

THE PRUSSIAN ADMIRAL AND THE PRUSSIAN FLEET.

The command of a national fleet seems at best but an anomalous position for one whose acquaintance with war has been entirely made upon land, and who, to the outside world at least, is better known as an artillery officer than as a naval commander. Yet Prince Adalbert, the present Commander-in-chief of the Prussian Navy, is a man in every way fitted for the post he holds. It is true that he is not a distinguished officer in maritime warfare, for the very good reason that he has had no opportunity of proving his skill therein, and still more because for many years during which he held his present position, the Prussian navy only existed upon paper. It is to him, however, that Prussia owes the not inconsiderable fleet she now possesses.

Henry William Adalbert, Prince of Prussia, was born at Berlin on the 29th of October, 1811. He is the son of Frederick William Charles and Amelia Marie Anne, of Hesse-Homburg, and cousin-german to the King of Prussia. At an early age he commenced his military studies at the artillery school of Berlin, and soon after entered the army, when he was attached to an artillery corps. He evinced at this time a passionate love for travelling, and set out on a series of voyages to the principal countries of Europe. In 1826 he visited Holland, in 1832 England and Scotland, in 1834 St. Petersburg and Moscow, in 1837 Turkey, Greece, and the Ionian Islands. In 1842 the King of Sardinia placed a frigate at his service, and starting from Genoa, the Prince visited Gibraltar, Tangiers, Madeira, and Teneriffe, crossed the ocean and cruised about the coasts of Brazil. On his return to Berlin he published the diary of his journeyings, which has since been translated into English. In 1854 the Prince was charged with the mission of the organisation of the Prussian marine, and received the title of "Admiral of the Prussian coast." At that time the extent of the Prussian sea-coast was comparatively limited; Prussia possessed no naval stations of any importance, and her available fleet was of the smallest. Notwithstanding such discouraging prospects, the Prince set manfully to work to build up Prussia into a naval power. He commenced by organising a gun-boat service for the protection of the coast, and then turned his attention to the construction of war-vessels on a more formidable scale. In 1856 he again embarked for the Mediterranean, where he took part in his first and only naval engagement. While cruising off Cape Tres Forcas, he was attacked by the Riff pirates, whom he dispersed after a sharp engagement, in which he was wounded. On his return to Prussia, Prince Adalbert contracted a morganatic marriage with Mdlle. Thérèse Elssler, sister to Fanny Elssler, the celebrated dancer. She was ennobled by the late King, Frederick William IV., under the title of Mme. de Barnim. One son was the result of this marriage, Baron Adalbert de Barnim, who died in Egypt in 1860 of fever.

After his marriage the Prince again devoted himself to his duties in connection with the organisation of a fleet. By his untiring energy and the thorough acquaintance he had formed with matters maritime—the result of his constant journeyings and his visits to the various naval stations of Europe—he succeeded in raising the Prussian navy to a very respectable footing. In 1854, when the Danish war broke out, the effect of the fleet consisted of a total of 85 vessels,

including 2 iron-clads, 8 corvettes, and 23 gun-boats. During this war the Prince took no part in any naval actions, but served with distinction in the army at Nachod and Skalitz.

At the present time the Prussian fleet is not only largely increased in numbers, but is well manned, well organised, and thoroughly well equipped. Since 1860 vessel after vessel has been launched, until Prussia, who fifteen years ago possessed neither fleet nor naval stations, has now become no contemptible naval power, and can boast a fleet second to none in the Baltic, and a line of naval stations and fortresses along her extended coast, to protect her territory from invasion by sea. Bismarck, in choosing Prince Adalbert for the head of the Marine, had, with his usual penetration, placed the right man in the right place.

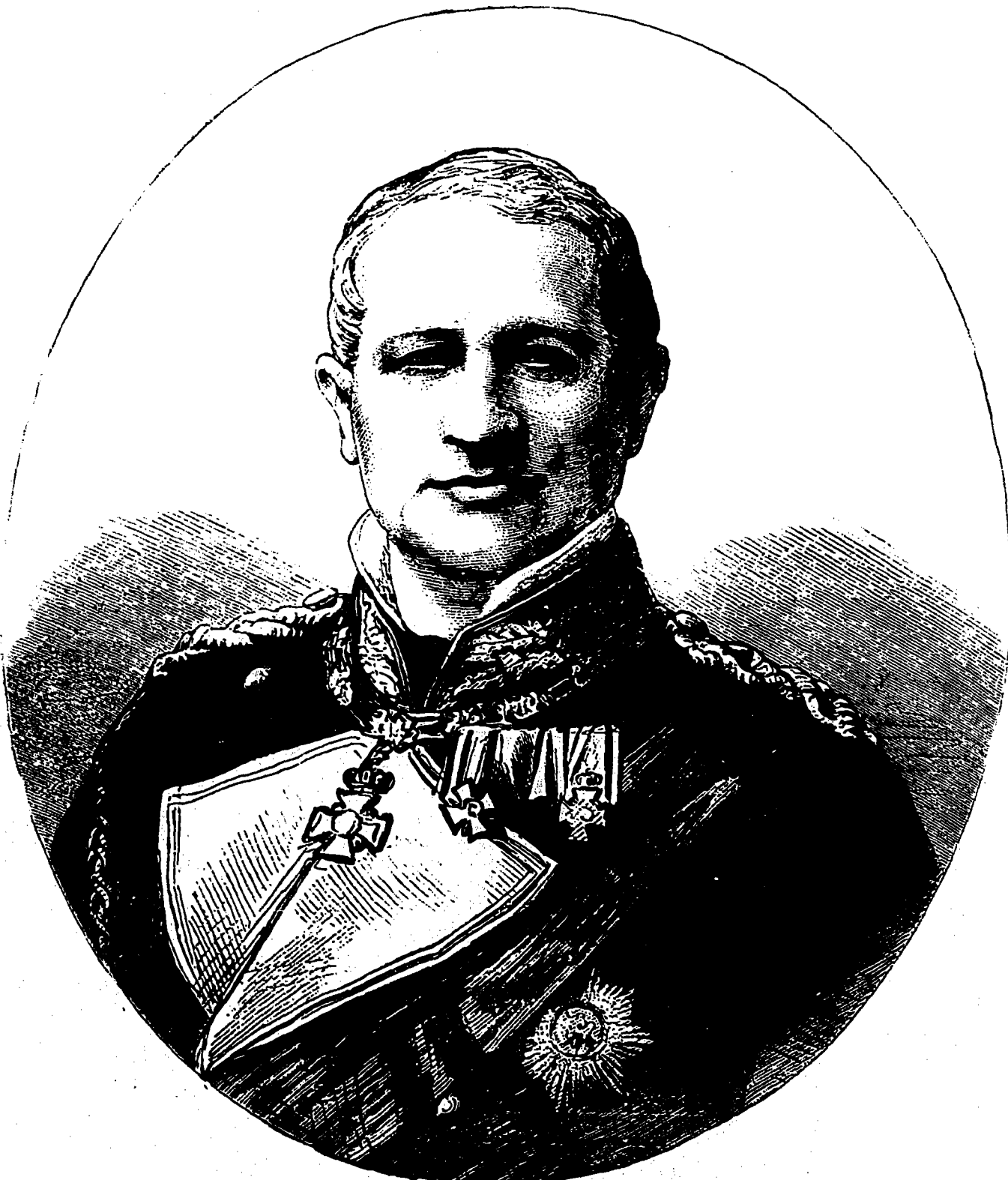
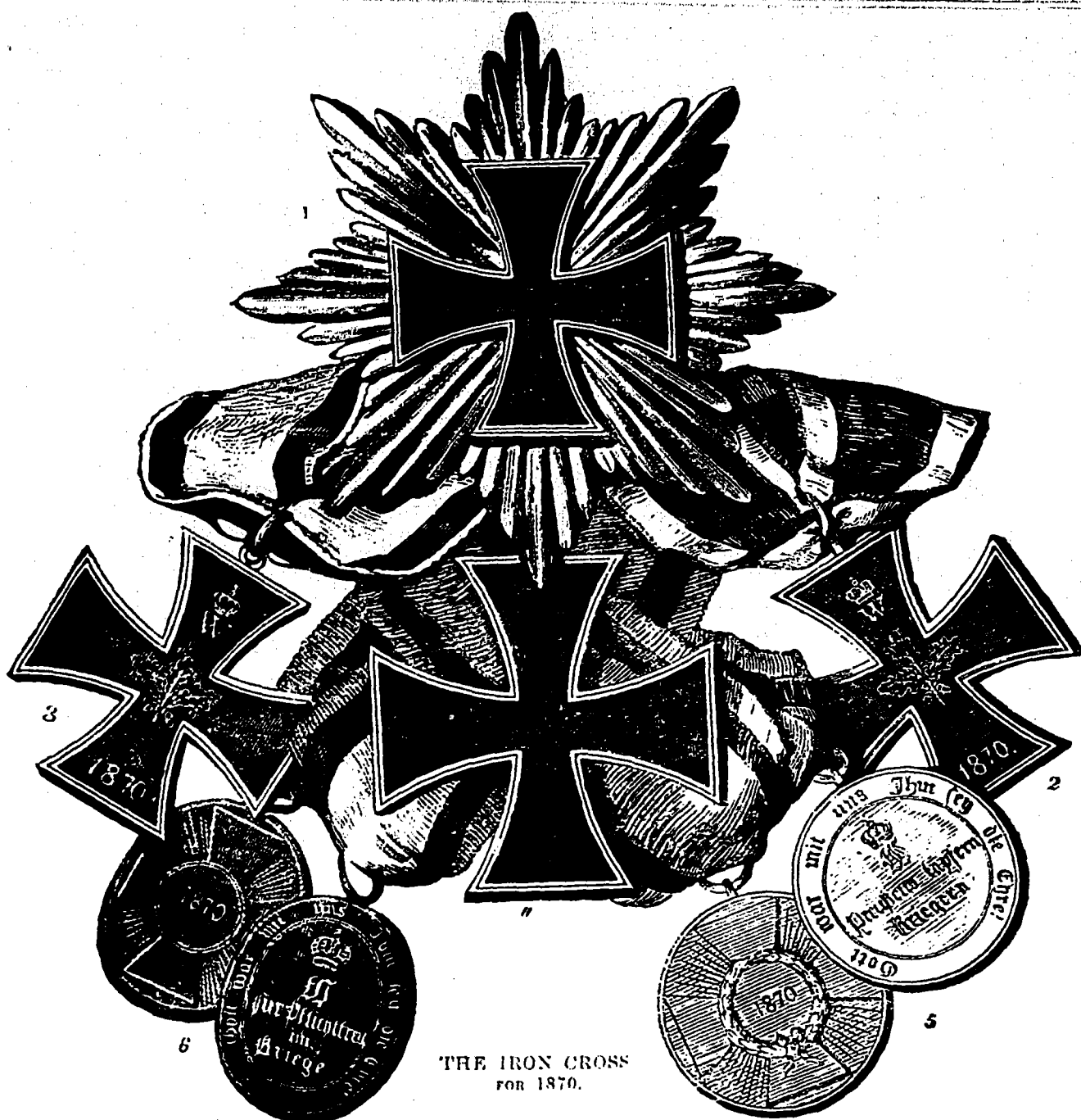
The fleet now consists of three armour-clad frigates, two armour-clad vessels, five corvettes, four gun vessels, two despatch-boats, one steam-yacht (the "Grille," said to be the fastest vessel afloat), three steam-vessels for port service, eight gun-vessels of the first class, and fourteen corvettes of the second order. Fifteen of these are screw-steamers, the rest paddle-steamers. There are also the following sailing vessels:—Three frigates, three brigs, four ships for port service, and 32 long-boats, the latter carrying two guns each. The total of steam-vessels is 88, of 7,892 horse-power, 42,825 tonnage, and carrying 454 guns. Within the last three months the "Renown," one of the finest British two-deckers, of 54 guns and 800 horse-power, has been added to the fleet. The three armour-clad frigates already mentioned are the "Koenig Wilhelm," 23 guns, Prince Adalbert's flagship, built at Blackwall, one of the most formidable iron-clads yet constructed; the "Prinz Friedrich Karl," 16 guns, recently built at Toulon; and the "Kron Prinz," 16 guns, built on the Thames.

Of course such a fleet is not to be compared to the immense naval armaments of England and France, but taking into consideration the extent of Prussian seaboard open to attack, the force is, after all, not contemptible. It must also be borne in mind that the fleet is being rapidly increased. Three iron-clads are nearly completed at Kiel and Dantzie, besides a number of frigates and sloops. To be built by 1877 are eleven iron-clads of the largest size, eleven double-banked frigates, seven heavy sloops and three transports; and of sailing vessels, three frigates and four brigs, amounting to 162 guns and 5,763 tons.

While attending to the augmentation of the navy, the Prussian Admiral has not neglected another and no less important branch. The number of serviceable naval stations on the Baltic has been nearly trebled, and by the acquisition of Schleswig Prussia has possessed herself of a first class port. Besides Kiel, the chief naval station of the German Confederation, she has Wilhelmshafen, Cuxhaven, and Bremerhaven, on the North Sea; and on the Baltic, Wismar, Stralsund, Stettin, Dantzie, and Koenigsberg, all of which have been materially strengthened and fortified.

THE IRON CROSS.

The celebrated Prussian order of the Iron Cross has been re-established. Like the Victoria Cross to the English soldier, and the Cross of the Legion of Honour to the Frenchman, it is the decoration that every Prussian soldier hopes to possess before he dies. The decoration is in itself a simple one—a plain eight-pointed cross of iron or bronze, intrinsically worth



PRINCE ADALBERT OF PRUSSIA.