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Book Review

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Prince Rupprecht As an Author



Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria.

BERLIN.

ON the 9th of November, the anniversary date of the German revolution, the newspaper reported the suspension of postal relations between Bavaria and the rest of Germany. Nevertheless I received that day, from the Kösel and Pustet Verlag of Munich, the newly published diary of Indian travels by Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria. The author is a significant personage at present, for, although he is not actively implicated in the movement now under way in Bavaria, there is no doubt that he exerts great influence behind the scenes. There is, moreover, a considerable element that points to Rupprecht as the future German Kaiser. Though we may consider this view somewhat extravagant, we cannot help being profoundly interested in the Prince. What kind of that, although uncrowned, he has retained such power over his people? For it is generally recognized that were it not for eternal obstacles they would immediately choose him to be their King and commander.

NOW, it is not always wise to judge the personality of Princes by their artistic and literary productions. For with Princes it cannot be unquestionably assumed, as it can with other mortals, that the author actually is the author and has not been more or less assisted by some one else. Princes have the deplorable habit of leaning on their subordinates—sometimes to the detriment of the work in question. Thus the memoirs of the German Crown Prince—edited, as everybody knows, by the novelist Rosner—have been not only polished up, but have received a lavish sugar coating of "poetic" sentimentality. If you know Rosner's novels, you can easily distinguish the changes he made, for the sake of effect, in the naïvely sincere style of Crown Prince Wilhelm. And you cannot help wishing that his subjective self-portrait had not suffered this retouching—

2 Prince Rupprecht

which was permitted only by the excessive modesty of the author.

The memoirs of Crown Prince Rupprecht are of a different nature. In his foreword he states positively that he will take no stand at this early date on the war or the revolution: "These events are still too recent. I cannot judge them lucidly at such close range." These are virile words; on the whole, virility is the Prince's outstanding characteristic. His mental attitude is best expressed in the verses from the "Rayana," a heroic epic of India, that he has chosen for his motto:

Let weaklings who are faint of heart
Surrender to their destiny;
Courageous souls go always on,
Confronting fate with confidence.
He who is resolute and strong
In his contentions against fate—
He is a man, and holds secure
His happiness from fate's attacks.

THE Crown Prince has spent his unsought leisure in the writing of a book on India; he has taken his material from the diaries he kept on his travels through that country in 1898. In scientific thoroughness his book surpasses most other works on India, which are of various kinds: artistic, poetic, philosophic, entertaining, and some—mostly from English pens—that treat in detail the difficult problems of this land of wonder. Among the last-named the book of Crown Prince Rupprecht will take an honorable place. Conclusive evidence of this is the fact that while reading this work one can forget the author entirely; for one's attention is completely taken up with the clear and impartial exposition of the racial, caste and religious conditions among the Hindus, Persians and Mohammedans, as well as of the various relations of the native Princes to the English rule and of the effects of this rule.

The Prince, impelled by his sober scientific spirit, always keeps his eyes open and, for the sake of enlightenment, penetrates into the life of the common people. In his search for experiences of all kinds he mixes with the sullen, filthy crowds. Again, his exalted rank gives him the opportunity of seeing much that remains hidden from the ordinary traveler: for he is accepted by the Hindu Princes as their equal, and his intimate association with them enables him to study their personalities and characters and to interpret their historical relation to their ancestors and their country.

Rupprecht voices sensible opinions on the questions of justice and reform. He gives full recognition to the magnanimity the English display in their administration of the country; but he has his own notions about England's relation to India in a national-economic sense. The economic and commercial aspects of life also come in for their share of the discussion.

ALTHOUGH this book was written only after the war, the author's calm, objective attitude never gives way to any outbursts of personal rancor. And in spite of the coldness and occasional dryness of the style the wealth of interesting facts in the book save it from ever becoming boring.

The author's artistic interest is aroused mainly by the architecture of the country. He has illustrated his work with many excellent pictures of the more prominent temples and mosques, which he judges with an exhibition of sure and refined taste. Although excessive enthusiasm is opposed to his character, he cannot resist interrupting his objec-

3

Prince Rupprecht

tive exposition with an occasional appreciation of the beauty and expressiveness of these buildings. He brings in many a felicitous comparison with the plastic art of ancient Greece.

AGAIN, he compares the great Mogul Akbar with the Roman Emperor Hadrian and gives an animated description of the Hindu Prince surrounded by philosophers and sages, with whom he discusses transcendental problems—an activity that in no way interferes with his being, like the Roman, a thorough warrior and statesman. Here is a delicate intimation that being a good soldier and finding enjoyment in spiritual matters are not mutually exclusive. For the Germans regard or condemn Rupprecht of Bavaria mainly as a dauntless or brutal soldier—the opinions varying with the political views of the critics.

At any rate, the Crown Prince's description of India demonstrates that his love for the heroic deeds of battle constitute only one side of his character, and that the Bavarians may not be entirely unjustified in remaining loyal to him.

These Indian reminiscences are to be followed by a book on Egypt, now in print. It is true that very much has already been written about this country. Yet we can look forward with great interest to the new work of a forceful and straightforward personality.

GABRIELE REUTER.

