



GERMANY'S ROAD TO RUIN.



GERMANY'S ROAD TO RUIN

THE MIDDLE YEARS OF
THE REIGN OF THE EMPEROR WILLIAM II

by

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LONDON

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

1932

FIRST PRINTED

February, 1932

This book is a translation of

DAS DRITTE DEUTSCHE KAISERREICH

(Zweiter Band : Deutschlands Weg in die Einkreisung)

PUBLISHED IN 1931 BY THE

VERLAG FÜR KULTURPOLITIK, BERLIN

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS GLASGOW

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LETTER FROM EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH TO
EMPEROR WILLIAM II

VIENNA, *April 12*, 1890.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will have learned already from General Count Wedel how greatly the mission entrusted to him pleased me. I read every line of your lucid account of almost incredible occurrences with the liveliest interest, and not until I reached the end of it did I realize what deep thanks I owe you for your unreserved demonstrations of confiding friendship and for all the trouble you have taken on yourself in order to strengthen me in the conviction that in the given circumstances you could have done nothing else in the end but, at the bidding of higher considerations, adopt the firm resolution to set a limit to your magnanimous complaisance, your patience and endurance. Now that I have gained a closer acquaintance with the real conditions of the situation, I am able to gauge and to feel with you how hard it must have been for you to come to this resolution, what bitter hours you had to go through from the beginning of the crisis. Sharing with you the deep regret for the necessity of letting things go so far, I lament none the less that so great a man, and one who has performed such services to Prussia, Germany, and peace, should have been able to let himself be carried away into activities against his Emperor and master for which in their final causes it might be easier to find an explanation than an excuse. The thought that in loosing the tangled knot you were obeying an inescapable necessity of state, will bring you complete peace of mind. I am convinced that in the present endlessly difficult period you will control the helm at home and abroad with a firm hand, with calm circumspection and consideration, supported by

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the new Chancellor, whom you have certainly been entirely right in recognizing as the right man, and whose acquaintance I shall be glad to make. I see a special guarantee for the future in the fact that under the guidance of a wise impartiality and a clear judgment you have chosen General von Caprivi, although on a former occasion a difference of opinion had arisen between you and him.

Looking forward to seeing you again in Silesia in the autumn, and with the most cordial thanks for your kind visit to the Empress in Wiesbaden, I assure you once more that you may continue for all time to count on the most loyal friendship of

Your

Most sincerely devoted friend and brother

FRANZ JOSEPH.

MANUSCRIPT LETTER FROM EMPEROR WILLIAM II TO EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH

VIENNA, *April 14, 1890.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Major General von Bolfras has just brought me your kind letter, which has done me infinite good. I hasten to thank you once more most warmly for the expression of your trust in me. I was anxious above all—considering the high honour in which I hold your exalted person—that you should not be in the slightest doubt and not suffer in the least from any appearance of inadequacy of information in regard to conditions here. Above all I was sure of what shines so warmly from your lines—that you were able to feel what that time meant for me and how infinitely hard and bitter the struggle and the decision were for me. But it is better so, and better also for our relations with one another, as in view of the independence and with it the secretiveness of the Prince, I should, unhappily, not have been in a position to know, quite freely, what courses he might be entering on in our foreign policy

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without my knowledge, and how these could be justified to my allies.

I was so grateful for the Empress's permission to visit her. She looked well, was satisfied with her cure, and was infinitely kind and gracious to me, and I am glad to be able to send you this report from Wiesbaden. The young couple were radiant with happiness and contentment.

With 1000 greetings and looking forward to the pleasure of another meeting,

Your true friend

WILHELM.

COUNT KÁLNOKY, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TO VON
SZÖGYÉNY, AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR IN BERLIN

(Private letter.)
Secret.

VIENNA, *November 14, 1894.*

HIS EXCELLENCY HERR VON SZÖGYÉNY, BERLIN.

Count Philipp Eulenburg returned to his post a few days ago, after several months' absence, and sought me out at once. He was, naturally, still wholly under the influence of the fall of Count Caprivi, effected in Liebenberg, and the retirement of the Prussian Prime Minister; he said that he had been commanded by Emperor William to communicate 'with the utmost candour,' not only to me but especially to H.M. the Emperor, 'everything down to the smallest detail' concerning the causes and circumstances which produced this astonishing Cabinet change. Our most gracious master met this desire and gave Count Eulenburg an opportunity of discharging the mission entrusted to him, which he did in the amplest measure.

Count Eulenburg also told me the origin of the things that produced the catastrophe, in great detail. Without going more closely into these narratives, rather confused by the countless immaterial details and personal questions, I am able to state that the account sent to us in your despatch of November 10, when the crisis was not entirely over, in no way conflicts with

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Eulenburg's, and is, indeed, substantially in agreement with it if one removes from the latter its peculiarly Eulenburgian embellishments. So much of the details communicated by Count Eulenburg as might serve to complete your reports has reference simply to circumstances of a more personal nature and just to the points on which I could not admit Count Eulenburg to be an impartial narrator. Accordingly, in what follows I am confining myself to communicating to you in strict confidence a few indications of the impression which I gained from Eulenburg's account, simply for your personal information.

To begin with I want to mention that at the time of his arrival in Liebenberg Emperor William believed, quite *bona fide*, that his last effort at conciliation had been successful that Count Caprivi was remaining in office, and that the Parliamentary campaign was going to begin. Thus it was in Liebenberg, where the Emperor was under the sole influence of the Eulenburg clique, that the plot, evidently long hatched, was ripe for execution. The levers available for its execution were Count Caprivi's attacks on Imperial German Ministers and members of parliament, with their echoes in the *Kölnische Zeitung* articles; these were interpreted as an unwarrantable cry of triumph over Botho Eulenburg—and Caprivi's increasing intimacy with the Left fractions and the Centre. I should doubt whether the gentlemen intended that Count Eulenburg, the Prime Minister, should also fall; it almost seems to me that Emperor William's prompt cutting of the knot by dismissing *both* of the rivals came as a surprise to the promoters of the intrigue. In his impatience of the perpetual annoyance from these personal incompatibilities—which, incidentally, showed plainly (1) that the two offices need to be combined again, and (2) that the indispensable Conservatives are implacably opposed to Caprivi—Emperor William brought the whole situation to an end by a decision which may have been all too precipitate, but of which the logical justification cannot be denied. There are, however, several circumstances which lend colour to the supposition that the clique was non-

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plussed, and, as Philipp Eulenburg said, the Prime Minister, who was always ready for any sacrifice, accepted without hesitation the course chosen by the Emperor. No doubt the plan still held good up to then to place his cousin in the fat post in Strassburg that he had earned—but now that that has come to nought, the next thing is to find a place for Count Botho! In bringing down Caprivi the gentlemen have won a victory which they will certainly be able to turn to account, for they are assured of the thanks of the Conservatives, and it will be very interesting to follow their further operations.

The way Count Eulenburg spoke of the absolute necessity for Baron Marschall to remain at Prince Hohenlohe's side, for the sake of the great services he is able to render through his uncommon parliamentary gifts, showed that Baron Marschall is regarded as indispensable *in Parliament* and not at the Foreign Ministry. Perhaps the rumour will thus prove well founded that Herr von Boetticher will leave his post and make room for the new Minister of State, whose post could in turn be given to one of the gentlemen of the consortium.

The Kaiser is in the midst of this net, quite unaware that it is being spun round him—let us hope that the moment is coming when he will see through the game and cut his way out. General Caprivi was not smart enough for these gentry, he was too honest and too slow-going to comprehend these subtle intrigues; unfortunately he also failed to keep in with the young Emperor. All this business may yet work great mischief, and I see no hope of improvement unless the Emperor's sound sense and his good impulses forge a way out.

So far as specially concerns ourselves, or rather our relations with Germany, I have no fears, as Emperor William himself offers us the best guarantee in this regard. The great pains these gentlemen are taking to see that the events are viewed here in *their* sense shows how anxious they are lest our most gracious master should have cause for dissatisfaction.

Hammerstein, the new Minister of Agriculture, is so out-and-out an agrarian that I am prepared for not a few new

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hindrances and impediments in the way of our imports into Germany; though we must energetically defend ourselves against them.

Emperor William's caution in his dealings with the young Tsar shows that he is capable of going to work shrewdly and with reflection.

Yours, etc.

KÁLNOKY.

EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH'S ABANDONED VISIT TO ROME

MANUSCRIPT NOTE BY EMPEROR WILLIAM II

After the accession to the throne of King Victor Emanuel of Italy, there came a perceptible alienation between Rome and Vienna. It filled Herr von Szögyény with deep concern for the future and the stability of the Triple Alliance.

One day he unburdened his troubles to me, closing with the question:

'What can one do in Vienna to combat the animosity in Rome?'

From my meetings with King Victor Emanuel I was aware of the true ground. He had never made any secret in speaking to me of the fact. Emperor Francis Joseph's *omission* to return in Rome the visit made to him by the King's *father*,—*Re Umberto*—was felt by Victor Emanuel as an insult, which he had *quasi* to 'avenge'! He had, he considered, to exact penance for the injury to the memory of his insulted father.

I replied to His Excellency's question by informing him of these facts.

The Ambassador nodded gloomily, remarking that he had feared as much. He had been brought into the secret discussions in Vienna on the question of the preparation for the return visit to *Rome*. All efforts to make any other place than Rome acceptable to Italy had failed, and there had been no choice but to face the necessity of approaching the Vatican

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and negotiating with it for a settlement of the question of the prior visit which the Vatican demanded but to which the Quirinal refused to agree.

The Vatican insisted on receiving the *first* visit from the Emperor after his arrival in Rome; *after that* it would *permit* him to enter the Quirinal. The Quirinal, of course, declined that arrangement.

After describing these proceedings and expressing his regret that the Roman Curia by its intransigent attitude was helping to cloud the *political* relations between Rome and Vienna, His Excellency asked me:

'Whether I really knew of no means of disentangling this fearful knot, which threatened to produce regrettable consequences in the future.'

He admitted *sub sigillo* that during the negotiations in Vienna at which he had been present *Re Umberto* had been given the *express promise* that the Emperor's return visit should take place in *Rome*. Thus, he added, King Victor Emanuel had *formal justification* for being excited over Vienna's omission of the visit.

I thought for a considerable time over this very complicated case, viewing it from every side, and I was guided by the following considerations:

I. *Vienna* had *promised* the return visit to *Rome*, but had *not* carried it out.

II. The Quirinal had consequently felt *injured*, and *rightly*.

III. The *Vatican* had put forward conditions which *interfered* with the visit.

A. *Vienna's position.*

Vienna imprudently *promised* a return visit of H.M. the Emperor to *Rome*, before ascertaining the views of the Curia. That ought *eo ipso* to have been done first. On the other hand, the much younger King of Italy who later came to govern has so far *omitted* to make his visit on accession—in conformity with long-standing custom among the Monarchs of Europe—to the much older Emperor. That was a *mistake*. Reason: the

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abandoned return visit from the Emperor to *his father*. Accordingly, in conformity with the usage above mentioned between the European Sovereigns, the Emperor was not in a position to visit the younger Sovereign *before* his own accession visit to him.

The Emperor's visit to *Re Umberto* was omitted because the *Curia* demanded of the Emperor on his arrival in Rome the *first* visit *before* entering the Quirinal.

That postulate the Emperor refused—rightly—to fulfil, as it amounted to an insult to the House of Savoy. Accordingly he abandoned the visit to Rome.

This abandonment, however, visibly worsened Austro-Italian relations and endangered the Triple Alliance considerably more after the succession to the Italian throne.

Vienna ought thus to have declared to the *Curia*:

'The *Curia* is a spiritual power and as such one is bound to follow it *in rebus ecclesiae*. But the *Curia* must not intervene by action in the temporal sphere to the injury of the interests or relations of two peoples, by imposing postulates which the Sovereigns in question are not in a position to fulfil.'

If the *Curia* had shown continued opposition, Vienna ought then to have undertaken the visit 'as *necessary* for the cultivation of good relations and as *required* in fulfilment of a promise,' ignoring the desires of the *Curia*. The *political interest of a country*, it should have held, comes *before* a gesture of courtesy towards the *Curia*.

B. Position of the Quirinal.

The young King Victor Emanuel, filled with an uncommonly exalted pride and sense of the dignity of his 'House of Savoy,' felt the Emperor's omission to return *his father's* visit as an offence against his exalted house, which it was hard for him to bear. This was all the more dangerous since he was in the *right*. The King was well aware of the precise ground of the omission—the *Curia's* postulate concerning the first visit from H.M. the Emperor to it *before* entering the Quirinal. Outwardly at least he was stiffly hostile to the *Curia*, and he

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felt its intervention in the question of the visit as an *affront* to his house and his rights as Sovereign, so far as concerned Rome as his capital and that of his Kingdom of Italy. In this too the King was *right*.

He must, for all that, have been familiar with the Emperor's spiritual bonds with the Curia, and it should have been his duty to help to make the situation easier for the K. und K.¹ 'Apostolic' Emperor and King, or at least to make the attempt to do so. Undoubtedly unofficial private relations existed between Quirinal and Vatican. With the Italians' gift of discovering and effecting compromises, it could not well have been entirely unthinkable for a solution satisfactory to both parties to be found with a little goodwill.

Evidently the King of Italy did not enter on this course. Instead, he seized on the idea of *reprisal*. He, the younger 'colleague,' refused to make the *first visit on accession* due to his older 'colleague'—a visit which, once for all, was '*de rigueur*' among Sovereigns in Europe—and in this way put himself in the *wrong* with Vienna. From the standpoint of the etiquette of courtesies observed between the Sovereigns of Europe, he committed a *tactless* action and an undeniable *slighting* of the older Emperor, which Emperor Francis Joseph in turn was bound to feel as an *affront*. In this Vienna was *right*. The visit from King Victor Emanuel on his accession was beyond all question due to be made to the Emperor, who was entitled to demand it. Thus there was *right* opposing *right*.

C. Position of the Curia.

The Curia demanded of the Emperor, in the event of his coming to Rome, his *first visit, before* entering the Quirinal.

It imposed its recognized *ecclesiastical* authority, which for His Imperial and Royal 'Apostolic' Majesty carried *decisive* weight, in a question of purely *temporal* and political importance, thus applying *compulsion* to the Emperor, against the

¹Imperial and Royal.

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interests of Austria-Hungary. Into the purely political considerations which governed the preparations for the promised visit of the Emperor to Rome, it pushed its way disturbingly and with the claim to *authority*. That was, therefore, an encroachment.

To begin with it damaged the temporal power of Italy and the dignity of the royal house of Savoy in the most painful way by the postulate of the *first* visit, which was equivalent to an ignoring of the Kingdom and its ruler. This was an affront to King Victor Emanuel and his realm. For he was bound to perceive in it a public non-recognition of his dignity as King of Italy and as protector of the Constitution of the Kingdom. In that he was *right*. The Curia was wrong, all the more as what was involved here was a purely political, *temporal* question, which did not in any way directly concern the Curia.

Secondly, through its postulate to Vienna the Curia exercised political pressure in a direction which was bound to bring injury to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy *pro futuro*. It also brought the Emperor inward struggles of conscience of the gravest nature, of which the anxiety expressed to me by his Ambassador was the reflexion. For the Curia *prevented* the Emperor's visit to Rome through an appeal to his feelings as 'an obedient son of the Roman Church.' It thus brought his religious feelings into conflict with his *conscience* as *guide of the State*. The considerations of the ruler demanded from him absolutely friendly relations with the house of Savoy and Italy, and therefore the visit to Rome. On the contrary, the Roman Pontifex tried to hinder or prevent the 'obedient son of the Church' from making his visit.

Conversely, it was bound to be known in Vienna that the house of Savoy regarded this postulate of the Curia as an affront, and to be known why it did so. If in spite of that Vienna accepted the postulate as justified and abandoned the visit, it put itself in the position of seeming to the Quirinal and to Italy to share the Curia's view, injurious as that was to the Quirinal. That was once more an affront to the King. Thus the attitude taken up by the Curia in the question of

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Emperor Francis Joseph's visit to Rome was absolutely devoid of justification. It was bound to know that its intransigent insistence on the utterly *unjustified postulate* bore within itself *dangers* for the future of the two Monarchies and their ruling houses, for which the Church had not to bear the responsibility. It should have been its *duty* to yield to the representations of the venerable Emperor, in order that he might be able to fulfil his duty as ruler and representative of the *political* interests of his countries and carry out the visit. The Curia ought never to have disturbed or hindered the Emperor's temporal policy.

From the foregoing it thus follows that on the two sides there stood right facing right. Facts that were assessed by one side as an affront facing similar facts on the other side.

My proposed attempt at a solution

H.M. the Emperor should write a personal letter to the King of Italy—to some such purport as follows: he has grown old; with the passing of time long journeys are becoming no longer possible for him. He has now to think of the closing of his life's journey. There is one thing that weighs upon his conscience: the abandonment of his return visit to his friend and ally, the *Re* Humbert. The King who was so close a friend of his has, unhappily, in the meantime passed away. The Emperor is, nevertheless, desirous of honouring before his death his promise given to *Re* Umberto, and, as the latter is no longer dwelling among the mortals, of at least visiting his grave and laying a wreath on it. He therefore begs King Victor Emanuel to permit him to carry out this intention.

In the case of that being acceded to, the following programme for Rome might be sketched:

- I. Arrival: at the railway station a great reception, King, Princes, Ministers, guard of honour.
- II. Drive of the two Monarchs through Rome to the Pantheon.

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III. Laying of the wreath on the grave of *Re Umberto*, H.M. the Emperor addressing the assembled members of the house of Savoy and corporate bodies:

'This is an act of friendship for the dead King, for the reigning King Victor Emanuel, for the house of Savoy and the whole Kingdom of Italy, towards whom H.M. hereby fulfils the promise he once made and pays to *Re Umberto* his formal return visit.'

Victor Emanuel's desire for the return visit to be made to *his father* would thus be fulfilled, and the injury done to his house by the omission so far to make it would be remedied. At the same time, the *first* visit—through the presence at *Re Umberto's* grave—would have been made to the royal house and to Italy. If the Curia still held to its postulate and if the Emperor regarded himself as bound to respect it, he could part from the King at the Pantheon and drive to the Vatican, as the King still owed him the first visit on accession. If the Emperor did not intend to pay attention to the Curia's objection, he would drive with the King to the Quirinal. Perhaps his subsequent visit from there to the Curia would be declined (?), perhaps, with tactful handling, it would not. Quirinal and Curia would each have to be informed of the programme, and meanwhile would be able to negotiate direct with one another.

When I had recounted and explained the reflexions and proposals set down in this document to Herr von Szögyény, he agreed with me fully and entirely. He too was a convinced 'true son of his Church,' but had not the slightest doubt concerning its attitude:

'If the Curia saw and were able to feel the depth of the Emperor's desire, it would reflect twice before administering to the venerable Kaiser, *coram publico*, a refusal which would absolutely bring all his subjects of *both confessions* into harness, and would be very sharply and disapprovingly judged by Italy and all the world. *It cannot slight the guest of the*

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Kingdom of Italy.' He decided with great pleasure to send this attempt of mine as a proposal to H.M. in Vienna.

At the first opportunity I related the whole affair to my father's friend King Albert of Saxony, who was also a 'true son of the Roman Church.' He awarded me his full approval in every respect with the remark that I had 'rendered an inestimable service to Vienna and the Triple Alliance by this proposal, and also to the peace of the world.' For King Albert of Saxony—the *only* trusted friend of Emperor Francis Joseph—was also feeling anxiety over the increasing tension between Vienna and Rome. The King was also of the opinion that the solution proposed by me was, 'with a little goodwill,' entirely acceptable both for the Curia and for the Quirinal.

To make thoroughly sure, I put the *proposed programme* for Rome in strict confidence before an Italian friend of mine, who is devotedly loyal to the Triple Alliance. In reply to my question what would be the attitude of the '*Roman piazza*' to this programme, he exclaimed:

'The Romans will take the Emperor's horses out of the shafts and pull him along to the Pantheon, for as a man the venerable old gentleman is regarded with much sympathy by us Romans.' This statement too I had transmitted to Herr von Szögyény.

Months passed without my hearing anything about the affair. Finally the Ambassador came to me. I read no encouragement in his depressed appearance. With great and sincere regret he informed me that his report with my proposal had been *rejected* by the Emperor, 'since the Curia would not assent to it.'

The visit was abandoned. The tension grew. In the world war Italy fell away from her allies. Not until many years after did I learn from 'well-informed' National-Catholic quarters in Austria and Germany the real reason for the rejection of my solution, which the Ambassador's tactful discretion had withheld from me. Vienna had *not* preserved discretion in regard to the Curia as to the source of the solution. When the

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Curia discovered *who* had made this proposal for a solution, it declared it unacceptable for that reason.

Emperor Francis Joseph submitted to the decision of the Church as final *against* the proposal of his *ally*.

By frustrating Emperor Francis Joseph's visit to Rome the Curia, instead of promoting peace among the peoples—which, as is well known, is the function of the Church on earth—had contributed consciously or unconsciously to the sowing of mistrust and discord between the princes and their peoples, and had thereby indirectly brought to its charge the downfall of Austria-Hungary.

Mulier taceat in ecclesiam!

Ecclesia taceat in politicis!

This note has been written because no consideration is to be found in any of the more recent historical works concerning Emperor Francis Joseph of this most important affair, which determined the fate of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Emperor Francis Joseph made the sacrifice of the political interests of his peoples to the interference of the Curia, damaging as it was to those peoples' political future; he lost his Italian ally, and his Empire fell into ruins.

Written from memory *without documents*

THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE THRONE OF LIPPE

MANUSCRIPT NOTE BY EMPEROR WILLIAM II

The old Prince of Lippe-Detmold had no children. In order to provide for the succession in the event of the death of a childless prince, the Prince of Lippe-Detmold had concluded a treaty with the Prince of Schaumburg-Lippe-Bückeburg at the beginning of the nineteenth century, providing that one of the latter's sons or brothers should succeed in the event of his death.¹

¹Mentioned in *Fürstin Pauline v. Lippe-Detmold* (published 1930).

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When the throne became vacant, the Prince zu Schaumburg-Lippe designated his younger brother Adolf—the husband of my sister Victoria—as Regent for the time being, in accordance with the treaty. That was as agreed on. At the same time the succession was disputed by the lines of Weissenfeld and Lippe-Biesterfeld. My brother-in-law and his wife were given a hearty welcome on their arrival by the population, and they soon succeeded in so winning sympathies in the Principedom by their disposition and their activities that the population wanted them to remain permanently.

Meanwhile the Biesterfeld line especially moved heaven and earth to secure the succession in Detmold. The Bundesrat was mobilized and an arbitral judgment was demanded. As this was a controversy between princes the standpoint was taken up that the German Emperor was the proper authority to decide it. Accordingly I chose Baron von Marschall as my adviser. Who can describe my amazement when ultimately it was decided on a vote that not the head of the Empire but King Albert of Saxony should be chosen as arbitrator—‘as he is the oldest German prince and helped to create the Empire and as a reigning prince has an older title than the Emperor’s’!

In the controversy the succession of the Biesterfeld line was disputed by the Bückeburg house on the ground of the inequality of the former in birth, as one of its ancestors had married a lady of the lesser nobility, Modeste von Unruh, whose descendants were not entitled to succeed. Marschall then worked on the issue with the King of Saxony without further consulting or considering me, and elaborated a decision in favour of the Biesterfeld line, although the impression had become general that it could not succeed for the reason just given. Thus as a result of his *votum* my brother-in-law and my sister had to leave Detmold, in accordance with his plain decision, much to the grief of the whole population, which had no liking for the Biesterfeld house. The treaty was ignored.

I spoke rather sharply to Marschall about this turn in the affair; at first he became very excited, maintaining that the

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right had been undeniably on the side of the Biesterfeld line. When I cut him short by asking briefly: 'And Modeste von Unruh? Has she simply been left out of account?' he became silent and very embarrassed; finally he got out of his difficulty by saying that 'He had been unable to vote any other way; the award had had to be given so, as the King of Saxony had confidentially admitted to him when the two were alone that he had *pledged his word* to the old late Count of Lippe-Biesterfeld, before his death, to place his son on the throne of Lippe and to prevent the Bückeburgs from seizing it.'

I replied: 'Then H.M. the King of Saxony was a *party* to the dispute and should not have pronounced an award, and you too should at once have resigned your function.'

The affair was not correct. For in a decision on a purely constitutional issue personal motives had been introduced, with the support of the Secretary of State.

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW