

TIMEO DANAOS.

BY WILLIAM VOCKE.

AS a constant reader of *The Open Court* I have read with interest your article on international goodwill published in its last number and fully agree with your views as to the important part public sentiment plays in the diplomatic relations of republican countries. Your remarks on the improvement in the relations between our country and England, as well as your references to the inestimable benefits our people have derived from their contact with the Germans, are also highly appreciated, but I beg to differ with you, when you say that the recent "estrangement between the United States and Germany started in Manila," meaning, as you doubtless do, that it was due alone to the misunderstanding between Admiral Dewey and the German admiral von Dietrichs; and since this leads you to say further on, that "mass meetings of German citizens in this country have been held of late for the purpose of assuring the German government that the Germans of this country have not yet forgotten that they are Germans," and still further, that the leaders of this movement "have expressed their German-American patriotism by an unnecessary and uncalled-for show of hatred for England," I deem it my duty, in view of the great importance, as well as the justice of the movement which you so seriously deprecate, to call your attention to a few facts, in order to show that your assertions are not entirely well founded.

Did the misunderstanding between the United States and Germany start in Manila? The difficulties there between the two admirals occurred in the summer of 1898. More than a year before that time the columns of many of the most widely circulated dailies in this country were constantly flooded with base falsehoods about the German people and their government. At the time the Germans secured by peaceable negotiations with the Chinese govern-

ment possession of a Chinese harbor for the protection of their extensive trade interests in the East these papers made most violent daily outcries against them, charging them with the wicked intention of seeking to establish barbarous trade restrictions against other nations, calling upon our government to interfere and in conjunction with England to prevent the cession of the harbor, stigmatising the men at the head of the German government as a band of buccaneers, highwaymen, and pirates, and showing their ill will in many other similar ways. Scarcely had our war with Spain broken out, when this evil disposition found vent in a systematic course of vilification such as has never been witnessed in the press of any country.

Let me call your attention to only a few of the many falsehoods which were circulated here and were made the subject of editorial comments, in which they were treated as historic truths, long before Admiral von Dietrichs set sail for the Philippine islands. Right at the beginning our people were gravely assured that both, the government and the people of Germany, were bitterly hostile towards us and that the former was engaged in getting up a combination of the continental powers to interfere in favor of Spain.

This lie nailed, we were told that but for the friendly attitude and the mailed hand of England these powers, with Germany in the lead, would have interfered, and that hence we owed England an immeasurable debt of gratitude. The German Emperor was reported to have said he "would never permit the Yankees to seize Cuba," and our Ambassador at Berlin, it was claimed, had been slighted at Court. Although both these statements were shown by the German ruler and Mr. White to have been base fictions, they were nevertheless given repeated publication as undisputed facts. Scarcely had Admiral Dewey's victory become fully known, when it was seriously asserted that "grasping Germany" was casting covetous glances at the Philippines and was threatening to interfere with our conquests which "liberal and unselfish England" was generously offering to help us prevent. This fabrication turned up again every now and then throughout the war to scare the timid and had gained such credence that one of the learned professors of the University of Chicago, in a lecture before his class delivered last winter, told his young hearers in all earnestness, that von Dietrichs would have attacked our navy under Admiral Dewey had not the British fleet prevented it.

A few apparently well-directed shots at our fleet from a battery in a Cuban port gave rise to the falsehood that the battery

was manned with German gunners furnished by the German military authorities, who were also said to have sent gunners to Cadiz to serve the forts at that place. Prince Bismarck, our people were told, had said that the war was the result of persistent provocations on our part and had indulged in other most unfriendly remarks about our government. Certain utterances from the lips of Lord Wolseley, the commander of the English army, and other English soldiers concerning the untried character of our raw volunteers, were treated as most friendly criticism, similar expressions, however, from German military authorities, intended in no more unfriendly a spirit, were set up to show deep hostility. The German Consul at Manila was falsely said to have tried to interfere with our blockade long before von Dietrichs was there, and as to the great gun manufacturer Krupp it was asserted that he had shipped a large number of cannon to Spain to be used in her fortified places and to have smuggled them through the German and French custom houses as kitchen furniture. The sympathies of the German people for Spain were reported to be so intense as to have prompted them to make collections throughout the empire which in a very short time had aggregated the enormous sum of twenty-three million marks. This story, as well as several of the others here mentioned, were cabled by the Berlin agent of the Associated Press and therefore passed through almost all the American dailies, and although the *New Yorker Staats Zeitung* and other German papers in the country promptly called attention to the enormity of the falsehood, the Associated Press never saw fit to have its agent explain and refute it.

But the most of these vile stories, of which I have only enumerated a few, came from British sources and were clearly intended to poison the minds of our people against the Germans. In fact, for a long time it had the appearance as if all the mendacious scribblers in the whole British kingdom, moved by one common impulse, had been gathered together for the sole purpose of bringing about a positive and lasting estrangement between this country and Germany. We were at war with a foreign power, and in the excitement of the hour, so natural under such circumstances, groundless suspicions were easily aroused. The studied and persistent attempts to place the fatherland in a false light before the American people, coupled, as they oftentimes were, with comments so abusive and scurrilous that they could not have been worse had we been in an open state of war with Germany, had therefore a far-reaching and most pernicious effect. The vile falsehoods, taken

as facts, were the subject of exciting discussion in private and in public, here as elsewhere; politicians and statesmen agitated them in the halls of Congress; semi-official organs spoke of the strong probability of an early war with Germany, and even men in high official positions, having imbibed the poison and ignorant of the true facts, gave expression to most angry and violent remarks amid loud threats of war.

The misunderstanding between the admirals, which in all probability amounted to nothing more than little tilts to which under ordinary conditions but little, if any, attention would have been paid, was in the excited condition of the public mind, brought about by the vicious slanders which had been circulated here so long, treated as a most aggravating aggression on the part of the German government, and otherwise enormously magnified. I beg to say, therefore, that the estrangement between the two nations did not "start in Manila and was intensified in Samoa," as you have it, but that it had started long before as the result of vile intrigues employed in the interest of another foreign power, and was intensified in Manila to such an extent that an American admiral in Samoa, in alliance with the commander of a British man-of-war, dared to do gross violence to a harmless people by firing shot and shell into their peaceful hamlets, in order to prevent the installation of their duly elected king, because the Germans favored him and the English opposed him, and further, because the American Chief-Justice of the island (at the bidding of the London Missionary Society, as we are now reliably advised) had seen fit to decide that the king was intelligible. Can it be doubted that if in this sad business the rôles of the representatives of the English and the German government had been reversed, the American Chief-Justice as well as the admiral, right or wrong, would nevertheless have been on the side of the British?

Alarmed at the serious danger which threatened the peace of two hitherto friendly nations, whose good relations should be sacredly guarded first of all by the German-American citizens, the editors of the German papers in Chicago called the first of the mass-meetings to which you refer. Two of the speakers at that meeting were born on this soil and never were Germans, one of them was a staunch fighter for liberty in 1848 and he, as well as another, American citizens for more than forty years, while the remaining two have belonged to this country over thirty years. Recognising, as they all did, that public sentiment in this country shapes the policy of our government, they were prompted by no

other motive but to appeal to reason, to warn the people not to heed the shameless slanders which for nearly two years had disgraced the columns of our press, and thus to prevent foreign intrigue from bringing about an open rupture between our country and the fatherland. You will see, therefore, when all the facts are duly considered, that the first and most important of all the meetings was not called by the leaders "to show the German government that they still are Germans," but that their course was patriotic and just, because it had for its sole object the peace and good will of two great and kindred nations.

Your statement that the leaders of the movement "have expressed their German-American patriotism by an unnecessary and uncalled for show of hatred for England," neither applies to the Chicago meeting, unless it is assumed that a proper characterisation of the shameless conduct of English venders of news on American soil, and the rejection of the arrogant assumption of the Anglo-maniacs that we are an Anglo-Saxon people and have derived all the blessings of our civilisation from England, constitutes such a show.

The men in charge of the meeting, as well as the entire audience, still believe in the wisdom of the counsels of the father of our country relative to entangling alliances with foreign powers, and since our country, in her invincible strength, does not stand in need of an alliance, the meeting expressed itself accordingly. For this reason it is also impossible for the speakers to agree with you when you say that "the mass-meetings would have served a better purpose if they had insisted on a triple alliance of the three Teutonic nations, the Germans, the English, and the Americans."

I admit that the spirit on the other side during our war was not what it should have been, and I deplore this as deeply as you do. But the press in Germany could not in the very nature of things have been half so violent as ours was, nor could public sentiment there exercise such powerful influence upon the action of the government as it does here. Nevertheless, I recognise it also to be a high mission of our German-American citizens to teach the Germans in the fatherland to respect and honor our American people, to brush away misunderstandings there and to seek to restore and preserve for all times the former esteem and cordial relations between the two nations.

I trust you will appreciate why I explain the character of the German-American movement and the causes that led to it at such length. Had I found your utterances almost anywhere else I would

hardly have noticed them, but you as I hail from the fatherland, and your views relating to subjects affecting Germany are widely respected. I have no reason to assume that you would devote your powerful pen to anything which in your judgment is not eminently just, and hence I take it for granted that some of the facts which have contributed to shape the movement which you condemn have escaped your notice, which is my apology for calling your attention to them.