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DECEMBER, 1914

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The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER



CAPTAIN COUNT ZEPPELIN.

(See pages 724-737.)

The Open Court Publishing Company
CHICAGO

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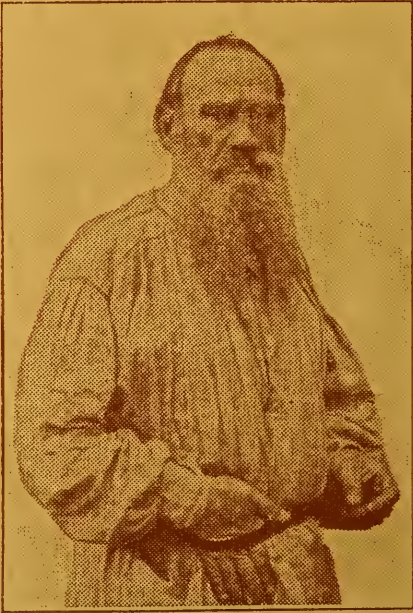
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Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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VOL. XXVIII. (No. 12) DECEMBER, 1914

NO. 703

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A LETTER FROM POULTNEY BIGELOW.

MY DEAR DR. CARUS: Your flattering proposal that I send you my views at this moment regarding William II shall be answered briefly and frankly—at any other time I would have said, with alacrity. But in this great world struggle it would please me more to bury myself in my forest retreat and emerge only after the now fighting forces had shaken hands and returned to their wasted fields and ruined houses.

My acquaintance with William II commenced during the great Franco-German war of 1870/71 when we were youngsters, each in charge of his tutor at Potsdam. For twenty-five years our relations remained of so friendly, not to say confidential, a nature that in so far as circumstances permitted, I was a favored guest at most of the German court functions—including the military ones, which to me were the most interesting and important.

This happy friendship ceased in 1896, and I have but myself to blame. William II has consistently followed ideals of the purest and loftiest character—they have led him to conclusions which I respect but cannot share.

After our Potsdam days William II went to school at Kassel and then to Bonn University; myself graduating at the Norwich Academy in Connecticut and afterwards at Yale.

William II is a Hohenzollern through and through and a gentleman into the bargain—which can be said of very few of that illustrious line—least of all of the husband of his great-grandmother Queen Louise of blessed memory.

In 1896 appeared the first two volumes of my *History of the German Struggle for Liberty* (1806-1813)—it was not pleasing to the Berlin court. It was not written in the spirit of Treitschke—for whom I had immense respect personally, but none whatever as

a philosophic historian. Every school-child in Germany learns of Frederick William III as the saviour of his country; to me he was the prime cause of her disgrace at Jena and the chief stumbling block to her uprising in 1813. The real hero of German liberty, in my book, is Queen Louise.

However, it was impossible that William II should forever publicly consort with one who not only believed in government for and by the people, but who was so tactless as perpetually to say so in print. The year 1896 would have closed my career as imperial guest for another reason. It was the year of the Jamieson raid, and in that year I spent six months visiting the important people in South Africa and studying the effects of a very unfortunate telegram launched by William II against the suzerainty of Great Britain as a colonial empire. This now legendary cable, whatever its literal wording, said to the Boer mind that when the followers of Paul Kruger should need help they were to look not to Westminster, but to Potsdam for relief.

The consequence of this dispatch was to encourage the spirit of separation in Pretoria and Bloemfontein; then came the great Boer war and then the prolongation of that war for at least a whole year because the Boers confidently looked for a great German army as per promises made by alleged representatives of William II.

Personally I have no evidence that William II ever made an official promise to help the Boers against England in 1900; if he had made such a promise he would have kept it. I have never known William II to tell a falsehood; I have never known him to accuse another of falsehood. But he has often created false impressions by giving way to the generous impulses of his nature—and the Kruger telegram is a glaring illustration. German officialdom has vainly sought to assure the world that there was nothing but innocence in this dispatch. They are fools who can be made to regard it so. During the Boer war and every year thereafter I was in Germany and felt but one strong national ambition—a thirst for war with England; a growing feeling that the German court wanted war and that it was a pity to miss so fine an opportunity as the Boer war for attacking a rival when her army was occupied six thousand miles away.

Of course I wrote of German policy in 1896 as freely as I write these lines—nor did my book *White Man's Africa* give any more pleasure at Potsdam than my *History of Germany* in her days of shame.

So now you have my confession—and in it you may read the reason why in 1915 I look for peace—dictated, not by William II, but by the Allies.

Nor is this incompatible with my opinion in this month of October, 1914, that William II has in this campaign proved himself the greatest soldier since Frederick the Great, a prediction which I published in 1889 when the press of the world was slandering him most persistently and when I deemed it my duty to give a true picture of his character which picture is true to-day after an interval of twenty-five years. But at this moment I am concerned not with William II the man whom I shall always love for his manly qualities, but with William II as responsible leader of a great nation in arms and therefore the head of a power capable of wrecking or elevating any social structure within his reach.

It is idle for us Americans to talk of official Germany as our Germany—the land of Goethe and Schiller; Helmholtz and Humboldt, Schubert and Wagner. The great poets and singers; philosophers and physicists; preachers and writers—these make up the ideal Germany of American students. But if you love those names and what they stand for do not waste your time amidst Germany's ruling classes. You may go to all the royal functions in Berlin and never suspect that there is such a thing as a gentleman or a scholar in Germany, save with a sword at his side and a helmet on his head. Since the simple days of 1870/71 the military ideals of Germany have changed—the German soldier then was the citizen trained to defend his fatherland. To-day Germany is dominated by a school of soldiers, thinkers and officials who clamor for German expansion and hiss down the moderate wise people who deplore bloodshed as a means of spreading commercial prosperity.

Germans of the moderate school are loyal to their army but cannot approve of the latter-day mania for a big navy and correspondingly big colonial territory. But, as before remarked, the moderates in Germany are howled and hissed down by the mob of military-minded expansionists who have convinced themselves that England owes her position to her colonies and that with the conquest of England Germany will at once be the ruler of the world.

What I say is not at random, but the result of intimate intercourse with Germans of every social plane and in every part of the world—including New Guinea and Kiao Chow.

No German will believe that England has drawn her colonies to her by the magnet of generous treatment and civil liberty. To-day England can count upon troops from any one of her self-

governing colonies—I venture to say that she can draw more from the single West India Island of Jamaica than can Germany from her one million square miles of colonial empire where she has ruled supreme for a full generation. The German whom I know talks German, sings German and sheds his blood for Germany—but when he talks of being a colonist it is under the British flag, not that of William II. During the Boer war I had occasion to address the Royal Economic Society in Munich under the presidency of the illustrious Professor Brentano, and afterwards the International Geographical Congress in Berlin. At each of these gatherings, where I spoke in German and was listened to by crowded audiences of the highest German culture, I made the point clear that when England should have won in South Africa, the Boers would then under the British flag enjoy for the first time true liberty and self-government. This was each time received by howls of skeptical laughter!

Who is laughing now when Boer and Briton are standing shoulder to shoulder against the man who penned the Kruger dispatch of 1896?

In 1898 the United States was at war with Spain, and the American navy performed one of the finest feats of which a naval commander is capable when Admiral Dewey entered a port sown with mines and sent to the bottom all there was of nautical Spain in the Far East. Then was the time for official Germany to have shown her traditional friendship for this country. Instead of that she sent to Manila Bay a fleet larger than that of any other power—a fleet that looked like a menace and that acted like a menace. It was an official blunder analogous to the Kruger dispatch. The one made Englishmen feel that Germany was seeking cause for quarrel; Manila made Americans realize that nothing but England stood between her and German ambition.

Of course official Germany saw that it had blundered at Manila as at Pretoria; and of course the official press commenced to explain and to accuse Dewey of having exaggerated—if not of having invented—his facts. But it was nevertheless a sad blunder! Then William II sent over his younger brother who had been admiral in Chinese waters when our Dewey was there; but this mission proved a blunder. Admiral Dewey would not come forth to greet Prince Henry and a case full of Red Eagle orders of the third and fourth class had to be shipped back again to Berlin because no one here would accept them except a very few who would accept anything.

Why weary with details? Suffice it to say that whilst German merchants and German scholars have been for the past thirty years enriching themselves in England and in every British colony and spreading the fame of German wares and German culture, official Germany has been as industriously spreading distrust and rumors of war. In the one port of Singapore I have counted at one moment twenty-five funnels of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company of Bremen; her ships carried the British mails throughout Malaya, German merchants were quietly absorbing the trade of England's Far East as they had that of South America. All was going smoothly for the German individual colonist and merchant. How often have I heard him say: "I am doing very well—if only my *verdamnte* government would leave me alone!"

Let an Englishman try to do business in Germany or in a German colony, and he will repent it. Germans in a British colony have the same rights as an Englishman or American—and no wonder that "made in Germany" has ceased to be ornamental in British eyes!

William II is making a splendid war—if war ever can be splendid. He has justified my most sanguine predictions—for I know the perfection of his war machine, having campaigned with his troops in every one of his twenty corps maneuvers. My German friends write me that I should illumine the American press by telling of German virtue and Franco-Belgico-British brutality and perfidy. My German friends believe their cause is sacred—William II feels too that he has been forced into war.

But what of it?

Let us look ahead, as we did in the Boer war!

England is the only country whose flag throughout the world stands for civil liberty and self-government. The degradation of England on the high seas would be a loss to all the world—chiefly to small neutral powers like Norway, Holland etc. All the world trades freely with England and profits by the liberality of her commercial legislation. The German talk about England's trade despotism is mere electioneering.

My German friends are never weary of painting India as a field for British barbarity and cupidity—they revel in Verestchagin's romantic painting—Sepoys blown from the mouths of British cannon. But come with me and let me show you the real India—her schools and colleges; her thousands of miles of railway and telephones; her incomparable highways, canals, public buildings and above all her body of civil servants who rule three hundred mil-

lions of heterogeneous natives more easily than could ten times that number of German officials backed by ten times the number of Prussian troops. Think of these three hundred millions in India and only seventy-five thousand white soldiers by way of garrison! Could there be any more astounding evidence that British rule in India is the rule of reason and not merely of the sword?

And now, dear Doctor Carus, I am done! I have written to you as I would to one of my German friends. My family is English on both sides and has been settled here since 1630. Of course I have my prejudices—nor can I conceal them. But you know that I love Germany, having lived there ever since 1866—not continuously, but off and on for more than forty years. So soon as the war is over I shall go there again and feel sure that however much they may be angry with you for publishing this and with me for penning it, time will prove that much as I love my own country Germans have to-day no more sincere and sympathetic critic than their friend and yours,

POULTNEY BIGELOW.