

英文世界名人傳記

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OTTO VON BISMARCK

FAMOUS FOLK SERIES

# OTTO VON BISMARCK

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY LIFE

#### FAMILY

Otto von Bismarck was the first Chancellor<sup>1</sup> of the German Empire and is one of the greatest statesmen of the world. He was born on the first of April, 1815, at the manor-house of Schonhausen,<sup>2</sup> when Emperor Napoleon had just come back from Elba, when the Congress of Vienna had broken up, and when Prussia had entered into its new alliance with Europe.

The family had, since the 14th century, belonged to landed gentry, and many members had held high office in the kingdom of Prussia. Otto's father was a quiet, gentle, modest man. He held the rank of captain of the cavalry. At the age of three-and-twenty, he retired from active service after his first campaign because he had to have his two boys educated. The king was angry at that act and consequently deprived him of his rank, which was not restored to him until a long time afterwards. He was an apostle of the French enlightenment and had been brought up as a nobleman, though

<sup>1</sup> Chancellor (chǎn'sél-ēr), the chief minister of state in the German Empire.

<sup>2</sup> Schonhausen (shùn'hou'zěn).

as one who was to be free from prejudices of caste. He lived a carefree life on his estate and spent most of his time in hunting, or drinking—for all the Bismarcks had been hard drinkers for centuries.

His mother, a daughter of the Mencken, cabinet secretary to the king, was a woman of strong character and ability. Dispassionate reason and ardent ambition were two of the most notable elements in her composition. In her everything was rational. She loved town life, display, and the court. She was in all respects the exact opposite of her husband. He wanted to live and be let alone while she wanted to make a great show in the society.

The father was pleased with his sons while the mother was never satisfied. The father: "I am always proud of your reports. Yesterday the Bulows<sup>1</sup> were here; I showed them your reports, and was delighted to hear how well they spoke of you." The mother: "Look around you, listen to the world's judgment concerning solid culture, and you will realise how much you will have to do before you can claim the title of a cultured man."

From his mother, Otto got his reasoning powers, his piercing and dispassionate intelligence;<sup>2</sup> from her, likewise, came his restless longing for power, which no Bismarck before him had had; but in temperament and character generally, he was his father's son.

Otto had a brother and a sister whom he loved very much. However, since he could not live side by side

<sup>1</sup> Bulows (bū'lōz).

<sup>2</sup> Intelligence (in-tīlī-jëns), the intellect.

with any one possessing equal rights with himself, he did not work together with his brother for long. Soon they divided the heritage.<sup>1</sup> He wrote: "I am about to go halves with my brother, with the aid of a purchaser who has made a very high offer, I have brought him to the point." Thereafter, each of them did his own work.

Otto's wife was Johanna von Puttkamer, to whom he was married in 1847. She was clever, able, amiable and very fond of music. She was less proud than he. She was gentle at home. Above all, she had the spirit of self-sacrifice. It was because of those excellence that he married her.

## YOUTH

Very early in life the little boy saw no one with whom he would have cared to be intimate, and had no associate whom he could love, save only his father. He spent quite a long time with his father, reading and smoking, eating lampreys,<sup>2</sup> and sometimes "playing a comedy with."

He felt his mother on the contrary, to be an adversary.<sup>3</sup> He was estranged<sup>4</sup> from her in childhood already. Notwithstanding<sup>5</sup> his strong family feeling, he admitted as much to strangers in later years. In hundreds of conversations, he never had a good word to say for his

<sup>1</sup> Heritage (hě'r'i-tāj), that which is inherited.

<sup>2</sup> Lampreys (lām'-priz), cel-like water animals, having large, suctorial, and jawless mouth.

<sup>3</sup> Adversary (ăd'ver-sâ-rî), one who is turned against another with opposing or hostile intent.

<sup>4</sup> Estranged (ăs-trân'jd/), to alienate the affections of.

<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding (nōt'with-stăn'ding), in spite of.

mother. He always used "extremely bitter" language about her, saying that she had "very little of what the Berliners term 'kindly feeling.'" He would add: "Often it seemed to me that she was hard and cold towards me." Since he regarded his mother as the ruling influence in the house, he held her responsible for all the severities he suffered at the boarding school. He never ceased to complain of the stale bread he ate there; of the Spartan<sup>1</sup> character of the education; of the inadequate clothing in winter; of the "unnaturally harsh discipline." Everything that came from his mother, all she wanted and all she taught, seemed evil to the boy.

When he was seventeen or eighteen, he already established a nihilism<sup>2</sup> in belief and thought firmly. He was convinced "that a republic is the most reasonable form of State." He regarded Harmodius<sup>3</sup> and Brutus<sup>4</sup> as criminals and rebels. Every German prince who resisted the emperor incurred his anger.

His attitude towards religious belief was also hostile. At the time of his confirmation, when he was about sixteen, he asserted: "Not out of indifference, but as the outcome of mature conviction, I abandoned the practice to which I had been accustomed since early childhood, and gave up saying my prayers, for prayer seemed to me to conflict with my view as to the nature of God. I said to myself that either God ordained everything

<sup>1</sup> Spartan (spär'tän), of or pert. to Sparta, esp. ancient Sparta, in Laconia, ruled by a Dorian people noted for their military organization and religious discipline and valor.

<sup>2</sup> Nihilism (ni'-hi-liz'm), a doctrine that denies any objective or real ground of truth.

<sup>3</sup> Harmodius (här-mō'di-ūs), an Athenian conspirator.

<sup>4</sup> Brutus (brōō'tūs), Marcus Junius, Roman politician.

in virtue of his omnipresence,<sup>1</sup> that is to say, independently of my thought and will; . . . or else, that is my will be independent of God, it would be arrogant . . . to believe that God could be influenced by human petitions." His train of reasoning like that showed that at this early age he was already a proud realist, who would only concede to a superior power just so much as circumstances made necessary.

It was due to his hatred for any sort of compulsion that he was very reluctant to enter military service. He used to ride, either alone or accompanied by his steward. In these rides he became acquainted with the lower classes, with peasants and dealers, and came to know the realities of the land.

## EDUCATION

The education of Bismarck at school was no better than ordinary. As a very small boy, he studied at a private school in Berlin. From the age of twelve to seventeen he was at the gymnasium<sup>2</sup> of the Graue Kloster. At that time on seeing the hatred against the nobility steadily growing in the establishment to which cultured bourgeois<sup>3</sup> were wont to send their sons, his pride of birth increased. He had not yet become remarkable in history but was already noted in Germany. He had no thought of proper respect for his teachers. He always

<sup>1</sup> Omnipresence, (öm'nī-prěz'-ens), presence everywhere.

<sup>2</sup> Gymnasium (jīm-nā'zī-üm), in Continental Europe, esp. Germany, a school preparing for the university, the classical languages being an essential part of the curriculum.

<sup>3</sup> Bourgeois (bōör'zhwâ/z), men of middle class.

wanted to sleep in the morning, and did not grow cheerful until late in the day. This peculiarity persisted throughout life.

In his school days, he was already opposed to the old style of parliamentary speeches, saying that he felt "repelled by the reading of the clownish and abusive orations. . . with which the Homeric<sup>1</sup> heroes were accustomed to regale themselves before a fight."

At the age of seventeen Bismarck went to the University of Gottingen,<sup>2</sup> where he spent a little over a year. Whilst in the University he was quite conspicuous in contrast with ordinary students: his dressing, his courage and arrogance,<sup>3</sup> his debauchery<sup>4</sup> and elegance,<sup>5</sup> the mingling of violence and kindness. This peculiarity was well described in the novel of John Lothrop Motley, his fellow student. In the novel Bismarck appeared as "Otto von Rabenmark." Motley said: "He was very young . . . not quite seventeen; but in precocity<sup>6</sup> of character . . . he went immeasurably<sup>7</sup> beyond any person I have ever known. . . . I have seldom seen a more unprepossessing<sup>8</sup> person . . . though on better acquaintance. . . . I began to think him rather well looking. He had coarse scrubby hair, of a mixed colour, something between red and a whity-brown. His face was peppered all over with freckles, and his eyes were colourless in the

<sup>1</sup> Homeric (hō-mēr'ik), pert. to Homer, the Greek poet.

<sup>2</sup> Gottingen (gūt'ing-ën), Hanover, Prussia.

<sup>3</sup> Arrogance (ār'ō-gāns), haughtiness.

<sup>4</sup> Debauchery (dē-bēch'ēr-ī), corruption of fidelity.

<sup>5</sup> Elegance (ēl'ē-gāns), the beauty of propriety.

<sup>6</sup> Precocity (prē-kōs'ī-ti), state of being premature.

<sup>7</sup> Immeasurably (i-mēzh'ūr-ā-b'li), illimitably.

<sup>8</sup> Unprepossessing (ün-prē-pō-zēs'ing), unattractive.

centre, and looked as if edged with red tape. An enormous scar, the relic of a recent duel . . . extended from the tip of his nose to the edge of his right ear, and had been sewed up with fourteen stitches. . . . He had recently shaved off one of his eyebrows, his face certainly might lay claim to a bizarre<sup>1</sup> and very unique character. His figure was slender, and not yet mature, but already of a tolerable height. . . . He wore a chaotic coat, without collar or buttons, and as destitute of colour as of shape; enormous wide trousers, and boots with iron heels and portentous spurs. His shirt collar, unconscious of cravat, was doubled over his shoulders, and boots with iron heels and portentous spurs. His shirt collar, unconscious of cravat, was doubled over his shoulders, and his hair hung down about his ears and neck. A faint attempt at moustachios, of an indefinite colour, completed the equipment of his face, and a huge sabre, strapped round his waist, that of his habiliments."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the young Bismarck had no love for the Bunschenschafts,<sup>3</sup> the students associations, because, he thought, their members were ill-bred. But he like very much to associate with foreigners. He made two friends, who were Motley, the American, a cheerful man of refined temperament, free from prejudices; and Count Keyserling, the Courlander, a man of mature mind and ascetic disposition.<sup>4</sup> On into old age they remained Bismarck's only intimate friends. They were older than Bismarck,

<sup>1</sup> Bizarre (bī-zār'), grotesque.

<sup>2</sup> Habilliments (hā-bīl'i-mēnts), dresses.

<sup>3</sup> Bunschenschafts (böön'shēn-shäfts).

<sup>4</sup> Disposition (dis'pō-zīsh'ün), quality.



more self-controlled, more concentrated in aim. Neither of them played an active part in the students' corps.<sup>1</sup>

In college Bismarck was supposed to be studying law, with an eye to a diplomatic career. He had no wish to become an army officer. In spite of his mother's ambitious longing which was that her father's power and position should be reborn in her son, his inclinations could not be repressed.

Moreover, Bismarck had no interest in the national problem. He never went to hear the most celebrated professor lecture on this topic. It was more to his taste to join his American friends on Independence Day. But when one of them spoke of German disunion, Bismarck bet twenty-five bottles of champagne<sup>2</sup> that Germany would be united within twenty-five years.

Bismarck had once spent a few months studying agriculture at the University of Greifswald,<sup>3</sup> and chemistry at the academy of Eldena, and had works on botany sent to him by Keyserling. He had little enough respect for philosophy. In the middle twenties he read a great deal and played a great deal. Byron<sup>4</sup> and Bulwer<sup>5</sup> now became his favorite authors. History, sociology and works of Shakespeare were all ploddingly digged. He told us: "Such general knowledge as I possess, dates from the period when I had nothing to do; when on my estate in the country, I had a library covering all fields

<sup>1</sup> Corps (körps), body of men.

<sup>2</sup> Champagne (shäm-pän'), a lightwine, first made in Champagne, in France,

<sup>3</sup> Greifswald (grifs'vält).

<sup>4</sup> Byron (bi'rün) English poet (1788-1824).

<sup>5</sup> Bulwer (bööl'wēr), English author and diplomat (1801-1872).

of thought and action, and when I literary devoured my books." As to play, swimming, duck-shooting in a hunt and shooting at a target were his every-day games. He also found delight in his rural occupation, "because of its independence."

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAD JUNKER

In his young days Bismarck was not only very hot-headed but also very odd in clothing as well as in manner. As a man of knightly birth, he had little in contact with the common people even with the nobles. Sometimes he disrespectfully criticized the government. Sometimes he made fun of ladies and squires when he met them in the country side. He was often peculiarly dressed and brought wine and porter with him wherever he went. After drinking, he rambled by muddy roads to a squire's farm where he greatly surprised a well dressed company by his disgraceful appearance. In this way he got the nickname of the Mad Junker, although he was not really mad.

The Junker was very superstitious. In all the phases of his life, he used to calculate the age at which he must die. "If I do not die after X years, I must do this or that after Y years." Once he wrote to his betrothed: "You will hardly believe how superstitious I am. Just when I had opened your letter, the great clock suddenly stopped at three minutes past six—an old English pendulum<sup>1</sup> clock which my grandfather had had from youth upwards, and which has been standing on the same spot

<sup>1</sup> Pendulum (pĕn'dū-lŭm), a body so suspended from a fixed point that it can swing freely to and fro under the combined action of **grainty** and **monentum**.

for seventy years. . . . Please write to me quickly to tell me that you are perfectly well and cheerful." Even when he was old, he did the same.

The Junker was secretly engaged three times. It was in the year of 1836 that he first engaged with Miss Russell Laura, an English woman of ducal<sup>1</sup> family. Next summer he was attracted by another Englishwoman, a clergyman's daughter, Isabelle Loraine,<sup>2</sup> who was more beautiful than Laura. Since he had already had a lover, he found the situation "extremely piquant."<sup>3</sup> He wrote to his friend: "I should tell you in passing that I am engaged, and that I have it in mind, like you, to enter the holy state of matrimony.<sup>4</sup> My intended is a young Englishwoman, a blonde, extraordinarily beautiful, and, as yet, she does not know a word of German. I am going to accompany her family to Switzerland, and shall say good-by to them in Milan, . . . for I must hasten to see my parents from whom I have been separated for nearly two years. . . . You must come with me to England, to my wedding, which will take place next spring."

In 1842 Bismarck entered into his third engagement with a girl of the neighbourhood, Ottilie von Puttkamer. In view of his bad reputation, her mother was at first opposed to the match. Four years later, however, she changed her attitude and consented to the marriage. Unfortunately too late! Bismarck had already made a general statement to the effect that he "cannot love." To a friend he said: "The feeling on which I have brood-

<sup>1</sup> Ducal (dū'kāl), of or pert. to a duke.

<sup>2</sup> Isabelle Loraine (iz'a-bél'a) (lō-rān').

<sup>3</sup> Piquant (pē'kānt), pungent.

<sup>4</sup> Matrimony (măt'ri-mō-ni), marriage.

ed for years, the feeling that my innermost and truest sentiments were frivolously<sup>1</sup> maltreated, the betrayal of my confidence, the mortification of my pride—these have left a residue of bitterness which I cannot adequately suppress. . . . With the best will in the world, I find it difficult to forget, even partly, any affront that has made a deep impression.”

Besides, at the age of thirty Bismarck had also made love to Marie von Thadden, a passionate girl of good family. But, he was not married because he never wanted to marry for money.

<sup>1</sup> Frivolously (friv'ô-lüs-ly), in a trifling manner.

## CHAPTER III

### BISMARCK ENTERS UPON A PUBLIC CAREER

Bismarck entered upon a public career as a wanderer.

At the age of twenty, he succeeded in passing his examination for the bar, and had experience of the practice of law for a little while at the Municipal Court in Berlin. As time went on, his distaste for such imbecilities<sup>1</sup> grew stronger. He only kept on at this job in order to avoid having to become a soldier, for, he said: "I have victoriously resisted the rather urgent wishes of my parents in that direction." At the Court ball, the prince of Prussia spoke to him and asked: "Why are not you a soldier?"

"I had no prospect of advancement in the army, Your Royal Highness."

"I doubt if you have any better prospects at the Bar."

Such dialogue between William of Prussia and Bismarck clearly shows the difference between the two natures.

In 1836 Bismarck was sent to Aix-la-Chapelle<sup>2</sup> to do administration work, which he despised greatly. He preferred to go riding with young English ladies rather than to do the routine work. After two months he quit his job.

<sup>1</sup> Imbecilities (im-bā-sil'i-tiz), absurdity, foolishness.

<sup>2</sup> Aix-la-Chapelle (āks'lā-shā'pēl'), city, Rhine Prov. Prussia.

Then he was admitted to the post of postdam<sup>1</sup>—upon the written understanding that he was to work regularly and diligently. However, he did not get on much better there than he did at Aix. After three months he departed without leave.

At the age of twenty eight the aimless youth made the first political utterance, the extract of which is worthwhile to be reproduced here:

“I can understand perfectly well that when men in red coats, on horseback, with hounds, are chasing a hare, and, thus engaged, look extremely pleased with themselves and their occupation—the spectacle must be very distasteful, not only to the hare, but also to any one who satisfied neither with himself nor with the world, is clad in black, has no horses, no hounds, no chance of hunting, and indeed no taste for the sport.” He admitted that he was “born in the caste of the *ci-devant*<sup>2</sup> nobles, . . . whose overwhelming privilege it is to prefix a ‘von’ to their names, like a mist-wreath that has outlived gloomier days, and is able to veil from mourning Germany the sunrise of bourgeois and social equality.” At the close, he demanded that “to Farther Pomerania<sup>3</sup> shall be left its dues and its personal liberties, to the extent, that it shall be entitled to spend its own money upon its own amusements in whatever fashion it may prefer.”

In this utterance Bismarck touched upon social and political questions, though it concerned only hares and

<sup>1</sup> Postdam (pöts'däm), city, Brandenburg province.

<sup>2</sup> *Ci-devant* (sē'dē-vän'), former.

<sup>3</sup> Farther Pomerania (fär'-thēr, Pöm'ë-rā'ní-ä).

stubblefields. Moreover, he defended his own class, the upper class end made mock of underlings who were not able to hunt. His first political words were those of a Protagonist<sup>1</sup> of the class war. It was due to his idea of class differences that he was not influenced by pietism,<sup>2</sup> for pietism did not exercise the least influence upon his politics.

Two years later he made a venture into State service again. That attempt lasted only for a couple of weeks because of clashes with his chief. Even when he had to act for his brother as Landrat, he soon felt sick of the occupation and speedily gave up the work, too.

“Thus do I drift on the stream of life with nothing to steer by except the inclination of the moment, and I am fairly indifferent as to where the waters may cast me up on the share.”

In 1875 his father died. Our self-opinionated youth began to feel that the time of his adventurous youth was over and he must exercise a wider influence. Such impulse, which dominated him for half a century to come, directed itself towards public life.

Thus in 1846 he accepted the appointment of the dike-board in which he was responsible for the care of the dykes. By the dykes the country in the neighbourhood of Elbe<sup>3</sup> was preserved from inundation. The reason why he accepted this position was not due to his interest

<sup>1</sup> Protagonist (prō-täg'ō-nist), one who takes the leading part in a drama.

<sup>2</sup> Pietism (pi'ē-tiz'm), the principle of practice of the pietists, a German 17th-century sect which strove for a revival of sincere and emotional religious feeling.

<sup>3</sup> Elbe (ēl'bē), river, Germany.



but due to his calculations of the chance of entering the Landtag.<sup>1</sup> So he wrote to his brother: "No doubt I could get promotion in the East Prussian service; but it is my misfortune that every post I might obtain seems desirable to me until I occupy it, and that then I find it burdensome and a bore. That is what would happen were I to accept this offer. If I go to East Prussia, I shall have to refuse the office of dike-reeve here, which the government has already promised me. . . . But the dike service, in conjunction with work in the Landtag, to which I can almost certainly secure election, will give me plenty to do without cutting me off from the administration of my estates . . . . My fixed idea is to pay off some of the debts first of all."

Now, as his ultimate object was to become Landtag and deputy, Bismarck did not work very long.

<sup>1</sup> Landtag (länt'täk'), the Prussian legislature.