

"This oratorical duel finished amid general laughter. I saw Bismarck leave the Chamber, and walk across to his palace. With his erect head, his firm step, and his right hand always uplifted, either to shade his eyes from the sun or to respond to the salutes of the passers by, the Chancellor passed on—the very picture of health, of strength, and of good humour: a young man of twenty would not have had a more lively manner than he."*

This has been the usual routine in the Reichstag: The President rises and announces that "Herr Richter will next address the House against the Bill presented by the Government."

At the same moment the bells are rung for the members, who are instantly seen rushing out from the refreshment bar or from the dining or smoking rooms. They are all eager to hear what the famous Opposi-

* Translated from the German (*Neue Freie Presse*: Th. Zolling).

tion Deputy has to say. And at the same moment, to form a striking contrast, the Imperial Chancellor would be seen to rise up quietly from his seat and leave the hall.

A few minutes later loud cheering goes up from the Left and low mutterings from the Centre, and then the speaker leaves the rostrum, and Bismarck reappears. This comedy is enacted every time the leader of the Opposition gets up to speak. It is Richter's business, of course, to oppose all the measures introduced by the Government, and as he is naturally applauded by the Left, the Right interrupts vociferously, and the representative of the Government stays away meanwhile.

There is certainly a good deal about it which looks like child's play, and one would hardly have thought it possible in the case of a man of Prince Bismarck's age and temperament. Those of his partisans who have sought to excuse him, say that he has acted in this way because Richter, who is a

redoubtable debater, has always taken advantage of these occasions to make a personal attack on the Chancellor, and sometimes to grossly insult him.

And yet, strange to say, these two implacable enemies on one occasion found that they were of the same opinion. How that came about no one can say; but the fact is sufficiently astonishing of itself—all the more that Richter, for many years past, has invariably adopted views diametrically opposed to those of the ex-Chancellor. Those who are able to read the German papers will have seen with what skill and talent he maintains them.

One day, then, in the Reichstag, Bismarck had to defend a measure the adoption of which Herr Richter had advocated only a few moments previous. The usual impatience was shown in the Chamber to hear the Chancellor's opinion, and he arose and said:—

“My first intention was not to reply to the statements of the honourable member

(Richter), until I had heard the opinions of some other speakers on questions which are not altogether within my competence; but I have a variety of other urgent business to transact, and this impels me to reply at once, and I do so with all the greater readiness that I find myself, for the first occasion in this house, in perfect agreement with Herr Richter on many points—a thing which, I repeat, has never happened to me before” (great laughter). “I will refer to this circumstance again later on, so as to preserve the good impression up to the last, and to be able to reply to a few remarks he made towards the end of his speech, which appear to leave the impression that he was very much annoyed at finding himself in agreement with me on so many points. . . .”

Further on, when alluding again to Herr Richter, he said: “We cannot always entirely refute the assertions of an orator, we therefore allow him to have the last word. According to my opinion, the tax on property

was a great injustice, and I am very happy to learn to-day that Herr Richter has declared himself strongly opposed to the law which established it. I am so much astonished at this, that I could not have believed it if I had not heard it with my own ears; but I am glad of it, and I take this opportunity of offering my congratulations to Herr Richter" (applause and laughter).

It has already been shown that Bismarck is no orator, but he flavours his speeches with quips and jokes, and is besides a master of sarcasm; he is gifted with irony, no doubt, but he uses his gift with a heaviness of hand that does not always savour of the gentleman.

In 1881, when the military tax (for people exempt from service) was being debated, he expressed his opinion of the measure in something like the following terms:—

"No one likes to pay taxes; besides, the fact of having to pay money never has a

tendency, of itself, to improve people's characters; on the contrary, for these taxes crush the middle classes. But it is quite a different thing when taxes fall on property; in that case the middle classes look with complacency upon the eagerness and the pleasure which we landed proprietors take in discharging these liabilities."

It need scarcely be added that the Chancellor's words afforded great amusement to his audience.

Some time ago, Mr. White, who was formerly United States Ambassador at Berlin, read a lecture before a numerous audience, the subject being "Germany." In the course of the lecture he spoke of Bismarck as he appeared in the Reichstag.

"The great Chancellor," he said, "sits with the other Ministers on the right of the President. He does not attend the sittings regularly. When one sees him for the first time, one hardly expects to find that he is a good orator. He appears to put forth all

his strength in order to get his words out. His speeches are generally a great deal too long, although at first he seems to be at a loss what to say. He puffs and snorts, as it were, and utters ill-founded assertions, and phrases which appear to have no meaning. Then, all of a sudden, one hears a sentence sufficient of itself to explain his whole policy, an expression which of itself suffices to floor his opponent, or a word which electrifies the nation, among which it circulates like wild-fire. After this there will be a few more reminiscences of the past, and suddenly again, in the midst of these, he gives an historical illustration in the highest degree convincing. Finally, after a few personal observations, he gathers up his arguments, and then follows a direct provocation launched in the face of an adversary, followed by an appeal to the whole German nation, to future generations, etc., etc., which never fails to produce a stirring effect. I have known many clever speakers, but I have never known one capable to the same degree of

electrifying his audience and carrying the whole country with him."

Annexed is an example of Bismarck's oratory. In the course of one of the sittings of the Reichstag, one of the members said that, in looking through official documents, he had come across an account of an interview between the Chancellor of the Empire and the Italian General Gavone. According to this account, Prince Bismarck had remarked to the Italian that he was not so much a German as a Prussian, and that he might easily be induced to give up a portion of the left bank of the Rhine to France.

Bismarck was not present when the member made this statement, but on his arrival he was informed of what had transpired. On the impulse of the moment he rushed to the rostrum and delivered himself as follows:—

"I have just been informed that in the course of the present sitting a member of

this House (Herr von Mallinckrodt) has stated that at an interview with the Italian General Gavone I intimated that I would be willing to cede back to France the districts on the Moselle or the Saar. I feel it my duty to contradict the honourable member in the most energetic terms, and to state that all that he has advanced is a pack of shameful lies, of which, perhaps, he may himself have been a victim. However, he ought to be more careful, and not make such important statements without being quite sure of his facts. It is all a pure invention; in fact, it is an audacious falsehood, the slanderous intention of which is perfectly clear. I have never given the slightest hint to anybody whatever of a possible eventual retrocession of a province, or of a village, or even of a clover-field. All that has been said on this subject is, I repeat, nothing but a brazen-faced lie, uttered for the purpose of blackening my character in the eyes of my fellow-countrymen and of my sovereign."

This little example will perhaps suffice to

give the reader a pretty clear idea of the late Chancellor's attitude and bearing in the Reichstag.

A good deal has been said and written of Prince Bismarck's favourite beverage, and so much that is inexact has been said on the subject, that it is as well to give some particulars respecting it.

It is certain that during the sittings of the Reichstag, and especially while speaking, it has been his custom to consume prodigious quantities of a yellowish liquid, which some have taken to be a light Moselle or Rhine wine, and others have declared to be alcohol, etc., etc.

Now this yellow liquor is nothing but weak brandy and water, generally mixed for him by the servants of the House. But on great occasions, when it was a question, for example, of getting an important Bill passed, or of getting considerable credits voted,—in a word, when the Chancellor had a serious bit of work before him,—the drink would be

mixed by the Ministers at the table. Count Herbert Bismarck generally presided over the group engaged in this business, and regulated the proportion of brandy to be put into the water, but sometimes another Minister would hold the brandy bottle.

When the glass had to be re-filled, each of those who superintended the replenishing of it would taste it—some one of them would pronounce it too strong, then a little of it was drunk and more water added—the others would perhaps say it was too weak, and then a little more brandy would be put in. And they would often be so intently occupied with what they were about, as not to notice the dumb appeals of the Chancellor in his impatience to wet his lips again.

The correspondent of the *Times* once reported that on a certain memorable occasion the Prince emptied his glass eighteen times.

The pencils used by the Chancellor had also a wonderful reputation in Germany.

They were of enormous size, and had exactly the appearance of those used by carpenters. He used up an astonishing number of them at every sitting of the House, because the Deputies, even those of the Opposition, would pick them up when the great man was not looking. They liked to carry them home as souvenirs; and many a gentleman's residence in Germany contains a "Chancellor's pencil" mounted under a glass shade.

There are plenty of people who can only write with a quill pen; Bismarck was always unhappy when he had not one of his huge pencils to take his notes with. A few years ago when taking the train to—, as soon as he was seated in the carriage he found that he had either lost or forgotten his pencil. The people in his suite offered him a number of little pencils, but these would not do for him. Presently the platform superintendent came up—the sly dog!—with a pencil of massive proportions, which he handed to the Prince. The latter was quite delighted, and a few days afterwards he sent the worthy super-

intendent a silver pencil-case for a keepsake, upon which he had the date engraved. No doubt the Herr Stationsinspektor has ever since declared this to be "the happiest day of his life." An Englishman who heard of the incident offered the man an extravagant price for his keepsake, but he would not part with the precious relic on any terms.

There is yet one more trait of Bismarck that is worthy of illustration. We all know that most diplomatists are more or less be-dizened with decorations; but not one of them, possibly, has won so many as Prince Bismarck. In fact, he possesses forty-eight. His military titles are:—General of Cavalry (a superior grade to that of General of Division), and Commanding Officer of the regiment of the Magdeburg Cuirassiers (No. 8).

The most exalted decoration he has received is the "Ordre Pour le Mérite" (the holders of which are entitled to the command of a Corps-d'Armée); this was conferred

upon him, by the Emperor William, on September 1st, 1884, on the occasion of the twenty-second anniversary of his joining the Ministry. The Prince of Wales holds as many as one hundred and twenty-nine titles, orders, and decorations.