

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallage Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Moltke
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo
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Nietzsche Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntz
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**The Secret Memoirs of the Courts
of Europe: William II, Germany;
Francis Joseph, Austria-Hungary,
Volume I. (of 2)**

Mme. la Marquise de Fontenoy

Imprint

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The essential qualifications for an author of such a work as the present are an actual acquaintance with the persons mentioned, an intimate knowledge of their daily lives, and a personal familiarity with the scenes described.

The author of *William II. and Francis-Joseph*, sheltered under the *nom de plume* of Marquise de Fontenoy, is a lady of distinguished birth and title. Her work consists largely of personal reminiscences, and descriptions of events with which she is perfectly familiar; a sort of panoramic view of the characteristic happenings and striking features of court life, such as will best give a true picture of persons and their conduct.

There has been no attempt to trammel the subject,—which embraces religious, official, social and domestic life,—by following a strictly sequential form in the narrative, but the writer's aim has been to present her facts in a familiar way, impressing them with characteristic naturalness and lifelike reality.

To this task the author has brought the habits of a watchful observer, the candor of a conscientious narrator, and the refinement of a writer who respects her subject. Hence she presents a true, vivid and interesting picture of court life in Germany and Austria. If such merely sensational, and too often fictitious, unsavory tales as crowd the so-called court narratives expressly concocted for the "society" columns of the periodical press are not the most prominent features of the present work, it is because they receive only a truthful recognition and place in its pages.

WILLIAM II
AND
FRANCIS-JOSEPH

CHAPTER I

"If only Emperor William would be true to himself — be natural, in fact!" exclaimed Count S—, a Prussian nobleman, high in the diplomatic service of his country, with whom I was discussing the German Emperor a year or so ago. Then my friend, who had, a short time previously, been brought into frequent personal contact with his sovereign, in connection with his official duties, went on to say:

"There are really two distinct characters, one might almost say two personalities, in the kaiser. When he is himself he is the most charming companion that it is possible to conceive. His manners are as genial and as winning as those of his father and grandfather, both of whom he surpasses in brilliancy of intellect, and in quickness of repartee, as well as in a keen sense of humor. He gives one the impression of possessing a heart full of the most generous impulses, — aye, of a generosity carried even to excess, and this, together with a species of indescribable magnetism which appears to radiate from him in these moments, contributes to render him a most sympathetic man."

"But," interposed an Englishman who was present, "that is not how he is portrayed to the outer world. Nor is that the impression which he made upon me and upon others when he was at Cowes."

"That is precisely why I deplore so much that the emperor should fail to appear in his true colors," continued Count S—. "All the qualities which I have just now ascribed to him are too often concealed beneath a mantle of reserve, self-consciousness, nay, even pose. During my recent interviews with his majesty, whenever we happened to be alone, he would show himself in the light which I have just described to you. But let a third person appear upon the scene — be it even a mere servant — at once his entire manner would change. The magnetic current so pleasantly established between us would be cut through, his eyes would lose their kindly, friendly light, and become hard, his attitude self-conscious and constrained,

the very tone of his speech sharp, abrupt, commanding, I would almost say arrogant. In fact he would give one the impression that he was playing a rôle—the rôle of emperor—that he was, in one word, posing, even if it were only for the benefit of the menial who had interrupted us. But when the intruder had vanished, William would, like a flash, become his own charming self again. That is what made me exclaim just now, 'if only the kaiser would be true to himself!—be natural, in fact.'

"I fully agree with you, my dear S— —," I remarked, after a short pause. "If the emperor has remained anything like what he was prior to his ascension to the throne, your estimate of his character is correct." And I went on to relate a little incident which occurred on the occasion of my first meeting with the emperor many years ago.

This meeting took place on that particular spot where the empires of Germany, Austria, and Russia may be said to meet, the frontier guards of each of those three nations being within hail of one another. The great autumnal military manoeuvres were in progress, and a merry party, including a number of ladies, were riding home from the mimic battlefield. We passed through a narrow lane, bordered on each side by groups of stunted willows and birch trees, under the sparse shadow of which nestled a few cottages painted in blue, pink, or yellow, in true Polish fashion. Suddenly our progress was arrested by terrifying screams proceeding from one of these hovels. Several of us were out of our saddles in an instant and rushed in at the low door.

Before the hearth, where a huge peat-fire was burning, stood a young peasant woman, her face distorted with agonized grief, and holding in her arms a bundle of blackened rags. We found that her baby had fallen into the glowing embers, while she herself was occupied out of doors, and the poor mite was so badly burned that there seemed but little hope of its ever reviving from its state of almost complete coma. We were all busying ourselves eagerly about the child and its distraught mother, when raising my eyes from the palpitating form of the child, I caught sight of "Prince William," as the kaiser was then called, standing near the door, apparently quite undisturbed and unmoved by this tragedy in lowly life. It even seemed to me in the dim light as if he were smiling derisively at our

efforts to relieve the sufferings of the little one, and to soothe the grief of its mother. But my indignation vanished quickly when a slanting ray of the setting sun, piercing through the grime of the little window, revealed the presence on his cheek of two very large and *bona-fide* tears, which had welled up in his eyes, to which the lad was endeavoring to impart an expression of callous indifference; and when at last we left the hut to seek a doctor for the tiny sufferer it was Prince William's own military coat, none too new, and even, to say the truth, much worn, that remained as an additional coverlet upon the roughly-hewn wooden cot, over which the sobbing mother was bending.

"Nobody," I added, "will, therefore, make me believe that Emperor William has not got a very soft spot in his heart, and that beneath the mannerisms which he considers it necessary to affect in order to maintain the dignity of his position as emperor,—those mannerisms which have given rise to so much misapprehension about his character,—there is not concealed a very kindly spirit, literally brimming over with generous impulses, which, if more widely known, would serve to render the kaiser the most popular, as he is the most interesting figure of Old World royalty."

It is because Emperor Francis-Joseph and the veteran King of Saxony are so thoroughly acquainted with his real nature, that they are truly and honestly fond of him. Both of them old men, with no sons in whom to seek support for the eventide of lives that have been saddened by many a public and private sorrow, they entertain a fatherly affection for William, who as emperor treats them in public as brother sovereigns, and as equals, but accords to them in private the most touching filial deference and regard, remembering full well the kindness which both of them showed to him when he was still the much-snubbed, and not altogether justly-treated "Prince William." They on their side are led by his behavior towards them to regard him in the light of a son. Of course they cannot be blind to his faults, but they are disposed to treat them with an indulgence that is even more than paternal, and to see in them relatively trivial defects, due to the manner in which he was brought up, and which are certain to disappear with advancing years and experience.

During his early manhood, Prince William was by no means a favorite either at his grandfather's court or at that of any other foreign sovereign which he was occasionally allowed to visit. Pale-faced and delicate-looking, very severely treated by his mother, who is what one is bound to call *une maîtresse femme*, the boy at seventeen was by no manner of means prepossessing, and his efforts to assert himself, and to crush down a good deal of natural awkwardness and timidity added to his singularly unlikeable appearance.

In those days it could clearly be seen that everything that he did or said was meant to create an impression of dignity and of grandeur, to which his physique did not lend itself very easily, and the contrast between him and his bosom friend the courteous, graceful and dashing Crown Prince of Austria, was very marked.

Good-hearted and endowed with a great many truly generous instincts the young fellow was, however, sorely handicapped by his education, the abnormal strictness displayed towards him at the Court of Berlin, and also by a continually and most distressingly empty purse. It is a hard and almost pitiful thing for the heir apparent of a great empire to find himself often without the necessary amount with which to cut the figure which his social rank forces him to adopt, and it must have been especially galling to the overbearing and proud nature of this boy to be continually obliged to borrow from his friends, nay even from his *aides de camp*, small sums wherewith to pay his way wherever he went. Nevertheless his father and mother, then Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Germany, believed it to be a thoroughly wholesome thing for the young man to have to humble his pride, should he not be content with the very small allowance made to him, this unfortunate idea being, however, the cause of a great deal of bitterness, which to this day has not completely faded from the heart of the now omnipotent ruler of the German Empire.

It is undeniable that many eccentricities and false moves on the part of William II. have been grossly exaggerated and placed before the public in a false light, showing him up as a conceited, bumptious and silly person, whereas not only his state of health, but his *entourage* should have been blamed for whatever he did that was out of place. During a great many years the young prince suffered

from what is called technically *otitis media*, namely, a disease of the middle ear, very painful, exasperating and even somewhat humiliating to endure, and which he must have inherited in some extraordinary way from his great-uncle, King William IV. of Prussia, who died insane. There are certainly some traits of resemblance between this hapless monarch and the present occupant of the German throne, for in both there exists and has existed the same exaggerated and narrow-minded religious beliefs, bordering on mysticism, and also an all-embracing faith in their absolute and unquestionable infallibility.

It has long since become a well-anchored creed that William II. has occasional fits of insanity. This is by no means the case, but it must be admitted that the peculiar malady to which I referred above, and which is as yet not eradicated from his system, causes him, at times, days of the most excruciating pains all over the back and side of his head, and it is scarcely surprising that at such moments the emperor should act in a way which astonishes the uninitiated. Indeed, William II. displays extraordinary force of character in suppressing physical agony, when the duties he owes to the state force him to come forward when unfit for anything else but the sick room.

The truth of the matter is that there are but few who can boast of knowing him well, and the masses as well as the classes both at home and abroad seem to take a peculiarly keen delight in accepting for gospel truth any sweeping statements made about him by the press of all civilized countries.

Although twenty-nine years of age when he ascended the throne on June 15, 1888, he may be said to have been at that time still but a raw youth, continually kept in the background, and treated more or less like a child, without any consequence or weight. It is, therefore, not remarkable that the first years of his reign should have been signalized by many errors of judgment; for it is not with impunity that one suddenly releases a person, locked up for years in a dark room and drives him into dazzlingly-lighted spaces without a guide, a philosopher, or a friend by his side to lead him on the way. The mental, as well as the physical optic has to gradually become accustomed to so complete a change, and this fact was not suffi-

ciently taken into consideration by all the detractors of the young monarch, when he, to speak very familiarly, leaped over the saddle in his anxiety to secure for himself a firm seat on the throne of his forefathers.

It is well to mention also that Emperor Frederick III., who reigned alas! but for a few weeks, was positively worshipped by the German people, and not without cause, for he was undoubtedly one of the finest personalities of this century. His appearance, his demeanor, his unaffected dignity, kindness of heart, and loftiness of purpose were difficult to surpass, and it was a bitter disappointment to his subjects when death snatched him away before he had had time to carry out the grand plans and ideas which he had long cherished and reserved for the time when he would have the reins of government in his own hands.

Speaking with all kindness and good-will, one cannot but after a fashion understand the disappointment of the Germans when this towering military figure, this magnificent specimen of perfect physical and mental manhood, vanished from their ken, to be replaced by the slender, pale-faced, somewhat arrogant and despotic young man, who resembled this father so little.

Emperor William II. is an extremely intelligent personage, in spite of all that may have been said to the contrary. He thinks for himself when he has a mind to do so, and, what is more, thinks logically, and is quite capable of following a thus logically-attained conclusion to its furthestmost point. He feels keenly his enormous responsibilities, and the tremendous international importance of his position as the ruler of over 50,000,000 people, for he well knows that any man wearing on his head the double crown of King of Prussia, and of German Emperor, is a being endowed with powers which are bound to compel attention from every point of the European Continent. Being given, as I have just remarked, that his health and his physique are neither of them of a kind to aid him in the tremendous task which belongs to him by right of birth, it is easily explainable that his self-assertive ways and imperious manners should often be mistaken for posing and posturing. Moreover, his imperfect left arm—a misfortune which has been a source of great distress to him ever since his birth—is but another one of those physical

troubles which his pride makes him anxious to conceal, this only adding to his stilted and repellent attitude. In spite of all these drawbacks, the emperor fences exceedingly well, rides with pluck, and even skill, managing to hold his reins with his poor withered left hand when in uniform, in order to keep his sword-arm free, and during his visit to Austrian Poland, which I referred to at the beginning of this chapter, I more than once saw him with my own eyes, whilst we were riding across country, take obstacles which would have made a far older and more experienced hunter pause and reflect on.

Nobody, even the best-intentioned, can deny that Emperor William has many faults; those are, however, either ignored altogether, or else exaggerated to an extent that eclipses all his good qualities, by his various biographers. Very few pen-portraits of royal personages that pass through the hands of the publishers can be said to present a true picture of their subject. Either the writer holds up the object of his literary effort as a person so blameless as to suggest the idea that he is an impossible prig, or else every piece of malevolent gossip is construed into a positive fact, his shortcomings magnified until they lose all touch of resemblance, while every word and action capable of misrepresentation is construed in the manner most detrimental to his reputation. In one word, he is either glorified as a preposterous saint, or else held up to public execration as an equally impossible villain. Now, in pictorial art, a portrait, in order to present a satisfactory and successful resemblance to its subject, must contain lights and shadows. You cannot have all light, or all shadow, but it is necessary to have a judicious mixture of both. So it is with the art of biography. If one wishes to give in print a true, and above all, a human picture of one's subject, it is necessary to mingle the shadows with the lights. In fact, the former may be said to set off the latter, and there are many shortcomings, especially those which the French, so graphically describe as *petits vices*,—small vices—which, resulting from a generous and impulsive temperament, serve, like the Rembrandt shadow of a portrait, to render the subject more attractive to the eye.

It is my object, not to give a definitive biography of either of the two kaisers, or even a mere record of their *vie intime*, but rather to present to my readers a series of incidents, full of lights and full of

shadows, showing their surroundings, describing as far as possible the atmosphere in which they move, the conditions of life which they are obliged to consider, the temptations to which they are exposed—and to which they sometimes succumb—and when I have completed my task I venture to believe that the readers of these volumes, while they may find the two emperors neither quite so blameless, nor yet quite so bad as they expected, may nevertheless experience a greater degree of sympathy and regard for them as being after all so extremely human.

CHAPTER II

While Emperor Francis-Joseph is justly reputed to have played sad havoc with the hearts of the fair sex in his dominions, especially in his younger days, having inherited that frivolity with regard to women which is a traditional characteristic of the illustrious House of Hapsburg, he has never at any moment during his long reign permitted his susceptibility to feminine charms to go to the length of influencing his political conduct, or the action of his government.

Emperor William, on the other hand, whose married life has been, from a domestic point of view, singularly blameless, and who has been an exceptionally faithful husband, has, in at least two instances, permitted himself to be swayed in his rôle of sovereign by ladies, who for a time figured as his "Egerias." One of them was a woman of extraordinary cleverness, and an American by birth, who while she has long since ceased to exercise any influence upon him, has retained the affection and the regard of both his consort and himself. She is the Countess Waldersee, daughter of the late David Lee, a wholesale grocer of New York, and who at the time that she became the wife of Field-marshal Count Waldersee, was the widow of the present German empress's uncle, Prince Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein. The latter abandoned his royal rank and titles, and assumed the merely nobiliary status of a Prince of Noer, in order to make her his consort.

The countess is treated as an aunt by both William and the kaiserin, and she may be said to have swayed her imperial nephew by her cleverness and intellectual brilliancy, rather than by her looks, for she is a woman already well-advanced in years.

Different in this respect was the influence of the emperor's other Egeria, namely, the Polish baroness, Jenny Koscielska, a woman of rare elegance and beauty, whose political importance during the time she reigned supreme at the Court of Berlin, was attributable to her personal fascination rather than to her sagacity or statecraft. She is the wife of that Baron Kosciol-Koscielski, who was one of the

most celebrated leaders of the Polish party in the Russian House of Lords, and perhaps, also, the most popular of all modern Polish poets and playwrights.

It would be going too far to assert that William was infatuated by her loveliness. Yet there is no doubt that as long as she figured at the Court of Berlin, he not only paid her the most marked attention, but likewise allowed himself to be advised by her in political matters. It was during the so-called "reign of the baroness" that the kaiser showed such an extraordinary degree of favor to his Polish subjects as to excite the jealousy and ill-will of the people in many other parts of his dominions. He reestablished the Polish language in the schools and churches of Posen, that is of Prussian-Poland, nominated a Polish ecclesiastic to the archbishopric of that province, and conferred so many court dignities, government offices, and decorations upon the compatriots of the fair Jenny, as to give rise to the remark that the best road to imperial preferment at Berlin was to add the Polish and feminine termination of "ska" to one's name. Old Prince Bismarck, who was at the time at daggers-drawn with his young sovereign, at length gave public utterance to the popular ill-will, excited by the rôle of Egeria, which the baroness was accused of playing to the "Numa Pompilius" of Emperor William. For, in the course of an address delivered by the old ex-chancellor at Friedrichsrüh, and reproduced in extenso in the press, he declared among other things that: "The Polish influence in political affairs increases always in the measure that some Polish family obtains of more or less influence at Court. I need not allude here to the rôle formerly played by the princely house of Radziwill. To-day we have exactly the same state of affairs, which is to be deplored!" Bismarck's allusion to the Radziwills was an ungenerous reference to the romantic attachment of old Emperor William for that Princess Elize Radziwill, whom he was so determined to marry that he offered his father to abandon his rights of succession to the throne on her account. This King Frederick-William would not permit, and William was compelled to wed Goethe's pupil, Princess Augusta of Saxe-Weimar. A loveless match in every sense of the word, for he remained until the day of Princess Elize's death her most devoted friend and admirer, seeking her advice in many a difficulty, to the great annoyance of Prince Bismarck, who detested her, and after her

death the old emperor continued to show the utmost favor and good-will to the members of her family in honor of her memory. Of course this speech of Prince Bismarck created no end of a sensation throughout the empire, as well as abroad, the press being encouraged thereby to print in cold type what had until that time been merely whispered in official and court circles. It is possible that the young emperor might have remained indifferent to popular clamor about the matter, had not two other incidents occurred about the same time to cool his liking for the fair Jenny.

In the first place, she felt herself so much encouraged by the influence which she believed that she exercised over the emperor, that when during the annual army manoeuvres Field Marshal Prince George of Saxony, and other Prussian and foreign royalties were quartered under her roof, she absolutely declined to hoist either the German flag, or the Royal Saxon standard, but insisted upon flying the national colors of Poland from the flag staff that surmounted the turret of her château. Naturally, Prince George and his fellow royal guests complained of this breach of etiquette to the kaiser, and protested strongly against it.

Almost at the same time, her husband, the baron, having been invited to attend the opening of a provincial exhibition in the neighboring Empire of Austria, was so carried away by enthusiasm, due to the kindness with which the Poles present were treated by Emperor Francis-Joseph, that forgetting all he owed to Emperor William, he publicly hailed Francis-Joseph as "sole sovereign of all Polish hearts," and as "Poland's future king!" About this time too, the empress paid a couple of rather mysterious visits to her mother-in-law at Friedrichkron. Court gossip ascribed these hurried trips to the fact that the empress had been prompted by her jealousy of the baroness to invoke the intervention of the strong-minded widow of Frederick the Noble. But it is far more likely that the empress visited the Dowager Kaiserin in order that she should call the attention of her son to the harm which the association of the name of the baroness with his own was doing him in a political sense both at home and abroad.

Whatever the cause of these consultations between the two empresses may have been, the fact remains that almost immediately

afterwards Baron and Baroness Koscielski received from the Grand-Master-of-the-Court, Count Eulenburg, an official intimation that their presence at court was not desired in highest quarters until further notice, and that under the circumstances they would do well to remain at their country seat. In fact they were virtually banished, and when both husband and wife travelled all the way to Berlin with the object of asking for an explanation from the emperor, he declined to receive either the one or the other. He had apparently come to the conclusion that the game was not worth the candle, and that in view of the fact that his intimacy with the baroness had never gone beyond platonic friendship and mild flirtation, it was ridiculous to incur the ill-will of his subjects and expose himself to slanderous stories concocted by his enemies on her account.

The influence of the American born Countess Waldersee was of a far more lasting character, and may be said to have been inaugurated very shortly after his marriage. Prior to becoming a benedict, Prince William was as gay as his very limited financial means would permit. In fact, he was charged with playing the rôle of Don Juan to at least half a dozen beauties of the Prussian Court, while at Vienna he became involved in a scandal of a feminine character, from which he was only extricated with the utmost difficulty by the then German Ambassador to the Austrian Court, namely, Prince Reuss. The presumption is that he had allowed himself to become the prey of an adventuress, and with the object of avoiding publicity he was practically compelled to provide for the welfare and future of a child which may or may not have been his offspring. But as soon as he married, he turned over a new leaf, and became the very model of husbands.

It has always been my conviction that this was due in part to the influence of the Countess Waldersee, and largely also to the unkindly treatment which his consort received during the early years of her marriage at the hands of his family. Although a nice and gentle-looking girl, Augusta-Victoria was far from shining either by her beauty or her elegance at a court which is one of the most cruelly critical and satirical in all Europe. Moreover, she labored under the disadvantage of being the daughter of the Duchess of Augustenburg, who is not credited with a robust intellect, and, in fact has passed the greater part of her life in retirement, and of the Duke of