

CONVERSATIONS WITH
PRINCE BISMARCK

CONVERSATIONS
WITH
PRINCE BISMARCK

COLLECTED BY
HEINRICH VON POSCHINGER

ENGLISH EDITION

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY
SIDNEY WHITMAN



LONDON AND NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS
45, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1900

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
I. THE CHANCELLOR IN THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR	1
II. FURTHER CONVERSATIONS AND INTERVIEWS	75
III. BISMARCK AND HIS MASTER	188
IV. BISMARCK ON POLITICS	208
V. , COMMERCE AND COLONIES	230
VI. BISMARCK AND HIS FELLOW-WORKERS	245
VII. IN LIGHTER VEIN	262
INDEX	295

“Es ist ja nichts auf dieser Erden,
Als Gaukelei und Taschenspiel;
Wie auch die Menschen sich gebärden
Der Kluge giebt darauf nicht viel.” *

[*Written in the Album of Frau Julie von Massow.*]

v. BISMARCK-SCHÖNHAUSEN.

BERLIN, 25th February, 1850.

“Nothing exists upon this earth
But sleight of hand and trickster’s arts;
And wisdom counts it little worth
To reckon on man’s outward parts.”

INTRODUCTION

THE contents of the present volume have been almost entirely selected from five of the latest bulky publications * of Heinrich von Poschinger, the most industrious, as well as perhaps the most trustworthy, of those German writers who have devoted themselves to the compilation of the history of Prince Bismarck's career. And if I say "most trustworthy," it is not that I wish to minimize the work of others; but that Herr von Poschinger, who has been for many years Privy Councillor in the *Reichsamt des Innern*, is the only man of letters who, since the death of Germany's distinguished historian, Heinrich von Sybel, has had free access to the Prussian official records. And so, if at first sight it may excite surprise that among the material here presented to the reader, there should be included interviews with journalists, accounts of promiscuous

* "Bismarck-Portefeuille," vol. i.-iv., Heinrich von Poschinger (Stuttgart, 1898-99); "Bismarck Neue Tischgespräche und Interviews," Heinrich von Poschinger (Stuttgart, 1899); John Booth, "Persönliche Erinnerungen an Fürst Bismarck," Herausgegeben von H. von Poschinger (Hamburg, 1899).

conversations which Bismarck held with friend and foe, it must be remembered that these have been deemed by a thoroughly competent judge to be not only authoritative sources of information, but also to deserve a permanent place among the records of the life of the maker of modern Germany. This test of authority is their hall-mark, whereas their intrinsic value may be best summed up, perhaps, in the words of the *Times* (1879): "The sparks of wisdom which Prince Bismarck was in the habit of emitting at his *soirées* will one day yet have a higher value than the longest debates in Parliament."

Now that the great statesman is at rest, and the acrimonious bickerings which were aroused after his death have passed into silence, the day is drawing nigh—and it promises to be a long one—in which everything worth preserving, every flash from that unique mind, may be expected to be read and appreciated for its inherent human interest. Much has been already given to the world—previous conversations with Bismarck among the rest—last and greatest, his own *Reminiscences* and *Reflections*. But here, together with some of his most important political conversations, will be found, for the first time in book form, the most remarkable of the interviews which startled the world after Bismarck's dismissal in 1890. They are gathered together—sentiments and opinions—rugged and even brutal in their directness, as the

parrying thrusts of a great gladiator may well appear, when standing alone and fighting for his honour and dignity in an age not particularly noted for moral courage, or indeed for any other form of sincerity. Here is indeed human tragedy: humour, sarcasm, pathos, pity, every manifestation of a great heart, side by side with calm disquisitions upon the most important political problems which interest mankind in every clime. Many of the keen shafts and sallies here collected, have been flashed to the ends of the Earth within a few hours of their utterance, have given work to thousands of type-setters, and absorbed the interest of millions of readers.

All this might indeed be said of the utterance of many public men in our age of electricity; but here the parallel ends. For whereas "the man of the day" is often but the faint shadow of the morrow and the unrecognizable dead of the day after, the pregnant thoughts of this political genius gain strength and meaning with the passage of time. A mere glance at the present volume will suffice to prove the truth of this; for, on almost every page are discussions of weighty political problems, and no topic is touched without being enriched by some *aperçu*, in many cases unerringly prophetic.

It is not, then, too much to say that in years to come men of all countries, who are interested in the difficult art of politics as demonstrated by one of the

greatest political artists that ever lived, will turn anew to the story of Bismarck's life and find essential material in these collected conversations.

It is well known that in the last years of his life Prince Bismarck was anxiously preoccupied with the future of the Empire in whose creation he had so large a share. It was not his ambition that Germany should domineer the world, nor even that she should excel other nations in the tricks of the money-market, highly as he valued a nation's material prosperity as a means and an indication of progress. His aim was rather to secure Germany from foreign interference with her free development as one of the great civilizing forces of the world—who knows whether in the future not the greatest of them all? Not as a conqueror, but as a guardian of law, order, and peace, was it Bismarck's wish that Germany should thrive; as a country in which, true to the motto of the Hohenzollern, *Summ Cuique*, everybody, rich or poor, should be entitled to his own, not merely to the bare measure of human justice, but also to a few rays of sunshine. The foundation of the State should be one of an ethical character, with equity for its keystone, and the principle underlying its wider policy: "Niemand zu Lieb, Niemand zu Leid" (to favour nobody, to harm nobody). And that this standard of the great statesman was no mere cant is best shown by the fact that, of all the

great Powers, Germany is the only one which has been uninterruptedly at peace with the world for the last thirty years. If Prince Bismarck's ideas prevail, Germany may well remain at peace for the next fifty years, and find her noblest mission in the development of those qualities and institutions which seem destined to make her as much the pioneer of social progress, as she is already the leader in the domains of scientific research and practical philosophy.

SIDNEY WHITMAN.

CONVERSATIONS WITH PRINCE BISMARCK

I

THE CHANCELLOR IN THE FRANCO- GERMAN WAR

THE greatness of character, the concentration of purpose, and the diplomatic genius displayed by Prince Bismarck during the war of 1870-71 have not yet, perhaps, been fully realized by the rising generation, most of whom are inclined to lose sight of the difficulties of this portion of the Chancellor's work in the overwhelming successes achieved by the German armies. It is, therefore, not out of place to collect a few conversations and interviews with Bismarck during this momentous period.

At the very commencement of the war it was evident that there existed in certain circles a slowly growing opposition towards the Chancellor. General von Hartmann, who was present at the departure of the King and his suite from Berlin on July 31, 1870, wrote as follows :—

2 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

"Bismarck also accompanied them. He was looking extraordinarily well, and was most merry and good-humoured; his powerful eyes sparkled with pride and pleasure; I, too, shook hands with him. I did not see Moltke; he is said to have looked as absolutely indifferent as ever. What nerves that man must have! I also witnessed Bismarck taking leave of Manteuffel, whom he approached with a hearty expression, as though he wished to shake hands before setting out on this decisive journey; but Manteuffel greeted him very coolly, and Bismarck's manner changed at once. They shook hands without any cordiality; their relations to one another remained unaltered. Manteuffel is said to be terribly excited, and to use the strongest expressions about trivialities. His *entourage* finds itself in a difficult position."

As the Royal Headquarters left Berlin, Bismarck involuntarily overheard a loud conversation, carried on in the adjoining compartment. General von Podbielski laid particular stress upon the fact that care had this time been taken to prevent Bismarck interfering in military matters. Von Roon, the Minister of War, who was on friendly terms with the Chancellor, interposed almost bashfully, "But surely he must know when he has to make peace."

In order to maintain connection with the German press, Prince Bismarck invited Ludwig Bamberger to accompany the Royal Headquarters, and to this we owe much valuable information about the Chancellor's daily life during this momentous period.

Their first conversation, which took place upon the

7th of August, turned eventually on the method by which the unity of Germany was to be the outcome of the war.

Bismarck touched on this subject with caution, and was particularly concerned in maintaining a good understanding with the several Federal sovereigns; Prussia must not allow itself to appear as if it wished to utilize the occasion for the purpose of robbing the German Governments after they, and in particular the Bavarians, had decided upon war. In the event of success, he intended (although his views on this point wavered during the campaign) to unite Alsace and Metz to Baden as a *Reichsland*; and yet Baden must not become any larger, for the more small states there were, the more easily would the unity be cemented. He had even incorporated Waldeck in Prussia with reluctance; the correct policy, he said, was to spare the various dynasties. That France would probably become a republic after the first few defeats, was a prospect quite to his liking; the only question would be, with whom to conclude a peace-treaty when once the Empire had been overturned?

The day after this conversation Bismarck gave Bamberger copies of Benedetti's autograph letter and draft of the secret *projet de traité* of August 5, 1866, in which parts of Rhenish Prussia, Bavaria and Hesse were demanded by France. The Chancellor mentioned that Benedetti had remarked, "Si non, c'est la guerre." And that he (Bismarck) had replied that that was absurd. Whereupon Benedetti retorted, "Si non, c'est la perte de la dynastie."

A curious incident, during the Chancellor's stay.

4 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

in Bar le Duc, is mentioned by the French author, Louis Ulbach—

“Von Bismarck found time during the march of the German armies on Sedan to discuss the merits of German and French education with the masters of the Bar-le-Duc *gymnasium*, who had remained behind. It was the eve of the last effort—the final crisis; and our great enemy, with the intention of defeating us simultaneously on all sides, inspected the *gymnasium* on August 28, 1870, inquiring about the number of lessons and the standard of the studies. This visit, reported by the master of the *gymnasium*, appears to me to have a special importance, though Bismarck does not mention it, and his historian, Moritz Busch, seems to know nothing about it. During this inspection the Chancellor emphatically censured the boarding-house system, which separates a child from its parents. He admitted that the German universities permitted too much freedom; but he seemed to prefer noisy liberty for the young to the uniformity and enervation of French seclusion. He thought it curious that ground-glass should be used for the windows; that the boys in the class-rooms were not allowed to look out upon the sky and open spaces; and that spyholes were made in the doors to surprise and pry upon the pupils. Bismarck even found fault with the pews in the chapel, which did not face the choir, but were arranged along the side, so that the boys could not see the services they attended. After inspecting and criticizing everything, he partook of a glass of *Kirschwasser*, pledged the peace, declaring at the same time that he had little belief in it, and left to hasten

the arrival of the German army on the last battlefield of the Empire."

Commencing with the capitulation of Sedan, a series of most interesting and valuable interviews are recorded, not by the hands of devoted subordinates, but by those to whom Bismarck's success meant ruin and defeat.

Captain D'Orcet, of the 4th French Cuirassiers, after describing in his *Récit militaire* the meeting of the generals empowered to negotiate the surrender of the French army after Sedan, continues—

"We were grouped as follows. In the centre of the room stood a square table with a red cloth. At one side of this table sat General von Moltke, with Bismarck on his left, and General von Blumenthal on his right. At the opposite side of the table sat General Wimpffen in advance and quite alone; behind him and almost in shadow were General Castelnau, General Faure, and the remaining French officers. In the same room were also seven or eight Prussian officers, one of whom, at a sign from General von Blumenthal, went to the stove and, leaning upon it, took notes of all that was said.

When every one was seated, there was a momentary silence. It was clear that General Wimpffen did not quite know how to open the conversation; but, as General von Moltke made no attempt to begin, he decided to do so himself.

"I wish to know," he said, "what terms of capitulation His Majesty the King of Prussia is disposed to offer to us."

"The conditions are very simple," replied General von Moltke: "all the troops, with their arms and

6 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

baggage, will be made prisoners ; the officers will retain their arms as a mark of respect for the courage they have shown, but will become prisoners of war like the non-commissioned officers and men."

General Wimpffen complained that these terms were too hard, and pleaded that the army should be allowed to withdraw to the interior of France, or to Algeria, on condition that it took no further share in the war. As Moltke declined to entertain any such proposal, the French commander appealed to the generosity of the Germans on his own behalf, pointing out that he had only arrived on the battlefield in time to take over the command. General Wimpffen concluded by announcing that he would appeal to the sense of honour of his troops, and either force his way out or defend Sedan.

At this point Moltke interrupted him. "Believe me, I entertain the greatest respect for you ; I quite understand your position ; but I regret that I can concede nothing that you demand. As regards an attempt to force your way out, that is as impossible as to defend Sedan. No doubt you have excellent troops, your picked infantry is very good, your cavalry is daring and fearless, your artillery is admirable and has inflicted heavy—far too heavy losses upon us ; but the greater part of your infantry is discouraged ; we have taken more than 20,000 unwounded prisoners to-day." He then proceeded to describe briefly the overwhelming numbers and superiority of the German forces, and concluded by offering to allow a French officer to verify his statement as to their position and strength.

General Wimpffen then tried a new tack. He urged

the German representatives not to press their advantages too far, and warned them against a course which must lead to an endless struggle between Prussia and France.

Von Bismarck now joined in the discussion.

"Your reasoning, General, at first appears well founded, but as a matter of fact it is not so. Generally speaking, one can rarely reckon on gratitude—never on the gratitude of a nation; one can put some trust in the gratitude of a sovereign, and also in that of his family; under certain conditions, one can even rely upon it with confidence; but, I repeat, one must not expect anything from the gratitude of a nation. If the French people were a nation like other nations, if it preserved firmly established institutions, if it regarded those institutions with reverence and respect, as we do, if the throne of its ruler was stable, we might then reckon on the gratitude of the Emperor and his son, and attach a definite value to that gratitude. But for the last eighty years the forms of Government in France have had so little stability, they have been so numerous, they have vacillated with such estranging rapidity, and their changes have lain so completely beyond the bounds of expectation, that one can reckon on nothing in your country, and it would be an act of folly for a neighbouring nation to found hopes on the friendship of any French sovereign. To do so would be to build a house of glass. Moreover, it would be foolish to suppose that France could ever forgive our successes. Your nation is excitable, envious, jealous, and proud beyond measure. France has declared war with Prussia—with Germany," he added, correcting himself, "thirty times."

8 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

within two centuries. On this occasion, as before, the war arose from jealousy because you could not forgive us the victory of Sadowa, though it cost you nothing, and in no way detracted from your reputation. But you thought that the glory of war was something to which you alone were entitled ; you would not tolerate near you a nation that was your equal. You believed yourselves unable to forgive us Sadowa—you will never be able to forgive us Sedan ! If we made peace now, you would resume the war in five or ten years, as soon as you thought you were strong enough ; and that would be all the thanks we could expect from the French nation. Our nation is the opposite of yours—honest and peaceable, not consumed with a lust of conquest, and only asking for peace. We wish to secure peace for our children, and in order to achieve this, we must set a barrier between ourselves and you. We need a strip of land and a chain of fortresses which will continue to protect us against the attacks of France.”

The French commander protested against this criticism of his countrymen, and assured the Chancellor that the diatribes of a few journalists did not represent the true feeling of the nation. The Frenchman of 1870 was more intent on making money and living in comfort than on seeking military glory. The old hatred of England had died out, and so would the bitter feeling towards Germany, provided that unseasonable severity did not inflame forgotten passions.

Bismarck at once replied—

“ There I must interrupt you, General. No ; France is the same as she always was. France wanted this

war, and the Emperor Napoleon declared it in order to establish his dynasty more securely. We know well enough that the reasonable and healthy section in France did not urge on this war. Still it accepted the idea willingly. We also know that the army was not the element most hostile towards us in France: the section in France which forced on this war was rather that section which makes and unmakes the various governments: the mob and the journalists," and he laid special emphasis on these words, "deserve punishment. We must advance as far as Paris. Who knows what may yet happen? Perhaps you will be establishing one of those governments to which nothing is holy, and which will make laws as it pleases. Such a government would decline to recognize the capitulation which you had concluded to-day in the name of the army. It would perhaps force the officers to break word of honour they had given to us, for, in any case, it would wish to defend itself to the last. We know well that France places soldiers in the field quickly; but these young troops are not the equals of veteran forces, and, moreover, the corps of officers cannot be improvised; no, nor even the non-commissioned officers. We desire peace, but it must be a lasting peace, and under the conditions which I have already mentioned. The fortune of war has placed the best soldiers and the best officers of the French army in our hands; to restore them to liberty of our own free will would be madness, and would prolong the war. Such a course is opposed to the interest of our nations. No, General; no matter how much we sympathize with your own situation, or how flattering our opinion of your army may be, we

10 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

cannot comply with your wish and alter the conditions offered to you."

"Very well," replied General Wimpffen, with dignity. "It is impossible for me to sign such a capitulation; we will resume the struggle."

General Castelnau now remarked, with some hesitation—

"I think the time has arrived to deliver the Emperor's message."

"We are listening to you, General," observed Bismarck.

"The Emperor has commissioned me to tell his Majesty the King of Prussia, that he has sent him his sword, and surrenders to him unconditionally. He does this, however, in the hope that the King, touched by so complete a surrender, will pay a full tribute to it, and grant the French army a more honourable capitulation."

"Is that all?" asked Bismarck.

"Yes."

"But which sword is it that the Emperor Napoleon III. has surrendered? Is it the sword of France, or his own sword? If it is the sword of France, the conditions might be considerably modified, and your mission would then assume a most serious complexion."

"It is only the sword of the Emperor," replied Castelnau.

"In that case the conditions will undergo no change," Moltke remarked quickly, almost joyfully. "The Emperor himself will receive everything that he desires."

The spectators of this scene received the impression that a secret difference of opinion existed between

Bismarck and Moltke, and that, whilst the former would willingly have allowed the war to end at once, the latter wished to continue it.

"We shall renew the battle," repeated General Wimpffen.

"The truce expires at 4 a.m. to-morrow," replied General von Moltke. "I shall open fire punctually at four o'clock."

All the generals and officers rose from their seats amid an icy silence: the words "I shall open fire punctually at four o'clock" seemed still to ring in their ears.

Bismarck, however, turned to General Wimpffen. "Yes, General, you command brave and heroic soldiers, and I do not doubt that they will display brilliant courage to-morrow and inflict severe losses upon us. But of what use will that be? You will have achieved no more to-morrow evening than you have to-day, and you will only have upon your conscience the blood of your soldiers and of our own which you have shed so uselessly. Do not allow your momentary displeasure to cause you to break off our conversation. General von Moltke will, I hope, convince you that to attempt further resistance would be madness."

The company then resumed their seats, and General von Moltke again assured the French commander that even the best troops could not force their way through the German lines. Wimpffen hazarded the suggestion that possibly the German positions were not so strong as they were represented to be, but received the crushing retort that the French were no doubt better acquainted with the topography of Germany than of France.

These memorable negotiations then closed by General

12 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Moltke according the French an extension of the truce from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m., on the suggestion of the Chancellor, in order to allow a French council of war to be held. A few hours later the capitulation was signed, and the French army became prisoners of war.

The following entry in the diary of the Crown Prince (afterwards Emperor Frederick II.) was penned at Donchery on the 3rd of September, 1870:—

“A visit from Bismarck. We retain Alsace under German administration for the ‘Bund,’ or Empire. The Empire idea was barely touched upon; I noticed that he was only in favour of it conditionally, and I took care not to insist. Altogether I am convinced that it must come to this; our development turns on it, and cannot be brought about more favourably than by means of this victory.”

This interview is apparently the one to which Bismarck referred during a conversation with Moritz Busch at Friederichsruh on the 26th of September, 1888, as follows:—

“It was either before or immediately after Sedan—at Beaumont or Donchery—and our conversation took place in a long avenue. We were riding side by side. Our views as to what was possible and what was morally permissible brought us into direct conflict; and, as he suggested using force and forcible measures against the Bavarians, I reminded him of Margrave Gero and the thirty Wendish princes, and also of the murderous night of Sendling. It would be a breach of faith, cruelty, and treachery to allies who had done their duty, quite apart from the folly of making the attempt when we still had need of them.”

Barely three weeks later, September 20, 1870, a remarkable interview took place between Bismarck and M. Regnier,* who was endeavouring to negotiate a treaty of peace between Prussia and the Napoleonic Dynasty.

Arriving at Ferrières from Hastings at 10 a.m., M. Regnier found little difficulty in obtaining a private interview with the Chancellor. The credentials of the Napoleonic agent consisted of a photographic view of Hastings, on which the Prince Imperial had written—

“MY DEAR PAPA,—I send you a view of Hastings; I hope it will please you.—LOUIS NAPOLEON.”

When Bismarck had carefully examined it, M. Regnier, with a searching expression, asked for a passport to enable him to go to Wilhelmshöhe to hand the photograph to the Emperor. After a brief silence, the Chancellor remarked—

“Our position is as follows. With whom can we negotiate, and what can be offered to us? It is our firm determination to utilize the present situation so as to avoid another war with France in the future, or at least for a very long time to come; therefore a rectification of the French frontier is indispensable for us. Moreover, we are confronted by two Governments, one *de facto* and one *de jure*; we cannot alter their position, and it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to negotiate with either of them.

“The neutral Powers would be glad to have the situation cleared up. The Empress Regent has quitted the country, and she has given no sign of life since; a few words of mine during an interview at which

* “Quel est votre nom? M. or No”

14 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

MM. de Castelnau and Pietri were present, might have given rise to serious *pour parlers*, if that had been their intention, but they do not seem to have wished to understand my meaning.

"The provisional Government for the Defence either will not or cannot accept this condition of a cession of territory, but proposes an armistice to enable them to put the question to the French nation. We can easily wait. We have 400,000 men here, living on the occupied and conquered districts; when Metz and the other towns have surrendered, we shall have 500,000 to 600,000 men; they can bivouac in this way throughout the winter. As soon as we are met by a Government *de facto et de jure*, which is able to negotiate on the basis proposed by us, we shall negotiate. For the present we have no occasion to communicate our demands regarding the cession of territory, since the suggestion has been declined *in toto*."

M. Regnier replied that he thought the Empress should have returned to the fleet or to her country—she might yet do so—and issue a proclamation; but the fear of appearing to hinder the national defence had dissuaded her from doing so for dynastic reasons.

The Chancellor interrupted him—

"That is true enough; but the past lies behind us, let us occupy ourselves with the present. So far as that is concerned, we should be happy to accept easier conditions than those to which the Defence Committee in Paris could openly agree. Bazaine and Urich would act in the name of the Imperial Government in the event of a capitulation."

He further informed the agent that Jules Favre thought he could reckon on the garrison of Metz. M. Regnier at once offered to go to Metz.

"If you had arrived eight, or even four, days ago, you would have been in time; now I am afraid it is too late."

Then, with a glance at his watch, he remarked that the hour appointed for the meeting with M. Favre had long passed, and so the interview came to an end. Regnier left on the Chancellor's writing-table the first number of *La Situation*, which was published the day before he left London, and observed he would take it again on bidding farewell to the Chancellor that evening.

At eight o'clock Bismarck again received M. Regnier, who proceeded to unfold his plans. The commandants of Metz and Strassburg were to be informed that, in the event of those fortresses being surrendered, negotiations must be conducted in the name of the Emperor. The members of the Senate, the Legislative Chambers, and the Council of State would be summoned by proclamation to assemble on the — at the town of —. Another proclamation would inform the nation that the violent action of the Left in seizing the supreme power had forced on the conclusion of a disadvantageous peace. The patriotism of the Empress Regent in leaving the country temporarily had prevented a civil war. Since the Provisional Government had given way so quickly, it was not necessary for so large a portion of France to be devastated so terribly that future generations would feel the effect. In spite of their victories, the enemy had caused less damage

16 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

in France than had the Provisional Government round Paris, although they had made no defence, and had merely busied themselves in deposing officials. (Bismarck interrupted him here to add his earnest confirmation of this sentence, and spoke of the unnecessary vandalism which had demolished the bridges without delaying the marches of the Germans by one hour.) In view of the expressed decision of the Committee of National Defence, there was no longer any reason for its existence, and its mission had in consequence come to an end. All imperial officials would therefore resume their duties from the 1st of October, on which date the Empress Regent would again take up the reins of government, and only such transactions as were executed by her authority would be recognized. Later on the French nation would be called upon to choose the form of government.

Bismarck replied as follows :—

“Fate has decided; the delay in recognizing this fact is not the attribute of inflexibility, but of vacillation; nothing can now delay us. Find us some one with whom we can negotiate, and you will render your country a great service. I will provide you with a general pass, which will permit you to travel through every German country, including all districts occupied by the troops; a telegram will arrive at Metz before you do, and facilitate your entry into the town. Will you leave me this first number of *La Situation*?”

It was now eleven o'clock, and Bismarck called Count Hatzfeldt to find quarters for M. Regnier, who preferred to pass the night at a locksmith's to occupying the room destined for Jules Favre the following day.

A lieutenant of police brought M. Regnier his passport at midnight. It ran as follows:—

“The Commanders of the allied troops are respectfully requested to allow M. Regnier, who is proceeding to Germany from here, to pass unhindered and to facilitate his journey as far as possible.

“ V. BISMARCK.

“ Ferrières, September 20, 1870.”

M. Regnier's second interview with Bismarck took place at 8 p.m.. on September 28, 1870, at Ferrières. After relating his experiences at the headquarters of Prince Frederick Charles, where he received permission to enter the besieged fortress of Metz, the Bonapartist agent appears to have treated the Chancellor to a lengthy exposition of his views as to the conditions of peace and the probable future of the political configuration of the world. He concluded with an appeal to the feelings of the Chancellor.

Bismarck replied, “The negotiations for an armistice have been broken off. I have found nothing but an advocate in M. Jules Favre. I am surprised and sorry that you, who appear to be a practical man, after going to Metz with the certainty of being able to return without any anxiety regarding your papers—a thing which has never before been sanctioned—should return without a more formal proof of your capacity for negotiation than a signed photograph of the Marshal and a letter to his wife, which, as I gather from its contents, it is agreed that you should answer. But, my dear sir, I have been a diplomat for more than twelve years, and this is not enough for me. I am

18 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

sorry, but I find myself obliged to break off all further communication until you have more extensive powers."

Regnier expressed his painful surprise and disappointment, and thanked Bismarck for his kindness towards him.

The Chancellor then remarked—

"I would gladly have negotiated with you upon the conditions of peace, provided you had been able to treat in the name of the Marshal at the head of 80,000 men. Have you anything to say against my sending the following telegram to the Marshal?—

"Does Marshal Bazaine authorize M. Regnier to negotiate regarding the surrender of the Army of Metz?"

Regnier had the words added, "On the basis of the conditions agreed upon with the latter."

Count Hatzfeldt later on brought Bazaine's answer to M. Regnier:

"I cannot answer this question in the affirmative. I have told M. Regnier that I cannot decide upon the capitulation of the town of Metz."

Needless to say, this reply put a stop to all further communication between Bismarck and Regnier.

An attempt was made, between the 6th and 9th of October, 1870, by General Burnside and Colonel Forbes to arrange terms which might lead to a cessation of hostilities. Before interviewing Bismarck, General Burnside asked Jules Favre for a note referring to this subject, but though this was refused, the American was authorized to refer to their conversation in discussing matters with the Chancellor. Particular stress was to

be laid upon two points—the integrity of French territory, and an armistice for the convening of the National Assembly.

On the 9th of October, Jules Favre received General Burnside on his return from Versailles. The result of his four interviews with Bismarck was as follows:—

The necessity of convening the National Assembly was fully recognized, but could only be granted on the following conditions:—

1. An armistice for forty-eight hours for the completion of the elections.
2. Free elections in the occupied departments, exclusive of Alsace and Lorraine.
3. An armistice not to apply to Metz.
4. Supplies not to be replenished during the armistice.

Jules Favre, in a special note, declared that these conditions could not be entertained, and the negotiations therefore came to nothing.

BISMARCK AND THE MAYOR OF VERSAILLES *

October 7, 1870

About this time the Mayor of Versailles, M. Rameau, had an interview with Bismarck about the elections for the National Assembly, and incidentally about the general military and political situation.

The Chancellor was sitting at a table covered with opened letters; one of these, partly mutilated, contained the order of the 1st of October, which eventually formed the subject of the conversation. Without showing the

* “Records of the Versailles Commune.”

20 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

letter to M. Rameau, Bismarck mentioned that it came from Gambetta.

M. Rameau opened the conversation by telling the Chancellor how he came to be the Mayor of Versailles, and then proceeded to formulate his requests concerning the elections. Bismarck assured him that the Germans wished for nothing better than that a Government should be formed with whom they might negotiate. The arrival of an envoy from the Provisional Government at Tours, and the permission to carry out the elections in their usual forms, were agreed to without demur.

"Very well," observed Bismarck, "I understand how you will act when the opportunity arises; but would you do so without an order, that is, some official document, from your Government; and do you possess such an authority?"

The Mayor declared that he would never permit elections to take place without orders, but though he had received no such authority, it would be sufficient if he were morally and completely convinced that an order had been issued from Tours on the 30th of September, fixing the elections for the 16th of October.

"You have received no news whatever that that order has been postponed or annulled in the mean time?" inquired Bismarck, and added, on receiving a reply in the negative—

"Well, I am certain of it, and will hand you the proof myself."

He then read aloud the order of the Government of the National Defence, dated Paris, October 1, 1870, which postponed the elections until they could take

place throughout the whole of the Republic, and declared every act in contravention of the order to be null and void.

Bismarck appeared to attach special importance to the list of names of all those who had signed the order, and read out the whole list.

The Mayor could not conceal his surprise and excitement at this unexpected news, and begged for a copy of the document to lay before the Town Council. Bismarck summoned a secretary and gave him a paper, adding a few words in German; he then turned to the Mayor, and told him the copy would be ready in an hour's time.

"You see," continued Bismarck, "I am not the person who prevented the elections on the 16th; even when they were fixed for the 20th of October, the Crown Prince asked me whether I objected to the elections taking place in the departments occupied by us, and I at once replied that I had nothing to say against it.

"And this has always been the case with the armistice conferences. They have never been broken off by *me*. An armistice of fifteen to twenty days was a material advantage granted to France by Germany. Every day was so much gained by France towards the organization of the general defence, but for Germany it was a loss, since it delayed our advance. We had, therefore, to be compensated.

"If I demanded Toul and Verdun, I only anticipated by five or six days the date on which those two fortresses would fall to us. But it was an enormous advantage to France, and particularly to Paris, to be able to effect wholesale repairs, materially by food supplies, morally

22 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

by political communication with the remainder of France. We could not concede the point of raising the investment, without obtaining compensation in the form of the military positions which command Paris.

"I never mentioned Mount Valérien; M. Jules Favre alone spoke of it. Referring to the investment, he remarked to me, 'How can you convene the National Assembly at Paris when it is invested?' I replied, 'Convene it at Tours or elsewhere.' 'Then how could the Paris deputies get there?' I replied, 'The absence of 43 out of 750 would not hinder the session of the Assembly.'

"In brief, M. Favre begged to be allowed to communicate this to the Government of the National Defence, and has not turned up since! Then all those articles appeared in the newspapers, saying that I had claimed Mount Valérien. This error was allowed to spread; and I am convinced that the preparation for the elections was suspended on October 2, and the *pour parlers* were broken off, for no other reason. Moreover, I have always censured the system of spreading false reports or lies through the Press, an abuse which was perpetrated by the Empire and is now continued by your Republic."

In answer to the Mayor's look of incredulity, the Chancellor continued, "I can give you a proof of this regarding an engagement which took place near L'Hay during the last few days. I have here the official reports and documents about the casualties. Our troops picked up and buried the French and German dead on one particular part of the battlefield, but only up to that point where the projectiles from your forts fell

without effect; there were more than 450 French and 85 Germans. But this is easily understood, as our troops were under cover and fired from loopholes made in the walls, whilst your troops were wholly without protection. These numbers do not include the losses inflicted on you by our artillery, whose accuracy is well known. They are estimated to be at the least as many again (and this we were able to ascertain), because those who were hit at a longer range fell so close to your forts that we could not pick them up. We may therefore say 900 French were killed and 85 Germans. Well, then, your papers reported about 400 French *hors de combat* against more than 500 Germans."

Count Bismarck then spoke of the political situation, deliberately choosing his words, as though he were explaining a complete policy to a plenipotentiary.

"We do not make war in order to occupy the country indefinitely, but to secure peace. Therefore, unless you create an authority, a government, which satisfies us that it is able to enter into obligations in the name of France, you put it out of our power to discuss the conditions of such a peace. The German armies will in no way interfere in the choice of the government, which France will itself decide on; nor will they place any obstacles in the way of the session of the elective assemblies and their actions, provided that the strategical lines, especially those towards Paris, are not traversed, and the military dispositions are not thereby affected.

"The defensive system, which the French Government appears to have adopted, forces Germany into a protracted occupation: this may lead to the most terrible catastrophes. The German armies, living on

24 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

French soil, and moreover able to draw the necessary supplies from their own country, with which they are in communication, will surely hold out longer than the city of Paris. At a given moment this city will have to open its gates to two millions of hungry people, who, even should the German armies have withdrawn from the immediate vicinity, will be obliged to travel at least eighteen *lieues*, a three-days' march in all directions, and will become exhausted without finding so much as a crust. Under such circumstances it is impossible to traverse such a distance, and the two million people are destined to perish."

To the Mayor's objection that Bismarck's observations were founded on the incorrect assumption that Paris had been abandoned and could not receive any aid, the Chancellor replied—

"France will collect men, but not an army. In order to form an army one must first of all have men, and secondly weapons, which the men know how to use. If the French had had time to learn the proper use of the chassepot, the Germans would never have advanced so far as they have to-day. But organization is also required (artillery, cavalry, engineers, supply and transport, hospitals, provisions of all kinds). These things cannot be improvised, and months will pass before everything is ready and the arms received from America. What can your *franc-tireurs* and *mobiles* do by themselves? They will never withstand a corps of ten thousand regulars and artillery.

"Last of all, your men, in addition to equipment and organization, require officers to form an army, and officers in whom they have confidence. What is one

to think of your generals (I do not say all), who, when the thunder of the guns commenced, were always one or two kilometres away from their men, drinking coffee; who actually allowed their soldiers to be fired on with case shot, whilst they were in camp, without making certain of the whereabouts of the enemy? The German troops could issue from a wood and unlimber a battery of forty guns before the French soldiers even suspected anything, or stood to their arms.

"Germany wants peace, and will make war until she gets it, let the consequences be ever so lamentable from a humane point of view. France may perish like Carthage and other nations of antiquity. This peace will be secured by a line of fortresses between Strassburg and Metz, as well as by those two towns, which will protect Germany against the dread of a second attack by France; the little fortresses lying between are of no importance."

The worthy Mayor then took his departure, after seeking the Chancellor's aid in obtaining a remission of the requisitions and contributions levied on the town of Versailles.

BISMARCK AND GENERAL BOYER *

Versailles, October 14 and 15, 1870

Before sending General Boyer to the German headquarters at Versailles, Marshal Bazaine convened a great council of war on the 10th of October. It was resolved that an attempt should be made to arrive at a military convention with Bismarck, so that the Army

* "Enquête parlementaire." General Boyer's evidence.

26 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

of the Rhine might march out of Metz with military honours. At the same time it was decided that, if the proposals of the German Government proved unacceptable, a last attempt should be made to leave the fortress.

Boyer left Metz, commissioned to ask Bismarck what conditions he would impose upon the army, and he was also instructed to inform him that the army would not agree to such a capitulation as that of Sedan. The General, accompanied by two orderly officers of Prince Frederick Charles, who did not allow him out of their sight, started on the 12th of October. He was forbidden to communicate with anybody *en route*. He reached Versailles early on the 14th, where the town-commandant assigned him a lodging in the Rue du Satory, under the strictest supervision, until he could be received by the Chancellor.

About ten in the morning, General Boyer was informed that Bismarck would soon send for him; but it was 1 p.m. when he was driven in an open carriage to the Chancellor's dwelling.

During the interview, which lasted till four o'clock, Bismarck discussed the French situation arising out of the revolution of the 4th of September, the European mission of M. Thiers, and his own interview with Jules Favre at Ferrières. Bismarck criticized the individuals, the parts they had played, and several members of the Government of National Defence. He also spoke of the American mission of Generals Sheridan and Burnside, who had returned from Paris, where they had gone, with his sanction to try and establish relations between the French and the German governments.

When the Chancellor inquired as to Marshal Bazaine's demands, Boyer explained that, after the military events in which it had taken part, the army considered that, as it had honourably defended its colours, it had a just right, in its present extreme need, to demand a military convention which should leave to it the honours of war instead of a capitulation.

Bismarck replied that, as this aspect did not concern him, but must be settled by the King, the Minister of War, and von Moltke, he could not give the General an immediate answer. He promised, however, to speak to the King the same evening, and let the General have an answer by the following day, adding—

"Since your mission is to demand a military convention, I must tell you beforehand that the King's council will not agree to any other conditions than those of Sedan."

General Boyer replied, "I can assure you that a military convention on that basis is impossible."

"But," said Bismarck, "I can bring political considerations to bear on the King and his council, and I can obtain conditions for the French army which I will communicate to you to-morrow."

The General then urged Bismarck to let him know what these political considerations were, and the Chancellor explained his plan, which was to negotiate with the Empress Regent, since the German Government did not recognize the Government of National Defence. But in negotiating with the Empress Regent, Germany intended to reserve advantages no less important than those which were conferred by its military position in respect of the army of Metz.

28 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

"Then you will propose negotiations with the Empress to the King and his council?"

"Yes, certainly. Have you recognized the Government of National Defence?"

"No," replied the General, "the army has not recognized it. We have received no communication of any kind from the Government of the 4th of September, and we only accidentally heard of its existence on the 14th of September, from some prisoners of war who had been exchanged. The same day we heard of the disaster of Sedan, the capture of the Emperor, and the establishment of the Government of the 4th of September. We have had a few papers, which those officers were able to procure, and we have read a number of orders, but we have had no direct communication from the Government itself, nor has any official reached us from it. We only recognize the Government of the Regent; we have taken an oath of fidelity to the Emperor, and we shall remain true to our oath until the country has decided otherwise."

Bismarck then developed his project. He proposed to secure the loyalty of the army to the Government of the Regent by a manifestation, and to prove that the army was determined to obey her Majesty the Empress in the event of her deciding to sign the preliminaries of peace.

Boyer then observed that this was impossible. The Marshal could not question every one individually; and it would be difficult to ascertain the opinion of the army: that would be to demand a kind of *pronunciamento*, which was not customary in the French service.

"But," said the Chancellor, "this manifestation by

the army is indispensable, for the Empress would not commence negotiations, if she did not feel that her actions were supported by the army. You will have to obtain her Majesty's signature to the preliminaries of peace. Under these conditions you can retire with the honours of war, taking away your arms, guns, and other material of war. Of course the fortress of Metz is not included, and is at liberty to defend itself with the means in its possession."

This last condition was secured by General Boyer in accordance with his instructions.

Boyer then observed, "If the army obeys the Empress, or is summoned to adhere to her, it will be the first duty of Marshal Bazaine, with the assent of the Council of War, to assemble the civil powers as they were before the 4th of September, at a point previously fixed, and to say to them, 'You were gathered together at a sitting on the 4th of September; at the moment the assembly was fallen upon, you were in debate: resume it at the point it had reached at that period. Whatever your decision is, we shall accept it. Even if you declare that the Empire has ceased to exist, we are soldiers of the nation, and will obey you. If you wish to refer to the nation, the army will assist you. Whichever way you decide, the army is ready to secure respect for your decision.'"

The second interview took place the following day about noon, when the Chancellor visited General Boyer at his quarters, and informed him that a convention on the terms proposed by the Marshal had at first been rejected by the Council, but that upon Bismarck's replying that another basis might be proposed, and

30 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

explaining the political considerations, the Council had agreed with his views. "If," added the Chancellor, "you obtain from the Empress her consent to sign the preliminaries of a treaty of peace, and if you obtain from the army a declaration of its firm determination to obey the Empress, you will also obtain the conditions which I mentioned to you yesterday: the army will retire with military honours, taking its guns and colours. The fortress of Metz is quite outside this convention. But you must apply to the Empress. She, as the sole remaining authority, is the only one with whom I can negotiate, for I will not recognize the Government in Paris, and still less the one at Tours. Are you sure that the army will follow you?"

Boyer repeated his remarks of the previous day, and Bismarck added, "Do you prefer to go to Wilhelmshöhe, the present quarters of the Emperor Napoleon? If so, I will have the necessary passes prepared for you or for the officer to whom these negotiations may be entrusted."

General Boyer said that he could not discuss the idea of the Council of War sending a negotiator to the Emperor, since the fall of Sedan and his capture had placed them in a position which it was inadmissible for him to discuss, but he believed that the army would from that date consider itself solely responsible to the Government of the Empress.

The conversation ended about 2 p.m., having lasted about an hour and a half, and General Boyer left Versailles the same evening, reaching Metz on the afternoon of the 17th of October.

• BISMARCK'S SECOND INTERVIEW WITH THE MAYOR OF
VERSAILLES *

October 21, 1870

A second interview with M. Rameau took place on the evening of the 21st of October, 1870, immediately after the action at Malmaison. Bismarck, who was in uniform, was working at a table, though he seemed to be rather tired; he was pasting newspaper paragraphs on to white paper by the light of three candles, the floor around him being littered with the papers from which he had cut them. He was very nervous, breathing deeply, and every now and then refreshing himself with seltzer water. Shaking the Mayor by the hand, he thanked him for having kept his appointment, and inquired, as if he were merely speaking about the weather, "How are matters in the town?"

The Mayor, considering this question rather vague, replied, "Oh, the town was hopeful to-day, but its hope, it seems, has not been realized." He alluded to a sortie by the French troops, in which they had beaten the Prussians, and had raised the hopes of the inhabitants to see the French arrive, by creating a panic amongst the soldiers quartered in the town.

"I did not want to see you about that," said the Count, with a smile; "I wished to inquire whether our men are guilty of excesses or misbehaviour?"

The mayor complained about the enormous burdens laid on the town, and added that, having already reported various police matters to the town commandant, he did

* E. Delerot, "Versailles during the Occupation."

32 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

not consider it necessary to repeat them to Bismarck. The latter, avoiding the topic of conversation, observed, "You complained about a fine of a hundred francs which was inflicted on account of a delay in supplying a vehicle."

The Mayor made a gesture of dissent at the mention of a "fine."

"Well, then," continued Bismarck, "let us lay principles aside. It shall not be called a fine, let it be a war contribution, an extortion, if you like, but I implore you to pay this little sum. So much you can do to please me, since I have helped you to obtain the remission of a war contribution of 400,000 francs."

M. Rameau replied that he could not pay a fine for an occurrence about which the communal administration could not reproach itself with either malice or neglect, as it had been impossible to procure the vehicle.

"In case of need, you might have requisitioned the carriage which I hire for my personal use, and I should have said nothing. But a Royal courier, who had an urgent message, could not get away, although relays costing 800 francs had to be employed, and as the object was not attained, we expect some reparation."

Bismarck here paused, as if he wished to change the subject.

"It is curious," he remarked suddenly, "how little you seem to know in France, and especially here in Versailles, of the real meaning of a state of war. When the signal to 'mount' is sounded, the male portion of the population should remain at home, otherwise they might be fired upon; but instead of that, your countrymen come out full of curiosity, crowding together in

the squares and avenues, and seem to await the further march of events so as to take part in them if necessary. Such a course might be fraught with evil consequences for them. When I rode out to the troops to-day, there were more than three hundred inquisitive persons in the Rue de Province; I made a complaint about this, and the sentry was placed under arrest, because he had not dispersed the crowd after giving them a final warning. To-day we had one sortie from Paris, and another from Mont Valérien. Twenty battalions moved out, to-morrow there may be forty, and the alarm signals may be repeated. Caution the inhabitants, therefore, to remain at home, for we wish to save you from a grave misfortune. When certain persons, for instance, the King, Herr von Moltke, or I, appear in the streets, a crowd immediately collects; this is most annoying to us. As soon as I am recognized, they run after me. Lately I returned home from the Prefecture in the evening, when two or three persons followed close behind me. One of them kept his right hand in his pocket; he might have been an assassin, and I was quite prepared for a knife-thrust. If such a thing had happened to one of our young officers, he would at once have drawn his sword and set to; such is the custom of war. I did not do so, but merely had the man, who was following close on my heels, arrested by the next sentry, and when they told me he was known in the quarter, I allowed the matter to drop. But you must inform the inhabitants, not by proclamation, but through your agents, that this kind of thing must cease."

Another pause ensued. The conversation had

34 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

apparently not yet reached its main point. Bismarck took a cigar, and, offering one to the Mayor, who declined it, said—

“You will, however, permit me to smoke?”

M. Rameau bowed in assent.

“Well, then, Mr. Mayor, it seems as if we are to spend the winter with you, and yet I greatly long to return to Berlin.”

“The matter is certainly not less unpleasant for us,” replied the Mayor. “But why must it be so?”

“No peace is possible without elections,” replied the Count. “At present there is no one who can assume the responsibility of negotiating for France; neither Count Chambord, the Orleans, nor the Empress Regent. And yet France and Germany both want peace. We shall be compelled to negotiate with Napoleon III., and force him on you.”

“You will not do that! France would regard it as a bitter insult!”

“But it is to the interest of the victors to leave the vanquished in the hands of an authority, who can be supported by a Pretorian Guard, because then war will not again be so easily contemplated. The extent to which the Imperial Government has pushed corruption is incredible. Are you acquainted with the papers which have been found in the Tuileries?”

“No, Count; you know that we have been quite cut off for more than a month.”

“Very remarkable papers, these! There are also leaders of the democratic party who are compromised by them. I must have the things published in our little paper, *Nouvelliste de Versailles*.” Then, after a

fresh pause, "But you are wrong in believing that Napoleon III. has no more adherents in the country; he has the army still."

As the Mayor shook his head, the Chancellor continued—

"Marshal Bazaine sent General Boyer to me in Napoleon's name to negotiate for peace. If we allowed the garrison of Metz to retire, they would march to the Gironde, having pledged themselves to remain there quietly for three months and await events, and we could then dispose of the 200,000 men who are investing Metz. We can form seven armies, occupy the whole of France, and live at your expense. Paris reckons on the provinces, and the provinces reckon on Paris. That is a twofold error. Paris possesses an army which suffices to garrison a fortress, but which cannot take the field because it lacks cavalry and artillery, and is not organized. With regard to the provinces, since Orleans we know what to think of the Army of the Loire: ruins and fragments, which cannot be put together again! The departments already complain that nothing is referred to the country. In the north only Lille is still in favour of war, but in the vicinity of Rouen and Havre, whither we have sent troops, public opinion will have nothing to do with further resistance. Several towns are policed by our troops and the inhabitants together."

"Perhaps, Count, you regard the circumstance that the town of Versailles submits to your police regulations as a symptom of wavering patriotism."

"By no means. If a town, occupied by the victors, aids them in protecting the public safety by arresting thieves, etc., it is done in the cause of humanity and

36 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

out of respect for the laws of society, and has nothing to do with patriotism."

Since Bismarck seemed neither inclined to break the ensuing pause nor to end the interview, M. Rameau suggested that, as Germany, according to the Chancellor, was not making a war of conquest, the basis of the peace might be the *status quo ante bellum*, for which purpose both countries should raze their frontier fortresses to the ground.

"But the circumstances are not the same on both sides," objected Bismarck. "With the exception of 1792, when it was borne along by the general current, Prussia has never attacked France, whilst France, under Louis XIV., the Republic, and the two Napoleons successively, has made war on us twenty-three times; even under the Restoration she would have done the same in company with Russia, had not the July Revolution broken out."

The Mayor next suggested a partial disarmament, which might also be forced upon the greater part of Europe. The question of an authority to negotiate the armistice led to an assurance from Count Bismarck that the necessary passes enabling the Paris deputies to travel to Tours would be granted.

M. Rameau expressed a wish to enter Paris and endeavour to persuade the Committee of National Defence to adopt his suggestions. Bismarck replied—

"I would not advise you to go. Peace proposals emanating from my initiative would find no hearing there; they would be regarded as a proof that we wished to continue the war, and, on that account alone would be rejected. In your own interest, do not attempt it."

"I am a Republican, Count, and a good Republican always places the common interest before his own."

"In that sense I too am a Republican, only I regard a hereditary head as an important hostage. But I will give you a proof that you will not succeed. America is the only country which really takes an interest in France. Four American Generals (Sheridan, Burnside, etc.) have applied to me regarding a peace. They were then in Paris, and on their return reported, 'Nothing can be done. With the exception of Trochu, who said, "We have not been beaten severely enough to be able to negotiate," none of them will listen to any mention of peace. They will not even ask the country. They are not true Republicans, but are either fools or tyrants.' I will not cause you pain by repeating all the expressions which the Americans used about the *personnel* of your Government. They will yet succeed in breaking France into pieces."

"Then I certainly shall not go to Paris," said the Mayor.

The interview ended by the Chancellor requesting the Mayor to hand the "indemnity" of 100 francs to a M. Poidevin, who had succoured an injured Prussian in Versailles.

THIERS AND BISMARCK *

Versailles, October 30–November 4 and 6, 1870

M. Thiers arrived at Versailles on the 30th of October, 1870, after a very fatiguing journey. Hotly contested actions were being fought round Orleans,

* "Enquête Parlementaire," M. Thiers' evidence.

38 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

railway communication had been interrupted, and, as no post-horses could be provided, artillery horses were taken from the guns and harnessed to his carriage, and thus he arrived at Versailles, where he found Bismarck awaiting him.

The French statesman's first remark was, "I can only tell you that I have nothing to report."

Bismarck replied, "I will give you two officers to precede you, and if you should meet with an accident—every letter costs me a life; you will be safe in the hands of the Germans—these gentlemen will remain at your disposal. I think it will take you many days before you convince the leading men; but the officers commissioned to accompany you will be there, ready to escort you back when you give them the signal to fetch you."

Thiers and his companions arrived at the outpost line, but the firing was so protracted that it was not easy for the party to make themselves understood. Two small boats were found on the bank of the Seine, and Thiers crossed over the river, after saying to the officers, "Expect me daily at four o'clock, at which time I shall endeavour to get out of Paris, if I have full powers to return to the German headquarters."

At 2 p.m. on the following day Thiers returned to the appointed spot, and, having given the signal, saw the two German officers appear. The same boat served for his return to the German bank of the river, and in a short while he reached Versailles. Bismarck, on hearing of his arrival, was much astonished at his speedy and safe return, and sent an officer to congratulate him.

At the interview, which commenced at 11 a.m. on the 1st of November, Thiers demanded a month's supplies of food. Count Bismarck replied, "You make a somewhat exaggerated demand, for Paris is already on half-rations, and now you ask for whole rations for a month. Nevertheless, I am ready to concede this; the King would consent, but the soldiers consider an armistice disadvantageous to us. You ask for more than you hope to get, and doubtless this is not your only request."

Thiers replied, "No; it is not my last word regarding the multitude."

"Well, then," said the Prussian minister, "put it on paper, so that we may have something definite to discuss."

Thiers drew up a memorandum, and handed it to Bismarck, who found fault only with the quantities of supplies demanded; and by this he allowed it to be noticed that an understanding on this point would be arrived at.

The negotiations were continued the following day. It can readily be understood that Thiers strove to give Bismarck the most favourable impression of his tour round the Courts of London, Vienna, Petersburg, and Turin, for he particularly wished Bismarck to believe that he had received numerous proofs of sympathy from "his friend" Prince Gortschakoff, and that if Germany did not cut short her victorious progress through France, Russia might at length grow angry. Thereupon Bismarck got up and rang the bell. "Bring me the portfolio with the Russian papers." A portfolio was brought in, which he handed to M. Thiers, saying,

40 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

"Read these; there you will find thirty letters, which have been sent me from St. Petersburg." M. Thiers read them, and abandoned all further representations.

At the fifth meeting, which took place on the 3rd of November, M. Thiers found Bismarck disquieted, depressed, and much excited.

"Have you any news from Paris?" asked the latter.

"None."

"Well, a revolution has taken place, and has changed everything."

Thiers was not exactly surprised at this, since he was acquainted with the condition of the capital, which he had quitted only four days ago, though he refused to believe the news.

"Such an attempt has probably been made," he replied, "but it will have been suppressed: the National Guard will not allow anarchy to triumph."

"I know nothing about it," replied Bismarck, and then read aloud a number of outpost reports, each one more confusing than the other. It struck Thiers that Bismarck himself was seriously put out by the news from Paris, for he evidently wished for peace, and did not conceal his fear that a revolution in Paris would lessen the chances of obtaining it.

Bismarck then asked Thiers whether he could ascertain exactly what had happened in Paris. M. Thiers had two capable and courageous secretaries, MM. Remusat and Cochery, one of whom he offered to send to Paris for news. Bismarck sent officers to accompany M. Cochery (the first of the two secretaries whom M. Thiers met), and their return was anxiously

awaited, so that the new situation might be fully understood.

Thiers saw Bismarck several times that day, for a new fact had cropped up which greatly aggravated the situation: this was the proclamation published at Tours concerning the surrender of Metz. The violence with which the actual or supposed authors of the capitulation were condemned had excited everybody in Versailles in the highest degree.

"The King wished for peace," said Bismarck to Thiers, "and he was inclined to grant an armistice in the hope that the passions of the war party would calm down. He has resisted the war-party in Prussia—for I will not conceal the fact that our soldiers are against the armistice, as they think that an armistice will only prolong your resistance, and they say that we must immediately conclude a peace or continue the attack on Paris. And now this new revolution in Paris and the language used at Tours have discouraged all those who hoped that these passions were allayed; this fresh outburst on your part has re-awakened our fears. Yesterday I was full of confidence, to-day I have utterly lost it."

Bismarck had only spoken the truth. Thiers was acquainted with several diplomatists and princes present in Versailles, and all the news which he was able to collect showed him that many changes had taken place within the last twenty-four hours.

Cochery returned during the night, having met with great difficulties on the way. Thiers learnt from him that a revolution had been attempted on the 31st—the day of his departure from Paris—and that, though it

42 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

had been suppressed, the half-conquered anarchists, unwittingly supported by honourable people whose misguided patriotism had been over-excited by the events of Metz, had nevertheless obtained the complete mastery of Paris.

Once more M. Thiers had an interview with Bismarck, and communicated to him all that he had learnt. Bismarck was as well posted as Thiers, but the latter was convinced that if he could but achieve the acceptance of that which Bismarck called the "First volume of peace," *i.e.* the armistice, he could not, with the best will in the world, obtain the acceptance of the second.

"If I thought," said Bismarck, "that the publisher would bring out the second volume, I would willingly assist you in publishing the first." He then informed him of the conditions of the armistice: either no food supplies to be brought in, or the surrender of a fort; but Thiers was not empowered to agree to any such conditions, and he was therefore obliged to break off the negotiations.

Thiers and Bismarck looked at one another, and asked almost simultaneously whether an immediate peace was not possible. The night was spent in arguments, and Thiers realized that a peace was then possible—painful without doubt, but not as painful as the one which would be forced upon them later on. He decided to proceed to Paris immediately to try and obtain the acceptance of such a peace, but Bismarck advised him not to do so, since he would certainly not escape from the madmen who ruled Paris. Thiers considered these dangers although very real, to be exaggerated, and told Bismarck that he could achieve

nothing unless he went to Paris himself; so he decided to make a rendezvous with the members of the Government at a point which they might select, in order to learn their opinions on a question which constituted the salvation of their country.

He despatched M. Cochery, who had already succeeded in reaching Paris, and arranged for a meeting at the Bridge of Sevres. On the following day, Thiers went to that spot, and was taken to an abandoned house, ruined by shells, in the Bois de Boulogne. Here he encountered only Jules Favre and General Ducrot. The former explained that at the moment it was impossible to bring the populace of Paris to a reasonable decision, and though he entirely agreed with Thiers' proposal, which, under the existing unhappy circumstances, he considered to be wise and acceptable, apparently the Paris Commune was already in command of the situation, although the *de facto* government of the capital was not yet in their hands.

Thiers sorrowfully took leave of Jules Favre, and returned to Versailles, where he awaited a final despatch from the Government of the National Defence with regard to the discontinuance of these negotiations, which had become quite useless. He left the Chancellor greatly perturbed about the continuation of the struggle.

BISMARCK AND JULES FAVRE *

Versailles, January 23–February 1, 1871

On learning from Pelletier that the food supplies of Paris were practically exhausted, M. Jules Favre sent

* "Enquête Parlementaire."

44 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

an officer to ask Bismarck for an interview, but without assigning any reason for so doing. The request was granted, and Favre arrived at Versailles about 8 p.m., having been forced to make a long *détour*, because of the threats of the reckless populace.

Favre opened the conversation by boldly declaring that Paris had sufficient supplies for six months, and that it had been decided to undertake fresh military operations. He mentioned the fact of General Trochu's dismissal as a proof of this assertion, and said that his journey had been undertaken at the risk of his life, owing to the excitement of the population. "Paris is about to assault your lines; I do not know what the issue of this action will be; it may fail, but to avoid unnecessary sacrifices I propose the following conditions."

After Favre had stated his demands, Bismarck replied, "It is too late; I have already opened negotiations with the Imperial family." (This was a feint of Bismarck's, in reply to Favre's representations about the brilliant situation of Paris.)

The Chancellor observed later on that he was confronted by three pretenders—Napoleon, the Regency, and Prince Napoleon—and that he was at liberty to negotiate with one or the other of these three representatives of the Imperial *régime*. He then mentioned the individual who had conducted the negotiations in question, and asked Favre, "What is your opinion of this man—this being to a certain extent a counsel's consultation?"

Favre gave his opinion, and added that he did not consider such a combination to be possible. At the

conclusion of the interview Bismarck requested his opponent to put his demands on paper. Favre, however, objected, on the ground that if the negotiations fell through, the document might be of service to the German statesman.

On Bismarck's replying, "On my word of honour as a gentleman, I only require it to show to the King, in order to inform him of the basis of our conversation," Favre then wrote down his four conditions in pencil: an armistice—for he refused to speak of a *peace*—the convocation of the National Assembly; the Prussian army not to enter Paris; the army of Paris to remain prisoners of war in Paris, and not to be removed to Germany.

The real work of negotiation commenced on the following day (24th), when Bismarck opened the conversation with the remark that the King had empowered him to negotiate for an armistice.

The Chancellor, however, remained firm in regard to the entry of the Germans into Paris, mentioning the will of the King and the generals as an almost insurmountable obstacle. The other French conditions were conceded, though Bismarck made all manner of objections, and Favre was successful in retaining the French troops in Paris, instead of their being divided into two camps under the walls of Paris.

"It is to your interest," the Chancellor said, referring to this point, "since disarmed and vanquished soldiers may become a great danger in a large city in the midst of all kinds of excitements."

Favre admitted the danger, but declared that he had great confidence in the inhabitants of Paris as well as

46 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

in the National Guard, and hoped that the soldiers would be kept under control.

To Favre's objection that he was not in a position to arrange military questions, Bismarck replied, "We are both in such a position that our signatures will suffice. For my part I can conclude any kind of treaty, and you can do the same, as you are accredited by your Government. I accept this Government just as it stands, and I believe that we two can settle everything."

Favre then returned to Paris and communicated the result of these interviews to the Ministerial Council, and it was decided that he should return to Versailles the following day, as, of course, only the general conditions were under discussion.

At the third interview, on the 25th of January, Favre desired the assistance of a French officer in discussing military matters. Bismarck, who had in the mean time consulted Moltke, said, "I told you yesterday that we did not require one, for at the time I did not know whether we had to settle these questions definitely. Now, however, it is necessary that you should bring a general with you to-morrow, and I should like to have General Schmitz, as he is the Chief of General Trochu's staff. We have only one condition—a capitulation must be signed by the Chief of the General's staff."

Bismarck at first expressly demanded the surrender of Belfort, and this Favre absolutely refused to consent to. The French were in complete ignorance regarding the situation and the fate of the Army of the East, which might afford valuable assistance to that besieged fortress. It was therefore agreed to await the arrival of news, which might be expected at any moment.

Unfortunately, no reports were received between the 24th and the 28th, or, at any rate, they were not communicated to the French. But the Government of National Defence could not allow the negotiations to suffer the least delay without exposing Paris to the danger of starvation. If the French Government had not negotiated, it would have been compelled to surrender (at discretion) that very day. It was therefore decided to put off the delimitation of the neutral point concerning the Army of the East until the respective conditions of the combatants were known, and meanwhile hostilities were to cease at once.

It was eight o'clock before Bismarck and Favre agreed to order the cannonade to cease at midnight, and, although Favre used his utmost endeavours, he did not reach Paris until about 10 p.m.

The next day General de Beaufort d'Hautpoul accompanied Jules Favre, but he appears to have been unsuitable for the purpose in hand, for Favre reported to his Government, "I cannot go to Versailles again with Beaufort; let us follow the rule, and give me General Valdau, the Chief of the General Staff."

After the armistice had been signed (January 28), the following telegram was sent to Gambetta at Bordeaux by Favre: "*Nous avons signé un armistice, faites-le immédiatement exécuter partout.*" This telegram was written about 11 p.m. with the same pen with which Favre signed the capitulation. Later on it was asserted that this momentous message was worded by Bismarck, or was, at least, composed under his supervision; but this has been denied by Bismarck.

During the days which followed the signature of

48 Conversations with Prince Bismarck*

the armistice, Favre busied himself with endeavouring to get the neutral zone fixed, and also with Bismarck's declaration that he would have Garibaldi shot if he fell into the hands of the Germans, as he was a free-booter, and had no right to bear arms against Prussia. Favre, however, insisted on Garibaldi being included in the armistice.

As the French National Assembly was about to meet at Bordeaux (February 12, 1871) Jules Favre said to the Chancellor, "The National Assembly is about to meet; inform me confidentially of your conditions, if you will. I shall be able to arrange the further details."

Bismarck, however, declined to do so, and Favre had to depart in ignorance of the demands which Germany intended to make.

THIERS AND JULES FAVRE AT VERSAILLES

February 21-26, 1871

Having quitted Bordeaux on February 19, the two French negotiators arrived in Paris on the following day. There was, indeed, no time to be lost, for the armistice was to end on February 21.

M. Thiers alone proceeded to Versailles, where Bismarck accorded him a sympathetic reception, and obtained an extension of the armistice without any trouble. The Chancellor, however, remained unshaken with regard to the conditions of peace, which his royal master had ordered him to insist upon as an ultimatum.

* Jules Favre, "Simple récit d'un membre du Gouvernement de la défense nationale."

France was to cede the whole of Alsace, including Belfort, the town and fortifications of Metz, and the greater part of the departments of the Moselle and Meurthe, besides paying an indemnity of six milliards.

Thiers made no attempt to conceal his consternation, and informed the Chancellor that he was greatly mistaken if he thought that France was so exhausted that she had to accept dishonouring or impossible conditions. To demand two of the finest provinces, and to take away their inhabitants against their will and disregarding their opinions and feelings, would, he feared, be an act of violence to which the country would not submit. The indemnity demanded was so fabulous a sum, that it was difficult to believe that it could be meant seriously. One's powers of imagination failed to grasp the financial operations necessary to support this burden. Not only would double the national savings be absorbed, but capitalists and landed proprietors would be ruined, and a dislocation of European finance would result, which would become a public disaster. He concluded by requesting to see the King, in order to convince himself of the truth of these statements.

Bismarck then brought word that the King would willingly receive M. Thiers, but requested that politics might not be touched on, as he could not depart from his rule of leaving to the Federal Chancellor the discussion of public affairs.

The second interview, on February 22, also took place in the absence of Jules Favre. In reply to repeated entreaties to reconsider the amount of the indemnity, Bismarck observed that the sum, which seemed so enormous to him would be thought

50 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

insufficient in Germany, where the ransom of France was estimated at twelve and even sixteen milliards. Even this sum would not suffice to compensate for the damages incurred, whilst the reduction to six milliards would be taken as a sign of weakness. The Chancellor added that long discussions were not necessary, and that the King had formally expressed the wish that a fresh extension of the armistice might be avoided; so he would have a treaty elaborated, and the various articles could be discussed singly. It was a question of a few short and comprehensive resolutions, which could not give rise to serious controversies, since they would practically form an ultimatum.

Thiers strongly opposed this procedure, for he had not abandoned the hope of being heard by coming to Versailles. He also resented the pressure brought to bear on him to sign a document without discussion, as this would ruin his country and break it up into fragments. Prussia, in signing the armistice, had pledged herself to enter upon negotiations with the National Assembly, convoked for that purpose, and such negotiations must mean discussions, mutual explanations, and even concessions if the interests of both parties demanded it. He would not refuse to give his opinion in examining the draft, but he expressly reserved his right to propose alterations.

No reply was vouchsafed to these remarks, as the Chancellor at once returned to the question of the indemnity, and wished to demonstrate that the amount was neither excessive nor hard to pay. "We have foreseen everything," he said, "and we are greatly inclined

to help you out of your difficulty. Two of our highest financiers have planned a combination which will make the payment of this apparently enormous sum almost easy for you. If you accept their support, we shall have solved a great part of the question; the rest will not give any trouble."

However, the services of Count **Henckel** and **Bleichröder** were not accepted, and on **February 23** **Thiers** again went to **Versailles**, accompanied this time by **Jules Favre**, in whose presence all subsequent negotiations took place.

Bismarck commenced by informing them that the King had consented to reduce the indemnity by one milliard francs. Again the French negotiators argued about the principle of this demand, though they conceded that the victors had a right to demand the expenses of the war, and also a proportionate compensation for damages. They denied them the right, however, of speculating on their success, and of enriching themselves at the cost of the vanquished. Plunder had long since been condemned by civilized nations even during the campaign. Though a commander might procure necessary supplies for his men by forcible requisition, he was forbidden to appropriate the possessions of the inhabitants by looting; how much more, then, was it against the universally respected laws of society to establish by treaty that the victorious nation, after obtaining a tribute more than sufficient to cover its losses, might seize the wealth of its vanquished foe!

In applying this elementary legal principle to the situation of France, **Thiers** and **Favre** demonstrated that two milliards would amply cover the war expenses

52 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

of Germany, and that a demand of five milliards was a veritable robbery.

Again the Chancellor denied the statements made regarding the German losses caused by the war. Germany was morally justified in demanding the cession of territory and the payment of the indemnity; discussion was therefore out of place. He did not appear perturbed by the statement that the loss of the provinces would unavoidably lead to another war later on, and replied, "We are aware of that; we reckon on a conflict, and hope that we shall not be taken unawares."

The French negotiators then directed all their efforts to saving Metz and Belfort from the misfortune of annexation. According to Favre's narrative, M. Thiers succeeded in moving the Iron Chancellor by his noble bearing and his eloquence, now imploring, now threatening, until Bismarck withdrew to ascertain the King's wishes regarding Belfort, and to confer with Moltke. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour, he returned with the information that the King had gone out and would not be back before dinner, and that Moltke was also away; half an hour later Moltke was announced, and Bismarck conferred with him alone.

At the end of another *mauvais quart d'heure*, Bismarck opened the door of the adjoining room, and, standing on the threshold, said, "In pursuance of the King's desire, I have had to demand the entry of our troops into Paris. You have explained your anxieties to me, and requested that this clause be omitted. We will concede this if you leave us Belfort."

Bismarck thought that the French would be unable to withstand the temptation of withdrawing the capital

.

from the grasp of the victors. Thiers, however, declared that Paris was ready to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs, and that the grief of the capital would be the ransom of Belfort.

"Think over it well," replied Bismarck. "You may perhaps regret having refused this offer."

"We should be untrue to our duty if we accepted it," said Thiers.

The door was again closed for Bismarck's conference with Moltke to be continued. The Chancellor afterwards told the French negotiators that it only remained to gain the King's consent, for which he would have to wait until dinner was over.

At length, about 8 p.m., Thiers reaped the fruit of his exertions, and France retained Belfort.

Two separate documents of the same date were decided on—the one to extend and regulate the armistice, the other to specify the conditions of the peace preliminaries.

The armistice was to be extended to March 12, in order that the National Assembly might have the necessary time to deliberate. Another clause provided for the entry of the Germans into Paris.

The regions occupied by the Germans were to be handed over in proportion to the payment of five milliards. Bismarck, however, made the concession that the territorial guarantee for the payment of the last three milliards might be replaced by a financial one, to be approved of by the Emperor.

In discussing these matters, the Chancellor remarked that he had great confidence in the honesty of the French negotiators, but that in his eyes the sincerity of

54 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

France was rather doubtful. The French nation had not changed; they only thought of beginning the war again, and would seize every opportunity with avidity to gratify their patriotic passions. Consequently, since he could not reckon on a loyal execution of French promises, he was obliged to ask for material guarantees. However, it was not impossible for France to find sufficient securities. If, for instance, the firm of Rothschild offered Germany a surety with their signature, he would have no further objection to the withdrawal of the German troops after the payment of the first two milliards.

The following day (25th) found Bismarck in an exceptional state of annoyance and irritation; he reproached Thiers with returning to matters already discussed and settled, and with aiming at the withdrawal of concessions he had already made. All this, he alleged, was done with a view to resuming military operations. The reason of this outbreak was attributed to a despatch of Lord Granville handed to Bismarck by Odo Russell the day before. This belief was confirmed by the following words which fell from the Chancellor's lips: "I can see clearly that you have no other object than to resume the struggle; and in doing so you will have the support and advice of your good friends, the English."

Jules Favre begged him to explain the meaning of his words, and added that Bismarck of all men should know how impossible it was for them to cherish the motives attributed to them. But the longer the interview lasted the more irritable the Chancellor became; he declared that he was ill and out of sorts, and that the negotiations were drawn out on purpose. At last

his anger broke out completely, and, striding up and down the room, he declared—

“I think I am very considerate in taking all the trouble which you put me to. Our conditions are an ultimatum; you can accept or decline them. I will hear nothing more about it. Bring an interpreter with you to-morrow; I will not speak French any more!” and with that he commenced to talk aloud in German.

The announcement of dinner at five o'clock put an end to the scene, and on resuming the negotiations Bismarck appeared to his French colleagues to be desirous of making them forget the violent scene they had witnessed.

At 1 p.m. on Sunday, the 26th of February, 1871, Thiers and Jules Favre returned to Versailles to sign the peace treaty. Whilst they were waiting for the documents to be got ready, a general conversation ensued, at the end of which Bismarck said, “I consider it advisable that my colleagues from Bavaria, Würtemberg, and Baden should be present.”

The French statesmen had no objection to the presence of these representatives, whose reception by Bismarck was hardly calculated to make them abandon their modest rôle. They were permitted to hear the treaty read and to sign it, which they did without remark.

With a beaming face, Bismarck, before signing his name, called for a gold pen, which had been presented to him for the purpose. Thiers attached his signature in silence, without betraying the emotion which he felt, and Jules Favre followed his example. The French negotiators then took their leave.

Bismarck's task was ended: it was worthy of the great statesman.

56 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

BISMARCK AND THE PARIS CONTRIBUTION *

Towards the end of February, 1871, a report was spread that the German head-quarters would not return to Germany on the appointed date, as the city of Paris had stopped the payment of its contribution, amounting to 200 million francs.

This report was confirmed, but it soon appeared that there was no reason to fear the resumption of hostilities. MM. Jules Favre and Pouyer-Quertier went to the Chancellor and told him that, though the *Banque de France* was ready to hand over the balance of the contribution, amounting to 100 millions, it was unable to do so for want of—money-bags. To hand over the coins in bulk would cause great inconvenience and loss of time both to the payer and the receiver.

Bismarck at once grasped the difficulty of the situation, and offered to afford any assistance in his power. German manufacturers were at once ordered to send canvas to Paris to be made up into bags. But the Finance Minister had yet another difficulty to contend with.

"Your Excellency," he remarked, "according to the law the *Banque de France* charges seventy-five centimes for each money-bag, and this amount——"

"We will willingly pay for every bag," interrupted Bismarck, and the bill (for over 23,500 francs) was paid without demur.

These canvas bags were in use for many years at the *Reichsbank*, though few of its customers knew, perhaps, how important a part they once played. Each bag

* "Tägliche Rundschau."

contained the same amount of gold coin, and on being counted not one of them proved to be short. This was also true of the payments made in paper, although one forged note of 100 thalers was discovered. The forgery was an excellent one, correct in every detail, with the exception that the words, "He who hands William or Bismarck over alive to the Government of the French Republic, will receive the sum of ten million francs," were substituted in lieu of the penal declaration. This forged note was sold at once as an interesting memento of the war for 100 thalers, if only to avoid a *monitum* from the Exchequer. The expenditure of 23,500 francs for the bags was also passed, after the French law and the custom of the *Banque* on this point had been verified.

.

NEGOTIATIONS AT FRANKFORT-ON-THE-MAIN,

May 6—10, 1871 *

The first meeting of the French plenipotentiaries, MM. Jules Favre and Pouyer-Quertier, with the Chancellor of the German Empire took place on Saturday, May 6, 1871, at the Hotel Zum Schwan. After alluding to events connected with the Paris insurrection, Favre assured Prince Bismarck of the sincere desire of the French Government to avoid all misconceptions and misunderstandings which might hinder the conclusion of a peace.

"These events," replied Bismarck, "are of such importance that Germany would be justified in regarding

* Jules Favre, "Simple Récit," etc.

58 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

the treaty of February 26 as no longer binding, since the execution of the principal resolutions has become impossible. Germany, if she wishes, can either revoke the treaty or hold you to an exact execution of the obligations thereby imposed on you. An entirely new situation has arisen, and must be taken into consideration. This is imperatively demanded by our interests, which become more and more involved. In my last despatches I have continually pointed this out. We do not suspect the good faith of the French Government, but we fear that it does not possess the power of surmounting the threatening obstacles. At the time we opened up communications, the Government appeared at least to be invested with full sovereignty; to-day it is expelled from the capital, after besieging the city for almost two months without much prospect of taking it. Triumphant in Paris, the insurrection may, at any moment, break out in several large towns. If the insurrection is victorious, its leaders will hasten to turn against us the forces whose organization we have permitted. United with the troops of the Commune, they will be able to throw themselves on our forces and compel us to commence a fresh bloody struggle. We cannot take the risk of these eventualities. The treaty of the 26th of February has also been violated in other respects. Article III. settles that immediately after ratification, and in accordance with an agreement between the two Governments, nine of the occupied departments are to be wholly vacated, and six others as far as the left bank of the Seine; that the French army is to retire behind the Loire; and that the Eastern departments are also to be vacated

after the payment of the first half-milliard. By this method the greater part of our army was to return to Germany after a brief period, and the unbearable and ruinously expensive absence of the troops was to come to an end. You surely know the sufferings imposed on our people by the absence of the troops and the burdens on our Exchequer connected therewith. In calculating the number of our troops for whom you have to provide supplies, an error of 150,000 men was made against us by our commissaries. We made no claim, because we thought that it was only a matter of a few days. To-day this error costs us several millions, and the expense is still increasing. Your Government does not appear to take these matters into consideration. We have allowed you to raise your army to more than 100,000 combatants; we have sent back more than 80,000 prisoners of war, and you now demand more. You seem to prolong the siege of Paris to an eternity; nor have you even returned the captured ships. We will not, we cannot, follow you further on this path. On the other hand, your Brussels plenipotentiaries systematically prolong the negotiations, which are to result in a definite peace, and endeavour to modify the conditions of the preliminary treaty to your advantage, and are in no way concerned to hasten your tasks. In this way everything is brought into question, and we see our guarantees dwindling away. The Emperor has ordered me to ask for new pledges, and to arrange for a supplementary treaty on those points. If you decline to accede to such a treaty, we shall demand from you the exact execution of the treaty of the 26th of February, and in particular the retirement behind the Loire of

60 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

that portion of your army which exceeds 40,000 men. We shall reserve our freedom of action regarding the suppression of the Paris insurrection, as well as the locality of the future negotiations, which cannot be continued at Brussels."

Favre retorted that the German proposals were tantamount to a resumption of hostilities. France had reached the furthest limits of her sacrifices, and to demand more would only drive her to a war of despair. As a proof of the honest and loyal intention of his Government, Jules Favre offered to negotiate a definite peace there and then. The fall of the Paris Commune was only a question of time, but if the army was forced to retire behind the Loire, the Commune would at once become securely established; nay, the very mention of German intervention would at once recruit their ranks. On the other hand, if the peace were to be signed at once, a fresh weapon would be given to the French Government for the suppression of the Commune.

The Chancellor replied, "I do not absolutely decline this solution; I am even inclined to prefer it to any other: that will be sufficient proof for you that we in no way cherish the intention of driving you to extremes, for I should fear that as much as you. But you cannot deny that the present crisis, since it has materially weakened your political credit, has also diminished the value of our sureties. Since your present position does not offer us the same guarantees as hitherto we may have to look for them elsewhere. We demand a more effectual pledge for the conclusion of peace on the basis of the conditions of the preliminary treaty, and for the

payment of the indemnity. I think that if we were to come to an understanding on this point, we should regulate the others very quickly."

Favre remarked that everything depended on the nature and amounts of the guarantees required, and asked for further information.

"We should like," replied Bismarck, "to reserve the right of deciding when your Government—which, as I hope, is now victorious—has attained such stability that we can quit your territory. In this sense the treaty of the 26th of February, which fixes the gradual withdrawal of our occupation after the payment of each half-milliard, and which only allows us a garrison of 50,000 men to hold six departments after the payment of the fourth instalment, would have to be modified. You have nothing to fear from this new resolution; we have the greatest interest in the return of our troops, since it is the wish of Germany, and we should be foolish and guilty if we did not comply with this desire. As soon as you have restored order, we shall vacate your territory in the most complete manner; too great a haste might be as dangerous to you as to us. We ask further from you, as a necessary condition for the safety of our troops, the right to control the approaches to the gates of Paris and to patrol the hitherto neutral zone between our lines and your walls. It is merely a question of exercising a police duty which you cannot deny us, and which may prevent annoying irregularities."

M. Favre wished to postpone these subsidiary questions to a further interview, and for the present urged the necessity of coming to an understanding regarding

62 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

the peace treaty, which would put an end to the undecided and dangerous situation.

The Prince approved of this project, and congratulated the French negotiators on thus avoiding dangerous complications.

"I cannot," he added, "conceal from you the fact that I am the bearer of an ultimatum, and that I am ordered to present it to you. Thanks to the frankness of your declarations, I regard it as unnecessary, though at the same time, as it is my duty, I cannot withdraw from communicating it to you. I request you to accept it if only to cover your responsibility towards the National Assembly, which, if it has to ratify our convention, must recognize the unavoidable situation by which it came to pass."

The interview, which had lasted four hours, then came to an end, and its purport was at once reported to M. Thiers, who signified his approval of the results achieved.

At noon the following day, Prince Bismarck, accompanied by his suite, returned the visit of the French plenipotentiaries. He commenced by protesting against the document, which he was about to bring to their notice, being regarded in any way as a threat, and expressed the hope that an amicable agreement would be arrived at; he had, however, to execute a direct order of his Government, and would therefore read the note aloud.

"With reference to our interview of yesterday, I have the honour to draw your Excellency's attention to the fact that the present situation in France differs materially from that which was taken into consideration at the time of the signature of the peace preliminaries. The

Government of the Republic does not possess to-day the same power of fulfilling its engagements as it did at that date. The Paris insurrection has, by altering the situation, endangered the future on which we believed ourselves able to reckon. Since the French Government has been obliged to leave Paris in the hands of the insurrection and thus to trespass upon the conditions of the peace preliminaries in order to seek the means of re-establishing its disputed authority, we must fear that similar occurrences might happen again even if the Government succeeds in regaining possession of the capital. We have hitherto abstained from an attack on Paris, which would put an end to an abnormal situation which was not considered in the treaty of the 26th of February, but this uncertainty cannot be prolonged without prejudice to our interests. We have agreed to a concentration of French troops sufficient to imperil our position in the event of an unexpected turn of affairs, but we can now no longer maintain this passive attitude in the face of circumstances which are at variance with the conditions of the peace preliminaries. Unless France is able to give us guarantees which will protect German interests with greater certainty against any future disturbances hindering the peace of France, we must secure them for ourselves.

“ We should like to seek these guarantees in the conscientious execution of the conventions concluded up to the present date, according to which the French troops stationed outside Paris would retire to the south of the Loire. Unless the French Government would be willing to come to an agreement whereby, after

64 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

the payment of the first half-milliard of the indemnity, the German troops would continue to occupy the Paris forts situated on the right bank of the Seine, with the corresponding portion of the neutral zone up to the walls of the city, as well as the gates situate on the right bank. In that case the evacuation, provided for by the treaty of the 26th of February, would, for the time being, be restricted to the departments of the Somme, Seine Inferieure, and Eure, and the evacuation demanded by Article B of the peace preliminaries would only follow in its full extent when the political situation of France is sufficiently established to offer security that the French Government would be able to fulfil its engagements to Germany. It would be contrary to the interests of Germany to prolong the occupation beyond the time which France requires her Government to be firmly established, because the expenses of maintaining our armies in France far exceed all sums which France contributes thereto. The interests of both countries do not permit us to allow such a situation to continue which leaves them in uncertainty, both as regards the future of their material relations and the continuation of circumstances which amount neither to war or peace.

“In order to put an end to this, we shall endeavour at our present conference to agree about the chief questions to be solved in the definitive peace treaty. If we do not succeed in this, and if the French Government refuses to give us the pledges which I have just had the honour to indicate to your Excellency, Germany will above all reserve the right to take steps against the irregular conditions at present prevailing in Paris, and to insist on the strict execution of the condition which

directs the French Government to withdraw its troops south of the Loire.

“Accept, etc.,

“V. BISMARCK.”

Favre informed the Chancellor that he accepted the note only with the explanation which had preceded its presentation, and requested that the negotiations might commence at once. Prince Bismarck replied in a few polite words, and returned to his hotel, accompanied *en route* by the cheers of the crowd assembled in the streets.

The conference was resumed an hour later at the Hotel Zum Schwan, and the question of the securities was discussed with some warmth, for Bismarck appeared to doubt the desire of the French for a rapid conclusion of the peace negotiations.

“Your actions,” he exclaimed, “are of more importance than your words, and what we learn about the former inspires us with little confidence. You have not abandoned the hope, a chimerical one in my eyes, of interesting Europe in your affairs, and you believe you will be able to achieve an alteration of the conditions of peace by an intervention. Therefore you search everywhere for hostile feelings which may embarrass us. Even quite recently you turned to Russia. Our ambassador at St. Petersburg reported this to me this morning.”

Favre interrupted the Chancellor to inform him that, though he had made efforts to awaken the sense of justice in Europe, he was incapable of playing a double game, and therefore requested that the despatch referred to might be communicated to him.

66 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

The Prince sent for the telegram, in which the ambassador reported a conversation with Gortschakoff who had received a note from the Minister of the Exterior. This expressed a wish that the Czar might exercise his influence on his venerable uncle, the German Emperor, in order to bring about a speedy peace, and so put an end to the dangerous continuation of this mutual lack of confidence.

In reply to an entreaty to diminish rather than increase the burden of the occupation, the Chancellor observed—

“ You forget that this occupation, which you complain of, presses more hardly on us than on you. Our army is the nation itself, and if it is stationed on your territory, our country is impoverished. Every family is angered by the absence of a member, and this is not justified by war. We demand that we alone have to decide when the withdrawal of our troops is opportune, not in order to leave them an unnecessarily long time on your soil, but so that we may not be forced later on to lead them there again. Moreover, the Emperor's orders are quite definite on this point, and we can make no concessions.”

Notwithstanding the determined attitude of the Germans in this matter, the French succeeded in arranging that the fifteen departments mentioned in the peace preliminaries were to be evacuated after the payment of the third half-milliard, and this they obtained without any consideration of the views of the Prussian Cabinet regarding the situation in France.

The question of guarding the gates of Paris was more successfully contested, and Bismarck contented himself

with the right of sending patrols round the neutral zone outside Paris.

The district round Belfort, which was to remain French, was then minutely discussed. In Versailles Bismarck estimated the radius of the district at seven kilometres, but, since this was the minimum, the French delegates endeavoured to obtain a more generous concession. • Relying on strategical geographical arguments, as well as on the manifest desire of the population to remain French, they demanded an extension of territory to the north, south, and west. Bismarck promised to investigate these claims with a view to approving of them, and suggested at the same time that a portion of the French demands might be granted in return for an equivalent elsewhere. The French negotiators protested against this view. It was not a business question when every concession called for a compensation; moreover, they were not empowered to dispose of what the peace preliminaries had left or promised to them.

On reassembling the following day (May 8), Bismarck informed the French delegates that Germany consented to the proposed area round Belfort, but demanded a strip of about ten kilometres along the Luxemburg frontier. The French would thus obtain 27,000 inhabitants and 6000 hectares on the Upper Rhine, whilst losing 7000 inhabitants and 10,000 hectares.

The German Cabinet was induced to make this proposal for two important reasons: the one, to obtain the rich iron ore deposits of the locality in question; the other, to diminish the French frontier towards Luxemburg by one-third. The Chancellor also mentioned

68 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

a third reason, of minor importance from the point of view of positive policy, for the territory which Prussia desired to possess had been the scene of repeated and bloody struggles. The mortal remains of a large number of officers and soldiers were there laid to rest, and the Emperor attached importance to the possession of their graves.

The French delegates did not consider it necessary to refute these arguments, having regard to the paramount importance to France of a field of action round Belfort. They therefore remarked that it was beyond their powers to negotiate so delicate a question, and that the National Assembly alone could decide, since it involved their sovereignty. A middle course was therefore adopted by agreeing to the alternative to be presented to the Chamber: either a radius of seven kilometres round Belfort without any further rectification of the frontier, or the above-mentioned extension in return for ten kilometres along the Luxemburg frontier.

The Chancellor consented, without offering much resistance, to the return of 20,000 French prisoners of war, who were to be sent without delay to Algiers, where they formed a welcome reinforcement against the rebellion.

On the other hand, however, the question of a commercial treaty was less easy to arrange, for whilst the French wished to restore the *status quo*, Bismarck warmly replied that he would rather begin the war over again than expose Germany to a tariff war. It was only on recognizing the certainty of a breach that the French delegates were constrained to agree that both Governments should base their commercial relations

- on the system of mutual treatment on the footing of the most favoured nations.

Several minor questions were then decided, but no understanding could be arrived at regarding the price of that portion of the Eastern Railway which was situated on the annexed territory. The directors of the company asked for 400 millions; Bismarck offered 100. At last the question had to be postponed to the following day, when the defensive treaty was to be signed.

On May 10, 1871, the following were assembled in a room at the Hotel Zum Schwan: M. Jules Favre, Minister of the Exterior; M. Pouyer-Quertier, Minister of Finance; and M. Goulard, representing France: Prince Bismarck, Counts Arnim and Hatzfeldt, representing Germany. At the moment of signing the Treaty, which was to be ratified by the German Emperor and the National Assembly, M. Favre received a telegram announcing the capture of Fort Issy by the troops of the Government, and also the President of the Council's complete approval of the arrangements made with Bismarck.

Favre lost no time in communicating the good news to the German Chancellor, who seemed to be rather surprised, for he, as were most of his countrymen, was firmly convinced that the French Government would not be able to take the fortifications held by the insurgents. In any case, he at once consented to resume the negotiation of the railway transfer. After a discussion of two hours, it was agreed that the sum of 325 millions should be allowed to the French railway company, and be deducted from the second half-milliard of the war indemnity.

70 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

THE RATIFICATION OF THE PEACE TREATY *

Frankfort-on-the-Main, May 20-22, 1871

On Sunday, May 20, 1871, MM. Favre and Pouyer-Quertier again arrived at Frankfort to complete the final formalities of the peace-treaty. *

Their conferences with Bismarck commenced at about 3 p.m. and did not end until 11 p.m., when the ratifications were exchanged, though the signing of the last signatures had to be postponed until the following Monday. Bismarck at first intended to summon the Finance Minister by telegram, but afterwards turned to M. Pouyer-Quertier and said, "I have thought it over; we do not want a middleman; everything can be arranged quite well between us."

As a matter of fact, he showed real sympathy towards M. Pouyer-Quertier. This was due to his straightforward manner, as well as to his lucid arguments; for, like all truly practical men, Bismarck valued highly precision and simplicity. Thus it happened that the Chancellor made several very valuable concessions, the chief of them being the acceptance of French bank-notes for 100 million francs in payment of the first instalment of the indemnity, although French notes were expressly excluded by the treaty just ratified.

Whilst the documents were being prepared, the political and military situation formed the subject of conversation. "The King," said Bismarck, "is rather disquieted, since he learns that you wish to have another 10,000 prisoners returned, because he thinks he sees in this a proof that a solution of your difficulties

* Jules Favre, "Simple Récit," etc.

is still far removed, and he cannot bear the thought of a further delay. Our troops do not wish to remain in France any longer. We promise you to withdraw our forces to Germany to a great extent, and by this we shall go far beyond the provision of the treaty. But we demand from you that you should act promptly."

"That is so much our intention," replied Favre, "that the breach will be commenced to-day, with the intention of proceeding to the assault not later than Tuesday."

The Prince congratulated M. Favre on this good news, and then mentioned the summons which the German Commander-in-Chief was to address to the insurgents regarding the disarmament of the Paris walls in accordance with the armistice. Favre, in reply, begged that the summons might not be sent, because a refusal would oblige the Germans to attack Paris.

The Chancellor recognized that it would be better to leave the French Government at liberty to act. "In the mean time," he added, "we cannot pledge ourselves to anything. You admit that we have the right to employ force a thousand times. You are not fighting a party, but a band of robbers who have broken the laws on which the whole of civilization rests. Can we look on with folded arms whilst public buildings as well as private property are destroyed—while the archbishop perhaps is murdered? Our attitude of reserve is no longer understood, and we can only promise to maintain it conditionally for a short time longer."

Favre then showed Prince Bismarck a telegram he had just received from M. Thiers, describing the efforts

72 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

that were being made for the suppression of the insurrection. Favre explained the position of his Government with all the energy of which he was capable, and succeeded in gaining permission for the return of the prisoners of war.

At their next meeting, about 9 p.m., Bismarck expressed the hope that the two nations might resume their former relations. M. Favre replied that every endeavour would be made to avoid friction by entrusting the direction of affairs to enlightened and conciliatory men. For the time being it would be going too far to hope for more than that.

"That is also my view," replied the Chancellor; "but I cannot admit that all hope of an earnest reconciliation is destroyed because the fortune of war has been favourable to us in a war provoked by you. You know better than any one the imperative considerations we have complied with; we should have striven in vain against the will of the German nation—nay, more, we should have committed an act of treason against it had we not been on our guard against fresh attacks by France. We do not now desire them, and we have no need to fear them, for we are armed against all eventualities. Nevertheless, I for my part still believe that much may be expected from time. You will, perhaps, be astonished at what I want to say. France will gain more by a sincerely peaceful attitude than by the systematic fomenting of the hatred engendered by this war. I will not dilate further on so delicate a topic, but will only repeat to you that I am no enemy to your country, and prove it by proposing a diplomat, whose thoroughly benevolent sentiments

you are acquainted with and who can only be welcome to you, as our ambassador to your Government."

Favre thanked the Chancellor, and also mentioned the name of the ambassador M. Thiers proposed to send to Berlin. In reply to an observation about the difficulties which would beset this post, the Chancellor remarked—

"You are greatly mistaken; he will be the most fortunate of all your ambassadors. We shall wrap him in cotton-wool, and treat him with so much kind courtesy that his chief desire will be to become indispensable to us. You have, as I see, a false impression of public opinion in Germany; it is all for peace. Of course I do not speak of certain soldiers, nor of the *exaltés* and flatterers of the nation, who call themselves Gallophobes, in order to draw attention to themselves and exploit the credulity of fools. Those who direct and govern the State are more reasonable; they know the vicissitudes of fortune, and if they ever doubted them, our very victories, which exceeded all expectations, would have enlightened them. They have no intention whatever of risking our brilliant successes in the game of new adventures. Your ambassador will discover this in a few weeks, and a longer intercourse with us will only confirm him in this conviction."

M. Favre suggested that the best means for re-establishing the normal relations, from which the Chancellor expected so much, would be the curtailment of the burdensome occupation.

"We will do that, too," said the Chancellor, "and we shall come to an understanding the more easily

74 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

since our interests are identical. If you could listen to the conversations in our regiments, you would hear only one wish expressed: to return home. This wish is also shared by every German family, and the Press repeats it in almost threatening tones. We were, nevertheless, obliged to resist it as long as the Paris insurrection forced us to insist on new pledges. It is now open to you to make these superfluous. Why will you not make use of the provisions of the preliminary treaty? After the payment of the first two milliards you can propose a financial combination. If it is a substantial one, we will willingly accept it, and in that case the total evacuation might take place much earlier."

Favre took his leave at midnight, promising to report the conversation fully to his Government, and to return the following morning to discuss some disputed matters.

The conference on the 22nd of May was of much the same nature as that of the preceding day. On taking leave of M. Favre, Prince Bismarck congratulated him on the conclusion of the peace, and on his personal share in bringing it about.

II

FURTHER CONVERSATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

BISMARCK IN BIARRITZ

BISMARCK'S first visit to Biarritz, in the summer of 1862, took place under rather peculiar circumstances. Though still only Prussian ambassador at the Tuileries, he was already marked out as the future director of Prussian policy. He was thus, as it were, still in a stage of transition, which, under the critical circumstances at the time, involved an exceptional strain even for the nerves of the strongest of men. Small wonder, then, that he felt the necessity of shaking the dust of Paris off his feet, and seeking a breath of fresh air in the sunny South.

Quitting Paris on July 25, Bismarck made a tour through the Médoc "in order to drink from the wine-press in the original language," and eventually reached San Sebastian *viâ* Bayonne on July 29, after a brief visit to Biarritz. A week later he took up his quarters at the Hôtel de l'Europe in Biarritz, and described his room as having "a charming view of the blue sea, which flings its white foam against the lighthouse between marvellous rocks."

76 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

In a letter to his sister, he describes the routine of his life.

“MY DEAR HEART,

“I have remained at Biarritz, the threshold, as it were, of the Pyrenees, which I shall perhaps explore. The sea-bathing, above all, suited me so excellently that I delayed my departure from one day to another, although I felt somewhat lonely. Since the arrival of the Orloffs, I live with them as if we were alone here. . . . We bathe in the morning; then go down to the rocks, lunch in a distant ravine behind the lighthouse, where I am at present writing these lines, seated on the grass next to a blue and yellow robe, and looking out on to green waves and white foam between two heather-brown fields. Large white seagulls with black wings hover and cry overhead, and the ever-present tamarind affords us sufficient shade against the burning sun of ‘fine weather,’ *i.e.* 25° Réaumur in the shade, though not here, where the sea-breeze cools the air. A few pears, peaches, and dogs lie about us. Orloff (you know him—the ambassador in Brussels, with a black bandage over his eye) sits smoking and reading; his wife, like myself, is writing. She would please you also; . . . very original, clever, and merry, . . . but civilized by her French-German education; her parents (Trubetzkoi) have lived in Fontainebleau for twenty years. At three we bathe a second time, dine at five, go for another walk, and lie on the heather in the sea-breeze until bed-time. A comfortable, still life, in which I forget Paris and Berlin (but not Reinfeld), and of which I shall carry

Further Conversations and Interviews 77

away very dear reminiscences. Why? Daily I ask myself that question, and put off the answer until the morrow, whilst I justly rely on the fact that I have not been so healthy for six years as I am here now. I walk and climb all day like a goat, lie in wet grass without fear of a chill, and each day I become a year younger, so that if I remain here long I shall become student-like or childish. With the exception of my neighbour, I only know an old Countess B—— and her grandchild, a pretty girl, fond of dancing, with whom I had to waltz a few times before the Orloffs came. Most of the remaining society are Spaniards of good family and no education; they speak no European language, and I know of nothing to do with them. . . .

“I shall not go to Berlin and Pomerania before the end of my leave, which expires about the 14th. Before that date I am afraid of being anchored in Berlin at the ‘sunny’ hotel. My fate must then be decided; how is a matter of indifference to me. Farewell, dear heart. The sun shines on my paper, and, since I write on my right knee, this letter is very readable; it is true Mendelssohn’s letters lie underneath. Hearty greetings to Oscar.

“Your most affectionate brother,

“v. B.”

In October, 1864, Bismarck again visited Biarritz. Napoleon and the Empress were living at the *Villa Eugénie*, hence all manner of reports and rumours about intended negotiations and intrigues arose on every side. But Bismarck did not touch Paris on his

78 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

way from Baden-Baden, and thus public opinion was somewhat quieted.

This second stay was no less enjoyable than the first, and Bismarck roundly declared, in a letter to his wife, that "if we were free, I would propose to you to come here with child and kit and remain the whole winter, as many Englishmen do, on account of the cheapness of living here in winter." c •

A Danish agent, Julius Hansen,* was granted an interview with Bismarck on the recommendation of Vicomte de la Guéronnière. Hansen's object was to learn from Bismarck whether the present situation regarding Schleswig-Holstein was considered permanent, and whether Germany could not be persuaded to return the Danish portion of Schleswig, thereby earning the gratitude of the Danes and the good-will of the Powers.

Bismarck replied, "Long before the war I had a presentiment that the hostilities between the Universities of Copenhagen and Kiel would lead to a war between the two nations. For my part, I have never looked upon the intrigues of the Kiel professors with a favourable eye, but the death of Frederick VII. and the state of agitation in Germany forced us to make war. I, personally, would have been contented with the line of Flensburg-Tondern, and, at the Conference of London, Prussia was inclined to concede Denmark the line Gjelting-Bredstedt. The military line of the Schlei would have sufficed as a frontier, and 70,000 Germans, certainly, would have been under the Danish

* Hansen's report of the interview has been stigmatized as incorrect in some particulars.

Further Conversations and Interviews 79

sovereignty. But the attitude of Denmark at the Conference made such a partition difficult, and the resumption of hostilities put every chance of such a combination out of the question. To-day it is impossible to alter the peace stipulations, having regard to the sentiments of the German nation and King William. The King of Prussia regards the hereditary titles of the Duke of Augustenburg as well founded, and consequently declares that if the Duke possesses a right to a single portion of that territory, he has an equal right to the whole of Schleswig. Otherwise, the King, according to his view, would himself have no right to seize the possessions of King Christian IX. The King of Prussia and all his family are in favour of the Duke of Augustenburg. So far as I am concerned, I doubt the rights of this pretender, and I believe that the matter will drag on at least for some time. If I had the choice between the alternatives of either incorporating in Prussia the duchies as far as Flensburg, or of giving the Duke of Augustenburg the whole of Schleswig and Holstein, I should without delay accept the first. I believe that neither France nor Russia would oppose an arrangement which left the Duchies to Prussia, and Austria would perhaps not commence a war on that account. But there is a more serious obstacle in the will of King William. He thinks that another has rights in the Duchies, and I cannot well be a greater royalist than the King. Nevertheless, I recognize that there are more than 100,000 Danes in Schleswig, who will have great influence in the future, and that it will be difficult to maintain good relations between Germany and Denmark so long as these Danes

.

80 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

are separated from their countrymen. I should not regard it as a great misfortune if North Schleswig were to be returned to Denmark at a given opportunity."

It was on Bismarck's return to Germany through Paris that the following flattering judgment was passed on him:—

"Le premier ministre de Prusse appartient à l'école des hommes d'État, qui ramènent tout au pouvoir et au commandement. C'est un franc absolutiste. Mais toutes les personnes qui ont vu de près cet homme d'État, sont frappées de la simplicité de sa mise et de ses manières et de la rondeur avec laquelle il s'exprime sur les affaires."

The political situation at the time of Bismarck's third visit to Biarritz was by no means serene. Public opinion in France regarded the Convention of Gastein, which entrusted the administration of Schleswig to Prussia and that of Holstein to Austria, as a decided victory of the Prussian policy. The French minister, Drouyn de Lhuys, censured the Convention in a circular note, whilst Napoleon, in a long conversation with the German ambassador, gave expression to the painful impression it had made on him.

The aggressive language employed in the circular note rendered the acceptance by the German ambassador of an invitation to the Villa Eugénie at least questionable in the eyes of King William. Bismarck therefore sought permission to repair to Biarritz himself and ascertain the real meaning of the apparent contradiction. On the receipt of a report from Von der Goltz that Napoleon had repeatedly expressed his regret at the terms of the circular note, the King at last

Further Conversations and Interviews 81

consented to Bismarck's departure—though with the reservation that no engagements should be entered into with France, as the effect of the Convention on the Schleswig-Holstein affair had still to be seen.

Bismarck's most important interview with Napoleon III. at Biarritz was the result of an invitation to lunch on the 8th of October, after which a long conversation took place on the terrace of the Villa Eugénie.

It was obvious that the Emperor was most anxious to undo the effect of the circular note, which he declared had been drafted and despatched in great haste. He began by asking Bismarck whether Prussia had not given Austria a guarantee regarding Venetia, hinting at a German coalition against France. Bismarck replied in the negative, and assured the Emperor that he might rely the more on his sincerity since such agreements, once made, could not remain secret for long, and that he (Bismarck) had no desire that his honesty of purpose should be doubted. Moreover, Bismarck considered it impossible that, even in the future, any convention could be arranged by which Prussia would help Austria to make war as she pleased, in which Prussia would be forced to join without reaping any advantages.

The Emperor for his part asserted that he had no intention of disturbing the peace of Europe, and protested particularly against harbouring any designs on Belgium. Using almost the very words Bismarck had employed in his interview with Drouyn de Lhuys a few days before, Napoleon remarked that events must be allowed to ripen and must not be forced, and concluded by asking how Prussia proposed to settle the Holstein

82 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

question with Austria. Bismarck candidly admitted that he hoped Prussia would obtain and hold Holstein by paying a money indemnity. He explained that the acquisition of the Elbe Duchies by no means signified an increase in the power of Prussia, for it would necessitate the development of the navy and the defences against the North, a burden which was not counterbalanced by the addition of a million new subjects. The acquisition of the Duchies was only an *arrhes* (earnest money) for the fulfilment of the task allotted by history to the Prussian State, and towards the further pursuit of which friendly relations with France were necessary. It seemed to him that it was in the interest of French policy to encourage the ambition of Prussia in the fulfilment of national tasks, since an ambitious Prussia would always place a high value on the friendship of France, whereas if she was discouraged she would seek protection in defensive alliances against France.

Napoleon was also anxious to know what attitude Prussia would adopt with regard to the Danube Principalities, for he seemed inclined to think that they might serve as compensation to Austria for the loss of Venetia. Bismarck replied that Prussia's direct interests did not go beyond the secure position of German commerce, and that Prussia's co-operation in the future reorganization of those countries was only conditional because of the necessity of avoiding complications with Russia on a question of comparatively little importance to Prussia.

The conversation then turned on the importance to Europe of sealing up the sources of infectious diseases which, like the cholera of that date, originated in the

Further Conversations and Interviews 83

pilgrimages to Mecca, and from thence spread to the West. The Emperor thought that dangers of this nature might be minimized by the united action of the Powers, and expressed a desire for the co-operation of Prussia. Although Bismarck did not disguise the danger that the fanaticism of the Mohammedans might be aroused by interference with the pilgrimages, he considered himself free to express his conviction that Prussia would readily take part in every work of civilization in that direction, so far as she was able to influence those distant regions.

The general impression left on Bismarck by his observations was that the sentiments of the French Court were extremely favourable to Prussia.

Prosper Mérimée relates the following diverting anecdote, which aptly characterizes the dominant tone of the Villa Eugénie.

One of the Empress's ladies professed the greatest admiration for Bismarck, whereupon her companions regaled her with many a prettily invented tale of the statesman's audacity. Mérimée, hearing of this, conceived the idea of painting a portrait of Bismarck, and then cutting out the head. This done, the Emperor, the Empress, and Mérimée proceeded to Madame N——'s bedroom at nightfall. A rolled-up counterpane simulated the body; the painted face was put in position, and the Empress placed a knotted handkerchief on its forehead to represent a nightcap, and in the semi-darkness of the room the illusion was complete. The conspirators kept Madame N—— back after their Majesties had quitted the salon, until they had taken up their posts of observation. Every one then pretended to go

•

•

84 Conversations with Prince Bismarck^e

to bed, and Madame N—— retired to her room. She remained there only an instant, however; rushing out again, she knocked at Madame de Lourmel's door with the piteous complaint, "Il y a un homme dans mon lit!" Unfortunately, Madame de Lourmel could not remain serious, and the audible laughter of the Empress at the end of the corridor completely spoilt the joke. But it was only later that Merimée learnt the full extent of his joke. One of the Imperial servants had previously entered Madame N——'s room, but retired hastily with stammering excuses on seeing the recumbent form. He then told his fellow-servants that there was a man in the bed. Some expressed the opinion that it was Madame N——'s husband, who had wanted to see his wife; but this suggestion was rejected as quite improbable. Some one, however, who had seen Merimée at work on the Bismarck head, prevented the report from spreading.

A fortnight after the Imperial family had quitted Biarritz, Bismarck, accompanied by his wife and daughter, set out for Paris, where he had another audience with Napoleon.

The Paris press commented on the Prussian statesman as follows—

"On lui a trouvé une physionomie fixe et douce faisant contraste avec le sans façon, j'allais dire la brutalité de sa politique. On a remarqué la beauté et les cheveux blonds de Mademoiselle de Bismarck. Bref, le dehors du ministre et de son entourage ont effacé un peu de l'impression produite de sa politique."

Further Conversations and Interviews 85

BISMARCK AND MR. W. BEATTY-KINGSTON *

Berlin, September 22, 1867

"I have had a four hours' palaver with The Man, but, as I expected, shall be able to make very little of it public, for he commenced our talk by saying, 'I have experience of your discretion; I shall therefore have no concealment from you, but I reckon confidently upon your using all the personal part of what I may tell you with all necessary reserve; and you will understand that the more unreservedly I speak to you, the greater proof I give you of my conviction that you will not compromise me with the people who are looking out for every word I say, by letting them know what I really think.' Now, as the personal or anecdotal part of his conversation is the most interesting and startling of all, being put 'upon honour' with regard to it necessarily lessens the importance of the published results of an interview such as I have this evening enjoyed; but I will do my best to tell you in this private letter all that is comprised in his prohibition. What I write in the public letter you may print without hesitation.

"He believes in peace, and for many reasons—but I had better, as nearly as possible, reproduce his own words: 'I do not believe for a moment that France will fight us alone, for, reckoning that every Prussian is at least as good as every Frenchman, we are numerically stronger than she is. The attack must come from

* *Daily Telegraph*, August 4, 1898.

86 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

her ; we shall never begin a war, if war there ever be, for we have nothing to gain. Suppose France entirely conquered, and a Prussian garrison in Paris ; what are we to do with our victory ? We could not even decently take Alsace, for the Alsatians are become Frenchmen, and wish to remain so. Belgium we do not want ; besides, England guarantees her integrity. Therefore, should this possibility—which is always being din-
ned into my ears as a probability—ever come to pass, France will undoubtedly attack us, in which case, if she stand alone, she is lost, for our system is such that the further she may advance (supposing she be at first victorious) into our country, the more armies will spring up against her, like Cadmus' teeth. You will say, "Old men, *à la fin*," but a Prussian is not so senile at forty-five as some people think. And every German is with us now, despite creeds and bias ; we have not sought, we have waited—they run after us, like the roast sucking-pig in the Chinaman's dream, crying, "Come, eat me !" You remember, a hundred years ago, at the battle of—[I did not catch the name.—K.]—when a Prussian dragoon was fighting a French cuirassier hand to hand, a German horseman, one of France's mercenaries, rode up to strike in on the part of his comrade. The Prussian called out to him, "Hold, brother ! let me finish this Frenchman ; he belongs to me !" and the German reined up, saluted, and rode off in another direction. That was a century ago. Since then what have not the Germans learned to comprehend of the brotherhood that naturally binds them together against the Frenchman or anybody else or all the world besides ! If the French fight us alone they are lost ;

Further Conversations and Interviews 87

- therefore, as they know this, they seek for allies. Will they find them? I will tell you why I think not.

“France, the victor, would be a danger to everybody—Prussia to nobody. That is our strong point. England wished to see a Power in Europe strong enough to counterbalance France. That is the reason she supported and sympathized with Austria as long as Austria seemed to be strong; that is the reason why I told the King, when he wished to carry out the “execution” in Denmark alone, “We must have Austria with us, or England will join her against us”—and that is the reason why England is now turning towards us—because she sees in us the Continental *contrepoids* to France, which you English, in spite of your loudly protested alliance with Napoleon, are too sensible not to understand the necessity of. Your alliance has already cost you dearly enough in loss of Continental influence, and I should not wonder if the proud English people were to get tired some day of playing a bad second fiddle to the old foe they have so often conquered. You will never take up arms against us in the cause of France.

“I have no little fear of Austria. Austria is like a house built of bad bricks, which, however, are kept together by an excellent mortar—how do you call it? cement—that cement is her German population. Whatever good has been done in her barbarous provinces, has been done by the Germanizing of her institutions. Everywhere in Austria German is spoken; the inhabitants of the different Slav, Magyar, and Latin provinces must use German to understand one another. An alliance, therefore, with France, having for its

•

88 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

purpose the arrest of German unity in its majestic progress, and the devastation of German territory, would be fatal to Austria, whichever way the tide of victory might set. She would surely be ruined through such an alliance, and she knows it. I am not the least apprehensive of an Austro-French Alliance, I give you my word of honour.

“‘Russia will never join France against us, of that be assured—it is impossible.’ (Bismarck said this with great emphasis, leaning on both his arms half across the table towards me, and looking into my eyes with the greatest earnestness.) ‘It is true that there has been some talk of an understanding upon the Oriental question—of a common plan of action in the East. Gortschakoff is a funny fellow—he has been taken in six or seven times by French humbug and protestations of an *entente cordiale* which always lasts from three to five weeks; then he invariably finds out that he is the victim of French cunning and ignorance mixed, and begins to curse and swear by all the devils and saints in the Russian calendar *qu’on ne le prendra plus*. And then he drops into the next trap with inimitable naïveté. Poor Gortschakoff! he gained his prestige in the Polish business, and thinks the only way to keep it up is to lend himself to the Oriental proclivities of Russia. Popularity is his one ambition. Russia is in a horrid state, and a big war is out of the question for her till she has set her house in order. If I were the Emperor’s prime minister—as he very much wished me to be six years ago—I should begin by cutting the army down to exactly half its present numbers, and knocking the privileges of the Tchinovnik on the head.

Further Conversations and Interviews 89

That foul and useless Tchén causes half Russia's misfortunes. Just now public feeling in Russia is as bad as can be against France; but, "whatever happens," make your mind up that we are quite safe from Russia.

"I do not think I need tell you why a French-Italian offensive alliance against us is out of the question—*cela saute aux yeux*. But I will tell you something that I am told by our agents at both courts, who are not often mistaken, and that is, that Napoleon is going to add another to the list of horrible mistakes he has made within the last five years. He is going to let the Italian troops occupy the Pontifical States, with the mere exception of Rome itself—by which he will bring down the whole of the Catholic, Legitimist, and Orleanist parties upon him, and make his position infinitely worse than it is—and it is bad enough, God knows! But to return to our peace or war prospects. There remains to France, therefore, in Europe (putting Denmark and the other Scandinavians out of the question—they are not worth counting) only Spain as an ally.' Here Bismarck looked at me comically, and we both laughed.

"What do I think might bring about war? Of course, an excuse would not be wanting if the French really needed one, but I think the greatest danger of all proceeds from Napoleon's vacillating state of mind. He is become old, but he is also become young—that is to say, he indulges in vagaries, gives way to impulses, and allows his fair wife to exercise a good deal too much influence over him. The Mexico business was her doing, as I suppose you know. He is not the man

.

90 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

he used to be, and Europe will never be safe whilst his present state of intellect continues. Another source of danger is the intense ignorance and mendacity of the men who represent France everywhere. Look round Europe for one capable or honest French agent! Yours, Latour, is the only man of integrity amongst them all—the only gentleman. All the others are knaves, or so crassly ignorant and prejudiced that an intelligent schoolboy is worth all of them put together. Gramont, for instance, is half a fool and a notorious liar—I beg your pardon, I should have said a lover of hoaxes. Benedetti is more clever than the run of French statesmen, though quite as dishonest; but why is he more clever? Because he is an Italian. He is also more amiable—also because he is an Italian. These fellows will neither learn anything, nor will they keep quiet. The consequence is, that Napoleon is worse informed upon European affairs than any other Sovereign. They made him go to Salzburg. You were quite right about that meeting; it was an utter fiasco; but I knew it would be from the first, and my people warned Napoleon of it, and advised him not to go. I was much amused afterwards to hear how he had been manœuvring for three days, and the Austrians counter-manœuvring all the time. He went to shear, and came away shorn. Why did he go to look for wool—he had the Golden Fleece already? But these shallow, trumpery French clerks—I cannot call them ministers or ambassadors—may bring their master and their countrymen into trouble.

““ When I was in Paris with the King, I told Rouher, before his colleagues and Gortschakoff, who happened to

Further Conversations and Interviews 91

be present, "Unless you want war with us, don't put yourself to the trouble of looking out for another Luxemburg—this is the last; I am *collé au mur*, and I will not give way an inch to any new demand. I owe my compatriots a war. I have cheated them out of one, in which they had a good chance of success, and it required all my popularity to enable me to do so. If you give me any opportunity, I shall certainly pay my debt." Gortschakoff tried to turn the conversation, as everybody looked dreadfully uncomfortable at my "boutade." But Moustier had something on his stomach, and managed to bring it up with many grimaces. They thought of urging that Luxemburg should leave the Zollverein—should I offer any objection to that? I broke out, "Don't talk to me of Luxemburg. I won't hear of Luxemburg. The Duke of Luxemburg has got to stay in the Zollverein till 1873, and then he can leave if he likes; but till then he shall not go out of it, and if you urge him to make a question of it, I shall say to the King, 'Flamberge au vent, sire!' and I don't think his Majesty will say me nay." They did not mention Luxemburg any more to me the whole time I was in Paris.' Here Bismarck indulged in another cigar, beered, and went on.

"You would like to know something about our plans, our aggregation projects, and our ambitions, would you not? I will tell you exactly what they are, and only two or three besides the King and myself know. First of all, there is Austria. Now, the German provinces of Austria, except the Tyrol and Salzkammergut, both of which are blindly Catholic and Hapsburg, may experience a strong gravitation towards us. I do not deny it

92 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

for a moment; but, I assure you, were I offered Upper and Lower Austria to-morrow I should refuse them. They are too far off; there are Bohemia, Austrian Silesia, Moravia, with three-fifths Slav populations, between us. If those provinces of German Austria were where Bohemia, etc., are, if Prague and Vienna could change places, I do not say no. Then we might think of it; as it is we do not. I assure you it is our earnest desire to see Austria strengthen herself round her German nucleus and stand firmly alone. Of course, we do not suffer any new oppression of Hungary any more than we would of the Austro-Germans, but we shall gladly enter into a fast and sincere alliance with a constitutional King of Hungary, who, as Emperor of Austria, allows the German element full play in his other provinces. There is Bohemia, Silesia, etc., again. They would prove a second Poland to us. We should have to learn how to manage the Czechs, whereas Austria has some experience in that task, although I admit it has been very bad experience. We don't want Bohemia, Silesia, Moravia, or any other part of Austria; let her get strong and be our ally—*voilà tout*.

“All the nonsense you have heard about part of Russian Poland, Courland, or the Baltic Provinces is as stupid as it is untrue. It is true there is some dissatisfaction amongst those Northerners, half German, half Scandinavian, on account of the Russian language being imposed upon them, but we shall not interfere. What should we do with provinces we could not defend? Besides, depend upon it, we shall not meddle with Russian territory or affairs any more than they will with ours.

Further Conversations and Interviews 93

“‘Beust is *trop fin*. Some time ago, about the vexed question of Bavaria and Württemberg, I let him know that, although we were prepared to maintain openly the Treaty of Nikolsburg, we would give our best attention to any proposals he might like to make, and, if we could not accept them, would faithfully keep his secret. He wanted to be too clever, and answered to my confidential communication that he thought the propositions ought to come from our side—that it was our turn to hold out a hand. I did not agree with him, and so the matter dropped. But we have since been very careful about South Germany, and have remained quite passive. We can stop as we are for ten years or more, only insisting upon the terms of the Treaty, but the Southerners will not let us, and if they come to offer us an accession of power, we shall certainly not kick them downstairs. But we wish it clearly understood that if Austria must disintegrate, we don't want any of the pieces. There is nothing in our attitude to annoy or alarm France. I think, barring the accidents at which I have hinted, there is nothing to prevent the maintenance of peace for ten or fifteen years, by which time the French will have got accustomed to German unity, and will consequently have ceased to care about it.

“‘I told our generals this spring, when they endeavoured to prove to me, by all sorts of arguments, that we must beat the French if we went to war then, “If you can make it as clear to me as that God be”—[verbatim.—K.]—“that we can crush France, and occupy Paris, I will still do all I can to prevent war; for you must remember, gentlemen, a war between such near

94 Conversations with Prince Bismarck •

neighbours and old enemies as France and Prussia, however it may turn out, is only the first of at least six; and supposing we gained all six, what should we have succeeded in doing? Why, in ruining France, certainly, and most likely ourselves into the bargain. Do you think a poor, bankrupt, starving, ragged neighbour is as desirable as a wealthy, solvent, fat, well-clothed one? France buys largely of us, and sells us a great many things we want. Is it in our interest to ruin her completely?" I strove for peace then, and I will do so as long as may be; only, remember, German susceptibilities must be respected, or I cannot answer for the people—not even for the King! The French, I am quite aware, are buying horses and provisions. That does not frighten me. Their harvest is a bad one, and they are quite right to take precautions against distress. They cannot want provisions for a war with us, for in such a war they must be the aggressors; and if they invade Germany they will find food and provender enough for ten French armies. Their preparations do not disquiet me in the least. *We are always ready.*

"How are we getting on with our new acquisitions? Very well, on the whole. I have removed Hardenberg, who did not suit Hanover at all, and sent them Stolberg, a gentleman, and a thoroughly honest man. We have allowed them to open their Provincial Diet, so that they may administer their internal affairs if they can—and we have a certain majority of the educated and commercial deputies. Against us is the Ritterschaft, or Junkers, "*une petite gentilhommerie pauvre et stupide*," who lived on the old Court and the King. Stolberg asked me whether he should check this party, or at

Further Conversations and Interviews 95

least suppress publicity to its sayings and doings. I told him, "By no means. If they were on our side, I should decidedly advise you to do so; as they are against us, let them say and do what they like—they will do us incalculable service by opposing and vilifying us." Hanover is all right, and so will Frankfort be soon. The fact is that Frankfort has been hardly used—von der Heydt, our Finance Minister, hates them a good deal, and he is very mean in all matters of money. He is constantly straining to add to the Privy Purse, and somebody must pay for it. But I have passed my word to the Frankforters that this grievance shall be redressed, and that they shall be put on the same footing as the most favoured Prussian town—perhaps even better, as they are new to us. I induced the King to tell them the same thing when he was there the other day, and answer their deputation at Berlin since in the same spirit. Why, when there was the question of that heavy fine to be inflicted upon them, the King insisted upon its being set at 50,000,000 thalers; I quietly cut it down to 25,000,000fl., and said to myself, "Bismarck, you will never see that money." We shall take over all the State debts, and treat them fairly. No wonder their house and land property is depreciated in value, if they go on howling all over Europe that nobody must trust them any more. What they have lost is the right of preaching in their State Senate and Diet, if that be a loss; in most other respects they have gained. About the loan—that is another mess of von der Heydt. Prussia is inheritor (*Rechtsnachfolger*) of Frankfort's obligations, and will redeem them.

"As for our Parliament, it is pretty well in hand.

96 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

We don't trouble the good people much with politics, and on internal questions, modified laws, etc., we have a majority. Of course some of them talk Liberal nonsense—they would give anything not to be obliged to do so; but they began on that platform with their constituents, and are obliged to continue, much against their will. No difficulties await us from that quarter.

“The Danes are giving us a good deal of unnecessary trouble. I would meet them half way if it were not that our people are so mixed in with them in the districts they want ceded. I know what would happen to our people, who have compromised themselves with us during the last year, if we abandoned them. It is not the Danish Government, but the small officials and the populace who would avenge themselves, and then we should have another cry of distress rousing Germany and stirring up the whole ugly question again, besides giving a chance to France, which I don't mean to do if I can help it. There are ten, twenty, in some places as much as thirty per cent. of Germans in these parts all the fuss is being made about. I cannot and dare not abandon them.

“One word more about Russia. Russia is like a strong and healthy man who is attacked by an illness. If he will only take advice and stop at home for two or three days he will get well immediately, and be as strong as ever; but if he will insist upon going out, walking about, and transacting business abroad as if he were well, then his malady will lay firm hold upon him, and perhaps he will die. Two or three days in the life of a man mean ten, twenty, or thirty years in the life of a nation. Russia must “stop at home.” She

Fürther Conversations and Interviews 97

has got a great future, her highest nobles are intelligent and honourable, her peasants are the best fellows in the world; it is in the middle that she is rotten—the official nobility, or Tchin, is a virulent ulcer, eating away her bowels.’”

BISMARCK AND THE FRENCH ARMY BILL OF 1872

Berlin, April 6, 1872

(Narrated by Mr. W. Beatty-Kingston)

In discussing the stumblingblocks in the way of general disarmament,* Mr. Beatty-Kingston referred to his first interview with Bismarck in 1867, when the Prussian statesman repudiated the idea of territorial aggrandisement at the expense of France. On that occasion he had declared that in the event of war and victory not even Alsace could be annexed by Prussia, since its former German inhabitants had in course of time become Frenchmen.

“Three years later he saw reason to change his mind, and, shortly after Sedan, came to the conclusion that it would be necessary for Germany to retain possession of Alsace at the conclusion of the war. To the annexation of Lorraine he was steadfastly opposed throughout the whole campaign, and was, at the eleventh hour, so to speak, overruled by Moltke, who insisted, on strategic grounds, that Metz must become German. William I. was of the same opinion, and Bismarck had to give way. But he said to me on the morning after the capitulation

* *Daily Telegraph*, August 31, 1898.

98 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

of Paris, 'As you see, we are keeping Metz; but I confess that I don't like that part of the arrangement. Strassburg is all very well; Strassburg is German in speech, and will be so in heart ten years hence. Metz, however, is French, and will be a hotbed of disaffection for a long time to come. The Emperor has too many foreigners for subjects as it is. We have had more than enough trouble with our Poles, though they have been benevolently governed, God knows! And we shall have still more with these Lorrainers, who hate us like poison, and will have, very likely, to be roughly handled, whereas the good old German *Elsässer* will be treated with the utmost consideration. They will soon like us better than they ever liked the Frenchmen, who were never weary of poking fun at them, gibing at their accent, and generally holding them up to ridicule.'

"At that time Bismarck was decidedly averse to wresting Lorraine from France; but when the annexation had become an accomplished fact, he would by no means admit that Germany could revoke it. Nineteen years later, at Friedrichsruh, I asked him if, in his opinion, there were no possibility of finally extinguishing the French grievance by some voluntary and spontaneous concession on the part of the Fatherland—some 'rectification of frontier,' involving the retrocession to France of the French-speaking populations of Lorraine; some compromise, in short, that would satisfy France without imperilling the security of Germany. 'There is none,' he answered decisively. 'We can yield no territory to them, except after a lost battle. Were the cession small or large, it would only whet their appetite for more. They have held provinces inhabited by German-speak-

Further Conversations and Interviews 99

ing populations for centuries ; provinces of which they robbed us by force. Let us now have our turn at holding territories peopled by a French-speaking race. Germany has never, wilfully or unprovoked, entered France. France has invaded Germany in arms between twenty and thirty times. In 1870 the French had all but forgotten their "rights" over Cologne and Mayence ; but the ~~Il~~fine-Line cry was revived fiercely enough then, and would be again if we were to show a disposition to restore any part of Lorraine to them. As far as the subsidence of their resentment against us is concerned, we can only trust to time, as you English did in the case of Waterloo. That grievance died thirty years ago.' On the same occasion Prince Bismarck derided the idea of a serious difficulty arising between Germany and Russia, adding, 'As for England and Germany, I regard it as an impossibility that these two countries should ever be at war, and as singularly unlikely that they should even quarrel.'

"His own attitude towards France after the war, at certain critical moments when her indiscretions threatened to disturb the peace of Europe, cannot be more aptly illustrated than by the following true story, which, until to-day, has never been given to publicity. At Lady Emily Russell's second State reception, given on the evening of April 6, 1872, Prince Bismarck singled me out in the crowd of guests, and asked me to accompany him to a small room adjoining the ambassador's library, where he conversed with me on the great question of the day—the proposed French Army Bill—for a little over twenty minutes. He spoke emphatically and significantly, looking me hard in the face

100 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

all the while with his glinting grey eyes, and enunciating each word with unusual deliberation and distinctness. After expressing in very strong terms his discontent with the behaviour of the French Government, and criticizing with extreme severity the inconsistencies and rambling contradictoriness of Thiers' last speech on army reorganization—this was in German, by the way—he bent down towards me, and said in English—

“‘I have cut off the spurs of the Gallic cock, but he is a very dangerous bird. If he takes me for a patient lamb that will wait till they have grown again, so that he may come and tear my skin, he makes the greatest of mistakes. This time I shall not have much patience—not so much as before, by a great deal. We will prevent France from hurting us; she shall not have any chance at all. You may be sure that I don't want war. I told you that I did not in 1867, and proved it. Nor did I in 1870; but all that I have worked for shall not be lost because a people is mad with vanity. They try my endurance severely; they must not try it too much!’

“Not a little alarmed by this unexpected disclosure, I asked him if he believed that the French could by any means pull themselves together in such sort as again to try a fall with Germany in the immediate future.

“‘That is not the question,’ he replied. ‘I will not give them time to become really dangerous. *It is my business to keep the time*’—these words he repeated—‘and I will take care that they do not gain upon us. They are trying, you see, all they can to steal a march;

Further Conversations and Interviews 101

but I shall not allow it. When I was in Russia, shooting bears, and I saw the bear rising up from all-fours to stand like a man, I did not wait to watch what he was going to do next, but fired at him—at his heart—to kill him. I used to have a very steady hand, and I think it is so still. It was not chivalrous, perhaps, to give the bear so little chance. But chivalry is out of place with wild beasts!’ Then he went on to tell me that he had instructed Count Harry Arnim, at that time German ambassador to the Third Republic, to go to Paris on the following Monday and officially apprise M. Thiers that, unless he forthwith shelved his ‘outrageous Army Bill,’ the German army would be mobilized within a fortnight, and eight French departments, already evacuated in accordance with the terms of the Frankfurt Treaty, would at once be reoccupied. Germany would then, he observed, consider herself in ‘a state of war’ with France, and France must take the consequences, ‘which,’ added the Chancellor, with characteristic brutality of frankness, ‘will assuredly be a heavy penalty in money, the loss of her navy, and a further reduction of territory that will drag her down to the status of a third-class Power. You may let your editors in London know all this—indeed, I wish you to do so—and they may make what use they please of it, as long as neither they nor you afford the slightest clue to the source of your information. Of absolute discretion in this respect I ask you to assure me on your honour. You will do the French a good turn if you warn them that the Prussian Eagle, too, has strong talons and a sharp beak, always ready to scratch and bite.’

102 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

“The desired warning was conveyed to France by the *Daily Telegraph* in a leading article, which frightened Thiers and the Assembly well-nigh out of their wits, and convulsed the Paris Bourse with panic. These were precisely the effects which Bismarck aimed at achieving when he authorized me to communicate his startling disclosures to my principals, with power to impart their purport to the world at large; his only stipulation being that he should not be compromised, directly or indirectly, as the author of the revelations here reproduced in his own words. On my part and on that of my chiefs, the bargain was kept loyally and to the letter. We are relieved from our obligation of secrecy by the great statesman's death. The *coup* devised by Bismarck, and which he had resolved to carry out with the aid of the *Daily Telegraph*—for he told me that if he had not met me at the Embassy that evening he would have written to me early the following (Sunday) morning to ask me to call upon him at midday—was perfectly successful, and saved him from the unpleasant necessity of assuming an invidious attitude towards France—an attitude of which the comity of civilized nations would assuredly have disapproved. He had sufficient confidence in his expedient to keep Harry Arnim back for forty-eight hours, and, sure enough, as soon as the ominous disclosures had reached the cognisance of the President of the Republic, M. Thiers telegraphed to Gontaut-Biron, the French ambassador in Berlin, instructing him to make such offers in relation to the payment of the war indemnity as would satisfy Bismarck on that point, and such promises with respect to the postponement of the Army

Fürther Conversations and Interviews 103

Bill as would deprive the Chancellor of a legitimate pretext for interference with French legislation.

“Peculiarly characteristic of the unexpectedness with which Prince Bismarck was wont to pass from one subject to another in the course of conversation, was the serious lecture he was good enough to favour me with, after he had apparently dismissed the sins of France and follies of Thiers from his mind, on the subject of British army reforms then in contemplation—I think, by Mr. Cardwell. Some of his remarks struck me as being very much to the point. ‘You Englishmen,’ he said, ‘should not be so hot to imitate Prussia. Nations that imitate do not do much good. Look at Italy. She has always imitated, first France, then us; and she could not win anything without help. Nations should keep their individualities. The system that suits us does not suit you, your habits, your character. Your army did very well; it was English. Perhaps it will not be improved by being made half Prussian, an eighth French, and the rest nothing in particular. It will be good for you if you go back a little to your Conservatives, who are not the worst of your patriots, and who know more about governing, although they may be less clever, than do the Radicals and Specialists.’ I ventured to remark that he was not practising as he preached. He replied, ‘That is because I am making a Germany. You have your England ready-made to hand. There is no need for you to upset anything more. Take care that you do not spoil your people!’ With this piece of remarkable advice he concluded a conversation in the course of which the fate of France had hung trembling in the balance.”

104 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

THE FUTURE OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

February 28, 1874

(Narrated by Maurus Jokai)

"The Prince first spoke about Austria-Hungary, and I listened.

"It is necessary that a consolidated State like yours should exist in Central Europe. I recognized that already in 1866, when I hastened to conclude a peace which was not agreeable to many of our friends. The German element is called to govern in Cisleithania, the Magyar in Transleithania. Your King is a perfectly popular and beloved sovereign in Hungary. Every race is bound to him by love. You may rest assured that this harmony, on which your future is founded, will not be destroyed by outward influences, and that whoever wishes to trouble the peace of Austria-Hungary will find himself opposed by Germany.'

"And Russia?' I interrupted.

"You have nothing to fear from Russia. Its territory from Japan to the Baltic is so extensive that Galicia would be but a small addition to it. It therefore extends its conquests in Asia to afford occupation to its discontented elements. The Czar and the Russian Government wish to have peace.'

"I permitted myself to express my fears for the event of a change of sovereigns.

"Believe me, the Russian Czarewitch will pursue the same policy as his father. He is an honest family man,

Further Conversations and Interviews 105

loving peace and quiet, and he will never think of planning campaigns like Tamerlane or Napoleon, or of continuing Peter the Great's testament.'

BISMARCK AND MR. JOHN BOOTH OF KLEIN-FLOTTBECK

The following interesting diary notes by Mr. John Booth,* a neighbour of the Chancellor's at Friedrichsruh, record his personal reminiscences of Prince Bismarck from 1878 up to the Prince's death.

Mr. John Booth, whose ancestors emigrated from Scotland to Hamburg, inherited the large horticultural gardens at Klein-Flottbeck, which were established by his father between 1820-48, and were chiefly devoted to the acclimatization of valuable foreign trees.

Following in his father's footsteps, Mr. Booth devoted his energies to this object for many years, and it is in no small part due to his disinterested efforts that so much has been done for the improvement of the German forest. Over a hundred experimental nurseries were established in various parts of the Fatherland at his suggestion, but it was only by Bismarck's sympathetic support that the blind bureaucratic opposition to this project was overcome. With a view to enlisting the Prince's powerful influence in this project, Booth forwarded a copy of his pamphlet on the Douglas pine to the Prince, and asked for permission to plant a few specimens on the Friedrichsruh estate. This led in May, 1878, to an invitation to

* "Personal Reminiscences of Prince Bismarck." John Booth. Hamburg: 1899.

106 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Friedrichsruh, when the specimen trees were to be planted.

At this time Prince Bismarck was just recovering from an illness, and had allowed his beard to grow for the better protection of his face and throat. As they walked towards the plantation, the conversation first turned on the house they had just quitted, which had formerly been a summer restaurant-hotel for the Hamburgers. "At my age I did not want to build a new house, which would hardly get dry in my time: my son can do that. This one suits me very well. I found it here, built on to it a little, and no one has any right to criticize; moreover, I suffer from railway fever, and therefore the close proximity to the line is very comfortable for me. I can get here from the Wilhelmstrasse in a few hours."

On arriving at the appointed place, Bismarck called for a chair, and, with a dog on either side, minutely superintended the planting of the young firs. When this operation was completed, Bismarck took his guest for a walk round the grounds, and eventually came to the forester's house. Pointing to it, the Chancellor mentioned that he had lived there, and said, "It was the happiest time of my life, and it was only uncomfortable when we had visitors, as, for instance, when Schuvaloff, the Russian ambassador in London, was here. He had to camp up there"—pointing to an attic window—"where my wife's maid usually slept, whilst she had to sleep elsewhere."

Bismarck next spoke about many abuses that had until recently prevailed in the Saxon forest, *e.g.* a pastor had for many years obtained trunks of beech

Further Conversations and Interviews 107

trees for firewood, and then sold them for parquet-floor blocks. He also complained of the composition of the Reichstag, and the number of theorists sent there, who, knowing everything better than every one else, could do nothing—men with assured incomes and positions who did not have to fight for their daily bread.

At half-past five they returned to the house to dinner, which for Bismarck meant invalid's diet. Mention being made of Count Nesselrode, Bismarck said, "He was a very refined man, one of the really aristocratic Russians. Gortschakoff" — here he reflected and murmured a patently unfavourable opinion to himself—"But many of those who nowadays call themselves Russian princes, excel in brutalities." Bismarck then discussed the situation in Russia in such a manner as to convince his hearers that he would continue the Russian alliance so long as it seemed to him to be of service to Germany.*

After dinner the Princess handed round the cigars, whilst Bismarck took his pipe for the first time since his illness, but had to put it away again after ten minutes. "I believe," said he to Booth, "if I could go planting here another week with you, then travel incognito a few months, and then plant again in the autumn, it would be far better for me than my real vocation." †

* The Germanophobe attitude of Russia in 1879 forced Bismarck to conclude an alliance with Austria.

† Later on, in 1887, he wrote to Consul-General v. Lade, "I envy you your favourite occupation in the evening of your life: the vegetable kingdom is more receptive and grateful than politics for the care bestowed on it. It was the ideal of my young days to imagine myself as an old man, free of cares, busy with his grafting in the garden."

108 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Their next meeting took place at the end of October, 1878, when Bismarck expressed himself willing to run the risk of catching cold again by watching the completion of Booth's work.

Booth congratulated the Prince on the marked improvement of his health compared with what his appearance had been earlier in the year. Having sat down on a bench and called for beer, Bismarck replied, "Yes, I was very ill then, and shortly afterwards all those excitements came upon me. It was no easy matter, after the attempts to assassinate the Emperor,* to get all my colleagues under one hat to vote for the dissolution of the Reichstag, and then to gain the consent of the Crown Prince, who was carrying on the Government for the wounded Emperor. But I was in the right. And then the Congress!† I had the greatest wish to depart from Berlin at once, but I saw nothing would happen, and that they would all disperse unless I remained there. The mental exhaustion which I suffered from at that time was terrible!

"Apart from the importance of the negotiations, it is extremely exhausting to express one's self in a foreign language, no matter how fluently one may speak it—so correctly that it can be taken down in the protocol without more to do. I rarely got to sleep before six, often only having a couple of hours about eight o'clock; I was then not at home to any one until noon, and you can imagine the mood I was in for the sittings. My brain was a jelly-like incoherent mass. Before I proceeded to the Congress I drank two or three such

* May 11, Hödel's; June 2, Nobiling's.

† June 13 to July 13.

Further Conversations and Interviews 109

glasses"—here he pointed to the beer-glass in his hand—"full of the strongest port wine, in order to get my blood to circulate properly; but for this I should have been quite unable to preside."

Again Mr. Booth had the honour of dining with the Bismarck family, when the chief topic of conversation was the question of who was to be invited to the wedding of Countess Marie, which was to take place the following week.

Count Herbert had brought a packet of letters for his mother, who opened them at table, and quoted extracts for the information of all present. Bismarck listened quietly, and only now and again interrupted with some remark on the personality of one or another of the individuals mentioned. "The Russian Princess N——," said the lady of the house, "will come to Berlin in December."—"Old police spy!" interrupted Bismarck, without looking up.—"I have invited Count Mouy of the French Embassy, who is such a friend of ours," remarked the Princess. "Then we must have Arapoff of the Russian Embassy as a counterweight," replied Bismarck. "What do you think about the ambassadors, Otto?" inquired the Princess. "Karolyi is the nearest to me, but he is out of the question; for if I invite him, the Russian and Turkish ambassadors would expect invitations too. I should not care to have them on this occasion."

Later in the day the Princess spoke of the landed interests of Count Brockdorff-Ascheberg, who was greatly satisfied with his Livland purchases. The Chancellor was of the contrary opinion. "I should never buy land in Russia, on account of the uncertainty

110 Conversations with Prince Bismarck^c

of political relations. Who will be guarantee to me for my possessions if the Czarewitch succeeds tomorrow, and with him the Slavonic element; and if I retain them, to what *chicanery* may I not be exposed as a German? * When I was ambassador in Petersburg, my compatriots often brought their grievances to me; but I could do nothing for them except refer them to one of the clerks of the Embassy, who was well acquainted with the customary ways and means of Russia." The Prince went on to relate how he had one day referred a good friend of his to this clerk, and had asked him to come again in a few days and report progress. His friend returned very well satisfied, and told the following story. The general in question invited him to breakfast, and then took him into a large room hung with all kinds of worthless pictures. One of them he praised to the skies, and then declared that, although he would only part unwillingly with it, he would nevertheless accept two thousand roubles for it. Bismarck's friend fell in with the spirit of the thing, paid for the picture, and got what he wanted.

November 19, 1878, again found Mr. Booth at Friedrichsruh, in response to an invitation from the Prince. The Princess was away on a visit, and so only the Chancellor, Count Herbert, Chief Forester Lange, and Booth, sat down to table. A dozen oysters stood at

* The above affords a remarkable instance of Bismarck's prophetic instinct. For, as is well known, the Russification of the Eastern provinces was afterwards decided upon in the Eighties, and this resulted in endless *chicanery* for foreign landowners in Russia. Germans were given the alternative of either accepting Russian naturalization, or of selling their property at whatever price it might fetch. e

Further Conversations and Interviews 111

each place. "How many were sent?" asked Bismarck. "A hundred." "I think," said Bismarck, "we will eat them all to-day; the ladies don't like them, and Tiedeman doesn't want any." And with that he ordered the remainder to be brought in. "The largest number of oysters I ever consumed at one time," continued Bismarck, "was when I ate a hundred and seventy-five, at Lüttich, on my return from England thirty-six years ago, when I was twenty-six. First I ordered twenty-five, and then, finding them excellent, another fifty; but whilst I was consuming these I decided to eat nothing else, and ordered another hundred, greatly to the amusement of those present."

As the Prince preferred his game cold, a piece of cold hare was placed in front of him. "A Pomeranian hare like this is quite a different animal to a Holstein one, and tastes quite differently," said Bismarck, and forthwith cut off a piece and put it on Booth's plate so that he might see the difference. Then he spoke of his cellar: "I was formerly a great claret-drinker, but now I have quite left it off. How one's taste changes! The wine one drinks for four weeks one can't swallow the fifth."

Whilst discussing the forests of America, Bismarck also touched upon the long-continued depression of German wood, saying, "If we do not regulate the absurd railway tariffs and get them into our own hands, we shall ultimately be ruined. But even in these matters the German fool wants to act for himself. If by reason of differential tariffs, wood can be sent to Lyons cheaper from Hungary than from the Black Forest, it is an absurdity which must ruin every

112 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

reasonable business." Next, referring to the iron duty, he observed, "During my thirty or forty years' experience of estate management, my blacksmiths' bills have always increased, no matter what the duty was. Now, will anybody seriously maintain that the abolition of iron duties has really benefited the landed proprietors. As a matter of fact, the duty plays no part with regard to the few prongs and iron fittings, and the countryman, who is always pushed into the foreground in these questions, practically notices no change. It will cost many a struggle, possibly even dissolution of the Reichstag, before these hair-splittings are overcome."

In response to an invitation to dinner, Mr. Booth proceeded to Friedrichsruh on the 26th of January, 1879.

"Why have you put on evening dress? you never did so before," asked the Prince, on welcoming his guest. "On former occasions I was out with your Highness planting all day, but this time I was specially invited for dinner." "You have embarrassed me," said the master of the house, "for I do not possess any evening dress, and I should have to put on uniform." "I believe," said the Princess, "that the last time my husband had a dress suit made was for our silver wedding."

At dinner the Princess regretted that her husband had to resume his parliamentary duties so soon, and spoke of the inevitable results to his health caused by the Opposition.

"I do not get angry with the Opposition any more than I do, in a war with the French, when a Frenchman shoots at me. I can look at N—— and his companions

Fürther Conversations and Interviews 113

at ten paces when they are throwing mud and stones at me; but Lasker and his followers annoy me, for they appear to go with me, and then at the decisive moment act quite differently to what I ought to expect from them." From this he proceeded quite calmly and impartially to criticize the Progressive Party and its unfruitfulness. "Tell me of one single thing which they have accomplished up to now—when they were not in opposition to me. But the chief difficulties are encountered behind the scenes. What pains did it not cost me last year to bring the ministers, and even the Crown Prince, to dissolve the Reichstag!" Then, speaking *sotto voce*, in order that all should not hear his words, perhaps, he added, "Certain ministers are nothing more nor less than assessors; they think they are doing their duty and governing when they paste a numbered label on each document."

Referring to the proposed new taxes and duties, Bismarck said, "If they are not passed, I shall dissolve the Reichstag and retire. Generally speaking, I consider it a want of taste when ex-ministers fight against the new ministers; but in this case I should do so with all my strength as a deputy, and I should soon find a constituency. Above all, I want to frame our taxes rationally. What injustice, for instance, lies in the equal taxation of the income of an individual who draws 2000 thalers a year, and that of a small tradesman, official, or teacher who has to struggle daily for an income of the same amount!"

After dinner was over, Bismarck and his guest had a long talk about exotic firs, especially the Douglas. The Chancellor intended to write to the Marquis of

114 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Lorne (then Governor of Canada) on the subject. "I spent some time with him and his amiable wife in Kissingen, and I think he would willingly do me a favour."

Mr. Booth's first invitation to dinner at the Chancellor's palace in Berlin was dated April 3, 1879. Amongst those invited were Franz von Lenbach, Minister Hoffmann, several Privy Counsellors and officers—in all some twenty guests. Bismarck was somewhat late, as he had to preside at an important meeting of the Federal Council, at which the tariff reform was to be discussed. At last the doors flew open, and in burst two large dogs, whose necks were still decorated by red silk ribbons in honour of their master's birthday (April 1), followed a second later by the Chancellor himself.

During dinner Bismarck asked Hoffmann about some document or other, and was informed that it was probably in the possession of some councillor. The Prince remarked half aloud, "It will never be any better with us until all the Privy Counsellors are extirpated root and branch;" and later on continued the subject by saying, "Well, just as the Poles cannot get on without Jews, so the Prussians must have their Privy Counsellors."

Speaking of Delbrück, the Chancellor observed that he was a bureaucrat in the good sense of the word, "the *fine fleur*, if I may say so, of bureaucracy." Discussing the rule of the ministers, each of whom acted quite regardless of the other, he said, "Camphausen, in particular, acted very badly in this respect; he comes first, then his ministry. Let everything else round him

Further Conversations and Interviews 115

get out of joint and the State be ruined, *he* goes up to heaven as a financier 'and a good man,' as Valentin says." Nor had Bismarck anything good to say about ministers of finance in general as he went through the list of them for the last fifty years and mentioned the *deficits* of each individual one.

Some one inquired whether the Prince was still a great smoker. "I no longer smoke cigars," replied Bismarck. "I tried a very mild one recently, but found it impossible. Indeed, I believe that every man has a certain quantity allotted to him; after he has consumed it his capacity ceases. For my part, I claim about 100,000 cigars and 5000 bottles of champagne." The Prince attempted to prove his figures, and succeeded in the case of the cigars, but, though he could point to a consumption of two bottles a day during his stay in St. Petersburg, he was unable to do the same with the champagne. "Well, then I have still a good quantity to my credit; and I am fond of it even nowadays."

During the after-dinner conversation Lenbach made several sketches for a portrait of Bismarck which the Emperor had ordered.

Another project that brought Mr. Booth into frequent touch with the Chancellor was the Kurfürstendamm, the only thoroughfare which led from Berlin to the Grunewald. As far back as 1873, Bismarck had reported on this matter to the Emperor, but nothing had been done beyond fixing the breadth of the road to be constructed at 52 metres (about 60 yards). In 1881 Booth surprised Bismarck with the information that some Englishmen were willing to construct the road in return for a ninety-nine years' lease of a few hundred

116 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

acres, of the Grunewald, where they proposed building villas. The Emperor, on hearing of this scheme, signified his approval, and at last it seemed as if this much-needed improvement was about to be realized. Yet, notwithstanding the good-will of the Emperor and the Chancellor, difficulty after difficulty arose, one of them being the canalization of the so-called "*Schwarzer Graben*" (i.e. Black Ditch). This "Black Ditch" is described as an "open, stinking *cloaca*, whose black, pulpy mass rolled sluggishly from Schöneberg to Charlottenburg and poisoned the whole neighbourhood." But since various bureaucrats in various ministries could not come to an agreement on certain points, so the nuisance continued unabated, though the requisite money had been ready for some time.

On one occasion Prince Bismarck wrote the following note on the margin of one of the papers relating to the Black Ditch: "I can only confirm the correctness of this, for yesterday I convinced myself by my own sense of smell!" But, as President of the Ministry, he was powerless in the face of the difference of ministerial opinion. At length Mr. Booth drew the Prince's attention to the danger of cholera, which might be bred by the Black Ditch, and by setting the Imperial Health Office in motion by virtue of his position as Chancellor, Bismarck was able to issue the necessary orders.

It was not without good reason that Bismarck in later years repeatedly observed that innumerable difficulties had been put in his way in the construction of the Kurfürstendamm—more, in fact, than all the diplomatists of Europe had subjected him to in any matter.

•

Further Conversations and Interviews 117

KISSINGEN

August 16, 1890

(Narrated by Anton Memminger *)

“On the arrival of Prince Bismarck at Kissingen after his dismissal, I received a telegram to say that he was expecting me. I proceeded to Kissingen at once, and arrived at the Upper Saline about 1.45 p.m., just as lunch was being cleared away.

“The Prince’s secretary, Dr. Chrysander, to whom I had sent my name, informed me that the Prince would receive me immediately. Since, however, I was clad in a grey jacket and had left my portmanteau in my hotel, I said that I would drive there as soon as possible to put on a black suit. This was of no importance; the Prince wished to see me, and not my wardrobe. Everything happened so quickly, that, without more ado, I was forced to step from the dining-room to the Prince’s study.

“The Prince stood erect before me in his simple black coat, gazing earnestly at me with his great eyes. I stepped up to him without hesitation and grasped his proffered hand, as he returned the pressure with the words, ‘You are heartily welcome.’ I then thanked him for his invitation, and was about to add a few polite words, when he interrupted me. ‘You have nothing to thank me for; you are a self-made man. I confess that I did not imagine you to be such a Pomeranian Grenadier. Why, you are as broad and heavy

* Editor of the *Neue Bayerische Landeszeitung*.

118 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

and almost as tall as I am. Please take a seat; I have several matters to discuss.'

"The Prince settled himself on the sofa in such a position that he could rest his head and back against its high wing, and, stretching one leg, remarked, 'You will not take it amiss if I make myself comfortable; I often feel twinges in my legs now that I am no longer quite free from gout. I am also old: age is the worst malady that I endure and will kill me some day, perhaps just at the moment when I am most plagued by curiosity to see what turn events will take in the world. We really live in a most interesting age—an age which may become still more interesting, since unpleasant times and events will certainly come sooner than many a wise augur predicts.'

"I had taken an easy-chair opposite the Prince, and moved a little to one side, as the sun shone into my eyes. Tyras, who was lying close to my chair, growled, and I told him to be quiet. The Prince, who also forbade him to growl, must have noticed that I did not think much of the dog, for he said, 'The animal does not seem to please you?'

"'No, your Highness; he has a stupid head.'

"The Prince laughed aloud. 'You speak openly, which pleases me; but I must tell you that you are the first visitor who has failed to admire the dog. Every one else, and especially the ladies, who have met him in the streets, have hitherto thought him wonderfully beautiful and charming.'

"'But I think the dog as ugly as he is stupid.'

"'Why, this is even better,' laughed the Prince. 'Take care that you utter no insult and are locked up again.'

Further Conversations and Interviews 119

“‘Oh no, your Highness; I have no such thought. How can I commit an offence in not considering a cur more beautiful than he really is?’

“‘You are quite right,’ replied the Prince. ‘I have never thought the dog good-looking or clever; at first one could hardly bear to look at him. Everywhere and always one can find people who do not deny their Simian descent, and who tender homage to their cousin, the dog. Why, there are even foolish ladies who wish to possess hairs of this animal to carry about in golden lockets as treasured remembrances and talismans in the place of “lucky pigs.” If they only knew that this dog is a present from the Emperor! And you cannot have known this either, or you would have spoken more considerably and euphemistically of Tyras. Of course you have no wedding-garment and no knee-breeches, only a Bavarian peasant’s coat.’

“‘Your Highness, I speak as I think, and it’s all the same whether I am in a Bavarian coat or appear as a *Salon Tyrolder* before the Emperor or the Czar, the Pope or the Sultan!’

“Again the Prince laughed. ‘It’s all the same—that is your motto. I have already noticed it in your paper, and I must say that Marcus Aurelius could not have found a better inscription for his *Stoa*. In certain situations—for instance, on the day of my dismissal, and since then—I also adopted a similar motto. I therefore retain this dog of the Emperor’s. “It’s all the same!” I had a fine hound, a grey bitch, Rebecca, of the same breed as my old dog, Tyras I., who was a gift from the Munich Dog Fanciers’ Association. Tyras was really an excellent dog, under whose

protection I was much safer than under that of the whole secret police of Berlin. The loss of that dog, in fact, grieved me as much as that of my former "Reichshund," Sultan, who was poisoned by a miserable scoundrel and a faithless *employé*. As my birthday happened to be coming round, the Emperor asked Minister — how he could give me pleasure, and, on being told of the death of Tyras and my grief, he at once ordered, "See that you get him a new *Reichshund*." The minister, who understands about as much about dogs as certain "diplomats" do about "statesmanship," went to the celebrated dog breeders, *Caesar und Minka*, and ordered a new "imperial" dog. Immediately afterwards—now listen—I received a letter from *Caesar und Minka*, in which they requested permission to assume the title of "Purveyors to Prince Bismarck" in return for supplying a rare and magnificent specimen of a dog. Such coolness went against the grain, and I sent them an answer which they certainly will never sell to an autograph-collector.'

"'This dog-story, your Highness,' I interrupted, 'is very instructive, and appears to me very like a *Tele-machiad* composed by Democritos *in usum delphini*. If one wanted to be malicious, one might write very drastic and pointed political letters on this subject to Paula Erbswurst in the *Kladderadatsch*.'

"'Oh no,' disclaimed the Prince; 'I had intended to talk over something quite different with you, but your independent remark led me to the subject of the dog. In the mean time, I beg that you will not comment on this dog-story, as is the custom of your paper; otherwise you will receive some "Berlin blue" from the

Further Conversations and Interviews 121

chemical factory of Drescher & Co.* I would not relate this story to the foreign editors who recently came here, but Schweniger has already told me that I need not be anxious lest you should publish anything that I could object to. After my death you can do what you like, though even then certain limits will be imposed out of consideration for the living, the interests of the Empire or of your own country Bavaria. You may consider what I wish to say to you to-day as a token of my gratitude because you were the first fighter who stood up for me with a two-edged sword, although you were in no way bound to me, whilst those whom I had nurtured have kicked me. In recognition thereof I will hold a kind of political council, and present you with a *vade mecum* to the criticism of great political events which will be of use to you as an editor.'

"The Prince paused, altered his position, and, drawing out a white pocket-handkerchief, laid it on the back of the sofa and placed his head on it. 'I have to help myself as best I can. My landlord, whom you know, always gives me his antique implements of torture, dating from Till Riemenschneider, in the Peasants' War, and apparently intends to avenge the peasants on the squire. This sofa is really a rack, and the material is so coarse that I should wound my bald head unless I put my handkerchief underneath as a precautionary measure. Still, what does not the force of custom bring about? I have lived here in quiet solitude apart from the town and the world, as Chancellor, and I now remain here as a peasant. The peace of former days,

* *Anglicè*, "You will be prosecuted by the Prussian State Attorney."

•

122 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

it is true, departed; people come from all parts, and the burden of work no longer compels me to have the multitude kept away by the police. I have never thought much of luxurious ease, my kitchen and a well-stocked cellar have been my best comfort. When one does much brain work, the used-up tissues must be replaced. My doctor Schweningen is of this opinion too, though he did not allow sufficiently for the capacity of my stomach. He is sometimes too exacting with me, yet I must obey him; and because he is the only man who has any power over me, I obey him almost unconditionally. I owe him the greatest thanks, and I consider that there are few so learned and interesting professors as he.'

"'On that account,' I remarked, 'so many of his brethren hate him. *Filicus filicum odit*, says an old Latin proverb; to-day it runs, *Medicus medicum odit*, though many smile like augurs when they meet each other.'

"'Quite my opinion,' added the Prince. 'But Schweningen is not accustomed to run down his colleagues; he is even just to Pfarrer Kneipp. I think it very nice that Bavarians do not scratch each other's eyes out. The Professor has already told me about you, and, moreover, I read your *Landszeitung*. I thank you especially for having supported my doctor when a mean clique of professors and their press wanted to drive him out of Prussia. From the distance I heard the blows which you laid about you—they were quarts and cuts! You were also the very first editor who took my part after my dismissal. You described the manner in which my wife and I had to leave our

Further Conversations and Interviews 123

dwelling, with Bavarian terseness ; your words sounded like the heavy blows of a blacksmith's hammer. I only ask you to spare the Emperor a little more ; otherwise people may perhaps believe that I am like a resentful bear who wanted to eat honey, but fell from the branch, which had been sawn through in a cowardly fashion, and was badly stung by the bees. This is not the case. It is only the drones that sting me, and their stings no longer penetrate my skin, therefore I remain perfectly quiet, and feel quite at home in my position of *veteranus emeritus procul negotiis*. My wife, however, does not get over the change so easily. It is a characteristic of good wives that they feel and resent an injury to their husbands much more than they themselves do. Women's feelings are only aroused when we have regained the guiding-rope which seemed to slip out of our hands. My dismissal was not a thing of yesterday, and I had long foreseen it. The Emperor wishes to be his own Chancellor, to order and direct, and will therefore have neither a mediator (Chancellor) nor an intermediate station, where the horses can be taken out, fed, or even changed, between himself and his ministers. The Emperor himself lives, as he says, in an age of traffic. But even there a great difference exists. A railway can be managed either commercially or bureaucratically ; the trains run on iron lines which are always the same breadth, and the service is carried out in a workmanlike and mechanical fashion on definite general principles.

“ ‘ But this is not the case as regards diplomacy and politics. It is easier for me to make a Secretary of State for Home and Foreign Affairs out of an editor—

124 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

remember Lothar Bucher—than it would be to make a clever leading editor out of a dozen Privy Councillors. A general may certainly be the civil governor of a province, but one can hardly become a diplomat, capable of guiding a great empire in one's old age, unless one has special qualifications. „Diplomacy is no shoemaker's stool on which one can sit, stretch a knee-strap, and put a patch on a hole; diplomacy' is not a craft which can be learnt by years and developed by rote on a roller. Diplomacy is an art. Take the politics of the day. Since I was once an editor, or rather wrote for the *Kreuzzeitung* when I was a deputy, I do not speak as a blind man about colours, but as a one-eyed man amongst blind men, and by this I mean the kind of Privy Councillors who understand everything, know nothing, and can do nothing. I will give you a whole cart-load of these Privy Councillors, jurists, theologians, and even philologists, all of them with first-class qualifications, and you will not be able to make more out of them than a man who compiles some spiritless local paper with a pair of scissors. One must possess the qualities of an editor who thinks for himself, and who creates and writes with spirit and force. Practice and experience certainly improve and tone down much, and even imprisonment is part of a political education.'

“‘Now your Highness is getting warm,’ I remarked; ‘and I must say with Blücher, “He intended that for me.”’

“‘Well, yes. You are none the worse in my eyes for having been in prison. I have been there too, but not for so long a time. It is a bad wine that was not

Further Conversations and Interviews 125

once a fermenting must. What was not Lothar Bucher to me! Such men do not grow on the wood of our Privy Councillors. He was like an organ—one had only to touch the register, and it played by itself all the chords and pieces one could wish for. Bucher was a working-horse without equal. When he was tired and ill, it was always “a good horse tries again.” He was worthy of a different position; but he was not always necessary to me, and so, like a faithful servant, he yielded to his master. Do you know Lothar Bucher?’ asked the Prince.

“‘Oh yes, your Highness; I know him by sight—the little Geheimrath with his uncanny silence. Nevertheless, he has spoken a few more words to me than to my colleagues; he also is a *veteranus meritis in serviendo consumptus*.’

“With a nod of assent the Prince continued, ‘I am glad that I am still so active after such affairs. To-day I still derive pleasure from conversation with this man, to-morrow with that, especially since I am no longer compelled to wear a muzzle. I have been a minister for many years, and as such was forced to be silent about many things; but that has all changed, and now I am free to say what I please, because I am no longer forced to remain silent by binding considerations. And why should I, of all people, not talk? I am not so old, broken-down, or faint-hearted that I should have to allow myself to be looked after. On the other hand, I feel fresher than I have done for a long time. I am a strong man, full of life, and feel human; this I could not be under the oppressive tasks of responsible office. I am really right glad to be suddenly freed

126 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

from the daily burden of care and work. I had already begun to consider myself condemned to it for life, when at last I was able to give up office. What I myself have often wished for has now come to pass. Bavaria was always a favourite abode of mine, and is still more so now. With a few exceptions, even your Bavarian papers have welcomed me to your country, and have treated me better than those snapping curs in the North.' "

"The Prince paused here and wiped his forehead. I permitted myself to draw his attention to a current rumour which reported that a wide and unfathomable gulf was fixed between the Emperor and his former Chancellor, and that this difference of opinion might lead to——

"‘The Emperor,’ interrupted Prince Bismarck, ‘wished to create his own policy. He is young, takes pleasure in work, and is energetic. There is something of the old Fritz in him; but he must make a wise use of it nowadays. I am not in his way. So far as I know, he has as little cause to be annoyed with me as I with him. My dismissal, it is true, ought to have come about differently, and certain incidents connected with it might have been omitted. Still, as I said, the tinder is extinguished, and my peace-pipe draws, though my enemies do not see any rings arising from it. As I said, I do not bear the Emperor a grudge, and perhaps the Emperor bears me none. There are indications which support this. Generally speaking, my successor follows the policy outlined by me; for the present he cannot do otherwise, and I am only afraid that he does not possess the faculty to withstand the theoretical influences which now surround even

Further Conversations and Interviews 127

the Emperor. I do not speak of the pin-pricks directed against me—I can put up with them; but, I must again repeat, I held Caprivi to be cleverer than this. In the mean time I will say nothing more about it; but other faults have been committed which cause me anxiety, and they seem to have something in view which would mean a break away from my long and laboriously maintained policy. The present attempts to place me in hostile opposition to Caprivi are the products of fear. They are afraid lest I should return, which I have certainly no thought of doing. It would not be at all agreeable to me; but still, I cannot allow my right to say a free word and express my own opinion as an ordinary citizen to be curtailed, least of all by those petty professional politicians—who were barely in knickerbockers when I was already engaged in European politics. What else should I talk of, if not of those politics which have always occupied me, an old politician, while I pursued the vocation for forty years? Had I devoted myself chiefly to sport, I should talk about sport. Thus I talk of politics, though it may not be to the taste of the “chicken-hearts” who fear the “coming” Bismarck. But these are not the only ones who are impudent towards me. There is another kind—the very narrow-minded office-hunters, who introduce themselves into higher circles in ignorance of the relation between the Emperor and myself, and who think they can curry favour there. They are as much on the wrong track as those who wish to make the Emperor my lasting foe by their impudent insinuations. This, however, is a futile task, and shows that they know nothing of politics.

128 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

“For me history exists, above all, in order that something may be learned from it. Though events do not recur, conditions and characters do, and by watching and studying these one can form and strengthen one’s mind. I have learned and evolved my “theory” from the faults of my predecessors in statecraft, though one ought not to speak of it in that sense, for there is no hard and fast science of politics any more than there is one of political economy. Only professors can succeed in boxing up the sum of the changing wants of civilization in scientific laws. The pupils then swear *in verba magistri*, and it is on this account that Manchester ideas are so hard to drive out of the heads of our jurists and public writers. They consider adherence to theoretical axioms to be political consistency. This stupidity goes so far that they overlook the actual circumstances and urgent points. The fathers of modern Political Economy are English clergymen (Adam Smith and Malthus), Jewish bankers (Ricardo and Sismondi), French merchants and jurists (Say and Bastiat), and German “indoor” professors, and on that account our agriculture has come off so badly. Our whole political economy of the class-room and the press is a political economy of trade, and not of agriculture as well. Now that the oppressed German peasantry wakes and calls for liberation from its unjust oppression, official political economy denies its right, and talks only of one-sided private interests, when in the first place general interests are at stake. If we do not support our agriculture, our powers of resistance will be ruined in the same measure as are our powers of supply. The peasant is the backbone of

Further Conversations and Interviews 129

our army; able to weather hard times, he is bound up with the country, and is interested in maintaining the same if only by the instinct of self-preservation. Town-dwellers and factory hands do not possess this feeling and quality, for one cannot be bound up with plaster and bricks, which are not organic substances. The country is the nation. A country without peasants is like a King John Lackland. Without peasants—no State, no army. The peasant is the rock on which the phantom ship of social democracy will be wrecked, just as the army is the wall before which the trumpets of Jericho will be sounded in vain.

“‘This must be made clear to the princes in particular,’ continued Bismarck, with raised voice, ‘for they, too, are mostly Manchester men who consult the *Stock-Exchange list* rather than the prices of produce. It was unfortunate that, with the introduction of modern constitutions, our princes were given a money salary, and were thus cut off from their intimate connection with the peasantry, from whom we all, strictly speaking, are descended. If our princes had to reckon solely or chiefly on the receipts from their domains, it would not cost our agriculture such exertions and struggles to get its rights.

“‘As it is with the princes, so it is with officialdom, the clergy and nobility, or at least with part of it. The officers stand closer to the nation, through their daily and immediate intercourse with the sons of the nation, than do the leading bureaucracy and clergy. Even the education of to-day favours estrangement from the people. The older Catholic clergy seclude their younger

130 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

successors as in a monastery, so that the young men enter life without any idea of what it is. The University has the same effect owing to the box-like division of students into corporations, which are full of one-sidedness and prejudice, hatred, and prudery. Being both inwardly and outwardly separated from the people, they think of nothing but appearances: see how the clergy attach importance to outward religion, pomp, forms, and appearances. And the youths at the universities imitate this; fashions, forms, and appearances threaten to stifle all inward nature. This is shown by the 'chopping boards' which so many students carry on their faces, and of which they are as proud as Indians of their tattooings. In my time we were different fellows; besides wearing devices on our shields, we carried ideals in our hearts, and fought with our strength, not with our heads. There was some meaning in it when we sang the forbidden song, 'The old shell has gone; the kernel remains, let us hold it firm!' Then the King accompanied the artist—you remember your Bavarian sovereign, Ludwig I.—and the peasant's son for squire. To-day the son of the artisan and the merchant, if he wears a coloured cap on his illustrious head, is more conceited than an exalted squire. Even our high schools educate the people wrongly; to-day every one wishes to be a student, and what do they study? We of old at least learned a little Latin, and knew our German classics, but what do they learn to-day? This is the cause of their overweening self-conceit, since real culture does not exist. The cavities'—here the Prince tapped his brow—'remain empty and have no space for spontaneous

Further Conversations and Interviews 131

thought and learning. That is the reason why so many educated people repeat, during the whole of their lives, what was drilled into them at the factory: this is particularly noticeable in the majority of our officials. Do you think that a Prussian Privy Councillor ever allows himself to be driven away from his college books? Our old district magistrates,* who lived in their districts all their lives and who were practical farmers, knowing everything and everybody there, were quite different men. To-day the country is governed by unpractical theoreticians and inexperienced office-hunters, whose submissiveness is the only gauge by which the ruling bureaucracy measures their thoroughness and utility. In this respect we Prussians are much worse off than you Bavarians. Although some of your clergy wish to drown all independent feeling in the nation with the holy-water brush, a counterweight is afforded by a portion of the old, self-conscious, popular, and practically trained officials. With us in Prussia everybody opens and shuts his eyes in emulation for the *cornucopia* of the Ministry according to desire, *secundum ordinem et voluntatem*.

“A portion of our old landed nobility still possesses some backbone. The democratic parties may censure squiredom as much as they please, but what are its enemies gradually substituting? A monied nobility, as in the Rome of the past, the Italy, Spain, and Ireland of the present. Even we Germans have such a monied aristocracy, which either consumes abroad the income derived from German soil, or plays the foreigner in Germany, serving foreign interests rather than home

* *Landräthe*.

132 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

ones. I have nothing to say against opposition to these two kinds of nobility, for they are as useless to the country as the landless Court nobility, and I have never wished to have much to do with these drones. We must "keep bees" with our political economy, and preserve the working bees; this alone is the true Conservative State-supporting policy. The wage-earning classes—above all, the peasantry—must be maintained and raised administratively, financially, and socially; this is the only true social policy. That which your Jesuits and our pastors call social policy is only a precipitate of social-democratic pains, feelings, and longings, with the after-thought of assembling a black bludgeon-guard to intimidate the thinking and independent citizen, and to realize their worldly lusts of hierarchy. The workmen will not then be grateful to them, but will dismiss them; these clergymen and professors only manage the business affairs of social democracy, and they will suffer the same fate as did those physiocrats of the former century, who with their Latin and ideals of Liberty met their end on the guillotine.

"“Hercules at the parting” (of the ways) is the motto of to-day; on the one side you have this social policy, on the other the Manchester free-trade policy. There, clad in a clerical surplice, we go into the national plenipotentiary; here, robed in the white burial cloak of the Jews, we enter the courtyard of the Jerusalem Temple.

"“The German Hercules must therefore go his own way; he must maintain and strengthen the German earning classes, the body of the nation; this must be the guiding principle of our home policy. Away with

Further Conversations and Interviews 133

looking towards the theoretical windmills, which can never be made to work, since they are designed to catch the wind from all quarters at one time. Some such toy was placed on the Emperor's writing-table; he then convened the international social conference, and he has already perhaps convinced himself of its uselessness. And thus it will be with other things—his preference for England among them. The serious part of it is, that the repetition of such experiments damages and mocks the very best national elements, and, first and foremost, the State and the Monarchy, whose most reliable and almost only firm support is made to waver. Struggle with all your force against such disastrous tendencies, and thereby you will render the best service to the nation, the empire, the Emperor, and, not last, to your own country—Bavaria. To lay stress on the self-government of your country is the duty of all honest and intelligent Bavarians, and I attach very great importance to this, because of the prevailing circumstances. Political education will prosper better under the protection of this independence than under the guardianship of short-sighted and dependent Prussian district magistrates who possess neither land nor money. What will the German nation come to if the central power of Berlin increases to an autocracy in the absence of opposition? A counter-influence to this threatening development must be created by a self-conscious nation; for a nation of thinkers is but small, and smaller still is a nation of thinkers-aloud. Everybody sighs for “gracious” acknowledgments or “gracious” kicks. There are even princes of ancient lineage who do not belong to the vertebrate order. I should not

•

134 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

like to include therein your old master, the Prince Regent. I am certainly a grateful subject of your Regent, and honour him greatly for his sincerity and favour to me, likewise his predecessor, King Ludwig II., and it is just on this account that I do not wish the Wittelsbachs to play the part of the postilion who only whistled the old tune of opportunities missed. At one time King Ludwig I. had nearly the whole^c of young Germany full of enthusiasm at his back, when he cultivated the Teuton spirit and courage of truth in his country, as well as the arts. All that has been forgotten to-day, unfortunately, but the Prussian archives still bear witness to the fear inspired by this Prince and King, which lasted so long as he allowed the free expression of German opinion; when that was suppressed, the political importance of the King outside his country fell, and Bavaria went to the dogs in company with the German confederation. What part might not Bavaria play even to-day in the German nation, in the German Federal Council, if she only possessed suitable men! But it is better to allow them to make "Hammelburg Tours." * •

"The Prince stood up, and I thought he was about to conclude and dismiss me, but he explained that he merely wanted to place himself more comfortably on the 'rack.'

"Many men have already discussed my political principles. The professors and the devotees in the papers are unceasingly sorry that I have not revealed to them a symbol of the principles by which I regulated my policy. Since they have only just grown out of the

† An allusion to an old work by von Lang.

Further Conversations and Interviews 135

political nursery, the Germans cannot accustom themselves to consider politics as a science of possibilities, as my intimate opponent, Pius IX., rightly styled it. Politics are neither mathematics nor arithmetic; in politics one certainly has to reckon with given and unknown quantities at one and the same time, but there are no formulæ or rules from which the solution may be deducted in advance. I have, therefore, not adhered to the opinions and methods of other statesmen, but have rather taken warning by their errors in calculation. Napoleon I. was ruined because he relied on his military successes and commenced hostilities with every state, instead of maintaining peace. Fortune in war made him arrogant and anxious to fight. His great plan fell to pieces after a short existence, because he did not exercise the first virtue of the statesman—wise moderation after the greatest successes—towards the other nations, and thereby involved Europe in one war after another, whereas I endeavoured to maintain peace after 1871. And I not only placed myself in definite opposition to Napoleon I., but also to Napoleon III. The latter certainly only endeavoured to imitate the more favourable side of his uncle; but by always trying to obtain something for himself in playing the part of an “honest broker,” he fell into the habit of that Italian diplomat of the past century who confused cunning with falseness. I played my cards out straight; I exposed the would-be cunning with the striking truth. That they often did not believe me, and then afterwards felt hard hit and disappointed, was not my fault.

“My policy is characterized by yet another contrast

136 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

which refers to German home policy, whilst the two former principles were chiefly concerned with foreign policy by recognized effect, thus confirming the old saying, honesty is the best policy. This principle is also inseparable from the third contrast. The adherents of the national movement in Germany were in so far dishonest, because they aimed at a united realm and one empire, while they really wished to sweep away all thrones and dynasties. The German princes, who were, moreover, not taken with the movement, opposed it with greater hostility, for they thought that their existence was thereby threatened. In order to steer the movement out of this irremediable conflict, another way had to be chosen, and it was found by adhering to the historical development of the last ten centuries, instead of by a revolutionary and total change. It was above all essential to win my Royal Master over to the national cause, which, with some difficulty, I succeeded in doing, for my old master was sometimes very cautious and anxious.

“ For instance, he thought of abdicating in 1862, when the Prussian Diet offered violent opposition, and he would have come to terms with Napoleon in 1870 if I had not placed, so to say, a *fait accompli* before the King by the adroit reading of the Ems despatch, thus saddling the odium of the war on the French. Yes! the King was sometimes very difficult to deal with, and would either procrastinate or refuse altogether. Nevertheless, an understanding on the German question was successfully achieved, for I allayed the King's doubts by endeavouring to maintain the old historical dynasties in Germany, and with it to conduct the national movement

Further Conversations and Interviews 137

at length to the most acceptable goal. Countries with a long past, a history of self-development, and a justified possibility of existence, such as Bavaria, Würtemberg, Baden, and Saxony, may easily be wiped out on the map, but the actual attempt would not result happily. Nor did I see any reason why one should grudge these countries their old established self-government, under which they were contented. It sufficed that the Kings of Bavaria, Würtemberg, Saxony, etc., should cede as much of their rights as was necessary to found the German Empire, having regard to justifiable traditions and demands. Any other method would not have been successful, and I did not wish for one. In many instances my countrymen, the Crown Prince Frederick William in particular, wished to go further; but I was successful. I had, though, work enough to moderate their appetites. Only Hanover and the Elector of Hesse proved absolutely intractable, and their removal was an imperative duty if Germany was to advance at all. Apart from the German national movement, a State of the magnitude and importance of Prussia could not tolerate two enemies, encamped between its western and eastern provinces, and always able to threaten it from the rear. These two enemies had to be removed. The other dynasties were gained over, and at last I obtained their full confidence, because they understood my straightforward and at the same time moderate policy.

“I enjoyed the particular favour of the late King Ludwig II. We corresponded on important political affairs until the last years of his life, and he was as amiable towards me in expressing his views as he was

•

138 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

witty regarding the various matters in question. After the correspondence which he carried on with me, I could by no means think him wanting in intellect—no, certainly not. I first heard of that through the papers. On principle, I never concerned myself with the domestic affairs of Bavaria, for I had nothing to do with ministerial crises and changes. It is true that in the unfortunate month of 1886 when the catastrophe was approaching, I was informed of the state of affairs by the aide-de-camp, Count Dürckheim, by means of a telegram handed in at Reutte in the Tyrol, when my assistance, so to say, the assistance of the Empire, was evoked for the King. I telegraphed back to the count in Tyrol, "His Majesty should at once go to Munich, show himself to his people, and represent his own interests before the assembled Diet." I calculated thus: either the King is well and will then follow my advice, or he is really ill and will not lay aside his shyness of publicity. The King did not go to Munich; he arrived at no decision, he had no longer any will or mental force, and allowed fate to approach him. My old master was deeply affected by the King's fate. That King Ludwig found so much love and devotion in his last days and after his deposition, is the most honourable testimonial for the loyal Bavarians. A correct decision was also not easy for the nation, and on that account I excused you and the other Bavarian editors who at that time gave expression to a popular feeling hostile to the Government, and had consequently to pay heavily for your courage with fines and imprisonment. But after the matter had been cleared up and the general excitement allayed, it would have been an unparalleled injustice on

Further Conversations and Interviews 139

the part of those loyal Royalist editors if they had wished to continue offending the Prince Regent, a thoroughly honest and benevolent Prince, against their better knowledge. I am glad that you, who once headed the opposition against the ministers, have, after calm consideration, become convinced that it was only right to stand by your Prince Regent. Any hostility to the latter would be a grievous wrong, for things had to happen as they have happened. The King had really become mad and incapable of ruling. His conduct in the face of my telegram must prove that to every sane man.

“The various accusations, that I had had a hand in the changes of Bavarian ministers by retaining one minister against the wish of the King, or by preventing the appointment of another, are too ridiculous and stupid. Nay, the suspicion has even been expressed that I had helped to prepare the catastrophe of 1886, and that it had been put into execution, after I had previously given my consent, by my special advice because the King stood in my way. How foolishly the papers write sometimes, without any knowledge or consideration of actual circumstances! The King placed every confidence in me, and even asked my advice in 1876, when he wished to replace Lutz’s ministry by an ultramontane one under Franckenstein. But the tall Arbogast did not consider himself or his party qualified or called upon to direct the affairs of Bavaria, and therefore did not say even one word about it to them. Lutz thus retained his office, and held it till the end of his life. Another minister would, perhaps, have been more agreeable to me, for it was Lutz who helped to introduce the

.

Kulturkampf with Hohenlohe, and then gave shelter and office in Bavaria to the clerics expelled from Prussia. A Franckenstein ministry would have suited me better, since the incapacity of the clerical *régime* for government would speedily have shown itself again, and it must be acknowledged that Lutz's ministry had the most difficult and dangerous problem to solve in 1886. The same gravediggers who would like to bury the "healthy Bismarck of to-day, were then at work to drown the sick King in a bog of printer's ink. The "snapping curs" never rested. At last a decisive action had to follow a long and wavering reflection in order to maintain the authority of the Government. The greatest courage was necessary for this, owing to the character of the Bavarian nation, which adheres with ancient loyalty to its Royal House, and possesses great scope for national idiosyncrasies. Minister Lutz then proved himself to be a clever, thorough, and courageous statesman. But for the future the men of the Bavarian nation must take care that they have a guarantee for their German character in the present frame of their self-government. This they must firmly maintain, for it is also best for the Empire and the German nation.

" "The maintenance of the Bavarian character and independence seems of importance to me for another reason, which belongs as much to the development in the future as in the past. The Bavarians form the natural link with Austria, for the Germans in Austria are people of real Bavarian race. One cannot foretell how affairs will shape in the East; it depends too much on the personality of those who rule in Vienna and Buda Pest. For the present the preservation of Austria is a question

Further Conversations and Interviews 141

of life or death to us. I am thinking less of a war with Russia than of peace in Europe. I sought to maintain peace, and for the sake of this great object I avoided matters which would have given cause for conflicts to excited and excitable politicians. Thus I ignored the boastings of the vain Russian chancellor, Gortschakoff, who claimed that he had prevented us from declaring another war with France; I allowed him to chatter. We wage no war with France or Russia without urgent necessity. I willingly concede to France her successes in Asia (Tonkin) and Africa. If that does not please the English, let them settle with France. And if the development of Russia in Asia does not please the English, let them settle with Russia. It is to be hoped that, owing to the disappointment which will result from his friendship with England, our Emperor will depart from the unhappy custom of the German Princes of playing the thankless part of the good-natured crane for the wolf, John Bull, by carrying on wars on the continent in the interests of England. When we were in trouble, England took the side of our enemies and sought to do business with both parties. Therefore, if England is placed between the Gallic horse and the Russian elephant, we Germans will not interfere with the great fire fork, but will peacefully look on at the starched lord being squeezed till he cries to Heaven.

“ ‘ But what should *we* seek with Russia or in Russia ? If we were to actually conquer it, we would only regain our turbulent Polish neighbours, who are as little suited for an independent State-organism as are the Jews of to-day for a new realm of Judæa. Nothing is to be got

.

142 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

from Russia. Germany itself is enough for us. We are sated. One must never forget that the greater the empire the more difficult it is to maintain, and the more easy to crumble away. For this reason we did not infringe on Austrian territory in 1866, and later on stress was laid on the undiminished maintenance of our eastern neighbour. Germany must never interfere in the domestic affairs of Austria. The Germans in Austria will not perish; they have only to help themselves; they must do as the Slavs, the Czechs, and the Hungarians do, and must march under one and the same flag and countersign. To "march divided" and "fight united" is certainly a proved rule, but only under a uniform command, such as that of Moltke's. But if the Ultramontanes force their way to the leadership among the Germans, I shall know beforehand that their aim is not for the union of the Germans, but for their separation and weakening. That is the object of the whole Ultramontane policy; it is democratic in France, republican in Italy, "social-Christian," or, if more convenient, social democratic in black, in Germany, feudal-Czech in Austria; it will even become anti-Semitic, so that it may deceitfully introduce itself to the Jews as their saviour. In Austria the Germans have been "big Michaels," instead of being really German and only German, though they have been everything else—Liberal, Clerical, Jewish, or International. The German Liberals in Austria are above all to blame for having become a minor party after being a governing one. They have been neither truly German nor truly Liberal. From a political point of view, they have neither acted with wisdom or with tact, and from

Further Conversations and Interviews 143

an economic point of view they have fallen to the level of *baksheesh*. In Parliament and in their press, which was a power in the Empire, they have hinted at objects, formulated demands, passed criticisms, and offered resistance, which must have repelled the Emperor Francis Joseph, and forced him to determine on seeking a fresh support in Parliament. He could find no other except the Conservative-Slav coalition. The German Liberals made the mistake of forgetting that the best guardian of German rights would be the Emperor Francis Joseph in his quality as a German Prince. To a certain degree they have disputed this function of the Emperor by striving to found Teutonism—but not the really popular Teutonism—as a Parliamentary monopoly. In my opinion the Emperor could not enter on such factious plans of opposition and government, for the interests of his Empire and dynasty forbade it. The Germans in Austria may perhaps have learned something in the course of time; the great majority of the Austrian nobles will never learn anything more. Again, the Czechs repeat the faults of the Germans in demanding too much, and the Emperor will thus turn from their unbounded desires and form another majority among the national representatives.

“‘ It is, of course, not always certain that the Emperor and his statesmen will be able to continue with a non-German majority for long. Those elements which are deficient in capacity for statecraft generally become boundlessly impudent, shameless, covetous, and self-seeking, and must be either bent or broken. This is the reason why the Turk is the only possible master in Turkey. Europe considers the Sultan sick, but I think

144 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

him a diplomat far above all others at the Golden Horn; I think that he is underestimated, and that the Turks are very far from quitting Europe. The Mohammedan creed has a good moral, is simple and inexpensive, and its method of educating the young is in many ways better than the Christian.

“From what one can see and hear, the Bulgarians in the Balkan States appear to contain a state-creative and state-maintaining element. They are a thorough, industrious, and economical nation, and cultivate slow and cautious progress. They respect, support, and defend themselves, and please me better than their Servian neighbours, who display an effervescing and nettled nature, a rather too Southern temperament. Prince Ferdinand is no doubt more capable than most other princes, and than the comic papers represent him to be; but he is unfortunately surrounded by too many questionable persons—and, do what he will, he cannot possibly have them all hanged. Of course, rascals like Major Panizza must be hanged—that is a matter of absolute necessity. The Bosnians were really poor when they were united with Austria, but they appear now to be getting on. The military dictatorship, which they had to substitute for civilian bureaucracy, acts with firmness and severity, clemency and justice. Their economic circumstances are improving, railways and roads are being constructed, and the State finances are favourable. Civilization progresses, and Austria does her duty there. Montenegro, on the other hand, is not particularly sympathetic to me. The Montenegrins I have seen are big men, but I could find no pleasure in their stubborn and truculent demeanour and peculiarly

Further Conversations and Interviews 145

unpleasant expression. The Russians can read the Montenegrin writing, but the Slavs, perhaps, have difficulty in understanding each other's languages and dialects. It would, therefore, not have been so difficult for Austria to Germanize its Slavs if she had understood her German functions earlier. I call to mind the Slavonic Congress at Moscow, where the delegates had to speak German in order to make themselves understood. Thanks to its size, and its inherent attractive force, Russia has more capacity for assimilating the southern Slavonic nations. Germany has no direct interest in any of these Slavonic nations of the South with the exception of Austria, and if Russia could take Constantinople there would be no reason for our preventing it. The policy of Germany cannot be pledged in regard to Bulgaria. The Bulgarians must and can help themselves as time passes, if only they maintain a strong government with unbroken peace, and do not fall from one extreme into another. A ruler like the Battenberger, although a good soldier, was certainly not strong enough for a position of such exceptional difficulty. We were, therefore, unable at the time to found a dynasty out there with a German Princess, in accordance with the wish of the Queen of England and the Bulgarian statesmen. Had we done so, under existing circumstances, we should then have assumed the duty of taking, to a certain degree, the bride and bridegroom under our political protection. Such a responsibility and sacrifice could not be expected from the German people, because, of course, they had no direct interest in Bulgaria. The Prince should have married some Russian Princess—there are plenty of

146 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

them—or a Duchess of Leuchtenburg. We could not send a German princess to an incomplete and insecure position. That which afterwards occurred proved me to be in the right. It is, moreover, difficult to understand why the Battenberger withdrew immediately after he had been brought back in triumph. The evil memory of that night on which he was kidnapped and sent away, must have retained its hold on his thoughts. When those few rascally officers and cadets forced their way into his room, he should have taken the precaution to have a powder-cask before him, and should have threatened, fuze in hand, to set it alight—the whole of the miserable company would then have fled. The Battenberger was no statesman; he was not suited for that throne, and a German Princess even less so. In short, we Germans have only one interest at stake in the East and South-East, and that is the preservation and future of Austria-Hungary. Our policy there must be restricted to that object.

“It is greatly to be regretted that so many Hungarian peasants in Hungary grow poor and emigrate; there is more than enough good arable soil for them there, and besides, the Slovaks are a good-tempered agricultural people, who might easily be Magyarized, and should not be allowed to perish. The Saxons of Transylvania have always been a deserving race, the best Germans of Hungary. The Croats, too, are well developed physically and morally, they always were among the best soldiers, and are a useful people in other ways; but none of these nations will survive one thing—the remarkable and rapidly spreading pauperization of their peasantry. A statesman should realize that the peasants must have

Further Conversations and Interviews 147

their own holdings, and the preservation of their class—administratively free and independent—must become the aim of the Hungarian State, for it stands higher than the value of mortmain, let people call it what they will. The Hungarians have statesman-like men, and it is to be hoped that they will find a minister who will cut through this knot if he cannot untie it. But the Hungarians must on no account delay too long, or else patriotism will lose itself in pauperism. The same applies to Germany also. We too have sufficient politicians, both Red and Black, to whom an economically well-situated peasantry is not agreeable, since it is opposed to the objects of their rule. The poorer the peasants the more abject and characterless they are. Where the peasants remain well to do, there more personal and political independence is to be found. When the peasant owns property, he sings and dances, and this the bigots will not tolerate; they wish to subdue light-heartedness and the social intercourse of the sexes, to emasculate the spirit of the people and make them stupid—this has always been the aim of the zealots and Pharisees.’”

FRIEDRICHSRUH

January 5, 1891

(Narrated by Max Bower *)

One evening in January, 1891, the conversation eventually turned on the various philosophic systems.

* *Hamburger Korrespondent*, January, 1891.

148 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

"Hegel," observed the Prince, "was taught everywhere in my time, but I only acquired enough knowledge of him for my examination. I am not conscious of any inward impression made on me, for as I gradually became a jurist by beer-drinking and the duelling-ground, the contemplation of natural life has influenced me more than did the philosophers. With this natural tendency, I felt myself drawn to Spinoza rather than to Hegel. Hegel really thought first of all of his audience, in order to be able to lecture on something. In comparison with Spinoza, he worked on cultivated soil, whilst Spinoza's thoughts grew immediately out of nature. With the aid of German books, I studied Spinoza in the Latin text. He was an aristocratic Jew, for the Dutch Jews were chiefly recruited from the Portuguese Jewish nobility."

"Your Highness," observed Beyer, "like the author of *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, recognizes a nobility of Jewry?"

"Certainly," replied the Prince. "The Jews are the most tenacious race, even more so than the Poles."

In reply to a query as to whether Spinoza's pantheistic philosophy had had any influence on him, Bismarck replied, "Christianity has had a much, much greater one, the greatest. I have not been quite able to get through Kant," he continued. "What he says about morality, especially about the Categorical Imperative, is very beautiful; but I live for choice, without the sense of the Imperative. I have, moreover, never lived according to principles; when I have had to act, I have never asked myself, 'According to what principles are you now going to act?' I set to work, rather, and

Further Conversations and Interviews 149

did what I considered good, and I have often been reproached with having no principles."

- On being reminded of a letter* which he wrote in reply to such a representation, the Prince smiled, and said that he would have preferred the letter to remain unpublished; he had received many similar letters from other friends, and especially from his old acquaintance Senfft-Pilsach.

"In my youth I often discussed with a philosophically minded cousin, who would have liked to 'mother' me, as to whether I must adopt principles or not. At last I said to her, and our differences came therewith at once to an end, 'If I am to go through life with certain given principles, it seems to me as if I had to pass through a narrow forest track, holding a long pole in my mouth.'"

* "I am heartily sorry if I am the cause of annoyance to believing Christians, but I am certain that that cannot be avoided in my profession. I will not discuss the fact that there are among my opponents many Christians, who are doubtless far in advance of me on the road to salvation, and with whom I still have to live in disagreement on account of that which is earthly on both sides. . . . Is the man who will not cause wrath just or unjust under such circumstances? . . . Would to God that, beyond that which is known to the world, I had not other things on my conscience for which I hope for forgiveness, trusting only to the Blood of Christ. . . . You see by the circumstantiality of my reply that I by no means endeavour to excuse myself. I rely on your friendship and Christian judgment, that you will recommend caution and mercy to the critic on future occasions; all of us are in need thereof. If, amongst the multitude of sinners, I hope that God's grace will not take away the staff of a humble faith, with which I seek to find my path, even from me in the dangers and doubts of my calling, such confidence shall make me neither hard of hearing the censure of friends nor angry against unloving and haughty criticism.

"In haste, yours,
"V. BISMARCK."

150 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Bismarck characterized Major Wissmann as a "whole man." "When Wissmann asked for what special instructions I had to give him when he was going to Africa for us, I replied, 'The only instruction I give you is this. Draw the bills of responsibility on me; I will accept all.' I have unlimited confidence in Wissmann. Twice he traversed the Black Continent, and each time the man returned with a 'white waist-coat.' He has never created difficulties for himself or us. The sword-knot at his side gives me a further guarantee for him. If he were to get into difficulties, my first instinct would be to side with Wissmann. Emin may be more intellectual than Wissmann, and, in any case, he is a learned man; but I believe that if I had his profile here, it would appear that the back of his head lacks all the animal energy which one cannot quite do without in Africa."

Count William Bismarck then related that Stanley, without turning round, had shot a man who had caught hold of the tail of his donkey. The Prince remarked, "Perhaps one cannot get on in those parts without something of that kind."

On this occasion the Prince spoke of Zanzibar as "a fruit which would have fallen ripe into our lap." If, in a colonial conflict with other States, England some day had need of the aid of German diplomacy, the Zanzibar Protectorate might be discussed with England. As it was, German influence was already predominant in Zanzibar. An English paper reported, said the Prince with a smile, that the Germans were in the majority in the Zanzibar goal. Now they wanted to make Bagamoyo a Zanzibar; but the latter's

Further Conversations and Interviews 151

banking connections, excellent harbour, and all its civilization could not be replaced by Bagamoyo. The Russian Emperor could not make a Königsberg out of Libau, nor the Danish King a Hamburg out of Glückstadt.

These political reflections, which alone somewhat clouded his good humour, were then interrupted by a fresh, clear voice from the next room, and Bismarck listened with enjoyment to a simple ballad sung by Count William's wife.

In reply to the question whether he liked music, the Prince said, "Above everything; Beethoven especially. I am not made for buying tickets and listening to music in a narrow seat, but I have always liked music at home. Up to my thirtieth year, when I made the acquaintance of my wife, who is very musical, I always regretted that I could not keep the music hours appointed in my course of studies. Whilst nowadays one talks so much of over-burdening the young, I had then to work thirteen hours a day—an hour of French and English in addition to the usual instruction. Therefore I had, unfortunately, to give up music; and I have always regretted this, for the German is by nature inclined to music. From my youth I have also been very enthusiastic about Goethe's poetry, and even now I read his poems in bed at night when I cannot get to sleep. My tastes have also remained loyal to Schiller, Uhland, and Chamisso. But Faust is my Bible of the whole of profane literature. Clavigo and the Elective Affinities, are unsympathetic to me on account of their flabby heroes, but otherwise Goethe is quite according to my taste."

•
•
•

152 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

The conversation then turned on the Viennese nobility, which was being constantly forced back by the "financial brooms," and Bismarck observed, "The Viennese nobility is measured according as to whether anybody can keep a first and second major domo. If he cannot do that, he does not pass as full value; they have no other inward standard besides that of money and expenditure."

FRIEDRICHSRUH

May 31, 1892

(Narrated by Dr. Hans Kleser *)

Shortly after the conclusion of lunch we sat down in the Prince's study (he smoked his usual long pipe, whilst I enjoyed the fragrant "Bismarck Bock" which he handed me). Conversation at once opened by the Prince returning to my speech about him in Cologne. "One must not think that I bear a self-consuming grudge against the Emperor, or any one else. I am far removed from that. Here in Friedrichsrub I feel happier and more contented since my dismissal, apart from bodily pains from time to time, than ever during my official life. The people who have brought about my fall are really entitled to my gratitude." In reply to a query as to whether the order for his dismissal did not appear to make his retirement a voluntary and desired one, the Prince observed, "My departure was no voluntary one. To the last I opposed rather passively the ever plainer attempts of the

* Editor of the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.

Further Conversations and Interviews 153

Emperor to induce me to tender my resignation. The first signs that the Emperor wished to be rid of me date further back than is generally accepted. It was not always my wish to be spared a railway journey from here to Varzin, Berlin, or Potsdam whenever important matters were to be discussed, and for a long time I had noticed, and they let me notice it, that every extension of my stay in the country would be welcome. The real insistence on my removal dates from New Year, 1890. Even then I still evaded it. The Emperor noticed it, and so he became still more plain, at first with the pretext secretly conveyed to me of separating the Presidency of the Prussian Ministry from the Imperial Chancellerie. We had such bad results from this separation under Roon, who was assuredly an excellent man, that I believed such a plan could at most be resorted to after my death. But if a smart general, proposed by me—and in conversation I mentioned Caprivi as an example—were to be placed at the head of the Prussian Ministry of State, I declared myself ready to continue as Chancellor of the Empire alone. For just then the political situation was fraught with such momentous decisions, that I did not consider myself justified by my conscience in resigning at that juncture. But even this proposal was distasteful to the Emperor; he wanted me to be put aside completely, and his immediate *entourage* no longer treated this as a secret.

“Even Windthorst heard of it and sought an audience of me, and this I granted him, as I have always done as far as possible to any member. If Windthorst has reported that I mentioned Caprivi to him as my

.

154 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

successor, it is an error of Windthorst's. Perhaps he heard from some one in the Emperor's *entourage* that I had hinted at a solution by making a general—perhaps Caprivi—President of the Prussian Ministry. At the time Windthorst was with me, I was not aware that Caprivi would be particularly welcome to the leader of the Centre. It is true that Windthorst said to me that he sincerely wished me to continue in office. Perhaps he even meant it; but stipulations for the event of my remaining were not discussed.

“The Emperor then made strong representations to me because I had received Windthorst without asking him (the Emperor). I had to deny the justice of this censure; but I saw from this occurrence that the Emperor wished to remove me at all costs from the direction of even the Imperial affairs. Nevertheless, for conscientious reasons I continued my passive resistance, but without abandoning the institutions, for without them it is impossible to carry on the affairs of the Empire and the Presidency of the Prussian Ministry with security. I did not approve, therefore, of the cancellation of the Cabinet Order of 1852, which directs the Departmental Ministers only to communicate with the King through the President of the Ministry. A Council of the Ministry took place on the 16th of March, at which the situation was discussed, and it was unanimously resolved that the situation demanded that I should be requested to remain in office. A member of the Council of the Ministry was found who reported the resolution, declared to be secret, and on the 17th General Hahnke appeared at my house, without any direct commission from his Majesty, so he said, to make

Further Conversations and Interviews 155

known his Majesty's expectation that I would send in my resignation. I informed the General that if the Emperor considered that he had no further use for me, he was able to dismiss me. No move on my part was required for that. It was impossible for me to apply for my retirement myself, since I was obliged to consider it a serious damage to German policy under the existing circumstances.

"On that very day Lucanus arrived with the direct Royal commission. He sweetened it by mentioning the Emperor's wish to create me Duke of Lauenburg, and stated that he, Lucanus, believed himself able to assure me that if I doubted my ability to support a ducal household on my income, the Emperor would be gracious enough to take this into consideration. That, indeed, was the last thing wanting—to be placed on the retired list, like a zealous, worked-out postman, with a special remuneration! I declared that I could not ask for an elevation in rank, which I might have had before, as I did not desire it. I answered Lucanus that, since the Emperor expected to receive my application to retire immediately I was prepared to sign my simple resignation at once, but that for an application of such importance a certain amount of time was required. I agreed to send the document to his Majesty as soon as I was able. I composed it on the 18th and during the night of the 19th. It contains about twenty pages, and explains why I could not officially be personally responsible for my retirement under the present conditions. According to my thinking, the Emperor could hardly have read this, my last official document, attentively when I received the decree of dismissal, the wording of which

•

156 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

you know. So long as I live, my application to retire, which really was the opposite of an application to retire, will not be published ; but if the Government Press of to-day, in order to falsify history, constantly point to my application to retire and to the gracious acceptance of the same, please demand that my application be published word for word officially by the Government."

The Chancellor then proceeded to discuss in general terms the difficulties of the situation, which prevented him from retiring voluntarily.

"In the first place, there were our relations with Russia, and the uncertainty whether any successor of mine would be able to maintain them in the then existing sincerity and friendship. It is true that Alexander III. is averse to German ideas, and is even an enemy of Germany. But he is a prudent ruler, and does not allow himself to be swayed in his foreign policy by a certain well-known feminine influence. Since the tissue of lies which Gortschakoff had spun round my person at the Czar's Court has been destroyed, Germany, so long as I was at the head of affairs, was on a good and sound footing with Alexander III., which means with Russia. Alexander III. is naturally suspicious ; but still there was one politician in the world whom he believed and trusted in unconditionally, and that was I. To-day it is different, as I had foreseen. They have abandoned my foreign policy at its most vital point."

On his attention being drawn to the alleged danger of the Pan-Slavonic movement in Russia, Bismarck observed, "I do not understand why a Russia holding Constantinople should be more dangerous to us than the present one with Petersburg, Warsaw, and Odessa.

Further Conversations and Interviews 157

From Germany's point of view, I should not have put any difficulties in the way of Russia if she had wanted to take Constantinople. From an egoistic point of view, I should even consider a Russia in possession of Constantinople, *i.e.* which had made one step from Odessa across the Black Sea, to be less dangerous to us than the present one. So far as Pan-Slavism is concerned, I consider that official Russia, nay, even the real Russians, are not at all Pan-Slavonic. The Pan-Slavonic leading articles in the Russian papers, which fill the Western Europeans with such fears, are not written by Russians at all, but chiefly by Poles, whose aim it is to incite Slav and Teuton against each other in the hope of creating a new Polish kingdom at their expense, no matter which side be victorious.

"There is by nature a fundamental difference between Russians and Poles. At the bottom of his temperament the Russian is a dreamer and an enthusiast, if you will, a silent Romanticist; the Pole is an intriguer, hypocritical, untruthful and unreliable, quite incapable of maintaining a State organization—to-day he overflows with *Jeszcze Polska*, to-morrow it is *Waschlapski* and *Krapulinski*.

"The Russian is therefore as hateful to the Pole as is the Teuton, but that does not interfere with his working with either, nor from being in the pay of both. As I have already said, those who champion the Pan-Slavonic ideas in the Russian papers are Poles. What I have said does not imply that there are not individuals of eminent learning and high character among them. I am speaking of the general character, and particularly of the political character, of the Pole.

.

158 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

During my official career I have had to conquer many obstacles and annoyances created for me by Poles. The youthful love of the Emperor William for a Princess Radziwil resulted in the creation of a multitude of Polish connections, which the Emperor, with his chivalrous tenderness, maintained during his life. All kinds of Polish political intrigues were carried on at Court, against which I have often had to fight a hard battle. The Pole is always engaged in proselytizing, and the Polish women are untiring therein and also successful. Therefore the suppression of Poledom, which is everywhere political and '*Great-Polish*,' must not be lost sight of. To favour Poledom would also put us on a bad footing with Russia. Unfortunately, this favouritism came into full swing immediately after my dismissal. The appointment to the Archbishopric of Gnesen of a well-known champion of the ideas of Great-Poledom was especially weak and reprehensible, both as a matter of foreign and domestic policy."

After a digression to discuss the characteristics of the old Emperor, Dr. Kleser asked the Prince, in connection with the Chancellor's great speech in February, 1887, whether there had been any difference of opinion between him and Moltke on the question of a declaration of war with France.

"Certainly," replied Bismarck, "and Moltke's view found more support than mine, which did not gain the day so easily. In my Reichstag speech I gave my reasons why I was against a so-called preventive war with France. My personal conviction, gained from the study of history, is that it is unwarrantable to enter upon a war with a weaker opponent at an apparently

Further Conversations and Interviews 159

suitable date, merely because the opponent at that time threatens to attack you as soon as he is strong enough to do so. Some of the French who threatened us five years ago are already dead to-day, and in all probability hardly one of them will be alive at the time when France may see her chance of attacking us. But I will go still further, and maintain that, if Germany retains only semi-capable statesmen, France will never have such an opportunity. During my time in office she certainly did not have one, and by herself alone she can hardly ever catch us up in a military sense. Moreover, Providence, or, if you will, the course of the history of the world, often takes care that, when a warlike feeling prevails, circumstances prevent its gratification. There was a time, after the Peace of Berlin, when Russia appeared anxious for war. But the progress we had made in the manufacture of guns and projectiles and the preparation of powder, which Russia could not equal quickly enough, prevented the possibility of war until the desire for war had vanished. Moreover, a personal argument in favour of peace existed for me in the thought of my old master. Where should we have left the Emperor during a war? At his age he could not have gone through the campaign; and do you think he would have remained behind in Berlin and have allowed the army to march out of the Brandenburg Gate without him? It would, I believe, have been possible for me, in spite of his deep-seated aversion to the horrors of a new war, to induce him to consent to such if I had given him the assurance that I was convinced that the war was unavoidable to secure the future of Germany, for he would then

•
•
•

160 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

have felt it his duty to consent to it. Since I did not then possess this conviction, which I have not even to-day—in spite of the deterioration of our relations since my dismissal, Germany simply remained on the side of peace. No one in the world believes that we did this on account of weakness.”

Reference was then made to the rumours that Bismarck wished to be “reconciled” to the Emperor before going to Vienna, where his son’s marriage was to take place.

The Prince remarked, “These communications proceed from the present Government, and have no further object than to invest me with the appearance of feeling guilty in some respect towards the Emperor, by inventing a desire for reconciliation. The words ‘reconciliation with the Emperor’ are in themselves an absurdity, were it only for the reason that a situation does not exist which a ‘reconciliation’ presupposes—at least, not on my part. My criticism is solely directed against the wrong political methods which my successor and his colleagues have adopted, for they fill me with anxiety for the Empire. Seldom, perhaps never, have I been so deceived in a man’s capabilities as I was in Caprivi’s. Perhaps, after all, there can be no more unsuitable preparatory career for the direction of the affairs of the State Secretariate in the Foreign Office than that of a State counsel. The King is above all criticism; no remark of mine is directed against him, and I beg you, as well as all visitors, who publicly support my political views, to leave the personality of the Emperor out of the question as far as possible, but in any case not to attack him. During my stay in Berlin to treat about taking over the Presidency of the

Further Conversations and Interviews 161

Prussian Ministry, thirty years ago, I learnt with real horror that the King of Prussia was only saluted in the streets of his capital by a couple of hair-dressers and a few court tradesmen. I then made a vow to myself to do what lay in my power to effect a change in this. I have done so, and reached my goal; and though it strikes me at times that I may have even overshot the mark, this is less serious than the other condition would be. Therefore, not a word against the King. But the ever-recurring insinuations as if I were stretching out my hand, or ought to take the first step towards a reconciliation, are meant to serve no other purpose than to create the impression that I have to make something good to the King—in fact, to beg his pardon. There can be no idea of that. Whether I am in the King's good graces or not I do not know; I have done nothing to forfeit them, and therefore I can do nothing to regain them. Now and again there comes a visitor, who thinks he must needs tell me that the Emperor wishes to approach me again. These expressions of opinion I judge from the same point of view; they are apocryphal because they are absurd in themselves. According to my conviction, the Emperor does not desire any other relations with me but those which he himself has created.

“The circumstances under which I had to quit the Chancellor's Palace were indeed most insulting to me and my family. Contrary to all custom, I was not even left in office until my successor was appointed, so as to give me sufficient time to move my things, such as any small citizen's family might expect. Nay, hardly had my successor been appointed, than he took possession

162 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

of the Chancellor's Palace, and obliged us to pack up on the stairs and landings. We were turned into the street like thieves, and lost many a bit of property by the hasty packing of our things. But all that does not affect me personally; it leaves me calm, and least of all does it excite me against the Emperor. If, therefore, the present relations between the Emperor and myself are represented as if I desired to see them changed, it is intended either to show the world that others are free from blame as regards myself, or, in the event of a 'reconciliation' taking place, I should be represented as the party that has begged off. For nothing in the world will I allow this suspicion to be thus cast upon me, as if I had committed some fault, or even shown a want of respect towards the reigning Emperor. Probably the people who spread such reports know that they can only call forth a denial on my part, thus making the so-called 'reconciliation' impossible on my side. That, perhaps, is the reason why these reports always crop up again, but they do not move me."

Then the Prince continued—

"I had long foreseen that things were bound to happen with the Emperor and me as they came about, and only from a pure sense of duty did I hold out, by the exercise of great self-control, and put off my retirement as long as I could. I was, therefore, not taken by surprise, though, on the other hand, I do not conceal from you that I was grievously disappointed in the German people. I thought they possessed more political judgment. It is not the faithlessness and defection of a few that pained me, but the complete inertia of the whole nation, which is apparently not able to perceive

Further Conversations and Interviews 163

what drives me to criticism. It is not a personal grudge, nor revenge, nor even a wish to regain power, but the anxiety, the heavy anxiety, which robs me of many a night's rest, about the future of the Empire founded with such costly and heavy sacrifices."

Dr. Kleser assured the Prince that only a slight opportunity was necessary to rouse the deep-seated feeling of the nation from its apparent apathy.

The Prince was sceptical, but his interviewer proved to be right, for only a fortnight later the "Urias" letter of Count Caprivi to the German ambassador at Vienna caused the sentiments of the German nation to be proclaimed with no uncertain voice.

BISMARCK AND THE ANTI-SEMITES

Kissingen, July, 1892

A South German politician, who was honoured with a seat at the Prince's table, recorded the following notes * on Bismarck's views regarding the Jewish Question.

Bismarck considered that a combination of the Jewish and German elements was useful. There was something in the Jews that the German did not possess. They imparted to the population, especially of large towns, a *mousseux* that otherwise would be wanting, as well as impulses and emotions, which would hardly exist to the same degree under other circumstances. Apart from all considerations of justice and humanity

* *Wiener Neue Freie Presse*, January, 1898.

164 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

he did not see any way by which the aims of the Anti-Semites might be realized. If one questioned them about the practical execution of their plans, they became like the Social Democrats; they were unable to propose anything that could be practically carried out; their recipes were not applicable to the organism of the State of to-day. Moreover, what could one do? Measures like Bartholomew's Eve or the Sicilian Vespers could hardly be proposed even by the Anti-Semites themselves. Nor could the Jews be expelled without grave injury to the national welfare. Any measures by which the Jews would be excluded from judicial and other positions in the State would only increase the evil which the Anti-Semites thought they had to do away with. For then the same Jewish intelligence, to which public careers would be closed, would embrace those fields in which the over-weight of the Jews is already said by the Anti-Semites to be intolerable, *i.e.* those of commerce.

The Prince then stated his opinion that the Jewish movement sprang less from religious and social instincts than from economic reasons. He mentioned as a fact that the Jews are greatly superior to the other elements of the population in making money. Their superiority rests on qualities which, whether they are pleasing or not, cannot be removed by measures of State. The Jews, by reason of their natural dispositions, were generally more clever and skilful than Christians. They were also, at any rate so long as they had not made their fortunes, if perhaps not more industrious at least more frugal and saving than their Christian competitors. To this must be added the fact

.

Further Conversations and Interviews 165

that the Jew would risk something more readily once in a way in order to gain a commercial advantage, and in applying his methods to gain his object, would also act more kind-heartedly than his Christian competitor. All this gives him an advantage in commerce which could not legally be taken away. Even the Anti-Semites had up till then been unable to suggest anything which might paralyze this advantage and its effect on the economic life of the nation. Their proposals had hitherto been impracticable, and no government would be found able to carry them out. It was also inadvisable for the State to put obstacles in the way of the pursuit of gain and fortune, for the other elements of the population would thereby suffer equally, and the national wealth would decrease.

It is not necessary on that account to allow the Jews to dominate, or to make one's self dependent on them financially, as is the case in some States. In his own dealings, as a minister, with the *haute finance*, he had always placed them under an obligation to him.

He considered the Jews to be useful members of the State of to-day, and thought it unwise to molest them. The rich Jew especially was generally a regular taxpayer and a good subject.

Finally the Prince spoke about his personal relations with Jews, and remarked *inter alia* that he had really reaped ingratitude at their hands. No statesman had done more for their emancipation than he had; yet, in spite of this, it was just the Progressive and Radical papers, in the hands of the Jews, which attacked him most violently. But he did not take that too much to

166 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

heart ; the reason was, probably, that the owners of the papers considered it due to their Liberal or Radical spirit not to allow the memory of that, for which they as Jews had to thank him, to influence the attitude of their papers with regard to him and his policy. On the other hand, he had witnessed many a trait of Jewish gratitude. Whilst he was farming his Pomeranian estate he, like all other landowners there, often employed a local Jew. One day the Jew became bankrupt, and came to him with the entreaty not to lodge a claim that he had against him, because then he would be able to get off unpunished. Bismarck consented, and allowed his claim to lapse. The old man showed his gratitude later on, by making payments every year, which he was not legally bound to do, and continued to do so until the Prince moved away from the neighbourhood, and said to him, "That's enough ; let us wipe out the remainder."

FRIEDRICHSRUH

*June 24, 1896 **

"Several of my previous visits to Friedrichsruh happened to coincide with the anniversary of some more or less important date in the history of Prince Bismarck. To-day it is exactly a quarter of a century since the old Emperor William drew up and signed the letter in which he announced his intention of making a

* *New York Herald*, July 12, 1896.

Further Conversations and Interviews 167

present of the estate of Friedrichsruh to his faithful Chancellor.

"It was, therefore, with a feeling fraught with auspicious augury that I found myself once more within the homely precincts of the renowned Schloss in the Sachsenwald. One of Herr von Lenbach's masterly portraits of his hero looked down on me from the wall as I entered one of the numerous rooms on the ground floor. An engraving of Bismarck inscribed with Chinese characters, just received, evidently—or let us say presumably—'made in China,' occupied a chair; and there stood the magnificent oak chime clock—a grandfather's clock on a colossal scale—which I had often admired before. Several busts of Bismarck were stowed away in odd corners, as if to make room for the more impersonal offerings with which the consoles and chiffoniers of the room were still loaded, notwithstanding that a vast collection of presents, representing a money value of many million of marks, has from time to time been sent away to the Bismarck museum at Schoenhausen.

"The Prince's grandsons, the young Rantzaus, happened to be in the room with their tutor grinding their way through the Greek grammar, and were not over sorry to be interrupted, I fancy.

"'Grosspapa is not about yet, Mr. X——.' And the tutor added that His Highness had not enjoyed a good night's rest, and that lunch had been put off a little late in consequence. However, it was not very long before the doors were thrown open, men servants passed to and fro, Dr. Chrysander appeared on the scene carrying an important-looking parcel of letters and newspapers

.

168 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

and we were informed that Prince Bismarck was already in the drawing-room, and lunch was served.

“It was nearly a year since I had last seen Germany’s great Chancellor; but he had certainly not aged in outward appearance in the interval. His complexion is of the same healthy hue as ever, and his large blue eyes, yet undimmed, flash their old fire. Only the neuralgia from which he has long suffered seemed to have become more acute of late, for I noticed that he now and then held up his hand to his left cheek, as if to assuage the pain with the warmth of his palm.

“But this was not for long, and in the intervals of relief his bright humour quickly returned, and with it his vivid interest and participation in every topic of conversation.

“What wine are we to drink?—a momentous question this, at such a hospitable board, but one of small importance to an anxious individual whose poor head is full of political questions to ask, and fraught with fear of asking them: ‘Yes, let it be Dürkheimer, by all means.’

“‘Dürkheimer is a wine of the Palatinate, and these wines are, indeed, excellent, although rather potent,’ says Bismarck, amiably starting the conversation in the most gracious of humours. ‘Formerly, I knew little about them, although I always knew something about wines in general. But now that such an enormous assortment of fine wines has been sent to me in the form of presents, I need no longer exercise my own judgment, and I fancy my friends reap the benefit of the change. In Frankfurt we used to drink Baden wines, Affenthaler and Markgräfler. They were cheap indeed in those days. A

Further Conversations and Interviews 169

first-rate wine only used to cost a florin a bottle, and the average table wine something like 18 florins the hundred litres (about 12 kreuzers a bottle).^{*} I used to smoke some cigars, too, which cost the same amount of money per thousand (about 1 kreuzer apiece), but only *one a day*,^{*} the Prince slyly added, ‘as a sort of reminder—as in the case of the Eastern potentate with the image of death constantly before him—that we are mortal.’

“How gladly would I have sat by the hour to listen to kindred delightful reminiscences; but there was my duty to perform, and the burning subject of politics still kept most uncomfortably in the background. And yet, who would dare to influence the line of conversation with the Iron Chancellor? Fortunately, somebody made the assertion that we all travel to excess nowadays, and that the nervous system has to pay for it in the end. Schweninger, the Prince’s doctor, for instance, literally lives in the railway cars. ‘Yes, Schweninger, indeed,’ Bismarck humorously puts in; ‘but he, you know, was born a rocket.’

“This was a happy turn indeed, for the transition from the topic of travelling to that of the different countries to be visited and their political troubles is almost a natural one. Thus we soon got by easy stages from Germany to Armenia, Crete, Egypt, and even as far away as the Cape of Good Hope and the South African Republic—the excellent Dürkheimer, the long pipe and a fragrant cigar keeping us steadfast company all the way.

* Twelve kreuzers about equal to fourpence in English money.

170 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

"England and Germany—their present and future affinities and antagonisms—a big topic for a luncheon table, ay, even for to-morrow and the day after—particularly for the latter; but, for the moment, also a very delicate one. The militant, aggressive German view of this topic is constantly kept before the public by Prince Bismarck's favoured organ, the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, which in its general drift may perhaps be taken to represent his views (and more or less those of the enormous number of Germans who still, and always will, blindly accept Prince Bismarck's dictum on such questions) as he *does not mind* them being made public.

"But there is one vital difference between Prince Bismarck's *personal* views on foreign political questions and their rendering by German newspapers, their passionate and at times even acrimonious tone, and his *Leidenschaftslosigkeit*; his dispassionate estimate of things and persons. Thus while his journalistic organs rave about *die englische verlogene Politik*, *die englische verlogene Presse* (the duplicity of English politics, the mendacity of the English press), the Prince himself remains impassive.

"He deprecates Germany getting too excited over questions which only remotely affect German interests.

"He may, perhaps, indulge in a caustic, stinging remark about an English, as also about a German, public man, but, as far as England and Germany are concerned, he is against an excessive swinging of the pendulum one way or the other: 'Not too effusive, not too abusive'—this is his keynote.

"Somebody refers to a recent Imperial utterance that 'blood is thicker than water.'

Further Conversations and Interviews 171

“‘Yes, perhaps it is,’ rejoins Bismarck. ‘In every case, blood is a sticky fluid; but I do not remember that blood relationship has ever robbed feuds of their deadliness. History tells us that no wars are as ferocious in their character as those between people of the same race—witness the animosity displayed in civil wars.’

“The conversation became general. I venture to tell His Highness that there is a widespread suspicion in England—although one probably not shared by many responsible persons—that ‘German intrigues’ were at the bottom of the Transvaal business,—that I had received a letter from a very influential personage in England, before leaving home, to that effect; that I had since spoken in Berlin to a number of leading journalists and politicians, among the latter Herr von Benningsen, Prince Carolath, Professor Delbrück and others, and that they, one and all, had ridiculed the idea.

“The opinions expressed on the telegram of the German Emperor to President Krüger had indeed varied with regard to its judiciousness; but I had not met one single person in Berlin or elsewhere who had anything to say against the sentiment it expressed.

“Here Prince Bismarck, without expressing any opinion as to the opportuneness of the Emperor’s telegram, simply remarked, ‘The Emperor’s telegram might with peculiar fitness and decency have been sent to President Krüger even by the English Government itself.’

“Somebody present thereupon said that he had recently met some representative Americans, and that they had assured him that there exists a strong current of public opinion in the New England States, among the clergy

•

172 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

and the teaching world, which enthusiastically applauds President Krüger, and is indignant at the various attempts that had been made to intimidate him, or to minimize his generous treatment of the Johannesburg prisoners.

“‘I do not think that President Krüger is in want of any assistance, German or any other kind,’ Bismarck replied, in his quiet, convincing way. ‘It was a clear case of attempted burglary, or *Secræuberei*; and should the worst come to the worst,’—which I understood to mean—should attempts at coercion come to be in the ascendant in certain quarters,—‘the Boers, who are men of stalwart physique, phlegmatic temperament, and good shots into the bargain, may, I think, be relied upon to defend their independence, and give a good account of their enemies.’

“To the remark that President Krüger had hitherto got the better of his opponents, the Prince added—

“‘That was not very difficult, considering . . . and the clearness of his case.’

“The conversation then turning towards other matters, I ventured to ask Prince Bismarck whether he thought that Germany, as I had heard it asserted, had, at the instance of Italy, urged the English on to undertake the conquest of the Soudan?

“To this he replied distinctly in the negative.

“He remains unchanged in his opinion, so often expressed, that Germany has little concern in these matters.

“And the straightforward way in which he added that the English had at least established order in Egypt would have convinced me, if I had needed conviction,

Further Conversations and Interviews 173

that, whatever his opinion may be, he is free from that petty dislike to England so often imputed to him.

“‘As for Crete, I can assure you,’ he said, ‘that I take less interest in that island than in any little mound in my garden. The Cretans are, I believe, very lightly taxed, and, under normal conditions, should be far better off under the Turks than they might possibly be in belonging to Greece.

“‘What the Sultan needs are good servants, and, above all, determination. Turkey has gone through more severe crises than the present one; but, of course, you require exceptional qualities to cope with such.’”

LI HUNG CHANG AT FRIEDRICHSRUH

June 25, 1896

The Chinese Viceroy, accompanied by his son Li Ching Chu, the first Secretary of the Embassy, Lo-Feng and other members of his suite, paid a visit on June 26, 1896, to Prince Bismarck, whom Li Hung Chang had long wished to see and talk to. Amongst the invited guests at the lunch were General Hannecken, Colonel Liebert, Lukas von Cranach, and Dr. Schweninger.

Thanks to the skilful interpreters, the conversation at lunch was lively and well sustained.

The Viceroy told the Prince that to see him had been his wish for thirty years, ever since he first heard of him after the Austrian war; at last the day for the fulfilment of that wish had come. He had seen many

•

174 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

portraits of the Prince, and had cherished great expectations; but no portrait came up to the reality.

Bismarck sought to turn the compliment by remarking, "I am no longer what I was; I am becoming old."

Li Hung Chang then inquired after the Prince's occupations.

"Nothing," was the smiling answer. "I do not bother myself about anything so that I may escape annoyance. I am no longer in duty bound to work, and I now find my pleasure in the forest and the fields in summer. I am by nature a farmer, and had no desire to be a politician."

The Viceroy asked after Count Herbert Bismarck, whose long service in the Foreign Office he cordially recognized.

"He always wants to busy himself with politics," replied Bismarck, "and in comparison with myself he has but little liking for agriculture."

Li: "With us, in China, the son has always to take over his father's work."

Bismarck: "That is generally the case with us also, but one cannot do so against one's nature."

The conversation then turned on serious political questions of recent date, and Li Hung Chang remarked—

"I was especially glad of my visit here, because I hoped your Highness would give me some advice."

"And what advice is that?"

"What must we do to reform China?"

"I cannot judge about that from this distance," was the Prince's reply.

Li: *Li* continued, "How can I be successful when

Further Conversations and Interviews 175

every one at home, the Government and the country, puts difficulties, in my way?"

Bismarck: "One cannot make headway against the Court. Much is possible if there is 'some sterling stuff' in the highest places; if that is wanting, nothing can be done. No minister can rebel against the will of the Sovereign; he can only advise and carry out orders."

Li: "But if the Monarch is accessible to all other influences, and these latter always gain the upper hand? It is the daily petty difficulties at Court which lame a minister's power."

Bismarck: "*Tout comme chez nous*. I often experienced the like, earlier in my career, even from a feminine quarter——"

Li: "Yes, but yours was such an exceptionally energetic temperament. Did matters always go off smoothly?"

Bismarck: "Well, always with the ladies."

Li: "But how is one to carry out the Sovereign's behests in critical times."

Bismarck: "Only with the support of an army. The army may be small, quite small, perhaps only 50,000 strong; but it must be good."

Li: "We have the men, but training is lacking. Since the Tai-Ping rebellion, which again gave strength to the present dynasty—that is, thirty years ago,—nothing has been done towards training. I have struggled against this standing still, but in vain. I have now seen the best army in the world, the German. If even in the future I cannot employ those means which are at my disposal as Viceroy, I shall yet aim at realizing what your Highness has advised; we must reorganize, and

•

176 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

that with Prussian officers and according to Prussian pattern."

Bismarck : "It is not essential that the army should be distributed in all parts of the country. It is only necessary that one should have the army at hand at any moment, and communications should be opened up, so that the army can be moved quickly and easily from one point to another."

On turning to German affairs, Prince Bismarck spoke approvingly of Prince Hohenlohe, a friend of thirty years' standing.

"We are old friends," said the Prince. "Caprivi was another one of those who say, 'It is ordered, and so it must be done.' Hohenlohe, on the other hand, has an independent opinion, which he maintains with foresight and skill."

Bismarck also mentioned that he had always taken an interest in China, and had endeavoured to enter into closer relations with that country. Negotiations to that effect had been commenced with Marquis Tsing at Kissingen, as far back as 1884. The Prince then turned to Herr Detring, who sat opposite to him, and asked how long he had been in China, and what his opinion was as to the future of Germany in China. Herr Detring informed him that considerable progress had already been made, thanks to the energy of the German Consul von Seckendorff.

The Viceroy inquired sympathetically after the health of his host, and asked him whether he slept well.

Bismarck : "Frequently not; I am often in need of a night's rest. . . . I am not so much troubled with pain as by the absence of sleep at nights. The longer I can

Further Conversations and Interviews 177

sleep in the morning, the better it is for me all day; but pains are often present."

Li: "But does not Herr Schweninger know of any remedy against them?"

"Oh yes! but the remedies are worse than the pain itself," said the Prince, with a smiling glance towards his faithful doctor.

In the mean time lunch had come to an end, and pipes and cigars made their appearance. In the course of conversation with General Hannecken, Bismarck, referring to the Chinese-Japanese war, mentioned the "Kowshing" explosion, and laughingly reminded him that he had had a good long swim on that occasion. Herr von Cranach, the painter, with whom the Prince exchanged a few friendly words, was busily engaged at the time in making sketches and taking photographs. On noticing a white and black ribbon on Captain Morgen's coat, Bismarck said to him—

"You surely cannot have received that in France, Captain; you are too young."

"It is the Red Eagle with swords," was the answer, "which his Majesty conferred on me for service in the Cameroons."

"Oh, that is it!" said the Prince. "I am glad to have an occasional African here."

Before his guests departed, the Prince requested them to write their names in his album. The Viceroy filled a whole page with Chinese characters to the following effect.

"Having heard with admiration of the fame of the greatest statesman of the present century for more than thirty years, it has given me inexpressible pleasure to

178 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

see his Highness Prince Bismarck at his seat in Friedrichsruh during my Extraordinary Embassy in Europe, and to be able to enter my name in this book as an expression of this happy event."

The Secretary to the Embassy, Li Feng Luh, wrote—

"I congratulate myself on belonging to the Embassy, which affords me the opportunity of seeing the Bismarck of the East in the company of the Li Hung Chang of the West."

The Viceroy was visibly loth to part from his illustrious host, and asked whether he was able to walk much.

"The radius of my walks," replied the Prince, "becomes smaller every year."

"And why do you not drive?" inquired Li, who makes great use of his bath-chair.

"One must have movement," answered Bismarck—"it is necessary for one's body; one must walk as long as one can."

Li: "Take pains to preserve your health carefully."

"Please say that again," interrupted Professor Schweninger, who was standing close by.

Li: "I have achieved nothing, and can do little more in the face of the obstacles which I find."

Bismarck: "You underestimate yourself. Modesty, it is true, is a very good quality in a statesman. Politicians, most of all, must avoid too great self-confidence."

Li: "Your Highness has achieved the greatest successes by that means, and can look back with contentment to your life."

Bismarck: "Here and in China the Greek saying applies, *Τὰ πάντα ἐστὶν*—'Everything collapses some day.'"

Further Conversations and Interviews 179

With a hearty hand-shake, Li Hung Chang then took leave of Prince Bismarck, who had accompanied him to the door of the railway carriage.

FRIEDRICHSRUH

September, 1897

(Narrated by Maximilian Harden *)

The Prince lives quietly in his house in the Sachsenwald, follows attentively the occurrences of the day, both great and small, makes comments on them according to his custom; but leaves no doubt open that he has no wish whatever to offer official advice or suggestions, or otherwise to interfere with the political affairs of the day. Although he meets the present Government with good will, as he would any other which does not force him to fend off obviously hurtful measures, still he would not like to be made responsible for its actions, and placidly, though sometimes a little bitterly, expresses a wish "to be left in peace." Meanwhile, piercing voices scream his name on the boulevards of Paris, and an editor of the *Figaro* mockingly exclaims that he would much have liked to see the face of the terrible man of blood and iron, on reading the speeches made on board the *Pothuau*. Had this heart's wish of M. de Roday been gratified, he would have seen a merry unclouded face. Prince Bismarck does not find in the after-dinner speeches of the Emperor Nicholas and M. Felix Faure any definite proof of a change in the situation, created between Russia and France by the Anglophile

* *Zukunft*, Sept. 4, 1897.

180 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

inclinations of Caprivism. He remarked on the subject : “ *Nations alliées* are by no means an *alliance*, and may sometimes only be a mere politeness, a strengthening and underlining of the unimportant words *nations amies* ; I remember, during my political activity, such dubious interpretations which were not unwillingly listened to by the parties concerned. And if an alliance had really been spoken of, one would first have to know its full contents in order to be able to estimate its value and importance. The people in Paris who demand the publication of the text are not far wrong. I do not believe that the contents of the treaty, if one exists at all, would please the French. In any case I have learnt that Russian policy is always very cautious, and I cannot think that it would ever embark needlessly on adventures from which it has nothing to gain.

“ Count Muravieff, with whom I very willingly consorted officially and personally when he acted as *Chargé d’Affaires* for my friend Schuvaloff, passed as our friend, and I do not know why he should have changed his opinions. It seems to me to-day that, in many instances, people exaggerate the importance of journeys, visits, fêtes, toasts—I might say, the decorative element in politics. They have sometimes attempted to use even me decoratively, like a shade of colour, but I am already too old for that, and hardly to be utilized for theatrical effects. M. Faure, who is said to have been a capable merchant—not at all a bad school for heads of State—appears to be endowed with all manner of useful qualities for the new method of travelling-politics : he is hardened against carriage and cabin fatigues, has

Further Conversations and Interviews 181

a good stomach, and behaves tactfully and cleverly, without harmful exaggerations and excesses of eloquence. If it is true that he has, in dress coat and top hat, greeted the Russian troops in military fashion—his hand to his tall hat,—such a method of saluting was certainly not correct for a civilian. He ought to have taken off his top hat, and, like old Fritz, paid the compliment with his three-cornered hat down to his saddle. On the whole, however, he has obviously got well and tactfully out of the affair. Only one must not believe that pleasant impressions and sympathies are deciding influences in politics; there, in the end, interests decide, and, with my experience, I cannot see what interest the Russians, who in political affairs are generally very cautious, are to have in coming to the aid of the French desire for *revanche*, so long as we do not carry on quite unwisely. Czar's Hymn and *Marseillaise*: they do not rhyme. Nevertheless, the French pipkin has now got nearer to the fire, and may boil over more easily than ever, perhaps. That ought to rid our ruling masters of any remaining illusions, and warn them against shifting the base on which our defensive strength rests. It is as well that we Germans can never enjoy the careless ease of the Phæacians, and that the Parisians, who frame French policy, should from time to time awaken us from our all too beautiful dreams by their cries. But they cannot frighten us with *nations amies et alliées*: Russian Emperors are nowadays too conscientious to set their soldiers in motion only in order that French vanity may perhaps find gratification.

“The papers now reproach me for having hurt the

182 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Conservative party by an expression which was published in a Vienna paper. I cannot now call this expression to mind. I do not know how it got into the paper, and I assume that it referred to events which occurred at my retirement, and during the discussion of the first commercial treaties. Of the present leaders of the Conservatives, moreover, I only know a few who are on friendly terms with my family, and whom I naturally did not wish to hurt; nor do I doubt the personal honour of the others. But it lies in the very nature of this party that it is particularly easily infected by the regrettable customs of party ambition. Officials who have seats, though they do not really belong to Parliament, who have to provide for sons, daughters, and grandchildren, and therefore have to have considerations,—many a one would like to climb a step higher in the State; and useful relationships, social and military connections also play a part. Add to this, that my equals in rank are very comfortable, do not willingly overwork themselves, or are much occupied by their agricultural duties; then it is that the hardest strivers, who prepare themselves for the sittings, and are well up in printed matter, seize the reins, and the Party notices, perhaps too late, that they have reached a 'crooked plane.' The gentlemen of the *Kreuzzeitung* persuasion made Ministerial life thoroughly sour for me; I never was their man, and the worst insinuations always came from this side. They left me in the lurch when the time came, first of all, to put the German Empire on its legs before the world. Much would have been different if I had then had Conservative help; but I would much rather have made a compact with Herr

Further Conversations and Interviews 183

Richter than with the friends of Nathusius-Ludom and their kidney. There was much envy because I had got on better than other *junkers* had, but there was also much theoretical narrowness and Protestant-jesuitical zeal. On my being sent away, the same people again had a hand in the game: look at . . . and the like affairs. How matters stand in the Party to-day, I do not know. Their outwardly visible performances do not exactly call for admiration from me. I often have the feeling that these gentlemen confuse the terms 'Government' and 'Conservative;' and I sometimes ask myself whether they really know exactly what they want to conserve.

"Incessant arguments take place in the papers about the increase of our fleet. Why such noise? What is necessary, according to the opinion of sober, professional men, must be granted. I believe we want new cruisers; but I am very suspicious of parade ships, which are only to serve in marking our prestige, and which one might call lying ships, because they cannot do anything when affairs become serious. As a minister I lacked every inclination for a policy of colonial conquest on the French pattern, and it seems to me as if the present time was especially unfavourable for that. Our trade must find sufficient protection everywhere, but the flag must follow trade, not precede it. For the present time the most important thing for us is a strong reliable army of efficient soldiers, armed with the best weapons. That was also Moltke's opinion, and he shared the conviction with me, that we shall have to fight the decisive battles (for our colonial possessions) on the continent of Europe. No stinginess, therefore, but also

184 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

no fantastic plans, in which we might finally embroil ourselves with other people, important for our European situation. *Qui trop embrasse. . .*

“I am astonished that State assistance has not been given at once, orderly and rationally, in connection with the inundations. Private collections do not make a pleasing impression. As many and as highly placed personages as possible ought to show themselves at once in the affected districts, and talk kindly to the poor people—not merely talk, but also have a decent amount of money in their hands. That is the chief thing, quite apart from the duties of neighbourly love, which the State has to exercise; a Government should lose no opportunity of making itself beloved in the country. And at present, it seems to me, such opportunities ought to be most particularly welcome.

“The Empress took a great part in the wearing away of my nerves. She was herself of a nervous, unstable, and unquiet nature, liked to busy herself in politics, and became fire and flames if one did not, could not, at once agree to her plans. Our frictions were of an early date. When the Prince of Prussia was to go to England in '48, and I wished to see him, to advise him urgently to remain in Potsdam, when the whole army and a large portion of the country population were for him, and his journey would have an evil effect, she would not let me see him. She was excited, and declared to me that she must provide for the future of her son before all things. Later on I heard of a curious plan which was concocted in her palace. Herr von Vincke addressed me in the Diet, and said he wished to move a resolution to entrust the Princess of Prussia

Further Conversations and Interviews 185

with the Regency; what did I think about it? First of all I asked why the Prince was not to be Regent. The Prince, opined Vincke, had become impossible in the country. 'Very well,' said I; 'if you move this, I shall move to have you arrested for high treason.' The resolution fell through because it had no prospect of success without the support of the Extreme Right. My relations with the Princess did not improve thereby, and she could never quite conceal a certain grudge against me, even when she became Queen and Empress. Her preference for everything French and Catholic also had an effect; and at one time there was in her Court a Camarilla, which did not always employ scrupulous means to attain its object. I should not have been able to do much if my old master, who moreover did not suffer less than I under these things, had not kept his ground at the crucial moment. But these struggles tried the nervous system, especially when the Queen sought to persuade him to abdicate, and I had to seize him, figuratively speaking, by the sword-knot. I may well say these years of feminine warfare have told more on my health than all open fighting in Parliament and in the Diplomatic Service."

A newspaper had observed that the old Chancellor would certainly go to Kiel shortly to christen a ship. The Prince read the paragraph aloud, and added, "So? People still seem to think that I am like a maid who once said to my wife, in Varzin, 'I can accusom myself to most things, but not to being alone! I feel all right at home, and am no longer fit for festivals.'"

The episode with Herr von Vincke was thus explained a fortnight later by Harden: The Prince of Prussia

•

186 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

knew in 1848 that, owing to unjust and unfounded suspicions, he was hated by a large part of the people, and, because he was a patriot and a Prussian officer, he was determined to sacrifice himself, if necessary, in order to secure the threatened throne for his brother Frederick William ; but he had not resigned his right to the throne. When Herr von Vincke wished to propose the resolution in the Diet, that the Regency should be entrusted to Princess Augusta, passing over her husband, Prince William, he turned to Bismarck with the query, as to what the Conservative party would do if this resolution were formally put. Bismarck replied, " I should at once move the Diet that the proposer be arrested for high treason." Thereupon Herr von Vincke replied, " Then we cannot pursue the matter, for without the assistance of the Extreme Right we cannot get the King to abdicate ;" adding the words, " We know that a letter of the Prince of Prussia is in existence in which he declares himself ready to abdicate." Bismarck retorted, " I know nothing about that ; if we start such notions we shall unsettle the only remaining safe elements—the Army and the country population—who fortunately have no idea of such things." This put an end to Vincke's plan.

Another sentence also gave rise to erroneous interpretation. Queen Augusta did not wish the King to abdicate during the conflict ; she only wished him to give way, which in Bismarck's eyes would have been nothing less than but surrendering the royal power. An abdication in 1862 would only have resulted in the Crown being transferred to the Crown Prince, who had long since reached his majority, whilst a renunciation

Further Conversations and Interviews 187

of the throne in 1848 would have led to the Regency being handed over first to Princess Augusta, in accordance with the wishes of the Progressive party. Had not Herr von Vincke's project been nipped in the bud by Bismarck's resistance, William I. would never have become King of Prussia and German Emperor.

III

BISMARCK AND HIS MASTER

THE keynote to the Chancellor's relations with his "old master"—as he preferred to call him—is very aptly struck by an observation made by Colonel Baron Zeddeler, the Russian military *attaché* at the royal headquarters in 1870. This Russian officer said that Bismarck's features invariably relaxed and assumed an almost tender expression when he spoke to his Sovereign.

Prince Bismarck delighted in relating anecdotes which displayed the Emperor's *politesse de cœur*, for though "he could also be angry at times, yet he was never wanting in true politeness. As his Regency approached he asked me for written information about every possible matter, about parish discipline, county affairs, and many other things. I gave him as detailed an opinion as if I had to train my son in political science, and was only privately afraid that the Prince might laugh at the elementary character of my work; but he was grateful to me for everything, because he always found something new in what I said. Even as Regent he wished to be nothing but an officer on duty, seeking to do his

duty in the most conscientious manner." In truth, Bismarck never wearied of reminding his countrymen of the great sacrifices William I. had made on the altar of patriotism.

On the same occasion Prince Bismarck touched upon the assembly of German sovereigns at Frankfort-on-the-Main in 1863, and mentioned that at that time the situation was very difficult and exhausting, especially for him. King William would willingly have attended the assembly. "That was only natural, as twenty-five sovereigns had gathered together with a King as their courier! We were then in Baden-Baden, and the King of Saxony came thither, so that it was very difficult to refuse." At length, after much hesitation and reflection, the King determined to decline the invitation. This decision was arrived at during a drive which he took with Bismarck. On their return an hour later, the letter conveying his decision was written, and the King himself watched the sealing of the missive with the greatest care, according to his usual custom, standing for the purpose behind Bismarck's chair. On seeing that the seal had been properly affixed he sat down, and lying back in the chair, said, "That is well; I cannot withdraw now."

Bismarck then left the room with the letter; but his nerves had suffered so greatly under the excitement of the whole occurrence, that he tore off the handle of the door in closing it behind him and threw it aside. The Aide-de-camp in waiting not unnaturally inquired whether anything especial had happened inside to excite him so much. Bismarck, who in the mean time had calmed down—such nervous excitement is quickest

190 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

allayed by bodily exertion—replied that it was all right again.

“Had I been such a reactionary, as I was then always accused of being, and to-day am still considered to be by some people, we would have gone to Frankfort. The ‘Bundestag’ reaction, supported by so and so many hundred thousand bayonets, would then have been realized. But I was still acquainted with that reaction from my childhood, and that kept me back. As a matter of fact, I never was a reactionary.”

The following remarks fell from the Chancellor’s lips at his wife’s tea-table on the 15th of June, 1866 :—

“I know the Prussians, and the Berliners in particular, like a *dreier*,* and I know that I hit the right nail on the head when, as an unadulterated *junker*, I advised the Prussian National Assembly to reply to every parliamentary interpellation with a beat of the drum. As soon as the drum is beaten and the bugle sounded amongst us, the *rôle* of the gentlemen with large mouths comes to an end with the bulk of the population. The charm of novelty for me, however, centres round the events in the salon of Countess X., for I can follow them well, since I know that this not exactly very clever *intrigante* is made use of by a lady of high rank in Vienna for secret political purposes. All these petty intrigues, however, failed because of the upright character of our most gracious Sovereign, and I am only well pleased that the typical Prussian Lieutenant adds to his other virtues that of leading the younger members of our society back to the right way by the bond of love. You can see how good a wife I

* A small Prussian coin, equivalent to a threepenny bit.

have, since she does not even ask what is really the matter with the Countess in question."

In reply to an observation made by Herr von Kleist at the outbreak of the war with Austria, that people were of the opinion that a Prussian defeat was inevitable, and that the result of the campaign would be the re-establishment of the German Empire under Austria, Bismarck retorted—

"Dear Hans, you are not usually wont to be so timorous. The Prussian Army is not to be beaten so easily, and if I thought that it could be beaten at all, I should not have pursued the policy I have done. Europe may imitate us in everything, but what they cannot copy is the Prussian Lieutenant. Moreover, I rely in this respect entirely on his Majesty, under whose eyes the achievements of the army will be doubled. Every respect for the Austrian Generals, but they have not got a Moltke, and up to now they have only been able to observe the effect of our needle guns on the Danes."

On one occasion Prince Bismarck related to a couple of Mecklenburg guests the following story about a Prince of one of the Mecklenburg families. In March, 1848, this young Prince, then an officer in the Prussian Guards, full of martial zeal, forced his way into the houses of known demagogues and attacked them, sword in hand. "It was very well meant," continued Bismarck, with dry humour, "but it was not exactly a suitable employment for a Prince." Disgusted at the weakness of the Government in dealing with the insurrection, the Prince left the service, and from that date pursued the Government with hatred and contempt.

192 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

The changes wrought by Bismarck left the Prince's opinions unaltered—nay, years afterwards, he went so far as to denounce Bismarck to King William, asserting that he was aiming at the King's life. "One day," continued the Chancellor, "my old master said to me, 'Do you know, Bismarck, what Prince ——— maintains? You plot against my life. Well, that may be true, you would be the nearest!' 'If your Majesty,' said I, 'will permit me, I would remind you that your valet and Aides-de-camp are just as near to you as I; but I beg your Majesty will be always so gracious as to tell me candidly when I am denounced to you, so that I can defend and clear myself.' Then my old master laughed: 'Really, Bismarck, if I were to repeat everything that is brought forward against you, the year would not be long enough!'"

Herr von Eynern thus describes the course of the conversation at a parliamentary dinner given by Prince Bismarck on February 22, 1889:—

"Politics of the day were hardly touched upon. The Prince made a few unflattering remarks about the questionable ability of the wordy professional politicians to direct affairs. Whilst touching upon the position of a monarch in the State, he praised a simple nature which always steered straight for the right object, 'such as our Emperor possesses, *that* is the way to advance matters.' Here he alluded, by way of contrast, to his experiences in the year 1848, when Frederick William IV. allowed himself to be drawn hither and thither, and when it was possible to withdraw the troops from Berlin without the King's orders. Then the Chancellor referred to the critical time known as the 'Conflictszeit,' when

King William was very anxious, and he related the following story: 'When I was appointed Minister in 1862, I drove to Jüterbog to meet the King, and found him in a state of great depression. The Baden royalties, whom he had just left, considered the conflict with the Diet insoluble, and had besought him to retrace his steps. The King said to me, "You have become a Minister, but only in order to mount the scaffold which they are building for you on the Opera Place; I myself, as King, shall be the next to follow you."

"The King doubtless hoped I should convince him that things were not so black,' said Bismarck; 'but I did the opposite, because I knew my man to be honourable and courageous in every danger. I told him that I did not consider either of these eventualities probable at present; but after all, even if they should happen, did it matter so much? We must all die some day, and it was of little importance whether it was a little earlier or later. I would die, as was my duty, in the service of my King and master, and the King would die in the defence of his holy rights, which was his duty towards himself and his people. It was not necessary to think at once of Louis XVI., who died an unpleasant death, whilst Charles I. suffered death most honourably, as honourably as on the battlefield.

"'Whilst I,' continued Bismarck, 'thus appealed to the King as a soldier, he became more composed and sure of himself, so that I returned to Berlin with a determined man with his mind fully made up and ready for the fray.'"

194 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

A few months later (May 20), Bismarck referred to the good services of Count Holnstein, who in 1870 not only provided the headquarters with good beer, but also was of great assistance in negotiating certain delicate affairs with Bavaria.

“Count Holnstein was very useful to us in other matters: he carried on communications between us and King Louis, in which I could make no use of diplomacy. He stood close to the King’s person—he was Master of the Horse—and I had to turn to him in order to be able to exert influence on the King himself. He travelled twice *quam citissime* from Paris to Munich, which was no small matter, for it happened at a time when some twenty German miles had to be traversed without a railway.”

After confirming the statement of a deputy that the Bavarians had exercised great influence at Versailles, the Chancellor continued: “At first I had great difficulty in persuading my old master to accept the Imperial title; he was rather inclined to regard it as an ornamental incumbrance. ‘As Emperor,’ he said, ‘I must do what others desire, as King I am the master; I was born a King and know what that means, but I do not know what I should be as Emperor.’ He was like a young subaltern of ancient lineage, who would rather be called Count than Lieutenant.”

Bismarck then observed that he had written to King Louis to gain his support in the question, which was not only opposed by other sovereigns, but also by his old master. He mentioned that since he (King Louis) had already made so many concessions by joining the *Bund*,

there was little left for him to concede. As matters stood, by giving way he would be yielding to the King of Prussia, who in the future would, to a certain extent, have the power of issuing orders to Bavaria; it would therefore be more correct to make a concession to the King of Prussia than to the German Emperor. Bismarck reminded King Louis of the German Emperors who had come from the House of Bavaria, and especially of Louis the Bavarian—very much *ad hominem*—and also that he (Bismarck) knew from his own family history that Louis the Bavarian had been a well-wisher to the Bismarcks.

The letter was written at the dining-table of the hotel, and on that account was not quite correct in its form. The paper was of an inferior kind, and the writing showed through on the other side; in this condition it was handed to Count Holnstein.

On the arrival of the latter, King Louis was suffering from toothache, and at first refused to see him. The Count sent in word that he had a letter from Bismarck. King Louis then let him come in, and after reading the letter, had it read aloud a second and a third time. He then remarked, "Yes, it is true! The King of Prussia must become German Emperor." King Louis then demanded from Bismarck a draft of the letter to be sent to the King William. Bismarck sent the draft, which was approved of by King Louis and forwarded to the King of Prussia.

At Friedrichsruh (February 24, 1895) mention was made of a saying of Schleiermacher that princes who wish to achieve much must have a "phlegmatic temperament." The Prince, after a thoughtful pause,

196 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

remarked with a sigh that that was entirely true of his late master, William I., who in certain respects was phlegmatic. It was often very difficult to convince him or to bring him to a decision, but when he had made up his mind, "houses might have been built on him." "He had inherited a childlike temperament from his mother, Queen Louise, which he preserved pure as gold to the very last. Lucidity and placidity maintained a most beautiful, harmonious balance in the Emperor's mind and temper; with him truth stood above everything. During my diplomatic career I have always sought after truth, but sometimes we were both forced by circumstances to depart publicly a little from the straight line. This was always hard for the old Emperor; he would flush up, and—I could not look at him, so had to turn quickly aside. My old master knew much happiness and also much sorrow. What did he not suffer during the 'Conflict Zeit'?" [1862–1866].

"And your Highness too," interrupted a voice.

"I," replied the Prince, "I was there for that purpose; but my good master—he felt it bitterly."

The following letter to Lieutenant-General von Quistorp contains a refutation of the assertions made by Colonel von Lettow Vorbeck in his "History of the War of 1866," that the King, acting on the advice of Prince Bismarck, had issued orders forbidding the Prussian cavalry to pursue after the battle of Königgrätz:—

. . .

“Varzin, July 27, 1894.

“YOUR EXCELLENCY,

“I thank you most sincerely for your friendly letter of the 24th, and am prepared to answer your question so far as my memory will suffice.

“On the day of the battle of Königgrätz I accompanied the late King from the time he was greeted by the sharpshooters of the Guard at Langenhof, and I did not leave the immediate vicinity of his person again that day. I did not notice, nor do I believe, that Prince Albrecht spoke to the King about the employment of the cavalry during this time; I am certain that the King did not exchange a single word with me on this subject, and in any case not in consequence of any remark made by Prince Albrecht, which I must have heard. Had the matter been mentioned to me, I should have strongly advocated the pursuit; but my sole task was to get the King out of the shell-fire, which, so far, the Aides-de-camp and doctors had vainly attempted to do. The King did not utter a single word either to me or in my presence about breaking off the action or the pursuit of the defeated enemy; it was not my duty to interfere of my own initiative with advice or remarks on the direction of the battle. Nor do I believe that the King said that Austria must not be driven to extremes. I had trouble enough at Nikolsburg to persuade my illustrious master that we must deal gently with the Austrians; but on July 3 it lay far from my thoughts to give expression to this politically correct idea, and least of all to the King. During the hours in question it was not possible to ascertain how great a victory had been achieved.

198 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Even on the evening of July 3 I did not consider the campaign ended by what had taken place, and I would not have had any military measures neglected to bring the war to a conclusion without the interference of France. I did not notice that the King gave anybody whatsoever an order which might be construed as showing his desire to break off the action. The King in my company met the 6th Cuirassiers and the 26th Infantry Regiment, which, with a rifle battalion, whose ranks were being effectively shelled, stood nearest to the Austrian artillery fire as far as I could make out. Shortly afterwards I was surprised to see the Cuirassiers turn about and ride back to their bivouac. I rode up to Colonel von Rauch, commanding the Brandenburg Cuirassiers, and asked him the meaning of this movement. He said that orders for the retreat had been given, and mentioned the number of men and horses he had lost by the artillery fire. I replied, 'I have observed, with regret, your losses in your immediate neighbourhood, and I thought you would now ride forward to see where the shells came from.' He then informed me that the horses had had nothing to eat since 4 A.M., and were much fatigued; moreover, he could do nothing except what he was ordered to do. The 'Halt!' had been sounded, and he had received orders to return and bivouac. I saw the 6th and other Cuirassier regiments march past to the rear, and had the private feeling that we had carried our manœuvre customs to the battlefield, by which 'Cease fire' is sounded as soon as the field day has reached the appointed stage. I was surprised by the order for the retirement of the cavalry, and do not know who issued

it; if it had been issued by the King direct I must have heard of it, as I was not more than a horse's length away from him during all this time. I can only say that what I observed surprised and deeply affected me.

* * * * *

"Mindful of our mutual experiences,

"I remain, Your Excellency,

"Most sincerely,

"V. BISMARCK."

Though some authorities have asserted at times that Bismarck intended to build a golden bridge for the beaten enemy on the field of Königgrätz, it is not correct. The idea, however, which lent probability to the statement was one which Bismarck had formulated long ago in the old Frankfort days, and had discussed in all its details with his royal master. If Bismarck said, "The only question now is to regain our old friendship with Russia," after Moltke had told the King of his conviction that the resistance of the Austrian Army was broken, this was not said because he considered such an admonition necessary on account of his anxiety lest the King in the triumph of victory should change his mind, but for very different reasons.

"The King was so shaken, so deeply moved in his extremely noble and gentle nature, that whilst others were not able to suppress their victorious joy, he was sad and depressed at the thought of how heavily the defeat must fall on Austria and the Emperor Francis Joseph, the loss of the hegemony of Germany rather than the loss of the battle as such.

"This feeling I wished to lessen, and therefore

200 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

reminded him that Austria would raise herself again at our hands."

It was once mentioned to Bismarck, that the old Emperor was represented to have been completely under the influence of his Chancellor—a mere puppet, so to speak, in his hands.

"Nothing," rejoined Bismarck with warmth, "is more incorrect than this belief and representation. William I. was anything but an 'easy-going' master. He was uncommonly tenacious of his opinions, traditions, prejudices, and it was always a tough piece of work to convince him of the necessity of taking a new departure. How many times have I been to him in the expectation of returning with his consent and signature, and have come away disappointed. And more than once a long consultation, at which I, with the best of intentions, could advance no further, ended with these words from the King: 'Now you have convinced me, and I believe you are right; but leave me another day or two to reflect further and think over the matter. I should like to protect myself against even the possibility of hastiness.' But if my dead master was not 'easy-going,' if he was not easy to convince, he possessed one quality which stands above all others: he was truthful down to the most minute detail. I always knew how I stood with him; if he declared himself convinced, he really was; and when he had given his consent to a measure, he did not hesitate another moment in executing it, for no power could have afterwards changed or made him waver. Never in his life did he leave me in the lurch; in this respect he was truly a knight and a hero."

. . .

In reply to an observation that his opportunities of discussing difficult questions with reigning sovereigns must have facilitated his tasks, Bismarck replied—

“That does not apply without limitations, and as a diplomat I would rather enlarge the scope and say that negotiations with leading statesmen are preferable to those with reigning sovereigns. If, for instance, a minister comes to me with some historical or documentary error, I can, if I am acquainted with the real facts, say to him without more ado, ‘My colleague, you are in error here; your memory has left you in the lurch this time; the affair stands thus.’ But when a king maintains some erroneous statement, and even assures me that he was present on the occasion, or that he had promised his father on his death-bed never to concede this or that, I am placed in check and must withdraw my piece, although I know that my opponent has made a false move.”

The Prince then related two humorous and drastic instances, in which negotiations with crowned heads had fallen through, because they had sought to put him in the wrong by false promises.

“Of course,” he added, “they did not do so against their better knowledge; but kings are so accustomed to see everything they say accepted as incontrovertible truth that they easily fall into the danger of thinking that they have really done that which they wisely ought to have done.”

Bismarck at first was in lively opposition to Prince William—who in later years was to be his “old master”—when the Imperial dignity was offered to Frédéric

202 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

William IV. Prince William urged his brother to accept the offered crown, which the latter very nearly did; whilst, as Bismarck later on related, "I used the little influence I then possessed to create a feeling against the project. I had to bring forward considerations for Austria, which were by no means decisive for me. I did not want the thing, for such a crown is only secure when one has placed it on one's head one's self. What would the situation of a German Emperor have been, if, at the first conflict with Parliament, some representative from Krähwinkel and the neighbourhood had said to him, 'We have given you the crown; now be decently grateful and polite!' And even if one had been inclined to put up with such like, the affair would not have been successful, because with a new Germany—a mere quicksand!—Prussia would have slipped out of our fingers."

The idea of King William's abdication (1862) was due to the opposition which his favourite project, the reform of the Prussian military system, encountered from the representatives of the nation, who either did not know, or purposely misunderstood, his intentions. The catch-word "militarism" dominated the situation in the Landtag. On assuming the Regency he had adopted, as his object, the idea that Prussia must make moral conquests in Germany; but he never laid aside the idea that a strong army was, above all, essential for Germany. This was in accordance with what he wrote to General von Natzmer in 1849: "He who wishes to rule Germany, must conquer it; it cannot be managed *à la Gagern*." Another method he did not find, and could not find, because there is no other method. And

thus an apparently unsurmountable barricade blocked his way.

Bismarck thus described the situation: "The King did not know of any other way out of it. His conscience rebelled against the conflict; magnanimous as he was to the last degree, he preferred to sacrifice himself. On my going to him at Babelsberg, his abdication lay on the table. He was tired, and I had the greatest difficulty in convincing him that his abdication would rather aggravate than ameliorate the situation, as indeed it would have done. The coach was in a ditch; not by his fault, but by that of the ministers of the last few years. Every one was ready with advice, especially the quacks who wanted to effect a cure with camomile tea when nothing but an operation would do any good."

About this date Bismarck was in the Pyrenees, from whence he was summoned to Berlin by a telegram from Roon. "I will not keep out of the way," he replied, "for I will not be guilty of cowardice." But at the same time he wrote to his wife, "There must be a decision now, or, come what may, I shall resign."

The conversation between King William and Bismarck on the 20th of September, 1862, became the turning point of the history of Prussia and Germany—nay, of the whole world.

"Up to that date," said Bismarck, "we had not quite understood each other. I had thought the King to be more undecided than he was in reality, and he considered me—well, somewhat of a political rowdy; but a quarter of an hour sufficed to convince us that we were both in the wrong. I do not know how it happened; I suddenly felt complete confidence in him

204 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

and he in me. Previous to the interview I had carefully written out the only conditions under which I would take the reins into my hands, but I did not take the paper from my pocket, and on reaching home the first thing that I did was to tear it up. •

“But you should have seen the change in the whole being of the King. As I entered he seemed so aged and broken, that my heart warmed to him and my eyes perhaps also, I do not exactly remember now—but I realized that what the man wanted was for the best! Nor do I remember exactly what I really said to him; whatever it was, it came from my heart, and he drew himself up and became so stately and erect that it was a pleasure to see him, a King again in very truth. From that moment I was his, body and soul.”

The implicit trust and confidence with which the Emperor William inspired his Chancellor alone enabled the latter to cope with the ever-increasing burden of work and cares with which he was at times overwhelmed.

Shortly after Bismarck had begged the Emperor (at the end of March, 1884) to allow him to resign the direction of German domestic affairs, he explained his position as follows to a member of the Reichstag:—

“I am seventy years old, my nerves are out of order, and I have not time to nurse myself. How can I think about injured feelings and little particularist jealousies when it is my duty to watch the course of affairs everywhere? Telegraphy has multiplied my work in the Imperial Chancellerie to a terrible extent. Germany is interested in whatever happens at Rome, Madrid, Vienna, Pesth, Petersburg, Paris, London, New York,

Washington, Hue, Tamatave, Melbourne, Sydney, Cairo, and Khartoum. I must look upon the world as a chess-board, and see how an event anywhere can affect German interests directly or indirectly. Formerly a Chancellor only needed to be conversant with the leading personalities at the European Courts, whereas now he must be acquainted with the parties, wirepullers, financiers, and the tendencies of public opinion, and act quickly on information despatched in haste and received by telegraph. In order to be able to generalize quickly, his eye should be everywhere, and his knowledge very extensive and exact. The position of Chancellor is no sinecure, and the duties might well overtax the powers of a younger man. If the Emperor did not support me in everything, I should not be able to get through with my work."

One day when a guest was rather slow in drinking champagne (Moët et Chandon, White Star), Bismarck pointed to the half-empty bottle and said, "We must finish it. Never in my life have I allowed a champagne bottle to quit my table otherwise than empty. My old master was very different. When he was alone at meals he always had a half-bottle of Bordeaux and a half-bottle of champagne standing in front of him. He generally finished the Bordeaux, but only rarely the champagne; the remainder he used to lock up himself for use the following day. He was one of the old school who never drank iced champagne, but allowed the cork to fly out with a bang." In spite of such little traits of exactness and economy, the old Emperor was by no means miserly, but was a "generous and aristocratic gentleman." It was also true of him that only

206 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

with difficulty could he bear to part with tried advisers and servants : this also applied to time-honoured articles of daily use, especially as regards his coats and trousers. At times no small amount of ingenuity was required on the part of his attendants to smuggle some new garment into the Emperor's toilette without his noticing it, to replace some cherished but wholly unserviceable article. If he noticed the change, an outburst of temper followed at once, and the intervention of the Empress was necessary before he could be brought to wear the rejected garment. "I can sympathize with him, for I too am much attached to what is old and accustomed. If a house on one of my estates becomes ruined, I do not have it torn down at once, but prefer to build another one close to it. My employés and servants are to me like those of the old Emperor. I part unwillingly with my people, and rather put up with all kinds of irregularities, often very bad ones, than make a change and accustom myself to new faces. I receive many an unpleasant impression of this or that one, many a report or accusation which do not please me, yet I think it over well before I dismiss him and take a new man in his place. To my recollection I have never really given any one notice or dismissed him except for disobedience ; in that case he has to go." The desire to retain old employés and old servants as long as possible was moreover a peculiarity of the Bismarck family. At the time Bismarck took over the Schönhausen estate, he found men there who were serving in the castle for the third generation. A farm superintendent had been sixty years in the service of the family. His own father had brought back from the Rheingau after the campaign of 1792 a

huntsman named Jöde, who was kept on a long time, and then given the inn in the village of Schönhausen. This Jöde was the first to take him (the Prince) out shooting, and he still remembered him quite well. The old huntsman possessed to a high degree the peculiarity of old servants who consider themselves to be quite on a confidential footing with their master. This one repeatedly boasted to him, "Your father and I, we shall get soaked and dry again out here in the summer." "To this day I still pay a pension to a steward who served our family for more than fifty years—they are the old relations. To-day it is different; railways and the modern trend of the country population towards large towns have done away with all that."

•

•

•

•

•

IV

BISMARCK ON POLITICS

It was some time before Prince William of Prussia and Bismarck understood each other. Their differences, however, did not rest on want of personal sympathy, but on real difference of opinion. Prince William was at first very accessible to English influence—later on to Russian—whilst Bismarck was opposed to both. Even when the Prince was appointed Regent in 1858, he was more inclined to Roon and Moltke, because his mind, chiefly devoted to military matters, quickly realized their worth, than to Bismarck, whom he sent to Petersburg as Ambassador. Meanwhile, the idea of entrusting Bismarck with the post of a leading minister came as early as 1860. Bismarck then wrote to his elder brother Bernhard, "Were I to go readily into the galley, I should be an ambitious fool; every great embassy, even that of Petersburg, which, apart from climate, is the pleasantest of them all, is a paradise in comparison to the slavery of a minister's work of to-day, especially that of the Exterior. But if a pistol is held at my head with yes or no, I have a feeling that to say no under the existing really difficult and

responsible circumstances, would be to commit a cowardly action.

"In short, I am honourably doing all I can to keep to St. Petersburg unmolested, even to watch from there the development of affairs with resignation; but, nevertheless, if a ministerial mount is brought round for me, anxiety about the condition of his legs will not prevent me from riding."

Whilst every other German politician in 1856 was debating as to whether it would be more advantageous for Germany to lean on the Western Powers—the chief representative of this view being Prince William of Prussia—or on Russia—the policy of Frederick William IV., and the *Kreuzzeitung* party—Bismarck was already raising the banner of a new Prussian-German policy. The necessity of this departure was demonstrated by a report of Bismarck's to Manteuffel, dated the 26th of April, 1856, which, perhaps, shows more clearly than any other document the extent and correctness of Bismarck's insight into the future.

In this report he contends that an alliance between Russia and France may certainly be expected in the future, for, since the collapse of the Holy Alliance, these two nations are no longer separated by any divergent principles, but are rather thrown into each other's arms by many circumstances. Germany, therefore, has the more reason to take the solution of the German question into consideration. The sooner this be done, the sooner the two German Powers could hold their own against the East and West. "According to the Viennese policy," the report continues, "Germany is too small for us two. German dualism, during the

210 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

last 600 years, and notably since Charles V., has always settled its internal relations by a thorough-going domestic war. And even in this century no remedy but this one will be able to set the clock of development at the right hour."

In after-years Bismarck has often been reproached that he was, politically speaking, "living from hand to mouth," and that he had only aimed at and seized the object nearest to hand. True it is that he grasped what was nearest, as every practical politician does and must do, but only when this led towards the remote object which he never lost sight of. It is the chief merit of Bismarck's foreign policy that he always realized correctly and consistently pursued his objective and the road leading to it, in the main essentials, though not in every detail, for that is impossible. "I do not even bear a grudge," he remarked (perhaps referring to an observation of Albert Träger's that the unity of Germany had fallen into his lap like a ripe fruit), "to those who, in looking backwards, see everything lying in beautiful order before them, and think that all happened as it did because it was bound to. When a ship gets into port safely, only those who have been on board can tell of the storms she has passed through. Certainly those who have whistled to invoke the storm may also know something about it. But things like these are easily forgotten."

Later on, in discussing the obstinate resistance offered to his policy by those who would not, could not, be convinced of its soundness until the thunder of the victorious Prussian guns at Königgrätz drowned their voices, the Chancellor remarked—

“There again you have an excellent proof that success is the only criterion for the great multitude of average people. Since things turned out well for us, everyone acclaims me with applause; had the contrary been the case, they would have stoned me, or rather my memory, for I should never have returned alive. I would have entered a Prussian regiment and got myself shot. And yet even then no blame ought really to have been fastened on to me, since in military matters I had to rely on Roon and Moltke. But of course I should have been the scapegoat!”

Bismarck was transferred from St. Petersburg to the Paris Embassy in May, 1862. Whereas the representatives of the Powers almost grovelled in the dust before Napoleon III., Bismarck held his head upright. On one occasion the Emperor proposed a close understanding with Prussia, whereby the latter was to annex Hanover and Schleswig-Holstein, whilst France was to be compensated at the expense of Belgium and Luxemburg. Bismarck replied that he was glad to be the one to receive this communication, since he was perhaps the only diplomat who would take the personal responsibility of concealing it from his Sovereign!

Bismarck repeatedly referred to Napoleon's personal amiability towards him. “Once he became quite oriental; he confided to me that he wished to find me a mistress, and seemed to disbelieve me when I told him that I neither required nor desired one. He was not able to grasp the idea of German family life. The Empress certainly could not give him any real impression of the family. She could be extremely amiable, nevertheless, and when she made use of this

:

212 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

faculty towards me I always felt that I had to be doubly on the *qui vive*."

"Nothing is so stupid," remarked the Chancellor one day, "that it cannot find supporters, if it is only brought forward with the necessary *aplomb*." Then, referring to the Schleswig-Holstein affair, he said, "Considered from the diplomatic point of view, that was a nut on which one might easily have broken one's teeth. I had no anxiety about the Danes, since it was to be taken for granted that they would commit a folly; and it was only necessary to create a favourable situation up till that should take place.

"Austria had to be made to understand that she would forfeit all sympathy if she did not go along with us. The gratitude of Russia for the service which we had rendered her when Austria wished to mobilize Germany, had to be re-awakened; and England had to be isolated, so that she might restrict herself to threats, as she always does when no one will fetch the chestnuts out of the fire for her. Each single act was in itself a trifle, but the difficulty lay in getting them all to fit in together. Our parliamentarians demanded of me that I should explain the motives of my policy to them. If at that time I had only told them a portion of what I am saying now, I should have made the whole affair impossible from the very beginning."

As a matter of fact, the successes of 1864 did not diminish the want of confidence with which German politicians, or rather the majority, regarded Bismarck.

Whilst the diplomatic difficulties which Bismarck had to encounter before Königgrätz could be brought

.

about, were certainly not inconsiderable, they were almost surpassed by those evoked by the new situation afterwards. Napoleon's energies were galvanized into feverish activity in order to obtain advantages from the Prussian victories. He intrigued with both combatants. Austria was to regain her lost Italian possessions in return for the left bank of the Rhine; whilst Prussia at the same price might annex the whole of North Germany and found a new German union. Benedetti, who acted as intermediary, was, under no circumstances, to depart from these conditions. Bismarck, however, retorted with the threat to conclude peace with Austria at once, and to reconquer Alsace with the armies of both States. "Both our armies are ready; yours is not. You yourself can imagine the consequences! Draw the attention of his Majesty the Emperor to the fact that such a war might, under certain circumstances, become a war with revolutionary thunderclaps!"

"This was a jet of cold water," observed Bismarck, in relating this incident, "which did not fail to effect its object. But one had to be prepared for anything with Napoleon, for already at that time he felt his throne trembling, and would willingly have glued a pair of nice new legs on to it, in the shape of the left bank of the Rhine—Belgium and Luxemburg. This was the cause of the rapid progress of the peace negotiations with Austria. No man could know how long I should be successful in my dilatory treatment of the negotiation with France. Napoleon's foolishness in placing his demands in writing in our hands was certainly an unexpected gain."

•
•

214 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Yet Napoleon's intervention had achieved some tangible result, for even at that date Bismarck would have liked to create a stronger tie between North and South Germany. But time was lacking for the completion of the tedious negotiations which would have been necessary to effect that object.

"With a few of the Southern States it would have been successful, and I was certain of Bavaria in particular. But it behoved us to do all or nothing—no patchwork. It was also difficult for me to keep his Majesty the King away from those who wished to commit him to annexations in South Germany. I am otherwise not exactly an enemy to annexation whenever necessary," the Chancellor remarked, with a hearty laugh; "but in this case I fought against it tooth and nail. If ever I was right, it was in doing this. We should never have been able to build a bridge over the Maine if we had crossed it in 1866 provided with pots of black and white * paint."

Before the commencement of the war of 1866, Bismarck had left no stone unturned to allay the "Constitutional Conflict" by German parliamentarians with the leading agreement, but without success. On the conclusion of that glorious campaign the Chancellor used his utmost endeavours to overcome the determined opposition of the King to the Bill of Indemnity with which Bismarck proposed to come to an understanding with the representatives of the people.

"I was never quite able to convince the King, who, with all his honest affection for Prussia and afterwards for Germany, invariably felt himself to be the ruler

* The national colours of Prussia.

throughout, that we should not compromise ourselves with the Indemnity project. We were the victors, and victors can afford to be magnanimous. . . . It would not have been so difficult for me then, had not little-minded men commenced their night manoeuvres in the belief that I with my policy had only broken in the steed so that they might seat themselves in the saddle.

"The Moor, they thought, had done his work, and if it had been true he would willingly have gone then. But it was not true, for half the work still remained to be done."

Bismarck once designated the seventy-five supporters of Virchow who voted against the two hundred and thirty members when the Indemnity Bill was passed, as men who would one day make a great to-do in heaven "if the resurrection did not take place in exact accordance to their programme." Whilst he was henceforth able to count on the approval of the bulk of the nation in after-years, he had to encounter a backstair influence, to the intrigues of which he owes many an anxious hour. In the eyes of some of his former supporters he had become too great and too liberal, and to them this was a crime which merited death.

"The men with ideas worthy of the lumber-room then began to band themselves together, and in seeking soon found a high protectress. Then commenced the mole's work. The General who wished to be a diplomat and who effected as little in that capacity as —, the higher lackeys (the Court Marshals) blinded by their aiguillettes, and also a few hysterical women who imagined that a Hohenzoller would allow himself to be degraded to the level of a Louis XIV.—a nice company

216 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

was soon collected! I had only one friend at Court—the King—but he was worth a thousand others.”

“And Moltke and Roon?”

“I will not insult them by reckoning them amongst the courtiers!” was the cutting retort. “ ”

After the effect of the Exhibition of 1867 had worn off, the Luxemburg question threatened to offer Napoleon a welcome occasion for a war. Certain of victory, and convinced that war was inevitable, Moltke was in favour of fighting at once. But Bismarck held back and abandoned the right of Prussia to garrison the fortress of Luxemburg.

“I still rebelled against recognizing the unconditional necessity of this war, which must make so many thousand widows and orphans and create such unspeakable misery. We had only just witnessed 1866, and in comparison with that which awaited the world, 1866 would dwindle to a pale shadow. Napoleon’s throne creaked in every joint: incalculable events might happen. . . . There was also another matter: 1866 was still too fresh in the memory of the Southern States; the enthusiasm which we evoked in 1870 would not have prevailed then. . . . The decision was not an easy one, for something else had to be considered: the question of right! I did not want a war which would enable others later on to reproach us with having entered upon it wickedly. Justice had to be on our side beyond every doubt, so that no factory-made falsification of history could take it from us.”

“I should answer the question as to whether Napoleon desired the war, with ‘No,’” said Bismarck, shortly after the battle of Sedan. “His object was that

of self-preservation, the maintenance of his dynasty, by a brilliant success such as he would have gained had the King, threatened by him, made the Hohenzollern candidature impossible for ever. But in order to attain that, he had to throw more into the scales than his own will: he had to threaten with the warlike desires of the whole French nation; and it was quite in accordance with his character that he should also be able to use this as a shield if matters turned out badly, as happened later on. All the official papers and little journals then kept up the cannonade until the sound common sense of the French fell to pieces and the Gallic cock crowed, "*À Berlin!*" When that happened, Napoleon's experience was the same as that of the sorcerer's apprentice: 'Those spirits whom I summoned, I cannot now get rid of!' Whether he still wished to back out of it may be doubted, but that he could not do so is certain! That he should have allowed matters to go so far was his great fault, and it was on the tip of my tongue at Donchery, when he wished to shift all the blame off himself: only I did not say it because he made me feel pitiful, being so broken and ill and full of fear of his own soldiers."

"To-day . . . we were arguing at table as to whether it was a Cabinet or a national war. Both sides were right and both were wrong. It began as a Cabinet war, and it became a national war. Napoleon wished it; he fanned the sparks of national jealousy until the French nation wanted the war, and the Germans too, when they saw that their honour could be preserved in no other way. In the end the Cabinets only did what could no longer be avoided. . . . But observe how, now

218 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

that Napoleon has quitted the scene, the French will make him the scapegoat for everything, even for their want of independence and their vanity, without which matters would never have gone so far."

Two years after the commencement of the "Kultur-Kampf" Bismarck observed—

"The best preparatory school for a Chancellor of the German Empire now would be a circus training under a juggler; Conservatives, Liberals, Centre—one of these must always be in the air, but only so high that one can catch him again, and whilst doing so the two others must not be allowed to fall. . . . The threads on the spinning-wheel of our domestic policy were never so tangled as they now are. It would be difficult enough to get done with only one task. But in addition to the Kultur-Kampf, social legislation, the protection of our agriculture and industries, and the increase of our Army are to be carried through, quite apart from a multitude of minor tasks—sometimes things really seem to turn round in one's head like a windmill. And it is just at this time that I should like to be quite free to deal with foreign policy. Gortschakoff gives me more trouble than I care to own; I would not like to disquiet our Imperial master, who is so attached to Russia. The old fellow on the Neva is jealous, nothing more, but that is more than enough. Clouds everywhere, and not a speck of blue sky to be seen at all!"

The course followed by the foreign policy of the European Courts was indeed well calculated to cause anxiety. The Eastern Question again threatened to become the tinder ready for a European conflagration. And though the Berlin Conference of 1878 produced

a calming effect, the danger still remained, for Bismarck attached no great value to the outward brilliance which this Conference shed on Germany.

“It is very nice,” he remarked, “that these gentlemen have come to us, and our Imperial master was almost as pleased about it as Werner (who painted the Conference picture); but the fact that I was only allowed to be ‘the honest broker’—whilst I would rather have sided with Russia had I been permitted to follow my personal inclinations—has cleared, though not improved, the situation. Russia will not forget our action, and Austria and England will not thank us for it. There was no other way out of it. I fear the time will not be long in coming when the Russian bear will allow Madame la République to scratch his hide, even though she wears a Jacobin cap on her head. The only consolation is that a *mariage de convenance* at the most can arise between Russian Absolutism and French Radicalism and Opportunism, but never a marriage of inclination—and a *mariage de convenance* seldom bears any fruit.”

To oppose the threatened danger, Bismarck sought and found a counterweight in the creation of the Triple Alliance, his last great feat in the arena of foreign policy. Even whilst Beust was Prime Minister of Austria, Bismarck had taken preliminary steps for the necessary understanding, but it was not until Andrassy had succeeded to the direction of Austrian affairs that the necessary advances were made. To make the accession of Italy in 1883 palatable to Austria was yet another difficult task.

“There were still at the Austrian Court,” exclaimed

220 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Bismarck, angrily, when the negotiations on this point once threatened to fail, "far too many people who have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing since 1866. Those whom God wishes to destroy, He afflicts with madness. This Empire, of which one might say as of the late Holy Roman Empire, 'How does it manage to hold together?' ought to thank God that it gains a powerful ally; instead of which these politicians in petticoats shudder like children taking medicine. If they are bent upon our watching their destruction by their Slavonic neighbour with grounded weapons, they can have it! Then they will clamour indeed, but it will be too late!" Fortunately, the energy of Andrassy and his successors succeeded in breaking the opposition to the alliance with Germany and Italy.

Varzin, October 19, 1877

(Conversation with Moritz Busch)

"The King wished to give me the arms of Alsace and Lorraine on making me a Prince. But I would rather have had those of Schleswig-Holstein, for that is the diplomatic campaign with which I am most satisfied."

"Did you contemplate its possibilities from the start?"

"Yes; immediately on the death of the King of Denmark. But it was difficult. Every one was against me; the Crown Prince and Princess on account of family relationship, His Most Gracious Majesty himself at first and for a long time afterwards, then Austria, the minor

German States, and the English, who begrudged us the possession of the Elbe duchies. We succeeded in gaining over Napoleon, who thought to place us under an obligation. Last of all the Liberals at home, who for once attached importance to the rights of a prince, were opposed to us. It was, however, only their envy and hatred towards me. Even the Schleswig-Holsteiners did not wish it; all these, and I do not know who else! We had a sitting of the Council of State at that time, when I made one of the longest speeches that I ever fired off, and said much that must have appeared unheard of and impossible to my audience. For instance, I represented to the King that all his predecessors, with the exception of his late brother, had added something to the realm; did he intend to keep to that? To judge by their astonished looks, they clearly thought I had been lunching too well. Costenoble was in charge of the protocol, and on looking at that document later on, I found that just the very passages in which I had been most clear and urgent had been omitted. I called his attention to the fact, and complained. He acknowledged that I was right, but thought that I would be pleased if they were left out. I replied, 'Most certainly not. You thought, no doubt, *ich hätte einen gepfiffen*. But I insist on their being inserted just as I said them.'

The characteristic features of race, and their influence on the political life of different countries, were at all times favourite topics of conversation with the great statesman.

222 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

In conversation one evening (April 30, 1868) with the celebrated jurist Bluntschli, Bismarck observed—

“It will perhaps appear fantastic to you if I maintain that nations bear a resemblance to Nature: some are masculine, others are feminine (not a new idea of mine). The Germans are men; so much so that, taken by themselves, they are ungovernable. Every one wants his own peculiarity. But when they are united they are like a torrent which irresistibly carries everything away before it. The Slavs and Celts are feminine: they do nothing by themselves—they are incapable of reproduction. The Russians can do nothing without the Germans. They cannot work, but they are easily led. They have no powers of resistance, they follow their master. The Celts, too, are nothing but a passive mass. Only where the German influence comes in does a political nation arise by combination—like the English; so also with regard to the Spaniards, as long as the Goths were in power, and the French, whilst guided by the Franconian element. The French Revolution expelled the latter, and gave predominance to the Celtic. That makes them inclined to submit to authority. The Westphalians and Suabians are old Germans with but little admixture, and therefore hard to amalgamate with the State. If they are seized with a national idea, and if they become excited, they will break the very rocks. But that rarely happens. As a rule, every village and every peasant wants to exist individually. There is a powerful combination of the Slavonic and Teuton elements in the Prussians; that is one of the chief reasons of their political usefulness. They possess something of the pliability of the Slavs and the virility of the Germans.”

Nearly thirty years afterwards Bismarck again referred as follows to his theory on the value of Teuton blood on the progress of nations :—

“I find that the life of nations is only crowned with success so far as they have Teuton blood in their veins, and so long as they preserve the characteristics of that race. The Irish are an effeminate race, who act with much feeling but with little understanding. I can understand in the end all nations and races, but I cannot conquer my aversion to negroes. They appear to me to be a caricature of the white man. The United States, who possess a large share of this race, inspires me therefore with the more interest. If social democracy plays no important rôle in that country—it has really appeared only in the large towns, and has been repressed with energy—it is probably due to the sparseness of the population. This hot-house plant of our civilization only flourishes when human beings live crowded together. . . .”

“I am filled with astonishment at the energy of the Japanese as compared with the lethargy of China. There are certainly some amongst us who see in the Chinese a danger to Europe. Such fears appear to me to be unfounded in view of the genius for standing still, displayed by this nation for centuries. On the other hand, mercantile conflicts through Japan, and the possibility of this country making an appearance as a political factor, are rather to be expected.”

“Here in Friedrichsruh I am not in a position to form a well-founded opinion about the course and result of the present crisis (in Turkey). Both depend on the actions of a number of personalities of Europe

224 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

whom I only know slightly, so that I cannot judge with accuracy as to what they will do on the occurrence of certain events, which may happen. Besides, I do not know whether, or to what extent, the Sultan will comply with the representations of the Powers, and what he will do if their harmony is not maintained; whether he may not some day in a passion cancel all that they think they have already got from him. Everything would then depend upon what Russia and England might do, and the distinctive note which they would sound in their counter-proposals: whether England would be able to again display the same determination towards Russia and Turkey as in the "seventies," and what attitude Austria-Hungary and Italy would maintain towards one another? I cannot calculate that beforehand—it depends on future eventualities. Too many indeterminable factors are present in the construction of the problem to enable one to arrive at an absolutely certain solution. A statesman can only follow the course of such a crisis attentively, and each one of the immediately interested States must be in constant readiness to preserve her own interests in addition to those of the whole of Europe. The best policy for Germany is to remain quietly in the background during the Turkish game of the Powers, and to await the result when it comes. I rejoice to see that we are not disposed to give up this reserve, and are resisting the temptation to force our way into the ranks of those Powers who are immediately interested in the Turkish question."

In discussing events in South Africa, whilst mentioning Chamberlain's headlong policy in terms more drastic

than flattering, the Prince defined the distinction which existed between the character and actions of the English as private persons and the policy of England. The individual Briton was decent, respectable, and reliable; the reproach of lying was to him the most serious of all reproaches. On the other hand, English policy was the contrary of all that; its dominant characteristic was hypocrisy, and it employed every method which the individual Briton despised.

At times, too, the policy of France was not very select in its methods. Its conduct towards weaker races abroad was as cruel and brutal as that of England; violence and cunning were also to be observed there as in the English *régime*, though the same degree of hypocrisy and perfidy, by which English policy was often directed, could not be proved against it.

The Turks are the only gentlemen in the East, whilst all the remaining nations there were more or less morally degenerate and politically unreliable. The resistance of the Greek statesmen to the suggested European control of their finances was, in the Prince's opinion, the *comble* of fraudulent bankruptcy.

Speaking of the characteristic traits of the German nation, the Prince said that they were still a race of non-commissioned officers: every one was eager to get the stripes. On an average every man in public life had only that degree of self-reliance which corresponded to his official hallmark, to the conditions of his official rank, and to his orders. Exceptions to this were praiseworthy but rare.

The parties in Germany hardly sufficed to fill existing needs, because the latter were principally of an

226 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

economic and social-political nature. On mention being made of the recent visit of the Farmers' League, the Prince stated that he had summed up his convictions in the phrase, "Il faut que la recherche de la fraction soit interdite." If anything is to be achieved in economic fields, one must put off to a future date political differences, which for the time being do not come into consideration. If the farmer want to get something, he ought not to ask of those who are ready to help him: "What political party do you belong to generally?" At first that must be a matter of indifference—"after nine o'clock for that," as the Berliners say.

One evening Prince Bismarck related that the negotiations with Jules Favre concerning the Paris contribution of 200 million francs took place on the stairs of his house. "We think," he said, "Paris would feel insulted if we were to demand less than a milliard," a statement which nearly drove Favre frantic. However, before the foot of the stairs was reached, the amount of 200 million francs was decided on, and subsequently paid. Bismarck thereupon proposed in the Council of Ministers that this sum, the first received during the National War fought with combined forces, should be devoted to wipe off the war indemnities paid to Prussia by her present allies in 1866. This proposal met with violent resistance, and the Chancellor was told, "These affairs belong to the past!" He replied, "It is not only on account of the past, but also for the future; we shall unite the new Empire more firmly by doing this." Nevertheless he remained in the minority, or rather quite alone; not one of his colleagues agreeing with him,

Talking to Mr. Booth in November, 1887, Prince Bismarck said, "The outbreak of war depends on England's attitude towards Russia, whether it will be that of a charging bull or of an asthmatic fattened ox. In the latter case our alliance with Italy will be of little use, since she will have to use half her army for coast defence against France, as the combined fleets of Germany, Austria, and Italy are not equal to the French fleet. Should England, however, be a charging bull, the French fleet would not only be paralysed, but the Turks would also go against Russia."

Booth replied that England's action could not be reckoned on.

"Yes," said Bismarck, "just as in England the many heads bring the unexpected to pass, so in Russia the one head of the Czar is not to be relied on."

In reply to Booth's statement that repeated sittings of the council of war had taken place in Austria under the presidency of the Emperor, Bismarck said, "Nothing can remain a secret in Austria, for they have the boasting Hungarian and the press," and again laid stress on the fact that nothing from that quarter was of much consequence.

Bismarck employed the long evenings at Kniephof during the early forties in the earnest study of history, that of England in particular. He was by no means an Anglophobe. "Although the history and institutions of England," so he declared in, after years, "have ever been most interesting material for study and thought, still the development of Germany must be shaped to accord with the peculiar character of the social conditions and political institutions of Germany."

228 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Nothing in his political career angered him more than to meet people who wished to transplant English institutions promiscuously to Germany.

Bismarck was inspired with a great admiration for Lord Beaconsfield, and one day discussed the personality of the English Premier.

"I repeatedly had him to spend the evening with us; as he was unwell he only came on condition of being alone, and I thus had many an opportunity of getting to know him well. I must say that in spite of his fantastic novel-writing he is a capable statesman, far above Gortschakoff and many others. It was easy to transact business with him: in a quarter of an hour you knew exactly how you stood with him; the limits to which he was prepared to go were clearly defined, and a rapid summary soon precisèd matters. Beaconsfield speaks magnificent and melodious English and has a good voice; he spoke nothing but English at the Congress. The Crown Princess asked me about this time whether Beaconsfield did not speak French very beautifully. I answered that I had not heard anything of it up till then. 'But in the Congress?' she inquired further. 'He only speaks English,' said I; and here she dropped the conversation," added the Chancellor in English, with a significant gesture of his hand.

At the close of his eventful career Bismarck was able to lay the foundation of the colonial policy of Germany, which will probably become an important element in the future development of Germany. Even as early as 1878 Bismarck observed—

"Up to 1866 our policy was Prussian-German, till 1870 German-European, and since then it has been

that of the world. In estimating future events we must keep an eye on the United States of America, for they may develop into a danger to Europe in economic affairs, possibly also in others, at present wholly unexpected by most of us. In the future the one cannot be separated from the other. The war of the future is the economic war, the struggle for existence on a grand scale. May my successors always bear this in mind, and take care when this struggle comes that we are prepared for it!"

V

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

THE interior development of the Empire demanded all the Chancellor's energies after peace had been concluded in 1871, the more so since matters had to be dealt with which were, at least in part, strange to him, and with which he had yet to become acquainted. Amongst these tasks was the framing of a commercial policy. Bismarck's practical common sense, no less than the necessity of taking a majority where he could find one, led him towards the Liberal party with all the greater force since his breach with Legitimist principles in 1866 had estranged many of his former adherents in the Conservative party.

"These people," he observed, "have adopted the blinkers which I have torn off the Liberals. They do not and will not see that since the accession of the Hanoverians, and now of the South Germans, the Liberals are very different to what they were formerly. Oh, if I were only in as comfortable a position for a couple of years, as are my colleagues in England! But the continual domestic quarrels in one's own house wear one out; when one realizes that in the end one reaps no thanks, and when one always hears, 'The

heretic must be burnt!' it is not to be wondered at if one prefers to go home and cultivate cabbages and shoot hares."

Bismarck's own grave doubts at that period as to whether he was pursuing the right course, or whether the Free Trade system—"Manchesterdom," as it was termed—which the chief debaters of the Reichstag lauded as the "only medicine for the State," was rather more harmful than useful to Germany. Never had he been seen so often pacing under the trees in the garden of the Chancellor's Palace, his hands behind his back, his head bent, and with anxious care in every line of his face, as during 1878. His decision to introduce a protective tariff solved the momentous question, and the Chancellor breathed more freely, although the projected socialist legislation would open up a new and enormous field of labour.

"Now I have a goal," he remarked at the time, "and I shall find the means to reach it. It will cost some hard fighting—so much the better! If the workman had no cause for complaint, the roots of social democracy would be dug up. Will it ever come to that? Will not the agitator—the workman—always demand more the more one gives?" Then, after a pause, "No matter! the attempt must be made. Should it prove a failure—as I almost fear it will—we have at least proved our good-will to all the world, and the fault will not lie with us if an understanding is not arrived at. . . . Germany in advance on the path of social reform as well . . . truly a thought 'worthy of the sweat of the noble;' but most of them will not sweat—that is just the mischief!" he added, with one of

232 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

his frequent transitions from the profoundest gravity to boisterous humour.

Bismarck was unable to agree with the law against Sunday labour, for, as he remarked to a visitor, "This law does not please me at all, for it brings me into conflict with my conscience. I will only mention one instance: I am riding through the fields on a Sunday morning and rejoice over the state of the crops. I then see in the distance an industrious worker labouring at his little plot of land for the benefit of his family. The law says that Sunday labour is forbidden by statute; as a landowner I am legally bound to report the man or forbid him to work. One can easily imagine the consequences; the man returns home annoyed, and his wife will hardly believe his statement that he has no right to work on his rented piece of land, as has been the custom since time immemorial. The man's resentment increases, and he goes to the public-house! Sunday is spoilt for the people by the rigorous law, and I very much doubt whether that is the right way to keep the Sabbath holy.

"If I think this matter over thoroughly as a landowner, I shall *not*, in riding through the fields, see a Sunday worker; for I shall turn my horse and hasten away so that I may not bring the hard-working and industrious labourer into trouble. It would be far worse to bring the man into conflict with himself, and I should perhaps contribute to the destruction of his hitherto undisturbed family happiness by forbidding him to work on Sundays at his own allotment, which supplies him with food for the year."

The following official documents relating to goods

"made in Germany," testify alike to the Prince's striving after commercial honesty and fair dealing, and also bear witness to the necessity of Government interference in this matter.

"Friedrichsruh, October 26, 1880.

"TO COUNT ZU LIMBURG-STIRUM.

"No. 499 of the *Nord Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* contains a very noteworthy leading article on some of the defects which cripple our foreign export trade. Although I have for some time devoted my attention to the question, I miss all the reports from our consulates about the damage which our foreign trade suffers in consequence of dishonest and careless shipments. From other sources I hear that cases have occurred where swords in scabbards without blades, scissors cast in one piece and the like, parcels containing inferior goods packed in superior stuffs, have arrived in foreign countries from Germany. The defects noticed in the accompanying articles, regarding packing and opening, are not less harmful for the whole trade of Germany than the other dishonesties. I consider it the duty of the officials of the Empire to check these occurrences and report them officially, so that they can be met as far as possible by official and public teaching. I therefore wish that all professional consuls in foreign countries, especially in America and Eastern Asia, and also in the Levant, may now be directed to report up to date their observations on the occurrences indicated, and to devote their attention to checking the same in future.

"I wish to see and sign the draft of the circular to be

234 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

addressed to the consulates, in which attention is to be drawn to the defects of definite branches of the export trade, which may be mentioned in the document."

The following circular, dated Friedrichsruh, November 6, 1880, was thereupon issued to the professional Consuls of the German Empire :—

"You are acquainted with the complaints which have been made public regarding careless and even dishonest shipments in our trans-oceanic trade, and the injury to our industries and trade resulting from such practices.

"According to the available information both of former and present times, a lamentable lack of reliability with regard to German shipments *inter alia* is apparent both as to quality and quantity. Temporary advantages gained by such means not only damage the reputation of the firms concerned, but also throw discredit on the industries and trade of Germany as a whole. It is therefore the duty of the Empire to labour energetically to abolish these malpractices. Even the making up and packing of German goods give rise to grave and oft-repeated complaints. The German making up leaves much to be desired, as regards shape and neatness of appearance, and is therein far behind that of France and England. In many instances the packing is not even sufficient for the most necessary protection of the goods, so that they frequently arrive at their destination in a broken or damaged condition.

"Owing to the results of the inquiry instituted last year by the Imperial *Chargé d'Affaires* for Central America, on which the decree of July 13 was based, the Council

of the Berlin merchants has requested the Export Committee for commercial affairs to report on the question—‘What can and must German manufacturers and merchants do to promote commerce beyond the seas?’ • •

“The report on this question also points to the necessity of doing away with the malpractices I have alluded to.

“It is the duty of the Imperial officials to control occurrences of this kind, and report them officially, so that they may be met as far as possible by advice, both officially and in the public papers.

“I therefore request that you will be so good as to pay special attention to the performance of this duty.

“I look forward to a continuous series of reports on your observations in this matter, mentioning by name the several cases brought to your notice which may appear to be particularly suitable for a remedy, and I enclose for your use the above-mentioned report as well as a compilation of remarks on German export trade and its shortcomings, collected from the results of the Central American Inquiry.”

At a *soirée* given to the members of the Prussian Diet on February 1, 1881, the conversation eventually turned on the colonial policy and the trade of Germany. Prince Bismarck complained of the action of Inspector Fabri in sending him a despatch protesting against the colonial policy of England, and further in having published the same. In England, private persons always keep touch with their Foreign Office in carrying out their great enterprises, whilst the responsibility for the latter is only taken over by the State

236 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

when success is ensured and the path clear. The colonial aims and efforts of Germany could only achieve success by a similar dependence on the now powerful German Foreign Office. Fabri had not kept touch with it at all. When England was engaged in a contest with the Transvaal Republic, was he to direct his Consuls to adopt a hostile attitude towards England? The English were everywhere on the best of terms with German subjects, whose property and efforts had always been protected like their own. The missionaries in particular had certainly never had any cause for complaint. In times of war, every word was jealously weighed, and nothing was worse than to allow one's sympathies to be biased by unimportant points, and to leave the conflicting interests, which are at the bottom of all struggles, out of consideration. He was not wanting in sympathy for the Boers, and that was shown by his pleasure at their calling themselves what they were—"Boers"—with pride and self-consciousness.

But whilst Bismarck was fully alive to the value and importance of colonial expansion for the future of the German Empire, he cherished but little sympathy for those of his countrymen who definitely severed their connection with the Fatherland to seek their fortunes under a foreign flag. Every German who thus abandoned his nationality in quest of gain was in Bismarck's eyes a distinct loss to the Empire from the economic as well as from the military point of view.

The Chancellor's opinion on this subject was stated very plainly in the following official letter, addressed to the Secretary of State for the Interior:—

“ Berlin, May 20, 1881.

“ His Serene Highness is of the opinion that the present existing statutory and other regulations with regard to the system of emigration, and in particular the organization of the agency system, are not in keeping with the interests of the Empire. It will be better to render emigration more difficult than to facilitate it. But this course must not be pursued so far, that people, who do not wish to remain in the country, and have determined to found a home abroad, shall be kept back by force. Still, good care must be taken to avoid furthering and facilitating emigration, and in particular any expense to the State on account of such emigration.

“ Keeping this point in view, the State in particular must withhold all proofs of sympathy for those Germans who have broken their ties to the Fatherland, and must officially acknowledge this to be the guiding principle of our emigration policy.”

It is worthy of notice that on a former occasion, when a request was made for German officials to travel through the Province of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, with a view to reporting on the same, Prince Bismarck curtly observed, “ I am not anxious to know how people who have shaken the dust of the Fatherland off their feet are getting on.”

A few months later, Count Herbert Bismarck was directed to draw attention to the importance of receiving reliable reports on the various harvests and crops of foreign countries, by means of a letter addressed to Under-Secretary Busch.

238 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

“Varzin, September 14, 1881.

“The Imperial Chancellor has noticed that our missions never send in reports on the prospects or yields of the crops of the countries to which they are accredited. In order to do away with this omission, the Imperial Chancellor intends to address a circular to all missions, requiring them to furnish such reports at regular intervals—every four or six weeks.

“The Embassies and larger missions, to which Consuls General and Consuls are attached, would have to make extracts from the reports of all the latter and then forward them with their own remarks to the Foreign Office. The circular must insist that these reports be drawn up in a form suitable for official publication. In this matter, the Imperial Chancellor attaches importance chiefly to discounting, by means of publications based on official sources, the generally highly-coloured statistics about the condition of agricultural produce abroad, which only serve to benefit speculators at the expense of producers. Hitherto, it has been almost a private monopoly of certain papers and periodicals, chiefly influenced by the commercial classes, and published in large cities, to issue harvest reports with claims to authenticity. These latter often influence the price of agricultural produce in a very marked manner, since they generally remain unanswered, as the official journals are rarely in the position to contradict them. It has frequently been observed that merchants depress the price of articles, so long as these remain on the hands of the producer. This they manage by cleverly manipulating news and price quotations in the local papers, as well as in the large commercial centres. In

late autumn and winter when the producer has sold his crops, reports of a different kind, such as a universal failure of crops, generally appear in the press, so that a considerable rise in prices takes place, which only benefits the middleman. This, however, can only be avoided by timely and continuous official publications which inform the producer as to the prospects and prices of the whole world, with which reports the so-called world markets, *i.e.* merchants and brokers, will then have to reckon. This would refer chiefly to those countries to whom we export, and from whom we import. Chief among the former are perhaps England, France, Belgium and Holland; amongst the latter, North America, Russia, and the Danube States.

"In the English press, for instance, the Imperial Chancellor has read that a total failure of the crops may be expected, owing to the continuous rain, and that every further rainy day means a loss to England of one or two million pounds sterling. But in addition to a very experienced Consul General, we have in England a large number of selected Consuls, who possess judgment and insight into the conditions of agriculture. If they were to send such reports at intervals, from the beginning of spring, throughout the year, to the Embassy which has to forward them, a very useful collection of facts would be the result.

"But in addition to the interest to our agriculture to have definite knowledge about those crops which other nations, besides ourselves, produce, it is also of importance for our industries to have information about the cotton crops of North America and Asia, as well as about the

240 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

state of wool in Australia, etc., and the circular should call attention to any increase of these articles which deserve special observation."

In March, 1882, the French Government assisted Germany to send delegates to a commission in Paris which was to discuss the principles for an International Convention for the protection of submarine cables.

The Chancellor's remarks were as follows :—

"Varzin, October 1, 1882.

"Germany will have to take part in the Conference, because we cannot be the only nation to hold aloof, though I am afraid that the eventual agreement will not be of much use to us. Other nations are imbued with a strong national egotism, and will proceed leniently against their own subjects for damage done to foreign cables. Whereas we, with our cosmopolitan feeling of justice, are sure to carry out the penal agreements strictly towards our own subjects for the protection of foreign cables. The result would probably be that we should protect our own and foreign cables, whilst the others would only protect their own."

At a parliamentary *soirée* given by the Chancellor on February 1, 1881, one of the guests reminded him that he always seemed to find some fresh work to do. The Prince's mood, which till then had been rather downcast at remembering the completeness of his breach with his old friends of the Conservative party, suddenly brightened up, and with a smile he answered, "You are hinting at my last new rôle of Minister of Commerce."

* August 23, 1880.

Yes, I undertook that in the spirit of Odysseus and the suitors. I want to drive the man out of Prussia, and, as it were, capture the post for the Empire. We have no Prussian, Saxon, or Brunswick commerce, but only a German one, and therefore the Ministry of Commerce must be an Imperial institution. But the setting aside of this office does not progress very quickly, as Prussia is the most particularist State in Germany. However, I shall yet bring it to pass by retiring some day."

On September 25, 1884, in the presence of some Hamburg merchants, Bismarck repeatedly urged the necessity of practical merchants developing the Colonial policy of the Empire, which duty he could not leave to the bureaucratic element: "I cannot send a Prussian *Landrat* to the Cameroons."

The Prince mentioned that he had been advised, in many quarters, and by some "very clever" people, to cede Angra Pequena in German South-west Africa to Britain in exchange for Heligoland, whereas his opinion of the value of South-west Africa was very different.

Bismarck then discussed the relations of Germany with England and France in regard to their colonial policy. On informing the British Government of the annexation of Angra Pequena, he expected that England would welcome Germany's first steps in colonial policy with friendliness, and that no difficulties would be made, thus rendering the united advance of Germany and England possible. Since, however, the contrary had happened, he had to come to an understanding with France, and it was therefore of importance to spare French susceptibility whilst advancing in West

242 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Africa and elsewhere. It would be impossible for Germany's colonial policy to flourish if opposed by both England and France. Up till then England had "missed the connection," and thus an understanding with France had been effected.

A memorial, addressed by the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce to the Foreign Office, pointing out that, contrary to international law, the French blockade of certain Chinese ports was not an effective one, was summarily dismissed in a few words. The Chancellor did not conceal his astonishment that this memorial should have been presented by the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, above all people. He could not interfere in French affairs; otherwise the danger would arise that French men-of-war might blockade the Elbe, which would cost the Hamburgers more than any damage inflicted by an ineffective blockade of Chinese ports.

One day, after his retirement (February 22, 1896), Bismarck discussed the colonial policy of Germany very fully. The Prince continued to uphold his former conviction that the merchant must go first and the State follow afterwards. It was always correct to take possession of a strip of coast, some two or three days' march in breadth, and come to an amicable convention with the negroes in the rear; if this were broken, or if any other acts of violence took place, military expeditions must be despatched to the Hinterland without delay, to give the aborigines an energetic and deterring punishment. No success could be hoped for by transplanting the Prussian Government assessor and his bureaucratic system to Africa. Work at the green

table was the very last thing suitable for that sphere. He, the Prince, was no unconditional adherent of the abolition of slavery, which had existed in that country for thousands of years, and was established because of the local conditions. But, on the other hand, the brutal and wrongful treatment of the negroes, such as that which had unfortunately been proved in certain cases against Germans, must be disapproved of. True, he did not believe in the equality of all races, but, on the contrary, he believed that the negro races had, by a Divine Providence, received a different destiny to that of the whites; but it would be a mistake if the whites made use of their superiority in a manner which ran contrary to humanity as well as to practical advantage. There was in negro races something of the nature of horses and dogs, but the system of training even animals by blows was out of date. An old riding master often called out in the *manège* when a pupil hit his horse or otherwise treated it harshly, "Don't hit your horse, it is not to blame for your inability to ride; your treatment of it is at fault." Moreover, it was a striking example of the negro's good nature that five whites, as often happened, undertook dangerous expeditions into the interior under the most difficult circumstances without having any further security than that arising from the "faith and loyalty" of the negroes. If there was something of the canine character in the black man, it was no disgrace to him, and the whites, who made use of this trait, ought to avoid treating the negro cruelly just because of this canine nature. No doubt the negro was lazy, and had to be driven, but not by

244 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

inhuman means. The black soldier, also, had often enough proved that he was not wanting in courage and self-sacrifice. He therefore regretted every time he read reports in the papers about occurrences in which it happened that negroes had been inhumanly and unjustly treated. Major Wissman knew how to deal with negro races.

VI

BISMARCK AND HIS FELLOW-WORKERS

THE years preceding 1866 were those which laid the heaviest burden on the Chancellor's shoulders, since, both at home and abroad, enormous difficulties had to be met and overcome before the German nation could assume the place to which Bismarck felt that it was entitled. The time not occupied by his foreign policy was devoted to parliamentary struggles and contentions, in order that the reorganization of the Prussian Army, the basis and *conditio sine quâ non* of all later successes, might be secured. Constitutional conflicts also caused a certain stagnation in domestic legislation, though the chief reason of Bismarck's comparative inactivity in the field of home politics up to 1866 lay in the constitution of the Prussian Ministry. Each minister was practically an independent entity in the State, and was only bound to bring the affairs of his department to the notice of the Ministry for deliberation.

Bismarck's complaints about this want of power in the Ministry date from an early period, and have often been asserted.

"The President of the Ministry," he remarked in the

246 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

House, on January 25, 1873, "has no greater influence on the management of affairs as a whole than any one of his colleagues. If he wishes to obtain such an influence, he is forced to gain his colleagues over by entreaties, persuasion, correspondence, complaints at Ministerial meetings—in short, by struggles which tax the energy of the individual to a very great degree."

And again on December 1, 1874, he thus alludes to his position: "The President of the Ministry is merely an ornamental member. I direct only in so far as the order of business is concerned, and I have by no means the disposal of the same. For years I may remain convinced that one of my colleagues does not choose the way for which I could accept the responsibility; but I cannot alter matters unless I force him to subordinate his views in some particular instance to mine, by means of persuasion, by entreaties, or by a majority in the Ministry."

Finally, on March 5, 1878, Bismarck practically denied the existence of a President of the Ministry in Prussia: there was only a Minister who bore the title and had to lead in the debates officially; he could *ask* his colleagues, "but he has no orders to issue." The King was the real *de facto* President of the Ministry. (January 29, 1881.)

From these expressions of his views, to which many more might be added, it is easy to see that the powers of a President of the Ministry were too limited for a man of Bismarck's nature; the whole apparatus could only work without friction when congenial spirits, such as Bismarck fortunately found in later years, shared his labours.

To mention only a few of such wearying and exhausting conflicts of opinions in the Ministry, the following instances may be cited.

- Count von Itzenplitz, who was Minister of Commerce from 1862-1873, permitted his department to remain a hotbed of that bureaucratism which was so distasteful to Bismarck's temperament and progressive ideas. The establishment of sound "Land-Credit" offices advanced too slowly; the North-Sea-Baltic Canal threatened to remain unfinished, and only repeated entreaties were, in a measure, successful in pushing forward railway development.

In a letter addressed (March 1, 1873) to Count Roon, who was then President of the Ministry, Bismarck observed that he had often had occasion to disagree with the principles pursued by the Ministry of Commerce. "I have hitherto only shown my dissent by a negative vote in various questions. I have been guided in this by the conviction that the political solidarity of the Ministry of State, created under such difficult circumstances and maintained under changing political influences, must not be endangered by me, because I happen to know the wishes of his Majesty the King. This consideration falls to the ground if his Excellency, Count von Itzenplitz, who has for ten years taken his full share in the great political labours of the Government, resigns his position as Minister of Commerce. In that case considerations for the personal convictions of an old colleague no longer bind me."

The friction between Bismarck and Herr von Bodelschwingh, Minister of Finance, 1862-1866, reached its climax when the latter, on February 28, 1866, warned

248 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

the Crown Council against a fratricidal war (with Austria). A couple of months later on he even suggested that the Minister of War should cancel the increase of the army establishment of horses. It has been alleged that before the outbreak of the war von Bodelschwingh declared that he could not procure the money required for the payment of the Army.

How deeply Bismarck resented these actions is shown by the fact that he would not willingly speak to any member of Bodelschwingh's party (Conservative) until his opponent had retired from the committee. Even as late as December, 1872, Bismarck expressed his annoyance that the Conservatives should have followed the lead of such an intriguer as Bodelschwingh.

Though von der Heydt (Finance Minister, 1866-1869) was not exactly sympathetic to Bismarck, he was at least an able and energetic subordinate, who knew how to raise money—"and that is what we want," observed his chief. Yet differences arose between the Chancellor and the "money uncle," as he termed him in a letter to Roon, which led to his retirement in 1869. Bismarck paid full tribute to his qualities in the Reichstag, by declaring, "We cannot doubt his patriotism, his honesty, nor, least of all, his caution, in cases such as the one now under consideration."

Bismarck considered Count Harry Arnim, the German Ambassador at Paris, an uncommonly talented diplomat, but nevertheless he was not slow in recognizing his faults: impatient ambition, unbounded vanity, and a tendency to act in politics according to his personal sympathies and inclination. Besides his rapidly

changing impressions, which even showed themselves in his official reports, Count Arnim was not always able to draw the line between fact and fiction. He was intent on paving the way for a restoration of the Empire in France after the war, because he considered the republic to be a dangerous example for Germany; Bismarck, on the other hand, thought it a deterrent one, and demanded that the Ambassador should abstain from hostility towards M. Thiers and the existing form of government. Arnim, strong in the belief in himself, did not gauge the future; Bismarck repeatedly urged that it was no part of Germany's duty to render France capable of forming an alliance, but rather to preserve the firm connection between the remaining great monarchies of Europe which could not be endangered by any republic. No less than eight despatches were addressed to Count Arnim by the Foreign Office between December 30, 1872, and January 21, 1873. It is therefore not surprising that Bismarck should have lost patience and informed his subordinate that in order to carry on affairs one must demand from the Imperial agents abroad "a higher degree of obedience and a lesser measure of independent initiative and of fruitfulness of political views than those on which your Excellency has hitherto based your reports and your official attitude."

Arnim complained to the Emperor about this last despatch; but before the incorrect copy, which he sent to his Sovereign, could reach its destination, the Emperor had decided to recall the Count and entrust him with the new Embassy at Constantinople. On the 2nd of April, 1874, however, the Vienna *Presse* published

250 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

"diplomatic revelations" dating from the Vatican Concilium (to which Arnim wished to send *oratores*, though Bismarck declined to interfere in the internal affairs of the Roman Catholic Church), which obviously aimed at glorifying Arnim's diplomatic capabilities at the expense of Bismarck. In a letter to the Foreign Office, Count Arnim disclaimed all responsibility "from any point of view" for these Vienna revelations. He further denied having sent a notice to the Brussels *Echo du Parlement* to the effect that he had resigned his appointment, and that Bismarck intended to have current business in Paris transacted in future by a consul. Both these denials of the Count in official documents were untrue, for the Brussels rumour was disseminated by his press agent, Dr. Beckmann, and he himself directly caused the publication of the Vienna reports. Moreover, he had removed a large number of official documents from the Paris Embassy without informing the Foreign Office, and either delayed or flatly refused to return them when called upon to do so. In the end, Count Arnim was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for an "offence against public order."

Arnim, however, escaped punishment by flight, and in exile wrote the notorious pamphlet "Pro Nihilo," in which, amongst other scandalous crimes, he accused Bismarck of secretly speculating with Bleichröder on the Bourse. On the 5th of October, 1876, ten members of the Court of Justice declared Count Arnim to be guilty of treason, *lèse majesté*, repeated libels on Prince Bismarck and the Foreign Office, and condemned him to five years' penal servitude. The Court expressly

declared that a "dishonourable intention" existed in connection with his crime of treason.

The following instance shows clearly how strongly the Chancellor resented any improper interference by the Councillors of the King's Privy Cabinet, civilian or military, in the affairs of the Government.

A former Hanoverian post-office official was recommended by the Chancellor's Office for the vacancy at Frankfort-on-the-Main in 1869. Privy Cabinet Councillor von Mühler felt compelled to advise the King, in his official capacity as acting Chief Petty Councillor, to abstain from making this appointment, basing his objection on the fact that the correspondence of the dethroned King of Hanover passed through Frankfort, so that it would be distasteful for the proposed nominee to execute any precautions that might be ordered. The Civil Cabinet therefore requested the Chancellor's Office to submit another name. Von Roon, acting as Bismarck's substitute, countersigned the declinatory decision. Count Bismarck therefore felt compelled to address a memorial to the King on the 26th of August, 1869, in which *inter alia* he observed—

"Hitherto it has never happened that the technical criticism of the qualifications of a person has been transferred to the Civil Cabinet. If the Post-master-General is no longer considered capable of appreciating the technical qualifications of officials of his Department, the Cabinet Councillor, who is better able to judge, should replace him if discipline is to remain in the service. The latter quality cannot be preserved with a system according to which personal qualifications are judged by the Cabinet, while the centre of gravity

252 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

of personal questions is transferred to an authority which is not officially responsible. By such a system a wide door would be opened to nepotism ; of this we are already accused—especially as regards the appointments to new provinces, and this accusation, it would seem, is not without justification. The present case appears to be without precedent in the service of Prussia. If the King himself is in favour of a particular official, his Majesty would probably not keep his wishes in the background. His Majesty has hitherto confidently entrusted the Postmaster-General with the judgment of the qualifications of an official. In this case therefore one can only ascribe the Royal decision, declining an official proposal, to the postal representations of Cabinet Councillor von Mühler—a method of influencing the Royal decisions on current business which is incompatible with the position of the Cabinet Council, and which increases and impedes business.”

In the memorial to the King, the Chancellor naturally restrained his anger, but the more terrible was the outpouring of his wrath in the covering letter addressed to Roon.

“I do not know whether Mühler has any special candidate in view, or whether he has only this frivolous motive for the Royal decision in order to cloak some female suggestion [here follow the names of influential ladies]. But I cannot get on with Post-office camarillas nor harem intrigues, and no one can expect that I should sacrifice health, life, and even the reputation of honesty to serve such plots. I have not slept for thirty-six hours ; I have spat bile all night, and my head is like a furnace in spite of compresses. It is

Bismarck and his Fellow-Workers 253

enough to make one go mad! Forgive my excitement; although your name is attached to the affair, I cannot suppose that by the formality of signing it you have identified yourself with the matter, or even examined it. I myself leave such matters to the blameless Philipsborn [the Postmaster-General], but not to the Cabinet Mühler or to — [name of a lady].”

Roon replied on the 1st of September. “I am heartily sorry that by my counter-signature I have become a co-defendant. But in my excuse I may perhaps remind you that we not infrequently counter-sign things without having investigated them sufficiently. If I had had any idea of the effect and the importance of this order on you, I would have remonstrated against it. I am ready to do so to-day.”

The impression which Bismarck made on his subordinates in office is thus described by one of them: *

“With his equipment of extraordinary gifts of body, soul, and spirit, he towered high above all ordinary sons of men, and also made great demands on the working powers, devotion and loyalty of his subordinates. On his arrival we all had the impression that he looked upon us with a suspicious eye, as if he thought we were perhaps bribed, or were under some other sinister influence. But when he had convinced himself that we were all honourable men and good Prussians in the bureau of the Minister of State, he gave us his confidence. For all that we were only the tools of his will, no room was left for comfortable relationship; but I believe of him that he was wholly and entirely in the service of his King and master as his subject and vassal with his

* Privy Councillor Immanuel Hegel,

254 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

possessions, blood, body and life, and was prepared to stake everything for him.

“Owing to many years of intercourse with Presidents of the Ministry I was used to the routine; I consequently avoided any really confidential relationships; acted with modesty, and yet without shyness, and I took pains to do my duty to the best of my ability, and to help the President of the Ministry with my services so far as mind and eye could reach. Thus I also gained Bismarck’s confidence; I always remained frank and sincere, nor did he ever check me in this. During the whole time of my connection with him I never came into conflict or received a slighting word from him. Things may perhaps have changed in later years. . . . A comfortable, self-contented nonchalance found no favour in his eyes; one was then in danger of being cast aside or trodden underfoot. In him strong self-respect, a fearless energy, an imaginative gift of combination, and, in spite of passionate excitability, a surprising sobriety, were combined with calculated moderation. At that time there was a violent constitutional conflict with the Liberal Diet; and during the crisis I watched him with unqualified admiration. His genial intuition—the rapidity with which he weighed and decided between conflicting views was most remarkable.”

A similar testimony to Bismarck’s sympathy with loyal and industrious subordinates is given by the post-master in Kissingen:

“Fifteen summers constitute a long period, and yet I seem to be in a dream when I think of how I stood with a beating heart for the first time as a young official before the intellectual giant, who, though his fame was

then at its highest, did not disdain to remember a subordinate official, who had merely done his duty. Thus it happened through many a summer when times became quieter. The idyllic sojourn at the Upper Salsine was only interrupted by the brilliant ovations offered to the Imperial Chancellor by a grateful nation. A serious illness brought his stay at the world-famed resort to an end. A few years later I was a guest in the Sachsenwald, and I found the strength of the old German oak broken. So much is written of Bismarck's deeds as a statesman—and rightly too; but Bismarck as a man also possessed virtues which distinguished him from the multitude, and amongst them I reckon gratitude towards subordinates. If ever one had an opportunity to render the great statesman even the smallest service, it was always certain to be acknowledged."

Herr von Keudell was one of the busiest of Bismarck's subordinates in the Foreign Office (1864-1872). To him Bismarck entrusted many negotiations with Bleichröder, who corresponded with Rothschild and thus communicated various matters to Napoleon which could not be done officially through the Ambassador at Paris. Amongst his other duties were the administration of the Guelph Fund and the superintendence of the political press. Herr von Keudell's subsequent resignation of his appointment as Ambassador at the Quirinal was by no means based on differences with the Chancellor, as has been maintained, his only reason being his desire to give his children a German education and to avoid the effect of a southern climate.

William I. hesitated a long time before he could consent to sign the patent appointing Lothar Bacher

256 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

as a secretary of legation. It is even said that the King crushed his pen underfoot in his indignation that Bismarck should have suggested one who in earlier days had been such an opponent of taxation for an appointment in the Foreign Office. Later on, however, he recognized how valuable an assistant Bismarck had acquired, and had direct relations with him on various occasions.

Bucher was at first somewhat ignored by his colleagues, and for the time being it was considered advisable that no mention of his appointment should be made in the *Staats Anzeiger*. His capacity for work was enormous; for instance, if a question was discussed at dinner in Varzin, the following morning would find an exhaustive *promemoria* by Bucher on the Chancellor's breakfast-table. Another characteristic trait was his great capacity for silence, and many a guest came away from Varzin without having heard even one word from the mouth of Privy Councillor Bucher.

Concerning Hermann Wagener, who wished to retire on being passed over for promotion, the Chancellor wrote to Roon in October, 1868: "He is not such a help to me officially as he might be with his talents. Inexperience of office work, obstinacy, threats to retire, other occupations, and above all the shock to my confidence by Senfft's threats *nomine* Wagener, in the event of the latter retiring, intervene and disturb. Yet Wagener is the only debater of the Conservative party, hard and uncomfortable though he be, who is still necessary; and even if he does retire, I am sure he has sufficient honour not to divulge official secrets. For parliamentary reasons I beg you to avoid precipitation in this matter, and if

necessary to influence his Majesty in this direction. One must not judge Wagener solely as a ministerial councillor, but also as a deputy and a man of service to the Conservative and Royal cause. I do not know who is to replace him in the Chamber, and gratitude is due to him for 'Forty-eight.'"

The official relationship between the Chancellor and Wagener is clearly shown by the following exchange of letters at the commencement of the "Kultur-Kampf" in February, 1872. Wagener wrote as follows: "I beg to report most obediently to your Highness that I am very unwell to-day and unable to work. The reproaches yesterday evening were very painful to me, the more so as they must convince me that my powers are no longer equal to my work." The Prince replied, "I hope that you will soon be restored to health; and in my nervous and unhealthy condition I beg that you will not make my life more burdensome by disagreements about external matters than it is already. You are the only one of my *entourage* with whom I can speak frankly without reservation, and if I cannot do that any more I shall be suffocated by my bile. I have not reproached you so much as the slow progress of business in the Ministry, and even if the former had been the case I should think that you ought to be able to pardon so old and much tortured a friend."

A characteristic trait of Bismarck's methods of educating his sons is shown by the fact that Count William voted against a resolution of the Chancellor's in the Reichstag. On being questioned, Bismarck replied that he had always been careful to preserve the complete independence of his sons. Greatly against the

258 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

inclination of his wife he never asked his sons—even at the early age of six—or allowed them to be asked where they were going, but permitted them to act freely for themselves.

Count William's career as a member of the Reichstag was a comparatively short one, and his activity was displayed rather behind the scenes as an intermediary between his father and the Parliamentarians than as a principal actor on the stage. Nevertheless, in fighting against the Chancellor's opponents, Count William's vigorous efforts attracted the special attention of Eugen Richter's faction, and so it happened that he lost his seat at the autumn election of 1881, and since then he has only sat in the Prussian House of Deputies.

In 1885, after serving as assistant to Herr von Tiedemann in the Imperial Chancellerie, and also as secretary to his father in the Prussian Ministry, Count William was appointed *Landrat* (district magistrate) of Hanau; but even there the hatred of his father's opponents pursued him. A revocation of the order forbidding merry-go-rounds to be accompanied by barrel-organs, and an admonition to National School teachers against frequenting public-houses and playing cards, called down on him the anathemas of the champions for the liberty and equal rights for all men.

On being appointed to the Presidency of the Government in Hanover four years later, however, Count William learned that his efforts for the welfare of Hanau had not passed unappreciated, and the departure of "Count Bill" was lamented on all sides.

On the dismissal of Prince Bismarck and the resignation of Count Herbert in 1890, Count William remained

Bismarck and his Fellow-Workers 259

in office, and in due course (in 1895) was promoted to the province of East Prussia.

After probationary service in 1874 in the Embassies at Dresden and Munich, Count Herbert Bismarck commenced his political career as his father's amanuensis and secretary. The Chancellor had need of such loyal and discreet help, since State secrets, as Louis XIV. said, must be entrusted to the fewest possible hands. But Count Herbert was also of service in negotiating matters on behalf of the Chancellor, such, for instance, as the occupation and administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time of the Berlin Congress, and, later on in London, in connection with Lord Granville's indiscretions regarding Egypt and Samoa.

In November, 1881, Count Herbert was attached to the London Embassy under Count Münster, where he remained until 1884, and thus witnessed the first efforts of German colonial policy, which afterwards were to fall into his hands for development. A few months were then passed at the Embassy to the Russian Court, where Count Herbert met Prince William (the present Emperor) of Prussia at the coming-of-age festivities of the Czarewitch in May, 1884. On his return from Russia, Count Herbert was appointed Ambassador at the Hague.

In the autumn of 1884, three years after his brother had lost his seat, Count Herbert was returned to the Reichstag by a Schleswig-Holstein constituency. On May 11, 1885, he was appointed Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, but since his chief, Count Hatzfeldt, had been transferred to London, the bulk of the work fell on his shoulders at the time when

260 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Germany's colonial policy was first being developed. On his promotion as Secretary of State in May, 1886, a noisy clamour was raised by the Opposition. They said that the traditions and routine of the various diplomatic personages, with whom he had now to correspond, were unknown to him. His opponents affected to forget his many years' experience of practical diplomacy under his father's immediate supervision, and it was absurd to maintain that Count Herbert was unacquainted with either office routine or diplomatists in general. It was not without reason that he was declared to be the Chancellor's "most trusted assistant in politics." It was, besides, of vital importance to the quick despatch of business that the discussion of these affairs with the Chancellor should be settled as soon as possible, and in this his son's position enabled such decisions to be obtained with the least delay. Count Herbert's promotion at the age of thirty-eight as Minister on April 26, 1888, by the Emperor Frederick, again gave rise to discussion about such youthful ministers. However, even in the Bismarck family this appointment had a precedent, for among others who had attained such high rank at an early age was William Augustus von Bismarck, an ancestor of the Count, who was appointed Minister of War in 1782 at the age of thirty-two.

It was under William II. that Count Herbert's energy and diplomatic talents had most scope. The difficulties with England and the United States concerning the Samoan question, where a party of German marines suffered a reverse at the hands of the insurgents, were settled, at least for the time being, by a Conference at

Berlin in 1889, over which he presided. The German colonial policy in East and West Africa was under the direct superintendence of Count Herbert, and also included the question of the suppression of the slave trade, which the Chancellor had left entirely in the hands of his son. After accompanying the Emperor on his travels to the various European Courts, Count Herbert paid a visit to England in March, 1889, to ascertain the wishes of the Queen as to the approaching visit of the Emperor, which took place in August of the same year.

As the Chancellor's advancing years rendered his parliamentary *soirées* burdensome to him, Count Herbert stepped into the breach and relieved his father of the greater part of his social duties.

Since the plan that Prince Bismarck should be gradually relieved of his offices—he was to remain Imperial Chancellor, with Count Herbert as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Herr von Boetticher as President of the Prussian Ministry—came to naught, Count Herbert followed his father's example and sent in his resignation, though the Emperor, according to the *Kölnische Zeitung*, repeatedly attempted to dissuade him from this step.

VII

IN LIGHTER VEIN

AFTER working late at night with his secretaries at Berlin on November 21, 1876, Prince Bismarck joined the family circle for a cup of tea. The conversation eventually turned on the Reichstag, which had just been opened, and the Prince expressed the opinion that the session would end before Christmas.

"Man proposes and—Lasker disposes," interrupted Herr von P——. The Prince frowned as if the jest did not please him; but Privy Councillor L—— did not appear to have noticed this, for he remarked, "A curious document reached me to-day; it is entitled 'The best means of curtailing the sessions of the Reichstag and Landtag,' or, 'What Lasker costs the State every year.'"

A shout of laughter followed, in which every one joined with the exception of Prince Bismarck.

"Where is the document, my dear Councillor?" asked Herr von P——.

"Oh! I have got it here, and I would read it aloud if I thought it would not be tedious to the company."

Every one wished that the pamphlet should be read aloud, and the Prince assented by his silence.

Privy Councillor L—— then commenced—

“Since Lasker first mounted the parliamentary tribune in 1865 he has uttered a total of 927,745,328 words in the Dönhofsplatz and at the other end of the Leipzigerstrasse—154 times as many words as the whole of the Old Testament, including the Apocrypha, contains; or 42 times as many as Goethe wrote; or 3.9 times as many as Cicero used in the speeches which have been preserved. If all the words spoken by Lasker were written consecutively on one strip of paper they would go more than nine times round the world, that is to say, nine times from Berlin across the Atlantic to America, the Pacific, Japan, Asia, Jerusalem, and back again to Berlin.” Renewed laughter, in which the Prince, at first reluctantly, joined. “If Lasker continues to talk at that rate, the strip will soon reach from the Dönhofsplatz to the moon.”

“Pray how long will it be before it reaches the sun?” asked a lady.

“The statistician unfortunately does not say,” replied L—. “Lasker has moved a total of 27,334 amendments, of which 27,211 have been carried. In eleven years, only, the shorthand reports record no less than 11,874 cheers, of which 8,881 were ‘loud.’ He has only once been called to order.”

“What!” exclaimed the audience, “Lasker has been called to order?”

“Certainly,” interrupted the Prince, “a year ago in the Reichstag on account of a remark about Windthorst. It is the only thing upon which I can heartily congratulate him.”

And so the merry jest proceeded until Bismarck, in reply to his wife, observed, “I should be quite pleased

264 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

to have Lasker in the Ministry, only he is too many sided. Choice is tiresome; I should not know whether to entrust him with Justice, Finance, the Interior, or Commerce."

"War, my dear Otto, War," interrupted Herr von P——.

"Or Public Worship," remarked a lady.

"Well," replied the Prince, "a good lawyer easily makes a good Minister of Public Worship, either Falk or Lasker." A remark that caused general astonishment.

The following amusing anecdote was related at dinner one evening by Bismarck:—

"The Grand Duke of Mecklenburg was gambling at the Doberan tables, and was betting on the same numbers as a rich master potter who stood next to him. Both having lost their money, the Grand Duke inquired, "*Na Pötter wat makt vir nu?*" (Well, potter, what shall we do now?) "Oh," replied the master potter, "*Hoheit schriewen Steurn ut, un ik mak Pött!*" (Your Highness will screw up the taxes, and I shall make pots!)

In expressing his sincere pleasure that the fourth part of the congratulatory letters, poems, etc., on the occasion of his birthday should have come from women and girls, Bismarck remarked, "I consider this a good sign, for, to judge by my own experience, the good will of women is not so easily gained as that of men. Moreover, the fair sex has never been partial to me.—I don't know why. I shall never forget the Grand Duchess X. She would not have anything to do with me. She used to say that I was too arrogant, that I spoke as if I were a Grand Duke. Apparently she

divided the human race into three classes—whites, blacks, and Grand Dukes; but she of course places the Grand Dukes first."

•St. Petersburg society in 1859 was agreeably surprised with its new Ambassador, for until his arrival it had been accustomed to court-bred pedants, whose chief object was to bask in the Czar's favour. The original and forcible character of the new Prussian representative was therefore all the more welcome; and though the Bismarcks were unable to vie with the splendid entertainments of the other diplomats of the Russian capital, the little dinners and *soirées* at their house, near the Nikolai Bridge, were far more popular than were the tedious display of others.

Bismarck's relations with Alexander II. were also on a very different footing to those of his predecessor. For instance, at a dinner given in honour of the King of Prussia, the Czar omitted to drain his glass in toasting his uncle, expressing the wish to devote the remainder to Bismarck's health. Bismarck pretended embarrassment, and pointing to his own empty glass, remarked, "I would willingly follow your Majesty, but we Germans have a saying, 'He who means well drains his glass.'" The Czar smiled, finished his glass, and drank Bismarck's health in a fresh bumper.

That Bismarck could take a joke against himself in good part is shown by an incident which occurred at the Wallner Theatre at Berlin, in 1863. Herr von Beust and Bismarck went to see a new play, in which the recent press measures came in for unstinted criticism. Both Ministers joined in the loud applause which rewarded the efforts of the actor, who, in spite of

266 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

repeated calls, refused to appear on the stage. At last he came forward and remarked with the utmost calm, "It was not necessary to call me. Behind that door I hear everything that goes on in here." Renewed bursts of applause greeted the hit at Bismarck, for he had, a short time before, left the Chamber of Deputies during a violent attack on the Ministry and retired to the Ministers' room close by. One of the speakers then remarked on the absence of the Minister against whom the attack was directed. Bismarck suddenly entered the Chamber with the words, "It is not necessary to call me, for I can hear so loud a voice even in the next room!"

Bismarck once related, in tones of the warmest appreciation, the following characteristic traits of the great Field Marshal, Count Moltke :—

"He was quite an exception in his punctilious devotion to duty; his was a peculiar nature, always ready and implicitly reliable, because he was cool to the very core. He would never have forgiven himself the least irregularity, even in his dress." Always *à quatre épingles*, the saying of the ever correct clock of duty applied to him by day and by night. Bismarck himself was far behind him so far as externals were concerned.

"It often happened that I had to wake Moltke and go with him to the King when particularly important news arrived. On such occasions I had the right to call my old master up at any hour of the night. After passing through all the guards and other obstacles to reach Moltke, I had only to wait five, or, at the most, ten minutes. Then he was ready: washed, faultlessly dressed according to regulation, with even his boots

freshly polished. Once it happened that the King said to me when we went to him, 'What! a white tie so early in the morning?' 'At your Majesty's service,' I replied; 'but it dates from yesterday.' It was about this time that I heard the only joke which ever fell from Moltke's lips. It was indeed a most critical time: the last few days before our invasion of Bohemia and Saxony. I had received news which made an earlier commencement of the struggle seem advisable, so I begged Moltke to come to me, and asked him if we could start twenty-four hours earlier than had been fixed. In reply he asked for paper and pencil, and went into the next room. After about a quarter of an hour he returned and said, 'Yes, it is possible.' To be able to effect this had the same influence on him as a glass of champagne would have on one of us; in other words, the bloodthirsty creature became so joyful that from very light-heartedness he made, I believe, the only joke of his life. He had grasped the door-knob ready to depart, but turned to me again and said, 'Do you know that the Saxons have blown up the bridge over the Elbe at Dresden?' 'Oh, that is indeed bad news!' said I. 'With water,'* added Moltke, and promptly departed. Yes, yes; his was quite a different nature to mine. He never was a runaway."

In the old Frankfort days Bismarck did eventually arrive at a fair understanding with Count Thun, though the latter, from the first, sought to lord it over his colleague by receiving him in his shirt-sleeves. With ready wit the Prussian remarked, "Your Excellency is

* A play on the words *gesprengt* (blown up) and *besprengt* (watered).

268 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

quite right; it is terribly hot," and, taking off his coat, sat down beside his would-be master.

During the halt of the Royal headquarters-staff at Mayence, in August, 1870, a barber was summoned to the Chancellor's quarters. On entering the room the man saw Bismarck in an easy chair, smoking his "long" pipe, and reading his correspondence. Going up to the astonished barber the Chancellor said the one word "Shave," put his pipe away, sat down and placed a napkin round his neck. The barber completed his work in absolute silence—*mirabile dictu!*—and was dismissed with, "Again to-morrow." This silent interview was repeated day by day until the day of his departure, when the Chancellor jokingly inquired, "You will accept Prussian money in payment?" "Certainly, your Excellency; in that respect I'm like a Prussian: I take what I can get," which repartee gained him six thalers and a hearty laugh from Bismarck.

Reference was once made to Bismarck's intercepted "Sedan" letter to his wife, which was published in facsimile by the *Figaro*. "Yes," said Bismarck; "I was more fortunate than many others, whose letters were intercepted during the war; my letter might be made public, and so it was eventually read by her to whom it was addressed. In the year 1866 a whole Saxon post was brought to me, amongst others a letter of a Saxon Prince. I had to open it. The Saxons had just been defeated; the Prussians were victorious everywhere, and yet the letter contained a scathing criticism of the Prussian troops . . . 'the fellows can't even shoot.' . . . I sealed it up again without taking a copy."

During the subsequent course of the conversation the Prince observed, "When such a new Minister has got his first few *crachats* (stars) and stands in front of a looking-glass, he slaps himself on his chest and says, 'You really are a very fine fellow!' and from that moment he knows everything better than any one else."

At dinner at Rethel, on September 4, 1870, Bismarck observed to his neighbour, Count Frederick Beust, that he had had an interview with Napoleon on the day after Sedan, whilst Moltke was arranging with Wimpffen for the surrender of Sedan. As it would have been bad taste to discuss politics at this meeting, the conversation rather resembled a talk with "a young girl with whom one dances the cotillon for the first time, and with whom one is not well acquainted."

Count Beust, Aide-de-camp to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, congratulated Bismarck at Versailles, on January 15, 1871, on the excellent relations existing between the German Chancellor and his namesake, Count Beust, the Austrian Minister. "Yes," said Bismarck, "that is all very well; but it always reminds me of the story of the slater who, in falling from a tower, remarked as he passed each story, 'All's well so far.'"

Later on, when dessert was being passed round, Bismarck observed, "We should not have been tempted by apples had we been in Adam's place; it would have had to be oysters or boar's head at the very least."

It was in Madame Jesse's house at Versailles that Bismarck gave utterance to a multitude of *obiter dicta* regarding the very necessary occupations of eating and

270 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

drinking. He admitted smilingly that his appetite was hereditary. "In our family we are all large eaters. If there were many of the same capacity in the country the State could not exist; I should emigrate. . . . I admit that I eat too much, or rather too much at one time. I cannot rid myself of the folly of having⁶ only one meal in the day. Formerly it was even worse, for then I only drank tea in the early morning and ate nothing at all until 5 p.m., though I smoked incessantly, and that did me a great deal of harm. By doctor's advice I now eat at least two eggs in the morning and smoke but little. But I am to have several meals—to-day one and a half beefsteaks and a few slices of pheasant. That sounds rather much, but it is not much, for as a rule it is my only meal. I breakfast, it is true, but the meal only consists of two eggs and a cup of tea without milk. After that nothing till the evening. If I eat a quantity then I am like a boa constrictor, but I cannot sleep."

Looking at the menu one day he laughingly remarked, "There's always one dish too many. I am resolved to ruin my digestion with duck and olives, and now there is Rheinfelder ham, of which I must now eat too much for fear of not getting my share (the Chancellor was absent from breakfast that day, December 22, 1870), and there is also wild boar from Varzin." Ham seems to have been a favourite dish of the Chancellor, for on another occasion when he was to dine with the Crown Prince, he remained at his own table until the Varzin ham was brought in, having told the footman, "Bring it in whilst I am here; it must be consumed with my co-operation—with thoughts of home."

The Prince was also very fond of hard-boiled eggs, though in 1870 he could not manage more than three, whilst formerly he was able to eat eleven at one time. Count Bismarck-Bohlen then observed that he had once eaten fifteen plover's eggs. "I am ashamed," replied Bismarck, "to say what my performances have been in that respect." No doubt the "loyal men of Jever" could have given him an honourable testimonial in the matter. •

The appearance of carp on the table one day gave the Chancellor an occasion to discuss the merits and demerits of the finny tribe. Marena and trout were his favourites amongst fresh-water fish, but on the whole he preferred their ocean brethren, especially the cod. "But a well-smoked flounder is also not bad, and I should not like to see even the common herring despised when it is fresh." About oysters he said, "In my young days I did as great a service to the inhabitants of Aix-la-Chapelle as Ceres did to humanity by the invention of agriculture; that is, by teaching them how to roast oysters." The Chancellor's receipt ran thus, "Sprinkle the oysters with grated Parmesan and bread crumbs, and roast them in their shells over a clear fire."

Bismarck recalled with pleasure the flavour of fresh lampreys, and also praised the Elbe salmon, which he declared was "the correct mean between the Baltic and the Rhine salmon, which is too fat to suit me." The next topic was bankers' dinners, "where a dish is not considered good unless it is expensive; carp, for instance, is despised because it is a comparatively cheap fish in Berlin. Pike-perch is preferred because it is

272 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

difficult to transport. Besides I do not care for it, and I think as little of *muræna*—the meat is too soft. On the other hand, I could eat *marenas* every day, in fact I almost prefer them to trout, which I only like when they are medium-sized, about half a pound in weight. There is not much to be said in praise of the large ones, which it was customary to serve at the Frankfort dinners. They generally come from the Heidelberg Wolfsbrunnen, and are expensive enough, so they must appear on the menu."

Good mutton and brisket of beef were amongst the favourite dishes of the Prince's table, whilst fillet and roast beef were not much relished. Of hares he observed, "A French hare is really nothing in comparison to a Pomeranian hare; it does not taste like game at all. How different are our hares which get their good flavour from heather and thyme."

At the time the Parisians were compelled to turn to horses and other animals for their food, Bismarck inquired one day at table, "Is that *du cheval*?" and on receiving the answer that it was honest ox, continued, "It is curious that one does not eat horse-flesh unless compelled to, like the people in Paris who soon will have little else to eat. The probable reason is because the horse is more akin to us than other animals. As a rider, we are, as it were, a part of it. It's the same with the dog. *Du chien* is said to taste quite nice, and yet we don't eat it. The more familiar a thing is to us the less we like to eat it. It must be very disgusting to eat monkeys, whose hands look human! Neither does one care to eat *carnivora*—animals of prey, wolves, lions, even bears, though the latter live less on flesh than on plants.

I do not even like to eat a chicken that has been fed on meat—not even its eggs.”

Bismarck's favourite fruit were cherries, and blue plums stood next in his estimation. As the Gruyère was being handed round, some one asked the Chancellor whether cheese and wine went well together. “Different kinds to different wines,” was the reply; “sharp tasting cheeses, like Gorgonzola and Dutch cheese, do not, but others certainly do. At the time when there was much drinking in Pomerania, two centuries ago, the Rammin family were the hardest drinkers. One of them got some wine from Stettin which he did not care about, and so he complained to the wine merchant. He received the following reply, ‘Eat cheese with your wine, Herr von Rammin; the wine will then taste the same in Rammin as it does in Stettin.’” This anecdote led to the subject of drinks in general. When the Chancellor and his staff were in St. Avold, the possibility of finding themselves without beer was mooted, but Bismarck thought that would not be a great loss. “The vastly increasing consumption of beer is to be deprecated. Beer makes a man stupid, lazy, and incapable. It is the cause of all the democratic political discussions to which men listen. A good corn-brandy would be preferable.” A glass of brandy at dinner reminded the Chancellor of the following *dictum*: “Lately—if I am not mistaken it was at Ferrières—a general enunciated the following maxim regarding the beverages of mankind: claret for children, champagne for men, brandy for generals.” One day Count Bismarck-Bohlen, who looked after the commissariat of the Chancellor's suite, reported, No more

274 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

brandy! The Chancellor replied, "Telegraph at once, 'Old Nordhäuser (corn-brandy) quite indispensable at headquarters; send two jars immediately.'"

Here it may be mentioned that Count Moltke was not only a great general, but also a talented inventor of new drinks. After a day's shooting with Bismarck, in Baron Rothschild's copse, the Chief of the Staff brewed a new kind of punch for the company out of champagne, hot tea and sherry.

"In earlier days," so the Chancellor related at Versailles, "I was at the Letzingen hunt, under Frederick William IV., and a 'trick' flagon, dating from the time of Frederick William I., was used. It was a hart's horn, holding about three-quarters of a bottle, and shaped so that although one could not place one's lips in direct contact with the hollow part, it had to be emptied without spilling a drop. The wine was very cold, but I drank it off, and my white waistcoat did not even show one drop spilt. The company opened their eyes, whilst I called out, 'Give me another!' But the King, who was visibly annoyed at my success, exclaimed, 'No, this must not be!' And so I gave it up. A capacity for liquor was a necessary qualification for the diplomatic service in those days. Diplomats drank the weak heads under the table, questioned them on important matters they wanted to know, and then made them agree to all sorts of impossible things. Sometimes the victim had to sign documents there and then, and when sober again had no idea how he had come to do so."

Nor did Bismarck despise tea, especially in the evening during his leisure hours, when among his staff. A few cups of tea with cognac he declared were good

for the health, and many a tankard of cold tea formed his refreshment at night.

The following documents illustrate a passage of arms with a German Editor.

“ November 27, 1878.

“ TO EDITOR STEIN, IN MAGDEBURG.

“ The Imperial Chancellor has commissioned me to inform you that, owing to your letter of the 26th inst., he is prepared to withdraw from the prosecution against you. Will you therefore name the Court which has cognisance of this matter ?

“ COUNT BISMARCK,

“ Court Assessor.”

The letter in question ran as follows :—

“ *To His Serene Highness Prince Bismarck, at
Friedrichsruh.*

“ Magdeburg, November 26, 1878.

“ MOST SERENE HIGHNESS ! PUISSANT CHANCELLOR
OF THE EMPIRE,

“ Your Serene Highness has summoned me on account of an article of mine in the *Potsdamer Zeitung*, ‘ The Crown Prince as Imperial Chancellor.’ I did not intend to insult your Serene Highness. Did I not once call you ‘ My dear Otto ’ in a letter, thereby paying you the highest honour it is possible to pay to so high-placed and famous a man ? But now I consider that you have come to the end of your strength, which you have sacrificed in the service of the Fatherland. In your place thousands of others would have retired long

276 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

ago, for you are nothing but a slave to your exhausting position, whereas you might live at your ease amongst your memories, as a respected private gentleman. *Beatus ille qui procul negotiis.* I had to do six weeks in prison for Herr Camphausen (whom I attacked far more sharply than your Serene Highness); it was the saddest time of my life, and I would not like to go through it again. I therefore beg most humbly that you will withdraw from the prosecution. Will your Serene Highness consider the enclosed article, 'The Latest about Prince Bismarck,' as a counterblast?

"With the greatest admiration,

"Your Serene Highness's most humble servant,

"JOHANN FRIEDRICH STEIN, Senior,
"Editor."

Fortunately for Bismarck the following letter did *not* reach him, owing to the precautions taken in dealing with postal packages despatched from infected areas.

"GRACIOUS SIR,

"Your Serene Highness will find in this envelope a lock of hair and two pieces of stuff, which come from a so-called plague-patient in the now notorious village of Wetljanka, who died in my presence on the 20th of January, 1879. The piece of linen was cut from the shirt which the deceased wore on his body during the twenty-two hours of his illness. The piece of cloth is from his counterpane. The articles in question have been carefully shut up since the 20th in a hermetically sealed capsule in order that the secretions with which they are impregnated may be preserved as

far as possible. I permit myself to send your Serene Highness the above-named articles in the hope that they may contribute in dissipating the exaggerated anxiety which the Asiatic plague has evoked in Germany. If, as I am convinced, your Serene Highness does not feel any discomfort after receipt of the enclosed (the effects can be ascertained after the lapse of forty-eight hours), this argument will be decisive.

"I have the honour, etc.,

"N. A., Citizen of Wetljanka."

On the occasion of a visit to Jena, Bismarck was reminded at lunch by Professor Delbrück of a saying of his, "that it is easier to go through the world without feminine baggage."

The Prince in reply seized the opportunity to explain his meaning.

"I am very grateful to the last speaker for the whole of his toast, with the exception of his quotation about feminine baggage. I think there must be some misunderstanding. If I made use of the above-mentioned expression I could only have meant the 'excess weight' which one has to fear when one travels with ladies (laughter). 'Free luggage' will always be very agreeable. Moreover, I am by no means desirous of recommending celibacy, since I am far too great an admirer of the feminine sex for State, military, and legal reasons.

"In order to rid myself the more effectually of such a suspicion, I beg you all to drink with me to the health of the ladies present, both married and single. May they assist in carrying the memory of to-day to their homes, and impressing it on their children. To-day's

278 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

proofs of sympathy would have been incomplete without the ladies. The fact that the cordial reception given me from Dresden to Jena meets with approval from the ladies is to me significant of the endurance of the German Empire (applause). That which our women adopt will be defended by our children; if they are girls, in the family circle; if they are men, on the battlefield, if needs be. With this interpretation to the quotation, I drink to the health of the ladies, as a politician and as an admirer of the fair sex."

In order to show the feeling of insecurity of the Czar of all the Russias amongst his subjects, Prince Bismarck related the following anecdote of the Emperor Nicholas.

The Court physician had prescribed massage for some ailment of the Czar, who however was unable to find a single person in his *entourage* to whom he cared to entrust the task. At his wits' end, he at last applied to Frederick William IV. for a few non-commissioned officers of the Prussian Guard; these were sent, and returned to Berlin after the completion of the rubbing "cure," heavily laden with presents. "So long as I can look my Russians in the face everything is well," Nicholas is reported to have said, "but I will not risk letting them work away at my back!"

It was the Chancellor's custom to invite the various officials of Kissingen to dinner towards the end of his annual visit, and amongst those thus honoured was the postmaster (since deceased), who rejoiced in a very pronounced "corporation." Prince Bismarck, who esteemed the worthy postmaster very highly, was struck by the marked development of this bodily characteristic, and inquired solicitously after his health.

The flattered postmaster thanked the Prince for his kind inquiry.

“To judge from your looks, you must have flourished especially of late years; but you do not appear to have adopted the right cure,” the Prince remarked with a smile.

“Oh yes, your Highness! I not only go in for the cure, but I have also employed many other means; and up to now nothing has done me any good.”

“Well, I can tell you of a remedy as simple as it is sure, and which cannot fail to be of service.”

“May I ask your Highness to tell me what it is? I would ever be grateful for it,” replied the postmaster.

The curiosity of the remainder of the luncheon party had been aroused by this conversation, and everybody listened attentively to hear of the Chancellor's remedy.

“The remedy is not only very simple, but it is also inexpensive—you need only take over the duties of one of your rural postmen for four weeks, and you will surely be rid of your burden.” The postmaster, though at first rather taken aback, joined heartily in the burst of laughter at his own expense.

A Kissingen doctor, who also received an invitation every year, did not fare much better than his fellow-citizen.

“I am not feeling very well after the Rakoczy water which I drank early this morning,” complained the Prince.

“Your Highness had better drink one glass less to-morrow; that will certainly relieve you,” ordered the doctor.

“That will hardly be possible,” quoth Bismarck.

“And why will that not be possible, your Highness?”

280 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

"For the simple reason that I only drank half a glass this morning," retorted the Prince with a smile.

Princess Bismarck was on one occasion unwell at Varzin, and a certain Doctor B—— was consulted. Though the Princess's condition was by no means serious, the doctor was asked to stay the day and dine. Perhaps the Varzin wine was a little stronger than he was accustomed to, for he narrated the following "true" story: "A peasant lad was once so severely wounded at a fight in a neighbouring village, that the top of his skull was completely shattered and the whole of the brain exposed. I was soon at hand, and used no fewer than twenty-five stitches, with which, after a fashion, I mended his head; thanks to my skill, however, he was able to resume work in three days' time."

On repeating this veracious story on one occasion, Prince Bismarck paused and inquired whether any of his guests happened to be a town councillor, for in that case he would not be able to finish the story. As every one denied the soft impeachment, the Prince continued: "Of course I pretended to have no doubt as to the truth of Doctor B——'s story, and only said, 'Well, my dear doctor, let me tell you another story which is as true as yours. A man once went to a well-known Berlin surgeon and complained of terrible headaches which he could not get rid of. "Oh, we can easily help you," said the celebrated operator; "your complaint is due to the brain, which seems to be deficient in some way." He then loosened the top of his skull, removed the brain, and said to him, "There, you won't be troubled with any more pains; come again in a few days and you can have your brain put back readjusted." The good man went

home very much relieved and pleased. A few days passed, and as the man did not return, the surgeon sent a message to him that it was high time to come and fetch his brain. The man sent back word to the surgeon, "I have since become a town councillor, and have no further use for a brain." Though Doctor B—— joined in the laugh, he nevertheless hurried away as soon as dinner was over, and never again told me any *true* stories."

In the early winter months of 1892, Bismarck entertained his guests at Varzin with many an amusing tale.

"At the time I possessed no other decoration than the Medal for Saving Life, the ribbon of which exactly resembles that of the Fourth Class of the Red Eagle. I was one day walking quickly towards the station when a street-boy called to me, 'Kann ick Ihnen nich eene Droschke besorjen, Herr Baurat?' (Can't I get you a cab, Mr. *Buildings Inspector*?)."

"After I had attained the rank of major, I once went out in uniform, when a policeman, thinking I was a major in active service, begged me to disperse a crowd which blocked the traffic, and with which he was unable to cope. I readily did so, but as he seemed to contemplate further similar requests, I explained to him, that I was sorry to be also the President of the Prussian Ministry, and as such could not place myself any longer at the disposal of a policeman."

"Later on I even rose to the rank of general, and one day passed a policeman in Berlin who did not salute me. 'Don't you salute officers?' I asked him. 'Oh yes, sir,' he replied in the innocence of his heart; 'but only superior officers.' 'Well, don't you count generals as

282 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

superior officers, my good man?' 'Certainly; but you are not one.' 'Perhaps you don't know that I am the Imperial Chancellor?' 'No, how should I know that?' he exclaimed; 'I have only just been transferred to Berlin from the extreme East.' 'I was so rejoiced to find that at last there was 'somebody in Berlin who did not know me, that I did not report the man!'

"During the war, the Grand Duke of Oldenburg called at Rothschild's château of Ferrières to pay me a visit. 'What does he want here?' said my smartest servant to another. 'Has he been announced?'"

Turning to his wife, Bismarck asked, "Do you remember our excellent Mecklenburg servant, Johanna?"

The Princess nodded.

"Well, he was for a time with a West Prussian in my service," continued the Prince, turning to the company. "One day I heard the two having a lively argument in the hall, and indulging in some sharp sallies. At last my West Prussian played his highest trump by calling out contemptuously to the Mecklenburger, 'What does he want—he hasn't even got a King'" [Mecklenburg being only a Grand Duchy].

In speaking of his dogs, Sultan and Tyras, Bismarck observed of the former, "When I was away from home he looked for me everywhere in deep dejection. At last to comfort himself he seized my white military cap and my deerskin gloves, carried them in his mouth to my study, and remained there with his nose on my things until I returned. Old Tyras too was very intelligent and faithful. In going to the Reichstag I used to walk through the garden behind the Chancellor's

palace, opened the gate to the Königgrätz Strasse, and had only to turn to Tyras and say the word 'Reichstag.' The dog at once hung his head and tail and retired dejectedly. On one occasion I left my stick, which I could not take with me into the street as I was in uniform, on the inner wall of the garden before passing through the gate. After four hours I returned from the Reichstag. Tyras did not, as usual, meet me as I entered the house, and I asked the policeman where the dog was. 'He has been standing for four hours at the garden wall over there and won't let any one come near your Highness's stick!'"

"Another time I went for a walk with Tyras in Varzin, and saw a load of wood lying on a cart which I thought had been stolen, as it had been freshly cut. I ordered the dog to remain with the cart, and departed to fetch a man who could explain the matter. On looking back I saw that Tyras was quietly slinking after me. I turned back and laid a glove on the cart. Tyras then remained there as if rooted to the spot."

In discussing old times in Berlin, the Prince mentioned a very well-known character, Cerf, formerly director of the theatre. One of his peculiarities was his inability to read. An "urgent" letter was one day handed to him at dinner with a request for an immediate answer. Cerf looked at the address for a minute, recognized the handwriting and handed the missive to his neighbour with the remark, "Aha, this is from that funny fellow X. I cannot read his writing; will you kindly see what he really wants of me?"

On another occasion one of Cerf's guests asked the following riddle at table: "The first is our host, the

284 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

second is the name of our hostess, and the whole is to be found on this table." Cerf was indignant that such a riddle should be asked at his table, for the solution was obviously "Assiette." His wife's name was Jette, and he was not at all grateful for the other half of the word. The riddle-poser, whose orthography was not his strongest point, then elaborately explained that he had not meant "assiette" at all, but that the correct answer was *Cerfiette* (serviette).

"As the American Ambassador, Mr. Washburne, had protected the Germans in Paris during the French war, we wanted to present him with a testimonial, therefore I had a Grand Cross of the Order of the Crown made of a more costly pattern than had probably ever been manufactured before. The brilliants alone cost 1000 friedrichs d'or. But before the Emperor conferred it on him, I took the precaution to ask again if he would accept the order, and received the reply that it would have to go to the Washington Museum, as he would not be allowed to wear it. As this was not much to my liking we kept it for the time being, and inquired by what other means we could show him our gratitude. In reply he begged that I should sit to an American artist for my portrait. The latter arrived, and so I had to sacrifice myself on the altar of my country and allow myself to be painted. The artist, in real American fashion, did a very good stroke of business by painting three portraits of me at the same time."

Bismarck and Bancroft were dining one day with Herr von der Heydt, who prided himself on the quantity and quality of the food offered to his guests. In those days (1868) Bismarck was still in possession of his marvellous

appetite. Bancroft, at first amazed, became at last anxious on seeing his friend *twice* partake largely of the first courses. "Dear Count," he remarked, with a world of anxiety in his voice, "I believe there is more to come!" "I should hope so," replied Bismarck, joyfully, and renewed the terrifying practice at the next course.

In discussing the characteristics of the various nations in January, 1896, at Friedrichsruh, the Chancellor remarked, "Bancroft always seemed to me to be the ideal American Ambassador. His cultured repose of manner struck me all the more because one of his predecessors had caused me constant annoyance owing to the inconsiderate behaviour of his wife. At the receptions of the diplomatic corps she invariably took up a position in the space reserved for the passage of Royalty. She stood like a general in front of the diplomatic battle array. One chamberlain after another endeavoured to lead her back to her place in the line, but she withstood all individual assaults, and it required an army of chamberlains, advancing in battle order, to force her to retire."

This military figure of speech brought the conversation round to the Prince's position in the army, and the cuirass presented to him by the Emperor (William II.), which was then handed round for inspection. The Prince related that he had hardly ever worn a cuirass, and would, therefore, only wear this one when he had to submit to the force of circumstances. He found it an uncomfortable thing to wear. "The last time I dined at the Palace in Berlin some six or seven officers of my regiment were present, and had to wear their

• •

286 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

cuirasses during the two or three hours which dinner lasted. I sympathized with them all the more because I knew that I was the cause of what to me seemed to be torture."

Some one then mentioned that the Emperor had also dined in a cuirass at Friedrichsruh. The Prince replied, "Emperors must and can do many things that we must not and cannot."

Part of this conversation had been sustained in English, which language the Chancellor had acquired as a young man. He then related the following story, which occurred during his period in the service:—

"One day I returned, dusty and dirty after my tour of duty, direct to the hotel, where my seat at table was next to those of an English family which had arrived that day, and they began to discuss my probable position by my not very tidy exterior. One of the ladies thought it impossible for me to be an officer, and yet my hand was not that of a private. I listened to the discussion in silence. Suddenly the lady reached for a mustard-pot. As she was too far from it, I handed it to her and said in my best English, 'It is empty; if you wish for another, I will ask the waiter to get you a full one.' Tableau!"

A guest at Friedrichsruh (March, 1898) expressed his astonishment at the large number of pipes which the Prince was able to smoke with comfort, whereupon Bismarck remarked that he had once had a conversation with an old Hanoverian officer, who was stationed in a fairly lonely post on the frontier. In reply to a query whether he paid many visits to the landed gentry in the neighbourhood, the officer replied—

"No, we never visit them."

"Well, then, do you play much at cards?"

"No, we don't play cards here."

"Do you drink, then?"

"No, ~~we~~ don't drink either."

"Well, *what* do you do when you are off duty?"

"Always smoke!" was the classic answer.

• "Every great man," observed the Chancellor, "seems to have some flaw or other, just as a good apple has its speck.

"Alexander von Humboldt's demeanour was at times undignified; he was not respected at Court, though I was one of the few who treated him politely. He used to wait in the ante-room of King Frederick William IV. at Potsdam and at Sans Souci for hours, whether he received a summons or not. If the King was not inclined to see him, he drove back to Berlin after hours of waiting. Old Field-Marshal Wrangel, who one day showed some of the officers belonging to his East Prussian Regiment round Potsdam and took them everywhere, went also to Sans Souci and saw Humboldt as usual in the ante-chamber. Wrangel then said to his officers, 'You have seen His Majesty's Chinaman and negro. I shall now show you the King's universal sage.' Humboldt quickly arose from his armchair and bowed. Clapping him on the shoulder, Wrangel said, 'Well, my universal sagelet, how are you?' What Humboldt did at the Court was always a mystery to me. The *pâté de foie gras*, with which he heaped up his plate, could not have been his object, for he was rich enough to be able to eat it at home. Afterwards he

• •

288 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

used to go to Varnhagen and talk scandal about the Court and its *habitués*."

Count Rantzau one evening mentioned that old King Leopold of Belgium often used to give little parties at the commencement of his reign. At one of these an unceremonious Belgian dug him in the ribs, a proceeding not unknown in convivial circles; this, however, led to the abandonment of such parties. "Well, that was pretty cool," said Bismarck. "I should have hit the person concerned on the nose and said, 'Pass the toast.'"

Bismarck then told the following anecdote: "A new official who wanted to present himself to Minister Maybach, met him on the stairs of the office and said, 'Have I the pleasure of addressing Herr Maybach?' To which the latter replied, 'My name is Maybach, but there is no question of "pleasure" about it!'"

On hearing of a complaint about the quality of Stettin wine, Bismarck said, "Yes! The conditions of the wine trade in Stettin are curious; more claret is exported from there than is imported; the difference probably is made up from the ditches of the fortress or elsewhere."

At dinner one day Bismarck called for some Hungarian wine that Count Andrassy had sent him on relinquishing office. "In writing to thank him," observed the Prince, "I added that I hoped he would often come into and go out of office, and send me sixty bottles of wine on each occasion."

"Soldiers have a much easier task than diplomatists; they receive their instructions, and know exactly how far they have to command and obey. I have known many

clever and many stupid generals, but they never, or at least very rarely, were wanting in that tact which civilians so often lack. I think this must be due to a feeling of comradeship, which also shows itself in their outward demeanour. For instance, in the 1st Guards, this is nothing less than marvellous. In society you never hear one of them sneezing differently from the other; it is the same throughout the army, and this is the reason why all old generals resemble each other."

Shortly after the conclusion of the Bohemian campaign, a highly placed but not very gifted general gave a grand dinner to some distinguished friends, officers and politicians, Bismarck included. The dinner was served in a large hall, lavishly decorated with antlers, buffalo horns, and other sporting trophies. When Bismarck was about to sit down, he observed to his neighbour who had distinguished himself in the late campaign, at the same time drawing his attention to a gigantic trophy of ure-ox horns, "It seems, Excellency, as if we were dining to-day amongst the family portraits of our worthy host."

"I was at the University with a certain Hesse of Altona, on whom we once played a practical joke. We cleared out his room and distributed his books and all his furniture on the stairs, and opened the novel 'Schilf Levinche' at the passage, 'You shall perish like the black soul of the black adder,' etc. He took proceedings against me: every one laughed at my defence before the University judge when I repeated all this stuff out of the book, and employed only such phrases as the above. Finally I got off with a slight reprimand."

290 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

Prince Bismarck was once asked whether he would have preferred any other education to that of a Prussian "gymnasium."

"Where should that have been?" inquired the Prince; "in France, in Switzerland, or at a school in a small German State? I am greatly in favour of a classical education, and I regret that French should now be taught at the expense of Latin. But in the development of character much depends on the period and the surroundings. I left the Gymnasium an Atheist and Republican. We believed in Plato. I always had a strong passion for liberty and equality. Indeed, I remember quite distinctly, when I was ten years old, that one of my school-fellows was put under the pump in the playground, and that the idea then struck me, Why shouldn't we some day attempt the same with our master, for united we should have the power to do so. On another occasion, when our ostler was called to the reserve, I wondered why the King, *one single man*, should have the power not only to call up people against their will, but also to enforce obedience."

In discussing the activity of Privy Councillors, Bismarck said, "We shall be ruined by examinations; the majority of those who pass them are mentally so run down that they are incapable of any initiative ever afterwards. They take up a negative attitude towards everything that is submitted to them, and, what is worst of all, they have a great opinion of their capabilities because they once passed all their examinations successfully."

The extreme care exercised by the Prince regarding his beloved trees at Varzin is shown by the following

occurrence. During a drive one day he noticed that a workman engaged in laying a telegraph wire was coolly sawing the branches off a tree because they were in his way. Annoyed by such sacrilege, Bismarck stopped and severely reprimanded the man, who excused himself by saying it was done in accordance with the engineer's instructions. The Prince found out the engineer's name, and sent word that he was to come to the manor at once. Somewhat anxious about the possible result of the unsought-for interview, the engineer duly presented himself before the Iron Chancellor. Now, it happened that this particular engineer was of gigantic build both in height and breadth. Bismarck's first question was, "What regiment did you serve in?" "In the Guards, your Highness." "Flank file?" "Yes, your Highness." "Rank?" "Retired sergeant." A few more military questions followed before the Prince came to the real cause of the interview, when the engineer candidly admitted his offence. The Prince was appeased and invited his visitor to lunch, "in order to talk about the Service."

The Prince was always unwilling to have a tree cut down, and was really grieved when he had to issue orders for the removal of one of his "friends." One day a Danish forester in his service rushed up to him whilst he was out riding, and exclaimed in his Danish dialect, "I must make a confession. I have passed over a tree; it was marked to be cut down, but it was *seu sön* (so beautiful), and so I let it stand." "Well," replied Bismarck, "if it is *seu sön*, you may leave it standing in peace!"

Mr. John Booth had repeatedly urged the Prince to

292 Conversations with Prince Bismarck

thin out some plantations which had grown too dense, but the necessary action had not been taken. Booth thus describes the fate of another attempt.

"I led the conversation towards that topic as soon as the soup was handed round. Bismarck, in a loud voice, causing all conversation to cease, said, 'My plantation is not to be touched; it is a forest-plantation, and is to grow like a forest.' Knowing that I was in the right, I did not wish to be trumped like that, and remarked firmly yet gently, 'I beg your Highness's pardon, it is a protective- and not a forest-plantation—to afford you protection from the west wind. If nothing is done, the interior and lower portions of the plantation will become bare, and the purpose of its existence will not be fulfilled. It is, I venture to repeat, a protective- and not a forest-plantation.' The Prince left my remonstrances unanswered, and the subject was not pursued for the time being. But whilst we were smoking after dinner he had the matter explained to him again. . . . As I was taking my leave, Bismarck stood up, took both my hands, and said with his sunniest smile, 'Dear Mr. Booth, I have had to allow my own doctor to tyrannize over me so much of late, that I must needs allow my tree-doctor to do the same.'"

Even the neuralgic pains to which the Prince was a martyr were powerless to repress his humour. Once he complained to a friend on leaving the luncheon-table with its display of wine-bottles, "Two things have afforded me especial pleasure in life—politics and wine. Politics I may not touch any more, and now Schweninger has forbidden wine."

Bismarck's delight in a good glass of wine is shown by another jest that fell from his lips only a few weeks before his death. "I would willingly," said he, with a melancholy smile, "leave everything to my heirs—my estates, my money, but I grudge them my wine-cellar."

INDEX

A

- Albrecht of Prussia, Prince, 197
 Alexander II. of Russia, 66, 265
 Alexander III. of Russia, 156
 Alexander of Battenberg, 145, 146
 Alsace, 19, 49, 97, 213
 America, 37, 111, 171, 239
 Andrassy, Count, 219, 220, 288
 Arapoff, 109
 Arnim, Count Harry, 69, 101, 102, 248, 249, 250
 Augusta, Empress and Queen, 184, 186
 Austria-Hungary, 80-82, 87, 88, 90-92, 140, 142, 145, 146, 199, 213, 219, 224, 227

B

- Bagamoyo, 150, 151
 Bamberger, Ludwig, 2, 3
 Bancroft, Mr., 284
 Bavaria, 3, 55, 93, 119-125, 126, 130, 133, 137-140, 194, 214
 Bazaine, Marshal, 14, 18, 29, 35
 Beaconsfield, Lord, 228

- Beethoven, 151
 Belfort, 49, 52, 53, 67
 Belgium, 81, 86, 239
 Benedetti, Count, 3, 96, 213
 Benningsen, von, 171
 Berlin Congress, 108
 Beust, Count, 93, 219, 265
 Bewer, Max, 147
 Biarritz, 75, 76, 80, 81, 84
 Bismarck, Count Herbert, 109, 110, 174, 237, 260
 Bismarck, Count William, 150, 257-259
 Bismarck, Countess Marie, 84, 109
 Bismarck, Princess, 109, 110, 112
 Bleichröder, Baron, 51, 250, 255
 Blumenthal, General von, 5
 Bluntschli, 222
 Bodelschwingh, von, 247, 248
 Boers, 236
 Booth, John, 105, 107, 109, 110, 112, 115, 227, 291
 Boyer, General, 25-30, 35
 Brockdorff-Ascheberg, 109
 Bucher, Lothar, 124, 125, 255
 Bulgaria, 144, 145
 Burnside, General, 18, 19, 26, 37
 Busch, Moritz, 4, 12, 220, 237

C

Camphausen, 114
 Caprivi, Count, 127, 153, 160, 163,
 176
 Carolath, 171
 Castelnau, General, 5, 10, 14
 Cerf, Director, 283
 Chambard, Count, etc., 34
 Chamberlain, Jos., 224
 China, 174-179, 242
 Christian IX., King, 79
 Chrysander, Dr., 117
 Cochery, M., 40, 41, 43
 Commune, Paris, 58

D

Delbrück, 114, 171
 Denmark, 78-80, 96
 d'Hautpoul, General, 47
 Drouyn de L'Huys, 80
 Ducrot, General, 43

E

Emin Pasha, 150
 England, 8, 87, 103, 133, 170, 171,
 173, 225, 227, 235, 241
 Eugénie, Empress, 14, 15, 27, 28,
 83
 Eugénie, Villa, 77, 80

F

Fabri, Inspector, 235, 236
 Faure, Felix, 179, 180
 Faure, General, 5

Favre, Jules, 15-18, 22, 26, 43-49,
 51, 52, 54, 55, 60, 61, 65, 69, 71,
 73, 74, 236
 Forbes, Colonel, 18
 Francis Joseph, Emperor, 143,
 199
 Franckenstein, Minister, 139, 140
 Frankfort-on-the-Main, 57
 Frederick, Duke of Augusten-
 burg, 79
 Frederick Charles, Prince, 17,
 26
 Frederick III., Emperor, 12, 21
 Frederick, William, 186, 192, 201,
 209, 287

G

Gambetta, Leon, 20
 Garibaldi, 48
 Gastein Convention, 80
 Gero, Margrave, 12
 Goethe, 151
 Goltz, von der, 80
 Gontaut, Baron de, 102
 Gortschakoff, Prince, 39, 66, 88,
 90, 91, 107, 141, 156, 218
 Goulard, M., 69
 Grammont, Duc de, 90
 Granville, Lord, 54

H

Hahnke, General, 154
 Hansen, Jules, 78
 Harden, Maximilian, 179, 185
 Hardenberg, 94
 Hartmann, General von, 1
 Hatzfeldt, Count, 16, 69, 259

Hegel, 148
 Hegel, Councillor, 253
 Henckel, Count, 51
 Heydt, von der, 95, 248
 Hoffmann, 114
 Hohenlohe - Schillingsfürst,
 Prince, 146, 176
 Holstein, Count, 194, 195
 Humboldt, Alexander von, 287

I

Ireland, 131, 223
 Itzenplitz, Count von, 247

J

Japan, 223
 Jessé, Madame, 269
 Jewo, 163-166
 Jokai, Maurus, 104

K

Karolyi, Count, 109
 Keudell, von, 255
 Kingston, W. Beatty, 85, 97
 Kissingen, 117, 254
 Kleser, Hans, 152, 158, 163
 Kneipp, Pfarrer, 122
 Königgrätz, 212
 Krüger, President, 171, 172

L

Lasker, 113, 262, 263
 Latour, Y., 90
 Lenbach, Franz, 114, 115, 167

Leopold of Belgium, 288
 Li Hung Chang, 173
 Lorraine, 97-99
 Louis II., King, 134, 137, 138,
 194
 Louisa, Queen, 196
 Lucanus, Privy Councillor, 155
 Luitpold, Prince Regent, 134
 Lutz, Minister, 139

M

Manteuffel, General von, 209
 Maybach, Minister, 288
 Mecklenburg, Grand Duke of,
 264
 Memminger, Anton, 117
 Merimée, Prosper, 83
 Metz, 15, 17-19, 25, 26, 29, 30,
 35, 41, 42, 49, 52, 97, 98
 Moltke, Field Marshal, 5, 6, 10-
 12, 27, 33, 46, 52, 53, 97, 158,
 183, 199, 208, 211, 216, 266
 Montenegro, 144
 Moustier, De, 91
 Mouy, Count, 109
 Müller, Councillor von, 251, 252
 Muravieff, Count, 180

N

Napoleon, Prince Jerome, 44
 Napoleon, Prince Louis, 13
 Napoleon III., 9, 10, 13, 30, 34,
 • 35, 80, 89, 135, 213, 216-218
 Nesselrode, Count, 107
 Nicholas, Czar, 179
 Nobiling, Dr., 4

O

Oroet, Captain d', 5
Orloff, Prince, 76

P

Panizza, Major, 144
Pietri, 14
Pius IX., 135
Podbielski, General von, 2
Poidevin, M., 37
Poles, 214, 235
Pouyer-Quertier, 56, 57, 70

Q

Quistorp, Lieut.-General von, 196

R

Rameau, M., Mayor, 19-21, 24,
25, 31, 32, 34-36
Rantzau, Count, 167, 288
Regnier, 13-18
Remusat, M., 40
Richter, 183, 258
Roon, Count, 2, 153, 203, 208,
211, 247, 248, 251-253
Rothschild, 54, 255
Rouher, 90
Russell, Lady Emily, 99
Russell, Lord Odo, 54
Russia, 36, 65, 88, 92, 96, 104,
107, 110, 141, 145, 156, 159,
180, 181, 218, 227

S

Saxony, King of, 189
Schmitz, General, 46
Schuvaloff, Count, 106, 180
Schweninger, Dr., 121, 122,
177, 292
Sedan, 4, 28, 2f3, 269
Senfft von Pilsach, 149
Sheridan, General, 26, 37
Spinoza, 148
Stanley, H. M., 150
Stein, Editor, 276
Stolberg, Count, 94
Strassburg, 25, 98
Sultan, the, 173

T

Thiers, 37-42, 48, 49, 51-55, 62,
71-73, 100-103, 249
Thun, Count, 267
Tiedemann, 258
Trochu, General, 37, 44, 46
Tseng, Marquis, 176
Turkey, 143, 173, 223-225
"Tyras," 119, 282

U

Uhrich, General, 14
Ulrich, Louis, 4

V

Varzin, 153, 256, 270, 280, 281,
290

Vincke, von, 184-187
Virchow, Professor, 215

W

Wagener, Hermann, 256, 257
Washburne, Mr., 284
Werner, Anton, 219
Wetjanka, 277
Whitman, Sidney, Introduction
William I., 27, 28, 33, 57, 79, 80,
159, 160, 166, 184, 185, 186,

188, 189, 194, 195, 199, 200,
202-205, 208, 255, 256
William II., 123, 126, 153, 160
Wimpffen, General, 5, 6, 10, 11
Windhorst, Dr., 153, 154
Wissman, Major, 150, 244
Wrangel, Field Marshal, 287

Z

Zanzibar, 150
Zeddeler, Baron, 188

THE END

