

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

were known at the time to a few initiates, but not to the representatives of the people. Nevertheless, Tirpitz had great difficulty in restraining the Emperor from premature bragging. When in the Autumn of '99 the second Navy Bill struck the first note of *Weltpolitik*, he tried in vain to prevent an Imperial speech at the launching of a ship. The Emperor was incapable of quiet, long-drawn-out achievement. He must always create a sensation, and that at once; and so, instead of unobtrusively building up sea-power like the Japanese, he delivered a resounding oration with the refrain: "Stern necessity demands a mighty German fleet!"

It was in vain that the Emperor was advised to "guard our Fleet as a precious indispensable secret, and let the English hear and see as little as possible of it." Beside these words of Bernstorff's he merely wrote: "Out of the question!" Doing the exact reverse of what had been suggested, he once more revealed his inner motive. "The Fleet alone gives me the necessary prestige in England," he said in 1904, and decided to show himself to Edward in his new glory without delay. When at last, for the first time in many years, the latter came to Germany, the Emperor on his yacht at Kiel was in a tremendous state of excitement. "He personally superintended the smallest details in the decoration of the 'Hohenzollern'." An immense awning was stretched over the promenade-deck, there were marvellous arrangements of flowers, little fountains and waterfalls tinkled and splashed refreshingly in every direction. A dinner for one hundred and eight persons, and a tea-party for two hundred and twenty, were given in honor of the King. The Emperor took all these matters so seriously that he was fully dressed three-quarters of an hour before the festivities were to begin, walking restlessly up and down the deck, and scarcely able to endure the waiting."

But at last he could parade the entire German fleet before King Edward. That was his moment. Now he could impress the detested uncle who had said, five years before, "Let him play with his Fleet." But unfortunately he impressed him too much. For the King soon forgot flowers and tea-party, even the waterfalls, but not the strength and up-to-date-

ness of the ships he had seen. Perturbed and reflective, he returned to his island. Two months later, the press and the House of Commons began the campaign against German fleet-building, — the Navy Scare, — and this time the statesmen gave the signal. Lord Fisher suggested doing with this German Fleet as of yore with the Danish. The King promised Delcassé English ships against Germany. At the British Admiralty, Lord Lee envisaged a surprise attack and for the first time in fifty years sent a squadron to the Baltic. There was open talk of landing one hundred thousand English in Schleswig. The ball had been set rolling, — henceforth there would be no stopping it.

NERVES NOT MADNESS

The Emperor's nervous temperament had long been a theme for private discussion, and after his abdication was publicly analyzed by psychiatrists. Now that we have reached the middle of his life, and of our delineation, we propose to enlarge upon this subject. In the year 1919, patriotic Germans sought to prove that the Emperor was mentally deranged, in the hope of convincing the enemy that he was innocent of responsibility for the War. That effort was superfluous, for with this eminently unheroic monarch there could never have been any question of set purpose, but only of how far his recklessness had involved him. Hitherto there has been no point in discussing his nervous condition. As a private individual, William the Second would not be declared legally irresponsible in any court of law by a physician who knew his business. It is true that such gifted and complex natures as his are never normal, — they are always on the dividing-line; but while it may please the psychiatrist to set him down as a case of neurosis, the psychologist will seek to avoid this suggestion of disease, and will account for him simply and naturally as the inevitable product of heredity, environment, and lack of control and opposition.

The only important doubts as to his normalcy are those formulated at an earlier date. Waldersee wrote, when the Emperor was thirty-two, "It is said that many people, and especially doctors, are quite openly debating whether, — possibly in connection with the ear-trouble, —

there may not be some very gradual process of mental derangement." When he was thirty-seven: "Since the Scandinavian trip, the old affliction in the ear has set in again, and depresses him badly. His nerves have repeatedly broken down since this re-appeared. . . . If any great political disappointment were now to occur, which is always possible, it would mean a complete collapse." In his forty-fourth year his physician Leuthold reports: "We must have recourse to a stay in one of the spas, under a strict régime." But Eulenburg, warning Bülow, writes as follows: "I want to give you a hint of the gradual alteration in the mental and psychical condition of our dear sovereign. It is difficult to convey the idea, but you will understand the bearing of my letter. . . . I may add that the crisis would certainly not, — as so many fear (or hope), — take the form of mental derangement, but that of nervous prostration."

Now, when so sagacious and intimate a companion fears nothing worse than nervous prostration at the worst moment, one may expect a definite answer to the crucial pathological question in the Emperor's reaction to the greatest crisis of all. Neither at the beginning nor the end of the War was he even for a moment mentally deranged. After all that has befallen him, he is to-day a vigorous man, hale and unaltered on the verge of seventy.

The gifts of high-strung natures are his, beyond all doubt. Two of those who knew and judged him best, and long were near him, though not actually at his Court, maintain to this day that he is exceptionally gifted. He certainly did derive from the English side of his family a measure of intellect and talent which for a century had been rare indeed among the Hohenzollerns; but otherwise the inherited attributes were ill-assorted, for there was not a trace in him of his two genuinely noble grandfathers, while from his parents he took only their weaknesses. Frederick's affectation and vanity, Victoria's ambition and self-will were blended into the uneasy self-consciousness of a slightly deformed man forever in the public eye. All his Caesarean tendencies were born of his anomalous resolve to seem aggressively manly, though it is true that they became more spontaneous as his authority increased.

The vivacity of his unstable temperament supplied his quick brain with those happy thoughts which struck everyone by their raciness and aptness. They have something of the born demagogue's pregnancy: "The trident of Neptune belongs by right in the German fist," — no one would forget that. At the opening of a technical institute: "Mathematics and physical science have shown mankind how to force the door of God's stupendous work-shop." At the inauguration of a Naval College: "Think of your work not only as a means of accumulating knowledge, but also as a literal interpretation of the words Duty and Energy . . . Character means more than anything else." Or they would take the shape of such charming things as this, in a birthday-letter to his grandmother: "How incredible it must seem to you that the tiny creature you so often held in your arms, whom Grandpapa used to swing in his table-napkin, has now reached the age of forty, and is just half as old as you, whose life has been so rich in blessings for us all. . . . I hope that you are not too ill-pleased with your queer, temperamental colleague." With what a gently ironic smile the Queen must have read these words, written in the midst of incessant conflicts!

HIS RUDENESS

One form of his absolutism was the rudeness to friends, guests, and intimates which Zedlitz observed year after year. The Emperor tweaks an old Major's ear, and gives him a staggering slap on the back. On the way to the shooting-butts he greets the War-Minister and the Chief of the Military Cabinet with the words: "You old asses think you know everything better because you're older than I!" Even ladies, — the Princess Fürstenberg at Donaueschingen, the Princess Leiningen at the Strassburg Vice-regal Palace, — were "beckoned up for His Majesty to take in to dinner. The Grand Duke Vladimir got such a thwack on the back with the Marshal's baton that it resounded again. Of course it was supposed to be in fun."

At a Silesian hunt in the autumn of 1904 he held Colonel von B. down in the snow for a long time "and rubbed him with snow to the great amusement of the on-lookers, — just as a schoolboy will bully a

weaker one. The whole hunting-party and hundreds of beaters were watching. Count Roger Seherr-Dobran had a still more unpleasant experience. It must be remembered that he was a Prussian Chamberlain, a member of the Upper House, had two sons, both officers in the Hussars of the Body-Guard, was fifty-three years old, and as a great landed proprietor was much looked up to in Silesia. The moment he saw him the Emperor said in a loud tone, "What, you old swine, have you been asked here, too?" The bystanders, including the ladies, could hear this apostrophe quite distinctly. The Count was naturally most indignant, and said so to his closer acquaintances, — instead of there and then putting the Emperor in his place, before everybody."

EROTICA

His nervous temperament was especially revealed in sensual lines. The whole domain of the will was unbalanced, and one wonders what the latent causes were.

The only serious testimony to an inordinate degree of sexuality in the Emperor is Bismarck's; but neither he nor any other informants, outside of ordinary Court scandal-mongers, imply that it extended beyond his conjugal relations, which began at so early a stage of his manhood. Herbert Bismarck, indeed, did say in the first few years of his reign that they "would have to find a mistress for the Emperor, and that might make it easier to govern the country." In the mess of the First Regiment of Guards "it was forbidden to tell smutty stories in the Emperor's presence, but with the Hussars of the Body-Guard this order was relaxed, and the young ruler, always ready for a joke, was as much delighted by this new diversion as a child with a new trumpet. He blew it incessantly, and will probably go on blowing it for the rest of his life, — and yet it means nothing, really, in him."

That these words come from Eulenburg adds greatly to their significance. The Emperor, despite his ever-increasing absolutism, despite his temperament, his love of change, and his indifference toward his consort, never showed any desire to take a mistress; but again and again chose effeminate-natured men as his friends. There can be only one explanation of the undoubted fact that this fault never took

any active form of perversity; and once more we find an explanation in the old subjective concern, — he could not bear to be suspected of any weakness. Eulenburg's group, although consisting mostly of fathers of families, was not normal. If the Emperor was not akin to them, why did he surround himself with such types? His craving to seem energetic and virile protected him from any erotic accentuation of his womanish, capricious, loquacious nature, which could be enthusiastic about rings, bracelets, orders, and jewelry of every kind; and subconsciously he struggled against the very same weakness in himself by which Eulenburg had enchanted him in his twenties. In the ribaldry of the messes he could drown the unacknowledged sensibility which might have made him lead a life resembling that of his friends in its refined decadence but would certainly not have added any virility to his decisions. William the Second, forever eluding his weaknesses, forever striving for the bearing of a Prussian officer, fought down all his inherent discords in order to be above all a regular man's man.

HIS ORATIONS

Other symptoms of his unbalanced nervous condition were his favorite occupations, — journeys and speeches. The perpetual journeys, — symbols of a heart in flight from itself and from tranquillity, — were, at an early date, opposed by his physicians, but in vain; the speeches, too, of which he often delivered four a day, were an outlet for his febrile nervous energy. The moment when at the festive board all arose, gazing at him with eager eyes and literally hanging on his lips; the silence, the sense of general absorption in his every utterance; the thought that the next morning the capitals of the world would be conning the words which now fell from him, — he could no more do without these things than without the constant succession of entries and processions, receptions at city gates and guild halls, gala-dress and maids of honor, the dropping of veils from statues, the gliding of vessels from their slips, the flourish of trumpets, the reviews, hurrahs and flags, the flowers, and the grand farewell at the railway-station. In the year '94 there were one hundred and ninety-nine goings and

comings. In seventeen years, five hundred and seventy-seven public speeches were delivered, which means an imperial speech every eleven days.

The Emperor possessed the born actor's power of sinking his own personality into that of the character he wished to represent. He could be a different person to everyone, — as imperial with the Tsar as he was democratic with Cecil Rhodes, American with Roosevelt, French with Saint-Saëns and Massenet. Almost everyone was enchanted with him at first, and James Gordon Bennett, who met him at Kiel and instinctively and instantly detested him, may be said to be a unique case. If he hit the nail on the head when he described journalists as snippet-snappers, he might himself be called a journalist, for, says Zedlitz, "he was very clever and quick at getting a superficial notion of any subject (for instance, a new theory of the origin of the world), and was able to talk about it as if it were his own discovery, or as if he were a professor of astronomy who had spent years and years in an observatory. Even the most eminent experts were taken in, and would marvel at his acquirements, his astonishing capacity for work, and his phenomenal powers of assimilation."

These histrionic tendencies were still more evident in the sermons for which life on board afforded him an opportunity, — though he occasionally took the pulpit on land also, as at Wernigerode in 1906. Among the yacht sermons is one delivered at Helgoland when the first ships had sailed for the Far East. He enlarged thus upon a text from Exodus: "Why have the heathen risen in the distant East? Because their aim is, by force and cunning, by fire and sword, to prevent the penetration in their land of European trade and the European spirit. And once more the Divine Command has gone forth: 'Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek!' But we, who must stay at home, constrained by other sacred duties, — to us it is said: 'Hear ye not the behest of God, which bids ye, "Go up upon the mountains! Lift up your hands to Heaven! Mighty are the prayers of the righteous." . . . Ours shall be not only a great fighting-force, but we will have our praying-force as well, — our great, our holy force of suppliants. . . . And will not our

soldiers be strengthened, be inspired, when they think, 'Thousands, nay, millions, bear us up in prayer at home!' The King of Kings cries, 'Volunteers to the fore! Who will be the Empire's intercessor?' Oh, that we might say this morning, 'The King hath called us, and all of us, all of us have come!' Let not one of you be missing! He who can pray is a man indeed!"

This performance, which might arouse professional envy in the heart of every Salvation Army Captain, belongs to the inception of the operetta war, and rings most villainously false. Not for spiritual things did the Germans go to China, but for sordid things, — for gold, not good. It was not God who sent the troops, but a sensation-loving sovereign, and not sacred duties but the protest of the Powers kept the others back. Millions were there indeed, but they were laughing, not praying. But he, in his bombastic ardor, must needs make Heaven in the pattern of himself and his conception of a King, — from God's mouth must issue the Prussian slogan, "Volunteers to the fore!" It was this militarized theocracy which not long afterwards made him, at the Hamburg Banquet, cry in a voice that pealed along the glittering table through the bejeweled, scandalized assembly, "Eyes front! Heads up! Look to the heavens! Bend the knee before the Great Ally who never yet forsook the Germans!"

HIS POLTROONERY

Another marked form of his neuroticism was his poltroonery, — a flagrant contradiction of the Attila pose. It was the hard-shelled Conservative President of the Chamber, the old Junker von Köller, who said to Hohenlohe: "God preserve us from war, while this Emperor is on the throne! He would lose his nerve. He is a coward at heart." The Hohenlohes, father and son, were much struck by this remark from such lips at so early a stage. Later, every one was to know the truth. No one can be blamed for possessing such a temperament, but it is rather disturbing in the Supreme War Lord of the most militarized of nations. A disastrous combination, — a crippled man, less fitted (as his tutor declares) to be an officer than any other in the country, condemned to the military profession unless prepared to follow the tradition of his family by renouncing the

Crown,—since in Prussia an incurable civilianism was a more cogent reason for abdication than an incurable cancer,—and thus, through all his lifetime, forced to affect a valorousness of which Nature had deprived him at the hour of his birth! In this lies the tragic element in the life of William the Second, with all its effects upon the nation.

THE PROCESSION OF SYCOPHANTS

Throughout thirty years the flatteries of his subjects,—from every class and every circle, in every place and of every religion, at banquets and burials, on holidays and working-days,—were ceaselessly poured out before this sovereign, and differed only in the degree of their fulsomeness. The sovereign believed them all. “Anyone who can read men’s faces,—and I think I can . . .” He made this remark at a banquet at Hanover, at the age of forty, and being such a reader of men’s faces, he discerned in all of them a genuine devotion. It was like a levee,—an interminable levee which went on for thirty years,—of Germans defiling before the throne of William the Second, and flattering him by speech or silence so that they might bask in his reflected glory.

First came the nobles of the land, outbidding one another in hunting parties, splendor, and blatant adulation, all for his sovereign pleasure. “When at Rominten Prince Dohna brought word of a good quarry, he would contrive to look as if he had come rushing headlong to tell the news and could hardly breathe with excitement and hurry.” Once he besought the favor of being allowed to put the same sort of bells on his cows that the Emperor’s wore at Rominten. When Count Ballestrem delivered the Birthday speech as President of the Reichstag, he made no admonitory allusion to the Emperor’s fresh encroachments,—rather he egged him on by saying, “Our Emperor understands the spirit of the age, for has he not said, ‘I do not intend to be what is called a constitutional ruler, who reigns but does not govern.’ I do not think our Emperor would look kindly on anyone who assigned that rôle to him.”

The most illustrious were followed by the most immaculate. “When in every sermon,”—so the Court-Marshall states,—“delivered or composed by any Court

chaplain, and afterwards read by the Emperor, there are never-failing references to the monarch’s virtuous way of life, it is only natural that the latter should develop a priggish self-consciousness not far removed from the most objectionable Pharisaeism. Only those who are acquainted with the private life at Court can really estimate the horrible servility of these lip-serving chaplains. I have often been absolutely revolted by it.” After one of these “detestably Byzantine sermons”, at the opening of the Reichstag in 1907, even Admiral von Müller said that there could be only one opinion as to its objectionableness. Immediately afterwards the Emperor remarked, “I haven’t heard so fine a sermon in a long time,—it was really excellent.”

THE MINISTERS DO HOMAGE

Next in the procession of flatterers came the Imperial Chancellor. As early as ’93 Bülow wrote to Eulenburg: “I was deeply moved when I was allowed to kiss his hand and thank him for the graciousness he had shown me.” Five years later he designated him in a written memorial as *arbiter mundi*: “Bülow is utterly ruining the Emperor,” said Ballin. “With his perpetual adulation he is making him overestimate himself beyond all reason.”

The Ministers followed in his footsteps. When they were invited to the sovereign’s dinner table, “they would stand in a semi-circle before the Emperor, all assuming a more or less military bearing. The Emperor, after his brief welcome, would say a joking word or two to one or the other, now and then asking some question, which would be answered as if on parade . . . It made one think of a Colonel with his non-commissioned officers.” When Marshall, as Secretary of State, presented a report on the Bagdad Railway which was being constructed by the Deutsche Bank he called it “Your Most Gracious Majesty’s own undertaking”. In the year 1904 Waldersee sums him up: “No matter what judgment he passes on persons and political parties, it is all accepted with approving smiles and bent backs. The Ministers are there to obey. What we have is literally a Cabinet Government, subject to the Emperor’s autocratic will. In most instances he simply conveys this to the Ministers through Lucanus.”

And hence it was not only their reports to him which reeked with the incense of *Allerhöchst* and *Alleruntertänigst*. They filled their instructions to their subordinates with these honeyed phrases, because such documents were frequently requisitioned for the Emperor's reading, and he might be angry if there were any shortage of superlatives. In their selection of newspaper cuttings, which they all, but especially the Foreign Office, had to lay before the Emperor, they took care that he saw nothing unpleasing. Some half-dozen men were supposed to draw the curtains and let in the light; but they opened them only half way, or a little less, or not at all, and so showed him or withheld from view the events and the public temper of the day,—always on the principle that "His Majesty requires sunshine."

These cuttings, ranging through decades and prepared in the Home Ministry, show two or three well-censored political articles; as many reports of accidents and crimes; Berlin gossip; an account of an exhumation, the forgery of a picture, or some new medical discovery; a description of an Imperial ceremonial, a military tournament, or some other patriotic event. Not the Emperor, but only the Empress was a regular reader of the *Lokalanzeiger*,—the Emperor would not look at the German newspapers, because in his youth he had come across attacks in *Vorwärts* and *Kladderadatsch*. He confined his newspaper-reading to the *Fürsten-Correspondenz*,—which was strictly true to its title.

THE AMBASSADORS DO HOMAGE

Next in the procession came the ambassadors. Frequently copies of the Imperial marginalia would be sent to them, so that by these censorial comments they might take cognizance of the master's state of mind; and telegrams would go forth with advice for the drafting of their reports according to the Imperial humor. Wires flew from Berlin to Rome or Constantinople with the information that a rapturous description of the Emperor's recent visit was looked forward to by His Majesty. During the Petersburg revolution of 1905 the Ambassador there waited a week before sending any information whatsoever, lest the Most High should be alarmed. When a freezing reception in England, such as

that of 1899, was got over without any violent unpleasantness, the much-relieved Ambassador reported to Berlin for the Imperial eye: "After the numerous expressions of satisfaction, pleasure, indeed delight, which have been imparted to me, I confidently anticipate the best results; and this includes the Royal Family, one and all. The personal intercourse with our illustrious sovereign had no less marked an effect on Her Majesty's Ministers. Balfour declared that he had never known a more thrilling experience than that of the hour during which he was under the spell of His Majesty's personality. . . . If His Majesty had appeared in London he would have been assured the most spontaneous and enthusiastic welcome. Though Press and public were obliged to maintain some reserve, they have in general managed to convey anything but an impression of coolness."

When in '05 there were ambitions for a harbor in China, and the Emperor asked the Ambassador, von Heyking, which one he had in view, the latter answered, "I was thinking of Amoy." When he was asked by Tirpitz why he mentioned a place he knew nothing about, Heyking replied: "But I couldn't leave His Majesty without a definite answer!" At Washington the Ambassador, Speck von Sternburg, publicly declared that the Emperor "not only had the most remarkable general intelligence in the world, but that he was thoroughly modern and comprehended the spirit of great industries as well as their technique, while his proficiency in the arts and music was of equal excellence."

THE OFFICERS DO HOMAGE

After the ambassadors came the officers, Generals and Admirals at their head, and all with the watchword, Obedience. The Emperor devised "an ideal battle-ship, impregnably iron-clad, rapid, and armed with torpedo-tubes, which would take the place of the torpedo-boats . . . The construction of this was attempted. We proceeded in conformity with orders received, and when it was clear that no useful result could possibly be obtained, this production came to be called the 'Homunculus.'" After a gala-dinner to the Staff the Emperor was told that the older Moltke had been, in reality, no great General,—all he had done was to carry out his sov-

ereign's orders. "The remark was meant for the Emperor alone. So who can wonder that he should come to think very little of his staff!"

"At the Imperial Manoeuvres, completely contradictory commands to the troops would arrive on an average three times a night. No one dares point out that this upsets the men, that important dispositions of troops are disturbed, that colossal marches result, and that the commissariat has to cope with great difficulties by reason of the requirements thus created. In the actual encounter modern conditions are ignored, the one aim being to make an imposing display; the staff rides through the lines of defense, the artillery follows, and the cavalry attack is as feeble as if it were still armed with flint locks. Everyone sees this, more or less; but no one dares say anything, — certainly not the Chief, Count Schlieffen.

"While no one wants to cut his own throat by venturing on a critical remark, there are on the other hand plenty of high-placed and most aristocratic persons ready to assure His Majesty that it has all been so interesting, instructive, and generally magnificent. . . . Mute, grave, expressionless, Count Schlieffen goes about his business of carrying out the Most High's orders. From this absolute silence and implicit connivance it has gradually come to rank imposture. In the parades and marches the squadrons are deftly and unobtrusively increased by men who have been kept in readiness unseen. The Emperor thus inevitably acquires the conviction that such an immense force of cavalry will be able to carry out the most colossal demands day after day. In reality, only a few horses are able, and that only with the greatest trouble, to get through the day's work. The others are replaced in the manner indicated above."

But the flatteries of the uniforms went far beyond what mere obedience dictated. At Danzig, in the autumn of 1904, General von Mackensen, on being presented to the Emperor at the railway-station, kissed his gloved right hand. Instantly this manly gesture became the fashion, and at the mess of the Hussars of the Body-Guard a lieutenant, honored with an order, kissed the hand of the Most High. An old General, who had been through the wars, commented publicly on a visit of

the Emperor's at Aix-la-Chapelle, "I have been present on many historic occasions, but I remember none which excited so great an enthusiasm." An officer challenged an editor who had allowed the Emperor's "Song to Agir" to be described as the work of a dilettante. When in 1890 the Emperor had given the wrong solution to the Staff's tactical problem, he spoke (by Waldersee's account) "to every officer he met on the promenade in the Tiergarten, trying to gain adherents for his erroneous view. Of course there were some people compassionate enough to agree with him." A military essay on Frederick's defeat at Hochkirch, presented to the Emperor, concluded with the words, "Under Your Majesty's command nothing of this kind would have happened."

THE CITIES DO HOMAGE

Then came the cities. In every province of the Empire the railway stations and guildhalls, the barracks and public monuments, were always decorated in expectation of their Most Gracious Majesties' arrival. At the Brandenburg Gate, and many other Gates, stood the frock coated Lord Mayors. Obelisks and festoons sprang out of the ground in one place to reappear next day in another. In Alsace it had become so much a matter of routine that the holes alongside the pavements for the Venetian masts were left open once for all. The streaming flags, the broad thick garlands of pine-branches, served a double purpose here, for they concealed from the all-penetrating Hohenzollern eye the flagless houses of the Francophile citizens. The City of Görlitz was not the only one to be deprived of the Imperial Manoeuvres and their benefits to trade, because of a democratic municipality. Hamburg, for a visit of the Emperor, created an island on the river Alster; and when the cities of Cologne and Crefeld wanted to write their names with a K, and were supported by the opinions of two professors, the voice of the Most High rang out on a stentorian C, and the supreme tribunal instantly dismissed the cities' petition on the plea of expense.

The private functionaries were not behindhand. The Emperor's tile factory had to have a subsidy every year, by reason of its cut prices; but the Emperor was shown the lists of orders and was thus

convinced that it did immense business. His Cadinen estate was represented to him as being a model of good husbandry. "It is horrible," observed the Imperial owner, "to see how little the farmers do for their men! Why don't they build houses for them, as I do at Cadinen? Then labor would not trend westward as it does now." And he told the English Ambassador that every schoolboy and girl on his estate had saved eight hundred marks "in the course of this last one year". He was delighted when they told him that he had a cow there which yielded forty litres of milk a day, — for "there one is not afraid of pouring more milk into a cow than can be milked out of her. . . . Strange," concludes Zedlitz, "that the Emperor must everywhere have someone who deceives him!"

HIS FRIENDS DO HOMAGE

Friends and intimates duly followed. "The bombast, blatancy, and fulsomeness of this composition (of Lauff's) can hardly be described. Quite opposed high-placed persons were at one in their disgust with the thing, and said so among themselves. However, it did happen that certain of them, when His Gracious Majesty expressed satisfaction with it, instantly veered around and endorsed his views, abounding in appreciative admiration. The grossness of this change, together with the shamefaced glances at anyone near by who had heard a diametrically opposed opinion a minute before, certainly had a comical side to it." Eulenburg writes of the Scandinavian trip in 1903, "The contrast between the years and the convulsive merriment of the guests is what I find most painful. These men are without exception persons who have reached high office . . . and they are all utterly worn out. But they retain sufficient energy to put up a show of gaiety, wit, even brilliancy . . . It disgusts me profoundly. I can't stand these Excellencies any longer, — always on bended knees; nor can I stand cracking jokes from nine o'clock in the morning on."

The compilers of "Emperor books" must not be forgotten. *The Emperor and Our Youth: What the Emperor's Speeches Teach Our German Youth* appeared in 1905 with two prefaces. This is from that by a court chaplain: "There are men whose

words are their deeds, and among these we all reckon the Emperor . . . His words stand for deeds . . . They reveal a profoundly practical knowledge of life." And this from the editor's preface: "Fervent thanks are due the Almighty for having given us an Emperor impervious to the wiles of flattery or base servility, one to whom the teacher, conscious of his sacred task and earnest in the fulfilment of it, gladly points as an august example . . . The lofty, one might say the religious, sense of duty and responsibility, the tireless zeal and unremitting diligence, the glad recognition of the services of others, the amazing energy displayed in mastering every kind of subject, — all this, combined with the magic spell of an irresistible personality, forms a whole of such gripping authority that no German youth can be unaffected by its ennobling influence."

THE ARTISTS DO HOMAGE

When a clever Frenchman, the artist Grand-Carteret, realized all this, he resolved to get his caricatures of the Emperor into Germany and wrote an open letter, in which the Emperor was thus made fun of: "As Napoleon once was for the whole world, so Your Majesty is now, — simply 'the Emperor'. You are Caesar. . . . The gaze of Europe is now directed constantly to the banks of the Spree. You are the idol, the Jove of our age . . . The world rings with your slightest utterance . . . Utter then, O Emperor, the behest which will bestow on the caricatures that emancipation which the world awaits from you!" Being a reader of men's thoughts, the Emperor uttered the behest, and the foreigner's book appeared in Germany, while German truth tellers were expiating their audacity in fortresses and prisons.

Mingled with the fabrications of Hohenzollern items such as the Emperor books were the artists with their portraits, allegories, poems, all of whom referred to His Serene Genius in the matters of tone and coloring, the construction either of a cathedral or a drama, — the record in this group being held by the architect of the church built in memory of the Emperor William I. An architectural sign, the intersection of two arcs, which in the original plan made the cross on the church-spire look as if it were surmounted by a

star and on that account greatly delighted the Emperor, naturally was missing when the building was carried out in stone. The Emperor observed its absence and was much annoyed, for it was precisely the redundancy of cross and star together which had fascinated him. Herr Schwechter, who had designed the Church, was too servile to explain, so were the clergy, and thus for twenty years a "morning star" in iron gleamed above the cross.

THE TOWNSMEN DO HOMAGE

Followed the townsmen who had business connections with the Court. "However independent they may actually be, they all turn courtiers in the Emperor's presence; and many of them soon become even worse than those who are most inured to the atmosphere. If there is any question of serious displeasure, they stand up as little for their real convictions as any of the others." Slaby, the eminent physicist, "now, alas! passes all bounds in flattery and lip-service." He pointed out to the Emperor how in the end he had always triumphed over his opponents. "Yes, that is true," answered the Emperor. "My subjects should always do what I tell them; but they always want to think for themselves, and that is what makes all the trouble."

THE HISTORIANS DO HOMAGE

They were all in the procession of flatterers, — every one of those independent souls who never once told the Emperor the truth that they afterwards wrote down for their own satisfaction: Ihne, Harnack, and Delitzsch, Helfferich and Krupp, Dörpfeld and Bode, Kopp and Faulhaber, Tschudi and Begas, the younger and sometimes even the elder Rathenau; while the celebrated scholar, Deussen, in his discourse before the Emperor in 1891 expressed the conviction that "the Emperor will lead us from Goethe to Homer and Sophocles, and from Kant to Plato." And Lamprecht, Germany's leading historian, and therefore doubly answerable for truth, in 1912 in a peroration on the phenomenon presented by William the Second broke into the following dithyrambs: "His is a personality of primitive potency, of irresistible authority, to whom the whole domain of emotion and experience is perpetually opened anew, as to a creative artist . . .

Self-reliance, fixity of purpose, ever directed to the loftiest aims, — these are the distinguishing marks of the Imperial personality."

And around the procession of bent backs and eyes that would not see, figures hovered whose airy forms, with cymbals and drums, crept through keyholes, floated through windows, hindered by no Master of Ceremonies. These were the paper-processionists, — the press of the Emperor and his creatures. In *their* faces too he could read, when the enraptured procession was over, "the sentiments of the people." Smiling, he could turn to the President of the Upper House: "What can you expect? They go wild about me everywhere! Oh, I know very well what is said and thought of me among the people!" And while the newspaper cutting dropped from his fingers, the eyes that for so long gazed unwearied on the glitter and genuflexions could close in dreams and again see them pass: princes and generals, chaplains and professors, ambassadors and ministers, authors and architects, lord mayors and artists, cardinals and Jews, intimates and acquaintances, — all enraptured, all overflowing with gratitude and praise.

One class, — one only, — never figured in that procession. The working man was missing. He was not qualified to come to Court.

THE CATASTROPHIC INTERVIEW

When the Emperor was paying a few weeks' visit to Colonel Stuart-Wortley he told his host all he had done for England and how he had been misunderstood there; and when he saw the Colonel again during the Alsace manoeuvres in September, 1908, at a time when English feeling against Germany was again being worked up because of the Fleet, he "expressed his personal desire that the utmost publicity should be given in England to the Anglo-philic views held by himself and his House." From what he further said, the Colonel immediately composed the rough draft of an interview with an unspecified interlocutor, which he proposed to publish in the "Daily Telegraph" as an attempt to pacify the Press and public opinion, submitting it beforehand to the Emperor. The Emperor pronounced the "article to be well written, and a faithful

report of what he had said;" and sent it through his Ambassador, von Jenisch, to Bülow, that he might "suggest any desirable alterations on the margin of the existing English text." Bülow was to be sure to send it straight back to him, not through the Foreign Office, "keeping it a secret from as many others as is at all possible." This was to be done as quickly as might be. Jenisch, — a diplomat indeed, — avoided reading the article, confined himself to penmanship, and did as he was told.

AN ATTACHÉ-CASE

When Bismarck, over seventy years of age, made protracted stays at Friedrichsruh, the youthful Emperor and the old Foreign Office officials were wont to complain about the delay thus caused to business. Yet here was the beginning of October and no one was in Berlin; and while the Emperor was hunting at Romin ten, Bülow bathing at Norderney, Secretary of State Schön climbing mountains at Berchtesgaden, a document in its locked attaché-case was likely to go through strange vicissitudes. True, it consisted merely of a few typed pages, and the Emperor had designated it as confidential; but the contents, — merely a few Imperial sentences, — seemed so commonplace that the Chancellor was not tempted to read them, so off it went to Berlin with the superscription "Confidential" and the instructions, "Revise carefully, any corrections to be written in the margin." In Berlin it was opened by the acting Under-Secretary Stemrich, who opened his eyes at the covering letter, took very good care not to read the typescript, and gave it to a Privy-Councillor, saying, "It seems to me rather rocky, — however, you'd better take a look at it and see what can be done."

Councillor Klehmet was a conscientious person. He read the typescript, and at first felt "very dubious about the advisability of publication"; but quickly took refuge in the thought "that the Foreign Office as such is not entitled to place itself in opposition to the Emperor's express wish, when the Chancellor, on his side, has conveyed no sense of uneasiness. Such being the case, I assumed that the Imperial Chancellor had already decided, or would decide what was to be done." Thus

thought Klehmet. He studied the document, corrected two important misstatements of the Emperor's, and suggested, besides, an alteration in phrasing.

Back it went to Herr Stemrich, who stuck to his resolve not to read it, but signed his name; thence back to Norderney, where Ambassador von Müller, the Emperor's right hand, received it and in his turn refrained from reading. Taking a copy of Stemrich's letter, he sent the whole thing back to Bülow. The latter bestowed but a cursory glance on the typescript, signed it, however, as it stood with Klehmet's corrections, describing these officially as "alterations which appear desirable". Back to Berlin went typescript and all. The Secretary of State received it, marked "Urgent"; but being just then summoned to the Chancellor, had "no time to take cognizance of the contents", and handed it over once more to Bülow, who remarked that he had seen it before. So back with it to Jenisch, from him to the Emperor, who handed it to the English Colonel, — and behold it in the London newspaper!

The typescript, then, had been read by Emperor and Councillor only, — by the former with the paternal emotion of an author, by the latter with the detachment of a philologist; while in the meantime it had passed through the hands of five diplomats whose moral duty, as statesmen, it was to read it, — a Chancellor, two Secretaries of State, two Ambassadors, of whom not one had been urged by a sense of responsibility, official zeal, or even mere curiosity, to examine what a fortnight later all Europe was to read as the authentic words of the German Emperor!

THE IMPERIAL INTERVIEW

"You English are mad as March hares, — you see red everywhere! What on earth has come over you, that you should heap on us suspicions unworthy of a great nation? What more can I do? I have always stood forth as a friend of England . . . Have I ever once broken my word? . . . I regard this misapprehension as a personal insult! . . . You make it uncommonly difficult for a man to remain friendly to England . . . During the Boer War German public opinion and the Press were decidedly hostile to you. But what did we do? Take note of this! When the Boer del-

egates were seeking friends in Europe and were received with acclamations in France, who was it that called a halt and put an end to their proceedings? I alone refused to receive them. . . .

"Again, when the struggle was at its height, the German Government was invited by the Governments of France and Russia to join with them in calling upon England to put an end to the war. The moment had come, they said, not only to save the Boer Republics, but also to humiliate England to the dust. What was my reply? I said that . . . Germany would always keep aloof from politics that could bring her into complications with a sea-power like England.

"And that is not all. Just at the time of your Black Week, in the December of 1899 when disasters followed one another in rapid succession, I received a letter from Queen Victoria, my revered grandmother, written in sorrow and affliction and bearing manifest traces of the anxieties which were preying upon her mind and health. I at once returned a sympathetic reply. Nay, I did more. I bade one of my officers procure for me as exact an account as he could obtain of the number of combatants in South Africa on both sides, and of the actual position of the opposing forces. With the figures before me, I worked out what I considered to be the best plan of campaign under the circumstances, and submitted it to my General Staff for their criticism. Then I despatched it to England, and that document, likewise, is among the State papers at Windsor Castle awaiting the serenely impartial verdict of history. And, as a matter of curious coincidence, let me add that the plan which I formulated ran very much on the same lines as that which was actually adopted by Lord Roberts, and carried by him into successful operation."

Then he went on to speak of the Fleet, which he was not building against England, but for great contingencies to come "which are impending in the Pacific Ocean, and are not so remote as some believe . . . Japan now has the upper hand. China's awakening is imminent. When that time comes, only great naval powers will have a voice in the decision of events."

This document began by calling upon England to be friends after the principle, "And will you not my brother be,

I'll break you head, — so trust in me!" Then a false coloring was put upon the extrication of England from her dilemma, and nothing was said of the Emperor's own "base action", — when to induce her to make peace he suggested that the Tsar should attack in Asia, an idea which he gave up only because he was afraid of the consequences. Next he designated a collection of commonplaces by the resounding title of a "Plan of Campaign", upon which he invited the verdict of history; lied about the approval of his Staff, who had never seen the papers at all; and plainly hinted, as his trump card, that his imposing "Plan" had enlightened the English Staff, and that Lord Roberts had conquered by following William the Second's indications, — in short the German Emperor's ingenuity had saved England in her direst need.

EFFECT IN ENGLAND

When Metternich, whom no one had consulted, opened the "Telegraph" at this article, he said to the members of his Embassy, "Now we may shut up shop." His despatches regarding its effect translated this speech into the language of diplomacy, and the full measure of his despair was compressed into one sentence: "We shall have to pursue an unequivocally pacific policy for a considerable length of time, if we desire to efface the impression." English Ministers and Generals at first refused to express any opinion whatever about the article and the fury of the press equaled that over the Krueger Telegram, — twelve years of improved relations seemed to have gone by the board. From excited Tokio came similar despatches; in Paris, Rome, and St. Petersburg every pen was against the Emperor. But this had become customary. The effect at home was something new.

STORM IN GERMANY

For the first time the German people revolted. For twenty years they had been silent while the Emperor spoke. Now they spoke, that he might learn to be silent. A torrent of such profound fury broke forth as has not been equaled in directness and sincerity from 1870 to 1914. Truly, the miraculous had come to pass, — the most submissive nation on earth had risen against its sovereign and claimed redress.

At that moment it could have asked and secured his abdication, — demanding, not a Republic, but the Emperor's son, for the movement was not socialistic but affected all classes. It came to this: the subjects revolted against their sovereign, not on account of a lost campaign or a tyrannous ordinance, not even on account of some particular encroachment that was injurious in its consequences. They revolted against his very nature, against the irrepressible loquacity which had now manifested itself in a manner that enabled them to estimate it as his duplicities had hitherto prevented them from doing. For this was as good as a story, — every subject, every peasant could imagine his Emperor drawing up the plan of campaign for his grandmother under the midnight lamp. It was both dangerous and ridiculous, and so the first storm broke upon the Emperor, precisely ten years before the second.

That the political Left should explode was less surprising than that the comic papers were allowed to tear the Emperor to pieces without being torn to pieces themselves by the censors. In "Simplizissimus" the old Emperor was shown pleading for God's mercy towards his grandson: "He is 'by the Grace of God', after all." To which God replied: "Now you want to put the blame on me!" A drawing by Zille showed a boy, "Little Willy," with the Emperor's features, squatting on a writing-table and smearing it and himself with ink, while Mother Germania and Father Bülow cried, "Didn't we tell you not to play at writing letters any more!"

In a third sheet a Court chaplain was lifting his hands to heaven with the biblical exclamation: "Oh that I could put a lock to my mouth and a seal to my tongue!" Again, on New Year's Eve a comic paper showed him receiving a muzzle as a surprise. All this was permitted in German lands; and a lampoon had the refrain:

"Insults to the Emperor-King
Even Councillors' lips can sing."

In November, 1908, the Germans might have been taken for a free and independent nation.

TALK OF ABDICATION

But the idea of abdication was much too revolutionary; it was mooted only by

those who were conscious of their strength, — by the Royalists themselves. "Royalist convictions are undoubtedly a precious possession," wrote a Conservative organ, "but the richest of heritages can be dissipated by wanton extravagance . . . The sovereign's rights are counterbalanced by duties, the neglect of which means an undermining of the very foundations of monarchy." In these circles, but in these only, they went further still: "Among the German Ministers, convened for a session of the Federal Council's Committee on Foreign Affairs, there was talk of persuading the Emperor to abdicate." Eleven years earlier similar schemes had been among the emanations of Holstein's brain, and therefore confined to his own narrow circle. Now the aristocracy of Bavaria and Saxony, of Oldenburg and Württemberg gathered in the embrasures of windows, biting their lips and talking of rough justice. They could have saved Germany.

BÜLOW RESIGNS

Bülow stood in the midst, and did forthwith what he was bound to do, — tendered his resignation and those of the responsible Secretaries of State. The Emperor was within his formal rights. He had not departed, this time either, from the path assigned him by the written word. He could with a good conscience, have let the Chancellor go; but he kept him, though he need not have kept him, — not out of loyalty, but out of fear. To stand forth, now, without cover, — the prospect was too terrifying! Besides, here was the Chancellor's opportunity. He could clothe Emperor and catastrophe with his approval, and he did it, the next day, in an official explanation which set forth the case for the Emperor in all its tragicomic verity. The Emperor, ill at ease, left Berlin. From the fourth to the sixteenth of November he was away, and having brought down the English bull, was occupied in doing the same for stags with Franz Ferdinand, and foxes with Prince Fürstenberg.

But amid all the entertainment he cast a lingering look behind. "The two days here," he wired to Bülow from Vienna, "have gone off very harmoniously and gaily. . . . The hunt went off splendidly. I brought down sixty-five stags. . . . I remember you in all my prayers, morning and evening. When has He ever failed to

help us, though hate and envy may pursue! There is a silver lining to every cloud. God be with you! Your old friend, William I. R." How cleverly he inserts, betwixt God and friendship, a warning to the guardian of his position at home! How blind remains this monarch, arraigned by his people, to any gleam of salutary perception! No, — it is he who feels injured and misunderstood, and in the meantime he enjoys himself and brings down sixty-five head of game.

On November 10 the Reichstag met, with all the appearance of a national court of justice sitting on its sovereign. That day anything might have happened, — solemn promises, constitutional modifications, perhaps even abdication, as already envisaged by the Federal Council. But nothing of the sort came to pass. The Germans, after a fortnight of agitation, were already their submissive selves again. No one ventured on the fatal word, not even the Socialists. The Emperor, whom custom forbade to take part in the debate, was indeed present in the spirit, but the party leaders did no more than lecture him. The sternest reproofs came from the groups of his Paladins, from Heydebrandt and Hatzfeldt. Others laid the blame on the Byzantinism which for twenty years they had fostered. Motions for modification of the Constitution proved futile. The assembly did not even venture on the most deferential form of protest, an address, — much less at a parliamentary system!

BÜLOW'S SPEECH

After that day the Emperor had nothing more to fear from his people. But Bülow had, from his Emperor. For in truth Bülow was the tragic hero in the Tenth of November drama. He was now to be punished for always pretending to be more of a fool than he was. He should either have championed the Emperor or abandoned him. He was in duty bound either to tell the Reichstag in Bismarckian fashion, "The Emperor acted with the best intentions, and constitutionally, too. He has refused the Chancellor's proffered resignation, and we intend to proceed as before, whether the nation likes it or not," or else to throw in his lot with the Reichstag and the nation, leave the Emperor in the dock, indict him, and pass out of favor the next day. His deep-seated loyalty would not

let him take the latter stand; so he decided on the other, and had prepared a speech in the Emperor's favor, in which, as Hammann states, he unequivocally defended him.

But at the last moment the statesman in Bülow, — or perhaps merely the patriot, — prevailed over the courtier. He overestimated the Germans, when he feared to strain the bow so soon unstrung. By choosing this *via media* he lost ground with both the nation and the Emperor. He criticised the Emperor, said his expressions had been too strong, reduced the plan of campaign to a few insignificant remarks, putting the Staff quite out of the question, and finally undertook to promise that the national excitement would "lead the Emperor henceforth to place upon himself, even in his private conversations, such restrictions as are indispensable for consistent policy and the authority of the throne. . . . Were it not so, neither I nor any of my successors in office could accept responsibility for the consequences."

A murmur of dissent from the Left, — but the House was satisfied with this lame statement. No more was said.

On the same Tenth of November the Navy received the following minute: "His Majesty's orders are that the cheering on all ships is to be absolutely simultaneous with the raising of the caps . . . At the command, 'Three cheers for His Majesty!' the flags will be hoisted. At the same moment those on parade will remove the right hand from the rails, and touch the cap. On the first 'hurrah' the flag-signal will fall. The cheer will then be repeated, the cap being held up by stretching the right arm at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and as soon as the cheer has died out, it will be carried by a sharp bend of the arm to the middle of the chest. At the third cheer, the cap will be smartly resumed and the right hand replaced on the rails. These instructions are to be followed on the forthcoming occasion of His Majesty's presence at the swearing-in of recruits."

Everyone who read these orders in the weekly service gazette and knew them to be, if not actually dictated, at any rate approved by the Emperor, instantly felt happier and more at home than during the perusal of the nagging Reichstag speeches.

Cheers for the lord of the land, in unison, at an angle of forty-five degrees, — that was the natural way for self-respecting subjects to behave, very different from unfruitful criticism of the Emperor's, — their eternal boy's, — good pleasure.

ZEPPELIN

He, on that same Tenth when they were all making speeches about him, opened the day by making a speech himself. Zeppelin's flying experiments had hitherto been scorned by the Emperor. The War Office had refused to examine his plans and models, and officers in general were forbidden to take any part in the Count's fantastic proceedings. Only three months earlier the Emperor had called him "the dumbest of all South Germans". On this day he addressed him thus: "Our Fatherland may well be proud of possessing such a son, the greatest German of the twentieth century, who by this invention has opened a new epoch in the development of mankind. It would not be too much to say that this is one of the most pregnant moments in the evolution of humanity."

BÜLOW'S FALL

In July, 1909, Bülow took leave of office on the "Hohenzollern", the spot and the day of the year being identical with those

on which he had formerly undertaken the management of affairs. In Berlin the Emperor discussed with him the question of his successor, walking up and down in the well-exposed Palace Garden, and dismissed him with a kiss and an embrace.

"Bülow shall be my Bismarck," the Emperor had once rather boyishly exclaimed. Bülow *had* been his Bismarck, — that is to say, he was as much the superior of his master as Bismarck had been of his, only the scale of greatness was different. Bismarck's passionate energy had graven clefts and folds in his countenance, Bülow's elegance had gone no deeper than dints and wrinkles.

His departure was the greatest of the four catastrophes. The downfall of Holstein and Eulenburg, the crisis brought about by the Emperor, — these altered little the usual course of affairs; but Bülow's elimination "made war inevitable". The best summing-up fell from Zedlitz senior in a letter: "To have kept the coach from overturning for so long, and to have skirted such abysses, was a service to be grateful for."

And, as Kiderlen writes, when the Emperor was showing the King of Württemberg a picture of the Palace Gardens, he pointed to the spot where he had kissed and embraced Bülow and said: "That's where I gave that scoundrel the boot!"

NEXT AND CONCLUDING INSTALMENT

"War and Retribution"



The editors will be glad to publish brief letters from readers relating to topics discussed by contributors, or to any view expressed in these FORUM columns

Arthur

Did a gentle old lady ever ask you to take care of her fish while she was away? Don't. It happened to me once.

She selected the handsome young man in the next room for this important trust, but he was full of engagements, was going out of town in fact. I had no engagements, — until I had made one with the fish.

They were pets; one was Johnny and the other Arthur. Johnny was snub-nosed, a business man, and a great worker, something like me. But Arthur floated around with a gauze petticoat over his nasturtium-colored underwear, and the whole thing ended in a long filmy tail cut in a double V. How he ever expected to earn his living in such attire, I don't know.

I like dumb animals that are dumb, but the roistering, rioting, stone-rolling nights these creatures spent!

"Don't overfeed them," the gentle lady had cautioned, "give them only a mouthful!" That sounds easy, — but whose mouthful?

That night the room grew cold and I got up and closed the window. I imagined the water in the bowl freezing hard like the balls at the glass-blower's with the fish inside. I wondered what woke me up; I didn't think it was the cold. I soon found out. Those fish were bowling with the green marbles and white shells in the bottom of the dish. When the sport had utterly exhausted them, they came to the top of the water and gasped for air and drank it in with loud noisy gulps. The water

splashed on the sides of the bowl like the sound of the sea.

"My sakes!" cried the landlady next day, "you ought not to fill that bowl so full! If those fish had been the jumping kind, you'd have found 'em stone-dry on the table."

My hair rose. If they had leaped out, I could picture Johnny marching up the outside of the bowl and jumping in again; but Arthur, — dressed up the way he was, — Arthur would be perfectly helpless!

It was cold the next night, too, and instead of raising the window, I opened the door. The landlady saw it. "You don't mean that you left your door open all night? Well, it's a wonder the cat didn't catch those fish! There's nothing she likes better."

It was a bright day. The sun came dazzling into my office. A thought struck me; those fish were in the south window of my room.

Probably by this time they were nicely cooked! My landlady answered the telephone. "Please take the fish out of my window," I said, "and — er — set them in the shade. Please do so at once." Then I was sorry I hadn't added, "If you find them right side up, telephone."

I was callous to goldfish long before the dear old lady returned, but I noticed casually that they were still healthy and active. When she saw them she sighed ecstatically, "Grandma's beauty-boy!" Johnny and I were both there, but it was Arthur she meant.

S. D. MEAKER.

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