

## BISMARCK IN PRIVATE LIFE.



### INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

IT is not intended, in this work, to deal with the subject of it in his character of politician, or of the Minister who has achieved the greatness of Prussia and the unity of Germany.

In the annexed pages it is "the man himself" who is depicted.

Bismarck was born in 1815, at the Castle of Schönhausen—his father being a cavalry captain, and his mother a lady of comparatively humble family. He was educated at Göttingen and Berlin, and after having passed his *volontariat* in the Foot Guards, he entered a Government office—in which,

however, he did not remain, for he was eventually elected Deputy, and still later on entered diplomatic life, and worked his way up to the high position which he has just quitted.

The following story is told about his mother's marriage.

The palace of the Crown Prince at Berlin, a building of somewhat simple and mean appearance, was a scene of great rejoicing and jubilation on March 22nd, 1797. A second son had just been born to the Crown Prince William and his wife, who was subsequently the beautiful Queen Louise. This was their third child, in a married life of two years and a half. The eldest, a princess, had only lived a few hours; the second was a sturdy boy, who lived to become King Frederick William IV. Spring was backward, and the weather was still wintry, when this third child was born; torrents of rain mingled with hail were falling without, and the wind howled savagely.

It is not likely that the mother had any inkling of the future in store for the child she

had just brought into the world, nor of the glorious part he would one day play.

At the commencement of this century there was at Potsdam a certain garden unequalled for its beauty. It belonged to a Cabinet Councillor, Herr M——, a man as remarkable for his wit as for his learning, and who was passionately fond of gardening. As time wore on the two Royal Princes often came to walk in this garden, accompanied by their tutor, Dr. Delbrück.

Prince William had a special predilection for these walks, for he was almost always sure to meet the daughter of the house. This young lady, Louise Wilhelmine by name, was strikingly handsome and just budding into womanhood, and she had a great liking for the little Prince, who loved her as a second mother.

One fine summer evening the young Prince, then about five or six years of age, was in the garden with his tall lady friend, and the latter, seated on a bench, was telling him some interesting stories. Suddenly the

garden bell rang, announcing a visitor; the servant in attendance on the Prince went to see who it was, and returned to tell Fräulein M—— that a young gipsy girl wished to speak to her.

The young Prince was curious to know all about this gipsy, and Wilhelmine told him with a smile that no doubt she was coming to tell them their fortunes, and her heart beat quickly at the thought, for young ladies of that age are all generally more or less superstitious.

The gipsy girl was ushered in to see her, and a very handsome specimen she was. She commenced by addressing a solemn little compliment to Fräulein M——, and then, after having studied the lines on her hands, said :

“You will become the wife of an officer wearing a tiger-skin covered with gilt ornaments, and golden shoulder-knots and tags. But you won't be married just yet, for the trophies at the Brandenburg Gate [at Berlin] will first be carried away during the night, and there will be a war with unlucky consequences for Prussia.”

At the first words of the gipsy, Fräulein Wilhelmine blushed crimson, for there did happen to be a young officer of Hussars who, for some time previously, had been very assiduous in his visits to the house. The gipsy continued :—

“Your first son will become a great man, and will be entitled Prince.”

Wilhelmine burst out laughing at these words; the astonished little Prince, however, did not budge, and the gipsy girl went on with her fortune-telling.

“He who will bestow all these dignities upon your son will be a mighty Emperor. And this future Emperor—there he is!”

Fräulein Wilhelmine laughed still more heartily at this; but the servant, who was present at the whole scene, afterwards told the story with all its details; what is still more strange, he saw the fulfilment of all these prophecies, and died just after the proclamation of the Empire at Versailles. His last words were: “Lord, Thy servant can now die in peace, having seen the

fulfilment of the predictions made in his presence."

How much of truth is there in all this? We cannot say. But at any rate Fräulein Louise Menken, the friend of the young Prince, married Lieutenant von Bismarck-Schönhausen, and this officer's third son—not his first, as the gipsy had foretold—was Otto von Bismarck, until recently Chancellor of the German Empire.

Before entering upon our subject, we think it desirable to say a few words about the character and disposition of the great Chancellor.

His character, which is eminently Prussian, is incomprehensible to us. There is in it a mixture of the rollicking student, the cadet, the lieutenant in the Guards, the diplomatist, the revolutionist, and the despot; the whole being seasoned with a kind of ironic imagination which constitutes an artist, and almost a poet.

Mons. G. Valbert, in an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, said: "He is an

## STUDIES OF BISMARCK.

### CHAPTER I.

#### *BISMARCK AS A STUDENT.*

THE grave ex-Chancellor, the man whose frown has made the whole of Europe tremble, had a rather stormy youth. It is curious, too, that through all his escapades there runs an endless vein of his domineering temperament. It must be said, also, that in later life he has not disdained to hoax and mystify those around him; when he was a student, however, it was he himself who had to pay the cost.

We are going to tell a few of these tales, well known in Germany; and from them the reader will be able to see that the man's character has changed but very little, if at all, during the last fifty years.