

BERLIN SOCIETY

BY
COUNT PAUL VASILI,

AUTHOR OF
"THE WORLD OF LONDON"
(*La Société de Londres*).

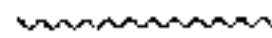
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XLI. A. XXII

PREFACE.

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MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I have received your letter, dated the 18th instant, informing me you have entered the Diplomatic Service and become an *attaché* at Berlin. The first half of your news is good, and I heartily congratulate you upon it; I cannot say so much for the second. Berlin is not the best place to begin your career in. There are too many serious political interests at stake, and too few amusements, for a young man of your age, who goes there as a total stranger. Berlin Society does not welcome foreigners; men of high position are exceedingly reserved; the women are either prudes or dissolute; the young men, for

the most part, scamps. They dance a great deal, but that you do not care about; and there is little intellectual conversation; this will please you still less. Berlin is essentially provincial. Gossip and scandal are more than usually prevalent, and intrigues are very numerous. Society there is most intolerant, and has constantly some new story to revel in: it has no literature, little education, and not the least interest in anything which does not immediately concern it.

You must understand Berlin society well not to fail, or rather you must know every sphere of society well, in order to render your visit interesting or profitable. I fear you will have neither time nor opportunity for studying the character of the people among whom you are going to live.

You tell me you regret arriving at Berlin, just when I am leaving it, never to return; and you ask me to assist you by giving you a few sketches of those you will have to meet. I

see no objection to doing this, but on condition of your absolute discretion. I shall only write for you, for your special and personal instruction. I mean instruction, and not conviction. My manner of judging, of observing, of drawing conclusions, must not in any way influence you. I may not always be right; it is for you to discern where I am right or where wrong. A double watch on observer and observations will be profitable to you.

•Do not ask me for a settled programme in my letters. I shall write them as I please, and when I please. You know my horror of categories and classifications. So soon as I shall have one, two, or three interesting ones, I will send them to you. Do not count on fixed dates. My love of sport, and my habitual laziness will often make me neglect my promise of noting my remembrances of Berlin for you. You will value my letters the more, I flatter myself, if they arrive as a surprise, rather than at stated times.





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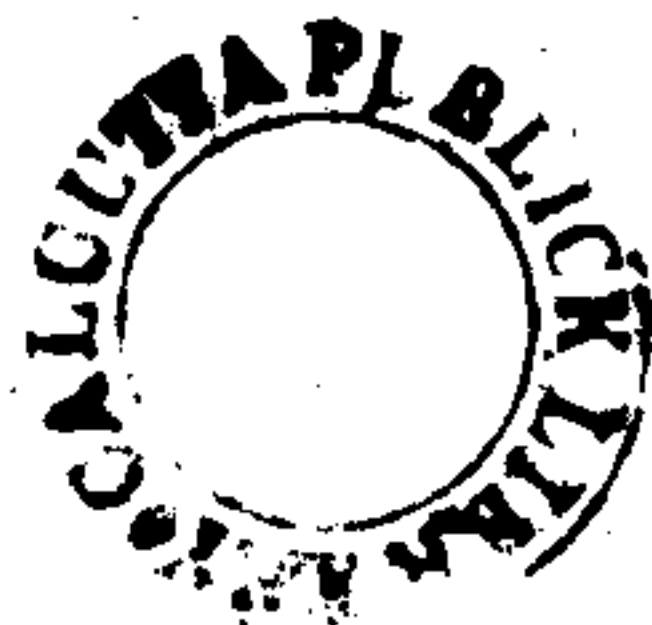
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# BERLIN SOCIETY.

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## FIRST LETTER.

### THE ROYAL FAMILY.



THE Emperor William is undoubtedly the most popular Prince amongst his own people of our time. Apart from his military triumphs, he is a most amiable man, agreeable in manners, paternal in his goodness. Without being remarkably intelligent, he is clear-sighted, of sound judgment, and has the faculty of quickly discerning those who can be of use to him, pushing them forward, and upholding them against all opposition. He has no vanity, but retires when necessary, withdrawing behind his Chan-

cellor, and although suffering from the imperious will of the latter, he has too much dignity to allow the world to perceive that he does so.

He is ambitious, but coarsely ambitious, coveting his neighbour's goods; physically and morally he has the same propensity; he always desires more than he possesses, and even now regrets that he did not take Savoy in 1866. He is obstinate in his principles and in his wishes, has favourites, but never permits them to interfere in politics, reserving that entirely to his Ministers. The Emperor William believes in the incapacity of his son, and is anxious that all Germany shall think as he does. He combines immense selfishness with great perseverance. He has more to do with the Government than is generally believed; when anything personal is in question he is most obstinate in imposing his ideas, otherwise he leaves it to others. He is a great upholder of the army, and that is the only thing he has not permitted Prince Bismark to meddle with. He has never approved the conduct of

the Crown Prince during his short regency in 1878.

The Treaty of Berlin displeased him; he would have had Bulgaria smaller, and was indignant at the emancipation of the Jews in Roumania. These two things were most disagreeable to him, as he assured one of my friends in an unreserved moment. Is it annoyance at not having been consulted on a matter of such importance, or is it really his political conviction which makes him deplore these two points? He has had much luck in his life, luck which he quite appreciates. In public he never mentions politics, but is essentially a man of the world. His politeness is unaffected and extreme. He knows what he owes to others, and is not ungrateful; but, on the other hand, he allows no one to forget that it is his name which has glorified all that has been done. On the whole he is really kind, candid, of ordinary intelligence, rather narrow-minded, he has good sense, and an excellent



heart. As an individual he commands the sympathy and respect of his subjects, and will hold his place amongst great sovereigns without ever having been a great man.

The Empress Augusta has a certain amount of natural cleverness ; she thinks more of this than it really deserves. She has had many warm friends, passionate admirers, and bitter detractors. Those who have credited her with great intelligence were wrong ; those who have called her malicious and slanderous were equally so. She has not a great intellect, neither is she malevolent, but she is intriguing, false, and affected. She must absolutely have a *rôle*, takes infinite trouble to be thought learned, literary, and acquainted with all that is going on in the way of science or art, and also to make herself popular. But she has no dignity, no notion of propriety ; she tells all her secrets to Mdlle. de Neundorff, and the latter carries on, in common with several ladies of high rank, all sorts of little intrigues, at the head of which is the



Empress. She surrounds herself with courtiers and favourites who are the first to speak ill of their Imperial mistress. In the main she is estimable and charitable, but she makes herself ridiculous by her efforts to be remarkable. She has an excellent heart and inexhaustible kindness, yet she does not understand the art of conferring benefits, but extracts all their value from her favours by her manner of bestowing them. Her efforts to be amiable are so tiresome that they produce an opposite effect. Little liked in general, she has never been appreciated. Neither her philanthropy, her charity, nor any of her real virtues have been believed in. She bores every one, from the Emperor to her servants. Unhappy woman, but unhappy chiefly through her own fault. When she is gone there will be a sigh of relief; but later on she will be regretted.

The Crown Prince has not hitherto been a man of action; he is a father of a family in the strictest sense of the words. He seems to exist



only for his wife, and adores his children, with the exception of his eldest son, whose bold spirit he fears. It is said at Court that his political ideas are visionary. His passionate admiration for the Princess has made him quite an Englishman at heart. For the last twenty-five years his position has been that of a Prince who may be called to reign any day, and it is a trying one. The Emperor and Prince Bismark regard him an Utopian. He is fond of art, encourages literature, and I should not wonder if his ideal were the character of Augustus; he favours many little Virgils who, if they were all put together, would not be the equivalent of the great one. When he ascends the throne his policy will differ greatly from that of his father. Thus, those who dislike that policy, either at home or abroad, centre their hopes in him. Do they deceive themselves? Will the Prince ever come to a decision, in time, that is, for action? His manners are cold; in spite of his polish,



one is not at ease with him. He is more condescending than familiar. His heart is really good, but his enemies assert that he will never take a higher position as Sovereign than he does as Heir Apparent. He has no ambition except the legitimate desire of reigning. He never forgets an injury, notwithstanding his kindness, which is infinite. Germany will have peace during his reign, and the prolongation of it would be the greatest happiness of France. He is not popular with the army. His talents, not generally but as a politician, are much debated in society, even by those who come most in contact with him. Unfavourable stories have been told about him. His father tries to keep him in the background as much as possible; his son depreciates him. The country has a great opinion, but his family entertains a very small one, of the Crown Prince.

The Crown Princess is a universal genius. She writes political essays, corresponds with

philosophers, paints, "sculpts," composes sonatas, draws architectural designs, &c. She is very intelligent, but is so much educated that the multitude of her ideas interferes with their development. Her capabilities sometimes obscure the clearness of her thoughts and the opinions she professes.

She does not cultivate the spirit of consistency; and she talks as Rochefoucauld wrote, in maxims.

The world has no charms for her. She does not like and doubtless despises it, for at her evenings you meet persons whom you never meet elsewhere, and whose only contact with society occurs at her house. She does nothing to deserve the title of a woman of the world, but, on the other hand, she has the sentiments, one might say the pride of her position as a Princess. She seems to despise the obligation of fidelity in friendship. A trifle turns her, while if it be a question of holding to an idea, she will display a persistency which triumphs over all obstacles.

She is a politician, and on these subjects has her own opinions, which are not always those tolerated by her immediate surroundings. Therefore, on the pretext of her artistic tastes, she frequently goes to Italy, in order not to have to approve that which she condemns, or to yield where she wishes to oppose.

She is sincerely and resolutely liberal, and with this she is reproached as a grave fault.

Her relations with the Empress are much strained; but less with the Emperor. She wields unlimited influence over her husband through both her head and her heart.

Prince William, their eldest son, is only twenty-four. Therefore it is difficult to say what he will become; but it is undeniable that at present he is a youth of promise, of talent, of head, and of heart. He is the most intelligent of the Imperial Princes. He is also brave, enterprising, ambitious, gay, and attractive, and so full of *entrain*, *brio*, and wit, in conversation as to lead one to doubt his being



German. He adores the army, by whom he is beloved. He has contrived, in spite of his extreme youth, to make himself popular with all classes of society, is well educated, well read, forms plans for the well-being of his country, and has remarkable perception in all things relating to politics. He will certainly be a distinguished man, and probably a great sovereign. Prussia will perhaps have in him a second Frederick II., but without the scepticism of the first; he has also sufficient gaiety and good-humour to soften the little asperities of character which, as a true Hohenzollern, he possesses. He will be essentially an individual king; will not allow himself to be led, will have sound and healthy judgment, prompt decision, energetic action, and firm will. When he ascends the throne he will continue the work of his grandfather, and undo that of his father, whatever it may have been. In him the enemies of Germany will find a formidable adversary; he may become the Henry IV. of his country.

## SECOND LETTER.

### THE PARLIAMENT.

A RECENT article in the *Gazette de l'Allemagne du Nord* has much exercised the Ultramontane journals, among others *Germania*, which has replied by a second aggressive article. This aggression, for which Prince Bismark was prepared, and which perhaps he even desired, will probably put an end for the present to the negotiations with Rome, which, however, not being entirely broken off, will remain in suspense until it pleases the Chancellor once more to throw them as bait to the Deputies of the Centre, in order to obtain some vote which he wants. It is curious to observe the adroit manner in which Prince Bismark steers amidst

the rocks of German Parliamentary life, and one might almost believe that he had concluded a treaty with the powers below on seeing the way in which he triumphs over all obstacles, surmounts all enmities, and succeeds in forcing those who apparently were quite decided to say "No" to say "Yes." These constant victories are partly explained by the Chancellor's extraordinary intelligence ; but their first cause and real reason are the want of cohesion in parties, and the total absence of patriotism which distinguishes the Parliament of the German Empire.

In fact, if we examine the different fractions of which the Parliament is composed, if we study their desires, their aspirations, we shall be convinced that none of them understand the true meaning of the word *patria*, and that they are therefore led, governed, oppressed by the greatness of the Chancellor, the only man in Prussia capable of appreciating the force of his own work, and who has so identi-

fied himself with it, that on the day he disappears it also will be buried with him.

Of the three great parties into which the Reichstag is divided, the Conservatives, the National Liberals, and the Centre, the first is rendered powerless by the complete dependence in which it is kept by the Government; the second is in discredit, as are all those who have failed to profit by their momentary success; and the third is ill-directed by a chief who is blinded by a latent and unavowed ambition. None of the three, as I shall endeavour to show, is strong enough to hold its own against any force, least of all against Prince Bismark.

The Conservative party is composed principally of nobles, Protestant or Catholic, who, feeling that they cannot, on account of their position, lean towards Liberalism, have thought it to their personal advantage to abstain from action, suppress their own opinions, and vote with the Chancellor always, or nearly always,

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under protest, however, when it is necessary to reassure their constituents' consciences. It is a party composed of well-meaning, weak people, of men without faith or conscience; of ambitious men, but without talent; and finally, of brainless idiots desirous of becoming somebodies at any price. The Government boasts to the public of its allegiance, and distributes a few decorations to it from time to time in order to make of it an accomplice. It is the guard of honour that accompanies Prince Bismark's decisions, and it is flattered, caressed, and adulated by the Prince either as a whole or individually. The greater part of the Conservatives are elected, thanks to the local influence which is possessed in this neighbourhood by every owner of a title or simply of a large estate. Their candidature is supported by the Government, which has docile instruments in them, and which, indeed, holds them nearly all in its hands. The nobility has so degenerated in Prussia, it is so poor, and has so often tried to enrich

itself by unavowable means, that it finds itself forced by circumstances to cover itself with State protection as with a cloak.

Strousberg, "the railway king," as he was called in Berlin, has on his conscience many Parliamentary votes extracted by necessity (represented by Prince Bismark) from his victims. The Prince, who despises humanity sufficiently to have said with Walpole, that every man has his price, has, with great cleverness, fished out of the troubled waters in which they were drowning, several Serene Highnesses, whom he has made his tools saving them from disgrace and ruin, at the same time delivering their remains to his left-hand friends, the Jew bankers. Scandal pretends, though of this we have no proof, that he has lately captured a Minister more docile than any other, who must execute all his wishes, submit to all his tempers, even put up with kicks, and who neither dares to protest against his ill-usage nor permit himself the

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slightest exercise of conscience, as he knows he would be delivered, bound hand and foot, into the hands of Bismark's chief executioner, to whom, it is said, he owes large sums of money, and who only spares him out of respect for, and by order of, the Chancellor.

The position of this Minister is, I am assured, also that of others still more noble and more illustrious, for example, certain dukes whose properties have been sequestrated without the intervention of the Crown. All these now pay their debts by sitting in the Reichstag, where they are loaded with honours.

These are only a few examples taken from a thousand among the Conservatives, but they suffice to show their humiliating powerlessness. Other hypocritically ambitious members of the party support the Government in order to become Ministers. Such are Count Udo Stolberg and the Prince de Hatzfeldt-Trachenberg, Count Paul's cousin. The first of these two personages is incontestably a

man of talent ; but entirely wanting in political sense, and embittered by his position as a younger son ; the second, a wealthy landowner in Silesia, is pushed forward by his wife, in whose veins runs the blood of a princely family in Gotha, and who inherits their ambition. She is the motive power which makes him move, for such is the weakness and insufficiency of "this staunch Conservative party," that it must be absolutely set in movement by love, fear, ambition, or interest : it is a pitiful image of a fading and incapable aristocracy, which tries to sustain itself by aid of a power of which it is jealous, which it hates, and against which it sometimes conspires and always grumbles ; but which it cannot do without ; and, moreover, it blindly obeys because of the fear it inspires.

The National Liberals have indeed a programme, but it is vague and indefinite, like their name. They were once staunch friends of the Chancellor. Who in Prussia have not

been his friends? They supported him in his designs against Rome, and in many others, but they made the mistake of believing that they had become indispensable to him. This error was fatal: none are indispensable to Prince Bismark; some may be at the utmost useful, and even then—he always promises, but never fulfils. How many who swore only by him are now become his mortal enemies? Such are MM. Lasker and Bennigsen, both men of remarkable intelligence, but who were in his way, and of whom he has succeeded in ridding himself. These gentlemen thought at one moment they had attained office, they even touched it; but unfortunately, between touching and grasping there is an abyss. However, the Nationals are not worthy of much pity or sympathy. They are not really liberal, although on some points they approach Socialism; they are Monarchists, they think only of their own interests; being above all men of the Exchange, they have a passion for the unity of Germany,

but only so far as it is personally advantageous to them. They attack the principle of landed estates, but defend their own. They cry out against the aristocrats, but do not disdain a title of nobility; in a word, they are conservative of whatever appertains to themselves, but of a profound and selfish inconsistency. They did, however, form a powerful party some years ago; now they have lost their former strength, firstly, because the Chancellor has turned against them; secondly, because the country began to look upon them with distrust; finally, because their principal leaders have given up their posts either from disgust, or weariness, or because their eyes have been dazzled by a vision of future favours. This was recently the case with M. Bennigsen, who had been suspected of having received orders from the Chancellor for his inexplicable retreat. Very shortly the National Liberals, who have already lost much ground in the last elections, will form only an insignificant minority in the

Chamber, and yet they had amongst them men of undeniable talent, gifted with a true sense of politics, with the highest intelligence; but they have not known how to utilize these qualities. Their hour arrived, but they did not perceive it, and it was seized and used by Prince Bismark. Now their day is gone by, their power ended. They are no longer sufficiently numerous to form a majority, and confine themselves to an active opposition to the Chancellor, and to worrying him by recalling the past. Beyond that, their influence is nothing; they are listened to on account of their eloquence; but their voices, which often declare truths to the nation, are no longer heeded. That which perhaps has also harmed them is their slightly idealistic tendencies; they have had some social dreams; now Germany only admits of poetic dreams. She admits that you may thirst after the ideal like Werther, but you must not think of the people, the workman, he who suffers, who labours, and



who, according to the theory of those who now govern Prussia, is only fit to be a soldier.

The Centre, or Catholic party, is without doubt the most powerful in the Chamber; nevertheless it cannot of itself constitute a majority; but it is the most foolish party, although the most united, and the most compact. It has no political sense; it is essentially selfish; its opposition is nothing but obstinacy; even its eloquence is only the eloquence of the preacher, and would be more in place if it proceeded from a Christian pulpit than a Parliamentary tribune. It contains in its ranks many men of much learning, but they either turn their talents to the profit of their own interests, or direct them in a wrong way, only to gain applause. Its head, Herr Windthorst, has not in vain been one of the Ministers of the King of Hanover; he has the thirst of office, and desires to be employed by Prince Bismark. Perhaps he does not realize his own aspirations; but they exist



though carefully hidden, and in the depth of his soul he says to himself, "If I succeed, I shall be great, and he will have to settle with me." This secret thought is the cause of indecision in his actions. He has not been able to impress a clear direction on his friends; he has drawn them on to give way sometimes, or to wrongly resist at others, according to the exigencies of the moment, and as he wished to appear amiable or formidable. In 1878, his attitude decided the rejection of the • law against the Socialists, a useful and necessary law notwithstanding, and which was afterwards passed only by the aid of a dissolution, and even then, by the aid of public opinion strongly excited by the repeated attempts of Hédél and Nobiling against the life of the Emperor. In 1883, he caused the budget to pass;—a grave and irremediable fault. Why? Because the Prince lured him on by the perspective of an arrangement with the Vatican, and he would not expose himself to the reproach of having

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failed in complaisance to the Government on his side. What happened then? As soon as the budget was voted, appeared the note of the *North German Gazette*, followed by a violent polemic between the journals of both parties, and that was all. The Chancellor confined himself to *promising* concessions, but the Centre had *given* him the budget. This unfortunate affair exposed more clearly than ever the want of patriotism which distinguishes the Reichstag in general, and the Centre party in particular. In fact, its members are for the most part convinced that budgets embracing several years together are injurious to the interests of the country. At the time of the message of the Emperor to the Chamber, in the month of April, they repeatedly protested their resolution not to vote it, as well as their conviction that fresh elections could only be unfavourable to the Government, and yet three months after these splendid promises, still holding the same convictions,

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they voted this same budget that they had at first decided on refusing, only because M. de Windthorst saw the shadow of a portfolio in the distance, and they said to themselves, "Perish the State, provided that the Vatican, represented by us, triumphs!" And neither they nor the Vatican triumphed! They ought to have been prepared for this. A man of the type of the Chancellor never recedes: on the day that he seriously wishes to make peace with Rome, he will conclude it without the help of the Reichstag, and without the help of the Centre; but for the present he does not dream of it. It pleases him to keep this bait hanging at the end of his line; he hopes by its aid to bring very large fish to his net.

The Centre, had it wished to follow a honest, loyal, and at the same time efficacious policy, had only two paths to choose between; either to join the Chancellor frankly, and then neither attack nor insult him in their journals; or to be openly hostile to him, and unite with

the Liberals in rejecting the budget. But these Catholic gentlemen are not capable of a good and wholesome policy, they are only capable of repining and vituperation. As for conducting themselves with reason or prudence, according to a plan determined and arranged beforehand, that is impossible to them; they have too many personal interests at stake. Of the other parties in the Reichstag it is useless to speak. The Poles are obstinate in their constant opposition, based on a one-sided view; the Socialists are affecting in their eloquence; the Alsace-Lorrainers are powerless. These three elements are weak in about the same degree, but at least do not injure their own cause, either because it is too fair to be defaced, because it is too desperate to be relieved, or because it is too impracticable to make proselytes. As for the Parliament, taken in its general aspect, it includes, as I have shown, some ambitious men, some idealists, many fools, a few men of merit,

several useful men of no importance, a certain number of persons seriously convinced that the Cross suffices to govern the world. The Reichstag makes, indeed, strange mistakes as to its own value. Thus it believes itself to be a Chamber, while it is only an Assembly; it imagines itself to exist under a constitutional government, while there is nothing of the sort. It believes itself to act spontaneously when it yields to a wish expressed by the Emperor conveyed in a message, while it is only submitting to the will of an absolute sovereign. It ignores its own strength, and does not know how to use its power. It is only the mask which serves to hide an aristocracy more splenetic than that which exists in Russia, as it rests not on a name as with us, but on a fact. It will always be a docile instrument in the hands of power so long as that power is wielded by Prince Bismark, that master in the art of sounding hearts, of encouraging ambition, of flat-

tering the strong, of deciding waverers, of governing all consciences by his cunning, his penetration, his energy, strength of will, and, above all, his profound knowledge of human nature.

Confronting this incapable Parliament, so wanting in patriotism, stands a formidable power: that of the Chancellor, whose figure is protected by the throne which serves him as a shield. One of Emperor William's greatest merits is to have supported his all-powerful Minister against all. It is true that he has thus gained the credit of a power really exercised by his Chancellor; nevertheless it is a virtue, to have recognized the superiority of another, especially when that other is of inferior rank.

Bismark has indeed perfectly succeeded in creating an absolute monarchy; in Prussia there is no longer a responsible Ministry or Chamber, or anything which constitutes the working of a constitutional government. There is nothing but the Chancellor, who has ab-



sorbed into himself sovereign, deputies, people, magistracy, everything. He has so moulded Germany to his will, that we confidently affirm that the country will not know how to get on when Prince Bismark is no longer there to direct it. At present all flatter him, in hopes of obtaining something; and he laughs at, as much as he despises humanity; but, cleverer than Richelieu, he does not stoop to decapitate his political adversaries—he limits himself to blackening them in public opinion. He has destroyed Lasker, overthrown Delbrück, and driven away Bennigsen; now it remains for him to ruin Windthorst by flattering him, whispering indefinite promises, exciting secret hopes, awakening unholy desires and selfish ambitions. He reigns as much as he governs; but Germany will pay dearly for the honour of having had him at her head, and for having possessed the most incapable Parliament that ever existed. The future will avenge Europe, for what now makes the glory of Prussia will

be the cause of her ruin in the time to come. It is not with impunity that all the vital strength of a nation is centred in one man. Sooner or later the moment arrives when that nation must expiate the absence of governors, and although he has triumphed over six successive Parliaments by the same artifices ; although he has aggrandized his country, and made himself the arbiter of Europe, imposing his will on all, Prince Bismark has at the same time prepared the fall and annihilation of that country by demolishing all those who could have carried on his work.

## THIRD LETTER.

## PRINCES AND PRINCESSES.

PRINCESS AUGUSTA VICTORIA, wife of Prince William, is so insignificant, that I only need say she fulfils her duties admirably, and that she will not leave Prussia destitute of heirs. It is asserted that she might be more amiable, but probably the impatience with which she is reproached is due to the irritability natural to a woman who passes her life in an interesting situation, rather than to a bad temper. Though not pretty, she is graceful. She is rather shy, but inspires regard. The relations between the young couple are good and affectionate without being tender. The Prince likes to amuse himself, but that is natural in a young man of

five-and-twenty, and surely an Empress's crown in prospect is more than sufficient to console a Princess of Schleswig for the trifling infidelities of her husband.

Prince Frederick Charles, the Emperor's nephew,<sup>1</sup> who was so much talked of in 1870, does not at all justify the fuss which has been made about him. He is not a remarkable man, but simply a brave, good officer, hopelessly boorish in private life, capable of obedience, an excellent tactician, disliked for his boorishness, without ambition, and without passions except for hunting and wine. He lives almost always in his house of Drelinden, detests society, and is happy only when surrounded by a small circle of deep-drinking friends, with whom he need not stand on his dignity. He is, it is said, more than rough to his wife, a charming person, both good and clever. She is capable of any self-sacrifice, but is afflicted by complete and in-

<sup>1</sup> Prince Frederick Charles died subsequently to the publication of this letter in *La Nouvelle Revue*.

curable deafness ; this has contributed not a little to render her an object of aversion to her husband. Beyond the intimate friends of the Prince, the couple see hardly any one ; they are much neglected by Society, which dislikes the Princess, and holds aloof from the Prince, on account of the infirmities of the former, and the gross rudeness of the latter.

Prince Albert of Prussia is, in the Royal Family, as valuable as a ball-room in a great house. He is tall, well-favoured ; and he represents the country admirably on every occasion. Baptisms, weddings, coronations, funerals, wherever the presence of a Hohenzollern is desirable, either from convenience or from courtesy to another reigning house, he is to be seen figuring in his blue dragoon's uniform, with a martial air, upright in his tunic, carrying high his empty head. On all but festive occasions he remains shut up at Hanover, like a gilded carriage in a coachhouse. A worthy man, an

all-round good father and as Prince

neither better nor worse than others, he enjoys his position, and does not dream that fate could have placed him in any other.

Besides these persons, the Royal Family comprises other members, too insignificant to require mention. There is the Princess Charlotte of Meiningen, eldest daughter of the Crown Prince; but when we have said that she is gay, pretty, coquettish, much admired, fond of amusing herself, and ill-mated with a man who does not deserve her, there is nothing to be added.

As for the Prince and Princess of Hohenzollern, I scarcely know whether they ought to be included in this august family, although the Emperor granted them their rank. The position occupied by them is a curious one. Before his marriage, Prince Frederick lived quite privately at Berlin, went into society, bad, as well as good, had many well-known *liaisons*; in a word, lived a bachelor's life in the fullest acceptation of the term. Society was so accus-



tomed to consider him of no consequence, that when he married none was accorded to his wife. The Empress, however, took the latter under her immediate protection, gave her a lady-in-waiting, and desired that she should be treated as a princess of the blood. This proceeding raised a storm in Berlin. All the female aristocratic and princely clique refused to recognize the precedence of the Princess Louise, affirming that a Thurn and Taxis could claim no such right, and quite forgetting that the Hohenzollern are cousins of the Emperor. After much protestation it was, however, found necessary to give way; but the poor Princess had to pay for the concessions made for her. She was voted plain, awkward, haughty, and disagreeable; and even now, though four years have elapsed, she is not forgiven for the social position she acquired by her marriage. Envy, the basest and vilest, continually attacks this young woman, who is graceful, pretty, intelligent and good, as

amiable as she is benevolent, a living incarnation of all that constitutes true womanly attraction. In spite of her numerous virtues, Princess Frederick of Hohenzollern is not to be counted amongst the happy. No doubt she divines the dislike and malevolence with which she is surrounded, for she lives an isolated life, seeing only a few choice friends, oppressed by a wearisome etiquette from which she has the most to suffer, though reproached for liking to surround herself with it.

## FOURTH LETTER.

## THE COURT.

THE immediate surroundings of the Emperor are not in any way remarkable. The Court at present produces the impression of a museum of old-fashioned furniture. When, on gala occasions, the Emperor advances, preceded by a limping *cortège* and followed by people who try to efface the irreparable ravages of time by the aid of art, one cannot help admiring this sovereign, who has outlived two generations, remaining robust and vigorous himself. Physical decrepitude one might forgive; we can tolerate the old stagers who surround the Emperor; but it is sickening to see how the younger favourites abuse the kindness of their

sovereign to obtain benefits of all sorts—this one a title, that one a decoration. They think they have the right to keep those who annoy them away from the Monarch whom they regard as their own property. The Emperor does not perceive these little manœuvres; he likes to have his old servants around him; and though too selfish to regret them when removed by death, he does not wish to part with them while they live. Thus, Count Puckler still remains head of the Royal Household, and Count Perponcher is Marshal of the Court, though the one is almost blind and the other—we had better not say too much of the other. The personal service of the Emperor is performed by six aides-de-camp. Two of them, Count Lehndorff and Prince Antoine Radziwell, are already generals, and have not quitted their posts for fifteen years. Of the second, I shall speak more in detail in a later chapter. The first is an ancient lady-killer who has been in the good graces of almost all the beauties of

Berlin. With little mind, great vanity, and profound selfishness, he has nevertheless been a favourite on account of his personal attractions, and his foppishness. He is not a bad man; but he has done harm either from want of delicacy or from foolishness. He has retained the Emperor's favour, and even succeeded in having his debts paid by him, no one ever knew why. His position at Court is so well established, that manœuvring mothers tried hard for him in spite of his wild youth. But two years ago, the Count, to the despair of a great many young ladies, and also of a fair widow who had made so sure of marrying him, that she had already arranged a study for him, proposed for Mdlle. Marguerite de Kanitz, a young girl of twenty, pretty, amiable, but insignificant, and apparently but little likely to captivate an old libertine. The marriage took place, and so far is a very happy one.

The four other aides-de-camp have no influence or individuality, Prince Henry XVIII.

of Reuss only excepted. He is handsome, a good sportsman, popular in society, amiable, good-natured, rather stupid, rather vain, but a successful man all the same, having courted many women, and now professing to be tired of the sex; sarcastic, very disdainful, thorough in his sympathies and antipathies. He is a favourite with Prince William, and will become a favourite with the Emperor, in whose service he has been only a few months.

General Albedyll, head of the Military Cabinet, is one of the best hated men in Prussia. His functions make him, it is true, a formidable person, for on him all the nominations and promotions in the army depend. He is a brave, rather indolent man, who, from fear of making enemies amongst men already risen, makes implacable ones of those who are on their promotion. The young officers execrate him because he truckles to men in office—a fault which paralyzes all promotion in the army. Never have there been in Germany so many old



generals "drooping the wing and dragging the foot," never have so many lieutenants waited for years for their rank in vain. Whether rightly or wrongly, M. d'Albedyll is accused of being the cause of this state of things, and the day when he obtains a marshalate will be one of rejoicing in all the regiments. Personally the general is amiable and polite, but deceitful like all Prussians of the Eastern provinces; he has *protégés* whom he takes care to advance—a breach of justice in so important a position as his. The Emperor likes him, and appreciates his fidelity; society flatters him in the person of his wife, who is charming. She is sister to the beautiful Duchess of Manchester; with less charm and brilliancy than her Grace, she has more character. Mdme. d'Albedyll is kindly, frank, and benevolent; she has enemies, but they are enemies who do her honour. The head of the Civil Cabinet of the King is M. de Kilmowski. He is little seen and less liked. He is an admirable official; but, from

becoming merely a machine, has no influence. When remembered, he is well spoken of.

To those whom I have mentioned as intimates of the Emperor may be added Dr. Lauer, his physician. Honest, excellent, disinterested, loyal, devoted to his master and his family, he has profited by his position only to do good.

The Empress's establishment is composed of a grand mistress, two ladies-in-waiting, a Court comptroller, a private secretary, and several maids of honour and chamberlains, who relieve each other by turns according to the requirements of their service.

The Grand Mistress, Countess Perponcher, sister-in-law to the Court Marshal of the Emperor, is an amiable woman, very noble, affable and polite, fulfilling admirably the duties of her position, always obliging, always hospitable, remarkable for nothing but an immense black wig placed in the form of a tower on the top of her head, as insignificant as she is well-intentioned. She gives parties

about as gay as funerals, but people like to be invited to them, because there they elbow all the Royal and Serene Highnesses who are to be found in Berlin.

Of the two ladies-in-waiting, one, the Countess Adelaidë Hacke, is a hunchback. Without possessing the cleverness which generally distinguishes this variety of the human species, she has its malice. She has great influence with the Empress, whom she sometimes guides ill. She is the *alter ego* of her august mistress, and takes her place on all occasions when that is possible. She is restless, and given to intrigue. Her soft, low voice has false and affected accents; she calls everybody "My dear," takes Madonna-like airs which suit her face ill, and secretly, in covert fashion, whispers the faults of this, that, and the other individual.

Her companion, Countess Oriolla, has been, it is said, pretty in her youth; the Emperor himself, having then paid court to her, continues to do so now out of respect for

ancient traditions. She is not liked by the Empress, at whose death she would doubtless rejoice, having at the bottom of her heart a vague hope that, the obstacle once removed, the Emperor might be induced to follow the example of his father, and create a second Princess Leignitz. Countess Oriolla, while professing to be very good-natured, is always pleased when chance discloses any vices or sins of her friends; when talking scandal she has a quiet, sardonic little laugh, which makes one think involuntarily of the sneer of Mephistopheles.

M. de Knesebeck, the Empress's secretary, is a thin little man, slender, bald, though only thirty years old, witty, sharp, subtle, and always able to get out of scrapes with marvellous dexterity. He is well educated, well read, and talks well, can intrigue on occasion, and exercises a discreet but real influence over his mistress; has many enemies amongst those whom his penetration detects, but knows how to turn upon them the harm they would do to

him. He at once discerns the wishes, hopes, and ambitions of all the parasites who surround the Empress, some to obtain a kind word said in public, others to secure a Chinese vase or Japanese teapot to decorate their drawing-rooms. The young secretary notes every act of cupidity, every mark of ignoble baseness of which he is the daily witness, and though he may not now use them against their authors, he bears them in mind. The result of his experience is a contempt for humanity which daily increases, making him a living contrast to Count Nesselrode, Grand Master of the Empress's Court, a free liver and a jolly person, too careless to note the faults of his neighbours, too indifferent to the good or bad things of this world to remark them. He has a daughter, who is agreeable without being pretty, and a son, who is an officer in the Lancers.

I must not close this chapter without saying a word or two more of Fraülein von Neundorff, First Lady of the Chamber to the Empress.

She is a personage in her way, in all the secrets of her Royal mistress; she writes her letters, sends her messages, imagines herself devoted to her, but does her harm by indiscretion and scheming. She is flattered and made much of by all the ladies who desire to remain in the Empress's favour, and who will often stay for an hour or two in her ante-chamber simply to afford Fraülein von Neundorff the gratification of keeping a Countess or Princess waiting. Rather a friend than an attendant, she combines the servility of a domestic with the veiled and affectionate insolence of a confidant who knows she is feared too much to be dismissed. The Empress sees only with her eyes, and is influenced by her to a degree injurious to her dignity, the more so that Fraülein von Neundorff, like all persons of her class, has neither the tact nor the wisdom to conceal her position as her Majesty's intimate adviser from the world.



## FIFTH LETTER.

## INTIMATE FRIENDS OF THE EMPRESS.

THE Empress Augusta likes society and cannot do without it. Her active nature requires constant occupation, and now that her infirmities keep her in her easy-chair, her only amusement is to gather her friends around her. Formerly she invited five or six persons to pass the evening at the palace, two or three times in the week. Now these little teas take place daily; the Emperor appears for a few minutes towards the end, and by his presence lends them a little animation. Tea is drunk and oranges are eaten by way of amusement. The Empress tries to keep up the conversation, but does not always succeed, on account

of the stiffness or sleepiness of her guests. When the Duke and Duchess of Sagan are at Berlin, these teas become quite festive. The Duke, a type of the French gentleman of the 18th century, is much liked at Court. He is an amiable old man, vigorous and active for his age, a courtier worthy to have lived in the reign of Louis XIV., knowing how to flatter neither too much, nor too little, witty without being intellectual, superficially educated, having the manners of a great nobleman and much experience of the world. He likes to compliment women and worship crowned heads: he was formerly very successful with the weaker sex, and still frequents the green-room; he is openly but charmingly selfish, always of the opinion of the person with whom he speaks; vain of his name, his position, and his fortune, fond of displaying the latter, and a wonderful organizer of fêtes and dinners, carrying his genius even to inventing new liveries for his servants. He favours those who admire him, but will never

harm those who criticize. He is above all a man of the time : French in Paris, he becomes Prussian so soon as he arrives at Berlin ; to be metamorphosed into reigning Duke at Sagan before being transformed into Prince Talleyrand's nephew so soon as he touches the soil of Valençay.

His wife, whose first husband was Count Maximilian of Hatzfeldt, is a daughter of the famous Marshal Castellane, and has inherited the barrack-room manners of her father. The Duchess of Sagan, remarkably well educated and clever, is of a type rarely met with. Her essentially masculine ways are so rough that they would never be tolerated in another, but are liked in her. Inconceivably outspoken, she speaks her mind to all, her relations, her friends, and her enemies without distinction ; shrinks from no crudeness of language, annihilates people with a word with the same coolness with which she aims at a stag or a wild boar in the forests of Silesia. It is

impossible to be dull for a moment in her company; she would animate a statue by quizzing its defects. Nothing ridiculous escapes her, no error or blunder of her neighbour's eludes her mischievous wit; in spite of all she is amiable, dignified when necessary, incapable of hurting any one intentionally, cruel without malice, exceedingly sarcastic, but so amusing that she is readily forgiven her intemperance of language for the sake of the spirit which animates it. By her first marriage the Duchess had six children, of whom none are a credit to her; by the second there is one daughter, Mdle. Dorothee de Talleyrand, married to the eldest son of Prince Fürstenberg, a pretty woman who inherits her mother's wit without her amiability.

Faithful to her system of preferring semi-foreigners, the Empress honours the Countess Louise von Beckendorff, widow of the General Aide-de-camp of the Emperor Nicolas of Russia by particular distinction. The Countess was a

Princess of Croy; she has remained as German as possible, and all that is Russian about her is the order of St. Catherine. She is the type of a Serene Highness of Gotha; her ideal is rank at Court; her supreme happiness breathing the same air with her Majesty. She passes for being clever, but is only intriguing. In society, she is a boon, for she knows every one, has travelled much, and has that drawing-room small talk, which is so indispensable, at her fingers' ends. At a dinner she fills the place of honour admirably, and likes much to be in it. Seen from a distance, she is a handsome person; but nearer, a thin mouth gives her a disagreeable expression. She is ambitious, haughty, vindictive, and capable of becoming dangerous if her vanity or pride be wounded. Her eldest daughter, married to Prince Hatzfeldt Trachenberg, resembles her in many ways, but redeems her faults by the charm of youth and a pretty face.

One of Countess Beckendorff's greatest

admirers is General Count von Goltz, brother of a former ambassador to Paris, much favoured by the Empress Eugenie. Count von Goltz, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, was a very gay man thirty years ago; now that age has obliged him to pull up, he has retained a certain liking for young women and even for older ones, who recall to him his youthful emotions. He is a worthy man who would be clever were he not so absent-minded. When he is not asleep he talks agreeably, and amuses the Empress by innumerable little stories, told with much spirit and humour.

As for Count William von Pourtalès, he used to be amusing; but good living, *danseuses*, and the pleasures of life in general have marked him with the impress which time sets on men of dissolute lives before it is due. The Count has been an egotist, amiable only to those who were useful or agreeable to him, impertinent to the rest. Now the old man of pleasure is simply a wreck, who talks from habit, without



knowing what he says. In the evening, he and Count von Goltz slumber together, but the latter keeps one eye open to note the movements of the Empress, his lips always repeat the same insipid compliments, formerly uttered with so much spirit, now only mechanically. Among his many former tastes, he has retained that for eating, as well as the love of objects of art or bric-à-brac. He has a splendid collection. His house in the University Street, is beautifully furnished and decorated; the courtyard is a small museum. This court, covered with a glass roof, has been the cause of one of the greatest sorrows ever experienced by Count Pourtalès. He had always hoped to receive the Empress at his house, and in order to facilitate the visit, had, in building his house, made two *porte-cochères*, so that Her Majesty's carriage might turn in the court itself. Alas! neither the Count nor his architect perceived that the court was too small to permit a carriage to move.

The old courtier was obliged to resign himself to the loss of his dearest hope. After many heavy sighs, he was at last consoled, a result to which his excellent cook contributed largely.

The private parties at the palace are frequented, besides the persons I have named, by the Grand Master of the Ceremonies, Count Auguste Eulenberg, also the Grand Chamberlain, Count William von Redern, his brother and sister-in-law, and several others, who are quite insignificant. Count Eulenberg, who before becoming Grand Master of the Ceremonies was Marshal of the Crown Prince's Court, is a polished and agreeable man, who, in spite of the difficulties of his position, has made friends everywhere, even amongst those to whom he has been obliged to refuse the rank they coveted. The place he occupies is no sinecure in a country like Prussia and a city like Berlin, where none aspire to a first rank in the Kingdom of Heaven so long as there is a German Empire on earth. In the lifetime of Count Eulenberg's

predecessor, every State ball was the scene of endless quarrels and discussions between the Chamberlain and many ladies of various pretensions; but the Count has put an end to all that; he is very firm and knows how to maintain his authority. Besides being very quick, always calm, and gifted with good sense, he will never do anything out of place. His brother, who was for some time Home Minister, is more intelligent than he, but has less tact and readiness. His position with the Crown Prince was very difficult, on account of the dislike of the Princess to him, and it is said that he did not regret being called to other functions. Count Eulenberg is married to a good and amiable wife, who is beloved by all who know her.

The Grand Chamberlain, Count William von Redern, is a man of seventy-five years of age, still vigorous; you may meet him in the Thiergarten every day between two and four o'clock taking his constitutional walk. He is a worthy man.

enormously wealthy, formerly very clever, a great musician, fond of art, kind to all, and his nephew and heir discounts the rich patrimony of his dear uncle beforehand. Count William has dabbled in literature; last year he published some *Mémoires* which caused some remarks, especially from his brother.

This brother is the greatest gossip who ever existed. He spares no one, shrinks from no trouble, and listens to no entreaty, when he wants to circulate any scandal. His life is passed in gathering news, either true or false, which he instantly carries from house to house with the enthusiasm of an idle man. He is a mischievous creature and wearisome into the bargain, from the slowness of his speech and the length of his explanations. In the world he is feared as much as he is disliked, and for some time has been tolerated in society only for the sake of his wife, *née* Princess Odescalchi, a charming old lady, who is as conciliating as her husband is the contrary.

Countess Victoria von Redern is one of the most respected women in Berlin : her *salon*, open every evening, is one of the few places in Brandenburg where there is conversation : she combines with great kindness a very upright, healthy, and just mind. Her only weakness is her too great affection for her only son, who has made all the principal cities of Europe ring with his follies. The Countess does not ignore the facts, but she is so good that she still keeps the door of her heart open to the prodigal.

The Empress receives no other persons intimately. In Lent, she gives a grand concert every Thursday, to which all Society is invited by turns ; but her ordinary life is passed in seeing the same faces, hearing the same opinions, and submitting, more or less, to the influence of the same people ; all of whom are either vain, interested flatterers, or simply victims to the liking with which, in spite of themselves, they have inspired the Empress.

## SIXTH LETTER.

## THE CHANCELLOR.

So much has already been said and written about Prince Bismark that I feel quite at a loss on approaching the subject. What can I say, about a man of whom history, legend, and fable have made their theme by turns? For fifteen years the Chancellor has been shown to us in all phases possible and impossible; writers have tried to make us admire the policy, detest the individual, and fear the Minister; Herr Busch has even initiated us into the private life of the Colossus, to show us Bismark at ease, in dressing-gown and slippers. None, however, of these attempts have succeeded, and the Prince is still an enigma to all who wish

to form a just idea of his character. Even those who have come nearest to him have not penetrated the secrets of his complicated nature, great through intelligence, dangerous through genius, superior to Machiavel in cunning, and to Richelieu in contempt for humanity. To tell the truth, the Chancellor does not even know himself; he does not know to-day what he will do to-morrow, and while directing the events of the world for years, is really often himself led by circumstances. The great source of his strength is the facility with which he changes his opinions, abandons his friends, courts his enemies, profits by the malice of one, the hatred of another, and the selfishness of all. His elastic conscience knows no scruples; his soul has no other ambition than that of an absolute power over men and things, kings and people. There is in his life the "I" of Medea; he has so often seen the destinies of empires and sovereigns concentrated in his person, that



he has arrived at the point of forgetting that his personality does not represent the entire world. Thus he demolishes all which is not he himself, all which serves him ill or does not obey him blindly, resists or contradicts him. In other days, long ago, Bismark was ambitious for his country, desirous of seeing Prussia occupy the first rank amongst European powers; now we may safely affirm that his former ambition has disappeared to give place to the personal desire of exclusive domination. Just as he once worked for his King, he now, that the King has become Emperor, applies himself to preventing him from having any knowledge of the affairs of the State. The German Empire certainly owes its actual existence to the perseverance and audacity of the Prince; he has founded it, raised it, and made it strong and vigorous; but now that this colossal work is done, he cannot make up his mind to let it develop itself by itself. He

the Empire, and thence the hesitation, the vacillation of policy which astonish us in the man of iron. Everything wears out by use, and the energy of the Chancellor has become obstinacy and spite. He is so used to succeeding, that he imagines he has the right to continually impose his caprices on all who surround him. His is a nature full of impulse, which often acts from whim, and now that his dearest projects have been fulfilled, he makes no more plans, but acts according to the impulse or exigencies of the moment. He governs only because he has made himself feared; his enemies frequently attribute to him designs of which they are afraid, and that they themselves sometimes suggest without suspecting it. Such as he is, the Chancellor presents none the less a great historical figure, especially when viewed from afar and placed on a pedestal, and so he will be viewed one day by posterity; but so soon as you examine him closely, you see his shabbiness, his littleness, his abandonment of

the great interests confided to his care, in favour of personal sympathies or antipathies. Prince Bismark has always desired to see the whole world bend before him; he has used every means within his reach to impose his authority. One of the most terrible traits in his character is his penetration of men, whose weaknesses he at once perceives, flatters, gently fosters, and profits by. To despise humanity thoroughly is to govern it; for then you know precisely what you may expect or exact from the cupidity of one, the envy of another, the baseness of this one, the hypocrisy of that. The Prince is as cynical as he is sceptical; when he thinks a conscience is wavering, he buys it, nine times out of ten, for men are cowards and will always give themselves to those from whom they expect something.

The Chancellor's plans have often been spoken of; his recently published correspondence has been quoted to prove that all he has

firmly convinced that he has above all profited by circumstances, and that in taking the power of the State in hand he had no object but to establish his own. Later on his ambitions developed themselves; then he recalled the dreams of his youth, and after the triumph of the man, wished to secure that of the country. Still later he aggrandized himself by making the world believe that he owed his success, not to circumstances, not to luck, but to a preconceived resolution, carried out by a will as invincible as it is resolute.

Few political men have had so many enemies; none have succeeded so cleverly in ridding themselves of them. To tell the truth, it is not only his enemies; his friends suffer the same fate as soon as they become troublesome or wearisome; but he is terrible in his dislikes, implacable in his resentments, merciless in his vengeance. It is well known what he has done to Count Arnim, and you need only remember M. Delbrück, Count Stolberg, Count Eulenberg, all his

former friends and colleagues, who have displeased him, and whom he has removed, effaced, —in one word, driven out of the political or parliamentary arena by unsparing malevolence. Friendly with each party in turn, he has used them, only to discredit them in the eyes of the country by their alliance with him. As a subtle tactician, he likes to appropriate the success of others, and has the faculty of accomplishing that difficult enterprise. One of his favourite tricks is to get hold of an ambitious schemer, and persuade him that there is in him the making of a great man. The victim always falls into the trap, and thus the Prince has secured a certain number of sycophants who serve him with love and adoration, imagining themselves indispensable to him, while they are only useful, and he simply flatters them to discard them later, if it appear good to him.

His conduct with regard to the Emperor is singular. Whilst affecting a great respect for

before him. There, as everywhere, he uses human weaknesses for his own purposes; he plays on the feelings of the monarch, whose love for Prussia is real and sincere to the point of self-sacrifice when necessary. On seeing them together, the tall figure of the Chancellor overtopping by a head that of the Emperor, one involuntarily asks which of the two is the master, and which has merited most from his country, he who has acted with self-abnegation, or he who has aggrandized his country only to oppress it in his own person?

As for the Empress Augusta, she has never liked the Prince. Formerly she even plotted against him with her friends and favourites, but experience soon showed her that it is better not to trifle with so strong an adversary; now there is an armed neutrality between these two enemies, who, being unable to destroy each other, watch from afar, resolved to recommence hostilities on the first opportunity.

Nevertheless, all the enmity that he has

aroused, all the curses that he has incurred, have had a certain amount of influence on Prince Bismark. They have made him misanthropic, or at least have caused him to dislike the world and prefer solitude. He lives like a hermit, shut up between the four walls of his palace, hidden from all, friends as well as enemies, only showing himself in Parliament from time to time, or to some one from whom he wishes to extract information. Then he becomes amiable, turns into a good talker, a good fellow, and fascinates those who do not know or divine him. Except on these rare occasions no one sees the Chancellor; he shuts himself up more and more in the bosom of his family, who, on their part, surround him with the tenderest affection.

His wife is a worthy woman, very vulgar in her manners, but with a kind heart, and a sound understanding, though without *finesse*, naively admiring her husband with a love as true as it is deep, in no way proud of her position, bene-



volent, though brusque, amiable to every one, aware of the enmity of some, and the false pretences of others, but treating the former with contempt and not deceived by the latter.

The Prince and Princess have two sons and a daughter. Of the sons, Count Herbert von Bismark is notorious for the scandal of his relations with a lady celebrated for her beauty. In this sad story he has acted a shameful part, and has proved himself selfish and cruel. He is a very vain man, very proud of his position as son of the Chancellor, and, like most children of great men, as commonplace as his father is remarkable. In society he is courted on account of the influence attributed to him; to him the words of the fox in La Fontaine's fable are continually addressed, "Eh!-good morning, Mr. Raven, how pretty you are, you seem to me so handsome." Unfortunately for the flatterers, the cheese, the object of their ambitions, is not in Count Herbert von Bismark's mouth.

His brother is more serious and reflective, he

has less brilliancy, but more solidity of character. He is a worker, a politician by conviction, but he will never become anything more than an excellent official. Physically he resembles his father, morally his mother, except for a ferocity in his antipathies, which is in the blood of all the Schonhausen.

Their sister, Marie von Bismark, after witnessing the death of her chosen lover, married Count von Rantzau, Councillor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is the Chancellor's favourite, resembling him in the turn of her mind. Her intellect is vigorous ; like the Prince, her father, the Countess von Rantzau is very quick in reading men, and very much given to ridiculing them.

## SEVENTH LETTER.

## THE BUNDESRATH.

WHEN, in 1870, the new Empire of Germany was founded, that deed was not accomplished without opposition. The petty Princes who, at Versailles, hailed King William as their chief, did not easily resign themselves to that hard necessity; in spite of their so-called enthusiasm, they would rather not have had the opportunity of showing it.

Bismark, with his genius and intelligence, understood the situation long before those who were the victims of it; he had foreseen the undercurrent of irritation felt by the petty sovereigns of Germany, and it was to soften the bitterness of the sacrifice to them that he

proposed the Bundesrath, or Federal Council. This assembly, by recalling the *Nord deutsche Bund* of old, might delude the little kinglings who grovelled at the feet of Prussia into the idea that they still had a voice in the affairs of their respective countries.

In reality, the Bundesrath is an immense humbug, so is the Reichstag, so is the Ministry! The Federal Council is only an instrument in the hands of the Chancellor, who makes it vote what he pleases, and who guides and directs it entirely. Instituted as a means of government, it has become a machine in whose name one man governs. All its members are either creatures of Bismark, or enemies too stupid to be dangerous, too insignificant to be in the way. It is a theatrical decoration, that is all. The public at large, those who look at the stage through an opera-glass, imagine that all works admirably, that the trees are natural, the fountains real water; but so soon as you come on to the stage you quickly discover the deception

which has taken you in. The Bundesrath is a machine for registering the decisions of the Chancellor. It is very useful to him as a lightning-conductor when he wishes to bring a Bill before Parliament which he knows will be distasteful to it, indispensable when a measure voted by the Chamber is to be rejected. In the first case it is the Federal Council who have asserted their independence, in the second it is they again who are in fault. Nothing is so amusing as to hear Bismark confiding to his deputies how grieved he is at the obstinacy of his colleagues. He acts that farce so often that one is tempted to ask what he would do if he had not this scapegoat always at his service. One might almost think that he would find it very embarrassing, if one did not know that a man of his stamp can never be taken unawares, and that in default of the Bundesrath his ingenious mind would have found something else.

The Federal Council is under no mistake as to the *rôle* it plays. In that it shows more wit

than the Reichstag, which imagines itself to have some weight in the destinies of Germany. The members of the Federal Council know perfectly well that their duty consists in blind obedience to the orders given them. That is why they never try to express an opinion, much less to have the slightest will or the least initiative in any matter whatever. Their existence is passed in waiting and submission; they represent, not their sovereigns, but a compensation granted to their *amour propre*; and as those sovereigns are nothing but shadows, so they are employed as phantoms in the drama in which the Chancellor plays the principal part.

In Germany little importance is attached to the Bundesrath. Ambitious people despise it, intelligent people ridicule it, sensible people think it useless; all agree in saying it has no dignity, no knowledge of propriety, that its influence is *nil*, and its opinions undecided, vacillating, vague, and modelled on those of its master. Nevertheless, all wish to preserve it;

I do not know why, as, for all the good it does, it might as well be suppressed. But it represents a principle, one of those rare principles which, if they have been undermined, have never been openly attacked by Prince Bismark, and on account of this all Germany thinks it necessary to place the unfortunate Bundesrath under a glass shade, through which it can be admired as conveniently as possible.

Germans in general think little about politics. They are proud of the success of their country, but coarsely proud, as would be a Redskin rejoicing over the number of scalps he had taken. The Germans are ferocious against their enemies, selfish with regard to their friends; but though proud of the elevation of their country, they never give themselves the trouble to discover the causes which have led to that elevation. The only feeling they entirely recognize is a thirst for absolute domination; they would like the whole world to be peopled with Germans. Their only idea is, to secure, to



establish their supremacy everywhere. Beyond that nothing moves them, nothing interests them, nothing takes them away from their daily avocations. Therefore they take no part in the way they are governed, and do not discuss it, excepting in the case of a few people whom an irresistible vocation drives in the direction of politics. This little group neither admires nor esteems the Bundesrath, but submits to its existence, even though it bows before the will of the Chancellor, that is to say, with a stoical resignation based on the conviction that, for the present, there is nothing to be done against the force of existing circumstances.

Amongst the cyphers who form the Federal Council, two men only are distinguishable from the others, one for his loyal honesty, the other for his cynical wit—M. de Nostiltz-Walwitz, representative of Saxony, and Count Lerchenfeld, Minister of Bavaria.

M. de Nostiltz is a diplomatist of the old school. He is one of those men who, in place

of brilliancy, have good sense, in place of wit, intelligence, in place of dexterity, firm and serious convictions. He is always very calm, very cold, very polite, very reserved, never ventures lightly to express any opinion whatever, has prudence, tact, and coolness. His position is that of a watch-dog. He knows perfectly well that Germany would like to devour him as well as his country, that the *soi-disant* independence of Saxony is resented. And in spite of this he has to listen every day to false words of friendliness, himself simulate a friendship which we may take leave to believe he does not experience. M. de Nostiltz understands perfectly that he is merely tolerated from necessity; but being powerless to change this state of things, he is resigned and only seeks to conduct himself with dignity. He rarely opposes or discusses a project of the Chancellor's; he only does so when he is sure of having a numerous majority with him. Generally he approves the resolutions submitted to him, and, by being

so circumspect, sometimes loses the influence he might have. He is always on good terms with his colleagues of the Council, as well as with the Corps Diplomatique, amongst whom his wife is also appreciated. Mdme. de Nostiltz is an amiable, kind, affable, and distinguished woman, who, with more ability than her husband, is sometimes less impassive.

Count Hugo von Lerchenfeld, Minister of Bavaria, is not like his Saxon colleague. He is still young, almost too young for the important post he occupies. This post he obtained, thanks to Count Herbert von Bismark, with whom he was intimate at Vienna. The latter recommended him to his father as being capable of becoming a useful tool. The Chancellor confided in the information given to him by his son, and when the Bavarian Government (whose last two representatives had nearly been expelled from Berlin on account of well-known stories) asked the Prince to name the person whom he wished to be accredited at the Court

of Prussia, the latter immediately designated Count Lerchenfeld, who has retained the good graces of his formidable patron.

Personally, the Count is very agreeable. He is well bred, well informed, has a great deal of tact, and, as a man of the world, is a charming companion. He has travelled much, and has appropriated the brilliant side of each country he has visited, at the same time he has picked up some of their most dangerous faults. He is ambitious, intriguing, a man to be treated at all times with caution, for he has no convictions, no scruples, except those which are contained in the commandments of God and demanded by existing laws. He has not even vices; his heart is a stone, his passions are confined to his own comfort; he has never loved or hated a single creature; he has courted those whom he wanted, and abandoned those who were no longer necessary. He has not even been ungrateful, for his nature is essentially ignorant of the significance of the word gratitude. His

devotion to the Chancellor is great; but this devotion is accorded to the position of the Prince, not to his individuality. M. de Lerchenfeld understands politics, but meddles as little as possible with them; he is too anxious for his future career to compromise it by anything so useless and troublesome as holding other opinions than those expected from him. His device ought to be *Pro me*.

Nevertheless, in spite of, or rather because of his faults, he will always be fortunate, always be liked, always be successful in his career, and, under cover of his selfishness, he will make his way in the world better than one encumbered by passions, convictions, enthusiasms, and all those sentimentalities which our nineteenth century has put out of fashion. At present the successful man is he who can unite raillery to amiability, indifference to what is expected of him to the desire of getting on at any price. Now, Count Lerchenfeld possesses this secret, and what is still better, knows how to use it.

Of the other members of the Bundesrath there is nothing to say ; they are all alike, all equally badly used by Prince Bismark, and treated with the same indifference by the public.

One only, the representative of Baden, Baron Turkheim, is a favourite with the Emperor and the Imperial Family, on account of his august mistress, the Grand Duchess Louise of Baden, only daughter of the Emperor William.

The Baron is an honest little man, very quiet, very inoffensive ; his greatest fault is a rooted antipathy to clean linen, water, soap, and in general everything that is dispensed with by savages, but usually appreciated by civilized beings.

## EIGHTH LETTER.

### THE MINISTRY.

LIKE the Parliament and the Bundesrath, the Prussian Ministry represents a political group kept in the background. It is a little agglomeration of officials, whom the public regards as Ministers, but who are merely Bismark's only superior employés, having a little more responsibility than their subordinates, and to whom he allows a little less initiative than to the mere heads of offices or sections. Their *rôle* is submission, their duty consists in obeying the orders they receive without ever disputing them. They are little more than servants, and infinitely below the position of confidant. They must not resist the Chancellor; they are obliged



to defend him, to save him trouble; they must be ready to submit to his rebukes, and resigned to be dismissed at a moment's notice, at their master's convenience. In a word, they are the victims of absolute power, victims who are not even decorated with flowers for the sacrifice; for the Prince ridicules their secret feelings. He executes them with the blow of a club, and kicks their corpses.

The first condition necessary to be a Minister in Prussia consists in willingness to work without hope of recompense. The second is being always ready to bear responsibilities one has not assumed. Besides these, you must have suppleness, be gifted with a certain intelligence, neither too much nor too little, and not be embarrassed by scruples against profiting by the inexperience of others; you must conduct and guide yourself, not after your own ideas, but after those of Wilhelmstrasse, or Varzin. In short, you must completely renounce your own individuality, and make a machine of yourself;

but a machine in the narrowest sense of the word, never daring to forget that your *rôle* is simply mechanical.

It is not always easy for Prince Bismark to lay his hand on auxiliaries of this kind. He has lately been obliged to seek men whose social and material positions are so uncertain that they cannot have any wish to evade his orders, his will. In a word, he has endeavoured to surround himself, not with fellow-workers, but with richly liveried servants. The men who actually compose the Prussian Ministry do not aspire to play any part, and make as little noise in their offices as in the world, where one sees them but rarely, and scarcely recognizes them. One only, the Minister of War, has a distinct personality; he is an independent member in this assembly of slaves, a fact extremely disagreeable to the Chancellor; but the army is the only institution looked after by the Emperor; it is a sacred thing which none, not even the Prince, is allowed to touch. The old

sovereign, a soldier in his soul, has always taken the part of the soldier; he has defended, maintained him, shielded him by his imperial authority. Neither the ruse, the cunning, nor the direct attacks of Bismark have had any success on this point; the Emperor has remained sole master of the army, and the Minister of War is responsible to the monarch himself only for the decisions or resolutions he takes. Naturally, this post is a very difficult one, because of the false position which it entails. A Cabinet, when it is united, can always get out of a difficulty, but a Minister, depending apparently on his chief, in reality independent of him, is always in a painful and embarrassing situation. Count von Roon knew well how to manage these manifold difficulties. When he was in power, moreover, the authority and despotism of the Chancellor had not yet attained their extreme height. His successor, General von Kameke, always had enough to do to hold his own against the

Prince, who has, however, at last forced him to retire, after long years of silent but implacable contest. General Brouart de Schellendorf, present Minister of War, has been too short a time at his post to allow one to judge of the way in which he will fill it; I shall, therefore, say little about him, except that when he was named, it excited joy in one circle, indignation in another, and astonishment nearly everywhere. The public at large, those who found their opinion on appearances and know nothing of what passes behind the scenes, expected quite another choice.

A nomination which astonished no one, was that of Count Paul von Hatzfeldt to the post of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. People were prepared for this, and only surprised that it had not been done long before. This tardiness, this delay in giving Count von Hatzfeldt the title of the office whose functions he already exercised, was caused by the pecuniary circumstances of the new Minister, who, being deeply

in debt, could not keep up his rank in a suitable manner, so long as his affairs were so gravely embarrassed. The Chancellor, who knew all these details, has been the guardian angel of M. de Hatzfeldt, who has always been one of his favourites. He persuaded the banker Bleichröder, the Count's principal creditor, to desist from a part of his claim, or, at least, to give time, and thus succeeded in securing to the Count, if not exemption from care, at least freedom from material bonds, and liberty to devote himself entirely to the service of the master.

Count von Hatzfeldt is one of those personages so often met with amongst high functionaries; neither good nor bad, ambitious of fortune more than glory, intelligent without being well-informed, clever without penetration, amiable from habit, very agreeable as a man of the world, mischievous, even dangerous as a man of politics. He fills his position in an admirable manner, receives ambassadors with a charming

smile, bows them out with a graceful salutation, never allows himself to be drawn into giving an opinion, pretends not to read the papers, not to like politics, and, while playing the innocent, tries to pass for very sharp. Really, he deceives himself more than he deceives others, for Prince Bismark, while permitting him to execute his plans, does not do him the honour of confiding his intentions to him.

The Count will never have the authority of his predecessor, M. de Bulow, with the representatives of foreign countries. His word is believed, but his promises are not trusted, perhaps because people suspect that he is not the man to respect them himself, still less to maintain them against his chief. Nevertheless, he is generally liked in society, where no one inquires too closely into the morality or the antecedents of those to whom one holds out one's hand, provided they fill a recognized position. His frank appearance is sometimes deceptive, and the natural *insouciance* of his character has gained



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him many friends. As a public man he represents nothing, as a private person he may claim some exception, but at bottom he is only worthy of the casual liking inspired by any well-bred man who talks agreeably for ten minutes.

Count Paul married a very pretty American, from whom he is divorced, and who is surrounded by numerous admirers. Amongst the latter, it is not uncommon to see the Count himself, paying his court with such perfect ease that I have often found myself, in my romantic moments, wishing him renewed success.

There is nothing to say of the other Ministers, for they represent neither strength, opinion, nor any individuality whatever. Each is active in his department, and, while bestowing extreme care on the affairs which are within his province, does not meddle with general politics. They are admirable bureaucrats, incapable of injuring the great work with which they are associated, but equally incapable of directing, guiding, or leading it to a good end. They are only specialities, or,



rather, utilities. But what will become of all these automata on the day when the powerful hand which works them shall no longer direct their movements? The motive which urged the Chancellor to surround himself with cyphers was purely self-aggrandizement, and it has enabled him to execute all his projects without the least opposition: it has procured blindly obedient soldiers for the general; but, on the other hand, the tyranny of Bismark has had the disadvantage for Germany of destroying all the men who could replace the colossus to whom she is at present delivered over. The Prince is the living incarnation of a system, a policy, a government, of all that constitutes the life and organization of a nation. The colossus gone, doubtless the German Empire will still subsist; but of him who sustained her will remain only the feet of clay.

## NINTH LETTER.

## THE POLICY OF GERMANY.

You will expect me, as a former diplomatist, to speak of politics generally. Do not hope for much on that subject; I can only devote a few pages to it.

The questions which concern diplomacy cannot be treated in a space so narrow as a letter. Moreover, you have not yet attained the age when politics become a passion. One becomes interested in them later, when life is congealed, like a maxim of Rochefoucauld's. You are still at the age when one looks at the fact itself, without seeking the sometimes insignificant causes or circumstances which produced it. You are, nevertheless, curious to know my

opinion on an alliance between Germany and Russia, or on the coolness which seems to exist between the courts of Vienna and Berlin. I have no leisure to point out the thousand little details which would prove to you that that union and that misunderstanding are, and will ever be, expedients, and resemble the deceptions practised by Frederick II., not, I must confess, without success.

Before the reign of Frederick II., in the time of the great Elector, the policy of Prussia had always consisted in simulating friendships and making dupes. Owing to this system, cunningly constructed and ingeniously followed, she has succeeded gradually, or rather her princes have succeeded for her, in forcing Europe to bow before the ancient tributary of Poland. Observe, I beg of you, that this has not been effected by the efforts or the valour of the country, but it is simply the work of several men, who for two or three generations have pursued the same aim, and in whom the whole nation



was incarnate. Germany in general, Prussia in particular, has a blind faith in the house of Hohenzollern. The German nature is weak, good at heart, ferocious only by fits, indolent, apathetic, capable of perseverance, but not of initiative; the Prussian carries the virtue of obedience to the highest point, but does not know how to issue any orders but those which he has received. He is born to be a soldier, he loves to conquer, he is extremely covetous of the goods of others. He is unable to appreciate moral qualities, and he cannot bear them in others.

The convictions, the ideal sympathies of the German people, have been marvellously realized by the reigning house. It has taken the word "Conqueror" for its motto, and, slowly, with premeditation, with energy, has applied itself to satisfy that voracious appetite which distinguishes the Teuton race. That is why Prussian policy has, for more than a hundred years, appeared so able, so constant in its aim,



and why it has really been so changeable ; so free from prepossessions, so completely indifferent to all order, in a word, so entirely selfish. The Hohenzollerns would have considered the pursuit of such an end as that of Richelieu—the lowering the house of Austria, as weakness. Prussia has never understood power except as founded on large territorial possessions ; she has always been devoured by envy, jealousy, revenge, by the worst sentiments of humanity, in fact. The Hohenzollerns have always been convinced that they were raised up by God to aggrandize the people whose instincts they have gratified without elevating their character. Prussian policy has always consisted in flattering, then abandoning and crushing, those who had the folly to believe in her protestations of friendship. She laid the vigilance of France to sleep in 1866—acquired the sympathies of Russia in 1870—conciliated England at the Berlin Congress—attached herself to Austria a year later by an



alliance. Prussia's plan has invariably been to cause other nations to quarrel among themselves, or to aggravate their internal difficulties so that she may profit by them.

Thus she rejoiced at the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the house of Hapsburg, and contributed all her strength to the creation of Bulgaria, by whose aid it is possible for her to molest the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, and again to stir up the eternal Eastern Question.

She likes to meddle with all, hover over everything, but simply from selfishness, never from high-minded ambition; she is intriguing, but formidable, for she is incapable of enthusiasm, inaccessible to pity; she bases herself on the coldest, the most exact, the most relentless calculation. Never is she more to be feared than when she seems best disposed towards her neighbours; never should one distrust her so much as when she most loudly protests her love of peace.

Much has been said about the union be-

tween the courts of Russia and Prussia; an effort has been made to prove that since the death of Alexander II. these relations had cooled. I think this is a mistake, at least as far as Russia is concerned, who, notwithstanding the assertions of hot-headed journals, has not the sense to see the danger she incurs. At Berlin, on the contrary, they now wish to cultivate the friendship of Alexander III., in order to avoid a reconciliation between him and France, and also because they want to excite him against Austria, whom they begin to find troublesome.

You will exclaim on reading this ; but if you carefully observe events you will see that I am right. For a long time there has been a silent rivalry between the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs. The former have succeeded in wresting the diadem of Charlemagne and Barbarossa from the latter, but they still have a grudge against them, on account of that imperial title



habituate themselves to the rival empire with which they are obliged to reckon. Their dream is the hope of driving the heirs of Marie Thérèse back to Hungary, and absorbing the Austrian provinces into the great German Fatherland. This dream they will one day realize, for they know not defeat ; then they will abandon Russia, who will have unconsciously helped them, and believe themselves masters of Europe and the world, until a coalition of all the other powers shall awaken them from their arrogant slumber ; perhaps even then they will contrive to avoid new perils, for they are as cunning as they are strong.

But, you will ask me, is there no way of arresting the growth of a power which threatens all nations ? Alas ! my young friend, I see none. In every age, barbarians have triumphed, and brute strength has always got the better of intelligence, genius, mind, elegance, charm, in a word, civilization. The old Roman Empire itself was unable to resist the shock of the

Teuton hordes ; how can you expect our present society to bear up against them ? Nowadays fraternity is ignored, and we do not coalesce against danger. The only way of turning away the attention of Prussia would be to abandon Austria, the object of her secret longing, to her, under the condition of her surrendering Alsace-Lorraine to France, and allowing Russia to install herself at Constantinople ; but a Richelieu would be needed to carry out such a conception, and we have not even a Mazarin in all Europe. England, too, would always oppose such a plan, and no one is strong enough to shut her mouth. On the other hand, France does not seem to have a sufficiently great policy to have much weight in European equilibrium, and Russia does not clearly enough understand her own interests to reject this consideration and conclude an alliance with their common enemy.

I see no obstacle in the future to the continuation, or even to the extension, of Germany's

power, unless Providence sends her a sovereign who will understand the true interests of his country better than his predecessors have done, who will apply himself to establishing his supremacy by a noble use of his power, and who, above all, will remember that the tallest and strongest tree may be uprooted by a tempest if it stands alone and solitary, whilst it runs less risk when growing in a forest, whose friendly branches protect it against the storm. But I perceive that what I am telling you are only dreams, and I pause lest you may laugh at my grey hairs and diplomatist's visions.

## TENTH LETTER.

M. DE WINDTHORST AND THE CATHOLICS.

I HAVE already spoken of this party and their leader in my letter on the (Reichstag) to-day I wish to give you a slight sketch of the man as well as of his adherents.

Herr Windthorst is a personage as curious to study physically as morally. His physiognomy, delicate, intelligent, sympathetic, is one of those which engrave themselves on the memory. His figure, almost microscopic, is however in no way ridiculous; his eyes sparkle with intelligence; his appearance is that of a being always on the move, always agitated, always trying to get himself talked of. His voice, sweet and sonorous at the same time, is



admirably calculated for debate; the ironical note is the most developed in his language, and his cutting sarcasms can pierce the toughest hides.

He is one of the best speakers in the Reichstag; his entrancing eloquence is of that order which moves the masses and agitates them without their knowing why; if we analyze it in detail, we soon discover that Herr Windthorst possesses only the oratorical art; but not that knowledge of facts, that forcible logic, which strengthen the arguments of Prince Bismark. A speech from the Catholic leader impresses but does not convince. The orator's thought never goes beyond the circle of his auditory; he addresses himself to its passions, awakens its bad instincts, excites those whom he addresses to enmity rather than seeks to persuade them. The "Pearl of Meppen," as M. de Windthorst is named, has an immense influence over the imagination of those who see in him the champion of oppressed liberty; these enthu-



siasts do not suspect that under these beautiful expressions is hidden one of the most authoritative characters in the world. This little man, of benevolent appearance, of exquisite politeness, so agreeably satirical, is in reality one of those tyrannical natures which cannot resign themselves to do without power. Formerly Minister of the King of Hanover, Herr Windthorst was destined by the force of events to take part in the Opposition, and to oppose the Prussian Government without intermission. His position as a Catholic allowed him to accentuate this strife, and to rally around him many who would not have lent assistance to the head of the Guelph party. His talent soon acquired for him uncontested authority over the Ultramontanes, who are for the most part very ordinary people; his marvellous cleverness permits him to hide his plans from them, and not to allow them to suspect his unbridled ambition.

Herr Windthorst would long since have

wearied of his ungrateful task were he not governed by the secret desire of again becoming a Minister. He dreams of his own triumph, while proclaiming that he works for that of his friends. He has already made some advances to the Chancellor, who, being in need of him and his party, received them very graciously. Bismark, who knows exactly the aspirations of his clever adversary, frequently profits by them, and always requires a great service from him in exchange for a trivial concession. The two antagonists sometimes divine each other; but the Prince has generally the advantage in the daily contests which take place, as he never loses his self-possession; besides he is not, as Herr Windthorst is, embarrassed by his friends, who frequently hinder the movements of King George's former Councillor.

It is difficult to direct a party, especially when that party is governed neither by love of country nor love of liberty, nor even by ambition. The Catholic activity has for its only



motive the triumph of a principle, which it understands imperfectly, but to which it clings. It is evident that the Catholic Church will never obtain in Prussia the supremacy that she covets; it remains therefore only to invent a *modus vivendi* to enable it to live in peace with the Protestant State. That this end can never be obtained otherwise than by direct agreement between the Court of Rome and the Cabinet of Berlin. This agreement, if the Chancellor succeeds in concluding it, will strike the Centre party a mortal blow; it will lose its *raison d'être* as well as its pretext for opposition. An understanding with the Vatican would be a complete triumph for Bismark, for it would rid the Government of its bitterest enemies; but it would also create so many others that it is better for him to keep those it has.

Prince Bismark understands the difficulty of this position perfectly. So long as things are in the actual *status quo*, it is always easy for him



tramontanes with a promise of concession, or satisfying the Liberals by the rigorous carrying out of some clause or other of the May laws. An arrangement once concluded, he would lose these two auxiliaries in passing his bills, and find himself surrounded by enemies, some accusing him of having abandoned them, and the rest resenting his having deprived them of their pretext for strife.

In fact, the Centre would be very unhappy if it could no longer attack the Government. It is a party only organized for skirmishing; it is incapable of following any other policy than that of combat. Were it partly victorious, it would immediately disagree, and scatter in such a manner that it would no longer be possible to rally it at a given moment. The narrowness that has at all times distinguished the Ultramontanes renders them inapt at anything but obstinacy. They do not understand politics as abstract principles; they have a still more vague idea of their application: all their

strength, all their efforts, consist in opposition to progress, whether in the domain of literature or that of science or art, or even that advance which every nation makes in civilizing itself and throwing off the prejudices that fetter it. One cannot love two things at one time, and if one is absorbed by the Church one becomes indifferent to the country. The Germans have reason to hate the Catholic party, and I am not surprised to see the anti-clerical organs of France frequently applaud the clericals of the Reichstag, for such is the blindness of the Catholics that they would not hesitate to call foreign aid to their service, if by so doing they could help their cause.

Herr Windthorst, with his clear sight, perceives this fanaticism, but cultivates it for his own ends, and is, perhaps, the only person among his party who does not hold the convictions which he defends. These convictions he continually strives to strengthen in his

whose aid he can gently make Prince Bismark give way. He does not perceive that this game of giving with one hand what you take away with the other, discredits him in the eyes of the public, who observe these manœuvres, and who, after all, represent opinion. The Chancellor understands the advantage he gains from these little parliamentary scenes very well, and, when they fail him too long, he provokes them. His system has always been to set his adversaries to quarrel amongst themselves, and it is to his trickery that he owes his success. His alliance, or even his friendship, always harms those who accept it; his last and surest means of getting rid of his enemies is also to make them believe that he suffers remorse for his past conduct to them.

The thing is manifest, the Prince taking a sort of pride in not varying his ways. The Catholic party has neither been able to foresee or to avoid the state of things with the Chan-

menced. The Ultramontanes congratulate themselves on their last triumph, Herr Windthorst sees the portfolio which he covets already within his reach ; but the future will little by little destroy these illusions, overthrow these hopes, prove to the deceived aspirants that when one is confronted by an enemy like Bismark, one must never temporize with him, but fight continually, without rest, without truce or mercy, to the bitter end, until either one triumphs over him, or is defeated, having lost all "*fors l'honneur.*"

## ELEVENTH LETTER.

## M. BEBEL AND THE SOCIALISTS.

THE Socialists are not to be accused of trafficking with the enemy. Never has a political party better defended a desperate cause, never has a handful of men given proof of more indomitable courage and energy. The Socialists in Germany are not brothers of either the Russian Nihilists or the French Communists; they have many affinities with them, they even employ the same means; but their aim is different, and their ideal rests on quite another basis. They are not rebels, they are indignant. They do not rise against the superiority of one social taste over another; they only protest against the accumulation of power in despotic hands



and against that of money in greedy ones ; they object to that absolute disdain of the fate of the poor with which Bismark governs. The fiercer amongst them, those who loudly proclaim their doctrines of murder and incendiarism, have arrived at this state of exaltation by much suffering. The German, as I have already several times told you, is indifferent to all questions of government, so long as he has his cabbage-soup, and can eat it in tranquillity. What matters to him the form of the government by which he is oppressed ! There are, therefore, only a small number of individuals who allow themselves to be moved by the miseries of the people, by the hard lot of the workman. It is this small number which compose the Socialistic party, and it has never succeeded in gathering numerous adherents, on account of the passive endurance of those whose indigence it takes to heart, whose interests it defends. Never will the Socialists succeed in becoming popular ; they have all that is required to carry away the masses, but the



ground which they work is slow to yield to the influence of their culture. The entire nation is too much stupefied by its hard military slavery to admit the idea that it could be delivered from it. This is why none but "ne'er-do-wells," or men without conscience, join the Socialistic party, whose chiefs alone are believers in, and enthusiastic for, their cause.

In the Reichstag the position of the Socialists is most painful. All avoid them, all parties dread them equally. Their conduct is equally admirable for its logic and for the persistence with which they pursue their object; although so few in number, they bargain with none for their help when they wish to make a demonstration in favour of that liberty to which they have devoted themselves. They have constantly preserved an independence all the more remarkable that it is almost unknown in German parliamentary circles; they have made concessions to none, and they have disdained those which have been offered to them. They have



never compromised their dignity, and have sometimes moved even their most determined adversaries by the rude but sublime eloquence with which they have claimed liberty, and the rights of citizenship for the poor as well as for the rich. Their formulas are evidently inapplicable, their plan unrealizable, their aspirations insensate, their appreciation even of human nature too elevated ; for a society such as they dream of could not exist without the vices, covetousness, littleness, and ambition which are the appendages of poor mortals ; but I repeat, their ideal is divine, and approaches that preached by Christ on the Mount.

All that is sweet and mystic in the German nature is concentrated in them : they have arrived at imagining that peace, concord, happiness, are things possible of attainment in our weary world, and that man has a right to use every means, even iron and fire, in order to secure and consolidate the victory.

This conviction is evidently an error ; but to



those who profess it, it communicates an ardour like to that which animated the soldiers of Mahomet II. when the old Greek empire fell into their hands, and Islam was installed at Constantinople. Socialism is a species of Koran also, but a Koran revised and adapted to the requirements and aspirations of our epoch. It is a religion of its kind; it is indeed the only one which has not yet been sapped by nineteenth-century science; it has its enthusiasts, its fanatics, its priests, and even its martyrs, more especially in Germany, where it has not its source in bad sentiments; it is the product of the natural poetry of the people, whose ideal is personified by Goethe's "Gretchen." Socialism, as it is understood and professed in the country of the immortal poet, would constitute a grave peril if we found it in another land, personified in the same manner; but in a nation incapable of enthusiasm, too calm to be carried away by momentary impressions, incapable of being excited by theories, affected by words or

agitated by tears, it will long remain a chimera, dangerous only to some lofty souls, who will always dash themselves against the calm indifference of the nation. Germany opposes them now with all her strength, because she does not understand them, and imagines that the insensate declamations of Herr Hasselmann are the same things as the lofty but logical opinions of Herr Bebel, his friend in appearance, but in reality his adversary.

Herr Bebel is a remarkable person. The son of a workman, he has risen to the position he actually holds only by perseverance, energy, and purpose. He educated himself, and by the simple force of his ability succeeded in organizing his party, in giving it a direction, and at last in disciplining it. He is a man of conviction, rather than of enthusiasm. He is not violent, and admits of destruction as a means only, without erecting it into a principle. He has no enmity to the great ones of the earth, but he would have power accessible to all, not concen-

trated in the hands of the few. He desires that this power should be the recompense of ability, not the crowning of a glory bought by the blood of thousands of victims. He admits no other superiority than that of the mind, of intelligence, and of labour; he dreams above all of the amelioration of the lot of the working classes, and claims before all general liberty—liberty religious, social, material. He is an apostle, in a word, but not a fanatic. A remarkable orator, his speech impresses, not, like that of Herr Windthorst, by a factitious eloquence made up of words well arranged and grouped, but by serious conviction, by the truth with which he endeavours to depict the miseries of oppressed humanity, by the warmth with which he strives to communicate his thoughts to his audience, to make them share his opinions, to bring them to recognize the truth of his assertions. He can speak of poverty, of misery, of vice, as a man who has closely contemplated these things, who has suffered by them. He

can melt those who listen to him, not by fictitious sorrows, but by real griefs; he draws tears, not for insignificant things, but for the hardness of the existence of the people, of the workman, of him who struggles, who toils, who strives against indigence and penury, and who will one day revolt against all the mire, the dirt, the corruption which surround him, against that luxury which is the product of his labour, against the wealth amassed in the safes of Prince Bismark's friends, the Jew bankers, and by the aid of which great nobles take his children from him to make harlots of them. This is what M. Bebel relates, it is to this that he draws the attention of all, of the poor as well as the rich, of the powerful as well as the weak; and this is why they will never pardon him, this is why he is hunted like a wild beast, why they make war on him, why they try to confound him with those who, as irreligious, but less merciful than he, would destroy a society which they have despaired of converting.

To this category belongs Herr Hasselmann, who was formerly much talked about, and who is a perfect type of a hardened demoniac. His speeches are panegyrics of murder and assassination. When the law directed against the Socialists was brought before the Reichstag ~~for~~ the second time, the violence of his words contributed not a little to its being voted. His friends themselves see the harm which his language and opinions do to their cause, and were not sorry when events forced him to retire from the parliamentary arena. To many people Herr Hasselmann represents Socialism, and few are aware that in Germany the greater part of its members are honest visionaries, like M. Bebel, with seductive language, ideas confused by a too great love of justice and equality, aspirations impossible in a century so positive as ours, projects unrealizable at a time when a scimitar brandished in the air no longer suffices to convert the world to the paradise of Mahomet.

## TWELFTH LETTER.

COUNT VON MOLTKE—MARSHAL MANTEUFFEL—  
GENERAL KAMEKE.

COUNT VON MOLTKE is a tall, thin, wrinkled, rather taciturn old man, who carries his eighty years easily; he has polished manners, stiff gestures, and is altogether rather insignificant. In society he is retiring, being naturally modest, and he appears to shrink from the homage and respect with which he is surrounded. He rarely hazards an opinion in public, and it requires an extraordinary event to draw him out of his habitual reserve. He has a great contempt for the world as well as for the opinion of the multitude; firmly convinced that the destinies of the people depend on those

who govern them, his opinion is that the rulers only ought to hold power, without ever initiating their subalterns into their designs. He is not a politician, he is a soldier who will enjoy his work as a soldier, and profit to the utmost by his victories. He is not ambitious, but he grudges the blood of his troops, and for that reason desires to spoil his enemies in order to render those enemies harmless by impoverishing them. He has no pity for those whom fate has opposed to him ; he pursues them with his vengeance so as to take from them any idea of future revolt and reprisal. He does not like to have to do with an adversary whom he thinks formidable or dangerous. Thus he rejoiced in the death of General Skobeloff, and allowed his satisfaction at that of Gambetta to be evident. He has a sincere horror of war, although to it he owes his present position ; but he thinks that once begun it is better to continue it to the end, and gain all possible advantage by crushing the adversary. He is in

accessible to all emotion, even his merits are mechanical. All feeling seems to him an unprofitable weakness; he loves no one. He so much fears to be accused of allowing himself to be influenced by anything but facts, that he commits real injustices. Although he has great influence, he is not known to have either favourites or protégés. In a word, he is a recluse who lives walled in by his egotism, and detests being disturbed in his tranquillity; by nature cold, impassive, incapable of doing good to any; in the course of a long life he has never obliged or asked a favour of any one. He is the greatest tactician of the age. This is an acknowledged fact, which even his bitterest enemies have admitted; but he is not a genius who would have made a career without the help of circumstances. He was discovered, which was very fortunate for Germany, as he never would have been capable of revealing himself or imposing his own influence. We cannot deny that he profited by the opportunities



offered to him ; but he is a complete cypher in the ordinary course of existence. Many mistakes have been made with respect to him. When he solicited leave to quit the Danish service and join the Prussian army, the Minister of War, in making his report on this request to the King, added in a note : “The departure of Captain von Moltke will be no great loss to the Danish army.” If the man who wrote this still lives, he must reflect strangely on his former perspicacity.

Great political influence is generally attributed to the old Marshal. Nothing is more unfounded. Count von Moltke has never meddled with Government affairs, ~~and~~ has never even been consulted on such subjects. During the war of 1870 his counsels were followed in a military point of view only, and if Bismark sometimes put him forward, it was as a sort of lightning-conductor, to avert from his own head the storm of maledictions raised by his dupes or his victims. The only function in

which he has had immense power has been that of chief of the staff; and on several occasions he has triumphed over the Chancellor himself, who has never succeeded in imposing his tyranny upon the army.

During the last two years Count von Moltke has retired even more into his shell. Since Count von Waldersee has been his assistant, he has not done much in the business of his department; it indeed has become too heavy for his age. Several times he has vainly begged leave to retire. He continues therefore to occupy his post; he even sometimes supports the bills which the Government submits to the Reichstag. Truth obliges me to add that these occasions are extremely rare, and only present themselves in the case of an almost forlorn hope.

If Count von Moltke is a man of the sword, Marshal Manteuffel is a man of the pen. A diplomatist rather than a soldier, he is more apt at politics than at war. He is an honest person,

in whose protestations the utmost faith may be placed. He is devoted to his King and to his country, but will never prove that devotion by conduct that his enemies could qualify as disloyal. His nature is energetic, but at the same time conciliating. He will never trifle with what he considers his duty, but will fulfil it in a manner as little objectionable to others as possible. He is not a selfish man. He is not capable of revenging himself for an injury done to him, nor even for a calumny of which he has been the victim. His reputation is stainless; the inflexibility of his principles is so well established that none, not even the Chancellor, have tried to move them. His position in Alsace-Lorraine is exceedingly difficult; it was only after much deliberation that he decided on accepting it, stipulating beforehand that he should have full liberty to manage those provinces according to his own ideas, and should not have to follow instructions sent from Berlin. These conditions were not to the taste



of Prince Bismark, who likes to dominate, even where he has no business. He was, however, compelled to consent, partly on account of the Emperor, who was most anxious that this post should be held by Marshal Manteuffel.

The Marshal, moreover, made great efforts at the beginning of his rule not to wound the susceptibilities of those whom he governs. He has often given proof of all the tact of which a German is capable, and he has many times endeavoured to prevent the harsh measures of the Government, or avoided applying them. He has always aimed at popularity, and with strange blindness, in a man ordinarily so clear-sighted, has desired to obtain it in Alsace-Lorraine. His relations with Bismark are of the coldest; the Chancellor dislikes him for his independent loyalty, and the Marshal has a secret contempt for the duplicity of the Prince, whose position, however, he covets in the depths of his heart. He would, moreover, perform its duties perhaps even better than

his rival does. Marshal Manteuffel would not be sorry to leave Strasburg, which he does not like, and where he feels himself ill at ease, as an honest man always is when condemned by events and circumstances to execute a task repugnant to his nature.

General Kameke, formerly Minister of War, is an individual whom you may possibly meet, and for that reason I must say a few words about him. He is a sharp little man, very benevolent, very amiable, though commonplace, whose influence has always been small, and whose best intentions have ever been paralyzed and reduced to nothing by the Chancellor's enmity. Between these two personages there has been for ten years a sullen strife, in which, as might have been expected, M. de Kameke has been vanquished. Nevertheless the Emperor liked him, and would have kept him ; but the General at last understood that he held an impossible position, and that his dignity would be compromised did he persist in remaining at a post

from which those more powerful than he were anxious to get him dismissed. He therefore retired in time, and he now tries to forget the annoyances he was obliged to endure. He is a worthy man and a good soldier, of ordinary intelligence, but well-balanced mind, incapable of entering into any intrigue, too honest to make his way in the world with much success. During all the time he was Minister, he tried to do as much good as possible, and for this he has not received sufficient gratitude.



## THIRTEENTH LETTER.

## PRINCELY FAMILIES.

THESE are the only ones who still enjoy any privileges. They are the object of special distinction at court, and this distinction does not fail to excite much envy and many disputes. In a country where the military power reigns in so absolute a manner as in Prussia, it is natural that the domination of one caste over all the others, and its possession of a rank refused to old Generals who have poured out their blood for their country should be regarded with disapproval. Nevertheless, in spite of the sullen and constant war made on them, the princely families have succeeded in maintaining their rights. German pride has not bent, and the

mediatized and other princes still take precedence at court receptions. Nevertheless they have been compelled to resign themselves to some encroachments on their former privileges—such, for example, as the high rank granted by the Emperor to the Knights of the Order of the Black Eagle. The rank which gave the knights of this order precedence over the Princes was the cause of a fearful commotion in the upper circles at Berlin. There were cries and protestations. Several Princesses refused invitations to court balls, and the tumult attained such proportions that, to obtain peace, and secure content at any cost to the Serene Highnesses of his court, the Emperor decided that the wives of the Knights of the Black Eagle should not participate in the honours of their husbands. This compromise, though it pleased none, assuaged the tempest, and since that time there reigns between the two camps a sort of armed peace, perhaps worse than an openly de-

you smile, but they have an immense importance at Berlin. It is on questions of precedent and etiquette that all fashionable life turns. Quarrelling about rank is as good an occupation as another, and suits the measure of certain intellects.

The number of princely families who reside in the capital is limited. The majority only remain there some weeks while the Reichstag is sitting; they leave town immediately on the termination of the session.

Few of these families pass the whole of the winter there, still fewer have a house or even a flat; and as for those who trouble themselves about society, you may count them on your fingers.

On the first line we must place the Ratibors. The Duke of Ratibor, president of the Reichstag, is one of the largest landowners in Silesia, where he has great influence. He did once, at the beginning of the Kulturkampf, take a part in politics, after the famous address presented

to the Emperor by the few Catholics who had rallied round the laws, called those of May.

The Duke of Ratibor was also, they say, slightly touched by the failure of Strousberg ; but a great man such as he is can always clear himself, especially when his influence and vote are of use to the Government. It is in consequence and by reason of this axiom that the Duke succeeded in floating where any other would have been swamped.

Personally, he is an amiable man, an accomplished courtier, not erring on the side of ability, but nevertheless intelligent, and able to get well out of difficulties. He possesses qualities which seem contradictory, such as tact and roughness. There are many flaws in his character, especially in the domain of principles and convictions, but he succeeds perfectly in hiding his deficiencies. He possesses a very fine house in Berlin, of which he does the honours admirably, and where from time to time

the presence of the imperial family, who distinguish him particularly by their notice.

The Duchess, a Princess Fürstenberg, is a woman of such perfect merit, that it is difficult to describe her; goodness, charity, benevolence, nothing is wanting. She bears with admirable resignation the crosses of her life, which are nevertheless said to be heavy. Her entire existence is devoted to the welfare of her fellow-creatures, and if ever any one in this world were worthy the respect and veneration of all, it is surely the Duchess of Ratibor.

Her sister, married to the Duke of Njest, is no less worthy than herself. As for the Duke, his portrait is easy to draw. He is neither ambitious nor an egotist, but simply a man who has always sought to gratify his fancies even though they cost him other things besides money.

For some years he has rarely been seen in Berlin, where he never stays longer than two or three days. Prince Bismark coaxes him,

though keeping him meanwhile in his power; the Emperor is amiable to him as he is to every one; society receives but does not welcome him; the *demi-monde* appreciate him as one of their most generous patrons.

Count Otto von Stolberg-Wernigerode, head of the noble, formerly sovereign, house of this name, is the most intelligent amongst the mediatized princes who adorn the court of Berlin.

He has occupied several important posts, and for some months even exercised the functions of Vice-Chancellor. He is a modest man, though active, not devoid of ambition, sincerely attached to his country; but who has not, precisely on account of his qualities, succeeded in getting on with Prince Bismark, therefore has been obliged to retire from public life. He is not capable of struggling against difficulties, still less of surmounting them. He is easily discouraged, and has had too few troubles in his life to have well-developed



strength. When his efforts failed, he had not the courage to continue to fight, and preferred to abandon the field.

He inhabits his castle of Wernigerode, situated in the Hartz Mountains, during the greater part of the year and leads there a sumptuous life, surrounded by all the ease and luxury procurable by an almost royal fortune. Berlin rarely sees him, and his house, of which the Countess did the honours with much amiability, remains closed.

Count Otto von Stolberg will surely play a part in the future, when the Chancellor shall no longer be there to crush him, and then perhaps Prussia will have a Prime Minister honest in all things, even in politics.

I have already said a word, in one of my previous letters, of Prince Hatzfeldt Trachenberg. He is an ambitious man, who would be capable of selling himself to the devil could he by that means obtain no matter what post in the Ministry. He is, for the rest, a very worthy

fellow, altogether inoffensive, in spite of his mania for being a somebody.

As for his wife, she is a very pretty woman, but at the same time the proudest who ever wore a coronet.

The Prince of Pless is immensely rich, a charming man, not too clever, with a benevolent heart, a cypher in himself, but surrounded by such material advantages that his personality is effaced by them. He possesses the most beautiful house in the city, which he had the good taste to have built by a French architect and French workmen. There he gives *fêtes* justly renowned for their elegance; his wife unites to much goodness, even to much intelligence, a stiffness which has gained her many enemies amongst people who have mistaken for pride that which is really only timidity. She is a thorough great lady, and it would be a good thing for Berlin if society included a greater number of unions resembling that of the Prince and Princess of Pless.

The Princes Radziwill have also, in their time, played their part in Berlin. At present their influence has sensibly diminished in consequence of the enmity of the Chancellor. The actual head of the family, Prince Antoine, is an amiable man, who during the whole of his life has had the good fortune to please every one, and who certainly merits the good repute that he enjoys. A great favourite with the Emperor, he has never abused the affection of his sovereign, and has always steered clear of intrigues. In society he is appreciated, and is more respected than his wife. She is a Frenchwoman, great-niece of Talleyrand, whom she resembles in her turn of mind, as well as in her constant adoration of each rising sun, and by the disdain she professes for all who are not favoured by the gifts of fortune. She is a friend of the Empress, whom she amuses by her witty and animated stories, but whom she has the good taste not to set against others, though that would be an easy task.

In her feelings, her preferences, her littlenesses, and her pride, Princess Antoine Radziwill is more German than French. Her greatest fault is a constant preoccupation about her rank and position in the world. She is so absorbed in the thoughts of the attentions due to her, that she totally forgets those she herself owes to others. In short, she is a cold woman, who loves domination above everything; who is convinced of her own perfection to the extent of believing the grossest flattery. She is often malicious unconsciously to herself, from her fixed habit of seeking the imperfections of her neighbours in all things.

Sometimes she attacks her own family, and her sister-in-law has often been the object of her criticisms.

This sister-in-law is a Russian, and still young. She is pretty, elegant, but, like many of her compatriots, affected, haughty, a coquette in head rather than heart, jealous of the homage

were made only for her amusement and pastime. She loves none, neither is she herself beloved. They say, however, that she is intelligent, and that her conversation can be interesting, but few persons are in a position to pass a judgment on this point, as she is extremely reserved.

Prince Ferdinand Radziwill, cousin of Prince Antoine, plays no part in society. He is in bad odour at court on account of his political opinions. He is a deputy, and sits at the Reichstag amongst the Poles, with whose views he agrees. His wife is adorable, beloved by all who know her for her goodness.

Prince Biron-Courland, the only representative of the family of that name, is too young for me to say anything about him. His mother, who for many years has occupied a prominent place in Berlin Society, is a woman of much sense, a *grande dame*, whose only fault is her too great indulgence for scandalmongers, and the avidity with which she receives their tales.

She is, however, in spite of this little sin, a goodnatured woman, always ready to atone for the evil her tongue has done to her neighbour. In society and at court she is held in the highest esteem, and it is more than probable that she will obtain the post of Lady-in-Waiting to which she aspires, and which she will adorn.

One of the most curious types is that of a certain old Prince, whose name I have forgotten, but you will easily recognize him. You can paint his portrait in three words: he has the neck of a bull, the aspect of a butcher, and tastes as little as possible in accordance with his personal appearance. He is the possessor of an immense fortune, and a great *protégé* of the Empress, because he always makes her a very low bow and does not speak a word. He is fond of hunting, wine, good cheer, and loose women, whom his means permit him to render still more unscrupulous.

Prince Putbus was obliged from loss of for-



tune to disappear for some years from the horizon of Berlin. He was the victim rather of the dishonesty of others than of his own prodigality. Therefore he was welcomed back with pleasure, and is, with his daughters, well received by all. He has also a niece, who was formerly celebrated for her beauty, her wit, and the number of her adorers.

Now all that is over, and she has become a hermit. She lives in absolute seclusion, and is no longer seen in society. She shuts herself up entirely in a charming apartment arranged with exquisite taste, where she remains absorbed in her memories.

\* They are, it is said, sufficiently numerous to afford her occupation and entertainment.

## FOURTEENTH LETTER.

MR. BLEICHRÖDER AND THE MERCHANT PRINCES.

LET us enter the regions of finance: believe me, it is well worth while. You will not regret the glimpse I shall give you of a society which, though not the highest, still holds that highest in absolute subjection.

Berlin is not Paris. In the capital of the new German Empire, as in Russia, there still exist prejudices long since dispelled in France. Amongst those prejudices we must count a certain repugnance to shake hands with a Jew before witnesses, or to visit at his house or receive him at your own. It is designedly that I say "before witnesses;" in the intimacy of a *tête-à-tête* all these little scruples vanish. There

is no city in the world where the children of Israel are more snubbed by society, or where that society makes more use of them.

Whatever may be said, the German aristocracy is not anti-Semitic. It even carries its complaisance towards the sons of Moses too far. It speculates with them in the stocks, and participates in the profits of great public works; but it shrouds itself in mystery to do all these things, and denies them with effrontery if needs be. In general, the Berlin aristocracy try to escape from the responsibility of their conduct towards public opinion, by affecting a profound contempt for everything approaching to finance or commerce.

The merchants are not ignorant of these affectations of the nobles amongst themselves; therefore they take a spiteful pleasure in despoiling them of their wealth, and holding them at their mercy. The Jews are in fact all-powerful at Berlin; they only breathe to discredit the aristocracy, and their journals



make a war on them that is the more cruel because it is waged with the money of the conquered.

As a general rule, you will not meet Jews in society, or you will meet few. In order to know them, you must be introduced by one of your colleagues to the house of one of the merchant kings where diplomatists do congregate.

On their side, the bankers do not make many efforts to attract the nobility to them. They wait with patience for them to make the first advance, knowing well that gold is an irresistible power. They will come for a subscription, or for a charitable bazaar, or to borrow money of them.

All these services are rendered by the merchants with the same good grace; they only ask, from the borrowers or the collectors, in exchange their presence at a dinner or a ball, a request which it is difficult to refuse.

The most celebrated of Berlin bankers is Mr. Bleichröder—*von* Bleichröder—as he takes care

to emphasize since he has obtained leave to add the noble particle to his name. This man is now a formidable power. Before 1866, he was only a little Jew of no importance. By degrees he has risen, through energy and will, to the position he now occupies—that of the greatest snapper-up of millions who exists in Berlin.

A faithful friend, confidant, flatterer, and passionate admirer of Prince Bismark, he was the first to foresee the high destiny of the Chancellor. He attached himself to his fortunes with a perseverance and obstinacy to which he certainly owes a part of his present greatness. Physically, Mr. Bleichröder is a little old man of pronounced Hebrew type. His hair is long and curled; his thick grey moustache scarcely hides a toothless mouth, and joins a frill of grey beard. His physiognomy, at once smiling and sad, betrays a singular mixture of goodnature and duplicity. But what is most peculiar in this face is a pair of eyes hidden behind blue spectacles which always

appear to be watching you. Although almost blind at certain times, he vaguely perceives the forms of people before him. The greatest compliment you can pay him is to talk of pictures and colours to him.

He dresses with care, and you may meet him every day, leaning on the arm of his secretary, taking his walk in the *Thiergarten*. Since he has been a widower, and that infirmities visible and invisible have overtaken him, he no longer goes into society. Before the death of his wife you might have met him in several official drawing-rooms, and observed his efforts to be received in others less accessible. This banker is one of the most intelligent men of our time; his instinct is marvellous in questions of policy or finance. He foresees events, even before the circumstances which are to produce these events have taken place. He knows how to profit by everything, however insignificant. He has seen Princes and States implore his protection. He knows



that a word from him can enrich or ruin thousands of people. He is conscious of a sovereignty greater than that of many kings. And yet he has not sufficient moral greatness to overcome the weakness of wishing at any price to play another *rôle* in elegant society than that of a millionaire.

In justice to him, we must say that it was chiefly Mme. Bleichröder who persuaded her husband to this. Since her death the number of ridiculous stories about the great Jew banker that used formerly to go the round in Berlin are no longer told.

One, for instance, was of his efforts to gain admittance into other houses than those which his position, as English consul, entitled him to visit. His perseverance in inviting people of the *grande monde*, in spite of their refusals, the infinite complaisance he displayed towards such people, extending even to not inviting his brother merchants with them, only brought about a miserable result. The society of Ber-

lin was divided into two camps, of which one went to Mr. Bleichröder's and laughed at him, while the other laughed at him but did not go.

Alas! many who laughed have found out, to their cost, how dangerous it is to treat such a personage lightly.

Mr. Bleichröder will sometimes swallow an affront, but only on condition of finding his hour of vengeance, were it but in offering his pity, accompanied by a few thousand francs.

If he were to tell how many stars of high society have owed their brilliance to him, how many people he has saved from a *faux pas*, or snatched from an abyss, if he were to tell all he knows about the said high society, it would make a volume far otherwise instructive than my counsels.

He is generous by nature, though generous after his own fashion. He is willing to help his neighbour, but he experiences a diabolical pleasure in making a great noble, or a proud lady, feel the weight of his benefits. He takes

particular pleasure in humiliating them by a distasteful familiarity. He taps the shoulder of the young man who comes to confess a gambling debt to him, and kisses the hands of the lady who finds herself forced to confide her embarrassments to him, and ask his help to pay her dressmaker.

Mr. Bleichröder can sometimes ingratiate himself with the most prejudiced against him, and poses as a providence to those whom he has helped to ruin. He gives audiences like a minister. The Chancellor makes use of him to communicate certain opinions with which he wants to inspire the foreign press. The journalists hold Mr. Bleichröder in high esteem, probably because they have been deceived by him so often. Diplomats dine at his house, and pay court to him. Every one fears him, a few profess to despise him; all those who want money see him in their dreams. Many obey him, in spite of their repugnance; very few are sufficiently cool, or sufficiently dis-

interested, to judge him as he deserves, and to regard him as an example of the feats which may be accomplished, of the difficulties which may be surmounted, by the race of Israel.

Mr. Bleichröder has a partner named Schwabacher, who is married to a Dutch lady, the most charming of women. Thanks to her he has won over a section of society. The pair introduced themselves by a side-door into a certain number of houses, mostly foreign, and it must be confessed that the tact, wit, and manners of Mme. Schwabacher would nowhere be out of place. She gives good balls, exquisite dinners, and at least one runs no risk of finding one's self in bad society, which sometimes happens with other leaders of her "world."

\* These ladies are remarkable, in several instances, indeed the majority, for great beauty added to a certain polish, which, although not the genuine article, passes very well for it. Their husbands, on the contrary, represent the Israelitish type in all its purity; hooked nose,

prominent eyes, greasy voices ; precocious stoutness ; nothing is wanting in them, not even the claw-like fingers destined to catch and keep the money of others. They have no conversational readiness, so much are their faculties absorbed in coveted millions. They are, notwithstanding, curious types to study, and I advise you not to neglect them.

Nevertheless, do not launch yourself too quickly into the high regions of commerce at Berlin, and above all be careful not to be too familiar there. They are people with whom a young foreigner in your position may dine, but whom he must always keep at a distance.

You may pay court to the women, but you must remember that their manners are not those of the great, and that their principles, with rare exceptions, are sound. Besides, their intellects are much quicker, more developed, than those of the ladies of the higher spheres, and their criticisms of the latter are always amusing. You, who have so caustic a

spirit, will appreciate it better than others. I hope you will not be persuaded into becoming the friend of a Berlin Jew. The supremacy which the Israelitish race has obtained in Germany is not exactly useful to this country.<sup>1</sup> Admitting that the power of German Jews may not be a great evil to us, I advise you not to lose sight of the fact that so immense an accumulation of capital in the hands of a single people might become very prejudicial to others.

<sup>1</sup> Russia.



## FIFTEENTH LETTER.

## COUNTESS SCHLEINITZ AND WAGNERISM.

COUNTESS SCHLEINITZ is the most learned and the most intellectual woman in Berlin. She is remarkable in every way. She busies herself in all that concerns science and art, is a musician of the highest order, a connoisseur in painting, occupies herself with politics, takes note of social problems. She has neither hobbies nor narrow prejudices of any kind, but is an accomplished woman of the world, able to conceal her knowledge, and throw a discreet veil over her superior qualities, benevolent by nature, and too much occupied to have time for scandal or suspicion.

She goes but little into society, and confines

herself to receiving a small number of acquaintances and friends, composed principally of artists and *litterateurs*, to whom she is the only lady in Berlin to open her doors. Society in general disdains to admit "that sort of people."

Formerly Countess Schleinitz received every evening; but the Chancellor, who meddles with everything, even the most insignificant things, took offence at the so-called "opposition" of the Countess, and gave her to understand that it would be better for her to discontinue her receptions. The result of this singular interference was that the only intellectual centre in Berlin was suppressed.

Countess Schleinitz continues to receive, but more rarely and in a more select way; she has subdued the impetuosity which caused her to confide in every new-comer; she always receives politicians, but especially artists and writers, and with this society reproaches her as a crime. Happily the Countess is too high-minded to care what people say of her. She

takes her pleasure where she can, being unable to content herself with the tittle-tattle and gossip of the idle world. She desires above all things to live with people capable of understanding her, and whose intelligence equals her own. Her house is a true republic: there you meet artists, musicians, actors, journalists, politicians, great lords, nobles, and women of the world. There you encounter no littleness of mind; but enjoy full liberty to discuss your opinions, and explain your ideas, and you are always encouraged by the gracious smile and the exquisite tact of your hostess.

Her husband rarely appears at these receptions, and leaves the Countess perfect liberty. Count Schleinitz, formerly Minister of Foreign Affairs, now Minister of the Emperor's household, is a man whose mind is already weakened by age and sickness; but he is in every respect excellent. The Count and Countess are especially distinguished by their kindness and sincere cordiality to all those with whom

they come in contact. Both are people of heart; and this probably explains why they have so many enemies.

However, as perfection is not of this world, the charming Countess has one weakness, one fault, or rather one false note in the harmony of her character. That fault is a passion—what do I say?—a fanaticism for Wagner and his music. She made that composer the fashion in Berlin; she speaks of him with religious respect, and when he visited her, she received him as if he had come from a celestial sphere.

Countess Schleinitz' enthusiasm for Wagner reaches such a height of exaggeration, that it would be ridiculous if we did not remember that one must have some tie to one's country. When one is German neither in heart, mind, nor taste, one must at least have one point of contact to the mother-country, were it only a passion for noise.

The German character is personified in Wagner's music. Bismark represents the prac-

tical side, and Wagner the artistic side of it. Just as the music of a country is inspired by the turn of mind of its inhabitants ; Italian airs are for the most part gay, Slavonic melodies melancholy, the music of the Orientals is plaintive.

German music is strong, sonorous, inharmonious, imperious, almost savage, as the nation is ; it would destroy all other music, impose itself on all, and, a yet more characteristic symptom, was developed at the moment when the nation itself accomplished the same transformation. Wagner is the Bismark of music, his work will last as long as that of the Chancellor ; both respond to the wants and the aspirations of their time and country ; both are men of the moment, the men required by a nation of positivists, who only dream of conquest, who disdain all that is sweet, gentle, or passionate, for whom power and noise are the only divinities.

However, the success and influence of the Wagnerites are partly due to fashion, and

supreme arbiter even in Germany. At one time that fashion had degenerated into infatuation. People went to hear "Tannhauser," and the "Niebelungen," only because it was the thing to do, and great personages had set the example. They applauded for the same reason, without knowing whether the music was worth the trouble, and they imitated the pious airs of the faithful so as not to appear impious in their eyes. The momentary triumph of Wagner was largely secured by the fuss which his admirers made about him.

Wagnerian fanaticism will not spread, and even amongst the compatriots of Wagner it will ultimately be confined to a small sect. Since the composer's death Wagner-worship has much diminished, and those who undertook the pilgrimage to Bayreuth this summer were far less in number than last year. The sanctuary will soon be deserted, or will be visited from curiosity only, as a Chinese pagoda or a Hindoo temple is visited. Was it not



from mere curiosity that so many people went to hear "Parsifal"? Very few undertook the journey from love of the composer's works. Among the number of the latter, however, we must cite the Countess Schleinitz, who is at least sincere in her admiration.

Do not imagine that in Germany all Wagnerites are as fanatical as the Countess. You meet them of all degrees, even the most moderate. Nevertheless, I would advise you always to express your opinion of the music of the master with great reserve; for every German will praise him energetically to a foreigner, as something that belongs to himself and has its source in the essence of the national character. The German loves Wagner, protects him to the death from all criticism, from all indifference. He believes that in so doing he loves, protects, defends the German country; he puts forth an ardour equal to that with which he guards his conquests and the supremacy he has acquired through Prince Bismark the Wagner of politics.

## SIXTEENTH LETTER.

### THE GREAT WORLD IN BERLIN.

It is now time to give you a *résumé* of Berlin Society, to initiate you into its morals, its customs, its ways with foreigners ; to show you its weaknesses, its shortcomings, its bad—and I was almost going to say its good—qualities.

The society of Berlin, my young friend<sup>3</sup>, is not a society like others. It does not possess our intelligent scepticism. It is even unprovided—in the higher classes—with the natural German honesty. There is about it a boorishness, a lack of civilization, which seems to date from the first ages of history (I speak, be it understood, of questions of morality). It is absolutely careless of its actions : its morals

are neither vicious nor debased, they are simply what the morals of our ancestors were before the meaning of the word *convenances* was invented.

In Berlin, adultery flourishes like a plant in a favourable soil; it ripens in the sunshine, and its fruits are displayed, gathered, and eaten without scruple.

Most married women either have a lover or mean to have one. Vice is not reprobated, virtue is rated among the number of superfluous things. As for love, one meets it rarely. *Liaisons* are formed from caprice, or from that instinct which throws a pretty woman into the arms of a handsome man. In the world of Berlin, love affairs are things unknown. A Lauzun or a Richelieu would be impossible. All is done calmly, coarsely, without poetry, without grace, without that half-uneasy, half-hypocritical scrupulousness by which at least homage is paid to virtue in other countries.

But this society so little scrupulous as to its

own morals, is rigidly severe on the morals of any other circle. It observes the least deviation, notes the slightest weakness, incriminates the most innocent actions, and suspects even the most secret thoughts. The society of Berlin is like a *Camorra*. All those who do not form an integral part of it are expected to approve and subscribe to its decisions, otherwise they are put under its ban. It will spread the most senseless calumnies about them; it attacks them in what they most respect; it wounds them in what they hold most dear. It declares a war against them, in which strength and numbers must one day or other triumph. For, strange to say, that society which itself has no sense of morality, and pretends to force others to be virtuous, hates those who practise virtue and cultivate moral worth. When it oppresses them it is at once from jealousy, and in order to deaden by its reproaches the accusing voice of opinion, which, without that,

Without exaggeration we may say that one half the society of Berlin passes its life in spying upon the other. For that reason it is impossible to keep a secret.

To give you any idea of the scandals and tittle-tattle that spring up and take root on the banks of the Spree, would be impossible. Suffice it for you to know that society will be better acquainted with the amount of your income than your banker, with your menu than your cook, with the number of visitors you have received than your servants, and with your thoughts than yourself. You will live, in short, under much closer surveillance than that of the police.

So much with regard to the moral aspect of Berlin Society. As for its intellectual aspect, it has none. For the most part the high-class Berlin woman neither reads, works, nor has any occupation. She passes her time in chattering, dressing and undressing, and seeking who will help her in these things. She has

neither a serious idea in her head, nor a worthy thought in her heart. Her preferences are vulgar, and she has no influence. She is wanting in grace, education, and tact. She is noisy, and unfortunately for her, she tries to imitate the Frenchwoman of the "fast" school. It is difficult, if not impossible, to talk with a Berlin fashionable lady, so ignorant is she of what is going on, so absorbed in herself, or in the actions and gestures of her rivals.

This is the type of the great lady, of the woman of fashion; there is also the housewife. Besides her you will find the home-bird, who is too respectable for me to describe, and like fortunate nations she has no history.

When the fine lady grows old, as she has gained nothing, learnt nothing, so when she can no longer repair the irreparable outrages of time, she envies the success of younger women, and takes into society an element of bitterness which adds mischievous malevolence to loose morals.



The men of the great world in Berlin do not seem to me to be very interesting. Those who are good for anything are very reserved. The old are even greater gossips than the women, and the young can only eat, dance, and gamble. Their ideal is a supper after a cotillion.

It is amusing to see how they can dance and how they can eat at Berlin. The officers bring to those two occupations a still greater ardour, if possible, than that which inspires them on the field. A quadrille figure is to their eyes a sacred thing, and a supper a state affair. You never hear it said after a ball, "It was very jolly," or even "Very tiresome this evening;" they say, "Good supper," "Bad supper."

But you will ask, are there not some houses in Berlin where you can pass a few hours agreeably? Well, no, they do not exist, at least for foreigners. In general each man lives for himself, none seeks to share his thoughts with another, or desires to exchange his ideas or communicate his opinions on men or things;

no one except Countess Schleinitz, of whom I have spoken, takes pleasure in gathering intelligent people together. It is impossible at Berlin to keep yourself informed of what is doing in Europe. In vain is that city the present centre of the political world: the events of the day are not discussed there. The people vegetate without interest in anything whatever, and life is altogether so organized that it is very difficult to learn what is going on in any world but that of the Court. There reigns a sort of terrorism over the thoughts, you dare not speak of what you see, much less remark to others on what you hear. Foreigners, though treated with much politeness, are nevertheless considered as intruders, and are made to feel this in many ways, as much in society as in clubs, to which they are often refused admission.

Amongst diplomatists there are few who entirely succeed in pleasing, and they are those who have completely Berlinized themselves,

that is to say, they adore dancing, gossip, champagne, and lobster salad after midnight.

Berlin society, in spite of its faults and vices, is nevertheless interesting to observe. The Germans despise other nations, they accuse them of all the faults which they themselves possess, especially and most persistently of looseness of morals, and you see from these few sketches that the accusation may be turned against themselves. If they have not *l'esprit léger*, like ourselves (the Russians) or the French, it is perhaps because their heads are emptier than those of either.

## SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

### THE THREE SISTERS.

FIVE-and-twenty years ago they were young, beautiful, seductive; they had long brown curls, wasp-like waists, transparent complexions, in fact, all the attributes of "the three Graces," as they were called. To-day, the brown hair has become *blonde cendrée*, the teeth have acquired a new whiteness, the cheeks a borrowed bloom, the lips a more brilliant carmine. The figure is enlarged, but its suppleness is replaced by majesty. The name even of "the three Graces" has changed—it has given place to that of the three sisters.

These three sisters are the most important personages in Berlin society. One of them is

a widow, still beautiful, very rich, very elegant. I need not speak of her private conduct; if she has had adventures, they are lost in the number of her brilliant successes. Moreover, what matters it that one has been calumniated, when one has become an Arsinoé? The beautiful widow is artificial in her person and artful in her moral nature. She thinks only of her dress, her furniture, her duties, her weekly entertainments, and but rarely of gallantry.

Her younger sister has not yet renounced the vanities of the world, probably because she has a husband who is proud of her success there. She is the least intelligent of the three sisters; on the other hand, she is the vainest. She, like her sisters, is orderly and calculating, she has no prodigality to reproach herself with, her only follies are dress, cosmetics, and all that can prolong the appearance of youth. She likes to be surrounded by admirers, and attracts a great number, especially among very young men whom she chooses from preference in

the ranks of officers belonging to fashionable regiments. The Imperial Guard is her favourite corps. This swarm of young adorers delights her, make her fancy herself young again, and forms a sort of court around her. She is, besides, the queen of fashion. It is *bon ton* to admire the Countess,—have I already told you she is a Countess? As for me, in the later days of my stay in Berlin, I had a sort of respect for the pains she took to remain beautiful. I had something of the sort of feeling that is inspired by a well-preserved antique statue. Furthermore, the Countess is amiable. She smiles on pretty women, hides the envy they inspire, talks loudly of the sympathy she feels for the plain, and consoles by turn wives who are neglected by their husbands, and husbands who are tired of domestic bliss. Her influence is enormous. Never had woman more in the domain of fashion. She is an absolute sovereign.



tant because she is one of the three sisters. She has neither the pretensions of the younger ones nor their insipid amiability. She is gifted with an excellent heart, and is a good-natured, noisy, vulgar woman, such as you meet with in Paul de Kock's novels. She takes offence at nothing, and does not offend others, shakes hands with all, looks at life on the sunny side, and indulges her eldest daughter to excess. She has no pretensions to youth, never had any to beauty, confesses the age of her children, and keeps open house every evening. People go there to play, smoke, dance, or flirt, as they please.

Her drawing-room is curious to observe, and if you ever succeed in entering it, I advise you to open wide both eyes and ears. At Berlin, Madame ——'s soirées enjoy a reputation, which is, I can assure you, justified: in her house you may enjoy the advantages of a club, and at the same time the charms of a private house, adorned by the presence of young women, or women who believe they are

still young. In this *salon* each vies with the other in making men forget that they belong to a world where woman ought to be honoured and worthy of honour, and in whose presence it is the custom to remove your hat.

The reign of liberty is complete. So soon as the lamps are lighted in the drawing-room it begins to fill with familiar guests, who, after, and often indeed before they have made their bow to the lady of the house, light their cigarettes, place themselves at a card-table, or converse two together on a sofa. There is no general conversation, but many asides. Happy couples saunter through the rooms, lingering willingly in the more deserted, and pause to admire the portrait of a celebrated actress—a portrait which is one of the ornaments of this sumptuous dwelling.

Glasses of beer are handed round; the young officers unbutton their tunics or their coats, some even go so far as to tap the daughter



of the house (whom all call by her Christian name) on the shoulder.

On yonder lounge reclines a still beautiful brunette, with slight figure, nostrils open like those of a racehorse, complexion made up with exquisite art in harmony with the tint of her dress. This woman has a metallic look, a sharp decisive way of speaking; you see at once that she has a cold heart and calculating instincts; that she is a woman of marble. Beside her is a man with light whiskers, whose too large nose does not spoil his handsome face, he is leaning against a table. For three years he has come there; for three years he has contemplated her. At first his expression was submissive, afterwards it displayed adoration, now you may read weariness in it. The attitude is always the same, only the expression has changed. She tries to enchain this last conquest, who would fain escape. How long will the struggle last, and who will gain the victory?

Her husband plays cards not far off, and



seems indifferent to this drama. His features are flat and stupid; his function is to surround his wife with luxury. He has no ambition; he enjoys life like a true Georges Dandin. Sometimes an enigmatical smile steals over his face. Does he take a melancholy pleasure in seeing the crow's feet round his wife's eyes?

Further on, leaning back in an easy chair, with a cup of tea beside him, is a man of ripe age—a diplomatist. He is a Minister. He is absorbed in animated conversation with a woman whose black dress is adorned with orange-coloured ribbons; but I perceive that it is the Countess of whom I have already spoken; this time she has forsaken the army for diplomacy.

There, a fair young creature, almost a child, listens with candid looks to a tall young man in the uniform of the Imperial Guard. These two are yet in the preliminary stage of what they call, in the language of the world I have just described to you, “a Museum.” You ask me

for an explanation. I have long sought for one, and I have found that, to a German mind, the word signifies the poetical time of love, the time when one writes verses and cultivates the Muses. This graceful pleasantry is thoroughly German.

To return to the *salon* of one of the three sisters . . . the absolute freedom which reigns there has done harm to Berlin Society. It is spoilt there as people of good education are spoilt when they no longer observe the proprieties. I have often observed that good company becomes the worst when it throws off its habitual restraint.

The greatest harm done by these three sisters has been altogether to destroy respect for women in the young men of the great world. Although the Prussian is not chivalrous by nature, it is only in the higher spheres of the capital that you see women in society treated as fast women, spoken of as *the* "such a one." To meet with a happy household in Berlin, to

see husbands respected or wives honoured, you must descend to the inferior classes ; you must introduce yourself into the *bourgeoisie*. There you will meet honest souls, elevated, intelligent people, with healthy ideas, leading useful lives.



## EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

## HERR STOCKER AND THE JEWISH QUESTION.

AMONGST the problems of German social and political life, this formidable Jewish question, which becomes each day graver and more menacing, is not by any means the most simple. For some time it was asserted that the anti-Semitic agitation was factitious, that it had been artificially worked up; its importance was attributed to the efforts of Herr Stocker and his adherents; and a sudden and ignominious end was predicted for it. I confess, to my great regret, that I am not of this opinion; I think, on the contrary, that the blind and obstinate enmity against the Jews, which exists in Germany, will increase as the influence

and riches of the Israelitish families become augmented. All men are more or less envious, and Germans are even more so than most other nations.

There is nothing therefore surprising in the fact that the Germans have an antipathy towards a people who have by degrees supplanted them in all questions vital to the nation.

If you have not seen the Jews in Germany, if you have not studied them at Berlin, you cannot form any idea of how they absorb and monopolize everything.

In times like ours, when money is the only power still respected, when the thirst for riches manifests itself in all ways, creditable and discreditable, the Jews in Germany are the only ones who have succeeded in attaining that power, and especially in retaining it.

Germany is not like England or France, a country where all think themselves bound to work, where none are ashamed to put their hands to the building of their own fortune.

In this land of prejudices, where no career save that of arms is considered honourable, where a noble believes himself, by the mere fact of his birth, bound to live in idleness, the nobility have reached a depth of poverty only equalled by their pride. It suffers, nevertheless, from this material decadence, and for some years has tried to remedy it by means of unsound transactions, or stock speculations, for which it has required an agent, who is always a Jew banker or stockbroker.

All Berlin, at the time of my departure, was talking of a catastrophe which happened, last year, to one of the most brilliant officers of the Guard, whose wife was one of the leaders of society, and who was obliged to leave his regiment on account of money affairs, in which a Jew had involved him.

The story made a noise, because the hero was a well-known man; but how many such occurrences remain secret! How many have the same beginning, the same ending, and take

place between the same people, to the increase of the hatred of the German nobility to the Jew financiers !

What they cannot forgive is that they should have been the dupes of those whom they would have deceived. By crying, "Death to the Jews !" the German nobles hope to divide the spoils of the favoured sons of Israel, and to regain the money they have lost.

As for the people, their antipathy is explained by the fact that they are constantly under the domination of the Jews, who have bought the factories by which the workman lives, as they have monopolized the capital which serves for the pleasure of the rich.

What I have said of the higher class of Germans may also be applied to the lower. The nation is not capable of a spontaneous effort, it only obeys impulses, moral strength is wanting ; it can neither invent, nor produce, nor conduct itself by its own initiative ; it has neither the commercial genius of the English,

the inventive faculty of the Americans, nor the restless energy of the French. It is created to fight, and to destroy; like its Teuton ancestors, it is absolutely incapable of restoring that which it has destroyed.

The Germans are a laborious and persevering people, but indolent as regards invention, organization, or contrivance. The German is an admirable instrument, a well-made tool, but he is only capable within a narrow and limited domain. He excels in executing, but not in conceiving. He works hard, but does not invent. He is stupid, even incapable, in all questions touching finance or trade; the few exceptions to this rule only serve to confirm it.

Men like Borsig or Krupp are phenomena which will not readily be reproduced.

Commerce itself, which might be accessible to the middle class, is, like industry and finance, in the hands of the Jews. The latter are absolute masters of the national activity, and one cannot wonder that in moments of over

excitement, the noble, the *bourgeois*, and the people join in cursing the Semitic tyranny.

Prince Bismark is the only person who has frankly accepted the help of the Israelites, without other *arrière-pensée* than that of obtaining from their alliance the possibility of completing his colossal task in peace.

Pastor Stocker, about whose writings, discourses, and opinions so much has been said, is only the interpreter of the great majority of the German people.

The pastor is not an isolated individual, he is one of those figures in whom the entire soul of a nation is incarnate ; like, for example, the Duke of Guise during the League, Luther among the Protestants, and Danton in the French Revolution. One need not partake his convictions, but cannot blame his fierce energy ; it is impossible to have lived in Germany without understanding the reasons which make of him the apostle of a party.

The English, who protest so strongly against



the crusade undertaken by Herr Stocker, cannot admit the reasons for it. Thanks to their commercial spirit as well as their political genius, the Jews have become English in England, and have identified themselves with the interests of their adopted country. It is the same in France, where the Jew works for the prosperity of a country which has become his own.

In Germany the case is very different. There the Jews find themselves confronted by a powerful material force which has turned against even those to whom it owes its development.

Pastor Stocker is not a sectarian, but a man who understands the danger incurred by his country. Only he is mistaken if he thinks to avoid this danger by the expulsion of the Israelitish race.

What would become of the material greatness of Germany if the desire of M. Stocker were suddenly realized? The poor man would be much embarrassed by his victory.

An Edict of Nantes, or a St. Bartholomew's

Day against the Jews would be a calamity in Germany.

But this would not be the result, if Pastor Stocker went on the principle of fighting the Jews with their own weapons, of learning their commercial secrets, of fighting them on their own grounds, disputing with them that power of money of which they dispose at present without control or limit.

If, in the conduct of his business, the German Jew is mean, even to servility, he has, at any rate, preserved his general race-character, a sort of independence against the brute force of Frederick's grenadiers, who have not enslaved him.

Seneca says that a people are always punished for their faults by the excess of their virtues. Germany is a striking example of the truth of this axiom. Until now she has triumphed over her enemies, thanks to her faculty of passive obedience, her tranquil perseverance, and her strength; she has beaten down all her foreign

adversaries ; but she is unarmed in face of those she has seated at her hearth, who live under the safeguard of her institutions and her laws. She is forced to lower her flag before them, to recognize her inability to annihilate the power and adverse influence which she would have taken into partnership if she had had the practical *savoir faire* of the English, or the assimilating spirit of France.

But no German would agree with what I say here, and Pastor Stocker less than any other.

If you have the opportunity, I advise you to make the acquaintance of this remarkable man, one of the most distinguished in Germany. In spite of his prejudices, and notwithstanding that mystic piety so often met with in Protestant pastors, he cannot fail to interest you by his coldly passionate language.

The compact arguments of his narrow logic, the violent asperity of his attacks, the sincere conviction with which he lays down false theories, mark him as a man incapable of

trafficking with his conscience, strict even to austerity. He has borne the numerous attacks of which he has been the object with a stoicism worthy of the ancients, and has treated enmity with contempt. His influence is greater than is believed abroad, more extended than perhaps even he or his friends suspect.

When the history of the first twenty years of the German Empire shall be written, M. Stocker cannot fail to occupy a place in it as the promoter of the Anti-Semitic Movement.

## NINETEENTH LETTER.

## THE DIPLOMATIC BODY.

THE diplomatic body at Berlin plays a considerable part, which is explained by the narrow scope of society. In this city, immense as it is, the number of persons whom it is agreed to call the Great World is so small that it would be impossible for society to exist without a foreign element. That alone explains the welcome given to the *corps diplomatique* at Berlin, and its *empressement* is measured by what is to be obtained from them in the way of dancing and eating. As for the secretaries and *attachés*, they amuse themselves or not according as they accommodate themselves to German manners.

The senior Ambassador is Lord Ampthill, representative of her Britannic Majesty.<sup>1</sup> He is a man of much intelligence, remarkable *finesse*, and exquisite tact; he has filled several difficult posts with distinction, not to say *éclat*; he is a diplomatist of the old school, able to disguise his thoughts, to divine those of others, to remain silent so long as it is necessary, to speak when advisable. For some time *chargé-d'affaires* at Rome, his intimacy with Cardinal Antonelli enabled him to acquire an Italian suppleness, rarely met with in an Englishman. A keen observer by nature, he has become more so from experience; he has learnt to weigh characters, to discover their weaknesses, and to use their meannesses and susceptibilities. He never expresses his true opinion either on persons or events. He is wise as a serpent, even while appearing expansive; he serves his country rather than those who govern it; he

<sup>1</sup> Lord Ampthill's lamented death took place while this work was in course of publication in *La Nouvelle Revue*



obeys tradition, and is not the servant of a minister or a ministry.

During the Berlin Congress he kept in the background, but quietly rendered the greatest services to England when the zeal of Lord Beaconsfield would have seriously compromised his country, had there not been some one at hand to tone down his impetuosity, and translate the too expressive phrases of Disraeli into diplomatic French.

Lord Ampthill is a great admirer of the Chancellor. Is he sincere in his enthusiasm? Without being a sphinx, this ambassador is impenetrable; with the most perfect amiability he will change a conversation when he foresees that it may become dangerous, just as he has the talent of persuading you that he has chosen you for a confidant, after favouring you with a few commonplace observations.

None can put a journalist on a wrong tack more successfully, and in so clever a manner

that the poor reporter never perceives that he has been duped.

Of all the foreign diplomatists accredited to the Court of Berlin, Lord Ampthill is, I believe, the only one who has divined the thoughts of Prince Bismark, and who, judging him as the man of iron deserves, has kept on good terms with him, in spite of the constant clashing of their respective policy.

The Chancellor appreciates the English Ambassador, and even fears him a little, because he feels himself divined. He is aware that Lord Ampthill, notwithstanding his apparent amiability, retains the English coolness, and will never allow himself to be seduced by flatteries or blinded by protestations of friendship; that he will resist all attempts at corruption, and with imperturbable calm will divide the promise made from that intended to be kept.

Lady Ampthill, a daughter of Lord Clarendon, without possessing her husband's talent, is

nevertheless a clever woman, who seeks to extend her knowledge, and keep up with what is going on in the world. She is an ideal Ambassadress. She is made to shine, to receive, to manage a house with *éclat*. One could not imagine her as the wife of a private individual. She seems to have been born for the position she holds. She is cold, and assumes a haughtiness which she believes to be pride; she talks well, but she is more amiable with those who flatter than with those who respect her. She likes to lead, to exercise a sort of royalty. Perhaps she has been a little spoiled at Berlin, but she is not ungrateful, for no one in the *corps diplomatique* takes so much trouble for society as the English Ambassadress. Her *fêtes*, her dinners, are always ordered in an admirable manner, and if she aspires to be a sovereign, at least she gladly discharges the duties of royalty.

The Austrian Ambassador and his wife cut a much smaller figure at Berlin. Count Széchenyi gives one the idea of a most agree-



able man when seen for the first time. On further acquaintance you discover that he is monotonous, and becomes tiresome by constantly repeating himself. His mind is soon exhausted, and you observe that you must furnish almost all the matter of the conversation. Nevertheless, he is a good listener, and is a great resource for chatterers. No one knows whether he is a good or bad diplomatist; he has only had to keep up friendly relations already established between the two governments. He is a model of courtesy. If he never guesses at a project of the Chancellor's, on the other hand he never crosses him. He will live at peace with every one, and die in the conviction that he has contributed to the great political work of his time. If he had a larger fortune, he would be perfect for the post he occupies; unfortunately the economy he is forced to practise influences his temper, and he talks too much about the cost of his shabby receptions. His wife imitates him in this,

and takes the public too freely into her confidence concerning her housekeeping troubles. She is, however, an excellent woman, kind, charming, helpful, but not suited for the position in which she is placed.

Before the present Minister, France was represented at Berlin by Count de Saint Vallier, *persona grata* in certain circles, a *bête-noire* in certain others. He is a personage very difficult to describe; he is slippery as an eel, and looks like one; as supple as a reed, and as cunning as a fox, if ever he falls, it is upon his feet.

Although his convictions are firm, they permit him to make the arrangements that he requires with men and things. He often thinks himself useful where he is only ambitious, and believes he is working for his country when it is only for himself.

As a diplomatist, he is adroit and clear-sighted, although he is sometimes deceived. He falls into a trap when it is cleverly baited to catch his vanity. He likes his importance to

be fully admitted, and to this end always remains on good terms with the Chancellor. Prince Bismark welcomed him with the more amiability that he was bored to death by M. de Gontant Biron.

Count de Saint Vallier profited with marvellous address by the faults of his predecessor. He applied himself to keeping out of all the little intrigues in which the *protégé* of the Duc Decazes had meddled. Thanks to that indicator, he secured a patron in the person of the Chancellor, and a friend in the Empress, whom he propitiated by a real or pretended friendship for her Lady of the Palace, Countess von Hacke.

He is capable of being a devoted friend, an excellent adviser; but in politics he is a disciple of Talleyrand, one of those men who foresee the good as well as the evil fortune of others, and secure a favourable result for themselves. The French Ambassador was disliked at Berlin by the old friends of M. de Gontant and I know



that they were all sincerely rejoiced at the recall of M. de Saint Vallier. A Minister I would advise you to study, for he is well worth the trouble, and to conciliate, for he is dangerous, is M. Sabouroff, representative of His Majesty Alexander III. He is an intelligent man, yet, like M. de Saint Vallier, confounds his own interests with those of his country. He is audacious, he shrinks from nothing, and will as easily drop a friend as get rid of an enemy. He is one of those who think the end justifies the means. Owing to his perfect indifference to what he terms sensitiveness or sentimentality, he will always keep himself afloat on the ocean of politics.

His astuteness and his talent are undeniable; but he is a fortunate diplomatist rather than a statesman.

He must have made a very good position for himself in Berlin, and Prince Bismark is, I think, grateful to him that he turns his attention to gallantry rather than to Russian policy.

Personally M. Sabouroff is the most agreeable man in Berlin: a delightful talker, an eminent archæologist, of perfect taste, a great collector of Greek antiquities, and a great admirer of modern goddesses.

Count de Launay, Ambassador of the King of Italy, and Sadullha Bey, the Sultan's *envoyé*, do not require a long description.

The former would perhaps be agreeable were it not for his wife, whose fierce jealousy freezes him in society and forbids him all expansion. Mdme. de Lannay, though, is no fool; but she is as suspicious as she is clever. Unfortunately she is deaf, which renders conversation with her almost impossible.

They give a ball from time to time, where it is fearfully hot, and refreshments are scarce. This is the extent of the hospitality of Count and Countess de Launay.

These receptions, however, surpass those of their Turkish colleague, who sacrifices himself to the extent of drinking other people's wine.

but does ~~not~~ offer his own to his neighbour, lest he should transgress the law of the Prophet.

I will not detain you with the Ministers or Envoys of small or second-rate powers. Only Spain and Portugal need be particularly mentioned.

Señor Merry y Colon de Benomar, the Spanish Minister, is a small, old man, foppish, very *empresé* with ladies, and proud of his descent in the female line from Christopher Columbus. He had shown diplomatic ability in Morocco, and it was thought he would do the same in Europe. In society his conversation is amusing. Since his marriage a little more importance is granted to him, and the number of those who called him M. Merry diminishes every day.

His wife is beautiful, kind, frank, and simple; she has only one ambition—to be an ambassadress; this rank she is almost certain of attaining.

Portugal has for the moment no Minister at Berlin, and is represented by a *chargé-d'affaires*

M. de Soveral, who has the greatest success with women. He is very—nay, too handsome—and has had more *bonnes fortunes* than any man, above all a foreigner, has ever boasted at Berlin.

He is not a bad man; but an *enfant chérie* with the ladies, and consequently spoiled.

He was long without a rival; but the coming of a brilliant Austrian Military Attaché did him some harm with certain Queens of Fashion.

Major von Steininger is moreover better calculated than M. de Soveral to please the ladies, because he is distinction personified.

The Greek Minister is M. Rangalie, better known for his literary works than for his political ability.

The French Ambassador is Count d'Aubigny, an amiable little man, at home on the Boulevards, and possessing the true Parisian volubility. His wife is an oddity, who, for fear of being commonplace, has fallen into absolute rudeness.

Sir John Walsham, First Secretary of her Britannic Majesty's Embassy, is a tall, thin, slender personage, a true son of Albion, and one of those officials who accomplish their daily routine more from ambition than love of work. He will advance in his career in due succession, and retire from the political arena with the honestly-gained title of Minister Plenipotentiary. His wife is a little person, very affected and very empty; incapable of comprehending the value of words, or of foreseeing the consequences which may be brought about by intemperance of language. She receives much, especially diplomatists, and simpers a great deal.

An amiable, good, and charming person, though too much Berlinized, is Madame d'Arapoff, wife of the First Secretary of the Russian Embassy. For twenty years she has lived in Berlin, and has ended by adopting its tastes and habits, and by liking it, if possible, more than her native country. On one point,

fortunately, she is not naturalized ; malevolence is a fault to which she is entirely a stranger.

Madame Arapoff is too much absorbed by the world, by visits, shopping, and trying on dresses, to find time to busy herself about others. Her life is a perpetual *fête*. She worships society to such an extent that she is incapable of seeing its defects. She has two charming daughters. Much courted by society, she is the only diplomatist's wife who is completely accepted at Berlin. Her compatriots of the Russian Embassy do not like, and are jealous of her. It is said that the Ambassador himself has not disdained to descend to small intrigues to procure the recall of his First Secretary.

I end this letter, having, I think, forgotten no one of importance. You yourself will pick out those I have left in the shade or forgotten.



## TWENTIETH LETTER.

## THE MIDDLE CLASS.

I SHOULD advise you, if possible, to get introduced to some middle-class houses, or to the small nobility who exist only in Germany, and who approach more nearly to the middle than the higher classes in their habits, their manner of living, and even their opinions.

We must be just, even to our rivals, and you would have a false idea of German society, were you to judge of it from the specimens afforded in the elegant *salons* of Berlin.

When you want to gather public opinion in a country, address yourself to those who form that opinion. You will only find these people in Berlin amongst small capitalists, second-

rate *employés*, professors, and *savants*; but I will talk of the latter in another letter. To-day I wish to conduct you into one of those worthy and tranquil homes where you can see the German such as he is, untainted by the demoralization of the great world.

To begin with, we must both climb two, often three, flights of very steep stairs. If the house be a new building, the staircase will be of marble, with banisters of wrought iron. If it be old, it will be of wood, but always covered with a hideous carpet of a different colour on each floor, according to the taste of the occupier, before whose door it ceases. You ring; a girl in white cap and apron opens to you, and informs you that the “*Herrschaften*”—or Lords—are at home.

After having left your overcoat in a very narrow passage, where the gas burns all day, and which serves as an ante-room, you are introduced into a small drawing-room where about a dozen people are seated on chairs or

*fauteuils*, ornamented with little squares of guipure, an obligatory decoration in German homes. A lamp lights the room as well as the people who are present. Do not forget that it is half-past seven, the hour when civilized people sit down to dinner. At first the room in which you find yourself appears to be the ugliest you have ever seen. The ceiling is chocolate colour, ornamented with birds or landscapes, red or green; the walls are covered with a horrible green velvet paper, on which a few pictures and photographs are hung.

An enormous porcelain stove entirely fills one corner of this room; the other is occupied by the piano. An immense sofa, the table we have already mentioned, and chairs arranged symmetrically against the wall, such is the furniture of this so-called drawing-room.

On the sofa a lady of a certain age is majestically seated; she listens to the compliments of an infantry officer, who has the air of heroically accomplishing a painful duty: true, on three

other ladies are enthroned in the *fautouils*. One of these is the hostess, who takes possession of you, and presents you to the sovereign of the sofa, saying, in a sepulchral voice, being overwhelmed by the greatness of the title she is about to pronounce: "Her Excellency Generaless K——." She does not allow you to enter into conversation with this star, but continues to name to you, "Madame the Privy Councillor, Madame the Colonel," and finally introduces to you her daughter, adding, "*Das ist mein Lischen:*" "That is my Lisa." After that you are free, and you ask yourself with terror what will become of you during the two mortal hours you must pass in this cage.

All these ladies have their knitting in hand, and appear absorbed in a conversation of which the price of meat and eggs is the principal topic. They seem to be on a footing of strictest ceremony with each other, using all their titles,

and uttering the same sentences that of Ex-

cellency or most Gracious Lady. In despair, you cast your eyes on the table covered with books, pamphlets, and newspapers. A light begins to dawn for you ; the hostess presently proposes to you to go and smoke with the gentlemen ; you accept, and on entering another room, you find yourself transported into another world. All the men in this other world are educated, polite, well bred, though ignorant of the ordinary forms of the great world ; all have their regular work, and are capable judges of the literary and scientific movement of their epoch. They have not the polish, the superficial varnish of the high society who assemble at the Palace *Unter den Linden*, and who adorn the Empress's Thursdays ; they do not know how to tie their cravats, and the cut of their coats dates from the last years of the Empire ; but neither do they know anything about the little scandals that are current coin in the Imperial circle. Their hearts are simple, their

ties are well developed, well balanced; it is a pleasure to talk with them, and one always learns something from them. Remark, that I make use of the words "intellectual faculties;" as for politics these people are as incapable of judging them, and as indifferent to them as the people of the great world.

To return to our *soirée*, time passes, the minutes fly, while from being astonished you become interested. The door opens, the little servant announces supper. The host offers his arm to her Excellency, the *Colonelle* is assigned to you, and all pass into the dining-room. The awkwardness of the first half-hour has disappeared. You feel at ease, and by degrees forget the little peculiarities of your neighbours.

The repast is simple. A saddle of venison, salad, and fruits, fresh or preserved according to the season, composes the bill of fare. The guests eat with their knives, put their fingers in the salt-cellars, lick their forks, and wipe



but you will pardon these little transgressions out of gratitude for the pleasant hours they have procured you.

When the repast is ended, you return to the drawing-room. The young lady introduced to you under the name of Lischen seats herself at the piano, and the evening ends as gaily as its commencement had seemed dull. At half-past ten every one prepares to leave; the gas is already extinguished in the corridor, and the servant lights you out with a candle.

Good-night is said, with a promise of future meetings, and the Excellency, the Privy Councillors and the *Colonelle* return home on foot, in the same way as the lieutenant who had been bustling about their greatnesses, and who rejoices at having economized the money which so good a supper would have cost him.

German society, in the upper class, is corrupt, in the lower, demoralized, and can only be properly appreciated by studying the middle classes. Nevertheless there, as in the aris-



toocracy, the inferiority of women, or, to speak more correctly, the manner in which they are relegated to mere household occupations and the cares of their *toilette*, strikes one at once. In reality, the enormous distance which separates the *bourgeoise* from the great lady lies in their respective morals. The wife of the small capitalist, of the *employé*, or even of the officer, will sacrifice herself to her family, to her husband, to her children, will reduce herself to the strictest necessities, making herself an unpaid servant, burying alive her youth and beauty in order to save up for the education of her sons; the wife of a noble, sometimes as poor as the other woman, will demand the means of shining in the world, of eclipsing her rivals by her dress, and under the name of little presents will in reality receive the price of her honour. Frequent, then, if you have the opportunity, these middle-class homes; there you will see a mother of a family, worthy in all respects in spite of her stinginess and her

absurdities, and you may, if you succeed in repressing that spirit of raillery which urges young men to laugh at those whose habits and tastes are not in accord with their own; you may, I say, learn the secrets of the life of the German. He is educated, laborious, sincerely convinced of the greatness of those who govern him; he understands nothing of the beauty of material things, he does not dream of the pleasure of being surrounded by objects which charm the eye or the senses, he is insensible to the beauty of a picture or a statue, and careless of comfort; but he will weep at the reading of a beautiful poem, find infinite enjoyment at seeing a plant flourish and prosper, and peruse for recreation after a day's work, one of Darwin's treatises, or look through Ranke's last volume. It is only the German of the middle class who reads. If you enter a public library, you will never see any one belonging to the higher ranks of society; the same con-

regiments of the Guards and those belonging to the Infantry and the Artillery. The former are ignorant and conceited beyond belief; their days are passed at the club or sauntering in the streets; their nights in dancing; they are almost more effeminate than women, and in the majority of cases more vain. The latter, on the contrary, are studious, modest, learned, but appreciated only by people who live out of the great and gay world.

This will explain to you why men who occupy any serious post, or are of themselves worth anything, keep aloof from the society which you as a young diplomatist are obliged to frequent. Nowhere does there exist a greater difference between the classes who constitute the nation than in Germany, and above all in Berlin. Everywhere else, a man of talent may emerge from the crowd, put aside prejudices, and by the simple strength of genius, make himself the equal of all. At Berlin, he may make himself

succeed in being accepted as an equal by those who instead of brains have ancestors. The result of the barrier thus raised by pride is that the men who could best accomplish the task of consolidating the German Empire, are so thrown back upon themselves, that they do not even attempt to put aside the boundaries which separate them from a world inferior in everything, but inaccessible to them.

## TWENTY-FIRST LETTER.

## ARTISTS AND SCIENTISTS.

THERE are many artists and scientific men at Berlin, but they form a sort of coterie among themselves, into which it is very difficult to penetrate. In general you do not meet them in society, except at the receptions of the Crown Princess, or in the *salon* of Countess Schleinitz. Princess Victoria, an enthusiast in all appertaining to science, literature, or art, makes it a point to encourage scientists and artists. Her intelligent patronage is highly appreciated. It is certain that since the marriage of the heir to the throne, all things belonging to the Arts have made immense progress. The Princess



and interests herself in the purchases made by the museums. Some few people in society imitate her example. The movement is still very limited, but nevertheless, it is a step in advance on a new road.

Unfortunately, the ignorance of the great world renders it incapable of taking pleasure in intellectual things, and consequently of guiding artistic production. The middle class has not enough authority with the artists; it allows itself to be ruled by them. Instead of pointing out their faults or their errors of taste, it blindly accepts the judgments they pass on themselves. The result of this state of things is that the artists, being left completely free, have founded a kind of national school, resting on the traditions of the Renaissance, and this has until now only produced monstrosities. Nothing can equal the conceit of a German sculptor or painter, except perhaps that of an officer of the Body-Guard. They imagine themselves to have conquered the kingdom of art as indisputably

as the German armies have conquered provinces. Being very obstinate in their ideas, they try to impose their tendencies on the entire universe.

As they have not an enlightened public to deal with, they can give free course to their theories, and by degrees will succeed in entirely corrupting the tastes of their compatriots. To begin with, they condemn the pleasure one takes in beholding a beautiful object, even if its outlines be not altogether correct, and they protest loudly against all things which only please the eye. According to them, all must be in the old German style, which is nothing more than a caricature of the Renaissance. Thus their houses are all sombre, dark, and ugly, furnished with seats and cupboards of carved wood, the walls ornamented with pictures of the new school, that is to say representing women in affected attitudes with faded bouquets in their hands.

But I perceive that I am launching out into

ing to you of German artists. I will begin with Professor Angeli. Professor Angeli is a Viennese, but he comes so often to Berlin, he is so largely patronized by the aristocratic society of this city, that he may be almost counted as a Berliner. His great renown dates from his portraits of the Crown Prince and Princess, who have also bought his principal works. Since then Professor Angeli has been the Benjamin of all the *salons*, and like other Benjamins has abused his position. He is probably the vainest man in the world. His pride attains phenomenal proportions; he believes the entire universe to have been created for his personal benefit. He is, however, responsible for his acts, for he can, on occasion, be relatively modest when he is with people who are not disposed to tolerate his vanity. Unfortunately that happens but seldom, and the *élégantes* of Berlin endure from Professor Angeli conduct which would not be tolerated for a moment in an *attaché*, or Secretary of Embassy.

Professor Werner, whose pictures of the "Congress" and the "Proclamation of the Empire at Versailles" have been greatly admired, is a slender little man, with a cunning face, but he at least is not aggressive. That does not mean that he has a poor opinion of himself; but he is not so vain as the majority of his brother-artists, and especially Herr Lenbach, the painter, whose head has been completely turned by two or three *bonnes fortunes* with fashionable fools.

Count Ferdinand Harrach is an amateur painter working for love of art; but this does not prevent him from selling detestable pictures at a very high price. His very pretty wife is only one of his many conquests. Although a clever man, he is so convinced of his own superiority that he does not deign to credit his neighbour with even a little common sense. He is very amiable, but one guesses from his subtle smile, in how little esteem he holds those whom he deigns to honour with his attention. He is one of the most ardent apostles of the

*Alt Deutsche* school. The Crown Princess no doubt thinks it better to err in art than not to cultivate it at all, and probably considers that Count Ferdinand Harrach sets a good example. She honours him with a special share of her good graces, and has even condescended to select him as her partner at a fancy-dress ball.

Among the artists you will be likely to meet, Professor Gustaf Richter, now the first portrait painter in Germany, is the most remarkable. He has neither conceit nor false ostentation. He knows his own merit, but does not pretend to surpass all the rest of humanity in genius. He is the only German artist who can be placed on the list of superior men ; he married a daughter of Meyerbeer. The wife, as well as the husband, merits your attention, and you should not neglect the opportunity of becoming intimate with them.

I will not speak of the other painters or sculptors who vie with each other for the favour of Berlin ; enough that I have pointed out the

principal amongst them, though I had almost forgotten to mention the sculptor Begas, a man of great talent, whose wife is celebrated for her beauty.

. The *fêtes* given by the artistic world of Berlin are amusing to those who like to observe human vanity, for nothing exceeds the contempt with which German artists speak of all those who do not share their ideas and tastes.

There are some remarkable scientists and literary men at Berlin. Not to speak of Mommsen, Von Ranke, and Von Helmholtz, nearly all the Professors at the University are men of the greatest merit and the highest ability, who work for work's sake, to advance science or clear up dark points in history, not for the triumph of their own theories or their personal opinion. These courageous pioneers of progress merit our sincere respect and admiration, for they are the only persons amongst their countrymen not blinded by false ideas of



people on the earth, and who place above the new German Empire, its armies, its conquests, its all-powerful Sovereign and Minister, one thing greater, more noble still, more sublime, for it is the only thing here below that the Deity has created in His own image—the human race.

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TWENTY-SECOND LETTER.

THE PRESS AND THE NEWSPAPERS.

IN Germany the Press plays a part disproportioned to its influence. Among the number of daily papers which inundate Berlin, only two or three influence the people, and even they are of quite an inferior order, as, for example, the *Klein Journal*, a sorry imitation of the *Petit Journal*, and the *Tageblatt*, of Berlin, which you must not confound with the *Deutsches Tageblatt*. These are both organs of German chaff and Jewish bitterness. They are principally read by servants and by the great world; each finding in them food to satisfy their love of "sensation."

It often happens that these papers are obliged

to contradict their own assertions ; but the public rarely read the denial, while it retails the false stories with pleasure. They are much read abroad, where people are so simple as to believe that they represent the opinion which they espouse. This is, however, a complete mistake ; the only really representative journals are two or three papers in the style of the *Germania*, the organ of the clericals, and the *Kreuz Zeitung*, that of the Conservatives.

The German Press is almost entirely in the hands of the Jew bankers, or otherwise depending on the Government, which by turns inspires the *Post*, the *Nord-deutsche*, and the *National Zeitung*, sometimes even the *Gazette de Cologne*, according as one or other of those papers appears favourable to their interests, and will allow itself most readily to be given the lie. In questions concerning the press, as in all others, Prince Bismarck has his plan. When he wishes to know what effect will be produced in the world by any particular news,

he causes it to be printed, taking care to frame it according to the so-called tendency of the chosen organ. After all Europe has been agitated, and the foreign press has more or less taken it up, and that the result desired by the Chancellor is obtained, he causes it to be contradicted by an "officious" note in the *Nord-deutsche*; and he then boldly rebukes those who dare to suspect an independent paper of collusion with the Government.

The *Nord-deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* is the only paper continually alimented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and even it is disowned every day. When the Ambassador of a Foreign Power complains at Wilhelm Strasse of a peculiarly offensive article against his country, a thousand apologies are made, ignorance of where the said article is to be found is pleaded, and a reprimand is to be at once addressed to the editor; but next day, without withdrawing the affirmations of the previous one, the editor publishes a short paragraph destined to appease

the indignation caused by them. This journal also serves as a keynote to all the others, who take their tone from it, and rarely question its assertions.

The editors are only there for form's sake; all the political articles are made up at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and submitted—at any rate, the important ones—to the Chancellor beforehand. When Prince Bismark wishes to convey to any particular quarter an opinion which would be out of place in the *Nord-deutsche*, and would not carry sufficient authority in one of his other organs, he chooses the *Post*, a journal supposed to be honest, Conservative, and independent, and of the integrity of whose principles most people are convinced. The help of the *Post* is invoked when the Chancellor wants to conciliate the pietist subscribers to the *Kreuz Zeitung*, and those silly people who have the nightmare of social revolution for ever before their eyes.

Lasker and the National Liberals, it was formerly strongly supported by the Government in its war against the Catholics. Since the party it represents has quarrelled with the Chancellor, the *National Zeitung* has also appeared to have done so; but this paper has still a point of contact with its ancient ally when it is a question of opposing their common enemy, Clericalism; and the Chancellor uses it without scruple when he wants to conciliate the foes of Herr Windthorst's party.

This journal, having the name of being quite out of favour in high places, may be contradicted, and even abused, without danger, if the sudden change of any of Prince Bismark's manœuvres render contradiction and abuse necessary.

The *Gazette de Cologne* is the advanced guard of the Chancellor. It is specially charged to observe foreign powers, to expose their ambitious projects, to reveal their dissensions, their



strength of their armies. Its particular mission is also to keep German patriotism on the *qui vive*, to awaken the national pride, and to give the final signal to the trumpet which sounds the note of battle.

Published out of Berlin, passing for the best-informed paper in Germany, as it is one of the richest, keeping correspondents everywhere who supply it with more or less fabulous stories, the *Gazette de Cologne* is reputed abroad to be an independent journal, but of passionate opinions and extremely violent in its dislikes.

The people suspect that its information comes direct from Bismark, who profits by the high position of this journal to arouse the ill-feelings of the Nationalists, to irritate the foreign press, provoke its anger, and then rebuke its violence.

Thus we see Prince Bismark has always several strings to his bow, and plays with the press as he does with everything else.

In the same way he manages the foreign

out what the Chancellor pleases; those who are corrupt, obey, those who are independent are circumvented, those who are hostile are deceived. Prince Bismark contrives to reduce the foreign correspondents to starvation, which drives them out of the truth like wolves out of a wood. Then having no food for their pens, they, like the Russian journalists, fabricate improbable news, or, like the *Times*, are reduced to describing the English Ambassador's balls and dinners.

Among the journals really free from all complicity or compromise with the Government, two only deserve special mention—the *Kreuz Zeitung*, or Gazette of the Cross, and the *Germania*. The former is patronized by elegant society; it contains detailed descriptions of all the Court *fêtes*, and announcements of births, deaths, and marriages. The fact of being a subscriber to the *Kreuz Zeitung* is in itself a patent of respectability. It is arch-honest, arch-Protestant, and arch-wearisome. Its saint is

those for whom the word progress is not an abomination.

The *Kreuz Zeitung* was formerly favoured by Prince Bismark. It pushes its scruples as to the veracity of its news to the extent of publishing it only when it is consecrated by time, and has passed into the domain of ancient history.

It is perpetually at war with the *Germania*, whose Catholicism is abominable to it. This latter paper, more Papist than the Pope, distinguishes itself particularly by its passionate ardour for all sorts of polemics, and by the readiness with which it enters into every kind of discussion. Tact is a virtue wholly unknown to it, and Christian toleration quite a stranger. Religion without charity, such ought to be its device.

The *Fremdenblatt* is a journal almost entirely consecrated to stupid, idle gossiping. It shares with the *Berliner Tageblatt*, of which I have

officers and ladies of Berlin: after a ball, the latter may read in it descriptions of their dresses, and the former the names of their partners. In general, all the papers devoted to the recital of the news and scandals of the great world are in favour with elegant society. The journalists to whom they belong profit by this state of things, either to augment the number of their subscribers, by dishing up some new gossip to them every morning, or to extort money from dupes whom they threaten to compromise by the revelation of certain anecdotes of their private life.

This species of extortion gave rise not long ago to a scandalous trial, in which an ex-officer, the bearer of an aristocratic name, and allied to the best families in the country, figured; but for once that the fact has transpired, how often have victims submitted to their fate without murmuring, and dearly bought a silence which they judged indispensable to their social position!

The most read journal in Berlin of this class is the *Börsen Courier*, the organ of the green-room and the stock-jobbers. Its editors are frequently in prison. Its stories are sometimes true, sometimes cruelly false. Its opinions on any other subject except that of money are worthless.

## TWENTY-THIRD LETTER.

## THE CHANCELLOR'S TOOLS.

I MUST not forget to speak of certain individuals whom you will have the opportunity of meeting, and whom I shall call the Chancellor's crows, in remembrance of our friend La Fontaine. They are more or less intelligent persons, always supple and cunning, often insinuating, whose manners and education leave nothing to desire, and who, from unbridled ambition, have made themselves slaves of Bismark, to whom they often serve, without suspecting it, as—how shall I express it? Spies is too strong a term; informers is too weak; I will say that they are people who have imposed on themselves the task of beguiling the sleepless hours of their powerful patron with stories of the events of



the day, and the doings and sayings of persons whose political opinions are feared in high places.

Without having a taste for fairy tales, like the Sultan in the "Arabian Nights," the Chancellor likes to be amused by anecdotes. He likes still more to possess several unavowed parasites, his keen scent makes him discover them readily, and he immediately persuades them that they have mind, talent, indeed all sorts of virtues; and, more important still, he gives them the assurance that they enjoy his—the Chancellor's—confidence. In a word, Prince Bismark, as the fox of the fable, beguiles these crows by giving them cheeses instead of taking them away.

It is seldom that the cheeses are of first-rate quality; but a humble Gruyère eaten in the Prince's company is often preferable to a slice of Stilton devoured in solitude. Starting from this principle, many people make desperate efforts to obtain a piece of the former; but,

alas ! that piece is like the fatal fruit of the tree of good and evil. Once tasted, one belongs no more to one's self, one becomes ambitious, cruel, cowardly ; one sacrifices honour, feelings, all, to the desire of being in the highest favour, to the pride of being approved by the master who owns one.

The compacts made between Prince Bismark and the auxiliaries whom he secretly uses, are never other than understood ; even those who have entered into them are often ignorant of the engagement which binds them. They only know that the Chancellor thinks well of them, that he invites them to Varzin, that he admits them to his intimacy, makes them talk ; that somehow or other their career develops itself in a manner peculiarly favourable to their interests. They do not know, or feign not to know, to what beneficent influence they owe their rapid advancement ; but at each new proof of favour accorded them by their Providence they pay a visit to the Chancellor, who receives them

with open arms, congratulates them, and repeats "I am so glad that a man of your merit is at last appreciated."

Among the individuals thus appreciated, two or three are in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; others, military or civil, go about in society, where they are marvellously well received, and only a few people suspect the part they play.

You yourself, forewarned as you are, will find it difficult to distinguish them, and will be apt to fall into the trap set for you by their amiability and their politeness, so much superior to that of Germans in general.

Nevertheless, the presence of these living telephones constitutes a serious danger in living at Berlin, for the slightest word uttered in unsuspecting privacy may be repeated to him who is criticized, and by the fact of its being repeated, assume importance that was never intended. Therefore never speak of politics during your stay at Berlin; or if you do so, praise all and everything, even and above all that which you disapprove.

Endeavour to avoid any chance expression ; confine yourself to the tamest commonplace ; remember that not only the walls, but even the air has ears, and that, in our epoch of progress, one, may, by aid of telephones, hear at Potsdam what is said in Berlin. I will not mention by name those whom I have been describing. What good would it do to unveil their incognito ? What good, above all, would it do to tear away their illusions ; to tell them that it is not their merit, but their utility, that procures them the Chancellor's protection, and that there will come a time when being no longer necessary, they will again sink into the obscurity from which a less clever person than Prince Bismark would never have sought to raise them ? Only I repeat again : Be on your guard, be on your guard ; be still more careful with young men who speak all languages well, who have travelled much, and possess a number of foreign decorations ; who are polite diplomats (this is a grave indication), eager in their attentions to women, in favour at Court,

popular in society, and who rarely go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.' Besides these unavowed gentlemen, the Chancellor has other avowed *protégés*. Such, for example is Herr Luidan, brother to Paul Luidan, the author, whom you must already have met. He has all the distinctive qualities of the Jewish race: energy, finesse, a well-balanced mind, sound judgment, extreme facility in the use of the pen, and ambition to raise himself by his own merit.

The Crown Princess regards Herr Rudolph Luidan with well-deserved favour. He is one of the best *employés* in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and has so far succeeded in retaining the favour of Prince Bismark. He goes but little into society, where he is received with a certain disdain on account of his Israelitish origin. He is a charming talker; you will find him, however, much more reserved than when abroad; for in Berlin every one fears a false interpretation. I doubt whether for this reason he will encourage your intimacy; nevertheless he would be a useful and profitable acquaintance

for you. Do not, however, imagine that he would give you any direct information whatever; he is extremely avaricious in that respect. I regret much for you the absence of Count Radowitz from Berlin; he is one of the most curious types I have ever met. Sharp, cunning, supple, clever, knowing how to accommodate himself to all situations; to lie with an imperturbable *sang froid* when necessary, to flatter adroitly, contradict *à propos*, approve when possible, he has, with all these qualities, one fault: that of impetuosity dangerous to a diplomatist, as it may lead him beyond his aim,—or at any rate make his employer fear that he will not always execute the instructions he receives to the letter and the spirit. He is also vain, and too accessible to flattery. He readily betrays a secret to those who will praise him as being the depository of it. Very passionate in his enthusiasm for the Chancellor, very zealous in his profession, he sometimes allows himself to be led into want of tact, and forgets that if Germany has the right to be proud, her



representatives are in duty bound not to be insolent. Such as he is, however, Count Radowitz may be counted, if not as one of the best, at least as one of the cleverest and most amiable of the diplomatic agents of Prussia. He is often accused by his colleagues of blundering; but in certain cases this may become a virtue, and it is well for a brusque and changeable policy like Prince Bismark's to be served by a representative whom he can disavow. For instance, when war is sought or desired, persons like Count Radowitz capable of provoking it, become precious auxiliaries. At present he is at Constantinople, to replace Count Paul von Hatzfeldt, and probably also to annoy Russia and provoke her *chargé d'affaires*, Count Nelidoff, who is said to be extremely susceptible.

I do not know how Count Radowitz likes his country house on the banks of the Bosphorus; but I am sure he is in his element in the midst of the various intrigues of oriental policy in which the unfortunate Commander of the Faithful is entangled.

To make people quarrel, and reconcile them afterwards, to have his hands kissed alike by friends and enemies, suits above all things the son of Radowitz, that friend of the mystic Frederick William IV., whom Saint René Taillandier has so well described in his *Dix ans de l'Empire d'Allemagne*.

I will only briefly mention among the *protégés* of Prince Bismark, Busch, the author of the famous book, "Table Talk," which was so much read two or three years ago. He is one of those friends who may be disavowed after having been allowed to act, and blamed for the impropriety of his revelations. One must have little knowledge of the Chancellor, and form a very poor idea of the power he wields, to suppose for a moment that Busch would have dared to publish his book without having previously submitted the entire text to Prince Bismark and obtained his permission to proceed.

The Prince does not dislike this sort of indiscretion, which allows him to reveal the pri-

vate side of his character to the public indiscreetly, and also certain opinions which he can only express to his intimates. The publication of the work, *Fürst Bismark und seine Seute*, was a sort of recompense granted to a man who had been useful to him, and to whom he had given the right of portraying his everyday life by way of wages. Prince Bismark knows the people governed by Cæsarism too well not to be aware that it is necessary to amuse them, either by giving them bread and games, under some form or other, or by offering the spectacle of a great man's private life to their eager curiosity.

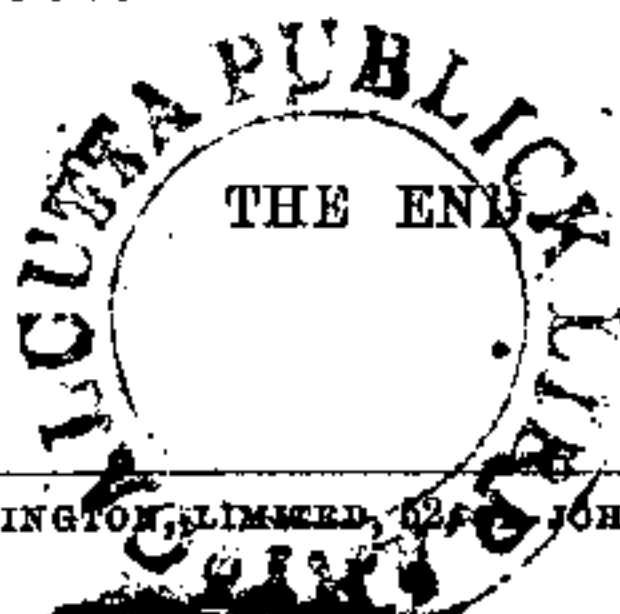
To conclude; if you would be well acquainted with Germany and observe the country with profit, you must study it, understand it, judge it at this moment of its history, when it seems to have assimilated its conquests, and when a near future may direct it in new ways.

One asks oneself, indeed, to-day, what Germany will become when the old Emperor, his all-powerful Minister, Moltke, Manteuffel,

these men of a former age who have sprung up in the nineteenth century, shall have disappeared; when in their place there shall be a ruler who has been enabled to study a military and absolute government without contributing to it, but to whom his position, his leisure, his works, his travels, the nationality of his wife, and his own tastes, have given quite a different turn, and it may be a resolution to govern Germany in a liberal sense? What obstacles will he find in the traditions of a system which has made Germany imperial? what resistance in an army formed for conquest; in a middle class not yet apt at exercising power; in a demoralized press and disorganized parties? What aid will he receive from ambitious persons incapable of assuming long unfamiliar responsibilities? Among all these unfavourable elements, socialism, let loose by Prince Bismark, and which he is powerless to check, threatens each day to rise. We may predict that the position of successor to an always victorious Emperor will be difficult and perhaps

untenable. Will he find in the army itself that spirit of sacrifice which would permit him to reduce it? Will he find in public functionaries inured to servility, the qualities necessary for making great reforms? Will the same generation which has seen the triumph of material strength everywhere, with its injustice and brutality, be capable of throwing itself with ardour into the ways of moral strength and justice?

To direct into such paths a nation so little prepared to follow them, a prince would require to possess a high spirit, generous aspirations, a firm hand, and indifference to popularity from the first. He might, however, rest assured that history will assign an equal place in her record of fame to the great legislator and the great conqueror.



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