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the shadows, — the peace and silence and the good dark?"

"If I knew how long they were going to last!"

"I love the good dark. Dear God, how I wished for it, toward the end, back home! When the physical passions have died and the mind itself grows sleepy, then the shadows are best. I always was sort of an old bat, you know, a prober of the darkness."

"But I don't know! I can't make myself remember. You were somebody famous, I think, and when I watch you and hear you talk that way I see a worn place in the carpet in the living-room, and old Colonel Bownes talking about Shiloh and Kenesaw Mountain, but I can't, I can't . . ."

He burst out laughing, — it was almost a cackle, — and suddenly was grave again. "For all those hard years I longed and suffered and fought for a little fame. It seemed to me that I must wrest it from them! I feared that the bitterness in my heart would poison me, — I think it did. Then when recognition began to come, perhaps it was too late. Anyway, I didn't want it any more. I knew what I needed, — range after range of lonely mountains, and purple valleys full of sleep. Then, I said to myself, the good dark. I have earned my euthanasia, — I will go to meet it. And now I am happy, for beyond all hope I have found euthanasia, the easy death, the death that is like a dream."

I could not speak. I sat staring at him.

"But I am glad to have a companion in the shadows. I find that every thread has not been cut. There are moments when I know the absurdity of loneliness."

"If this solitude, this profound con-

templation are everything, then are human contacts vain to you, — are people nothing, and all the warmth . . ."

"Remember that I am speaking here in extreme old age. There are times when the good dark is best, there are men who must seek it." He sat up straight, and the blue veins stood out upon his pallid hands, tense upon the arms of the chair. "All that is worth while in life is the love you have had for a few people near you. But that survives the shadows, — that is the one radiant thing."

He sank back. "If I talk on, — these old words of mine, — you will soon know who I am. No one outside the caves must get news of that, but why should I not tell you, who are deep within?"

"For pity, now, speak to me plainly! Tell me what has happened to me, — where I am, — why the Indians have not helped me leave. I don't care about the gold dishes, — it would take more than treasure to bring me back in here. I'll go mad among these awful shadows. I hate your good dark, — truly, I cannot stand it. It is a frightful situation . . ."

"Smoke. Sit down again." The old man motioned serenely. "You can't expect to tumble into Pluto's palace and get right out. Remember Persephone! I will tell you what you re up against, — frankness was my failing. You are destined for sacrifice, but not till Spring comes again. That's the only time we hold these ceremonies."

"Sacrifice in that pool?"

"The *cenote*, the sacred well. But we'll find some escape, perhaps. Gradually we'll contrive some plan. The Indians consider it a great honor to be chosen as a

victim. You saw the light on that young girl's face."

"I can hardly be expected to have the same point of view."

"Wait, and understand. What you have come upon, by virtue of your extraordinary accident, is a faint survival of the life of other ages. I think you were rather hypnotized by the ceremonial drums, but if you had studied our little gathering calmly you'd have seen that all the dancers and celebrants were just common Indians from the hills around and the village beyond the caves. They are the only ones who know the way to this second gallery of chambers that the river has worn out. While those above us are delivered to the tourist, worshipers who remember their old gods hold their rites in here.

"The treasure that you see was hidden in the *monte*, in the first years of the Conquest. Centuries ago they brought it all to our caves. There are golden chests, full of jewelry, of turquoise and jade, tiny golden replicas of the gods. Oh, it's a great place!" He smiled. "It wouldn't do for the Indians to come here in numbers, — the secret would get out. We hold but a single festival each year, — the one you witnessed, the rite of Spring."

"Why did they let me see it, then?"

"They believe you were miraculously sent by the sacred river, — holy and predestined. The oracle has declared that 'one of pale skin' must seek the augury next year, and you arrived so pat!"

I had to calm myself and find out all I could. I asked him what augury?

"In the depths of the well is the answer to all mysteries. The occult powers which dwell there know when the Indian's Good Year is to be, and will warn him when it draws near. Every Spring one of my flock is chosen by divine indication to go down and see if the great hour is yet at hand. The day that a victim comes back from those waters will usher in the reign of the Indian in the land once more and all shall be as it was under his empire. They hope, always, that the sacrifice will rise to the surface and reveal the marvels seen, but in the years since I have been officiating none has returned. To be quite frank, I believe that the well is bottomless, — that it leads to the underground river."

"And flows out into the sun again! Dear God, the blessed sun!"

"The air that blows to us down the channel is warm and dry, you see."

"Are you without compassion, whoever you were, since you've turned barbarian? Do you feel no pity for the poor creatures thrown into that black water?"

"Why pity? It is a painless, an exalted, a privileged death. Their lives are none too happy, and if they can die in a magnificent illusion, — what better fate to wish them?"

"I decline the privilege. Already I've thought of a way to get out, whether you help me or not."

"Try this superb red banana. I want for nothing in here, you see. Now the situation is this:" — He might have been opening a business conference, — "There are four old women who cook and wait upon me in pairs, — María and Catalina, Carlota and Lola. They come before sunrise and leave at dusk. They bring fruits and vegetables, attend to my laundry, provide everything I really need. They come and go by the one way out of these caverns, and that is guarded perpetually by a sentinel with a long and silencing knife. The centuries have gone by, and the secret has not been betrayed."

"You forget that they may send a rescuing party after me."

"They will not find these caves. If you got out, you yourself would never know how to come back."

I pondered with hidden face. There was a long interval.

"I know what you have been thinking of. You fancy that you can escape by way of the stream, as you came."

"God, no! I wouldn't go back into that horror."

"Well, it would be more sensible, now, if we were to take our rest, and go on with our conference another time. After all, there are three hundred and sixty-four days in which to discuss your plight . . ."

I don't know how long I slept. What's a day, where there are no clocks nor calendars? Catalina had rigged up a blissful couch in the dining-cave, with soft pelts and serapes, and I was still a-shiver from my cold swim. When I woke the patient brown women were crouching near me, making coffee over the tiny stove. They had brought me a pair of Indian sandals to replace my soaked shoes.

The old man wasn't around when I

went out into his study. I poked about, hoping that without being either dishonorable or rude I might find something that would piece together those fragments of remembrance, so that at last I should be able to speak his name, — his famous name, I was sure, — and so end this tumult of questions in my mind. He had many books which told me nothing: paper-covered books in foreign languages which the Indians had probably brought in to him from city shops.

Longingly, I eyed that portfolio. No, it was not the sort of thing one did. Still, in desperate situations . . . I was saved from temptation by the sound of his slow footsteps shuffling over the stones of the entrance passage.

"Give me a hand down, will you? I've been bathing a bit in the sacred well. But you musn't do it. You are profane. And good day."

"Good morning, if it is morning."

"When will you comprehend that here you are free of clocks? I only keep track of the years themselves by that Spring rite of ours. Somebody's been in my books, — I don't mind at all. Let's have coffee." He sat down with a satisfied air. "I never miss my exercise." The keen eyes gleamed

over at me with amusement. "My excellent houris know only Spanish and their Indian tongue. We may talk."

"O host, O avatar," I said, "you eluded all my questions last night. But I'm going to keep them up till I find out how you got in here yourself. Be sure of that."

"Gladly. A little sugar? Why, you see, I rather look like an old demigod, — like that lost leader whom they're always expecting to return and lead them back into their ancient empire. I, the Great Futilitarian, minister to such an absurd hope!" I started. Who was it that used to be called the Great Futilitarian, — what famous and pugnacious man, — where had I heard or read the phrase? "But these poor people," he went on calmly, "are not sufficiently educated to do without hope." He gravely trimmed the jeweled lamp.

"Well, this country was full of the reddest kind of war when I reached it. I knew that beforehand, of course. It was partly what I came for. But I had no money and no clothes except my old black suit, so nobody bothered to shoot me. I wandered about pretty much as I pleased, and enjoyed the danger immensely. Finally in the little village off there I heard about these caves, — the ones the tourists visit now. 'That must really be,' I thought, 'the heart of the hills, where a man could rest forever.'"

He paused prosaically to explain to Catalina that bacon must be crisp. "But I couldn't find them. No one but the Indians could, then, so I gave them up and stayed on in the village to see if I could learn to speak the old tongue, — I was a bright pupil, too! One day I got me a little canoe and started to paddle down the Chuchilango. I was always interested in water-life, and the callas and Agrippina lilies were beautiful along the banks. The surroundings were so sweetly dreamy that, I am obliged to confess, I went to sleep. The current must have done the rest, for I woke up in absolute darkness, with the bow of my craft against the wire that fortunately halted you. I've no idea of where the river enters the mountain to this day.

"From that moment the question of my destiny, — what was left of it, — was settled, because it has been foretold that the immortal priest and leader will return to his people on the stream of darkness,



in a little bark.' That's well known. I dare say you've read it. Presently, of course, they will discover that I am not immortal and that another must herald their new day, but meantime I really enjoy the life, and I am very proud of my command of the language. You heard how sonorously I used it!"

Again he surrendered himself to that refreshing chuckle.

"Somehow, it all pleases me," he said. "You know, I have loved the macabre. These caverns are such places as my mind had visited a thousand times."

"The macabre?" How long would my wits hesitate exasperatingly upon the brink of recognition? The living-room . . . talk and reading . . . winter and lamplight . . . "Tell me who you are!"

"I am the interpreter of darkness. He is at peace at last, satisfied beyond his utmost hopes, here in his 'Land beyond the Blow'. I nurse no wish to leave. The world that I hurried from in 1913 had nothing to offer surpassing this, — utter solitude, rich with legend, unceasing contemplation. In these caverns I have written astounding tales, pages of epigram, a hundred glowing poems, and thrown them all into the sacred well. Don't you know yet who I am?"

"Forgive me, — I think of you and hate."

"Yes, hate is creative energy, as I wrote. But now at the dusk of life one wants peace, not hate, so I stay."

"You came here a refugee from the United States. . . ."

"Ah, pray say, a refugee from life as I'd grown weary of it. I told myself, one day: 'Off in the South are purple valleys, full of sleep,' and then I went, in my old black suit, with my faithful cane, and in time the good dark received its son. I came with a hunger and thirst for the mountains, for rest, for this good dark. My eyes were never for noon. Child, I have found them all."

"And you send back never a sign?"

"All the way, as I set out, they pestered me with questions, — newspapers, the insatiable hosts of the curious. And I told some one thing and some another. Really, I can't remember just what. 'So many things may happen!' I said. None of them, you see, could have understood what drove me, had I told."

I bent toward him. The light floated in the jeweled bowl between us. "Your supreme purpose, to discover the stronghold of solitude, and peace?"

"For a man like me who has lived so long, what can be as blessed? I do not lose, remember, the love which I have cherished for a few. It grows here in the loneliness, and has become divine. When you have passed eighty you understand the heart. Better. I was right, — hate is creative, but it burns out, and love burns on." The keen blue eyes were searching the shadows. "It was all very long ago. Now I do not count even the years."

"After all," he said, as if to himself, holding a yellow mango up for admiration, "after all, I told them I'd no notion how long I should remain."

"You need not return. Only help me."

"After Shiloh and Chickamauga, after those clustered bitter years, I've earned my euthanasia. Have I not suffered almost as much as Christ? Is it not time to rest now?"

"Yet for one minute come back to realities and help me find a way out of these caves!"

He looked up and smiled. "You wish to go, truly? But you will tell them where I am, and the rest would be horror. So you must not go."

"I will promise anything you say. I keep my word."

"Never to tell of this until you know that I am dead? *Know* it, remember!"

"Never, — in the name of your cave gods and of my Own."

"Anyway, you don't know who I am."

"I don't? But listen: In front of our bookcase in the living room there was a worn place in the carpet, and I used to sit right there when I was a child, and read the books on the bottom shelf. They were in a long set, and they lasted me for years. I liked them because the stories were so awful, and everyone kept saying I ought not to read them. There was a picture of you in the first book, but you looked very different then, and it didn't help me much."

"Old Captain Bownes used to talk about you with my father, and I'd hear little bits while I sat there and read. He told of fighting at Shiloh and Chickamauga. He said you had a temper, all right, when you were a boy! *Ashes of the Beacon . . . Can Such Things Be? . . .*

The Land beyond the Blow . . . In the Midst of Life . . . I remember now so well! You are Ambrose Bierce."

He sat still, as if he had not heard me, motionless as the stone gods. After a long time he spoke. "Not here in my caverns. Not in the good dark." He rose stiffly and felt for his ebony cane. "Give me a hand up the passage," he said. "I've thought of something."

He made his way into the hall of the idols. There they sat in their unceasing conclave, staring at the onyx surface of the sacred well. "It is better for me, too, if you can go. . . . You burst in here and trouble my good dark . . . remind me. . . ." Suddenly he stopped.

"Somewhere by the altar here," he murmured, "is one of those long obsidian knives that they used to take out hearts with. But that was long ago. The knife fitted into a gold sheath,—ah, here we are! It has a jagged edge. I was thinking that with patience it could sever strands of the wire that bars your way downstream."

"Oh, to swim again in that cold black water, not knowing where?"

"There is this drum," he said, still with

that air of deep abstraction, "this fine long hollow log, a buoyant bark for you. I will strip off the serpent skins. The guard does not watch this chamber. They trust in the wire, but I think that you can saw the strands. Now I am going back to my study. I am very tired."

But he fumbled about until he found another of the black glass knives and cut the snakeskin cover. "Perhaps it will float," he said cheerfully, pushing it beneath the altar. "In any case, don't come back here and speak to me of things which I have forgotten!"

Breathless, I was crouching at the edge of the swift water, fingering the wire.

"Bon voyage!" he said, low. I turned and saw that he was still standing near his private passageway. All the humor had rekindled in the piercing blue eyes. He smiled, lifting his ebony staff. "I would only convince you, child, that whatever happens to you is not very important, after all. When we no longer tremble, then comes peace."

I have always hoped that I answered gratefully his serene farewell: "I light no beacon for you here. Sail on out of my shadows."



Wilhelm Hohenzollern

A Biography by Emil Ludwig

TRANSLATION BY ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE

FIFTH INSTALMENT—"SYCOPHANTS AND SCANDALS"

TIRPITZ came on the scene.

The Emperor always had a good eye for finding men qualified to carry out his wishes, and in this instance he certainly fished out the most gifted officer in his Navy. Even in the Army, Tirpitz scarcely had his match in energy, sagacity, and courage. Unlike all those hitherto surrounding the Emperor, he disdained to flatter him, knew what he wanted, and was a prey to no corroding vice, — a specialist who combined a genuine passion for his calling with the profoundest knowledge of it. Tirpitz had only one failing, — he told lies. At Court he was called "the Story-Teller".

He had to lie. The German battle-fleet had to be built if the diplomats were ever to come to an understanding with England. To this end he invented two slogans, "Emergency Fleet" and "Danger Period". Such a fleet would keep England from creating the "emergency"; and Germany had only a few years to get through the "danger period", during which her building would be objectionable to England and therefore dangerous to herself. These slogans were on everyone's lips, and only the skeptics said that England would surely keep pace with Germany and the "period" be everlasting. Tirpitz himself believed not a word of it all. He was a sailor, and what he wanted was a fleet strong enough to challenge England in,



THE LAST OF THE KAISERS
From a Drawing by Johan Bull

say, twenty years' time.

To any one acquainted with the character, history, and position of England, Tirpitz's idea could only appear absurd, since the strongest naval power could not possibly concede an equal fleet to the strongest military power, without endangering her own existence. Without a fleet, Germany could be with England, — with a fleet, she had to be against her. Hence England offered an alliance at a

time when, as Tirpitz writes, Germany could not be sure "whether the political step was risked for the sake of sea-power pure and simple, or was to be regarded, in its entirety, as a definite demonstration of friendship." Tirpitz won over the Emperor for the battle-fleet in a couple of conversations, was appointed Secretary of State of the Imperial Navy in the summer of '97, obtained his first demands from Hohenlohe in September, and when Bülow assumed office in November, confronted him with a *fait accompli*. Bülow would have had to be an expert to discern the future of fleet-building in the aspect it then presented.

For from the very first it was necessary for Tirpitz to lie. Only seven ships of the line were asked for, but in this skeleton proposal there lay, well-nigh imperceptibly, provision for thirty-eight, and in the succeeding estimates the new leviathans figured as smaller types. These deceptions