

CHAPTER VII.

BISMARCK'S POPULARITY—HIS BIRTHDAY PRESENTS.

FOR a long number of years Bismarck has been the most popular man in Germany. But it was not always so: there was a time when it was far otherwise, not only in Germany generally, but also in Prussia, his own country. The following letter, which appeared in the German papers in June 1866, will give an idea of this:—

“Herr von Bismarck having the intention of making war (upon Austria) in his capacity of Major in the Landwehr, and as I should be delighted to see him *the guest for a certain period* of the Emperor of Austria, I hereby offer a reward of ONE HUNDRED FLORINS to the soldier who shall get possession of the Count's person, whether by his own efforts

or by the assistance of others, and whether the said Count be taken alive or dead.

“(Signed) DR. JOSEPH HUNDEGGER.”

But not so long after that appeared Dr. Hundegger would have tried in vain to get any such thing inserted in any journal whatever, and even if he did succeed he would have run the risk of being literally torn to pieces.

Whenever the Chancellor went out, either on foot or on horseback, the news would run through the streets like the firing of a train of gunpowder. As the word passed that he was coming, shops, offices, warehouses, factories, public-houses would be emptied instantly, as if by enchantment; and everyone would press forward to catch a glimpse of the renowned Chancellor's features. And then there would be bowings and scrapings and salutes without end. The very street Arabs would run after him, and tell each other what that stalwart cuirassier had done for the aggrandizement of his country; they would put

on an air of great importance in repeating the lesson which perhaps they had only learned the day before, and they would follow in his train right up to the gate of his palace. Beyond this point there was no possibility of penetrating; and then the great man would turn and salute the crowd for the last time, and the throng would gradually melt away.

But this was not the only way in which the multitude would show their enthusiasm; this has also been done by the writing of poetry, the making of speeches, the sending of addresses and gifts, etc., etc. The reader will perhaps find some pleasure in a description of some of the most original presents made to Prince Bismarck. At the same time some instances will be given of the extraordinary degree of admiration shown him, not only by Germans, but also by foreigners—principally Englishmen, Austrians, and Italians.

Let us begin with the most substantial

proof of this admiration; that is, by gifts *in kind*. Every year, on the anniversary of his birth, the inhabitants of Jever have been accustomed to send him a hundred and one plovers' eggs, accompanied by a piece of poetry written for the occasion. The eggs were always probably more prized than the verses, which were signed "the faithful ones of Jever."

Bismarck once sent to this group of "faithful ones," by way of showing his gratitude, a goblet in the shape of a plover's egg.

On April 1st, 1875, he kept his sixtieth birthday. This time there was a whole avalanche of verses, of telegrams, of tangible presents, eatables and drinkables; but the most original gift of all was that sent by an Elberfeld manufacturer, and which consisted of a clothes brush, the bristles of which were so arranged as to form the Chancellor's name and initial; namely "O. v. Bismarck" (Otto von Bismarck). The back of the brush bore his arms cleverly carved upon it.

This present was accompanied by a letter, in which the sender expressed the following wish: "I hope this brush may serve to remove the dust from your Highness's clothes, and that your Highness, preserving for a long time to come the vigour of your intelligence, may succeed in brushing from off the Imperial mantle of Germany all the dust and maggots of the time gone by."

On the occasion of his seventieth birthday, the German colony in Constantinople sent him a sword of honour. As soon as it reached him Bismarck drew it from its scabbard to examine the blade, which was of splendid temper, and in the course of his scrutiny he discovered that the weapon had once belonged to Ali, the Pasha of Janina.

The blade bore an inscription in Arabic, the meaning of which was something like this: "Happy he who shall perish by this sword: death will seem sweet to him, given by such a perfect blade."

"That is all very fine," observed Bismarck;

"but I think I shall be quite satisfied to keep it and admire it."

What will be said of the gift sent to him in 1885 by Herr Pschorr, the great brewer of beer at Munich?

The description of this present is given in a German book, from which the following is taken:—

"On the seventieth anniversary of his birth, Prince Bismarck received an enormous box from Munich. When it was opened an oak cask was found in it, bound with iron hoops, and the hoops were covered with beautifully chased ornamentation. On the front end of the cask, cut in bold relief, was a view of the city of Munich, and on the other end were carved the arms of that city, also in bold relief. The whole was executed in a most remarkable and artistic manner."

The Munich journal which announced the sending of this gift by Herr Pschorr, described at the same time the ceremony

to be observed in presenting it to Bismarck in the following words :—

“The cask contains about thirty-three gallons, and weighs about five hundred-weights. Herr Pschorr will attend in person to hand over the cask. The latter will be slung on poles of white polished wood, and carried by four stout brewer's-men, who will set it down before the Chancellor on a stollodge of carved oak. Herr Pschorr will then hand to the Chancellor an address written on parchment, in red and gold letters, and enclosed in a tasteful casket. The following are the terms of the address :—

“‘Serene Highness,—The undersigned very respectfully takes the liberty of presenting you with this address as a token of his profound and sincere admiration, and to *roll* at your feet a cask of his best beer, brewed last year for export. He would be the happiest man on earth if your Highness should find pleasure in drinking a glass of this refreshing beverage on the occasion of your seventieth birthday. May God bless and protect our Imperial Chancellor, and grant him many and man

long years to live, for the glory, honour, happiness, and welfare of Germany.

“‘I remain, with the profoundest respect,

“‘Your Highness's

“‘Most humble servant,

“‘GEORG PSCHORR, Brewer.

“‘MUNICH, 28th March, 1885.’”

But the donor did not stop there in his impulse of patriotic generosity—and perhaps, also, he had an eye to business. Means must be provided for enabling the Chancellor to taste the beer at the very moment of its arrival on the morning of April 1st. Accompanying the cask, therefore, were two tankards. One of these was of silver, and bore the Imperial arms and the Chancellor's initials, and on the lid a gay Gambrinus waved a goblet of frothy beer. The other tankard was of fine porcelain, with a lid of solid silver, on which was a figure of a Bavarian waitress with fresh complexion and radiant features, and clad in the richly coloured national costume.

This figure had in her hands two full jugs of beer, holding them out in a tempting manner to the thirsty souls expecting them, and seeming to repeat the old Bavarian saying:—

“Hopfen und Malz,
Gott erhalt's!”

“God preserve the hops and malt!”

The Germans estimated the value of this gift to be about £100.

Here is a present which was not lacking in originality.

A workman of Cologne, a sort of wharf-labourer, a poor wretch whom everybody knew not to be possessed of a brass farthing, put down his name for twenty marks (£1) on a subscription list going round the town at the time of the seventieth birthday.

Now this poor fellow was receiving a monthly allowance from the public relief-fund, and the overseer of his parish seeing his name on the subscription list sent for him and said,—

“Well now, what is the meaning of this? You get parish pay, don't you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then just explain to me how you are able to put down twenty marks for the testimonial to Prince Bismarck.”

“I don't intend to put them down, sir, by your leave.”

“What do you mean?”

“I haven't paid anything, and when they come for the money I shall ask them to let me off with so many days in gaol.”

“Oh, that's it, is it?” answered the functionary. “I understand. But that can't be done you know, unfortunately.”

“Well then you must just scratch out my name,” said the man.

He had no doubt had some experience of that kind of thing before the magistrate: “So many shillings or so many days”!

It was on this occasion especially (the seventieth birthday) that Germans of the

North, as well as Germans of the South overwhelmed him with presents.

Bismarck is a great smoker: he is fond of a cigar, but he much prefers a pipe. It was only natural, then, that his admirers should think of sending him something to smoke and something to smoke out of; and this they had already done on a liberal scale at the time of the war of 1870—numerous boxes of Havana cigars reaching him from all the towns of Northern Germany.

Württemberg especially distinguished itself at this time by sending an enormous batch of presents to Bismarck. The little town of Nagold, in the Black Forest, sent a congratulatory address, covered with signatures gathered from the surrounding neighbourhood, and richly ornamented with designs. This was all very nice, of course, but the good provincials feared that the Chancellor might perhaps think their address a little too platonic, if there were not something substantial added to it; so the worthy Nagolders

informed him in a postscript that they were sending him at the same time, by post, a box containing a little of the produce of the Black Forest.

The box contained a dozen quart bottles of raspberry brandy, with handsome labels, each surrounded with a bordering of the three German colours—red, white, and black.

It would be far too heavy a task, however, to enumerate all the queer presents the Chancellor received at the time of this anniversary. Let it suffice to mention two or three more of the strangest ones.

In 1885, a Bavarian organ-builder, named Edenhofer von Regen, sent him a huge organ-pipe set to "the normal," and with it an explanatory note, in which the honest Bavarian stated his reasons for making such a singular offering:—

"For many years past," the letter went on to say, "your Highness has set the tone for all

Europe, and indeed for the whole world. You have always given the proper note, and this excites the surprise and admiration of everyone. But now that you have arrived at your seventieth year, and as that great age generally brings with it little infirmities which might have a disturbing influence on the exactitude of the note, I venture with all respect to offer to your Highness an organ-pipe set to 'the normal,' with the devout wish that your Highness may be able, for many long years to come, to set the proper note without having to go to the pipe for it."

History does not record what were Bismarck's reflections on receiving this strange gift.

He received another singular present in the same year—1885. It was—a whip! sent by the inhabitants of Stanaitschen. Whips, it may be mentioned, form the staple article of manufacture in this small locality, and the goods are notorious throughout Germany for their excellent quality.

An address was sent with this present also, in the shape of some verses, in which the Stanaitschen people said, in substance, that "considering the difficulties of the times in which we are living, and the continual necessity in which the Chancellor found himself of keeping many people in order, it is absolutely necessary that he should have a trusty whip."

The plovers' eggs sent by the inhabitants of Jever caused many a sleepless night to the people of Westerhayn, in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, and they at last resolved to get themselves talked about in like manner. When, therefore, the seventieth birthday of the Prince came round, they despatched to his address a case of hams. There was nothing extraordinary in this, of itself, but the senders had conceived the ingenious idea of so arranging the hams, that looked at from one direction they represented Bismarck's initials, and from the other direction the Imperial arms.

The educational inspectors of Lüdenscheid also showed that they held the great Chancellor in their remembrance, only they did it in a much more modest fashion than the persons mentioned above. They were content to send Prince Bismarck a telegram on his seventieth birthday. And as the cost of telegrams was high, and the schoolmasters rather poor, they worded their telegram as follows :—

“TO PRINCE BISMARCK, BERLIN.

“*Sirach*, 10 ; verse 5.

“THE EDUCATIONAL INSPECTORS OF LÜDENSCHIED.”

Naturally Bismarck got down the book on opening the dispatch, and this is what he found at the place indicated :—

“The successes of a ruler are in the hands of God, and He giveth him a good Chancellor.”

They were no fools, these schoolmasters ; but their idea was not a new one, for the Americans had frequently had recourse to the same expedient.

The ex-Chancellor has a companion who never leaves him (already alluded to at the

commencement of this book)—his dog Tyras, which the Germans have nicknamed the “Reichshund” (“Dog of the Empire”). Every time a party is given at the mansion, the dog is sure not to be forgotten, all the more that he is well known to all those invited to the Prince's *Frühshoppen* (early luncheon).

On his master's seventieth birthday Tyras was presented with a magnificent blanket, on the four corners of which were embroidered his initials ; several costly collars were also sent him, and lastly—a sofa ! The latter gift was accompanied by a verse of four lines, of which the meaning was probably hardly understood by Tyras. They were as follows :—

“Tyras, sei hübsch, artig und gut,
Sei es bei Tag, sei es bei Nacht.
Bewache unsern Kanzler gut ;
Dann wird als Präsent dir dies Kanapé gebracht.”

“Tyras, be gentle, good, and kind,
All day long, and through the night,
Watch over our Chancellor faithfully,
And this gift of a sofa you'll receive.”

Very pretty and touching, isn't it ?

A certain Bavarian poet also sang the praises of Bismarck in the old Bavarian dialect. The piece is too long to be reproduced, but the following is the substance of it:—

“A waggoner, a mason, a carpenter, a hunter, and a tradesman are seated around the table at a brewery tap, discussing the genius and abilities of Bismarck.

“The waggoner says that he ought to have been a driver, because he knows how to go at a great pace without upsetting the coach.

“The mason says that the Prince ought to have joined *his* profession, because he has pulled down a great number of small erections, and has raised in their place a large and substantial building.

“The carpenter claims him for *his* trade; in the first place because he has rebuilt the old edifice, and in the second place because he has surrounded it with an insurmountable barrier.

“The hunter maintains that all the others are wrong, and that there was only one career open to Bismarck: he ought to be a hunter, because he has never missed his aim.

“The tradesman spoke last, and declared that each of his companions were equally mistaken: that Bismarck had done much better in becoming *himself*.”

In 1877 he received a congratulatory telegram from an address which was of itself enough to excite surprise. This dispatch, of which the following is a translation, was sent him from—the Moon!

“Highness! we congratulate you!
True it is that you're accustomed to it;
But certainly it must rarely have happened to you
To be addressed by people in the Moon.”

These inhabitants of the Moon, however, were only the regular customers at an ale-house in Weissenfels with the sign of “The Half Moon.”

Bismarck replied to this telegram by a quatrain which ran as follows :—

“That congratulations of any kind
Could reach me from the Moon,
Where the inhabitants are very few,
I should never have believed.”

When he celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of his entry into the Ministry, one of his admirers published, through a Berlin bookseller, a sort of epic poem entitled “Triglaw-Bismarck.” This admirer was gifted with a very fantastical imagination, as will be seen. The idea worked out in his verses was the following :—

Bismarck is such an extraordinary personage that future generations will take him for a myth; so much the more so, that nearly all the acts of his life will present themselves in a symbolical form to those who in the dim future shall look back upon them. These people will involuntarily think of Triglaw, the god of the Wends.

This said Triglaw had, it appears, three



PRINCE BISMARCK AND HIS SON, COUNT HERBERT.

heads : Bismarck had at first three tufts of hair on his head, reduced subsequently to three hairs. But this is not all ; for, according to the poet, the figure "three" crops up continually in his hero's life. The following are some examples,—

He is the third child of his parents.

He has himself three children.

He has been elected three times member of the Landtag.

Three times has he been Ambassador.

He has served three Princes of the House of Hohenzollern.

Three times has he vanquished his country's enemies.

These victories were won in three wars, by the trio—Bismarck, Moltke, and Roon.

In the course of his lifetime he has borne three noble titles—Gentleman, Count, and Prince.

He has three places of residence—Berlin, Friedrichsruh, and Varzin.

He has cemented the alliance of the Three Emperors.