

## PRINCE VON BISMARCK.

By H— B—

WITHIN the recollection of men, and probably also within the knowledge of the most painstaking historian, no statesman has received such world-wide recognition of his services and achievements as Otto, Prince von Bismarck, upon the occasion of his eightieth birthday in the year of grace 1895. The demonstrative acts of congratulation may be said to have commenced in right earnest well within a week of the birthday, though the preparations—hardly less demonstrative and sensational than the stupendous outcome of it all—were in full swing, and as fully reported by the combined aid of telephone, telegraph, ink, and print, throughout the civilised world, quite a month before the memorable event.

In his "Sturm und Drang" period, which may be said to have begun with the moment he entered the service of the State, and to have ended only on the day of reconciliation with his Sovereign, Prince Bismarck frequently expressed and proved his contempt for the tribe of "ink-slingers." If anything could obliterate this sentiment, the very handsome and generous way in which those despised "ink-slingers" have now requited his enmity, and, let us say, injustice, should go a long way to effect the cure. English journalists, at least, have not exhibited any resentment for former snubs. No jarring note has been struck in all the lengthy messages which were flashed across, recording faithfully the exuberance of enthusiasm prevailing throughout Germany, and relating personal details to an extent which might have satisfied the proudest and vainest of men. Nor can he complain of any lack of attention or generosity in the way of leaders. One birthday leader is generally considered sufficient for the greatest sovereign, or even statesman. Prince Bismarck has received from most of the great dailies at least three such weighty articles—that is, before, on, and after the event. The cavalier refusal of the majority of the Reichstag—"the notorious 163" as it is now termed—formed the only unpleasant feature in the devotional festivities; and,

though the Emperor forthwith endeavoured to counteract the effect by a message expressing his indignant protest and that of the nation at large, I have reason to believe that the shot went home, that the sting remained, and that the imperial message, even when it had been backed by expressions of approval from all parts of the Empire, acted only as a palliative on the proud mind of the ex-Chancellor, who never could brook criticism of any kind, much less an open insult.

I think, by the way, that this generous act on the part of the Emperor has hardly been sufficiently appreciated at large. It should be remembered that Prince Bismarck not only parted in anger from his sovereign when the latter accepted his resignation, but persisted in acts of the gravest provocation towards his liege long after, as well as before, his enforced retirement. It was one thing to forgive his eminent subject these transgressions, sometimes deliberately aimed to thwart the imperial will, occasionally mere exhibitions of gross ill-temper; but it was quite another matter for the sovereign to go out of his way, after he had succeeded in setting himself right in the eyes of the nation by effecting the reconciliation, spontaneously to take the cudgels up in behalf of his aged servant against the majority of the elected representatives of the people. This proves a loftiness of mind which Prince Bismarck has never aspired to, neither in his relations with his sovereigns nor in his dealings with mortals of less exalted rank. It also proves that the Emperor has fully mastered the difficult art of gauging public opinion.

It were impossible, indeed ludicrous, to attempt to give anything but the slightest character sketch of the mighty recluse of Friedrichsruh within the limited space of a magazine article. Even a lightning sketch is no easy matter, in view of the mass of excellent comments which has flooded the columns of the Press on the subject for the greater part of a month. Bismarck's career belongs to history—and historians will no doubt in due time apply the fierce



search-light of criticism to every stage and act of his life. I propose to confine myself to citing a few facts which have come within my personal knowledge.

In the early summer of 1866 a goodly

It was Moltke, whose assurance that there would be no difficulty in defeating the Austrians was accepted absolutely by Bismarck. Who took the lion's share of credit for the result of the campaign—*i.e.*,

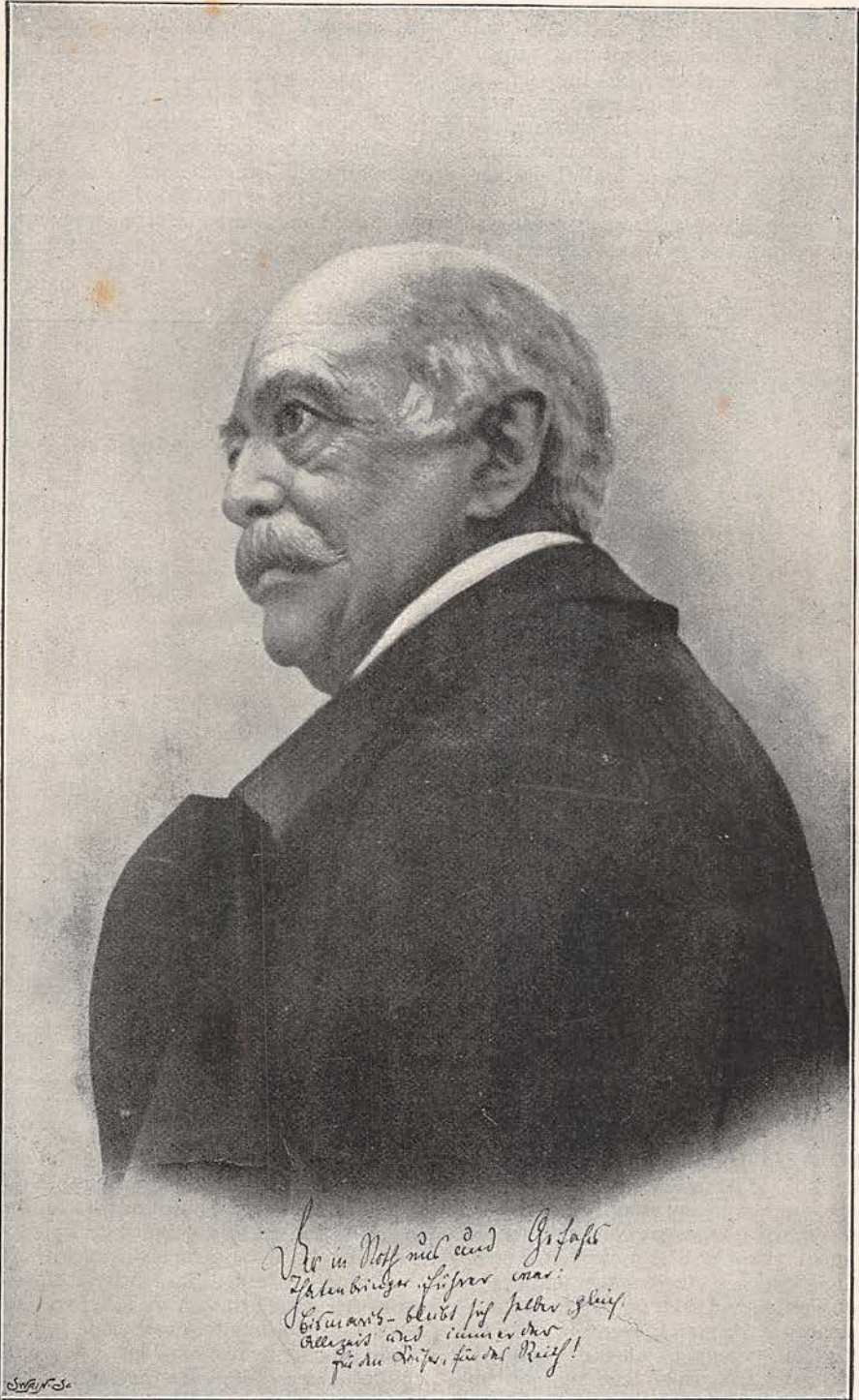


SCHLOSS FRIEDRICHSRUH: VIEW FROM THE PARK.

crowd was assembled at the railway station of the town of Görlitz, in Silesia, to see the King of Prussia pass through on his way to the front to assume the command of his army against Austria. On the arrival of the train, his Majesty was cheered with the utmost fervour until he disappeared in the royal waiting-room. In his suite was then descried the famous Minister von Bismarck, but the crowd made way for him in silence. A boy, indeed, called out from the balcony of the station, "Bismarck hoch!" but the "Hoch" was half stifled as he caught the glare from about five thousand upturned angry faces, and there was no response. Bismarck seemed rather amused than annoyed, and smiled cynically. The thought was probably in his mind, "It will be different when we return." And he was right. But what gave Bismarck that confidence, which was shared only in part even by the King?

for Prussia's advancement? Bismarck. He grudged the Crown Prince and the Red Prince their hard-won laurels, and took no pains to conceal his dislike for them. Moltke was scarcely mentioned. When the Franco-German War broke out, there was no man in Germany more confident of the result than Bismarck. And why? Because Moltke had assured him in his quiet way that the German army was, and that the French was not, prepared. Who took, again, the lion's share of credit for the result of the campaign—the creation of the German Empire? Why, Bismarck! And he has never ceased since, by word of mouth, by writing, and through his organs in print, to impress the German nation and the world at large: "It is I to whom this is due. I am beholden, of course, to my good old master for not having opposed me, whereby I was enabled to carry





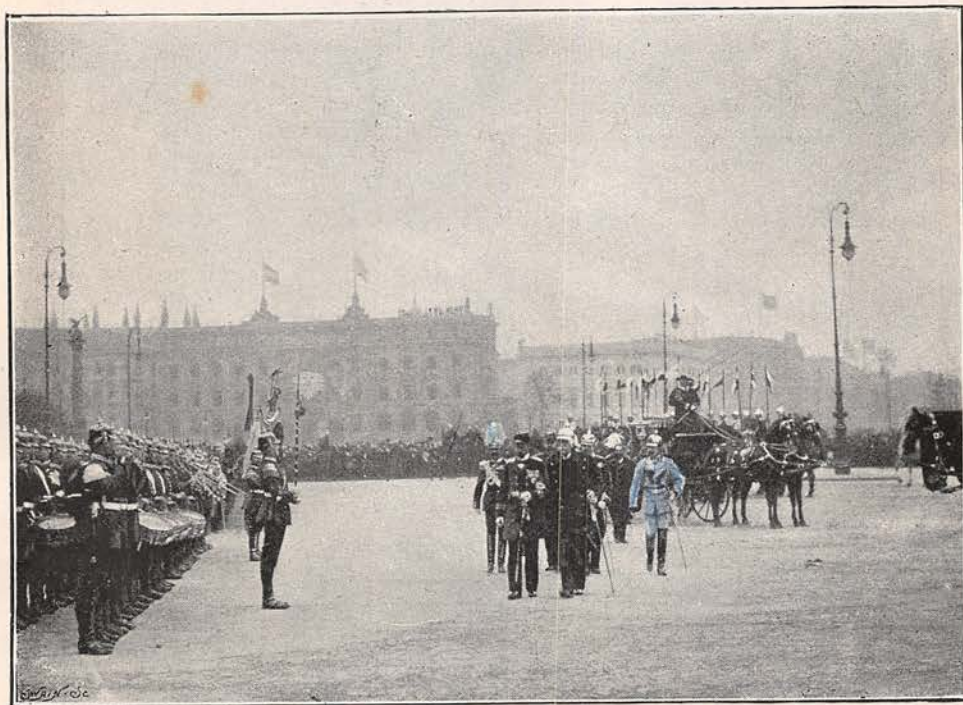
Wer in Noth mit eud Gröfste  
Hilfen bringet, der ist der Beste.  
Bismarck - bleibst dir selber gleich  
Allzeit und immer der  
Für die Arme, für den Reif!

PRINCE VON BISMARCK.



through my long-conceived magnificent scheme, and I am also quite willing to acknowledge that I could not have done so without the efficiency of the army." The splendid services of the Crown Prince and Red Prince, however, were ignored. These Princes had again given offence to the old egotist by their achievements on the battle-field and their consequent popularity, and it may be said without exaggeration that one at least was pursued beyond the grave by Bismarck's

Bismarck, has undoubtedly marred at the council-table. For is it not wonderful that scarcely five years after France had apparently been crushed in the most complete manner possible, there should have arisen anew the spectre of war beyond the Vosges, and threatened Germany?—threatened it so gravely, indeed, that the order for mobilising the army had actually been signed by the old Emperor with reluctant hand, when at the last moment wiser counsel prevailed in France, and



PRINCE BISMARCK'S ARRIVAL IN BERLIN AFTER HIS RECONCILIATION WITH THE EMPEROR  
AT FRIEDRICHSRUH.

*In the foreground Bismarck, supported by Prince Henry of Prussia, is walking down the front of the Guard of Honour in the square of the royal Castle.*

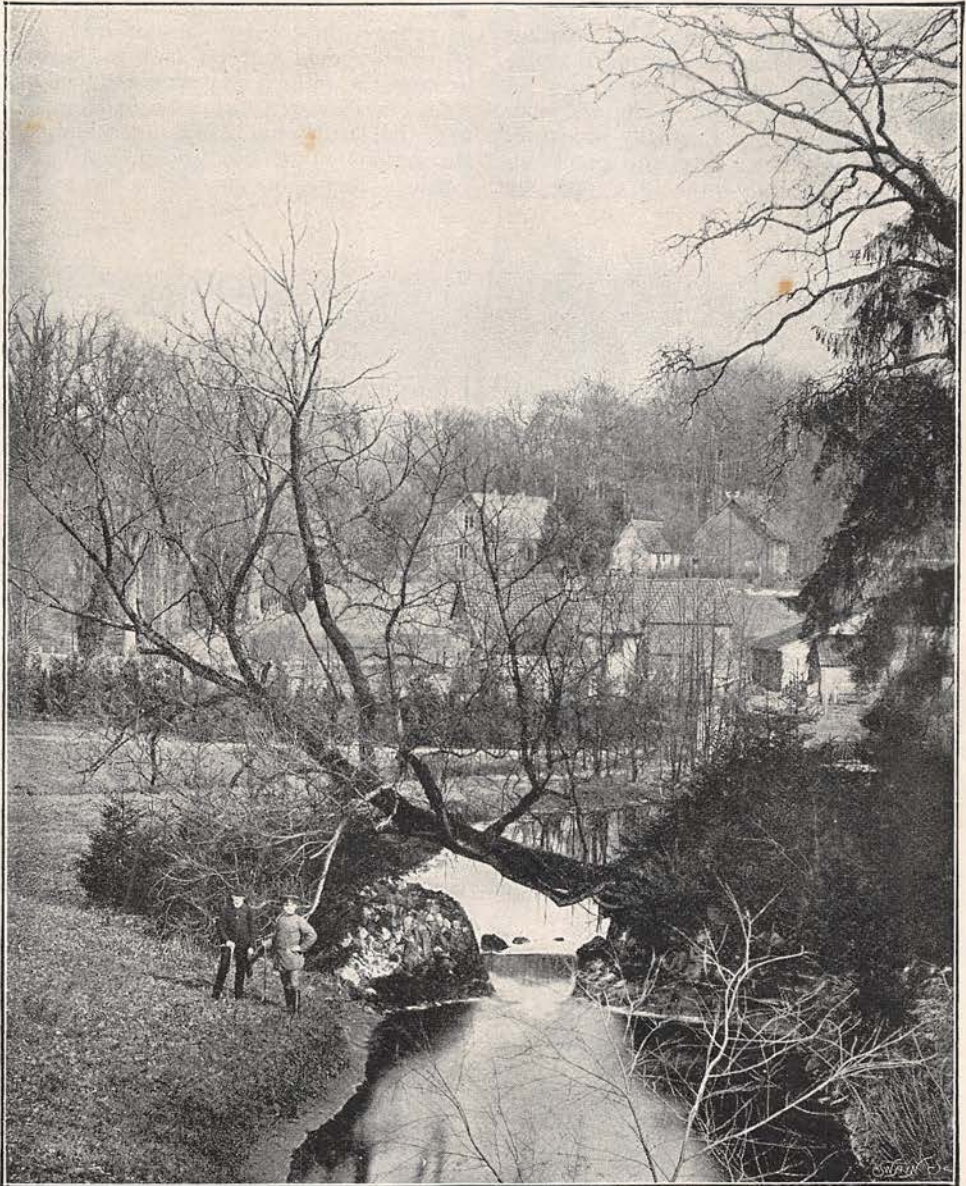
implacable hatred. And Moltke? He was honoured by the old Emperor openly to the full, and in his Majesty's heart, perhaps, more than any other man alive. He was acclaimed by the army and the people, and—made use of by Bismarck whenever the latter required his sage counsel and assistance in Parliament. But no public acknowledgment has Bismarck ever given to the really greatest German of this century of bogus reputations. In all his lengthy birthday speeches one searches in vain for even a slight allusion to the unrivalled services of the Grand Old Silent One, whose stupendous successes in the field he, the great

prevented a renewal of the struggle. What has happened ever since? Why, every year we are impressively reminded that the danger is still there, and must be followed by disaster if the fighting forces of Germany be not increased forthwith. If this long-continued insecurity, this constant threat of invasion, is not Bismarck's fault, I should like to know who else could possibly be made responsible. To create an empire is one thing—for the sake of argument I will admit that Bismarck did it all by himself—to secure its safety is another. Has Bismarck done the latter? If not, why not? Have a quarter of a million of



German lives been sacrificed only to produce a fine show, which directly afterwards turns out to be in daily danger from the very foe who was crushed to produce it?

expected to have achieved something worthy of a reputation, such as he had literally made for himself, the reputation of the most far-seeing statesman



A CORNER IN THE DEMESNE OF FRIEDRICHSRUH: A GAMEKEEPER'S HOUSE AND ARTISAN COTTAGES IN BACKGROUND.

I think when the history of the German Empire is written by unbiassed judges from authentic material, it will be found that Bismarck has protested too much. Where he might have been

in Europe, there he failed in the most signal manner. I refer, of course, to the terms of peace which he dictated to France, and which he believed were amply sufficient to cripple France for



a generation at the very least. The French imagined at that time, and still hold the opinion, that Bismarck was the hard man who insisted upon those annexations in full. As a matter of fact, it was not Bismarck, but Moltke, who insisted so firmly on the possession of Metz. The question of securing the strategical defences of the Empire was left to Moltke's decision, and he remained quietly obdurate while the man of blood and iron was actually wavering. It was Bismarck's duty to exact an indemnity sufficiently large to cripple the

with, France was really at the mercy of the conqueror, whereas Japan had only succeeded in seizing a few outer defences of the Chinese Empire. But, above all, Bismarck had not to fear any intervention on the part of other nations, while Count Ito had to face the opposition of at least three great Powers, each one of whom could put an end to Japan's ascendancy without any very great effort.

In fact, Bismarck, Count Guido Henckel, and the late Baron Bleichröder bungled the settlement of the French indemnity between them—at any rate, as far as the



PRINCE BISMARCK'S STUDY AT FRIEDRICHSRUH.

resources of the French treasury for a long breathing space, to enable him to provide for the security of the new Empire. He fixed an amount which France had no difficulty whatever in paying—in fact, it turned out to be the merest flea-bite.

What would the world in general, and Japan in particular, have thought of Count Ito's wisdom and capacity if that statesman had arranged such terms of peace that Japan would thenceforth have had to make fresh sacrifices every year to prevent a renewal of the struggle? However, the comparison is hardly fair to Count Ito. He was beset with difficulties which find no parallel in Prince Bismarck's position at the end of the war with France. To begin

interests of Germany were concerned. This is beyond dispute, and reflects little credit on the trio.

So much for Bismarck's share in the creation of the Empire. Now as to his management of affairs in the piping times of an insecure peace: this is specially remarkable for the following events, incidents, and features.

He provoked a totally uncalled-for, prolonged, and fiercely waged religious struggle, misnamed the Kulturkampf, which ended in the most complete discomfiture of the Great Chancellor. He created the power of the Socialists by encouraging them to organise themselves into a Parliamentary party. For, when



Bismarck became Minister-President of Prussia, the Socialists in that kingdom numbered only a few thousands; now their electors are counted by millions. —

Bismarck had, of course, not the faintest idea that he was creating a Frankenstein for himself and for the German monarchy. All he aimed at was to create another party for his use in the political kicking game which he knew how to play with such dexterous skill and vigour, a game in which the kicking was at first done only by himself or by his leave. When one party displeased him he used to set another, or more, to give it a good kicking. The Socialists, however, soon emancipated themselves from his authority, played the game on their own account, and improved upon its former methods by taking the Chancellor himself for their butt. Germany is thus indebted to Bismarck for a very troublesome and dangerous factor in politics, a power which the German Parliament is at present endeavouring to reduce within safe limits.

He further initiated a Colonial policy, and, at his instigation, German capitalists invested their money in territories which have thus far yielded no return, but, on the contrary, have proved a heavy burden to the German taxpayer. On perceiving this failure, the Chancellor transmogrified himself into a rabid enemy of all Colonial enterprise, and dubbed the Colonial party contemptuously "those mad Colonial Menschen." Strange to say, he who is to-day acclaimed by united Germany as her great benefactor and only statesman never had a party of his own. He succeeded admirably in setting everybody at loggerheads, but failed in all his efforts to collect however small a party who would owe him allegiance for more than a brief season. His support existed mainly in the Emperor, who simply dissolved Parliament if it opposed Bismarck, and continued that course until Bismarck was satisfied. It may be thought extraordinary

that there should have been, and should still be, a great difficulty in replacing Bismarck. But this will be readily understood when the fact is taken into consideration that Bismarck would not advance any statesman in the service of the Government who showed originality and independence of judgment. He thus managed to reduce his colleagues, as well as the rising aspirants, to the merest marionettes, who simply did what they were told, and asked no question. Such able men and possible rivals as Radowitz and Keudell were sent out of harm's way—the first to Constantinople, the other to Rome.

But for the great personality of the old Emperor, who commanded reverence and confidence not only in the German States but throughout the civilised world; but for the confidence reposed in the Prussian leaders of the united army, the Empire would probably not have been created at all. At any rate, I doubt whether the other German States would have so freely granted all the privileges to Prussia.

No fair-minded critic will grudge Bismarck his fair share of praise, but this must not be allowed to eclipse the great and active parts played by the old Emperor, the Crown Prince, Count Moltke, and others, who did quite as much as Bismarck to knit and anneal the great work. It is meet here to state that, in the opinion of those well qualified to judge, the accomplishment of the task was due more to the spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm evoked by the great victory in the heart of every German than to any carefully planned scheme such as Bismarck claims to have originated years before the war, and to have brought to fruition by the exercise of his genius.

For the views expressed in this article I am, of course, personally responsible, although I believe they are shared by many who prefer to be silent in this hour of homage to an undoubtedly great man.