

THE DEAD BISMARCK. A NOTABLE CAREER.

Sketch of His Life by George Alfred Townsend.

THE MAN OF BLOOD AND IRON AT ONE TIME MASTER OF ALL EUROPE.

Rising From a Youth of Little Promise to Become a King Among Men. His Unconquered Yet Successive Character—A Comparison to Cromwell—His Unflinching Spirit.

To nearly all Americans and many German-Americans the origin of such a man as Otto Edward Leopold Bismarck will be obscure even after explanation. The circumstances of German civilization are so different from British and French development that this biography must commence with some little history.

The north of Europe, in the direction of the River Elbe, a good while remained in the hands of the heathen Baltic tribes after the French and Normans. To subdue these semi-Slavonic unbelievers crusades were sent on foot, and the warriors of the cross and of the feudal German empire were rewarded with the feudal or military lands which they took from the natives. Among these unknown warriors were the ancestors of Bismarck.

He was born April 1, 1815, and might have been called among American school-boys, therefore, an April fool.

In his boyhood Napoleon had burst from Elba and carried his banner again for 100 days almost to the North sea. In laying low Napoleon as he passed through Germany from Russia the year previously appeared on the field as a Prussian prince, with Blucher and his aids, the long lived king whom Bismarck was to serve 40 years afterward as prime minister. Bismarck was six years younger than Gladstone and five years younger than Pope Leo XIII.

His father's estates were falling to ruin, and he undertook to bear agricultural lectures. The sons took charge of their parents' estates in order to save them from destruction. He went into the provincial diet of Pomerania at Stettin, but got tired of its monotony. As an agriculturist, however, he showed some vigor and was a rather severe employer, yet after a hard day's supervision he would get on his horse and ride 10 miles to some evening assembly in a town. He was moody at times from the want of real domestic life, and some called him "mad Bismarck."

Sometimes, tortured by dark thoughts, he would dash through the fields in solitude and again bring in a loud company and make a night of it, so that tales were told of him as if he were some haunted spirit. Sometimes he appeared to be a Liberal in politics. In this country solitude at Kniephof, near the Baltic, however, he read much in every direction—theology and philosophy as well as history. He studied Spinoza deeply, visited France and England and had a remarkable impudence with his official superiors. The old father died in 1845, and the sons divided the property, and Bismarck kept Kniephof and Schoenhansen.

We must understand that Prussia had undergone a complete transformation in the early part of the present century, when she recklessly attacked Napoleon and was overrun by him in one brief campaign. He imposed upon her conditions of the hardest character. Her western provinces were absorbed in one of his experimental kingdoms, and her army was compelled to be kept at a low standard. Two remarkable men, Stein and Scharnhorst, undertook to keep these conditions and yet raise Prussia to her former military rank. They therefore compelled the whole population to be a certain period under arms, and this was the commencement of the great military system of Prussia, and Bismarck's first prominence in politics was in contending against the taxpayers who would not allow the army to be kept up to an extravagant standard at their expense, while he meditated recreating Germany by driving Austria out of it and consolidating the smaller states, which after the close of the French revolution governed the diet at Frankfurt, which was somewhat like a weak congress in the United States.

In short, throughout Germany, until Bismarck reformed it, there was something like states' rights, with a diet or congress at Frankfurt, in which Austria and Prussia were the two great rivals, to be compared to Virginia and New York in the story of the United States.

It may also be explained that Germany was peculiar among the nations of Europe after the conquest of the Roman empire by the Germans whose different tribes and leaders formed nearly every kingdom in Europe. France pulled away from the empire of Charlemagne and left Germany to become the representative of the old Roman empire. The German emperors were also called kings of Rome and after being elected in a peculiar way generally went to Rome at their convenience to be crowned by the pope.

Thus a mixed military and spiritual empire existed north of the Alps until the time of Luther, when the minor princes, feeling the popular inspiration against so much Italian interference in Germany, went into revolt. Prussia was the especial country of Luther and remained Protestant and was not much affected, like other parts of Germany and all France, by the Calvinistic second reformation.

He is said not to have been very educated and had rather blank but shrewd eyes, but was determined and on during. All persons had to approach him with consideration. He himself had a strong memory and was a first class business man, could speak French and dance, but did not like athletics.

At Goettingen one of his college mates was Mosler, the American historian, who was minister at London just after the march humiliated Austria. His mother refused to send him to Heidelberg because she thought he would get the detestable habit of drinking beer there. Before he left Berlin he had fought a duel with a Jew lad named Wolf and cut off Wolf's spectacles and received a wipe in the leg.

He was a jolly student and traveled through the Harz mountains on foot and for throwing a bottle out through a window after breakfast was summoned before the faculty and came in with his cap and dog, which caused him to be fined 5 thalers. He fought about 30 duels at Goettingen and was wounded only once, showing the scar on his cheek. He is said never to have attended a lecture, rather displaced his fastidious mother, yet he passed his examination by natural gifts. He was full of hard franks.

At 20 he was made a notary or examiner in Berlin and had much to do with getting divorces. At a court ball he met his future master and king, who was struck with his tall form and grim countenance. "Justice," said Prince William, "must seek her advocates according to their height in the guards." A favorite cousin once gave him a letter to deliver, which he forgot, and when he returned it to her in three weeks he said, "I did not deliver this in order to entreat my cousin of the habit of intruding into my letters." Sometimes he would let a parcel of young foxes into the drawing room.

A man of exalted spirits, to whom the dry, common life of Prussia was insufficient, Bismarck was sure to attain distinction only in some irregular, perhaps overbearing, way. He was all the time getting ready to be a diplomatist, as his mother desired, and for that reason went to Aix-la-Chapelle, in the western section of Prussia, where there was a special court, but this was a bathing resort, and Bismarck fell in with French, Belgians and Englishmen and went with them on excursions everywhere. His first rate English made him a favorite with the young men of that nation, but he got into many scrapes and consequently had himself transferred to Potsdam, the old royal residence, an hour's ride from Berlin, where after 1838 he went into the messroom among his fellow guards.

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In Germany, something like the established church of England, and this accounts for the Lutheran priests everywhere having such close control over their congregations and schools. Luther is regarded in Germany as the founder of the literature, the common language and the popular common sense and independence of the land. Of all those things in a certain way, Bismarck was the old Tory representative, just as in England the ultra advocates of the crown were sticklers for the crown's religion.

It was Bismarck's work to drive Austria, the preponderating state, entirely out of Germany and make Prussia the new and only Austria, and to absorb several of the states offensively partitioned for Austria, and to reconstitute Germany as she now stands, with Bavaria, Saxony, Baden, etc., necessary but obedient kingdoms, all under the same military autonomy.

He used, to invade and assault Austria, the popular hostility to little Denmark. The Danes owned Schleswig-Holstein, a German territory, and were trying to abolish the German language in the laws and university. The little German states made a great outcry at this, and the two big German states had to rival each other in going to Schleswig-Holstein's assistance.

In 1842 Bismarck rescued his drowning servant in the public sight at great peril to his own life and received for it his first decoration, which he still wears amid prouder stars, the Prussian safety medal. He was a good while lieutenant in the Uhlands and owned a mad chestnut charger named Caleb.

He fell in love with his wife, Johanna von Puttkamer, while in the army. Her father and mother both opposed the marriage, but gave in before the young woman's tears. They were married July 28, 1847, after Bismarck was 32 years old. She was not 23. She saw him first in his uniform.

Upon their wedding trip King William IV of Prussia was at the hotel in Venice and commanded the groom to dine with him, which he did in a borrowed dress suit. The king sounded him thoroughly on German politics and subsequently made him ambassador to the federation at Frankfurt.

He had two estates—Schoenhansen, a 5-story and high gable house, near a church, with a broad, solid tower and wide, sharp roof, built in the year 1212, and Kniephof, far distant in Pomerania. At the former he passed his early married life, and his wife had three children—Mary Johanna, born 1848 at Schoenhansen; Nicholas Ferdinand Herbert, 1849, at Berlin; William Otto Albert, 1852, Frankfurt. He and his wife were both of half aristocratic extraction and military descent, and they inherited energy to live well. His father-in-law lived to a very advanced age.

In 1847 the king summoned a united diet and the chambers, something like the English parliament, and Bismarck appeared at the royal palace. The time was serious, as France was about to overthrow Louis Philippe and become a republic, and her example was potential in Germany.

Was it the mere accident of having formed the personal acquaintance of the king or was it original, rugged, contrary thinking which made Bismarck suddenly cease to be a Liberal and become a loud military Tory?

His brother, his cousins, his father-in-law, were also members. They all heard a great deal of Liberal twaddle. One man declared that only to get a free constitution had Prussia risen against the French in 1813.

Bismarck ascended the tribune to deny this. Prussia had risen, he said, not for politics, but for patriotism.

They howled at him and hissed. He defiantly took out a newspaper and began to read it until the president could restore order.

He had then a tall, gaunt stature, short hair, ruddy countenance and blond whiskers all round his jaws and very shining eyes. The Conservatives were destitute of good orators. Bismarck spoke in a raw and hesitating voice.

The men of 1813 were still living—it was but 34 years—and thought they knew what they had risen for.

Bismarck went up again. "True, I did not exist in those days," he said scornfully. "I always thought, however, that the men of 1813 rose against a foreign servitude. I now learn that it lay at home. For this correction I am not by any means grateful."

The Prussian press was all Liberal. It singled Bismarck out for regular abuse. It made him.

He wrote a letter to the king, Frederick William, offering him his services and life. The king sent him often at Hans Bonnet palace, Potsdam, an hour's ride by rail from Berlin. He passed the revolutionary summer at Stolpe, on the Baltic. In February, 1849, his native Brandenburg region sent him to the chambers. The Royalists made gains. People of respectable antecedents could not break the familiarity, the swagger and the perpetual threatening of a mob where till 1808 had been serfdom in a phase nearly equal to that of Russia.

"No word has been more wrongly used," vociferated Bismarck, "than the word people. Everybody has held it to signify just what suited his own view, usually as a crowd of individuals whom it was necessary to persuade."

Nevertheless he was a political worker and did not come to parliament nor get power there without scheming.

The king had put down the revolution. Bismarck opposed any further amnesty. "Ere long," said he, feeling the army to be on top, "the Almighty, who is the arbiter of battles, will throw dice and determine the controversy between the brute force of barricades and a sovereignty granted by heaven."

He opposed the Frankfurt imperial constitution.

"The Frankfurt crown may be very brilliant, but the gold must be added by melting into its composition the Prussian crown, which I oppose."

The democrats, rising again, were put down in Berlin by a volley and a charge of cavalry. Cried Bismarck:

"The motive principles of the year 1848 were far more social than national. The envy the poor had of the rich was excited in proportion to the continued feeding of a spirit of license from high quarters, which destroyed the moral elements of resistance in the minds of men. I do not believe that these evils would be averted by democratic concessions or by prospects of German unity. The sound of the trumpet has lost no charm for the Prussian ear. Frederick the Great would have turned not to constitutional union from Frankfurt, but to the most prominent peculiarity of Prussian nationality—her warlike element."

It took 17 years to demonstrate that.

"We do not need," he said, "to see the Prussian monarchy melt away in the filthy ferment of south German immorality. I have never yet heard a German soldier sing, 'What is the German fatherland?' The Thirty-eighth German regiment preserved us from the Frankfurt parliament. We are Prussians, and Prussians we desire to remain."

From such sentences came the song: I am a Prussian! See my colors gleaming—The black-white standard floats before me free. For freedom's rights my fathers' heart blood streaming—Such, mark ye! mean the black and white to me!

Shall I then prove a coward! I'll e'er be to the sword! Though day be dull, though sun shine bright on me, I am a Prussian, will a Prussian be!

Bismarck moved his family to Berlin about 1850, and there his son was born, afterward his father's assistant. Bismarck became a courtier and went to the king's estates to hunt.

He became a politician as much as Croker in New York or Quay in Pennsylvania and was often seen at a beer saloon, where once he broke his mug over a man's head for insulting words about the royal family. He made a good deal of fun of Persigny, Napoleon's fellow, who came to Berlin on a mission. Bismarck wrote a great deal for his own newspaper—The New Prussian Gazette—and was often found at the office of nights. He was having an excursion in his favorite Pomerania when news came of his appointment to Frankfurt. It was a great, bold, personal office. The king was rather taken aback at Bismarck's rapid decision to go, and so was Mantuffel, his minister.

He lighted a cigar before the presiding deputy at Frankfurt, rose late, bluffed uncivil superiors and rode horseback to the neighboring petty courts. He influenced the press. His title was ambassador. He lived in a Prussian merchant's house at Frankfurt and received the visit of the prince of Prussia, subsequently his warrior king, who was a little disturbed at Bismarck's nonchalance and youth—but 36. This prince became thick with Bismarck soon and was godfather to his son Bill, named for the prince in 1852.

The envoy rented an elegant villa, had a thousand camellias in the flower beds and dispensed fine hospitality. Every ruler with a state in any degree German kept a minister at Frankfurt. Bismarck was social with them all and with artists, authors and musicians. He also gave parties to the servants to show the Pomeranian way. He received many crosses and stars to put upon his breast, besides the life saving medal, and lent money to needy Prussian travelers who had gambled at the baths he was one day to discipline. After 10 o'clock at night he dictated his letters for three or four hours. At 5 o'clock in the morning he went riding.

"Each of us," he said, "pretends to believe of his neighbor that he is full of thoughts and plans if he would only tell, and at the same time we none of us know an atom more of what is going to happen to Germany than of next year's snow. Nobody, not even the most malicious skeptic of a democrat, believes what quackery and self importance there are in this diplomatizing. Most of the letters are opened here by postal spies."

To his wife he wrote upon his mispent youth:

"Would it might please God to fill this vessel with his clear and strong wine, in which formerly the champagne of 21 years foamed uselessly and left nothing but loathing behind. Where now are Mrs. Blank and Miss Blank? How many are buried with whom I then flirted, drank and died? How much is venerable to me now that I then ridiculed? I cannot understand how a man who considers his own nature, and yet knows nothing of God and will know nothing, can endure his existence from content and wearisomeness. I know not how I could formerly support it. Were I to live, as then, without God, without you, without my children, I should not indeed

know whether I had not better abandon life like a dirty shirt."

He argued that the Prussian army be made very strong—ready to jump into Austria, which undervalued Prussia. The war between France and Austria occurred. Prussia did not pitch in, and Bismarck in 1868 was recalled. He had become well acquainted with old Metternich. His life in Frankfurt made him the best political reporter in Germany.

Bound at once to St. Petersburg, he was visited with fierce rheumatism and was nursed by his wife at her native Reinfeld, in the Baltic land. She was a strong looking woman, of as much character as himself—not handsome, but devoted. She was a fine piano player, and he loved her music. In 1860 they all went to St. Petersburg, and Bismarck began at once to study the Russian language with a master. He was a schoolmaster to his own children and attracted great attention as a sportsman. In 1861 he figured at King William's coronation. The czar and his mother thought much of Bismarck.

He still longed for war with Austria, saying to his wife: "On this earth there is nothing but hypocrisy and jugglery, and whether this mask of flesh is to be torn off by fever or a cartridge it must fall at last. Fools and wise men as skeletons look very much like one another." He was only 44 when so despondent and cynical.

The horrible climate of St. Petersburg transferred him to Paris as minister in 1862. It was already considered to make him prime minister.

"I am more lonely in the midst of great Paris than you, wife, are at Reinfeld, and sit here like a rat in an empty house, my only amusement to send away the cook for cheating me in the accounts."

He thought Eugenie a beautiful woman. "My conscience, dear, reproves me for seeing so much that is lovely without you." He walked on the sands at Biarritz with Napoleon III, whom he was in eight years to hold a ruined prisoner of war.

In 1862 a cabinet crisis came in Berlin, and Bismarck at 47 was summoned there from the Pyrenees to be the head of the government. He was called The Hotspur of the Junker party. Said the democrats again: "Bismarck! That is the coup d'etat!"

In the midst of his life of commotion at Berlin he wrote to his wife: "Such good black pudding I never ate, and seldom such good liver. May your slaughtering be blessed!"

He worked in the government from 8 o'clock to 10 p. m. and said: "But health and sound sleep—tremendous thirst. How I love to be lazy and how I have to work!"

His unscrupulous yet sincere character now came fully out. He ruled without law, but for the glory and ultimate security of Prussia.

"The frontiers of Prussia," he growled, "are not favorable to a good state constitution. The great questions of the day are not to be decided by speeches and majorities, but by blood and iron."

A soldier himself, his moral courage was extraordinary in Europe. He was the Tecumseh Sherman of that side of the water, and the year was that of Vicksburg.

He had a budgetless government. He went specially to Paris to take leave of Napoleon in August, 1862, at St. Cloud. "Our relations to Austria," he declared bluntly, "must unavoidably change for the better or the worse." "That Bismarck drags us by the halter," said the Viennese in the Danish war. Austria went to Denmark to watch Prussia and recover prestige from her defeats in Italy.

In 1864 the Prussian flag waved on the Danish ramparts at Duppel, and Bismarck was there with King William. The emperor at Vienna gave him the order of St. Stephen and said, "Ah, if I had but him!"

The Danish war was an experiment on the newly reorganized army and the needle gun. In 1868 Bismarck was made a Prussian count. He had an intrigue with a celebrated opera singer, it was believed, and their pictures were photographed together like old Dumas and Ada Mencken.

He was so disgusted in 1863 that he said: "I wish that some intrigue would necessitate another ministry, so that I might honorably turn my back upon this liver of ink. The restlessness of this existence is unbearable. I regard every one as a benefactor who seeks to bring about my fall."

The French populace was even then clamoring for war.

Sept. 30, 1866, as new major general, Bismarck rode into Berlin with the victorious army. He wore a white uniform, orange sash, yellow collar and helmet, and was in such bodily pain he could hardly keep the saddle. For a good while he was very ill in the country.

He was so sick, rheumatic, unendurable.

The 17th of May as he was walking from the king's palace he heard two shots fired behind him, and one of them struck his side. He grasped the assassin by the throat, who fired another shot that grazed from Bismarck's shoulder. Changing the revolver to the left hand, the assassin fired again twice, one shot burning his coat, another landing his rib and making him for an instant sick. He handed the criminal over to the military, and this person, a social democrat, committed suicide.

The city turned out in his praise. The king and princes went to his house. He was compelled for the first time in his life to speak from his window. Austria wanted to kill him.

In five weeks the Prussian columns were moving. June 20 the news of victory arrived. All were singing Luther's hymn. Lightning broke over Bismarck's head, and he shouted, "The heavens fire a salute!"

July 8 was fought Sadowa or Koenigsgratz. Major Bismarck, long under fire, was the first to discover the crown prince coming. "Those are not plow furrows," he cried, "they are marching lines." To his wife he wrote from the field:

"If we do not become extravagant in our demands and do not imagine that we have captured the world, we shall obtain a place worth the having. At Koenigsgratz I rode the tall roan. He was 13 hours in the saddle without fodder. My bed was on the road with a carriage cushion."

He made peace to save his army from pest in Hungary. He and the king stopped in the castle of Nicoloburg, where Napoleon resided after Austerlitz. He was 51 years old and had been in politics nearly 20 years. Aug. 4 he was back in Berlin, the greatest man in Europe. To the French minister he said: "Friendship, a lasting friendship, with France! They will, I hope, represent the dualism of intelligence and progress."

Unable to get the army appropriations from the lower house, he closed the chambers, saying the thing would rule himself. Four sessions of parliament he treated in this way, ruling without other than feudal law. He awoke, however, the German student and patriotic feeling against the Danes and beat them by the help of Austria and other parts of Germany, and then suddenly turned upon Austria and drove her out of the German empire and extended Prussia to include Hanover, Hesse and finally several other states.

With a great army and the nation appeased he met the French and dictated the hard terms of peace to them.

He could not succeed in his long conflict with the Catholics and the pope. In 1879 he introduced a German protective tariff.

In 1884 he began German colonies. In 1885 he was 70 years old and almost supreme.

In 1888 he demanded 700,000 men to be added to the army.

As just before the Austrian war Ferdinand Cohen tried to kill Bismarck, so in 1874 a Catholic tinsmith attacked him at Kissingen.

Statesmen in Europe are judged by the extension of their country they brought about. In this view Bismarck altered the map of Europe more than any man since Napoleon, and his changes have the consent of the governed.

In 1866 he accomplished the final unity of Italy by his aid, cast Austria out of Germany and took all Germany besides into a Prussian empire.

In 1870 the French, cast into the shade by the magnitude of Prussia's wars and annexations, made an issue with Bismarck insolently on the small matter of Spain offering her vacant crown to a prince of the family of Hohenzollern. The consequences were heavy. France lost the fine provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, with cities like Metz, Mulhausen and Strasbourg.

The Germany remade by Bismarck has 47,000,000 people. Out of this empire 1,160,000 annual emigrants from this empire 1,116,000 come to the United States. The cities have enormously grown. Berlin near 1,500,000 and 23 cities above 100,000. The army costs near \$100,000,000 a year and is always near 500,000 men strong. Alsace-Lorraine added near 1,600,000 to the population.

Bismarck's unflinching soul took the field and made the terrible demands on France which, but for the gifted nature of the people and their soil and system, would have ruined her. He placed the Kaiser's crown and name upon his king at Versailles, a scene not matched by any in Napoleon's career.

This Bismarck did not probably contemplate. France owed her humiliation to the desire for annexation whenever she found any neighbor making any. In taking Savoy and Nice from Italy she lost Alsace-Lorraine.



WILLIAM II. PRINCESS BISMARCK.



BISMARCK IN THE REICHSTAG.



WITH PIPE AND MUG.