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Henry W. Fischer**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SECRET MEMOIRS OF BERTHA
KRUPP ***

The Secret Memoirs
of Bertha Krupp
From the Papers and Diaries of Chief
Gouvernante Baroness D'Alteville

By
HENRY W. FISCHER

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and His Consort," "Secret History of
the Court of Berlin,"
etc.

Si Krupp nobiscum, quis contra nos?

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THE SECRET MEMOIRS OF BERTHA KRUPP

Si Krupp nobiscum, quis contra nos?

CHAPTER I UNDER THE WAR LORD'S THUMB

The Real War Lord—Putting on the Screw—The Kaiser's Plot Revealed—Disinheriting the Baroness—A Startler for the War Lord—Bertha to be Sole Heiress—Frederick Makes His Will—The War Lord Loses his Temper—A Base Suggestion

On a bright August day of 1902 the neighbourhood of Villa Huegel, overlooking the forest of smoke-stacks, cranes, masts and other erections that silhouette the town of Essen, was like an

armed camp. Its master, Frederick Krupp, cannon king and war promoter, while not entitled to household troops, has an army of firemen as large as the contingent of the mighty potentate of Reuss-Greiz-Schleiz-Lobenstein, and this was pre-eminently the season and hour of military display.

The Krupp warriors resemble Prussian infantry in dress. In discipline and aggressiveness they are second to none serving under the eye of the "All Highest," as the Kaiser fondly calls himself. Give their master a dark look as he passes, and one or more of them will pounce upon you and pound you to jelly before you can say Jack Robinson; reach for your handkerchief or pencil in your back trouser-pocket, where a revolver might be, and they will spit you on their fire-axe.

To-day Krupp firemen were everywhere. They lined the roads, guarded crossings and bridges, looked up at every window, sentinelled gates and doors. They were posted, too, in the tree-tops and on telegraph and signal posts, while indoors, along the corridors of the villa, you met them at every turn. Right royal arrangement that! Yet why at Huegel?

On this particular day Essen was alive with colour. Hussars in green and silver—the Düsseldorf brand—galloping round and round the villa circuit, kept their eyes keenly alert for suspicious characters; in Essen, indeed, every stranger is looked upon as a double-crossed suspect. Dragoons were there, too, from East Prussia, to watch the hussars, for one never knows, you know. And, of course, there were bodyguards—white tunic and breeches, black cuirass and silver helmet, surmounted by the "bird of poisonous glare," as Heine described the Imperial eagle. Many other uniforms, too—uhlans, chasseurs, mounted infantry for the War Lord likes to strut abroad to the tune and clank of a variety of arms. He would have horse marines if he were not so deadly afraid of Mr. Punch.

Before the library door of the Villa Huegel two giant cuirassiers, sabre in hand, revolver in belt, dull men and dangerous, of the sort that always do their duty not as they see it, but as their superior officer sees it.

Suppose that earthling orders a death-dealing blow for anyone attempting to enter the room under guard. It follows, as a matter of course, that the person is a dead man or dead woman, or maybe a dead child—militarism rampant, but discipline triumphant! Who cares for a corpse more or less?

A much-bedizened personage is standing in the centre of the high-ceilinged, wainscoted room. A gewgawed War Lord; but how unimposing he looks on foot and unprepared to meet the gaze of admiring multitudes! He is not much taller than the average grocer's clerk, and until Father Time sprinkled his straight, wiry hair with grey was a decided red-pate.

The War Lord's clothes are Berlin pattern: all straight and right angles, like the tunics of the impossible marbles that spoil his Avenue of Victory. He wears jewellery of the kind the late mad King of Bavaria used to decorate his actors with: a watch-chain thick and strong enough to hold a two-year bull, a timepiece bulging like an alarum clock, and a profusion—or confusion—of gold-mounted seals and medals. But the finishing touch: sky-blue garters, set with rosettes of diamonds and pearls alternating.

We know his public face—stern, haughty, cast-iron, forbidding—and his official demeanour has been brought home to us a thousand times and more in statue and photograph, in colour and black and white, throned, on horseback, or standing alone in Imperial self-glory under a purple canopy—he knows how to stage-manage himself in uniform.

The London tailor who skimped his coat in front, he hates with a deadly hatred, for padding, plenty of it, is essential to his *mise en scène*. See him on his well-trained, high-stepping horse, and you have the ideal camera subject: broad shoulders, prominent chest (laden with seventy-odd medals), strong limbs, jingling spurs, bronzed face, skyscraping moustachios and all.

But in the drawing-room, and in mufti—what a difference! Heavy set, somewhat short-limbed, and the face that looks strong when framed in military cap or helmet now seems to possess only brute force.

At this moment his left hand sought the seclusion of a trouser-pocket, while his right, studded with gems like a chorus-girl's, sawed the air with coarse assertiveness.

"My dear Frederick," he addressed his host, balancing himself on his right foot, "while you are here to execute my orders, all's well. But suppose something happened to you. You are not in the best of health and"—lowering his voice—"a careless boy. Don't deny," he added quickly when Frederick Krupp ventured to protest. "Both my Roman ambassador and our envoy at the Holy See heard about your peccadilloes in the island." The speech, begun in a bantering tone, terminated shrilly.

The Ironmaster alternately blushed and blanched. "I hope you do not believe all you hear," he faltered.

"Never more than a third of what I'm told," replied the War Lord, softening his voice; "but, even so, things must not be left too entirely to chance."

Frederick Krupp went to the window, marking each step for the benefit of possible listeners, then tiptoed to the great folding doors. He opened the off wing suddenly and looked out. "All's safe," he said, returning; "and what fine brutes those outside."

"Fancy them?" laughed the War Lord jovially, for he knows how to unbend when he wants to carry a point. "Now to business. We are all liable to die almost any moment, and you, dear Frederick, are no more an exception to the rule than I am—or those brutes."

Frederick Krupp looked uncomfortable, and to hide his embarrassment or gain time dropped into courtly jargon. "And what may be your Majesty's pleasure?"

"Make a satisfactory last will, sir—a last will guaranteeing the Krupps' goodwill for ever and a day—likewise satisfactory dividends—for the chief stockholder, if you please."

Frederick Krupp bowed low. "Please?" he repeated. "Why, I lie awake nights planning wars for your benefit. If there were not a Persian Gulf, I would have invented one to pave the way for the little scrap with England you are aching for."

"Hold your horses!" cried the War Lord. "That Bagdad railway must be finished first. What I want is a guarantee, and a most binding guarantee, that the Krupp works be conducted in all future as now, according to my Imperial will and pleasure, in the interest of the Fatherland and—our pocket," he added flippantly.

Frederick Krupp surveyed himself in the glass. "You talk as if I had one foot in the grave," he said in the careless manner of addressing a boon companion, or like one intimate putting things pleasant, or the reverse, to another. Frederick Krupp died in the odour of eccentricity. There was certainly something eccentric in his relations with the War Lord. But the latter tolerates familiarity only so long as it suits him; and, presently observing the clouds gather on his guest's brow, Frederick Krupp changed his tone.

"At your Majesty's commands, I am all ears," he murmured, as, obedient to a sign from the Emperor, he drew up an arm-chair for him.

"Sit down yourself," the Emperor ordered curtly, pointing to a tabouret. Then, sneeringly: "Your idea was——"

"To leave everything to my wife."

The War Lord slapped his knees hard, as he always does when excited.

"So would Herr Müller and Herr Schulze," he cried, without attempting to conceal the insult. "Her Ladyship—chief of the Krupp works—of what use would the Baroness Marguerite be to *my* interests?"

Mrs. Frederick Krupp was *née* von Ende, and the War Lord, always eager to use titles of nobility, chose to call her by her maiden name and style.

Frederick Krupp, who, despite his irregularities, was genuinely fond of his wife, moved uneasily on his low chair. "Your Majesty is pleased——"

"To have his head screwed on tightly and in the right place," declared the War Lord, bringing his fist down on a table at his elbow and making the Chinese ivories jump. "Now then, without further palaver, I don't choose to see the Baroness heiress of the Krupp works. She shall not control my interests, do you hear? nor those of the Fatherland."

The War Lord talked as if addressing a parcel of raw recruits. His withered left hand had pulled from the trouser-pocket, and was making spasmodic attempts to clutch the lapel of his coat. He has the curious taste to give this poor hand a liberal coating of rings, and his enormous emeralds seemed to gleam more poisonously than usual upon the cringing form of poor Frederick.

"Willy," gasped the Ironmaster pleadingly.

The War Lord was not to be cajoled.

"As I said, her Ladyship gets a pension. Leave her as big a share of your fortune as you please," he added on second thought. "Yes, the larger the better; it will avert suspicion—I mean forestall criticism, of course."

"But," remonstrated Frederick, in a weak way, "Marguerite and I have an understanding."

"Understanding," scowled the War Lord, brutality written all over him as if he were rehearsing his pretty phrase: "Those opposing me I smash."

He contemplated Frederick for a while as a big mastiff might a King Charles before mangling and killing it. At last he remembered there are two ways in most things. "Of course," he began

rather soothingly, "understandings among subjects are null and void when opposed to the Imperial will. Explain to Lady Marguerite with my compliments, if you please," the last phrase emphasised three times by hand cutting the air vertically.

Frederick Krupp, thoroughly cowed by this time, nodded assent. This man, used to bulldozing Governments the world over, a terror before his board of directors, and a demigod to his workmen, felt a mere atom with the eyes of the War Lord flashing wrath and contempt upon his yielding self.

"I will; but what may be your Majesty's precise commands?" he stammered meekly.

The War Lord perceived that his victim had become like wax under the lash of his tongue. He could afford, then, to be magnanimous. "You forget etiquette," he replied, with a half-smile; "since when is it customary to question a majesty? Still, I am no Eulenburg" (referring to the Grand Marshal of the palace), "and will overlook your *faux-pas* this time. Listen, Frederick." He softened his speech with a "dear Frederick," and then issued his mandate: "The Baroness eliminated——"

Herr Krupp raised his eyes supplicatingly, but the War Lord paid no attention. "Eliminated," he repeated, accentuating each syllable. Then, in pitying style: "Too bad you haven't got a son. However, the Salic Law does not apply to commoners."

The Ironmaster made bold to show annoyance at the word. "Commoner by my own free will," he protested. "Haven't I declined Earldoms and Dukedoms even?"

"More's the pity that you remain plain Krupp, like a grocer or the ashman, when you might be Prince of Essen," cried the War Lord, jumping up. The Ironmaster rose as well.

Courtly usage, of course, but also a measure of precaution. He meant to be on hand in case his august guest suffered a fall, and there is always a possibility of that when the War Lord labours under excitement, for his whole left side, from ear to toe, is weak and liable to collapse if the full weight of the body is thrust suddenly upon it. As a rule, the War Lord remembers, but when carried away by passion, or for other reasons loses control of himself, he is prone to forget or even fall in a heap with no warning. Such a *contretemps* happened once at Count Dohna's, when Frederick was one of the house party, and long remained in his memory.

Visiting at Proeckelwitz in the summer of 1891, the War Lord had deigned to be pleased with a pair of blacks. "Buy two more of them for a four-in-hand, as befits the Sovereign," he said to his host.

The hint, dropped with charming German delicacy, was a command, of course, and a year later, in June, the War Lord started for the castle in right royal style; but he did not get far that way, since the four-in-hand shied and bolted when the villagers burst into patriotic song, to the waving of a thousand and one flags. As an eye-witness put it: The leaders rose on their hind legs, the cross pieces came loose and began knocking against their pasterns, and off they were at a furious rate. Count Dohna let the reins of the runaways slip, and hung the more heavily on to those of the shaft horses, who were trying to follow the others. He let the blacks run for a while but without losing control, and as they were about to plunge into a bed of harrows he succeeded in checking them.

Then, for a mile or so, he gave them a run on freshly ploughed ground. After that they went steadily.

The War Lord had put his arm around his host's shoulders when the horses started off, and, the danger past, pressed the Count's hand, but did not say a word. Then came the collapse. He had to be helped down from his seat, and took no notice of the greetings of the ladies awaiting him. Leaning upon his chasseur and Adjutant Von Moltke (now Field Marshal), he crept to his room, his face pale as death and lips compressed.

Dinner was set back an hour, but the War Lord had not recovered his speech when, with difficulties, he put his feet under the mahogany. His body physician, Doctor Leuthold, was sitting opposite the august person, and upon a sign from the medical man the War Lord rose from table after vainly trying to swallow a spoonful of soup. Nor did he come down to breakfast, but attended luncheon, still looking pale and haggard. Then, for the first time, he greeted the ladies of the house, and spoke a few words to his host; but when a forward young miss referred to the accident he bade her keep silent by an imperious gesture, while a tremor seemed to run through his body. He would not hear of hunting, and left next day without having fired a shot.

Frederick Krupp, remembering Proeckelwitz, moved as near to his Imperial guest as politeness permitted, ready to catch him in his arms if need be, but the War Lord no sooner perceived his intention than he became more infuriated than ever. "For Heaven's sake no heroics, Frederick!" he roared, sitting down again. "Draw up a stool and listen."

"One second," pleaded the Ironmaster, "I will set the miniature orchestrella going." He pressed a button, and almost simultaneously a music-box near the door, sheathed in tortoise-shell and gold bronze, began trilling out melodies, so as to confuse, if not obscure, conversation to possible listeners if it waxed overloud again.

The War Lord nodded. "Not half bad. You may send me one of those things to put in Bülow's office. There are always some Italians lurking about—to report to Madame la Princesse, I fancy—and put the W.I.R. on the box.

"Well, let's get back to things," he added, quickly changing his tone to drill-ground clangour. "Madame eliminated and there being no son——"

"Your Majesty desires me to leave the business jointly to Bertha and Barbara?" asked Krupp.

"Are there six crown princes or one?" inquired the War Lord in his turn, with affected calmness.

"I don't follow," said Herr Krupp.

The War Lord could hardly master his impatience. Still more raising his voice, he demanded abruptly: "Is Prussia to be divided into six petty Kingdoms when I die because I happen to have six sons, and a small principality besides for my daughter?"

Herr Krupp opened his eyes wide: "Your Majesty wants me to disinherit one of my children?"

"I want you to proclaim my godchild Bertha Crown Princess of the Kingdom of Cannon."

"But my other daughter——"

"Bertha is *my* goddaughter!" (with the emphasis on the "my").

"Can I ever forget the honour conferred upon my humble house?"

"I trust not," said the War Lord, who is careful not to let people forget any small favours he may bestow.

His brain works in fits and starts, in bounds and leaps, and when he wants a thing it jumps at once to the conclusion that his fancy is a *fait accompli*. Persuading Frederick had been easy with its bits of browbeating and flashes of cajolery. Now, flushed with the triumph gained, he launched forth the details. "Bertha, Crown Princess, trust me to find the right consort for her."

"She is only a child."

"The very age when she ought to be taken in hand and moulded." The War Lord illustrated the intended process by kneading the air with grasping fingers, his "terrible right" alternately pushing and squeezing, attacking, relaxing and coaxing, with the father looking on, terror-stricken.

Such, then, was to be the fate of his little girl: a vice round her white neck, spurs to her sides. The man before him came into the world accoutred to ride, and seventy millions of people his cattle!

The jewels on the War Lord's ring-laden hand flashed and threatened. That twenty-carat ruby on his little finger meant blood, and the emerald, linked to it, might denote the poison-tongue eager to corrupt the childish mind into an instrument of high politics. Diamonds stand for innocence. There were diamonds galore. Oh, the farce of it! Opals, too, a rare collection, but the stone sacred to October tells at least an honest tale—tears.

The War Lord stripped off a gold hoop with a large turquoise. "Wear it in remembrance of this hour, dear Frederick," he said. "The turquoise signifies prosperity, you know."

He walked towards one of the windows and, standing within its deep embrasure, pointed to the towering chimneys. "My brave guardsmen," he exulted, half to himself, "outposts of my Imperial will, avant-guard of my seven millions of warriors; it will be great fun, old fellows, to make you dance as I whistle!"

Then, with a broad smile to Frederick: "That being settled, the Minister of Justice shall draw up your testament at once. I brought him to Essen for that. Now, don't look frightened, boy. 'Last will' does not mean 'last legs.' You will outlive us all, I bet. Let's think of a Prince Consort now."

"But, as said, Bertha is much too young," faltered Frederick.

"Herr," staccatoed the War Lord, "I already had the honour to inform you that Bertha is my godchild—m-y g-o-d-c-h-i-l-d. Do you hear?" he yelled, while startled Frederick looked anxiously towards the door.

The War Lord took the hint and resumed conversational tone. "Come now," he ordered, "roll call. Some of our dear friends are still in the marriage mart." (Reflectively): "Too bad; Fritzie got married." Bertha's father shuddered at the mentioning of a certain Count, who, though brother-in-law of a reigning Grand Duke, was prisoner Number 5429 at Siegen jail, in Rhineland, a few years later for crimes unspeakable. In 1902, however, the dashing Colonel of Horse had not yet been publicly disgraced, and the War Lord launched into a panegyric of his friend. "Yes, indeed,

Fritz would have made a first-class master here. Not overburdened with brains, but knows enough to obey orders. No humming and hawing for him when the War Lord has spoken. But the Suien girl caught him. The kind of son-in-law you want, Frederick."

Krupp shook his head.

"I respectfully beg to differ; none of these for my little girl."

"*These?*" The War Lord again raised his voice, but dropped into a hoarse whisper when he heard the officer *de jour* address the sentinels in the corridor. "One can't say a word without being overheard," he grumbled; "nearer, Frederick, still closer." As he continued speaking he laid his massive right hand on Frederick's knee and hissed between his teeth: "These? You forgot that you were referring to *my* friends."

"I did not, most assuredly I did not," returned the Ironmaster, disengaging himself by a swift movement and jumping up.

"You dare!" hissed the War Lord, again losing control of himself.

"I dare anything for my child!" cried Krupp, his face livid with rage; "and I tell you to your face none of your free-living friends for my Bertha!"

"Insolence!" roared the War Lord. "Take a care that I don't send you to Spandau."

"I would endure Schlüsselburg rather than suffer my child to marry one of *these*," insisted the Ironmaster doggedly.

The War Lord gazed at the speaker for twenty or more seconds, then said in a tone of command: "You can go. Send in Moltke" (referring to his adjutant, later chief of the general staff).

With the latter he remained closeted a quarter of an hour—quite a long space of time for a person of the War Lord's character—and it is said that he tried to persuade the blond giant (Moltke was blond and blooming then) that Krupp was a madman, as crazy as the Mad Hatter. Otherwise he would never have dared oppose his plebeian will against that of the supreme master. Of course not!

Of Moltke's counter-arguments we know naught, but the War Lord's visit to Essen wound up with a grand banquet of sixty covers, and in the course of it host and Imperial guest toasted each other in honeyed words.

* * * * *

Less than two months later Frederick Krupp died by his own hand, and Bertha Krupp—sixteen, homely and already prone to embonpoint—mounted the throne of the Cannon Kings, as the War Lord had willed.

And, as he had insisted, she became automatically a pawn in his hand, his *alter ego* for destruction and misery.

Ever since his intimacy with Frederick, the War Lord had looked upon the Krupp plant as the power house for the realisation of his ambition—the conquest of the world; and to a very considerable extent Frederick had aided and abetted his plans by employing his genius for invention and business to commercialise war, and making it fit in with the general scheme of high finance.

"Want a loan?" the Cannon King used to ask governments. "May we fix it for you? But first contract for so many quick-firing guns."

The loan being amply secured, and the quick-firers paid for, then the suggestion would come along: "Have some more Bleichroder or Meyer funds on top of our latest devices in man-killers." And so on, and so on; an endless chain.

Yet, while so eager to provide death with new-fangled tools wholesale, Frederick could not, or would not, divest himself from the shackles of business honesty—and his inheritance.

He wouldn't play tricks on customers. The steel and work he put into guns for, say, Russia or Chili were as flawless and expert as in the guns bought by his Prussian Majesty. And that was the "besetting sin of Frederick," the damning spot on the escutcheon of their friendship, as the War Lord viewed it. It followed, of course, that when one hundred of the Tsar's Krupp guns faced one hundred Krupp guns of the Government of Berlin, they would be an even match so far as material went—a thing and condition in strict contradiction to the Potsdam maxim: "Always attack with superior force."

How often the War Lord had argued with Frederick: Soft lining for enemy howitzers; a well-concealed, patched-up flaw in the barrel of quick-firers.

"I know no enemy, only customers," was Frederick's invariable rejoinder, garbed in politest language.

Customers! Decidedly the War Lord wanted customers—plenty of them, since, as we know, he had invested largely in Krupp stock; but to take customers' money was one thing, and to provide them with means for spoiling the War Lord's game was another.

When that pistol-shot startled Villa Huegel on November 22nd did it portend the death-knell of what the War Lord called "Krupp molly-coddledom"?

Even during Frederick Krupp's lifetime—just as if his early demise had been a foregone conclusion—technical experts of the Berlin War Office had been instructed to make extensive experiments with steel on the lines ordered by Wilhelm the War Lord.

The test would be the Day!

CHAPTER II WEAVING THE TOILS ROUND BERTHA KRUPP

"Your Play Days are Over"—The Baroness Speaks Out—In the Grip of the
Kaiser—A Room Apart

"The makings of the true German heifer," that astute Frenchman, Hippolyte Taine, would have said of the young girl who was busy in her garden behind Villa Huegel on the 24th of November, 1902. For her blooming youth was full of the promise of maternity—broad shoulders, budding figure, generous hands and feet, plenty of room for brains in a good-sized head. Pretty? An Englishman or American would hardly have accorded her that pleasing descriptive title, but comely and wholesome she was, with her air of intelligence and kindly eyes.

An abominable German custom makes scarecrows out of children at a parent's death. So Bertha Krupp was garbed in severest black, awkwardly put together. Her very petticoats, visible when she bent over her flowers, were of sable crepe; not a bit of white or lace, though it would have been a relief, seeing that the young woman's complexion was not of the best.

"Bertha—Uncle Majesty——" cried a child's voice from outside the house, "wants you," it added, coming nearer.

"To say good-bye?" called Bertha in return. One might have discerned an accent of relief in the tone of her voice.

"Not yet," replied her sister, running up, as she tugged at Bertha's watering-can. "Adjutant von Moltke said something about a con-con——"

"Conference, I suppose," completed the older girl. "Will you never learn to speak, child?"

"Uncle Majesty uses such big words," pleaded little Barbara. "Hurry, sister, he is waiting, and you know how crazy he gets——"

"But what have *I* got to do with him? Let him speak to Mamma. Tell them I am busy with my flowers."

"Bertha!" cried a high-pitched voice from the direction of the villa.

"Mamma," whispered the younger girl; "hurry up, now, or you will catch it." At the same moment one of the library windows in Villa Huegel opened, disclosing the figure of the War Lord, accoutred as for battle—gold lace, silver scarf, many-coloured ribbons, metal buttons and numerals. His well padded chest heaved under dozens of medals and decorations, his moustachios vied with sky-scrapers. With his bejewelled right hand he beckoned imperiously.

"My child, my goddaughter," he said with terrible emphasis when Bertha entered the room, breathing hard, "once and for all you must understand that your play-days are over; at this moment you enter upon the service of the State." He turned abruptly to Bertha's mother, adding in tones of command: "You will put her into long dresses at once, Baroness. It isn't fitting that the heiress of the Krupp works shows her legs like a peasant girl."

"But I don't want to wear long dresses, Uncle Majesty," pouted Bertha.

The War Lord took no notice of the childish protest, but looked inquiringly at Bertha's mother.

"Surely in matters of dress, at least, the child's wishes should be consulted," said the Baroness half defiantly.

"But I insist," fumed the War Lord.

"And I respectfully submit that your Majesty must not meddle with matters of toilette in my house."

The War Lord pulled a high-backed, eagle-crowned chair of silver-gilt up to the late Cannon King's desk and pushed Bertha into it. It was the fauteuil he had once designated as "sacred to the All Highest person"—meaning himself, of course. As a rule its gold and purple upholstery had a white silk cover, which was removed only when the War Lord visited the great house.

"Cardinal fashion," he said to the astonished child, without taking notice of his hostess's remark. "Cardinals, Bertha, are princes of the Roman Church, and each has a throne in his house. While the See of St. Peter is occupied, the emblem of power is turned to the wall. So, heretofore, this throne of mine was obsolete while I was away from Essen, but since your father, as his testament shows, appointed you his successor under my guardianship, you shall have the right and privilege to sit in my place. A throne for the War Lady while the War Lord is away!"

The bewildered child was slow to avail herself of the grand privilege. Shoulders bent forward, she wriggled to the edge, hardly touching the seat, while her eyes sought her mother's with mute appeal.

However, the War Lord was determined to do all the talking himself. "As I pointed out, under Papa's will, you are sole owner of the Krupp business and mistress here," he declaimed, with a disdainful glance at the child's mother. The Purple-born did not scruple to exult over his victim before her daughter.

Happily, the young girl did not observe his ruthlessness, nor would she have understood her godfather's motive.

"Mistress here," repeated the War Lord; "responsible to no one but God's Anointed."

Bertha, now thoroughly frightened, burst into tears. "Don't cry," ordered the War Lord brusquely. But Frau Krupp jumped to her feet, and, placing herself in front of the child, exclaimed with flaming eyes: "Such language to a little girl and on the day of her father's burial!"

The War Lord saw that he had gone too far. "Come, now," he said soothingly, "I meant your Uncle Majesty, of course. Uncle has always been kind and considerate to his little Bertha, hasn't he?"

He asked the Baroness to be seated, while he patted Bertha's shoulder and hair. "God-daughter," he said softly, "be a brave girl and listen." And, with the child's eyes showing increasing bewilderment every moment, he burst into a panegyric of himself and his sublime mission on earth, such as even his dramatic collaborators, von Wildenbruch and Captain Lauff, had never conceived in their most toadying moments.

He was on the most elaborately intimate terms with God, and every act of his was approved by "his" God beforehand. "His" God had appointed him vicar on earth, instrument of His benevolence and of His wrath.

"My child," he sermonised in accents of fanaticism, "think of the honour, the unheard-of honour in store for you; you, the offspring of humble parents, shall do my bidding as my God directs."

Bertha was stiff with astonishment, but the Baroness moved uneasily in her chair and was about to speak, when the War Lord, who had paused to observe the effect of his words, resumed:

"The Krupp business, *your* business, my dear Bertha, is unlike any other in the world. All other manufacturers and merchants cater to the material welfare of man, more or less; the Krupp works alone are destined to traffic in human life for God's greater glory and at His behest.

"For fourteen years God has listened to my prayers for peace; for fourteen long years I have beseeched Him, morning, noon and night, in every crisis that arose throughout the world to permit me to keep my sword sheathed—God's sword. But all these years myself and your father, Bertha, have kept our powder dry, never relaxing armed preparedness, doubling it rather, to be ready for God's first bugle-call."

And so the blasphemous vainglorings went on.

The War Lord strode over to the long wall of the room, dragging his sword over the marble floor and giving his spurs and medals an extra shake. He pushed a button, whereupon an illuminated map of Europe shot into a frame where, a second before, a Watteau shepherdess had impersonated *les fêtes galantes du Roi*. Drawing the sword, he delineated with its point the Central Empires, the Italian boot-leg, and Turkey's European possessions. Then he double-crossed France, Russia and Great Britain. "The enemy!" he cried. "Enemies of German greatness, of German expansion, of German *kultur*—therefore, enemies of the God of the Germans and of mine.

"But with your help I will smash them, pound them into a jelly, Bertha."

As if overcome by horror, the child glided from the impromptu throne of the self-appointed *Godgeissel* (the Lord's scourge) to the rug, and buried her face in her mother's lap.

"Uncle Majesty," she sobbed, "you mean to say that I must help you make war? The Commandment says, 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

"But the Lord also said, 'Vengeance is mine,'" quoted her Uncle Majesty; "and God wreaks His vengeance through me, His elect, His chosen instrument.

"Still, these matters you will understand better as you grow older," he continued. "For the present remember this: under your father's will, I am your chief guardian, and you must obey me in everything. While nominally, even legally, you are sole proprietress of the Krupp works and their numerous dependencies, you hold these properties, as a matter of fact, in trust for me. It follows, my child, that you must leave the direction of the works to your Uncle Majesty and his subordinates, the directors and business managers. Do you agree to that?"

There was something hypnotic in the War Lord's delivery. As the Baroness explained afterwards, he talked like one possessed. Add to this his necromantic manoeuvring, his Machiavellian gestures, his grandly weird eloquence—inherited from an uncle who died in a strait-jacket—small wonder he prevailed upon the grief-stricken child, when, alternately, he threatened, cajoled and flattered.

As a matter of fact, the War Lord's words seemed to have a peculiar appeal to the richest girl in the world, who neither divined nor imagined their sinister purpose. What pierced her comprehension appealed to a youngster's love of independence, of shaking off mother's leading-strings. In the avalanche of phrases that assailed Bertha's ears this stood out: "Your mother doesn't count; you are mistress in your own right." Very well, she would put the promise to the test. "I don't quite understand," said the Cannon King's heiress; rising from her knees, and without looking at her parent, added, "but I leave it all to you, Uncle Majesty—everything."

"Do you hear?" cried the War Lord, addressing Frau Krupp.

"I have heard, and Bertha will go to her room now," replied the Baroness firmly; and though the War Lord made an impatient gesture indicating that he meant the child to remain, she conducted her daughter to the door, kissed her on the forehead, and let her slip out.

When she turned round she saw the War Lord in the *Godgeissel* chair before the desk, resting his right arm on the blotter, his left hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Any further commands for the mistress of the house?" she queried in no humble tones.

The War Lord, seemingly absorbed in a document he had taken up, replied without looking at his hostess: "Send in Moltke," whereupon the Baroness retreated backward towards the door. She was about to drop a curtsy to signify her leave-taking, when the War Lord cried out: "One thing more, Madame la Baronne. From now on this room is *my* room, and none but myself or the Krupp heiress has the *entrée*. My goddaughter may see my representatives here, but no one else—no one."

CHAPTER III A MOTHER'S REFLECTIONS

The Baroness and Franz—The Power-Drunk War Lord—A Pawn in the Game—
The Sweets of Power—Germany Above All—The War Lord's Murder Lust—
Fighting the Frankenstein—At the War Lord's Mercy

The Baroness's boudoir in Villa Huegel is a spacious apartment, hung in blue and silver, the colours of her noble house. Everything that riches, mellowed by refinement, could command enhanced its luxurious comfort. In the home of Baroness Krupp are trophies of her visits to foreign shores: cut glass, coins, bronzes and curios of all kinds. Silver-gilt caskets hold royal presents, precious stuffs and monstrous ornaments from German kings and kinglets—articles of jewellery for the most part, too big for a woman of taste. All are crowned and initialled, but few hall-marked. Since a prince is supposed to give away the real thing, why bother about carats? Numerous paintings, English landscapes, French and Italian decorative art and figures. An English grand piano in one corner. Britishers prefer German makes, but the much-travelled

Baroness wouldn't tolerate the home product.

She is seated before a spindle-legged table with a crystal top over a velvet-lined drawer, where Madame's royal orders and decorations repose—crosses and stars, quadrupeds and birds of various *outré* forms and degrees. Pointing to one of them bearing the name of a queen famous for her beauty and misfortunes, she murmured: "How proud I was when he gave it to me! At that time I thought him chivalrous and believed him sincere in his religious professions. Since he intrigues to make my little girl the accomplice of his murderous desires, never more will I wear it."

"Master Franz desires to speak to your ladyship," said a manservant from behind the portières covering the doorway.

"Show him up."

Franz was a distant relative who had lived much in the Krupp household after he finished his studies at the late Frederick Krupp's expense. At this time he was chief electrical engineer of the establishment, destined for still higher honours, for experts held that the mantle of the great Edison had descended upon Franz's broad shoulders. He was like a big brother to the Krupp girls, and looked upon the Baroness as a mother, having never known his own.

Tall and good-looking, Franz, as a rule, dressed like an Englishman of distinction, but to-day he had chafed under the obligation of wearing evening dress for breakfast, lunch and tea, because of the War Lord's presence. Even now his nether garments belonged to the ceremonial variety, but he wore a jacket tightly buttoned over the wide expanse of his shirt-front.

"So it is proposed to make two kinds of steel in future," he whispered, after closing the door and drawing the curtains. "Has that your approval, Frau Krupp?"

The Ironmaster's widow heard only the first part of the sentence; she was too amazed to listen further.

"What is that you say, Franz?"

The young man kissed the Baroness's hand.

"Acting without your leave or consent—I thought so," he said. "I would have staked my life on it that you would permit no such infamy." Seeing the Baroness's questioning eyes focused on his, he explained:

An hour before the War Lord left the Director-General had sent for him—"to explain certain technical details," ran the message. He had to wait a considerable time in the ante-room of the conference chamber before being admitted, and while there could not help overhearing what was going on inside, as the War Lord was arguing in drill-ground accents.

This was the gist of his peroration, defended with consummate sophistry: It was a crime against the Fatherland to supply possible enemies with arms that at one time or another might be used against the War Lord's Majesty. That sort of thing—treason, to call it by its proper name—had been permitted long enough, too long, in fact; and now that the life-long defender of misguided business honesty had been removed by God's Hand—G-o-d-'s H-a-n-d—there must be an end of it. He (the War Lord), ever on guard against the Fatherland's enemies, had instructed his scientists to discover a substitute for hard steel with which to line enemy guns and armour. These substitutes were forthwith to be experimented with, and, if the results were satisfactory, must be employed, instead of the real steel, whenever the War Lord so directs.

"And Frederick hardly cold in his shroud!" gasped the Baroness.

"But you," cried Franz, "you can prevent this fraud, this disgrace! You must, you will, I am sure of it!"

The Baroness had risen and stared vacantly into the fire.

"God punish me if I would hesitate a moment to do as honour dictates, Franz, but Frederick Krupp left his widow bound hand and foot," she replied bitterly.

"You mean to say that you submit to the power-drunk War Lord? Abdicate your sacred trust? Make your children and your workpeople accomplices of fraudulent practices?"

"Haven't you heard about the stipulations which were made in your Uncle Frederick's last will and testament?"

"Not a word," replied Franz.

"I thought Bertha would tell you."

"I was busy all the afternoon, and then came the Director-General's order, which prevented me from saying good night to the children."

"Sit down then and listen," said the Baroness. "As Uncle Frederick often told you, the War Lord has tried for years to obtain control of the Krupp works. In particular he was for ever preaching against the policy of business integrity, the proudest of the Krupp inheritances; but

though my husband allowed himself to be dominated by him in many respects, in this, the Krupp honesty, he remained adamant, partly thanks to my advice and strenuous opposition, I dare say. Up to now the Krupps have never played any government false, as you know."

"But, Uncle Frederick dead, the War Lord is moving heaven and earth to flog the firm into submission." There was suppressed rage in the tone of the young man's voice.

"Let me finish," demanded the Baroness. "Convinced that I would refuse to be the tool of his ambition, the War Lord persuaded your Uncle to ignore me as his legitimate successor, and the testament appoints Bertha sole heir and, again ignoring me, the War Lord her guardian and executor."

"*Gott!*" cried Franz.

The Baroness went on: "His position as supreme overlord of the Krupp business he made perfectly clear to us."

"Us? You mean the heads of the business?"

"I referred to the child and myself. He talked to the directors afterwards." The discrowned Cannon Queen told Franz the story of the Imperial interview. "He is the master," she said in conclusion, "Bertha his pawn, myself nobody."

"And we, the heads of the business, and our workmen, his slaves," added the chief electrician gloomily.

These two people, suddenly confronted by the unexpected—a wife shorn of her rights and wounded in her holiest maternal sentiments; an honest man commandeered to debase his genius and become an accessory to murder most foul—sat for a while in silence, brooding over their misfortune and the disasters threatening mankind as a consequence.

At last the Baroness roused herself. "And what did they want with you at the conference, Franz?"

"I was admitted after the War Lord had left to be closeted with the Director-General," replied the engineer, "and the directors seemed to me extraordinarily perturbed—far more than the master's death warrants among equals. Herr Braun acted as spokesman. He said the War Lord wanted the firm to experiment with a new steel lining for guns intended for foreign countries.

"Foreign countries! What does that mean?" I asked, as if I had not been an involuntary listener to the War Lord's speech.

"Majesty's orders—it behoves subjects to obey, not to ask questions," said Herr Braun, with unusual severity. "To the point, sir, acting upon the War Lord's orders to entrust the business to expert hands, we have decided to turn over the job to you."

Franz stopped short, then burst out: "What am I doing, Frau Krupp? You just told me that you are not the head of the firm, and I am about to reveal matters of the gravest importance confided to my keeping. I made a mistake—I was led away by filial reverence for my benefactor's widow. Pray forget what I have said."

Franz was about to withdraw, when a voice outside called: "Mamma, can I come in?"

"You said good night once. I thought you were in bed and asleep, Bertha."

The door opened, and a hand rustled the portières.

"Are you alone?"

"Only Franz."

"Oh!"

Bertha's blonde head thrust itself through the centre of the curtains, while she paused on the threshold. Then a naked foot in a blue velvet slipper with a golden heel: a vision in floating white rushed in and nestled childishly at the Baroness's feet.

"Howdy, Franz?" said Bertha, drawing her kimono tighter over her bosom. And to her mother: "I couldn't sleep after what Uncle Majesty told us to-night. So I came down. You are not angry, Mamma? Don't scold, Mamma," she added, observing her mother's stern face.

Frau Krupp patted the child's head. "Fate!" she said to Franz. "*Voilà*, the head of the Krupp firm. Continue."

The engineer bowed. "With your permission, my chief," he said, addressing Bertha.

"Anything you please, you big booby," laughed the child. Then, seriously: "I am your chief, indeed I am. Think of bossing a big chap like you and that arrogant Herr Braun, too!" She motioned Franz to bend down, and whispered in his ear, "Wouldn't it be fun to sack him?"

"No nonsense, child, if you want to stay up," Frau Krupp was very much in earnest, and to Franz she said: "Go on; I am impatient to hear the rest."

"I was telling your mother about some business Herr Braun wants to entrust me with," explained Franz, looking at the child.

"How very interesting," yawned Bertha; "but you can't get me to listen. Ah, there, I see one of Barbara's dolls. I will play with it till you get through; then supper. I didn't eat dinner with Fraulein," she added, looking at her mother, "and there's such a goneness here," touching her abdomen. The greatest force for destruction in the world, yet a child to all intents and purposes!

"Proceed," said the Baroness to Franz.

"With the chief's permission," began Franz formally; then, as if trying to make his disclosure as indefinite as possible: "You heard about the order from King Leopold, secured by the War-Lord's Brussels ambassador?"

The Baroness nodded, and Bertha took her eyes momentarily from her plaything. "Big, big guns," she said, describing a circle in the air by turning the doll's arm and hand round and round; "my apanage, poor Papa said. Glad you reminded me. I must tell Herr Braun about it. All the profits are to go to my children's hospital." She sat the doll astride her knee, bobbing her up and down, then burst out laughing. "See that head-dress, Franz, and her gown and apron—the Belgian colours. Looks like a coincidence, doesn't it?"

Bertha embraced the doll tenderly. "Thank your King for me, Dolly. The more guns he orders, the better for our little children here. German interests first," laughed Bertha, looking up. "Uncle Majesty told me so ever so often."

The "Germany-above-all" spirit, spelling moral and physical ruthlessness, spoke out of the child. The Fatherland first, second and third; perdition for the rest of the world, if Germany's interests be served thereby!

Whether the heiress had an inkling of what the War Lord really intended, it is impossible to decide; neither can there be any positive knowledge as to the attitude she might have assumed if, perchance, she did understand Franz's pregnant words.

Pupil of the War Lord, firmly believing in his preachings, saturated with his theories, and over-awed by his claims of Divine mission, his vapourings were gospel to her, and "Germany-above-all" was one of the commandments, even though it conflicted with all the others.

A monstrous case of *folie à deux*, "deux" standing for the German nation. Here we have a man decked out in ornate regimentals travelling about his country telling four millions of men: "You must die for Me," and immediately each man says to his wife: "I wonder if there is a special heaven for patriots like your husband?"

And to a certain class of persons he points out that science is but the handmaiden of wholesale murder, and that they must employ their God-given inventive genius, all their brains, all their time, to devise new ways and means for killing as many men, women and children as there are in the world outside of the German Empire. And they do.

And to a woman he says: "You were born to suffer. Give me your husband; I want him for the fighting." And she forthwith tells her man to make one more for the shambles.

And to the golden-haired girl he says: "A truce to your vanity, off with your locks, that I may buy more rifles; and your lover I want, too. His manly breast will make an excellent scabbard for a French or Russian lance."

And the golden-haired one raves that she is thrice happy to be allowed to sacrifice her beauty and the idol of her dreams for the War Lord.

"I want your fathers," he says to a playground full of children, "and your uncles and big brothers and cousins." And the little ones cry: "Hurrah! Long live the Emperor!"

"Would ye live for ever?" he queries of men between fifty and sixty-five. "To the barracks with you, even if you are but good for cannon fodder."

Someone tells him of a bunch of boys playing marbles in an alley; not one of them has finished his education. The War Lord examines them critically and sniffs. "You are big enough to stop a bullet somehow," he allows, and they are led to slaughter.

The All Highest looks upon the earth and boasts of his winged legions of man-killers. He declaims that Englishmen and Frenchmen and Italians and Belgians have turned out to fight God's Anointed; but adds with a sly smile they left their women at home and their brood, that he may out-Herod Herod. In his mind he feels the earth trembling under the heavy tread of his armed millions and the weight of his artillery.

This Dancing Dervish of universal slaughter, this man given over to murder-lust is the object of veneration not only of those whom he addresses in person, because of their mistaken sense of duty and patriotism; a whole nation, seventy millions strong, acclaim him Saviour—Messiah of the Fatherland's destinies.

One can understand individual sacrifice, but seventy millions of people, every mother's son and daughter, turning beasts of prey! It baffles psychological speculation. Everywhere the

"Evangelium of German superdom," as the War Lord sees it, is loud.

Small wonder Bertha, born of man-killer stock and suckled on the breasts of militarism, which nourished her kith and kin and their hundreds of thousands of dependents, believes unconditionally in the doctrines pronounced by her godfather, to her the God-head of power infinite, omniscience incarnate!

Hence the implied rebuke to Franz: "German interests first." After that she returned to the nursery—her Belgian doll.

Frau Krupp looked significantly at Franz. "You were going to say—"

"My orders are to experiment with the War Lord's new formula for steel on those guns for Liège."

Franz buried his head in his hands, elbows planted on knees, leaning forward heavily, while the Baroness sat looking at him, her nimble mind weighing the pros and cons. At last she reached out a hand and touched the young man's shoulder.

"Franz," she said solemnly.

The young man's head shot up and he stared at Frau Krupp as if she was a ghost. Answering the question in her eyes, he almost shouted, "Never!" holding up his right hand as if under oath.

The Baroness placed his hand on Bertha's head. "Swear that you will stand by this child."

"I swear, with all my heart, so help me, God," pronounced Franz, with severe emphasis.

A peculiar look came into the Baroness's eyes, half satisfied, half cunning, as with a sort of imperious finality she said: "It is well." Then, turning to the child: "Bertha, run along now and tell them to serve in the small dining-room in five minutes."

"Make it ten, Mamma, so I can put on my new *negligée*."

"All right, ten; but hurry," agreed Frau Krupp, looking at the pendule.

When the curtain had fallen behind Bertha the Baroness turned a white, severe face upon Franz. Then, abandoning all pretence of loyalty to the Grand War Lord, she told the terrible secrets long locked in her bosom, secrets imparted by her late husband or gathered from his lips during long, sleepless nights while he tossed on his pillow.

"It's the Frankenstein we have to fight," she said, "the pitiless, heartless, soul-less Evil One, intent upon setting the world afire through my child's inheritance. The plotting has been going on ever since the crowned monster was enthroned. Almost the first communication he made to Frederick, as head of the Empire, was: 'Now we must bend all energies to get ready. And when we are, I will set my foot upon the neck of the universe, Charlemagne redivivus!'

"Previous to that, Frederick and myself had agreed gradually to drop cannon- and ammunition-making. The Krupps were to create, instead of facilitating destruction. No longer was Essen to be a place upon which a merciful God looked with abhorrence. Engines of death had made us rich and powerful; henceforth the coined results of war were to be employed to make waste land arable, to drain morasses, to dig canals, to prosecute every peaceful endeavour promising to enhance the German people's chances of happiness and prosperity. The old saw of turning swords into ploughshares was to be enacted by the firm that had made war thrice deadly. Then the tempter came. 'I rely upon you, Frederick! You are the Fatherland's only hope, for Germany can achieve its destinies only through blood and iron.'

"One more supreme effort, Frederick, then the War Lord will turn husbandman, making you manager-general of his great farm stretching from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to Siberia.'

"As you know, the War Lord is an insinuating talker," continued Frau Krupp, "and his autocratic manner, enhanced by occasional flurries of condescension and persuading Frederick to join in his social relaxations. Ah!" she cried, striking the table with her hand, "it was these that forged the bullet which killed my husband!"

There was a shrill tone of rage and defiance in the last words. Then emotion mastered Frau Krupp's strength. She tottered, swayed, and would have fallen had not Franz caught her. He knew what she had suffered through her husband's intimacy with the War Lord and his cronies, and shuddered.

"Mother," he said unconsciously, as her head touched his breast. The Baroness let it rest there a moment; here was a tower of strength, of reserve force.

"Alas!" she continued, after a tense silence, "in the long run they ensnared Frederick. He succumbed to their ensnaring wiles as a foolish man might to the flatteries of a flirt. My counsel was no longer sought; the promises he had made—which I had exacted in happier days—were forgotten or denied. The very ploughs and ploughshares we were manufacturing then were thrown into the melting-pot for guns."

She picked up a book lying on the mantel. "Vital Statistics of the German Empire," she read aloud; "Steady Increase of Population." She flung the volume on the hearth. "Multiply like the Biblical sands; it only means that Essen works the harder to put you under the sod."

Frau Krupp dropped her voice and went on in a whisper: "Do you understand now what your threatened retirement would mean? It would mean that, excepting France and Great Britain, the whole of the world, all the smaller nations, would be practically at the War Lord's mercy, because their guns wouldn't shoot, their swords and lances wouldn't pierce.

"Such is the goal he has been striving for, the goal he wants to attain through my little girl. 'Have them all inadequately armed, and it will be a walk-over for German arms,' he calculates."

"And how can I prevent the world's debacle?"

"By fighting fire with fire. You cannot fight the War Lord openly—pretend obedience, fall in with his plans apparently, be an enthusiastic faker, as far as he can see; but don't smirch my little girl's business honour and submerge the world under a tidal wave of blood by making other nations defenceless. I have your promise, Franz?"

"It's a vast prospect," answered the young engineer, "but I have sworn to stand by Bertha ___"

"I thank you," said the Baroness, as the portières were noisily pushed aside and a child's voice cried: "Supper's ready."

CHAPTER IV

BERTHA KRUPP, WAR LADY, ASSERTS HERSELF

Science Steps In—Franz Incurs the Kaiser's Wrath

Six months of feverish activity in the Essen works, of tests and measuring velocities, of experimenting with ingots, hardening processes, chilled iron castings and compound steel—who knows or cares for the technique of murder machinery save generals of the staff? As Mark Twain at one time labelled a book, "There is no weather in this," so the present author will not burden his pages with figures and statistics of any sort. It would be a tantalising undertaking at best, for the War Lord himself was directing, and insisted that his every misunderstood, mis-stated and often wholly untenable whim be immediately gratified by the ready servility of Krupp employés—"his people."

Up to the time under discussion the Emperor Wilhelm had devoted nearly all his energies to drill, political intrigue and uttering platitudes. To dabble in formulary details, with nobody to dispute his opinion or correct his errors, flattered him in the proportion as his judgment about ordnance construction became more and more fantastic.

He was always going about with a half-dozen professors at his heels, losing no opportunity of propounding nebulous and remarkable theories to their startled but complaisant ears.

At the beginning of the present century the German professor was a hundred years behind the times in his dress, manners and social habits. The German Punch had rudely caricatured him into a new habitat, where soap and water, clean collars, unfrayed trousers and non-Cromwellian headgear held sway. Up to that period, he had bathed occasionally, had curled his hair now and then, and thereafter relapsed into that state of slovenliness which is labelled scientific preoccupation by the German mob, and stands in awe of learning, be it ever so badly digested and wrongfully applied.

The War Lord had an English mother; he is a Barbarian fond of the tub. He perceived that professors might be made useful to him. But how make them presentable?

A visit to England gave him the clue.

And forthwith the new order of Court dress was launched: short clothes and pumps, silk stockings and jabot-shirts; and the official Press rudely informed those "entitled to the uniform" that bathing was imperative before getting into it.

The brotherhood of science furthermore received hints to patronise the War Lord's own barber in regard to their flowing beards. "But Admiral von Tirpitz wears a forked beard too," pleaded some. "No precedent, Herr Professor, his Excellency has Majesty's special permit!"

With the superfluous hair, the professors likewise had to shed their accustomed hyperbole.

"Don't speak until spoken to." "Answer in as few inforamatory words as can be managed." "Invariably make your answer meet the Imperial wishes." "Never contradict," were the Grand Master's instructions, and the scientific men abiding by them soon found themselves in clover, because they were "useful," while the rest were discarded.

In particular, experts in chemistry were exploited by the War Lord. "They must help to feed my army and people"—in case war lasts longer than expected. "They must invent new weapons of destruction"—for while powder and lead are well enough in their way, they do not spell the end of things.

German scientific men are very fond of power and have an enormous idea of their own importance, but their notions are subject to fits of extravagant humility if policy, or personal advantage, can be served by Uriah Heepisms. The keener ones in the Imperial entourage found that it would pay to cater to the mobility in the War Lord's ideas while there was a certain degree of logic. And if, perchance, he happened to drop into incoherency or extravagance, was it the professor's business to set him right? Court usage registered an emphatic negative.

Such were the beginnings of the partnership between War Lordism and the perversion of German science into an instrument of destruction. "Science to the rescue of the lame and halt"—an out-of-date notion. Science makes them by the hundreds of thousands.

The professors were powerful assistants to the War Lord in maintaining his grip on the Krupp throat and acquiring further business concessions from the firm; but, of course, as to realising the technical chimeras of the War Lord's mind with respect to new-fangled war machinery, there was more pretence than activity, for dividends had to be considered, and the War Lord would have been the first to make an outcry if his earnings were reduced by the fraction of a per cent.

Franz maintained his position as chief experimenter, and, his expert judgment in gunmaking as well as in electricity being unquestioned, he was able openly to frustrate some of the War Lord's most bloodthirsty plans by proving them impracticable to the satisfaction of the board of directors, which put a stop to their execution for the time at least.

"Uncle Majesty is very wroth with you," said Bertha to her relative one evening, when the War Lord had returned to Berlin after one of his unofficial visits to the Ruhr metropolis. He was in the habit of coming to Essen every little while now, unheralded and incog. Likewise in mufti; and what discarding of regimentals and associated fripperies meant to him few people can imagine.

His uniforms are built to make him appear taller and more imposing, while affording a ready background for all sorts of decorative material—ribbons, scarfs, stars, crosses and medals galore.

"Wroth with me?" queried Franz.

"Yes, with you," replied the child; "and I heard him dictate a long letter, giving you a terrible talking to. I just signed it," added Bertha with a satisfied grin.

"And why am I hauled over the coals?" asked Franz.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied the child. "'One of the things little girls cannot understand,' said Uncle Majesty. But I do know that you must—I said *must*—not do it again. I won't let you, do you hear? I mean Uncle Majesty won't."

Franz raised his hat and knocked his heels together, military fashion. He was about to withdraw when Bertha caught him by the arm. "You are not angry with me, Franz?" she pleaded.

"No, my chief."

"Say 'no, *liebe* Bertha.'"

"No, *liebe* Bertha."

At this moment a messenger caught up with the two young people on the road to Villa Huegel and handed Franz an official-looking envelope. The engineer looked inquiringly at Bertha. "May I?"

Instead of answer the Krupp heiress picked up her skirts with both hands and ran towards the house.

Her letter informed Franz that the task of completing the Belgian guns had been entrusted to other hands. Secondly, that, in future, communications about experiments ordered by the War Lord must be addressed to the heiress direct, not to the board of directors.

CHAPTER V

HOW THE WAR LADY WAS CAJOLED

The Imperial Chief-Court-and-House Marshal, Count Eulenburg, has the honour to command Fraulein Bertha Krupp to attend upon their Imperial and Royal Majesties, His Majesty the Emperor and King, and Her Majesty the Empress and Queen, during the Christmas and New Year's festivities at the Schloss, Berlin.

A royal equipage will await Fraulein Krupp's pleasure at the station, meeting the early morning train of December 22nd.

Dress: Silks, Velvets and Laces.

Attendance: Wardrobe mistress and maid; A footman.

The invitation, copperplated on an immense sheet of rather cheap paper and sent through the mail free, created much excitement in Villa Huegel, the more so as it was wholly unexpected, the War Lord never having intimated that an honour of that kind was in store for his godchild.

In the meantime Bertha had risen to the dignity of opening her own letters and using her discretion as to divulging their contents, or not, as she saw fit, or rather as the War Lord saw fit. This was strictly opposed to native custom; but isn't the King above the law? And certain reports, such as those ordered to be addressed to Bertha direct—Franz's for instance—All-Highest wouldn't have communicated to any save himself, not even to Frau Krupp. Hence his command that the Krupp heiress keep her own counsel in regard to her correspondence.

Bertha broke the great seal of the Court Marshal's office and her eyes became luminous as she read the printed words and angular script. She sat staring at the latter for a minute or two, while the Baroness, chafing under her impotency, pretended to be busy with an orange. Finally Barbara tiptoed behind her sister's chair and looked over her shoulder. The fourteen-year-old girl being well up in Court lore—having seen dozens of such letters addressed to her late father—applied herself to the essentials, skipping the merely decorative lines.

"Christmas and New Year's festivities at the *Schloss*, Berlin," she read aloud. Then higher up: "Fraulein Bertha Krupp."

"Oh, Mamma!" she cried, "we are not invited, you and I. Isn't that mean of Uncle Majesty?" She stamped her foot. "But he shan't kiss me when he comes again—see if I let him kiss me."

"Hold your tongue, naughty child."

Bertha spoke with an air of unwonted authority. She folded up her letter.

"Just see how high and mighty we are!" mimicked Barbara. "'Naughty child,' and what are you? I shouldn't wonder if Uncle Majesty spanked you sometimes, when you are alone with him; you always come away full of humility to him and of arro—arro—" (she couldn't find the word) "the other thing to us—to Mamma and me, I mean."

The Baroness put out her arm as if she expected the children to resort to fisticuffs. "Barbara," she called half pleadingly.

"She will go to her room," insisted Bertha, ringing. The butler responded so promptly that there was no doubt he had been listening behind the portières.

"Fraulein Barbara's governess," Bertha ordered. And as the man was going out: "My secretary shall report at once in my council room."

"Are you mad?" cried Frau Krupp, when the curtains had dropped behind the servant. Bertha seemed so unlike herself—unlike what her child ought to be.

The Krupp heiress disdained to answer.

"Since I am to be their Imperial and Royal Majesties' guest, I must prepare for the honour," she deigned after a little while; "in half an hour I'll leave for Cologne. You may accompany me, if you like, Mother."

The Baroness grew white under the lash of Bertha's patronising tone. "You shall not go," she said hotly.

"If you will come to the council room you can see in black and white my authority to go where and when I please," replied Bertha, going out.

Barbara and her mother looked at each other in blank amazement, the child not

understanding, the mother understanding but too well. Bertha was lost to her; the supreme egotist had gained a strangle-hold on her flesh and blood.

With the strange intuition that often moves children to do the right thing at the right time when grown-ups are at their wits' end, Barbara seemed to divine what passed in her mother's mind and, burying her face in the Baroness's lap, she sobbed out convulsively words of consolation, of endearment and unbounded affection. Frau Krupp bent over the child's head and kissed her again and again. "My little girl, my Barbara, won't discard Mother, will she?" she said in broken tones.

"Not for ten thousand Uncle Majesties," cried Barbara fiercely; and, as if the words had freed her from a spell, she rose of a sudden and planted herself in front of Frau Krupp.

"— Uncle Majesty," she said, clenching her little fists.

Then, overcome by her breach of the conventions, she ran out of the room and into the arms of her governess.

Frau Krupp would not have had the heart to scold Barbara even if she had not run away. "— him!"—her own sentiments. With such reflections she leaned back in her great arm-chair, undecided whether she should follow Bertha to the council room or not. Her motherly dignity said "No," while anxiety for her child urged her to go to her.

"To think of him playing the bully in my own house," she deliberated; "the coward, setting a child against her mother! But I know what it's done for. He wants her like wax in his hand—the hand getting ready to choke the world into submission."

The butler entered with soft step.

"Fraulein begs to say that she will leave for Cologne at 10.30 sharp, and she desires your ladyship to get ready."

"Thank you, my maid shall lay out the new black silk costume. Did you order the horses?"

"Fraulein's secretary is attending to everything," said the butler in a hurt voice. "I don't know by what authority he assumes my duties," he added.

"He shall not do so again, Christian," promised the Baroness.

Three hours later Frau Krupp and Bertha were going the rounds of Cologne's most exclusive shops. The Hochstrasse is too narrow to permit the use of a carriage; the ladies were followed, then, by a train of commissionaires laden with boxes, for Bertha was buying everything in the line of frocks, costumes and millinery that was pretty and expensive. Consult her mother? Not a bit of it. The Court Marshal's instructions were silk, velvet, laces; nothing else mattered.

The shopkeepers, of course, knew Frau Krupp; they had known Bertha familiarly ever since she was in short frocks. The girl of seventeen had blossomed into the richest heiress of the world, yet it would have been almost indecent not to consider the elder woman first.

So the best chair was pushed forward for the Baroness, and man-milliners and *mannequins* fell over each other trying to win her applause for the goods offered. The widow of the Ironmaster smiled and talked vaguely about their merits, but announced that Bertha was to do her own choosing.

Bertha went about her task like an inexperienced country lass suddenly fallen into a pot of money. The girl seemed to be working under a sense of assertiveness, tempered by responsibility to a higher power. That higher power regarded her mother of no consequence. Though of a naturally dutiful and kindly nature, Bertha assumed an air of independence unbecoming to so young a woman.

Indeed her want of respect was of a piece with her "Uncle Majesty's" behaviour in a little Italian town, when his father lay dying there. The War Lord, then a junior Prince, had crossed the Alps as the representative of his grandsire, head of the State, and instantly presumed to lord over his mother, who was the Princess Royal of an Empire, compared with which his own patrimony is a petty *Seigneurie*.

He arrived on a Saturday night, and at once ordered divine service for seven o'clock next morning, an hour suiting his restlessness and most unsuited to his parent, worn out with night vigils and anxieties.

However, to humour him, and also to gain more time to spend with her ailing husband, the Imperial Mother acquiesced in the arrangement; but imagine her surprise when in the morning she learned at the last moment that, at her son's behest, the House Marshal had not provided carriages as usual, and that she was expected to walk three-quarters of a mile to the chapel.

Meanwhile the official procession of church-goers had started. At the head a platoon of cuirassiers, followed by the Prince's Marshal and staff. Next, his adjutants and a deputation of

officers from his regiment; his personal servants in gala livery; finally, himself, walking alone, the observed of all observers.

The father's own household was commanded to fall behind. So were his mother and sisters; the Prince was not at all interested in them. His Royal Mother might lean on the arm of a footman for all he cared.

Here we have an exaggeration of the most repulsive traits of egotism, self-indulgence, callousness, coarseness, cruelty and deceitfulness, for, as intimated, Wilhelm had been careful to keep his parent in ignorance of the affront to be put upon her.

Small wonder that a person so constituted, having vested himself with full charge of a girl's soul and mind as she approached mental and physical puberty, upset her filial equilibrium, while her actions reflected the impress of his own arrogance.

CHAPTER VI FRAULEIN KRUPP INVITED TO COURT

The Virtue of a Defect—Bertha's Reception—A Disappointment

There is a streak of malignity in the best of women. Maybe the younger girl has nothing but praise for another a few years her senior, but she will add that naturally "age" inspires respect. Helen has the most beautiful eyes, the daintiest figure, the most transparent complexion, the softest colour, the most exquisite feet, the sweetest smile and the most delightful air of superiority, and when her friend tenders her a box at the Play she will invite some girl conspicuously deficient in most of these excellences—human nature, or just plain, ordinary devilry. So Bertha's mother took a sort of grim satisfaction in the poor taste Bertha displayed in selecting her Court gowns.

"He taught her to ignore her mother even in matters of dress; serves him right if her appearance jars on his sense of beauty," she said to herself more than once when superintending the packing of Bertha's many trunks.

The Baroness had never visited the Berlin Court, and her conception of its splendours resided in her own imagination.

As a matter of fact, the Berlin Court is the home of bad taste; plenty of fine shoulders, but draped with ugly and inappropriate material. Some few *petite* feet against an overwhelming majority too large and clumsily shod. Some fine arms and hands, since such are subjects of the War-Lord's appreciation, but faces broad, plain and uninteresting.

The taste of a man who allows his wife to keep a bow-legged attendant is necessarily deplorable; a king permitting that sort of thing, despite prevailing fashions, is inexcusable.

An anecdote in point.

When, in the 'nineties, the Medical Congress sat in Berlin, the learned gentlemen were commanded to a reception at the Palace, and in their honour the whole contingent of Court beauties was put on exhibition.

"Did you ever see an uglier lot of women?" asked a Russian professor afterwards, addressing a table full of colleagues. All shook their heads sadly, depressed by the remembrance of what they had witnessed.

Into this *milieu* of hallowed ugliness and organised *ennui* dropped the Krupp heiress like a pink-cheeked apple among a lot of windfalls.

As we know, she was not pretty from the stand-point of the English-speaking races. Her complexion was good, but it lacked the Scottish maid's transparency; her hair was fair to look upon, but there are a thousand English girls travelling on the Underground daily whose glossy tresses are to be preferred; her figure was a little too full, like that of Jerome Napoleon's Queen, Catherine of Würtemberg, whose finely chiselled bosoms scandalised the Tuileries when she was scarcely sixteen. She had the heavy gait of the German woman, and the vocabulary of them all: "*Oh Himmel!*" "*Ach Gott!*" "*Verdammt!*" and so forth, a dreadful inheritance, which even the "Semiramis of the North" could not shake off after fifty and more years' residence in Imperial Russia.

Her Majesty's maid of honour, Countess von Bassewitz, went to the station with Count Keller, a minor gold stick, to receive and welcome Bertha. Bassewitz was young and pretty—"the only happy isle in an ocean of inelegancy," as Duke Gonthier of Schleswig used to say. Her sole perceptible defect was indifferent hands, but, strange to say, this very blemish got her the position at Court.

The War Lord had declared that he wouldn't have more of the "hideous baggage" (meaning Her Majesty's ladies) that "made his house a nightmare," and that the next Dame du Palais to be appointed was to be good-looking, or must wear a bell, so that he could keep out of her way. His Queen, who regards all women through the jaundiced lorgnette of jealousy, was in despair. In her mind's eye she saw the Schloss peopled with Pompadours, Du Barrys and Dianes de Poitiers.

The War Lord had instructed the Court Marshal to demand photographs of applicants for the vacant post, and Countess von Bassewitz's he considered the most promising. "Wire her to report to-morrow morning at eight," he ordered. She arrived while the War Lord was busy lecturing his Council of Ministers on international law, and Her Majesty saw the candidate first. She couldn't help admitting to herself that Ina was comely in the extreme, and that it would require a vast deal of intrigue to induce her husband not to appoint the young girl forthwith. Then a happy thought struck her. "You may remove your gloves," she said condescendingly.

Countess Ina blushed and grew pale in turn; conscious of her weak point, she was afraid it would work her undoing.

But, instead, Her Majesty smiled benignly upon those unlovely hands.

"His Majesty!" announced the valet de chambre.

"Be gloved, my child; hurry."

The War Lord didn't know what to make of it when "Dona" approved of his selection.

"She is mysteriously confiding," he said to his crony, Maxchen (the Prince of Fürstenberg). But he changed his mind when, a week or two later, he had induced Ina to take off her gloves in his presence.

The War Lord had instructed Bassewitz and Keller to treat Bertha "like a raw egg," saying: "Her income is bigger per minute than that of all you Prussian Junkers per annum"—a gratuitous slap, the more ungenerous since the old Kings of Prussia gobbled up a goodly part of their landed possessions, as Bismarck once pointed out to Frederick William IV.

Berlin pomp and circumstance! Three flags, paper flowers on lanterns, a much-worn red carpet leading from the spot where Bertha's saloon carriage was to draw up to the royal reception room in the station.

As Bertha, though Grand-Lady-Armouress-of-the-World, has no place in the Army List, she must be content with walking through lines of royal footmen in black and silver, on which account the War Lord sincerely pitied the girl. "Twenty marks for a precedent to endow her with a uniform," but even the obsequious Eulenburg failed to discover an excuse.

Inside the Royal waiting-room: red-plush furniture, with covers removed, in garish glory; a bouquet of flowers from the Potsdam hothouses; a silver teapot steaming; on a silver platter four bits of pastry, one for each person and one over to show that we are not at all niggardly—oh, dear, no!

The stationmaster enters in some kind of uniform, a cocked and plumed hat above a red face, toy sword on thigh. "The train is about to draw into the station, Herr Graf, and may it please Her Ladyship."

Countess von Bassewitz starts for the door. "One moment, pray," admonishes gold stick, "the noblesse doesn't run its feet off to greet a commoner even if she is laden with money."

Courtiers suit their vocabulary to their lord and master. Countess Bassewitz is young and hearty. Never before had she reflected on the sad fact that Bertha lacked birth, but now that a gold stick had mentioned it, a mere maid of honour must needs bow to superior judgment.

So the richest girl in the world was left standing in the doorway of her saloon carriage for a good half-minute before their Majesties' titled servants deigned to approach. "Will take some of the purse-pride out of her," observed Count Keller.

Then, hat in hand and held aloft, three bows, well measured, not too low, for high-born personages' privileges must not be encroached upon.

"Aham, Aham" (several courtly grunts, supposed to be exquisitely *recherché*), "Fraulein Krupp, I have the honour—Count Keller—Countess von Bassewitz, dame to Her Majesty. Had a pleasant journey I hope," delivered in nasal accents. In Germany, you must know, it is considered most aristocratic to trumpet one's speech through the nose after the fashion of bad French tenors chanting arias.

Countess von Bassewitz, amiable and enthusiastic, spouted genuine civilities. "Fraulein looks charming!" "What a pretty frock!" "I will show you all around the shops," and more compliments and promises of that kind.

Childlike, Bertha had expected a coach-and-four. Another disappointment! The carriage at the royal entrance was of the most ordinary kind—a landau and pair of blacks, such as are driven about Berlin by the dozen.

"If you please," said Count Keller, bowing her into the coach. She planted herself boldly in the right-hand corner, facing the horses. Bassewitz looked horror-stricken at the heiress's cool assumption of the gold stick's place, and to smooth him over attempted to take the rear seat; but Bertha pulled her to her side. "Don't leave me," she whispered, with a look upon the ruffled face of the Count, who marvelled that there was no earthquake or rain of meteors because he was obliged to ride backwards, with a "mechanic's daughter" in the seat of honour.

CHAPTER VII IN THE CROWN PRINCE'S PRIVATE ROOM

A Talk with the Crown Prince—Matrimonial Affairs—Bertha Discussed—The
Empress and Her Sons

The War Lord had not taken any notice of Frederick the Great's injunction against "useless beggar princes." At the time of Bertha's visit six of them, ranging from twenty-one to thirteen years of age, were roaming the palace, and there was a little girl of eleven besides. Only the eldest boy was provided for, by the Crown Prince's Endowment Fund; the rest were booked to live by the grace of their father's munificence and such moneys as could be squeezed out of the public in the shape of military and administrative perquisites, unless they contracted advantageous marriages; for while the Prussian allows himself to be heavily taxed for the Civil List, that jolly institution, grants for His Majesty's sisters, cousins and aunts has no place in his catalogue of loyalty.

Talking one day to his heir, the War Lord broached the subject of a money-marriage.

"But mother didn't have any money," the *bête noire*, Crown Prince William, had the temerity to interpose.

"No cash, it's true; but our marriage quasi-legitimatised our acquisition of Schleswig-Holstein, and those provinces are worth something."

"Perhaps I had better marry Alexandra or Olga Cumberland," suggested young William, "so that the possession of Hanover can no longer be disputed. These girls have coin besides."

"Don't speak of them—there are reasons."

"Or a Hesse girl of the Electoral Branch."

"And turn Catholic like Princess Anna," cried the War Lord furiously. "Shut up about that Danish baggage. I myself will get you a wife. Trust father to find you the *comme il faut* wife—*comme il faut* in every respect: politics, family, religion and personal attractiveness, for we want no ugly women in our family."

The Crown Prince opened his mouth for a pert reply, but William forestalled him by an imperious gesture.

"I am preparing a message for the Ministerial Council."

In the evening William invited his younger brothers—Eitel, Albert, Augustus and Oscar—to his rooms, providing a bottle of beer and two cigarettes per head. Having attained his majority and consequently succeeded to the Dukedom of Oels, the Brunswick inheritance, he might have offered the boys a real treat, champagne and tobacco *ad lib.*, but such would have been against Prussian tradition, which stands for parsimony at home and display where it spells cheap glory.

"Joachim wanted to be of the party," said Augustus.

"And tell Mamma all—not if I know myself. It's time the kid was in bed anyhow," said the Crown Prince with fine scorn, for Joachim was only thirteen years old at the time.

"He will tell all the same," suggested Albert.

"And will get a thrashing for his pains. Besides, I shall withdraw my allowance of three marks

per week. Tell him so; that will settle the mamma-child."

"He shall have it straight from the shoulder; you can rely on that, Duke of Oels," said Eitel.

"Oels," repeated Eitel, "why didn't you inherit Sibyllenort too? The idea, giving Sibyllenort to those sanctimonious Saxons."

"Rotten, to be sure. But old William was eccentric, you know, like his brother, the Diamond Duke," said the Crown Prince.

"The Diamond Duke; wasn't he the chap who made some Swiss town erect him a monument, omitting the proviso that it must not tumble down?" asked Albert, who sets up as a scholar.

"Precisely so, and the monument is dust."

Prince William shook with laughter. "But that's not the question before the house." Willy assumed the oratorical pose favoured by Herr Liebknecht, the Socialist. "Boys," he continued, actually using the German equivalent for the familiar term, "what do you think? Father presumed to find me a wife—me!"

He repeated the personal pronoun three or four times with increasing emphasis, while beating the board with his clenched fist—a very good imitation of the War Lord himself.

"I am not beholden to him financially like you, not at all," cried the Crown Prince. "He can keep his miserable fifteen thousand thalers per annum."

"No," he added quickly, after reflection; "it will be the greater punishment to take his money."

The Crown Prince continued: "And if father dares propose wife-finding for *me*, what will he do to you, boys? If he has his way, you won't marry the girl of your choice, but some political or military possibility. There is only one way to prevent it," insisted the Crown Prince. "We must all stand together, declaring our firm determination to do our own wooing without interference from father. He will plead politics, interests of the Fatherland. But for my part, I won't have father impose a wife on me, even if the alliance gained us half of Africa or Persia."

"And I won't marry a Schleswig," said Eitel.

"Nor I a Lippe, no matter how much Aunt Vicky cracks up Adolph's family."

"Now then, all together," declaimed the Crown Prince. "We, Princes Wilhelm, Eitel, Albert, Augustus and Oscar of Prussia, solemnly swear not to have wives imposed upon us for reasons of State or politics, father's threats, entreaties and personal interests notwithstanding."

The boys repeated the impromptu troth word for word. "Shake on that," said Wilhelm, holding out his hand. And the agreement was so ratified. Then another round of beer on the Duke of Oels.

As the Princes were draining their *Seidels*—conspicuous for the emblem of the Borussia Students' Club of Bonn University on the cover—a low whistle was heard outside.

"The mater," whispered Oscar.

"Push the *Seidels* into the centre," commanded the Crown Prince, helping vigorously. He pushed a concealed button and the centre of the table with its contents disappeared through an opening in the floor, while another set with glasses of lemonade and cakes shot into its place, the floor likewise filling up again.

The Princes were petrified with amazement. "Duplicate of the Barbarina *table de confiance*," explained the big brother; "had it secretly copied and installed without my Grand Master being the wiser."

This sort of table was invented by Frederick the Great for *tête-à-tête* confidences with Barbarina, the famous Italian beauty.

The sight of the lemonade made the Empress radiant. "And I had been told that you were up to all sorts of tricks," she said apologetically. And to the Crown Prince: "I am so glad you are setting your younger brothers a good example."

"Always, mother, always," vowed Wilhelm. "Believe me, if these boys were as abstemious as I, they would save fortunes out of their lieutenant's allowance."

"I came to prepare you for our visitor, Fraulein Bertha Krupp," began the Empress.

"A mere kid, isn't she?" cried Eitel in his most blasé air.

"Don't let your father hear that," said the Empress severely; and again addressing the Crown Prince, she continued: "She is quite a young lady, well educated and excellently well brought up. Father wants us all to be particularly nice to his ward—treat her as one of the family."

"I say, mother," interrupted Eitel, "is there to be anything in the way of a matrimonial alliance between a Hohenzollern and the granddaughter of the Essen blacksmith? If so, mark me for the sacrifice. Judged by her photos, Bertha is a bonnie girl, with plenty of life; wouldn't I have a thousand and one uses for her money. To begin with, I would buy myself a hundred saddle horses

and a gold wrist-watch, such as English officers wear, also a yacht."

"Not a word about *mésalliance*!" The Empress had grown red in the face, and Eitel made haste to apologise. Putting his arm around his mother's shoulders, he kissed her on the cheek and pleaded: "Mother, fancy his Royal Highness, Prince Eitel Frederick of Prussia, marrying anyone not of the blood royal! Of course I was joking. Just tell us, Willy and me, what ought to be done about that little commoner due to-morrow, and big brother and I will see to it that your commands are obeyed to the letter." This with a threatening look upon the younger boys.

"I thought father's injunction to treat her like one of the family would suffice. It means that you must not let her see the gulf between such as she is and Royalty. Show her the sights, but don't boast of anything we've got. Father says she can duplicate the Schloss and Neues Palais, all our palaces with all they contain, without considerable damage to her purse."

"But if none of us is going to marry the little-big gold mine, and as papa is her guardian and can do as he likes with Bertha, what's the use of truckling to her?" asked Augustus, who has a logical mind.

The Empress who, as a rule, is not good at repartee, immediately replied as if she had foreseen the question. As a matter of fact, the War Lord had thoroughly coached her in what to say.

"Augustus," she replied, "of course your father's will is law with Bertha as with everybody else; but in this case he would rather coax than otherwise, for in a few years, you see, she will attain her majority, and might insist upon taking the bit between her teeth, if in the interval she had been driven too hard."

"Eminently correct," said the Crown Prince. "I endorse every word you say, Mother, and if these youngsters don't want to understand they needn't. They will be made to do as you suggest."

CHAPTER VIII STORIES OF COURT LIFE

Musical Honours for Bertha—Bertha in a Temper—Luncheon at Court—A Tantalizing Procedure—A British Experience

"Call out the guards when Fraulein Krupp drives up," 'phoned the War Lord to the officer *du jour* from the Council Room between writing a treatise on a scrap-of-paper policy and making an outline of his speech, "An Appeal to Royalism," later delivered at Königsberg.

To have fifty men under a lieutenant exercise their feet on a given spot to the tune of fife and drum for the benefit of a person not born to the purple seems to William the highest honour conferable, a delusion bred by militarism. In the same spirit, the War Lord of Bismarck's time sent his Chancellor the patent of lieutenant-general. "That won't buy me a postage stamp," remarked Bismarck.

The Iron One would have preferred a pipe of tobacco, while his War Lord went about for three days patting himself on the back for his act of generosity and telling everybody within reach of the good fortune which, thanks to his grace, had befallen Bismarck, "really a mere civilian."

Bertha was too young to see the absurdity of the gratuitous manoeuvre, "the sausage intended to knock the side of bacon off the hook," as they say in Hamburg. It cost the War Lord nothing, made healthy exercise for the soldiers, and Bertha, still a child in experience and mode of thought, was impressed when Count Keller, pricking up his ears at the sound of the drum like an old army horse in a tinker's cart, shot out of his seat, raised his hat and bowed low.

"Signal honour, upon word, Fraulein; unprecedented—almost," he added in an undertone.

And Countess von Bassewitz, rolling her eyes in loyal ecstasy, squeezed Bertha's arm. "Majesty must be exceeding fond of his godchild to treat you like an equal—almost," she too added.

Drum and fife still made for ear-splitting discord when Count Keller handed Bertha out of the carriage. His lordship, by the way, was now congratulating himself on having been deprived of the seat of honour. Small doubt, if he had taken it, it would have been reported to the War Lord,

and Majesty, bent on showering Royal honours on the commoner, would have been furious.

Two lackeys at the door, more at the bottom of the stairs, still more on the first landing—men-servants seem to be the only commodity lavishly provided at the Berlin Court.

"*Kammerherr*, the Noble Lord von ——" (mentioning some Masurian village) "commanded to the sublime honour—Fraulein Krupp's service" (long intervals between half-sentences to show that the speaker was really a Simon-pure Prussian aristocrat) "beg to submit—with Fraulein's permission—I will conduct Fraulein to her apartments."

Bertha did not understand half the titled personage trumpeted in nasal cacophony, but a word or two from little Bassewitz explained. Then ceremonious leave-taking, as if it was for years; assurances of "unexampled pleasure experienced," of "more in store," and "Majesty is so graciously fond of Fraulein—she ought to be so happy"; in fact, there wasn't a girl "in the wide, wide world so favoured," and more polite fiction of the sort.

Up two flights of stairs; corridor thinly and shingly carpeted; electric bulbs few and far between. Ante-room, saloon and bedchamber. In the first threadbare, red plush furniture. The bedchamber was hung in cretonne of doubtful freshness.

"I trust Fraulein's slightest wishes are anticipated. Princess von Itzenplitz last had these apartments, and was graciously pleased to express her highest satisfaction," boasted the *kammerherr*.

Her Grace of Itzenplitz may have done so, but the richest girl in the world was not inclined to put up with such third-class hotel accommodation!

When the *kammerherr* had bowed himself out Bertha sat down on the edge of the bed and had a good cry. Received like a princess, and housed like a charwoman! But she wasn't going to stand it, not she, Bertha Krupp.

Her assertiveness, newly acquired, but all the stronger for that, made her give a vicious pull to the bell-rope. She hardly noticed that it came off in her hand when a lackey, scenting baksheesh, responded.

"My servants, quick!" she ordered.

"Beg Fraulein's pardon, they haven't yet arrived from the station."

"Didn't Count Keller provide a conveyance for them?" she demanded peremptorily, hoping that her words would reach that worthy. "They must be sent for instantly."

There were sounds of carriage wheels in the courtyard below.

"Wait," cried Bertha; "there they are at last!" She handed the servant a small gold coin. "For the driver; let him keep the change."

The footman withdrew with a broad smile. No doubt he robbed the cabman of half the generous tip.

Torrents of "Ohs!" and "*Ach Gotts!*" when the Essen contingent came in. They had waited more than half an hour for the expected royal carriage, and then in despair took the only public vehicle available.

Bertha's tirewoman inspected the apartment while giving vent to her outraged feelings. "Darling Fraulein can never sleep in that bed. It's as hard as rocks."

"I know," said Bertha. "But what is to be done?"

"I will send Fritz to fetch in the car your own bed, all except the frame," decided the tirewoman after reflection.

"But wouldn't that be an insult to my hosts?" Bertha asked.

"Rubbish! The late Queen Victoria always carried her bed along, even when she came to visit her own daughter in Berlin. Besides, we can plead doctor's orders," said Frau Martha; and when the heiress still seemed doubtful she added: "On my own responsibility, of course; you don't know anything about it. The Baroness will back me up, I'm sure."

The Krupp footman was accordingly dispatched, and returned two hours later with the bed-furnishings.

Meanwhile Bertha, all in white silk—according to the Court Marshal's command—was waiting upon Her Majesty, who fondly kissed her and inquired most affably after her mother—a regular set of questions afterwards repeated by the War Lord, all his sons, and daughter. They are not very original, these Hohenzollerns.

The Krupp heiress, who, as intimated, was first inclined to be rather proud that the guards were called out in her honour, loathed herself for that weakness ten minutes after penetrating the Imperial circle, for the incessant reference about that piece of pomp made by the royal family and their titled attendants was simply maddening. "Unheard-of honour"; "Must remember it to the end of your days"; "Most unique spectacle in Europe"; "How thoughtful of Majesty"; "Too bad

madame, your mother, didn't witness it," were among the least stupid comments assailing Bertha's ears on all sides. The War Lord himself went into raptures of delight, being as pleased with his surprise, as he called it, as a schoolboy with a new top, and then forestalled possible further speculations on the matter of his dispensations of honour by announcing that, in honour of Bertha, he would partake of the family luncheon.

More effusions of delight, more congratulations showered on Bertha: "He must love his godchild very dearly"; "He wouldn't have done that for the Emperor of China." ...

Luncheon at Court! Bertha had pictured to herself a grand function: courtiers in gold lace, swords at their side; ladies in grand toilettes; swarms of servants in showy liveries; a dozen or more courses, under the direction of the Lord Steward of the Household; golden dinner service à la American multi-millionaire; "heavenly music," and so forth.

Alas! And Bertha had brought her appetite along, the appetite of a growing, young, country lass from a food-worshipping household!

The ladies were dowdy, the gentlemen in ordinary uniform or dressed in abominable Berlin taste; over-loud music, with which the War Lord persistently found fault with both time and execution. The average *Kapellmeister* "had not the shadow of a perception" of the composer's artistic intentions. His views were "plebeian, necessarily—maybe his mother was a washerwoman, poor wench"; and, after all, the War Lord himself must conduct to "get proper results." Of course, everybody was "convinced" of that.

"Majesty" was too "lenient." It was "truly heartrending" to hear music so "butchered," etc.

"*En famille*," they called it, and Bertha sat at the end of the table between two cadets, younger sons of a principality not much larger than Richmond Park.

"Fraulein," whispered one, forgetting, under the impetus of youthful confidences, to speak through his nose; "Fraulein has dined beforehand, of course?"

"Why, no," she replied innocently, "and I am powerfully hungry."

"Then you will stay so"—this from the loquacious petty prince.

At that moment the soup was put before the War Lord, and he fell to demolishing it at starving bricklayer's rate. When he had about half finished, the family and guests were served, and when he was through, his plate was removed and so were the rest. Bertha had had two spoonfuls, and the petty prince, who had gulped down four or five, grinned broadly.

Fish, entrée and fowl were offered, and ruthlessly yanked away in the same rapid gunfire fashion. To an empty stomach this teasing with coveted food was uncanny!

"I hope you have dined well," said the Empress, after the party adjourned to the "Cup Room" for coffee. "Was the service satisfactory?"

"Excellent," lied Bertha.

The coffee had an abominable oily taste. "From my colonies," explained the War Lord. "Mighty good, when one gets used to it."

But Bertha noticed that while his guests were served *en bloc*, he brewed coffee for himself and wife in a silver Vienna machine.

Desultory conversation: church building, social reform, Bismarck, orphans, knitting socks for soldiers' children. Ill-concealed yawns. The War-Lord would have a game of billiards, and then off to the park on Extase (his favourite saddle-horse).

"Ride or drive, which do you prefer, Bertha?" he said to the Krupp heiress, going out.

"As Uncle Majesty commands," lisped the young girl, very much embarrassed.

"I promised Louise a sleigh ride. Perhaps she would like to go with her," suggested the Empress.

"All right. Two horses and outrider."

An outrider—something, to be sure, but going to the park "with that kid."

Princess Victoria Louise was eleven then, and intellectually no more advanced than a child of four. Poor child! her father's ear trouble seemed only one of the dreadful inheritances that stamped her a sufferer from Hohenzollern disease. And Bertha had fondly imagined that she was to be classed with grown-ups!

"Did Fraulein enjoy her lunch?" asked the motherly Frau Martha, when summoned to help her young mistress change for the outing.

"Plenty to eat, but no chance to eat it," replied the Krupp heiress sullenly. "Get me a sandwich or two, or I shall faint."

"We were told," wailed Frau Martha, "that lunch was dinner for servants, and this was the menu: half-bottle of small beer each, yellow peas in the husks, three inches of terribly salt boiled beef, three potatoes each, two carrots, and no bread."

The Krupp servants, it seems, were no better treated than those of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward) and the untitled attendants of other royal highnesses and majesties, those of the King and Queen of Italy, for instance.

In the 'nineties it was common report in Berlin diplomatic circles that the Prince of Wales kept away from Berlin because he "could not induce any of his favourite servants to be of the party," these favourite servants being the same whom the then Court Marshal, von Liebenau—a drill sergeant with a gold stick—designated "as the hungriest and most impudent set of menials" he ever had the misfortune to encounter in the exercise of his duties.

Why the epithets?

His Royal Highness's valet and his grooms had politely asked for eggs and bacon for breakfast, and they would not have cold pork and potato salad for supper, even though that be the Empress's favourite menu to go to sleep on.

And those "impudent Englishmen" had the temerity to ridicule the solitary bottle of small beer graciously allowed them by His Prussian Majesty; and about this and more the first groom of His Britannic Highness and the Berlin excellency had an exciting passage of words, memorised, rightfully or wrongfully, as follows:

The Englishman: "The other attendants and myself cannot possibly worry along on the breakfasts furnished, rolls and bad tea; and salt pork and lentils for dinner is not what we are used to."

The Prussian Bully: "Nor do you seem to be used to household discipline. But I will have no more of your English impudence. I will inform the Prince of his servants' unruly behaviour."

The Chief Groom: "Thank you. His Royal Highness will then engage board for us at a hotel, and there will be an end to starvation diet."

On another occasion pease pudding, pork, roast potatoes and beer were sent to the rooms of Queen Marguerite's chief tirewoman for dinner, at the Neues Palais, a couple of hours before she was expected to dress Her Majesty for a State banquet. The dame refused it, and sent for the Empress's chief titled servant, Baroness von Hahnke, stating in plain terms that, unless she were furnished with food suitable to her rank and station, she would drive into town to dine, even at the risk of being late for Her Majesty's service.

The Baroness, frightened out of her wits, told the Empress the facts, and the Imperial lady gave Count Puckler (responsible for the sins of the kitchen) a terrible talking-to before her other titled servants. At the same time she ordered a suitable dinner for the Italian lady from her own cuisine—a dinner the extras of which upset the budget for some weeks to come.

CHAPTER IX WHAT THE MAID SAW AND HEARD

Revelations—Sauerkraut and Turnips—What the Dachshunds Did

FRAU MARTHA to FRAU KRUPP,
née BARONESS VON ENDE.
BERLIN, SCHLOSS, *Christmas*.

GRACIOUS LADY,—May it please the Gracious Lady, we arrived safely and sound, and Fraulein just started off on a sleigh ride with the little Princess, who is as foolish as the poor Mueller orphan in our hospital, but, mind, she had something warm before I let her go.

Fraulein don't want me to say nothing, but duty compels me. Gracious Lady, I must tell you that Fraulein got up still hungry from table and ate four ham sandwiches, three doughnuts and a cream tart, which I bought for her with my own money (no matter about that) ere I let her go. After I made her warm inside, I made her warm underneath, and put on her the beautiful sables the late Gracious Gentleman, God rest his soul, got given to him in Russia. With all respects to Majesty, the little Princess, in her cheap *iltiz* (*patois*) garment, looked like a mere rag doll compared with our Bertha, please excuse me, Gracious Lady.

Gracious Lady will forgive an ignorant girl, but the three of us, Fritz and Lenchen and me, call the Schloss Starvation Hall.

Except Fraulein and Fritz and Lenchen, I haven't heard a decent word since we left home. They just snarl and hiss. Because Fraulein is called the richest girl in the world, they fetch and carry for her, like the mealy-mouthed menials they are; but if it wasn't for the tips, I don't think they'd do a thing for her.

Fraulein won't tell you, so I do, that the three of us rode to the Schloss in a hired coach, because Uncle Majesty was too mean to send a carriage for us—and to think of what at home we always provide for his twenty and more attendants and the fine time we give them!

I see now why they are always so greedy in Essen. They never get such meat and *vittel* as we give them, in Berlin or Potsdam; they hardly have enough peas in the husks and potatoes in the jackets.

Gracious Lady can't imagine their meanness in the Schloss. I am told there isn't enough linen to give Majesties a daily change. And how the hundreds of menservants keep clean, with only two bathrooms, and hot water which must be carried up four flights of stairs, I can't make out. As to the maids, they don't.

But the poor things can't help it; all they get is two marks fifty (half a crown) a day for from twelve to sixteen hours' work, and not a cup of coffee or a spoonful of soup in this fierce, cold weather. And think of it, they don't get their wages weekly, as the law allows, but on the third day of the month. The poor wretches haven't even got a place to eat.

I won't say a thing about Fraulein's rooms.

Thought Gracious Lady would be pleased to know that I am looking after the child, trying to keep her in good health, no matter what trouble and expense, and I remain, with respects from Lena and Fritz, the Gracious Lady's most obedient servant,

MARTHA.

P.S.—I had to send for towels to the car, for the ones given to Fraulein were as hard as boards and there were only two, and the maids said they would be changed every second day; and I beg the Gracious Lady's pardon, but myself and Lenchen and Fritz were given two small huckaback towels to last through the week, and a tin wash-bowl no larger than those we feed the Great Dane out of at the villa, and no pitcher or foot-tubs. What are we going to do?

MARTHA.

Letter from FRAU MARTHA to HERR L—, Superintendent of the Household, Villa Huegel.

BERLIN, SCHLOSS, *Christmas.*

HONOURED HERR L—,—This Schloss is a big pigsty, excuse the hard words, and I can tell Gracious Lady only half our troubles. There is no bathroom for Fraulein, no running water—our poorest cottagers in Essen are better off. It takes about half an hour to get a cupful of lukewarm water from the kitchen, and the maid looks daggers if you don't tip up the tin every time.

If we could only get Fraulein's car into the courtyard (there is plenty of room) and live in it, we would be all right, for Fraulein's meals I could cook on the new-fangled kitchen range, which makes no smoke, and she could have her bath regularly.

Gracious Lady will have told you about Fraulein eating at Uncle Majesty's table. What do I say—eating? Fraulein comes back every time half dead of hunger. Bertha says it's the quick serving, but I had a talk with the stewardess last night, and she told me things. The allowances even for Majesty's table, she said, are cut so fine, there is never enough for all, family, officials and guests; and, to cover up the shortness, the courses are served quickly as if shot from the new machine-gun I have heard Herr Franz talk about. Some of the guests get skipped, others are given just a mouthful, and part of the food is carried out again for the hungry wolves of lackeys.

Mean, now, isn't it, Herr L—? But we, I mean Fraulein, has to put up with it while here. As to grub allowed to Fritz, me and Lenchen, it's sauerkraut and turnips and herrings and black bread; but we don't mind, as we can buy outside. But I can't take Bertha into eating places, and make up for what she goes short at the royal table; she has to live on sandwiches and cake for the most part. Other arrangements as bad. I would be ashamed to tell you of the servants' accommodations: back-stairs, rotten-smelling oil lamps. We won't be comfortable until we get back home once more.

For Fraulein's bed I got the linen from our car, but as we took just enough for a night's run

and back you must send some more. I wanted to save you the trouble, and asked the housekeeper to have some washed. Not here, she said; too few in help, no extra tubs, no place to dry. When I offered to pay for the soap, that seemed to tickle her immensely, but she had to refuse in the end.

Honoured Herr L—, tell the servants at the Villa they don't half know how well they are off. I never did until coming across all this high-sounding stop-a-hole-in-the-sieve business.

You cannot imagine, worthy Mr. Superintendent, too, what funny things there are too—the War Lord's dachshunds, for instance, all jaws and stomach. They look like those yellow-skinned truffle Leberwursts held up by Frankfurters, and—what do you think?—have been taught to snap and nibble the calves of people of quality only.

Mine they leave severely alone, thank God; but I told Fraulein not to put on too many "lugs," lest they mistake her for a "von."

Of course I can't swear to it, but they do say that "Uncle Majesty" has a way, by a mere look, of setting the dachshunds on people he dislikes; they must be as smart as Herr Director-General's French poodles, I reckon. Anyhow, they seem to know when "Uncle Majesty" is cross with someone and go for him.

I heard you tell Herr Franz of meeting Count Posadownk in Bielefeld and what a great man he was. And surely he is a man with a lot of authority, but here no one is bigger than a ten-pin before "Uncle Majesty."

George, the chief *Jaeger* who stands behind his chair at table and knows everything and everybody, has become quite friendly-like with me. Well, George says Count Posadownk "gets the War Lord's goat" every time he reads those long-winded reports of his. But the War Lord must listen, says George; "part of Majesty's business to hear the ministers' gab." And listen he does—the Lord knows how he manages—but ten minutes is his limit; after hearing someone else talk approaching a quarter of an hour, he is "ready to explode," says George.

By that time the Count is just warming up, and you would think nothing short of an earthquake could stop him. But the dachshunds are as good as the fire-spitting mountain we saw in Italy—or was it Switzerland?

A wink from "Papa"—"raising or wagging an ear," says George—shows the dachshunds that Posadownk ought to make himself scarce, and in a twinkling they get ready for attack round the short clothes and silk stockings.

While the Count talks his head off, first one, then the other bowwow sets up a dismal howl. Posadownk raises his voice, the dachshunds yelp more loudly, and Majesty, pretending to call them off, makes the hullabaloo worse still.

Just the same the Count is crazy to finish, and the dachshunds go on inspecting his legs. Maybe he gets in a good kick or two, but the hounds are experts in pulling at silk stockings without drawing blood. Once or twice his Excellency went away with stockings in ribbons.

The same thing happened to others having business at the palace; the wonder is that no one poisons the beasts. If they bit me—a dose of something strong for them, you bet.

Remember, nothing about Bertha-and-nothing-to-eat to Her Ladyship.—The Herr Superintendent's very humble servant,

MARTHA.

CHAPTER X THE ENTANGLING OF ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND

Discussing the Archduke—"Intoxicate with Promises"—A Look at the Map—
The War Lord's Miscalculation

"What do you think of number one?" asked the War Lord, when the door had closed upon Bertha at the old Chancellor's Palace.

The diplomat performing the duties of deputy-head of the Empire is tall, inclined to corpulence, grey moustached and bright eyed. He knocked his heels together like a recruit trembling before the drill-ground bully. "Majesty refers to Fraulein Krupp?"

"Quite correct."

"She has the benefit of Majesty's personal guidance—there's no more to be said," declared von Bülow, with conviction. "But who may number two be?"

"Not quite the figurehead of number one. I refer to the gentleman coming to see you."

"The Archduke? I was going to beg your Majesty for instructions concerning His Imperial Highness."

"Plain Franz Este, if you please; his incognito must be taken very literally."

"At your Majesty's orders."

"He is number two," emphasised Wilhelm; and while pretending to look out of the window replaced his left hand, which had slipped, upon the hilt of his sword. Then, fully accoutred, he resumed: "Number one furnishes my arms—

"And those of the world," put in the Chancellor.

"That's where you and *all* of you are mistaken. *My* gun works arming *my* enemies? As intimidated, number one helps to *disarm* my enemies."

When he saw blank amazement on the Chancellor's countenance, he added: "Don't ask how, for in this case purpose sanctifies the means. Number one, then, is my right arm, while number two I intend to make one of my men-at-arms."

Another pause for effect.

"I am all ears, Your Majesty," said von Bülow.

"Well, then, bear this in mind: Franz Ferdinand has to be indulged despite his marriage to the little school marm. He is a fool, of course. Well, the Chotek being an encumbrance to Franz Ferdinand, we must make her into a quarry for our own good. What do you think?"

"I am afraid I lack capacity to follow the trend of Your Majesty's grand ideas this morning," replied the Chancellor, remembering that he had been chosen, not to think, but to carry out orders.

"Well, as you know, I persuaded Francis Joseph to wink at the Chotek indiscretion. The decree elevating the ex-governess, and making her brats of princely estate, ought to have been dated from Berlin instead of Ischl, for it was I who placed that plum in Her Ladyship's pie, the Olympian Emperor notwithstanding. Hence Prince Hohenberg—for Franz Ferdinand is more or less his wife's husband—is beholden to me for such recognition as his marriage received, and Sophie will not let him forget it either. Accordingly, I call him 'number two' in my combination."

"If the children of this union——"

"*Disunion*," interrupted the War Lord, applauding his irony with a loud guffaw.

"Disunion," von Bülow obediently repeated, "lay claims to the throne, is it Your Majesty's intention to support them?"

"All Archdukes look alike to me," replied the War Lord with fine disdain; "all fools, bigots, or both. Rudolph was an exception. At all events, it is to our interest to give Herr von Este to understand that, if he is determined to make Sophie both Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, Germany will support his mad scheme."

"Your Majesty thinks Hungary will accept her as Queen?"

"She has to, for a morganatic marriage is a real marriage according to Hungarian law."

"Which suggests the possibility of grave internal dissensions," said the Chancellor.

"Quite so; to Pan-Germanism this little governess is worth five army corps. If her marriage causes a split in the Dual Monarchy, why, we will annex German Austria and leave the Hungarians to die, if they choose, '*pro Regi nostro, Sophia*.' But that's quite a long way off. What concerns us at present is getting solid with that chap. I know what you want to say: A brute, a beast. But so long as the Chotek is satisfied, I am."

The latter in response to an indication on von Bülow's part that he meant to put in a word or two.

"When I come to think of it," continued the War Lord, "neither Alexander, nor Charlemagne, nor Napoleon were what you call gentlemen overflowing with the milk of human kindness. As I see it now—my plans are not quite matured, of course—but this is certainly beyond question or dispute: As my ally in the conquest of the world, a namby-pamby partner would be of confounded little use. Besides, for sentiment I have Victor—darling fellow!"

Saying this, the War Lord gripped his sword so hard that the point of the scabbard threw a statuette of the King of Italy off an *étagère*, smashing it.

"There he goes," he sneered, kicking at the broken china; "uncertain commodities at best, these Dagos. Always fishing outside the three-mile limit, and everlastingly ogling with England and France."

"Majesty is pleased to under-estimate King Victor's devotion to German interests," ventured

von Bülow warmly.

"When you were in Rome you used to sing a different tune," said the War Lord severely. "But *revenons à nos moutons*: Franz Este is a bit of a mutton thief himself"—Wilhelm laughed heartily at his quibble—"very fond of Hungary and Bohemia. We must intoxicate him with the promise of great things to be accomplished by the union of German arms—German-Austrian, of course."

"May I remind Your Majesty that Franz is rather a fanatic in religious matters?" suggested the Chancellor.

"I was coming to that," snarled the War Lord—it simply maddens Wilhelm to find that someone, beside himself, has an idea in his head. Whether the religious aspect had occurred to him before we don't know, but he pounced upon it with vulture-like gusto, adopting it *in toto* as it were.

"You will say to him: 'Brothers in arms and in faith—the Protestant and the Catholic Church, or the Catholic and the Protestant,' I don't care. Remind him that Prussia offered the Pope an asylum before the invasion of Rome by the Italians.

"Yes," he continued, "curse the Italians as much as you like; promise him Venice and the Balkans up to the gates of Constantinople."

The War Lord pressed a button underneath a large table fronting the Chancellor's desk, whereupon the mahogany top disappeared and another marked off in geographical divisions, representing the map of Europe and part of Asia, replaced it—the *Kriegsspiel*; Europe in battle-array.

The *Kriegsspiel*—War Game—shows the military strength of each country in plain, movable figures, horse, foot and artillery, navy and aircraft—the figures liable to correction from time to time; the exact location of the forces is apparent at a glance too.

The same applies to fortresses, letters designating the origin of the artillery equipment.

Above each country wave its colours in the shape of a tiny silk flag, fastened to bead-headed pins, easy to stick in anywhere.

The War Lord pulled out a drawer and took a handful of German flags, but before using any a new thought struck him.

"Send for Kast," he commanded curtly.

Adjutant Baron Kast appeared as if catapulted into the room.

"I forget the lettering combination—I want 'k' for Belgium. You are sure the other equipments are marked according to latest reports."

"At Your Majesty's service."

The adjutant fixed the 'k' as required and stood at attention.

"I will call in case I need you further."

The officer was drawing backwards towards the door when the War Lord stopped him.

"One second. I want a cross fixed to letter 'k.'"

Kast, a martinet without ideas of his own, a mere *mannequin* moving on the strings of discipline, looked blank astonishment.

"If it can't be done, send for the mechanic; he shall fix the new combination overnight."

"May I try, Your Majesty?"

Kast succeeded in quick order.

"Why did you hesitate, if it's so easy?" demanded the War Lord.

"With Your Majesty's permission, I was wondering whether it was your pleasure to have a cross placed against all the 'k's' on the map."

The War Lord looked at von Bülow, who dismissed Kast by a look.

"Out of the mouths of fools and sucklings," misquoted Wilhelm under his breath, while a cruel sneer played about his lips. Then, to the Chancellor, aloud: "Inborn stupidity or low cunning?"—referring to Kast.

"The first, Your Majesty, the first. Your Majesty will agree, when I say that I myself do not see the significance of the cross."

"You will—in time," said the War Lord brusquely. "But to continue."

He took a German flag and placed it on the spot marked Rome. "The Holy Roman Empire of German nationality," he said.

"Which Voltaire designated as neither holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire," remarked von Bülow drily.

"Time's passed, time was, time is," quoted the War Lord, "or rather will be." For awhile he remained in silent reverie, then turned upon the Chancellor suddenly. "You asked the other day how to mark the English Channel. *Gott!* it's worth five million men to Edward. No, don't mark it

at all; for if the distance between Calais and Dover can be bridged only half-way by our guns—no impossibility, you know—that strip of water won't amount to more than a few army corps."

Again the War Lord remained in deep thought. "Noah's ark," he demanded after a while.

The Chancellor pulled out a drawer at the side of the *Kriegsspiel* table. "At Your Majesty's service." The War Lord picked figure after figure, dropping them on the floor, until he got hold of a small white object.

He held it between two fingers, eyeing it curiously; then moved it deliberately across the Channel, holding it aloft, and planted it on the spot marked "London."

"The Dove of Peace," he said; "for in London we will dictate peace to the world. Tell Franz."

CHAPTER XI THE CROWN PRINCE ON A LARK

A Gallop with the Crown Prince—On the Way to Surprise

Letter of BERTHA KRUPP to FRANZ.

BERLIN, SCHLOSS.

DEAR FRANZ,—When I promised to write, I expected to put a school-girl's ability at composition to the test, being half afraid that my description of Berlin and the Court might not pass muster with so severe a critic as my dear half-brother. But something has happened that makes living in the shadow of the throne and royal intimacies and reviews and State balls, even the Grand Council of the Knights of the Black Eagle, look insignificant.

Listen! Yesterday after luncheon the Crown Prince came to me with a mysterious air. "Bertha," he said, for he is quite familiar, "you look like a good, sporty girl; let's fool those fogies, and have a lark all by ourselves."

You may be sure, Franz, I was frightened, and looked it I suppose, for he added quickly: "Upon my word as an officer, your Mamma may know about it." And then he unfolded his plan.

"I am tired to death of the baggage that attends our rides, watching with as many eyes as a centipede has feet; this afternoon I will lend you one of my swift English hunters, and I will ride Circe, a devil of a horse that can outdistance father's Extase any day. Flottwitz—you know he is Master of Horse—promised to give the others the slowest plugs in the stables, and we will humour their dog-trot as long as the public gaze is upon us. But once beyond the dear public's reach, off we are, rein and spur. Don't be afraid; the grooms, too, will be mounted on grandmothers; they won't catch us."

I felt quite relieved. "It will be jolly," I said.

The Crown Prince laughed immoderately. "What a little innocent you are," he cried; "running away is only the beginning. As soon as we are out of sight, we will turn and gallop to Castle Bellevue. There we will dismount, and I will punt you across the river. It is but a stone's throw to the gipsy's cottage, and that is where I will take you."

I became apprehensive again. "I am afraid of gipsies," I faltered.

"Afraid in *my* company?" cried Wilhelm. "I forbid you to be afraid of the very devil when I am around. I am your cavalier," he added; "you must do as I tell you." Then his tone became coaxing again. "Don't you like to have your fortune told, Bertha? She is a 'bird at it'—makes your flesh creep and all that sort of thing."

"But does Auntie Majesty approve?"

"Bother, Mother; I am not under her thumb," he answered, and I thought it very horrid of him.

Well, Franz, everything came off according to programme. For a young girl from Essen to ride down The Linden with the Crown Prince, masters of horse, maids of honour, chasseurs and grooms is lots of fun, and I don't know that I ever enjoyed anything so much as the throngs of people in the streets and on the sidewalk cheering and waving hats and handkerchiefs. But, of course, they thought me a Royal Highness or some sort of princess, the very least.

"Can't you ride astride?" whispered the Crown Prince as we passed through the semi-

shadows of the Brandenburger Thor.

"What is that?" I asked, and somehow got the feeling that his question was not the correct thing. So I touched my horse with the spur and cantered away. Wilhelm joined me quickly. "Dog-trot now," he said, and we jogged along like Herr Director-General's family on their old brown mares.

After passing Castle Bellevue, promenaders became few and far between, and then the long-legged hunters increased the distance between ourselves and the rest of the party very considerably. Suddenly Wilhelm—he asked me to call him by his first name, but I always prefix his title—whispered: "Now, *ventre à terre*." Setting the example he jumped a hedge, I after him—a fine race we ran for the next ten minutes.

Then back to Bellevue. We galloped right through to the water's edge, and were half across the river before the stablemen had caught the horses.

Lieber Franz, you must excuse; I can't write a word more. Too tired and too excited. So good night for to-night and pleasant dreams.—Always your good sister,

BERTHA.

CHAPTER XII THE FORTUNE TELLER SEES BERTHA IN A HAZE OF BLOOD

Mother Zara Speaks—Ghosts of Infamy—What the Blackbird Foretold—The Crown Prince Stands Aloof

BERTHA *to* FRANZ.

DEAR FRANZ,—The gipsy Wilhelm and I visited is not at all like the ones that occasionally come to Essen at fair-time or by way of caravans. You know we always thought them impostors and, small doubt, they were, for the same yarn had to do for everybody: the tall, dark man, that would come into one's life, was conjured up even for little Barbara at the rate of ten *pfennigs*.

Mother Zara is a hundred years old if she is a day; a face the colour of an old green-back American bank-note crumpled up—thousand and one crow's-feet to the inch. Dress: rusty black silk, edged with moth-eaten sable; sugar-loaf hat, filigreed with zodiacal signs; white mice following her wherever she goes.

This much I observed while waiting. She was in an adjoining room and, as I observed through the glass door, in no hurry to meet her visitors, even though the servant had recognised the young master of Bellevue Castle.

Meanwhile the Crown Prince was walking up and down, smacking his high boots with the riding-whip. I believe he was looking for a mirror—vain boy—and was furious at not finding one. Young Wilhelm affects to be as nervous and impatient as Uncle Majesty, and won't sit down a second if there is room to move about.

At last the door opened and the stooping figure of the clairvoyante appeared on the threshold, a blackbird perching on her left shoulder and half a dozen white mice circling round her feet, or riding on the train of her dress.

"Mother Zara," cried Wilhelm advancing, "I brought my cousin——"

She shut him up with an imperious gesture. "Hold your tongue, young braggart, for this is serious business."

She spoke in a high-pitched, authoritative voice, and I tell you, Franz, I was all a-tremble when Zara fixed her eyes upon me—eyes that looked you through, like the eyes of a sorceress you read about in the story books.

"What do I see?" she murmured to herself, drawing figures on the sanded stone floor.

"A deuced pretty girl," remarked the Crown Prince gallantly.

The clairvoyante shook her stick at Wilhelm. "Leave us alone," she cried; "I want no interference."

When the door had closed Zara turned upon me like some wild thing, and I tell you, Franz, I wished myself at our little bower at Villa Huegel, playing dominoes with you or Mamma.

"Who art thou?" she cried. "So young, so gentle, so kind of aspect, yet I see thee in a haze of blood."

She walked around me in a circle, dragging her terrible crutch, the mice capering and vaulting.

"I can't make it out," she kept mumbling; "looks the German, but here men do the ruling, and her power for destruction— Where does it come in?"

Of course I was too frightened to utter a word. I merely gazed upon my tormenter and trembled.

The soothsayer drew her garments around her bones and settled down on a low stool before the hearth. With her crutch she stirred the ashes, separating them from live coals and addressing each heap in turn as if they were human beings. As I perceived with horror, poor me was the subject of her monologue.

"Keep to your hell-hole, Mother Toffana," she muttered, sending a half-dead coal into the corner (I ought to tell you, Franz, that I have been reading Alexandre Dumas of late, otherwise I wouldn't have understood half the things she said). "Toffana, you are not in it with this child," she continued. "And Joanna of Naples, husband-killer and warrior, the number of men and women and children that died by you and for you is nothing compared with the hosts she will send to slaughter."

"Madame la Marquise de Brinvilliers," she said to a live coal, drawing it nearer, "come and feast your eyes on this girl. You did your work all right for undertakers, but were a pitiful slacker just the same."

She rose and bowed ceremoniously.

"Your Majesty," she mumbled, pointing with her crutch to a glowing ember, one of several detached from the rest. "You once waged war for seven years on a stretch, yet the number of Prussians you killed, added to that of your own people that perished in battle and by disease, may be expressed in six noughts. And," turning to other debris, "your record, Catherine of Russia, is quite as inadequate as Maria Theresa's compared with the prospects for manslaughter held out by this young lady!"

After an ominous silence: "Sheba, Elizabeth, Semiramis, aye, ye furies of the White Terror who dined off Lamballe's liver, miserable failures all of you—" She did not finish, but the end of her crutch continued to poke fire and ashes, separating and piling up, moving and sweeping along larger and again smaller quantities like figures on a chessboard.

She seemed dissatisfied, and as the minutes passed, her speech, or rather her mumbling, became more and more disconnected. Suddenly she drew her stick across the piles, levelling the lot. "No use," she cried, turning round and addressing me; "I can't get anything out of them. Are they holding back, or is Zara losing her cunning? But I *will* know," she added fiercely. "Who art thou, girl?"

I was speechless with fright, and all engrossed with her combinations as Zara was, she scarce noticed my silence and lumbered on regardless. Maybe, too, no reply was expected.

"Not the War Lord's wife," she mused. "Augusta is the mother of many children, they tell me, nor—" (I didn't catch the rest, it was a jumble of mumbblings.)

After she became articulate again, I heard her say: "Oceans of blood have been poured out. But what am I saying? She is only a child."

Then out of her black silk mantle she drew a pack of cards, threw them on the table, and, resting her right hand heavily on the crutch, studied the pasteboards anxiously for a while.

"Cursed mystery," she whispered. Then to the bird: "Jezebel, help!"

The black thing hopped on the table and scattered the cards with his feet. Then he picked up one with his beak and presented it to his mistress.

"A town in flames," said Zara after scrutiny.

More cards offered by the bird!

"A thousand baby-hands raised above the waves!

"A tumbling cathedral!

"Bodies piled mountain high!

"Women, children and old men for breastworks!

"A graveyard-ditch a hundred miles long!

"Death lying in wait on the floor of the ocean!

"Fire from the heavens," read Zara, and again and again her shrill voice rang out, recording horrors even more dreadful.

When the bird of ill-omen had offered the last pasteboard, Zara shook my arms with a fierce

gesture. "Fiend incarnate, thy name and station!" she yelled.

Probably Wilhelm had been listening. "How dare you touch Fraulein Krupp," he demanded, as, running in, he stepped between me and the sorceress.

At the mentioning of my name, a look of triumph came into Zara's face.

"My cards never lie, nor do the embers," she proclaimed. "The burning towns, the wails of babies rendered fatherless by your works, the waste of centuries of culture, the smoke, the fire, the calling upon all resources of nature for the wholesale annihilation of life—five letters cover it: K-R-U-P-P."

The feelings setting my head awlirl must have been pictured in my face, for eventually even this fury of wrath was moved to mercy; yet like the spirit that ever denies, Zara's pity took a cruel turn.

"Never fear," she said, with a profound curtsy; "it is written that the oceans of blood you will help spill will not even soil the hem of your dress.

"A world in arms, every mother's son turned upon every other mother's son, shooting, stabbing, bombing, suffocating. Cities laid waste, countrysides desolated, brave men changed to vultures, honest men to thieves—your work, Bertha Krupp! But the War Lady remains scathless!

"Blood's a peculiar liquor—means death to those from whom it flows, and profits to her that forges the bullets!

"Chimborazos of dead bodies: fathers, brothers, nephews and uncles; excellent manure, and your dividends, little girl, going up by leaps and bounds!

"Towns in ruins—*your* ruins, Bertha, but they will have to be rebuilt. More millions in your coffers!

"Ten thousands of miles of railways destroyed. Look out for big orders, Bertha!

"The world groaning under unheard-of loads of debts—debts created that Essen might flourish. Splendid opportunities for investment, eh?"

She continued a while longer in the same cruel vein, her basilisk eyes glued upon mine—I couldn't get away, try as I might—while Wilhelm, my self-proclaimed cavalier, did naught to help me. Indeed, I had to endure her abuse till Zara herself became tired of hurling invectives, and turned upon the Crown Prince with: "Twenty marks, please. I have wasted enough time."

Then, like an imprisoned wild thing, seeing the open gate, I fled.

Oh, Franz, what does it all mean?

BERTHA.

CHAPTER XIII

"WE WILL DIVIDE THE WORLD BETWEEN US"

Dazzling the War Lord—Bartering Kingdoms—Juggling with the Church

Franz Este, masquerading for incognito purposes as Duc de Lorraine, was a tall, closely-knit man, no more at home in mufti than a gorilla in pyjamas. A bronzed face, disfigured by the Habsburg lip and an air of disdain, one would have picked him out of thousands as a person to avoid!

His speech was a cross between a military command and the snarl of an angry dog when addressed to persons beneath his rank, and against such the physical advantages he boasted were ruthlessly exploited. Franz was impervious to heat or cold, hence the officers of his household and his servants had to endure both in the extreme without proper protection.

"If the master can do without an overcoat, or wear a close-fitting uniform when it is a hundred in the shade, why not you, menials?"

He had a passion for drill and for slaughter. A day on the parade ground, meddling with the mere outer film of things, seemed to him the pinnacle of military achievements. He never stalked, or took risks in the chase; the proud deer and the miserable hare alike were driven before his gun in vast numbers that he might pump lead into them, turning forest or plain into shambles.

He went to visit their Prussian Majesties with the fixed intention of dazzling the War Lord with a programme of petty regulations about military customs and appearances to be introduced at his enthronement. A slanting row of buttons was to be set in a straight line; another was to be

lopped off altogether. Yes, indeed, he was considering, too, a new movement in the goose-step. And those Hungarians! They had little respect for the essentials of military obedience; but, with His Majesty's advisory help, he would pound it into them—yes, pound it!

Gentle methods might do for women when they are decidedly pretty, but not for the people as a whole, etc.

Music to the War Lord, who feeds on regulations and petty tyrannies as a boa constrictor—if the whole can't be masticated at a gulp, why, leave the rest for another "try."

Brothers in spirit and in arms!

"Franz," said the War Lord after luncheon, enlivened by French champagne with a German label—the Court Marshal's way of encouraging home industry to the naked eye: German products only for German Imperial palates, but beware lest a certain august taste be displeased! A bit of unpatriotic deception, rather than face such an eventuality!

"Franz," said the War Lord, after that fruitful and thought-quickenning luncheon, "some day we will divide the world between us—pope-kaisers both of us."

"Pope?" gasped Franz, his mind tugging at the Jesuit swaddling clothes that he never really outgrew.

"You know," insinuated the War Lord-tempter, "there is but one way to re-establish rulership by divine right as on a rock of bronze: impregnate it with sacerdotal authority. I am already Chief Bishop of Prussia; the Lutheran popeship of the world is my game, as yours should be the Roman Catholic popeship."

"What about the Holy Father?" suggested the Jesuits, using Franz as a speaking-tube.

"Holy fiddlesticks," laughed the War Lord. "As one of the English Henrys put it: 'I will be damned ere an Italian parson dictates to me in my own realms.'"

The War Lord bowed ceremoniously. "Hail thee, spiritual and mundane lord—true Emperor of Slavs, Czechs, Magyars, Poles, Russians, Servians, Bulgarians and Montenegrins."

"But Italy—you promised me Italy," muttered Franz.

"Correct, in exchange for German Austria!" said the War Lord.

"Do I have to give up Vienna?"

"Rome is a more celebrated place, and if it gets too hot in August, Petersburg will make a splendid summer resort. There is Prague and Budapest besides. I thought you liked the Hradschin?" he added gaily.

When Franz still refrained from entering into the spirit of the proposals, the War Lord opened a miniature safe on the top of his desk.

"Have a 'genuine,' same as Edward smokes. Have to keep them in a burglar-proof safe—those thieving lackeys, you know. You have the same trouble at Bellevue" (the Austrian heir's Vienna town house) "I suppose."

"God punish the scoundrels—yes," replied the pious Franz, and, accustomed to the cheap and nasty output of the Austrian tobacco monopoly with its endless stogies, helped himself eagerly.

"A mark apiece," boasted Wilhelm, like a Jew commenting on early strawberries.

"Italy being a sort of apanage to the Emperor of the Slavs"—more bowing and scraping—"you wouldn't care to have a rival court on your hands, would you? And that's what the Vatican will always be so long as it is allowed to exist."

"You would abolish it?" cried Franz, alarmed.

"Not completely; I would retain the Holy Father as a sort of Christian Sheikh-ul-Islam, yourself to be the real responsible head of the Church."

"The Pope is not a married man."

"Alexander VI. was, and also some others. Besides, the Tsar whom you are to succeed as orthodox pope never was a stickler for celibacy."

"Orthodox pope?" echoed Franz, his Jesuit blood a-tingle.

To his pietist understanding the mere mention of a rival Church was as a red rag to a bull, and no one realised that condition of his mind more fully than the War Lord. But would he allow the even tenor of these *pourparlers* to be disturbed by the conscientious scruples of the surly individual smoking his *echte*? Not he!

Conscientious scruples, indeed, and in world politics too! He had not previously given the subject any thought, but on his desk lay a letter marked: "On the Service of the Holy See"—a happy coincidence and a suggestion.

The papal *breve* dealt with nothing more momentous than the shifting of the protectorate over the Christians in Turkey, but the mysterious word State-secret covers a multitude of lies.

"My dear Franz," said the War Lord, weighing the Pope's letter in his hand, "the problems

you seem to approach with fears and trepidation are fully treated in this document. However, without the Holy Father's consent, I dare not reveal his intentions. But this much I can say on my own responsibility: after we get through with Russia, there will be no orthodox question. The orthodox Church will have to unite with the Catholic——"

The late Whistler would have loved to draw Franz's face while the future Emperor of the Slavs listened with covetousness and fanaticism, the zealot's ardour and the brute's vindictiveness written large in his usually stony face.

"Will have to make submission to Rome," he interrupted, pounding the table.

"As you like, King of Rome." To offset the Duke's holy fervour, the War Lord affected a tone of calmness utterly at variance with his ideas.

"The coming union of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches——" he continued.

"The absorption of the schismatic Church by the only true Church," insisted Franz.

"Will make it particularly important for you to have the office of Pontifex Maximus in addition to that of Emperor and King," said the War Lord. "I'll let Bülow talk details."

"After consultation with my father confessor?" asked Franz anxiously.

"Why not unfold our plans to a council of Archduchesses and the whole priest-ridden pest?" cried the War Lord, momentarily forgetful of his rôle. "I beg your pardon," he added quickly; "I was quoting Bismarck. What I meant to say is: that our *pourparlers* are strictly confidential—not a word to any one, confessor, Francis Joseph, or the Princess herself. I have your word as an officer?"

Never was a word of honour more reluctantly forthcoming than that of the prospective Emperor of the Slavs.

CHAPTER XIV GETTING EVEN WITH THE WAR LORD

The Hungarian Nero—The Episode of the Mouse

Emperor of the Slavs, King of Rome, Avenging Angel of the Schism and its Grand Lord Destroyer—Pope even—though he had misgivings as to the propriety of the latter title—what prospects for the son of the degenerate Karl Ludwig—and the War Lord footing the bill! A Protestant, true enough, but his friends, the Jesuits, held that the purpose sanctifies means, whatever their character.

How they would rejoice at the news!

But his word as an officer! Pshaw! The War Lord calling himself "all-wise," "all-seeing," etc., had been fooled for once by the simple-minded Bohemian, for Franz's left hand was on his back when *parole d'honneur* was demanded, and he lost no time gripping his thumb with the other fingers and pressing it hard.

Mental reservation! That little matter was settled, and in most approved style. *Honi soit qui mal y pense*.

A while later Franz asked to be confessed.

"Not while your soul is in the state of disgrace," pronounced Father Bauer with impressive solemnity.

Franz's bold front melted away like butter before a blast furnace. "Pray confess me, your reverence!" he cried, terror all over his face.

"After due reflection," was Bauer's niggardly consent. "Your Highness will retire to the oratory now."

And like a schoolboy ordered to bare his skin for a birching, the Emperor of the Slavs—so proud, so adamant, so haughty before the War-Lord—went into his bedroom, where his *prie-Dieu* stood in front of the miniature travelling altar that accompanied His Highness wherever he went.

In respect to absolute submission to the clergy, Franz rivalled Charles and Ferdinand of Spain; he retained, too, the utmost respect for the persons of the reverend gentlemen who dominated him by virtue of their priestly office.

On his part, Franz came from the oratory a much chastened Prince. Bauer was waiting to

hear Franz's report of his interview with the War Lord—or as much of it as the heir thought well to divulge at the time being, for the breach of faith he had been absolved beforehand. After all, while Bauer had full charge of Franz's personal conscience, so to speak, the real powers behind the proposed Slav throne was the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna, the Papal Legate and the Czech black aristocracy.

The latter, indissolubly wedded to Franz's interest by his marriage with the Chotek, was his chief support in the Dual Monarchy. Hungary had labelled him Nero, the Germans regarded him as a renegade, while Trieste and the Trentino suspected him of harbouring treachery against the Motherland.

That he was wedded to the idea of the restoration of the States of the Church was a foregone conclusion, and the re-establishment of the Austrian Archdukes—who forfeited their Italian thronelets under Victor Emmanuel II.—would be the logical sequence.

"Of course, there is the Triple Alliance," faltered Franz.

"Not at all binding," decided Bauer, "since one of the signatories is under the ban of the Church, and the other" (with a mock bow before a painting of the War Lord) "a heretic."

Franz reverently kissed the Jesuit's hand. "A relief, a priceless relief of grave conscientious scruples," he said warmly. "Thank you, Father Bauer." Then, giving his voice quite an Olympian intonation: "We have no further commands for you to-night."

Franz Este swore lustily when he discovered a red silk nightgown under his pillow. After a Vienna haberdasher had told him that Alexander of Servia had worn a night garment of this colour, he had banished them from his wardrobe, intending to use the supply on hand for presents.

Franz tugged viciously at the crystal knobs of the rococo chest of drawers, pulling one to the ground and dislocating the handles of others. "Confound it! All red, Alexander-red—red as blood!"

An ill omen? A thorough fanatic, Franz was the most superstitious of men. However, as subsequent events showed, in this case superstition was the mother of horrors unparalleled. Alexander's fate had been sealed eight months before, when the red-nightgowned King and his Queen were slaughtered in their bedchamber; but somewhere among the Balkan principalities the plot that eventually did away with Franz and his Duchess might have been hatching even then—who knows?

The taciturn, soured, cruel Franz forgot about the Alexander-hued nightgown when he prepared to report the day's events to his wife, for he loved Sophie. He used a small table at the foot of the big rococo couch for a writing-desk, and as he sat there, facing the silvered canopy with China silk curtains falling from a crown held aloft by cupids, his face recalled the features of a French soldier who had been condemned to death for a series of crimes, and who, to his judges and fellow-men, had boasted of his utter lack of feelings.

The soldier had never loved anyone, neither parents nor friends, neither woman nor man, neither animal, nor money, nor precious things. He hated them all, and his only aim in life was destruction. But when he lay in the sands, bleeding from a dozen wounds, as ordered by the court martial, a little mouse was seen to emerge from the sleeve of his tunic, went capering up the prostrate form, and glued his nozzle to the man's mouth. And with his last breath the apostle of hate kissed the tiny rodent.

Like the trooper, so Franz, the man who spurned a nation's love, was not entirely barren of sentiment. He had a tender spot in his heart for Sophie, even as Sophie, mouse-like, loved the man who made a point of being hated. Human nature: even Nero loved Poppæa once.

CHAPTER XV

"AUNTIE MAJESTY" AND BERTHA

A Royal "Commercial"—Blood and Benevolence

"My dear child," continued Auntie Majesty, "you ought to thank God on your knees for permitting you those grand opportunities to do good."

"I hope I am duly grateful, Auntie Majesty."

"And, of course, next to God, it is your Uncle Majesty to whom you are most indebted."

Bertha curtsied with the readiness peculiar to German girls, whose left knee seems always on the point of "knixing," which word signifies an arrested attempt at kneeling. Since Napoleonic times kneeling before royalty has gone out of fashion, even in Spain, where the Prime Minister was formerly obliged to play chess with the King while down on his knees, and woe to the excellency who attempted to sit on his haunches.

Bertha assured Auntie Majesty how much she appreciated the War Lord's efforts on behalf of the Krupp works. Her own father could not have done more. Truly wonderful orders are coming in, the Herr Director-General had informed her this very morning. East, west, north and south—everybody seemed to want Krupp guns now.

"All your Uncle Majesty's doings," insisted the "crowned auntie." "His ambassadors and consuls in all parts of the world have orders to drum up trade for you, and those that do not succeed pretty soon find themselves A.D. (retired), they say."

"I hope not!" cried Bertha, emphasising the last word. "I don't care for people to lose their positions on my account, and will speak to Uncle about it."

To say that Her Majesty was amazed at the outburst is putting it mildly. She had been given to understand that Bertha was tractability personified, and here she was talking in "Majesty's" own vein, a thing Augusta had never dreamt of doing in all the years of her married life.

"Fraulein Krupp," she said very seriously, "shall have to report to your mother what you have said."

"Mamma has nothing to do with affairs of that sort. They rest entirely with Uncle Majesty and myself!" said Bertha.

What language, and to her! And from a mere child, too! Auntie Majesty opened her mouth for a sharp rebuke, when she remembered what the War Lord had said about a certain lady.

"Vulgar," had been Her Majesty's estimate.

"*Non olet*," corrected Wilhelm. "If her words are offensive, let the jingle of her millions drown them; if she insists upon eating peas with her knife—why, remember that Croesus ate with his fingers."

And Count Wedell (Minister of the Royal House) had only recently told her (with a thousand apologies, to be sure) that Bertha's income was larger than the War Lord's.

Besides, "Auntie Imperial" had promised a portion of Bertha's vast income to "her God." She uses the personal pronoun in connection with the Deity without blasphemous intention, of course, nor does she allow herself to speculate on the War Lord's theory that the Hohenzollerns control a god of their own, and that another god is keeping a benevolent eye on Prussian baby-killers.

Augusta Victoria decided, after reflection, to give the subject a turn favouring her pious schemes.

"Remember what the fathers of the Church have said: 'Women have no voice'—they certainly should not meddle in administrative matters." Her Majesty affected a smile. "Leave these to your guardian, and, when at times his measures seem harsh or incomprehensible, acquiesce nevertheless, for in the end it's results that count."

The Queen of Prussia is a good woman at heart. She wouldn't hurt a fly, but a million men put under the sod roused no squeamish sentiments; for, of course, if the War Lord makes war, it is for God's greater glory, and did he not tell the recruits the other day that it was inexpressibly sweet to die for him? So let the million perish.

Auntie Majesty was careful not to mix blood and iron with her arguments in favour of gun-making and explosives. If Essen manufactured Nuremberg toys or Munich honey cake, she could not have used more innocuous terms referring to its death-dealing industry. At any rate, it must be kept up—nay more, its output must be doubled and trebled to continue the charities and works of benevolence inaugurated by the Krupp family on the present grand scale and to extend them farther, as Bertha had planned.

It all sounded good to the young War Lady. With Zara's perturbing admonitions still fresh in her mind, she welcomed justification of the course mapped out by Uncle Majesty, and the conference closed to mutual satisfaction.

Augusta Victoria received the promise of an annual subscription of 50,000 marks for her church-building schemes, and Bertha that of Her Majesty's hearty co-operation in Essen's social-work campaign. More than that, Her Majesty would come to inspect Bertha's hospitals, schools, old people's homes and asylums.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW FRANZ FERDINAND WAS FOOLED

Vienna's Opinion of the Kaiser—Afternoon Tea for the War Lord—Playing Up to Ferdinand—When Britain Slammed the Door—The Archduke is Not Satisfied

"There goes our Lady of the Guns," whispered the War Lord to Franz Este, as they stepped from the private gate into the palace yard, where their entourage, already mounted, was awaiting their advent.

"The Krupp heiress I heard about? You are her godfather, are you not?"

"More!"

Franz was so taken aback that he forgot for the moment to swing his right leg, whereupon Umberto, objecting to such left-sided proceedings, reared and would have thrown him, had not two energetic grooms pounced upon the charger.

"Be careful, it's Italy you are riding," chaffed Wilhelm, when the cavalcade was safely under way. Quite a stately procession: masters of horse in scarlet and gold; the adjutants on duty, outriders, grooms and a platoon of gendarmes.

"How so Italy?" queried Franz.

"Victor Emmanuel's father used him on his several visits to Berlin, and he has been reserved for heavy-weights like yourself ever since. A wilful beast, even treacherous."

"Hence well named," said Franz sententiously, at the same time locking his thighs more closely. "As to the Krupp girl, what were you going to say?"

"First tell me what Vienna thinks of my connection with Krupp affairs."

"You won't take offence?"

"Not a bit."

"And won't be annoyed even if it smacks of *lèse-majesté*?"

"Rot and nonsense. Go on."

Franz drove his brute nearer to the War Lord's side.

"They *do* say," he whispered, "that you sort of kidnapped Bertha against her mother's will, and are now conducting the business solely with an eye to dividends."

"They think me Leopold II.," quizzed the War Lord, alluding to the business methods of the late King of the Belgians. "Excellent; a lie to be encouraged! But as a matter of fact—*entre nous*, of course; strictly *entre nous*—I acted upon the principle of *jus primae noctis*. In olden times, when the vassal died, the liege lord assumed charge of the property for the dead man's eldest son, presumably his lordship's, which action forestalled wastage of the estate. As liege lord of Prussia I deemed it my duty to prevent the disintegration of the Fatherland's war machinery, and had myself appointed Bertha's guardian, with full power to act. Of course, the Baroness does not like that; neither did the vassal's widow cherish the idea of becoming a chattel."

"And is she easily managed?" asked Franz, as he dealt the fractious Umberto a vicious blow between the ears.

"Not that fashion," replied the War Lord, when he had caught up with his guest; "flattery is the thing with girls. That and a certain amount of unctuousness, backed by divine right, I found quite an irresistible combination."

"You mean to say that you flatter where you can command?" asked Franz.

"Certainly not," replied the War Lord, pulling himself up straight. "I merely insinuate that my wishes with regard to the running of the plant are her own; consequently, I do as I like at Essen."

The War Lord raised his riding-whip in the direction of the Master of the Horse, trotting behind, whereupon that functionary gave spur and galloped ahead. Thirty seconds later the advance guard wheeled right and left, drawing up at the sides of the avenue, and leaving a clear space for Wilhelm and Franz.

"May they enjoy the dust we are kicking up," laughed the War Lord, as they pressed on. When, on their return to the palace, the General Staff building was in sight, Wilhelm consulted his wristwatch. "Gottlieb's tea hour," he said quite incidentally. "Suppose we stop and have a cup!"

He referred to Count Haeseler, sometimes called the German Galliffet, though as a cavalry

officer in active service his epaulettes never knew more than two stars. However, subsequently he won much fame as an administrator and organiser, and, by catering to the War Lord's love for mounted rifles, dragoons, hussars and uhlans, enjoyed rapid and steady advancement. Still, having a will of his own and small hesitation to state it when goaded to opposition, he might never have achieved the supreme honour of field marshalship had he not been in his youth the favourite adjutant of the War Lord's "sanctified uncle," the Red Prince Frederick Charles, father of the Duchess of Connaught.

In the War Lord's opinion, Frederick Charles ranked next to his *Herr Grossvater* (Mister Grandfather), and whenever Wilhelm became too insistent on some strategic madness of his own, Haeseler had but to say: "That's one of the things His Royal Highness was most strenuously opposed to," to cause the Imperial nephew to cave in.

Of course, the meeting with Franz Este had been prearranged, but Haeseler played the surprised to perfection: Too bad Imperial Highness was incog.; otherwise he might run over to Posen to inspect his regiment, the Tenth Hussars. He (Haeseler) had just had that pleasure. *Schneidig, grossartig* (cutting, immense), and Haeseler knocked his heels together. "Horses, men, uniforms, drill, perfect as new-laid eggs."

"Hard boiled, I hope," said the War Lord; and all three shook with laughter.

"And what may my marshal have been doing?" asked the War Lord.

"Reading up the testament of Frederick the Great."

"Any relation to the testament of Peter the Great?" asked Franz anxiously.

"Imperial Highness is pleased to jest," replied Haeseler. "Peter the Great's last will, so called, was an invention of Napoleon to justify his making war on his friend Alexander, while the third Napoleon revived the fraud for purposes of the Crimean campaign."

In his surprise the War Lord, who knows history only as taught in school, dropped a bit of marmalade on his white cloth tunic.

"Unless you can prove these statements, you will have to pay for cleaning this," he said, looking sharply at Haeseler.

"May it please Your Majesty, I will consult the card index." The marshal pulled out a drawer. "Here it is," he said: "'*Napoleon Auteur du Testament de Pierre le Grand*,' and here is another volume: '*Les Auteurs du Testament du Pierre le Grand*.'"

"Authentic?" queried the War Lord.

"Abundantly so. Shall I send these volumes to the Schloss?"

"No; I have no time for reading *olle scharteken*" (ancient tomes).

"In that case I'll want them," said Franz, who was of a studious nature. "Have you got anything more on the subject?"

"Only an essay printed in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*."

"Send that too." The Bavarian town being a stronghold of Catholicism, Franz evidently concluded that anything printed there was akin to gospel.

"But you referred to the testament of Frederick the Great." The War Lord's voice betrayed impatience, and Haeseler made haste to explain, i.e. repeat his lesson, as it were.

"May it please Your Majesty and His Imperial Highness."

"'Herr von Este,' if you please," interrupted Franz.

"Herr von Este," repeated the marshal obediently, bowing low, "the most precious inheritance come to us from the hero of the Seven Years' War is his admonition that Prussia must correct her coast line. He had intended doing so himself, but time and opportunity were unfavourable, and so his plans for blazing a road to the oceans are awaiting our initiative. By grasping it we will carry out the last will of Frederick the Great."

"And what were his late Majesty's plans?" asked Franz.

"To move Prussian mile-posts up to the Channel and ocean, to plant ourselves in the sea area between the English, French and Belgian coasts, the waters through which most of the world's trade must pass," cried Haeseler enthusiastically.

"But that would mean annexation of Belgium and Holland," demanded Franz.

Count Haeseler, having instructions not to answer questions of that kind, bent over a series of maps illustrating the history of Frederick the Second, while the War Lord, disregarding the question, commanded curtly: "The strategic points, please."

Count Haeseler traced them at the end of a blue pencil:

"King Frederick planned a quick march from the Rhine through Belgium, forcing Liège, then the capital of an ecclesiastical principality, and pouncing upon Nieuport on the North Sea. Next, he intended to attack Dunkirk and Gravelines. Then to Calais. His final objective point was Paris,

of course."

"Never heard of such a plan," said Franz.

"Because at Frederick's time these territories were an apanage of the Habsburgs," volunteered the War Lord. "Proceed, Haeseler."

"I can only reassert what I have submitted to Your Majesty more than once—namely, that King Frederick's plan is as sound to-day as at the time——"

"When Prussia presented England with Canada and made secure her Empire in India," interrupted the War Lord. "And isn't she grateful for the inestimable services rendered by us with a generous heart?" he continued, warming his thighs and his wrath at the gas logs. "Won't allow us to acquire coaling stations in any part of the world. Shuts the door in our face in Africa, Asia and America, and supports with treasure and blood, if necessary, any scheme intended to impede Germany's progress, territorially and economically."

"We depend for our very life on foreign trade, yet England would restrict us to the Baltic and a few yards of North Sea coast."

"Franz," he cried, rising and holding out his hand, "I will turn the Adriatic into an inland lake for the Emperor of the Slavs if you will help me secure the French Channel coast line, the north-eastern districts and the continental shores of the Straits of Dover. Is it a bargain?"

Franz, too, had risen, and was about to clasp the War Lord's hand when his eye lit upon the field-marshal. "You bound me to secrecy," he said doggedly, "yet our private pourparlers seem to be property of your General Staff."

"The heads of my General Staff know as much as I want them to, Herr von Este, no more, no less," replied the War Lord in a strident voice. Then, in less serious mood: "Come, now, the *Kapellmeister* does not play *all* the instruments, does he? and don't you think I have more important things to do than worry over charts and maps and figures. That is *his* work," inclining his head toward the field-marshal.

When Franz the Sullen still withheld acquiescence the War Lord continued in a bantering tone: "He is preparing the way, is Haeseler. While at Strassburg and neighbourhood, take a look at his sixteenth army corps, kneaded and knocked into invincibility by him. If there is a superior war machine, then our Blücher was beaten at Waterloo. Let his boys once get across the French frontier—they will never again leave La Belle France. Haeseler catechism!"

And more in the same boastful martinet vein, winding up with the promise of sending to the Austrian heir *de luxe* editions of Haeseler's contributions to the General Staff history of the Franco-German War and of his technical writings on cavalry exercises and war discipline—a sure way of pleasing Franz. Yet it was patent enough that the Jesuit disciple was only half mollified. Desperate means were in order!

"I tell you what"—the War Lord dropped his voice—"I will lend you Haeseler for a fortnight or a month. Invite him to Konopischt" (the Austrian heir's Hungarian seat) "and find out everything. What he doesn't know about horse, foot and artillery, especially horse, is not worth knowing."

At last Franz's face lit up. "I'll take you at your word," he said warmly.

Franz's thirst for military knowledge was insatiable. He had read most of the books, ancient and modern, on the science of war; had consulted all living army leaders of the day; was, of course, in constant communication with his own General Staff; and knew the methods of the Austrian, Russian, German and Spanish cavalry, both by practice and observation, since he took his honorary proprietorship of the Bavarian Heavy Troopers, the Saxon Lancers, the Russian 26th Dragoons and the Spanish Mounted Chasseurs very seriously. But to have Haeseler for private mentor and adviser, to be hand and glove with the premier cavalry expert of the world, at one time apprentice of Frederick Charles, the Red Prince, was indeed a priceless privilege.

"Will you come?" he asked Haeseler.

"Oh yes, he is coming, don't you worry," cried the War Lord, even before Haeseler finished the phrase: "At your Imperial Highness's command."

"His Excellency shall demonstrate to me that the offensive partnership you propose will be to mutual advantage," said Franz quickly, to forestall possible further arguments on the exchange of the Italian Adriatic for the French-Belgian-Dutch Channel coasts.

CHAPTER XVII

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

The reports of two meetings between exalted personages, held on the eve of the day memorable for the conference at the General Staff building, would furnish a clever editor with "deadly parallels" of vast interest.

Dramatis personæ of one meeting: The War Lord and Bülow. Scene: The library of the Frederick Leopold Palace, nearly opposite the Chancellory.

Meeting number two: Franz von Este and Lorenz Schlauch, Cardinal Archbishop of Gross Wardein, Hungary. Scene: A private parlour in the Hôtel de Rome, near the Schloss.

The pall of secrecy hung over both trysting places. Cardinal Schlauch, of his Hungarian Majesty's most obnoxious Opposition, would have lost caste with his followers if seen with the "Habsburg Nero," and the latter would have had a strenuous *quart d'heure* with Francis Joseph had "Uncle" known of his intimacy with Schlauch. Hence the room at the hotel, and Adolph Muehling, guard of honour, outside the door.

Why press the old proprietor into service, when a word to the Commandant of Berlin would have brought sentinels galore?

Because Count Udo von Wedell, head of the German Secret Service, occasionally unloads a uniformed stenographer on an unsuspecting, but suspected, visitor to Berlin; and, Udo failing, Captain von Tappken, his right-hand man, might be tempted to do so. Spy mistrusts spy, you know.

On his part the War Lord was as anxious to keep his conference with Bülow from Franz, as Este was to invent excuses for wishing a night free from social duties or official business. Accordingly Wilhelm had twice changed the programme.

His first idea was to receive Bülow at the Schloss. No; Franz might hear of it. His valet (Father Bauer) was singularly well supplied with money, and royal lackeys (confound them!) prefer *trinkgeld* to medals, even. Again, he might drive to the Wilhelmstrasse himself, if it were not for those penny-a-liners at the Kaiserhof, a whole contingent of them, bent on getting coin out of nothing. Already vague hints at an incognito royal visitor had appeared in one or two gutter journals.

"Augustus tells me that Frederick Leopold had his Berlin house thoroughly overhauled. Nothing unusual about inspecting the renovated lair of the Prussian Croesus?" suggested Prince Phili Eulenburg. He referred, of course, to the Grand Master of Ceremony and the Lord of Klein-Glenicke, the War Lord's cousin and brother-in-law.

"By Jove, you are almost too smart for an ambassador, Phili," cried Majesty; "you deserve a wider field, the Wilhelmstrasse or the Governorship of Klein-Popo should be yours. Meanwhile, and until one of those posts becomes vacant, 'phone Bülow to meet me in Leopold's library at nine sharp. Moltke shall send six men of the First Guards to investigate garden and all, and they will remain for corridor duty. Augustus, of course, must communicate with Leopold's *maître d'hôtel*."

At 8.55 P.M. the War Lord, in mufti, fur collar of his great-coat hugging the tops of his ears, slipped down the secret staircase leading from his apartments to a side door, and into Count von Wedell's quiet coupé. The Secret Service man who acted as groom had mapped out a circuitous route, avoiding the Linden and Charlottenstrasse.

When the carriage passed the Kaiserhof the War Lord could not resist the temptation to bend forward. "Udo," he said, "are you not ashamed of yourself, robbing these poor devils at the journalists' table? If they knew how I am suffering in your springless cab—oh, but it does hurt!—it would mean at least ten marks in their pocket."

"Confound their impudence," said Count von Wedell. "But Your Majesty's criticism of the coupé is most à propos—just in time to insert the item for a new one in the appropriation."

"The devil!" cried the War Lord. "I thought this ramshackle chariot your personal property."

Wilhelm likes to spend other people's money, but with State funds it is different, for every *pfennig* spent for administration reduces the total His Majesty "acquires."

True, Prussia spells despotism tempered by Parliament, but her kings can never forget the good old times when appropriations for the Court were only limited by the State's utmost resources.

"My own!" gasped Wedell. "Would I dare worry Your Majesty's sacred bones in an ark like this?"

The carriage entered the palace stableyard, the gates of which opened noiselessly in obedience to a significant crack of the whip.

Sentinels posted inside and out, civil service men in frock-coats and top-hats, who muttered numbers to their chief, replying in kind!

"Everything all right, Bülow upstairs," whispered Udo in Russian. He went ahead of the War Lord through lines of his men, posted at intervals of three paces in the courtyard and at the entrance. The vestibule was splendid with electric light for the first time in the history of the old palace.

As the suspicious War Lord observed, Marshal Augustus had been busy indeed. Heavy portières everywhere, over doors, windows, and *oeils-de-boeuf*; to passers-by the Leopold Palace was as dead and forlorn as during the past several years.

Up the newly carpeted grand stairway the War Lord rushed. The smiling Bülow stood at the library door. Wilhelm merely extended his hand; he was too full of his subject to reply to Bülow's respectful greetings and inquiries after his health.

"Wedell will stay," he said, "for our talk will concern his department no less than yours."

Bülow had arranged arm-chairs about the blazing fireplace, but the War Lord was in no mood to sit down.

"Here's a devil of a mess," he said, "just discovered it in time. That confounded Este is too much of a blackleg to be trusted."

"Too deeply steeped in clericalism," suggested Bülow.

"That and Jesuitism, Romanism, Papism and every other sableism. Found him out in our first confab, and to-day's meeting with Haeseler confirmed it. He will never consent to a Roman Empire of German nationality. Wants all Italy for himself and Rome for his Church. Intolerable!" cried the War Lord, as he strode up and down. "Twenty marks if Otto were in his place."

The War Lord's joke drew tears of appreciative hilarity from the obsequious eyes of the two courtier-politicians.

"Your Majesty's remark reminds me of a patriotic speech made by the Prince of Bueckeberg at the beginning of the railway age: 'We must have a railway in Lippe, even if it costs five thousand thalers,' said His Transparency, amid thunderous applause."

This from the Chancellor, who, like Talleyrand, delights in quotations and has a knack of introducing other people's witty, or stupid, sayings when desiring to remain uncommittal on his own part. In this instance he would rather exhaust Bartlett and his German confrère Hertslet than discuss that Prince of *mauvais sujets*, Otto of Austria.

At the time of the discussion (it was in 1903—three years before the royal degenerate died) the father of the present heir to the Dual Monarchy was on the apex of his ill-fame.

He beat his wife and his creditors, he disgraced his rank, his manhood, and, though thirty-eight years of age, was frightened from committing the worst excesses at home only by the threat of corporal punishment at the hands of his uncle, the Emperor. For Francis Joseph, most Olympian of monarchs, according to the upholders of Spanish etiquette at the Hofburg, is very apt indeed to give a good imitation of the petty household tyrant when roused. For this reason, probably, his late consort, the Empress Elisabeth, used to liken him to a cobbler.

Francis Joseph's most recent fistic exploit at Otto's expense was still, at that time, the talk of the European Courts. It appears that His Imperial Highness, at dinner with boon companions, had emptied a dish of spinach over the head of uncle's marble statue, and prolonged the fun by firing over-ripe tomatoes, pimentos, spaghetti and other dainties at the already abundantly decorated effigy.

When finally he ordered Count Salm, his Court marshal, to send for a "mandel"—fifteen pieces—of ancient eggs to vary the bombardment, Salm refusing, of course, he assaulted the Excellency, sword in hand, and a general medley ensued, in which considerable blue blood was spilt. No lives lost, yet the innocent bit of *passe-temps* brought the Emperor's fist and cane into play again.

But our mutton is getting cold.

"Unfortunately," said von Bülow, "Franz Ferdinand is a particularly healthy specimen of humanity."

"And even should he die like a Balkan royalty——" suggested von Wedell.

"I thought you had been unable definitely to trace Russia's fine Italian hand in the Belgrade murders?" demanded the War Lord sharply.

"For which many thanks," murmured Bülow.

"With Your Majesty's permission, I referred to the older generation of Balkan assassins," said

Udo.

"Well, let it pass, Monsieur le Duc d'Otrante." The War Lord frequently addressed his Minister of Police by Fouché's title, while commenting upon Napoleon's bad taste in raising that functionary to so high an estate. "After all," he used to say, "he was nothing but a spy, and as treacherous as the Corsican himself."

This, it will be observed, came with peculiar ill grace from Wilhelm, who, like the first Emperor of the French, demeaned himself to direct personally his Secret Service, and to associate with the cashiered army officers, *agents provocateurs*, etc., of this branch of government.

"What if Otto, as Emperor of the Slavs, sets up a claim for all Poland, Your Majesty's with the rest?" Bülow had asked.

"I would rather see my sixty millions of people dead on the battle-field than give up an inch of ground gained by Frederick the Great and the rest of my ancestors!" cried the War Lord, as if he were haranguing a mob. "Besides, why should Otto, more than Franz, covet my patrimony?"

"Because of his relationship with the Saxon Court through her Imperial Highness Josepha."

"Pipe-dreams——" snarled the War Lord contemptuously. Then, seeing Bülow redden, he added: "On Otto's part, I mean."

"I beg Majesty's pardon—not entirely," quoth Wedell. "Dresden is still making sheep's eyes at Warsaw, and when Your Majesty spoke about a grand Imperial palace to be built in Posen, King George remarked: 'Suits me to the ground. I hope he'll make it after the kind American multimillionaires boast of.' This on the authority of a Saxon noble whose family established itself in the kingdom long before Albert the Bold."

"Children and disgruntled aristocrats tell the truth," commented the War Lord; "sometimes, at least," he added after a while. Then suddenly facing Bülow, he continued in an angry tone: "That black baggage, wherever one turns. Unless there be a Lutheran Pope, Monsieur l'Abée de Rome will try and catholicise Prussia, even as Benedict XIV. tried to do through Maria Theresa."

"It was another Benedict, was it not, who offered public prayers that Heaven be graciously pleased to foment quarrels between the heretic Powers?" suggested Bülow, pulling a volume on historic dates from the shelf as if to verify his authority.

"What of it?" demanded the War Lord impatiently.

"One of the heretic Powers prayed against was England, Your Majesty."

"And you want to insinuate that I must pocket all the insults Edward may find it expedient to heap upon me?"

"Nothing is farther from my mind, of course. I merely meant to point to the historic fact that the Catholics always pool their interests, always fight back to back, while the disunity and open rivalries among non-Catholic Powers——"

"I know the litany," interrupted the War Lord rudely; "but let's return to Este. What do you intend to do with that chap?"

"Make him work for us tooth and nail," said Bülow, "and as for any extra dances with the Saxon or His Holiness—well, Udo will keep an eye on him. From this hour on he must be kept under constant observation, whether at home or abroad, in his family circle or the army mess, at manoeuvre or the chase, at the Hradschin or at Konopischt."

The War Lord, visibly impressed, laid his massive right hand on Count von Wedell's shoulder.

"Where is Este now?" looking at the clock.

"Suite eighteen, Hôtel de Rome."

"With whom?"

"Cardinal Schlauch."

"Bishop Tank of Gross-Wardein? And who is watching them?"

"Number 103, garlic and *bartwichse* to the backbone."

"Under the bed?"

"No, Your Majesty; in it. I varied the programme for His Highness's sake. Like an old maid who persists in the hope of catching a man sometime, he never misses looking under the bed."

"I will examine '103' in Königgrätzerstrasse at 9 A.M. to-morrow," commanded the War Lord; "and, Udo, if you love me, have him well aired. An hour or two of goose-step would do the garlic-eater the world of good."

The number, of course, referred to a Secret Service man. They have no names so far as the Government knows, or wants to know, and, despite their usefulness, are looked upon as *mauvais sujets*. To make up for this their pay is rather better than that of the average German official. They get a little less than the equivalent of £4 a week and 10s. a day for expenses. These sums

constitute the retaining fee; their main income depends on the jobs they are able to pull off. They get paid for all business transacted, in accordance with its importance. When on a foreign mission, they may send in bills up to £2 per day for personal expenses, but in all ordinary circumstances the 10s. per diem must suffice.

The War Lord turned once more to Bülow. "You said: 'Make him work for us.' I would willingly sentence him for life to the treadmill. What's your idea of work for Franz?"

"I refer to Your Majesty's complaint that the Austrian army is in a state of unreadiness, of unpreparedness for war. Now, while I have no opinion whatever as to Herr von Este's capacity as a general, I do know that organisation and discipline are ruling passions with him."

"He would rather beat a recruit than go to Mass," interpolated Udo.

"The right spirit," approved the War Lord, "and it shall serve my purposes. I taught the Bavarians to out-Prussian the Prussian; the Austrians shall follow suit, or Franz will know the reason why.

"A drill-ground bully by nature and inclination, he will know how to make an end to Blue Danube *saloperie*; and if strap and rod won't do, he will use scorpions, like that ancient King of Judea—or did he hail from Mecklenburg, Bülow?" Autocratically ruled Mecklenburg is Bülow's own particular fatherland.

"I am sure the riding-whip always sufficed in our domains," smiled the Chancellor; "but Your Majesty is right: rose water wouldn't make much impression on Slovaks and Croatians."

"Well then," said the War Lord, "here is the programme: No more about Lutheran popeship, Holy Roman Empire of German nationality, future of the Holy See and so forth. Nauseate him, on the other hand, with Austrian military *schweinererei* (piggishness), which ought to disappear from the face of the earth in the shortest possible order to make room for the glories of Prussian drill, discipline and efficiency.

"With von der Goltz knocking the Turk into shape and Franz Este driving the devil of irresolution and maniana out of the Dual Monarchy, we will be in a position to defy the world—and to fight it, too."

CHAPTER XVIII

A SECRET SERVICE EPISODE

No. 103 Arrives—The Spy's Report—The Archduke and the Cardinal—The Ruling of the Church

Count von Wedell's office on Königgratzerstrasse.

Royal coupé driving up and down the opposite side of the street. No groom—dismounted chasseur with feather hat stands guard at the big oaken door entrance.

Long-legged brown horses, evident habitat: England. As a rule, the War Lord drives with blacks or greys; likewise the wheel-spokes of the vehicles used by him are gilded. Those of the carriage we observe are chocolate colour, with just a thin silver line. Wilhelm sometimes travels incog. in his own capital. By the way, why always chocolate-coloured carriages when royalty does not wish to radiate official lustre? In the reminiscences of the third Napoleon "the little brown coupé" figured largely when the Emperor of the French went poaching on strange preserves, and other monarchs had the same preference.

Inside the Imperial office building: sentinels with fixed bayonets at each corridor entrance; over the coco-nut mat, covering the right-hand passage, a thick red Turkey runner; Secret Service men in top-hats and Prince Albert coats every ten paces. At the extreme end a big steel double door.

"No. 103," whispered the speaking-tube into Count Wedell's ear.

"Three minutes late," snarled that official; "but I will pay him back."

"No. 103," in faultless evening dress (though it is nine in the morning), is conducted through the right-hand passage. He is at home here, but no one recognises him. Secret Service rule: No comradeship with other agents of the Government. You are a number, no more.

As he is ushered through the lines of sentinels, the royal chasseur, drawn broadsword in his

right, opens the door with his left hand. Count Wedell meets him on the threshold.

"Kept Majesty waiting," grumbled the Privy Councillor *sotto voce*.

"Cab broke down, Excellency," No. 103 excused himself.

"Don't let it happen again. You will stand under the chandelier facing the inner room. Attention!" commanded the chief.

And at attention, every nerve vibrating with excitement and expectancy, No. 103 stood like a statue in the Avenue of Victory, but with rather more grace, for no man living could imitate the War Lord's marble dolls without provoking murder. Wedell had gone into the inner room, the entrance of which was framed by heavy damask portières with gold lace set *a jour*.

"Portholes," thought No. 103, sizing up the decorations; and, keyhole artist that he is, he soon met a pair of eyes gazing at him through the apertures.

"Majesty taking a peep," he reflected. "I wonder what he thinks of the man who went back on his native Nero for filthy lucre."

Whether he thought well of him or not, the War Lord kept No. 103 standing full twenty-five minutes. If in his youth he had not had a particularly cruel drill-ground sergeant, he could not have endured the pain and fatigue.

Suddenly the portières parted: the War Lord, seated at a "diplomat's" writing-desk; Count Wedell, toying with a self-cocking six-shooter, stood at his left.

"If that thing goes off and accidentally hits me," thought No. 103, "there is a trap-door under this rug, and a winding staircase leading to a sewer, I suppose, as in the Doge's Palace." Comforting thought, but who cares for a spy?

"Approach," ordered the War Lord in a high-pitched voice. When No. 103 was within three paces of the Majesty, Wedell held up his hand.

"His Majesty wants to know all about last night," said the Privy Councillor.

"Did Herr von Este really look under the bed?" queried the War Lord, tempering the essential by the ridiculous.

"He did indeed," replied No. 103; "and I nearly betrayed my presence between the sheets watching him."

"What happened?"

"Nothing, Your Majesty; just a thought passing through my mind."

"Out with it," cried the War Lord, when No. 103 stopped short.

The *agent provocateur* looked appealingly at Count Wedell. "I humbly beg to be excused."

"I command you!"

"Well then, Your Majesty, it occurred to me that I ought to have planted a mark's worth of asafoetida under that bed."

Did the stern Majesty laugh? He guffawed and roared enough to split his sides—the lines between the sublime and the low are not tightly drawn in Berlin.

"This fellow has wit," said the War Lord to Udo. "When you come to think of it, asafoetida is mighty appropriate ammunition to use against the Jesuit disciple." Then, with a look to No. 103: "Proceed."

"Details and all," commanded von Wedell.

"The minutest," emphasised the War Lord.

"May it please Your Majesty, I was in that bed three hours before the parties came into the room. The Cardinal had hired Suite 18 expressly for the meeting, his lodgings being elsewhere in the hotel. He was first to arrive, and swore lustily because there was no crucifix or *prie-Dieu*, as ordered.

"Cursed like a trooper, eh?" cried the War Lord. "Make a note of that, Udo. When I am Lutheran pope I will visit the grand bane upon any cardinal guilty of saying naughty words."

"Your Majesty will have the All Highest hands full," remarked von Wedell. "What about Prince Max?"

"I shall take devilish good care that the Saxon idiot never achieves the red hat. Making eyes at Warsaw and a friend at the Curia! What next?" To No. 103: "Proceed."

"An impromptu altar was quickly set up, and when Herr von Este was announced——"

"What name?" interrupted the War Lord.

"Ritter von Wognin, Your Majesty."

Count von Wedell promptly explained: "One of the minor Chotek titles."

"I always said he was his wife's husband," affirmed the War Lord, with an oath. Then, to No. 103: "Well?"

"The Cardinal had taken his stand at the side of the crucifix, and when the Ritter walked in

elevated his hand pronouncing the benediction, whereupon the Austrian heir dropped on his knees. The Cardinal seemed in no hurry to see him rise, but finally held out his hand, saying: 'In the name of the Holy Church I welcome thee, my son.'

"And Este kissed his hand, didn't he?" cried the War Lord.

"He certainly bent over the Cardinal's hand, and I heard a smack," replied No. 103.

"That settles it," said the War Lord; "the foot-kiss for me when I am pope of the Lutheran Church."

"May it please Your Majesty," continued No. 103, "the two gentlemen then settled down in easy chairs and engaged in a long, whispered conversation in which alleged sayings of Your Majesty were freely quoted by Herr von Este."

"Enough," interrupted the War Lord; and at a sign from Wedell No. 103 backed towards the door, which opened from outside. "You will await a possible further summons in here," said Count Wedell's secretary, ushering No. 103 into a waiting-room.

"How much has that fellow got on credit?" demanded the War Lord.

Wedell pulled out a card index drawer. "Upwards of thirteen thousand marks."

"He knows that he'll lose it to the last *pfennig* if he squeals?"

"The case of our man who exchanged Barlinnie Jail for the service of Sir Edward Grey brought that home with peculiar force to everybody in the Wilhelmstrasse and Königgrätzerstrasse," replied Udo.

It should be interpolated here that German spies receive only two-thirds of the bonuses accruing to them. One-third of all "extras" remain in the hands of the Government at interest, to be refunded when his spyship is honourably discharged. If he is caught and does not betray his trust, then these savings *par order de mufti* are paid over to his family or other heirs; if he betrays his Government, then the Government gets even with him by confiscating the spy's accumulated savings, which arrangement gives the Secret Service office a powerful hold on its employees.

"Very well, recall the millionaire-on-good-behaviour," quoth the Majesty.

No. 103 proved the possession of a marvellously retentive memory. Quoting His Highness's confidences to the Cardinal, he repeated almost word for word the War Lord's conversation with Franz, both at the Schloss and at the General Staff office.

"Any memoranda used?" demanded Wilhelm abruptly.

"None, Your Majesty."

"Did the Cardinal take notes?"

"No, Your Majesty. When Herr von Este urged him to do so, he said it was unnecessary, since he never forgot matters of importance; in fact, could recite a text verbatim after tens of years."

"Curse their stenographic memories," said the War Lord. "I hope you were careful to note what Schlauch said," he added in a stern, almost threatening voice.

"I memorised his talk to the dotlets on the i's," replied the Secret Service man, bowing low. "Quite an easy matter, for His Eminence used words sparingly—

"To conceal his thoughts, of course." This from the War Lord.

Then No. 103 read the "notes" from his mental memorandum pad. The Cardinal, it appears, laid down three rules "for the guidance of his 'dear son' and all other Catholic princes:

"I. Agreements with heretic sovereigns do not count unless they serve the interests of the Church.

"II. If the proposed Slav Empire would bring about the submission of the orthodox heretics to the Church of Rome, no amount of blood and treasure spent in so laudable a cause may be called extravagant, the sacrifice being for God Almighty.

"III. But if there should be a by-product" (our own term, the Cardinal's being too circumstantial) "a by-product in the shape of a heretic pope—pardon the blasphemous word—then Franz's ambition would be a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty, excommunication would be his fate in this world, the deepest abyss of hell in the other."

Count von Wedell, misinterpreting his master, thought "it was to laugh," but a look upon the War Lord's face caused him to change his attitude.

"Pay No. 103 five thousand marks, half in cash, half in reserve," said Wilhelm, disregarding the one-third clause for a purpose, no doubt. "I have no further commands for him at present."

Count Wedell stepped forward from the inner room, and the portières automatically closed before No. 103 had finished his obeisance.

CHAPTER XIX BERTHA AND FRANZ

On Forbidden Ground—A Talk on Brain-Curves—Bertha is Afraid—Shades of Krupp—"Charity Covers ——"—A Dramatic Exit

"Oh, Franz, tell me what it all means!"

If Bertha and the chief engineer had been real lovers, and had selected the moon for a place of rendezvous, they could not have been safer from intrusion than in the late Frederick Krupp's library with the door unlocked, for the "room sacred to His Majesty" was a sort of Bluebeard chamber into which no eye but the War Lord's and Bertha's must look.

Bertha had shown her mother a parcel of documents which Uncle Majesty had ordered her to read carefully. "I will go to the library, where I will be undisturbed," she said in her decisive tone, while the butler was serving early strawberries sent from Italy. Strawberries in January in a little Rhenish town! It reminds us that when Charles V., warrior and gourmet-gourmand, sucked an orange in winter-time, his Court was prostrate with astonishment and admiration.

And Alexis Orloff won Catherine the Great from his brother Gregory—temporarily, at least—by sending to the Semiramis of the North a plate of strawberries for the New Year. Yet nowadays any well-to-do person can indulge all the year round in the luxuries that made Charles and Catherine the envied of their Imperial class.

Bertha was in the War Lord's chair, for she felt very Olympian since she had returned from the Berlin Court, while Franz sat on the *tabouret* affected by the Krupp heiress during the interviews with her guardian.

"What did Zara really mean?" repeated Bertha.

"Are you prepared to hear the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" queried Franz.

Bertha Krupp moved uneasily in her high seat. Her mental stature had advanced rapidly under the War Lord's teachings, disguised as coaxings, and while the sound principles implanted in her bosom by a good mother were at bottom unimpaired, she was beginning to learn the subtle art of putting her conscience to sleep when occasion demanded—a touch of Machiavellism!

Just now she would have loved to shut up Franz, as she was wont to silence her mother by a word or look, though less rudely, perhaps, but her fondness for the man—though she was not at all in love with Franz—forced her to be frank with him.

"Speak as a friend to a friend," she said warmly.

"Well then——" began Franz.

Bertha covered his mouth with her hand. "A moment, please. May I tell Uncle Majesty?"

"What I have to say is no secret of mine and certainly it is not news to the War Lord. By all means tell him if you dare."

"If I dare?" echoed Bertha.

"My own words."

Franz spoke very earnestly, almost solemnly: "Will you hear me to the end, whether you like the tune or not?"

"If it relates to Zara's prophecies, I will," said Bertha. "But," she added falteringly, "you know I mustn't listen to criticism of my guardian."

Franz shrugged. "I quite understand. Forbidden ground even for your Mother."

Bertha felt the sting of reproof keenly, and did not like it. Indeed, at the moment she would have given up gladly a considerable portion of her wealth to be restored to Franz's unconditional and unrestricted good graces. So, humbling herself, she temporarily abandoned her high estate and again became the unsophisticated girl whom Franz used to call sister. "*Do go on,*" she urged; "it was all so romantic, so strange, so mysterious, and you know I love to feel creepy."

Franz had risen and approached the great central window. "May I draw the curtains?" he asked, looking over his shoulder.

"They must not see you. I will."

Bertha tugged the golden cords. "Working overtime again?" she queried, as she observed the blazing smoke-stacks.

"More's the pity, for every pound of steam going up those chimneys means so many lives lost,

and for all those lives, Bertha, you will have to account to God."

"Old wives' tales," commented the Krupp heiress, as if the War Lord in person played souffleur. "On the contrary, as you well know, war preparedness means peace, means preservation; and with us in particular it means happiness and prosperity to the ten thousands of families in this favoured valley. It spells education, arts, music, care of children and of the sick and disabled. It means cheerfulness, such as ample wage and a future secured confer; it means care-free old age." As she recounted these benefits her enterprises were actually dispensing Bertha looked at the chief engineer with a slightly supercilious air.

"Well rehearsed," remarked Franz dryly.

"Oh, if you want to be rude——"

"I do," said Franz, taking hold of her wrist; "I am sick of all this lying palaver about good coming out of evil, and I want you to be sick of it too, Bertha."

The Krupp heiress leaned back in her chair, crossing her arms. "At the American Embassy I heard rather a quaint saying day before yesterday: 'Go as far as you like.'

"A most apt saying," admitted Franz. "Thank you for the licence. As I was going to point out, you did attach too little significance to Zara's words, thought them mere piffle of the kind for sale in necromancers' tents. There is enough of that, God knows, but do not lose sight of the fact that at all times and in all walks of life there have existed persons having the gift of prophecy. Who knows but Zara has?"

Bertha was now rigid with attention. She had moved knee from knee; her feet were set firmly on the carpet, while the upper part of her body straightened out. "I don't follow," she said almost pleadingly.

"Let me explain," continued Franz. "You and I and the vast majority of people can look into the past—a certain curvature of our brain facilitating the privilege. Another similar or dissimilar set of brain-cells, or a single curvature, might lift for us the veil that now obscures the future."

"The future?" gasped Bertha.

"Indeed, the future; and, practically considered, there is nothing so very extraordinary about it, for what will happen to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow, is in the making now. If, for instance, the Krupp works were going into bankruptcy a year hence, the unfavourable conditions that constitute the menace to our prosperity would be at their destructive work now. Do you follow?" added Franz.

"I think I do," said Bertha.

"Hence I say the gift of prophecy presupposes a correct interpretation of the past and present as well as the peculiar gift of extraordinary brain development—a rare gift, so sparsely distributed that in olden times prophets were credited with interpreting the will of the Almighty."

"Franz," cried Bertha, her face pallid and drawn, her hands twitching. "*Oh*, my God!" she screamed, as if nerve-shattered by an awful thought suddenly burst upon her; "you don't believe—no, you can't—! Tell me that you do not think it was God's voice speaking through Zara?" And, as if to shut out some horrible vision, the Girl-Queen of Guns covered her face with both hands.

"It is not for me to pronounce on things I don't know," replied Franz. "Judged by what you have told me, Zara suited her prophecy for the most part to facts and to existing tendencies, conditions and ambitions on the part of political parties and high personages."

"She called me the coming arch-murderess of the age, insisted that the warrior-queens of past times, even the most heartless and most cruel, had been but amateurs compared with me in taking human lives—— Oh, Franz, tell me it is not true! She was romancing, was she not? She lied to frighten me and to get a big *trinkgeld*."

"I wish it were so," said Franz earnestly; "but, unfortunately, she had a clear insight into the future as it may develop, unless you call a halt to incessant, ever-increasing, ever-new war preparations."

Many years ago I read a manuscript play by a Dutch author, in the opening scenes of which a Jew tried to sell another Jew a bill of goods. Shylock number two wanted the stuff badly, but calculated that by a show of indifference he might obtain them for a halfpenny less. On his part, Isaac was as eager to sell as the other was to buy, but the threatened impairment of his fortune called for strategy. So he feigned that he did not care a rap whether the goods changed hands or not, and the two shysters remained together a whole long act engaging in a variety of business that had nought to do with the original proposition, each, however, watching for opportunity to re-introduce it, now as a threat, again as a bait, and the third and seventh and tenth time in jest. So Bertha, having once disposed of the war preparation bogey, according to Uncle Majesty's

suggestion, now returned to it in slightly different form. She was determined to discount Zara's prophecies at any cost.

Getting ready to fight was tantamount to backing down; spending billions for guns and ammunition and chemicals and fortifications and espionage and war scares and whatnots was mere pretext for keeping the pot boiling in the workman's cottage, and the golden eagles rolling in the financier's cash drawer, and so on *ad infinitum*. When Bertha had finished she thought Zara's prophecies very poor stuff.

Franz came in for the full quota of that sort of argument out of a bad conscience so warped by hypocrisy. Our Lady of the Guns no doubt believed every word she said, or rather repeated—dear woman's way! She always firmly trusts in what suits her, logic, proof to the contrary, stubborn facts notwithstanding. Instinct or intuition, she calls it.

"That is no way to dispose of so grave a subject," said Franz.

"But what can I do?"

"Prevent more wholesale family disintegration, forestall future mass-murder, future dunging of the earth with blood and human bones."

Franz put both hands on the girl's shoulders. "Bertha," he said impressively, "make up your mind not to sign any more death-warrants, stop making merchandise intended to rob millions of life and limb and healthy minds, while those coming after them are destined physical or moral cripples that one man's ambition may thrive."

"Shut down the works, you mean?" cried Bertha; and, womanlike, indulged once more the soothing music of self-deception: "It would ruin the Ruhr Valley, throw a hundred thousand and more out of work; and what could they do, being skilled only in the industries created by my father and grandfather?"

"Papa, Uncle Alfred, the first Krupp—God bless their souls!—were they founders of murder-factories, as you suggest? No, a thousand times no. Their skill, their genius, their enterprise has been the admiration of the world. Everybody admits that they were men animated by the highest motives and principles. They made Germany."

"I don't deny it; I underline every word you have said, Bertha. The foundations for Germany's greatness were laid within a stone's throw of this window; much of her supremacy in politics and economics was conceived between these four walls. But now that the goal is achieved, that the Fatherland enjoys unprecedented wealth and prosperity—let well enough alone."

"You talk as if I were the War Lord!" cried Bertha.

"You are his right hand: the War Lady."

"He is my guardian, my master."

"Only for a while. You don't have to submit to his dictation when of age."

Carried away by emotion, Franz had spoken harshly at times, but now his tone became coaxing.

"When you come into your own, promise me, Bertha, to accept no more orders for armament and arms of any kind. Dedicate the greatest steel plant of the world to enterprises connected with progress, with the advancement of the human race! Build railways, Eiffel towers for observation, machinery of all sorts, ploughs and other agricultural implements, but for God's sake taboo once and for all preparations for murder and destruction!"

Bertha covered her ears. "Don't use such words; they are uncalled for, inappropriate." Then, with a woman's ill-logic, she repeated the last. "'Destruction'—you don't take into consideration what your 'destructive' factors have done for my people, what they are doing for humanity right along. Auntie Majesty thinks our charities and social work superior to Rockefeller's, and God forbid that I ever stop or curtail them."

"Yes! Think of your charities," said Franz; "take the Hackenberg case. What is he—a soldier blasted and crippled in mind and body by the war of 1870. Essen's industry made a wreck of Heinrich, and he costs you one mark a day to keep for the rest of his life; three hundred and sixty-five marks per year, paid so many decades, what percentage of your father's profits in the war of 1870-71 does the sum total represent?"

"A fraction of a thousandth per cent., perhaps. Another fraction pays for the son Johann's keep, another for that of the two younger boys, another for Gretchen, etc., etc."

"But if there had been no war, Heinrich would not have been disabled, and consequently would not have burdened charity with human wreckage! Do you see my point?"

"Go on," said Bertha.

"Because you are used to it, maybe the Hackenberg case does not particularly impress you. You were not born when Heinrich sallied forth in the name of patriotism. But reflect: there are

thousands of charitable institutions like yours, not so richly endowed, not so splendid to look upon, but charnel-houses for Essen war victims just the same. And all filled to overflowing—even as the Krupp treasury is. Yet that Franco-German war, that made the Krupps and necessitated the asylums and hospitals, was Lilliputian compared with the Goliath war now in the making—partly thanks to you, Bertha."

"But I have told you time and again there will be no war, that I have the highest authority for saying so!" cried Bertha angrily.

"Authority," mocked Franz. "The French of 1870 had the no-war 'authority' of Napoleon III., the Germans that of William I., before the edict went forth to kill, to maim, to destroy, to strew the earth with corpses and fill the air with lamentations! So it will be this month, this year, next year—for history ever repeats itself—until the hour for aggression, which will be miscalled a defence of our holiest principles and interests, has struck.

"The air pressure has increased," continued Franz, parting the window curtains; "see the lowering clouds! And watch the storm coming up, lashing them in all directions. West and east they are spreading, and, look, north too! They are falling on Northern France, on the Lowlands and Russia like a black pall."

"You prophesy a universal war?" shrieked Bertha.

"The answer is in your ledger. For thirty and more years your firm has been arming the universe. Since your father's death you have distributed armaments on a vaster scale than ever, and now, I understand, the pace that killeth is to be still more increased.

"When you have furnished Germany with all the guns, the ammunition, the chemicals, the flying machines, the cruisers, the submarines, the hand grenades—what then? Presto! a pretext of the 1870 pattern, or something similar, and Zara's prophecy will come true as sure as light will burst from this Welsbach now."

Franz touched a button.

"Voilà, Madame War Lady," he said, bowing himself out.

CHAPTER XX

"AUNTIE MAJESTY" AND HER FROCKS

Bertha on Her Dignity—On Thin Ice—Barbara Wants to Know—The Empress's Toilette

"And now for a good talk," said Barbara, with a look upon the tirewoman who had accompanied Bertha to Court. "Tell me all about Auntie Majesty's 'Martha.'"

"Oh, she's far more important than this one," Bertha replied, patting the "Frau's" cheek; "a Baroness like Mamma and in the Almanach de Gotha."

"Better looking too than our Martha, is she not?" mocked Barbara.

"I won't go as far as that. She is too tall and angular and spinster-like, and has a nose like Herr Krause—always red."

"Does she drink?" inquired Barbara.

"No," said Martha, thrusting out her formidable bosom; "she laces too tight, poor thing!"

It was after ten p.m., and Barbara ought to have been in one of two white-and-pink beds gracing the Young Misses' Chamber in Villa Huegel, but Frau Krupp was away in Cologne and Martha the most indulgent of governesses. Hence it had not been necessary for Bertha to exert her authority to gain an hour out of bed for sister.

Bertha, who was sitting on a low "pouf," was convulsed with laughter at Martha's pantomime. Shrieking, she knocked her forehead against her knees, Barbara joining.

"And Auntie Majesty's Martha—the Baroness, I mean—does she put out the linen and mend silk stockings and serve tea on the waitress's day out?" continued Barbara her inquiries.

"Why not ask whether she makes the help's beds?" demanded Martha; and then, in her drastic manner: "You are a baby, Fraulein Barbara."

But the Krupp heiress treated the question seriously. "No," she replied, assuming an air of superiority. "The Baroness tells the Empress what is fit to wear."

"*Unfit*, Fraulein means to say," whispered Martha.

"And besides——" continued Bertha.

"She tyrannises over the lower servants, such as Lenchen and me." Barbara laughed heartily at Martha's sallies, but Bertha "had an attack of dignity," as Barbara put it, and said to Martha: "Come now, who was in Auntie Majesty's confidence, you or I?"

"Fraulein certainly had the run of Her Majesty's rooms, and I do hope they were nicer and cleaner than Fraulein's," bristled up Martha.

"Don't quarrel," pleaded Barbara. "Soon it will be eleven, and then both of you will shout 'bed' until you are hoarse. *Do* go on, Bertha, and don't you dare interrupt her again, Martha."

"Well," said Bertha, "I promised——" She settled down in the big velvet fauteuil nearest the fire and assumed an oldish mien.

"I was sometimes present when the Baroness and Auntie Majesty discussed new frocks and hats," she continued, "and I think if Mamma was in Madame von H.'s place, Her Majesty would be—what shall I say?—more tastefully dressed.

"Once she persuaded Auntie Majesty to accept a hat that made her look seventy to a day: Gold lace and heliotrope velvet. I will buy Granny one like it next time I go to Düsseldorf. At first Auntie did not seem to care for it at all, but the Baroness made such a fuss. 'Majesty looks enchanting,' she kept saying."

Here Martha dropped the courtliest of curtsies, "flapping her arms like wings"—Barbara's description.

"'Charming,' 'ever youthful,' continued Bertha, imitating the Baroness.

"The right sort of talk too," said Martha. "Tell a woman of our age—mine and Auntie Majesty's—that we look like sweet sixteen, with a teapot for a bonnet, and we will wear it even at the opera."

"Well, did Auntie get Granny's hat?" asked Barbara.

"She did, and wore it when we went to the children's *matinée* at the theatre in the Neues Palais; and I heard her sister, Princess Frederick Leopold, tell her: 'Thank your stars that Will is not coming. He would certainly advise you to send your new chapeau to——'" Bertha stopped short.

"To?" asked Barbara, flipping a slipper in the air and catching it on her naked foot.

"I can't tell," said Bertha; "it was not intended for me anyhow."

Barbara looked at Martha. "You say it."

"It commences with an 'H.'"

"Hohenlohe—Grandma Hohenlohe," explained Bertha quickly.

Barbara was thinking hard. "No, she did not say Hohenlohe; and, besides, she is dead."

"Getting warm," murmured Martha.

"Now you stop." Bertha looked very serious. "The Princess Leopold referred to their grandmother, of course. What else should she have in mind?"

The tirewoman bent low over Barbara's ear. "Majesty's *Jaeger* told me that the War Lord is in the habit of consigning old lady relatives of his to a hot place, whether dead or alive."

Barbara clapped her hands. "I know," she laughed; "you need not try and keep things from this child, Bertha. I was not born yesterday."

"I shall tell Mamma, and you will get it too, Martha." The Krupp heiress was on her dignity once more.

"Why not put me across your knee and spank me?" said Barbara derisively. Then, coaxingly: "*Do* go on, Bertha; it is all so interesting; and if Martha does not behave (stamping her foot) she will leave the room this minute. Did you hear what I said, Martha?"

"Indeed, Your Majesty, and the other Majesty will now proceed," mocked the tirewoman, who was unimpressed, having known the girls "all their born days."

"Well," began Bertha anew, "there were a few days of Court mourning while I was in Berlin, and I had to wear all white, no jewellery, no flowers. All the gentlemen had mourning-bands around their left arm, and Uncle Majesty wore the uniform of Colonel of Artillery—black and velvet."

"Auntie was in black too—silk, of course, and heavy enough to stand by itself; but at her throat I saw a large diamond brooch."

"'That will get Mother into trouble if the old man peeps it,' observed the Crown Prince, who took me in to dinner, and who knows all the English and French slang."

"How perfectly delightful he must be!" cried Barbara.

Bertha continued: "'Why?' I asked."

"'Mourning and brilliants—absurd,' whispered Wilhelm Wiseacre. But Uncle Majesty either did not see, or knew less than his talented son, and Auntie escaped a scolding that time."

"Scolding a Queen. You are joking," cried Barbara.

Before the Krupp heiress could speak, Martha delivered herself of a few "*Mein Gotts*."

"Oh," she said, "royal ladies are just like other girls' mammas."

"Like Aunt Pauline and Rosa?"

"Well, yes. They have a husband, children and an allowance."

"An allowance? I thought they were wallowing in gold pieces like you, sister," said Barbara, loojving up admiringly at the older girl.

"I suppose Auntie Majesty has about a million per year to dress on," said Bertha loftily.

"A million," repeated Frau Martha contemptuously. "Fraulein ought to have heard some of the stories the maids told me about Auntie Majesty's lingerie. One of them used to be dresser to a French diva, whatever that is, and on the Q.T.—"

Bertha was anxious to change the subject, and remarked, with a hard look upon Martha: "And the troubles they have with servants! One afternoon on *Bal-Paré* night Auntie's *coiffeur* did not show up—sickness, or something of the kind—and the Baroness did her hair. 'How very frail,' I thought, particularly as Auntie was going to wear the grand tiara with the Regent diamond. However, the head-dress, being so very heavy, is put on only before she enters the royal box.

"Her Majesty was fully dressed when Uncle's *Jaeger* handed in a dispatch from Queen Victoria, asking about Prince Joachim. She immediately sat down to write an answer, and as she leaned over the paper—for she is rather short-sighted—the whole *coiffure* came down in a heap. I never saw her cross before, but I tell you——" Bertha checked herself.

"Now about the jewellery," cried Barbara. "She has wagon-loads of them, has she not?"

"Of her own, no more than Mamma, I guess, for those you read so much about on festive occasions belong to the State, and the Baroness is responsible for their safety. Once, I was told, she left a valise containing several Crown jewels and some of Auntie's own in the Imperial saloon carriage when they were going to Stuttgart. Through the stupidity of a guard the valise got misplaced, and was discovered only a month later in an out-of-the-way railway station. That time Uncle Majesty himself lectured the Baroness, ordering her at the same time to use her own baronial fingers to sew the diamond buttons on Her Majesty's dresses. Furthermore, to make sure that the fastenings of ear-rings, brooches, bracelets and chains, etc., were intact."

Barbara wanted to know whether the Berlin Crown jewels were as fine as Queen Victoria's in the Tower of London.

"Not quite," said Bertha thoughtfully.

The child nodded. "I know, for when I asked Miss Sprague whether the Regent was as beautiful as the Koh-i-noor, she said: 'You might as well liken your shabby German South-West Africa to the Indian Empire, Miss Barbara.'"

"Don't let the War Lord hear that!" Frau Martha raised a warning finger.

"Now about the dresses! She wears a new one every day, doesn't she?"

"At least she never wears the same twice unaltered."

"What jolly shopping!" cried Barbara. "Does she go round herself? I would."

"That's the ladies'—the Baroness and the Mistress of the Robes—business, of course. She sees the fashion through their eyes and, when Auntie is ill-dressed, the blame really attaches to her women. One morning Auntie called me in and said: 'Bertha, what do you think of my dinner toilet for to-night?'

"The gown on the *mannequin* was of light red silk with white flounces and blue train, set off by rosebuds."

"Kakadoo!" laughed Barbara.

"That's how it struck me," said Bertha. "But there stood the Baroness pleased as Punch about the new 'creation,' and certainly expected me to say something nice. I was in despair, but Auntie Majesty came to my rescue. 'It's quite impossible,' she said, 'isn't it? Tell Schwertfeger and Moeller——'

"She did not finish, but took up the Alnumach de Gotha lying on the dressing-table. 'I thought so—Wilhelmina's colours. If Wilhelm had seen me in this, he would have said: "You are rushing things, Dona. Wait till we annex Holland.'" Then she turned to the Baroness: 'Have it unripped at once. The silks shall be used any way except in this absurd combination. I will wear white this evening.'"

"To bed at once; enough for to-night," ordered Frau Martha, turning back the clothes on Barbara's bed.

CHAPTER XXI

THROTTLING BAVARIA

The Etiquette of Dress—Bülow in a Fix—That "Place in the Sun"—"That Idiot Bismarck"—Prussianize the British Empire

In the grandchamber where Bismarck sat so long enthroned and Caprivi, the general "commanded to the office," as he might have been ordered to occupy a bastion, spent troublesome years; at the desk where Prince Hohenlohe's thoughtful face shone between colossal oil-lamps; in the very chair where the Iron One swore lustily at petty kings, sat Bernhard von Bülow, Chancellor and Major-General.

Don't forget the Major-General, for the War Lord had more trouble making him than conferring the Imperial Chancellorship. Military titles are sadly embroidered with precedents and rules and things.

Frederick the Great used to own silk mills, therefore his ministers of State were compelled to wait upon him in satin breeches and long-tailed satin coats, and no man who loved his job would appear more than six times in the same garments before the Majesty, since the royal merchant would have considered himself cheated out of the sale of so many ells. Frederick's descendant, the War Lord, is interested in army cloth—hence his dislike for mufti.

Jovial, talkative, on good terms with himself, Bernhard felt quite guilty in his velvet jacket—a present from the Princess, his wife—when he heard a sharp voice call out his name. It came from the garden path adjoining the high French windows.

"Must be coming from the War Ministry. What's up?" thought the Chancellor, ringing frantically for a dress coat. If those sentinels would only challenge Majesty, there might be time to change.

In the summer of 1905 the proverbial Bülow luck was still in full swing. At the moment it sent Phili Eulenburg to the rescue, for the ex-ambassador, still undisgraced, was, as usual, in attendance upon the War Lord.

"Fine chap, that," said Phili, pointing to one of the sentinels who guarded the inner court of the Chancellor Palace; "may I put him through the paces just to show I did not get my epaulettes for form's sake?"

"Anything as long as you don't make me ridiculous, Phili." Maybe the War Lord was curious to see whether his friend had any military talents. Perhaps he remembered that Bismarck, talking to Maximilian Harden or Moritz Busch, let drop a remark to the effect that persons of the Eulenburg type made great generals—sometimes, *vide* Alcibiades, Cæsar, Peter the Great, Frederick, etc.—good diplomats never!

"Advance," "retreat," "right," "left," "charge," "about face," crowed Phili, repeating the last order several times.

"*Pack ein*" ("Cheese it!"), said the War Lord, "if these are the only commands you remember." However, when the pair entered through the glass doors, Bernhard, to his intense satisfaction, was resplendent in a frock-coat, with the ribbon of the Red Eagle in buttonhole, Majesty missing the chance to scold him for a sybarite. To Wilhelm's mind, male humanity is "nude" when unaccoutred with knapsack and bayonet, or else unshrouded in evening dress at nine a.m. Bülow had flatly refused to array himself *en frac* in daytime, and in his hussars' breeches he always fidgeted "in a nerve-racking way." So he must be allowed a Prince Albert coat—Chancellor's exclusive privilege, of course! Bismarck used to ride to the old Kaiser's palace in a fatigue cap, but at the door donned the steel helmet. But let none of lesser rank and importance imitate these worthies.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish," said the War Lord, acknowledging Bülow's respectful greetings by a wave of the hand. "Phili tells me that Victor will require pretty strong proof it's defensive before he joins our war. And Udo has secured tell-tale correspondence to the same effect, which will be sent to you presently."

"Italy making demands before she has even lost a battle?" cried Phili, without indicating quotation marks.

Bülow knew of course that the *bon mot* was Bismarck's, but the War Lord thought it original. "Don't repeat that to the Princess, please," he said to Bülow, "lest she put our Phili on her index. As to Victor, what do you think of the ingrate?"

"With Your Majesty's permission, I rather think that the information" (Bülow looked straight at Eulenburg, then thought better of it) "of—Count Wedell is not well founded. Your Majesty knows how such rumours arise. Maybe King Victor has, at one time or another, expressed himself to the effect that he meant strictly to adhere to the stipulations of the Triple Alliance, whereupon some person in the secret found out that the Triple Alliance obliges Italy to take up arms only in case Germany or Austria are attacked. Presto, the mischief-maker concludes that King Victor is not in sympathy with Germany's world politics, etc. etc."

"Maybe, but Udo's and Phili's reports must be sifted to the bottom," commanded the War Lord. "I told Wedell to put a man of pronounced political instinct on the work—an Italian, of course; there shall be a wrestling match between Dago cunning and German political shrewdness."

Up to then the War Lord had spoken quite to the point. Now he indulged in one of those *saltomortales* of uncontrolled thought that tends to incoherency.

"We must get rid of Otto," he said abruptly, pounding his knee with his terrible right.

Prince Bismarck's Christian name had been Otto, and Wilhelm got rid of him. Count Bülow, perceiving no connection with matters discussed, wondered whether the War Lord had reference to the former occupant of the Chancellor Palace, or maybe to a dog or horse. So, to be on the safe side, he smiled broadly and asserted: "Precisely, Your Majesty."

"Of course, there is that *Schweinhund* (pig-dog) Ruprecht."

Bülow began to scent a connection; however, the War Lord saved him further cogitation by doing all the talking.

"A madman, this Ruprecht; thinks his petty State an Indian Empire. Period: Thirteenth century, or thereabout. Dwells longingly on such scenes as Mohammed Toghlak enacted, having hundreds of rebels tossed about by elephants on steel-capped ivories, and then trampled to death to the sound of trumpets and beating of drums. 'I would like to treat our Socialists that way,' he told me time and again."

"Using wild boars instead of elephants, I suppose," said Phili. The sally caused the War Lord much merriment.

"Egad," he laughed, "your mileage from Liebenberg is not thrown away; you liquidate the bill by *bons mots* every time."

"I dare you tell the Reichstag," cried Phili.

"Bülow shall," said the War Lord; "but"—facing the Chancellor once more—"those muttons! With Italy a possible *quantité négligeable*, we must make doubly sure of Bavaria's unquestioned and enthusiastic support of Berlin. Now, Phili, who has been living there many years, tells me that the Bavarian people as a whole——"

"The great unwashed," put in Phili, who will live up to his reputation as a wit or burst—in Germany one need not be a Mark Twain to succeed.

"The Bavarian unwashed," repeated the War-Lord, "do not like Prussia. The only means of gaining national support for our war in Bavaria, then, is by favour of the Crown. Otto's is a harlequin's cap, and you can't ask people to rally around a War Lord more beast than man, and certainly as crazy as a march-hare. It follows: we need a sane man in Munich, Bülow—nothing short of a sane man will serve our purpose. I understand that Maximilian Joseph, 'the creature of that upstart, Napoleon,' had a royal diadem built which has never been used. Pull it from the vaults of the Munich Hofburg, Bülow, and place it on Luitpold's head, and if he persists in his silly refusal, on Ludwig's."

"Majesty knows these gentlemen's objections: 'There can be no real king in Bavaria, they say, until the constitutional incumbent is dead,'" spoke the Chancellor gravely.

"Then kill Otto," cried the War Lord. "What, miss our place in the sun for a madman! Not if I know Wilhelm, Emperor Rex. Briefly, Bülow, as there is no king in Bavaria, we must make one—one who recognises that he is *Rex Bavariae par la grace de Roi de Prusse* and, accordingly, is willing to do the King of Prussia's bidding."

"But the people, will they rally to a standard bearer of that kind?" asked the Chancellor.

"The mob," cried the War Lord. "What has the mob to do with it? We show him a puppet in ermine and purple with Maximilian Joseph's unused crown on his silly pate, and 'hurrah,' '*Heil Dir im Siegeskranz*.'"

"With the aid of the loyal Press," suggested Phili.

"Of course, the Press bandits are part and parcel of the plebs; let Königgrätzerstrasse see to them at once. And, Bülow," continued the War Lord, "the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine*—not a word!"

"That's where Majesty shows his wisdom," said Phili, nearly doubling up in a profound bow. And as the War Lord seemed to enjoy the compliment, he added: "I am not the bird to befoul his own nest; but if it be true, as the London papers sometimes assert, that Germany produces no real diplomats, I point to Your Majesty and say: Here stands the greatest of them all, greater than Cavour and Bismarck, Talleyrand and Wotton."

"Talleyrand was a great liar," mused the War Lord.

"And preserved Prussia." This from the Chancellor.

"My motto," said Wilhelm, "is: 'Keep a silent tongue where one's own interests are concerned, lest the itch of controversy produce a scab that even the unknowing may perceive.' He was boldly plagiarising Wotton, but if his auditors noticed the theft they were wise enough to keep it to themselves.

"Your Majesty's idea is that, in case Italy prove disloyal, Bavaria must act the buffer, the people offering stubborn resistance."

"— stubborn!" cried the War Lord, striding toward the great wall where a series of maps were displayed on rollers. Of course Phili got ahead and pushed the button. "— stubborn!" repeated Wilhelm. "Look at the Bavarian frontier—as naked of fortresses as a new-born babe of a dinner dress—no defensive works to speak of. If the Italians make good their threats against Austria and reach Innsbruck, good-bye Munich! The whole of Bavaria would be at the mercy of the Dago dogs of war! Bülow," cried the War Lord, "Phili brought documents to show that the Italian General Staff is mapping out a road to Berlin via Munich, Leipzig, Potsdam. That idiot Bismarck," he added, with an oath, "the question of collars and epaulettes was not the only one he decided in favour of the Bavarians. Four years previously he failed to squeeze Bayreuth out of them—Bayreuth, one of the Hohenzollerns' earliest possessions. With small pressure he might have regained the principality in 1866 in place of the miserable few millions of thalers as war indemnity that the Bavarians had to pay. We could have made Bayreuth-land an armed camp, a second Heligoland, as it-is-to-be!"

The "collars and epaulettes affair," to which the War Lord referred, cropped up in November, 1870, during the *pourparlers* for the Bavarian-Prussian treaties. King Ludwig insisted that Bavarian army officers should continue to wear the badge of their rank on their collar, while King Wilhelm said their shoulder straps were the correct place. The Chancellor, Bismarck, saved the situation by arguing: "If in ten years' time, perhaps, the Bavarians are arrayed in battle against us, what will history say when it becomes known that the present negotiations miscarried owing to collars and epaulettes?"

No wonder Prince Pless (Hans Henry XI., late father-in-law of Princess Mary, *née* Cornwallis-West) said to the Iron Chancellor: "Really, if at the time we were discussing the criminal code we had known what sort of people these Sovereigns are, we should not have helped to make the provisions against *lèse-majesté* so severe."

"Now if Bayreuth were in our hands," continued the War Lord, "the Italians could whistle for the new road to Berlin, as the English can for the promenade to Hamburg, since Salisbury, good old man—God rest his soul—presented us with that little islet in the North Sea."

"Maybe Bavaria could be induced to fortify her frontiers on the Austrian border," suggested the Chancellor.

"And I postpone my war until half a dozen Liéges and Namurs and Metz and Strassburgs are built—man alive," thundered the War Lord. "Life is short, and the longer England and France are left in possession of the best colonies, the harder it will be for us to Prussianise them when things are being adjusted to our liking."

"Prussianise England and France, excellent idea, *très magnifique!*" crowed Phili the irrepressible.

"Not quite so fast," said the War Lord. "I was thinking of India and Ceylon, of Cochin China and Tonking, of Algeria, Hongkong, the Straits Settlements and the French Congo, of Madagascar and Natal, of Rhodesia, Gibraltar, the Senegal and other dainties in the colonial line."

"Even so—a jolly mouthful for Prussianisation, Majesty."

"You don't suppose I would tolerate the loose discipline encouraged by Downing Street and Quai d'Orsay," cried the War Lord. "Subject peoples and tribes must have a taste of the whip and spur. Where would Poland be without them—yes, and Alsace-Lorraine! But those Bavarians, Bülow. I hope I made it perfectly clear that Otto must go and that severest pressure must be

brought on Luitpold."

"Together with the Italian problem, the matter shall have my closest attention," said the Chancellor.

"And don't forget that they are a crazy lot at best, and hand and glove with Franz Ferdinand's black masters."

"Matters can't be hurried, though," ruminated Bülow, "and I am afraid there is little store to be set by Luitpold."

"His ambition is to go thundering down the ages as the man who refused a crown," sneered Phili.

"Thank Heaven he is eighty-four," said the War Lord piously.

"And Ludwig tickled to death with the idea of becoming king," added Eulenburg.

The War Lord was making his adieux, when he suddenly turned upon Bülow. "What are you going to do with Ruprecht?"

"Promise him a field marshal's baton in our war."

"The right bait," assented Wilhelm, "but I pity the country under his supreme command. Do you know," he added, "that the lowest of his subjects would not permit him to cross his threshold?"

CHAPTER XXII PAYING THE PRICE

What Edward VII. Thought—No Room for Art—A Vision of Threadneedle Street

Bülow, who loved being Chancellor, hated Phili Eulenburg.

However, the Imperial ex-Ambassador at the Hofburg was then in the zenith of his ill-gotten empire over Majesty, and to incur his displeasure spelt disgrace or enforced resignation.

At the moment the grand old man's thunderbolts were under lock and key in Harden's Grunewald villa, and the exalted personages marked for lightning carried things with a high hand, using the German Empire like an entailed estate.

Pretty evenly parcelled out this *fidei commissum* favoured by the Prussian Constitution, which makes suffrage a mockery. Phili, of late enriched by Hertefeld, the Rhenish domain that guarantees him an independent income of £5,000 sterling a year and by a couple of millions cash, which Baron Nathan Rothschild, of Vienna, left him. Phili was practically the overseer of the Government personnel, and of the diplomatic corps in particular. His card index of prominent men and women, reinforced by reams and reams of correspondence, characterised each person—diplomats, deputies, ministers, councillors, governors, politicians, commanding generals and aspirants for high honours in the army or navy—according to his own viewpoint, the avowed object being to people the highest offices within the gift of the Crown with people like-minded with himself.

And it must be admitted that Phili pretty thoroughly succeeded, since the War Lord, seeing everybody through Eulenburg's eyes, selected in the main only persons of mediocre intellect, or plain bullies, as his representatives abroad and at home. The reference to Eulenburg's optics, by the way, recalls another Bismarck sally: "One look at Phili's eyes is enough to spoil the most elaborate dinner for me!"

Could gourmet-gourmand express himself more emphatically? What the Iron Chancellor thought of ambassadors appointed under that régime has already been quoted; it coincides with the reputation for clumsiness and inefficiency the War Lord's diplomatic servants have in all quarters of the world. In *ante bellum* days few of them were "honest men sent abroad to lie"; the great majority were liars intent upon bulldozing or deceiving the personages who mistook them for gentlemen. Of course, "like master, like servant." The late King Edward maintained that Wilhelm was vulgar and ungentlemanly; hence Baron H or Count Y might think it presumptuous to be otherwise. Besides, the Berlin Foreign Office will employ nobles only, and we have the authority of Gunther, Count von der Schulenburg, Lord of Castle Oest, Rhineland, for the

illuminating fact that every tenth German aristocrat is unspeakable. So much for the German diplomatic service.

General Count Kuno von Moltke presided over another self-gratifying clique—that of the Army; and if Germany had invaded Belgium ten years previous to toying with the scrap of paper, she would probably have been overthrown in short order, for at that time the Commander of Imperial Headquarters held the same sinister sway over the military as Phili did over the civil branches of the Government.

"Lovey," "sweetheart," "my soul," "my all" (Kuno Moltke's epistolary titles for Majesty), "hears as much of affairs as I want him to know, no more," was Moltke's boast, according to the sworn evidence of Frau von Ende, Count Moltke's former wife, in the famous Harden slander case.

Yet though Moltke lost his case, the War Lord declared "there is nothing definite against Moltke, but he must remain on half-pay."

Can you imagine King George V. so flaunting the decisions of Old Bailey and thereafter saddling the British public with a life pension of about £500 per annum in favour of the guilty party?

Can you imagine why such "sweet affection for the All Highest" should make up for lack of military qualities in a general officer slated for supreme command in the field?

For his crusade Maximilian Harden won much praise from English writers, but if he had let it flourish in high places for a decade longer, Great Britain would be richer in blood and treasure.

Another of these coteries of men who dispensed high offices among themselves for their own ends existed in the Imperial Court—aye, it lodged there, not in the Schloss or Neues Palais exactly, but—oh, irony!—in the Princess's Palace, the hideous *dependance* of the Crown Prince Palais, Unter den Linden, the apartments granted for life to Royal Chamberlain Count von Wedell being its headquarters.

Oh, the jolly tea-parties they enjoyed in the great high-ceilinged rococo chambers, full of discarded furniture and appointments of the Frederick the Great and Watteau period; Louis Quatorze and Quinze, Boule and Chippendale, Empire, here and there—antique regularity and capricious *bizarrierie*, gems of Art some, also pieces chipped and disjointed.

Carlyle called Frederick "the last of the Kings"; he was certainly the last of Prussian kings possessed of an appreciation of the beautiful. The present War Lord kicked from his palaces—none were built since the eighteenth century—all *objets d'art* that would please the eye of anybody not a German boor, substituting unmentionables of the goose-step type, square-jointed, clumsy, coarse, and wholly *mauvais goût*.

What the "majestic" chambers lack, then, those of the Excellencies *nolens volens* boast. Wedell's rooms in particular contained a variety of eighteenth century *chef d'oeuvres* selected by the Count himself from heaps of "ancient rubbish" sent from the Neues Palais and Sans-Souci by order of Court Marshal von Liebenau, a corporal dignified by a gold stick.

No doubt the Knights of Wedell's Round Table enjoyed what was "*caviare* to the general." At any rate, their tea-parties seem to have been a delight to "high and low," for no one admitted to the charmed circle ever sent his regrets.

We find there General of Cavalry Count Wilhelm von Hohenau, son of the War Lord's uncle, the late Prince Albrecht of Prussia, and Sailor Trost, of His Majesty's yacht *Hohenzollern*; the gentleman already introduced, Count Kuno von Moltke, also Lord of the Cathedral and Private Riedel of the Uhlans; Count Lynar, brother-in-law of the Grand Duke of Hesse and Colonel of His Majesty's Horse Guards, and Gus Steinhauer, midshipman; Count Frederick von Hohenau, brother of Wilhelm, and Court Councillor Kestler, who rose from the ranks to gentlemanly estate and high honours in His Majesty's service; His Serene Highness Prince Philip of Eulenburg, Right Honourable Privy Councillor to the Prussian Crown, member of the House of Lords, etc., and Raymond Lecomte, French chargé d'affaires. These men were regular attendants, under the presidency of the noble-born host, of course, but there was a fair sprinkling of counts and barons and so on in this royal palace connected by a covered archway with the town residence of the Crown Prince and his family!

That was strange enough—audacity to the point of recklessness, one might call it—but stranger still is the fact that all these men were in the War Lord's good graces, if not on intimate terms with him like Eulenburg.

With the Hohenaus he was on "Willy" and "Freddy" footing; Count Johannes von Lynar he called "Jeanie"; and His Excellency Lieutenant-General Kuno von Moltke was his "Tütü"—with dots over both u's, if you please.

Nor were Wedell and Moltke the only tea-party members admitted to high positions at Court.

Wilhelm Hohenau was governor to His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince, and, on Moltke's recommendation, Count Lynar was about to be gazetted personal adjutant to His Majesty—an office giving him apartments at the royal residence—when he was vulgarly "pinched" and lugged off to jail for the crime of—being found out.

Because he was the War Lord's "Jeanie," Lynar would not listen to "Tütü's" and "Willy's" and "Freddy's" hints about the Bank of England as a safe depository.

"Some day," he used to bluster, "a few weeks or a month after 'The Day,' I will ride up Threadneedle Street and straight into the vaults of that venerable pile, and leap my charger over mountains of gold—will be quite a change, don't you know, from jumping fences at Hoppegarten."

As to the others, Sailor Trost and ditto Gustav Steinhauer each enjoyed a meteoric career, rising in quick order to petty officership—impossible to advance them higher, because they were men without education; and whenever and wherever an excuse could be found for employing them in that extraordinary capacity, they were given charge of the Imperial person. Thus Gustav Steinhauer always acted as chief guardian of the War Lord's lodging in Castle Liebenberg when the Majesty visited his beloved Phili.

Kestler was a miserable subaltern, destined to starve on a daily wage of four marks, when Eulenburg discovered and introduced him to Majesty. Under the War Lord's favour, he was transferred to a more lucrative department in the service, and decorated!

Yet why the *Pour le Merite* for Kestler, and for Eulenburg, Wedell, etc.? What *were* their peculiar merits? Has anyone ever been able to discover?

To-day Eulenburg, twice tried, is a prisoner for life on his estate; the two Hohenaus are banished from Germany, and dare not come back on pain of arrest; Count Kuno von Moltke is a pensioner of the German people on foreign soil; Count Wedell forfeited the two gold buttons on the tails of his *frac* and his residence at the Princess's palace.

Why did they get off so easily in comparison when the crash came?

The answer is obvious enough. These persons had been careful to deposit in London, E.C., the letters they had received from a certain exalted party who shall be nameless, and Count Lynar, prisoner No. 5429 at Siegburg Jail, had neglected that simple precaution.

CHAPTER XXIII HOW VON BOHLEN WAS CHOSEN

The First Step—Prussian Manners—The War Lord Finds His Man—Putting
Bülow to the Test—Discussing the Husband to Be—von Bohlen is Chosen

On the morning after the Bavarian debate in the Chancellor's palace the War Lord and Prince Phili met early in Sans-Souci Park for an hour's horseback exercise and scandalmongering. Be sure that *chronique scandaleuse* was thoroughly discussed, as well as the personnel of Phili's favourites, and if there was anybody at Court and in Society, in high official places and in the royal theatres whose ears did not tingle with the calumnies or malicious tittle-tattle launched, the gossipers' memory was at fault, not their capacity for impertinent innuendo.

These personages were walking their horses in a secluded avenue of the woods beyond Klein Glienecke when they heard galloping behind. "My courier," said the War Lord; "we'll wait." They drew rein, and presently a red-coat shot by them in a parallel road. When some fifty paces ahead, the courier leaped his horse across the intervening ditch, then stopped short at the imminent risk of being thrown, and waited, hat in hand.

"Get the mail bag," commanded Wilhelm curtly, after the style of Napoleon, who thought nothing of ordering a king to see how dinner was progressing. Phili trotted off, and presently returned with a red morocco leather portfolio. A silver-gilt key dangling on the War Lord's bracelet gave access to the contents: two letters, both postmarked Essen.

"From Bertha," said the War Lord, glancing at the bigger envelope, and put it into his pocket. The other he tore open in great haste. "Wonder what the Baroness wants from me?" he muttered.

Phili having returned the portfolio, the courier was dismissed by a wave of the hand, and Wilhelm plunged into the epistle *sans cérémonie*.

"The devil!" he cried, before he had finished the first page, and drove his horse so hard against Eulenburg's side that Phili could not suppress an outcry.

"Listen to this: Bertha has fallen in love with Franz, sort of foster-brother, you know; they were children together."

"The electrical expert you told me about?"

"Precisely. But I won't allow it; she might as well aspire to be wife No. 777 to our friend Abdul. But here comes the Baroness and pleads that the dear child may have her way, Franz being such a good young man; marriages are arranged in heaven, and her blessed Frederick will be tickled to death, etc., and more tommy rot like that."

"You don't think Franz exactly the right person?"

"Phili," cried the War Lord, "if you were not such an old sinner and bald-headed and married and the father of children of marriageable age, I would order you to marry her."

"Another woman—are there none but women in the world?" groaned the ex-ambassador. "Besides, I have not the least talent for bigamy; try Kiderlen-Waechter."

"Would be the right sort, but he is nearly as old as you."

Once more Extase's flank squeezed Phili. "I've got it," Wilhelm exclaimed suddenly. "When you get back home, browse for an hour or two on your card index, picking out the most desirable and up-to-date Benedicts in the thirties or thereabout, preferably men in the diplomatic service. Got everybody's photo up there, haven't you?"

"At Your Majesty's service, the whole gallery."

"Pictures and personalia you'll bring to the Neues Palais this afternoon, and maybe I will run over to Essen in the night to show the *crème de votre crème* to the Baroness. This folly about Franz must be nipped in the bud, and with a girl the better and handsomer man does the trick every time."

The War Lord wheeled his horse around and trotted off in the direction of his residence. He never takes the trouble of telling his riding companions of his intentions. "Let them keep their eyes open and do as I do." The Queen herself fares no better when out riding with him. If her harness gets out of order or something of that sort, and she has to dismount, Wilhelm presses on unconcernedly. "Let the Master of Horse look after her."

Phili, arrived at his apartments, had no sooner got into his dressing-jacket of flowered silk, when the telephone rang furiously. "I command," admonished a hard voice.

"Here, Phili, at Your Majesty's service."

"Are you at work on the cards?"

"Head over heels," lied Phili.

"And in this connection—has nothing occurred to you?"

The obsequious courtier was in a quandary. Woe to him if he attempted to be wiser than his master!

"The old story; I have to think of everything," the War Lord thundered. "Can't you see you must take your selection of names to Bülow and pretend to get advice on the candidates from him? If you don't, he will be offended."

"Like the old woman he is," ventured Eulenburg.

"Don't you criticise *my* Chancellor." There was a brutal emphasis on the "my," and Phili stuttered a dozen excuses for his slip of the tongue.

"Never mind, to work, Prince! It was Louis XIV. who almost waited on one particular occasion. Remember, Phili, I don't want to repeat his experience."

Phili rang for Jaroljmek, his secretary.

"I do wish Majesty could get along without me for a day or two," he said. "More pressing business. All the young men in the diplomatic service to be inquired into, liver and kidneys. At once, of course! Beastly bore unless I may count on your assistance."

"Of course, Serene Highness."

"Have the maids bring in the card index, then."

"With Highness's permission, I will ask the butler to help me. It's too heavy for girls."

"Not at all. Women were put into the world to wait on such as you and I. The woods are full of girls, while nice boys are few and far between. And you vulgarise a high-stepping horse by hard work."

So two nine-stone girls were ordered to carry in from an upper storey the great wooden case weighing a hundredweight, while His Highness and secretary looked on and, moreover, increased their task by foolish directions.

"The smaller legations where I am sending the unlicked cubs—fellows without an inkling of

Greek art and antique beauty—we'll go through those first," said the Prince.

"May I ask Highness the purpose of our research?"

"Majesty is trying to find a hubby for—*Nomina sunt odiosa*. However, you know the party."

"Rich?"

"Wealthiest girl in the world."

"Old Frederick's daughter! I heard some queer stories about Papa."

"Naughty boy!" with an indulgent smile from Phili. "Well, Majesty wants a Benedict for Bertha who will paddle the War Lord's canoe even more enthusiastically than his wife's baby-carriage."

"Why doesn't Majesty consult von Treskow and Kopp?" said the secretary.

"Don't mention those rude plebeians."

And so the pretty pair went on. They selected a round dozen should-be aspirants for Bertha's hand.

These the Emperor examined later.

"Receding chin," announced the War Lord disdainfully, reviewing the first few while the friends sipped their China tea.

"All the ear marks of the wife-beater," he commented on an attaché accredited to the Court of St. James's. "That fellow is sure to give trouble," he commented on photo No. 4. No. 5 was dismissed with a contemptuous: "Meddlesome snout." He continued to throw the photographs on the carpet, but suddenly sat up straight as a bolt.

"My man!" he cried. "Get Bülow on the 'phone. No; order Augustus to have an extra train ready for the Chancellor to leave Potsdamer Bahnhof in half an hour at the latest."

The Court Marshal 'phoned back that a regular train was leaving at the time prescribed, and that a saloon carriage might be attached for Count Bülow.

"Very well, but express—Neues Palais first stop. Now call up Bülow." The War Lord was continually filling his teacup and absorbing large quantities of cucumber sandwiches. He had his mouth full when the red disc annunciator reported Bülow at the other end, and emptied it with a gulp.

Yes—immediately. Most important. Would not he bring the Princess? His wife would be delighted.

In an hour's time a royal landau and four set Chancellor von Bülow and his Princess down in the Sandhof, the War Lord stepping from one of the tall door-windows of his study on to the terrace to welcome them, and Countess Brockdorff, Mistress of the Robes, receiving Her Serene Highness on Her Majesty's behalf.

Do these august ladies love each other? Assuredly—after the fashion of Empress Eugenie and Princess Pauline Metternich. The Princess thought herself as good as the Empress any day, and never hesitated to say so, and when on one occasion Eugenie's tantrums were excused on the plea that she had an uncle in the strait-jacket, Pauline quickly responded: "There are a few lunatics in my family too."

So the Princess Camporeale, whose husband was to be "princd" a few weeks hence, regarded herself as good as the *née* Schleswig-Holstein, arguing that the Beccadello were more ancient than Her Majesty's family. And her Margravate of Altavilla was worth more in lires and centimes than Her Majesty's title of Margravine of Brandenburg.

So the Princess Maria told Countess Brockdorff she could not move until the ladies of her Court arrived from the station, and the House Marshal was warned that Her Highness's lackeys must not be allowed in the palace canteen. German beer and sausage always upset them.

Four exceedingly pretty Italian women came in the second carriage. "My governess, Marchesa ——" "My reader, the Countess ——" "My maids of honour, Contezzina ——" and Baroness ——"—all members of former sovereign or semi-sovereign houses.

Bülow beamed in his animated fashion when he did not see Eulenburg, whom he rather expected to find, since he was always where least wanted.

"And what may be Your Majesty's pleasure?" he asked in his courtly way, when they were alone in the study.

"I want your opinion on the husband I've selected for a certain young lady." The War Lord had quite forgotten his own admonition to Phili. "Look!" He laid a hand partly over the photograph on the table, allowing only the forehead to be seen.

"Good, capable forehead," observed Bülow; "something behind that."

"No obstinacy, I hope," said the War Lord. Next he let the photograph's eyes be seen.

"Cold, steadfast, may be some disposition for cruelty," was Bülow's verdict.

"A good nose, mouth disdainful, somewhat high cheekbones—it's von Bohlen und Halbach!" cried the Chancellor.

"You know him?"

"To some extent, both officially and unofficially. Never had any chance to distinguish himself, but decidedly adaptable, yet not lacking executive ability, I believe."

The War Lord was delighted with the endorsement his own views received.

"Look at that chin," he said; "firm isn't the word for it—bulldog, regular bulldog. He will lead you the deuce of a dance, Bertha!"

At the mention of the name the Chancellor winced perceptibly. "I endorsed his capacity for business; I know nothing about his personal character," he ventured, adding: "He must be at least fifteen years older than Bertha."

The War Lord consulted Phili's notes. "Old enough to vote, as they say in the States—to vote for me, *nota bene*, at directors' meetings. Call up your office and find out what kind of subordinate he is."

"I looked at his papers only the other day. He seems to give his chief no trouble, carrying out orders punctually and painstakingly; never harasses the minister with original suggestions, but is quite content to do his duty and say naught about it."

"Is his family good enough?"

"Gentle born," explained the Chancellor; "father was Baden Minister, mother not of noble birth—Sophie Bohlen—but she had money, I believe. The present Councillor of Legation is university bred, of course, and belongs to the Guard Hussars, *Landwehr*, *Chef d'escadron*, says the army 'Who's Who.' Nevertheless," concluded the Chancellor in his most persuasive style, "I don't think him the right sort of husband for Bertha."

"Right sort for *me*," cried the War Lord.

Bülow, conscious that His Majesty at the time could not afford to quarrel with him, risked a none too gentle rebuke by disregarding the interruption.

"She is so young," he went on, "and, as I pointed out before, there is the making of a cruel master in his face. Think of the wealthiest girl in the world tied to a man who will not let her have her own way—a sort of drill-sergeant husband. Your Majesty is too whole-hearted, too generous, too gallant," he added with a smile, "to impose a husband of that kind upon your ward."

In response the War Lord dropped the high falsetto of command which had marked his interruptions, and said in a more conciliatory tone: "There is not a man alive against whose choice as a husband objections may not be marshalled *à la advocatus diaboli*. Now, for a change, listen to the *advocatus Dei*, please: It goes without saying that I have my ward's happiness very much at heart. Indeed, if she was of my own flesh and blood, I could not cherish more tender feelings for her. I love her like one of my own children, and haven't I accepted Cecile much as I loathe her mother? But with Bertha it's not a mere matter of getting married and preserving her unexampled wealth, if you will——" The War Lord stopped short, but after a moment's thought continued: "It will be more public spirited for Bertha to marry the man of my selection than to imperil the Fatherland's right arm. Where would we be if she chose for lord and master one of those fool-pacifists, some von Suttner milksop, seeing that without Krupp's loyal co-operation our great war would go to pot—that even a mere defensive war would better be avoided."

"If Fraulein Krupp or her husband went to extremes, the State could step in and take over the Krupp works," objected the Chancellor.

"And do you suppose that our agents in Brussels, Lisbon, Rome, the South Americas and so forth would be allowed to buy guns from the King of Prussia?" The War Lord answered his own question with an emphatic "No!" then suggested slyly:

"To sell the enemy war materials is part of our ante-war programme, is it not?"

After walking the length and breadth of the room, he planted himself firmly before Bülow, whom, by the way, he had not asked to be seated.

"I command," he said with an air of finality; "Bohlen is the man. Your own suggestion, you can't escape from it," he quickly added, when Bülow protested. "You said the fellow, though capable, is not self-opinionated—no swelled head—always obeys orders—in short: adaptable. That kind of man we need at the head of the Krupp establishment to do the Fatherland's work according to my directions—hence Bertha will marry him and no one else."

Then, to forestall further arguments: "Let's join the ladies now."

He rang for an orderly. "The Grand Master," he commanded.

Count Augustus zu Eulenburg had evidently anticipated that he would be wanted, as he stood waiting in the Shell Grotto, facing the park. The walls and ceiling of this gorgeous entrance hall

are clad with semi-precious stones in their natural growth: mountain-crystal and malachite, coral trees and amethyst rocks, agate and garnets, gold and silver ore; presents from royal friends for the most part.

"I'll leave for Essen to-night. Wire Frau Krupp to expect me for breakfast. The small entourage, and warn messieurs my humble servants not to take too many lackeys. I am tired of carting their households around."

"At Your Majesty's orders." The Marshal bowed low. Then in a whisper: "Is Phili to be of the party?"

"Certainly not," replied the War Lord so Bülow might hear him. "Report to me later," he added in an undertone.

"Later" the following *tripotage* was overheard:

War Lord: "Phili hasn't left?"

"He is awaiting Your Majesty's further commands."

"Tell him to get ready for Essen."

"He begs to remind Your Majesty that he is not in the Baroness's good graces."

"Am I not painfully aware of that? She would prefer the measles to a morning call from Phili."

"Then he is to stay on the train while Your Majesty visits Villa Huegel?"

"Until I require him. He may be needed to quicken her ladyship's decision about matters in hand, as under pressure of his presence she will consent more readily, just to get your precious cousin out of the house."

CHAPTER XXIV THE WAR LORD'S DAY IN ESSEN

The Krupp Free Hotel—The War Lord and the Cinder—Bertha's Little Surprise—The Blue Ribbon of the Son—A Mad Idea—The War Lord Apes the Expert—Enter the Pawn—A Wily Game—Disposing of Franz

"A wonderful country, the United States," said the War Lord to Chief-Engineer Franz; "it produced two Maxims. The British War Office captured Hiram, but there is another, Hudson, who seems to know as much about explosives and guns as his more celebrated namesake. I want you to take a year's leave and study him—him and Pittsburgh. Your salary goes on, of course, and there will be a suitable allowance for expense. I will arrange this with the Director-General."

Franz bowed his thanks, for Wilhelm, big with his subject, showed plainly that he meant to do all the talking.

"Hudson Maxim," he continued, "claims priority as inventor of half a hundred discoveries that would seem to spell success in war. He knows a lot about dynamite, torpedoes, and detonating fuses too, and is great in chemistry. Try and learn all he knows by fair means or—foul," he added. Then, musingly:

"I have lately looked into some recipes suggesting chemical preparations for means of attack. The War Office will furnish details. Consult Hudson Maxim and other American authorities on the subject, using the utmost discretion, of course, for I don't quite trust those Yankees. They manage to cover up their British sympathies, but I have had a peep or two beneath the surface. I know Armour." His mind took a sudden leap. "How soon will you start?" he demanded. "Do you want a week's time? Very well."

"May it please Your Majesty, Frau Krupp invited me to accompany herself and daughters on their jaunt—sort of *maréchal de logis*—" ventured Franz.

"Duty, sir! Fatherland first. Tuesday's French liner, then; and don't fail to investigate whether steamers of this class are liable to be of use as auxiliary vessels in case of war. Ballin and the Norddeutscher Lloyd people pronounce them veritable men-of-war. But, to my mind, Ballin and Company are after subsidies."

Thus was Franz politely requested and cruelly coerced to leave Villa Huegel. It was on the eve of the day after the interview between War Lord and Chancellor. Events had moved swiftly since then.

A comfortable night on Majesty's train *de luxe*, preceded by a variety performance by Phil Eulenburg, star impersonator.

Breakfast, 9 A.M., at the Krupp villa, better and more plentiful than at home.

A drive next? No; Uncle Majesty would not allow Bertha to handle the ribbons of the four-in-hand. Never doubted her ability, of course—yet that experience of his at Count Dohna's. No amateurs on the box for him. "His little girl was to sit by his side," and they were to discuss "grave business matters."

Wilhelm, who always looks for chances to combine business with pleasure, asked to be driven to the *Essener Hof*, a hotel in the city of Essen proper, where intending buyers of guns and ammunition are lodged, and, it may be added, wined and feasted at the War Lady's expense. Be sure that the Krupp hostelry is never lacking in guests pretending to be unsatisfied with the tests of war material conducted for their benefit as long as there is the slightest excuse for delay in going home, since, once satisfied, they must buy, and, the deal concluded, give up their comfortable apartments at the *Hof*.

Wilhelm left half a dozen of his large, ugly visiting-cards at the door of the hotel for the Jap, Chinese, Turkish and other representatives, bending down the lower right-hand corner of the pasteboards to indicate his regrets that he had failed to find the gentlemen in.

"If any of them attempt to pay me a return visit, I shall put them under 'old Fritz' and pulverise their yellow bones," he said to Bertha.

But before they had finished laughing at the piece of raillery the War Lord uttered a cry of anguish. An infinitesimal cinder or a bit of soot had got into his left ear, causing him the most excruciating pains.

"Home," he gasped piteously. "Let's pick up a physician on the way." (For some reason or other no doctor was included in the small Imperial party.)

Dr. Shrader was dumbfounded when the royal chasseur, in feather hat, broadsword at his side, summoned him. "My consulting hour; dozens of people waiting," he protested. The chasseur bent over the doctor's ear and whispered, whereupon Shrader ran into the street in his dressing-gown, apparently to interview the gutter, for, in his anxiety to pacify the War Lord with stammered excuses, his nose was close to the stream of mucky water running down the hill.

Naturally, the humour of the thing did not appeal to Wilhelm, racked with pain as he was. He rose from the seat, and, pushing the obsequious doctor aside, jumped up the steps, saying: "Attend me, I command." Of course, in the meanwhile the doctor's household had got wind of the royal radiance, and flocked from parlour, bedrooms and scullery, males and females and children, all eager to prostrate themselves in hall or on staircases, wherever they might be.

The War Lord turned to Shrader: "Send them upstairs; lock them in if necessary." And, with a look through the glass door of the waiting-room: "These people must leave instantly; I won't be their *Grossebeest*."

He let himself drop into the doctor's ample desk-chair.

"The ear-pump and antiseptics!" he commanded with a cry of pain. Then, as the doctor approached with the instruments: "Oh, take off that dirty dressing-gown first. Roll up your sleeves. Wash your hands."

More insulting orders were thundered at the man of science by a supposed gentleman, but their execution gave Shrader time to recover.

He handled the ear-pump with consummate ease, as he happened to be a specialist in the line, and soon had the satisfaction of showing the War Lord the annoying fragment of cinder which his skill had discovered and extracted.

"May it please Your Majesty, it would be well to clear all the passages by blowing air through them," he humbly suggested.

"Do all that's necessary, doctor."

Shrader produced another instrument fitted with a spiral trumpet and a long rubber tube, and went to work vigorously. By the time the War Lord was ready to leave the doctor laid down his microscope: "I congratulate Your Majesty; no evidence of putrefaction, hence no gangrenous inflammation."

"Who said there was?" demanded the War Lord severely.

"I meant to submit to Your Majesty that the ear will give no further trouble."

"That's better," said Wilhelm in a pleasant voice. He strode through the hall at such a pace that the chasseur had hardly time to open the door for him.

The street was black with people. "Hochs!" resounded from a thousand throats, basso, tenor, soprano, what not. A good many people had been talking to Bertha—all at once, of course.

"Prating of their misfortunes—the usual racket," suggested the War Lord, with a look of contempt, as he sat down beside the heiress. And when the carriage was clear of the mob he added: "You ought to have walked the horses up and down in the neighbourhood while I was with the doctor."

"I thought of that, likewise that the carriage might not have been on hand when you wanted to start, Uncle Majesty. You told me the remark of the French king: 'I almost waited,'" replied Fraulein Krupp.

Dr. Shrader had indeed relieved the Majesty, who felt fresh and buoyant after the invigorating ride over the hills and along the shooting-ranges. The latter, while fully manned, were silent, for the chasseur had telephoned to Count Helmuth von Moltke, and the adjutant had countermanded all trial practice.

"Let's look at 'old Fritz' again," said the War Lord, after refreshments. Unlike Charles V., the War Lord is never awakened during the night to swallow some favourite dish, but five meals a day are his rule, and to revive his animal spirits he takes a number of raw eggs in a glass of cognac after the slightest exertion, when at home, i.e. at his own expense, while more substantial and elaborate provision is expected at friends' houses.

At Villa Huegel he is never disappointed. Even if he brought those "forty scientist friends" he once imposed upon Dom Carlos of Portugal, poor man!—indeed, even if he asked Frau Krupp to lodge and feed a whole regiment of gold-laced or fringe-trousered nobodies or impostors, there would be the most generous response on her part and no questions asked.

"When I heard you were coming, Uncle Majesty, I planned a little surprise," said Bertha, when showing the War Lord a short cut to "old Fritz's" habitat. She led the way to a section of the armour-plate department, whose employés burst into feverish activity at their approach. No doubt they were expected.

"Eighty tons," said Bertha, pointing towards the huge crucible steel block being placed under a giant hydraulic press.

"How will you move a cannon of that size?" queried the War Lord, who is liable to get his figures mixed.

"But it is not going to be a cannon, Uncle Majesty," explained the mistress of the works.

"You are going to roll it out into an armour-plate for Chimborazo, then?"

"Once more Uncle Majesty is pleased to be mistaken."

"Maybe it's a statue of England's lord high admiral you are making?"

"Burning," said the smiling Bertha; "it has something to do with the sea."

There was more guessing and repartee during the first half of the thirty minutes required to coax and squeeze and handle and form the block and drag its slow length along—150 feet of it. Seeing that, the War Lord no longer could master his curiosity.

"What is it to be, Bertha?" he asked in a tone that would not be denied, and the wonder is that he did not add the polite: "I command!" of average Prussian bully ship.

"The shaft of a big steamer, Uncle Majesty; the biggest——"

"I know, I know," shouted the War Lord above the din of machinery, "for Ballin. Wants to snatch the speed record from Bremen. Fetch the superintendent, Bertha."

To the official, who was undecided whether he ought to drop dead with devotion or burst with pride, he said in the tone of an ancient Father of the Church: "Work of the utmost importance is entrusted to you—in a measure you are the guardian of the Fatherland's supremacy at sea. England is building a giant steamship to steal our speed record. Her new ocean greyhound is to be ready for passenger service in 1907. Pray to God fervently, asking Him to grant you success that you may help to defeat the enemy of German commerce and our development as a sea power. To assist in taking the blue ribbon of sea power away from Great Britain should be the aim of all good Germans, even as it is your War Lord's duty to secure for the Fatherland the ocean coast-lines she needs." He dismissed the man with a wave of the hand.

It is interesting to note here that this speech was delivered a month before Wilhelm met King Edward at Wilhelmshöhe to spout "his sincere wishes for a frank understanding with Great Britain" and for the "desirability of common action" where German or British interests were involved.

Meanwhile the shaft had been completed, a towering, solid mass, and the War Lord, walking round it, remarked admiringly: "Fine, looks as if come out of Vulcan's own smithy. What next?" he added, with his customary impatience.

The young girl was anxious to show her familiarity with the business. Had she not undergone much coaching by Franz for this very reason?

"Extracting the kernel," she answered, with an air of superiority.

"I should like to see the removal of the kernel," ordered the War Lord, as if the idea were original with him. Bertha pulled his sleeve and whispered again, after which Wilhelm admonished the superintendent: "Take care that it comes out in one piece."

No doubt the man would have died of mortification if the well-known "cussedness" of "inanimate objects" had played him a trick; but, luckily for him, it refrained, which encourages the thought that the supposed "inanimation" is not quite so hopeless after all. Maybe in this case the "inanimate object" was intent upon beating the War Lord out of a chance to scold and air his views on mechanics.

"Any more novelties?" asked Wilhelm, disappointed because the machinery worked to perfection.

"The hydraulic shears are busy in the next shop," said Bertha.

There the War Lord saw sections of armour-plates for one of his Dreadnoughts cut as if they were so many enormous Swiss cheeses.

"Some fine day," he commented, "we will mount one of these shears on the Calais coast, and next to it a giant magnet." He paused, contemplating the picture of his imagination.

"Yes, yes, Uncle Majesty!" cried the eager Bertha.

"The magnet," continued the War Lord, "will pull the English Dreadnought fleet out of the Channel, and toss ship after ship over into the jaws of the shears to be made mincemeat of. Fine heap of scrap-iron for you, Bertha."

"But the sailors!" cried the young girl.

"*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*," declared the War Lord, shrugging.

Next they looked at some enormous presses capable of bending armour-plates to any shape desired. This amused the Majesty hugely. He likes to bend men and things.

"Any shape desired?"

"Any Your Majesty will be pleased to command."

"Very well. Model one on the left half of my moustache."

The supervisor shouted orders and the machinery stopped for a little while, then turned out the desired shape with photographic accuracy. But the War Lord would not have it: "The point's missing," he declared.

"I leave it to Fraulein," murmured the superintendent, wincing under the rebuke. And with the vivacity and carelessness of youth Bertha divined the situation, and instantly came to her employé's rescue.

"Herr Grier is right; Your Majesty's moustaches are not trimmed alike. The left one is much shorter."

Wilhelm put his hand up to his cheek. "So it is," he admitted grudgingly. "I remember I set fire to it last night on the train lighting a cigarette." This was addressed to Bertha. He was too small a person to excuse his rudeness to the superintendent.

"There is a ninety-ton block of steel making. Would Uncle Majesty like to see how it's done?" said Bertha, on the way back to Villa Huegel.

"Ninety tons! What a cannon that would make! Of course I would like to see it."

Bertha led the way to the crucible works, where at that moment fifty pairs of workers were engaged in carrying about on long bars white-hot crucibles of metal. They were acting with the utmost precision, and one shudders to think of the wounds and mutilation that would have ensued had either one of them stumbled or been seized by sudden illness. As each couple of men advanced and tilted the glowing mass into the mould, the War Lord observed:

"Much too long-winded and laborious. I will talk to the Director-General about that, Bertha."

And, turning to the supervisor, he demanded curtly: "The composition of the mixture?"

The man bowed to the ground to hide his confusion, and once more Bertha jumped into the breach.

"He doesn't know—nor do I. Secret formula of Grandfather Frederick. Don't press him, Uncle Majesty, for even to speculate on these technicalities means dismissal and disgrace for an employé." Though she spoke in a pleading tone of voice, the War Lord continued to frown.

"Perhaps he is allowed to explain why no shorter process is used."

The supervisor fairly beamed with readiness and satisfaction. "May it please Your Majesty, our way—I beg Fraulein's pardon, the Krupp way—is the only absolutely sure method to forestall bubbles and flaws."

"And a flaw, is it a serious matter?" asked the War Lord, very much alert.

"Indeed, Your Majesty, for it may cause the shattering of a shaft, the breakdown of

machinery, the bursting of cannon."

"And all cannon turned out by the works have the benefit of this process?"

"All without exception, Your Majesty."

A bystander says he heard the War Lord mutter under his breath: "What rot!" And there is a further report that he burst into the Director-General's room, and roared: "Fine kettle of fish I discovered. Guarding against flaws in cannon intended for enemy countries! Why not turn over to France and England and Russia all the secret plans of the German War Office?"

But no authoritative record of Wilhelm's sayings relating to this particular point has been obtainable. As a matter of fact, it isn't worth the pains of special research. It is to be noted, however, that after the Turkish defeat at Lule Burgas and Kirk Kilisse Bertha's husband was moved to say that the stories about the "inefficiency of Krupp guns and Krupp workmanship" were "fables," and that he was ready at any time "to take the field against all comers with Krupp guns and Krupp armour."

After tea the War Lord had a long, serious talk with Frau Krupp. Happily her ladyship had been mistaken. Bertha was not actually in love with Franz; just a sort of sisterly attachment, momentarily intensified by girlish longings. So much the better, since the right sort of husband for his ward had been found: Doctor von Bohlen und Halbach, the young diplomat, distinguished, well-bred, sound business head and ambitious. "Highest ambition to serve his king."

"Supposing Your Majesty understood Bertha correctly with respect to Franz, her change of heart does not mean that she will fall in love with Your Majesty's candidate for her hand," said Frau Krupp.

"Preparing to jump," thought Wilhelm; "I wish Phili were here." And as accident would have it, His Highness was announced that very moment. Eulenburg, or Hohenzollern luck?

The Baroness opened her mouth to deny herself to the visitor on the plea of unavoidable business, but Wilhelm got ahead of her. "The Prince is most welcome," he said to the major-domo.

There is no denying that His Highness, ten or more years ago, was a striking personality and had a peculiar charm. As Murat knew more about the art of dressing than Napoleon, so Eulenburg overshadowed Wilhelm as a glass of fashion, avoiding the latter's all-too-apparent striving for effect and pretence.

Despite their close relations, he greeted Wilhelm without a trace of familiarity and kissed Frau Krupp's hand.

"Just in time," cried the War Lord. "I was telling the Baroness about the Chancellor's young friend, von Bohlen. Bülow told me he would ask you to allow him sight of your records concerning the diplomat. Was he satisfied? Tell us all you know about Bohlen?"

That he was well aware of Frau Krupp's loathing for him need not be reiterated, and that in her ladyship's eyes praise from Sir Phili spelt the worst of condemnation for the party approved of he fully realised, and framed his answer accordingly:

"I am pained to acknowledge that I have no personal acquaintance with the young man who rejoices in the great Pontiff's love and friendship——"

"You have Pius's own opinion," cried the War Lord. His astonishment was equalled only by his appreciation of the lie told.

"At Your Majesty's service—through the kindness of the papal legate. When Majesty commissioned me to get reliable information about our foreign representatives, I went to headquarters—may it please Your Majesty."

"It pleases me immensely. What did the Pontiff say?"

"Exemplary habits, God-fearing, able and ambitious—these few words sum up the Holy Father's estimate of Bohlen."

"Did you hear that?" asked Wilhelm, addressing Frau Krupp. "We will get the details from Bülow." And turning to Phili, he said: "You wanted to meet my ward. I will summon her, and she shall show you over the house and grounds. Beats Liebenberg," he added in an undertone.

Phili beamed. "His Majesty is joking," he said to Frau Krupp. "To compare my poor Tusculum to Villa Huegel and surroundings is to put my Skalde songs next to the immortal ballads of Beranger."

Frau Krupp dared not object to Wilhelm's arrangements. She played into the War Lord's hands.

"I will meet you and His Highness at the fountain in five minutes," she told Bertha—a welcome cue to Uncle Majesty.

"Aside from the Pope's estimate, does the Chancellor himself approve of Herr von Bohlen?" asked Frau Krupp.

"Enthusiastically. Bohlen's record in Washington and in Peking equalled his success at the Holy See. *Gnädige Frau*," added Wilhelm in a tone of conviction, "let's hope that the estimable young man's heart is still free. I have no doubt that he would be a *dieu-donné* to Bertha, yourself and—Essen."

"And Your Majesty desires me to broach the matter to my daughter?"

"What is *gnädige Frau* thinking of? Do you suppose I would have wooed Augusta if I had known that Bismarck wanted me to marry her? No, no; matters of that kind must be left to accident, or apparent accident. This is the time for diplomatic furloughs. Tell me where you want to take the girls on their holiday, and I will have your son-in-law-to-be introduced quite casually. Bülow will manage."

"Bertha spoke of having another look into Rome before the hot season," said the Baroness.

"Fate," cried Wilhelm (if he was a Catholic he would have crossed himself). "God's will," he corrected his lapsus *linguæ*. "Herr von Bohlen und Halbach will be ordered not to leave his post until further notice. When you are in Rome he will present himself with Bülow's compliments, offering to act as my ward's cicerone. This will give you abundant opportunity for intimate observation and Bertha a chance to fall in love if she cares.

"All's arranged, then," he added in the finality vein peculiar to his nature, when he kissed Frau Krupp's hand at the door, which he had opened for her. In the Teuton Majesty's eye this was a great and almost overpowering act of condescension; the twentieth-century Prussian-en-chef rather prides himself on such mannerisms, fondly mistaking them for dignity.

Well satisfied with the success of his stratagem, Wilhelm rang for his adjutant and dictated to him a long dispatch to the Chancellor, giving a well-coloured version of the interview with Frau Krupp and instructing Count Bülow how to answer the lady's forthcoming inquiries.

"The holiest of the holies, of course," ordered Wilhelm, referring to the telegraphic code. "I don't trust these Essen fellows," he deigned to explain; "the Chasseur shall take the message to Düsseldorf and personally hand it to the President to be sent over the official wire."

Afterwards he joined the ladies and Phili, finishing up the day's strenuous work of intrigue and sight-seeing with the talk to Franz, recorded at the opening of this chapter.

Just before leaving Villa Huegel he had another *tête-à-tête* with Frau Krupp. "I have conferred signal honours on your protégé" (meaning the chief engineer), he said. "I am sending him to the States to study new inventions and investigate patents relating to war materials—greatest chance that ever came to a young man. If he does as well as I expect, I will make him special representative of my General Staff. Is your Ladyship satisfied now?"

Frau Krupp breathed her humblest thanks. What else could she do?

CHAPTER XXV A ROYAL LIAR

High-Placed Plagiarists—Diplomatic Trickery—The Kaiser Whitewashes Himself—"What of the German Navy?"—Clumsy Espionage

October 10th, 1905, 6 p.m.

The red disc betraying the War Lord's presence at the other end of the wire thrust itself between the Chancellor's eyes and the copy of *Echo de Paris* he was reading.

"I command Bohlen," said Wilhelm's impatient voice.

"I am afraid he is not available just now, Your Majesty. Gone shopping with his fiancée the last I heard."

"Order Wedell to find him. He shall be at the Chancellery at nine sharp, when I expect to find you too, Prince."

"Gracing my wife's soirée?"

"Soirée to-night? Excellent! I will order all my boys to kiss Madame's hand. It will put her into good humour, and she will the more readily allow you to attend to business."

"And, Majesty," said Bülow, hopefully, "the Princess Maria is counting on having the honour of Your Majesty's presence."

"I will send the insignia of *dell' Annunciata* instead."

"I beg Your Majesty, don't. Maria might not remember that Charles XII. sent his boots to preside at the Swedish Council of State."

As before remarked, it is one of Bülow's tricks always to have on the tip of his tongue some historic *bon mot* suitable to the occasion.

There was an outburst of rough laughter. "He did, did he? And yet they called him the Madman of the North. Next time Herr Bebel has a congress, I will send the Reds a pair of my riding breeches, and no new ones either. But *revenons à Bohlen*. Devil of a chap! Made Bertha his goods, his chattel, his stuff, his field, his barn, his horse, his ox, his ass, his everything! That's the way! Make them eat out of your hand, Prince!"

Bülow was a Prince since the 6th of June, and the War Lord never tired of calling him by the title of his own creation. He had just borrowed boldly from the Bard, and the theft being apparently undiscovered by his literary Chancellor, Wilhelm felt justified in relaxing his imperious mien some more.

"Can't you prescribe a dose of sleeping sickness for that fool Liebert? His shouting about 'our war' to obtain supreme sea power is co-responsible for the *Entente Cordiale*. Of course I like to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy, but in his Navy League speech Liebert went too far. If he keeps it up, I shall put him on half-pay. Tell him so." (The War Lord referred to General von Liebert, ex-Governor of German East Africa, who had made a speech threatening Great Britain and France.)

And more talk of that kind. The more gossipy, the better for Bülow, as there had been no time to digest the *Echo de Paris* article and to enter into its discussion before he had fully made up his mind what to say about the reported Anglo-Franco-Russo-Japanese Alliance. His comments might lead to serious dissension with Majesty, for Wilhelm was sure to fasten on to some supposed negligible point in the Chancellor's argument to distort the whole tenor of his interpretation.

Tit for tat. Only when Bülow was the victim, there was no prearrangement like in the case of the repudiations of the Joseph Chamberlain and the London *Daily Telegraph* interviews.

When in England five years before, the War Lord had prompted Mr. Chamberlain to make his historic appeal in favour of co-operation between Great Britain, Germany and the United States, assuring him that Germany's future policy would rest on such an understanding as on a *roche de bronze*.

Mr. Chamberlain, being under the impression that only gentlemen were invited to Sandringham House, thought His Majesty sincere and gave public utterance to the message, promising peace and mutual understanding.

But the *Roi de Prusse* had no sooner shaken the dust of England from his boots than Bülow was ordered to repudiate the whole thing (without directly impugning his Sovereign's word, of course) and to ridicule Chamberlain's "Utopian schemes."

Notwithstanding, the then German Ambassador in London, Count Wolff-Metternich, later had the impudence to complain to Sir F. Lascelles, British representative in Berlin, that the state of English opinion toward Germany and the British Foreign Office's coldness toward the Wilhelmstrasse gave him considerable uneasiness; whereupon Sir Lascelles demanded to know whether Germany expected British Secretaries of State, having been struck in the face, were to turn the other cheek for further castigation and insult?

Three years after the birth of the Quadruple Alliance, at which we are now assisting, the War Lord and his Chancellor had another repudiation game between them. Mr. Harcourt having prepared the way in his amazing Lancashire speech,[#] Wilhelm strove to outdo the Father of Lies in the notorious *Daily Telegraph* interview, the general theme of which was:

[#] Mr. Harcourt's speech in Lancashire, October, 1908: "I wil not offer to other nations the temptation which would be afforded by a defenceless England, but let me assure you ... there has not been any period in the last ten or fifteen years—and I speak with knowledge and a sense of deep responsibility—in which our relations with Germany—commercial, colonial, political, and dynastic—have been on a firmer and more friendly footing than they are to-day.

"Our rivalries are only in trade and education, and though I should claim for us the supremacy of the former, I would yield to Germany the palm for perfection in the latter; but of personal animosity there is none between the rulers, the Governments, or the peoples. And if in either country there is a small class of publicists who, for selfish and unpatriotic ends, desire to set the nations at variance—well, they are the footpads of politics and the enemies of the human race."

"You English are mad, mad—mad as March hares. What has come over you that you are so

completely given over to suspicions quite unworthy of a great nation? What more can I do than I have done? I declared with all the emphasis at my command, in my speech at Guildhall, that my heart is set upon peace, and that it is one of my dearest wishes to live on the best of terms with England. Have I ever been false to my word? Falsehood and prevarication are alien to my nature.

"My actions ought to speak for themselves, but you listen, not to them, but to those who misinterpret and distort them. That is a personal insult which I feel and resent. To be for ever misjudged, to have my repeated offers of friendship weighed and scrutinised with jealous, mistrustful eyes, taxes my patience severely. I have said time after time that I am a friend of England, and your Press—or, at least, a considerable section of it—bids the people of England refuse my proffered hand, and insinuates that the other holds a dagger.

"I repeat that I am the friend of England, but you make things difficult for me. My task is not of the easiest. The prevailing sentiment of large sections of the middle and the lower classes of my country is not friendly to England. I am therefore, so to speak, in a minority in my own land.

"It is commonly believed in England that throughout the South African War Germany was hostile to her. German opinion undoubtedly was hostile—bitterly hostile. The Press was hostile; private opinion was hostile. But what of official Germany? Let my critics ask themselves what brought to a sudden stop, and indeed caused the absolute collapse of the European tour of the Boer delegates who were striving to obtain European intervention? They were fêted in Holland; France gave them a rapturous welcome. They wished to come to Berlin where the German people would have crowned them with flowers. But when they asked me to receive them I refused. The agitation immediately died away, and the delegation returned empty-handed. Was that, I ask, the action of a secret enemy?

"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, so far from Germany joining in any concerted European action to put pressure upon England and bring about her downfall, Germany would always keep aloof from politics that could bring her into complications with a Sea Power like England.

"Posterity will one day read the exact terms of the telegram—now in the archives at Windsor Castle—in which I informed the Sovereign of England of the answer I had returned to the Powers which then sought to compass her fall. Englishmen who now insult me by doubting my word should know what were my actions in the hour of their adversity.

"Nor was that all. Just at the time of your Black Week, in 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 dispatched 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. Was that, I repeat, the act of one who wished England ill? Let Englishmen be just.

"But you will say, what of the German Navy? Surely that is a menace to England. Against whom but England are my squadrons being prepared? If England is not in the minds of those Germans who are bent on creating a powerful fleet, why is Germany asked to consent to such new and heavy burdens of taxation? My answer is clear. Germany is a young and growing empire. She has a world-wide commerce, which is rapidly expanding and to which the legitimate ambition of patriotic Germans refuses to assign any bounds.

"Germany must have a powerful fleet to protect that commerce and her manifold interests in even the most distant seas. She expects those interests to go on growing, and she must be able to champion them manfully in any quarter of the globe. Germany looks ahead. Her horizons stretch far away. She must be prepared for any eventualities in the Far East. Who can foresee what may take place in the Pacific in the days to come, days not so distant as some believe, but days at any rate for which all European Powers with Far Eastern interests ought steadily to prepare?

"Look at the accomplished rise of Japan; think of the possible national awakening of China; and then judge of the vast problems of the Pacific. Only those Powers which have great navies will be listened to with respect, when the future of the Pacific comes to be solved; and if for that reason only, Germany must have a powerful fleet. It may be that even England herself will be glad that Germany has a fleet when they speak together on the same side in the momentous debates of the future."

When the interview set the world guessing, disputing, imputing and passing the lie freely, Prince Bülow again disavowed his master, with His Majesty's consent and at his instigation, of course, otherwise the fate of Bismarck would have seemed much too good for the obstreperous servant.

But to return to the 10th of October, 1905, 6 P.M. While the Chancelleries of all Europe were quaking with deliberations on the Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* in connection with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the War Lord's chief minister spent an anxious *quart d'heure* trying to convince His Majesty that he was not intriguing against one of the numerous Eulenburg-maggots, fattening in the public cheese, Limburger brand.

Majesty, it seems, was deeply concerned about a certain titled member of the German Embassy in London who had befouled his record by spying. This pretty gentleman attended the Essex manoeuvres in the fall of 1904, notebook in hand, and sent elaborate reports, accompanied by sketches and diagrams, to the Berlin General Staff, acting the part of Secret Service agent no less treacherously, but rather more clumsily, than the German aristocrat who was convicted at Edinburgh in 1911.

Subsequently, of course, no British Army officer could afford to know this individual, and Mayfair, too, showed a decided inclination to cut dead the *chevalier d'espionnage*.

"Quite naturally!" Prince Bülow saved himself by adding: "From the English standpoint."

The telephone fairly "zizzled" as the War Lord shouted back:

"What? Ostracise a man who has done nothing but his — duty toward me and the Fatherland. Intolerable! —!! He must be reinstated in clubs and Society. He must be able to hold up his head in Piccadilly as proudly as in Unter den Linden. I command it. Speak to Lascelles about it, and have this boycott ended at once.

Of course Bülow promised—with his left hand on his back, which, as explained, allows a good German to vow one thing and mean another.

CHAPTER XXVI EXPLAINING "THE DAY"

The True Wilhelm—The War Lord is Angry—More Disclosures—Bülow Sums Up—Dreams of Conquest—The Subjugation of England—Peace Must Wait on War—The New Big Gun—von Bohlen is Dense

Prince Bülow emptied a small phial of double-distilled extract of eau de Cologne on his handkerchief, for a message from the palace said that the War Lord's ear trouble had again become acute, and that, consequently, all windows and doors must be hermetically shut during his visit at the Chancellery. Again he was called up. Wilhelm had dismissed his Chasseur, with a record of twenty years' faithful service, because the man kept the carriage door open while he asked whether a hot-water bag was wanted. "Instanter!" Wouldn't suffer him to take his place on the box again.

"Pleasant evening in store for us, Herr von Bohlen," said the Prince to Bertha's fiancé.

He rang for his adjutant. "You would not like to go back to Brandenburg?" he began pleasantly.

"Nor to any other provincial hole, Your Highness," answered the Baron Reiff, clicking his heels together.

"In that case see that His Majesty does not complain of draughts while here."

The adjutant raised a hand to his left ear. Bülow nodded. "I will have to hold you responsible, Reiff," he said in tones of unwonted severity.

The Chancellor's palace was *en fête*. The brilliantly lit corridors and stairs were alive with guests, eager to pay homage to Princess Maria: Scions of Royalty and mere beggar counts, as the great Frederick used to style poor nobles; masters of statecraft and prima donnas; generals and blue-blooded cornets, courtiers and members of the hierarchy. And as many lackeys in blue and silver as visitors.

Most of the guests longed for sight of the Chancellor, and would have given much to have a peep at the room where Bismarck bullied and ruled Europe, but the glass doors leading to the grand garden salon were guarded inside and out by Secret Service men, while Baron Reiff flitted to and fro, scrutinising faces and keeping an eye on everybody.

In the grand salon of the Bel Etage, Enrico Caruso was exchanging notes of purity for the immaculate ones of the Bank of England, when the siren of the royal automobile cried shame on Verdi. Three blasts and a half. Her Highness's master of ceremony, at the foot of the staircase, rapped frantically; the doorkeeper rushed forward with an enormous umbrella, though the sky was clear; Baron Reiff looked daggers, and conversation was cut as by the executioner's axe.

Narrow lips frozen together under a carrot-greyish moustache with points threatening the white of his eyes; face a dead yellow; a masterful, defiant chin thrust forward; eyes flashing, but dark of aspect in general appearance despite his white, red and silver accoutrements, the War Lord strode into the Chancellor's room.

He looked so stony, a stranger both to joy and pity, that Herr von Bohlen told Bertha afterwards that the War Lord seemed, to him, like a man whose veins were clogged with salt and clay instead of running warm blood.

A stiff, mechanical salute, squaring of shoulders, inflating of chest, pecking at the two men, who nearly bent double. Wilhelm acted as if his spine were paralysed. No graven image of his own design appears stiffer, more jointless. Somebody has likened him to a coloured plate out of a book of etiquette. He certainly looked it, for etiquette taboos smiles, real courtesy, humanity itself.

While his eyes swept the room, the silver helmet came crashing down on a table. He would have given much to discover reasons for complaint, and Prince Bülow's precautions against draughts discomfited him more than his negligence would have done; it robbed him of the chance for flying into a passion.

"Pretty goings on at Downing Street and Quai d'Orsay," he snarled. "Yesterday it was Kiauchau. To-day it's German Belgium and Northern France they ask. Any additional insults since then?"

"All the dispatches are in Your Majesty's hands," replied the Chancellor, looking significantly at Herr von Bohlen.

"Report." If the Lord of Statecraft and gentleman born and bred, Chancellor and Prince, had been a thieving valet, Wilhelm could not have spoken with more contemptuous severity.

"Will Your Majesty be pleased to be seated?" This with another questioning look at Bertha's fiancé. Prince von Bülow had more than a little respect for the dignity of his office.

"Without reserve," muttered the War Lord, dropping into an arm-chair. "I want him to know, and knowing, to understand the imperativeness of his duties as head of the Krupp works. Report, sir."

The Chancellor, who wore Hussar uniform with the insignia of Major-General and more decorations than the most beloved of cotillon favourites at 2 A.M., bowed ceremoniously, then stood bolt upright and somewhat constrainedly.

"May it please Your Majesty," he began, weighing a parcel of dispatches in his hand, but not looking at them. "The Paris disclosures just made seem to be the direct outcome of the friendly understanding between Great Britain and France——"

"The abortion called *Entente Cordiale*," interrupted the War Lord—a red rag to a bull already wounded.

The Chancellor continued: "The British assume that we are planning the destruction of France, and, that accomplished, the invasion of England. British statesmen recognise that the French army is no match for ours, that even with the assistance of the English Yeomanry——"

"Miserable hirelings, whom the German Boers thrashed four years in succession," cried Wilhelm, rising and stamping his foot.

"Even with their assistance Germany would remain supreme on land," resumed Prince Bülow. "Hence Quai d'Orsay's overtures to Downing Street: Paralyse German land supremacy by supremacy on sea, and——"

"Steal my colonies, that's their game," thundered the War Lord, addressing Bohlen. "Do you

know what that means, sir? That the Hohenzollern wouldn't have a stone to lay his head on when the Reds have their way. To me colonies are entailed estates, on which to fall back when the civil list at home fails us. Suppose Germany—which God forbid—turned republic. Off we are to Africa like a shot, there to await our chance to return at the proper time. And there won't be any doffing the chapeau to the mob if we do come back, I warrant you."[#]

[#] In March, 1848, Frederick Wilhelm IV., Wilhelm's grand-uncle, was ordered by the Berlin revolutionists to come out on the balcony and to salute when the victims of his soldiery were carried past the castle. He bowed obsequiously—an act that is gall and wormwood to the War Lord. Hence it is permissible in the Fatherland to call Frederick Wilhelm IV. an ass—no more or less. An editor who called him a mouse-coloured ass got three months for his pains.

"It must be conceded, though," said the Chancellor, with a conciliatory smile, "that the British are profoundly pacific and that there is no itch for war in the Island Kingdoms. If ever there was, it lies buried somewhere on the African veld. Neither is France likely to provoke war."

"She knows better," cried Wilhelm. "French women don't want children."

"So much for the *Entente Cordiale*," continued Prince Bülow—the War Lord had sat down on the edge of a table, swinging his right leg to and fro—"British statesmanship contending that Europe needs a strong France, and that a blow struck at France is a blow aimed at England."

"Donnersmarck's talk. If it was not for his money and his age, I would muzzle the old fool. But as I told him only the other day, he will be punished sure enough."

Donnersmarck is a Prince of the War Lord's creation, better known by his hereditary title of Count Henckel. The family achieved the lower grades of nobility at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and has always been noted for considerable landed possessions. Prince Guido is one of the richest men on the Continent, and the King of Prussia sometimes uses him as a speaking tube, never scrupling of course to disavow his utterances when it suits the Majesty-souffleur. In the disclosures referred to, Donnersmarck and Professor Schiemann had boldly announced in Paris that, if France contracted an alliance with England, Germany would fall upon her, crush her and exact a staggering indemnity, enough to pay for all damage the British fleet could possibly do to the German merchant marine and trade.

These threats were not repudiated at the time (the latter half of June) and the War Lord had considered them quite legitimate clubs for pounding French opinion while the *Entente Cordiale pourparlers* were on.

Professor Schiemann is a publicist, a historian and a lecturer on military academics. He is held responsible for some of the misinformation on historic topics the War Lord frequently betrays in his public utterances.

"We now come to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," said Prince Bülow.

"Aiming at Kiau-chau," finished the War Lord grimly.

"Which Your Majesty's foresight will preserve for the Fatherland," declaimed Bülow, who ought to have been a great courtier instead of an indifferent chancellor. But the War Lord was not in the mood for compliments. He was out to smash things.

"By Heaven!" he vowed, "I would rather turn the Pacific and the Yellow Seas into Red Seas and exterminate those brown devils to the last than allow a stone to be touched in my glorious colony of Kiau-chau."

"Spoken like an emperor," seconded Bülow. Then, with a look at the clock: "May it please Your Majesty, I would submit that our young friend here must not be misled by the statements in the Press. I have here a copy of the agreement, stating clearly that the Alliance becomes operative only by reason of attack or aggressive action resulting in war against either England or Japan."

"Words, words!" cried the War Lord contemptuously. "I suppose Herr von Bohlen's heard of Bismarck's editing of the Ems dispatch! But proceed."

Bülow cleared his throat before he approached the momentary *cause célèbre*.

"To-day it is reported from Paris, Tokyo, London and Petersburg—in the leading journals, though not officially—that a quadruple alliance is about to be ratified, terminating once and for all the seemingly interminable quarrels between Great Britain and Russia, and drawing each empire's own ally into close relations with the other: Britain's ally, Japan, automatically becomes Russia's ally, while Russia's brother-in-arms, France, becomes England's, and all four have agreed to defend either when driven to war by unprovoked attack."

"Four to three," mused the War Lord gloomily, "and number three as unreliable as a girl with

nerves."

"Majesty is pleased to forget Turkey."

"What's an ally without a navy in a conflict with Great Britain?" demanded Wilhelm. "That old thief, Abdul, rather invests in Circassian beauties than cruisers. But" (impatiently) "sum up, Bülow, sum up!"

The Prince resumed his lecture: "It is argued that Japan, being bound to give military support to Great Britain under certain eventualities, is of course interested in maintaining amicable relations between the other three empires and joined as a logical consequence of her alliance with England."

"England, always England," cried the War Lord. "Ostertag writes that it was on the advice of England that the fortifications of Antwerp and the Meuse were strengthened before and after the Morocco trouble." (Ostertag, German military attaché at the Court of St. James's.) "Bohlen," he continued abruptly, "is there anything in the situation that is not quite clear to you?"

The Councillor of Legation with the bulldog jaw and the cruel eyes answered modestly, but firmly: "May it please Your Majesty, I think I understand fully."

"Then you also understand what is expected of you as future head of the Krupp works," quoth the War Lord, laying his heavy right hand on Bohlen's shoulder.

"To obey Your Majesty's instructions and carry them out as a Prussian officer should."

The only great king Prussia boasts, Frederick, said on his death-bed: "I am tired of ruling slaves." His successor would have his Prime Minister *une âme damnée*, and never tires of telling about his "great, his inestimable reward" to a sentinel who murdered a man. The latter was drunk, German fashion, and did not at once respond to the sentinel's "Who goes there?" Bang, bang popped the sentinel's gun, and the man in mufti was ready for the undertaker.

"Next day, while a vile Press was assailing the soldier," said the War Lord, "I had him called before the ranks, promoted him, decorated him and, as a supreme honour, shook him by the hand."

"Obey Your Majesty's instructions." The War Lord, who would tell the Deity what to do, had expected as much of course, but Bohlen's evident sincerity, nay, enthusiasm, was not to be despised, particularly since it outweighed the latent fear that, after all, Bertha, when of age, might elect to take the bit between her teeth and make trouble.

"My advice and commands shall never fail you," said Wilhelm, with the air of a great Lord conferring £500 for life upon a dustman. "Now to Germany's aims—the grand future in store for her under my guidance. When you know my plans, you will begin to realise the magnitude of the work expected of Essen—of you."

"At Your Majesty's orders," saluted von Bohlen.

The War Lord was too excited to accept the gilded and crowned arm-chair Bülow offered, thereby obliging the older man in tight-fitting accoutrements and high boots to remain standing. "We must have an adequate seaboard," he poured forth; "the waters between the English, French and Belgian coasts and the harbours, fortresses and towns commanding that area will do for a start. That means Calais and Dover, Portsmouth and Boulogne, Antwerp and perhaps Havre, for Germany's future lies on the water, as I have said time and again, and those few miles of wet element circumscribe the focus of the world's trade, which must be ours by reason of superior military, scientific and commercial achievements—by our Kultur."

"Your Majesty orders a further extension of the Germania shipyards," submitted Bohlen.

"Everything in time," corrected the War Lord. "We may lay down ships as fast as our utmost resources permit, or faster. Still those confounded English can beat us. A great navy we will have, of course a greater and a better one even than the skunks of the London gutter Press credit my imagination with, but not to be knocked to bits. We will keep it safe, and at the end of the war will augment it by the French fleet and the fleets of the minor countries. Then good-bye for ever, British Sea Power!"

"Of course," continued Wilhelm, "the French and Belgians will have to be forced before they recognise my claims to those parts of their territory that formerly belonged to Germany. Flanders is German to the core, Liége and Limburg provinces were never anything but German, while the southern half of the Netherlands belonged to Germany since Charles the Fat, even as Alsace and Lorraine. Franche Comté is German of course, and Toul and Verdun were once German Free Cities like Metz."

As he dilated on his claims the War Lord grabbed a walking-stick leaning against von Bülow's desk, and tapped and stabbed at the map of Europe on the wall, puncturing and piercing it in places he particularly coveted.

"Montbeliard," he continued, "is Moempelgard, an old-time apanage of Würtemberg. My title to the principality of Orange is more legitimate than King Edward's as Emperor of India, and who will deny that Bourgogne is German Burgund, and that the original Burgunders came from the Mark and West Prussia? Not to have inserted Duc de Bourgogne in the grand title of the *roi de Prusse* is a mistake, for which its maker ought to be kicked."

He had nearly ruined the map, when his fury changed to an attitude of calm deliberation. With an air of magnanimity, he said: "However, as to France, I am willing to exchange these inland territories for the coast departments, from Dieppe to Dunkirk, provided we do not find it necessary, from a strategic standpoint, to annex Havre too."

He paused, and von Bülow tried to curry favour by suggesting: "Your Majesty intends the absolute conquest of France?"

"As a preliminary to the subjugation of England," said the War Lord solemnly.

"I am half-English myself," he continued, "and have no illusions whatever as to Great Britain's submission. After our victory the Wilhelmstrasse and Downing Street will have to enter into a gentleman's agreement: Myself, Admiral of the Atlantic; the United Kingdom to retain home-rule; Germany to be confirmed in the possession of the whole Continental shore of the Straits of Dover and in that of the French and Belgian Colonies; we, on the other hand, to guarantee England's occupation of India.

"Now to the part Essen will play in the coming upheaval."

Wilhelm was facing von Bohlen, and took hold of a button of his silver-braided Hussar jacket, the button nearest the throat. If he had intended to throttle Bertha's future husband, his grip and mien could not have been more menacing.

"We will probably have less than ten years to prepare; it's time that you get to work, young man," he said. "How do you stand with Bertha? Has she agreed to leave business to you?"

"Everything, according to Your Majesty's wishes. She promised me only to-day. We have divided our kingdom. I to be regent of the works under Your Majesty's guidance; Bertha to devote herself exclusively to social work and charities."

"Approved," said Wilhelm like a schoolmaster handing out diplomas. "When is the wedding to be?"

"May it please Your Majesty, we fixed on the second week of October next year."

"It doesn't please me a bit. Why lose so much time postponing?"

"Her ladyship will not have Bertha marry before her twentieth birthday."

"The Baroness, of course," cried the War Lord, with an oath. "When it comes to doing things, there is always a woman in the way. But I will thwart her. You shall take virtual, if not active, control of the Krupp works at once. Your resignation as my Councillor of Legation is accepted as from to-day," he added, with a look at Bülow.

The Chancellor smiled. "I submit that Herr von Bohlen is entitled to six months' leave of absence."

"Six months for making yourself solid with my ward, and prepare for the greatest job ever entrusted to one man," decided the War Lord. "Now listen:

"I've already told you that I will hack my way to Calais and crush France absolutely. Essen's business, then, is to make all so-called works of peace wait upon the necessities of war—all, everything I say. Is that clear?"

"We are to attend only to orders from the German General Staff," replied von Bohlen.

"They come first, of course," said the War Lord, "but foreign orders for guns and ammunition must also be attended to if Berlin so advises. On that point there will be special instructions. But it's only the beginning—an obvious one, and the Krupp's have always been more than equal to regular demands from my War Office. However, in future these are sure to increase immeasurably, out of all proportion both in size and in variety."

Exhausted by the intense mobility of his ideas, the War Lord abruptly threw himself into the armchair, held in readiness for him by the obsequious Bülow, crossed his legs and struck a match. He carried it to his lips, holding it there; then, having burnt his fingers and moustache, dropped it, cursing madly. He now took a cigarette out of the silver gilt box offered him for the tenth time or oftener, but was too busy to light it.

"Krupp," he said, "I mean Bohlen—Krupp von Bohlen, a good name, we'll stick to it—Krupp, I want you to make me a gun capable of mowing down Dover Castle from Calais. Can't be done? It will have to be done!" And he brought his fist down on the table with a bang.

"I looked in at the Photographic Society the other day," he proceeded, "and saw an Adolf Menzelpfoto enlarged five times the original size. The operator just extended a piece of

framework. I don't suppose it's quite as easy to double or treble the size or range of cannon, but the mind and energy now experimenting with my new twelve-inch howitzer should be capable of turning out a seventeen-inch or twenty-inch howitzer, and that's what you will have to do, Krupp."

The ex-Councillor of Legation, just renamed, bowed low. "I assure Your Majesty that, as head of the Krupp works, I will not rest until such a war machine is produced," he vowed.

"And take my word that I won't let you go to sleep." The War Lord's tone was a cross between banter and threat, but its brutal meaning was photographed on the speaker's face. "You will now make your bow to Madame la Princess," he continued, pulling out his watch: "Return in fifteen minutes.

"Bertha's husband must not know everything at the start," he said, when the door closed behind Krupp von Bohlen. "As to that twelve-inch howitzer, I did not have a chance to talk to you about my recent clandestine visit to Meppen, where we had the final test. The twelve-inch howitzer quite suffices for Calais if the plans for longer range guns miscarry or war comes quicker than we calculated. At Calais, you know, the Channel narrows to a width of twenty-two and a half miles, and the new twelve-incher covers fourteen miles."

"That means Kent is safe for the present," the Chancellor made bold to comment.

"It is easy to see that you are a general of cavalry and not of artillery," he was immediately corrected, "else you would perceive that a howitzer of the range given, planted at Calais, will allow our warships to advance within eight and a half miles of the English coast and pound everything into muck and pulp there. Where—what will your Kent be then? A heap of rubbish and scrap-iron!"

"I presume Tirpitz is satisfied that there can be no blockade?"

"We will guard against that by mine fields and destroyers, submarines, cruisers, scouts and Zeppelins," explained Wilhelm. "Old Zep's *Echte*" (alluding to the cigar-like shape of Zeppelins) "will be as safe in our French harbours—for we will probably take Havre and Dieppe at the same time as Calais—as in Kiel Canal."

The War Lord was going strong on technical details when the return of Krupp von Bohlen was announced.

"So the ladies dismissed you!" he cried, at the same time unbending enough to ask von Bülow to be seated, while the younger man must remain standing. "Got the howitzer-Calais-Dover question pat, have you not? Well, the twenty-three miles' range gun is only one of the achievements you owe me and the Fatherland. In addition, the Krupp works and associated interests must extend their facilities for mines and mine-laying a hundred-fold, for we will have to cut Portsmouth and Plymouth off from the North Sea and provide safety zones for our warships the whole breadth of the Channel.

"Thirdly, Essen will have to turn out submarines at a much faster rate than your firm is doing now; have to arm the numerous forts we will set up along the French-Belgian coast with the heaviest of artillery, and furnish air fleets to prosecute a guerilla war against English trade and—stomachs."

Von Bohlen looked puzzled. He had imbibed enough of the Krupp spirit to encourage him in the belief that he might rival an earthquake as a destroyer of life and property, but his ambition had never extended to interference with other people's digestion.

"Explain, Bülow," ordered the War Lord, considering it beneath his dignity to give information on so trifling a subject.

"His Majesty refers, of course, to the disturbance of England's food supplies. Unlike Germany, Great Britain cannot feed herself, being dependent for the sustenance of the inner man on imports. And these His Majesty intends to stop by the means referred to."

"And, speaking of aircraft, you must provide means for bringing airships down," continued the War Lord, "for there is every indication that the enemy will attempt to fight our aerial fire with ditto fire, especially the French. The slow English will fall behind, of course." Abruptly: "Have you got any ideas to offer in that line?"

"Not at the moment," confessed von Bohlen; "but I will ask Bertha to lend me her most enterprising constructor of light ordnance and the airship expert. They will be given three months for experiments."

The War Lord nodded. "Not half bad, but offer a premium if the question is solved within three weeks."[#]

[#] Neither three weeks nor three months nor three years sufficed, and Krupp's balloon-gun, mounted on automobile

carriages, is one of the latest additions to the German artillery. It is effective at about 7,000 yards, and throws projectiles weighing 12 lb. Its dead weight of 11,000 lb. operates against its usefulness in the field, but it is well adapted to forts and fortresses. This gun can describe a complete circle in the horizontal plane and can fire vertically.

He rose. "More of this in a day or two, after I have seen Moltke, Tirpitz and old Zep. In the meantime remember this: Super is the thing. We must have super-guns, super-submarines, super-aircraft—ordinary arms will not do in the struggle to come. Our enemies are ordinary men, fighting with ordinary means, while we are supermen bent on superhuman effort, and consequently need super-arms."

He turned from Bohlen. "Announce me to the Princess Maria," he commanded Bülow.

CHAPTER XXVII BERTHA'S WEDDING DAY

Krupp Hospitality—A Nasty Custom—"Old Fritz at Play"—The Bride Arrayed—
Abdul's Present—The Wedding Service—A Glimpse of Essen

On October the 15th, 1906, Bertha Krupp was married, and, presto! Wilhelm jumped into the saddle: Krupp *en croupe* was meant for both the heiress and her husband-to-be.

To be sure, Essen was *en fête* for the War Lady and Gustav. For them flags and garlands and paper flowers. Rivers and oceans of paper flowers! They recalled Unter den Linden when some yellow or brown, or maybe a white, majesty is expected to make his state entry through the Brandenburg Gate. And almost as many girls in white as paper flowers on lantern posts and over doorways, while every boy had his face and his hands washed, and all the professors and directors wore their locks in curls.

To-day all victims of Moloch labour, of burns and crashing irons, of scaffolds that gave way and mountains of steel a-tremble, of engines gone wrong and cars off the track, and a thousand and one other accidents connected with work, were freshly shaved and voluble of their sufferings and Fraulein's kindness. Johann gave a leg to prevent bubbles in the casting of a royal Prussian cannon, and Fraulein bought him an artificial one, offering this advantage over the real article: he might throw it at his wife when nettled. Heinrich had lost the sight of an eye in the service of the works, and Fraulein not only procured him a glass one, but added a steel pince-nez that made him look like a twopenny clerk. And Mariechen and Märtschen had good jobs in the ammunition shops, since their husbands were killed in an earth-slide at the Germania shipyards near Kiel—"Fraulein looks after everything and everybody." In short, city and country-side, town hall and hospital, the well-to-do and the poor, old and young, the joyous and the lame and the halt—all looked their best in Bertha's honour and acted *gemuetlich*-like (which was mostly noise) in Bertha's honour—when the War Lord came into sight!

Once upon a time the War Lady had been sternly admonished not to bring more than three attendants on her state visit to Berlin; in repaying that visit—for his intervening comings to Essen were more or less impromptu or on business—the War Lord brought twenty times three, sixty: personal friends, courtiers, generals and army officers.

When, years before, he inflicted two-thirds of this number on King Christian, the Continent stood aghast at his inconsiderate impudence, for the Copenhagen Court was notoriously poor then. But Bertha was his ward and was under his thumb, and, besides, had "money to burn."

So he embraced this opportunity for paying off old debts by inviting to Essen a number of nobles whose hospitality he had enjoyed, for there they would be more sumptuously lodged and dined and wined than at his own house.

The call to Villa Huegel was snapped up by all who could crowd into the Imperial train, for Krupp hospitality is proverbial in the Fatherland's mansions and country houses; and the Prussian aristocrat, living at home on superannuated venison, herrings and potatoes, washed down by diluted fusel-oil called Schnapps, likes nothing better than to gorge himself at the expense of persons whose lack of rank precludes dreaded return visits.

Savings in the household exchequer weigh heavy enough with the War Lord to put him into

royal good humour, but the limelight radiating from Essen, because the richest girl on the planet married a poor but capable man, was the main thing, of course. For the Wolff Bureau, that feeds the Continental Press with "pap" about "All Highest" doings and with governmental lies, would mention Wilhelm and his myrmidons twenty times as often as the bride and groom.

There would be—as a matter of fact, there were beforehand—long-winded litanies about the War Lord's love for his ward and his surpassing efficiency as a guardian; his consummate wisdom in the selection of a husband for Bertha; the unheard-of increase in the value of the Krupp property under Wilhelm's guidance—columns of that sort of symphony to Imperial ears.

And the War Lord's show: State coach and six, forty more horses from the royal stables, one hundred flunkeys, and the "great surprise!"—but that did not come off. "That woman wouldn't stand it."

When the War Lord was shown into Frau Krupp's boudoir he beamed most graciously. "I cannot make Bertha a Royal Princess," he said, "but I will treat her like one. How many guests have we?"

"In the villa a little over three hundred, Your Majesty."

"Well, I had a thousand ribbons printed—have the rest distributed among the loyal people. But let the police do it, as there is sure to be a terrible scramble for these souvenirs, and we don't want the Moscow tragedy repeated." (He referred to the crushing and killing of hundreds of men, women and children at the People's Festival during the Tsar's coronation.)

Meanwhile the Master of Ceremonies had opened the silver-gilt casket filled with layers upon layers of pieces of white ribbon, about one inch broad by five long. There was a baronial crown above the letter "B" at the top, and gold fringe at the bottom.

The Baroness turned purple at the sight, but her son-in-law pulled her sleeve in time. "Mamma will arrange with His Excellency," he said; and the unsuspecting War Lord got busy with one of his quintette of meals, served to him separately.

"An unheard-of honour," pleaded Herr Krupp von Bohlen, who had followed Her Ladyship into an inner room, as he dangled one of the garter-ribbons before her eyes.

"I call it a nasty, indecent custom, and my daughter will have none of it," replied Frau Krupp hotly.

Krupp von Bohlen looked both hurt and indignant. "Pardon me, madam, the customs of our Royal Family must not be spoken of in that style where I am. And what is deemed honourable for Royal Prussian Princesses can but add dignity and renown to a subject favoured like one of them."

"If an announcement of that kind is considered fair and decent in royal circles," angrily replied Frau Krupp, "it is their affair; as to the daughter of the Baroness von Ende, she would blush to think of such a custom."

Krupp von Bohlen advanced his chin an inch more.

"Matters affecting the Royal Family are beyond discussion," he said haughtily, "and if you ever again approach the subject, please remember that I am a Prussian officer. But that aside. His Majesty has graciously commanded, and the order is to be carried out to the letter." He bowed stiffly and retired.

The Baroness let herself fall into an arm-chair, and, elbows on knees, buried her face in both hands. A scandal in the air, but she was determined to risk it. Let the feelings of Prussian Princesses be what they may in regard to the ancient custom; there was to be no distribution of *her* daughter's garter for the War Lord's friends and her own cottagers to gloat over.

She had spent half an hour in this sort of brown study, agitated by reflections bordering on *lèse-majesté* most horrible, when Barbara rushed in: "Oh, Mamma, Uncle Majesty and everybody are at 'Old Fritz's,' and Uncle wants all the gentlemen to take chances under the hammer. He is making them give up watches and decorations, and he whispered to me he hopes some get smashed. Come and see the fun."

To be sure Frau Krupp was in no humour to attend the Imperial circus—it is a stock joke with Wilhelm to frighten under-dogs out of their wits by subjecting their valuables to seeming destruction, and Her Ladyship had been an unwilling witness more than once. But Barbara's naïve: "What a beautiful box—more presents?" made her sit up. Why should not "Fritz," oldest of family servants, essay to *corriger la fortune de la maison de Krupp*? A chance in a million, but stranger things have happened!

As everybody knows, "Fritz" has a falling weight of fifty tons, and has been hammering steel blocks into shape since 1860. When Bertha's grandfather started building it family, friends and competitors the world over thought him crazy, and said so, but "Fritz" has never missed a day's

work in fifty-four years, and seems to be good for a century still. Indeed, the marvellous delicacy of his adjustment remains unimpaired, and occasionally the manager makes him crack nuts without injuring the kernel.

The War Lord was smashing his friends' watch-glasses without hurt to dial or hands when Frau Krupp and Barbara came upon the scene.

"The trunk of the Krupp heiress, containing some of her choicest wardrobe," explained Wilhelm banteringly in an undertone. Then aloud: "I'll forfeit ten marks to any charity madam may name if Fritz injures the casket in the slightest. Those with me raise a hand." Two dozen hands went up. "Sorry I did not make it a hundred marks," whispered Wilhelm to von Scholl, as he placed the casket on the steel table. Then, standing off, he commanded: "One—two—three."

Down came the Brobdingnagian not like fifty, but like a hundred thousand tons, hitting the table an earthquake-like smack. It was all over in a second, but both Wilhelm and the War Lady's mother thought a lot in that tiny fragment of time. The casket was, of course, as flat as a window-pane and not much thicker, while of its contents there was no trace, the silk having become part and parcel of the metal. Nothing short of the melting-pot, said the expert, would yield isolated strains of the thousand bedizened ribbons. And, on top of it, Fraulein Krupp collected 250 marks for her orphanage!

Was it the loss of his ten marks, the blotting out of his "indecent surprise," or thoughts of the murderous fruit which the marriage about to be solemnised would yield him that clouded the War Lord's brow as he walked up the middle aisle of the chapel? He was to give the bride away. The groom was the War Lord's man, his discovery, his creature! He found him secretary of legation with the least of the kings, grubbing along on a salary of five hundred pounds a year, and destined in all probability to marry either a spindle-shanked or a bull-necked "Fraulein von" with an infinitesimal dot. The goal of his ambition: a berth as minister plenipotentiary at the Court of a minor king! Salary: seven hundred pounds per year.

Well, he (the War Lord) was about to give in marriage this candidate for polite poverty and subaltern honours a nice, healthy, well bred and intelligent girl of good family, likewise revenues compared with which the civil list of the average German king were twopence! It surely should follow as a matter of course that common gratitude, if not inborn discipline, would make Krupp von Bohlen the instrument of any warlike mischief the author of his good luck might contemplate. Indeed, he had vowed so much.

Now Lohengrin and rustling silks: The bride and groom.

The latter, like most of the men present, in showy uniform, blue and gold; the War Lady in lilac *crêpe de Chine*, myrtles in her blonde hair.

She was rather pleasant than pretty to look upon: a massive face, indicating a not unkindly disposition; blue eyes, wavy hair, a firm mouth; a bit strong on figure.

Her head-dress was typical enough for Germany: myrtle, the "bleeding," commemorating the cruelty of the barbarous islanders who pierced the shipwrecked with spears and arrows!

Ancient history aside, the sign of the myrtle leaf was indeed prophetic of the horrors this marriage would impose upon humanity, in accordance with the compact between the War Lady's husband and the War Lord; but, as nine out of every ten German brides are myrtle-bedecked, the fashionable crowd in the chapel had no mind for the augury.

Still, why mauve, the colour of mourning and old age, for the wedding gown? Since it was of the War Lady's own selection, it suggested almost a premonition of the evil in store for Europe.

Did Bertha's lens of imagery conjure up the ghosts of the millions who must die by the output of her factories that her own unborn offspring have more milliards to play with, and was she mourning in advance for the children she would render fatherless, for the hosts doomed to extinction because profits in the wholesale murder of men are surpassing high?

Who knows?

It is almost inconceivable that a person like the War Lady, engaged in the appalling trade of death-dealing, regarded her business other than a gigantic slaughter monopoly—a privileged one, to be sure, yet the most heinous of crimes against God and men just the same.

At the Courts of the eighteenth century "punishment boys" were kept, to be thrashed when small highnesses deserved to have their jacket warmed. Here, at the altar, Bertha, used to Royal State on account of her wealth, was about to engage a punishment boy. In future Gustav was to take the blame for all the enormities her factories would visit upon humanity!

The old-time punishment boys were well paid for their pains; the Krupp punishment boy was to have an income of seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling per annum. The old-time

punishment boys were frequently loved by the masters for whom they suffered; Herr Krupp von Bohlen was loved by the young woman whom he relieved of grievous responsibility. Yet the note of mourning in her attire, and at her bosom the mark of "Abdul Hamid the Damned"!

The War Lady is sincerely religious, and so is the War Lord's Imperial lady, only more so. Indeed, with Her Majesty the Church is almost an obsession, yet both the Queen of Prussia and the Queen of Essen have accepted presents from the wholesale assassin of Christians, who remembered only one thing to his credit in the course of thirty-three years of absolute rule: that he did not murder his brother. This was his plea to the Young Turks when deposed.

For many years the Berlin Court was a pensioner of the man who prided himself on having spared the life of his mother's son, making up for this unnatural restraint by spilling the blood of forty thousand "Christian dogs." Five millions cash "Abdul the Damned" lent to the War Lord (and he is still whistling for its return), and season after season he sent material for the Queen of Prussia's underlinen and summer dresses. Bales of Oriental stuffs, gauzes, linens, laces and silks from Tscheragan Serai used to be delivered at the Neues Palais about every April the first, filling the house with real "Turkish delight," of which Her Majesty's sisters, the rich and the poor, likewise partook according to their needs or the favour in which they were held at the moment.

And when Her Prussian Majesty is *en grande tenue* she often augments the great Napoleon's diamonds, captured at Waterloo (the same that once blushed at the generous bosom of his sister Paulette), by those that the great Frederick gave to his lovely mistress La Barbarina, the dancer, and took back again when he tired of her; and when even multiplication fails to give satisfaction—for a Queen of Prussia must have more diamonds than an American multi-millionaire—she adds the parure of brilliants and the numerous brooches and buttons and bracelets given her by The Damned.

After all, this seems appropriate enough for the Queen of a country pieced together of territories gained by assassination, war, treachery and other atrocities; but think of the War Lady accepting gifts from the most despicable of men and kings! Surely there must be some fellow-feeling of malign camaraderie between the makers of murderous tools and their users, a sort of revival of swordsmiths-worship and the veneration in which the great men of old held their Curtanas and Flamberges!

Possible, or shall we set it down to mere female thoughtlessness, which in some respects seems akin to that of half-savages after the style of the story Mark Twain once told the War Lord:

"Where is 'Liza?'" asked the master of the house, when he missed the coloured waitress at breakfast.

"Can't come round for a few days. Just had a tiny wee baby," answered the housemaid, grinning.

"A baby! How's that?"

"Oh, just nigger-shiftlessness, I reckon."

But it wasn't thoughtlessness, or shiftlessness alone, that made the War Lady pin to her breast the grand cordon of the *Osmanié* Order of Virtue; it spelled, at the same time, a bid for war material, decreed by the businesslike groom. The War Lord saw it and smiled. "Bravo, Gustav, you are the stuff," and "Bertha, as is fit, the yielding lamb."

And the organ pealed and cooed, and the chorus of cathedral singers chanted off the key, and the voice of the officiating minister droned, and everybody thought it most "heavenly," but boring; and the generals and army officers smacked their lips, anticipating the table delicacies in store; and the courtiers congratulated themselves because it was all fun and no work; and each lady thought she looked a heap better than her best-beloved friend; and the War Lord stared at the ceiling contemplating ways and means for mining the Krupp quarry of wealth and efficiency to within an inch of hell.

"And so I pronounce you man and wife," sang out the minister, expecting the biggest fee!

"Hail thee, Frankenstein," thought Wilhelm. He inflated his chest as the archangel aspiring to omnipotence may have done: from this moment on the means for such aggrandisement as only Napoleon dreamt of were in his hands, and he was free to plunge the world into irremediable ruin if he liked.

Through Bertha's resignation, through von Bohlen's connivance, he now owned the Krupp works; he *was* Frankenstein—Frankenstein, the hideous, the abhorred, whose malignity was equalled only by the accumulated wretchedness he meant to visit on all resisting.

Even as he extended his hand to the bride, with lip congratulations, he thought of the riot of despair the troth just sealed spelt for his own people and the nations to be subdued! Was he then—is he then—the hideous fantasm of one bent on naught but destruction?

God knows—mere physical observation discerns no more than the frightful selfishness that has lashed the War Lord to ever-increasing efforts of fury since Bertha's wedding day and is driving him still.

As overlord of the greatest industrial plant in the world, he deliberately diverted it from its legitimate *raison d'être* as a cradle of life and progress and turned it into a dividend-mill for the cultivation of human hatred and the making of corpses, at the same time endowing it with a soul still more monstrous: his thrice-abhorred Kultur.

He had steel hammers enough to line, side by side, a road reaching from Liverpool Street Station to Hyde Park; steel boilers enough to start a second Pittsburgh; more machinery than the rest of the kingdom boasts; more electric motors than Paris or London employs in its public conveyances, etc.; and with unparalleled selfishness in evil suborned them exclusively to his passion for destruction, adding unlimited capital and business capacity, utter disregard for human life and extraordinary facilities for chemical-physical research, begetting inventive genius of a high order. There is the explanation of the frightful catalogue of Hunnish sins that have disgraced civilisation since the 29th of July, 1914, according to the findings of Lord Bryce's Committee.

"The *Kapellmeister*, at Your Majesty's orders?" reported Count Eulenburg.

"Hohenfriedberger March," replied the War Lord, locking his teeth.

Hohenfriedberg is a shining mark in Prussian history, for in June, 1745, Frederick the Great overwhelmed the Austrians near the small Silesian village, nearly annihilating Prince Karl and his Saxon allies. He composed a march in honour of the event, a rather stirring piece of musical claptrap, among the best that came from his pen.

"I can drive the Austrians too," thought the War Lord, as he stepped from the chapel, the bride's mother on his arm. And, the military band outside executing some flourishes when he passed, he added grimly: "Bayonet in back, if necessary."

CHAPTER XXVIII A FORESHADOWING OF "LUSITANIAISM"

The Rise of Herr Ballin—A Woman's Vanity—Herr Ballin at the Schloss
—"Frightfulness" on the Sea—Smoothing the Way—The War Lord and Wedell
—A Spy Plot—Overrunning England with Spies

On the eve of the day when the *Lusitania* snatched the world's speed record from the North German Lloyd, the red discs in the Chancellor's and in Count Wedell's office bobbed up almost simultaneously:

"I want to see the Jew Ballin. To-morrow morning at the earliest. You heard about the *Lusitania*?" Before Prince Bülow could say "Yes," the War Lord had hung up the receiver, simultaneously pressing the button marked Wedell, whom he asked to bring in the Ballin personalia.

"No ordinary Jew," explained the chief of the Secret Service.

"But common stock?"

"Very, Your Majesty."

"How does Ballin dress?"

"Affects the American business man, All Highest, in demeanour and dress."

"A genius, you said?"

"For making money, absolutely, Your Majesty."

"Let's hear about his beginnings." The War Lord sat down in a low chair and lit a cigarette. No such luxuries for Count Wedell, though. The head of the Secret Service stood while he read from his card index in telegraphic style:

"Born emigrant agents.—Son, brother and nephew of drummers-up of steerage cargo.—Learnt rudiments of trade in his native Hamburg.—Finished in London——"

"Perfect finishing school for aspiring German boys," interrupted the War Lord; "the English educating their future business rivals—touching!"

"I have often thought about that in connection with our war," said Wedell. "Of course, Your Majesty expects to win, but victory does not beget good will. Suppose London, Birmingham, Liverpool and the rest say no more foreign clerks and other employés, especially none of Teutonic origin?"

"Don't you worry. Any little game of that kind will be forestalled in the terms of peace. Finish your Ballin."

"Returned home," read Wedell from his cards, "secured employment in minor steamship line to bring Poles and Hungarians to Hamburg for shipment to the States. Hapag people soon awoke to the fact that the devil of a genius was weaning their quarry away from them.—Approached Ballin with promises of double salary. Ballin refused—then acquired controlling interest in employer's line.—Then sold out to Hapag."

"That happened when?"

"In 1886, Your Majesty."

"Since then business has grown immensely, hasn't it?"

"Its gross profits climbed from £125,000 to £2,825,000 per annum in twenty-five years, while its fleet increased from twenty-six to one hundred and eighty pennants. Tonnage in 1886, 50,000; to-day, exceeding one million."

"That will do," said Wilhelm. "Send in Haeseler."

Count Haeseler had arrived the night before from Konopischt, had been waiting to report to His Majesty for an hour or more, and, to kill time, had been paying visits to officials and pensioners living in the big pile. There had been cigars and cognac galore, and Gottlieb was on excellent terms with himself when he saw His Majesty.

"Went to bed with an attack of the heart, and got up refreshed and happy," he said.

"I see Franz Ferdinand's reputation at home is of the value of nothing, but, still, he treated you like a white man," interpreted the War Lord.

"Majesty hit the nail upon the head, as usual. Not an Austrian, Hungarian, Croatian, Servian, Bosniak or Pollack alive would not gladly spend his last *heller* to buy a dose of prussic acid for the heir to the throne, but to Your Majesty's representative he was all charm. Nearly gave me a horse."

"Forgot to send it to the station with the other baggage, eh? Well, aside from cheating my field marshal, how is he going on?"

"Like a steam-roller. The next time Your Majesty will deign to inspect the Sixth Infantry or the Wilhelm Hussars, Majesty will not recognise them. Fellows like me are being relegated to the scrap-heap by the dozen, and he cares no more for archdukes' privileges than the white souls of valets de chambre. His iron broom is busy with horse, foot and artillery, with the navy and the air fleet all at the same time, and wherever he touches there is a clean sweep and a howl of dismay, pitiful enough to move a tiger, but not Nero."

"He is stirring them up," rejoiced the War Lord.

"He is making the Austrian army a worthy adjunct of Your Majesty's forces," said Haeseler, very earnestly.

"And you taught him these new stratagems?"

"I would never have been allowed to leave the country alive if the Hungarians knew what I did teach Nero."

"Dirty trick," said the War Lord, "not to give Gottlieb the horse." Then imperiously: "I expect your detailed report about all the reforms in the Austrian army and navy in a fortnight."

"There will be no gun missing, I promise Your Majesty."

Count Haeseler referred, of course, to the astounding memory and precision of the great Napoleon. Once, when occupied by much business, the Emperor sent an officer to Belgium to investigate military stores. The officer handed in his report. Napoleon gave him back the document with these words: "There are two guns missing at Ostend." And there were two missing.

"And your general opinion of Franz based on intimate observation?" queried Wilhelm.

"He seems to regard himself as a sort of necessary barricade to progress, yet has no patience with the idea uppermost in Austria that *laissez faire* must be perpetuated for ever and a day simply because it's as old as the hills."

"And the Duchess?"

"With Your Majesty's leave, confidently expects to be Empress of Austria."

"Must have Pan-German leanings."

"No, Your Majesty; only the truly womanly passion to be the most envied of her sex."

"Slav conflict with Austria suits me all right," said the War Lord. "The Czechs and Hungarians wanting Sophie, the Austrian Germans will feel the more inclined to join my Germanic Federation."

"But," said Haeseler, "Franz counts upon Your Majesty to help at the enthronisation of Sophie by force, if necessary."

The War Lord went to a bookshelf and pulled out a volume bound in red with atrocious gold decorations. "And Franz brags about having read every strategic work ever written," he commented.

"Majesty refers to Moltke's introduction of the Franco-Prussian war."

"Yes, but this isn't the volume. Can you quote from memory?"

"I will try my utmost, Your Majesty: 'The days are past when for dynastical ends armies went forth——'"

"Take an '*echte*,' Edward's brand," said the War Lord.

There was a royal carriage at the station for Herr Ballin, and the royal coachman, keen for marks, waved his whip frantically to attract attention, and coin: the shipping king, emerging from a first-class compartment, affected not to see. Berlin has two kinds of cabs, and Ballin chose the Noah's Ark brand at threepence a mile. When he said "Schloss," the driver quizzed him curiously and decided at once to put him down at the kitchen entrance. "Must be a relative of some housemaid," he calculated, and could not understand at all why the royal carriage, though empty, drove plumb ahead of him when they reached the Schlossplatz. Of course the War Lord's livery meant to impress upon the Court Marshal that he had been on the spot.

Court Marshal von Liebenau left the reception to his aide and ran upstairs.

"With Majesty's permission. Regular Jewski, second-class cab. How long shall he wait?"

"Show him up instantly."

From this it may be gathered as from the scene witnessed at the Wilhelmstrasse, that waiting for Majesty is a punishment meted out on religious or other grounds.

Ballin had anticipated questions, and received instructions. "The *Lusitania*," said the War Lord, after the curtest, not to say abruptest of welcomes, "must teach you Hamburgers and the Lloyd people this important lesson: In the ocean greyhound to be built hereafter, the naval value is obviously of greater importance than trade or dividend considerations, for the moment war is declared all your vessels will pass under my exclusive control, and I need all the auxiliaries, with a prodigious coal supply and a speed unsurpassable by cruisers, I can get. If war with England came to-morrow, the *Lusitania* would be turned loose upon our commerce at once, and neither Wilhelmshaven, nor Bremen nor Hamburg boasts a vessel capable of overtaking her. She can sink our ships right and left, and show a clean pair of heels every time. Until yesterday I considered *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, *der Krönprinz*, *die Deutschland* and the flyer named after me capable commerce destroyers, but the *Lusitania* could sink either of these giants, and boast of her record in the nearest English harbour protected by mines."

"But Majesty doesn't anticipate that merchantman will turn upon merchantman, and that passenger steamers in particular will be sunk either by vessels of the same lay calibre or by regular men-of-war?" ventured Herr Ballin, who evidently believed at that time in "scraps of paper."

"Herr Ballin," said the War Lord, "you were described to me as the most far-seeing and progressive of sea lords outside of my navy. Surely you can't be of opinion that in the great war to come international niceties will be allowed to cut any figure? If Germany must draw the sword before my navy is superior to the British, I propose to save my men-of-war and trust to submarines."

"But passenger steamers——" quoth Herr Ballin rather more timidly.

"Passenger steamers carry freight, and in time of war all goods that might possibly be of use to the enemy in any way, manner or form I consider contraband. And contraband spells destruction."

"Does Your Majesty anticipate that the English, French or Russians would attack Hamburg liners while engaged in the passenger traffic?"

"If they half know their business they will. For my part, I would not hesitate a moment to sink the *Lusitania*, or any other Cunarder at sight, since all are supposed to be in the service or, at least, at the service of their Government."

Herr Ballin breathed hard as he said: "May it please Your Majesty, what about neutrals? Like the Cunarders, the Hapag carries on every journey hundreds of American citizens."

"I don't know anything about a Yankee's food value," replied the War Lord cynically. "I think the denizens of the big herring-pond will have to make the best of them."

Herr Ballin bowed low. "As Your Majesty commands."

"It is settled then," continued the War Lord. "On your part, bigger and faster boats than the English; on my part, I promise to advise you of the date of the outbreak of hostilities long enough beforehand to save your vessels for the Fatherland. Even if circumstances decree their internment *en masse*, Germany will be the gainer in the end, when both our navy and our merchant marine remain unbroken."

Ballin was retreating backwards toward the door, when the War Lord recalled him. "I am dickering with Wilhelmina about Curaçao for a coaling station, and"—banteringly—"if you could stir up war between the Netherlands and some other colonial power I would be very much obliged. We got the coaling station in the Red Sea through our pro-Boer sympathies. Curaçao would make an excellent *apéritif* after getting over Dutch troubles."

"The United States would object."

"Of course, but there are some twenty-six millions of Germans in America, every mother's son of them fighting-mad for me—part of my invisible army and almost as important as the other. The Germans in America have an immense vote-swaying power; they control Washington to a large extent, and some of the State Legislatures absolutely. And, as you know, each American State is sovereign. Suppose I would threaten to decree secession for the States between New York and Seattle, taking in New York, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Missouri, etc. etc., where would Washington be? Would Roosevelt risk Civil War because I want a place to coal my ships not exactly five thousand miles from the Panama Canal?

"I tell you, my men controlling a large portion of the American Press won't let him. And, by the way, Ballin, the Hapag, the Lloyd, Woermann, etc., will have to give more extensive support to my German Press in America than is done now. *Die Staats Zeitungs*, the *Herolds*, and whatever-they-call-them can't live on wind. Ridder is a rapacious cuss and a Jesuit besides; but my Washington bureau tells me that his complaints are not altogether groundless. As my Germans become more and more Americanised, the German papers' circulations are dwindling, and likewise slumps the advertising. For this we must make up. German shipping and the industries engaged in international trade must support the German Press in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Kansas City and the minor towns, as my Government supports the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine* and Krupp his *Neueste Nachrichten*.

"By the way," he added, grabbing a "Bismarck pencil" suspended from a wire and scribbling on his calendar block, "I will have to tell Krupp, Loewe and the rest of the ammunition hogs to loosen up on those German papers in America. Podbielski shall see them about it. Of course he is no stockholder, but his dear Emma is." (The War Lord referred to the scandals connecting a German general with subserviency to army purveyors to the extent of awarding contracts exclusively to firms in which he was financially interested.)

"It might serve the Hapag and '*meine Wenigkeit*' (literally my inferiority, meaning your humble servant) if specifically informed respecting the invisible army Your Majesty was graciously pleased to allude to," bowed Herr Ballin.

"In the States," explained the War Lord, "my volunteers are mostly full-fledged citizens—universal suffrage, otherwise a stench in my nostrils, is working overtime for the German Cause there—but in the rest of the world merchant-princes, manufacturers, trade agents and skilled workmen do yeoman duty for me and the Fatherland. Of course we have a lot of adherents in England—'naturalised' they call them. Funny term! I hold that it would be most unnatural for a German to embrace another nationality, especially the English."

"Whenever you hear of troubles in Ireland, put it down to my invisible army. That same army has before this fomented labour troubles in Russia, and it never sleeps in France, particularly not in Paris."

And, lowering his voice, the War Lord talked of invisible forces building concrete gun-platforms along the French and Belgian frontiers—"foundations for manufacturing plants," he added sarcastically.

"Of course I am doing my bit in other respects too," he concluded. "I have fed some of these German editors from the States at my own table, and ——— bad manners they had too; and I have baited them with minor orders in plenty. If Ridder behaves himself I will make him a 'von' some day, and that German Congressman from Missouri—I forget his name—will get a five-pronged coronet too. But to return to Curaçao. If I get a foothold there, I will have both French and English for neighbours—excellent chances for picking a quarrel if desirable."

The War Lord put a finger down vigorously on the Wedell—and Adjutant von Moltke buttons. The nephew of the great Field Marshal responded almost instantly. "I want Wedell."

"Count Wedell is in waiting, Your Majesty." Even while the equerry spoke, the sign language of the telephone announced that the Chief was at the Schloss.

"That Jew of yours will be useful," said Wilhelm approvingly. "He will obey orders like Krupp, but remember His Majesty can't do all the reconnoitring himself. I tell you for the hundredth time that your department is negligent with respect to England. You must get Ballin to help you."

Count Wedell winced. "If I have had the misfortune to fall short of Your Majesty's expectations——" he stuttered.

"My resignation is, etc.' The old Wedell complaint; I know what you want to say. Only recently I stopped your cousin's litany by remarking: 'I thought you liked your salary and perquisites.' None of that nonsense, please. Listen: I have played sleuth for you at Portsmouth; I know the dockyards there like my pocket. The Solent and Cowes are open books to my General Staff, owing to descriptive matter and diagrams I have furnished, and what I did not tell Tirpitz about Gibraltar is not worth knowing. Really," he added, "English *naïveté* is astonishing, particularly in the face of the Press campaign. With the most widely circulated and best informed newspapers constantly reminding them that my whole naval policy is directed against Great Britain, English officials—military, naval and civilian—extend me every opportunity for the study of old England's defence and weakness. Thanks to my inspection, my General Staff is as well informed about the Gibraltar signal station as the first English Sea Lord—it is to laugh.

"And how they opened their ports to me: Leith, Port Victoria, Folkestone were as free to the *Hohenzollern* as Piccadilly Circus.

"The next time I visit Edward I will drive my yacht right up above Tilbury. See if I don't."

"Poor devil of a pilot," mocked Count Wedell.

"Now, don't credit the English War Office with more circumspection than the average German schoolboy has," guffawed Wilhelm; "the pilot will probably get the V.C., and I promise Tirpitz some astounding information for, while on the bridge, I will pump the pilot dry—absolutely dry.

"I really worked hard for your department," concluded Wilhelm; "now show that you can follow my lead."

"Perhaps Majesty favours establishment of semaphores on the British coast on a larger scale."

"After we prohibited the keeping of carrier pigeons in the neighbourhood of German naval stations? No, *Herr Graf*, I am not dispensing meal tickets to penny-a-liners just now. Think of something new, something Ballin can do for us."

"I submit that cheap excursions to English harbours and seaside resorts, arranged by the Hamburg line during the holiday season——"

"I take it all back," cried Wilhelm. "You are earning your salary, Wedell. Capital idea. The Naval Intelligence Service shall subscribe for a hundred berths, sending its most expert photographers, topographers, surveyors, fortification experts and naval men. In mufti, of course, and you will have men on board to spot fools that betray their official connections. Tell Ballin I want some of his largest steamers for this service, so that my army and my navy men get well lost in the crowd. The larger the crowd, the more men of military age and reservists, of course."

"Your Majesty thinks of everything."

"I have to," said the War Lord. "And make a note of it. Amateur photography is to be encouraged in the schools, the press, in society. No use sending crowds of Germans to England unless they bring back plenty of photographic evidence relating to the enemy coast and land defences. As a special inducement, Ballin shall have a dark-room on board and develop films free of charge. In that way we will get duplicates of everything."

"I beg to submit," said Wedell, "there is still another aspect to Your Majesty's enlightened prospect."

"Fire away!"

"The legend of impossible invasion will suffer a collapse with everybody observing that the supposed impregnability of Dover is all moonshine."

"Not half bad," said the War Lord. "Those tourists will make splendid *commis voyageurs* for our army of invasion."

"*Agents provocateurs!*"

Wilhelm shrugged impatiently. "Fouché's business! Of course my War Office will furnish the dates for the excursions. Sounds ridiculous, but England's little vest-pocket army indulges in

annual manoeuvres like my own, and it would be curious if some valuable information could not be gleaned from a boat full of military and semi-military sightseers. Of course the English naval manoeuvres are much more important. Sometimes a simple tourist sees things for which the official and unofficial representatives of my Admiralty and your own department, Wedell, search in vain."

The discussion continued in the same vein for another half-hour, the War Lord impressing upon Wedell the absolute necessity of increased espionage in England. "Thirty-six years ago," said Wilhelm in conclusion, "Bismarck had over thirty thousand spies and sympathisers in France doing his work. Have we got as many in England to-day? How many are on the pay-rolls of English railways, of Scotch railways and, particularly, of Irish railways? You can't tell off-hand? Report within three days. And don't forget the proofs, if you please. I likewise want to know how many of your men are detailed to attack British arsenals, harbours, wireless stations and so forth in the event of war. Whatever their number, duplicate, nay, treble it, and don't be sparing with promises. If we invade England, we won't get out in a hurry, tell them, and there will be plenty of pickings for our friends while we are on the Insular side of the Channel.

"Remind them that our army of occupation remained in France two years and five months after peace had been signed. I propose to enjoy English hospitality even a while longer, and the people that serve us 'before and aft' can make enough money while we are in England to evacuate with us and live on their interests in the Fatherland after Threadneedle Street has paid the last instalment. Think of it! Serve the War Lord and feather one's own nest at the same time."

Wilhelm had been sitting down uncommonly long. Indeed he had been almost confidential with his pal in the conspiracy international. He now rose, squared his shoulders and assumed his favourite character of the graven image.

"I don't like Krupp's ignorance of things English. Shall make a few trips into England, and see what there is to be seen," he said in a tone of command. He continued: "I want a talk from Court Chaplain Dryander on the chosen people, not on the Jews—on the term. Got impressed with it while talking to Ballin. Germans the chosen people! Sounds good!"

"Dryander will report at eleven to-morrow morning. Order (Professor) Delbrueck to be here at the same time. I will see him after the sky-pilot has gone. Parsons are such romancers; it's well to digest their palaver to the accompaniment of historic facts."

"One thing more." The War Lord grabbed a pencil and marked asafoetida on half a dozen pages of his daily calendar. "I want to have a conference with chemists by and by."

CHAPTER XXIX

SOME MORE SECRET HISTORY

Deluding Rathenau—Callous Experiments—What Lord Palmerston Said—The Kaiser's Aims

"What is this I hear?" demanded the War Lord, having scantily acknowledged Herr Krupp von Bohlen's low obeisance. "I want you to understand once and for all that your wife is my ward, and that any offence to her spells disrespect to Majesty."

The Overlord of the Krupp works was confused with surprise. He attempted to make answer, but did not get further than a formal: "May it please Your Majesty."

"I have no further commands for you at the moment," he was cut short. "Wait in the Adjutant's room until called."

"A.E.G.," cried Wilhelm to the adjutant of the House Marshal's office, opening the door for Krupp.

"My dear Rathenau," he said, when an old man, stout and stockily built, with a philanthropic chin and a complexion denoting indifferent health, walked in. "My dear Rathenau, being credited with seeing ahead, perhaps you'll tell me what this means?" And he pointed to half a dozen entries topping his daily calendar.

"Asafoetida," read the electrical end of the Jewish triumvirate of self-made men—Ballin, Thyssen, Rathenau. "Does Majesty want me to create a corner in the reverse of eau de Cologne?"

"Yes and no," said Wilhelm. "But like Ziethen did before Frederick, sit down. And so you may not fall asleep like the great cavalry leader when visiting the king in his old age, I will tell you a story."

He retailed the yarn about the meeting between Franz Ferdinand and Cardinal Schlauch, the Secret Service man in the bed, and what No. 103 wished he had placed under the bed before the interview.

"It gave me an idea," he continued, "an idea, I confess, strengthened at Essen. Why not bottle the noxious gases set free in the furnaces, and let them loose on the enemy?"

"What, kill them wholesale?" cried Rathenau, moving uneasily in his chair. Philanthropy is one of his hobbies, and underhanded methods go against his grain. The War Lord knows this, and clapped the silencer on his savage bluntness.

"Kill them? No. Wholesale? No, too. There is to be no gale of these gases—just a breeze to knock out, or knock over, offensive or defensive. I figure this way: Maybe the enemy, entrenched, has to be dislodged at any price to gain some given point. We can't get at them with the ordinary style of weapon; they won't come out even to be hand-grenaded. In such cases, I hold it good strategy to smoke them out."

"Asphyxiating gas," mumbled Rathenau half to himself.

"A good name—something suspending animation—suspending it while we take the coveted place. We won't lose a man, and the enemy is mulcted out of prisoners only, for all placed *hors de combat* by our chemicals will be cared for by the Red Cross."

"Majesty does not intend to have the gases absolutely poisonous?" inquired Rathenau.

"Now, would I have asked you, whose humanity all Berlin admires, if I did?" cried the War Lord; "if I was signing death warrants, I would not have applied to you, but to Krupp. He is a natural born butcher, I tell you. Krupp devises means to destroy life with the gusto of an American barkeeper mixing cocktails. They blamed Nero for saying he wished the Roman people had but one head that he might knock it off. You should see Krupp gloat over my new howitzers."

"And those noxious gases, the workings of which Your Majesty observed at Essen, do not inflict permanent injury?"

"In the majority of cases black coffee suffices to make the men fit for work again; in a minor number of cases mild palliatives are required. I advised free distribution of milk for those suffering from a weak stomach. Hypodermic injections are resorted to once or twice a week. So you see our 'gassing' will be quite harmless."

When the President and Owner of the "A.E.G." (German for General Electric Company) still refused to wax enthusiastic, the War Lord tried a new tag. "It's the charitableness—I almost said the Christianity—of the thing that mainly attracts me," he lied. "You remember Valentina's husband in *The Huguenots*. He was murdered during St. Bartholomew's night, at the side of my ancestor, Admiral Coligny. The Comte de Nevars had been asked a little while before to join in the massacre of the Protestants, but refused, pleading that his family contained a long list of warriors, but not a single assassin. So am I trying to curtail killing by the proposed new method of attack. Prisoners, yes; the more the merrier; but deaths and wounds as few as possible."

"Hydrochlorine, with the accent on the hydro, might possibly serve Your Majesty," said Rathenau, after thinking hard for a few seconds.

"Very well, write it down," ordered the War Lord. "Besides Krupp, who can furnish this chemical?"

"The Ruhr Chemical Works and the Ludwigshafen Aniline Factory might."

Rathenau was dismissed with scant thanks, and Krupp was readmitted to listen to the substance of Wilhelm's conference with the President of the A.E.G., the latter's philanthropic objections being carefully marked as the War Lord's own, while the diluting advised was dismissed as namby-pamby.

Krupp, after listening respectfully, said: "May it please Your Majesty, I have had a little experience with asphyxiating gas. We used it to destroy a number of consumptive cows, thinking it the more humane method. They were to be benumbed before slaughter."

"God forbid that Bertha, who is very much attached to the animals on the estate, ever learns what really did happen. As for myself, I had an inkling, but where experience is to be gained charity must take a back seat."

"Well said," commented the War Lord. "Go on!"

"We tethered the cattle in an enclosure, their heads over a furrow from which the poison gas was rising. It had a sharp, bitter smell, and as it caught the animals' throat they gasped and choked. Some attempted to breathe deeply and could not, and all went giddy, it seemed, but did

not lose consciousness.

"The chief vet. had predicted that the intense irritation of the bronchial mucous membrane would fill the tubes with a fluid which the animals could not expel, and this is what did happen.

"We let them suffer for experience's sake, then gave them salted water. This cleared their lungs and forestalled complete suffocation."

"You have gathered the technical information from the medical report?" asked the War Lord.

"Partly from that, partly from observation," replied Krupp. "When the vets. stated that the animals were on the point of slow suffocation—drowning, we killed them by the quicker method. But one cow was allowed to die by poison gas, to give necessary clues to the medical men. They stated, after investigation, that the gas had had a corrosive action, destroying the mucosa."

"Very interesting," said the War Lord, who had seemingly forgotten about his pretended motives of philanthropy. "Your chief vet. shall report in full to my Ministry of Cult. I shall order that from now on condemned animals shall be delivered to the concerns manufacturing this kind of gas for scientific experiments."

The red disc on the War Lord's desk went up. Wilhelm looked at the clock. "Delbrueck." Then, turning to Krupp: "You shall wait and hear what he has to say."

The successor of Professor Treitschke was bringing the War Lord an essay on "Germany as the Land of the Chosen People," a sort of theological-political tract, suggested by Wilhelm and partly formulated by Court Chaplain Dryander. Its present form had been decided on by Professors Harnack, Schiemann, Meyer and the editor of the Prussian Annals (*Preussische Jahrbuecher Magazin*).

"Typed," said the War Lord approvingly. "I wish you would instil that modern idea into those of your colleagues, who annoy me by their handwriting. The worse it is, the more scientific they deem it. I will read it presently. Now tell Krupp how you view the situation with regard to England."

"The United Kingdom they call it," sneered Delbrueck, the most loquacious of "that damned band of professors," to quote Palmerston. "Well, there will be one less in the quartette when war comes—Ireland. The Green Isle will join us when the first shot is fired by a German battery. Further, there is every reason to believe that the title of Emperor of India will be as obsolete as that of King of Jerusalem before hostilities are under way a month, while New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and Canada will certainly not miss the chance for gaining independence."

Herr Krupp looked at His Majesty in quite bewildered fashion. Evidently he had not reckoned on such far-reaching eventualities, but the War Lord had.

"Miss their chance for independence? Not likely! Go on, Delbrueck. Tell him about the Boers."

"I needn't assure you, Herr Krupp, on which side the defeated of 1901 will fight. It is self-evident," said Delbrueck.

"And Egypt?" ventured Herr Krupp, to show his patriotism.

"German industry and discipline shall fructify the land of the Pharaohs like the Nile itself. We will drive out the English of course," cried the War Lord.

"The arming of India will be a tremendous task," he continued. "As you know, I am sending the Crown Prince to India, and the military experts accompanying him will furnish all missing links."

"May I suggest that His Imperial Highness sound the Indian Princes," interpolated Professor Delbrueck.

"All that is provided for," retorted the War Lord.

But Delbrueck would not be discouraged in his optimisms. "In addition," he went on, "Krupp guns will bark forth the declaration of independence by South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and the rest of the British dominions, territories and Island Kingdoms. Quite an undertaking, eh?"

At this point the War Lord came to Delbrueck's relief. "Finally there is that beggar Turkey. You mustn't be hard on Abdul Hamid, Krupp. Bad pay, of course, but he never hesitates about pulling chestnuts out of the fire for me, and I like him. Besides, since we pay China a subsidy of a million per year for getting ready to wallop Nicholas, why not treat Constantinople with liberality?"

Krupp bowed and promised to talk the matter over with his board of directors, but the War Lord scarcely listened. He had deigned to express a wish—woe to the person, or persons, not interpreting the wish as an All Highest command.

He turned to the professor. "Delbrueck," he said, "I had a letter from Francis Joseph. He has

set his heart on Bosnia, and wants me to support him. Is there any way of arguing with Russia from the historic point of view?"

"I will look into the matter for Your Majesty at once."

"Very well. If you do not succeed, Russia will get a glimpse of my shining armour, which is the best argument, after all."

"Now you know my friends, official and otherwise," concluded Wilhelm, again addressing Krupp; "about my aims I have talked to you before. Always bear in mind that I am German Emperor—an expansive title relating to all lands and peoples of the Germanic family, no matter what name they may go under.

"We must have German Holland and German Belgium, German Tyrol and German Switzerland, and, of course, German Austria. As you know, I have a good title to the whole of North-Eastern France, too, but I will waive that for the Continental Channel coast."

"Your Majesty must have Trieste," said Delbrueck.

"I must have and mean to have all the naval outlets and outposts necessary to German trade and my protection," said Wilhelm in most Olympian style.

CHAPTER XXX

BROWBEATING THE WAR LADY

A Letter from Count Metternich—Scaring the Kaiser—Bertha Offends the War Lord—Using the Secret Code—For "The Day"—An Awful Oath—The Kaiser Wins

"I can almost forgive Metternich for allowing himself to be bested by Sir Frank, for that last yarn he sent me is not to be sneezed at. Bertha and Krupp are on the point of a momentous quarrel. Some pacifist idiot—a woman, probably—put a plea in her ear about 'trade in murder,' 'profit in man-killing,' and that sort of thing, and the baby did the rest.

"She sits on the Huegel, befouling the machinery for conquest-making below her windows.

"Some of the ordnance we are sending to China to-day may kill my unborn child," she writes, "and things have come to such a pass that Krupp had to instruct the coachman to avoid certain roads where Bertha's carriage might meet with ammunition and other transports.

"And ever since, all day long and half the night, she accuses Krupp of using her money to forge guns and bullets that, by and by, may seek the heart or limbs of his own son.

"Don't I know when war will break out?" he retorted angrily the other day. 'Long before that our boy will be on a journey round the world.' Think of a Prussian officer forced to indulge in such damnable stuff!" cried the War Lord.

"I submit, Your Majesty, that one has to temporise with women, especially with a young mother," suggested Prince Bülow.

"Silly sentimentalities," sneered the War Lord; "I want none of them. Bertha has to be broken of her freak—broken," he repeated, gritting his teeth. "Why," he continued, "she even refuses to take joy in her charities now, because, she says, 'money made out of armaments is tainted and no good can come from it.'

"If I allow that sort of thing to go on there will be a *Kladderadatsch*" (fatal *dénouement*), "one fine day. She may attempt to wrest from Krupp the power of attorney under which he acts as my agent, and there is such an abomination as divorce, you know—oh, *mille pardons*, you do know. And, worse luck, my courts deal in it as well as the Vatican." (The War Lord referred to Princess Bülow, whose first marriage to Count von Donhoff was dissolved by the Holy See in 1881.)

Bülow reddened under the insult. "I am wholly unsuited to interfere in other people's family affairs," he blurted. Then, frightened at losing his temper, added: "I beg Your Majesty's pardon."

"My ward's affairs are my own," declared the War Lord haughtily. "I'll settle with Bertha myself, make her eat out of my hand—take my word for it—and this will help."

He showed the Chancellor a long, handwritten letter, with the imprint of Carlton House Terrace, marked "Private and Confidential," and asked him to read it aloud. The address was that of the German Embassy at the Court of St. James's, and Count Wolff von Metternich, His

Majesty's Ambassador, was the correspondent. He had been permanently in London since 1901, previously serving his diplomatic apprenticeship there, off and on, between 1885 and 1890. His naïve complaint in the Joseph Chamberlain affair has been noted. As he was the War Lord's confidant while in the service of the Berlin Foreign Office, Count Metternich could not have been altogether without knowledge of Wilhelm's treacherous conduct in and toward England. The War Lord claimed British hospitality time and again to combine espionage with all too successful attempts to hoodwink the English Sovereign and his statesmen about his real intention toward Great Britain. King Edward was not too blind, though, to what was going on; he is credited with the remark that the War Lord was not a gentleman.

"Important, if true," said Prince Bülow, handing back the letter.

"Just as important if it *isn't* true—for my purposes," quoth Wilhelm. He walked up and down the room for several minutes, mumbling things, then suddenly confronted the Chancellor: "A belated answer to my letter to Tweedmouth—can it be that?"

Prince Bülow was surprised beyond words. The War Lord referring to his clumsy attempt (in the early part of the year 1908) to throw dust in the eyes of a British Minister of State in regard to his responsibilities, by an act of unprecedented condescension!

Wilhelm's personal letter to the First Sea Lord had caused considerable excitement in Germany, but there had been no discussion of it at the Chancellery. The subject was too ticklish for that—particularly its aftermath, with its references to "foolish stratagems," "unintelligent attempt to deceive," "refusal to be perturbed by such little incidents," and last, but not least, England's avowed determination to thwart Wilhelm's plans to be supreme upon the sea, since "there is nothing for Great Britain between foreign sea supremacy and ruin."

And those "wretched *Temps* articles" (Majesty's description was stronger), admonishing England not to put faith in the War Lord's protestations, but strengthen her navy and double her army.

The War Lord seemed to divine what was going through his Chancellor's mind. He changed the subject. "Edward and Nicki have been talking it over; they are afraid of me, despite boasted Anglo-Russian and Anglo-French propositions, and want to give me a good scare!" he cried. "But I will show them that I don't care a fig for their Entente. The Mediterranean trip is off. My purple standard shall fly at Cowes, and Wedell shall arrange for a little trip into France. Yes, France," he insisted. "I have long wished for a view of the strategical passes of the Vosges, and you must persuade Fallières to invite me to see the *Schlucht*.[#] Less than an hour's motor trip from the frontier, you know."

[#] The proposed motor tour across the French frontier was actually "arranged," as suggested by the War Lord, and was billed to come off in the first or second week of September (1908). However, at the last moment the War Lord showed the white feather, having been informed that he would never leave French soil alive, a number of patriots having vowed to kill him. Previous to this there had been much irritation in France and talk of "impudence," "cynicism," and "espionage."

"I will leave no stone unturned to execute Your Majesty's commands," said Prince Bülow, indulging in a profound bow to hide his face and avoid betraying an astonishment bordering on perplexity.

"Wonder if Edward can be persuaded to meet me in the Solent," mused the War Lord. "I would love to tell him about my trip to Heligoland, our coastal defences there, and preparations for aerial invasion. Of course, the details will be Greek to Uncle, since he knows less of military matters than my two-year-old fillies at Trakehnen, but my tale may possibly induce him to be more careful in matters of his *amours impropre*: Russia and France. Don't you think so, Bülow?"

"The Quadruple Alliance, Your Majesty? I can only repeat the conviction previously expressed—that it is entirely pacific, a defensive measure absolutely. As to King Edward, his political strategy is certainly superior to his military talents, but I was under the impression that he introduced Your Majesty to the Maxim gun."

"He happened to be my guest on the day set for the trial of that incomparable man-killer, and I took him to Lichterfelde to show him how I would annihilate his vest-pocket army if he wasn't as careful as his Mamma. Strange to say, he seemed to be quite *au fait*. I had bet Moltke a dozen *Echte* that Uncle couldn't distinguish a Nordenfeldt or Gardner from the old-time Gatling; but he did. 'Confound your impudence,' I said to Moltke, when I paid the price; but Helmuth convinced me that I got off dirt cheap. The Maxim gun, he persuaded me, must have undreamt of

possibilities if even Edward recognises its importance as a war machine.

"So the empty *echte*-box taught me that every copper invested in Maxim guns means one dead—an enemy—hence, that I can't have enough Maxims. I want fifty, no, a hundred thousand."

Wilhelm smiled sardonically as he added: "I told Krupp he would lose his job unless he improves on Maxim and gets up a machine-gun as light as our army rifle and as easily fired. But that reminds me. I will go to Essen to-night to impress Bertha with her patriotic duties. You'll keep Krupp here."

"Frau Krupp," said Wilhelm, as he retired with the War Lady to the library of Villa Huegel.

"Bertha," she pleaded.

"Bertha is treating her Uncle Majesty very badly."

"May it please Your Majesty to say in which way I have offended?"

"In every way, in the surest way, in the most traitorous way!" cried the War Lord, trying to stab the floor with the point of his sheathed sword—a pitiable sight, since his poor left hand was powerless to move. "You are thinking of diverting the works from their sacred purpose: The Fatherland's defence."

Wilhelm struck a sentimental pose. "That's my reward for the love and care I bestowed on Frederick's child," he half monologued. "I educated her, exalted her above all women in her station of life, treated her like a child of my own, like my own sons and daughter. I have bestowed as much thought on Essen as on my army and navy; made her business and fortune the grandest of their kind; selected for her loving husband a man of surpassing capacities and gave her wedding the *éclat* of a royal function. Emperors, sultans and kings have bedizened her with courtesies and high decorations for my sake—the legend of 'the richest girl' has melted into 'the happiest woman in the world'—*semper fidelis*, and Madame, satiated and ungrateful, turns me the cold shoulder."

"Oh, Uncle Majesty, how can you say such things?"

"Bertha," cried the War Lord, laying his hand on her knee, "if you were not Frederick's daughter, were not rich beyond the dreams of avarice, I would ask: How much—how much did England pay you for deserting me and the Fatherland?"

Frau Krupp slipped from the chair, and on her knees implored her terrifying visitor to show mercy.

"The King of Prussia never pardons traitors."

The word awakened Frau Krupp's self-respect. "Traitor!" she cried; "I would be a traitor to humanity if I continued making faggots to set the world afire."

The War Lord broke into wild laughter. "So that's the melody," he shouted, "echoes of the gutter Press in London, Paris, Petersburg, Tokyo! It's well you mentioned it, Frau Krupp; I know now exactly how we stand, you and I, the benefactor and the unworthy object of my magnanimity."

Bertha lay on the silken rug sobbing her heart out, but for Wilhelm the quivering form of the girl for whom he professed a father's love was mere air.

Sitting down at the great desk, he shouted: "I command" into the speaking-tube sacred to his All Highest person, and, Adjutant Baron Dommès responding, he ordered: "Prepare for a confidential message to the Chancellor by secret code. Have the line cleared. You will attend to the wire in person."

He grabbed a block of paper and began to write, tearing off sheet after sheet with partially finished sentences, rejecting his own words as fast as he wrote them, and talking to himself in tones considerably above a stage whisper.

"Would suit the Austrian Baroness to turn Krupps into an ironmongery for household and farm goods," he sneered savagely, "but the mollycoddles shall know presently that they haven't got a silly girl to deal with." He paused, giving a furtive look to the prostrate Bertha; then began scribbling again and reading his hasty scrawl to himself:

"Bethmann-Hollweg shall consult with Kuentzel and Harnier about condemnation proceedings against— Never mind, I will give names by 'phone after receipt of message is acknowledged. Must be kept a profound State secret. Anyone mentioning it even in the presence of his secretary will be dismissed *cum infamia*. Remember, the best legal talent only." (The persons named were high officials in the Ministry of Justice.)

Excitement would not let Wilhelm be seated long, and he began pacing the floor, dragging his sword.

"Preposterous!" he alternately mumbled or hissed. "A mere slut foiling my plans, interfering

with my life's work! Stop making implements of war: the great Alexander held up on the road to India by a blacksmith!" He laughed hysterically, lunging forth to both sides with his clenched fist as if striking at imaginary enemies.

"But the maw of death will be glutted with or without your assistance, Frau Krupp—glutted to nausea!" he cried, pausing before the trembling girl. "There will be an accumulation of anguish such as the world has never witnessed, despite thee, ingrate that thou art."

The War Lady raised her hand and looked at him with ghastly, tear-stained eyes.

"Don't—oh, don't!" she breathed.

"The more you plead the quicker the catastrophe will come! You mean to keep me in a state of unreadiness, but my enemies are even less ready—time to strike!"

"Even Your Majesty can't make war without pretext," wailed Bertha.

"I can't, eh? I can't? And there are no pretexts, either? What about Morocco? If I seize the smallest harbour of that — country, isn't that tantamount to invading Algiers? I tell you in such event France and Great Britain must fight whether they like or not. And their blood upon your head, Bertha, the blood of France and Great Britain and Russia, and of the German people, too."

He affected to shudder. "A thing of horror such as even Dante could not have conceived!" he exclaimed pathetically.

"And I the cause?" faltered Bertha.

"Who else, since you are driving me to war! Can I, dare I wait until Le Creusot, Woolwich and the Putiloffs have finished their preparations? I be — if I will!" he added rudely, "so I propose to seize the Krupp plant and manufacture my own war material until 'The Day' and after."

The War Lady, trembling with amazement, half raised herself from the floor and, balancing on her right arm, stared wildly.

"Seize my plant?" she gasped; but the War Lord paid no attention. Kicking his sword aside, he once more seized pencil and writing-block.

"*Cum infamia*," he read, as if for Bertha's benefit. Then his pencil flew rapidly over the paper: "The plant to be taken over by the act of the Sovereign, Gwinner and Emil Rathenau to look to the financial end, Dernburg and Thyssen to examine the business end." (Arthur von Gwinner, German railway magnate; August Thyssen, mine owner and merchant prince.) He was grabbing the speaking-tube, when Bertha took hold of his shoulder.

"Uncle Majesty," she whispered softly.

"If you please, Frau Krupp, no familiarities," barked the War Lord. "You are interfering in business of State."

"Listen, Uncle," pleaded Bertha.

"No, *you* listen to your King," said the War Lord coaxingly, "that is, if you will be once more my good little girl, and not presume to mix in my affairs, in affairs of the State."

"I am at Your Majesty's mercy," sobbed Bertha.

"You ought to have thought of that before."

"Forgive me, forgive me, Uncle Majesty."

"On one condition: that never again you lend ear to outsiders in matters affecting the Krupp works, whatever may be their character or claims to recognition."

"I promise, Uncle Majesty."

The War Lord leaned back in his chair and motioned to Bertha to sit down.

"The most terrible War Office secret has just been communicated to me by Metternich," he began, "and I would be unworthy of the trust imposed upon me by the Almighty if I did not use every preventive to undo this new dreadful peril to the Fatherland. Prevention spells: 'Increase of armaments on land and sea and, indeed, above the sea.' That's why I am forced to seize the Krupp works if you dare oppose my will——"

"But I don't, Uncle Majesty. I swear I don't!" cried Bertha.

The War Lord sunk his penetrating eyes into Bertha's as if trying to read the War Lady's very thoughts. "Ring for the baby," he said; and when the child was brought in he whispered to her to dismiss the nurse.

"Swear on the life of your child that you will not attempt to wrest the control of the Krupp works from my agent, or agents, and that your factories and shipyards shall ever be at my exclusive disposal, your Uncle Majesty to control the output and mode of manufacture absolutely, and decide on all measures deemed essential for the success of the works and the armament and defence of the Fatherland."

For a few moments the War Lady stared at the speaker, then allowed him to take her right hand and place it on the baby's head.

"I swear," she said in a hardly audible voice.

"On the life of your child," demanded Wilhelm. There was a scarcely concealed threat in his tones.

"Mercy, Uncle Majesty!"

"Mercy begins at home. There are thirty thousand families depending upon you—all told, about one hundred and fifty thousand people are living in Essen and suburbs. Do you want to see them all wiped off the face of the earth?"

"I don't follow, Your Majesty."

"I asked a question; I am not after argument. Once more I ask: Would you rather see Essen, my fortress of Cologne, Düsseldorf, the whole Rhine and Ruhr valleys blasted out of existence than say these eight words: 'I swear on the life of my child'?"

"I can't conceive the meaning of Your Majesty's words; but I love my people, and I would much rather die myself than have them suffer on my account," said the War Lady. She kissed the child, and, with tears streaming from her eyes, pronounced the fatal words.

"In the name of the Fatherland I thank you," said Wilhelm, touching Bertha's forehead with white lips cold as ice. Then, striking a theatrical pose, he added: "*Si Krupp nobiscum, quis contra nos?*" (If Krupp is with us, who can stand against us?) He rang the bell. "Dommes," he whispered into the 'phone, adding a word of the secret code. Presently there was a knock at the door. The War Lord himself opened it. Dommes was standing at attention, naked sword in hand. A few more words in the secret code. The door closed, and Dommes began patrolling the corridor.

CHAPTER XXXI A GREAT STATE SECRET

The Great Dundonald Plan—The Menace to Essen—Who Holds the Secret?—
An Infallible Plan—England Will Have to Pay—The World Will be Mine

A minute passed while the War Lord listened for the steady tread of his epauletted sentinel on the marble floor and seemed to count the steps. If Dommes had strayed an inch upon the purple runner which he was ordered to avoid, Wilhelm would have rushed out and abused him for a spy. Not until satisfied that the possibility of being overheard was out of the question, he told of the things weighing upon his mind, or of those, rather, that he wanted to weigh on Bertha's mind.

"You heard of Lord Dundonald?" he asked abruptly.

"The father of Baron Cochrane, who announced the death of Gordon and the fall of Khartoum," replied Bertha. "Gustav met him at Brooks's, I believe."

"The desert rider doesn't interest us now," retorted Wilhelm, "though I would love to have him on my staff—just the man to lead my African forces and to help in the Boer uprising. I am talking of Thomas Cochrane, the tenth Earl. Surely you learned about his good work against Napoleon and his exploits in South American waters? For a time he was admiral of the Chilian Fleet, re-entering the British naval service in the last years of William IV.'s reign."

"I recollect now," said Bertha.

"Well, the two elder Dundonalds were scientists, like your father and grandfather. Indeed, Dundonald *grand-père* made several epoch-making chemical discoveries—I suspect Heydebrand is stealing his ideas on every hand" (Dr. Ernst von Heydebrand, leader of the Agrarian party and a husbandman of note), "for Earl Archie enlarged on the relations between agriculture and chemistry even during the French Revolution; but Thomas Dundonald, his son, the same who defeated the Corsican at sea, was, or rather is, the man who threatens the Fatherland, even though buried these fifty years and more. Industry is indebted to him for discoveries in the line of compressed air, improvements in engines and propellers, but his *chef d'oeuvre* was a war machine.

"I tell you, Bertha, it looms up larger and larger as the struggle that is sure to come approaches—a perpetual threat menacing the stability of my Empire.

"The enemy—I mean the British War Office—has wrapt that thing of horror in darkest mystery ever since its inception a hundred years ago, and Haldane is as secretive about it as the

Prince Regent was in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

"During my every visit to England I have tried to find out from princes, statesmen and military men on the Dundonald plan, only to meet with patriotic objections in one place, with bluff in another. Lord Roberts went so far as to say there was no such thing. But King Edward, when Prince of Wales, contradicted Roberts, without suspecting, of course, that I had quizzed the Field Marshal. He had seen the document, he said; it rested in a secret drawer of the War Minister's safe. 'No other War Office official has access to it,' he told me, 'and it's the only copy in existence.'

"His word notwithstanding, there was a possibility, of course, that the plans of the great war machine might be concealed somewhere about Lord Dundonald's town residence in Portman Square, or in the archives of Gwyrch Castle, his seat in Wales, and Wedell has spent ten thousands upon ten thousands, bribing confidential servants, librarians and secretaries and what not? I had half made up my mind to approach the present Earl, when Metternich, by the merest accident, came upon some of the information sought after.

"Bertha," continued Wilhelm, "though we don't know its exact nature yet, the last doubt as to its limitless efficacy as a destroyer is removed—hence, the famous secret of the London War Office constitutes a peril to the German Empire that only war preparations on the largest possible scale can hope to check."

He dropped into melodramatic style, *tutoyering* Bertha: "Dost understand now, child, why I contemplated taking over the Krupp works for the State in case you failed your Uncle Majesty? Such would have been my duty, my sacred duty."

"I understand now, understand fully, and I humbly beg Your Majesty's pardon."

"It is granted," said the War Lord, with the air of a tyrant annulling a death sentence. "And now you want to know about the menace Dundonald's plan holds out to Essen, of course. But for your fuller understanding we must first go into the history of the case."

The War Lord lit a cigarette and settled comfortably into his throne chair. "Some two years before the battle of Leipzig," he began, "Lord Dundonald first startled the British War Office by a device for annihilating all fortified places and armies of Europe, should Bonaparte succeed in uniting them against England. However, his plan was so terrible, the Secretary for War refused to take the responsibility of either rejecting or accepting it, and persuaded the Regent to appoint a committee for its investigation *en camera*. The Duke of York, Lord Keith, Lord Exmouth and the two Congreves were chosen, and their verdict was: 'Infallible, irresistible, but too inhuman for consideration.' And at that time, Bertha, Englishmen and Englishwomen were hanged for stealing a sheep or an ell of cotton. So you may be sure that Lord Dundonald's war machine is no more burdened with sentimentality than 'old Fritz' yonder.

"The terrible plan was reluctantly pigeon-holed, and, as you know, Prussia, not the English, smashed Napoleon.

"In 1817 Lord Dundonald went to South America, having previously pledged his word of honour that he would not use his invention for the benefit of foreigners, and that, on the contrary, it should remain for ever at the disposal of England's War Office. Later, his lordship confessed that he had been tempted time and again to employ his invention, but refrained from self-respect.

"After 1832 he was back in London, and from then on until his death in 1860 he submitted his terrible plan to each succeeding War Minister, and each of these gentlemen declared the method capable of realisation with the awful results predicted by the author, yet too savage for adoption by a Christian government.

"Followed the Crimean War, with its initial anxieties, particularly to my grandmother. To her Lord Dundonald, then quite an old man, submitted his plan anew, which he said would shorten the war; but Queen Victoria hadn't the heart to listen to the inhuman proposal. However, Lord Palmerston had the invention officially investigated, appointing the most progressive scientists of the day for the task. As expected, they upheld Lord Dundonald's claims in every particular, but the inhumanity clause attached forbade its acceptance under a ruler like Queen Victoria, and once more the plan was shelved.

"Of course," added the War Lord, "they were fighting against Russia then. If it had been Germany, that blackguard Palmerston would have hanged the committee that declared against its acceptance.

"That happened sixty years ago," he went on, "and the British War Office has kept Dundonald's terrible plan in reserve ever since. Nor has its exact nature leaked out, though time and again one or other of the Powers have offered millions for the betrayal of the secret. Now, if I

had been War Lord when Lord Dundonald was travelling in Germany—but that's neither here nor there," he added gloomily.

Wilhelm walked to the empty fireplace and stared at the lifeless logs, while a sinister and cruel expression intensified the brutality of his features, "You heard of Frederick the Great stealing the dancer La Barbarina from the Venetians, bodily snatching her out of the ambassador's coach? So would I have kidnapped Lord Dundonald, 70 Wilhelmstrasse" (the palace of the British Embassy) "notwithstanding.

"I would have clapped him into Spandau, and kept him at a diet of bread and water until he revealed his secret in every detail—yes, and put to the test, too. And if starvation hadn't fetched him round—why, we have a lot of that Nuremberg *bric-à-brac*—thumb-screws, Spanish boots and toys of that sort—hidden away in some of the old castles and prisons——" True to his habit of manual illustration, he described some of the workings of the torture machinery by attacking the atmosphere.

"But, as said, it's neither here nor there," he resumed finally. "Back to our mutttons, then, *mon amie*. This is the story which Metternich obtained from two sources: Whitehall and Gwyrch Castle.

"To-day Dundonald's terrible plan plays a more decisive part in England's foreign policy than ever, being regarded as the supreme reserve force, a reserve force such as the world has never dreamt of. Its point is against Germany, as a matter of course, but I doubt not that Asquith would use it upon his own allies if ever they turned against him. Hence, France, Russia, even Japan, dare not act independently of Great Britain lest she employ Dundonald's terrible secret.

"As to its nature, according to certain vague information deduced from some of the late Lord Thomas's manuscript notes found at the Welsh castle, the hope that in the meantime it had been superseded by modern explosives, and that its main principle, or allied principles, were no longer the last cry in the line of destruction, has proved absolutely untenable. His menacing method is as infallible and irresistible to-day as it was a hundred years ago; all your dynamiters, nitro-glyceriners, lydditers and the rest of them notwithstanding, Bertha."

The War Lord struck a tragic pose: "To sum up, in concocting this crime against humanity the English lord degraded his intellect beneath the meanest animal. Your poor child," he murmured, "like my fortresses and towns on the coast of the North Sea or Baltic, so Essen and the peaceful Ruhr valley may be swallowed up in the whirlwind of his enormities."

"I shall defend my boy with my last breath!" cried Bertha, jumping to her feet, "him and all my people. Tell me, Uncle Majesty, why is Essen especially menaced?"

"Its proximity to the frontier is our most vulnerable point. Pray, and pray hard, Bertha, that Wilhelmina remains our friend. If she joined our enemies, Lord Dundonald's devilish invention might be brought to your very doors, through the Zuyder Zee and Waal, and Germany's armoury, the Krupp works, obliterated; the Fatherland itself could be wiped off the map.

"I hope to prevent this by throwing an iron wall across Belgium and Northern France," he continued, tracing a line on the wall-map, while Bertha faltered out:

"And this English menace——"

"How it works, you mean? With the resistless energy of Etna in eruption and the iron grip of the flow of ashes that buried Pompeii and Herculaneum. Only here will be no escape by water; but for my protecting arm you will all be suffocated in bed, or standing or going, as it were."

The War Lord stepped to the window and looked through the telescope fixed on a stand. "As far as the eye travels," he monologued, "one vast ghastly cemetery. Every house and cottage a grave, this villa a mausoleum."

"Save us!" shrieked Bertha. "Your Majesty alone can save us!"

"I will," said the War Lord, "my Imperial word: they shall not harm a hair on your child's head. With the Krupps working according to my plans, I will save Essen and my ships and my fortresses, too, for danger anticipated is half overcome; and when 'The Day' arrives I will move so quickly Whitehall won't have time to put the Scottish nobleman's surprise into practice. Listen, Bertha:

"The Japs disembarked eight thousand men at Sakhalin in a single hour, and whatever these brown devils did my army will have to go them one better. I will fall on Belgium, and, as I told Krupp, hack my way to Calais. By that time, maybe, you will have completed the howitzer that, planted at Calais, will make Dover Castle tumble into the dust. If you haven't, my air fleet alone must pull off the job. After closing the mouth of the Thames——"

"Sheerness to be blockaded?"

"By mines, Zeppelin, admiral. And before they have recovered from their surprise I will have

three hundred and fifty thousand men on the way to Threadneedle Street. About the same time King George and Mr. Asquith, or whoever is in power, will get a wireless to the effect that, to the indemnity England will have to pay, a thousand million pounds will be added if there is an attempt to interrupt the march of my armies by using the Dundonald plan, or if same is used anywhere or at any time against my possessions. My admonition will be in time, for to launch an undertaking so gigantic as to baffle even the most enterprising of your own lieutenants, Bertha, will take the slow English months and months; the swiftness of my movements, then, can be relied upon to forestall the evil intended to make our own warlike invention pale into insignificance."

"But the English fleet, Your Majesty?"

"Obsolete, old iron so far as the Channel is concerned. If I have enough airships, I won't bother about George's Dreadnoughts at all, for my nine army corps can be shipped from Calais in half an hour's time.

"As you know, my latest Zep. carries a hundred persons, and I have been talking it over with your Board and the Count: there are no technical obstacles against the construction of airships four times the size; airships can expand even more readily than howitzers.

"And the dream of my little girl need not be abandoned, either," added the War Lord in softer tones, "for the telegram to King George will further stipulate that the Dundonald secret must be turned over to me, and that I will have a hundred hostages to guarantee my absolute monopoly of this war machine—all the living war ministers and the heads of the families of the war ministers for the last hundred years, with a sprinkling of dukes, princes, high statesmen and low politicians to boot. Lady Warwick has sometimes wondered what the English nobility is good for—I'll show her.

"The Dundonald secret in my exclusive keeping," concluded Wilhelm, "you can devote the Krupp plant in all future to the ideals of the pacifists; for the world, awed into submission and silence lest I make a vast Pompeii out of a rebel country—the world will be mine!"

With the War Lady's astonished eyes following him as he strode the length and breadth of the room, the War Lord chuckled to himself. "Lord Dundonald's crude notes, found by my agents, have put me on the track of the secret; anyhow, we are now experimenting in Charlottenburg. My experts call it a liquid perambulant fire, a hundred per cent. more efficacious than my asphyxiating gas for clearing a road through a human wall, as each cylinder is guaranteed to lay low man, beast and technical obstacle for a space of a hundred and more square feet. What do you say to that, Bertha?"

"You are wonderful, Uncle Majesty," said Bertha.

"Invincible, arm in arm with the War Lady," declaimed Wilhelm.

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