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WHY THE NEW REGENT OF BAVARIA REFUSES A CROWN

BY EX-ATTACHE

PRINCE LOUIS OF BAVARIA'S succession to the regency of a kingdom, which is second only in rank to that of Prussia in the confederation of twenty-odd sovereign states known as the German Empire, marks a new departure in the latter's policy and existence. With a Prussian bullet still in his body, received at the battle of Helmstadt — a bullet which had the effect of putting an end to his active military career—he has always been the most vigorous champion of Teuton particularism; that is to say, of the defense of the sovereign rights of the various states of the confederation against the aggression and usurpation of Prussia.

Ever since the foundation of the present German Empire in 1871, and even prior thereto, from the time of the organization of the so-called North German Confederation at the close of the war of 1866, there has been a tendency on the part of Prussia to centralize all the sovereign power, first of the North German Confederation and then of the empire, at Berlin. This policy has been pursued, sometimes so insidiously as to escape public attention, at other times boldly and openly—but always without interruption—until some of the smaller states have ceased to retain any independent power or authority, save in name. Indeed, the Prussians are never tired of pointing out in speeches and in print the superior advantages which non-Prussian Teutons would derive if they were subject to one great and powerful state, ruled by the Kaiser—one of the great figures of the world—rather than to be compelled to accord their allegiance to a petty sovereign, whose name and rank count for little, if anything, outside the borders of Germany.

Bavarian Hatred of Prussia.

This has been strongly resented in Wurtemberg, Baden, Saxony and in the two Grand Duchies of Mecklenburg, likewise in Hesse, but nowhere more intensely than in Bavaria. Popular sentiment in that kingdom is perhaps best illustrated by the well-known story, according to which the present Kaiser, when questioning at Kiel a Bavarian recruit for the navy, asked him who was the national and hereditary enemy, expecting to hear that it was France, but was disconcerted to receive a naive reply to the effect that the enemy was Prussia. On another occasion—it was during the lifetime of the late Emperor William—his son, the then Crown Prince, had under his command during the annual maneuvers of the entire German Army a division of Bavarians. Getting into conversation with an ordinary Bavarian trooper, toward the end of the operations, the man expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which he and his comrades had been handled, and exclaimed with enthusiasm: "Ah! if we had only had Your Imperial Highness to command us in the war of 1866 we'd have beaten those damned Prussians!"

The late Prince Luitpold of Bavaria, like his younger son, Prince Leopold, and his nephew, Prince Arnulf, all of whom had taken part in the Franco-German War of 1870, had always been noted for his very friendly relations with Prussia and with its reigning house of Hohenzollern. So much was this the case that when, in 1886, King Louis' extravagances of conduct and of speech became such as to render it necessary that he should be deprived of the reins of government and placed under restraint, the regency being vested in his uncle, Luitpold, the latter was accused by the masses of his countrymen with having rendered himself a party to a Prussian plot, organized by Prince Bismarck, to remove Louis from the throne, in consequence of that eccentric monarch's well-known hatred of everything Prussian. In many places, indeed, Luipold's statues and busts were destroyed or mutilated, and his portraits defaced, in the most ignominious fashion, as having betrayed his country and his sovereign to Berlin. It took fully 10 or 15 years for the late Prince Regent to live down the odium which he had incurred in connection with Louis II.'s imprisonment and mysterious death; and before the people could be convinced that Luipold had no alternative in 1886 but to consent to the dethronement of his nephew and to his own proclamation as regent.

His eldest son, Prince Leopold, never made any pretense, at any rate in those days, of sharing his father's leanings towards Berlin. He had been brought up to look to the Hapsburgs rather than to the Hohenzollerns, the one dynasty in Germany to which all the other reigning families could yield the "pas" and accord the leadership—primus inter pares. Moreover, his wife, Archduchess Marie Therese of Austria, half-sister of Queen Mother Christina of Spain, is the daughter of one of the most anti-Hohenzollern members of the house of Hapsburg, namely, the late Duke Ferdinand, Duke of Modena, and her influence has certainly not been calculated to foster friendly sentiments on the part of her husband towards Berlin.

Bavaria and the Constitution.

When, in 1870, the two houses of the Bavarian legislature gave their consent to the constitution of the new German Empire as it now exists, and to the inclusion of Bavaria among the other sovereign states comprised in the Kaiserxeich, he, Prince Louis, delivered a most remarkable speech in the Bavarian House of Lords, in which he expressed his "profound sorrow" at being obliged by circumstances to vote in favor of the plan, which he declared had but one merit, in his eyes, namely, that it furnished a more definite safeguard for the maintenance of Bavaria's sovereign rights than the kingdom had enjoyed under the public and secret agreements with the North German Confederation, which it had been compelled to make after its defeat by Prussia in the war of 1866. He likewise urged the ministers in the most earnest manner to avail themselves of the fact that Prussia stood in need of Bavaria's consent for the organization of the new German Empire, to demand a considerable increase of territory in recognition of the valuable services which the Bavarian Army had rendered in the war with France. "If," he added, "we have a greater and a, therefore, stronger Bavaria, we shall then be the better able not only to resist any future aggression by Prussia, but also to defend the cause of any other state of the confederation whose independence may be threatened from Berlin.

By degrees Prince Louis has become reconciled to the new order of things, and he now preaches to his countrymen loyalty to the German Emperor, in matters of imjetlar interest, providing these do not in any way interfere with the immeasurable superior obligations to their native Bavaria. He never departs from the opinions to which he gave such sensational utterance at the great banquet at Moscow on the occasion of the coronation of the present Czar. The principal German guest was Henry of Prussia, as representative of the Kaiser. But there were also scions of every reigning house of Germany present. In proposing the health of the German royal guests at the banquet the Muscovite Grand Duke entrusted with the chairmanship, in the place of the Czar, made the mistake of giving as the toast, "Prince Henry of Prussia, as representing the Kaiser, and all the princes of the vassal German states." Before the cheers had died away, and before Prince Henry could reply, Prince Louis of Bavaria was on his feet, desclaring that neither he nor any of the non-Prussian princes present could accept the word vassal, that none of the reigning houses which they represented would dream of acknowedging the Kaiser's suzerainty, and that they were not his feudatories, but his allies, on a footing of perfect equality—that he was merely primus inter paros.

These sentiments contitute the keynote of his character, of his policy in the past, and of his policy in the future, and no matter what the tenor of the speeches, or the language of the dispatches, exchanged by Emperor William and Prince Leopold on the occasion of the latter's recent succession to the regency, after his father's death, there will be a greater independence than heretofore on the part of Bavaria toward Prussia, there will be less intimacy between Munich and Berlin, and the particularism not alone of Bavaria, but also of most of the more important non-Prussian states of the Confederation, will be emphasized. True, Prince Leopold is already 67 years of age, white-haired, white-bearded, and with a Prussian rifle bullet still in his body—unique among the federal rulers of Germany, in this latter respect. But his race is a long-lived one, as demonstrated in the case of his father, who died the other day at 92, having retained until within a few months only of his demise sufficient mental and physical vigor to do some very successful, though arduous, deer-stalking. Moreover, his eldest son and heir, Prince Rupert, who lost his charming wife (sister of the Queen of Belgium) only the other day, takes his views and his prejudices from his parents rather than from his late grandfather, or from his uncle, Field Marshal Prince Leopold of Bavaria.

Prince Louis Declines Crown.

Prince Louis has resisted the pressure brought to bear upon him from within the kingdom as well as from beyond its borders—from all parts of Germany—to have himself proclaimed king, and to consent to the deposition of his cousin, King Otto. The latter has been incurably insane ever since 1870, under restraint, and in the closest kind of seclusion since 1876; that is to say, since 10 years prior to his proclamation as king. His lieges have never set eyes on him during the more than a quarter of a century that he has been their monarch in name, and the only notion which the present generation of Bavarians have of his appearance is derived from the coinage on which his effigy still figures. An overwhelming majority in both houses of the Munich Parliament favored the deposition of Otto and the establishment of Prince Louis on the throne in his stead, on the ground that the country was at a disadvantage in being represented among the other rulers of the empire by a regent in lieu of a full-fledged monarch, arguing that Louis' voice would carry much more weight if he was able to speak as king, instead of merely the latter's representative.

Moreover, they cited several precedents for a move of this kind, notably the analogous case of Grand Duke Louis II. of Baden, who was already insane when he succeeded his father in 1852, but was deposed as incurably imbecile four years later, and his younger brother, Frederick, proclaimed sovereign grand duke in his stead, the ex-Grand Duke Louis surviving the dethronement for several years.

The Munich government, in conjunction with the two legislative chambers, had taken all the necessary steps to substitute Louis for Otto on the throne of Bavaria, when the prince suddenly intimated that he would not under any circumstances whatsoever accept the crown until it came to him in natural course through the demise of his demented cousin, that as long as the latter lived he would content himself with the regency; also, that in the event of his predeceasing the crazy king, Prince Rupert, his own son and heir, would follow his example and restrict himself to the dignity of regent.

While Prince Louis did not vouchsafe any public explanation of the motives which thus prompted him to decline the crown, it is understood that he had concluded that in these modern times of advanced democracy, when the deposition of monarchs by their discontented subjects is becoming the fashion, it would be impolitic from a dynastic point of view for the reigning houses to foster this practice, and to set at naught the principles of hereditary monarchy by themselves initiating dethronements.

Is a Naval Enthusiast.

Prince Louis, unlike most other German rulers and Princes of the Blood, is rarely seen in uniform, and ever since the battle of Helmstadt, in which he was so severely wounded, has displayed a marked preference for civilian clothes. When obliged to don a uniform he looks uncomfortable therein. It does not set well on him, and the appearance which he presents is quite the reverse of military. The only thing of an armed character in which he is really interested is the German Navy, of which he is one of the most enthusiastic supporters, and which is one of the few subjects in which he is in entire sympathy with the Kaiser.

Another field of common interest with the Emperor is the promotion of inland navigation by the construction of new canals, the enlarging of those already in existence and the deepening and connection of the various rivers of the empire one with another. This hobby of inland navigation is all the more surprising, since if there is one thing more than any other to which he is devoted it is agriculture, and inland navigation has found its bitterest opponents among the agrarian element throughout Germany, which fears that domestic agricultural interests will be impaired if foreign foodstuffs can be brought into the interior of Germany and distributed throughout the empire at a nominal cost of transport by means of waterways. The Prince is without exception the leading farmer, not merely of Bavaria, but, indeed, of all Germany. Is abreast of every new development in agricultural science and obtains extraordinary results on his various estates in Bavaria, in Austria and in Hungary, particularly on his model farms of Leutstetten, on the shores of the Starnberger Lake.

Rather below than above medium height, thickset, broad-shouldered, with a somewhat weather-beaten face, the complexion of which, however, denotes sturdy good health, Prince Louis charms those brought into contact with him by his entire simplicity of manner, his freedom from arrogance, or even from anything that could be construed as condescension. His utterances strike one by their extreme incidity of expression, by their straightforwardness and directness. He is a foe of anything that resembles equivocation, and prefers to speak the truth, no matter how unpleasant, rather than to remain silent. He is the most independent-minded, independent-spoken, prince or monarch in Europe, and just on this account one of the greatest characters among the rulers of Germany. Thanks to his sincerity and to his patriotism, he enjoys the confidence of all classes of his countrymen to a degree without precedent in the history of the land, and whenever he speaks he may be relied upon having at his back the entire Bavarian nation.

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SURVIVING OLD IRISH CUSTOMS

OF WEDDING CUSTOMS the most peculiarly Irish is the coming of the "straw boys." This, with the custom of killing a wren on St. Stephen's day, is merely a pastime and as such is eagerly kept up by the young men and boys.

Although a great number of people can be happy dancing on a mud floor, says the Ave Maria, still space does curtail the possible hospitality of a newly married pair and there are always some neighbors who cannot be included among the wedding guests.

Any young men who have been omitted dress themselves up in white garments and on their heads they wear masks plaited elaborately in straw. Thus disguised they join the wedding party and each one in turn claims the bride for a dance. To take any refreshment would be quite incorrect; the "straw boys" merely dance and go away.

The custom belonging to St. Stephen's Day is still observed in the eastern counties of Ireland, where "straw boys" are no longer known. It must be a very old custom, for the killing of a wren dates back to the times when Ireland was invaded by the Danes, and a wren by dropping onto the Danish sentinel's drum is said to have given warning to the invaders that the Irish Army was at hand.

Now the wren is killed by boys who have never even heard the origin of the custom and it is carried from house to house, tied to a furze bush, the bearers being disguised in any old rags they can lay hands upon, and at each door they sing the doggerel lines:

The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,
On St. Stephen's Day was caught in the furze,
Though his body's small, his family's great,
Come out, Mrs. ——, and give us a trate!

And there are very few who do not give a copper toward keeping alive this old, old custom.

Another Christian custom—but this is a custom of religious sentiment—is that of placing a lighted candle in every window on the night of Christmas Eve, the idea having originally been to show that if the holy family had come to that house they would have found a welcome, instead of the repulse of the householders of Bethlehem.

"To light in the birth of the Redeemer of the world," so it was explained by an old woman, who still possessed one of the triple holders for rushlights that in the old days every one kept safely for use at Christmastime. Now that manufactured candles have taken the place of tallow dips those who keep up the custom are satisfied with setting sometimes one, sometimes three candles in each window.

The custom of keeping a goat with cows and a bantam with hen may be traced to an idea of luck, though it is also maintained that goats eagerly seek out a pasture and soon clear it of all herbs that would be injurious to cows if they were left for them to eat when the grass began to fail.

The most interesting as well as the oldest and still most cherished customs are those that have gathered round deaths and funerals. The caoine or "keen," so often mentioned by Irish writers, is now to be met with only in the West, where the soft plaintive voices seem to lend themselves peculiarly to it.

No one who has not heard a real keen can imagine the wild melancholy of the call that brings an unsought-for lump to the throat of the passer-by. As soon as a person dies the women raise their voices in a high minor key, letting them fall away and die in a most heartrending wail.

This keening is undoubtedly a relic from pagan days, and indeed the blind, unquestioning way in which so many customs are clung to makes it easy to believe that they date back to remote times. The question is whether in these material days the fact of their having been clung to so tenaciously, without any reason having been assigned for them, will not lead to their being abandoned altogether.

For instance, lately going into a house where a child lay dead, we found the furniture all turned upside down, chairs and tables alike standing with their legs in the air.

"Is that to make more room for people coming to the wake?" we inquired of a woman standing near.

"Sorra room, daughter!" was the reply. "'Tis just a fashion we have."

"But why?" we insisted. "What is the reason?"

"Not a know do I know," she confessed. "Maybe the corpse's father could be tellin'."

But neither from the "corpse's father" nor from anyone else have we been able to discover any explanation of a singular custom that is not confined to Connemara alone.

Of late years wakes have been made such excuses for drinking that they have been much discountenanced, and in certain dioceses they have gone back to being what they originally were, the watching of a dead person's family round the coffin. In some places the rules against the indiscriminate distribution of drink at wakes have been somewhat hard to enforce.

"Thank God, then, that my man Mick is dead and buried dacent!" was the exclamation of a certain old widow on hearing the bishop's regulations.

When a person is near death a brown habit that has been previously blessed with the blessing of the scapular of Mount Carmel is put upon him so that he may die wearing Our Lady's livery. No house is without a habit blessed and laid by in case of sudden need. Formerly two saucers were always placed on the dead man's chest or on his coffin, one containing snuff, the other earth that had been blessed.

It is only within late years that advantage has been taken of the tacit revocation of the law which forbade any act of Catholic worship to take place in a public grave yard. It is the exception now for the priest not to accompany the funeral and bless the grave, therefore the blessed earth which used to be thrown into the open grave before the coffin was lowered is now seldom needed.

The snuff, however, is still there, and in some parts each man is presented with a pipeful of tobacco, which he smokes as he follows the funeral, and then throws down the pipe on the newly filled grave. In one churchyard which is washed by the Atlantic we counted the bowls of several hundred such pipes lying around the newly made graves.

The reason for the snuff and probably for the pipes was hard to find. Only one out of many persons questioned could offer any explanation. This one was a woman who said that the custom came from a belief that when the Lord's tomb was cut in the rock of the garden the tobacco plant was the one that grew over it.

The Highlander's Revenge.

[From the Glasgow Herald.]

An Englishman who had been holliday-ing in the Far North paid a visit to the battlefield of Culloden. His driver, a fine old Highlander, acting as guide, pointed out to him everything of interest which tradition or historical fact associated with the fight. "And there," said the guide, pointing with his whip to a field of corn not far off, "lie the English." "Ah, very interesting," replied the Englishman. "Yes," retorted the Highlander, with something like passion in his voice, "and you will noatice that it iss Scotch oats that iss growing there."

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