

**GENSERIC, KING OF
THE VANDALS AND THE
FIRST PRUSSIAN KAISER**

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Genseric, king of the Vandals and the first Prussian kaiser by Poultney Bigelow

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POULTNEY BIGELOW

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By Poultney Bigelow

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1890

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Kaiser**

GENSERIC

KING OF THE VANDALS
AND
FIRST PRUSSIAN KAISER

BY

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AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF THE GERMAN STRUGGLE FOR
LIBERTY," "PRUSSIAN MEMORIES," ETC.



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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The Knickerbocker Press
1918

To

THE AUTHOR OF

ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN

“ . . . It is now more than a quarter of a century since I had the privilege of meeting you on the shores of the Baltic—the Vandal habitat. Each of your books I have read—many of them three times—one or two so often as to have lost count. In your pages I have found not merely the rhetorical graces that charm the intellect, but also a spiritual appreciation of Prussian character that no historian can afford to ignore; for nowhere else will be found the truth presented more fearlessly or with finer critical sense.”

P. B.

INTRODUCTORY

THERE are no surprises for him who studies history at its source. When, therefore, in the summer of 1914, the whole civilised world burst into a cry of indignation at Prussian barbarity, it proved that the world at large was ignorant of history or rather had been inoculated with educational serum "made in Germany." Prussia in 1914 did only what was expected of her by those who knew her past. Unfortunately, the American Press, in common with that of England, has for twenty years turned a persistently deaf ear to the many warnings that came from over the Rhine; and under cover of an almost universal pro-German and Pacifistic propaganda, William II. prepared a raid upon the trade-relations of the world, unparalleled for ferocity, for vastness, and for efficiency in diabolical details.

During the quarter of a century through which

he honoured me with marks of his favour—I had almost said his confidence—he posed as a Prince of Peace. But this was only a mask which he dropped so soon as he had completed the Kiel Canal and had completed also his programme of national expansion.

Our Pacifists did not—or would not—see the new Prussian menace, and when those who knew sought to point it out, every American University became suddenly a centre of German propaganda, where Doctors of Philosophy from Goettingen, Heidelberg, and Berlin, preached loudly and fervently the gospel of a Kultur Kaiser who loved America dearly and hated only war.

When William II. ascended the throne (1888) he secured for me permission to use the secret Archives, not only of the State but also of the great General Staff. Here I gathered at first hand materials for my *History of the German Struggle* (1806–48). The first volume was published in 1896, the year in which William threw his mask away.

He thanked me for the copy which I sent him, but expressed disappointment, not to say anger, at the manner in which I had pictured his resting-in-

God-legendarily-glorious ancestor, Frederick William III., who is rescued from oblivion only by having had for a wife the saintly Queen Luise. William II. did not like my treatment of Prussian history, nor can I say whether he expected to find in me an honorary historiographer to the Hohenzollern Court,—to praise the present war—to justify the rape of Belgium—the murder of Edith Cavell and Captain Fryatt, and the nameless horrors incident to the sinking of the *Lusitania!*

Important is the fact that historical text-books are, in Prussia, treated as political pamphlets; and that professors of the German University distort the records in their own archives in order to glorify the reigning dynasty.

In 1913, Germany celebrated with much enthusiasm the Centennial of her Liberation from Napoleon. The present Crown Prince was made President of the National Committee; a massive monument of mediocre taste was dedicated at Leipzig; and the most famous of local dramatists was ordered to produce in Breslau a play that should fire the Prussian heart and glorify the reigning House.

The play ran for two days—just long enough for news of its character to reach Potsdam and secure the attention of the Kaiser. Then came an order that it be at once suppressed.

The simple German rubbed his eyes and scratched his ears! The millions who had not seen it now rushed to buy a copy; and, of course I did the same—happening to be just then in Bavaria. No reason had been given for the summary act of censorship and the more the people read, the less did they understand.

The dramatist had detailed with Wagnerian wearisomeness the services of all the great men who had helped in 1813 to throw off the yoke of Napoleon. It was indeed a dreary drama and would have been damned for that reason alone in any other country. But I had been Imperial guest at many patriotic plays with five acts of flatuous prolixity; for instance, *The Quitzows*, where even the military escort yawned at flattery that would have seemed gross even in a Byzantine court. Knowing then that mere length and dulness could not be a blemish in Berlin eyes, I was not long in detecting the reason for the play's with-