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CHARLES TOWER

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OF MODERN KNOWLEDGE

No. 72

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GERMANY OF TO-DAY

BY
CHARLES TOWER



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I INTRODUCTION	7
II KAISER, BUNDESRATH, REICHSTAG, AND STATE-PARLIAMENTS	25
III THE EXECUTIVE, CHANCELLOR AND BUREAUCRACY, POLICE, LAW COURTS	47
IV THE FUNCTIONS OF EMPIRE: THE ARMED FORCES, IMPERIAL FINANCE, SOCIAL INSURANCE, AND THE COLONIES	69
V BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL. THE MUNICIPALITIES AND THEIR WORK	100
VI GERMAN EDUCATION	129
VII THE ORGANISATION OF INDUSTRY	160
VIII AGRICULTURAL GERMANY	183
IX CASTES AND CLASSES	207
X INTELLECTUAL LIFE	230
BIBLIOGRAPHY	254
INDEX	255

GERMANY OF TO-DAY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

IF the future of the German Empire lies, as the German Emperor maintained, upon the water, it would seem to be at least as certain that the past history of that part of Central Europe now included in the Empire has been largely influenced and in part perhaps determined by water: not indeed by the water of the Baltic or the North Sea, but by the water of the rivers, which now, as of old, are the natural and cheapest means of transport, and at times have also formed natural divisions. It is only necessary to recall such catchwords and phrases as, "there must be no line of the Main" (that is to say, the particularist or separatist tendencies of North and South Germany must be made to disappear), or "the Junkers East of Elbe" (that is, the land-owning and ultra-conservative squires of Eastern Prussia), or "the line of the Lippe" (which forms an almost complete division between the seats of the poorer Evangelical

and wealthy Catholic landlords and nobles of Westphalia), to see that even to-day rivers play a great part not only in the unity of the Empire but also in its internal divisions and dissensions.

The Germans, their ambitions, achievements, methods, men and manners are so continuously the topic of private conversation and public debate in English-speaking countries, that sometimes there is a tendency to forget the outlines of the map of the Germany of to-day. In fact, "you forget the map" is apt to be one of the complaints made by German newspaper-writers and even German statesmen when defending German military budgets against the charge of Jingoism. So it is well to begin with the map.

Modern Germany consists, geographically, of a territory drained by the four rivers, Rhine, Weser, Elbe, and Oder, flowing northwards, together with a southern section drained, it is true, by rivers flowing in the other direction, but finding its commercial connection northwards for political reasons. In the development of the modern Empire out of the mere congeries of petty States, formed in part by watershed divisions, it was geographically natural that the northern States should be the first to combine and it was also natural that a struggle should take place before the southern portion of the Empire, south of the Main, broke loose

from its geographically more natural connection with Austria and found its outlet northwards. Hence one might expect to find sharply defined contrasts between the portions of the Empire north and south of the Main, and it becomes easy to bear in mind the fact that all German development has been and still is profoundly modified by the contrast, for example, between the Bavarian and Prussian character and their political, religious and economic tendencies. Even to the present day there is probably too little mutual give-and-take between North and South Germany: there is still a clearly defined "line of the Main."

Leaving out of account for the moment certain accretions, such as Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig-Holstein, and Prussian Poland, there is yet another marked division whereof politically too little notice is sometimes taken, the division marked roughly by the course of the Oder, to the west of which lies the industrial region of Northern Germany, to the east the agricultural section. Quite frequently discussions in England regarding "Germany" appear in reality to be discussions only about Prussia, and even about one part of Prussia, the old monarchy east of the Oder. It is possible that some of the antipathy sometimes displayed is felt instinctively not for the German Empire, but the old Prussian nucleus,

whose character, manner of thought, and even political aspirations are to quite a considerable extent determined by geographical and geological conditions.

West of the Oder is Industrial Germany, east of it Agricultural. Westphalia, the Rhineland, the valley of the Weser, these are the districts which developed Germany's foreign trade, and for whose protection in their infancy the high tariff-wall was partly destined: these are the countries interested in the "open door," in the maintenance of the best possible commercial relations with all foreign countries, and therefore also in the maintenance of good political relations throughout the world. It is after the traveller from London to Berlin has passed the Porta Westphalica, that picturesque gap in the semicircle of the Teutoburg hills, that he enters the long and dreary stretch of flat country, which, at first pleasantly pastoral, interspersed with red-roofed villages, and sometimes timbered farmhouses, gradually merges in the pine-forests and sand-dunes of Brandenburg, the ungenerous soil from which the East Prussians gather a hard living. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that the predominance of Prussia in the partnership of which the Empire consists has been brought about precisely by the difference of soil and climate here intimated. In East Prussia, for example,