

**The German Creator of the British Naval Panic.**

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conflict yet to come. No one could be more wedded to the all-big-gun battleship than the ranking officer of the German fleet.

In manner, as in appearance, Admiral von Tirpitz reveals the lowliness of that origin which has always made him so anomalous a personality among the men who sway the mind of his imperial master. Although not exactly of plebeian birth, von Tirpitz sprang from a humble family in the March of Brandenburg, where his father long held an obscure local dignity. The "von" did not appertain to the Tirpitz name until the bearer of it had attracted attention to himself by an almost monomaniacal insistence upon the theory that imperial Germany meant fighting ships. Alfred Tirpitz at sixteen was a raw-boned, awkward rustic who had never seen the sea and whose aged father, in sheer despair of ever making much of such a lout, put him aboard one of the frigates comprising the royal navy of Prussia. The boy had received what we would call a high school education, although the critics of the great admiral to-day are fond of insinuating that he could not speak intelligible German when he entered the service and has never succeeded in acquiring the language since. There is certainly much that seems uncouth in the Admiral's mode of conveying his ideas, but his friends in the navy league insist that he has merely the bluntness and the heartiness of the old salt.

The other explanation, and one finding favour with all scions of ancient houses, is that he loathes the well born. It took him four years to win his way to a lieutenancy at a time when the younger sons of Prussian territorial aristocrats got all the good berths in the service. By the time he was twenty-five Tirpitz had formed the methodical habits which made him what he is to-day—a punctual, regular, systematic being, ever on the alert to keep his next appointment. He seems to have a craze for detail and exactness. He is down to breakfast every morning by seven, according to one account of him in the Vienna "Neue Freie Presse," and he expects all official reports for that day to be on his table by that hour. Immediately after breakfast, which meal engages him just half-an-hour, he takes refuge in a huge apartment off the dining-room, fitted up with models of every sort of gun and torpedo that can be utilized aboard a battleship. Here the admiral receives the great capitalists and employers of labour who, from one end of Germany to the other, are eager to participate in the profits of the new era of huge squadrons. They are known to find him a keen driver of bargains. Admiral von Tirpitz exercises an almost absolute sway over the huge sums annually diverted from the imperial treasury into the coffers of the Krupps, the Blohms, the Vosses, the Schichans and other great captains of industry whose incessant activities make the new imperial Germany so marked a contrast with the fatherland of Goethe, Schopenhauer and the other "dreamers."

Intellectually, von Tirpitz is as the poles asunder from the philosophical, poetical and proletarian Germany from which the ranks of his severest critics are recruited. Many a fierce denunciation of the Admiral is given space in the Socialist "Vorwärts" of Berlin and heartily does von Tirpitz echo his imperial master's taunt that the party to which this organ devotes itself is but a crew of traitors without a country. In the political philosophy of von Tirpitz there never was a Germany until the creation of the North Sea squadron of sixteen battleships, with Wilhelmshafen as a base. He has given expression to this theory in the past with so much freedom that European organs, especially those in London, quote him rather freely as the typical German Jingo. This has made the Admiral cautious of late. He may not have said that the idea of the fatherland to the true subject of the Emperor embraces an establishment of thirty-eight battleships of the largest size, but the remark is attributed to him in many foreign dailies and is found by them to harmonize with his career.

Although he has a wife and grown-up sons, Admiral von Tirpitz is said to be so wedded to the task of equipping his imperial master's navy with the appropriate number of battleships, cruisers, torpedos

boats and submarines that his very relaxations are nautical. He dumbfounded two young naval officers at one of his wife's receptions by demanding sternly what they meant in neglecting their duties to dance attendance upon a frivolous woman. He frowns down all utilitarianism of battleships for the purely social functions attendant upon visits to a foreign port. He has set his face resolutely against the marriages of young naval officers to rich heiresses. "You have very soft white hands for a man who aspires to command a swift cruiser," he is reported to have said with his characteristic bluntness to a candidate for promotion. He refused a post of great responsibility to an officer of much distinction on the ground that the applicant was an exceedingly fine waltzer. "A man who dances so divinely," von Tirpitz is said to have said, "proves that he has no sea legs. Our sailors must not waltz if they want to reach the bridge. Let them learn the hornpipe." However authentic such anecdotes may or may not be, they illustrate the popular conception of the character of von Tirpitz, whose rise from poverty to the supreme command, under William II, of the entire Imperial naval force, is a great humiliation to the Prussian aristocracy. Time and again have the great nobles gone over the head of von Tirpitz to their sovereign in protest against the Admiral's hostility to the caste system of promotion in the army. Many incredible tales are told of the blunt debates between von Tirpitz and his sovereign on this sore subject. "Get along with him as well as you can," the Emperor is said to have remarked to one aggrieved candidate for promotion. "That is what I must do." In justice to the Admiral, however, it must be pointed out that he is the target for all sorts of attack not only in European newspapers generally, but especially in the Socialist and Radical dailies of the Fatherland. He is denounced as a martinet, as the head of a system of paid spyings upon the navies of foreign Powers, and as a tool of the dynastic ambitions of the Hohenzollerns.

The secret of the unparalleled career of von Tirpitz in creating a great naval power out of a inland empire with but a fraction of coast line is said, in the London "Daily Mail" to be his amazing capacity for initiative—his ability to impose his ideas upon inferior and superior alike. This initiative explains the force of his genius, but the keynote of his character—the faculty with which he infects others with his ideas—accounts for the German navy as the world beholds it to-day. Had there been no von Tirpitz, in the matured opinion of the London "Post," the ambitions of William II, for a position of might at sea would doubtless have persisted, but they must have remained as intangible as his ambition for a vast colonial empire. A certain narrowness of outlook in the mind of von Tirpitz, a propensity to what is called the fixed idea, a contempt for birth and breeding as such, an unconventionality, not to say rudeness, of manner and method—these personal traits are not attractive, but they enable their possessor to master the intricacies of the famous steel, gun and armour works of Krupp at Essen, to manage the State dockyards at Kiel and Wilhelmshafen, and to command a great squadron at battle practice in the North Sea. "He is, perhaps," to quote the London "Mail" again, "the world's only Minister of Naval Affairs who incorporates in himself the rare combination of practical seamanship, eminent executive talent, astute statesmanship and genius for naval construction." He has held his present post for the unprecedented long period of over twelve years.

The tendency of the Admiral to select promising young men of humble birth as subjects for promotion in the service he controls has won him innumerable devoted adherents in every squadron. Afloat he is rather jovial, and, for a sailor, most abstemious in eating and drinking. The regular features of the large, typically Teutonic countenance, the unshrinking gaze of the steely blue eyes, and the patriarchally forked grey beard impart to von Tirpitz in uniform somewhat the aspect of Neptune conventionalised. He will sit in the smoking-room of a battleship and roar a marine ditty into the ears of the staff, all joining in the chorus. For all that, he has the reputation of being pretty stiff. No one in the service afloat or ashore knows precisely when to expect the Admiral on one of his perpetual tours of inspection. The owner of a great establishment at which the impulse of demands for the fleet had led to a sudden expansion was quite amazed when von Tirpitz burst into his

private office one morning. "You are hiring foreigners to rivet the armour plates," said the Admiral. "There are

three in the yards now. Do you know that you risk the loss of your contract? With that the old sailor dashed out abruptly.

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