

Revolutions: Political and Social

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ARTICLE NINETEEN.

HAD BISMARCK lived in 1913 it is quite possible he might have laid claim to have had a vision of Germany's industrial greatness, and to have had that end in view during all his diplomatic villanies. He could have, mankind being exceedingly prone to just this kind of rationalization, furnished a reasonable amount of evidence to justify his claim, if he had not published his "Reflections and Reminiscences," which leave no doubt of the source of his inspiration.

It is just here that the Materialist Conception of History confounds the great man theory. A very limited amount of common sense compels us to credit the influence of some men in the development of mankind. But a very limited knowledge of history warns us that development did not depend exclusively upon any one man. We can no more deny the intellectual greatness of some men than we can the physique of others. One man is six foot six, weighs two hundred pounds and can hold at arm's length a fifty-six pound weight and raise from the ground to arms length above his head two hundred weight. Another, five foot one, who turns the scale at a hundred and ten pounds can only marvel that such things be possible. One man's heart sustains him in a rush of a hundred yards in ten seconds, while another in a ten-pace trot almost succeeds in an effort to tear itself from its moorings. That we should recognize this of some organs and deny the superiority of some brains is hardly consistent with good sense. Given then, a position wherein to exercise their mental excellence, there can be no question of the influence of some men in the affairs of mankind. We are quite ready to admit that a statesman who has sense enough to see and admit the facts of existence, sufficient brains to recognize their significance, and training enough to utilize them, will have more influence in the affairs of a nation than one who lacks these essentials of statecraft.

But the crediting of a nation's greatness to this individual is quite another matter. Bismarck was born early enough to realize what the ravishes of war meant, and during his official life he had seen Prussia humiliated by many European powers. He had seen this humiliation become a settled policy of Austria. Thus Prussia had a glorious past, in which she had emerged victorious from a struggle with all the great powers of continental Europe. And just previous to being called to the chancellorship he had seen Prussia gradually slipping under the heavy handicap of a mad monarch. In 1861 the mentally deranged Frederick William returned to dust, and his brother, as William I, ascended the throne of Frederick the Great; he brought along with the blood of his great ancestor all his ambitions, if but little of his ability. This ability, however, was to be found in manifold splendor in the three men we referred to last issue.

The creation of a nation strong enough to resist her powerful neighbors—Russia, Austria and France—was the purpose of Prussia's rulers. This could only be accomplished by welding all German-speaking peoples outside of Austria into one nation. The heterogeneous and conflicting states of Italy had in 1859 become a nation, an example, and mankind with all his precepts and proverbs, is particularly moved by example, of what could be done. One man swims the English Channel and receives the plaudits of a proud people; ere long a score are striving to perform the difficult and dangerous feat. One statesman achieves a stroke of statecraft, and there arises a number of ambitious imitations.

Prompted by Von Roon, William I commenced a reorganization of the army. The first need was a more generous gathering of young men. The two-year term was therefore raised to three. This was bitterly opposed by the Prussian Diet; a compromise

was effected, whereby money was voted for one year only. When the Diet again assembled the army was reorganized; when they realized how they had been tricked another rumpus ensued, which again ended in the same compromise. Von Roon continued his policy, and, following the election of 1861, when a large Progressist majority was returned from the new industrial districts of Silesia and the Rhineland, which appeared determined to use the army question to force a decision on where the power in Prussia resided, the struggle between King and Parliament arose. This time there was no compromise; the Army Bill was rejected, and the deputies declared that henceforth they would exercise fuller control over the finances of Prussia. The King dissolved Parliament and the ministry resigned with the exception of Roon. The electors returned an even greater majority of deputies determined to rule, and the Army Bill was rejected almost unanimously; Prince Hohenzollern and his ministry resigned, and the King, probably due to some family defect of blood, lapsing into an inferiority complex as had his brother before him, contemplated retiring to quieter if less exalted paths, and for the moment King Capital seemed about to enter into his pre-appointed sphere. Roon advised calling Bismarck to the helm, and it was so. The deputies rejected the Army Bill for a third time; it was then passed in the Upper House and Bismarck continued to conduct the affairs of the country after Parliament had adjourned. The country was now in a state of ferment, but the new chancellor ignored it. A kindly fate soon furnished him with the opportunity to advance his already formed scheme for enlarging the frontiers of Prussia.

An agitation had been for years carried on in Poland for the restitution of their country, which carried the sympathies of all Europe. Russia, we have seen, was the ally of Austria, and for Prussia to attack Austria would obviously be utter madness. The Czar in the early days of 1863 executed an order which would either kill the Polish movement or bring it into the open where it could be crushed. An army levy of one-half per cent. of the population was made, and it was made effective in Poland in towns only, and every one known to have been active in the disturbances and agitation was to be pressed into the army.

With the inevitable insurrection which followed the attempt to enforce this levy we are not concerned just now. The people of Europe and not more than the people of Prussia were more sympathetic; several governments prepared to intervene; Liberals and rebels everywhere raised their voices, Marx foremost among them, and it was at a meeting of delegates from the workers of Europe, called to protest against the terrible measures used to suppress the insurrection. It was from this protest that the "First International of Glorious Memory" arose, although it did not take definite form until a year later. But "order is restored in Moscow" and how many of the Revolutionists of that day would be satisfied with the order of restoring? After revolutionary Europe, longing for almost a century for that restoration, they got it from their masters, and Poland is the one great safeguard against the international revolution.

Such is fate. And such the limit of human vision. Bismarck offered the Czar his help, and secure in this proffered assistance the Czar proceeded to the most drastic suppression of the revolt. When it was over Austria had lost a powerful friend and Bismarck had gained one. This had hardly been consummated when fate again favored Bismarck. The King of Denmark died, and the question of the German-speaking duchies of Schleswig-Holstein was again in the diplomatic fire.

Germany, we remember, had been humiliated in this matter in 1848, and the question again aroused much feeling. Without going into the intricacies of succession, we can proceed to its results. The German Bund and Assembly of Princes determined to

see these provinces separated from Denmark. Accordingly the federal government ordered Hanover and Saxony to formally seize them. But Bismarck had other fish to fry. He represented this action to Austria as a return to the revolutionary days of 1848, and succeeded in drawing her into an alliance wherein they would jointly seize the prey. To do this he had to overcome the antagonism of every one, even King William, except of, course, Von Roon. The Danes were driven from the disputed territory, and much bluster was heard from England and France about the Treaty of London, the same we heard so much of in 1914. The unfortunate Danes, expecting intervention, held out long enough to permit Bismarck to obtain the precise boundary he required, which included Kiel harbor. Notwithstanding England's having received the Daughter of the Sea King across the water, as Tennyson sang on the occasion of the marriage between Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and Alexandra, Princess of Denmark, the rights of small nations and France and Britain's heroic efforts to protect the poor Turk's bag and baggage a few years previous, Austria and Prussia were now two lusty dogs with one miserable bone. The former was yet too powerful for Bismarck to attack, as she was sure to have the support of all the other German states, although her action in Denmark had lost her much prestige.

Bismarck prudently retired every time the Austrian dog growled; meanwhile seeking alliance in the only possible country available. Italy had an army of experienced fighting men, only too delighted to have another whack at Austria's heroes of 1848. The Italian rulers, more pragmatic, gazed lovingly, as they had long gazed, on Venetia, still under Austria's barbarous rule, which, with Rome, still barred their complete unity, and formed a wedge and offered a pretext for Austrian aggression at any time. Barkus was willin' but Napoleon III had assisted the Italian to defeat Austria, in fact, had practically done the job himself with his trusty revolutionary Frenchmen, and he might object. His warriors had seen service in the Crimea and in Italy, and so Bismarck had to make an afternoon call on his Imperial Majesty. They met in September, 1865, at Biarritz without witnesses. Napoleon claimed he was offered Belgium, or some Rhine side territory, as the price of his neutrality. Bismarck denies it. We are not concerned with who's got the button; we note however, that Napoleon acquiesced. The alliance went forward: Italy in the event of success to have Venetia.

But it looks as though we can't get through with Bismarck's villanies this time, so we will require further space in next issue.

Whoever hesitates to utter that which he thinks the highest truth, lest it should be too much in advance of the time, may reassure himself by looking at his acts from an impersonal point of view. Let him duly realize the fact that opinion is the agency through which character adapts external arrangements to itself—that his opinion rightly forms part of this agency: is a unit of force, constituting, with other such agencies, the general power which works out social changes; and he will perceive that he may properly give full utterance to his innermost conviction, leaving it to produce what effect it may. It is not for nothing that he has in him these sympathies with some principles and repugnance to others. He, with all his capacities, aspirations and beliefs, is not an accident, not a product of the time. He must remember that, while he is a descendant of the past, he is a parent of the future; and that his thoughts are as children born to him that he may not carelessly let lie. . . . The highest truth he sees he will fearlessly utter, knowing that, let what may come of it, he is playing his right part in the world—knowing that, if he can effect the change he aims at—well: if not—well also; though not so well.

—Herbert Spencer.