

WEIRD STORY OF GERMAN DIPLOMACY

Emil Witte's Narrative of Diplomatic Methods Practiced at Washington Is Interesting Anyway.



MIL WITTE, a person not unknown to the newspaper world of New York, and not without admirers for the fertility of his journalistic instincts, has written a book which he evidently intended to be a diplomatic sensation. Herr Witte's claim is that he was for ten years a secret attaché of the German Embassy at Washington, and that while serving in that capacity he learned much, for instance, regarding the secret policy of the Kaiser's Government toward the United States and toward England during the Spanish war.

Repeatedly Herr Witte declares that the secret key for German diplomacy in America following the Spanish-American war was enmity and mistrust toward England, and cites correspondence showing how German officials mixed up in intrigue to produce an effect on public opinion. None other, in fact, than the German Ambassador was, according to Witte, authority for the statement that, during that war, England had made "astounding propositions" to Germany. The Samoa question is reviewed, and Witte shows how critical was the estrangement of England and Germany then, and how the German Embassy trusted to the New York representative of Wolff's Bureau to publish certain matter through The Associated Press, which, if published, could only have greatly fanned the flame on both sides of the Atlantic. The only reason why it was not published before the powers came to a better understanding was that the correspondent had gone off on a particularly long "bear journey" in the city, and neglected the telegrams, and thus an international complication was happily avoided.

Witte says that the purchase of the Caroline Islands by Germany was really the work of Baron Speck von Sternburg, but when he had arranged everything von Holleben came back to the embassy in time to plume himself with the feathers. He tells about how Germany wanted the Philippines very much, and Prof. Blumentritt, the Prague jurist in the employ of the German Government, maintained a secret connection between the Berlin Foreign Office and the Filipinos, and made a voluminous report to the Government as to how the Filipinos were armed, how they could be provisioned, &c. Witte expressed his surprise that the German Government should be carrying on such a movement while officially asking the United States to look after her interests in the Philippines, and received the reply: "We must not let America become too great!"

The relation of Congressman John J. Lentz, a member of the House Committee for Military Affairs, to the German Embassy, and the mistrust it awakened in the State Department, are spoken of, and leads Witte to charge that it was a definite scheme of the home Government at Berlin suddenly to recognize the German-Americans who had been so abused and neglected before, to stir up their sympathies, and, by presents of flags, &c., from the Kaiser, to win their allegiance for Germany, thus making a half enemy for the United States within its own borders, or, to say the least, a great party that would stand for Germany and the fatherland if there was a war between Germany and America. This change was easier brought about because of the distrust of many people that President McKinley and his Administration were making an alliance with England. The German Government worked on this, and contributed to forming anti-English sentiment. More might have been accomplished had the German Ambassador and his staff had more tact in handling the Washington reporters. As it was, it was usually easier for a newspaper than

of the United States, for almost no one except Baron Seckendorff and the correspondent of the New-Yorker Staats-Zeitung saw Von Holleben. The Ambassador was bad enough with his curt message, "Tell them they must not write anything hostile to Germany, if they expect to keep on friendly footing with the embassy," but when it passed through the mouth of the raw, gruff Chancellor, Hofrat Kinne, with his little understanding of English, it was likely to assume such a form as this: "Hounds! The next time an attack on the Kaiser or Germany appears in your paper, I'll throw you out through the door!" The result was that both the German Ambassador and the German Government were falsely represented in the American press, and this got Germany into great difficulty with the United States and led to Von Holleben's recall and ruin. To what extent, however, Von Holleben stooped to use the American press for his own purposes, according to Witte, is seen in the letter which he had Witte write, under a nom de plume, to The Washington Evening Star, attacking the character of Herbert Bismarck, when it was reported that he was to be sent to Washington as Von Holleben's successor. The letter appeared on Feb. 28, 1899, and was signed "Teutone." Herr von Mumm, who took Von Holleben's place, knew quite as well how to work the press, having, for example, caused the publication of a report that President McKinley had written a personal letter to the Kaiser asking to have Von Mumm made Ambassador. Herr von Mumm pretended to despise the American newspapers and newspaper men, but secretly used them liberally, clipping out articles and copying bodily to make up his reports. But once he unwittingly inclosed the original clippings in the cribbed report sent to Berlin, and then his stock went down in Unter den Linden. Von Mumm wanted the Washington post and still wants it.

A very amusing and highly graphic chapter of the book is devoted to a description of the make-up of the German Ambassador's staff at Washington, especially in the time of Von Holleben. Germany persists in sending to the American capital only men of nobility, notwithstanding the feeling of indifference on the part of Americans toward titled foreigners, and Witte thinks several of Germany's representatives are good subjects for his descriptive powers. He gives a very lively portrait of his Excellency Herr Theodor von Holleben, whom he thinks the Foreign Department at Berlin would never have sent to Washington if they had known his real talents. Of Baron Speck von Sternburg Witte speaks in friendly terms, calling him, indeed, his friend, and saying that the most one can say against him is that he is on friendly terms with President Roosevelt; "the politician as reckless as successful." Von Sternburg knew Roosevelt when the latter was Police Commissioner in New York, and the one is said to have promised the other a call to Washington as Ambassador if ever he became President! Baron von Sternburg always disliked writing, and when he filled the office of Von Holleben he had Prof. Hermann Schönfeld write his reports. Von Sternburg received two "orders" for the same—Schönfeld received nothing. The Second Secretary of the embassy was Count Hacke, celebrated in the Washington newspapers as a cotillon dancer, especially on an occasion at the Turkish Ambassador's.

Witte's book will hardly cause an international disturbance, but apart from the question of its credibility, it makes interesting reading.

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Diplomatie. Von Emil Witte. New
York: G. E. Stechert & Co.