

master shoemaker in Schlawe. And—may I ask to whom I have the honour——”

“Well, I am a shoemaker, too.”

“There! that’s funny now! But I suppose you have a good many customers at Berlin?”

“Yes, thanks; pretty fair.”

Thus encouraged, the worthy bootmaker was about to address a new string of questions to the stranger, when he saw a post-boy approach in full uniform, and with a most respectful air addressing the portly gentleman, he said:

“I have the honour to inform your Excellency that the coach is ready.”

The poor man was almost knocked over with surprise on hearing these words, but he soon recovered himself, and begged the Chancellor’s forgiveness for having dared to speak to him; and Bismarck tapped him on the shoulder and said, in a friendly way,—

“If ever you have occasion to come to Berlin, call at my workshop, No. 76, Wilhelmstrasse. Good day!”

On one of those very estates enumerated above, there was a tenant-farmer, who, although a worthy fellow in the main, was a confirmed drunkard. Seeing that this man could not conquer his continual craving for drink, Bismarck one day gave him notice to quit. The man, however, was no coward, and flatly refused to go.

“No, your Excellency,” he said, “I shall not go. I have my agreement, you know.”

“I don’t care for that. If you won’t go of your own accord, I shall turn you out.”

“I would like to see you try it on,” answered the man.

The farmer, of course, had right on his side, and the Chancellor said he could remain in his holding, but from that day he changed his drunken habits.

The following amusing anecdote will serve as a concluding one in illustration of this aspect of Bismarck’s character.

Like all great and prominent men, he has been severely caricatured—in the public

prints, in ballads, and in pamphlets; and these attacks have sometimes thrown him into a violent rage.

The Prussian Government had just put in force the new Press Law, when Count von Beust, then Minister of Foreign Affairs in Saxony, came to Berlin to arrange for the participation of his country in the Franco-Prussian treaty of commerce.

Bismarck one day proposed that Beust should accompany him in the evening to the theatre, and accordingly they went together to the Wallner-Theater, where the piece being played was "A New Spark." In the course of this piece the popular actor Helmerding sang a little ditty which never failed to bring down the house. As before mentioned, it was just at the time when the Press Law was promulgated, and in the course of the heated discussion which arose on the Bill, Bismarck had made a speech in which he made use of the expression: "Always preserve your freedom of speech." This remark was taken up and repeated everywhere.

Helmerding took the character of a carpenter and joiner in the piece at the theatre, and at a given moment he had to sing a couplet which he rendered in this style:—

"We are now living in very strange times,
We keep ourselves s-s-s-summ-summ ready.
And we are disposed s-s-s-summ-summ
With the mouth to s-s-s-summ
Always preserve our freedom of speech!

"In Hesse, s-s-s-summ-summ-summ, idle,
At home s-s-s-summ-summ
We manage to s-s-s-summ
Always preserve our freedom of speech!

"The — s-s-s-s confiscated,
The — s-s-s too confiscated;
Why are s-s-s confiscated?
Everything is s-s-s-s- confiscated.
But always preserve your freedom of speech!

Da capo.

"S s summ
S s summ
S s summ I
S s summ dare not.
But always preserve your freedom of speech!"*

* Of course the translation will not carry a rhyme like the original.

The song was frantically applauded, the grimaces of the actor while singing it being inimitable, and the two Ministers were as loud in their approval as anybody.

Bismarck was a first-rate horseman when a young man, and he had gained quite a reputation by the long rides he took on the back of his tall mare Caleb. She carried him once from Polzin, a little watering-place in Pomerania, as far as Kollin, near Stargard and Stettin; the distance between the two places being over fifty miles.

But there was nothing peculiar or unusual about the ride itself. When he was about half way, however, Bismarck was dying of hunger and thirst, and he stopped at a roadside tavern in a little village through which he passed. The landlord set before him plenty of good food to satisfy his hunger, but his wine was hardly fit to drink, and his beer detestable. There happened to be stopping at the same inn a traveller in the wine trade, with samples of his liquors.

Bismarck asked to taste his samples, and the traveller consented, and in an incredibly short time every bottle was emptied, and Bismarck walked away, warmly thanking the man for his kindness. As soon as the traveller realized that all his stock was gone he became dreadfully excited, but was unable at first to form a correct idea of the loss he had sustained through his liberality to the thirsty stranger. However, he soon came to himself, and saw what a folly he had committed. The landlord came up to him just in time to prevent him from tearing his hair out; he gave him a note from Herr von Bismarck containing a heavy order for wine, and the commercial traveller did not lose by the occurrence after all.

Bismarck, in the meantime, was jogging along on his journey, enjoying the joke immensely.

Here is a tale the ex-Chancellor is fond of telling about the battle of Sadowa, against the Austrians.

“On that day I rode my big chestnut horse. I was thirteen hours in the saddle, and all this time the animal had nothing to eat. He behaved splendidly under fire, was not in the least afraid of the dead bodies lying about, and came out of it all apparently much less fatigued than I was. I slept that night on the pavement at Horschitz, for every house was filled with the wounded, and the King passed the night on a sofa with all his clothes on. For myself, I slept as sound as a top, and were it not for a touch of lumbago next morning, I should not have had so much to complain of.”

When the Council of War was held at Nikolsburg, it appears to have been the opinion of the personages attending it that the war should be continued and carried into Hungary. Bismarck, however—and he alone—held a contrary opinion; he feared to penetrate into the wide plains of that country in the midst of a hostile population; and besides, the cholera was beginning to make



FREDERICK I.,
LATE EMPEROR OF GERMANY.

frightful ravages in the ranks of the Prussian army. But notwithstanding all the arguments he put forward in support of his opinion, he got no one to support him.

Seeing, therefore, that he could accomplish nothing by reasoning, he changed his tactics. He went into a room adjoining that in which the Council was being held, threw himself on a sofa, and began to weep bitterly. The two rooms were only separated by a thin partition, so that the others heard his sobs and groans. . . . After another long discussion the majority of the Council pronounced in favour of Bismarck's view.

The following is a fact with which probably only a very few persons have been acquainted.

On the day when the German troops re-entered Berlin after the war with France, the Emperor William stood in front of the statue of Blücher to see them file past. The Chancellor was at the head of the troops as they marched up, and after passing the

saluting point he turned off, and, going up to the Emperor, said something softly in his ear. His Majesty replied in the same fashion, and Bismarck, who had just been named *Prince*, went to take his place behind his sovereign with the other officers of the Staff. But he was evidently very fidgety; he could not remain still a moment, turning about uneasily in his saddle and looking around him in all directions. A person standing near, who knew him, noticing these manœuvres, went up to him and asked,—

“Does your Excellency require anything?”

The reply was, “A pencil and paper.”

A police officer was found, who could furnish these requisites, and placing the leaf of paper on his knee, Bismarck wrote a few words upon it. When he had finished he held the paper over his head and said aloud,

“Here is a dispatch. Is there anyone who will take it to the telegraph office?”

“I will,” cried the same person alluded to above.

“Thank you!” answered the Prince. “And to reward you for your kindness I will allow you to read it.”

This is what the message contained:—

“TO THE COMMANDER OF THE GERMAN OUTPOSTS BEFORE
PARIS.

“If the French outposts continue to move forward you will attack them immediately.

“BISMARCK.”

The Germans did not attack, however, thanks to the efforts of Count von Waldersee, at that moment Military Plenipotentiary in Paris.

Bismarck has now been depicted from a good many points of view; but here is one aspect under which, as yet, he has not been seen in these pages.

Although he is a man who does not believe in much, he is superstitious beyond all description. The following are a few examples in support of this statement.

The number “thirteen” has a very deep meaning for him. He will never sit down

to table where he would make the thirteenth. Count Bismarck-Bohlen narrates that one day in 1870, at Rheims, when the Chancellor gave a dinner, one of the invitations had to be countermanded, because otherwise there would have been thirteen at table.

General Boyer, Bazaine's envoy, arrived at the German headquarters in Versailles on Friday, October 14th, but Bismarck would not see him till the next day, saying that he would never do anything of importance on any Friday, much less on a Friday the date of which coincided with the anniversary of Hochkirch, Jena, and Auerstädt.

He was talking one day of a defeat the Germans had experienced in the course of the campaign of 1870. "I beg you to observe, gentlemen," he said, "that that happened on a Friday."

Bismarck does not believe in a lucky or unlucky star, but he is convinced that his life is seriously influenced by a certain mystic number. Several of his intimate

friends, indeed, affirm that he said to them one day at Versailles: "I shall die at such an age, in such a year; I am sure of it, for I know the mystic number which rules my whole existence." It is said, too, that several years later he expressed the same conviction at Varzin.

At the close of the battle of Sadowa there was a severe storm accompanied by heavy thunder. The Chancellor interpreted this celestial music in his own favour. "See," he said, "the Eternal Father is firing salutes to announce our victory."

Nothing, in fact, escapes his notice, and a very slender indication is sufficient for him to base an opinion upon. At a moment when the battle of Sadowa was as yet undecided, and when, indeed, the Prussians appeared to be losing ground, Bismarck was wandering over the battle-field like a soul in agony. Certain historians have gone so far as to say that he kept a loaded revolver in his holster for the express purpose of blowing his brains out if the

Austrians had won the day. Presently he fell in with Von Moltke, who was quietly looking on at the fight. Being anxious to arrive at an idea of the exact state of affairs, he pulled out his cigar-case, in which only two "londrès" were left—one of them extra good, and the other of very inferior quality. He handed the case to Von Moltke, who, after examining the cigars for a long time, silently helped himself to the best.

That was enough for the Chancellor, and he remarked to some one at hand,—

"When I saw Von Moltke use such deliberation in choosing his cigar, and above all when he chose the best, I knew that was a sign that things were going well with us."

And he was right.

Prince Bismarck wears a heavy iron ring, on which is engraved the Russian word "Nitschewo." The meaning of this word is "Never mind!" or, "What does it matter?" And this is why he wears it:—

In 1862, when he was Prussian Ambassador at St. Petersburg, he was invited to an Imperial hunt which was to take place about a hundred versts from the capital. He was passionately fond of hunting, and accepted the invitation with alacrity. He drove down to the meeting-place, therefore; but as he had arrived a day too soon he took the opportunity of making an excursion in the neighbourhood, and lost his way. After tramping about for a long time in all directions, he came to a small village of most miserable appearance. He asked a peasant whom he met how far it was to the place of rendezvous. The man replied, "Twenty versts."

"Will you drive me there?"

"With pleasure, sir."

A few minutes later he was installed by the side of the peasant in a diminutive sledge drawn by a pair of diminutive horses.

"Try and get there punctually," said Bismarck. "There is no time to spare."

"Nitschewo," replied the driver.

A moment or two later he said: "But they are crawling rats you have got there, instead of horses."

"Nitschewo," repeated the man in a grumbling tone. And, giving the horses the reins, the sledge flew forward at head-long speed.

"You are losing your senses, man! This is the other extreme, and a mad pace it is."

"Nitschewo."

"Look out! You will turn us over!"

"Nitschewo." And in the twinkling of an eye they were both rolling in the snow.

Bismarck was furious, and he seized a sort of iron rod which had been wrenched from the sledge, and felt inclined to belabour the peasant's shoulders with it. But the man did not take his eye off him for a moment, and said again,—

"Nitschewo."

This stoical reply had the effect of calming Bismarck's anger; but he preserved the

rod, and had a ring made out of it with the word engraved upon it: "Nitschewo."

HOW BISMARCK CAME TO BE CALLED THE IRON CHANCELLOR.

The nickname of "Iron Chancellor" was given to Prince Bismarck on account of a famous speech he made, in which he said: "The unity of Germany can only be effected by blood and iron."

After Kullmann's attempt upon his life on April 29th, 1877, an "iron" statue of him designed by the sculptor Heinrich Manger, was raised at Kissingen, as an expression of the joy the German nation felt at his escape from so serious a danger.