

TEN YEARS OF KAISER WILHELM.

BY POULTNEY BIGELOW.

ON January 27, 1888, the present William II of Germany had achieved the rank of major-general in the Prussian army. He was twenty-nine years of age, esteemed by his fellow-officers as an intelligent and enterprising commander, but known to Germans at large only by an effort of certain philanthropists to make him a leader of anti-Semitic propaganda. On June 15 of 1888 he ascended the imperial throne, and at once began to rule his forty-five millions of Germans with a vigor that had not been experienced in that country since the days of the Great Elector.

I have known few men so free from brag or hypocrisy as was this German prince when he ascended the imperial throne. On the Christmas immediately preceding the death of his noble father he wrote a letter to a friend three thousand miles away. I have no right to make this letter public, but shall be forgiven for this much: the writer dwelt earnestly upon the year that was closing, and particularly referred to the problems of the future, little dreaming that he was the one who would be called upon to assist in their solution. In this letter he confessed that the ambition of his life was to improve the condition of the working-people, to reconcile the rasping conflict between those who have and those who have not, and, above all, to make the Christian religion a real thing. He went on jokingly to lament that some of our American millionaires did not see fit to leave him legacies for this purpose; for he was, he said, always hampered for want of necessary funds.

We live so much nowadays in an atmosphere of political and journalistic selfishness that we do not readily believe a man who says that he is working merely for the good of others. We have been constantly trying to find a solution to the acts and words of William II, and stubbornly refuse to believe him when he explains himself. The German Emperor knows the history of his family well, and to him that history teaches this lesson: that a Prussian monarch governs by right divine, and not as the mouthpiece of a popular congress. He is first of all a

soldier, and listens to no grievances while insubordination is discussed. The great German Empire of nearly fifty millions has grown from a nucleus that two hundred years ago, when the Great Elector was fighting for existence, was merely a swamp about the size of Rhode Island. Even the great Frederick had under him a population smaller than that of the State of New York to-day; yet he faced a coalition of all Europe. Through two centuries Prussian kings have succeeded one another with most exemplary regularity, when in Russia, France, and other parts of Europe kings had a peculiar way of dying suddenly. Some Prussian kings have been worse than others, but none has ever forfeited the loyalty of the great mass of the people; and, rightly or wrongly, the average peasant of the Fatherland regards his king as the direct author of all that is good in the country. This feeling is nearly extinct in England, and never existed in New England; we must take account of it, however, when studying German politics, for it is a force of marvelous extent and power.

William II knows England and Norway, the two most republican countries in Europe; and he frankly admits that, while popular self-government may be excellent among people familiar with the machinery of legislation, Germans are different, and require different treatment. He will discuss this matter with you freely and with knowledge. I can imagine his using such words as these: "Show me a country that in two hundred years has grown stronger than Germany, and at the same time has done so much for the education and material welfare of her people. Even America had its long civil war, and to-day offers to the world a picture of municipal administration, to say nothing of senatorial legislation, which no German need envy. For my part, I believe that one man can govern better than a congress, just as one captain can manage a ship better than a deputation of the crew. God has intrusted me with the responsibility of my station, and, with God's help, I shall try to render a good account of my stewardship."

No wonder, then, that immediately on as-

ascending the throne the Emperor addressed his first words to the army, reminding his soldiers that he and they were inseparable. "We belong together," he said, "I and the army. Thus are we indissolubly united, whether God sends peace or storm. I vow to remember that the eyes of my ancestors are looking down upon me from the other world, and that it is to them that I must be responsible for the glory and honor of the army." Subsequently appeared a proclamation "to my people," in striking contrast to that issued three months before by his father, who had dwelt at considerable length upon the importance of constitutional safeguards. William II filled his proclamation with splendid sentiment, and avoided constitutional promises that might prove embarrassing. "I have assumed the government," said he, "looking up to the King of kings, and have vowed to God that, after the example of my fathers, I will be a just and clement prince to my people, that I will foster piety and the fear of God, and that I will protect peace, promote the welfare of the country, be a helper of the poor and distressed, and a true guardian of the right." There was this broad distinction between the utterances of William II and Frederick III, uttered within a hundred days. Frederick emphasized in the most solemn way the legal and constitutional limits of sovereignty. His son as carefully avoided reference to any limitation beyond those which he chose to place upon himself as a clement and God-fearing prince. His conduct is strikingly in contrast to that of his father; but then, his father was the exception in a long line of absolute rulers. William II was not merely true to the teachings of his venerable and illustrious grandfather, but equally so to the public utterances of Frederick William IV and Frederick William III, the husband of Queen Louise, to say nothing of earlier monarchs, who had little reason to address their people, one way or the other.

A week after ascending the throne, William II addressed the assembled members of the Imperial Parliament. "I have summoned you, gentlemen," said he, "in order that in your presence I may declare to the German people that I am resolved, as emperor and king, to follow the same path by which my deceased grandfather won the confidence of his allies, the love of the German people, and the good will of foreign countries." In this speech the name of God appears four times, the word constitution but once, and then in an unimportant connection. One fourteenth of

the speech relates to matters constitutional, but only in so far as this document regulates the relations of the different German states one to another. On June 27, on opening the Prussian Diet, he again paid a hearty tribute to his grandfather. "Like King William I, I will, in conformity to my oath, be faithfully and conscientiously mindful of the laws and of the rights of the representatives of the people, and will with the same conscientiousness exercise the constitutional rights of the crown, in order to hand them at some future time intact to my successor on the throne." If we recall now that this same grandfather, William I, had to leave Germany during the revolutionary days of 1848, and if we can remember how, in 1862, he set aside the Prussian constitution because members of Parliament did not vote as he wished, we shall, I think, see clearly that the present Emperor's promises to copy his grandfather did not awaken striking enthusiasm among German liberals. Had Frederick III not suffered his brief term of empire, the language of William II would have sounded like the conventional utterance of the Prussian monarch. But a liberal king had reigned in Prussia; Germans had, for the first time in their history, listened to a Hohenzollern who spoke in praise of self-government; the people were already speaking of a new era of liberty, when death carried away their dearly beloved Kaiser Friedrich, "Unser Fritz."

It would have been the part of a less courageous—that is to say, a less honest—man than William II to have continued the promises made by his father and predecessor, and then have nullified them, as did Frederick William III in 1819, Frederick William IV in 1847, and William I in 1862. On the contrary, from the very outset the Emperor has behaved with directness and courage; and it takes considerable courage, in these days of ballot-boxes and constitutional amendments, to stand up alone and question the right of majority rule.

In the first year of his reign, on the 27th of June, he received a deputation of Berlin citizens, and said to them: "Look to it that churches be built in Berlin." On the 16th of August he sent a challenge over the Rhine that left no doubt as to his views regarding his claims upon Alsace and Lorraine. "I believe that in the whole army we are united in the sentiment that we would rather die upon the field of battle—our eighteen army-corps and forty-two million people—than that one single stone of these two provinces be handed back."

Doubt frequently has been raised as to the exact language used by William II on particular occasions; for at official banquets no account is taken of the press, and the public has to trust to the memory and good will of those who happen to be present. This same sentiment, however, I heard repeated in Metz, in September, 1893, when the Emperor's audience included a large number of guests who spoke French and thought French, although officially they were rated as German. To these he said solemnly, and even sternly: "German you are, and German you shall remain, so help me God and my good sword!" I am quoting from memory, and I well recall the furtive glances shot from one to another by the Frenchmen near to me.

As early as 1888 the Emperor took sole command of the troops at the autumn manœuvres, and directed the operations of thirty thousand men with a confidence in himself that surprised, if it did not wholly please, his older generals. He worked throughout as hard as any of his subordinates, being in the saddle always before daylight, and allowing himself a bare five hours for sleep. He made one or two mistakes which were obvious even to civilians, but were as nothing compared with the fact that Germans now realized that they had an emperor who, at the age of twenty-nine, knew how to command an army in the field. Nearly every foreign power was represented at these maiden military operations, and all looked for the perpetration of some serious blunder. At the outset there were skeptics who believed that the Emperor was being coached; but this surmise was soon exploded by the masterly manner in which he summarized the work that had been done, the faults that had been made, and the remedies that should be applied. Since then it has been my good fortune to be present when the Emperor has commanded the other corps of his army in every part of Germany, and on each occasion I have been enabled to appreciate his proficiency in conceiving and executing military operations on a large scale. Incidentally, too, by studying the work of successive army-corps from year to year, I marveled still more at the even excellence of the men in the different provinces of the empire. The regiment from the borders of Russia can drill side by side with one from the Rhine, and, for me at least, it is impossible to see a difference. And it is in this constant comparison of army-corps that the chief interest of attending military manœuvres lies. We note from year to year the varying progress,

and are each year surprised by the uniform state of excellence, which is almost monotonous.

In 1889 the Emperor startled the school-teachers of Germany by telling them that they had been wrong in their method of instruction, and must henceforth do better. "For our German life, and to understand the questions of the present day, it is essential that we should understand thoroughly the history of our own time and our own people. The reason why social democracy leads astray so many heads and hearts is because we do not sufficiently teach children the mischief caused by the French Revolution, nor explain to them the heroic deeds in the wars of liberation against Napoleon." It is painfully true that the German boys of my day learned thoroughly the history of Greece and Rome, and acquired a smattering of monarchs who ruled in the middle ages, but that vital period beginning with the French Revolution and including the battle of Waterloo found no serious place in the German curriculum. Indeed, I might almost assert that if a subject proved interesting to school-boys the academic authorities were sure to regard it with suspicion, on the principle that school, to be profitable, must be drudgery, like mere mental gymnastics. The Emperor has succeeded in bringing a small degree of light into the gloomy life of the German school-boy, and for this alone he deserves gratitude. As to history, however, I doubt if the proposed reform will do much good, because the German government sees to it that those who write history conform to the views prevailing at court. Treitschke, for instance, is the favorite court historian, although I have been frequently struck by his incapacity to discuss a Prussian monarch, save from a courtly point of view. In Germany university professors profit by the favor of the court almost as much as do lawyers, physicians, and architects. I found in my own case that to publish the truth about the Hohenzollern monarch was a good way of frightening from my acquaintance a number of courtly Prussians who were in all other respects independent men.

In the second year of his reign—1889—the Emperor commanded at the manœuvres in Hanover, when he entertained the present Russian Czar, then Czarevitch. The military operations were in all respects successful, and did much to reconcile this lately conquered province. Nicholas II did not at that time make a good impression upon any German of my acquaintance. The relations be-

tween Germany and Russia were then as unfortunate as they are now between Germany and England. Up to within a few hours of his arrival, nobody about the Emperor knew when the Russian guest might be pleased to put in an appearance; and when at last he was definitely announced, he was scandalously late, and many of those who had crowded the streets out of curiosity had gone home in disgust. A war with Russia would have been popular then, for Germans were being vigorously persecuted, or Russified, in the Baltic provinces, and in other respects the Russian government improved every opportunity for showing its contempt for things and persons German. At a grand court dinner, when his imperial host proposed his health, the young Nicholas responded in French, although I was told that he knew German. When he left the table afterward, he strolled through the saloons of the palace, amid the bowing nobles, with his hands in his pockets, and an expression which, to me at least, did not suggest respect for his host, let alone for his fellow-guests. The German papers were not allowed to call attention to this, but it made considerable impression on those present.

On New Year's day, 1890, the Emperor greeted Bismarck cordially, and prayed God that he might be many years spared, for the sake of his wise and faithful counsel. Within three months he had dismissed this chancellor, and appointed General Caprivi in his stead. I am convinced that the Emperor in this step acted for what he deemed the best interests of his country. Bismarck employed his enforced leisure by saying whatever he thought might embarrass his successor or draw the Emperor into political controversy with him. Within a short time of the dismissal, the Emperor, while speaking of the reasons that had forced him to let Bismarck go, said solemnly that, whatever that disappointed man might say, still he (the Emperor) would never open his mouth against him. And he has kept his word. For now eight years Bismarck has kept up a licensed opposition in the press and has frequently published what should have been regarded as secrets of state; yet in all these years never once has the Emperor referred to him except in the language of an affectionate son to an eccentric and exasperating parent. It required courage for an emperor less than three years on a throne to dismiss a prime minister who had served three successive German emperors. Bismarck had done no single act likely to

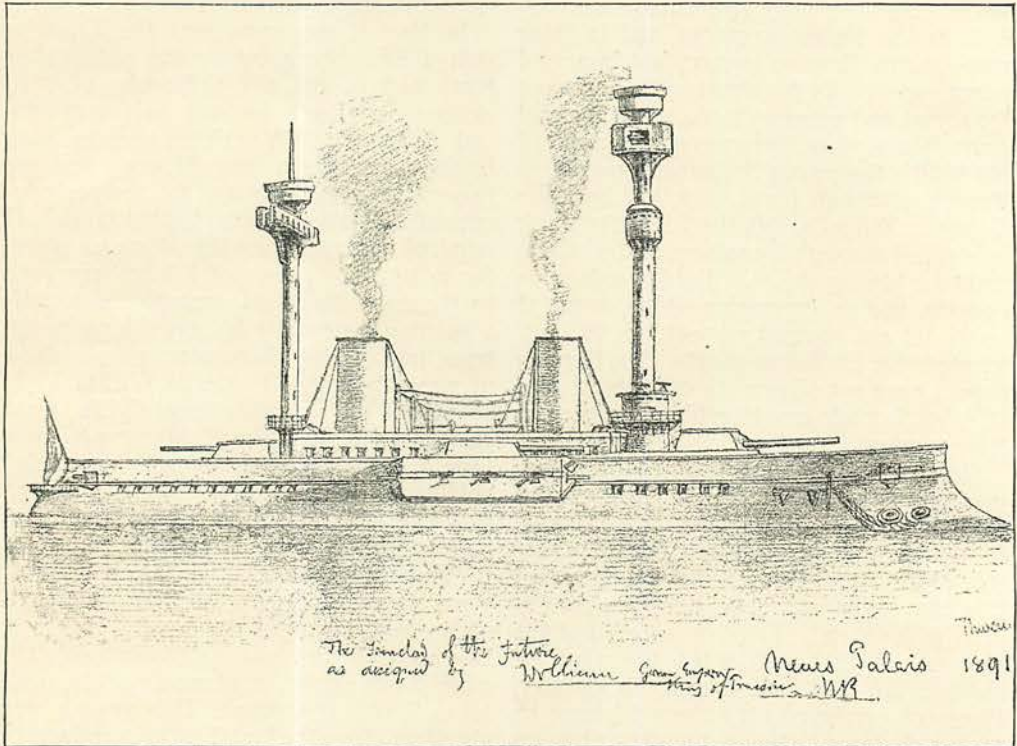
produce immediate rupture; but the Emperor had the courage to recognize that since the Franco-German war problems had arisen requiring statesmanship rather than violence, and that the policy of Bismarck was proving ineffectual. To a friend he wrote in that year: "My heart is sore, as though I had a second time lost my grandfather. But God has so willed it, and I must bear it, even if it crushes me. I am now in command of the deck. The course remains unchanged; so forward, full steam, ahead!"

In May of the same year the Emperor visited Königsberg, where the philosopher Kant had taught the philosophy of pure reason; and there he said to the provincial delegates: "We Hohenzollerns have received our crown from Heaven, and are responsible only to Heaven for the performance of the duties implied in that trust." It required courage to say this in such a place; for in 1813 the people of Königsberg gave to Germany the best example of a self-governing community helping a king in distress, and in 1840 these same people stood up manfully against Frederick William IV in support of their constitutional rights. Four years later, in the palace of this same Königsberg, I heard the Emperor scold the assembled nobility of this part of the world as though they were school-children. He told them that he regarded it as monstrous that certain of their number had ventured to hold political views at variance with those of their monarch—that they must stand or fall together, they and their king, particularly in these days when it was a question of meeting "the revolution" (*die revolution*). This speech was significant from the fact that the agrarians, or landlord party, were organizing to defeat the commercial treaties proposed by Caprivi—treaties under which food-stuffs were to enter Germany from Russia and Austria-Hungary at lower rates. In 1890 the Emperor astonished the Jews by making a speech to the recruits, in which he remarked that no one could be a good soldier if he were not at the same time a good Christian. This speech he has repeated several times. Not long ago the editor of the chief comic paper in Germany ("Kladderadatsch") was sent to jail for venturing to quote this speech in connection with a humorous picture representing his majesty the devil, with his finger to his nose, pondering upon a knot which he had constructed at the end of his tail. In the clouds above were represented some of the great soldiers of olden times—Hannibal, Cæsar, Napoleon, and, notably, Frederick the Great.

The devil soliloquizes: "Now, what did I wish to remember when I put that knot in my tail? Ah, yes—the Emperor's speech. I must claim Frederick the Great; he does n't belong with Cæsar and Napoleon; he was n't a good Christian, and he must therefore have been a bad soldier." I don't pretend to quote the exact words.

In that year he wrote beneath his picture a legend hitherto associated with absolute

German—that both nations had so frequently stood together in the protection of "both liberty and justice." The affection of the Emperor for England was cordially returned until January of 1896, when, after the Jameson raid, he sent a telegram to President Krüger of the South African Republic, intimating that if help were needed, Germany was in an obliging mood. This telegram evoked an angry explosion in the organs of



"THE IRONCLAD OF THE FUTURE" AS DESIGNED BY THE EMPEROR WILLIAM IN 1891.
(FROM A SKETCH BY THE EMPEROR.)

monarchy, *Sic volo, sic jubeo*, which, rendered freely, means, "The law is thus because I wish it thus." Next year, on March 18, 1891, he made a speech to his army which emphasized once more how little faith he reposed in salvation by parliament. "The soldier and the army, not parliamentary majorities and resolutions, have welded the German Empire together. We live in serious times, and the future may have bitter things in store. In my heart I feel with my ancestor who said that he knew of no more comfortable place to die than in the midst of his enemies." In the same year he was warmly welcomed in England, and made an excellent speech at the Guildhall, remarking that the same blood ran in the veins of English and

English public opinion. Since then there has been no interchange of friendly acts between the two courts, and the German Emperor did not grace the festive procession held in 1897 to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the rule of his gracious grandmother Victoria.

The Emperor's knowledge of England's military capacity is complete and exact. He knows the British officer, and the character of the man under him. He knows by heart every ship in the British navy, and what guns she carries. At home his study is like the museum of a naval engineer, and he is frequently occupied with the designing of battle-ships. In 1893 he struck the key-note of his future naval policy by sending this motto over the

wires to a boat-club near Berlin: "*Navigare necesse est, vivere non est necesse*"; that is to say, "We can do without living, but not without a navy." This sentiment is natural enough to Englishmen, Norwegians, and New-Englanders, but is very novel in Prussian history. The old Emperor William looked upon the navy as more ornamental than useful. Frederick William III regarded the idea as impious; "for," said he, "Frederick the Great got on well enough without it, and what was good enough for him is good enough for me." In the days of the Great Elector colonies were attempted in the West Indies and on the African coast, but they soon died out; and though I made diligent search, I could find no trace in St. Thomas of the Brandenburgers who now figure so conspicuously in the history of German colonial effort.

The progress which Germany has made in the way of rowing and sailing as a manly sport is largely due to the example and encouragement of William II. About the time of the Franco-German war boating was such a rare thing as to be virtually non-existent. American and English students occasionally got up a boat-race at Bonn, Dresden, or Berlin; but aside from efforts of this kind I can scarce recall anything worth mentioning in the days when I lived in a German family at Potsdam. Now all this is changed, and throughout the season not a week passes but one or more regattas are held, in which first-rate crews contend for prizes, many of which are offered by the Emperor. Officers and students still feel that it is beneath their dignity to row, but a good beginning has been made by encouraging boating among school-boys. Of course there are many pedagogues who think the Emperor very reckless in thus admitting rowing to be a part of education, but this opposition is growing feebler and feebler; for the older people notice that the men who are good in their boats can be also good in their classes, and they will soon also discover that men who open their pores and stretch their muscles every day become as strong in moral qualities as they do in mere physical strength.

In 1895, on the occasion of opening the great canal connecting the Baltic with the North Sea, the Emperor organized the most magnificent marine carnival ever held in European waters. All the world sent specimens of their marine architecture, and the bay of Kiel was so full of war-vessels that one could paddle about for miles, lost in a forest of steel. For miles and miles one saw only a succession of funnels, masts, and military

tops, and many a man left the place without having been able to see the town of Kiel, owing to the intervening craft. To this festival the Emperor invited a large number of guests, including the members of his Parliament. His object was to interest them in maritime matters by showing them what his chief naval port could offer at such a time. Grand banquets were held; the Emperor made many glowing speeches; the deputies had free champagne three times a day, and every other luxury that imperial means could command. All were impressed with the beauty of the scene as a whole, and with the excellent work done by the German navy in the last few years; but with it all old-fashioned Germans shook their heads, and thought that they ought to be satisfied with having the strongest army in the world, and not insist upon having a great navy as well.

New Year, 1895, England and Germany appeared to be on the best of terms, and, indeed, the English military attaché in Berlin seemed to be the favorite at court; but at the close of the year the stupid Jameson-raid occurred, and all at once Englishmen and Germans appeared to be mortal enemies thirsting for one another's blood. It so happened that on the day when the Emperor sent his cable to Paul Krüger I was dining in Berlin with two officials. When I asked them their opinion of the Emperor's despatch, they both clasped their hands over their heads, and rolled their eyes upward as if to say, "Great heavens, how could he do such a thing!"

According to the imperial constitution, the prime minister is expected to accept the responsibility for the Emperor's acts. Nothing which William II has done since his accession has so profoundly modified his relations with foreign countries as this short cable, which sounded like an effort to interfere in matters of strictly English concern. Prince Hohenlohe, the prime minister, acted throughout as though nothing were expected of him except to carry the Emperor's messages to the telegraph office. We do not yet know whether he advised the Emperor to send this despatch or not. Certain it is that it did no good. Within three months from the sending of this despatch I was in South Africa, and learned soon enough from representative Boers in the Transvaal that they resented the interference of Germany quite as much as they did that of any other country. Germans themselves told me that their position in South Africa had been made more difficult

since the Emperor's despatch; that is to say, Germans had been made odious in the eyes of their English fellow-colonists. The Emperor would never have sent that despatch had he known the spirit of independence which animated the Boers, and it is a thousand pities that his prime minister permitted such a message to be sent without a vigorous protest.

But from the few points on which I have dwelt we can, I think, note in the Emperor the rare and excellent quality of courage to act and speak as he feels. In the ten years of his reign we have no example of his stooping to deception. He meets his people frankly, tells them what they should do, and wastes no precious time in political log-rolling. His people are all the time grumbling at him, and none can blame them for that, for he is perpetually endangering such liberties as were guaranteed in 1871. But beneath all the grumbling heard in the press there is something in William II that commands the Prussians' admiration, and that is his soldierly devotion to what he conceives to be his duty. In theory the German government is based on a constitution; but the great mass of Germans who have served in the ranks of the army have but small confidence in party government—at least, compared with that of one strong man. The German likes to be governed—mildly by preference, but even despotically rather than slackly. There is a very intelligent liberal constitutional party in the German Reichstag; but even with such able men at its head as Barth, Bamberger, and Richter, it fails to overcome the traditional habit of blind obedience cultivated in the barracks and at the state schools.

At the opening of this year (1898) Germans have become so accustomed to seeing men sent to jail on charges of *lèse-majesté* that no riots occur when their most esteemed editors are sent to prison for having expressed sentiments shared by the bulk of intelligent readers. It is my good fortune to count as personal friends many patriotic Germans who oppose the government by every constitutional means, because they believe in the principles of popular government. As an American, my sympathies are naturally with those who are struggling for a government by the people. To me the cause of liberty means in the long run the cause of justice and good government. No one with English blood in his veins can doubt this.

Nor do I doubt the Emperor's general belief in this same sentiment, although he

would modify it by saying that his Germans had not yet arrived at the political maturity which would justify him in modifying his Prussian ideas of sovereignty. If a vote were taken to-day throughout Germany to determine who should be the leader of the German people, I have no doubt that the present Emperor would receive such a popular indorsement as would surprise the world. The reason for this is that he alone represents in Germany the power to control religious and political differences, and at the same time to make head against enemies abroad. It has been the fashion to predict imperial disaster from year to year, especially since the retirement of Bismarck; yet if we choose to analyze the ten years of William II, they will, I think, compare favorably with any ten years of Bismarck since the adoption of the imperial constitution in 1871. The so-called *Kulturkampf*, or quarrel with the Papacy, was a Bismarckian creation. During his reign the socialist vote swelled from a mere nothing to over a million. He it was who saddled Germany with a million square miles of pestiferous hot country, called by courtesy a colonial empire. Under him the political police developed to hitherto unprecedented power in the suppression of Danish sentiment in the northwest, Polish down east, and French in the provinces acquired by the war of 1870. Under him the relations between Russia and Germany grew to be so strained that war seemed at one time imminent; and, indeed, Germany, under his manner of settling domestic and foreign questions, was drifting into political chaos when William II took charge. In parenthesis, let me hasten to add that these later blunders in no way detract from the greatness Bismarck achieved as a man of blood and iron, who smashed the empire of Napoleon III, and forced every petty German prince to consent smilingly to a redistribution of political power in favor of Prussia. But the man who can smash his enemies, and force them to smile while he is bullying them, is not necessarily the wisest lawmaker for a complicated and civilized nation in a state of peace.

William II has not undone all the mischief which Bismarck had been able to do, but he certainly has not made matters worse; and most Germans will, I think, admit that the independent papers reflect to-day a more general satisfaction at the national outlook than in the spring of 1890.

The French in the conquered provinces are not yet German, but they were pleased

when the Emperor came to live among them near Metz; and while they are still perpetually irritated by petty Prussian police administration, they are realizing that behind it is an honest and powerful government, while latterly little has happened in Paris to make them wish for a government inspired by the Élysée. Socialism is still strong, and the lately incorporated provinces of Denmark and Poland are not altogether reconciled; but the Emperor has visited more than once his Polish subjects, and his beautiful wife is a native of a province once claimed by Denmark.

It is one great source of the Emperor's power that he knows personally not merely all his brother sovereigns, but every man of official importance in his own country. There is not a province of Germany with which he is not familiar, and his memory for names and faces is so great that for him to see a man once is to know him for the rest of his life. In this knowledge of his country he surpasses any of his predecessors on the Prussian throne, and all of his contemporary sovereigns. It is safe to say that Queen Victoria knows less of Great Britain than her grandson knows of his country, and in the case of Austria and Russia it is equally true. This is not such a trifling matter as it might appear. I recall, in this connection, the statement of a German official in Metz, with whom I had some conversation during the Emperor's first visit there. This German had married a young lady of Metz, and all her family treated him very coolly on account of his nationality, and proclaimed that they would not in any way do honor to the German Emperor when he should visit their town. Finally, however, curiosity alone induced them to occupy a window with their German kinsman in order to see the imperial entry, but they carefully explained that this should not be misconstrued as infidelity to France. When the Emperor appeared he was greeted with much cheering and waving of handkerchiefs. He happened to look up full at the window where was this assembly of pretty French ladies, and recognizing the official, whom he had seen before, his face lighted up with a smile; and in such circumstances few faces can be more attractive than that of William II. In this crisis the stern resolutions of these ladies of France melted away helplessly, and they became from that moment allies of the Hohenzollerns. They at once began to wave their handkerchiefs with vigor, and the moment the streets were clear they rushed out, sought the nearest picture-

shop, and each purchased a photograph of William II. The reconstruction of Alsace-Lorraine goes on very slowly, but it might stop altogether were it not for such a man as the Emperor.

In spite of much evidence to the contrary, the Emperor is not a tyrant, nor has he manifested a desire to wield power for the mere purpose of making other people uncomfortable. He takes a positive delight in hearing of good things said or done by others. He does not fail to read what is said against him.

When the late William Walter Phelps was the American representative in Berlin, "Mark Twain" happened to be in town. Mr. Phelps having informed me that he had taken no steps to let the Emperor know of this, I of course pointed out to our minister—what I knew to be the case—that the German Emperor knew by heart the works of our great humorist, and would be most happy of an opportunity to talk with him. Mr. Phelps, however, persisted in thinking that it was not his business to do anything in the matter, seeing that Mr. Clemens was not present in any official capacity. Next day I was leaving for America, but that evening I had an opportunity of telling the Emperor that Mark Twain was in town. The moment he heard this he clapped his hands at the good news, and called out to his wife, who was at the other side of the room: "Auguste, Auguste, here is good news! What do you think? Mark Twain is in town!" and then he eagerly inquired about him. But when he learned that Mr. Phelps had not seen fit to arrange a meeting at once, he frowned in a significant manner. Of course Mark Twain was immediately invited to meet the Emperor at luncheon, and both enjoyed the meeting.

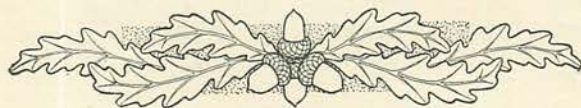
It would be, I think, within the mark to say that in the last ten years the Emperor has conversed at length with every eminent American or Englishman who has passed through Berlin. I have never heard of such a meeting but that the visitor has been strongly impressed by his imperial host's specialized knowledge. In the midst of the rush of festivities at Kiel in 1895, the Emperor found time to dine on board the flagship *New York* of the American squadron. Her captain told me afterward that their imperial host stayed until two o'clock in the morning, and during his stay extracted from them every manner of information. He closed his visit by testing the capacity of the crew for manning ship and putting

out fires at the shortest possible notice. When Mahan published his great book on the "Influence of Sea Power," the Emperor at once read it, and sent him a cordial telegram acknowledging the indebtedness of himself and his officers for the lessons taught therein. I have no doubt that the strenuous efforts now being made to strengthen the German navy have received great encouragement from the study of this American work.

Personal government can be easily abused, but it is distinctly advantageous for a state so dependent upon its military prestige as Germany. For a century, at least, the foreign relations of Russia and Germany have been modified, even controlled, by the occasional personal conference of the two sovereigns immediately interested. With the Russian Czar the Emperor can speak distinctly and without fear of his words being nullified by congresses or parliaments. He has achieved alone, by a few words with the Czar, important concessions in China which will lead to other concessions more important still. If he could arrange his relations with England through his grandmother alone, I have no doubt he would once more regard himself as bound up with English interests. As it is, he is bound to be misunderstood; for personal government in England disappeared along with the head of Charles I. Two years ago I published my history of "The German Struggle for Liberty," which was regarded by the German conservative papers as an impious attack upon monarchy in general and the Emperor's ancestors in particular. It was nothing of the kind, but merely the statement of certain well-established facts from an American point of view. My friends predicted that the Emperor would drop the book into his waste-paper basket, with a curse upon its author. Instead of this, he read it, according to his own statement, from beginning to end, pointed out faults, from his point of view, and obviously thought no worse of me for my lack of orthodoxy. Next year I published my "White Man's Africa," in which I had to speak of his relations to the Transvaal in a manner far from complimentary. Again

he sent word to me that he had read the book with interest and pleasure. These two little episodes dispose of the perpetually repeated slander that he can endure nothing but praise, and quarrels with any one who opposes him.

The first authentic account of the Emperor's character appeared in THE CENTURY MAGAZINE for August, 1891. That account seemed at the time strangely at variance with popular opinion as represented by the press, and I confess that since its publication many an act of the German government has appeared to prove either that my own opinions were ill founded, or that subsequent events had changed the Emperor's character. But now, in viewing the ten years as a whole, we can readily forgive much that has been bad in detail for the sake of the incomparably greater amount of good reaped by his people and the world at large. He has been a liberal patron of art and letters, architecture and engineering work. He has taken intelligent and energetic interest in the material development of his country, especially in the encouragement of ocean commerce and the acceleration of train service. The army and navy are both of them absolutely and relatively stronger than they were ten years ago, not merely in number of ships and men, but in organization and general efficiency. He has shown complete contempt of danger by moving about on his travels and in his daily "constitutionals" without any particular police protection such as prevails in Russia. He has added to the German Empire Heligoland, near Hamburg, and Kiao-Chau in China, both without firing a shot. He and his wife have exhibited in these years the picture of a happy family in which he governs out of doors and she is supreme in the nursery. Almost alone among the great ruling families, his has been free from social scandal; and if worse were to come to the worst, he is about the only crowned head who could turn to and earn his living, either as a ship designer, a newspaper editor, or a military man. He has a Yankee head on his shoulders. This I said ten years ago, and it remains true to-day.



WILHELM II AS ART PATRON.

BY HENRY ECKFORD.



THROUGH one of those examples of atavism which may be discovered in almost any large family of mixed descent, Wilhelm II repeats the traits of some ancestor who was not of Teutonic stock. Frederick Wilhelm IV, from whom, of course, he does not descend, showed similar characteristics. In his appearance, too, Wilhelm II is not a Teutonic type, but a Slavic; and he is therefore very fitly a king of the Prussians, Mecklenburgers, Silesians, Lithuanians—of all those old tribes, in fine, who opposed and merged with the Gothic and Saxon invaders during the kaleidoscopic wars and raids which went on from 300 to 1000 A. D. To suit his figure, face, and temperament he should have received at baptism some name like Prebislav or Wratislav to indicate that in this modern scion of old mixed stocks the special Slavic strain has put forth a conspicuous flower.

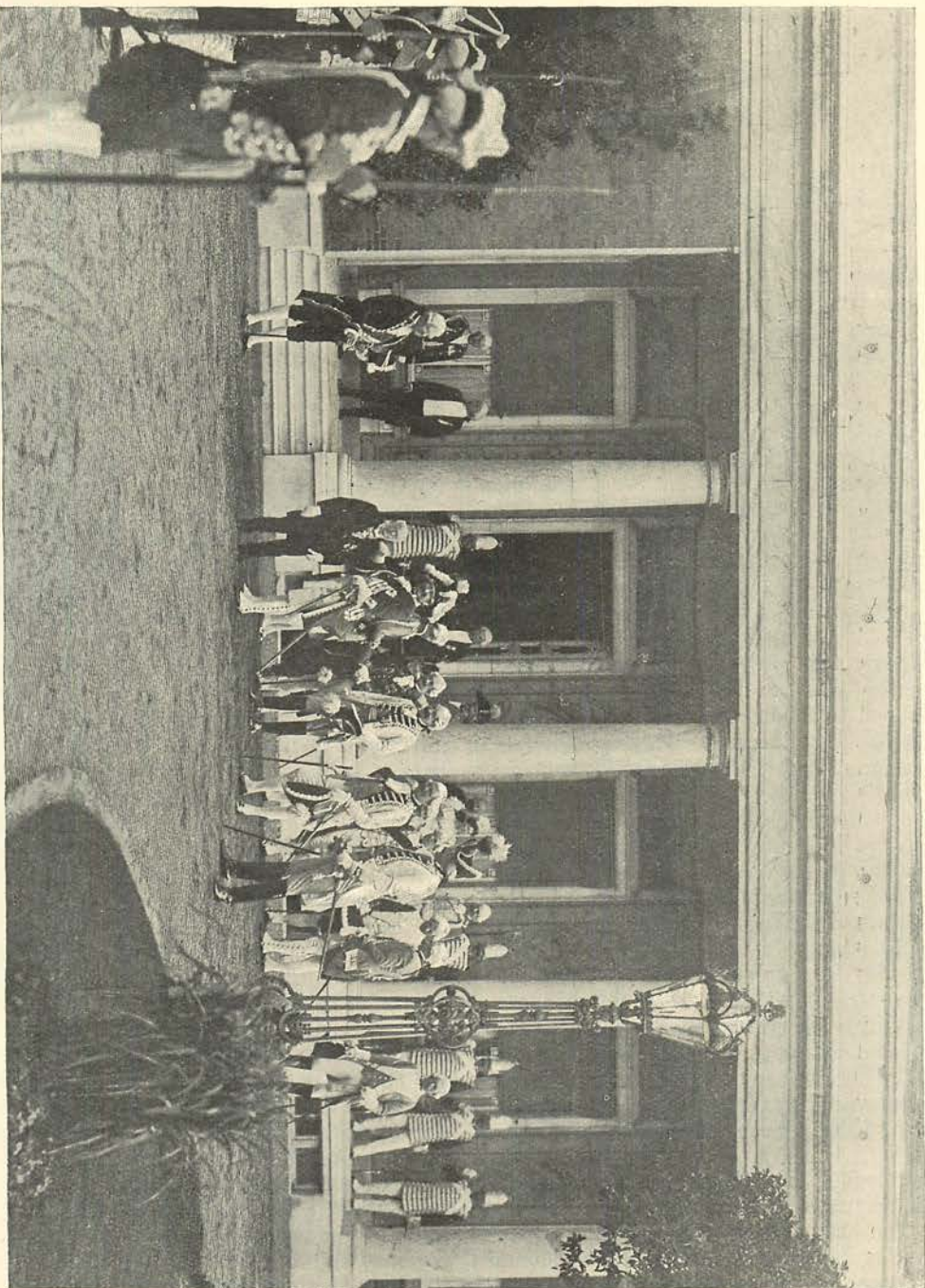
The rest of the world does not regard Slavs with the inborn and trained contempt of the German. On the contrary, such brilliant, lively, capable natures as that of Wilhelm II, with strong leaning to the fine arts and rhetoric, and no little skill in military matters, are by no means rare in the Slavic past.

Wilhelm earnestly desires to make the fine arts flourish in Prussia, and in this respect, as in all others, to set the pace for the German Empire. He is generous in exhorting cities to raise monuments, and helps all he can. He is indefatigable in visits to studios and in encouragement to sculptors, painters, and other artists whom he regards as able. It is, however, only under great disadvantages that a man on a throne encourages the arts. His very power stands in his way. The importance of what he says is such that a criticism exercises a crushing effect. The fact that he is of so impetuous and self-confident, if not exactly domineering, a nature, puts him at this disadvantage: he admires greatly certain artists and their works, and almost violently dislikes the works of others. He is a pretty partizan, and, what is worse, he cannot help it, because he gets

it by inheritance from some old Slavic prince of an ancestor who in his own day probably caused the artists of the wrong camp to be sacrificed to the grim gods of paganism.

Adolf Menzel is one of his pets, much to the dismay of the courtiers, who resent the ennoblement of a man of no family, and find the savage old artist far from genial company. At the great court ceremonies Menzel wanders about like a mask from some antique comedy in Greece, his brows knit, his sash resplendent, his orders duly displayed. But the more the courtiers avoid him, the more the Emperor tries to make up for their sins of omission by favoring him publicly, as one may see in the view of the façade of the Marble Palace at Potsdam, where Wilhelm II, with a jovial smile on his face, dressed in the uniform of the Great Frederick's time, and posed among his courtiers and select body-guard in the same historic garb, is seen before the photographic camera, laying his hand on Menzel's shoulder. Even this unheard-of honor, however, does not bring a smile to the artist's crabbed face.

Moved by the best of intentions, the Emperor is not very successful in his efforts to encourage art. They smack too much of personal tastes and one-man power. Menzel is perhaps a favorite, not because of his great Meissonier-like skill in illustrations, but because he is the draftsman and painter of the period of Frederick the Great. The Emperor is really honoring his own line rather than the artist when he covers him with rewards. He does not realize the contempt that professional artists have for amateurs who dabble in oils and water-colors, clay and chalks. It is not by making sketches for the Knackfusses to carry out that the Emperor will raise art in Prussia from its present stagnation, but by allowing the dangerous breath of liberty to blow through the art world. The fine arts are under the drill-sergeant, and produce recruits who have everything except art in them. It is too much to say that this is the Emperor's fault; but it is true that so long as he insists upon running things artistic, no one else can, or will—and the artists themselves least of all.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY M. ZEISLER.

THE EMPEROR WILHELM II AND THE ARTIST MENZEL.