only way in which these matters could be controlled by the State was for the State itself to attempt to solve them in a manner that would be favourable both to itself and to the working classes concerned.

This led to the beginning of the quarrel between William II. and Prince Bismarek. The latter, for once, had been mistaken in his appreciation of a human character. He had imagined he could retain his influence over the young Sovereign, and oblige him to do practically all he was told. He had never credited him with a strength of will capable of holding its own against his colossal personality and his power, not only in Germany but also in the whole of Europe. When a lady who was an intimate friend of the Chancellor's family, the Princess Odesscalchi, referred to the possibility of the Emperor's developing a craving for more independence than his powerful Minister consented to grant him, and of his one day feeling inclined to do without him, Bismarek simply shrugged his shoulders and carelessly replied, "He will never dare."

This false sense of security was the cause of the ultimate defeat of the first Chancellor of the new German Empire, and led to his departure from the stage of European politics, where he had played the leading part for so many years. This extraordinary event

## William II. at the Helm

occurred with far less fuss than one could have imagined. There was a general feeling in the air that Bismarek had outlived his reputation, and that, after all, he only got what he deserved. The Emperor, upon whom one had looked until that day as a very exuberant youth, began to inspire respect, and people realised that he was a man with whom one would have to count, and whose strength of will, power of dissimulation, and strong determination were of a most uncommon order.

It was from the day which saw the removal from office of the man who had been considered as an arbiter of the destinies of the whole of Europe that the real reign of William II. began. He set himself then to govern seriously, and with exceeding care and prudence ; and he displayed quite remarkable foresight and wisdom in his handling of Germany's foreign affairs, to which he gave his most special attention. He had learned one thing from the great Minister whom he had so brusquely dismissed, and that was, to be under no illusions as to political friendships.

He therefore applied himself to the strengthening of the military power of the German nation, to upholding the discipline of the Army, to the creation of a powerful Navy capable of holding its own on the high seas if need be, and to the development of his country's commercial and industrial resources so as to ensure its internal prosperity. At the same time he proclaimed himself resolutely as the champion of peace in Europe, and his influence made itself felt whenever peace was

## The Berlin Court under William II

threatened. He had been represented as a warlike Prince ; he tried by his whole conduct to prove that he had realised all the dangers which a war, even if successful and glorious, entails, as well as the misery, sorrow, and distress that accompany it. He never relaxed his watchfulness over German interests ; he never neglected a single military preparation which he considered necessary ; but his whole policy was apparently conducted on peaceful lines, and the weight of his influence, which in time grew to be considerable, was always exercised in favour of a peaceful solution of the political difficulties that cropped up in his way.

He tried to establish cordial relations with his neighbours, and it was not his fault if both the German and the foreign Press often compromised them. He declared that if it depended upon him there would be a general conference of all the great States in Europe, with the view to eliminating certain subjects of irritation that might ultimately lead to serious differences between them, and he repeated everywhere that it had not been his fault if he had failed to bring it about.

Following his grandfather's last recommendation, he also did his best—or said he did—to strengthen the affection and friendship that had existed from time immemorial between his House and that of the Romanoffs. This was not always easy. The Emperor Alexander III. did not greatly admire the character

## Overtures to France

of the German men, and the two men were not in sympathy with each other. When the present Tsar succeeded his father, William II. hoped that through his cousin, the Princess Alix of Hesse, the Tsarina, it would be possible for him to acquire influence over Nicholas II. ; but he then found in his way the personal influence of King Edward, who at that time was exercising all his faculties and admirable tact and knowledge of the world in order to bring about a Franco-British and Russian understanding.

This alliance might well have troubled or given misgivings to any Sovereign outside the *entente*. It must not be supposed that William II. underrated its importance, or that he did not perceive its dangerous aspects. But he treated its underlying spirit with considerable coolness. His belief was that nations or individuals rarely go out to fight other people's quarrels unless in doing so they see some immediate personal advantage. He trusted to the instinct of self-preservation, and hoped that, if he persevered in the policy he had adopted, he might yet preserve peace to the world and save his own country from the perils of a struggle with any one of her strong neighbours until the moment arrived when she would be strong enough to be able to provoke it herself.

One of his ambitions had been to establish a kind of *modus vivendi* with the French Republic. He expended much effort to bring this about, and showed what, for him, was considerable common sense in

## The Berlin Court under William II

ignoring certain provocations which he received from the most rabid Germanophobe parties, who refused to accept even a suggestion of normal intercourse to replace the strained relations that had existed between the Cabinets of Paris and Berlin ever since the war of 1870. Whenever he found occasion to manifest his sympathies with France in any calamities that befell her, he did so; as, for instance, after the big fire that consumed the Charity Bazaar in Paris and claimed so many illustrious victims. He never paid any attention to the personal attacks of which he was so often the object, nor to the many ridiculous tales concerning himself or his family that were continually put into circulation in the French Press. He bore himself with the utmost dignity, and inspired respect for Royalty and its principles from the moment he found himself called upon to uphold them.

With Austria he was always on good terms. He had been clever enough to appear to accept the supremacy over himself of the aged Emperor Francis Joseph, whom he had treated with the utmost veneration and with almost filial tenderness.

At the same time, he displayed a feverish anxiety to place Germany in an unassailable position of strength and power. After having done many tactless things, he suddenly developed considerable shrewdness in his handling of the vast interests confided to his care, and displayed commendable prudence in not accepting with too much alacrity many advantages that were



## Bismarck's Dismissal

threw in his way. He knew he was often discussed and adversely criticised by many people who should have refrained from doing so owing to their personal relations with him; but he never allowed them to guess that he was aware of the fact. He showed himself sometimes impetuous, and refused to admit any contradiction in the resolutions he had taken, but he seldom adopted any that had not been well thought out. He was a brilliant orator and an excellent talker, an entirely sympathetic man, and was also believed to be a man of deep and a true character. Taking all this into account, coupled with his undoubted originality, his complex nature presented an enigma to man, even to those who saw him most frequently, and who might have had the chance of discovering the real tendency of his thoughts, plans, and ambitions.

On the day when we saw the dismissal of Prince Bismarck no one could have imagined that he was meditating on the consequences of an act of daring such as few sovereigns ever indulged in. He wrote a famous letter to the Chancellor with a firm hand, and in the breakfast talked about current topics with the Empress as if nothing out of the common had happened. The Empress was still excessively timid, and had not till then required the influence over him which she possesses at present. She knew that a conflict had arisen between her husband and the Chancellor, but she did not suspect that he would ever dare to tell

## The Berlin Court under William II

Bismarck that he did not require his services any longer. She sat, therefore, in silence throughout the meal, waiting for William II. to speak. When at length he did so, it was in a curt phrase uttered as he rose from the table: "General von Caprivi has accepted the post of Chancellor," he said; "we must ask him to lunch to-morrow."

It was thus, on all the different occasions when he found himself faced with the responsibility of taking grave steps, that William II., who was credited with impatience and lack of restraint, conducted himself. He was, and is, essentially a man of great decision and resolution, and in emergencies he knows how to rise to extraordinary heights, whilst it is difficult for him to keep his temper in the small worries of life. Moreover, he is jealous—almost to excess—of any encroachment on his Imperial power and privileges as a Sovereign. There is no abnegation in him, no spirit of self-sacrifice as was the case with his father and grandfather; but there is a strong spirit of justice—hard, stern, unsparing justice—which he metes out to himself as well as to others. He will always recognise when he is wrong, but he will seldom admit it, and he never forgives anyone who has the imprudence to point it out to him. So it was with Prince von Bülow as it had been with Prince von Bismarck; but, in regard to the latter, in his ruthless treatment of him, the Emperor was animated by a spirit of retribution for the influence to which he

## Empress Victoria and William

had yielded during the months which preceded and followed his accession to the Throne, and he made the great Chancellor responsible for the strained relations that had existed at one time between himself and the Empress, his mother.

It is not a generally known fact, but the Emperor grew in time to regret the manner in which he had misjudged the noble woman who had given him birth. The Empress Victoria, by her tact and the manner in which she withdrew herself from all possible influence on State affairs, forced him to respect her. Further, as years went on and his own children grew up, he realised the responsibilities and accompanying anxieties of parents when they deeply love their children; he then began to understand what his own conduct had been, and to feel remorse for it. Unfortunately, his pride for a long time prevented his making the first advances that would have opened his mother's arms. His relations with her continued to be stiff, and they met but rarely, until at last one day he visited her at Friedrichshof, near Cronberg, during a stay that he made at Homburg. The two went out together for a walk in the beautiful park, and when they returned to the palace it was noticed that William II. was holding the Empress's arm, and leading her along with most affectionate care; and before they parted, for the first time since the death of Frederick III., Victoria folded her "boy," as she called him, in her arms, and held him there in a long and fervent embrace.

## The Berlin Court under William II

It was her last joy on earth. A few months later the widowed Empress rejoined her husband. Whilst her coffin rested in the little village church to which it had been carried previous to its removal to Potsdam, the Emperor William held a long and sad vigil beside it, and before it was lifted from the catafalque on which it reposed, he stepped forward and, bending the knee, bowed his head upon it in silent prayer. What passed in his soul during those short minutes, in which the incidents of his childhood, youth, and manhood must have passed before his eyes, no one knew; but it is certain that his remorse must have been bitter. When he got up his eyes were dry, but he never mentioned his mother to anyone from that day forth, unless on some official occasion when etiquette obliged him to speak of her. And over his bed a large photograph of the Empress Victoria hangs and smiles upon her first-born, whom she so freely forgave the faults that caused her so much sorrow.

It has not been observed by anyone yet, so far as I know, that the animosity displayed by the Emperor against Prince Bismarck became stronger and stronger in proportion as his relations with the widowed Empress Victoria improved. Here again is evidence of that particular trait in his character which makes him inclined to shift on to those whose bad advice he has followed all responsibility for those deeds or actions which he regrets having performed.

It is certain that the great Chancellor, though he

## Caprivi as Chancellor

may have disliked the Consort of Frederick III., never advised her son to use violence toward her. When she was kept almost a prisoner within the walls of the New Palace at Potsdam, immediately after the death of the Emperor, it was Bismarck who insisted on the guards stationed at her door being removed, and who explained to William II. that he was not only harming himself but also setting himself before the whole world as an object of scandal by such unwarrantable conduct. And yet it was Bismarck who, later on, was blamed by the Sovereign for having inspired those very measures which he had so strongly disapproved. So much for the consistency of William II.!

When General von Caprivi succeeded Prince von Bismarck, the Emperor began to take a more active part in the government of his country. It had been hardly possible for him to do so whilst the great statesman to whom Germany owed its unity was still in power. Prince von Bismarck used to tell him only what he wished him to know, and while according to him the utmost reverence, treated him as a negligible quantity. With General von Caprivi things were different, and it was William II. who began to show independence in regard to his Ministers. When Caprivi in his turn retired from office and was succeeded by Prince Hohenlohe, the Emperor found himself compelled to show more consideration to his Chancellor. The Prince, besides being related to him,

## The Berlin Court under William II

was too dignified to admit any departure from the respect which he expected and had the right to claim. He was of a cautious, shrewd temperament, very prudent in all that he said, and much too tactful to allow himself ever to be carried away by his feelings, be they hurt or satisfied. The Emperor had to reckon with him, and this discipline proved most beneficial. Hohenlohe had a wide experience of politics, and knew how to impart it to the young monarch without wounding his susceptibilities. "Uncle Clovis," as the Royal Family called him, exercised a most salutary influence over the mind of William II., and whilst he remained in office it was noticeable how the young Emperor refrained from the exuberances of language which constituted his principal defect. He was sobered, grew quieter, and began to bear with philosophy the disappointments which he encountered. Some of the wise steadiness of Prince Hohenlohe was acquired by him, and under the able guidance of the old statesman the Emperor gained a stability of mind as well as of purpose which until then had been lacking.

To-day William II. has passed his fifty-fifth year, and can look back upon a quarter of a century's reign with some satisfaction and no little pride. The country which he found prosperous has, under his leadership, increased marvellously in prosperity. No revolution has come to retard Germany's progress. Even the rising wave of Socialism which has threatened the other

## A Too Great Confidence

countries of Europe has shown itself less troublesome in Germany, which is the only country where Socialists put patriotism before the claims of their party. Amidst the numerous difficulties which had cropped up in the international situation, none have broken the peace of his Empire. Though passionate and somewhat extreme in his likes and dislikes, William II. had known how to subordinate these to the great vital interests of the German nation. He had preserved his independence and at the same time made himself respected by all the leading statesmen in Europe.

His experience has been most varied; I may be forgiven if I say that it has not been of so much use to him as it might have been. His confidence in his own strength has always been too great, and by it he has blinded himself to the consequences of some of the most important actions in his life, as well as of some of the gravest decisions he has taken.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EMPRESS

**T**HE marriage of Prince William of Prussia, as he was at that time, with the Princess Augusta Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg was not precisely a love match. She was a few months older than he, and was not possessed either of extraordinary beauty or wonderful attractions. She had been brought up very quietly, as her parents had been but sparingly endowed with this world's goods. The war waged between Prussia and Denmark on account of the Schleswig question had nearly ruined the family, and it was only much later that a part of his former fortune was returned to the Duke of Augustenburg, the father of the present German Empress. The latter had never expected the brilliant destiny which was to become hers.

The first idea of her betrothal to the future ruler of the German nation had proceeded from Prince Bismarck, who had imagined it would put an end to the question of the Duchies, which still remained an obstacle in his path. It had obtained the eager support of the Crown Princess Victoria, who for once found herself in thorough accord with the Chancellor,



## Marriage of William II

and whose feelings of friendship for the dispossessed legitimate owner of the annexed provinces found a satisfaction in thus compensating him for the loss of his birthright.

The old Emperor was perhaps the one who viewed the plan with mixed feelings. He would have preferred another alliance for his favourite grandson. William, the younger, however, when the proposal was made, declared he had no objection, but before giving his formal reply, he would like to see the Princess Augusta. A meeting was consequently arranged, which took place at the country seat of old Prince Clovis Hohenlohe, the future Chancellor, who was a near relative of the Duchess of Augustenburg, by birth a Princess of Hohenlohe. The young and timid girl, who felt afraid to open her mouth, at once attracted Prince William, who wanted a submissive wife, and who guessed directly that she was precisely such a person as he had desired: modest, unassuming, thoroughly good and kind, but a woman without any initiative, who would always follow his lead. She, on her side, was immediately subjugated by the frankness and the brilliant wit of the Prince. She accepted him with fear and trembling, but gave him her whole heart, her sole preoccupation then being to get his own under her control.

At the time of her marriage the Empress was a tall, fair girl, very slight and gracious, a perfect type of a German Gretchen. She had an abundance of

## The Berlin Court under William II

soft brown hair, lovely blue eyes, but no complexion to boast of; she did not know in the least how to dress, danced very badly, and seemed above all things shy.

During the first years of her married life she was almost continually in delicate health, and at a disadvantage as regards physical looks. She lived nearly the whole year round at Potsdam, and went but rarely to Berlin, where a few rooms in the old castle had been assigned to her and her husband—rooms that were as uncomfortable as they could possibly be.

The Prince left her much alone, being generally absorbed by his military duties and his studies, which continued in spite of the quasi-emancipation his marriage had procured for him. Luckily for her, she had an immense amount of common sense and a placid disposition, and she did not allow the numerous tales that reached her ears to trouble her serenity or to interfere with her peace of mind. She gave up almost the whole of her time to her numerous children, over whom she watched with passionate devotion; and she wisely made up her mind to take no part in the family quarrels of her husband, or to give any attention to politics, which she declared did not interest her. She is a very sweet woman, but the world declared she was too insignificant ever to be taken into account by her husband, and predicted that he would very soon get tired of her.

These predictions proved to be quite wrong. The

## Influence of Augusta Victoria

Princess William was far cleverer than Berlin society gave her credit for being. She acquired a considerable influence over her husband precisely by the way in which she effaced herself and subordinated all her thoughts and actions to his. She never volunteered advice, but also never refused to give him her opinion on any subject upon which he consulted her, doing so with invariable common sense and sound logic. He learned, in consequence, to look up to her in many of the difficulties in which he found himself not infrequently entangled. She was always calm, always serene, invariably patient, and knew how to hold her own when it was necessary, without making a parade of her intention.

When she became Empress she took up her new duties with the same placidity she had preserved throughout her life, but also with a determination not to be a nonentity, as people had prophesied would be the case. With quiet firmness she enforced rules which preserved the dignity of her Court, as well as the etiquette she considered indispensable to maintain her leadership of German society.

She has been a model sovereign, wife, and mother, and has always expected German women to follow her example of domestic devotion. She possesses also a deeply religious sense, which has caused her to put forth strenuous efforts to develop religious feelings among her people. She has been accused of being a bigoted Protestant, though she has never shown in-

## The Berlin Court under William II

tolerance. But her view is that without religion no people can be really great, nor do they deserve the protection of Providence. She has always insisted on her dependents going to church every Sunday, and she herself never cares to miss a service on the Sabbath day.

Her interest is sincere and maintained in the cause of charity, and for years she went into the smallest details concerning the management of every benevolent organisation and committee over which she presided. All the institutions founded by the old Empress Augusta as well as those in which her mother-in-law, the Empress Victoria, had been interested, enlisted her protection and help, and the amount of work she contrived to get through in one day was quite marvellous. She left nothing to others, and insisted on her permission being asked for the most insignificant change or reform which had been decided upon by the responsible directors of the various institutions.

Education, particularly that of girls, was long the object of her special care, and during the years when she was able to devote time to it, she, perhaps, did more than anyone else in Germany to make public careers open to women as well as men, encouraging them to work for their own living. She has shown herself practical in all the reforms which she has contrived to bring about, and whatever she has undertaken has ever been carried through with determination and thoroughness.

## A Stately Empress

In the early years, especially, the Emperor was grateful to her for having so energetically entered into the spirit of her duties, and also for having so consistently spared him every annoyance and worry. He respected her and bore her a strong, deep affection from which he has never wavered, and for which, for her part, she showed herself entirely grateful. He knew that he would always find her ready with sympathy in the critical circumstances of his life, and that she would never forsake or blame him whatever he might do.

Few women have understood so thoroughly as the Empress Augusta Victoria the significance of the word "dignity." From the very earliest years, when the high position of Empress seemed afar off, she was always dignified; she never forgot herself, whatever the exigencies of her exalted position demanded, and she has ever borne her crown with dignified pride.

She makes a stately Empress, worthy to fill the place of her predecessors. When she enters the room on a State occasion, covered with priceless jewels, and bends her head in salutation to the people assembled to greet her, she looks every inch a queen. Her face has become quite lovely, with its wealth of snow-white hair, which she wears piled up high on the top of her brow, and which she likes to ornament with a diamond tiara or crown. Her slight, still quite youthful figure, also shows to advantage in the beautiful dresses which she is fond of wearing.

## The Berlin Court under William II

One of the amiable weaknesses of the Empress Augusta Victoria is her love of dress, and she spends an enormous time in consultation with her legions of dress-makers.

The Empress is given to entertaining, and though people complain that her balls are rather stiff and ceremonious, it must be acknowledged that they are worthy of a Sovereign's palace, and that they present a beautiful sight. Augusta Victoria considers it her duty to gather Berlin society around her, and although she has quite done away with the familiar way in which old Emperor William and his Consort used to see their friends, she has also put an end to the many intrigues and Court plots with which the life of the old Empress Augusta, her husband's grandmother, was so full.

The Empress never attempts to let her personal likes or dislikes be perceived by the people whom they concern, and she studiously tries to be indifferently and equally polite to everybody admitted to the honour of her receptions. When she gives a ball she talks to everyone on whom she ought to confer that favour; she inquires after their many interests, and generally leaves them with a reference to her pleasure at seeing them. She never omits mentioning the subjects that her guests are most interested in, and in general she understands to perfection the art of entertaining, in which few queens have surpassed her.

In her household the Empress displays the same

## The Empress and Her Children

conscientiousness she brings to bear on everything she does. No detail seems too trivial for her notice. She enters into all the minute cares that are inseparable from the management of a large palace, and is as careful a housewife as she is a model mother and an ideal Sovereign. Her whole life is centred in the Emperor and in their children, and she spends most of her time in trying to anticipate what William II. requires, or what he would like to have. She has helped him to rearrange the old Berlin Castle, and it has been modernised just enough to make it comfortable without detracting from its ancient character. The admirable art treasures that were scattered in one or other of the various royal residences have been gathered together most carefully, and placed here and there in the private apartments of the Emperor and the Empress, exquisite taste and arrangement being the keynote of their disposition. Augusta Victoria spent a long time in England as a girl, and she brought back with her the English ideas as to comfort and homeliness that are so little understood in Germany.

The Empress has contrived to keep her subjects' affections and to be considered a model German woman, though in reality she manages her household on far more English lines than her mother-in-law, the Empress Frederiek, ever dared to do. Most of her bedroom furniture, with its pretty chintz hangings, comes from London, and her study, with its wealth of flowers, profusion of photographs, and collection of low, com-

## The Berlin Court under William II

fortable easy chairs, reminds one of a drawing-room in Mayfair on a larger scale. The illusion is heightened by the fact that English is also frequently spoken in the family circle; it was, indeed, the only language used in the Royal nurseries when the family was young.

The personal relations of the Empress with her husband have always been most excellent. He loves, he respects, and he appreciates the great qualities of his wife. He consults her frequently, and he delights in the fact that she never questions him, and whilst immediately telling him all that comes to her ears, always waits for him to tell her his own business. She keeps herself acquainted with all his cares, reads all the books which interest him, scans all the papers likely to attract him, and is always ready with an opinion when he requires her to give him one. Though perhaps she does not admire all he does, she weighs matters carefully, and very often brings him round to her own way of thinking, possibly from her way of first appearing to be convinced by his ideas. She never speaks loudly, never gets angry; but she can show considerable firmness, and although she always obeys she does not scruple sometimes to differ from her imperious spouse when she thinks that it would be to the latter's advantage.

She is as devoted to him as Princess Bismarck and Mrs. Gladstone were to their husbands; but she is imperially so, and even in the intimacy of her home



## Domestic Arrangements

life never forgets or allows others, even William II., to forget that she is an Empress.

It is perhaps her firmness of character that, more than anything else, has drawn the Emperor so much to her and given him so much confidence in her judgments and opinions. He seeks her help far more often than perhaps he would care to admit, precisely because he is aware she never allows her sympathies, antipathies, likes or dislikes, to influence her conduct, which, unfortunately, is not always the case with him, as his temper often runs ahead of his judgment, with more or less direful consequences. In such moments the tact of the Empress redeems the mistakes of her husband by bringing to the rescue the sweetness of her countenance, the encouragement of her smiles; and nine times out of ten she succeeds in wiping out the remembrance of some hasty word with which the Emperor has quite unnecessarily wounded someone.

William II. never interferes in anything his wife has decided concerning her household and its management, and accepts all her arrangements with absolute submission. The Empress insists on knowing everything that goes on in her home, and devotes much more personal attention to such matters than most ladies of high position. She looks every day at the menu for dinner and lunch, consults with the head cook, superintends the arrangements of the flowers on the dinner table—about which she shows herself extremely particular—keeps herself informed as to the condition of

## The Berlin Court under William II

the household linen, and performs all these small womanly duties without the least fuss or ostentation.

It is the same with her charities. She reads every begging letter that is addressed to her, and never misses making inquiries as to the truth of the tales of distress brought to her notice. She replies or causes a reply to be sent to every written communication she receives; she never overlooks any details connected with her multifarious duties; in brief, she is "of virtues full possesst."

Her first years of married life were spent almost entirely in the seclusion of her maternal cares. Incidentally, it allowed her to keep apart from the many intrigues going on, and at the same time it gave her more influence over her children than the majority of women in an exalted position obtain. Her sons are all devoted to her, and consult her in all their sorrows, woes, embarrassments, or troubles. They are afraid of their father, and it is the Empress who puts in a word in their favour, and generally contrives to soothe the angry feelings of William II. when one of his boys contravenes some of the rules he has laid down for them. He does not care to cause annoyance or sorrow to his wife, and often forgives for her sake what he would have treated with the utmost severity, had she not been there to avert his wrath with her soft, kind, imploring words.

In regard to the present Crown Prince, she has often had to interfere, and often, too, that interfer-

## The Crown Prince

ence has failed, notwithstanding the constant care the Emperor has taken not to wound her.

There is little love lost between William II. and his first-born. The Empress, on the contrary, has always nursed a particular fondness for her eldest son, whose character bears so much resemblance to her own. He was a timid boy, just as she was a timid girl; and in presence of the haughty, domineering, impetuous nature of his father, he almost always lost his presence of mind, and forgot the good resolutions he had made to try to please him. That was when he was still a child and a youth. Later on, he showed leanings towards an independence the Emperor did not admit, and stormy scenes ensued which the Empress had to quieten down, a task in which she was nearly always successful. But not always will the Empress be able to smooth out these domestic ruffings; it is probable that as time goes on the relations of William II. and his son and heir will become more strained, and perhaps end in a state of open warfare between them, especially if the Crown Prince continues his advocacy of militarism and thereby gains more popularity in the country.

As for her other sons, Augusta Victoria did not have so many difficulties concerning their welfare, though she might have had cause for anxiety about the second, Prince Eitel Fritz, if she had listened to the various rumours about him in different circles of Berlin society. Of her numerous children, he is

## The Berlin Court under William II

perhaps the one for whom she cares the least, maybe because he is decidedly the favourite of his father, whom he resembles more than do his brothers.

On the whole, she has been a happy mother, equally as she has been a happy wife. Even the imperiousness developed by her daughter, the present Duchess of Brunswick, has not greatly worried her. With the usual philosophy that has helped her so much in life, she has come to the conclusion that the spoilt, wilful girl, who was the only member of her family capable of twisting the Emperor round her little finger, would lose the little defects in her character when brought face to face with the real difficulties and responsibilities of a life for which she had been carefully trained by her loving mother.

Among the consorts of the crowned heads of Europe of the present day the Empress Augusta Victoria is, perhaps, the most popular with her subjects, with the exception of Queen Mary of England. The Empress's nationality alone has ensured for her a far easier position than the Empress Frederick ever had, the latter having been called, to the very day of her death, "the Englishwoman," just as Marie Antoinette had been called "the Austrian." She has therefore the opportunity of doing many things a foreign princess could not risk, and she not only understands her people, but she realises, too, their idiosyncrasies, of which there exist but too many. Being herself a German, she can reason as a German, feel as a Ger-

## Feelings of the Nation

man, and whilst apparently absorbed in the three things which her Imperial consort once declared to be the only objects for which a woman ought to care—her kitchen, her church, and her children (“Küche, Kirche und Kinder”)—she yet carefully watches over the smallest elements capable of maintaining the undoubted popularity which she has acquired throughout the Empire.

Unfortunately, this gracious, graceful, amiable princess suffers from a most delicate state of health that for some years past has obliged her to take great care of herself. She generally spends a season every summer at Nauheim, and though its waters have done her a considerable amount of good they have not been able to cure the heart affection from which she suffers. Should anything ever happen to her the Emperor will feel it keenly. She has truly been the guardian angel of his house as well as of his Empire. All grades of society speak with respect and tenderness of the gentle lady whose life has been given up to others, and who from the heights of the throne has given such a pure example of unselfishness and devotion to her family and her duties. Whatever feelings the German nation nourishes for its Kaiser, and they certainly are not unmixed, it has only one opinion respecting Augusta Victoria—that she deserves to be loved because hers is such a loving, sweet, truthful, bright and beautiful nature.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CROWN PRINCE AND PRINCESS

**I**T is a common saying that no Sovereign is able to get on with his heir. William II. proved no exception to the rule, and if he himself was at one time on bad terms with his father, he has had ample opportunity, since the present Crown Prince reached manhood, of finding out that his own son has not been slow to follow his example. The Emperor being despotic and authoritative, has shown but little indulgence in regard to his first-born, which has led to unpleasant conflicts. The Empress has had more than once to interfere, and the affectionate relations that existed between the Emperor and the Crown Prince when the latter was still a small boy, have vanished.

The antagonism between William II. and the Crown Prince dates from the latter's early school years. He was not very bright, always delicate in health, and had inherited more of his mother's kind and gentle character than of his father's brilliant intelligence and quick spirit of decision. He was, moreover, timid and sensitive, and was very quickly discouraged from trying again whenever he failed to do something he set out to accomplish. When he



1896



1896



1901

CROWN PRINCE FREDERICK WILLIAM

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## Boyhood of the Crown Prince

could not pass some examination or other, and his father stormed and raged, he became terrified, and lost the small amount of presence of mind he had. His father inspired him with such awe that he never dared to speak in his presence; a word of blame, indeed, entirely paralysed his faculties. This timidity enraged William II., who attributed it to cowardice, a defect that up to then no Hohenzollern had ever suffered from; and he did not spare his reproaches to the unfortunate Crown Prince, who, driven to his mother for sympathy, grew to love her almost exclusively, and to look upon his father as a tyrant, ever ready to punish in the most severe and cruel manner those with whom he was dissatisfied.

When he grew older and was sent to the University, the Crown Prince met young men of his own age, and in their company he began to overcome his natural timidity, and to assert himself more than he had previously done. He began to realise what his position meant as future Emperor, and he set himself to study the history of his country and to prepare himself for the destiny that lay before him. Very soon he had made friends for himself, and became the centre of a small party, who saw in him a possible instrument for manifesting its opposition to William II., who was far from being popular among all classes of German society. When, later on, the Crown Prince began his military duties in earnest, the same thing continued.

## The Berlin Court under William II

He had inherited the love for pretty women that had characterised his great-grandfather and so many Hohenzollerns before him. It is not strange, therefore, that he should have indulged in numberless flirtations, both in society and elsewhere—flirtations that considerably contributed to irritate his father against him. One of those which created the most sensation at the time was with a pretty American *prima donna*, for whom the heir to the German Throne felt much more than a passing passion. It was freely said, indeed, that he seriously contemplated giving up his prospects to his younger brother in order to marry the girl.

When this began to be suspected, the Empress grew terribly alarmed, and used all her influence to persuade her son that he would be failing in his most sacred duties if he ventured upon such a step. Augusta Victoria had the more reason for anxiety than the Emperor, who, instead of being furious at the Crown Prince's infatuation, as might have been expected, was said, rather, to look at it with lenient eyes. The reason assigned for this in certain high circles was that in his inmost heart the Emperor felt that his son and heir would thus be compelled to leave the succession open to his favourite child, Prince Eitel Fritz, for whom he entertained the warmest affection. The Empress was aware of this fact, and she set herself with all the means in her power to induce the Crown Prince to look at things from her own point of

## Crown Prince's Love Affairs

view. And when at last she had succeeded in persuading him to part from the fascinating young American girl, she began talking about his marriage. It would be the best thing for him, the Empress argued, if he wanted to obtain more liberty than he enjoyed, to set up a house of his own.

The Crown Prince listened to his mother, and began looking round him for a princess with whom he could offer to share his lot, visiting the various German Courts in quest of a possible bride. He did not care to marry a foreigner, and the example of the Empress Augusta Victoria was there to prove to him that what Germans appreciated most in a consort of their Sovereign was her German nationality and origin.

Unfortunately, there were but few eligible young ladies among the Highnesses and Serene Highnesses from whom he was allowed to choose. One day, however, at Doberan, a seaside resort in Meeklenburg, he met the youngest sister of the reigning Grand Duke of Meeklenburg-Schwerin, the Princess Cecile.

The Princess Cecile was about seventeen years old at the time. She was not pretty, but eminently attractive and a general favourite. By birth she was the equal of the Crown Prince, and no alliance could be more appropriate for him. The Princess's brother was a Sovereign; her eldest sister was married to the Crown Prince of Denmark; her mother had been a Russian Grand Duchess, the cousin of the Emperor Alexander III. Everything seemed to favour the



## The Berlin Court under William II

idea of this union, and yet it did not meet with the unqualified approval of the Emperor, precisely on account of her mother, the Grand Duchess, to whom he raised objections. She had not been popular in Mecklenburg. She was bitterly reproached for her lack of affection for the country of her adoption and for her French sympathies, which she had never troubled to hide from the public. She lived almost exclusively at Cannes, where she possessed a beautiful villa; and her children, with the exception of the Grand Duke, had been educated in France. It was in France also that her husband had met with a sudden and rather mysterious death, falling from the parapet of his garden into the street, where he was found lifeless in the early hours of the morning.

The Grand Duchess Anastasia Michailovna had brought up her two daughters admirably. They inherited, too, all the vivacity of her character as well as her singular charm, especially the Princess Cecile, who the more attracted the German Crown Prince as he got to know her.

It was not, however, easy for him to open the subject with his father. The Emperor at first declared that he would not give his consent to the marriage; and when at last he was induced to relent he laid down certain conditions, some of which were that the Grand Duchess Anastasia was never to come to Berlin or to live anywhere near her daughter, that she was to leave the German capital on the day following the

## Marriage of the Crown Prince

celebration of the marriage, and that she was to be allowed to return only once, for the christening of her first grandson, in case the future Crown Princess ever gave her one. The Grand Duchess Anastasia accepted them with a shrug of her shoulders, and the remark that, after all, she was younger and in possession of better health than the Emperor William.

The wedding took place with great pomp in Berlin, and the new Crown Princess soon became a general favourite. She was an exceedingly fascinating little person, full of life, fun, and merriment, and enjoyed the good things of life with particular zest. She possessed a truly French smartness, and, to the horror and indignation of German society, in which the Emperor shared, it was soon discovered that her entire trousseau had been made in Paris. She exhibited the most marvellous clothes that Berlin had ever seen, and she put them on with true Parisian chic, and a certain extravagance that did not appeal to the Empress, whose taste was for a simpler magnificence. Yet Augusta Victoria always looked regally attired, whilst her daughter-in-law often bore herself and dressed herself like a little grisette. She was dashing and eccentric, and compelled admiration, even from those who did not approve of her.

Berlin society quickly fell in love with her. She became its life, and the centre of the ultra-smart set. She went about a great deal, taking her husband with her, and the couple danced, skated, rode, appeared

## The Berlin Court under William II

at every public or private festivity, entertained in their own palacc, and surrounded themselves with young people who very soon worshipped them—and compromised them as much as they could. Whispers concerning the Crown Princess soon crept about that would have made the Emperor very angry had he only heard of them. It was said that she was deeply in debt, and that tradesmen had become reluctant to furnish her with further supplies, so difficult was it for them to obtain payment. It was also related that she borrowed money right and left, gambled whenever she found the opportunity, and was altogether as different as possible from any other German princess that had ever become the wife of a prince of the house of Hohenzollern.

Notwithstanding all this gossip, she was loved by all who knew her; she even so fascinated the Emperor himself that he grew to like her very much. She understood how to amuse him, and her sprightliness brought a new life into the Imperial household, which, until her advent, had been considered rather gloomy and staid. In excusing her many originalities she had a droll way, which incidentally displayed a sublime indifference to the judgments of the public. She would admit quite frankly that she was in the wrong, but maintain at the same time that she could not change her disposition. This may or may not have been the case; but certainly the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg had superintended with great love and

## A Gay Butterfly

care the education of her daughters, watching over them with far more wisdom than many mothers in her position would have done.

The Crown Princess, in her early married days, flitted through life like a gay butterfly; but beneath her apparent frivolity was hidden a considerable power of observation, and whilst trying to make for herself friends with whom she could indulge her taste for unlimited amusement, she also succeeded in winning over to her husband's side many serious people to help him to form for himself a political party, which would learn to depend upon him in the future. She had no French sympathies, in spite of her French education, or perhaps on account of it. She had seen French politicians, had listened to their conversations, and seemed to have come to the conclusion that a war between Germany and France was inevitable. That war the Crown Princess did not dread, but she thought that her countrymen did not bear enough in mind that France was, as she believed, a watchful enemy. She did not underrate the strength of France, and, as the future German Empress, she considered it would be better to beat the French than to be beaten. This feeling caused her to encourage her husband in his warlike sympathies, and very soon the couple became the idols of the military party, then a circle of young and inexperienced officers, who dreamt only of laurels, which they would probably never deserve.



## The Berlin Court under William II

A politician and statesman, such as was the Emperor, could not look at things from the same point of view as these young hotheads, and they accused him of pusillanimity and hesitation. At different times William II. blamed and reprimanded his son, and even in public did not spare him the expressions of his disapproval, until one day the Crown Princess, irritated beyond words at the silence of her husband in presence of the reproaches of the Emperor, attacked the latter herself, and told him plainly that it was strange he insisted on such absolute obedience from his children, after having been himself such a disobedient son to his own parents.

William II. became extremely angry with the Princess for braving him with such audacity, and he forthwith exiled her from Berlin. At the same time, he refused her permission to accompany the Crown Prince, as had been arranged at first, on his tour round the world, but sent her to Egypt, with her lady-in-waiting, the Baroness von Tiele Winckler, in whom he had the greatest confidence, and whom he requested to explain to the rebellious Princess the duties which the latter seemed so completely to ignore. The Crown Princess spent some months at Cairo, and went up the Nile in a dahabeeyah; but when she returned to Europe she had not changed one iota. The clearest result of her journey, indeed, was the resignation of the Baroness von Tiele Winckler, who declared to the Emperor that the state of her health did not allow her

## Criticising His Father

any longer to keep pace with the numerous caprices of her august mistress.

The last accusation was an unfair one. The Crown Princess had never been capricious; she had only smarted under what she considered to be her false position. Like every impetuous character, she had started at a giant's pace along a road which she believed to be an easy one, and soon found her progress barred by obstacles which she had refused to believe existed. The sense of her failure hung on her and damped her gaiety, but she did not attempt to reconcile herself with her lot, and with a greater ardour than ever urged her husband to persist in his efforts to play a part in the politics of his country. It was due, in fact, to her inspiration that the Crown Prince allowed himself openly to criticise the opinions and resolutions of his father, and upon several occasions to proclaim himself in opposition to him. The shyness under which he had suffered in his youth had entirely disappeared in contact with the friends whom he had made for himself, and he began expressing his views in public, and especially associating himself with the militarists, who came to look upon him as their future leader.

The result of this activity was that he was sent to Danzig in command of the Hussar regiment stationed there, which was another exile under a different name. But at Danzig, too, he indulged in rashness, until at last the Emperor came to the conclusion that the

## The Berlin Court under William II

best thing to be done was to recall his son to Berlin, where he could keep him under his immediate control.

A curious insight is afforded of the little confidence that William II. has had in his heir by the fact that he has hardly ever sent Prince Frederick to represent him officially at any foreign court. Whenever a mission of courtesy is required, it is Prince Henry of Prussia, the Sovereign's brother, who is generally asked to undertake it. The only time I can recall when the Crown Prince paid an official visit abroad was when he was sent to Tsarskoye Selo, to present himself to Nicholas II. as the husband of the latter's cousin. This visit lasted three days, and produced an excellent impression, partly owing to the charm and pleasant manners of the Crown Princess, partly because the Empress had implored her son to keep quiet, and to avoid in his conversations any subject that might prove offensive to the Tsar or to the Russian nation. For once he had listened to good advice, with the most agreeable results.

But, apart from this solitary occasion, William II. has not encouraged his son to go about much in the world. Of course, he made him undertake his famous journey round the world, which political events prevented him from continuing farther than India; but though he was received everywhere with Royal honours, it was more as a traveller than as the representative of one of the mightiest sovereigns in Europe.

After the early outbursts things seemed to quieten

## Crown Prince and War

down in the life of the Crown Prince and Princess, but it was only the lull which so often precedes a storm. As time went on, and they both grew older, and just a little wearied with the everlasting round of gaieties, their ambition and love of politics increased in proportion to the amount of repression their efforts had suffered. The Crown Prince was weak, and, like all weak natures, he had a craving to be considered strong and capable of holding his own, even against his much-dreaded father, whom he often defied, simply because he felt afraid to obey him. His conduct on the whole exhibited but little constancy, no comprehension of the exigencies of his situation, and no well-considered programme as to the future. Had he ascended the throne of his ancestors at the moment of his frenzied militarism, probably he would have discovered that many of his former opinions and plans for the future reposed on impracticabilities.

The Crown Prince is an advocate of war. For years he has wanted war—because he is young, and reckless, as well as untried of the strength of his country; but also because he feels tired of the subordinate position to which he finds himself relegated, and which he believes laurels won in a victorious war might improve, if not completely change.

He scarcely ever gave a thought to the fact that a modern war would of necessity involve interests and bring about complications from which it would take years for the world to recover; that it would be

## The Berlin Court under William II

the signal for so much hatred and violence, would arouse so many evil passions, that whoever assumed the responsibility for it would commit a crime against mankind for which no punishment would be sufficient, because none would be proportionate to the evils that it would cause. The Crown Prince, as well as his giddy little wife, only look at the glory of a victorious campaign, they only consider it from its triumphal point of view, and because they know that it may bring advantage to themselves; they ignore, or do not realise, the miseries which it will entail upon others.

## CHAPTER IV

### A ROYAL COURTSHIP

NOT only in national affairs has William II. proved a strict disciplinarian, but his own household, too, has been ruled with an iron hand. His children have been brought up with a very wholesome respect, if not fear, for their father; while other relatives—the Emperor's brothers, cousins, and sisters—scarce ever dare demur against any decision that he makes regarding them. Whenever anything happened at which Society might look askance, or the nation consider unworthy, William II. peremptorily caused things to be hushed up, so that no breath of suspicion should follow the royal name.

The old saying about Cæsar's wife has been applied by him to the whole Royal Family, over whom he has watched with sometimes more solicitude than the objects of it have liked. With his own sons the thing was not very difficult. The young Princes were strictly brought up, and taught obedience to the chief of their House before anything else; they never dared to do anything without his special permission, and even their travels and excursions were made subject to their father's approval.

## The Berlin Court under William II

His only daughter, the Princess Victoria Louise, whose temperament was almost as autocratic as his own, and who did exactly what she liked, was the only person who ventured to oppose him, and showed her independence to an astonishing degree. Indeed, she "twisted round her little finger" her parents, her brothers, and the whole Court, always getting her own way, and mocking at her brothers for remaining so abjectly submissive to the Emperor's orders or directions. As a girl she was a dear little thing, but respected neither anybody nor anything; and as she grew up she remained unchanged. Clever with it all, eminently attractive, though not a beauty, she knew very well that her father and mother were perennially at pains to spare her sorrow or trouble or disappointment. On the other hand, the Empress had many an anxious moment. She had very decided opinions on propriety, hence she often felt sincerely alarmed at the extremely modern spirit which her daughter displayed. The Princess was a girl of to-day, through and through; fond of sport, outdoor exercises, and devoted to fashion. The most daring French modes were irresistible to her. She delighted in causing a sensation, and when no one in Court circles dared wear slit skirts, because the Empress declared them to be indecent, the Princess Victoria Louise went about in an exceedingly close-fitting skirt that hardly left her any room in which to move, and flaunted a really embarrassing slit. But with it all she only managed to look rather

## Princess Victoria Louise

more like a fashion plate in no. the best of taste, instead of chic and *distinguée*. When her mother attempted to remonstrate with some of her caprices, which was not often, the Princess managed her father so well that she obtained his approval of things which he never would have allowed on any consideration whatever had his consent been asked.

The young Princess had been a petted child; it is therefore scarcely surprising that she emerged from the schoolroom a capricious girl. At the same time she was kind, full of generosity, and liked to see everybody happy around her. Whenever she saw a possibility of coming to the help of others, she hastened to do so, and very often she acted as the intermediary by which petitions reached the Emperor, who never refused the appeals she made to him on behalf of the poor and needy. She was truly the light of his eyes, and when the question arose of her marriage, it is but natural that it should have been a subject of great anxiety to him.

With all his affection for the young Princess, the Emperor was not blind to the certainty that he had only to express his approval of the advances of some prince or other for his daughter's hand, for he to oppose the idea with strenuous decision. Victoria Louise had declared when she was still in the schoolroom that she would only marry for love, and when the Emperor tried to explain to her that in Royal houses one could not do all that is allowed to simpler mortals, the girl



## The Berlin Court under William II

merely shrugged her shoulders, and replied that in the twentieth century even princesses had the right to please themselves in the choice of a husband.

The Empress used to sigh, but found herself powerless beside the determination of the child who was beginning to treat her mother as an old woman whose opinions were behind the times. William II. was shrewder, and understood that with an impulsive, daring character like that of his spoilt darling, diplomacy was essential.

For a long time he had cherished the idea of effecting, by means of a marriage, a reconciliation between the Houses of Hohenzollern and of Hanover. Indeed, he had never approved of the measure adopted by the Prussian Government in regard to the Guelph dynasty, nor the confiscation of their fortunes. He would have restored at once the famous Guelph Fund to the Duke of Cumberland, from whom it had been diverted by Prince von Bismarck to the use of the secret police and secret political agents. The Duke of Cumberland absolutely refused to listen to overtures of reconciliation, and replied that he would never renounce his rights to the crown of Hanover, or appear to sanction the spoliation of a kingdom that was his by succession. His eldest son, Prince George, was even more insistent than his father, whom he encouraged in his stubborn attitude, and it was only after the former had been killed in an automobile accident, that the Emperor William could begin once more in a most

## Prince Ernest of Cumberland

cautious manner to feel his way in view of the great events which he hoped to bring about.

When Princess Victoria Louise had passed her twentieth birthday and had refused several brilliant matches one after another, amongst them the hand of the then hereditary Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the Emperor thought it time to display his diplomatic strategy. He had been in Munich on more than one occasion, and had had the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the son of the Duke of Cumberland, Prince Ernest Augustus. The young man had met with his approval. He had found him unaffected, simple in his tastes and manners, and admirably well brought up. His political opinions appeared to the critical eyes of the anxious father to be sound, devoid of the extremes to which his father, the old Duke of Cumberland, was given. In addition, Prince Ernest made plain that he would welcome with eagerness the prospect of becoming a reigning German Sovereign. The Duchy of Brunswick also was not to be disdained, with the huge fortune that went with it, and so Prince Ernest took the hint that was given him, and ventured at last to express to the Emperor the timid hope that he would be allowed to pay his attentions to the Princess Victoria Louise.

William II., however, was far too wise to invite the Prince to begin his courtship in Berlin, where his arrival would inevitably excite his daughter to discourage her would-be suitor. He therefore sought the

## The Berlin Court under William II

help of the Crown Princess, whom the doctors had ordered to St. Moritz for the winter, and asked her to take her young sister-in-law with her. In doing so, he acquainted her with his plan, which depended for its success upon the person principally interested in it not suspecting its existence.

The Crown Princess entered into the conspiracy with zest. Under the pretext that she would feel so dull alone, she begged Victoria Louise to accompany her. The girl at once assented, and when her father began to object, she immediately rebelled, declaring that she did not care for the pleasure of the Berlin season, and preferred to be with her dear Cecile. William II., secretly gratified at the success of his diplomacy, at last, but with apparent reluctance, allowed her to start for St. Moritz.

At St. Moritz the two princesses entered heartily into the winter sports, and when, as if by chance, Prince Ernest of Cumberland arrived, he naturally saw a lot of them, and was included in all their excursions and pleasure parties.

It was not long before the young daughter of the German Emperor, suspecting nothing, became aware of a more than passing interest in the son of the Hanoverian Pretender. This led on to the romantic side of her nature being fired by the idea of effecting, through a marriage with him, the reconciliation of two Houses that had hated each other for nearly half a century. These conclusions being reached she

## How Marriages are Made

immediately began to plan by what means she could induce her father to agree, as she was certain he would consider her idea monstrous.

The Crown Princess meanwhile was carefully watching events, and from time to time writing to her father-in-law, reporting progress. When she fancied that things were beginning to ripen, she chided her sister-in-law for getting too friendly with Prince Ernest, adding that she felt sure the Emperor would be very angry if he thought that a flirtation had been going on between them. This was sufficient to make Victoria Louise declare that she loved Prince Ernest, and would never marry anyone else, whereupon wise Princess Cecile declared that she was going there and then to return to Berlin.

There were stormy scenes. Princess Victoria Louise was furious, and the Crown Princess secretly delighted. When Berlin was reached William II. was awaiting his daughter and daughter-in-law at the railway station, and the former had scarcely alighted from the carriage when she herself broached the subject of her attachment and begged her father's consent.

The Emperor, of course, began by objecting, and allowed a few months to pass under the pretext of political difficulties before he at last gave his consent. He was glad to have an opportunity of testing the seriousness of her feeling for the young man, and he also did not care for her to suspect that this husband, whom she was so delighted to have chosen for herself

## The Berlin Court under William II

in the face of so much opposition, had really been the one whom, for years, her father had wished her to marry.

Thus came about, through a young girl's caprices and spirit of independence, the reconciliation of two rival Houses who for years had been bitter enemies.

It was not an easy matter to hand over the Duchy to its lawful owner, and even an autocrat like William II. found many obstacles in his way before he could have the satisfaction of seeing his only daughter installed in the old castle that had been the cradle of the Guelph dynasty. The idea of bringing back the heirs of the Duke of Cumberland into the circle of reigning German sovereigns was not viewed sympathetically by the people as a whole. The Duke himself had never renounced his principles or his claims to the Crown of Hanover, of which his father had been despoiled, and it meant a heavy sacrifice for him to visit Berlin for his son's wedding. He did so under protest, and behaved himself as gruffly as he possibly could during the festivities. If the truth be told, he did not quite relish finding himself passed over in favour of his son, and yet he would not accept the only conditions on which a reconciliation between him and the Hohenzollern dynasty could have been effected.

He was too good a father, however, to stand in the way of Prince Ernest, but he was sorry that destiny had brought about the dilemma for his son of

## A Royal Wedding

renouncing either his love for a charming princess and the possession of a glorious inheritance, or the principles to which his father and grandfather had clung with such persistence throughout their lives. All these circumstances put together had worried him, and it required all the good temper, the tact, and cleverness the Emperor can show when he likes, to tide over the days of the visit without appearing to notice the stiffness and animosity against him and his dynasty which the Duke of Cumberland did not even attempt to dissimulate.

The wedding was the occasion of pompous festivities at the Court of Berlin. The King and Queen of England and the Tsar of Russia were present, and nothing was spared to add to the importance of the event.

When the festivities came to an end one of the very few intimate friends of the Emperor began talking to him about the marriage, and expressed his surprise that so few objections had been raised by the Sovereign to an alliance that had appeared at first sight to be impossible. William II. did not reply for some time, then at last he said slowly: "My mother had always dreamt about it; it is partly on that account that I have been so eager for it: one must atone sometimes." The words were characteristic, and proved that the memory of the Empress Frederick inspired her son more at one time than anyone could possibly think or expect.

## The Berlin Court under William II

There was another person who also looked rather askance at the husband of the Princess Victoria Louise, and that was her brother, the Crown Prince. He had never approved of that "Hanoverian marriage," as he disdainfully called it among his own friends, and he took no trouble to hide his feelings on the subject, going so far as to endeavour to impede the arrangements his father wished to carry through, and openly to express his apprehensions that the security of the Empire was in danger of being compromised by the accession of Prince Ernest, unless the latter publicly declared that he repudiated all the claims which he might have on Hanover. This was impossible for the son of the Duke of Cumberland, who had to consider his father's feelings. But the Crown Prince, though implored by his mother to keep quiet, refused to do so, and did not scruple to say that his duties as future German Emperor obliged him to protest against what he considered a weakness on the part of William II., who was putting the interests of his daughter before those of his country.

This was more than sufficient to exasperate the Emperor, and the most serious quarrel he had ever had with his son and heir resulted from the latter's attitude, a quarrel that became the more bitter when the Duchess of Brunswick, informed of her brother's conduct, declared that she would not come to Berlin again unless she felt sure that she would not meet the Crown Prince, thus depriving her parents of the

## State Entry into Brunswick

pleasure of seeing her under their roof, a thing they had been eagerly looking forward to.

Thanks, however, to the tact of the Empress and the sweetness of the Crown Princess, who used her best efforts to prevail upon her husband to abandon an attitude that was only harming himself, the quarrel somehow came to an end, and the brother and sister became reconciled to each other; and on a fine November day, the new Duke and Duchess of Brunswick made their state entry into their capital amid the clanging welcome of all the bells of the old city.

It was noticed by the people who had gathered at the railway station to receive them, that whilst the young Duke looked slightly embarrassed, his Consort comported herself in a truly regal way and accepted the homage and good wishes of her new subjects with the utmost composure and dignity, behaving like a real sovereign already used to her position, and well aware of its privileges, as well as of its duties. Later on she received all the ladies who had the right to be presented, spoke to them with the utmost affability, seemed perfectly well informed as to all the details that concerned them, and when she appeared for the first time at the Opera, wearing the family diamonds, with the famous big tiara of the Duchesses of Brunswick on her head, she struck everybody by her queenly aspect, and won all hearts to her and her husband.

The Emperor had given excellent advice to his



## The Berlin Court under William II

daughter as to how she was to behave in her new position, and for once she was docile enough to listen to him and follow it. She very soon made herself popular; she completely outshone her timid young husband, behaving as if it were she to whom the Duchy belonged, and who had endowed him with it, which was really the case in a certain sense. Her imperious character asserted itself quickly enough, and it also did not take much time for her subjects to find out that whereas their new Duke was essentially meek, their Duchess did not intend them to forget any of the duties they owed to her.

The present Duchess of Brunswick was certainly a spoilt child; the same cannot be said about her brothers. They had been brought up on strict military lines, with great severity and an utter lack of indulgence. They have become strong active young men, the type of Prussian officer who seldom look beyond the sphere in which they move. The second, Prince Eitel Fritz, had always been his father's favourite. He is a strongly built, burly fellow, rather inclined to corpulence. Military life has not had a good influence over him, if all that one hears is true, and more than one scandal, of sufficient proportions to wreck any reputation except that of a member of a royal house, has been hinted at. Whether these scandals reached the ears of the Emperor or not, it is difficult to say; probably they did not, because he would not have been indulgent in regard to them, had he

## Marriage of Prince Eitel Fritz

known of their extent. But some vague rumours may have been brought to his notice, because he insisted with energy on the Prince marrying, in spite of the latter's protests that he felt no inclination to do so. And he even found him a wife, and Prince Eitel married the Duchess Sophie Charlotte of Oldenburg, the daughter of the reigning Grand Duke of that name. The Duchess Sophie, who was five years older than Prince Eitel Fritz, was the only child of Princess Elizabeth of Prussia, the cousin of the Emperor William, and the second daughter of the famous Red Prince, Frederick Charles. She had inherited some of her mother's good looks, much of her charm, and was, moreover, a great heiress; but being rather unhappy in her home, where a stepmother reigned, felt glad to escape.

The marriage has not been a happy one, and so far no children have been born to bless it. Current gossip has it that the Prince did not mend his ways after marriage. His wife lives a lonely life, mostly at the Castle of Bellevue in the Thiergarten, where she spends her time in reading, painting, and seeing her few friends. She is too proud to complain of her lot in life, and too dignified to enter into rebellion against it. She is serious, earnest; and the pleasures of Society for which her sister-in-law, the Crown Princess, is so eager, have no attractions for her. Once or twice the gentle Empress has tried to break through the reserve of her daughter-in-law, only to be met with a haughty

## The Berlin Court under William II

silence that repels every attempt at consolation. Thus the Princess goes on living her loveless, cheerless life, respected by all, with few real friends and many sincere admirers.

The third son of the Emperor, Prince Adalbert, is a sailor, bright and full of fun, devoted to his profession, and the affianced husband of the Princess Adelaide of Lippe. His next brother, Prince August William, has made a love match with his first cousin, Princess Alexandra of Schleswig-Holstein, a charmingly pretty, bright girl, who is a great favourite with her mother-in-law, the Empress. Prince Oscar of Prussia, who always showed a romantic turn of mind, has recently married a lady-in-waiting of his mother, the Countess Ina von Bassewitz, a clever, amiable woman, with fascinating qualities of heart and mind. Here again the present Duchess of Brunswick gave proof of her influence over her father. The Emperor at first would not hear of his son contracting a morganatic marriage, but finally yielded to his daughter's persuasion. The story runs that when William II. arrived at Brunswick for the christening of his daughter's first-born child, and asked her what present he could give, he received the reply that all she craved was permission for Prince Oscar to marry the lady of his heart. William II. could not resist this appeal.

William II. has but one brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, who, of all the children of the Emperor Frederick, is the one who resembles him the most

## Prince Henry of Prussia

in face as well as in character, and who entered the Navy when quite young. Prince Henry, who is married to his cousin, the Princess Irene of Hesse, always lives at Kiel, and makes but rare appearances at the Berlin Court. He never meddles with politics, and his relations with his brother are excellent. William II. appreciates Prince Henry, who invariably represents the Emperor in all ceremonies where he cannot appear himself. Sometimes, though not often, he consults him on this or that matter, and with good reason, for his sound common sense is reminiscent of his father, Frederick III., whose pleasant manners and popularity he has also inherited.

As for the sisters of the Emperor, they do not live in Berlin, and, with the exception of the Princess Charlotte, seldom visit the capital. The Princess Sophie is now Queen of Greece, and for some time was on bad terms with her elder brother, on account of her change of religion, which William II. could not forgive. The Princess Margaret is married to Prince Frederick Charles of Hesse, and scarcely ever leaves the Castle of Friedrichshof, near Cronberg, which was left to her by her mother, the Empress Frederick, whilst Princess Vieky, as she is called, is quite settled at Bonn on the Rhine, where her husband, Prince Adolphe of Schaumburg-Lippe, possesses a lovely villa. The Princess Charlotte is the one most frequently seen in Berlin, where at one time she used to spend the greater part of the year. She is an extraordinary kind

## The Berlin Court under William II

of person about whom the wildest rumours have been flying, and she has been accused of not being on good terms with the goddess Truth. She married Duke Bernard of Saxe-Meiningen. On the whole, they have got on with each other very well; the Duke has been the most indulgent and submissive of husbands. They had only one daughter, and thus the Duchy of Meiningen has no direct heir. Busybodies declared that the Princess Charlotte had ruined her health by quack medicines and drugs which she took in a vain endeavour to reduce the embonpoint to which she was naturally inclined.

Duke Bernard of Meiningen left the Army many years ago, and used to spend part of every winter at Cannes together with his wife, who had made herself very popular among French society.

There are also the three sons of the late Prince Albert of Prussia, who, though they are not very often seen in Berlin, must be mentioned. The second one was for some time in the Army, but retired and went abroad; whilst the eldest is a distinguished musician, who spends most of the year in his splendid castle of Camenz in Silesia, where he lives in great state. As for the youngest, he is married to the Princess Agathe of Ratibor and Corvey, the eldest daughter of the present Duke of Ratibor, an accomplished young lady, whose marriage terribly scandalised the Roman Catholics of Berlin, who could not forgive her for having proved unfaithful to their Church and for having her

## The Emperor's Retort

children baptised as Protestants. Some people said, concerning this fact, that the Emperor, who was often worried by his Catholic subjects, and who had warmly approved of the marriage, had not been backward in retorting that, after all, if Paris was well worth a Mass, the honour of being a Princess of Prussia was certainly worth some sacrifice of conscience.

## CHAPTER V

### PRINCES OF THE GERMAN STATES

**I**T was not without secret heart-burnings that the various reigning princes of Germany accepted the subordinate positions that became theirs after the proclamation of the Empire. Though conscious of the immense advantages that accrued to their Fatherland through the great changes brought about by the successful wars of 1866 and 1870, they nevertheless felt that some of their independence, and a good many of their personal advantages, had disappeared, together with the revenues from State post offices and custom houses that up to then each duchy, or whatever it called itself, had individually possessed. This feeling was especially strong in the South of Germany. In Bavaria it took the form of a decided hostility to everything Prussian. Though King Ludwig II. was for a time under the influence of Bismarck, as his correspondence with the latter proves, he nevertheless regretted having had to act as the spokesman of Germany when the desire was expressed that William I. should assume the Imperial Crown. This led him to appear sometimes as an opponent of the policy inaugurated by the great minister, who had forced a

## Reminiscences of Bavaria

whole country to accept the consequences of the bold policy which he had carried through. When the unfortunate King was deposed, and a few days later perished in the lake at Berg, it was expected in Berlin that Bavaria, under the leadership of the Prince Regent, would become much more Prussian in feeling, and in a certain measure this hope was fulfilled.

Prince Luitpold was too cautious a man to indulge in dreams of independence, and he did his best to soothe those of his subjects who entertained rebellious feelings, and to persuade them to become reconciled to the inevitable. He had the advantage of being so old that one felt afraid of hurting him, and accepted from him many things which otherwise would not have been tolerated. It was generally felt that Prince Luitpold could not live very much longer, and that after his death a great change was bound to take place; but, deceiving everybody, he persisted in living far beyond the usual span. When at last he died, people had become so used to the policy he had pursued that they had dismissed all possibility of its ever changing.

The present king, Ludwig III., is devoted to his religion and to his duties, but incapable of assuming any independence. He is married to an Austrian Archduchess, of the Este line, who being the direct descendant of the Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of James I., who had married the Prince Palatine of Bavaria, is considered as their legitimate Queen by any Jacobites still existing in England. She is much respected and



## The Berlin Court under William II

has brought up her numerous family with the utmost care. There are half a dozen undoubtedly plain daughters, whose quaint old-fashioned German names, such as Helmtrude, Wiltrude, and so forth, has led to their being nicknamed by the inhabitants of Munich the "Trudeln" (stumpies), by which they are known throughout Bavaria, even in the remote little villages of the Tyrolese Alps. Their eldest brother, Prince Rupert, who in time will succeed his father on the throne, has had much said about his easy outlook on life, and is decidedly unpopular among his future subjects. He married his cousin, the daughter of Duke Karl Theodor in Bavaria — the Princess Gabrielle, a sweet, delicate little woman, with all the charm and none of the extravagance of the ill-fated Wittelsbachs. She was exceedingly popular among the inhabitants of Munich, and once, during a severe illness she went through, crowds remained on the big square in front of the palace where she was living, anxiously awaiting the bulletins. She recovered, however, only to die a few years later at Sorrento, whither she had been sent by her doctors, with no one beside her except her lady-in-waiting and a few servants. Her remains were brought back to Munich and laid to rest in the family vault of the Wittelsbachs. Her husband has not married again.

Although the present German Emperor has always shown much attention to the Bavarian Royal Family, it is not often that its members have visited Berlin,

## Wurtemberg and Baden

and whenever they have done so, it has always been a formal visit of courtesy.

The King of Wurtemberg was once an officer in the Hussar Regiment of the Guards at Potsdam, and one of the smartest young princes in Berlin society. After his first marriage, however, with the Princess Marie of Waldeck and Pymont, he left the service, and settled in Stuttgart; and since his accession to the throne of Wurtemberg, he has paid but rare visits to the German capital. If all that one hears is true, he is not on very good terms with the Emperor William, and the two sovereigns are not overjoyed whenever Fate brings them together.

There was a time when very intimate relations existed between the Prussian Royal Family and that of Baden. The Grand Duchess Louise was the beloved daughter of the old Emperor, and so long as the latter was alive she used to make frequent visits to Berlin, where she always received a warm welcome. These visits, however, became rarer after the death of her father and mother, and still more so after her own widowhood; but William II. always treated her with great respect, and made a point of inviting her to all the weddings and christenings in his family, taking care to draw people's attention to the fact that his aunt was now the oldest surviving member of the House of Hohenzollern.

The Grand Duchess Louise had three children— one daughter, the Princess Victoria, who is the present

## The Berlin Court under William II

Queen of Sweden, and two sons, of whom the second, Prince Louis, was a most promising young man, the object of his grandfather the Emperor's special affections, and a general favourite. Unfortunately, he was carried away at the early age of twenty-five or so by pneumonia following upon influenza, and with him his mother's dearest hopes in life were also buried. As for the present Grand Duke of Baden, he is the type of what the Sovereign of a small German State should be: an amiable but insignificant man. He is married to Princess Hilda, the only daughter of the last Duke of Nassau, whose son ultimately succeeded to the Luxemburg throne; but their union has been a childless one, and the Duchy will revert, after the death of its owner, to his cousin, Prince Maximilian, whose wife is the eldest of the three pretty daughters of the Duke of Cumberland, the sister-in-law of the present Duchess of Brunswick.

There are two Grand Dukes of Mecklenburg. Grand Duke Adolf of Mecklenburg-Strelitz has but recently succeeded to the Duchy after the decease of his father, and is so far unmarried. His grandmother, the Princess Augusta of Cambridge, is the sister of the late Duchess of Teck, and aunt to Queen Mary of England. The Grand Duchess Augusta is far advanced into the nineties, but is still hale and strong, and extremely popular among her former subjects. In her youth the present Dowager Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the daughter of the late Duke and Duchess of Anhalt,

## The Mecklenburgs

was extremely admired for her good looks. The elder of the Grand Duke's two sisters was married to a Frenchman, the Comte de Jametel, the wedding ceremony taking place at the little church at Richmond, on the banks of the river Thames. This union, unfortunately, did not prove at all happy, and the Princess Marie obtained a divorce a few years later, resuming her maiden name and title of Duchess of Mecklenburg. As for her sister, she married the heir to the crown of Montenegro, and has not often visited her native home since.

I have already mentioned the Dowager Grand Duchess Anastasia of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the mother of the German Crown Princess. Hers has been an adventurous life. When but a girl of sixteen she had become married to the heir to the Schwerin Duchy, one of the most amiable and charming princes in Germany. Whilst gifted with the rarest qualities of heart and mind, the Grand Duke was extremely delicate in health, being confined to his room for months at a time. His uncertain health was responsible for many lengthy sojourns abroad; towards the end of his life, indeed, the Grand Duke was almost permanently settled at Cannes, and made but rare visits to his native land. His death was tragic in its details, and a mystery hangs over it to this day. His widow did not often return to Mecklenburg, which she had never loved.

Her son is very popular in Mecklenburg, as, too, is

## The Berlin Court under William II

his young wife, the second daughter of the Duke of Cumberland.

One of the uncles of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin is married to the present Queen of the Netherlands. Prince Henry is not of very amiable disposition: neither has he won the affection of the Dutch. His wife bears with the utmost dignity the burden of her ill-assorted marriage. Her only daughter is Queen Wilhelmina's great joy in life.

Of the brothers of Duke Henry of Mecklenburg, styled Prince of the Netherlands since his marriage, one, Duke John Albert, was Regent of the Duchy of Brunswick until it was handed over to the husband of Princess Victoria Louise of Prussia. He is considered to have been a wise administrator and a clever man, if somewhat heavy in appearance as well as in speech. He was tactful, and was regretted at Brunswick when, on his return to Mecklenburg, he retired into private life.

Duke Paul, his elder brother, when still quite young, had fallen in love with his cousin, the Princess Marie of Windisch-Graetz, the daughter of a Mecklenburg princess and of an Austrian nobleman. She was a Roman Catholic, and for love of her he became converted to her faith.

His abjuration brought dire disgrace, and he has been compelled to renounce his and his children's right of succession to the Duchy of Mecklenburg, in which he stood next to the present Grand Duke, until

## A Fatal Love Affair

the birth of the latter's sons. These sacrifices, nevertheless, did not receive their full reward ; for it is said that, instead of making him a devoted wife, the Princess indulged in such reckless extravagances that the Grand Duke had to interfere. Her father, however, succeeded in appeasing the irate Grand Duke, and since that time Duchess Marie has lived in a castle in Styria, which she is not allowed to leave, with only a lady-in-waiting to keep her company. From time to time Duke Paul pays her a visit, but otherwise she is forgotten by a world of which she was once most fond. Her only daughter lives at Schwerin, and hardly ever sees her mother, while her only surviving son has brought little credit on his father's house.

The Ducal House of Weimar is also one of importance in Germany. The present Duke, who succeeded his grandfather, is still quite a young man, though already he has been married twice.

He is one of those very happy people who have no history, and it is not likely he ever will have any. But a tragedy happened a short time ago in that House of Weimar, when the pretty Princess Sophie shot herself in her room one evening, for love of the son of a Jewish banker, whom her parents refused her their permission to marry. It was a sad story, which testifies to the strange ideas that prevail in certain royal families in Germany, who do not scruple to receive as occasional visitors people they would not dream of associating with more intimately. The bare

## The Berlin Court under William II

idea of their daughter thinking of Baron Bleichroder as a possible husband never occurred to either Prince William of Weimar or his wife ; and when they found themselves confronted with the problem of this love affair, which they had really brought upon themselves, they entirely lost their heads, with the result that their daughter, seeing all her hopes dashed to the ground, preferred death to life without the man of her choice.

It is related that she had at first planned a flight from Heidelberg with the young Baron, but that the latter had recoiled before the scandal that would have followed. Whether this hesitation shattered the roseate dreams that Princess Sophie had been harbouring in regard to her Jewish lover it is impossible to tell, but the fact remains that in her despair she put an end to her existence.

The Grand Duke of Hesse enjoys a privileged position among the German princes, by reason of the facts that he is the first cousin of the Emperor, that one of his sisters married Prince Henry of Prussia, and that another is the Tsarina of all the Russias. He has not taken active part in the progress of his native land. His matrimonial differences with his first wife, Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg, with the divorce that followed upon them, have been widely discussed in German society.

Among the favourites of the Emperor, the present Duke of Saxe-Coburg holds foremost place. There

## The Kingdom of Saxony

are several reasons for the affection which William II. feels for this young ruler. First, he is the son of Prince Leopold of England and of that amiable Duchess of Albany who has made for herself so many friends wherever she has been. Then, he was partly brought up in Berlin under the eyes of the Prussian Royal Family, and he is married to one of the nieces of the Empress Augusta Victoria, the daughter of her favourite sister, Duchess Caroline Mathilde of Schleswig-Holstein. Duke Charles Edward is a model ruler of a miniature kingdom. He is frequently seen in Berlin, where he is always welcome, and his altogether charming wife is also very popular there.

Talking of the Duke of Saxe-Coburg reminds me of King Frederick August III., who belongs to the same ancient family, and is the present ruler of Saxony. His extraordinary wife, Princess Louise, whose adventures have caused so much stir in the world, I knew very well. After her flight from Dresden she called herself the Countess of Montignoso. She was a charming woman, and one could not help liking her. She was entirely out of her element in the dull and stiff Court of Dresden, but extremely popular in Society. Princess Louise felt oppressed by the inelastic boredom of Court life under the rule of her father-in-law, King George of Saxony, and, on the other hand, she was too impetuous to wait patiently for better days. Matters were not mended by the narrow views of the



## The Berlin Court under William II

Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Tuscany, her parents, who would not listen to her troubles; and then, too, her husband was reputed to be lacking in will power, and as clay in the hands of his father, of whom he stood in fearful awe.

That the disaster of this marriage became a tragedy was more the fault of circumstances than anything else. The Crown Princess of Saxony was a high-spirited woman, who did not easily brook opposition to any of her fancies, and who, moreover, was too proud to accept any remarks on her conduct. This may account for her lack of real friends to help and advise her, a deprivation which in her heart she felt keenly. On the other hand, King George was one of the most bigoted, stern, inflexible characters alive; without tact and with little knowledge of the world. He lived engrossed in etiquette, and his occupations, I really believe, consisted solely of saying his prayers, going to church, and studying the rules of precedence of the different courts of Europe. He was the last man capable of understanding a bright, talented girl such as his daughter-in-law was then, and when he saw her do things, risky perhaps, but generally quite innocent, he only considered them in the light of a rebellion against the time-honoured customs of the Court of Saxony, and as a crime against himself and his dynasty. The Crown Prince was sincerely in love with his wife, and had someone been found at the time capable of inducing him to go and seek her himself when she left

## Archaic Courts

Dresden, it is probable that he would have been able to bring her back with him.

Between these two men, the indifference of her own parents, and the terror of being put into a mad-house, with which the King had threatened her, the Princess Louise entirely lost her head, her sole idea being to escape the fearful fate by which she believed herself to be pursued. Is it surprising, therefore, that in her over-excited state of mind she heaped mistake upon mistake, until in the end she allowed her life to be shipwrecked?

Scandals, indeed, have seldom been lacking in German royal houses, and it could hardly be otherwise at these small courts, still conducted on the archaic principles of three hundred years ago, with no concern beyond that of the shooting party of yesterday and the ball of to-morrow; where but little of intellectual or artistic interest breaks the monotony of days that drift on according to a fixed ceremonial, the rules of which it is considered a crime to infringe; where men only think of military exercises or hunting exploits; and where women live engrossed in fashion-plates, gossip, and the study of precedence. Can one wonder, whenever a mind more modern and less absorbed in such trivialities finds itself surrounded by such mental stagnation, that it rebels against the emptiness of a conventional existence which brings no satisfaction to any really human emotion?

Men can escape from this thralldom, but for women

## The Berlin Court under William II

it is almost impossible, as morganatic marriages so far have been the exception for them. Such marriages, however, tend nowadays to become the rule among the male members of the different German dynasties ; they continually renounce the privileges of their birth in order to keep the affections of their hearts. Years ago, when the late Duke of Meiningen married the lovely, clever actress, Fraulein Franz, and created her Baroness of Heldburg, it caused a terrible scandal, but to-day it would scarcely attract more than passing attention.

The Duke of Meiningen was a remarkable man and certainly constituted a great exception among the "petitesses d'Allemagne," to use the expression dear to the famous Princess des Ursins. He had studied foreign literature ; Shakespeare was his favourite author ; and theatrical art in Germany owes to him the development which has been so noticeable in recent times. He brought life into theatrical performances, and his celebrated group of actors, known throughout Europe as "The Meiningen Company," carried the fame of German art far and wide. He remained to the end of his long life interested in his beloved theatre, and continued to supervise the smallest detail in staging the plays performed by his actors, until they were perfect in their art. He encouraged artists and writers, authors and performers, and was certainly one of the most enlightened men of his generation.

German potentates have always prided themselves

## The New Duchess of Brunswick

on the manner in which they have protected Art, but in spite of their professions of devotion to artistic matters, it remains an open question how many among them have understood the real significance of Art. Of course, when speaking thus, I am not referring to sovereigns like the late King Ludwig II. of Bavaria, the parents of the present Emperor of Germany, or some other personages whom I have known and learned to respect and to appreciate.

German rulers have had an addition to their number recently, by the accession of the son of the Duke of Cumberland to the Duchy of Brunswick. I do not think that I am venturing on too hazardous a prediction when I say that most likely life at that Court will be carried on according to the most modern ideas.

The only daughter of William II. has inherited to a considerable extent the strength of will of her headstrong father, and she certainly will not allow the modern spirit of independence for which she cares so much to be interfered with by the more staid members of Brunswick society. She will try to make her little Court as pleasant a place as she can, introducing into it the ideas of comfort that she has to a great extent learned in England, a country for which she has entertained an affection since her early childish days, when she romped on the sands of Felixstowe during the summer holidays.

Providence so far has favoured the wayward daughter of William II. Up to now everything has

## The Berlin Court under William II

gone well with her, and when, a few months ago, she gave birth to the son and heir who was to continue the old dynasty of the Guelphs, his birth was hailed with manifestations of the deepest joy throughout the country. The christening was solemnised in great state, in presence of the Emperor and Empress, the Crown Prince and Princess, the Duchess of Cumberland (who had arrived alone without the Duke, and who was one of the godmothers of the infant), and representatives of the crowned heads of Europe. The young Duchess looked radiant, and as he gazed upon her with tender eyes, William II. could certainly congratulate himself on the success of his diplomacy, and also return to Berlin satisfied as to the prospects of happiness of his only and beloved daughter, as well as upon the fulfilment of one of his most earnest wishes, the reconciliation of the Guelph and Hohenzollern dynasties.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SUCCESSORS OF PRINCE VON BISMARCK

**W**HEN Prince Bismarck was dismissed by William II., people began to prophesy all kinds of disasters for the Empire. His successor, General von Caprivi, had the reputation of being an honest, conscientious man, an excellent worker, but by no means a brilliant statesman, or one possessed with sufficient authority to replace the great minister who had fallen. Perhaps this was the very reason why the Emperor had chosen him; he had made up his mind to govern in person, and to follow the example of Louis XIV. when the latter uttered his famous "L'État c'est moi."

General von Caprivi found his office beset with difficulties. Bismarck did not exert himself to make it easier; indeed, whispers were heard that his influence was the other way about. On the other hand, Caprivi had to cope with the imperious character of the Emperor, and to do his best to retrieve the latter's mistakes, of which there were many at that time. The General fought valiantly for months against tremendous odds, and at last retired with considerable pleasure from an office that certainly was no bed of roses.

## The Berlin Court under William II

Prince Hohenlohe was in a better position, and it is likely, had it not been for his advanced years, that he would have succeeded in imposing his ideas in matters of government more fully than he did. He really gave William II. his political education, and he found in him an excellent, if not a docile, pupil.

Neither Caprivi nor Prince Hohenlohe were ministers of violent temperament. They were statesmen of the old type, who always took into consideration the circumstances of each case, and the reasons for each individual action. With the brilliant minister who stepped into the Prince's shoes things changed; the Emperor found himself in the presence of a man who aspired to become a second Bismarck. Herr, afterwards Count, and finally Prince Bernhard von Bülow was certainly a very bright star in the firmament of Prussian politics, where his manner was even more that of a diplomat than a statesman.

William II. was very fond of Prince von Bülow at one time. The latter had admirably understood his Sovereign, and at the moment when he aspired to enter into his councils, as his principal and most trusted adviser, he had given proof of extraordinary self-control for a man so entirely convinced, as he was, of his own worth. He had kept under strict restraint any desire he might have had to advance his own opinions, and quickly brought his diplomacy to bear upon the Emperor, whose impetuous, ardent, and restless nature became subjugated by the apparent

## Prince von Bülow

submission with which he had found his own words echoed, and his own judgments endorsed, in all questions he was discussing with his minister, or about which he sought the latter's advice. Very soon Prince von Bülow became the Emperor's favourite; and, exuberant as he always was, William II. showered favours upon him, showed unlimited confidence in him, and admitted him into his intimate friendship. When the Prince thought his position entirely secure, he divested himself of the caution which characterised his every step at the beginning of his ministerial career, and began to assert himself. He aspired to govern his Fatherland alone. He was certainly clever, intelligent, learned, and exceedingly well-read; but he was a *poseur*.

The Emperor, who at heart quite realised his own weaknesses, was very different. Self-assurance certainly formed a goodly part of his character, but he put the material interests of his country before everything else. As long as he saw in his Chancellor a man likely to defend them also, von Bülow was secure. But there came a time when the Emperor's feelings changed, though the Chancellor did not perceive the ground shaking under his feet, any more than Prince von Bismarck had done at the moment when his fall occurred. The Emperor conceived that Prince von Bülow began to display toward his wishes that natural imperiousness which had helped him to make his remarkably rapid career. This led to the first



## The Berlin Court under William II

shock between Bülow and the Emperor. William II. is not of a character to brook opposition, and when his privileges as a monarch came into question he soon showed his Chancellor which of them was the master.

A few small conflicts took place, which, however, were not of great importance, when the incident connected with the conversation of the Emperor with the correspondent of a leading English newspaper occurred.

Much has been written concerning that affair; but there is a detail that so far, I think, has never been divulged before. William II. had requested the correspondent in question to send a copy of his conversation to the German Foreign Office before publishing it. It seems that the correspondent, meeting Prince Bülow, asked him at what time he could see it, adding that the matter had to be dealt with quickly, as he wanted to send the interview to his paper at once. Upon which the Chancellor laughingly replied that he was sure it would be all right, and that the correspondent need not take the trouble. When the stir caused by this memorable conversation took place, the Emperor inquired why the Foreign Office had not seen to the matter, and was informed that Prince Bülow had not deemed it necessary. William II., in spite of his defects, is essentially a gentleman. He said nothing, and disdained to exculpate himself, or even to allow the world to guess that his was not the blame. But he never forgave Prince von Bülow, and



Photo VON UHREN

DR. VON BETTMANN-HOLLWEG



Photo BAUTZ

PRINCE BERNHARD VON BÜLOW



## Bethmann-Hollweg takes Office

when the latter, later on, made his famous declaration in the Reichstag that henceforth the Sovereign would not speak in public before having submitted all that he wanted to say to his ministers, his feelings of rage against his Chancellor knew no bounds, and he made up his mind to dismiss him at the first opportunity, with perhaps less scandal than in the case of Prince von Bismarck, but to dismiss him all the same.

He had not to wait long, and a year had not elapsed before Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg was called upon to occupy the palace in the Wilhelmstrasse which had been acquired by the Government for the use of the Chancellor of the Empire. Prince von Bülow retired from public life, and withdrew to the solitudes of his own homes, his cottage at Norderney, his estate in Holstein, and the Villa Malta in Rome. He had inherited a large fortune from a distant relative not long before he withdrew from office, and this helped him considerably to tide over the loss of his position. After his retirement he did not actively oppose his former master, nor the policy which the German Government carried on, but he had a significant shrug of the shoulders, which spoke volumes, whenever Prussian politics were mentioned.

The Emperor carried himself with extreme dignity at this delicate period. He rarely mentioned his ex-Chancellor's name, and never would be induced to speak to him, and this is probably the reason why the latter has preferred to live in Italy. His wife was

## The Berlin Court under William II

a Sicilian who, through the second marriage of her mother with the Italian statesman Minghetti, held quite an exceptional status in Rome and at the Court of the Quirinal. She felt delighted to find herself once more in her own country, and the couple soon made themselves thoroughly at home in the Eternal City, where they certainly contrived to enjoy a wide popularity. The Emperor, it should be recorded, always mentioned the Prince with some expression of praise whenever he found himself obliged to do so.

When, in the early spring of 1914, I last saw Prince Bülow he seemed to have aged considerably; his tall, bulky figure was somewhat bent; there were lines upon his face; the eyes, too, had lost a measure of their former vivacity, and there was a look of general weariness in his whole attitude.

The conduct of William II. in regard to the dismissal of Prince von Bülow forms a strange contrast with his attitude when he asked Prince Bismarck to abandon the position he had held for more than a quarter of a century. Then the impetuosity of his youth and character led him into many regrettable manifestations he would have done better to abstain from indulging in; but when, after having seriously thought it over, he made up his mind to part from his fourth Chancellor since his accession to the Crown, he did it gravely, quietly, with firm politeness, but at the same time with the inexorable determination of one who means to carry through the decision he has taken.

## A Look Backward

This leads me to revert to that important passage in the life of the present German Emperor—his separation from Bismarck. To many it came as a thunderbolt in a clear sky, whilst those who had had the opportunity of studying the character of the young Sovereign previous to his accession to the throne, only wondered how he had managed to retain the services of the great Chancellor for such a length of time. The fact is that Bismarck had grown erratic in some things, and his caprices and overbearing temper obliged those who had anything to do with him to exert the utmost patience in order to retain their self-control in his presence. He had been used to doing exactly what he liked for so long that he could not understand why the new Emperor suddenly required explanations. William II., who had a very high idea of royal dignity, tried for the sake of all that had been, and of the great things that the Prince had accomplished, to bear with him. He deeply respected the old veteran at whose side his father and grandfather had fought, but he respected his own position even more, and he would never have accepted the reputation of being a king who left all the cares of the State in the hands of his Prime Minister. Though the world has not given him credit for it, it is nevertheless a fact that William II. tried by all the means in his power to bring Bismarck to understand that somehow things had changed since the death of the old Emperor, who had left him so absolutely free in his decisions

## The Berlin Court under William II

whenever politics were in question. He hinted to him that, after all, he did not require much, but simply wanted not to be systematically ignored by the Chancellor, as he was continually doing. He even asked common friends to interfere and to persuade Bismarck that it would be to his advantage as well as for the good of the country if he would make up his mind to share with his Sovereign the cares of the State. But the Colossus refused to listen to anything, and the only reply which the Emperor could obtain was the characteristic remark that "If I retire he will be obliged to call me back again within the week. I prefer to spare him that trouble."

It was then that the fate of Bismarck was settled. William II., who had hesitated for months before deciding to part from the Chancellor, made up his mind immediately after these words had been repeated to him, and without waiting another day, he sent to the Prince to ask him for his resignation, which, of course, the latter then handed in. He was forthwith honoured with a letter in which his services to the State were fully enumerated, and he received the title of Duke of Lauenburg, in order, as he angrily exclaimed when he heard about it, "to blot out the name of Bismarck from the face of the earth." Whatever were the feelings of the Emperor in regard to his former teacher, he certainly had no such thought in his mind, but can a man in a rage reason? And Bismarck was for once in a towering rage.

## Bismarck's Last Days

It is, however, not true that he clung to office. He may, he probably did, regret parting from it; but he certainly made no effort to retain it. He left Berlin, and almost immediately started his policy of opposition to the Emperor, criticising everything he did and trying to make himself as obnoxious, from his retreat of Varzin and Friedrichsruhe, as he possibly could to the young monarch.

In a certain sense Prince Bismarck succeeded, until at last events, as well as time, did their work, and there came a day when William II. was clever enough to offer the olive branch and to present it personally to Bismarck, visiting him for that purpose at the Castle of Friedrichsruhe, where the old statesman received him with sincere pleasure, which, however, he carefully refrained from showing too openly. After this he reappeared in Berlin, where he was welcomed with effusion by the populace. The Emperor visited Friedrichsruhe once more, for Bismarck's funeral.

When in his turn Prince von Bülow was dismissed by William II. people wondered who would be bold enough to replace him. They did not have to wait very long, because the present Chancellor of the Empire was almost immediately invested with the important functions of leader of German politics, a position which he has occupied ever since.

Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg had always been held in respect. He belonged to an old Frankfurt family



## The Berlin Court under William II

famous for the riches, honour, and the straightforwardness of its members. His character was above reproach; his connections were unimpeachable; his intelligence, though perhaps not so brilliant as that of Prince von Bülow, was certainly more sound. He possessed abundant self-control, was devoted to his duties, and no coward. He would never willingly have deceived anybody; and above everything he was too thoroughly monarchist by conviction ever to hesitate to cover with his ministerial responsibility any imprudence of his Sovereign. He was sufficiently the servant of the Sovereign to defend him, if need be; but, on the other hand, he had no servile tendencies.

He was a tactful and painstaking speaker. When he ascended the tribune in the Reichstag he was always listened to, even when his conduct was most severely criticised by the opponents of the Government, and whenever he treated the subject of international politics he did so with unusual care, and with a clearness in his presentation of the facts which he was trying to bring before his hearers that could only command respect. Gifted with prudence and discernment, he did not attach undue importance to things that did not deserve it, and in spite of attacks he never allowed himself to be influenced either by the Press or by public opinion in the cases when from his point of view they did not coincide with the interests of the country.

Yet with it all there was a vein of unconscious

## A Vein of Unconscious Hypocrisy

hypocrisy. I must lay stress upon this criticism, because it contains the key to the national character and has obscured many sterling qualities. Being a German, I may express myself with more freedom in regard to my compatriots than a foreigner could do, and also with more impartiality. I shall not, therefore, be suspected of an unjust hatred or unjust prejudices when I try to outline the German character as it has developed in the course of centuries.

Ever since Prussia has become conscious of its capability of raising itself to the rank of a powerful nation, she has worked towards it with a tenacity that has only been equalled by the dissimulation she has brought to the accomplishment of this purpose.

Perhaps this dissimulation was necessary ; at least, Prince Bismarck, among others, has said so, because other countries would have been but too eager to interfere with the steady determination which has been the characteristic of all Prussian sovereigns since Frederick the Great. This necessity has degraded the German character.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REICHSTAG

I HAVE here tried to come to a true and unbiased opinion as to the part played by the Reichstag in the development of the Empire as well as in the political progress of the country. When the Assembly was called into existence Prince Bismarck said it was with the intention that it should become a serious help to the German Government in its administration of the newly-founded Empire. Bismarck, though, fully intended it to remain an intention, and nothing else. In the first years which followed the Confederation, this Parliament gave promise of its determination to fulfil the mission with which it believed it had been entrusted.

In those long-forgotten days which saw the Socialists fight for their freedom and the Catholics struggle for their principles, the Reichstag was the scene of more than one surprise. But as time went on, its temper underwent a considerable change, perhaps because latterly there has been nothing left to fight for in Germany; at least, not in the former sense. Whatever official newspapers may say, there is no constitutional government in the German Empire at

## An Impotent Parliament

present, if we take the fact into consideration that no vote of the Reichstag influences in the very least the actions of the Ministers, in the sense of their possible resignation before the disapproval of their conduct by the country. Neither they nor the Emperor attach any importance whatever either to a hostile or to a friendly vote of the representatives of the country, and, so far, all the Ministerial crises that have taken place have been caused by friction between the Sovereign and his responsible advisers ; never by any censure in the Reichstag. The principal—one may almost say the only—function of this Assembly is to vote the credits required by the Government or asked for by the Sovereign.

Taken as a whole, the importance of the Parliament of the Empire is far inferior to that of the Prussian Landtag, where at least Deputies are allowed to talk and discuss, and even occasionally to influence, through their votes, the fate of the Bills presented for their approval or disapproval ; another proof that in Germany, although it is the Empire that is talked of, it is only the Kingdom of Prussia which really counts. The Hohenzollerns have always been careful to assure to Prussia, if not the first place, at least the first word in the administration of the country of which it is a part.

Nevertheless, the illusion as to the importance of the Reichstag, the existence of which is meant to make the outsider imagine that the whole of Germany

## The Berlin Court under William II

is united in one thought and one heart, is studiously kept up by the Prussian Government. It does not care to have the world suspect of what small consequence it considers the Reichstag to be either in the matter of the interior administration of the country, or in the direction of its foreign policy.

In a certain sense, the Emperor and his Ministers are justified in their determination to ignore it, because there is no real majority to-day in the German Parliament, and, for the matter of that, none has existed for the last twenty years or so. There is only an accumulation of interests, subject to constant changes. Endless friction goes on between the different factions and parties, who either support or abandon the Government, as their fancy dictates, but who, whilst influenced sometimes by external circumstances to make an occasional stand for this or that object, are yet incapable of remaining united for any length of time. The only point on which this sad simulacrum of a Parliament appears at the height of the mission it is supposed to perform, is on the question of national defence. There the Deputies enter into every detail of the measures submitted to them, though they generally end by accepting all the Bills connected with it, in spite of the opposition of the Socialists, who in Germany have strenuously defended the cause of universal peace.

Concerning the different parties represented in the Reichstag, of which none is numerous enough to con-

## German Socialism

stitute an independent majority, the Centre, once so powerful when Windthorst led it and Bismarck fought against it, has become quite a humdrum kind of affair; it sometimes raises its voice, but has quite lost its *raison d'être*, having obtained all, or nearly all, that it had required, and more than it could reasonably have hoped for. The Poles maintain their irreconcilable attitude, but, being quite a small faction vote either Right or Left as they imagine will be most disagreeable to the Government, without ever showing rational feelings or common sense in their action. The Conservatives still support the Crown in maintaining its prerogatives and privileges, as they always have done in the past. The National Liberals talk a lot, and work very little; discuss with energy and abandon with promptitude the questions which ought to interest them the most, owing to a want of that backbone which is perhaps more essential in politics than in anything else. The Socialists alone have remained consistent in their conduct, and theirs is the party which has, in comparison with all the others, progressed the most and won to itself the greatest number of partisans throughout the country. Bebel is dead, so are his comrades of early days who helped him in winning a position which had been refused to their party for so many years. But his disappearance, though a grief, has not been a blow to his adherents.

Socialists are very powerful nowadays, they are the best organised political party in Germany. They

## The Berlin Court under William II

are not anarchists—or at least their saner elements repudiate the theories of anarchism. They abhor assassination as a weapon, and they do not sympathise with destruction. Their aim is to build, not to demolish. They have a complete programme of government, and should they ever succeed in getting power in their hands they would come forward with men ready and willing to rule in accordance therewith. They are patriots, and though they do not like the Emperor personally, and perhaps could wish he were by some means or other removed from the political scene of their country, yet they have a strong sense of duty in regard to their Fatherland; and should disaster ever befall the German Eagle, they would make no attempt to raise the masses in a revolutionary movement.

Those who calculate on such an eventuality make a gross mistake. German Socialism is in fact essentially patriotic. It has outlived the ostracism in which it was formerly held, as well as the distrust with which it was viewed by reasonable people, and it has won the respect of its foes as well as the affection of the masses. It has never compromised itself by making concessions which would have been inconsistent with the principles which it defended, and its parliamentary tactics have been free from treachery or falsehood. How many parties could say the same?

It is no matter for surprise, therefore, that the German Socialists are in possession of the esteem of

## France, the Bugbear

their adversarics, who, however they may fight against them, will never refuse to shake hands with them.

One of the most curious features of the Reichstag is its sensitiveness on all questions connected with France. The danger presented by this troublesome neighbour is constantly in everyone's thoughts, and weighs a great deal on the minds of members of Parliament: on the other hand, no one dreams that Russia will ever quarrel with Germany. France seems to absorb all the capacities for fear and anxiety in the political domain of the German nation, though it is true there is, too, a vague uneasiness concerning the trustworthiness of the allies Germany is supposed to have.

One thing which cannot fail to strike the disinterested observer is that the Triple Alliance, notwithstanding all that has been said or written on the subject, has never been considered by German public opinion as a trump card in European politics. It was never really popular, and no one, from the Emperor downwards, feels quite sure that it will hold good in the case of a foreign war. This is perhaps the reason that all the attention of the Reichstag remains riveted on the doings of France, and why it would have preferred a Russian to an Italian defensive treaty. This explains, also, why all the propositions of further armaments have always been sanctioned, no matter how huge. Always keen on military matters, the Emperor, latterly, has studied them with an atten-



## The Berlin Court under William II

tion credited by few, even among his most intimate friends. He has begun to realise that he can benefit by others' experience, and that he should not pass over the old generals of his army as he had done at the beginning of his reign.

Incidents like that which had occurred with General von Meercheidt-Hülßen would never have happened in recent years. It was such an amusing incident that I cannot refrain from relating it here, as it illustrates very well the character of William II.

He was presiding over some military exercises in the neighbourhood of Berlin when suddenly the idea struck him to interfere in the arrangement previously decided upon, and instead of leading the regiment of which he had assumed the command to its prearranged destination, he took it into his head to make a surprise manoeuvre, and ordered it to turn back and to charge the enemy. It seemed to have succeeded very well, and the young Sovereign was elated with the success with which his plan was apparently met.

Soon, however, old General Meercheidt-Hülßen appeared upon the scene. The General was one of the heroes of the war of 1870, and enjoyed a great reputation in the Army; he was also known for his brusqueness and utter want of consideration for the feelings of others. He rode up to the Emperor and asked him point-blank what he had meant by going against the plan adopted by the General Staff, and why he had muddled the heads of his soldiers in causing

## Snubbing the Emperor

them to execute exercises which were quite useless. William II. became irritated, and replied that he had wanted to see the success of a charge of cavalry directed against an infantry brigade. "The success!" exclaimed the angry old general; "the success! Do you know what that success would have been if I had been in command of that infantry you wanted to crush? I should have simply ordered my men to turn round and to fire one or two volleys, after which you would not have brought back one single tail of your squadrons. They would all have been laid low. No, young man; don't attempt to meddle in what you know nothing about!"

It is to the praise of the Emperor that, instead of being dissatisfied with this blunt and most rude speech, he took it in good part, and so long as the general remained on active service he treated him with the greatest respect.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AMONG THE DIPLOMATS

**D**IPLOMATS have always occupied a privileged position at the Berlin Court, especially under William II. The Emperor is fond of talking with the ambassadors, and has gone even further in his politeness to them than his grandfather. He calls privately on the foreign ambassadors, and sometimes discusses alone with them the most momentous political questions. When Count Schouvaloff and Count Osten Sacken represented Russia in Berlin, one could often see the Imperial carriage standing at the door of the Russian Embassy, and it was very often the friendship with which the monarch honoured these two statesmen that helped to clear misunderstandings which might otherwise have spoiled the relations between the two countries. Count Schouvaloff was especially liked by William II., who appreciated his military talents, and perhaps gave them more importance than they really deserved, because the Count was more of a dashing commander than a profoundly learned strategist. He was a man gifted with great tact, which in his first days at the Embassy made up for lack of diplomatic experience

## At the Russian Embassy

such as he richly acquired later in life. He had been brought up according to traditions which prevailed at the Russian Court in the times of Alexander II. and of Nicholas I., when friendship with Germany was strong. During his tenure of office at the Berlin Embassy, he succeeded in avoiding serious friction between his Government and the Wilhelmstrasse, and in his relations with the Berlin Foreign Office made manifest the exquisite urbanity of his manner, the balanced fairness of his mind. He was deeply regretted at Court when he was recalled. In military circles, especially, was he missed, for he had made himself exceedingly popular from the first moment of his arrival in Germany. His successor, Count von Osten Sacken, was a diplomat of old standing, whose career had been made abroad, and who, everywhere he had been, had left grateful remembrances of his fine qualities.

He was already old when he came to Berlin, whither he was transferred from Munich, and he brought with him to his difficult post an immense experience and vast knowledge of men and of politics. The fact of his German origin made his position easier in some things; but on the whole, perhaps, more complicated, particularly when his duties clashed with his sympathies.

Count and Countess Osten Sacken were delightful people, essentially aristocratic, courteous and kind. The Count was accomplished and tactful and of high integrity. When once he gave his word, he kept it, no matter how difficult this might prove to him;

## The Berlin Court under William II

and when he promised to attempt to convince his Government on some point or other upon which it had remained obdurate, one could feel certain that, nine times out of ten, he would succeed.

He was a short, stout man, with a very intelligent face, and though somewhat pompous, could appear entirely amiable, even when cross or annoyed at something. His staff was exceedingly fond of him, and he treated all his subordinates with true kindness. All the bachelors in the Embassy lunched and dined with him every day, and he watched over them with real interest, even paying their debts at times when these had not been incurred for any unworthy object, and the failure to meet financial liabilities was the result of misfortune or accident. He put the Embassy on a very high footing, both politically and socially, and the receptions and dinners given there became quite famous.

Count Osten Sacken was seconded in his efforts by his accomplished wife, who was a widow when he married her. Her first husband was a Prince Galitzyne, enormously rich, who had occupied the post of Russian Ambassador at the Court of Madrid when the gay Queen Isabella reigned there. Count Osten Sacken was attached to the Embassy in the Spanish capital, serving under the Prince. When the Prince died, the Count married the Princess as soon as her mourning was over, and the couple, who had a great affection for each other, lived most happily ever after. Madame Osten Sacken was older by some

## Countess Osten Sacken

years than the Count, but she was far too perceptive not to know how to behave under the circumstances; few women have been gifted with more tact. She never interfered with her husband's affairs, and though she was very well aware of everything that was going on at the Embassy, being often consulted by the Count on some delicate point or other where he thought her quick mind could suggest some good advice, she never made the least sign in public that he sought her opinion on political matters and always acknowledged the benefit of having done so. She shut her eyes, too, regarding any little excursions he might have made now and then outside the limits of conjugal duty.

She was a curious little woman to look at; rather stout, dressed in quite an old-fashioned way, and wore continually a rope of the most splendid pearls that it has ever been my good fortune to see. She looked rather like a little fairy of the children's tales, but not a wicked one, though she could be extremely sarcastic at times, and was possessed of a quick and caustic wit, as well as a sharp tongue. Some people feared her, others liked her; the greater number admired her for her splendid intellectual attainments, and everybody recognised that she had kept the best traditions of the past, while not fearing to appropriate everything that was best in our time.

Count and Countess Osten Sacken remained in Berlin for more than fifteen years so far as I remember. They both ended their days there. The Countess

## The Berlin Court under William II

died at the advanced age of eighty odd years, and the Count some years later at about the same age. They were universally respected, and the Count was even a little feared, because one realised very well at the Foreign Office that he would never allow the prestige of his country to be endangered, and that he would stand up for it in a perfectly polite but at the same time most energetic and serious manner.

When he died, the Emperor William was genuinely sorry. He felt quite safe with Count Osten Sacken; he was aware that the latter had a horror of adventurous projects, and would never allow himself to be drawn into one. That was a guarantee for the peace of Europe; that peace for which the Emperor deluded so many into believing he cared so much that he was ready to make any sacrifices, save of his country's honour, in order to ensure it.

The Count's successor was very different. M. Swerbeiev is an essentially pacific man, and has the misfortune to show it far too much in his demeanour. He is a mild individual, who prefers to live upon good terms with everybody, and is strongly averse to anything like strife. He was promoted step by step in his career, and made a reputation for being an excellent worker. He does not possess extraordinary talent, but displays plenty of goodwill, and is always ready to fulfil most punctually and faithfully all that is required from him. He will always do the right thing at the right moment, but will never admit the possibility that sometimes it

## English Diplomats

is just as well to do the wrong one. In brief, he is a perfect diplomat, but an indifferent statesman, and not a keen politician.

England was represented for a considerable number of years by Sir Francis Bascelles, who had always made himself popular wherever he went. Though not brilliant he was nevertheless clever, interesting in his conversation, quiet and gentlemanly in his manners, and gifted with a keen spirit of observation, of which he made excellent use. He had great diplomatic experience behind him and it suited him very well where it became necessary. During the years that he spent in Berlin, relations between England and Germany passed through many a troubled sea, but he contrived to avoid real conflict with great ability and extreme tact. He was very much liked in Society, as was also Lady Bascelles, whose death there excited universal regret. The receptions given at the British Embassy were considered as the pleasantest of the winter season.

The successor of Sir Francis was Sir Edward Goschen, also a diplomat of experience, who has an abundance of sound qualities, a strong character, and plenty of tact and dignity. At first he strikes one as rather dull, but his quality of most penetrating intelligence.

In various trying moments since his appointment in 1908 his steady, able and level-headed statesmanship has reserved influence and good feeling.



## The Berlin Court under William II

One cannot say that he has made himself popular among the butterfly set in Berlin, but he is respected by all, and well liked.

The doyen of the Diplomatic Corps is the Austrian Ambassador, Count von Szögyény-Marisch, who has occupied that post for something like twenty-three years. He is a Hungarian, and a pleasant though superficial man, who has been kept so long at his place because he is extremely liked by the Emperor, and because relations between the German and the Austrian Courts are generally conducted directly by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the two Empires, their respective ambassadors having nothing to do save to register the decisions reached. He has been in Berlin for such a long time that it has become a sort of second Fatherland for him. He is very fond of society, and has made a host of friends in Berlin. When, some few months ago, the rumour got about that he would soon be replaced by a Prince Hohenlohe married to an Archduchess, it was felt that a recall would break his heart and probably send him to a premature grave. Any successor will find it extremely difficult to win a position such as the Count has acquired owing to the considerable time he has lived in the German capital. It certainly is more the home of Count Szögyény-Marisch than Vienna, or even his own Hungarian estates, which he has seldom visited.

Another diplomat who has been in Berlin for a considerable number of years is M. Jules Cambon, who

## M. Cambon

represents France. He is one of the most astute diplomats that the Quai d'Orsay has to-day. Both he and his brother, who is the French Ambassador in London, are clever statesmen. Courteous, civil, pleasant, never allowing himself to be drawn into an intrigue or a compromising friendship, M. Jules Cambon has won for himself the genuine respect of Berlin society. The Emperor in particular is said to appreciate his straightforwardness, the simplicity of his manners, and his innate dignity.

He is an ardent patriot, who knows that in his position he ought to be the last man to throw oil upon the fire, rather that he should ever do his best, in consonance with honour and truth, to avoid any pretext for a quarrel. He has watched carefully every manifestation of anti-French feeling in Prussia, but has never exaggerated its importance; on the contrary, he has consistently tried to minimise artificial rufflings of the public temper brought about by journalists in quest of something sensational.

Cold in manner, not effusive, he never offends anyone by seeming to neglect an iota of what is due to his position, but he studiously refrains from any familiarity that could possibly be construed into a desire to make himself either popular or more appreciated than he ought to be in order to be able to retain, in regard to his superiors at the Quai d'Orsay, his perfect independence of judgment and opinion. When appointed to his post, he had found his position rather

## The Berlin Court under William II

difficult at first owing to the high and noble birth of his predecessor, the Marquis de Noailles. After him M. Cambon appeared to the élite of Berlin society rather in the light of an intruder, because he was not of illustrious and ancient lineage. Very soon, however, the new Ambassador lived down that false impression, and made himself appreciated, even among those who had thought to be most hostile to him. He is a man of peaceful disposition, though of great determination; he would never allow himself to be scared by a circumstance which was not really serious and alarming; at the same time he would not overlook things that might acquire an importance if not handled with sufficient delicacy by people not sufficiently experienced in the labyrinth of diplomacy.

The United States for a long time was represented by people who seldom entered into the gay world of Berlin, but were more at home in the learned circles of the capital, where, for instance, the keen intelligence of Mr. Andrew White was so very much appreciated. Suddenly, however, the United States Embassy blossomed into popularity when Mr. Charlemagne Towers was appointed. Mr. Towers, thanks to his immense fortune and his amiable, dashing, rather eccentric wife, soon achieved a leading position in Society. He also pleased the Emperor by the generous manner in which he opened his house, and asked all whom he met to share his splendid hospitality. Mr. Towers was a cultured man, a man of letters, and one

## U.S.A. Ambassadors

who contrived to interest the Sovereign, not only in his person, but also in many of the vast enterprises that he favoured, or with which he was occupied.

The entertainments given at the Embassy were organised on a scale of magnificence such as Berlin had never seen before, and whenever the Emperor and the Empress honoured Mr. and Mrs. Towers with their presence at a dinner or at a ball, the luxury that was displayed assumed quite fantastic proportions, and caused far more talk than any festivities given at the Royal castle. Without exaggeration it can be affirmed that it was with the advent of Mr. and Mrs. Towers, that Berlin society assumed its now prevailing tone of great elegance and plethoric luxury. It was calculated that the expenses of the United States Embassy verged on several millions of dollars yearly. Since the existence of Prussia as a kingdom it had never witnessed anything like the stupendous magnificence displayed by the American Ambassador.

When the next Ambassador was appointed the Emperor, in his endeavour to induce Mr. and Mrs. Towers to remain in Berlin, sent a request to White House to give Mr. Towers some appointment that would keep him in the capital. His successor, Mr. James Hill, not being a multi-millionaire, was anything but a social success. It is to be doubted, indeed, whether anyone could have been that after the Charlemagne Towers had taken their departure. Mr. Leishman, who replaced Mr. Hill, also did not

## The Berlin Court under William II

prove the amiable man he had been represented to be before his arrival. Perhaps the great success obtained by his daughter everywhere she appeared had something to do with the general disapproval, and when Miss Nancy Leishman became the bride of the young Duke of Croy, her parents' position was rendered absolutely untenable, as jealous people invented so many improbable stories concerning them.

The present Ambassador, Judge J. W. Gerard, however, seems likely to revive the days when the United States Embassy was so popular everywhere. For one thing he has a young and very pretty wife, who unites amiability with a keen love for enjoyment in any shape or form, who cares for balls, dances, receptions, visits and, in short, everything that people eager for great social successes ought to care for. She immediately transformed the Embassy, and made it one of the loveliest residences of the capital, bringing everywhere her American love for flowers, pretty things, and luxurious surroundings. She is pleasant in her manners, and attentive to others, particularly to the American colony in Berlin, inviting its members constantly to dinners and concerts, and making them feel thoroughly at home within her hospitable walls. She also preserves excellent relations with the families of the other Ambassadors, and cultivates the friendship of the serious as well as the smart set of Society. Altogether she has been an excellent acquisition to the world in which she moves.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD

**W**HEN the Emperor William II. ascended the throne, one of the first things which he did was to surround himself with his own friends. He kept the old servants of his grandfather, and even gave them high honorary functions, which added to their rank and dignity, but he did not allow them into his intimacy, and, gradually, as time went on, he conferred the principal posts in his household on people whom he knew personally, until—to-day—all the really important places at Court are occupied by close friends of the Sovereign. It is my purpose to present to the reader some little character sketches of these personages.

According to an order of precedence established by William I., the holders of the four highest offices in the Imperial household rank before everybody else, including the heads of the princely mediatised families, much to the sorrow of the latter. With the exception of the Great Chamberlain, who invariably took precedence over the others, the remaining three ranked among themselves according to the date upon which they had been appointed. William II.,

## The Berlin Court under William II

in order to soothe the ruffled feelings of some people, decided that these positions should always be distributed amongst the chiefs of certain princely families enjoying the title of *Durchlaucht* or Serene Highness; but this resolution was not viewed with the satisfaction that he had expected, as all the numerous Hohenlohes, Salms, Solms, etc., objected just as much when they found themselves obliged to walk behind Prince Radolin, whose title was of the newest, as they would have done had a Count Donhoff or Arnim been in his place.

The Great Chamberlain is Prince von Solms-Baruth, an exceedingly rich man—owner of one of the finest country seats in Silesia—married to a daughter of the late Prince Pless. He is about the same age as the Emperor, who has known him since they were both children, and has always been exceedingly fond of him. The family, though belonging to that of the old Solms, was but a younger branch of it, and could boast only of the title of Count. Old Count Frederick of Solms-Baruth was a very popular personage in Berlin society some forty years ago. His son, the present owner of the family estates, had served in a cavalry regiment of the Guards, until he married pretty little Countess Louise Hochberg, the sister of the Prince Pless who married Miss Cornwallis-West. He is an amiable man, of unimpeachable character. He has contrived always to remain upon intimate terms with William II., though he has had the courage

## Prince Fürstenberg

to contradict him sometimes. Without being gifted with unusual intelligence—indeed, he is too rich to need genius—he is equipped with common sense, and fills with tact and dignity the great position he occupies. The title of Prince, with the right to be called a Serene Highness, was conferred upon his father, Count Frederick, by the late Emperor Frederick III., and was one of the first honours granted during his short reign.

The Head Marshal of the Imperial household is Prince Fürstenberg, head of the mighty and powerful Fürstenberg family. He is a comparatively young man, being younger by a few years than the Kaiser. He belonged to the younger branch of the Fürstenberg family, which had settled in Austria, and only succeeded to the enormous riches of the elder one, as well as to the family seat of Donaueschingen, in the Duchy of Baden, after the death of a distant cousin, the head of the elder line, whose marriage with Mlle. de Talleyrand had remained childless. He is a typical Austrian; speaks German with the Austrian accent, is married to the Princess Schönborn, also an Austrian, and was very well known in Vienna, where, indeed, William II. had met him, and where he had grown to like him.

When he entered into possession of his great inheritance, he conceived the idea, together with the Duke of Ujest, whose millions were almost as numerous as his own, of using his fortune to start a trust, with the object of fighting the power and



## The Berlin Court under William II

might of the Jews. If Dame Rumour is to be believed the two illustrious partners took an interest in numbers of industrial and commercial enterprises of different kinds, including hotels, shops, railways and iron works. The ventures, however, have been emphatically the reverse of successful.

When this enterprise was first started it met with considerable sympathy on the part of William II., who had it explained to him in detail, and who expressed himself in public as being quite enchanted with it. He loaded Prince Fürstenberg with favours, appointed him to one of the first four offices at his Court, made his wife a Dame du Palais of the Empress, and contracted the habit of going every year for a few days' shooting at Donaueschingen, where, among a select circle of friends, William II. spent his time most pleasantly.

Prince Fürstenberg does not live in Berlin. When some great Court function or other requires his presence he stays at the Hotel Adlon, on the Linden. He is much sought after, but is not perhaps a thoroughly popular personage in Society, on account of his Austrian haughtiness and a suspicion of snobbishness.

The Princess Fürstenberg, his wife, is a tall, fair woman, not pretty, but pleasant, and possessed of a grand manner, reminding one of the Austrian Arch-duchesses. She does not care for Berlin, and contrives to spend most of her time in Vienna, where her own family resides, and where she is Dame du Palais at

## The Trachenbergs

the Court of the Habsburgs, as well as holding a like position in Berlin.

The Great Cup Bearer is Prince von Hatzfeldt Trachenberg, created Duke of Trachenberg by William II. ; a title, however, which he has not assumed in private life. He belongs to that proud Silesian aristocracy which holds strictly Conservative principles, and in the Reichstag, as well as in the Upper House, he invariably supports the Government, notwithstanding the fact that he is a Catholic. Indeed, even during the struggle of the Kulturkampf against Prince Bismarck, he sided with the Government. He is a good-natured fellow, very indolent, very honest, with a considerable amount of common sense.

He is married to the Countess Benckendorff, a slight, fair woman, niece of the present Russian Ambassador in London. She was a favourite with the Empress Frederick, who appointed her Mistress of the Robes. The couple come occasionally to Berlin, but spend most of the year at their country seat of Trachenberg, near Breslau. They have two sons, the elder of whom is married to the daughter of Baron von Tschirsky, the German Ambassador in Vienna; and the younger is wedded to a Japanese lady, the daughter of Viscount Aoki, formerly Minister of the Mikado in Berlin.

The office of Chief Butler of the Imperial Court is held by Prince Radolin, formerly German Ambassador in St. Petersburg, and then in Paris, where he spent

## The Berlin Court under William II

something like ten years. Prince Radolin, who is by origin a Pole, was formerly known as Count Radolinski. He had been at the head of the household of the Crown Prince, afterwards Frederick III., who rewarded him for his services by granting him a princely title during his short reign. He was in favour with Bismarck, whom he kept well informed as to events at San Remo during the last illness of Frederick. The Crown Princess, though invariably kind and amiable towards him, did not like him. I was told that when Count Seckendorff, the faithful friend, admirer, and servant of the Empress Frederick, heard that Count Radolinski was to be known in the future as Prince Radolin, he exclaimed that it was just as well he should bear another name. As a diplomat, Prince Radolin displayed fair qualities, and proved himself useful, even if he did not always exhibit brilliance.

He is very rich, and so can represent his country with sufficient pomp and luxury, entertain guests at his house, and not stint himself in any way. In Paris, thanks to his wife, who was of French origin through her mother, he had relatives in the Faubourg St. Germain, of whom he made use, and who greatly facilitated his entry into the smart society of the gay city. This was not difficult, as he was gifted with sufficient charm to make himself agreeable to the Republican authorities and government. He is now an old man, but quite content with his lot in life, his high rank, the good graces of the Emperor, and

## Count Eulenburg

the considerable fortune he is still quite able to enjoy.

The four personages whom I have just mentioned represent the most important officials at the Court of William II. Then come the holders of minor offices, some of whom, however, are also in possession of high positions, such, for instance, as Count August von Eulenburg, the present Minister of the Imperial Household, a perfect gentleman, as well as a most pleasant and courteous man, who, in spite of his advanced years—he must be close on the eighties—still appears wonderfully young for his age. He is said to own more decorations and orders, Prussian as well as foreign, than any other man in Germany. He was also for some time at the head of the household of the Crown Prince Frederick, but left it before the family dissensions between Frederick and his son, the present Emperor, had arisen. Count Eulenburg is extremely tactful, and has never been found wanting in presence of mind on any occasion. He is honest and straight, and fills his sometimes difficult position with great success and perfect dignity. At great Court festivals, where one sees him in his splendid uniform and gold embroidered tunic, preceding the Sovereign, he is an imposing figure. What is more important even is the fact that, although he has been for the last fifty years in possession of one of the most important positions at the Court of Berlin, he has not made an enemy.

He was for a long time Great Master of Cere-

## The Berlin Court under William II

monies, in which position he was succeeded by Count George von Kanitz, a type of the Prussian Junker, whose manners are far from having the suavity of those of his predecessor. Count Kanitz, who began his career as an officer in the Second Life Guards, was married to a Countess Hatzfeld, the daughter of the late Duchess de Sagan by her first husband, Count Maximilian Hatzfeld. The marriage, however, did not turn out a happy one, and the couple divorced after a few years. The Countess Kanitz subsequently married Baron Arthur Scholl, who formerly had been an attaché at the Austrian Embassy in Berlin. Her children remained with Count Kanitz, and their eldest daughter, the Countess Gisele, is now married to Count de Pourtalès, the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg.

There is a second Great Master of the Ceremonies in addition to Count Kanitz. His functions are entirely confined to the foreign diplomats accredited at the Berlin Court, and he bears the title of Introducer of Ambassadors. His duties consist in watching over the Diplomatic Corps, seeing after their comforts, presenting them to the Sovereign, and communicating to them all details concerning the festivities which they are expected to attend. The present occupant of the post is Baron von Roeder, an extremely clever and intelligent man, a keen observer, and a personage who certainly knows more than the great majority of people about the undercurrents of Court life in Germany, as well as in other countries. He is discretion

## General von Lyncker

itself, but if he should ever leave memoirs behind him, they will certainly rank among the most interesting documents concerning the habits and customs, as well as the events, of his time.

When the Emperor married, he asked his grandfather to give him as chief of his household a certain Captain von Lyncker, under whose orders he had begun his military service in the First Regiment of Foot Guards at Potsdam, and for whom he had taken a great liking. William I. having consented, Captain von Lyncker left the army and assumed the then modest functions of head steward of the very small household of the young Prince. He has never been displaced since that time, and at the present day entirely manages the Imperial Palace and all that pertains to it, doing so with extreme care, great knowledge, and admirable taste, down to the smallest administrative details. He is treated as an intimate friend both by the Emperor and the Empress, and they have often consulted him on important questions, such for instance, as the education of their children.

General von Lyncker, as he is now, is absolutely devoted to the Monarch and to the Royal family, and is, perhaps, the one man on whom William II. can absolutely rely. It is to him that those who have some favour to ask of the Emperor generally apply. He has considerable influence over the Emperor, and has never been known to abuse it, in spite of the many opportunities he must have had to do so. Everybody

## The Berlin Court under William II

who knows him likes him, and, what is more important, esteems and respects him. He hardly ever leaves his Imperial Master, whom he accompanies on all his journeys, and it is upon him that lies the responsibility of all the internal arrangements of the Royal Household.

General von Lyncker has under his orders all the servants and officials of the Palace. The only official who is not under his control is the Master of the Horse, Baron Hugo von Reischach, a former officer of the Garde du Corps, who in his young days was considered one of the handsomest men in Berlin. He married the youngest daughter of the Duke of Ratibor, and secured a place in the household of the late Empress Frederick after the latter's widowhood. On her death, the Emperor took Baron von Reischach into his own service, and appointed him Master of the Horse, giving him the supervision of the Imperial stables, a function which he has filled with great knowledge and skill, and certainly the old traditions which had been kept up ever since the days of King Frederick William III. have been fully maintained under his rule; few royal households can boast of such admirable horses and carriages as those of the Prussian Court.

Baron von Reischach is a very pleasant and jolly fellow, the incarnation of what a German officer is supposed to be. He rides well, drinks hard on occasion, is a good shot, and an excellent dancer. His intellectual faculties are perfectly sufficient, and his manners absolutely admirable.

## Baron von Hülsen Haeseler

Before ending this sketch of the principal officials at the Court of William II., a few words must be said concerning the Superintendent of the Royal Theatres, Baron von Hülsen Haeseler, who has replaced his father in those delicate functions. Baron von Hülsen was, in his young days, one of the most brilliant officers in the Second Regiment of the Foot Guards. The Emperor is extremely fond of him, and appointed him to the responsible position which he has now filled for a considerable number of years, simply because he liked him, and not at all because he took into consideration any fitness he might possess to occupy the office. Baron von Hülsen is rather abrupt in his manner, and so is not popular either in Society, or among the actors and artistes who are placed under his orders.

The household of the Empress is a very large one, far larger indeed than that of the old Empress Augusta, who contented herself with a Mistress of the Robes and two Dames du Palais. William II., however, at once rearranged his wife's Court on a much larger scale. He tried to establish something after the custom in vogue at Vienna, and to nominate a certain number of Dames du Palais, chosen among the greatest ladies in the land. These are not expected to be in attendance on the Empress except on State occasions, but they form part of her household, and enjoy a special precedence over other ladies in Society, as well as certain privileges, such, for instance, as the permission to occupy the Royal box at the theatre, to use the



## The Berlin Court under William II

Royal carriages, etc. At present there are fifteen ladies who hold the position of Dame du Palais. These include the Princess Solms-Baruth, *née* Hochberg, wife of the Great Chamberlain, a pretty, fair woman, looking ever so much younger than the forty odd years she is in reality; then the Countess Lehndorff, sister of Count George Kanitz, Master of the Ceremonies, whom I have just mentioned, and the widow of one of the favourites of the old Emperor William, General Count Lehndorff. She was once very pretty, and is still attractive, but her face wears an habitual look of sadness, which is justified by the many sorrows which have fallen to her lot. The Countess, who acted like an angel in regard to her husband during his last illness, is loved by everybody who knows her, and immensely respected. Another Dame du Palais is the Countess Eulenburg, the widow of Count Eulenburg, who, for some time under Bismarck, occupied the post of Minister of the Interior, a high-born dame, with pleasant manners, but a rather haughty demeanour. Then there is the once lovely Countess Udo Stolberg-Wernigerode, *née* Arnim, who is still remembered for her impersonation of Queen Elizabeth of England at a fancy ball given in honour of the silver wedding of the Emperor and Empress Frederick; the Duchess of Ratibor, an Austrian by birth, and the wife of the head of the ducal house of that name, whose daughter, the Princess Agathe, married a younger son of the late Prince Albert of Prussia, and thus became the

## Dames du Palais

cousin of William II. To continue, one mentions the Countess Donhoff Friedrichstein, wife of a mighty East Prussian magnate; the Princess Radolin, whose husband is the Head Butler of the Imperial Court, of whom I have already spoken; the Princess Innhausen, a new title conferred by the present Emperor on her husband, who is an intimate friend of his, to the great scandal of many people who did not think he was entitled to such a favour (which is generally a reward) for services he had never rendered; the Countess Puckler; the Countess Redern, widow of Count William Redern, so well known in London, where he occupied the post of Councillor to the German Embassy, some thirty years ago, and the sister of another intimate friend of the Emperor's, Prince Lichnowsky, who became Ambassador at the English Court in 1912; the Countess von Scheel Plessen, a great favourite with the Empress, and the Countess Harrach, *née* Pourtalès.

The Dames du Palais are expected to be either married women or widows. Single girls are never appointed to these posts, but the two ladies-in-waiting who were in attendanee on the Empress when the latter first came to Berlin as the Princess William of Prussia, and who are still with her, the Countess Keller and the Countess von Gersdorff, have received the title of Ladies of the Imperial Court, and been given the privilege of being called "Excellency," together with a rank equal to that of the Dames du Palais. These

## The Berlin Court under William II

two ladies are the intimate friends of the Empress, whose entire confidence they enjoy. Countess von Gersdorff distributes the charities, which is no sinecure under Augusta Victoria. No one knows the amount of money she lavishes upon them. Very often the Countess has to curb the generous instincts of the Empress, who might be imposed upon if her faithful friend were not at her side to defend her.

Besides the ladies I have mentioned there are young ladies-in-waiting, Demoiselles d'Honneur, one of whom, the Countess Ina von Bassewitz, was lucky enough to win the affections of Prince Osear of Prussia, the fifth son of the Emperor and Empress.

At the head of this numerous household is placed the Mistress of the Robes, the Countess Thérèse von Brockdorff. The Countess is the daughter of an old friend of the Emperor William I., the Baron von Löen, who was for a very long time attached to him as aide-de-camp, and, who, until his death, remained a *persona grata* at Court. She became a widow when quite young and still very lovely. Though childless, she refused to marry again, and made herself so much respected that, when it became necessary to form a household for the future wife of Prince William, the choice of the old Empress, as well as that of the then Crown Princess, at once fell on the Countess Brockdorff as the fittest person to be put at the head of it. She has ever since that day remained in possession of the post, which has grown vastly in importance, because

## Countess Brockdorff

the Mistress of the Robes of the reigning Sovereign enjoys quite special privileges, the precedence over all other ladies, and the right to expect the first call from them, even when they happen to be the wives of foreign Ambassadors. It is through her that every demand for a presentation to the Empress must pass, as well as all communications relating to matters of etiquette.

The Countess Brockdorff is now a very old woman, of rigid virtue, good manners, but not transcendent wit. She is very honest, very good, very true and faithful, very much imbued with her own importance, very unconcerned about everything that does not affect Court life or Court customs, who knows, perhaps, that Frederick the Great reigned in Prussia, and that Louis XVI. was beheaded in France, but whose notions of history are otherwise rather hazy and misty. Her knowledge of French is also vague, but her kindness is real, and this in spite of a certain stiffness that she considers to be indispensable to her functions, and which is sometimes taken for impoliteness, but is certainly quite unintentional.

I have purposely refrained from mentioning until now the most important personage in the household of the Empress—Baron von Mirbach, who is her confidential secretary and the Master of her Household. The Baron is a remarkable personage. Of handsome appearance, pleasant manners, and a singularly practical intelligence, he began his career as an officer in one of

## The Berlin Court under William II

the infantry regiments of the Guards, married a Belgian, the niece of the Minister, M. Frere Urban, and succeeded in getting appointed as gentleman-in-waiting to the young Princess William on the latter's marriage.

Once in possession of the post, he exerted his faculties to gain her sympathy and also some influence over her mind. When she became Empress he particularly devoted his energies to helping her in her plans in favour of Protestantism, and her efforts to build new churches in Berlin and elsewhere. Augusta Victoria is a most fervent Protestant, and Court chaplains and other clergymen who have ever applied to her for material help, either for themselves or for their poor parishioners, have never met with a refusal.

She strove to present to her subjects a perfect example of the devotion which she considered every Protestant ought to feel for his or her faith, and she carried this resolution to the extreme, so that it even ended by exciting criticism from people who thought she would do better not to exhibit such absolute confidence in the clergy. This, however, was not spoken of openly, but just hinted at in some circles where Baron von Mirbach was not a favourite. He, however, did not pay any attention to these slight demonstrations against his activity, and he managed things so well that very soon he became quite indispensable to the Empress, who in many things sees only through his eyes and hears through his ears.

Baron von Mirbach encourages the Empress in her

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*Victoria*

EMPRESS AUGUSTA VICTORIA IN 1894



## The Empress a Church Builder

fondness for building churches, but he always dissuades her from spending the large sums she devotes to charitable works; he is not a scholar, but a man who has learned much in the school of experience. He assumes modest appearances, yet is proud in his heart, and with an extreme simplicity he allies a great spirit of observation, and a considerable amount of acute knowledge of men and of their actions. This latter quality has enabled him to carve out a brilliant career most useful to himself.



## CHAPTER X

### HEADS OF PRINCELY HOUSES

**F**ROM time immemorial the members of the "Reichsunmittelbar" families—those subject direct to the Empire—were in possession of peculiar privileges. They constituted the highest nobility of the country, ranked with the German sovereigns, who treated them as their equals, and frequently intermarried with them. Mostly they could trace their origin to the times when they were independent princes, with "droits de haute et de basse justice." After the Congress of Vienna in 1814, the greater number of them had to renounce their sovereignty over their former principalities, and to become no more than great landowners and masters of beautiful castles full of historic memories. While doing so, however, they retained their special rights to be considered on a footing of equality with the crowned heads of Europe, and were exceedingly jealous of the special rank they enjoyed at Vienna and at Berlin, as well as among the smaller courts of Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden, and so forth.

The members of these families are entitled to be called Serene Highnesses, and at all their important family events, such as births, marriages and deaths, they

## The Illustrious Counts

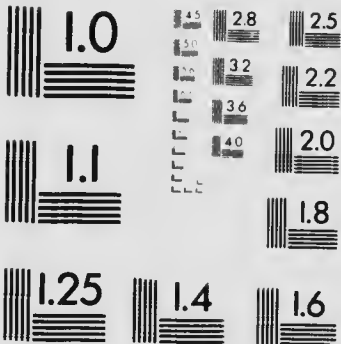
exchange amongst themselves official letters written in the style that sovereigns use on like occasions. The heads of these families still exercise a patriarchal overlordship over their younger scions, and feel a large measure of responsibility for the actions of the latter. Whenever one of them wants to marry a woman below him in rank, the whole family interferes, and takes the greatest care that this "disgrace" should not exert any influence on its own prospects, or bar the possible rights of any of its members to the inheritance of the entailed estates.

Among these families are some who do not bear the title of Prince, but, rather, are styled "Illustrious Counts," which is considered in some cases to be a far higher title. Such were the Bentineks, the Stolbergs, the Castell-Rüdenhausens, and a few others, in whose veins ran "all the blood of all the German Howards." The Stolbergs, who were once sovereigns in the Harz region, where their proud castle of Wernigerode stands to this day, and who are still called by the inhabitants of the country by the familiar appellation of "Unsern Grafen"—our Counts—played a considerable part in the history of Germany, especially during the troublous times of the Reformation. They can trace back their descent to the tenth century, when a Countess of Stolberg-Wernigerode was elected as the first abbess of Quedlinburg at its foundation in 932, a position filled later on by many daughters of that illustrious house, until at last one of the noblest among them, the Countess



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## The Berlin Court under William II

Juliana von Stolberg-Wernigerode, went over to the Protestant faith, and became its staunch defender. The Stolbergs for a long time refused to exchange their Count's coronet for that of a Prince; the father of the present head of the family was especially averse to it, and more than once refused to yield to the request of the old Emperor William I. that he should do so. After his death the present Sovereign conferred this dignity on the heads of the three lines of the Stolberg family now existing, without asking whether they liked it or not. William II. is rather fond of granting new titles right and left, and some of his enemies assert that he does so in order to humble the pride of certain families, and to prove to them that, notwithstanding their illustrious descent, they can still owe something to him, in that he can add to the number of dignities which they already possess.

Apart from these families, others exist in Prussia, very ancient too, or very rich, or very powerful, on whom, during the last fifty years or so, Prussian monarchs have conferred the title of Prince, either on all their members or on the head of the family. Such are the Plesses, the Carolaths, the Blüchers, the Hatzfelds, and lately, the Eulenburgs, Bülows, Henckels, Radolins, and Innhausens, whilst in Austria we find that the same thing has happened with the Batthyánys, the Kinskys, the Montenuovos, and a few others. These families are treated with far more familiarity by the Sovereigns of their respective countries than by their

## Duke d'Arenberg

brethren of that old German aristocracy. These newcomers were only given a rank decidedly inferior to the one of the Reichsunmittelbar, who even when they accepted the Princes as husbands for their daughters, were very careful not to allow their sons to seek wives among the Princesses, because the advent of the latter in their midst might have imperilled the purity of their quarterings.

It is very difficult for a foreigner to understand all these subtle distinctions, but in Germany they are most important, and they are observed with punctilious exactitude.

The Premier Prince and Duke in Germany, as well as in Austria, is the Duke d'Arenberg, who, whilst possessing enormous estates in Westphalia, is settled in Belgium, where he spends part of the year, either in Brussels, where he owns the palace that formerly belonged to the ill-fated Count of Egmont, who was beheaded by the Duke de Alba, and also the wonderful castle of Héverlée, near Louvain, one of the show places of Flanders. The present Duke, whose mother was also a Princess d'Arenberg, succeeded to the title and estates when quite a small boy of about five or six years. When he had attained his majority he entered one of the regiments of the Guards in Berlin, rather against the Dowager Duchess's wishes, who felt afraid he might meet some girl or other in Germany who would not possess the many qualifications needed to make him a worthy duchess. The young man,

## The Berlin Court under William II

however, remained fancy free, and only spent his time joyously among his comrades, making himself a general favourite, in spite of his rather gruff manners and a not too prepossessing physique. Notwithstanding these defects he was a jolly good fellow, who, without being brilliant, was sensible, and had a kind heart. He spent a lot of money, which, however, was of no importance, as he had more than he needed, and he was the envy and despair of the mothers of marriageable daughters.

After a few years of this kind of life he returned to Brussels, where he soon lost his heart to the lovely Princess Hedwige de Ligne, one of the handsomest women in Europe, and a distant cousin. He forthwith married her, to the joy of everybody and the relief of the Dowager Duchess. The couple come sometimes to Berlin, and are very happy together, have several children, and entertain most sumptuously at their Brussels residence and in their Westphalian and Belgian castles.

The Duke d'Arenberg has three sisters, the eldest of whom, Princess Ludmille, married the late Duke of Croy, and is the mother of the present holder of the title ; the second one was married to her cousin, Prince John d'Arenberg, and is also widowed ; whilst the third became the wife of Prince Stephen of Croy, the head of the younger branch of that family, and the owner of the magnificent castle of Roeulx, the splendour of which was already famous in the Middle Ages, and which is renowned all through Belgium.

## The House of Croy

After the d'Arenbergs and the Salm-Salms—whose lineage goes back to remote ages, but all of whom are strictly conventional, so there is nothing interesting to say about them—the House of Croy, just referred to, is considered to be the most illustrious in Germany.

The late duke died when still quite young. He contracted a chill whilst shooting, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Charles, who was still a minor. The Croys had always allied themselves to the highest in the land, and the present Archduchess Isabella of Austria, the consort of Archduke Frederick, is a daughter of that house, the sister of its late head. The young Duke followed the example of his cousin of Arenberg, and entered the regiment of the Prussian Garde du Corps in Berlin. There he was much sought after, and, of course, the object of much flattery. It was rumoured that his mother wanted him to marry one of the numerous daughters of his aunt, the Archduchess Isabella, and that the idea had appealed to the German Emperor, who tried to persuade the young man, whom he liked very much, to consent. Alas for these dreams! The Duke met one day at a ball the pretty, witty, amiable, lively daughter of the United States Ambassador in Berlin, Miss Nancy Leishman; from that moment his fate was sealed. Great was the scandal when he announced his intention of raising the fair American to the rank of Duchess of Croy. His family was in arms, every effort being made to oblige him to give up this "mad scheme" as it was called. So



## The Berlin Court under William II

strongly were the august nobilities exercised, that the question whether, should he persist in it, he would be allowed to retain possession of the family estates was seriously discussed.

The only person who encouraged him to follow the dictates of his heart was his intimate friend, the German Crown Prince, who assured him of his protection against the indignation of his mother, brothers and innumerable cousins. Miss Leishman showed considerable tact and prudence in her conduct, and at last the Crown Prince made a personal appeal to the Dowager Duchess, who, finding that she could not shake her son's resolution, finally consented to his marriage, and even graced the wedding ceremony with her presence. The newly-married pair came to Berlin in the course of the following winter and were made very much of by their friends, as well as by the heir to the throne and his amiable little consort, but the Duchess of Croy was not presented at Court, and it is still an open question whether she ever will be.

I have mentioned the Stolbergs. The late Count Otto was a very high and mighty personage, lord of Wernigerode, where he led an almost regal existence in its splendour and magnificence. He used to entertain the old Emperor twice a year at his castle in the midst of the Harz Mountains, and together with his amiable wife had many friends and but few detractors. His son, the present Prince, is everything one can expect in a man with no ambition beyond that of always

## The Hohenlohes

keeping what Providence has given. He is married to a Countess Castell-Rüdenhausen, whose pedigree equals his own in importance, but he is seldom seen in Berlin, where his parents used to spend part of the year, and give splendid receptions, which were attended by all the royalties present in the capital.

Even more ancient than the Stolbergs, Croys and Arenbergs are the Hohenlohes, who are divided into several branches the eldest of which, the Hohenlohe-Langenbourgs, are allied to the German Empress and closely connected with the English Royal Family by the marriage of Prince Ernest with the Princess Alexandra of Saxe-Coburg, granddaughter of the late Queen Victoria. Prince Ernest is a charming man, who wherever he goes makes friends, and who is as tactful as he is amiable and pleasant. He lived in Berlin before his marriage, then occupied several diplomatic posts. The one in London he held for a good many years. He now spends most of his time on his estates of Langenbourg, in Würtemberg, where he is universally beloved, and together with his duchess visits Nice in spring, but lives there very quietly, not often being seen among the cosmopolitan society of that gay winter city.

The richest member of the Hohenlohe family was Prince Christian Kraft of Hohenlohe-Oehringen, Duke of Ujest, who, when his father died, inherited something like two hundred millions of marks. The Duke is an extremely clever man, though not in the least a

## The Berlin Court under William II

business head, as he has proved by associating himself with the unfortunate financial ventures of Prince Fürstenberg, his great friend. He has never played any part in politics, and he has never married; he had been in love with the popular Countess Louise Frankenberg, and since her death he has remained faithful to her memory.

The Duke of Ujest is now an old man, considerably broken in health, but carrying himself with great dignity, with a perfect consciousness of the enormous importance of his position. After his death the title and estates will pass on to his brother, Prince John, who has married one of his cousins, another Princess Hohenlohe, and has several sons.

There are also Austrian branches of the Hohenlohe family, which have allied themselves to the Habsburgs, the members of which one does not see in Berlin. Then there are the Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürsts, and the Dukes of Ratibor, who, like the Fürstenbergs, have one foot in Austria and the other in Prussia. They have always been great favourites with the Russian Royal Family.

Prince Clovis of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, the late Ambassador in Paris, and Chancellor of the German Empire, was a distinguished member of the family. He left three sons and one daughter. His heir, Prince Philip Ernest, was married to a lovely Greek, the Princess Ypsilanti, but she died without issue, and quite soon afterwards, to the great scandal of all his kindred, he

## A Friend of Francis Joseph

married an actress. Not long after his second marriage the Prince developed symptoms of insanity, and to-day he is an inmate of a lunatic asylum.

The elder of his two brothers is married to a Princess Salm, whilst the second, Prince Alexander, took to wife a lady famous for her beauty, the widow of Prince George of Solms-Braunfels. She was an Italian by birth, and nearly twenty years older than himself, but at fifty looked as if she were only eighteen.

Old Prince Clovis had three brothers, one of whom was Cardinal Hohenlohe, who held a powerful position in Rome, and at one moment aspired to the tiara of the Roman Pontiffs. The youngest was for a long time one of the most important functionaries at the Vienna Court, the personal friend of the Emperor Francis Joseph, whose confidant he remained until his death; one of his sons married an Austrian Archduchess. Prince Victor, the third brother of Prince Clovis, succeeded, owing to an arrangement which he made with Prince Clovis, to the title and estates of the old Dukes of Ratibor, Princes of Corvey, and to the stately domain of Rauden, in Silesia, which belonged to them. The Duke of Ratibor was generally considered as the leader of the Silesian nobility, and took an active part in all the struggles which Bismarck fought with the extreme Roman Catholic clerical party in Prussia. He was clever, straightforward, and honest; a keen politician and an able diplomat. He had always been upon excellent terms with the old Emperor

## The Berlin Court under William II

William, and was held in high esteem by the present Sovereign, who, at the beginning of his reign, frequently consulted him on State matters. The Duke of Ratibor married an excellent woman with very strict religious principles and admirable domestic qualities. The present Duke, the eldest of a large family, is married to an Austrian, Countess Breunner, and their daughter was accepted as a Princess of the blood-royal when two or three years ago she wedded Prince Frederick William of Prussia, a cousin of the Emperor's. In his speech on her wedding day, William II. warmly welcomed her into his family circle.

It is not possible to speak of the Hohenlohes without thinking of the Sayn-Wittgensteins, with whom they have been so often allied, and whose illustrious birth almost equals their own.

The Wittgensteins are very numerous, with any number of romantic stories attached to their name. There have been marriages, divorces, love affairs, duels, and every possible event to bring variety to the lives of the members of that family. One branch has settled in Russia, where the children of Prince Frederick—called Fritz by all those who knew him—possess large estates, and enjoy the name and title of their father, which they could not do in Germany, owing to the inferior birth of their mother. Prince Alexander, the head of the Sayn-Wittgenstein-Sayn line, renounced his rights to the family castle in favour of his son, in order to marry his daughters' governess, and

## Princess Bariatinsky

is at present known by the name of Count von Hachenburg.

The most wonderful member of that family is old Princess Léonille Wittgenstein, *née* Bariatinsky, a Russian, who must now be nearing her ninety-ninth year, and is still alert and hearty, with some traces of her former good looks and an ever bright and caustic wit. She lives the whole year in her villa near Lausanne, has been converted to the Catholic faith, and is friendly with all the higher dignitaries of the Roman Church, whom she keeps at her beck and call, who tremble before her, and who live in the hope of inheriting for the use of the Church some of her vast wealth.

Another Princess Wittgenstein who deserves something more than a passing mention is the widow of Prince Francis of Sayn-Wittgenstein. In her youth her beauty and charm almost equalled that of her mother, the celebrated Countess de Villeneuve, the faultless features and lovely eyes of whom caused such a sensation in the world somewhere about half a century ago. Her sister, the Countess Goertz, was just as pretty, and perhaps even handsomer than the Princess. The Emperor William II. admired the Countess Goertz; the busybodies who abound in Berlin society had, indeed, at one time a great deal to say concerning their friendship. William II. used every year to be a guest at her castle of Schlitz, in the province of Hesse, and saw her almost daily whenever she was in Berlin

## The Berlin Court under William II

for the season. The Countess died some ten or twelve years ago, relatively young, and with her came to an end the only romance the Emperor has been credited with since his accession to the throne, because his admiration for the Princess Pless, after all, existed mostly in that lady's imagination. It is said that at the grave of the splendid Countess von Goertz the Emperor allowed his emotion to overcome him, and did not even attempt to hide his sorrow from the world.

## CHAPTER XI

### OTHER PRINCELY FIGURES

**T**HE Serene Highnesses about whom I have spoken are considered the most important personages in the social world of Berlin. There are many other people, however, who, if of less exalted rank, are much more blessed with worldly goods, and figure largely in the social firmament. I have already referred to Prince Hatzfeld and to Prince Radolin.

The late Prince Carolath, had he been alive, would have retained my attention on account of his great fortune and the magnificent castle of Beuthen, where he resided. His first wife, the lovely Princess Elizabeth, used to entertain on a lavish scale, until the scandal connected with Count Herbert von Bismarck, the son of the great Chancellor, occurred, which sent her an outcast from the world where she had so long reigned as one of its queens. Her husband married again after the divorce, but died some two or three years ago, and the present holder of the title and estates is his son by his second wife, a young man hardly yet in the twenties. The Princess Elizabeth is living in solitude at Venice, a very old woman, but still wonderfully handsome.



## The Berlin Court under William II

Another wealthy family are the Biron, of Curland, who claim their descent from the old Dukes of Curland, and conveniently ignore their ancestor, the Biron of Russian fame, whose millions they still hold. The present prince is an amiable man, very proud and very haughty, but an inoffensive being, and a wonderful business man. He has improved his large estates since he came into their possession; from an inheritance encumbered with debt he has created a kingly fortune, which he spends royally, giving most sumptuous entertainments at his castle at Wartenberg in Silesia, one of the show places of the province.

He married a Frenchwoman, Mlle. de Jaucourt, the daughter of the Marquise de Jaucourt. She is tall and fair, with a wealth of lovely hair; without being regularly beautiful, she succeeds in being altogether charming. In appearance she is most dignified, and is always admirably dressed. She delights in wearing a profusion of jewels. The Prince and Princess spend part of the year in Paris; the Riviera also sees them frequently, but they are present at every great festivity which is given at the Berlin Court, as the Emperor is rather fond of them both. They have a number of children, whom they bring up with more care and intelligence than is usually exercised by parents of the present time.

The Plesses are about one of the wealthiest families in Silesia. The Princess is an Englishwoman, who created quite a sensation by her beauty when she

## The Plesses

appeared as a bride in Berlin society. She is very popular, and although she seldom enjoys good health, she is a bright, merry, cheerful being, kind to others, and very happy with her lot in life. The Emperor had admired her exceedingly in her youth, and perhaps she took this admiration for something more than was meant, but her confusion when an allusion was made to the subject was very pretty to behold, and did no harm to anyone. Her husband is a rather indolent man, who takes life easily. There is nothing remarkable about him beyond his fine figure and his good nature. The first few years after his succession to his estates they used to entertain in the beautiful palace which he owned in the Wilhelmstrasse, but the Princess preferred residing in England. The house, therefore, was sold, much to the sorrow of his father's old friends, who had kept such pleasant recollections of the brilliant receptions given there during the lifetime of the late Princess. The general regret at such a fine place being closed was sincere, for it was a wonderful mansion, being built for the old Princess by a French architect.

The Plesses, as well as the Birons of Curland, the Blüchers, and the Hatzfelds, are recent additions to the ranks of the princely families in Prussia; but still their titles date from the days of the coronation of the old Emperor William I. as King of Prussia, at Königsberg, in 1861, and so have attained a respectable age. But the Eulenburgs, the Knipphausens,

## The Berlin Court under William II

and the Henckels are all creations of the present Sovereign.

Of these, Prince Guido Henckel von Donnersmarck deserves certainly more than a passing mention. For one thing he is, without exception—after the heiress of the famous Krupp—the richest person in Germany; and, for another, he is a personage who won for himself an almost universal notoriety, some sixty years ago, by his marriage with a woman whose fame has survived all the glories of the Second Empire. Thérèse Lachmann, to give her her true name, was a Jewess of remarkable beauty and still more remarkable intelligence, who had been born in Moscow, where she married a tailor called Villegoing. Barely a year had elapsed, however, when she ran away.

At that time Paris was the refuge of all women who wanted to throw their caps *par dessus les noulins*, as they say. Thérèse Lachmann soon found the means of starting on the career of luxury for which she had craved ever since she had reached years of discernment. Associated at first with the pianist Hertz, one of her co-religionists, she was abandoned by him when he had to accept an engagement to give some concerts in America, and she very soon found herself reduced to penury, so that during a severe illness that overpowered her she could not even pay for the medicines which she required. In that extremity she asked the assistance of the French author, Théophile Gautier, whom she had met occa-

## A Romantic Career

sionally, and with whom she had started a friendship that was to be an enduring one. Gautier found her in a miserable, third-rate boarding-house in the Champs Elysées, lying on a pallet without sheets or pillows, and with only a pitcher of cold water by her side. To his intense astonishment she said to him: "You see to what depths I have fallen. It isn't likely I shall survive this illness; but if I do, I am not one of those beings who won't attempt to fight against Fate. Remember that one day, in this very street, I shall have one of the finest houses that Paris can boast."

Gautier thought she was mad, but Thérèse Lachmann was as good as her word. When she recovered she started once more on her quest for fortune, and Fate, in the shape of a dressmaker who had guessed the possibilities of beauty and ambition, came to her help. This dressmaker, Camille, allowed Thérèse a substantial credit, and with a collection of lovely gowns in her trunks and about twenty pounds in her pocket, the adventurous Jewess voyaged to London. In England she very soon made an enormous sensation, thanks to her peculiar style of beauty; and, surrounded by wealthy admirers, she soon forgot her Paris misadventures.

Nevertheless, ere long she repaired again to Paris, and there conquered the heart of a real marquis of Portuguese origin, the Marquis de Paiva, who, regardless of the advice of his friends and of the censure

## The Berlin Court under William II

of the world, married her. The Moscow Jewess thus became a cousin of the reigning house of Braganza, the legitimate consort of the descendant of kings. It was not long before they parted, and only yet a little later the marquis committed suicide in a Paris hotel.

The worldly career of Thérèse Lachmann improved by leaps and bounds from that day onwards. She met Count Henckel von Donnersmarck, who fell passionately in love with her, and for many years the two lived together in Paris, where she was able to build the sumptuous palace of which she had boasted to Théophile Gautier. Henckel was a clever man, who quickly won a reputation, not only in France but throughout Europe. His wife, Thérèse, was a woman of genius, and with her ambition and all the resources of her wonderful mind, she contrived to win a dominating position. She staggered that period of the Second Empire by the luxury she displayed and the extravagances of her imaginative fancy. Her dinners were the best in Paris; her jewels eclipsed those of the Empress; her horses and carriages were the talk of the city. She managed her own large fortune admirably, and she considerably increased the millions of Count Henckel by the knowledge which she brought to bear upon the various investments that she advised him to make.

Near the capital, the Countess had bought the estate and castle of Pontchartrain, which at one time had

## An Incident of 1870

belonged to the Count de Maurepas, the minister of Louis XVI. She continued there in summer the sumptuous receptions that she held in winter in the beautiful house on the Champs Elysées, with the onyx staircase and the ceilings painted by Paul Baudry. When the war with Prussia broke out, she had perforce to leave the country.

During the peace negotiations, Count Henckel was appointed German commissary in Nancy, and acquitted himself with great tact, but when he returned to Paris after the conclusion of peace, he found that his position there had considerably changed. Nevertheless, it was his wife who negotiated between Prince Bismarck and Gambetta when the latter expressed the desire to see the Chancellor at Varzin. Count Henckel was the channel through which she approached the Chancellor. The negotiations fell through, as Gambetta hesitated at the last moment, and allowed himself to be persuaded by some of his friends that his popularity with the masses would be endangered if he risked such a delicate step.

The French Government at this time became alarmed by rumours that the mistress of Pontchartrain engaged in political intrigue, and Count and Countess Henckel were made to understand that their departure from Paris would be viewed with favourable eyes. They retired to their Silesian properties of Deck, where the ex-Marquise de Paiva built herself a castle, not inferior in luxury and magnificence to her château at

## The Berlin Court under William II

Pontchartrain, or her mansion in Paris. She had bought some of the jewels of the Empress Eugénie, and she liked to wear them in the evening, even when there was no one near to admire them. At Neudeek she lived like a queen. Her husband remained in love with her till the last day of her life, and never noticed the alteration that took place in her beauty, nor the ravages of age or illness which had robbed her of her former splendour. It was in that new home of hers that she died, in 1884, leaving behind her the remembrance of a most extraordinary career.

As long as the Countess Henckel was living, her husband did not frequent Berlin society, but, about two years after, he appeared one evening at a reception given by the Empress, and thereafter became at once one of the most conspicuous figures in the German capital. He had been a very handsome man in his youth, and at that time—he was close upon fifty—he still retained his good looks and his erect figure. He was pleasant, clever, well read, and polished in manner, though there was a fraction too much ostentation in regard to his money. He wore as studs two immense rubies, which represented a fortune in themselves. He liked to boast of the excellence of his cook; and though the latter was a real artist, one would have preferred to discover the fact for oneself and not to be told of it before one had tasted his soups. But all this was only a trifle; the real thing remained, and that was the hundred or two

## A Millionaire's Dilemma

hundred millions which the Count possessed, the diamonds and pearls that were hidden in his strong box, the iron and zinc mines which he owned, and the general importance of his person.

Very soon the Count awakened to the fact that it would be a pity if his colossal fortune passed to distant relations. For a wonder he did not find it such an easy matter as he had thought to find a second wife. He had been spoilt by the extraordinary intelligence of Madame de Paiva, and beside her every other woman seemed tame. He spent two or three seasons in Berlin, gave a number of dinners, and even a few receptions, but in vain.

But later Fate took him to Wiesbaden for a course of baths, and there he met Catherine Slepzoff, who was a Russian, and who bore a strange likeness to his late wife. She also was a native of Moscow, where nearly the whole of her life had been spent. She had been married to a man who, later on, was to play a considerable part in the history of his country, and to become Minister of Justice under the Tsar Alexander III., M. Nicholas Muravieff, but she had been divorced from him. She was about twenty-eight years of age and very poor. She was not pretty, looked audacious, and dressed loudly. She attracted Count Henkel, who found her possessed somewhat of the same powers of fascination as his first wife. She very soon succeeded in captivating him so entirely that he married her.



## The Berlin Court under William II

The wedding took place at Wiesbaden, and caused almost as much gossip as the Count's first marriage had done. It could not, as in the former case, be attributed to a young man's folly, and consequently was not to be excused. German society took it in the light of a personal affront, and when the new countess made her first appearance in Berlin she met with considerable criticism. To tell the truth, in spite of her good nature she did not accommodate herself to the wonderful position she had won.

The Countess Henckel tried to banish from her husband's thoughts the remembrance of his first wife, obliging him to sell the house in the Champs Elysées and the estate of Pontchartrain. She queened it, therefore, at Neudeck, as well as in the handsome residence which she occupied with her husband at Berlin, where they entertained their friends with the most wonderful luxury and magnificence, giving balls and dinners which the Emperor sometimes honoured with his presence.

To her consort's great joy, the Countess Henckel gave birth to two sons, and at last, some ten years' ago, after having spent a week at Neudeck, where he had been royally received and entertained, William II. conferred upon the Count the title of Prince, with the status of a Serene Highness, much to his wife's gratification.

Physically, the Princess is a tall, slim, dark woman. She has languid movements, a drawl in her speech,

## A Link with the Past

and always dresses in the height of fashion. She has made an excellent wife to her old husband, who still dotes upon her and gives her all that she can possibly want. The couple travel a good deal, often spending the winter months at Nice or in Italy, and have contrived to win popularity for themselves in Berlin. A couple of years ago their eldest son married the Princess Anne of Sayn Wittgenstein, the second daughter of handsome Princess Franz Wittgenstein, *née* Ville-neuve, and she has already given an heir to the vast domains of Donnersmareks. The old Prince Guido is now over eighty years of age, and already very weak and feeble. His wife has kept her youthful figure and appearance; she likes Berlin, and is grateful to the Emperor for his unvarying kindness toward her and her husband.

Another curious figure in Berlin society is the old Princess Radziwill. She is the widow of a great favourite of William I., whose distant cousin he was, as his grandmother had been a Princess of Prussia, the niece of Frederick the Great. The Princess Radziwill played an important rôle during the lifetime of the Empress Augusta, who only saw through her eyes, and who liked her extremely. She was credited with nursing a great enmity toward Prince Bismarck.

By birth a Frenchwoman, belonging to the Faubourg St. Germain by her family ties, she tried of old to introduce French manners and customs into the German capital, amongst others that of staying at home every

## The Berlin Court under William II

evening, and receiving her friends after dinner instead of in the afternoon. These receptions are amusingly stiff and solemn; the very arrangement of the chairs in the drawing-room suggests the necessity of remaining on one's good behaviour. The guests are offered tea, carried about in large cups on a big tray by a mournful-looking butler, and nothing else by way of refreshment ever appears, not even a sandwich or a piece of cake. There is a legend that once a plate of biscuits, very dry and stale, was seen somewhere on a side table, but the suggestion has never been thoroughly investigated, and remains doubtful to this day. The Princess herself sits in a wide arm-chair, with an enormous basketful of knitting beside her, and works away at a quilt or a large stocking with the utmost unconcern. She rarely gets up, except in the case of some very important lady putting in an appearance, and she chatters with infinite volubility and great wit about the current events of the day.

Her house is the centre of all the news that goes about in Berlin, and her wonderful memory makes her conversation extremely entertaining for her listeners. She has been a widow for a considerable number of years. She is decidedly more respected than liked, and many people stand in awe of her sharp judgments and severe criticisms; still she is typical of her day; her manners have a tinge of the eighteenth century about them, and she is a terrible stickler for etiquette and tradition, never forgives a breach of the customs

## A Centre of News

and habits in which she has been brought up. She holds quite a unique position in Court society, where exists no like salon to that over which she presides with such dignity. She is simple in her dress, and has never bowed to the demands of fashion, which she disdains from the height of her unimpeachable position. Unfortunately, with all her good qualities, she misses the gift of sympathy, and is always so occupied with what the world thinks, and with the fear of doing anything that might take something away from the halo that surrounds her, that she sometimes appears hard, whilst she is only prudent. She is, indeed, a worthy person, but one whom it is just as well not to know too intimately or to approach too often.

## CHAPTER XII

### COUNT AND COUNTESS WALDERSEE

**I**N speaking of the intimate friends of the Emperor it is impossible to omit Field-Marshal von Waldersee and his accomplished wife. The Countess was an American, and had first been married to Prince Frederik of Holstein, an uncle of the Empress Augusta Victoria, who, in order to wed her, had renounced his name and rank and taken the title of Count von Noer. After his death his widow married Count von Waldersee, who was at that time a very well-known general, but still not yet illustrious.

The Countess Waldersee was a remarkable woman. She was singularly gifted and noted for her wonderful tact. She had been well received by the Holstein family, and remained on excellent terms with them after her second marriage.

The Empress Augusta Victoria treated her as one of her best friends, both ladies having sympathies in common. It was largely due to the influence of the Countess that the Empress gave up so much of her time to the cause of Protestantism, which she fostered more than any previous Prussian Queen. The

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Photo. HUNFSTAENGL

*Wilhelm Prinz von Preussen  
1884.*

WILLIAM II. in 1884



## The Count and the Army

Empress trusted the Countess, who, of course, was her aunt by marriage, and did all that she could to induce the Emperor to look upon her with the same favour.

General von Waldersee was an ambitious man, and though at first he did not meddle in politics, yet he tried to instil into the Emperor's mind the necessity of giving all his thoughts and attention to the requirements of the Army, in which he himself was extremely popular and widely respected.

The General occupied for some years the responsible position of Head of the General Staff, and as such had plenty of opportunity of getting into touch with all the details of the vast organisation which his illustrious predecessor, Moltke, had brought so near to perfection. He was, however, of a more bellicose temperament than the old Field-Marshal, who, notwithstanding the immense successes and laurels which he had won, was an enemy of war in general, and esteemed it a great mistake to draw the sword hastily, or otherwise than under great provocation. Count von Waldersee had lived in Paris for some time, and this sojourn had but deepened his dislike of the French nation, whose habits, customs, manners, government, and religion were equally abhorrent to him. It is certain that he communicated some of his feelings to his subordinates, just as he tried to develop the warlike instincts of the German army. He was an impetuous man in his way, and though he was also clever, yet



## The Berlin Court under William II

it is to be doubted whether he possessed the clear insight into things which, notwithstanding what some people say, constitutes one of the qualities with which William II. is strongly endowed. Count von Waldersee was deeply devoted to the Fatherland, but he wished it to display its strength more often than it did. He considered that the only safety of Germany in the future lay in the prompt annihilation of France as a military country; each day that went by, he maintained, added to the difficulty.

At first, however, he did not dare speak openly on the subject to the young Emperor, trusting rather to the latter's impetuosity of character to rush along the road into which the Count, without appearing to do so, had tried to direct him. But William II. was far too shrewd, and far too much of a real statesman, to allow himself to be caught by the clever sophisms of a keen politician such as Count von Waldersee. He listened to him; he approved all that he said; he smiled; but though he seemed to be in complete accord with him, yet he restrained the warlike manifestations which now and then took place in Germany, and resolutely adopted a political line that savoured of conciliation. People blamed him for this, especially the few who used to meet daily at the house of Count Waldersee, and who shared the opinions of their host. They were all clever men and women, but lacked a knowledge of human nature. To many among them the impassive attitude of the

## The Emperor and the Countess

Emperor, in presence of certain provocations, seemed inexplicable.

It was some two or three years after his accession to the throne that his friendship with the Countess Waldersee became more pronounced. He liked her frankness, the simple, earnest way in which she spoke to him, making use of the privileges that her age and her relationship with the Empress gave her, but never at the same time forgetting the distance that separated her from her Sovereign, nor the respect which she owed to him. William II., as well as his consort and perhaps even better than she did, liked to be able to come uninvited to the Countess Waldersee, and to consult her on various matters which he could not very well discuss with his ministers. She always advised him well, was most moderate in her judgments, most charitable in her views, and most wise in her interpretation of various facts that perhaps he had not quite seen in their true light. She was also discreet; never asked anything either for herself or for others, and never abused the confidence that was reposed in her—a confidence which became so complete at last that the Emperor discussed almost every political step with the Countess Waldersee before it was made public. More than once she prevented him from making a false move, and more than once inspired him to undertake a wise one.

The Countess was a woman on the wrong side of fifty, with beautiful white hair, lovely soft eyes,

## The Berlin Court under William II

a straight figure, and charming manners. She was very quiet, never put herself forward, and never boasted of any influence which she might have exerted upon this or that event of which, probably, she had been aware long before anyone else had even suspected it. She accepted the news of such things with a surprise which seemed so genuine that the keenest observers were taken in by it.

During the first years of her stay in Berlin the Countess observed a considerable reticence in regard to any new acquaintance; and whilst strictly observant of the rules of social etiquette, she avoided any friendships that might ruffle the smooth course of her daily existence. It was only later on, after the accession of the present Emperor, that the Countess Waldersee opened her doors to a select few, and gathered around her friends with whom she stood in perfect accord of thought and opinion, and whom she tried to introduce into the personal circle of the Emperor and Empress. In Berlin, society soon spoke of the coterie of the Countess Waldersee, and to relate extraordinary stories of the influence which she exercised in Court circles. Ministers became exceedingly deferential to her, and often sought her in order to discover whether it were advisable to bring before the Emperor this or that proposal, which for one reason or another, they feared might not prove palatable to him.

Ladies, too, asked her advice on matters of deportment. They found it difficult sometimes to retain the

## The Empress and Religion

good opinion of the Empress, whose rigid principles occasionally created awkward situations for those who took a more frivolous view of life. The Countess Waldersee always knew how to advise them for their good, and she also understood exactly the right moment to plead their cause with Augusta Victoria, to whom she preached continually the necessity of showing herself indulgent to the follies of the young, as well as to the mistakes of their elders. She made herself liked by everybody. There came a moment when even her few enemies spoke of her with respect, if not envy, and whilst they attacked her in regard to her political activity, yet respected her as a woman, and never ventured to assert that she had made bad use of the unquestionable influence which she wielded.

It was the Countess Waldersee who introduced Pastor Dryander into the Imperial household, who, to this day, fills the office of chaplain to the Imperial Family. She persuaded the Empress that it was her duty to watch over the purity of the Evangelical Church. Augusta Victoria soon gave all her energies to the cause of Protestantism, as well as to its propagation. Nevertheless, she exhibited a wide tolerance in regard to other creeds, and certainly never expressed in public any personal antipathy or prejudice.

This last attitude was certainly inspired by the Emperor, who hated fanatics, and did his very best to counteract their plans and ambitions. In that respect he was in perfect accord with the Countess

## The Berlin Court under William II

Waldersee, who also held that the best way to impose one's own convictions on the world was respecting the beliefs of others. But at the same time she worked with all her might for the dominance of Protestantism in the German Empire. One must not forget that at the time of which I am speaking, the Kulturkampf struggle was still fresh in people's minds. In Prussia, as in other countries which, before her, had fought against the encroachment of the Church of Rome in matters of interior government, persecution had been the means to awake the fervour of the people; and whilst the Catholics had become fanatics, the Protestants had acquired a degree of bigotry previously unknown in that kingdom where tolerance had been the rule.

One of the unpleasant characteristics of William II. is a certain fickleness, which owes its origin to his fear of being ruled by others. That fickleness was very soon discovered by people who were envious of the exceptional position held by the Walderses, and little by little they played upon it, and persuaded the Emperor that his friends were boasting of their intimacy with him, as well as of their relationship with the Empress. They were openly saying, so the fiction ran, that their opinions would prevail over any others with the Sovereign. The newspapers joined in, and some Radical organs went so far as to attribute the admiration of William II. for the Countess Waldersee to motives which could not exist. These unkind gossip-

## Malicious Tittle-Tattle

ings were repeated right and left, until at last they reached the ears of the persons most interested.

The Empress was the first to hear about them. She simply smiled, but thought it well to mention the malicious tittle-tattle to her husband. William II. became furious, though, strange to say, his anger fell, not on the people who had been silly enough to invent this stupid calumny, not against the Countess Waldersee, but against Count Waldersee himself, who, rightly or wrongly, he believed, made too much of the freedom which his Sovereign had allowed him, and of having promulgated the feeling that his opinions were adopted by William II. in all questions concerning the army. He had long been dissatisfied with the Count, whom he had found too imperious and inflexible, and he seized with alacrity this opportunity to punish him.

He went to see the Countess, and reproached her bitterly for what he called the proud independence of her husband. A violent scene took place between the two friends of years, and William II. told his wife's aunt quite distinctly that he would not allow his decisions to be discounted by his Chief of Staff, whose duty ended with the instruction of the army, and any meddling with politics was unwelcome.

This sounded the knell of the friendship between the young Emperor and the Countess Waldersee. Their relations became strained ; and though outwardly nothing appeared to be changed, as William II. still

## The Berlin Court under William II

attended the receptions that were given by the Countess, yet he no longer came in to have a quiet cup of tea with her, as he had done almost daily before this episode.

Count von Waldersee kept his office, and was even promoted later on to the exalted rank of Field-Marshal; yet it became evident that the Emperor was always glad to challenge the wisdom of something that he had done. It was noticed that the Sovereign never missed an opportunity of contradicting him, or annoying him, and other military men were consulted in all important questions connected with the army.

One fine day, when the expedition to China was decided upon, and Europe had accepted the offer of Germany to allow the command of the international troops sent over to re-establish order in the Celestial Kingdom to be given to a German officer, it was Count Waldersee whom the Emperor appointed for this responsible and difficult post. At first the choice seemed to be an excellent one. The Field-Marshal had the reputation of being a man of tact and intelligence, and to be in possession of a most conciliating character. He spoke French and English equally well, and was a gentleman in everything he ever did or said. One could feel certain that he would never allow himself to be arrogant, as so often are German military men; and that his conduct throughout would distinguish itself with impartiality as well as with kindness in regard both to the Chinese and to the troops confided to his care. William II. was warmly congratulated on such

## The Expedition in China

an excellent choice, which met with general approval, and before Count Waldersee had started upon his difficult mission, he was received by his Sovereign, who showed himself as gracious as possible to him. But when the audience was over, and the Emperor was asked his impressions about it, he smiled, and replied that "very often those who had been successful in Europe failed in Asia," and that the Chinese expedition would prove whether Count Waldersee was really the clever man he imagined himself to be.

The fate of the expedition is known. It certainly did not secure for Count Waldersee the reputation of being a second Moltke; and when he returned to Europe it was with disgust at the difficulties which had been put in his way. The result of the expedition was that he had added nothing to his military renown, and had lost a good deal of his reputation for being an expert diplomat. Perhaps this was what the Emperor had secretly hoped for; he said nothing, however. He continued his assiduities towards the Countess Waldersee, and seemed to find an especial pleasure in visiting her, and talking with the Count, to whom he always spoke of some incident or other connected with that unfortunate China expedition, which, without having been a failure, had nevertheless not proved a success.

There are things which always follow one in life with the sense of not having come up to the expectations they had raised, and poor Field-Marshal von



## The Berlin Court under William II

Waldersee was haunted to the end of his existence by the feeling that he could have done so much in China, and yet had been able to achieve so little.

Not long after his return he retired from active service, and the Waldersee salon closed its doors. The Emperor never failed in his praises of his former Chief of Staff, nor in laying stress on the enormous services which he had rendered to his Fatherland; and though everyone could discern the cruel irony of his words, yet there was nothing in them that could not be interpreted in favour of the Count, whose merits were loudly extolled by what appeared to be the most grateful of Sovereigns. The Field-Marshal, whenever he found himself in the presence of William II., was always singled out by him for some special honour or other; but one Christmas Day he received a present which ought to have opened his eyes as to the feelings entertained towards him by the Emperor, even had he still been in ignorance of them. It consisted of an old English caricature, set in an admirably artistic frame, which represented the Humpty Dumpty dear to children's hearts, with the characteristic legend :

“ Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall !  
All the King's horses, and all the King's men  
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.”

After the death of her husband, who did not survive

## Death of the Count

his return from China by many years, the Countess Waldersee retired altogether from the world. She left Berlin and settled in Hanover, where she created for herself a pleasant if modest home. The Empress visited her there sometimes, and the two ladies kept up a correspondence which was as affectionate as it was frequent. The Countess was often consulted by her niece on various family questions, such as the fits of independence indulged in by the Princess Victoria Louise, and her romance with Prince Ernest of Brunswick, and she invariably succeeded in smoothing the differences which arose between mother and daughter on this as well as on other questions. She remained in close intercourse with her friends of old time, and so managed to keep herself exceedingly well informed as to everything that was going on in the German capital.

The Countess Waldersee never saw the Emperor again, and though she made no sign, those who knew her well guessed that the wound which he had inflicted upon her feelings of affection towards her husband had never healed, and perhaps also had never been forgiven. To the end of her life she remained dignified and silent as to her wrongs. The American girl who had made her way into one of the oldest royal families of Europe, and who later on had loved and married a man who had nothing but his sword and the affection he had inspired her with to plead for him; who had clung to him in prosperity as well as in adversity; defended him whilst he was alive, and kept his memory sacred

## The Berlin Court under William II

after he was dead; had given to the world a splendid example of a woman's constancy.

Whatever may have been the faults and the imperfections of the Countess von Waldersee, she deserved all her life the deep respect in which she was held. She died a few months ago at an advanced age.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### FRIENDS OF THE EMPEROR

**T**HE disposition of William II. is impulsive. In by-gone years he easily formed friendships, many of which came to a tragic end. The great favour and subsequent disgrace of Count von Waldersee was not an exceptional event. Other favourites, speaking with reference to things as well as people, shared a like fate. Too often the Emperor waxed quite enthusiastic over objects which certainly did not deserve the attention he suddenly lavished upon them. On the other hand, in personal matters, when he discovered that he had worshipped false idols, he not only instantly acknowledged his mistakes, but also allowed people to know that he had been mistaken, and then, in his desire not to screen the misdeeds of his former friends, he abandoned them, whether their fault merited it or not.

A friendship which thus suddenly sprang into life was with a Pole, M. Koscielski, who paraded before the world the closeness of his relations with the Emperor. M. Koscielski was ambitious, and had great dreams of becoming the saviour of his fatherland. With an utter want of tact, he boasted of the numerous proofs

## The Berlin Court under William II

of confidence which the Emperor had given to him. The fact was that William II. had conceived a great liking for the dashing Polish nobleman, and had listened to his opinions on the Polish question. He insistently maintained that the Emperor would find that his Polish subjects would stoutly support the Throne should ever there be a war with Russia.

At that time—it was immediately after his accession—the Emperor was still a novice in politics and groping his way in the dark, undecided whether to follow the dying advice of his grandfather and always remain upon good terms with Russia and its Sovereign, or resolutely to back Austria and eventually Italy, and so head a coalition against France and any possible ally—for there were whispers in diplomatic circles—in order to crush them before they had had time to unite against him.

In the latter contingency, a rebellion of his Polish subjects would prove a source of considerable trouble. Therefore, he lent a willing ear when M. Koscielski persuaded him that he was extremely popular all over Poland, and looked up to as a saviour whose advent would heal all wounds, appease all strifes. The belief of William II. in these assurances lasted until the Countess Waldersee put before his eyes some letters which she had received from personal friends of hers, who, having lived for some time in the province of Posen, were conversant with the numerous intrigues that were going on there, in which the clergy, as well as the great landowners, were involved. Some re-

## Some Polish Friendships

marks made by M. Koscielski concerning the credulity of the Emperor in regard to the information with which he was regaling William II. were repeated in these letters. The discovery infuriated William II., who, whilst not divulging that he was aware of the duplicity of his favourite, treated him with such cold indifference and contempt that ere long he retired from Berlin.

He now lives on his extensive estates, and only comes to the German capital when something very important is discussed by the Prussian Upper House, of which he is a member. For those who knew him well, his fall did not come as a surprise. Their only wonder had been at his success in penetrating into the intimacy of the Imperial family, and winning the friendship of the Emperor with a few fine words that did not mean anything, even when they said much. His fall was a source of great disappointment to his compatriots, to whom, as an important personage at Court, he would have been invaluable.

Another Pole, Count de Hutten Czapski, was also, and indeed is still at present, a *persona grata* at the Berlin Court. The descendant of a family belonging to the old Polish nobility, he is an immensely wealthy man, and a member of the Prussian Upper House, also holding an important Court appointment. He has always been intensely German in sentiment, and absolutely happy whenever he could shake hands with Royalty. In earlier years his ambition was to be

## The Berlin Court under William II

considered the smartest man in Berlin ; he bought his clothes in London, his shoes in Paris, and his gloves in Vienna. He was a tall, slight man, with red hair, a small moustache, a freckled complexion, an immensely long and thin neck, excellent manners, and a profound knowledge of the world. He never made a mistake in social matters, never forgot an anniversary, and was, in general, a model of one whose sole care was to make himself pleasant to his neighbours. He had never married, though all the mothers of girls of a marriageable age had set their caps at him with vigour ; but he eluded all traps and succeeded at last in acquiring the reputation of being a confirmed bachelor, about whom it was waste of time to trouble, so resolute was he not to give up his liberty.

The Emperor at first slightly mistrusted him ; but after a time William II. became reconciled to his too polite manners, and recognised the immense use which he could make of such a man. Count Czapski kept himself far from all in whom he thought he perceived leanings toward political intrigue. He supported the Government in the House, and his vote could always be relied upon whenever appealed to. He managed matters so well in this direction that no one in the ranks of the Polish aristocracy to which he belonged, and by whom he was considered as a privileged person, ever blamed him for his undeviating support.

When Count Czapski found himself honoured by the kindness of the Emperor, and made the recipient of

## Within the Emperor's Circle

various honours and rewards, he was tactful enough not to boast of the fact. Discretion was not the least of his numerous qualities. He never put himself forward, never related anything of what he had heard, and contrived to know everything that was going on in society, as well as in political circles. When called upon to give an opinion, he did so in most moderate terms, and with great care never to compromise anyone in doing so. He never asked favours, and seldom gave them. He was the ideal of a neutral being, than whom not many have so thoroughly succeeded in making life agreeable.

A few Prussian noblemen, such as Count August von Donhoff Friedrichstein, were also looked upon with favourable eyes by the Emperor. The Count was an amiable man and a great landowner, of unimpeachable character and unsullied honour. Others within the Emperor's circle were Count von Arnim Boytzenburg, the head of that Pomeranian House, famous for its immense fortune and beautiful estates, and his brother, Count Hermann Arnim, who had added the name of Muskau to his own, from the magnificent castle and property he had bought from the heirs of the last Prince Puckler. All these men were liked by the Sovereign, and were present whenever he held his famous lunches, at which he moved among his guests as any private gentleman would have done.

These noblemen were treated by William II. as his friends, but they did not possess his confidence



## The Berlin Court under William II

so fully as some others, among whom the late Count Udo Stolberg stood foremost. At one time Count Udo played a considerable part in the politics of his country. He was a younger member of the Wernigerode branch of the Stolberg family, but very rich nevertheless, and had married Countess Elsa von Arnim Boytzenburg, an heiress, whose fair, splendid beauty created a sensation wherever she appeared.

Count Udo was a man of singularly sound intelligence, of high capacities, and of blameless life and reputation. He long presided over the debates of the Prussian Upper House; always with prudence, tact and moderation. The Emperor respected and esteemed him, and consulted him frequently, because he knew the Count would always tell him plainly what his opinion was, whether it would prove palatable to the Sovereign or not. His influence was always exercised for good, and he succeeded, almost better than anyone, in soothing the natural impatience of his Imperial master, and in inducing him to look at things in a common-sense way. Since he has died, William II. has more than once been heard to say that he has never been able to find so wise and devoted a friend, on whose fidelity and disinterestedness he could always rely. The Countess Stolberg, now aged, is still alive, and occupies the position of *Dame du Palais* to the Empress.

Baron Zorn de Bulach, who in some things has replaced Count Udo Stolberg, is an Alsatian who rallied

## Baron Zorn de Bulach

to the German Empire almost immediately after the annexation of that province in 1871, notwithstanding the fact that his father had been Chamberlain to Napoleon III. and a great favourite of the Empress Eugénie, as well as of Parisian society in general. Baron de Bulach was the owner of the castle of Osthausein in Alsace, a stronghold that had been in the possession of his family ever since the twelfth century. He was rich and independent, not at all given to ostentation; a man who had resolutely accepted the consequences of the war of 1870, and put all his local influence, which was great, at the disposal of the Emperor and of the German Government.

Until quite recently he was Secretary of State for the Home Department in Alsace-Lorraine, being also the Keeper of the Castle of Hohkönigsburg, near Strasburg, an Imperial residence which has been reconstructed from the ruins of the old castle of that name. He is a great favourite of William II., and deserves the confidence which the latter reposes in him. Quite different from Count de Hutten Czapski, he is progressive, and thoroughly enjoys the struggles of political life. The French in Alsace-Lorraine hate him, and look upon him as a traitor who has abjured his French origin and the traditions of his youth to court the favour of the oppressors. His position has never been an easy one; it would assuredly have been better for his peace of mind had he refused the responsibility of being the right-hand man of the Statthalter of the annexed

## The Berlin Court under William II

provinces, and left such a post to a German. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether a German would have understood so well as he the needs of the population, or been able to fight against many abuses of authority on the part of the administration with the same independence and knowledge of facts, as well as of circumstances, as Baron Zorn de Bulach.

There was a time when the baron used often to come to Berlin, where he was always welcomed with effusion, not only at Court, but also in society. Latterly, however, he has spent his vacations at Osthausen, where, so far as I can remember, the Emperor has more than once been to see him. He has two sons, and his only brother, who abandoned a diplomatic career in order to enter holy orders, is at present the Roman Catholic bishop of Strasburg, where his position is just as delicate and as difficult as the baron's, though in a different way.

The people whom I have mentioned, with the exception of M. Kosielski, have succeeded in maintaining themselves in the good graces of the Emperor, perhaps because they have not seen him too often. As for the military men that have at one time or other been called to hold appointments in his household, they have come and gone, experiencing the vicissitudes of a favour that never lasted very long, but which sometimes was returned to them with just as little cause as it had been withdrawn. Among the old servants of his grandfather, the young Emperor has never chosen one to be the object of his special favour, or upon

## A Noteworthy Trait

whom to confer any extraordinary reward beyond, perhaps, some high decoration which the individual did not require. All these old military or civil functionaries seemed to him to be the ruins of a past that did not interest him.

A noteworthy trait in the Emperor's character is the fact that, though his interest in his army has always been even keener perhaps than his grandfather's, he yet did not make favourites of officers or generals. As a rule, from some singular motive, he bore himself nearly always as an Emperor in regard to his military friends, treating them with more stiffness than he did those in ministerial offices. For instance, his friend, Prince Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador in London, was only admitted into his close intimacy after he had left the army for the diplomatic service.

Prince Lichnowsky is certainly one of the ablest diplomats Germany possesses. Keen, observant, witty, singularly learned and well read, he early distinguished himself as a dashing Hussar officer by his studious habits and wonderful perceptiveness. His father, too, had been a clever man, though very sarcastic, and credited with extreme ill-nature in regard to those whom he did not like. The old Prince married a Princess Marie of Croy, a sister of the grandfather of the present duke. The Princess survived him, and, so far as I am aware, is still alive. As well as a son, the present Prince, she had two daughters, the eldest of whom is the widow of Count William von Redern, whilst the

## The Berlin Court under William II

second married an Austrian with an immense fortune, Count Charles Lanekoronski, and lives in Vienna.

Prince Lichnowsky is probably the most capable man the German Foreign Office has possessed since the death of Baron von Marsehall von Bieberstein, and it is more than likely that he will become Imperial Chancellor, when he will assuredly try to resuscitate the views and principles of Bismarek.

Prince Liehnowsky married a Bavarian lady, Countess Mathilde Aro, a very charming woman, who has brilliantly succeeded in making herself popular in London. The couple are fond of entertaining, and do so in the grandest way imaginable, sparing neither money nor care to fill worthily the duties inseparable from the high position they hold.

The only person who can be considered as a rival to Prince Liehnowsky, and a serious one too, is Admiral von Tirpitz, the creator, for one can hardly call him anything else, of the German Navy. Admiral von Tirpitz is a strong man. When he stepped into his difficult post he was given a programme that was stupendously ambitious.

He was asked to do what Bismarek had hesitated to begin—to create, out of nothing, a navy, just as Bismarck had created an army and an Empire. The German may be a soldier, but certainly he was not believed to be a sailor; and the task which the Admiral was told to undertake presented difficulties which seemed to be insurmountable. Before essaying

## Admiral von Tirpitz

the task, Von Tirpitz had a long conversation with the Emperor, from whom he did not hide his fears that the country would not back him up in the naval reforms which were indispensable. William II. listened to him with great attention, and when at last he had finished, replied to him quietly: "I understand you very well, and all that you say; I have thought it too; but we have a duty to perform in regard to our Fatherland, and even if we succumb in the struggle, still it is a duty to go on with. Whatever happens, you may rely on me. I shall stand by you."

Whether, in the few years that have passed since this conversation, any other man than Admiral von Tirpitz could have achieved such a result remains doubtful, or at least open to discussion. It is entirely his iron will that overcame the opposition with which his plans were met in the country. In the Reichstag, too, the members were indignant at the large credits asked by the Government for the fleet, and declared them entirely useless, or at least premature. The Admiral remained insensible to the attacks directed against him, keeping at his post, and working with indomitable energy.

He is the only man to whom the Emperor never dictates, but quietly talks over things. They settle matters together in a friendly, earnest way, all personal feelings being set aside for the furtherance of the one purpose they share in common.

## CHAPTER XIV

### IN FINANCIAL CIRCLES

**I**T is singular how many disappointments the Emperor William II. has experienced in his friendships. The faculty to distinguish between true merit and false claims is not strong. He is so impulsive that too often he judges humanity only from its superficial aspects. Great intelligence always fascinated him; great aptitude, no matter for what, exercised over his mind an influence which he could never resist. It was the case with Prince von Eulenburg; it was also the case with Herr Krupp, whose end, though different, was not less sad than the drama which shipwrecked the reputation of the Prince. They were both treated by the Emperor with particular favour; they both stood on the pinnacle of human prosperity and human grandeur. Their fall, also, did not occur without producing a cataclysm that affected their country and their Sovereign almost as much as it did themselves. And of the two, it was not the great Krupp whose end was the more unhappy.

Alfred von Krupp, the owner of the great iron-works, who had been treated as their equal by

## Alfred von Krupp

almost all the crowned heads in the world, was a singularly interesting personality. He was a generous, charitable, kind-hearted man, gifted with great intelligence, and a wonderful head for business. In his domain of Essen he ruled most despotically. He personally controlled all the vast enterprises with which his firm was connected, and he allowed no one to interfere with any decisions that he thought it necessary or useful to make. He knew by name almost every workman he employed, and could tell at a glance what kind of man he had to deal with. He was a hard worker, too, one who never recoiled before difficulties, and who had always kept his hand to the plough in order to set a good example.

Beyond the dreams of avarice, he had the supreme contempt and indifference for money which only a man who has studied humanity in all its phases, and realised that money is at once the greatest power and the greatest evil in the world, can feel. Simple in his tastes, he preferred a peasant's fare to the luxury with which he could have surrounded himself. He had never been under necessity to deny himself anything, knowing well that everything lay within his reach, that no caprice of his, however ruinous it might be, could not be satisfied. This had saddened him, and turned him into a kind of misanthrope—a man lost in vain regrets at having nothing to regret. He held the destinies of Europe in the palm of his hand, and he did not care for it.



## The Berlin Court under William II

Alfred von Krupp lived the existence of a middle-class German, without interest and without any other comprehension of life than a realisation of his duty to his workpeople. There was no poetry in his character; nothing but the commonplace. At the same time there was courage, energy which, though latent the greater part of the time, was still there, and was to manifest itself in an hour of danger, when he preferred to die rather than face an ordeal of the kind which Prince Eulenburg accepted without flinching. Whatever were his faults, when Krupp saw that the game was up he lost it *en beau joueur*.

The Emperor had made a great fuss of him. He had even visited him in his villa on the heights of Capri. William II. liked the genuineness and the simplicity of the man, and his utter unconsciousness of all that it was within his means to perform, had he only cared to do so. When he was told of Krupp's terrible end it caused him genuine sorrow, and instead of showing toward the memory of that friend the unconcern which he had displayed in regard to Prince Eulenburg, he refused to accept as truth the version that was given of his inexplicable suicide, and attended the funeral.

William II. did more than that. He extended his feelings of sympathy toward the widow and to the children. The will of Krupp left nearly all his millions to his eldest daughter, a simple, unsophisticated girl, brought up as would have been any little *bourgeoise*,

## Fraulein Krupp

with few high ideals, and little sense of responsibility. She never understood or realised the unique position that she was called upon to fill as the sole mistress of the Krupp works, the heiress of the Krupp millions.

These millions were wonderfully well administered, and she had no trouble whatever with their management. She was charitable and kind, but her character was cold, with no spontaneously charitable impulses; she gave much away, but seldom did so in person, allowing the managers of her wealth to distribute her bounties. She visited with assiduity the different charitable institutions of Essen, testifying to the boundless interest taken by the Krupp dynasty in the welfare of their workmen; but she was too timid to open her mouth. People blessed her, but few loved her; though they all respected her, and looked with envy at this young heiress of the greatest fortune in Europe, whose life was so joyless, so devoid of compensations.

When her daughter attained her eighteenth year, the Emperor asked Mrs. Krupp to bring her to Berlin, in order to present her at Court. The young girl resolutely opposed the idea, saying that she would feel out of place among a gay world to which she was a stranger. She remained at Essen, and the attendance once or twice at a ball in Bonn constituted the only glimpse she allowed herself of society. She might have played the part of a queen, but she felt afraid to become acquainted with the terrible things she had

## The Berlin Court under William II

heard concerning society and its villainies, which she felt fir . 7 convinced had caused her father's tragic end.

Bertha Krupp had worshipped her father ; it was to him that her thoughts turned whenever she found herself obliged to come to some important decision in her life. She had heard whispered about him many things which she did not understand. They angered even more than they alarmed her, and she could not forgive her mother for her apparent indifference concerning the events that had caused Alfred Krupp to put an end to his life. This cut the girl to the core, and embittered her against the world.

Whilst she was thinking about all these problems, and failing to find a solution, the Emperor was keeping his eye on the young heiress. His one dread was that she might fall in love with a foreigner, an enterprising Englishman or Russian with a fine title and a pleasant face. He wished the Krupp works to remain under the management of a German. At last he felt he could bear the anxiety no longer, and began looking about to find a husband for the fair, blue-eyed girl, one who would enter into his own views and continue the traditional policy that had bound the house of Krupp to the German Empire by such close ties.

He had learned of a young man belonging to the Bohlen branch of the Bismarck family, von Bismarck Bohlen, a serious, intelligent man, an officer of the

## Her Marriage

reserve, with an earnest, straightforward character. He was good-looking, smart, but had never been considered fashionable. The Emperor, who knew everything worth knowing concerning the people in whom he felt interested, decided in his own mind that the young fellow would be just the kind of person to win the heart of the heiress. He arranged matters so that von Bismarek Bohlen found himself one day in Bonn, whither he had been sent on some military mission or other. The Emperor's sister, the Princess Victoria of Schambourg-Lippe, was living in Bonn, where her husband possessed a magnificent villa. William II. took her into his confidence, and asked her to bring about a meeting with Bertha Krupp, trusting to von Bismarek Bohlen to do the rest.

The latter had not been slow to take the hint that had been given to him. He immediately began his courtship, which proved the more easy for him because the girl, with her modest, guileless appearance, at once appealed to his heart. He set himself to win her, and succeeded very quickly in doing so. The Emperor was delighted. He at once sent his good wishes to the engaged pair, and gave the bridegroom permission to assume his wife's family name, calling himself Herr Krupp von Bismarek Bohlen.

William invited himself to the wedding, which was solemnised under the simplest conditions, the bride walking quietly to church together with her mother and sister, and returning home in the same

## The Berlin Court under William II

manner on her husband's arm. The event was celebrated at Essen by the distribution of charity on a prodigal scale.

Herr Krupp von Bismarck showed himself worthy of his new destiny. From the first day of his marriage he set himself to the task of managing his wife's enormous fortune, as well as giving his full attention to the welfare of the army of people dependent upon her. He soon made himself liked by those living on the Krupp factories and estates, and he took to heart their interests as seriously as if they had been his own. No detail connected with the administration of this huge business concern escaped him, and he soon initiated many small changes that proved of considerable benefit. He did not, perhaps, become as popular as had been his father-in-law, who had been born at Essen, and had enjoyed the affection of all its inhabitants; but he made himself respected by his impartiality, his honourable conduct toward his men, and his simplicity. He changed nothing in the customs that had prevailed in the Krupp household, and together with his wife led the life of a rich country gentleman, scarcely to forget that he had become one of the great names of the world, and that kings themselves had to count with him.

Frau Bertha von Bismarck Bohlen is a tall, fair woman, with a pleasant face but no great beauty. She dresses with a simplicity that would put to shame

## The Krupps and the Emperor

many women among the circle of her acquaintances, who think only of their personal adornment. She wears her hair parted plainly in the middle and gathered in a soft knot behind, which she mostly arranges herself. Meeting her in the street, one would never dream of taking her for the richest woman in Europe ; and she, who could have as many horses or motor-cars as she cared to own, is often to be seen riding in a tramcar, or else walking alone in the streets of Essen. When Fate threw millions into the lap of Bertha Krupp it did right for once, because she has ever employed nobly the immense resources with which she had been endowed.

The Krupps are certainly the richest persons in Germany, but they have none of the offensiveness of the *nouveaux riches*. They probably do not know, perhaps, how to spend their millions upon themselves, and there is little of luxury about their surroundings ; nevertheless, they understand perfectly well the power that money gives to relieve misery and distress. Herr von Krupp and his wife are sovereigns in a certain way : they have kingly responsibilities. This fact keeps them in constant and in more than friendly relations with the Imperial Government, as well as with the Emperor personally. The Krupps are a great financial power, but, to their praise, they are not financiers. They represent an institution which is so closely connected with the political and military greatness of Germany that it forms an integral part of the Empire.

## The Berlin Court under William II

Were the Krupps ever tempted to forget this fact, the Emperor would certainly be the first to remind them of it, and of the duties which it entails upon them. One of the reasons of the protection which he always extended to the Krupps, and of the interest which he took in the marriage, is that he considers them as being one of the elements of the Empire's strength. Since Herr von Bismarck Bohlen became the master of Essen, it is William II. who has really reigned there. Every morning—a fact never before divulged—a special messenger brings a letter from Essen addressed to the Emperor, in which he is informed of what has been done the day before. Every evening that same messenger returns with a reply in William II.'s own hand, written to von Bismarck Bohlen, in which the latter is informed as to any dispositions the Sovereign may care to make, or any improvements he may wish to suggest, in one or other of the departments of the famous ironworks. Their legal owner would never dare attempt anything of the kind without the sanction of his real master.

There are to be found in Berlin a number of millionaires who have gradually pushed their way into society, and so been accepted on terms of equality. The Fried'anders are the best example of perseverance conducted with great circumspection and considerable skill. They are almost as wealthy as the Krupps, and Herr von Friedlander's coal mines rank among the richest in Europe. He counts his fortune by

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## The Friedlanders

millions, and vainly tried during the lifetime of the old Emperor to acquire for himself a prominent place in society. He only succeeded in doing so, however, in recent years, when his daughter had grown up, and the lure of her dowry loomed before the eyes of tender mothers desirous of finding an heiress for their sons.

As soon as Miss Friedlander put up her hair and donned long frocks, Berlin showed excessive anxiety to become acquainted with her mother, and invited her to all their receptions and balls. The lady was shrewd enough to realise the real worth of the courtesies of which she suddenly became the recipient, and she very wisely determined to use the situation to her benefit. She opened the doors of her palatial residence, gave a series of balls, dinners, concerts, and afternoon teas, and invited as guests the smartest and the most elegant women in Berlin, all of whom eagerly responded to her appeal.

It soon became "the thing" to go to the Friedlanders', and, thanks to the luxury which they displayed at the entertainments they gave so frequently during the winter season, their house became a social centre without rival in Berlin. Herr von Friedlander rubbed his hands and chuckled as, from the top of his staircase, he watched the proudest ladies of the most aristocratic circles of the capital coming up to his wife with open hands, calling her by endearing names, and treating her with the utmost



## The Berlin Court under William II

deference and a faint tinge of envy. He knew that he had but to make a sign and that they would all be but too eager to please him, and to jump at the opportunity of eating his dinners and dancing at his balls. His Jewish origin was not allowed to weigh in the balance against his millions. In regard to him, Berlin might have repeated the famous phrase which was applied to Samuel Bernard during the reign of Louis XIV. in France: "What does it matter whence he comes? He is so rich."

Herr von Friedlander, however, was almost as wise as he was rich. He lent a deaf ear to the many hints which he received concerning the advisability of marrying his only daughter with some scion of an aristocratic German house, because he knew very well that should she become the Princess of So-and-So, or the Countess of So-and-So, she would, notwithstanding her millions, remain exposed to disdain on the part of her husband and contempt from his relations, who would never forgive her her plebeian and Jewish origin. He did not seek, therefore, to marry her in Berlin, but encouraged her to take frequent journeys to England, being convinced that there she could find a husband of high degree who yet was not vain of his numerous quarterings; so that when one day the young girl came to tell him that she had fallen in love with one of the sons of Lord Redesdale, the Hon. John Freeman Mitford, he felt quite delighted.

The wedding was one of the most sumptuous that

## Luxury in Berlin

has ever been witnessed in Berlin. The wedding presents were something quite wonderful, though the jewels seemed insignificant before the long pearl ropes which Mrs. von Friedlander generally wore, and the plate trifling in presence of the solid gold service which ornamented her table on the days when important or royal guests were expected. But still they excited considerable sensation, as also did the bride's trousseau, in which laces alone figured to the amount of more than one million marks.

After the wedding breakfast the happy pair left for the honeymoon, but the Friedlanders' hospitable mansion was not closed after the departure of its most beautiful ornament. Mrs. von Friedlander went on entertaining as often as formerly. She has become entirely a woman of the world, who likes to go about and to be appreciated for her receptions, for the luxury of her entertainments, and for her dresses. Her house is now, perhaps, one of the most select in Berlin, an invitation only being sent on the strength of the best introductions.

There was another Jewish lady in Berlin who deserves to be remembered, though I somehow think, without, however, being quite sure, that Madame Leonie Schwabach died some months ago. Her husband was manager of the important banking house of Bleichroder and Co., and British Consul-General in Berlin for a considerable number of years. She was of Dutch origin, remarkably handsome in her

## The Berlin Court under William II

youth, and kept her good looks to long past middle age. She was extraordinarily intelligent, and at a time when it was not easy to find an intellectual salon in Berlin, hers was a place where one could talk of everything that was going on in the world of literature and art, with a sprinkling of politics now and then to give zest to the conversation.

Diplomats used to like to visit Madame Schwabach, because she received them with an affability they did not often experience in the more select circles where it required at least a baron's coronet to be admitted. She had tact, too, and never intruded where she thought she was not wanted. She treated other women with extreme politeness, but with a mixture of disdain and of contempt that was most interesting to watch. She was perhaps the best-dressed lady in the whole of Berlin; the sums which she used to spend on her personal adornment were something fabulous, and excited the envy of all other women. At the same time, she was not given to coquetry, and had no desire to eclipse her less fortunate sisters. She used to spend money because she had it, and in that, like in everything else which she did, she remained essentially ladylike.

Talking about dresses reminds me of a lovely little woman whose taste in her clothes has passed into a proverb, Mrs. Siemens, the wife of the owner of the electrical firm of Siemens and Halske, and the daughter of the famous chemist, Professor von Helmholtz.

## The Bleichroders

She is one of Berlin's greatest *élégantes*, and to be met in the most fashionable circles of the capital. Very different from her mother, who was cleverer than she, and absorbed in higher pursuits and aims, she is far more popular and decidedly more sought after. Her pretty, smart figure can be seen on the race-courses and on first nights at fashionable theatres, as well as at Court balls, where she was admitted by the special order of the Emperor, with whom she is a great favourite. Mrs. Siemens gives receptions that are considered as events of the winter season. She is an admirable hostess, though perhaps caring more for her own amusement than for that of her guests.

The Bleichroders are more to be met abroad than in Berlin, where they have not succeeded in becoming quite popular, in spite of their wealth, perhaps because there has never been in their family a woman capable of holding a place in the social firmament of the capital. They mostly live in Paris or Nice, and when they return to their native country they remain absorbed by the details of their immense business, preferring not to take part in the social gaieties going on around them. Though they spend large sums when they want to gratify some personal whim, they are reputed to be miserly, and, on the whole, though one of the most important firms in the German Empire, its two owners have attained to little importance in the fashionable circles of the capital.

On the other hand, the family of the Mendelssohn

## The Berlin Court under William II

Bartholdys for more than a century has exercised a real and a great influence, not only in Berlin but in the whole of Germany. This is all the more remarkable, because in the early years prejudice against Jews was so great that it would not have been possible for a person in Court circles to frequent a Jewish house. But the shadows of Mendelssohn the philosopher, and Mendelssohn the musician watched over the family, consolidating the immense influence which it had acquired in Prussian society. The Mendelssohns were always privileged people; they were deep thinkers, artists, philosophers, writers, poets, and also business men of no mean order.

The head of the house, whose brilliant abilities have contributed to make the banking concern of Mendelssohn and Co. one of the foremost in Europe, Herr Ernest von Mendelssohn Bartholdy, is a living example of the adaptability of the Jewish race, as well as of its splendid qualities. He had been brought up by his father, who also belonged to the ranks of the most distinguished men of his time, one in whose house were wont to meet some of the most intelligent people in Europe. Thiers, Balzac, among foreigners, Mommsen, Helmholtz, Gregorovius, Wagner, and Lembach among Germans, had been received there with all the deference due to their genius and to the place which they had made for themselves in the world of art, letters, politics, or philosophy. For years there met in the mansion which the family occupies to this

## The Mendelssohn Bartholdys

day in the Jagerstrasse of Berlin, a circle of the most elevated minds of modern times, who discussed all the problems of the day with the spirit of impartiality that can only be found among those who look at life as well as at history from a height to which vulgar souls can never rise.

The Mendelssohns could easily exercise great influence, because, blest with inexhaustible riches, they never aspired to anything else but to use them for noble aims. They did not pose for what they were not, never aspired to become smart, but were always ready to help those who were in need, and to come forward on every occasion when their purse could hasten the discovery of some means to further human progress.

The present owner of the Mendelssohn banking house has continued the glorious traditions of his ancestors; he is a man whom it is an honour to know and a pleasure to meet. Ever ready to allow others to participate in the knowledge which he has acquired in his studies, he often puts at the disposal of those who ask him for that favour, the rich archives of his family, together with his father's and grandfather's remarkable collection of letters from nearly all the European celebrities of the last century and a half.

Few can boast of such treasures. There, one can find documents relating to the history of the Napoleonic wars, as well as to the French Restoration, and one's only regret is that their owner has not yet consented to publish them. There, letters can be read from almost

## The Berlin Court under William II

all the philosophers of the nineteenth century, from the greatest historians of the same period, and from the most famous artists and musicians of modern times, who all found extended to them that wide, generous hospitality which, ever since the days of the great Moses Mendelssohn, was practised by his descendants and kinsmen.

Herr Ernest Mendelssohn was married to a very pretty and attractive woman, the daughter of the great banker Warschauer. She was an admirable hostess and a charmingly intelligent person, who largely contributed to her husband's popularity. She used to give very pleasant balls where there was no exhibition of ostentatious luxury such as is so often practised by rich financiers, but which were always musical and arranged with the utmost perfection in all the details of the supper and the decoration of the rooms. Unfortunately, this accomplished lady died a year or two ago, and the Mendelssohn house has been closed since, to the sorrow of all those who used to frequent it before.

The Emperor, well knowing the influence of the Jews, and appreciating the support they eventually find in them, has always tried to combat prejudice in Prussia against the race. He has raised to the ranks of the nobility the Frankslanders and Schabach and a few other Israelitish families, and has made personal friend of Herr Berlin, the director of the Hamburg-America shipping company, whose energetic

## A Democratic Emperor

character resembles his own in so many points, and whose intelligent efforts have aided in the development of the German mercantile navy. He also sees often Herr Rathenau, the manager and proprietor of the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft, and has even appointed to the responsible post of Minister of the German colonies a baptised Jew, Herr Dernburg, an appointment which was the cause of one of the greatest scandals that Germany has ever seen. Once William II. went so far as to invite to lunch with him at the castle of Berlin on one fine day five Hebrew capitalists, the two Rothschilds, Rathenau, Friedlander, Schwabach, and another, a man in regard to whom he showed himself especially generous, and with whom he discussed at length the economic and financial condition of Germany.

The Emperor's efforts, which owed their origin to the conviction which he possesses that Jewish co-operation is necessary for the great work of ruling a State, have not done away with the prejudices which still exist among certain aristocratic circles of Berlin, where the superiority of financiers is not yet established or recognised, still less accepted.



## CHAPTER XV

### CLUBS AND CLUB-LIFE IN BERLIN

**U**NTIL recently there were no features in common between clubs in Germany and England. Latterly, however, some faintly recognisable English usages have been observed in Berlin.

For a long time the only smart club in Berlin was the Casino, situated on the Pariser Platz, where all foreign diplomats were admitted by right of their position, and where nearly all the prominent people of the capital congregated to hear the latest news of the day. It was a solemn place, to which it was considered respectable to belong, but which had nothing attractive about it. Young officers who prided themselves on their smartness preferred the messes of their own regiments, where they could enjoy a deal more freedom than in the empty rooms of the Casino, where a rubber of whist was looked upon as something frivolous. The extreme seriousness and dullness which pervaded the whole atmosphere of that grave place did not prevent its members from being ill-natured, and not a little of the coarser shade of gossip had its origin in the small talk of this most select of clubs.

Ladies, of course, were never admitted within its

## The Union Club

sacred precincts, and the men were of the most exalted families of Germany.

Then, one day it was whispered that a new club was starting life; a club which would boast of the highest patronage, and which was going to kill entirely the old and venerable Casino. The rumour turned out to be true, and the Union, as the club was named, started upon a notorious existence.

Its founders belonged to the ranks of "la jeunesse dorée" of Berlin, and its promoters were the Duke of Ujest, Prince Pless, all the Hohenlohes, and a few smart young officers, such as Count Adalbert Sierstorpf, Count Oppersdorff, and so forth. The ostensible *raison d'être* of this club was to rival the Paris and London Jockey Clubs.

The opening was attended with great ceremony, and if I remember rightly the Emperor William II. put in an appearance on the day of its inauguration, declaring himself delighted with the organisation and aims of this paradise of sportsmen, as ill-natured persons called it. Prince Pless was elected president, and the committee was composed of well-known people, for the most extremely rich. At first everything ran smoothly, and the old Casino on the Pariser Platz found itself deserted, everybody who was somebody making frantic efforts to secure election to the Union. So it went on for a couple of years or more, then sinister rumours began to circulate concerning the establishment. It was declared that few among the visitors of this

## The Berlin Court under William II

ultra smart place really cared for horses or sport, but that the sole aim of the club was to afford a gambling centre for all those who, for one reason or another, could not go to Monte Carlo to indulge in its luresome pleasures.

The Union Club became the scene of revelries such as never before were witnessed in society. Cards were played until the small hours of the morning, and a tradition still exists of a game that went on for three whole days without stopping, between two members of the highest aristocracy, until one of them had to retire from the field completely ruined, notwithstanding that his share of this world's goods was more than large. Ere long usurers appeared, and at last scandal upon scandal followed, and suicides became frequent among the gay youths who had been so proud to have a place exclusively their own far from the watchful eyes of their elders.

Even Prince Max Egon von Fürstenburg, whose purse at that time appeared to be inexhaustible, confessed that the stakes played at the Union were rather staggering, and one evening he had to have recourse to a friend in order to settle his differences of the night before. Officers, to whom heavy gambling debts were forbidden, found themselves repeatedly in dire straits, and more than one had to send in his papers so as to escape the publicity of a scandal that would have made him impossible in society for ever afterwards. Commanders of regiments over and over again warned

## High Play

subalterns not to become members of the Union Club, and once or twice submitted the case to their superiors, asking for authority to forbid their officers to frequent its rooms.

It seemed, however, that the Union Club was protected by people of powerful influence, and all the efforts at exposure failed, until at last one day a disgraceful story leaked out that settled its fate for some time at least. A young officer in one of the crack regiments of the Guards lost something like two hundred thousand marks. He could not pay, and the Jew whom he asked to help him demanded such security that he had perforce to apply to his father rather than to submit. The Jew, incensed at finding that he was losing this important prey, resolved to revenge himself, and denounced the officer as well as some of his comrades to the military authorities. An inquiry was made that disclosed such sad human weaknesses and follies that the Emperor at once ordered the commander of the Berlin garrison to insist that all the officers who were members of the Union Club should resign, under penalty of dismissal from the Army. The result was disastrous; the unfortunate club nearly collapsed, and for a couple of years dragged on an existence that was anything but prosperous. Little by little, however, the Union Club recovered from its stagnation and took up a new lease of life, but which was certainly more dull.

At present the Union is an elegant place that would

## The Berlin Court under William II

give much to be able to revive its old smartness. Until twelve or even one o'clock at night it keeps up a most respectable appearance, and one can notice an innocent game of cards being timidly played here and there, but at the time when sedate people are in bed, and when the Berlin of the night wakes up, the Union also rubs its eyes, and settles down to some revels, which, though far from equalling those of former times, are still sufficiently lively. Money flies about once more, as if nothing had ever happened to restrain its owners from throwing it away on the green tables.

Among the famous gamblers who filled the world with their exploits in that quarter, I must say a few words concerning a personage who once had a European notoriety, and who was just as well known in London as in Berlin, I mean Count William Redern, "der Fine Wilhelm," as he was familiarly called. Count Redern was not the son of very rich parents, but the nephew of a very rich uncle aged something like over eighty years, who was Great Chamberlain of the Imperial Court under William I. The Count was a childless widower; his wife, an heiress from Hamburg, had left him all her large fortune, which, in addition to his own considerable banking account, made him exceedingly rich. He was the owner of a lovely old house, which has since been transformed into the Hôtel Adlon. It stood at the corner of the Linden and Pariser Platz, and there he used to give magnificent concerts, which the Emperor and Empress and the whole Royal Family

## A Meteoric Career

regularly attended. He had no near relations, with the exception of one brother, old Count Henry Redern, a retired diplomat, married to a lady belonging to the Hungarian branch of the princely family of Odescalchi, a charming old woman, who was liked and respected by everybody.

Count Henry had two daughters and one son. The girls married the two Counts Zichy, one of whom, Count Eugene, was rather a celebrity in Hungary, where he played a considerable political rôle, taking part in the Hungarian agitation against Russia, and harbouring at one of his numerous castles the ex-King Milan of Servia after the latter's abdication. The son, "der Fine Wilhelm" whom I have just mentioned, was an extraordinary man: very handsome, pleasant in appearance, with delightful manners and ready wit, he was a general favourite, even with people who did not care for his lack of conscience and more than elastic morals. He had begun his career by running through his own money and that which his parents possessed, then managed to get a considerable part of his debts paid by his uncle, who was fond of him, and whose heir he was ultimately to become.

The old Count did not want his nephew to get into difficulties which might spoil his diplomatic career, and so when the young man was appointed Secretary of the Embassy in London, he paid what he owed to his tradesmen, as well as to Berlin moneylenders, and then sent him to England, saying that this was the

## The Berlin Court under William II

last time he would ever do anything for him; henceforward, if he wished to throw away money, he must look for somebody else to help him afterwards.

Count William promised wonders, and started for London. After something like six months he had gone through all his available cash, and found himself once more in difficulties. Happily or unhappily for him, Sam Lewis, of blessed memory, was still in the land of the living. He managed to get pretty good information as to the prospects of Count William, and generously lent him at something like two hundred per cent. all that he required.

For some time all went smoothly, but old Count Redern, instead of departing for a land where spendthrift nephews are unknown, did not show the slightest sign of any breakdown in his health. Sam Lewis got weary of waiting for his money, and wrote to him that Count William had borrowed from him a considerable amount on the security of his reversion, and that he, Sam, was willing to hand the debt over to Count Redern with a reasonable reduction, provided he got back the original capital that had been borrowed from him.

Count Redern, on receiving this letter, sent for his brother and told him that unless he recalled his son immediately to Berlin he would take steps that would for ever blight the career of that impudent spendthrift. As for paying his new debts, he would do that under no consideration whatever.

## Sam Lewis Shows His Hand

"Fine Wilhelm" returned in disgrace to Germany, and had to send in his resignation from the diplomatic service. He settled down in the country, and for some years lived the existence of a recluse, cursing his old uncle and Sam Lewis in turns. Then at last Count Redern died, his wealth passed to his brother, and "Fine Wilhelm" was triumphant once more.

He hastened to settle his outstanding accounts, and began once again his former luxurious existence. He turned the old family castle topsy-turvy, had it refurnished by a London firm, began all kinds of improvements on the estate, and finally married the young Countess Liehnowsky, sister of the German Ambassador in London, who was very glad to accept him, as he was considered almost the best *parti* in Prussia.

A few years of extravagance led up to a third financial catastrophe; this time on a more disastrous scale even than the two preceding ones. The house on the Linden had to be sold; the works of art and the picture gallery which it contained went to Christie's, or to the Paris Hôtel Drouot. The estates were most heavily mortgaged, and would probably have got into the hands of the Jews had not "Fine Wilhelm" died.

His widow set herself the task of retrieving the fortunes of the family. She left Berlin, settled in the country, and managed admirably the vast estates of which, happily, she had been left the trustee. She paid all her husband's debts, and showed herself in every



## The Berlin Court under William II

respect an admirable mother. Since her eldest daughter has been presented she has been seen a little in Berlin, and she has been appointed Dame du Palais to the Empress, who likes her very much.

"Fine Wilhelm" was not a victim of the Berlin clubs, which, in his time, were still represented by the old-fashioned Casino. Other young men, however, might not have come to so sad an end as they did had they not found in the Union Club the means to gamble away their fortunes, lose their reputations, and forgo all the social advantages with which they had been endowed by birth.

The late Prince von Fürstenburg would have been a victim had not his wealth been so enormous that he could not have imperilled it; and if his cousin and successor managed to deplete his fortune, it was not because he squandered it in follies, but because he attempted the impossible task of fighting against Jewish financial and industrial enterprises.

The present Duke of Ujest lost thousands and hundreds of thousands of marks in the Union Club, and Prince Pless also left some of his money there. These, however, could afford to do so if they liked, and their reputation and their honour, of course, could not have been affected by any monetary losses.

There were others, however, who did not possess such colossal means, but who wished, out of a feeling of false shame, to imitate their example. These owed to the Union Club and to the customs which prevailed

## Under Imperial Censure

there the ruin of all their prospects, unless they managed to retrieve their follies by marrying some rich American or the daughter of a banker or industrial magnate who wanted to obtain a place in society and was willing to pay for it most heavily.

The Emperor became alarmed when he found that his first prohibition in regard to the Union Club had proved of no avail. Gambling went on notwithstanding Imperial censure. It went on mysteriously, and could not be traced to this or that person, but it went on somehow. The Sovereign thereupon determined to stamp out the habits of luxury which had gradually got hold of the army by issuing sumptuary laws which he asked the commanding officers of the different regiments, brigades and divisions to enforce. He even went so far as to decide the number of courses that were to be served at regimental dinners, the quantity and quality of wines that could be drunk, and so forth.

In a certain sense he succeeded in checking the thirst for luxury which had gripped Berlin society, and among the unmarried military officers he revived the custom of attending the regimental messes instead of dining or lunching at a fashionable restaurant. He also fostered a new spirit of good fellowship amongst young officers, doing his best to institute simplicity in their customs, so as to prevent a stupid rivalry in spending. In that respect he was measurably successful, and the German Army owes much to him. He entered into the smallest details of an officer's life,

## The Berlin Court under William II

and showed himself far more paternal than his grandfather had been.

William II., unhappily for himself, is no by means kind in his manners, and far too abrupt in his decisions. He has, therefore, never become so popular in the army as his grandfather. He often hurts people by his tactless remarks ; but whilst lacking the courtesy and exquisite urbanity of William I., he is at heart far more generous, and more than once has helped young officers who had come to grief through unforeseen circumstances. In such cases the Emperor is always ready to loosen the strings of his purse and to arrange matters, and he does it in the nicest manner imaginable, trying to evade expressions of gratitude from the recipients. On the other hand, he sometimes shows himself far too severe in regard to faults that it would have been better to bury in oblivion.

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## CHAPTER XVI

## THE EULENBURG SCANDAL

**A**MONG the most intimate friends of the Emperor was a man who was to become the central figure of one of the saddest scandals of modern times, one whom, with his usual impetuosity, William II. had raised to a pinnae, but whom, later, he allowed to be dragged before the tribunal of his country under the most painful circumstances. I am thinking of Prince von Eulenburg, the former German Ambassador in Vienna, Knight of the Order of the Black Eagle, member of the Prussian Upper House, one of the highest personages of the Empire, and one who for a long time was supposed to be the foremost man in the confidence of William II.

Prince Philip von Eulenburg, who was a younger member of the family of the Counts of that name, was the brother of the present Minister of the Imperial Household, Count August von Eulenburg. When still quite young he had entered the diplomatic service, where he made a rapid career, thanks to his wonderful adaptability and remarkable intelligence. While still Secretary of the Legation at Stockholm he had married a Swede, the Countess Sandels, who, being the last

## The Berlin Court under William II

of that line, had brought him a considerable fortune. Owing to some family arrangements with his brothers, he had succeeded to the entailed estate of Hertefeld, belonging to his mother, together with the lovely castle of Liebenberg, in the province of Brandenburg.

He was indeed a pleasant man, and having been appointed as the representative of the Foreign Office in attendance upon William II. during some journey abroad of the latter, he attracted the Sovereign's attention, thanks to the clear and precise manner in which he reported to him on current affairs. After that the Emperor always took him with him on his travels, as also on his yearly trips to Norway.

Ere long Count von Eulenburg became quite a favourite with the monarch, who appointed him Ambassador in Vienna at a moment when there was some slight friction between the Prussian and Austrian Governments. For some years he represented his country at the Court of Francis Joseph with great success and ability. On the first day of the year 1900, by special order he was created Prince von Eulenburg Hertefeld, a Serene Highness, and on the 27th of the same month was nominated hereditary member of the Prussian Upper House, receiving at the same time the Orange Ribbon of the Black Eagle. His favour had reached its zenith, and people began to say that William II. intended soon to appoint him Imperial Chancellor.

It was this man, who was looked upon as the

## A Terrible Affair

most powerful personage at the Prussian Court, who became involved in a disgraceful trial that reflected sadly on the morals of the higher grades of the German Army.

The scandal was enormous. When Count Arnim had been condemned to hard labour, thanks to his quarrels with Princee Bismarek, the world had already wondered at the spectacle of a former ambassador being publicly branded as a felon. But the charge under which Count Arnim was indicted rested on purely political ground, and, besides, could be explained by the authoritative and revengeful temper of the great statesman, who at that time was the absolute master of his country. When Princee Eulenburg was arrested, politics had nothing to do with the prosecution which was begun against him.

It is not easy to give details of this terrible affair; it can only be sketched superficially. It had been an open secret for some time that certain practices had gained ground in the smartest regiments of the Guards. A few years before, a young officer of the regiment of the Gardes du Corps, the eldest son and heir of a former favourite of the old Emperor, had been obliged to leave Berlin hurriedly, owing to some revelations made by a soldier of his squadron. Thanks to the high position of his father, the officer was allowed to take refuge in Russia, and his family spread the rumour that he was not quite sane; there was perhaps some foundation for it, because he had ultimately

## The Berlin Court under William II

to be confined in a lunatic asylum. Later on a member of one of the embassies was discovered during a police raid in a most suspicious situation, together with some officers with whom he used to hold meetings in a small apartment hired for the purpose. There again the story was hushed up, and the individual left the German capital within a few hours of the catastrophe.

At last, however, it became impossible for the military authorities to shut their eyes to the doings of certain high officials, and finally the Minister of War had to present a report on the matter to the Emperor, and to ask the latter for orders.

William II. became furious after the first moments of consternation that followed upon the cruel revelations. He instantly gave orders that the matter should be sifted to its very depths.

Regardless of any possible consequences, he declared his intention of allowing the law of the land to mete out to the culprits such punishment as it considered necessary. A commission was appointed, which had to present its report to the Emperor before giving it any publicity.

Fearful things came to light, and facts were revealed which destroyed the honour of more than one noble family. Some of the most intimate friends of the Emperor found themselves involved in these revelations.

The scandal reached unheard-of proportions. Men with high titles were ignominiously dismissed from

## A Bitter Moment

the service, and had to go and hide their shame abroad, notwithstanding the urgent efforts that were made to save them. In one case the man's wife, the daughter of a duke, threw herself at the Emperor's feet, begging him to spare her husband and to allow him to resign his commission in the army without being branded as a felon. William II. showed himself inexorable, and refused to listen to her. He was infuriated at this sea of shame that was rising around him, compromising the army of which he had been so proud, and making it a subject of scorn abroad as well as at home. He felt that he had not only been deceived, but also held up as an object of contempt before the world, which would refuse to believe that things could have been going on for such a length of time without his having been made aware of them.

What especially infuriated the Emperor was the thought that he could be suspected of closing his eyes to such hideous occurrences out of friendship for the guilty parties. This last idea was the most bitter one of all, and in his wrath he was not judicious enough to weigh carefully the consequences of an open scandal, or to calculate the harm that it would undoubtedly bring upon him as well as upon the renown of his army.

Supplications proved of no avail; nor could considerations that were put forward shake his resolution to punish the guilty people, and to stamp



## The Berlin Court under William II

out the evil at its root by showing that no position, however high, could shield those who had so far forgotten themselves. When it was proved to him that personal friends had been among those suspected, he was stunned, but did not flinch in his resolution to have justice done. He declared in strong words that he would not pardon any who were proved guilty, and did not utter a single expression of pity for the victims of this unparalleled disaster.

An investigating magistrate was entrusted with this sad affair. He did it conscientiously, with an earnest desire to get at the truth and at the same time to show himself merciful if only it were possible. Every day brought forth new facts; every day added to the list of those compromised; until at last the judge had to beg the Emperor to grant him a private audience in order to lay personally before him certain things which he felt afraid to disclose before having received permission of the Sovereign to do so.

William II. received the magistrate in his private study. When he was ushered into the presence of his Sovereign that old, white-headed official, whose duties had hardened him in regard to many things, and who was not likely to be influenced by false sentiments of consideration for those who did not deserve it, could not help trembling at the thought of the blow he was about to strike. He silently handed his report to William II., and in a few words expressed his extreme sorrow at the nature of the

## The Magistrate's Report

ommunication he had thought it his duty to present.

The Emperor covered his face with his hands. The shock was fearful. It was, perhaps, the worst that had ever befallen him, and in the first moment it seemed to him that he could not bear it—that it would crush him for ever. When at last he raised his head the magistrate was almost frightened by the stern expression which had settled on his features, as well as by the relentless glance of his angry eyes. He spoke quietly, with far less warmth than he usually showed when something occurred to distress him, and he gave his instructions in a clear voice. The high estate of the chief offender was not to screen him from the consequences of his crimes. He was to be treated as any other mortal would be if found out. He was to be tried, and if found guilty was to be punished. Particularly he was not to be allowed to escape, because he, the Emperor, did not want people to say that he had connived at the man's flight out of fear that the scandal might touch his own person.

The magistrate listened in silence, and then begged permission to put in a word. He proceeded to explain to the Sovereign that before a resolution of the gravity of the one he wanted to take was put into execution it ought to be examined on all sides. He urged that sometimes it was better to allow one criminal to go unpunished than to raise a scandal in which the highest in the land would be found engulfed. He said that

## The Berlin Court under William II

very probably the monarch would be bitterly attacked for not having known what kind of people he admitted into his intimacy, and of having voluntarily ignored things he ought to have known, or at least guessed. He represented at last that there were other people beside these abandoned ones whose feelings had to be taken into account and consideration: wives, children, young girls entering life, and young men beginning their career, whose innocent heads would be branded with infamy for ever; and he also spoke about the shame that would fall on the Fatherland itself. He asked whether, in the presence of these facts, it would not be better to allow one criminal to escape rather than face the consequences of such a storm as would arise were serious measures of any kind to be taken.

The Emperor remained inflexible. Only once did he appear to waver; it was when the wife and children of the guilty man were mentioned, and then, with an accent of terrible agony, he exclaimed, "And I—do you think that I do not suffer too, that I do not realise all the dirt which will be thrown at my head? Do you imagine that it does not hurt me to the heart to discover how my confidence and friendship have been abused, to find that I have been so thoroughly mistaken? I feel that this man has disgraced the country over which I reign, whose fair renown is dearer to me than life itself."

He stopped, and once more buried his face in his

## The Emperor is Relentless

hands in his intense agitation. The magistrate listened, but remained silent. What could he say? What could be said in the presence of such an overwhelming calamity?

William II. quickly recovered his calm, however. He told the sorrowful official that he would send him his orders on the next day, and dismissed him with considerable emotion. When he was alone he instantly gave directions for the Count Udo Stolberg to be called to him. He received the Count immediately upon his arrival at the palace, and discussed with him the dilemma in which he found himself. The Count was also of opinion that the scandal ought by all means to be hushed up; but the Emperor, who seemed violently agitated, began explaining to him that he owed it to the dignity of his person and of his throne to protest against the possible stigma that he had spared anyone out of fear that he might himself be involved in some way or other in the conduct of the latter.

"I am quite aware that it will cause a terrible scandal when it is found out that a prosecution is coming on; but isn't this scandal preferable to the one which would surely arise were people to say or think that I had been afraid to have a trial because I had shared his guilt—as they would be sure to do?"

This argument seemed to impress Count Stolberg, but nevertheless he urged prudence on the Sovereign,

## The Berlin Court under William II

and advised him, before taking extreme measures, to proceed to a new inquiry.

Those who had the opportunity of approaching William II. during this sad time say that they never saw him so anxious, irritable, and nervous as he showed himself in those days when the fate of his former friend was hanging in the balance. The fact was that, for the first time in the Emperor's life, he had lost his self-confidence, and was beginning to realise that his judgments were, after all, not less fallible than those of other people; and that he, too, was liable to be mistaken and deceived in his estimates of the people with whom he had surrounded himself. The blow was as bitter as it was unexpected, and perhaps it was its poignancy that made him so merciless in his treatment of his former favourite and friend.

Whilst the inquiry was proceeding, from which he was to come out a broken and dishonoured being, the accused man's health entirely broke down. Nevertheless the Emperor showed himself merciless, and the man's wife was forbidden to see him. When the order to leave the Charité reached her she revolted, and wrote to William II. a letter in which she poured forth all the agony of her soul.

"You have called yourself our friend," she said; "you have visited our house, have sat at our table, heaped honours and dignities on my unfortunate husband. Now, in the hour of his misery, instead of remaining at least neutral, you do all that you can

## Princess Eulenburg's Letter

to make his position even more bitter than it was already. Everybody has forsaken him; even you, his Sovereign, whom he has served so faithfully, you turn away from him. The only person who has remained faithful to him is his wife, whom you want now to prevent from remaining at his side to encourage him in this bitter, cruel hour. Is this worthy of you, of your honour and dignity as a Sovereign? I ask no favour from your Majesty; but I venture to claim the one right left to me—that of remaining near my husband in this crucial hour of his life, and of sharing his fate, whatever that fate may be. I ask your Majesty to grant this in memory of the days when we were both honoured by your Majesty's friendship."

This appeal was not made in vain, and she was allowed to return to the hospital.

The trial of Prince Eulenburg took place in Berlin, and the excitement which it created is quite indescribable. To see in the criminal dock a former trusted friend of the Sovereign was shaking the whole of Berlin society. The conduct of the Emperor was generally blamed, it being felt that there was a lack of generosity in his conduct toward his former friend and companion. He would have been amply punished by the consciousness that he had been found out.

When he appeared in court on that sad morning every one of the spectators were moved to pity at the dreary spectacle. The tall, energetic man, whom

## The Berlin Court under William II

all had admired in his gold-laced uniform at some great Court function, had changed into a complete physical and moral wreck, on whom it was heart-rending to look as he was carried into the vast hall by four prison warders who took up their places next to him.

It became very soon evident that Prince Eulenburg's strength would never allow him to go through the ordeal of the trial with its attendant tortures. It was adjourned *sine die*, and has never been revived since its collapse after the first few days of the hearing; perhaps no one ever wished it would do anything else. The Emperor himself realised that he would have done better to have followed the advice of disinterested persons, instead of acting, as he did so often, on the first impulse of the moment, and only when it was too late regretting his step. The Emperor came out of this tragedy an altered and a chastened man.

## CHAPTER XVII

### BERLIN SOCIETY OF TO-DAY

**T**HAT a change has come over Berlin society under the present reign is an outstanding fact, and though its various phases were almost imperceptible to a constant dweller in the city, yet to anyone returning to the German capital after an absence of some years the difference would be very apparent indeed. In former times Berlin was a patriarchal kind of place, and Court society was as one great family divided into several subdivisions, but still having common interests and common meeting-places.

In that circle everybody knew what everybody else was doing, how many dresses a lady had bought for the season, and the number of hats she had ordered. People were good-natured, too, and if it happened that two ladies had chosen the same day to give a ball or a reception, as soon as they heard that this was the case they quite amicably arranged things in regard to changing the date, so as to accommodate each other. Everybody knew the "Almanach de Gotha" by heart, and whenever a girl got married the smallest detail concerning her future husband immediately became food for gossip, and the fortune of the



## The Berlin Court under William II

young couple discussed to a nicety. In that small and select circle secrets did not exist; indeed, there was no necessity for them, as existence ran its course in smooth channels, and the inevitable rivalries which occur everywhere were of an essentially mild order. The sayings and doings of the Royal Family, the festivities which were given at Court, or which were attended by Royalty, formed the great subject of all conversations, and the sole object of real interest. Court balls were pleasant affairs, where state and ceremony were allied with amusement, and where, after the first quadrille had been danced, the old Emperor walked about like any ordinary host and looked after his guests' enjoyment and comfort.

Berlin in the 'eighties still kept its similitude to a German Royal residence of the former century, and there existed between its society and the Royal Family an easy familiarity which savoured of the affectionate as well as of the respectful, and which was essentially homelike. William I. hated etiquette as well as restraint, and although he remained always kingly in his demeanour and his dignity, he disliked pomp and stiffness, and considered himself more as the father than as the Sovereign of his subjects.

Society was very well aware of this peculiarity and appreciated the kindness of the old monarch, who created around him an atmosphere of placidity which was very dull indeed, but very safe. Society was prim, stiff, rigid in its rules, but it was also dignified, stately,

## II

### Reorganising the Court

and even when ill-natured essentially polite and well behaved.

Now all this has changed. As soon as William II. ascended the throne he set himself to arrange and organise his Court on lines of a much stricter etiquette in all State ceremonials, and with a far greater liberty of manners on small occasions, when he liked to be able to throw off the burden of royalty and to converse with his friends like an ordinary mortal. Moreover, his restless mind and bright intelligence refused to remain confined within the narrow circle of people among whom his father and his grandfather had moved. He invited to the palace representatives of all classes of society, interested himself in all the new discoveries and in all the great humanitarian and intellectual movements of his time.

To the great scandal of the few remaining doyens of the old school, he asked to lunch with him such big commercial and industrial personalities as Herr Ballin or Herr Friedlander and their wives; indeed, he would as readily have entertained Herr Bebel, or any great Socialistic leader, if it had only been possible and the personage in question had lent himself to anything of the kind. He had no prejudices, still less foolish pride, and his thirst for knowledge was so great that he did not care what he did so long as it could be gratified. On the other hand, whenever any great ceremony was taking place, he liked it to be carried through with magnificence. Though he had been brought up in habits



## The Berlin Court under William II

of consistent simplicity, he was personally fond of luxury, and of splendid apartments and gorgeous receptions. When he installed himself in the Royal Castle of Berlin, which had not been occupied by the Sovereign for a long time, he superintended the decorations and arrangements down to the smallest detail. And he did it in the best possible taste, making use of the many artistic treasures which the palace contained. The private rooms of the Empress are marvels of elegance as well as of comfort, and her consort constantly adds some new ornament to them, to his own delight. He uses the State apartments only on State occasions, thus justifying their name, but even those have been transformed and beautified according to modern ideas, much to the scandal and indignation of his grandfather's ancient friends.

The Emperor, it cannot be denied, in the early years of his reign antagonised many representatives of the old Prussian aristocracy who had been used to being treated on a footing of equality by William I., and who found themselves suddenly confronted by a Sovereign who made them feel upon every possible occasion the great difference that existed between them. Gradually they bade adieu to Court life, returning to the capital only when compelled, and then only for the shortest time possible. Society took up a defiant attitude in regard to the Emperor; it became the fashion to complain of the dullness of Court entertainments; the smart set took to seeing each other at public balls

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EMPRESS AUGUSTA VICTORIA

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## A New Social Atmosphere

given in some great hotel like the Kaiserhof, for instance, and to seize any pretext to excuse themselves from attending Royal functions. Before very long the Emperor learned of this, and the guilty people were permanently struck off the invitation list of the Palace, a fact that made them the more inclined to persist in their hostility toward the young Sovereign. He did not seem to mind; indeed, in some instances, he appeared rather glad to be rid so cheaply of people whom otherwise he would have felt compelled to treat with attention.

At that early stage of his career as a monarch he expected from his entourage more blind obedience than those used to the manners and customs of the old Court felt inclined to give him. By and by a new social atmosphere formed around him as the distinctions which had been so rigidly enforced were broken down. William II. found new friends of like opinions to his own. Wealthy people, who up to that time had lived either in their country seats or in small provincial towns, took to coming to Berlin, and were duly invited to the Imperial balls, four or five of which were regularly given in the course of each season. These balls were the delight of the *débutantes*. The new Empress, contrary to the old regime, did not approve of married women being too worldly, and reserved all her sympathies for the young people, for whom she used to give small dances, at which they alone were allowed to waltz. In consequence, balls became dull,

## The Berlin Court under William II

and men preferred to avoid them. Flirtations, even of the most innocent kind, gradually disappeared, and society became, if not more moral, at least more secretive as regarded its movements, more discreet in its likes and dislikes, and apparently more absorbed in family duties, which the Empress set before everything else.

Another change came about when newcomers invaded Berlin, bringing habits and customs of other places and other countries. Americans began to frequent the capital, and, of course, made felt their independence of manners, freedom of speech, and general indifference to everything that was not purely material or pleasant. Women became smart, elegant, not only in their dresses, but in their general habits, and they tried also to introduce among their friends the happy-go-lucky ways which they had picked up at such places as Monte Carlo or Cairo. Politeness became practically a thing of the past, and the great number of small sets into which society divided itself showed themselves impertinent in regard to one another, until it became exceedingly difficult for the foreigner to discover where he could lead a peaceful, if not a pleasant, existence.

Very soon the newcomer found out that financial and commercial circles were perhaps the safest for him to move in, as there at least he could find unanimity of purpose and thought. It is true that in these circles, too, outsiders were to be found, and that even the greatest ladies were but too glad to be admitted. The



## Distrust of the Emperor

Emperor's broadness of view resulted in Berlin becoming like Paris, the only passport necessary to obtain a leading part in its entertainments and enjoyments being the possession of an unlimited amount of money and perfect knowledge of the art of spending it with advantage to oneself and to others.

Politics also came to be discussed from quite a different standpoint than they had been during the years when Prince Bismarck presided over them. They were talked about with far more calm, and perhaps more understanding of the requirements of the country, than had been the case formerly, when people had full confidence in the great statesman to whom Germany owed so much, and believed it was best to leave in his hands the management of its foreign and interior policy. After his death the upper ten began to interest itself in what was going on in politics, partly because it did not quite trust the Emperor, and partly because it felt that things had changed: Germany was getting so prosperous that it behoved everybody to watch carefully all that was being done to safeguard the interests and the integrity of the Fatherland.

As the necessity for increased armaments arose, the patriotic feelings of the nation were aroused, and whilst nothing the Government asked for was refused, the nation wanted, nevertheless, to know the why and wherefore of things, and whether the responsible Ministers of the Crown were prepared to do their duty in regard to the country. Parliamentary life had de-

## The Berlin Court under William II

veloped itself since the proclamation of the Empire at Versailles, and the different parties which for so long had only existed inside the walls of the House of Parliament began to make themselves heard outside.

Suddenly Germany lost that entire confidence in the Government, which she had found so advantageous to her interests in the days when William I. resided in his little palace in the Unter den Linden and Prince von Bismarck in the Wilhelmstrasse. She wanted all at once to be told what was being done in the matter of the national defence and for the furtherance of her vital interests. The Agadir incident had been followed quite feverishly by the public mind as well as by public opinion, and whilst it was felt that the honour of the nation could not admit a climb down before the French Republic, it was also thought that it would have been wiser and more politic not to have given any occasion for the incident. The same thing occurred in regard to the famous journey of the Emperor to Morocco.

It had been severely criticised by the saner portion of political men who were concerned in any way in the conduct of the affairs of the country. They considered it as one of the many hasty resolutions into which William II. had been drawn through the impetuosity of his temperament and the vividness of his imagination. With time, however, he somewhat abated his energy, and came to look at things far more coolly. After he had curtly dismissed Prince von

## A Political Revival

Bülow, he had begun to interest himself more dispassionately in the affairs of government. The nation began to have more confidence in him, and as this confidence became greater it increased the interest which people had begun to take in politics, and accentuated the feverish anxiety with which was followed the constant additions to the navy.

This interest manifested itself even among the fashionable section of Berlin, where conversations gradually assumed a more serious tone. The newspapers were eagerly scanned for something else than the latest social scandal or the newest Parisian fashion; society became graver, more thoughtful, and more sedate; it realised the fact that there was something else to look forward to than amusement; that Germany had reached a period in its history where decisive events were at hand, and where she required much more than ordinary prudence to emerge in safety from the numerous perils in her pathway.

Since the war with Austria in 1866, Berlin society has gone through three different phases. About thirty years ago it was intensely dull, old-fashioned, respectable, and even its amusements savoured of something akin to provincialism. Then, later, it became essentially frivolous—as enjoyable as it was loose in its manners and indifferent in its morality. Latterly it has arrived at the third stage. It is reforming; tightening up all round; it remembers itself no longer as merely the capital of a small Prussian kingdom,

## The Berlin Court under William II

but that of one of the most powerful Empires in Europe.

The German character is steady, persevering, and possibly obstinate. It does not easily yield up anything it considers it has the right to retain. That character has been roused, particularly among the once frivolous and useless members of society. This would not, perhaps, have taken place if the new elements which William II. had welcomed had not made their presence felt. Their influence has become very real, and it has been beneficial, in the sense that it has taught the upper classes that they had no right to look down upon those who were not their equals by birth. In that sense the reforms introduced by the present German Emperor in the customs of society have been very useful, and have linked together various elements which, until his accession, had nothing in common.

The great misfortunes of William II. are that he has really taken no one into his entire confidence ever since he ascended the throne, and that he has not been sincere with himself, even when he has shown himself truthful. The Emperor has a singular knack of calling "duty" everything that it suits him or his designs to have done; and, further, he has contrived to impress his people with the conviction that duty alone guides his actions and inspires his policies.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EDWARD VII AND WILLIAM II

**E**ARLIER in this volume I have referred to the dislike which existed between Edward VII. and the German Emperor. It had its beginnings in the treatment by William II. of his mother, the sister of Edward VII., but undoubtedly much of the friction arose from natural differences of temperament. While Edward VII. always gave the impression of a polished, suave, and finished diplomat, his Imperial nephew possessed the impulsive rashness of a crudely developed sense of power. Things, perhaps, would have materially improved, and the mutual harshness between the two considerably softened by the advance of years, had it not been for the fact there was always lingering in the background of the mind of Edward VII. the memory of slight upon slight which the Empress Frederick had experienced at the hands of her son.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, when Russia entered into an understanding with France, that a far-seeing monarch like Edward VII. should not only recognise in it the opportunity of a closer friendship

## The Berlin Court under William II

which should serve mutual interests, but also the concern it would cause his German relative, were the friendship to ripen into an understanding between the Empires of Britain and Russia and the Republic of France. Politically, it would be a good move; personally, it would cause gratification.

William II. always admired strongly the sound views of Queen Victoria, whose wisdom and foresight he recognised and whom he entertained a deep affection. He was supposed, too, to be very fond of his mother's native land. While his grandmother was alive it may have been true, but it certainly was less discernible upon the accession of Edward VII. and still less as the years went by. When King George V. ascended the throne a re-flickering of friendship threw a fitful light on the diplomatic scene, but it has never been fanned into a blaze of goodwill.

Edward VII. found more fruitful fields for his advances in other domains of Europe than Prussia. But in whatever direction his activities extended, I will do him the justice of saying that his movements were astute, ably conducted, and cleverly thought out. He had had time in the many years during which he was waiting for his Crown to become acquainted with the most delicate problems of European diplomacy. A substantial advantage he derived from this period of waiting was that he had more than one opportunity to modify or to improve upon lines of conduct he had

## What Edward VII Wanted

planned for future execution. He liked France and its people. He had happiest memories of days spent in Paris, whilst, on the contrary, Germany was connected in his thoughts with everything that, to him, was dull and constrained.

King Edward was essentially proud of his own country, and of his position as ruler of the British Empire. In Berlin we thought he sincerely believed himself far superior to the German Emperor, and that he fully meant, when he succeeded his mother, to raise his prestige even higher. He had always been of opinion that, during the last quarter of a century or so, England had interested herself far too little in European politics, and that it behoved her to regain the lost ascendancy in Continental affairs she had possessed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when her armies had held their own against the soldiers of Napoleon.

Without being aware of the feeling, he perhaps felt slightly jealous of the influence Prussia had attained after the triumphs of Sadowa and of Sedan. He wished to instal himself in a place of similar power to that long held by Prince Bismarck, whom he considered to be the greatest figure in Europe since the days of Richelieu. Bismarck was a figure against whom Edward VII. could not have hoped to fight, but whom he could very legitimately aspire to replace. King Edward wanted to make London the diplomatic centre of the world, just as Paris had been during

## The Berlin Court under William II

the First and Second Empires, and Prussia under William I. To a certain degree this hope was justified, and King Edward was strong enough, and clever enough, to have realised it in due time, had not death intervened just at the moment when success was within his grasp.

His designs proceeded just as much from his patriotic feelings and ambitions for his country as from his personal feelings, and the impatience he had always felt at the superiority the Hohenzollerns assumed. He wished to prove to his detractors that he was not the man entirely given up to worldly pleasures he had been represented, and that he was of the stuff great Kings are made. He could be intensely unpleasant, in the cool, disdainful manner he knew so well how to assume when he chose; and it is impossible to deny that Edward did choose that attitude in regard to our Emperor.

Hostility between England and Germany really took a definite shape after the accession of King Edward. William II. knew this but too well, and upon the death of his uncle did his best to renew the old relations that formerly existed between his people and Great Britain. In the Press, however, continued distrust was manifest on both sides of the North Sea. London newspapers continued to attack Germany, whilst the Press of Berlin loudly denounced what they called "the false and unscrupulous politics" of the English Government.



## The Eve of the Entente

In those years it was my own feeling that these fulminations were founded on nothing tangible. Such manifestations of cordiality as the visit of the English squadron to Kiel and the return call of German men-of-war at English ports were surely more compatible with the spirit displayed by William II. and the enthusiasm with which he was received by the English nation on English soil. So far as I could discover, there was no reason why England and Germany should be unfriendly. On the contrary, everything ought to draw them together. Their religion, their customs and habits, the trend of their mind, and their enterprise in business.

When whispers filtered through to our Embassy that King Edward's well-known friendship for the Republic was on the eve of being converted into a closer understanding, with probably some secret clauses inimical to Germany, it seemed to me unlikely. Superficially, it did not appear surprising, but I failed to comprehend what grounds England had to espouse the quarrels of France.

Surely, I thought, English politicians are wise enough not to risk such an adventure; and if they were not, then the Emperor William is far too prudent not to do his best to neutralise the efforts of French diplomacy and to avoid giving any pretext for England to link her destiny with France because she imagined herself open to danger from anything that might happen in Germany.

## The Berlin Court under William II

The Entente Cordiale, however, became an established fact. It was undisguisedly brought about by Edward VII., and was one of the most direct results of his European tour in 1903. The visit of Edward to Paris in May, and the return visit to London of President Loubet in July, cemented the mutual friendliness into a rapprochement. Within twelve months—in April, 1904—the Entente agreement was signed in London by the representatives of England and France. The consummation was viewed with considerable perturbation in Berlin. More particularly because of Italy. Questions raced round official circles in Berlin as to the likelihood, or otherwise, of the Quirinal breaking her pledges in the Triple Alliance. What was the meaning of King Edward's visit to Rome? What was the reason of the former coolness between Italy and France being replaced by a distinct warmth immediately after Edward had gone from Rome to Paris, and later had entertained King Victor Emmanuel and President Loubet in England?

Answers to these questions were evidently worth seeking, for scarce had the British Emperor left Rome before my Imperial master, Emperor William, hastened to visit his illustrious ally, where, it is reported, he was received with "temperate enthusiasm." Then the Morocco business cropped up, and all the while talk was bandied about as to a further step by England; no other than joining the existing Franco-Russian agreement and forming a Triple Entente. Here, again,

## Emperor William's Great Aim

I felt sure that the influence of Edward VII. was at work. The advantage of such a step was with those who had never ceased to hate Germany, and therefore a blow at the German Emperor.

When it became known that an understanding had been entered into between Russia, Britain, and France it caused much apprehension in Berlin. The rôle of England was dramatically discussed. I remember arguing with a highly placed official compatriot that English politics had always been sound; the Cabinet never lost sight of the real interests of Great Britain. There was therefore no fear, I concluded, that they would ever jump headlong into an adventure of which it would be impossible to foresee the end. It was on account of the common-sense characteristics of English statesmen that I felt pretty certain the peace of the world would not be compromised—as some people in Germany feared—by the understanding.

In the background of my mind I had always the knowledge that the Emperor William, in one of his confidential moods, had told me that his great aim was to establish a close commercial union between Great Britain and Germany. I believe that the sentiment which inspired the idea, is my Emperor's desire for Anglo-German friendship, a desire which has become stronger since the accession of George V. I do not believe in the possibility of a serious conflict arising between Great Britain and the German Empire. I feel greater security because I know

## The Berlin Court under William II

personally the two diplomatic representatives most concerned. With such people as Sir Edward Goschen and Prince Lichnowsky, the interests of both nations were quite safe; both are statesmen gifted with singular diplomatic genius and experience.

## CHAPTER XIX

### UNDERCURRENTS OF GERMAN POLICY IN THE BALKANS

**N**OW that nearly two years have gone by since the outbreak of the first Balkan War, the different circumstances that brought it along are becoming more truly discernible.

To say that this conflict was inevitable is simply distorting facts. Ever since the Russo-Turkish War, trouble has been brewing in the Balkans, and no one who understood politics believed that the Treaty of Berlin had put an end to the manifold difficulties which could grow out of detestable Turkish administration, coupled with a normal restlessness of the different Slav nationalities in that part of Europe.

Since that treaty was ratified there have been disorders and massacres in Armenia; disturbances in Macedonia; riots in Roumelia, and perpetual disorders in Albania. There has been a Greco-Turkish war, and one between Servia and Bulgaria; revolutions, too, in Belgrade and Sofia. But none of these circumstances shook the peace of Europe, the only result being to give work to the various European Chancelleries and Cabinets. Even the various intrigues which had ruffled the daily existence of the inhabitants of Con-

## The Berlin Court under William II

stantinople, coupled with the overthrow of Abdul Hamid, had passed by without bringing international complications in their train.

Any one of these events had been far more grave than the differences which suddenly arose between the Turkish Government and the Ministers at Belgrade and Sofia; yet these entirely unimportant questions led to two murderous wars, terrible massacres, and finally to a peace but poorly patched.

People will ask why this occurred; how it came that in this case the efforts of diplomacy proved useless. The reply is simple; too simple, perhaps, for those who like to seek extraordinary motives for everything that happens. They proved useless because at Berlin, the direction whence pressure might have been exercised on Turkey, it was preferred to let matters drift until they became quite unmanageable and differences had to be decided at the point of the sword.

The strangest part of all this strange story is that it was due to the initiative of the Emperor William that the first idea of a treaty between the different Balkan kingdoms against their common foe, Turkey, had arisen, and that without his encouragement it is doubtful whether it could ever have been discussed between them, far less approved and signed.

This meddling by the German Sovereign in a matter that did not concern him in the very least, has, so far as I know, not earlier become public property. I believe, however, that it was known almost immediately to the

## Ferdinand of Bulgaria

members of the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress, whereon it instructed one of its agents, of whom many were disseminated all over Europe, to demand explanations in Berlin. The Committee was advised to allow matters to develop without interference, as they might prove more advantageous to the Turkish Empire than could be imagined at first sight.

The truth was that the Emperor understood very well that a war waged by the small Balkan States against his faithful friend and ally the Ottoman Empire, was sure to lead to bitter interneine quarrels, in which a third party, himself probably, or Austria, would be sure to find some ground for interference—and this was his secret aim.

He advised King Ferdinand of Bulgaria in this strain, assuring him at the same time that it was only through some such crisis that he could hope to win the Imperial diadem to which he had aspired ever since he attained to Royal degree, only a few months before. The event had not been viewed with enthusiasm in the Balkans; in Servia especially the people feared that it might serve as a pretext for their troublesome neighbour Bulgaria to yearn for more territorial extensions at the expense of Servia. King Ferdinand, even in his own country, had not been clever enough to win sympathy. He was neither a pleasing nor a pleasant personality. But he was powerful and cunning, knowing when and how to spend money, and how to restrain his true feelings when he thought it to his interest to do so. His conduct

## The Berlin Court under William II

was a demonstration of intelligence and craftiness, though it had sadly lacked in honesty—but where do we find honesty in politics? Certainly never in the East, where it would be esteemed a folly to do aught else but try to win every advantage possible without considering one's neighbour.

King Ferdinand, by his elaborate system of spies, had discovered traces of the relations which Enver Bey had established between the Committee of Union and Progress in Turkey and the German Emperor. He had used this knowledge with great tact, but contrived nevertheless to make William II. feel that an important secret had fallen into his possession.

The immediate result was the establishment of most friendly relations between Berlin and Sofia. An early outcome was that the Emperor advised Prince Ferdinand, as he was at that time, to marry again, and where family ties and relationships might extend his influence. In Princess Eléonore of Reuss-Köstritz was found an ideal bride. She was cousin to the Grand Duchess Vladimir of Russia, aunt to the Tsar; and her family had long been on terms of intimate friendship, not only with the old Emperor William I. of Prussia, but also with his successors. William II. had learned to know her at her aunt's, the Princess Stolberg-Wernigerode, at whose sumptuous castle in the Harz Mountains he had been a frequent visitor.

The Princess was a charming woman, full of excellent qualities, who during the Russo-Japanese War had gone



## An Important Secret

as a volunteer to nurse the wounded in Manchuria, and who had won for herself many friends and admirers, through her heroic conduct at the time of this unfortunate campaign. She was no longer young, but this was not of any importance, and her excellent heart and sweetness of disposition were just of the kind to win popularity for her wherever she went. The Emperor hoped that this might influence for the better the chances of Prince Ferdinand, whilst the very fact that a German princess presided over the little Court of Sofia would go far to explain the German sympathies which, as was very well understood by all the parties concerned, would have to become known as time and events revealed .. designs and intentions of Prince Ferdinand.

Ferdinand understood at once the advantage of such a marriage. He proposed to the Princess Eléonore, was accepted, and brought her to Sofia, where she very soon won for herself golden opinions from everybody. She was a woman of strong character, but also one who did not care to create difficulties. She accepted her husband's decisions with indifference, and was quite content to be allowed sufficient liberty to occupy herself with her many benevolent schemes. When Bulgaria was transformed into a kingdom, she was satisfied to be called a queen, but did not feel particularly elated. Through her personal relations with so many of the crowned heads of Europe, she contrived to be of considerable use to her consort, who was being very well aware

## The Berlin Court under William II

of her tact and intelligenec, confided various political missions to her. These she invariably performed to his satisfaction, and it was principally through her that communications passed between the new Sovereign of Bulgaria and the Emperor William II.

When relations between Turkey, and Servia, and Bulgaria became strained, the Emperor, as I have already explained, advised King Ferdinand, as well as King Peter of Servia and King Nicholas of Montenegro, to conclude the treaty that later on drew forth so much comment from the political world, as well as the criticism of the Press of the whole of Europe. Negotiations concerning this treaty were conducted in the greatest secrecy. The principal channels through which the clauses passed to and fro for discussion were the Queen of Italy, who communicated their intent to her father at Cetinje; Queen Eléonore at Sofia; Prince Arsène Kara-Georgevitch, the brother of King Peter. The then Crown Princess of Greece was also made *au courant* by her brother, the German Emperor. Politicians such as M. Pashitch in Servia, and M. Venizelos at Athens, were, of course, consulted on the matter, and immediately recognised the advantages that might acerue to their respective countries through such an alliance of the Balkan States. The treaty was signed, and war against Turkey enthusiastically declared.

When the first Balkan War was started, it was most certainly the firm intention of the belligerent parties to snatch Bosnia and Herzegovina from Austria, and Con-

## Turkish Affairs

Constantinople from the Turks. At first the progress of hostilities seemed to justify a hope that both these aims would be accomplished. A series of brilliant victories brought the Ottoman Empire almost to the brink of irremediable ruin. Then things changed. The allies began to quarrel, and a fratricidal war began, that culminated in massacre upon massacre which for cruelty surpassed history. Europe again urged the combatants to conclude peace, but the appeal was disregarded, until Roumania, owing to a secret understanding which existed between its late King and the Berlin Cabinet, interfered in the matter, and declared to King Ferdinand, that unless he stopped, she would enter the field against him.

In the meantime Turkey, under the direction of Enver Bey (soon to become Pasha), and with the help of German money and German officers, had made the most of her opportunity, and had reconquered Adrianople previous to some other great coups—unhoped-for successes which she obtained at a moment when everybody believed her to be crushed out of existence forever.

There again could be traced the hand of the Emperor William. He it was who had furnished the Turkish Government with money, and with officers who led the Ottoman Army with more ability than Turkish militarists had been able to do. He even went so far as to send Enver Bey a plan of action destined to force the hand of Russia, and to oblige her to declare herself

## The Berlin Court under William II

in favour of the Balkan States, so as to give a pretext for Austria to interfere. By some untoward chance, the letters of the German Sovereign fell into the hands of the then Minister of Justice, Nazim Pasha, which, perhaps, accounts for his murder, because no trace of these letters was found after his assassination. The uncertainty of the whereabouts of these letters caused considerable anxiety to William II., who had reason to fear that they had fallen into hostile hands.

All these things are provable and official lips be unsealed, though it is doubtful whether the facts have been published before. When the Bulgarian armies were beaten by those of their former allies, the Servians and Greeks, King Ferdinand saw that he had played the part of a dupe. He wanted to rebel, but was silenced by new promises.

The misfortune of King Ferdinand has been that he has trusted far too much to his own experience and intelligence, and that he has no clever politicians at his side such as M. Venizelos or M. Pashitch. M. Pashitch, especially, gave proofs of consummate ability, not only by his success in emerging with glory out of a most difficult situation, but also by his wisdom in not enforcing too onerous conditions upon vanquished Bulgaria in the peace concluded at Bucharest. He had had the sagacity not to lend a ready ear to the many insinuations which had been made to him from Berlin; and though fully aware that it might have been to his and to

## The Situation in Servia

Servia's immediate advantage to side with Austria, and thus put an end to a tension that promised to become more and more bitter every day, he had continued faithful to his long-standing policy of remaining always friendly with Russia.

The greatest wish cherished by M. Pashitch was to arrange a marriage between the Servian Crown Prince and one of the daughters of the Tsar, and it was with this intention that he accompanied the Crown Prince to St. Petersburg in the early spring of 1914, for the ostensible purpose of standing godfather to Alexander's nephew, the son of his sister, the Princess Hélène, as I have already related. M. Pashitch was clever and shrewd enough not to allow his desires to be suspected, and contented himself with sounding the ground. When he found it unfavourable to his views, he quietly beat a retreat without giving the least suspicion of his hope.

M. Pashitch took the opportunity of his short stay in the Russian capital to tell the Russian Government his views concerning the general situation in the Balkans, and to obtain the assurance that, whatever happened in the future, Russia would stand beside Servia, and protect her against aggression on the part of Austria, which it was felt everywhere would not be delayed much longer. He knew very well that it had been a longstanding wish at the Ballplatz to make Servia share the fate of Bosnia, and become an Austrian province. The idea has lately taken hold of

## The Berlin Court under William II

the public mind in Vienna, where it is believed that it is principally through the medium of Servian politicians that Russia is prosecuting an anti-Austrian propaganda in Galicia and in Bukowina, as well as in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, however, an antagonistic current against Russia has set in, or rather developed violently, after having smouldered for years, and what will be the end no man can tell. Apprehensions are being expressed openly—that is all one can say.

## CHAPTER XX

COUNT VON SCHWERING'S DIARY

BERLIN, JUNE 30, 1914.

I ARRIVED here last night, summoned by a telegram from Kiel, and I am expecting the return of my Imperial master every moment. I wonder how I shall find him after this Sarajevo tragedy. I should be very much mistaken if it did not affect him deeply. If ever he liked anybody it was the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and certainly he had more in common with him than with many other people, even members of his own family. The tragic death of such an intimate friend must have been a dreadful blow to him. The uncertainty of the future must also weigh upon him, and render him anxious.

I recall the days of our common childhood, when he and I used to share in common our studies and amusements, feelings, and impressions. Years have gone by since then ; we are both past middle age ; he has grown-up sons ; and yet he has always remained for me the boy with whom I played, with whom I exchanged so many thoughts, and with whom I made so many plans for a future which, as regards myself at least, I could not imagine without him.

## The Berlin Court under William II

Later on our paths went more than once asunder ; he did many things of which I could not approve ; allowed himself to be carried away further than I would have liked by the impetuosity of his character. But for me he has never changed.

Lately he has seemed to me to become sad and morose, and the boyish laugh which he kept for so long, and which seemed to defy the years that had accumulated over his head, has been heard but seldom. Still, for me he has not changed—at least, I think he has not done so, though once or twice a doubt has crossed my mind as to whether my frank criticisms were not accepted with less indulgence and more impatience than had been the case before.

I never cared for the murdered Archduke, with his heavy face, which, even when it smiled, looked stern, and with those eyes that never lit up, save when they looked upon his wife and children. I am sure the Archduke was an excellent husband and a devoted father ; I am not so certain that he would have made a good sovereign, though he certainly would have proved an enterprising one. However, all this is past ; Francis Ferdinand is lying dead, side by side with the wife he had taken unto himself against much opposition, and whom he would most certainly have raised to the throne of Austria had he ever come to occupy it. That story is at an end, together with the romantic existence of the unfortunate Duchess of Hohenburg. We have to look forward to a future in which these



## A Revelation

two people will have no part ; we are faced with uncertainty, that worst of all evils. We must see what is before us, and we must make the most of a very bad case.

JULY 1, 1914.

I have seen the Emperor, and I have never felt sadder than when I left him. We had a long conversation, which revealed to me a being quite different from the one I thought I knew so well : a being that was strange to me, in whom shone at intervals dark flashes of hatred, rage, and revengeful feelings. These feelings, I believed, had quite died out after the dismissal of Prince Bismarck, and the death of the Empress Frederick had, by the consequences which followed upon these two events, softened his nature. And yet to-day, when I spoke with him, I had a vision of that other man he had been at the beginning of his career, and which I believed he was no longer. He seemed suddenly to have aged by ten years ; the eyes were sunken, the expression of his mouth hard, the general appearance stern and unbending. He spoke coldly about the assassination of his friend, as if the event had not impressed him beyond what a *fait divers* would have done. Only once did he give way to emotion, and that was when I spoke about the grief which the old Emperor Francis Joseph must have felt when told that tragedy for the second time had robbed him of his heir.

## The Berlin Court under William II

"Yes, he is to be pitied," replied William II.; "and yet, God knows, he is not the one I pity most. There are others who will suffer through this death—others who will lose their all through it."

And to my remark that probably he was thinking of the children of the murdered Archduke, he answered, to my astonishment, that he had never given *them* a thought. When I looked up at him inquiringly, he then said, slowly, that this murder would call for revenge, and that revenge sometimes leads to catastrophes of unusual magnitude.

He then spoke about the impression that must have been produced in Russia by the Sarajevo tragedy.

"They will be glad," he added; "it suits them to see upon the throne of Austria a young and inexperienced man. The Russians, poor wretches, do not imagine that this young man may be so situated that he will be forced to endorse the policy of those whose place he has taken."

Then suddenly, to my great astonishment, William II. began speaking of the possible complications that might arise out of the murder of the Archduke. He expressed his opinion that most probably Russian gold and Russian intrigues had had something to do with the pistol shot that had ended the life of the heir to the Habsburg monarchy; but he added, "Russia shall be punished for the share she has had in this drama; she will suffer for it. She must be either very

## Off to Norway

stupid or very conceited if she thinks that Austria will not insist on the chastisement of the guilty people. Francis Joseph will not allow the assassins of his nephew to escape. Indeed, out of this murder will perhaps result the ultimate triumph of German civilisation and German politics."

The tone in which the Emperor spoke alarmed me to a considerable extent, and I could not help putting to him plainly the question whether it could be possible that he was thinking of such a serious step as going to war to avenge his friend.

"No; I am not thinking of going to war," was the unexpected reply, "but I may be obliged to declare it." Then, as if afraid of having said too much, he added: "You must not get alarmed, my friend Axel. I sometimes allow myself to say what I do not mean; for the present I am only thinking of one thing, and that is of going to Norway for my usual holiday. You must come with me this time. These last months have not been a real holiday, and I want you to share this one with me."

I bowed, but somehow felt uneasy. I cannot understand what can have occurred to change him so thoroughly. I suppose, however, that his nerves, which have always troubled him, are more unhinged than usual, and I rather dread on his account the journey to Vienna, where, it seems, he wants to go to attend the funeral of the Archduke. I told him so, and was again surprised to hear him reply that he did

## The Berlin Court under William II

not know yet whether he would start for Austria or send someone in his place.

"One does not want the aged Emperor to undergo too much fatigue," he said; "and what I wish to say to him can be conveyed just as well in writing; and then Moltke is to see the Chief of the Austrian Staff at Carlsbad."

He remained thoughtful for some moments, and then, as if wanting to shake off an unpleasant thought:

"Yes; you must come with me to Norway, friend Axel," he said; "maybe this will be the last holiday I shall enjoy for a long time, and I want you to share it with me. Who knows what the next months may bring us?"

"Your Majesty does not foresee any international complications?" I asked. "For the present nothing seems to point to the possibility of anything serious arising in that direction."

"Serious things occur when one least expects them," was the enigmatical reply. "Sometimes the necessity arises for a nation to assert itself, if only because she feels that otherwise others will do it, and do it to her disadvantage. No; for the present there are no complications to be foreseen; but with the French idea of a *revanche*, with Russia's preparations for war, and with the restlessness of Servia, a spark may fall that shall set fire to the whole world. Austria, too, stands at the threshold of a new era in her existence, and perhaps it would be better for her were

## War with Servia ?

the transformation, which she must undergo whether she likes it or not, to take place during the lifetime of the present Emperor than under a young and not over-clever sovereign. The new heir to the throne is an excellent young man, but the world requires more strength and energy than he has given proof of as yet."

He remained silent for some time, then stood up, and began pacing to and fro for some minutes. At last he slapped me on the shoulder :

"Don't think about all this, friend Axel," he said. "I am not my usual self this morning I want the breezes of the North to set me right again. When we get back from Norway I shall be a different man. And for the present let us say good-bye. I shall send for you one of these days, when, perhaps, I shall not frighten you as I have done this morning."

He dismissed me. I felt very uneasy at his strange manner, and the unexpected turn his thoughts had taken. I know him so well, that I am perfectly well aware he would not have spoken as he did had he not been brooding over some plan or other that had not yet sufficiently matured in his brain for him to talk about, even to his most intimate friends.

I cannot help being vaguely alarmed at his whole attitude. Surely he is not thinking of going to war to avenge the assassination of his friend! War—with whom? With Servia? Absurd! The more so that one cannot make the Servian nation or the Servian Government responsible for the crime of a fanatic.

## The Berlin Court under William II

With Russia? There is absolutely no reason for a conflict arising between that nation and Germany. With France? But France just now is busy with her new law compelling three years' military service, and until that is passed she will not seek the occasion of a rupture with us. With England? This can hardly be admitted, especially if one takes into account the extreme cordiality manifested when the King and Queen of England visited Berlin for the marriage of the present Duchess of Brunswick.

No; the more I think about it, the more it seems to me that my fears are groundless, and that the irritability of the Emperor proceeds from an overwrought state of nerves.

And yet I feel alarmed, though it would be hard to explain what grounds I can have for being so.

JULY 2, 1914.

I had arranged to dine to-night at the Hôtel Adlon together with my old friend Moltke, the head of the General Staff. At the last moment he telephoned asking me not to wait for him, as he was summoned by the Emperor to the palace, and might be late.

Surely there is nothing extraordinary in the fact that the Sovereign wants to see the general before his departure for the Norwegian fiords, and there is absolutely no reason for alarm in this very ordinary occurrence. Yet it fills me with unaccountable apprehension.

## A Talk with Moltke

I dined alone after having loitered as long as I could, and when my simple meal was over, I repaired to the General Staff, hoping to find that Moltke had already returned from Potsdam, which, however, was not the case. I waited for him more than two hours, spending my time in reading the papers in that very same study where I had seen at his writing-table that other Moltke whose name still lives in history. I sprang up at last, annoyed with myself and my own thoughts. Why was I haunted by that word "War," what reason had I for always thinking about it and meditating on the consequences which might follow in its train?

We, surely, have no need to go to war; we are satisfied with our lot, and with the position which we hold in Europe. But—and there I get confused again—in Germany there is the Emperor, who, after all, has the last word to say in the matter. Is the Emperor as eager for peace as he was a few months ago, during the recent campaign in the Balkans, for instance? I tried to persuade myself that his feelings have undergone no change in regard to that question, but somehow did not succeed, and I kept longing for Moltke's return to be able to discuss the subject with him. What a time he was away! The clock on the mantel-piece pointed already to midnight, and still he did not come back. At last the door-bell rang, and to my intense relief my old friend entered the study.

The moment I looked at him I felt that something

## The Berlin Court under William II

was wrong. He, too, seemed to guess the state of my feelings, because, almost before having greeted me, he dropped into an arm-chair beside his writing-table, and, as if replying to the question I had not yet time to put to him, he said slowly: "Yes my friend, the storm is coming on at last."

"The Emperor?" I asked.

"The Emperor puzzles me," was the unexpected reply. "Up to now he would not even allow for the possibility of Germany ever going to war during his reign, and you know better than anyone else how he has rebuked the Crown Prince whenever the latter has seemed to agree with the ultra military party in the country. Well, will you believe that to-night he has kept me for more than four hours discussing with him the chances we have of coming out with glory from a possible conflict with an enemy he would not name to me?"

"And you told him?" I inquired eagerly.

"I told him what you know as well as I do, that Germany has been ready for years for any surprise that might overtake her. I told him, too, that should she be drawn into a war, she would not be able to conduct it on the same principles as in 1866 and 1870; but that it would be a desperate war. I also added that under the circumstances the duty of every German patriot consisted in doing his best to avoid it, because, though we might emerge triumphant out of the struggle, we should lose the respect and the consideration of



## The Dawn of Realisation

Europe, owing to the means we should be forced to employ."

As he was speaking, my old friend's lips were twitching nervously. I have known Moltke for the last forty years. We have been always the staunchest of friends, the closest companions. He is not a warlike man, perhaps because he knows what war means, and especially what it would mean at the present day and with modern weapons. Under his influence, the Emperor, who sometimes during the period when Count Waldersee was at the head of the General Staff had seemed inclined toward a warlike policy, has considerably softened. When I saw the emotion of my friend, I understood at once that something very serious had occurred, and that the fears which had haunted me ever since the tragedy of Sarajevo had not been quite groundless.

"You have no idea of what could have happened to induce the Emperor to speak to you as he has done?" I inquired.

"No, I have no idea; though perhaps I can guess. But then my suppositions would be so entirely horrible that I do not care to utter them even to an old friend like yourself," was the unexpected reply.

"Don't mind me," I retorted; "sometimes it is a relief to say what one fears."

"Well, then, if you will have it, I am afraid that the Emperor has been deceiving us for years; that whilst pretending to be an adversary of war, he was

## The Berlin Court under William II

in his own mind continually thinking of the day when he could declare it."

I gasped in astonishment.

"You are surprised," said Moltke. "I was surprised myself, and perhaps even more than you. I thought up to now that I knew our Sovereign, that all the intricacies of his character had been fathomed by me, and I find that I was mistaken. To-day I have seen and spoken with an unknown Emperor, with a man who was an utter stranger to me. Is it the murder of the Archduke that has transformed him to such an extent, or has he at last thrown away a mask behind which he has hidden himself for the last quarter of a century? I cannot decide that question, and I will not waste my time in trying to do so. Suffice it to tell you that now he is thinking of war, preparing for it; and, may God forgive me for saying so, he is determined to declare it if others do not declare it to him."

I got up and walked to and fro for a few minutes in the room, then sat down opposite the Chief of the German General Staff.

"Is it possible that our Emperor is getting old, and falling under the influence of the Crown Prince?" I asked.

"Would to Heaven it were so!" said the General. "No; he is under no one's influence. He is only showing himself in his true light; he is owing to us at last, what he kept studiously concealed from us

## Germany Will Win!

until to-day, namely, his desire to engage in a struggle that would make him the master, not only of Europe, but also of the world.'

"He won't find the task easy," I retorted. "Europe will not bow down before him so quickly, and, in spite of its enormous resources, it is certainly a question whether Germany could emerge victorious from a world-conflict in which she would find arraigned against her the most powerful nations of the world."

Moltke smiled sadly.

"You must not indulge in any such fears, my friend," he said. "Germany will win. Krupp does not exert in vain; but it is of this victory that I am afraid. It will be accompanied by such ruins, such misfortunes, such disasters, that all the civilisation of which we are so justly proud to-day will perish in a storm the magnitude of which shall far exceed the greatness of our triumphs. All the peaceful conquests of which our country felt so proud, all the progress she has made in the field of science and industry, all the development of her intellectual faculties which has been so rapid lately, all this will disappear beneath the load of horror and ignominy that will henceforward cling to Germany for all time. This is the awful side of any war that might break out to-day. We cannot afford to lose it, because by doing so we should be destroyed and cease to exist as an independent nation."

"Doesn't the Emperor see this?" I inquired.

"The Emperor," was the mournful reply; "the

## The Berlin Court under William II

Emperor feels now just what he felt on the day when Bismarck resigned office."

"But what could have brought about such a change in his feelings and thoughts? When he started for Kiel he seemed so eager to show himself friendly to everybody he came across."

"He *seemed*," replied Moltke. "He can seem so many things when it suits his purpose."

"You are nervous, my friend," I remarked; "and you attach too much importance to the state of nervous excitement under which the Emperor labours just now. Remember how sensitive he can be on certain occasions. He was fond of the Archduke, and he may have talked of avenging his death; but supposing even he wished to do so it would not be a reason for him to go to war. He cannot begin a campaign against Serbia, and, so far as I know, Serbia is the only country compromised in this assassination. Even Austria cannot go to war with her for this murder, and the most she can do is to require that the accomplices of the criminals—admitting they had accomplices in Serbia—should be duly punished, a thing that no one, and least of all a statesman like the Servian Premier, M. Pashitch, would dream of refusing."

"Does one require a reason to go to war if one is determined to do so?" asked the General in reply. "Pretexts can be always found for every action, be it a good or a bad one. I tell you, William II. wants war. He has, I am afraid, been wanting it always,

## The Unforeseen

but has had the courage to dissimulate his feelings until the day when he believed he could at last proceed on his ruthless designs with the certainty of being able to fulfil them. If you had heard him question me to-night on our strength, and especially on the action our artillery could take in case of a war, you would not doubt his intentions."

"But he says that he is going to Norway," was my helpless reply.

"And he will go to Norway, depend upon it. He needs rest, and perhaps he realises that it will be a long time ere he can get any after this holiday."

I started as I remembered the words of William II. the day before, when he had asked me to accompany him on his northern cruise, and added, "Who knows what the next months may bring us?"

Moltke guessed what was going on in my mind, and smiled one of his enigmatical smiles.

"I hope I am not a prophet, my friend," he said, "and perhaps you are right in saying that I do not make sufficient allowance for the state of the nerves of our Sovereign. I am but too well aware that every campaign is subject to unforeseen incidents which may decide its fate in quite a different way than could have been supposed. And we should find ourselves, in the event of war breaking out, in presence of far more formidable foes than have ever stood against us before."

"Why don't you say this to the Emperor?" I inquired.

## The Berlin Court under William II

“ I did say it to him, but you know his method of putting you off. When he saw my anxiety he laughed, with the remark that our conversation was a purely academic one, and that so far as he knew no one was going to declare war on us. He did not say that he would not declare it on others. And all the time he returned to the principal subject of our conversation, the question as to whether Germany was ready.”

“ And what did you reply ? ”

“ The truth ; on my honour as a soldier I told him that we were ready, that our artillery was the strongest in the world, and that so far as it was in human power to foresee, we were able to take up our stand against the whole world should the contingency arise for doing so.”

“ And then——”

“ And then he dismissed me. But what do you think were his last words ? ”

I looked inquiringly at my friend.

“ ‘ We must resume this conversation another time. In the meanwhile I must have another talk with Tirpitz.’ That was what he told me as I was leaving the room.”

I almost cried out on hearing Moltke’s story.

JULY 4.

I have not been able to get any rest for the last two days. My conversation with my old friend Moltke has been haunting me. Can it be that he has guessed

## A Mystery

the truth concerning the character of the Emperor? Is it possible that the latter has been wearing a mask during all these years; that he has consciously attempted to throw dust in the eyes of his best friends? I cannot bring myself to believe this. No one has recognised the Emperor's faults more clearly than I have done, but, still, I have always thought him frank and true by nature. If this hideous thing were true, and if he really craves for war—if, forgetful of all his promises in the past, he allows himself to be carried away by an unholy ambition, then indeed I shall lose all faith in humanity. Either my friend Moltke has been mistaken, or the Emperor has been particularly unnerved by recent events. But then, why this interview with Tirpitz—Tirpitz whom he had seen the other day at Kiel, when it seems he could have told him all that he possibly could have wanted to say to him? I will get to the bottom of all this mystery. Under the pretext of inquiring when we really start for Norway, I will go to Potsdam. Then, perhaps, I shall ascertain exactly how things stand, and may God grant that my fears turn out to be groundless.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have seen the Emperor, and must say that I do not share Moltke's alarm. William II., on the contrary, seemed to me to be quieter than a few days ago; he avoided all reference to politics in his conversations, and only spoke of our trip to Norway.

## The Berlin Court under William II

He asked me to stay and have lunch with him and the Empress, and during the meal appeared to be in a better temper than for a long time. Indeed, I wondered what could have occurred to make him so satisfied and so easily pleased with everything. He complimented me on my good looks and the Empress on a dress which she wore for the first time, and even mentioned the Crown Prince with a tenderness that he did not usually show in regard to the latter. I ventured to express the hope that His Majesty was now no longer displeased with the Prince, to which William II. replied: "Oh, well, time cures everything, even a boy's wilfulness. The Crown Prince is now a man, and understands that he can no longer play the child. Who knows but that serious duties may require him at any moment? I am not immortal, and even before I die there may occur circumstances that will oblige him to look at things in a different light to what he has until now."

When the Emperor said this the feeling of uneasiness which had worried me for the last few days, and which during lunch had almost disappeared, returned with a renewed force. What circumstances could occur to sober the headstrong, impetuous young heir to the throne? Surely no danger threatens Europe—the best proof of the fact lies in the many plans that the Emperor is making concerning the coming autumn, and the quietness with which he speaks of his departure for Norway. The Empress, too, looks as serene



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CROWN PRINCESS CECILE



CROWN PRINCE FREDERICK WILLIAM

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## William II in Buoyant Mood

as ever, and the whole atmosphere of the Palace at Potsdam is restful and undisturbed.

When, after lunch, the Emperor called me into his study, I had almost forgotten my fears of the days before. William II. seemed also in a buoyant mood. "I am glad to steal away from State cares and annoyances for a few days," he said to me; "I also require rest. After all, a human being is not a machine, as I have found out to my cost."

"I am glad to find your Majesty in such good spirits," I said.

"Yes, I am in good spirits, friend Axel," was the reply. "I always feel in good spirits when I have made up my mind to a great resolution and overcome the natural misgivings which generally attend such things."

"Your Majesty always ends by doing the right thing," I observed, "even when your first impulse is a wrong one."

The Emperor did not reply for some minutes, and seemed absorbed by the contemplation of the cigar he was smoking. Then he turned to me from the window at which he had been standing surveying the beautiful park stretching in front of it and said abruptly, "Yes, I have a sense of duty, and I mean to live up to it. Duty towards my people, my country, and my dynasty. But I am prepared for others not to understand it and to contest it. Duty, my friend Axel, you must not forget, is different according to the posi-

## The Berlin Court under William II

tion and the responsibilities of each individual. My duty is not yours, and vice versa."

He looked at me keenly, as if wishing to guess what were my thoughts, then went on speaking in a serious tone :

"Have you ever thought, friend Axel, that my grandfather when he died had not quite achieved the task which he set out to perform; that though he had seen renewed in his person the traditions of the old German Empire, yet he had not entirely lived up to them? It was all very well to have been proclaimed Emperor at Versailles, but still it was not enough. Look at Germany's position from the geographical point of view. It stands surrounded by enemies, without that vital necessity, an outlet to the sea, save where artificially created. Can it under the circumstances play the dominant part it ought to do in the destinies of the world? Germany has been reproached for its militarism, but the moment we give up militarism we lose all the advantages we have gained by the great wars by which my grandfather created a new Germany. And yet we cannot go on for ever in the defensive position we occupy to-day. We cannot do so because it is already entirely misconstrued, and, in order to silence our enemies and to stop the tongues of our detractors, we must make one final effort."

As I listened to the Emperor my worst apprehensions returned. I felt just as Moltke had done, that I was in the presence of a personage I had not known

## William II, the Sophist

before, and that William II. was revealing himself to me in a light he had never done until that day.

He appeared to guess my thoughts, because he said, smiling again :

“ You must not take my words tragically, my friend. I do not harbour any sinister designs against my neighbours, I assure you ; only, as I am getting older, I cannot help thinking more deeply than I have done formerly on the future that awaits Germany. When one has become a grandfather it is but natural that the future of one’s grandchildren preoccupies one. So long as I am here it is well, but who can assure me that when I am dead my son will follow the same principles and the same line of conduct that I have ? Is it not better to leave him an inheritance so large that it cannot be squandered and so firmly established that nothing can ever wrest it from him ? . . . No,” he went on, “ I am not thinking of war in the sense you attach to that word. But I have thought about it, ever since I succeeded to my father, only then we were not ready, whereas now——”

He paused, then went on again :

“ —Now we are ready. But the question arises whether we can go on keeping ready for ever. What is the use of sacrifices when one cannot persevere with them ? That is what is worrying me—or, rather, what has been worrying me for a long time. And this murder of the Archduke, putting even aside its horror, is pregnant with terrible consequences, not only

## The Berlin Court under William II

for the Austrian monarchy, but also for the whole world. It is not a young and inexperienced fellow like that little Archduke Charles who will be able to inspire respect for the Habsburg monarchy, or to induce Austria to follow his lead. If anything can be done, it must be attempted during the lifetime of the Emperor. When he is gone, it will be no longer time."

"But what is to be attempted?" I asked.

"Oh, my friend, there you touch a subject which it would take too long a time to discuss. Besides, you must not forget that I am talking academically and merely touching on possibilities, not on probabilities."

He smiled once more, and I could not quite make up my mind whether he was serious or not. Wanting, however, to give to the conversation a practical turn, I asked him what he thought of the relations between Russia and Austria, and whether he believed that these relations might improve through the death of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand.

"Don't ask me such a question, friend Axel," answered the Emperor; "it would require a far cleverer man than I am to reply to it. I think that, as things stand at present, Serbia holds the key to the situation."

"But surely Serbia had nothing to do, officially at least, with the assassination of the Archduke?" I inquired.

"Whether she had or not is quite immaterial,"

## The Key to World Events

answered the Emperor. "The only thing that counts is whether or not she can be represented as having had a hand in it. Believe me, my friend, in this world in which we live the principal thing is not what things are, but what they can be made to look like. There lies the key to all the political events that have shaken the world."

He stopped, and, seeing the look of consternation which must have appeared on my face, he seized me by the arm, in the same playfully affectionate manner as of old when we had been boys together, and then exclaimed :

"There, don't look so glum. Nothing threatens our holiday, friend Axel, believe me, and a week hence we shall be in the land of the Midnight Sun, where politics are forgotten and where man finds himself in the presence of Nature, that greatest of masters, whose teachings are never misguided, though often misunderstood. Forget what I said ; my words are of no consequence—only the fancies of a restless brain. Will you have a smoke ?"

He handed me his cigar-case as he spoke, and I noticed that he wanted to change the conversation with that impatience I knew so well. I began discussing our coming trip, and politics were not touched upon again during the few minutes he kept me still beside him. It was only when he dismissed me that I could perceive on his face certain signs of lassitude mixed with impatience, which were new to me.

## The Berlin Court under William II

It is evident that the Emperor is hiding something from us, meditating on a plan which he has not thought it worth while to unfold to his friends, perhaps because he fears it will not meet with their unqualified approval. But of what does this plan consist and what aim has he in view? If Max Fürstenberg had been in Berlin, I would have tried to find out through him what was really the matter. The Emperor likes him better than he does most people, and does not fear his acuteness or his penetration—of which the Prince has none—and sometimes allows a stray word to escape him in his presence capable of putting others on the track of his intentions. But good-natured, easygoing, simple Max Fürstenberg is in Vienna, mourning for his dead Archduke, and in his absence I am afraid that there is nobody able to give me an idea as to William II.'s intentions or thoughts.

JULY, 1914.

### *On board the Imperial Yacht "Hohenzollern"*

Three days have elapsed since we left Germany, and so far our cruise has been a most successful one. The Emperor is an excellent temper, and proves a charming companion. In that intimacy which life on board ship creates between the members of a yachting party—intimacy where restraint and differences in rank are equally forgotten—William II. appears to have thrown off the melancholy that had overtaken



## The Servian Problem Again

him ever since the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. Contrary to the general expectation, he did not attend the Archduke's funeral, and when I ventured to ask him the reason why, he replied that the Emperor of Austria's physicians had advised him that emotion ought to be spared the aged monarch, who was not yet sufficiently recovered from the serious illness he had been smitten with in the spring

"And then," he added, "it is also better that Francis Joseph should not be tempted to ask for anyone's opinion concerning the course of conduct he ought to adopt in regard to the assassination of his nephew."

This last remark has set me wondering. Evidently William II. knows more concerning this last subject than he cares to say, but still I cannot bring myself to believe in any complications resulting from the tragedy of Sarajevo. The crime was even more a sordid than a political one, and certainly the Servian Government will be the first to desire that its authors should be punished as they deserve.

I do not consider King Peter or M. Pashitch as saints by any means, but they are no fools, and it would have been folly to have been party to such a deed, and to have encouraged anyone to raise his hand against a defenceless woman, such as was the Duchess of Hohenberg. Therefore I am sure that whenever the Servian Government is asked by the Austrian authorities, it will hasten to comply with their just requests.

## The Berlin Court under William II

I even said so to the Emperor, but the latter simply gave me one of his enigmatical smiles and replied :

“ Well, we shall see. I am sure I hope that you are right, friend Axel. But at the same time I will confess to you that I am glad to be away from Berlin at the present moment.”

JULY 24.

News of the ultimatum presented to the Servian Government by the Vienna Cabinet has just reached the Emperor.

What can I say concerning this diplomatic document ? It has fallen on the world like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. Has Austria gone mad—has her Sovereign taken leave of his senses ? And how could Count Berehtold have made up his mind to take such an important, such an unheard-of, step without consulting first our Minister for Foreign Affairs, or referring the matter to our Emperor ? The whole thing sounds incredible, and the fears which I had been vaguely entertaining ever since the assassination of Francis Ferdinand seem suddenly to have become real, tangible facts. I could not rest, but waited with the utmost anxiety for the appearance of the Emperor, who had retired to his own cabin. He did not come out of it until dinner-time, when he appeared in most exuberant spirits, laughing loudly, and giving way to what I should have called “ insolent mirth ” had it referred to anyone else but himself.

## Austria Moves

The night was wonderfully mild, and the dim light of these northern latitudes gave it a particular charm. The fiords of Norway presented a lovely sight, and the still waters through which our yacht was slowly gliding reminded one almost of those of the Mediterranean, so blue and clear were they. The Emperor sat on the captain's bridge, smoking a big cigar, and lying back in a rocking chair. His eyes were half closed. For a long time he did not speak; then, calling me to a seat beside him, he at once plunged into the matter which lay uppermost in the thoughts of us both.

"So Austria is moving, friend Axel," he said. "I wonder what the step she has taken will bring about?"

"May I venture to say that your Majesty was aware that it was going to take place?"

"I aware? You are mistaken, my friend. I knew nothing, and why should I? The matter does not concern me, after all, and I purposely did not go to Vienna so that they might not say I was in any way privy to it."

"That means, your Majesty was, after all, consulted by Francis Joseph?"

"Consulted! Certainly not. Austria is not dependent on me or on my Government. This is entirely a personal affair of hers. Why should she refer it to me? I may have guessed something, but you know yourself how idle and useless it is to allow oneself to be influenced by mere guesses."

## The Berlin Court under William II

“Sir!” I exclaimed, with more real anger than I had ever allowed myself in the presence of William II. “Austria would never have dared to send such an ultimatum unless she knew for a fact that the German Government would not disapprove of it.”

“How could the German Government disapprove of it?” replied the Emperor. “First of all, I repeat it again: it is a purely personal affair, in which Austria could act independently; secondly, how could my Government—or myself, for the matter of that—disapprove of such a very natural step on the part of the Emperor Francis Joseph as to seek vengeance for the abominable murder of his nephew and heir?”

“Vengeance be ——!” I could not help exclaiming. “Vengeance has no part in this matter. There is something else at the bottom of all this. Your Majesty will never persuade me that Francis Joseph was so fond of his nephew as to endanger his crown for the pleasure of seeing Servia driven to bay by his threats.”

“Who says that the crown of my venerable ally is endangered?” asked William II.

“Your Majesty will affect to misunderstand me. So be it, I shall speak clearly. Servia cannot accept such an ultimatum, and even if she felt tempted to do so, Russia will never allow her to submit to it.”

“What has Russia to do in the matter?” asked the Emperor in the lazy tone of voice he likes to adopt whenever he wants to drive out of patience the person with whom he is talking.

## Russian Intervention

"Russia is the paramount factor in Servia, as your Majesty knows," I replied, "and the humiliatic of Servia would mean her own loss of prestige in the Balkans. Neither the Tsar nor his advisers will ever consent to it."

"Russia has just as little to do in Servia as I have in Austria, in the matter of purely personal affairs. She had better keep quiet, and perhaps it will be a wholesome lesson to her to find that she is not considered in questions that, after all, do not concern her."

"Your Majesty will affect to misunderstand me," I repeated. "At present Servia is seeking a *rapprochement* with Russia at any cost. Is it likely that she will not turn to her in her present dire strait? And if she does so, then Russia can only reply in one way: that is in assuring her that, should Austria persist in her pretensions, she will find herself faced with the danger of Russian intervention."

"My cousin Nicholas won't be such a fool!" said the Emperor. "Why should he endanger his throne by taking up the gauntlet in favour of a country that, after all, cannot be useful to him in any way?"

"Your Majesty forgets that Russia has always looked upon herself as the protector of all the Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula. She cannot now renounce that tradition."

"Why, a crime remains a crime. Surely Russia cannot wish that those to whom the Archduke has fallen a victim should remain unpunished!"

## The Berlin Court under William II

"No one wants them to remain unpunished; but between this and becoming the vassal of Austria, which is practically demanded by her ultimatum, there exists an abyss."

"Ah, friend Axel," said the Emperor, "why discuss these things on such a lovely night? Let us leave the world to its useless quarrels and remember the words of the Koran: 'We are all but the fingers of the hand of Allah.' What does it matter if some of these fingers have iron nails? In the Holy Book everything is written before ever we come to read it."

"Allah has got nothing to do with the matter," I answered sharply, "unless your Majesty wants to take upon yourself the part of its prophet! We are faced by a most serious question, the question of the Triple Alliance stepping forth in an attitude that can only exasperate Russia and the satellites of Russia. Is it worth while to provoke a conflict that can bring about the greatest war history has ever known?"

"Who speaks of war, my friend? Surely I have never so much as mentioned that word? Why should we go to war?"

"Because Russia will," I exclaimed. "And upon my word it seems to me that this is what your Majesty is driving at."

"I am driving at nothing. I am in Norway enjoying my holiday. It is for my Ministers to decide what they should do at this juncture. If I were asked for my opinion I should say: Let Russia and Austria

## Grave International Complications

settle their differences together. They are both old enough to know their own minds."

"But suppose Austria finds herself in her turn faced with an ultimatum on the part of Russia?"

"My friend, when that day comes it will be time enough for me to think as to what I ought to do. I hope it won't take the shape of an interruption to our pleasant holiday."

I felt so enraged that I almost got up and went away, but happily remembered in time with whom I was speaking. I could not make out the Emperor. In an international complication which, to say the least of it, was extremely grave, he seemed perfectly quiet and even amused. My conversation with Moltke came back to my mind, and terror seized me whilst I looked and listened to William II., to a man entirely different from the one whom I had known ever since his childhood.

I said nothing, and went on smoking, waiting to see what the Emperor would do.

I was not long in suspense. He got up and went to look at the horizon, then turning to me, "Isn't it all lovely?" he said, "the night and the landscape? What a pity to think that such an evening cannot last for ever! This world is not well organised, friend Axel!"

"I will not pretend not to understand your Majesty," I replied, "but yet I will hope that Austria listens to reason, that she will think twice before

## The Berlin Court under William II

embarking on a course whence there is no turning back."

"And do you think that if she turned back, others would quietly follow her example?" exclaimed the Emperor. "Austria is not alone in this matter. Behind her stands the Russian public and the Russian Press, the ambition of President Poincaré and the insolence of French journalists—all the rivalries and the dangers which threaten us, and which have for so long threatened us, when I could do nothing but keep silent and impassive. I have waited and watched a long time, far too long for a Sovereign who has a task to perform. Do you think that this has been easy for me? Do you imagine that I have not suffered in my pride and my patriotic feelings and my ambition in thus remaining quiet under all the insults which have been showered upon me? If so, you are mistaken. I have kept silent because I could not do anything else, because we were not ready for the struggle, because I had no certainty that we could affront it with the conviction that we would win. Now the hour has struck when I can throw off my mask. Don't you think that this is a relief, after the five-and-twenty years that have passed since I came to the conviction that Germany was not powerful enough, that she had not yet attained her highest destiny? The struggle has been bitter indeed, but now it is over at last, and I can breathe freely. I do not wish for war, but I will not go a single step to prevent its break-



## William Throws Off the Mask

ing out. I will await it without flinching, and, should I find myself entangled in it, then indeed will I make it without mercy and without remorse, sparing no one and nothing, destroying all that I cannot take!"

As William II. spoke, the moon, that until that moment had shone quite brightly, suddenly hid itself behind some clouds. His figure, by a singular effect of light, appeared to have grown larger, almost immense. It towered above the yacht, and was reflected in the still waters of the sea, as would have done the shape of some giant about to crush within its fingers both the vessel and those who were aboard it.

JULY 25, 1914.

I have spent a sleepless night, and felt not only thoroughly worn out, but also unnerved as I got up this morning. The faith which I have had for so many years in my beloved Emperor has been totally shaken—I am afraid to use the word "destroyed." What can have occurred to change him so thoroughly, to transform him into a kind of beast of prey—for, indeed, this is what he appeared to me to be last evening. Surely he cannot have been serious when he spoke of wearing a mask these twenty-five years?

I do not share his opinion that Germany has not yet reached the ultimate goal of her ambitions. Germany is at present the first Power in Europe. None other is feared, respected, and looked upon with such confidence as she is. My Sovereign has the most

## The Berlin Court under William II

influence in the world, and that was the case even during the lifetime of the shrewd politician, King Edward VII. Since the latter's death it is William II.'s experience, tact, and knowledge of politics that has more or less led the thread of diplomatic affairs everywhere.

Distrusted as he was when first he ascended the throne, he has lived down the want of confidence which his youth and impetuosity had inspired. In grave circumstance, when the peace of Europe was threatened, he wisely refrained from throwing oil on the fire.

After all, the Emperor is neither a fool nor a madman, and he would be either one or the other if, with such plans as I have feared in his brain, he remained here on board his yacht, cruising in Norwegian waters, whilst the destinies of his country were at stake. No; I am dreaming a nightmare, and feel sure that the first sight of my Sovereign will dispel it.

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A long and anxious day has almost come to an end. The daylight is vanishing; will the night bring me some alleviation to my anxieties? When I saw the Emperor he was good-tempered and amiable. We discussed politics, but he did not show during our conversation that fierceness which had been noticeable yesterday. On the contrary, he expressed himself in most encouraging terms concerning the solution of the crisis in the Balkans.

## The Ultimatum to Servia

A telegram brought news this morning that Russia had requested Austria to extend the limit of time, imposed in her ultimatum, for Servia to comply with her demands. The Emperor told me that he thought the request a reasonable one, but when I inquired whether he supposed that Austria would accede to it, he would not give me his opinion on the point, but kept saying that this was a personal matter between Austria and Servia, which must be settled between them without any outward interference, adding only that he regretted that Servia had not looked at the question from the same point of view, and had applied to the Emperor of Russia for advice.

"Don't forget," he added, "that Germany is the ally of Austria, that this alliance is a popular one in our country, and that any interference on the part of Russia may come to be considered by public opinion in Prussia as an attack on ourselves."

"This can hardly be," I retorted, "if your Majesty takes into account that Russia's influence will be for peace."

At this juncture an increasing noise interrupted us, and very soon the yacht's cutter, which had been sent to fetch dispatches at the little Norwegian village near which we were anchored, approached the *Hohenzollern*, having on board a special messenger, who handed the Emperor several telegrams. A courier from Berlin also came aboard with important letters.

Contrary to his usual custom, William II. did not

## The Berlin Court under William II

retire to his cabin to read them, but opened them on the deck. As he read their contents his face changed considerably, and assumed an earnest expression. He turned towards me, and merely said :

"Events are hurrying; you can see now for yourself how they stand. One of the telegrams says that Servia has accepted the Austrian ultimatum save on a few points which are of no importance whatever."

I sighed with relief. The news seemed to be almost too good to be true.

The Emperor stood silent for some time gazing on the sea, as if meditating on some grave problem he could not quite solve to his own satisfaction. Then, with a gesture of impatience, he threw away the cigarette he had been smoking.

"People will be fools!" he said. "Why is it always so difficult to make them understand what is required of them without calling a spade a spade."

He followed this enigmatical remark with a quick order to up-anchor and steam for Kiel.

I could plainly see that something had upset the equanimity of my Sovereign.

The mystery, however, was to be explained to me a little later by one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, who after dinner whispered in my ear that a most important telegram had been dispatched by William II.'s orders to Vienna, addressed to the Emperor of Austria.

"What did that telegram contain?" I inquired.

## A Deliberate Lie

"A hope that Austria would go on insisting at Belgrade for a full satisfaction to her demands contained in her ultimatum of the other day," was the unexpected reply.

"But hasn't she got it—that satisfaction?" I exclaimed. "It seems to me that Servia has gone as far as she decently could go. Besides, it is no business of Prussia to proffer an opinion in this matter, which is entirely a private one between the Vienna and the Belgrade Cabinets——"

I stopped short in my phrase, remembering suddenly what the Emperor had said to me concerning the necessity for non-interference by the great Powers in the conflict to which the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand had furnished a pretext. How did it come that, after expressing himself in that sense when the question of Russia mixing herself up in the matter had arisen, he himself did exactly what he had declared others ought not to do, and volunteered of his own accord to give Francis Joseph advice which the latter had not sought? A cold sweat ran down my back. Decidedly William II. had changed; decidedly, too, he had not told me the truth; for the first time I had detected him in a deliberate lie.

What if, whilst speaking continually about the necessity of maintaining peace in Europe, he had all the time been preparing for war, and worked matters so that it might be brought about at the very moment when he was ready for it, whilst others were not?

## The Berlin Court under William II

The thought is too horrible for me to allow myself to brood over it, unless events compel such a conclusion.

JULY 26.

We have been steaming at full speed during the night; the Bergen fiords have disappeared; we shall sight the coast of Denmark in a few hours. We stopped for a half-hour before we left southern Norway behind for the boat to go ashore to get the telegrams. They brought news of the Servian mobilisation and of Russia's determination to support Servia. The Emperor read this out to me.

"You can now see for yourself how kindly disposed our good cousin Nicholas is toward us," he remarked.

I could find no reply suitable to the occasion. I was beginning to read like an open book the mind of William II., and what I saw written there simply terrified me.

"The good people of Berlin, it seems, have also construed this behaviour of the Tsar as a threat directed against us, because they have most strongly expressed their opinion concerning it."

He then read us portions from other telegrams which he still held in his hand. These said that loud manifestations had taken place in the streets of Berlin, and that they had been distinctly inimical to Russia and friendly toward Austria. Demonstrations of strong hostility had been made before

## Back to Berlin

Embassy, and this notwithstanding the efforts of the police to stop them. The Russian *chargé d'affaires*, who administered the Embassy in the absence of the Ambassador, M. Swerbeiev, who was on his way back to Berlin after being absent on leave, had strongly protested against the conduct of the mob, and complained about it to the State Secretary, von Jagow. But the latter, whilst expressing his regret at the occurrence, had replied that it was very difficult to control a crowd when once it became excited. At this point I could not help remarking to the Emperor that such an answer might only be construed as an approval of what had taken place.

William II. shook his head, but said nothing. It was ominous that he thus kept silence, and it surprised me the more because generally, whenever any grave incident arose, he was but too eager to talk about it with the few intimate friends like myself who were near him at the moment, and whom he knew he could trust.

JULY 27.

I shall never forget that journey. William II. alone appeared to be and remained in the best of tempers. He playfully remarked several times that it was curious that both the President of the French Republic and himself should be cruising in northern waters at the same juncture.

Had we were ten days older we might per-

## The Berlin Court under William II

haps have taken little busybody, meddling Poincaré prisoner, together with his man-of-war."

"What does your Majesty mean?" I said. "We are not at war with France, and there exists no reason why we should be."

"There exists no reason why we should be at war with anybody," replied the Emperor, "and yet who knows whether a few days will not see us at war with everybody? Do you think that France will remain quiet in the case of Russia attacking us?"

"But Russia has no intention of attacking us," I persisted.

"Oh! my friend, what are intentions in this world of ours? Intentions are but the natural development of circumstances such as they present themselves to us. Who would, for instance, have dreamt of my cousin Nicholas telegraphing to that little Servian ruler that he would never remain indifferent to his fate and to that of his country? It was far more in jeopardy during the recent war with Turkey, and later on with Bulgaria, and yet no one in Russia ever dreamt of interfering. Come now; you appear to think that I am determined to engage Germany in a struggle? You most certainly are dreaming. The only determination I have taken is to get home as soon as possible to-day."

When we reached the station of Wildpark, near Potsdam, we found awaiting us on the platform the



## Austria Mobilises

Empress, together with the Crown Prince and Princess, the other members of the Royal Family, the Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, and all the Ministers. There was a look of earnest solemnity in this reception, which was entirely different from what I had ever seen on like occasions. William II. looked grave, but certainly not anxious, and he appeared to me to have grown even more enigmatical than he had been during the last days of our momentous northern cruise. I did not get out of the train, but proceeded to Berlin, where I hoped to find some news.

During the short time of our absence the capital had become entirely transformed. The streets were filled with people eagerly scanning the newspapers, and expressing loudly their hatred for Russia. France was not even mentioned. All the faculties of the Berlin mob seemed to be directed against the Tsar and his people. My servant told me that the Russians whom the present crisis had found at hotels or passing through Berlin were made the objects of the most hostile demonstrations. The crowds were loudly expressing their indignation at what they called an intended attack of Russia against Germany.

The elation of the public was something wonderful to behold. The news of Austria's mobilisation had been received a few hours before our arrival, and had been hailed by demonstrations of exalted enthusiasm. A general opinion seemed to prevail that we had been made the object of a hostile attack on the part

## The Berlin Court under William II

of Russia, and this in spite of all the efforts of our Government and of our Emperor personally.

JULY 28.

I am writing this under the impression produced upon my mind by words which I have just heard the Emperor utter. Sometimes it seems to me that I am the victim of some horribly appalling nightmare, from which I must awake because its abomination cannot be true. Here is a Sovereign whom I have served and loved; whom I, together with many others, believed to be a just, conscientious man, desirous of the welfare of his country, averse to every adventure that could endanger its prosperity, suddenly transformed into a cunning, hypocritical, sly being, who had for years in the secret of his thoughts meditated upon this awful infamy which I fear is about to be perpetrated! Can this be possible?

I feel I cannot stand this anxiety and suspense any longer. I shall go to the Castle; I shall ask to see the Emperor.

LATER.

I have seen the Emperor. I only wish I had had the courage to kill myself before having listened to the Sovereign of whom I had made an ideal.

William II. received me in his study. He was sitting at his writing-table, upon which various plans were displayed, and which, evidently, he had been

## "I am Going to War!"

studying with attention. His features were drawn and haggard, but his eye was resolute and as keen as ever. He began talking to me about the events of the day, and expressed himself at first with great calm and coolness on the war which he considered inevitable. I ventured to ask him what could have happened to imbue him with such a conviction, and what had been the real reasons which had determined him to draw the sword in order to support the inadmissible demands of Austria. The Emperor lifted his shoulders in a depressing manner, saying as he did so :

"Is it possible, my dear Axel, that you, too, believe that it is on account of Austria that I am going to war?"

I looked at him with intense surprise, so unexpected had been that question.

"You are astonished at what I say," he resumed. "But will you let me speak to you with sincerity and with the frankness which behoves old friends such as we have been? You have known me until this day as an essentially pacific Sovereign; sometimes, even, you have thought me too lenient and yielding in questions where I ought to have protested against unjust accusations levelled against German politics and Germany in general. Well, if I have been so it is not because I wanted peace at any price, or because I did not understand that the expansion of Germany was far from having reached the point it could aspire to attain. I kept quiet, simply because we were not ready, and

## The Berlin Court under William II

that when one engages in a war, even with ninety-nine chances of victory and only one of defeat, it is still a crime to do so if one is unprepared. Germany, envied and detested as she is, cannot afford to be vanquished in anything that she undertakes, far less in a war.

“I had, therefore, to weigh all the chances of a possible defeat, and so long as I saw even a single one I deferred the execution of the plan which I have nursed ever since my boyish days, when you and I were talking about a German Empire even greater than the one which existed already. It has taken me twenty-five years to establish on a solid basis the attempt that I am going to make at present, but never for a single day have I forgotten the mission which lies before me, and which I must perform, or perish in the attempt.

“Look at the geographical position of Germany, surrounded as she is by numerous foes, all eager to feast on her, all persuaded that the day is drawing near when they will be able to sweep her from the face of the earth. Do you think that I am not aware of the hatred with which we are regarded everywhere, of the jealousy that dogs our footsteps? I have borne with the insults of both the Panslavist and the Franco-phil parties; I have submitted to detractions of my army; I have kept still whilst formidable alliances have been formed against German prestige and German power; I have submitted to the foolish boastings of

## The Emperor's Megalomania

an idiotic Press, which in every country in the world has cried out that the very existence of Germany constituted a public danger against which the whole of humanity ought to rise up in anger and self-defence. And I have remained quiet.

“Do you think this has been easy? If so, you are vastly mistaken, my friend. Every one of these daily insults and provocations has seared my soul like a red-hot iron. I have felt it eating into my rest, and driving sleep away from my eyes. But I have made no sign; I remained impassive, because I knew that the hour of reckoning was at hand, when the Sovereigns who had believed that they were conferring an honour on me when they condescended to attend my daughter's wedding would crawl in the dust at my feet before the might of my sword, and would have to recognise that Germany was the greatest, the most powerful nation in the whole world, her Emperor the one potentate whom no one dared to thwart in any way.”

He stopped as if frightened at his own violence. I was staggered. The discovery that the friend of my youth, the Sovereign for whom I would have died, was nothing else than a scheming, cruel, unscrupulous brigand overwhelmed me.

“Yes,” he said; “for the next few days half the world will call me mad for daring to enter into a struggle with almost the whole of Europe. They will vote me a silly, blinded creature, led away by his pride and vanity. But this will not last long. Very soon these

## The Berlin Court under William II

same people shall be stunned by the spectacle they will witness."

The Emperor got up and walked towards the window, whence one could see the vast square in front of the palace, with the statue of William I. erected upon it. He pointed with his finger at the bronze figure representing his grandfather and merely said :

"The great Emperor whose place I fill to-day had his army. I have got my cannon."

The words fell on the silence of the room like the sound of the earth shovelled over a coffin—solemn and awful.

Their awesome echo died away slowly, leaving me with a sensation which must have been akin to the one felt by fanatical Hindoos when they are crushed under the wheels of the ear of Juggernaut.

"Yes, I have my cannon, and do you know what these words mean, my friend? No, you do not, so I am going to tell you. They mean that at last we have a weapon the like of which has never been seen before, and which will wipe out not only the hordes of our enemies, but also every means of defence of which they can boast."

He stopped, and I said nothing. There was nothing to say to this bold avowal of the desire to destroy the world.

The Emperor made a sign with his head to dismiss me. I bowed profoundly and silently retired.

## A Pre-arranged War

AUGUST 3.

I have not written anything in this diary during the last four days. Indeed, courage has failed me to go on recording the march of events in the week that has gone, events for which I feel ashamed as a German and as a man.

I did not go near the palace again. What use my trying to dissuade him? The die is cast; we have thrown down the gauntlet in the face of the world; we are engaged in a struggle in which we find arrayed against us the strongest Powers in Europe, and the only ally we have got is weak, tottering Austria, for whom war means defeat, even before it has commenced.

I have seen my friend Moltke again. He says very little, but has owned to me that the Emperor had initiated him long ago into his plans, and only requested him to acquaint him when Germany would be ready, and could start with the certitude that victory would not escape it. I have also spoken with von Jagow, the Foreign Secretary, who, whilst not so reticent as Moltke, yet could not quite understand why the Emperor had chosen that particular moment in order to attack both Russia and France. That he had led things to that point, von Jagow admitted, and also that there was absolutely no reason to go to war over a matter which might have been settled amicably had Germany intimated to Austria its desire not to see European peace disturbed. For the public the *mot*

## The Berlin Court under William II

*d'ordre* is to say that Russia has attacked us, that the Tsar has played us false.

An officer who is going to have a high command in the coming campaign confided to me that for months the army had been unofficially mobilised, and that a few days was all we required now in order to be able to pour more than a million men on to the plains of France, as well as across the Russian frontier. But even he, who probably will play an important part in the events which are to follow, even he could not account for the reasons that had brought about the terrible conflict which is bound to change and to transform the map of Europe. The Emperor has remained a sphinx, even to those whom he had thought fit to call into his confidence, as well as to myself.

After a mental struggle, the agonies of which I cannot pen, I decided once more to see the Emperor. He heard me, and then burst forth :

“ My friend, listen to me. I am going to talk with you seriously and openly for the last time, because you have been my friend, the companion of my youth, and because I feel convinced that in your inmost heart you yet have a very warm and sincere affection for me. Our points of view are quite different, and I know that my present course of action inspires you with horror and perhaps even with disgust. I know, too, that you will think worse of me as time goes on. But war is not sport, nor can it be looked upon with merciful eyes. Mercy, when out of place, comes often



## "The Most Titanic Struggle"

quite close to cruelty. At the time in which we live it is essential, in the very interests of that civilisation which you are so fond of invoking, not to prolong the agony every war—even if it is conducted on humane lines—must bring along with it. We stand to-day on the threshold of the most titanic struggle history has ever witnessed; it is our duty to end it as quickly as possible. Under these circumstances, it is indispensable to strike terror into the soul of the enemy, to convince him at the very outset that resistance is worse than useless, and that no pity shall be shown to him, because pity would mean the prolongation of the conflict necessity obliges us to fight—and fight to a finish.

"I tell you this," he pursued, "because most likely you will feel indignant at many things which, in the course of time, you will see me do. I wish, therefore, to prepare you for them, to tell you that you must not come and talk to me about mercy, or ask me to spare this or that town, these or those people. I shall spare no one, because I mean to win, because the destinies of Prussia require from me the sacrifice even of my reputation in history, if by doing so I can ensure its triumph. You think me a monster of hypocrisy; perhaps I am one—perhaps not. But I know one thing, that later on, when we are all dead and gone, history, who will judge me, will speak about me as of another conqueror, whose reign put his country on such a pinnacle of glory and power that no other in the world will be worthy to be even mentioned beside it."

## The Berlin Court under William II

"By God, how you have contrived to disguise your real self!" I exclaimed.

"Do you think so?" smiled William II. "You could not have pleased me more than by saying so."

The Emperor went towards the window and opened it, beckoning to me with his hand to come to him as he did so.

I approached him, and beheld an enormous crowd massed before the Castle screaming at the top of its voice, and calling forth, "Der Kaiser! Der Kaiser!" The spectacle was grand, but it did not move me; it filled me only with terror at the sight of a mob applauding its Cæsar.

AUGUST 8.

We are now at war with half the world, England having sided with our enemies the other day. This last-mentioned event, which ought to have created intense consternation, only gave rise to fresh bursts of enthusiasm on the part of the masses, that seem to have been entirely hypnotised and won over to the opinion of the Emperor.

Germany is no longer Germany; my countrymen are quite transformed by the lies and falsehoods upon which they have been fed. They either really believe, or else they pretend to believe, that they have been attacked, and that their duty demands them to rise up against their foes.

Talking about England, she is the country about whom one speaks in Berlin with the greatest bitterness,

## Germany Convinced of Treachery

again because the Emperor has decreed that it must be so. Last night I was discussing the situation with a man who perhaps knows William II. as well as any. On my inquiring from him why the anger of our Sovereign was especially directed against Great Britain, which he had always professed to like, and against the English royal family, whose friendship he had always sought, he replied to me that in the professions of amity, of which the Emperor had been so generous, there had been as much hypoerisy as in everything else that he had ever done.

"William II.," he told me, "had a sincere affection for Queen Victoria, with whose character he sympathised in a manner that was quite extraordinary considering the fact that he was a very young man, whilst she was a very old woman. As long as the Queen lived he would most certainly never have attempted anything against England. But he hated the late King. The Emperor ascribed entirely to the influence of Edward VII. the decided attitude taken by the Tsar in regard to France and the conclusion of the Triple Understanding. He saw, or thought he saw, himself ignored and isolated, and knew very well that the English public watched with a certain anxiety the development of the German navy. At the present moment the whole of Germany is convinced that England has behaved treacherously in regard to her."

"All you tell me may be true," I replied; "but suppose the war should be an unsuccessful one?"

## The Berlin Court under William II

"It will not be unsuccessful," answered my friend. "The Emperor's precautions have been too well taken; but whether it will not lead finally to a dismemberment of the German Empire is another question."

"What do you mean?" I inquired.

"Simply this, that a man cannot become too great with impunity. Victories like those our Sovereign is dreaming about destroy just as much those who win as those who lose them. Empires that have enlarged themselves too quickly have always foundered. Bismarck knew this rule of historical evolution, and he was wise enough not to stretch the rope too far. I doubt whether our Emperor will show himself as wise."

I have been thinking deeply about these words of my friend. He knows the Emperor very well; has, indeed, studied his character better than I have done, or, for the matter of that, could have done, because my affection for the person of my Sovereign has sadly blinded me, as I perceive now, in regard to his defects. I had most sincerely believed him to be honest, and incapable of any mean or dastardly act. Reality has cruelly disabused me.

This alone would have been sufficient to break my heart, even if other things had not occurred to do it. I belong to those men that have nursed high ideals. These ideals I believed the Emperor shared in common with me; at least, he had told me he did so, and this not once, but during the many years stretching from the time when we were boys together to the day.

## Violations of Neutrality

not so long ago, on the occasion of his daughter's wedding, when he had said to me, in a semi-joking, semi-serious tone :

“ Well, my dear Axel, no one, I hope, will *now* say that my dispositions are not pacific, and that I don't do my best to heal old wounds. What would Prince Bismarck have said had he seen a Princess of Prussia becoming the bride of the heir to the kingdom of Hanover ? ”

The worst is that, from whatever side I look upon the question, I find it wanting in any consoling element. We had signed a treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium ; we have violated it for no other reason than that of our own convenience. The invasion of Luxemburg, too, has been another iniquity before which even our Iron Chancellor had recoiled.

The recklessness with which we are continuing to act everywhere constitutes one of the greatest iniquities history will record in the ages to come. And the worst of all this mass of evil is that we try to cover it under the mask of righteousness, and that we forget our own sins in the contemplation of those which we fancy we detect in others. Virtue has never been glorified to the extent that hypocrisy is praised in this kingdom of Prussia.

SEPTEMBER, 1914.

*Headquarters of the German Army*

I have lacked the courage to go on with my diary.

## The Berlin Court under William II

Indeed, I feel ashamed of taking up my pen again after the experiences of the last weeks.

I have seen of what the Emperor is capable. I have looked upon Belgian villages burned to the ground; I have seen homeless women and children wandering among the ruins of what were once prosperous homes; I have looked upon the corpses of murdered boys and old men and defenceless girls; I have observed so much misery, so much suffering, so much evil, such utter disregard of the laws of God and man, that I can only wonder how I have not gone mad over the heartrending spectacle. Wherever the German armies have passed desolation has followed, and charred ruins remain to testify that they have been there. I ask myself whether this is war?

Despair has taken hold of me. Is it worth while to go on living in a world that can smile on such atrocities, condone such infamy? I feel it will be impossible for me to go on serving a monarch capable of the bloody deeds of which William II. is being guilty. I am determined, though, to attempt one last effort to speak with the Emperor. He cannot be altogether bad; he must have some human instincts left in him to which it will be possible to appeal.

MIDNIGHT.

The die is cast. I have played my last card, and I have lost. I have seen the Emperor. I have tried to appeal to his heart, to his feelings of justice and of

## A Tragic Letter

humanity. All my efforts have been useless. The Emperor remained inflexible. To my adjurations he replied, "War is not child's play," and that it was time people realised it. The only means to ensure a peace for Germany, he went on, consisted in showing oneself pitiless, and in hesitating before nothing. That the whole kingdom of Belgium had been destroyed was very regrettable, but an example had to be made, and the world had to learn that Germany was not to be trifled with.

"I have duties to perform towards my own people," he added, "and I must think of the sacrifices Germany has made; she deserves a reward. Let her find it in the knowledge that not one Power in the world is capable of resisting her, and that whoever attempts to do so is instantly destroyed."

"It is not of Germany your Majesty is thinking!" I could not prevent myself from exclaiming. "It is of your own ambition and vanity."

William II. stared at me.

"I can afford to forgive you, friend Axel," he said.

The diary here closes abruptly, from a cause all too tragically apparent from the following letter found in the Count's study and addressed to the Emperor:—

"When this letter shall reach your Majesty I shall have gone where disillusion is unknown. I do not know whether your Majesty will give a thought of regret to one who has been brought up at your side,

## The Berlin Court under William II

and who has to a certain extent shared all your ambitions and followed your life with passionate affection and devotion. Probably not, because my presence at your side must have been for you a silent, involuntary rebuke, as it reminded you constantly of the man that you have been and that you must know I think you are no longer.

“ However, dead people have the right to be heard, and in the name of humanity, of religion, and of honour, cry out to you to stop before you go any farther on the bloody road you have started upon so ruthlessly and so unnecessarily.

“ For a greater number of years than I care to mention, your Majesty has deceived not only those who knew you superficially, but also your best friends, the people who, like myself, believed that they thoroughly understood all the intricacies of your character. You have given the death-blow to all those faithful hearts. It is all very well to say that you have worked for the glory and for the triumph of Germany, but you know that when taxed by me to-day for having thought only of your own ambition you could not deny it. It is that ambition which will cause your ruin ; that love of your own person, of your own aggrandisement, that, unless you stop before it is too late, will bring about your downfall.

“ You are standing now between two ways. Do not listen to the powers of darkness : instead of fighting defenceless nations, fight the demon who has taken



## “Vengeance Will Overtake You”

hold of you, and oblige him to retreat into the infernal regions which he inhabits. Stop the ruin that is being daily enacted around you, else vengeance will surely overtake you, and your race, and your dynasty.

“I have nothing more to add. If my death but opens your eyes, then, indeed, I shall feel that I have not died in vain.”

60

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