

# The Mailed Fist in American History

**THE SAMOAN EPISODE, AND HOW A STORM AVERTED TROUBLE WITH UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND AGAINST GERMANY—PRINCE HENRY INSULTS ADMIRAL DEWEY—EUROPEAN COALITION AGAINST AMERICA PREVENTED BY ENGLAND—VON DIEDERICH INCIDENT AT MANILA.**

An American representative, in presenting his letter of credence from the President of the United States to the ruler of the German Empire, has one advantage in the fact that he has an admirable topic ready to his hand, such as perhaps no other minister has. This boon was given us by Frederick the Great. He, among the best of continental rulers, recognized the States as an independent power; and, therefore, every American minister since has found it convenient, on presenting the President's autograph letter to the King or Emperor, to recall this event and to build upon it such an oratorical edifice as circumstances may warrant. The fact that the great Frederick recognized the new American republic, not from love of it, but on account of his detestation of England, provoked by her conduct during his desperate struggle against his continental enemies, is, of course, on such occasions diplomatically kept in background.

Certain orators have recently emphasized the traditional friendship of the German Government and the United States, beginning with this considerably overworked enthusiasm of Frederick for American democracy. Until the establishment of the German Empire, in 1871, the United States had no difficulties with Germany. Our treaties with Prussia, still in force, represented a high ideal of international relations. The German states showed none of that hostility to the Union during the Civil War that so disgraced other European Powers. No German emperor, like Napoleon III, attempted to form a European coalition against the United States; no German statesman, like Gladstone, declared in a public speech that "Jefferson Davis had made a nation" and showed full sympathy with the Southern Confederacy. No Alabama or Shenandoah sailed from German ports to prey on American commerce. If we could go back forty-five years, to the Franco-Prussian war, we should find a startling contrast to the present situation. Americans sympathized then with Germany and prayed for the defeat of France! How else could they express their detestation of a pinchbeck emperor who had overturned French

liberties, sought to extend his imperialism by force of arms over Europe, exerted all his influence to destroy the American republic, and defied the Monroe Doctrine by setting up an Empire in Mexico?

**Change of German Attitude.**  
As long as Germany existed as a land of philosophers, musicians, and poets, seeking national and individual idealism and uninspired by the desire of conquering Europe and mankind, she found a responsive and admiring friend in the United States. But the Prussification of Germany changed that, as it changed so many other things. Until 1871 there was no German Empire; this new aggressive state, founded by a great military victory, evidently changed the German character, or at least brought to the front traits that had long lain dormant. It certainly disturbed the even tenor of German-American relations. Many of their differences had a rather sordid turn, pigs and sugar apparently constituting for several years the chief subjects of diplomatic intercourse. The German agrarians—the junker aristocracy—had always been restive at the large importations of meat from the United States and had little difficulty in finding reasons for excluding it. Whenever Germany discovered that American pork and sausage were unsanitary, the United States could usually suggest justifiable reasons for the exclusion of German beet-sugar. The two nations for many weary years exhausted all the talents of their diplomatic representatives on this absorbing theme. This and the German-American who stayed in the United States long enough to obtain citizenship and who, returning to Germany, claimed exemption from military service under the aegis of the American flag, constantly tended to promote ill-feeling.

**The Samoan Incident.**  
But Bismarck's plans for the erection of German colonies first caused really bad blood. In the Samoan episode the modern German, or Prussian, spirit showed itself in all its swagger and offensiveness. Americans of the present generation little appreciate how serious this Samoan

situation became; only American energy, as illustrated in the conduct of an American naval officer, Commander Leary, and a timely and devastating hurricane, prevented war. One episode, the cumulation of several months' bickerings, shows how serious the situation was.

A German corvette, the Adler, lined up before Apia, and trained its guns upon the "rebels" led by Chief Malietoa. Before it could fire its first volley, however, something happened that took the German commander's breath away. A small war vessel, named the Adams, and bearing the American flag, sailed in between the German ship and the shore. Her decks were stripped for action and her entire broadside was turned in the direction of the German vessel. Presently Commander Leary, accompanied by his staff, appeared on board the Adler, presenting his compliments to Captain Fritze. "If you fire," he said, "you must fire thru the ship which I have the honor to command. I shall not be answerable for the consequences." He then returned to the Adams, the drums of which were heard beating as they called the men to quarters. What Captain Leary did, of course, was to present squarely the issue of war or peace to the German naval officer, precisely as, eleven years later Dewey presented the same issue to Admiral von Diederich. That Leary's act was somewhat audacious is evident when one considers that his ship contained nothing but old-fashioned smooth-bore guns, while the Adler had a fine assortment of new Krupp armament. Captain Fritze did not accept the challenge; he steamed away, and German swagger, temporarily at least, lost something of its virulence.

This lively little scene grew out of a disagreement, with Germany on one side, and England and the United States on the other, which had made trouble for several years. Any one wishing the complete details will find them splendidly told in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Footnote to History." As far back as 1878, the American government had secured from the reigning "King" the harbor of Pago Pago as a naval station. England also possessed vital interests there. But, some time afterward Germany came along, ran up her flag at Apia, and issued a proclamation, coolly appropriating the islands to herself. Hardly had the imperial officials done this when the Stars and Stripes ascended another near-by flag-pole, announcing an American protectorate. In the interest of peace, both the German and the American governments disavowed the acts of their agents, and both flags came down simultaneously. Then the Germans erected a stool-pigeon king, Tamasse, against Malietoa, who was friendly to the Americans and the English. Presi-

dent Cleveland sent three ships, the Kaiser sent three, and the English a new steel cruiser, the Calliope. The greatest excitement prevailed in the United States; every moment, the public awaited the news that seemed likely to spell war.

**Storm Averted a War.**  
Then occurred one of the strangest episodes in the history of war and diplomacy. Americans who had been picking up their morning papers in daily expectation of a clash found that the news, when it came, had a very different character. A terrible typhoon had struck the islands, destroying all the American and German ships, with some loss of life. Only the British cruiser, the Calliope, escaped. This disaster had a sobering effect upon all three nations. Instead of going to war, England and United States accepted Bismarck's invitation to come to Berlin and talk the situation over. He evidently depended upon his great skill as a negotiator to accomplish the German aim, which was absolute German supremacy over the islands. The United States maintained that the three nations should control the Samoan settlement was the first diplomatic failure Bismarck had ever sustained. "It has been left to the navy-less American Republic," said the London Saturday Review, a paper notorious for its hostility to America, "to give us a lead in the path of duty and of honor."

**German Unfriendliness.**  
But this event increased the hostility which Germany nourished against the United States. Even so great an admirer and well wisher of Germany as Andrew D. White, who returned to Berlin as ambassador in 1897, admits that this unfriendliness widely prevailed. "On my setting down to the business of the embassy," he writes, contrasting 1897 with 1879, "it appeared that the changes in public sentiment since my former stay as minister, eighteen years before, were great indeed. At that time German feeling was decidedly friendly to the United States. But all this is changed now." And, speaking of the German press, "there were in all Germany but two newspapers of real importance, which were friendly to the United States. All the others were more or less hostile, and some bitterly so. The one which I read every morning was the worst. During the Spanish War it was especially virulent, being full of statements and arguments to show that corruption was the main characteristic of our government, cowardice of our army and navy, and hypocrisy of our people. Very edifying were quasi-philosophical articles; and one of these, showing the superiority of the Span-

ish women to their American sisters, especially as regards education, was a work of genius. The doings of every scapegrace in an American university, of every silly woman in Chicago, of every blackguard in New York, of every snob at Newport, of every desperado in the Rocky Mountains, of every club loafer everywhere, were served up as typical examples of American life. The municipal governments of our country, especially that of New York, were an exhaustless quarry from which specimens of every kind of scoundrelism were drawn and used in building up an ideal structure of American life; corruption, lawlessness, and barbarism being its most salient features. Nor was this confined to the more ignorant. Men who stood high in the universities, men of the greatest amiability, who in the former days had been the warmest friends to America, had now become our bitterest opponents, and some of their expressions seemed to point to eventual war."

**Prince Henry's Insult.**  
An incident at Hongkong, in the early part of 1893, intensified this ill-feeling. At that time, Germany aspired to play a great part in eastern affairs, in pursuit of which ambition the Kaiser had sent his brother, Prince Henry, with a considerable fleet. The Kaiser had sped his brother farwell in one of his characteristically flamboyant speeches, instructing him to display Germany's "mailed fist" in the Orient. At that time Spanish-American relations were rapidly verging toward war; one result seemed inevitably the destruction of Spain as a colonial power and Germany, as well as other continental powers, unfavorably regarded the prospect that her colonies might fall to the United States. Doubtless, part of the duties of this new German squadron was to make "observa-

tions," and to stand ready to act in the Philippine situation, should the imperial policy decide on drastic action. The German officers showed their sympathy with Spain and their contempt of the United States in all possible ways.

These insults culminated at a dinner which Prince Henry gave to the officers of the foreign warships, which was attended by Admiral Dewey and other Americans. Following the usual custom, Prince Henry, rising, proposed toasts to the nations whose representatives were his guests. Diplomatic etiquette stipulated that these nations should be mentioned in alphabetical order, the French names being used. The first toast was, therefore, proposed to Germany (Allemagne). Next came England (Angleterre), followed by Spain (Espagne). Since the French name for the United States is Etats-Unis, the toast to that nation should have followed that of Espagne. Ignoring this, Prince Henry next proposed France. Few men are so punctilious on diplomatic etiquette as Admiral Dewey, and, at this affront, he rose, with his officers, and quietly left the table.

**A German Apology.**  
Naturally the incident produced a sensation both in Germany and America. Prince Henry sent an officer to apologize, but Admiral Dewey, again the soul of punctiliousness, refused to accept an apology sent second-hand. His Royal Highness had personally insulted the United States and so the same gentleman must personally offer the amende honorable. Then Prince Henry made a ceremonial call and apologized. He explained the incident as due to a temporary mental aberration. Although he was using the French names for the other countries, he said, his mind persistently "connoted" the United States (To be continued next week.)



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