

candidates (a Progressist) alluded to Bismarck in the following terms:—

“I look upon this personal government of the Chancellor as a misfortune for our country; all the more that he has only one object in view—to curtail the rights and the influence of the people’s representatives. As regards interior administration, the Chancellor totally lacks the necessary experience; and his foreign policy is hesitating and shifty, and only calculated to arouse a feeling of mistrust and uncertainty in the conduct of public affairs.”

It is needless to say that the man who had the temerity to attack in this way the arbiter of Germany’s destinies had not the slightest chance of being elected at that time.

CHAPTER VIII.

BISMARCK'S WITTY SAYINGS.

EVERY statesman and politician is more or less accused—if not by his contemporaries, at least by posterity—of having perpetrated any number of puns and jokes. Flashes of wit—of very doubtful taste sometimes—have often been fathered by journalists upon such or such a man of note, merely for the sake of obtaining currency for them. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the paternity of many a witty saying has been fastened upon Prince Bismarck. A few only, however, are really his, but we can vouch for the correctness of the following, which are repeated without any attempt at chronological order.

We will commence, however, with the cruel conundrum put by King William of

Prussia at the expense of the Emperor of Austria, without the slightest shadow of excuse. It dates from 1867. The Emperor Francis Joseph had already been beaten, but his future ally must needs try to kill him also with ridicule. Talking one day with his Chancellor, King William asked him point blank,—

“Wissen Sie wer der beste Baumeister in Europa ist?” (“Do you know who is the best architect in Europe?”)

“No, sire.”

“Well, then ; it is the Emperor Francis Joseph.”

“Why, sire?”

“Es ist Ihm nie etwas eingefallen.”

This was a play upon words, for the phrase can be translated in two ways : First, “He has never got a useful idea into his head” (and that is what King William meant to say); secondly, “Nothing that he has built has ever fallen in upon him.”

Bismarck laughed heartily at this fun of his sovereign's, and his backbiters say that

he often served it up afresh with abundant comments of his own, and they always went off with the greatest success.

It is said that at the commencement of the war of 1870, King William asked his Chancellor,—

“What shall we do with France?”

“Wir spielen mit Ihr sechs und sechzig.” (Literally: “We will play sixty-six* with her.”)

This alleged reply of the Chancellor might appear charming to a person knowing nothing of what was going on at the time ; but to those who are aware how uncertain Prussia felt of success at the outset of the campaign, the genuineness of the saying will appear very doubtful.

At the time of the Berlin Congress, the then Crown Prince gave a farewell dinner to the delegates, styling it a “Friedensdiner” (“Dinner of Peace”), Prince Bismarck

* A game of cards very popular in Germany.

was requested by the Crown Prince to arrange with the delegates about the date on which the dinner should be held, and he addressed himself in the first place to the English Premier, Lord Beaconsfield, asking him whether the following Thursday would suit him.

"But," said Beaconsfield, "does your Serene Highness talk so soon of peace and parting? That is what we call selling the bearskin before you have killed the bear."

"Well," answered Bismarck, "*you* kill the bear then."

"That's just what I intend to do," was Beaconsfield's rejoinder.

Bismarck could not avoid laughing at this *double-entendre*, although, of course, it was aimed at Russia, Prussia's ally.

When Bismarck was sent as Prussian delegate to the Federal Diet at Frankfort, one of the first visits he made was to Prince Metternich, the Austrian Minister, who was staying at that time at his castle

of Johannisberg. It must be mentioned that Prince Metternich was the life and soul of society at Frankfort. He was a delightful and untiring talker, especially when he could be led into the subject of the French Revolution. He had been an eye-witness of some of the scenes enacted during this troublous period, having been at the time a student of philosophy at Strasbourg,* and his tutor left him to enter a Jacobin club.

A few days after this visit to Metternich, Count von Thun met Bismarck and said to him,—

"You must know that Prince Metternich is quite delighted with you. What have you done to get into his favour?"

"Oh, a very simple matter," replied Bismarck. "I listened to the Prince's conversation for three whole days without interrupting him, looking as enlightened and interested all the time as I possibly could."

* He had Benjamin Constant for fellow-student.

In the spring of 1854 the King of Bavaria held a grand review of his army, and numerous foreign officers were invited to the display, among them being an Austrian General. All the visitors were resplendent with stars and orders. Bismarck was among the guests, and he had donned for the occasion his uniform of Lieutenant in the Landwehr, and wore on his breast a goodly number of decorations, conferred upon him by the Princes of the Confederation.

The Austrian General was rather annoyed at seeing Bismarck decked out with all this "tin-ware," as he called it, and going up to him, and pointing to the orders on his breast, said in a low but rather bantering tone,—

"Donnerwetter, Excellency! Did you win all those stars before the enemy?"

"Certainly," replied Bismarck; "I won them all before the enemy—at Frankfort-on-the-Main!"

In April 1857 Bismarck had just had an

interview with the Emperor Napoleon III. The relations between Prussia and France were at that time rather strained, and in a letter to his sister, Frau von Arnim, he described how embarrassed and upset he was at that period.

"I am cold," he wrote, "although I have five fires going; I never know what time it is, although I have half-a-dozen clocks; and although I possess eleven large mirrors, my tie is always askew."

Mention has already been made in the foregoing pages of the strenuous opposition Bismarck encountered in Prussia when he thought fit to appoint Dr. Schweningen, of Munich, his private physician, and to nominate him Professor in the Berlin University.

One day, when he was exasperated at the fresh objections which poured in upon him from all quarters, he sent to one of the most embittered objectors (Herr von Gossler) the following reply:—

"If Schweningen goes back to Munich

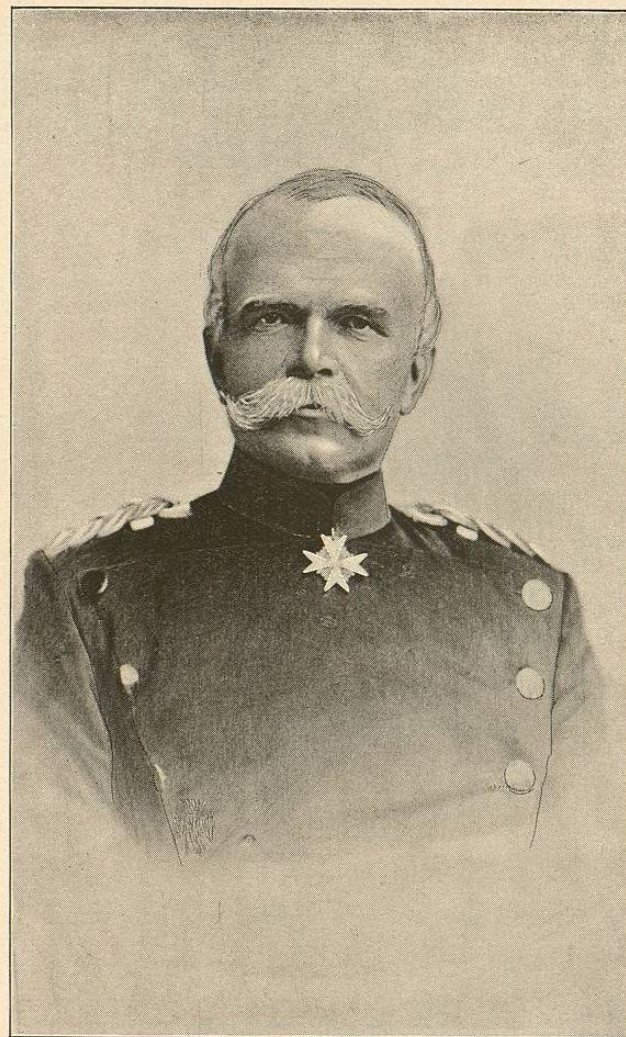
I go with him. You may do what you like in the matter ; but my mind is fully made up."

It has already been stated that Dr. Schweningen was elected and kept in Berlin.

It is pretty well known that the *Kladderadatsch** made a certain trio of prominent men the favourite subjects of its puns and caricatures: these were Napoleon III., the Sultan of Turkey, and Bismarck.

When the first of these three personages died, it was a great loss to the comic print, as it was thereby deprived of one of its choicest objects of ridicule. Some time after the Sultan felt annoyed at all the fun that was made of him, and made representations on the subject to the Prussian and Austrian Governments (for the Austrian journals imitated the *Kladderadatsch* in casting ridicule upon these three great men). The result was that the Sultan was let alone, and

* German comic paper ; similar to our *Punch*.



COUNT CAPRIVI,
BISMARCK'S SUCCESSOR AS CHANCELLOR.

Bismarck was the only one of the trio left for these papers to fling their jokes at. Bismarck is stated to have alluded to the subject in the following terms:—

“Very good! I am the only one left now to be a butt for their sorry wit. We shared the business hitherto, but now the Sultan has also disappeared. It is very provoking, for I really don't know whether I shall suffice for it all by myself.”

Field-Marshal Von Moltke—a long time ago, and with perfect reason—was dubbed “the Great Silent One.” Bismarck, in speaking of him one day, gave the following description of him, which is certainly not lacking in wit:—

“Every time there is a declaration of war on the *tapis*, even Moltke gets talkative, and when that of 1870 was resolved upon, he suddenly got ten years younger. Previous to that he was always crabbed and surly; but no sooner was war decided upon

than he became quite chatty, recovered his liking for champagne and strong cigars, and forgot all about the gout which he had contracted through reposing so long upon his laurels, which had grown damp and cold."

Bismarck was one day in company, when, among other things, the subject of how much it cost to gain experience in life cropped up. He kept silent for a time, but presently he joined in the conversation and said:—"Fools pretend that you can only gain experience at your own expense, but I have always managed to learn at the expense of others."

The man's whole policy was defined in these few words, and it would have been difficult to express it in a shorter sentence, more cynical or more true.

The following little anecdote is narrated by the German papers of April 23rd, 1889:—

"Yesterday the Chancellor took his usual

ride on horseback to the Thiergarten, going by way of Charlottenburg, and he found some difficulty *en route* in responding to the enthusiastic cheers and salutes of the people among whom he passed. Suddenly a well-dressed lady, belonging, apparently, to the upper class of society, rushed up to him and exclaimed,—

"'Ah, your Highness! how glad I am to have seen you once in my life!'

"The Prince was taken aback for a moment, but quickly recovered himself, and replied with a smile, 'I trust, Madame, it will not be the last.'

"And applying his spurs to his horse, he went off at a gallop."

The Treaty of Nikolsburg was, as is well known, concluded in the castle of the same name belonging to Count von Mensdorff-Pouilly. It is a very ancient structure, but a marvel of architecture and of excellent interior arrangement. When Bismarck entered it for the first time he was struck with