

The Secrets of the Hohenzollerns

STARTLING EXPOSURE OF INNER LIFE OF KAISER AND CROWN PRINCE AS TOLD BY COUNT ERNST VON HELTZENDORFF TO WILLIAM LEQUEUX

EDITORIAL NOTE.—William Lequeux, who here chronicles for his friend, Count Ernst von Helzendorff, the latter's revelations of the inner life of the imperial German court, has long been recognized throughout Europe as the possessor of its innermost secrets.

The English "Who's Who" says of him: "He has intimate knowledge of the secret service of Continental countries and is considered by the government (of Great Britain) an authority on such matters." Another authority says: "Few people have been more closely associated with or know more of the astounding inner machinery of Germany than he."

Lequeux probably has more sources of secret information at his command than any contemporary in civil life, and for the last six years the British Government has made valuable use of his vast store of secret information through a specially organized department with which Lequeux works as a voluntary assistant.

Count von Helzendorff became an intimate of Lequeux several years prior to the outbreak of the war; he has been living in retirement in France since August, 1914, and it was there that Lequeux revealed from the crown prince's general adjutant pen-and-ink make public these revelations of the inner life of the Hohenzollerns—the "democratic" of the world would like to know the real, but heretofore hidden, personalities of the two crown prince members of the monarchy they see now arrayed against.

The Kaiser's Secret Trip to the Hague.

ONE May morning in 1907 I was walking on the terrace of the Castle of Halberg, at that time in the possession of the late Freiherr von Stumm, whom the emperor often visited.

I think, however, that our host became secretly irritated at the frequent visits of his imperial guest, for certainly what with the establishment of the special telegraph to Berlin and a special post office, and the finding of accommodation for the crowd of personal attendants, each visit must have cost poor old Von Stumm a considerable amount.

I had already been busy upstairs in the room allotted to me, and had come out to take a walk in the warm and welcome sunshine, when suddenly I saw the emperor in a suit of brown civilian clothes striding towards me.

He seemed to be in a humorous mood and joked with me as I walked beside him.

Suddenly he halted, as though recollecting something and asked: "Helzendorff, have you with you some of our paper for important documents?"

"Certainly," was my reply. "Ah! then please place some of it with envelopes upon my table, and also wire to Berlin to send here ten copies."

"Ten copies?" I echoed in surprise. "Yes, ten. I may want even twelve or more."

Just before eight o'clock that night I was informed that the couriers were waiting below, and on descending found six of the imperial messengers and four from the ministry of foreign affairs, ready to travel anywhere, even to the uttermost ends of the earth.

A Stupendous Hoax.

On informing his majesty, the latter handed to me about thirty of the great blue envelopes containing "documents of the highest importance," addressed in his own hand to various officers of state, princes, princesses, and other prominent people in all parts of the empire.

"These are to be taken at once, Helzendorff," the emperor said. "The messengers are to bring us replies." "In every case?" I asked.

"Yes, in every case," he answered. Then I carried the batch of correspondence below, and much puzzled at the nature of this latest activity in private letter-writing, I handed them to the couriers, who sorted them out and distributed them among themselves.

Half an hour later the documents were being conveyed to various parts of the empire.

When I returned to the study I found the kaiser laughing quietly to himself, and wondered what could be the reason. He signed some documents I read to him, but ever and anon a broad smile would cross his usually stern features.

Until a week afterwards I did not learn the cause of the imperial merriment, but when I did I burst into loud laughter myself.

Those envelopes containing "documents of highest importance" each contained only a comic postcard, which the emperor had purchased during a visit to Snarbruck.

The kaiser had played a huge joke upon those whom he despised, for the delivery of these formidable imperial dispatches created a great stir in the households of their recipients. Old princes were awakened in the middle of the night to be handed a dispatch from the emperor; old princesses jumped out of bed to receive an imperial communication; officers tore open the envelopes eagerly expecting

high appointments; the admiral of the grand fleet believed that war had been declared; and insignificant foreign diplomats were under the impression that the emperor had at last deigned to notice them.

The whole thing was a huge joke invented by the kaiser on the castle terrace, and the court and the imperial family were in fits of laughter over it for a week.

A Message to the Emperor.

One afternoon when we were back again at the palace at Potsdam the emperor was explaining to me a certain order he wished carried out. Presently one of the flunkies entered with a private note for his majesty. The emperor read it, and instantly I saw that his countenance grew pale and his manner changed.

He read it again, and then re-read it, his lips compressed, his eyebrows narrowed, and his cheeks unduly pale. Afterwards he struck a match and burned the letter in the grate.

That missive no doubt contained some grave news, the nature of which I could not guess, because he suddenly abandoned his work, and telling me to meet him in the study at eight o'clock that evening, he strode out.

When he had gone out I picked up the blackened tinder and examined it, but it was so charred that I could not read any word, though from the two or three marks of the pen I realized that it had been written by the hand of a woman.

An hour later I learned that the emperor had left Potsdam. He had by receipt of that letter evidently become seriously perturbed.

I called the flunkie who had handed him the missive and questioned him. He had received it from another servant who had received it from someone else, until at last I discovered that it had been handed by a young girl to one of the sentries on duty outside the palace, who in due course had sent it in to his majesty.

While passing along one of the corridors that evening I met bald-headed old Von Kluppel, who was at that time grand chamberlain, and he beckoned me into his cozy room. Then, when the door was closed, he asked—

"What has happened? The emperor has left incognito and all of a sudden. The state ball tomorrow night has been cancelled."

"Cancelled!" I echoed. "Where has the emperor gone?"

"Nobody knows—except Herman, his personal valet, whom he has taken with him."

"Curious," I remarked, thinking of the letter, though, of course, I told Von Kluppel nothing of it. Whatever transpired within his majesty's study was always regarded as a strict secret. More than one serious family quarrel had occurred there in my presence.

"Well, something serious has certainly occurred. That is my belief," declared the old chamberlain. "Uncle Zeppelin was coming to the palace tomorrow on a visit, and I have just sent him a telegram to postpone his journey."

"But his majesty had two important engagements tomorrow, and, in addition, a military parade in Berlin," I said.

"All is canceled, my dear Von Helzendorff," replied the old fellow. "The emperor has left for a destination unknown. I suppose I had better report his absence to the imperial chancellor?" he added.

"No, if I were you I would say nothing," I replied. "For some private reason his majesty has evidently been forced to go on a journey. Without doubt I shall hear from him tomorrow. As soon as I do so I will tell you."

A Telephone Message From "Herr Zeller."

My expectation was realized, for the next day just after six o'clock in the evening I received a telegram dispatched from Haarlem, in Holland, ordering me to go to the Adlon hotel, in Berlin, at once and register there. The concluding words of the message, sent in English, were: "You will receive a telephone call at 10:30 tonight." It was signed "Zeller," one of the names used by the emperor when he traveled incognito.

I ordered the car and drove into Berlin, taking with me a small bag, and engaged a room in Herr Adlon's hotel, in which was a telephone.

Soon after ten o'clock I told the telephone operator that if anyone rang me up I should be in my room.

Half-past ten came, and then slowly the hands of the clock passed round to eleven, and past.

Suddenly there was a sharp ring, and I took up the receiver.

A strange voice sounding far away asked for me, and I replied in the affirmative. Then in a few seconds another voice—which I instantly recognized as the emperor's—asked in English—

A LETTER FROM THE CROWN PRINCE'S PERSONAL ADJUTANT TO WILLIAM LEQUEUX, POSSESSOR OF THE SECRETS OF EUROPE.

VENISEZ Nadon,
par Morel-sur-Lotting,
Seine-et-Marne,
February 10th, 1917.

My dear Lequeux:
I have just finished reading the proofs of your articles describing my life as an official at the imperial court at Potsdam, and the two or three small errors you made I have duly corrected.

The gross scandals and wily intrigues which I have related to you were many of them known to yourself, for, as the intimate friend of Lulu, the ex-crown princess of Saxony, you were, before the war, closely associated with many of those at court whose names appear in these articles.

The revelations which I have made, and which you have recorded here, are but a tithe of the disclosures which I could make, and if the world desires more, I shall be pleased to furnish you with other and even more startling details, which you may also get into print.

My service as personal adjutant to the German crown prince is, happily, at an end, and now, with the treachery of Germany against civilization glaringly revealed, I feel, in my retirement, no compunction in exposing all I know concerning the secrets of the kaiser and his son.

With most cordial greetings from

Your sincere friend,
(Signed) ERNST VON HELTZENDORFF.

that I have to attend to. It would be as well to tell them at my office that I have been called to Hamburg. Can you hear me?"

"Perfectly," was my reply. "I quite understand your orders, sir, and will attend to them at once. I shall leave for The Hague tomorrow night."

"Good. And bring me another suit of civilian clothes."

Then there was a sudden buzzing in the instrument, a sharp click, and all was again silence.

I put down the receiver in wonder. I saw that to telephone to me at the palace was impossible, as it would go through the exchange there, and somebody might be listening. For that reason he had sent me to the Adlon, and from his conversation he was evidently representing himself at The Hague to be a prosperous German merchant, as he had done at Nice and other places.

At nearly two o'clock in the morning I passed the sentries on duty, and re-entered the Potsdam palace. It was then too late to give the kaiserin her husband's message, therefore I waited till morning, and gave it to her verbally when alone with her in her breakfast room.

The empress seemed greatly relieved when I told her of the telephone conversation, and during the day wrote me a note to hand to the emperor on my arrival at The Hague. That night I left for Holland, and next morning duly inquired at the Hotel des Indes for Herr Zeller. I was conducted to a small suite of rooms on the first floor, where, dressed in a gray suit, his majesty rose to meet me, smiling at my astonishment.

"Well, you heard me plainly on the telephone, eh?" he asked. "Ah, I see you are surprised that I am here. I, too, am equally surprised to find myself here. And, further, I do not know how long I shall remain."

"I have brought the clothes," I remarked, and afterwards drew the empress' letter from my pocket and handed it to him.

"Her majesty should have left for Prague yesterday," he said. "Did she go?"

"No. She was still at the palace when I left at eight o'clock last night."

The emperor gave vent to a grunt of dissatisfaction. From the books lying about his room I gathered that he passed his time in reading, preferring not to go out in the day time for fear of being recognized. Apprehension on that score was unnecessary, for the kaiser, shorn of his uniform and decorations, presents in civilian attire a very ordinary appearance and not readily recognizable by the man in the street. For that reason he was often able to spend a week in Paris, Nice, or on the Italian Riviera without anybody being the wiser.

Mystery of the Royal Scheme.

I engaged a room close to that of Herr Zeller, and for some hours remained with him while he signed a number of state papers which I had brought with me. He seemed strangely absent-minded, I thought, but presently he took up one of the formidable blue documents which, by the heading, I saw was an urgent report from the imperial chancellor.

"Look, Helzendorff! Look at this!" cried the emperor.

"The chancellor reports that the editor of the Cologne Gazette has called at the chancellery and inquired how long it was intended that I should remain out of the country? Think of it. My absence is known!"

"That may be so," I responded, "but your majesty's whereabouts is unknown to all save her majesty the empress."

"Yes, yes," said the emperor impatiently. "But our police will commence making inquiries, and I shall be traced here."

"Why not leave at once," I suggested, "in the hope of elucidating the truth."

"Ah! That is just the unfortunate point. I am unable to leave," he replied. "I must remain—and I do not know for how long!"

Further than that he would tell me nothing. The fact that his absence from Germany was known greatly upset him. It seemed to me as though, that truth leaking out, some clever secret plan of his had been thwarted.

From his countenance, as he re-read that document, I saw that serious trouble was brewing for somebody. His majesty, seized by his mania for travel would very often at five minutes' notice leave Potsdam and journey to the farthest end of the empire. But the papers were always at once informed, and the kaiser never went out of his country without first acquainting the chancellor of his intentions. In this case, however, he slipped away by a night train, and nobody knew until next morning.

The Dark-Haired Woman.

On concluding the correspondence, I went out for a stroll, when, not far from the hotel, I noticed a well-dressed, rather handsome, dark-haired woman approaching. To me her face seemed familiar, and I was puzzled to know where I had seen it before.

I passed on, and, entering a cafe, sat down to smoke and to think. Memory of that woman's face still haunted me. I felt that I had met her somewhere, and had had good cause to remember her, yet, for the life of me, I could not recall the circumstances of our meeting.

An hour later, on returning to the hotel, I saw her speaking with the concierge.

She was evidently staying there, hence a few minutes afterwards, when she had ascended the lift, I questioned the man, and learned that she was Madame Rosales, from Malaga, in Spain. She had arrived with her husband three days ago, but monsieur had left the same morning for Paris, and she was now awaiting his return.

The motive of the emperor, usually so restless and pompous, in remaining virtually a prisoner in the hotel, and posing as a merchant, was certainly most mysterious, and even a chat with Herman, his majesty's chief valet, elicited no information.

That night, as I sat alone eating my dinner—for Herr Zeller took his meals in his private sitting room—the dark-haired woman sat at a table near me. With her was a pretty girl in a pale pink dinner gown, evidently a friend who lived in the town.

The pair chatted together and laughed merrily over their meal, while I watched them covertly.

Why, I cannot even now tell, but I held Madame Rosales in distinct suspicion. Yet I could not recollect where we had met before. Now, however, as I sat there in the corner eating my meal I felt convinced that, on her part, she had recognized me, and further, that she had pointed me out to her companion.

Later in the evening I made other inquiries in the hotel, and learned that Madame had several friends. The evening that her husband left for Paris a tall, thin, pale-faced young man had called upon her after dinner, and had a long chat with her in a corner in the lounge. Afterwards they went out together for a short walk, and, returning, he smoked a cigar before he left.

On the following day another man, of rather unkempt appearance, called and lunched with her.

Needless to say, I watched Madame carefully, and managed during that evening to catch several glances of her. After the pair had dined they spent a short time in the lounge, where they both smoked cigarettes. Then, it being a beautiful moonlight night, they put on their coats and went for a stroll.

The Emperor Peeps In.

So interested had I become in the woman that I followed, and, unsuspected, I dogged their footsteps for nearly half a mile, until they entered a dark, forbidding-looking house which faced a weedy canal.

When the door opened a man greeted them, and slipping in quickly, they disappeared.

They were there for over an hour—yet I remained keeping constant vigil, until at last Madame emerged alone, retracing her steps hurriedly to the hotel.

Next morning I met her in the lift at about eleven o'clock, and we descended together. She was dressed to go out, but in the hall the porter handed her a telegram. This she opened, afterwards writing a reply, and taking it herself to the post office.

memory was so at fault. There were, I felt, some peculiar circumstances connected with the woman at the time I had known her, but what they were I could not recall. I saw, however, that her memory was better than my own, and that she knew me, and because of that fact had already grown apprehensive.

It was not in Berlin society that I had met her. Of that I felt assured; just as certain, indeed, that her real name was not Rosales.

While I had been out watching the woman on the previous night the emperor had also taken a stroll through the city. What, I wondered, would the Berlin police have thought if they knew that William was walking about at night unguarded and unattended at The Hague.

As I sat with him attending to some correspondence and taking down a number of instructions regarding important matters at the Wilhelmstrasse, he suddenly broke off and told me how he had, on the previous night, spent an hour drinking Dutch beer at that popular resort of tradesmen and their wives, the Royal Brasserie.

"Nobody recognized me," he laughed. "I found out that they sold the best beer one can get outside Germany, and I really enjoyed it. I sent for you, but you had already gone out. Did you go to the theater?"

"No," was my reply, and then I told him practically what I have related in the foregoing lines.

"How curious!" exclaimed his majesty. "I would much like to see this mysterious Spanish lady. She must be interesting."

At first I tried to dissuade him, but he was so persistent that I described at which table she sat at lunch, and it was agreed between us that while we were eating our meal he should come to the door of the dining room and peep in.

This the emperor did, and cleverly, too, for she never saw him, being at that moment engaged in conversation with a waiter.

When I rejoined him in his room he said: "No, Helzendorff, I have never seen her before."

"Well, majesty," I declared. "I am certain I have seen her or her photograph somewhere, and that she is not what she represents herself to be."

"She's an adventuress most probably," replied the emperor. "Many women are. Indeed, it is difficult to discover one who does not adventure either in love, in politics, or in crime."

A Trip to Berlin for Information.

His words impressed me. An hour later I went to a photographer's and arranged for a surreptitious portrait to be taken of Madame Rosales the next time she took a walk.

All day the young photographer haunted the vicinity of the hotel until the light faded. Yet next morning as she came out he snapped her without her knowledge, and in three hours I had a rough print of it in my pocket.

That night, after writing down a great mass of memoranda, instructions to various departments of the state, I left again for Berlin, with orders to ring up Herr Zeller on the telephone from some unsuspecting place every night at ten o'clock.

I returned to the Berlin Schloss absolutely mystified, and next day spent the greater part of the time visiting the chancellor and the various ministers, and giving them the emperor's commands. Then at about six o'clock I called at the chief bureau of police in the Alexander Platz, and entered the private room of old Leibbrand, who at that time was chief of the detective service.

To him I showed the surreptitious photograph of Madame Rosales. The astute thief catcher removed his spectacles, and examining the picture with the aid of a big reading glass, gave vent to a loud grunt.

In response to his bell a younger and more alert man entered, and to him he handed the photograph, saying: "Please see if anyone recognizes this. I believe I do—but I may be mistaken."

He then became inquisitive as to where and how I had obtained the picture, but naturally I said nothing.

"I've been away on a journey," I said, "and meeting the woman, I thought her suspicious."

"And if my memory serves me properly I think, Count, that your suspicions are very well grounded."

"Why?" I asked.

"Let us wait for the report from outside," replied the old fellow. Then, in order to turn the conversation, he asked news of Balz, who was at that moment the detective in attendance on the kaiser's person, and whose vigilance the emperor had, of course, evaded.

"Oh! He's at Potsdam," I laughed. "I haven't seen him lately, for I've been away on a mission."

"The emperor is in Thuringia," Leibbrand said. "There seems to be some mystery as to his whereabouts, but Balz telephoned me today to say that his majesty has gone to Thuringia without any staff or personal attendants."

"That is so, I believe," was my reply, but I smiled, for the Thuringia myth had been invented by myself before I had left for Holland. It is at any time difficult to impose upon the Berlin police, but, of course, news given out officially from the court they naturally believe to be the truth.

Peril of the Emperor.

A quarter of an hour later Leibbrand's assistant re-entered the room, and, handing back the photograph, placed a file of papers before his chief, saying:

"The woman is a famous Spanish dancer, and one of the most active members of the anarchist society of Geneva—the society which committed the bomb outrage upon King Alfonso, and who were responsible for the recent attempt on the king of Italy."

"An anarchist!" I gasped. "Yes," answered the official. "And a very dangerous one, too. If she put foot into Germany, we should have her at once under lock and key."

"Why?"

"Because it is known that there is a conspiracy on foot, organized by that league in Geneva, against his majesty the emperor. We had news of it from the Swiss police a month ago."

"Is there really a plot against the emperor?" I asked, much startled.

"There certainly is in Geneva," replied Leibbrand. "At the present moment we are watching for this dancer's appearance in Germany. I thought I was not mistaken when I first saw her picture."

I stood in that bare official room utterly staggered. I dared not tell those two men the truth or give them warning of the emperor's peril.

I saw, however, that I must act instantly. In five minutes I had gathered that the woman was one of the most dangerous anarchists in Europe, and I also realized that my memory had served me very well, inasmuch as I had seen her picture in an illustrated paper a year before, when she had been arrested in Rome in connection with an alleged attempt upon the life of the king.

"Herr Leibbrand, will you please write down for me the facts you have just related?" I urged.

"Most certainly," was his reply, and taking up his pen he scribbled the truth, signing it with a flourish.

Eighteen hours later I ascended in the lift at the Hotel des Indes to the suite occupied by Herr Zeller.

Without waste of time I produced the snapshot photograph and asked him whether he recognized it.

"Certainly," was his reply. "It is Madame Rosales," adding, laughingly, "I became acquainted with her and her husband in a curious manner in the lift last night. We were ascending together, Madame, who wore a soft blue evening blouse, standing next to me. Unfortunately the button on the wrist of my coat caught in the sleeve of her blouse and tore it very badly. I apologized for ruining the blouse, and insisted that her husband should send the damaged garment to me so that I might replace it with something better. It arrived only five minutes ago, and is in that little box over there," and he indicated a cardboard box lying upon the couch.

"Ah! You haven't opened it, I see!" I exclaimed. "Your majesty must not open it! Please read this!" And I put before him Leibbrand's signed statement of the identity of Madame Rosales.

When the emperor read it he instantly realized the situation.

Luring the Kaiser.

"Ah! I see it all, Helzendorff. My practical joking becoming known, the anarchists have taken advantage of it. I have been lured here, out of Germany, by a cleverly conceived dodge, for I came here believing that I was to meet in secret General Oranovskiy, chief of the czar's military cabinet, who wished to confer with me. And though he was due three days ago he has not arrived. Instead, this woman and her friends are busy plotting my death."

"Without a doubt. Probably had you opened that box yonder it might have been fatal," I said. "Is it not wise to leave at once for Berlin?"

Herr Zeller acted promptly upon my suggestion, and we carried back to Germany the box containing the actress' blouse. Next day in my presence, the box was carefully opened in the military laboratory, when we found, wrapped in a pretty blue crepe de chine blouse with heavy beaded trimming, a small canister filled with a high explosive, the fuse so arranged that had the string of the box been suddenly released by cutting in the ordinary way a terrible explosion must have ensued.

Certainly the emperor very nearly lost his life as a result of his own practical joking.

As for the Spanish dancing girl, she apparently followed the emperor, for two days later she and a man named Ferroni, a well-known Italian anarchist who was posing as her husband, were arrested at Horstwal when about to enter Prussia, and both were eventually sent to prison for ten years.

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