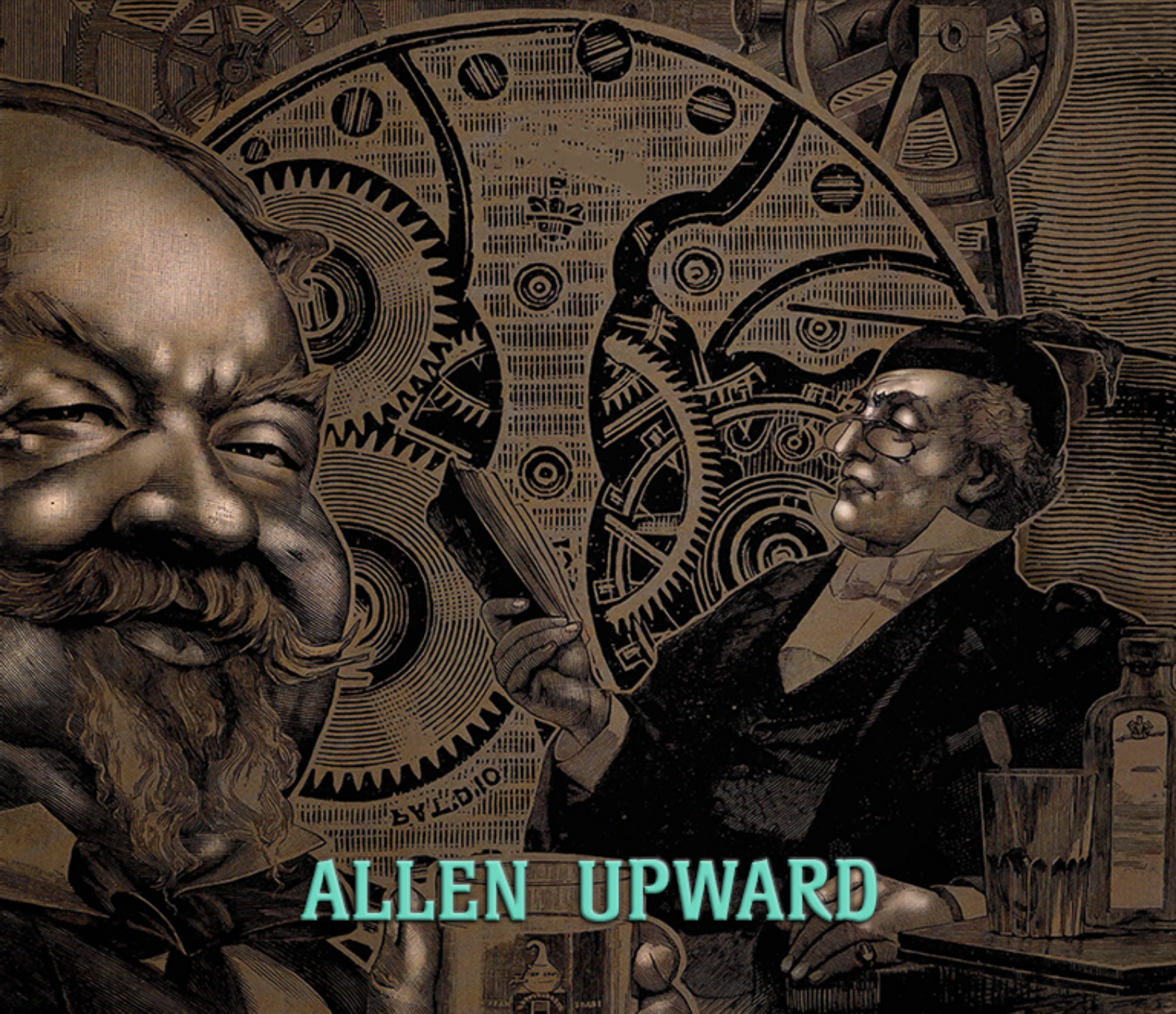


CLASSICS TO GO

# SECRET HISTORY OF TO-DAY

BEING REVELATIONS OF A DIPLOMATIC SPY



ALLEN UPWARD

# **Secret History of To-day**

**Being Revelations of a Diplomatic Spy**

**Allen Upward**





“The Kaiser was attired in his most magnificent costume, wearing the famous winged helmet on his head, and surrounded by a galaxy of ministers and great officers, all arrayed in the utmost military splendour.”

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## THE TELEGRAM WHICH BEGAN THE BOER WAR

The initials under which I write these confessions are not those of my real name, which I could not disclose without exposing myself to the revenge of formidable enemies. As it is, I run a very great risk in making revelations which affect some of the most powerful personages now living; and it is only by the exercise of the utmost discretion that I can hope to avoid giving offence in quarters in which the slightest disrespect is apt to have serious consequences.

If I should be found to err on the side of frankness, I can only plead in excuse that I have never yet betrayed the confidence placed in me by the various Governments and illustrious families which have employed me from time to time. The late Prince Bismarck once honoured me by saying: 'To tell secrets to Monsieur V—— is like putting them into a strong box, with the certainty that they will not come out again until one wants them to.'

In these reminiscences it is my object to recount some of the services I have rendered to civilisation in the course of my career, while abstaining as far as possible from compromising exalted individuals or embittering international relations.

That I am not a man who opens his mouth rashly may be gathered from the fact that, although at any time during the long struggle between Briton and Boer for the mastery in South Africa, I might have completely changed the situation

with a word, that word was not uttered while a single Boer remained under arms.

In order to explain how I came to be concerned in this affair, I had better begin by giving a few particulars about myself, and the almost unique position which I hold among the secret service bureaus of Europe and America.

By birth I am a citizen of the United States of America, being the son of a Polish father, exiled on account of his political opinions, and a French mother. From my childhood I showed an extraordinary aptitude for languages, so that there is now scarcely a civilised country outside Portugal and Scandinavia in which I am not able to converse with the natives in their own tongue. At the same time, I was possessed, ever since I can remember, with a passion for intrigue and mystery. The romances of Gaboriau were the favourite reading of my boyhood, and it was my ambition to become a famous detective, the Vidocq of America.

Fired by these visions, I ran away from the insurance office in which my parents had placed me, when I was little more than sixteen, and applied for admission to the ranks of the famous Pinkerton Police. Although my youth was against me, my phenomenal command of languages turned the scale in my favour, and I was given a trial.

Very soon I had opportunities of distinguishing myself in more than one mission to Europe, on the track of absconding criminals; and in this way I earned the favourable notice of the heads of the detective police in London, Paris, Berlin, and other capitals.

At length, finding that I possessed unique qualifications for the work of an international secret agent, I decided to quit the Pinkerton service, and set up for myself, making my headquarters in Paris. From that day to this I have had no cause to repent of my audacity. I have been employed at

one time or another by nearly every Government in the world, and my clients have included nearly every crowned head, from the late Queen Victoria to the Dowager Empress of China. I have been sent for on the same day by the Ambassadors of two hostile Powers, each of which desired to employ me against the other.

On one occasion I acted on behalf of a famous German Chancellor against his then master, and on another on behalf of the Emperor against his Chancellor; and neither had cause to complain of my fidelity. I have been instrumental in freeing a Queen renowned for her beauty from the persecution of a blackmailer set on by a foreign court; and I have more than once detected and defeated the plots of anarchists for the assassination of their rulers.

In this way it has come about that I enjoy the friendship and confidence of many illustrious personages, whose names would excite envy were I at liberty to mention them in these pages; and that few events of any magnitude happen in any part of the globe without my being in some measure concerned in them.

Often, when some great affair has been proceeding, I have felt myself as occupying the position of the stage manager, who looks on from the wings, directing the entrances and exits of the gorgeously dressed performers who engross the attention and applause of the ignorant spectators on the other side of the footlights.

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The true story of the famous telegram which may be said to have rendered the South African War inevitable is one which strikingly illustrates the extent to which the public may be deceived about the most important transactions of contemporary history.

Every one is familiar with the situation created by that celebrated despatch. For some time previously all England, and, in fact, all Europe, had been agitated by the intelligence that Johannesburg was on the eve of insurrection, that the Boers were drawing their forces together about the doomed city, that Dr. Jameson had dashed across the frontier with five hundred followers in a mad attempt to come to the aid of the threatened Outlanders, and that his action had been formally disavowed by the British Government.

Close on the heels of these tidings came the memorable day on which London was cast into gloom by long streams of placards issuing from the newspaper offices bearing the dismal legend, 'Jameson Beaten and a Prisoner!'

While the populace were yet reeling under the blow, divided between distress at this humiliation for the British flag, and indignation at the criminal recklessness which had staked the country's honour on a gambler's throw, there came the portentous news that the head of the great German Empire, the grandson of Queen Victoria, had sent a public message of congratulation to the Boer President, rejoicing with him in the face of the world over an event which every Englishman felt as a national disaster.

That hour registered the doom of the Pretorian Government. Jameson was scornfully forgotten. The British people, as proud as it is generous, made up its mind that the forbearance so long extended to a vassal of its own, could no longer be shown with honour to the *protégé* of a mighty European Power.

On the very day on which this celebrated despatch appeared as the chief item of news in all the newspapers of the world, I received an urgent cipher message from the Director of the Imperial Secret Service, Herr Finkelstein, demanding my presence in Berlin.

My headquarters, as I have said, are in Paris, and fortunately I was disengaged when the summons arrived. I had merely to dictate a few dozen wires to my staff, while my valet was strapping up the portmanteau which always stands ready packed in my dressing-room, and to look out my German passport—for I have a separate one for every important nationality—and in an hour or two I was seated in the Berlin express, speeding towards the frontier.

From the bunch of papers which my attentive secretary had thrust into the carriage, I learned something of the effect which the German Emperor's interference in the affairs of South Africa had produced on the public mind in England. It was evident that the Islanders were strongly roused, and were preparing to pick up the gage of battle which had been thrown down. No sooner had I reached German territory than I found evidences of an even greater excitement. The whole nation seemed to have rallied round the Kaiser, and to be ready to back up his words with martial deeds.

By this time I had little doubt that I had been sent for in connection with the outbreak of hostile feeling between the two Powers. But it was impossible for me to anticipate the actual nature of the task which awaited me.

On reaching Berlin I was met by a private emissary of Finkelstein's, who hurried me off to the Director's private house. The first words with which he greeted me convinced me that the business I had come about was of no ordinary kind.

'Do not sit down,' he said to me, as I was about to drop into a chair, after shaking hands with him. 'I must ask you to come to my dressing-room at once, where you will transform yourself as quickly as possible into an officer of the Berlin Police. The moment that is done, I am to conduct you to the Palace, where his Majesty will see you alone.'



As I followed the Director into the dressing-room, where I found a uniform suit laid out ready for my wearing, I naturally asked: 'Can you tell me what this is about?'

Finkelstein shook his head with a mysterious air.

'The Kaiser has told me nothing. But he warned me very strictly not to let a single creature in Berlin know of your arrival, and from that fact I have naturally drawn certain conclusions.'

I gazed at Finkelstein with some suspicion. We were good friends, having worked together on more than one occasion, and I knew he would have no wish to keep me in the dark. On the other hand, if he had been instructed to do so, I knew he would not hesitate to lie to me. The secret service has its code of honour, like other professions, and fidelity to one's employer comes before friendship.

Keeping my eye fixed on him, I observed carelessly—

'You will tell me just as much or as little as you think fit, my dear Finkelstein. On my part I shall, of course, exercise a similar discretion after his Imperial Majesty has given me my instructions.'

As I expected, the bait took. Curiosity is the besetting weakness of a secret service officer, and the Berlin Director was no exception to the rule. Putting on his most confidential manner, he at once replied—

'My dear V—, if you and I do not trust each other, whom can we trust? Rest assured that my confidence in you has no reserves. I have spoken the bare truth in saying that the Kaiser has given me no indication of his object in sending for you. But the fact that he has ordered me to take these precautions to conceal the fact of your arrival in Berlin tells me plainly that there is a person whom he wishes to keep in ignorance; and that person can only be——'

'The Chancellor?' I threw in, as my companion hesitated.

Finkelstein nodded.

'You consider, perhaps, that it is against the Chancellor that I am to be employed?' I went on.

'It looks like it,' was the cautious answer.

'And the reason why this task is not placed in your hands?'

'Is because I am a native of Hanover, and the Kaiser regards me rather as a public official than as a personal servant of his own dynasty,' said Finkelstein.

'In other words, he regards you as a creature of the Chancellor's,' I commented bluntly.

The Director made a pleasing and ingenious attempt to blush.

'I can only affirm to you, on my sacred word of honour, that his Majesty has no cause to trust me any less than if I were a Prussian,' he declared. 'And I shall take it as a personal kindness if you will endeavour to convince the Kaiser of my loyalty.'

'I will take care that he knows your sentiments,' I answered, with an ambiguity which Finkelstein fortunately did not remark.

By this time I had completed my transformation. A glance at the cheval glass showed me a stiff, well-set-up Prussian official, exhaling the very atmosphere of Junkerdom and sauerkraut. I gave the signal to depart, and we were quickly driving up the Unter den Linden on our way to the Imperial Palace.

'Announce to his Majesty—the Herr Director Finkelstein and the Herr Inspector Vehm,' my companion said to the doorkeeper.

A servant, who had evidently received special instructions, stepped forward.

'The Herr Inspector is to be taken to his Majesty at once,' he said firmly.

Finkelstein bit his lip as he unwillingly turned to re-enter his carriage. I followed the lackey into the private cabinet of the monarch who had just found himself the centre of an international cyclone.



"A glance at the cheval glass showed me a stiff, well set-up Prussian official."

Wilhelm II. received me cordially. It was not the first time we had met. About the time of his ascending the throne I had been the means of inflicting on him a defeat which a smaller man would have found it hard to forgive. Fortunately, the German Kaiser was of metal sterling

enough to recognise merit even in an enemy, and to realise that my fidelity to my then employer was the best guarantee that I should be equally faithful to himself, if it fell to my lot to serve him.

‘What has Finkelstein told you?’ was the Emperor’s first question, after he had graciously invited me to sit down.

‘Only that he was able to tell me nothing, sire.’

The Emperor gave me a suspicious glance.

‘He appeared to regret that your Majesty had not given him your confidence,’ I added, choosing my words warily. ‘He assured me that you might rely on his entire devotion, as much so as if he were a native of your hereditary States.’

‘And what do you say as to that?’ demanded the Kaiser, with a piercing look.

‘I think that your Majesty cannot be too careful whom you trust.’

Wilhelm II. allowed himself to smile gravely.

‘I see, Monsieur V——, that you are a prudent man. If Herr Finkelstein wishes to convince me of his loyalty to the Hohenzollerns, he cannot begin better than by renouncing the pension which he continues to draw secretly from the Duke of ——.’ His Majesty pronounced the name by which a well-known dispossessed sovereign goes in his exile.

Familiar as I long have been with instances of perfidy in others, I could not restrain an exclamation of astonishment at this revelation of Finkelstein’s double dealing. The Kaiser continued—

‘After that you will not be surprised if I caution you particularly against letting Herr Finkelstein know anything of the object of the inquiry I wish you to undertake.’

I bowed respectfully, and waited with some impatience to learn the true nature of my mission.

‘I could not receive you here without taking some one into the secret of your employment,’ the Kaiser went on to explain; ‘and I chose Finkelstein in order to give the affair as much as possible the aspect of a private and domestic matter. In reality the task I have to set you is one of the most grave in which you have ever been engaged.’

The Kaiser took one of the Berlin papers of the day before, which was lying on the desk in front of him, and pointed to a column in which was set out in conspicuous type the telegram which had convulsed Europe and Africa, and had already caused Lord Salisbury to issue orders for the mobilisation of his Flying Squadron.

‘I have sent for you, in two words, to find out for me the authorship of this telegram,’ the Kaiser said.



“‘I have sent for you, in two words, to find out for me the authorship of this telegram,’ the Kaiser said.”

Notwithstanding my long training in the most tortuous paths of secret intrigue, I was fairly taken aback by this announcement.

‘That telegram!’ I could only exclaim. ‘The one which your Majesty addressed to President Kruger!’

‘*I never sent it,*’ Wilhelm II. declared gravely. ‘It is a forgery pure and simple.’

For a moment I sat still in my chair, almost unable to think.

‘But what——? But who——?’ I articulated, struggling with my bewilderment.

‘That is what you have got to find out for me,’ was the answer. ‘Let me tell you all I know. The first intimation I had of the existence of such a thing was the sight of it in the

Press. I sent instantly for the Chancellor, who came here wearing a reproachful expression, and evidently prepared to complain bitterly of my having taken such a step without previously informing him. When I told him that the whole thing was an impudent fabrication, he could scarcely believe his ears. In fact, for some time I believe he was inclined to consider my repudiation of it as a mere official denial.'

I ventured to raise my eyes to his Majesty's as I observed

—

'Your Majesty has taken no steps to make your repudiation public?'

The Kaiser gave an angry frown.

'That is the serious part of the affair,' he answered. 'Kruger, in his eagerness to proclaim to the world that I was on his side, had sent copies of this infamous production to every newspaper in the two hemispheres before it reached my eyes. At the moment when I first saw it, it had already been read and commented upon all round the globe. The British newspapers were already threatening war, and my own people had been excited to a pitch of enthusiasm such as no other act of mine has ever called forth. You see the position I was placed in. If I were now to disavow this forgery, my disavowal would be received everywhere with the same scepticism as was felt even by my own Chancellor. The British would triumph over me, and my own subjects would never forgive me for what they would regard as a surrender to British threats.'

I sat silent. I realised the full difficulty of the Kaiser's position. He was committed in spite of himself to the act of some impostor, whose real motives were yet to be discovered, but who had already succeeded in bringing the two greatest Powers of Europe to the verge of war.

‘Before I can undo the mischief which has been done,’ the Emperor proceeded, ‘I must first of all ascertain from what quarter this forgery emanated. When I have obtained that information, backed by clear and convincing proofs, it may be possible for me to satisfy the British Government that they and I have been the victims of a conspiracy. If you can succeed in furnishing me with those proofs, it shall be the best day’s work you ever did in your life.’

I listened carefully to these words, scrutinising them for any trace of a double meaning. It was impossible for me to dismiss entirely from my mind that suspicion which the story told by Wilhelm II. was naturally calculated to excite. I asked myself whether the Kaiser was really in earnest, or whether he was not inviting me, in a delicate fashion, to extricate him from the consequences of his own rashness, by putting together some fictitious account of the origin of the telegram, which might impose on Lord Salisbury.

It was clearly necessary, however, for me to appear to be convinced.

‘May I ask if your Majesty’s suspicions point in any particular direction?’ I asked, trying to feel my way cautiously. ‘The President of the Boers is perhaps——’

The Kaiser interrupted me.

‘I do not think Kruger would dare to provoke me by such a trick. He would know that he would be the first to suffer when it was found out. No, I am convinced that we must look nearer home for the traitor.’

Something in the Emperor’s tone struck me as significant.

‘If you could give me any indication of the person——’ I ventured to throw out.

His Majesty looked at me fixedly as he answered—



‘Does it not occur to you, Monsieur V——, that there is in my Empire a powerful family, the heads of which seem at one time to have cherished the notion that the Hohenzollerns could not reign without them, a family which aspired to play the same part in modern Germany which was played by the Mayors of the Palace in the Empire of the Merovingians?’

‘You allude, sire, without doubt, to the Bismarcks?’

‘My grandfather was forced into war with the French by a forged telegram. There would be nothing surprising in an attempt from the same quarter to force me into a war with England.’

I had no answer to make to such reasoning. Daring as such a manoeuvre might appear, it was absurd, in the face of historical facts, to pronounce it improbable.

After a minute spent in considering the situation, I turned to the question of how the fraud might have been carried out.

It was quite clear to me that such a message could not have gone over the ordinary wires. The despatches of Emperors are not, as a rule, handed in over the counter of a post-office, like a telegram from a husband announcing that he is prevented from dining at home. I asked the Kaiser to explain to me the system pursued with regard to Imperial messages.

‘That is a matter about which you will be able to learn more from the Chancellor than from me,’ was the answer. ‘Foreign despatches go through the Chancellery, and there is a staff of telegraphists there to deal with them. The wire goes direct to the Central Telegraph Office, I believe, from which it would, of course, find its way to the Cable Company.’

'Then this fabrication must have been sent from the Chancellery in the first instance?' I inquired. 'It could not have been received at the Central Office from an outside source?'

'Impossible. They would not dare to transmit a message in my name which had not reached them through one of the authorised channels.'

This was the reply I had expected. But I did not fail to mark the admission that there was more than one channel through which the forgery might have come. I was quick to ask—

'Is there not some other source from which this telegram may have reached them besides the Chancellery? Your Majesty, no doubt, has a private wire from the Palace.'

The Kaiser looked a little put out.

'That is so, of course,' he conceded. 'But that wire is used only for my personal messages, and those of the Imperial family.'

'Still, a message received over this wire, and couched in your name, would be accepted at the Central Office, would it not?' I persisted.

'Undoubtedly. But the Palace operator, a man who works under the eye of my secretary, would not dare to play me such a trick, which, he would be aware, must be detected immediately. Take my advice, Monsieur V—, waste no time over side paths, but go direct to the Chancellor, and commence your perquisitions among his staff.'

I bowed respectfully, as though accepting this plan of campaign. But, as I withdrew from the Emperor's cabinet, the doubt pressed more strongly than ever upon my mind whether I was not being asked to play a part. I half expected to find everything prepared for me at the Chancellery,

prearranged clues leading to the detection of a culprit who would recite a confession which had been put into his mouth beforehand.

I was perfectly willing to perform my part in the comedy in a manner satisfactory to my employer, but all the same I meant to keep my eyes open, and not to let myself be the victim of a deception intended for English consumption.

In this mood I presented myself before the Chancellor. As soon as the Imperial autograph introducing me had met his eye, his Excellency threw aside, or pretended to throw aside, all reserve.

'I am delighted to find the Emperor has placed this business in your hands, Monsieur V—,' he said obligingly. 'Your reputation is well known to me, and I am convinced that you will be perfectly discreet. The Emperor is, of course, thoroughly taken aback by the results of his unfortunate impulse, and wishes to relieve himself of the responsibility he has incurred. In that I am quite willing to help him, but not at my own expense, you understand.'

I murmured something about the Bismarcks. His Excellency gave a smile of contempt.

'All that is absurd,' he rapped out. 'The Emperor is quite foolish about that family, which possesses no more influence to-day than any Pomeranian squire. No, if his Majesty wants a victim he ought to be content with one of his own staff. I refuse to allow the Imperial Chancellery to be discredited in the eyes of Europe.'

This reception, so unlike what I had anticipated, made me begin to think that my inquiry would have to be serious. After a little further conversation with the Chancellor I decided to go to work regularly, beginning by tracing the Imperial telegram back from the Central Office.