

THE ASHBOURNE FAMILY SAGA

CHAPTER XVIII

and

Saucy Sophia's Snippets plus trailer for next month.

November, 2024.

The seven friends including Edward were enjoying their cigars and schnapps after luncheon at Frau Gruber's Speisesaal located in a side street not far from Friedrichstraße Bahnhof in central Berlin. They did not all meet very often, and it was now over two months since they had all been together. They briefly discussed the late Kaiser Wilhelm Friedrich Ludwig I whose long life finally closed on the 9th March that year (1888). He was born in 1797, the second son of the extremely popular and well-beloved Queen Louise and Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia who had suffered much under the Napoleonic yoke during the early part of their lives. Such harsh treatment of their subjects at the hands of the French had not endeared the country to their west to German hearts and minds.



Kaiser Wilhelm I.

There was much regret expressed for the death of Kaiser Friedrich III, whose full name was Friedrich Wilhelm Nicholas Karl and who had died on the 15th June at the age of 54. Edward amongst the group was particularly sorrowful because his wife, now the dowager Kaiserin Victoria is the first child of the Queen (Victoria) and his death was also much mourned at home in England. Although Edward kept his thoughts to himself he had become aware that partly through the influence of his wife, Friedrich had adopted many of the liberal views of England with regard to governance of the now German Empire. Opinions completely contrary to the style of government pursued by the Chancellor, Graf Otto von Bismarck. Such contradiction did not bode well for the future comfort and

possible happiness of the late Kaiser's widow, who was also our Princess Royal, thought Edward. Kaiser Friedrich had died of cancer of the oesophagus after a long and extremely agonising period of suffering. The previous summer the family had been to San Remo in Italy on holiday when Friedrich developed a cold, or so they thought, but the infection persisted, his health had steadily deteriorated and there had been nothing the best doctors and surgeons could administer to preserve the life of the Crown Prince and later Kaiser.



Kaiser Friedrich III.

The new Kaiser, Wilhelm II had now been on the throne for three months, too short a time for any of them to have much opinion to express. They were loyal to the regium and their country whilst Edward's loyalty was always to the Queen Empress at home and to Great Britain in general.

Heinrich Bauer, the son of a manufacturer of chemicals in Württemberg, and who always seemed to be the best informed on matters political, wondered if Wilhelm, at the age of twenty-nine, would have the experience and patience to rule the country.

"I understand that unlike his grandfather, the late Kaiser Wilhelm I, he wants to take an active part in government, be his own man and make decisions for himself. My father says he is too impetuous." Announced Heinrich.

"How does your Papa know, he's miles away in Württemberg. Why! It's almost in Switzerland." Queried Horst Meckel, who always seemed to consider himself slightly superior on account, the others thought, of his having attended at the University.

"Papa knows, he is always very well informed, the business would not flourish without good information. It is important to know what one's competitors are doing, and also regarding the government who makes the significant decisions." Said Heinrich.

To lighten the mood Anton Fuchs, the comedian of the group asked if any of them had seen Yolanda recently. Eugen Baader leaned back in his chair with the air of a seasoned racecourse punter, put his thumbs in the arm holes of his canary yellow waistcoat and announced. "Have I seen *Yolanda!* I'm quite sure I have seen more of her than any of you." And a satisfied grin spread across his face, as much as to say 'I'm the man of the moment' so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it.

"And what precisely are we to deduce from such a bold statement against the good lady's virtue!" demanded Caspar Janssen, who was slightly jealous of Eugen, the artist his parents wished him to become.

"Shall I tell you?" mocked Eugen, "Or." Looking directly at Caspar. "I could be accused of destroying the lady's unblemished reputation and ruining her chances of honourable marriage!"



Part of the Kurfürstendamm, Berlin.

"That might be a possibility with Yolanda, but not with Hedwig!" Exclaimed Caspar. "Two days ago, I took the *good* lady to a café on the Kurfürstendamm; she had the best there was, and after I took her to the theatre and a cab home, that is her home. As she stepped down refusing my hand, she looked straight at me and declared that the evening had been memorable, but she had enjoyed better!"

"What did you say her name is?" Enquired Horst.

"Hedwig," said Caspar.

"Thereby lies the problem, the name means war and battle, you've had a lucky escape old chap, the fool who marries her will be betrothed to a regular old battle axe! Put it down to experience and next time don't be so generous." Advised Horst.

Suddenly Otto Pfisterer who only seemed to be interested in unterseeboote (submarines) piped up. "As you are talking about Yolanda, it seems to me we have all experienced her favours. I do not mean we have known her in the Biblical sense, but she is rather good fun to be with."

“Well now!” exclaimed Anton, “We all thought that unterseeboote were your sole interest, I shall have to keep an eye on you in future.” To which there was general laughter and slapping of the tabletop making the glasses jangle.

Eugen held his right hand up to quieten the boisterous hubbub, and in a subdued voice to avoid being overheard by other customers of Frau Gruber said somewhat grandiosely “The good lady merely asked me to paint a portrait of her. She asked if I could portray her as Aphrodite. I suggested Artemis the goddess of hunting and the night which Yolanda considered for a few moments but then said no, she wished to be Aphrodite, or Venus if I preferred. There being no difference other than Greek or Latin we settled for Aphrodite.”

Anton could not contain himself. “What! You painted her naked!”

“Wait a moment.” Said Eugen. “I needed to come back with painting materials. We needed to discuss a few matters, but after some further thoughts and ideas we settled on oil on canvas. She wanted me to include an Eros (Cupid) so there would be no doubt that she would be Aphrodite.”

Edward sat back in his chair and listened to their banter, and as he listened he realised that they all knew Yolanda, but to each of them she was slightly different, not the same junges Dienstmädchen. The Artist Eugen intrigued him as he realised that there was more to the young fellow than just a painter of ships whilst at the same time he wondered if Heinrich who seemed to promote himself as a man of the world but actually very much standing in his father’s shadow. To all of them though Yolanda seemed the perfect portrayal and depiction of feminine charm. She was generous with her favours without being loud and brash. No one could accuse her of being a “loose woman” nor a “blue stocking” though she had clearly been well educated and could converse on almost any subject. She is beautiful to behold with charms in just the right proportion, and an enthusiasm, nay eagerness for male company; was she also hungry for love, complete love. Edward thought that she seemed enraptured with desire to enjoy life to the full and with gay abandon, possibly reckless enthusiasm which could soon land her in serious trouble.

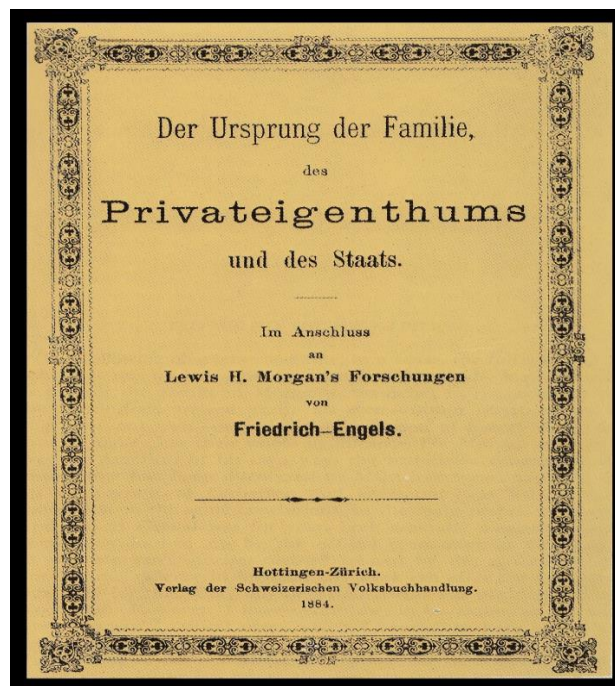
When Edward surfaced from his reverie they were still talking about the painting and Eugen was explaining how he had borrowed a plate camera and photographed Yolanda in the agreed pose. The photographs would enable him to work on the picture at home, though he thought Yolanda would have preferred him to stay with her working on the painting. Eugen now thought he had said far too much and refrained from providing any further details. He did not tell them that the light is all wrong in Yolanda’s room and that, with little difficulty, he had persuaded her to visit him at his flat. She came on a regular basis and often not only posed naked but walked about and poured drinks for them both distaining to even gather a dressing gown about herself.



Eugen painting Yolanda in his flat cum studio.

Perceiving the subject to have been exhausted for the time being that day, Horst produced a book from one of his deep coat pockets and holding it before them asked if any had read Friedrich Engels latest preaching of the Communist Manifesto disguised as a type of serious anthropic history of mankind entitled “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.”

“I went to much trouble to obtain a copy; this one came from Belgium and is not the first edition which was published in 1884. Not much about private property and the state, mostly about family, or so it seems to me,” Declared Horst.



**The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State
by Friedrich Engles, 1884.**

To the surprise of all of them Otto announced that he had read the book. "An uncle of mine has a first edition, bit of a collector of books is my uncle, but hardly reads any of them. I read it when I visited for over a week last year."

"And what did you make of it?" Enquired Horst.

"Not much." Answered Otto. "There's a great deal about gens and group marriage with the Iroquois, North American red Indians of New York State being mentioned frequently."

"Did you say *group marriage*?" Enquired Caspar.

"That's quite right, I had the same opinion." Stated Horst.

Not to be put off that lightly Caspar then enquired. "What exactly does he mean by group marriage?"

Addressing the whole group Otto attempted to explain. "Firstly, Engels divides the development of mankind into three groups or stages of progression. There is a lower stage when there was a knowledge of pottery, growing crops and domestic animals. To explain the middle stage, he refers to the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico who built houses rather like fortresses with bricks and had added metal work but not iron to the achievements of mankind"

"And the third stage?" Enquired Edward.

"The Bronze Age." Said Anton.

"No, that's the middle stage." Confirmed Otto. "The Upper Stage begins with the smelting of iron, states Engels."

"But what about this group marriage thing" persists Caspar.

"I am coming to that, if I remember correctly it belongs to the lower and middle stages and is or rather was practiced by the whole tribe with all the adults being married to each other. I mean." Said Otto to correct himself. "Each female was married to all the men, and every male member of the tribe was married to all the women."

"Sounds great!" Said Anton. "I could enjoy myself with all of them, one after another."



Friedrich Engels in 1879.

“Wait a moment.” Said Otto holding up his right hand. “It’s not that simple, everything is owned collectively, as with children, their mother is known but not the father. This places much power and control in the hands of the females, with the most determined and controlling female taking control of the whole tribe. Perhaps now you are not so sure?”

“Well now you put it that way it seems we are better the way things are.” Declared Edward and Anton.

“What else does Engels talk about in his book?” Asked Anton.

“That, to my recollection, seems to be the problem, not much.” Said Otto. “There is much quoting of other Authors work, Lewis H. Morgan, J. F. McLennan, Backhofen, and Lubbock are all mentioned and there is quite detailed information on the gradual political development of Ancient Greece and Rome with references to other peoples, India, South America, the Irish, English and ourselves. It’s not light reading, most of it completely over my head, might as well have been written in Ancient Greek. A good book to take to bed when you cannot sleep. I guarantee you’ll be sound asleep in no time.”

The luncheon meeting continued for another forty minutes when the group gradually broke up as separately they made their excuses and departed for their respective offices. Edward was one of the last to leave having time on his hands that afternoon. He had moved away from the house of Alexandra’s uncle in the Grunwald and secured the tenancy of a flat near Friedrich Strasse but on the opposite side of the Spree, across the bridge. This location was both economic and within walking distance of the Naval Administration Office to which he was attached. He had acquitted himself with panache. His reports on ship repairs and construction were accurate, detailed and precise and endeared him to the Director. So good was he seen to be that within six months he had been promoted twice firstly, to the equivalent sub lieutenant and two weeks ago to a lieutenant. Jokingly his friends had said that at that rate he would be captain of his own ship by Christmas, and one had suggested a small ferry boat in the Spreewald!



The bridge across the Spree with the railway to Friedrich Strasse Bahnhof over the roadway.

There had been a mild frost to wake up to that morning, the first of the coming winter. It was now late September, and during the morning clouds had gathered from the east rendering a change in the weather to give way to one of those days which seemed to consist of showers of rain followed by bright and sunny intervals, but quite windless. The Imperial flags of the German Empire, Red, White and Black hung limp with rain on the numerous flag staffs of the city. As Edward crossed the Friedrich Strasse Bridge the Spree looked cold and uninviting, even for boating and he was grateful for the break in the weather to avoid getting wet again. There was even sunshine sparkling on the slate roofs of surrounding buildings and glistening on bronze statues. To Edward's delight when he arrived home a letter awaited him from Alexandra's father the Graf to let him know that they would both and the Gräfin (Countess) be arriving in the Metropolis the following day, Saturday the 22nd September, and would be staying at the Hotel Kaiserhof on Wilhelmplatz.



Hotel Kaiserhof, Wilhelmplatz, opened in October, 1875.

There was only a few days until they arrived, and Edward had much to do in the intervening period. but perhaps after the initial delight at the anticipated arrival of his beloved Alexandra his thoughts turned to speculation as to why the three of them were making the journey to Berlin. Could it be to accompany and chaperone their beautiful daughter, or were they coming to put pressure on him to propose marriage? After much careful consideration he thought the latter most probable. Was he worthy of her, a mere lieutenant while her father a Graf, a Count in France or an

Earl at home in England? He was in a quandary, he could forestall any embarrassment by leading the assault, asking Alexandra's father for her hand in marriage before any pressure was put on him to declare his intentions towards the lady, but what did Alexandra desire? They had been very good friends for some time now, over a year, but had not discussed marriage. Also, he doubted his navy pay would be anywhere near sufficient to provide for a wife, especially one from the aristocracy.

By now Edward was sitting pondering the problem. He made a cup of coffee with the forlorn hope that somehow the aroma would stimulate his brain cells into action, but his little grey cells did not seem to be responding. Then he remembered that he had yet another problem to resolve. He had moved away from Alexandra's uncle, the smart house in the prestigious Grunwald area, and although Edward had understood the parting to have been amicable, he now wondered if Hans Hoffmann felt aggrieved and thought the young Englander ungrateful of all the help he (Hans) had bestowed on him. Edward did not know that his rapid career advancement had been partly due to Uncle Hans having put in a good word for Edward on many occasions. Not that Edward desired the intervention on his behalf. Edward, the stout-hearted subject of the Queen Empress firmly believed in making his own way in the world, though privately he would not deny that a superior's assistance in his advancement is always most welcome.

Saucy Sophia's Snippets



Another post card from the Author's private collection.

A bit of a mystery is this card. The young lady, semi dressed, seems to be attending to her hair, is she getting ready to go out, and if so where. It could be that, although the gentleman is wearing his carpet slippers and cream trousers, the silk top hat, white silk scarf and possibly an opera cape hanging on a peg denote class. Perhaps he knows his wife or mistress will be hours getting ready and does not see any reason to hurry himself. Or is she a lady of easy virtue dressing to go home after a romp between the sheets?

Trailer for December.

The family in Weston-under-Penyard receive communication from Berlin and all are agog with the news. Christmas will be a joyous occasion for all.

Dorian M. Osborne

1st November, 2024.