BISMARCK TOWERS

"The vague mautiements, fluting, indolent, impatient day-dreams and tobacco-smoking of poor southern Germany." - Carlyle, Frederick, Chapter VII., published in 1858.

I

In the reading-room of Herr Hofrat's sanatorium, throwing about the blotting-pads advertising M. der Eelus, Patent Coffers, and the ash-trays, was what at first sight looked like a child's money-box (and, indeed, it had a slot for pennies), but on closer view revealed somewhat of Cervantes' tower, or of Theodorie the Ostrogot's tomb in that orchard at Ravenna. It was, in fact, the model for a "Bismarck-Toren," and Goethe the librarian correct to insert between its expectant lips a contribution towards the erection of its multi-magnified copy on a hill above that watering place. What site more suitable for such a patriotic edifice than the Franconian forests, which, at the bidding of Bismarck, saw Prussians and Bavarians draw the first fraternal blood cementing German unity in 1866, there being, as the window of ancient sorcerers averred and sundry modern statesmen hold, no mortal comparable to that which to such liquid.

It happens that I am old enough to remember the terror of the Prussian victories in Paris, and the jubilation also of the withdrawal of the French garnison from Civita Vecchia in 1870—old enough, therefore, to understand why Germany should erect Bismarck-Towers as suitable adjuncts to the beer-and-coffee workshops which render intimate and so palatable the Faust at: romance of its adorable woodlands. As one of the members of the present French Government, of Bonaparte, M. Masson-Semhiat has written in his only-enlightening Fautes un Roi, comme faites la Paix? When I try to get inside a German's skin and to think a German's thoughts, the first thing I am aware of is a feeling of satisfaction stoked with anxiety. I feel as if my life had begun in 1870, but with the remembrance of a long and painful endurance, the condition preceding it. I am aware of existing completely only since the victory of Germany and her unification: since then I am secure, and I count for something in the world.

What the delicate, sympathetic perception of this French Socialist has thus expressed is apt to be overlooked by our too-too solid Anglo-Saxon self-righteousness, since Anglo-Saxons are but solid self-righteous Teutons, Textually incapable of imaginative sympathy. We have forgotten that before 1870 a German did not feel secure in the world, and was very, very far indeed from counting for anything in it. Do let us be retrospectively deluded by the prestige of Goethe and Kant and Hegel and Bach and Beethoven; nor take for granted that the German man in the street was hallowed by the admiration of Carlyle and R人心 before 1870. Germany must have been full of music, of philosophy and poetry, as well as full of soldiers, but the rest of Europe, as distinguished from a handful of musicians, philosophers and poets, themselves for less important than they imagined—the non-musical, non-philosophical, non-poetical rest of Europe would not have thought the better of Germany for that. From the Thirty Years War onward, through the wars of Marlborough, the wars of Frederick and those of Napoleon, and for the fifty-five years succeeding Waterloo, that vast country was a poor place enough in the esteem of other nations, who exported from it "wee German hainties" for kings and royalties German brides scarily virgin of religious beliefs for the Catholic, protestant or Italian orthodox marriage market; hinterland mercenary regiments, "Royal Alienage," and "Monopolie" for France, and those convenient Hessian soldiés to light Washington at so much thousand a day by the Ejector in Schiller's 'Cauda and Lox'. To see that English cannans, playing the free-born Yankees to starve peacefully in the earlier cotton mills. Except for Frederic the Great, a prince obviously out of place in his barbarous and comic country, enlightened eighteenth-century Europe thought precious little of the land of the "high Dutch," (obtaining a dialect of what was spoken by William of Orange or Voltaire, one of the few Occidentals who ventured into its impute wilds), tyrphied its inhabitants as Roon Tonder-thus fane and Doder Pangheval, etc. at 1774 the harplieful Dr. Burney, travelling over the country for his musical history, seems barely to have heard of Sebastian Bach, and distinguished more than that distinguished harp-keeper of Lord, Monsieur Emanuel his son, and evidently breathed freely only in the company of the Italian opera composers and towards them men so a few polished princes had introduced to the France language and cookery to make life liveable in their imitate Versailles of Schönbrun, or Nymphenburg or Wilhelmshof.

The fame, the numberless translations of the Sorrows of Werther began to change matters a little. Still, when Madame de Stael wrote De l'Allemagne, about
1810, she was doing for Germany something not unlike what Lafcadio Hearn did for Japan in our own memory. And even if exotically-minded Europeans waxed more and more enthusiastic over German literature and philosophy during the first half of the nineteenth century, Germany itself remained in Western estimation the country of watering places and picnic robber castles and princelets calling themselves "Transparencies," in which Thackeray's Amelia's and Dobbin's at best Meredith's Harry Richmonds, condescendingly took their ease. Ten years of my own childhood were spent in that Germany of before Sadowa; and I can vouch for the vague benevolent amusement with which my elders would compare that vast but unassuaging country with England, or France, or even Russia—or rather, did not think of making such a comparison at all! As to political kudos, the defeat of Napoleon was set down entirely to the British and the burning of Moscow, Blucher playing (in the talks I can remember) the rather comic opera part of an old military party who had just not come up too late.

And if Napoleon had overrun the country repeatedly, establishing French officialdom (and even brother Jerome King of Westphalia) here, there and everywhere (there is not a royal or serene schloss without a room Napoleon slept in!), why, that was what Germany had been accustomed to ever since always. Indeed, French memoirs and novels (for instance, Monsieur Paul Adam's La Force) leave one wondering whether Germany, poor sentimental frump among nations, ought not to have felt rather complimented by the rough and ready assiduities of so gallant and gallant and irresistibly conquering a neighbour. Moreover, the French kept Germany reminded that any day might see a renewal of such sublime Napoleonic neighbourliness as, for instance, when Alfred de Musset sang:

Nous l'avous en, votre Rhin allemand,

and added with Parisian politeness:

S'il est à vous, votre Rhin allemand,

Lavez-y done votre livrée.

In fact, before 1866 Germany counted as little as Italy did without having Italy's sempiternal self-gratulation as the heir to Greece and Rome, and the possessory and victim, as Filicaia had sonneteered and Byron translated, of a particularly fatal beauty. There was no fallen dignity, no fatal beauty, none of the romance attaching to Greeks, Sicilians, Poles and
STATESMAN—Bismarck's Towers.

Hungarians, about that pre-Sadowa German: "S'il est à vous, votre Rhin allemand; lavez-y donc votre linge"—such graceful banter was quoted with approval by the great nations which came to drink Racey water or play at roulette under M. Benazet at Baden Baden.

Bismarck, or the movements personified in Bismarck, changed all that. As Monsieur Marcel Sembat makes his imaginary contemporary German say: "J'ai conscience de n'exister pleinement que depuis la victoire et l'unité de l'Empire. Depuis je suis à l'univers et je suis à l'Empire." That is why the German builds "Bismarck Towers" in the wooded hills, whither himself and his family wend their Sunday way for beer, coffee and some dim, inarticulate, emotional equivalent of Wagner's Waldweben, and why there was a model Bismarck Tower, with a slot for contributions, in the reading room of that sanatorium.

It did not receive any contribution from me, for I have no taste for Bismarck Towers or Bismarck anything. But I can understand that Germans, even most anti-Prussian ones, should feel some sneaking gratitude towards that odious man of genius. Are they not haunted, as Marcel Sembat says, by the dim recollection of that uneasy, humiliating embryonic national life, whence Bismarck, by howsoever ruthless means, undoubtedly delivered them, an atrocious historical accoucheur, cutting into the tissues of our common mother humanity to bring to quicker birth a great new nation.

Such surgery horrifies the rest of us. It is, I take it, what we call Bismarckism, decreeing that, since for two centuries the poor, weak Germany of earlier days had been invaded and raided, girls dishonoured and lads taken for foreign service, down the valley of the Moselle and across the Rhine at Strasbourg, this frontier region must fight for Germany, or leave their homes and businesses and parents' graves, within a year.

Devil's surgery. But not invented by Bismarck, indeed not invented by anyone except as a practical as universal in the past, and esteemed as efficacious, as the more picturesque forms of human sacrifice, that of Jephthah's daughter, or Iphigenia, by which kings and commanders of old settled their international difficulties. Bismarckism had been practised by Nebuchadnezzar, Louis XIV. had applied it to that selfsame Alsace, only that in his slipshod feudal days it mattered little whether one was taillable and coréable in the Holy Roman Empire or in France. The method was well known to our godly Lord Protector, who cut and cauterised Ireland after such biblical fashion. Napoleon practised it on the largest scale, grafting the living limb of one country on another, making up new monsters like Doctor Moreau in Wells's hideous tale. The Allies in 1815 did a deal of such cutting into the bleeding, quivering will of peoples. And the Allies of 1915? One wonders, hearing many and sundry talk of "stamping out German militarism," whether Bismarckism, as in the good old days, will not be fought by Bismarckism, which, as it existed thousands of years before that jowly Chancellor, will exist, and try to exist, blood and iron and all, long afterwards.

So let such English folk as took no pleasure in Bismarck Towers in German bedrooms, see to it that no Bismarck Towers, under whatsoever other name, be set up metaphorically in any country whatsoever, to commemorate this war against Bismarck's country.

VERNON LEE.
instinct nor etiquette forbade gentlemen to wear their hats at table, and even to spit at table, in the polite days of Charles II. It is etiquette, not instinct, that forbids these things to-day. At the end of the meal in Charles’s day the guest dipped the end of his napkin in a bowl of water set before him, and proceeded to clean his teeth and wash his hands with it. Nowadays such a use of napkin and finger bowl would be regarded as a new sin. The modern etiquette of the napkin, by the way, as it is set forth in The Woman’s Book, affords another delightful example of the sheer arbitrariness of etiquette—especially of etiquette as we find it in the books:

“Do not fold your serviette after dinner at a friend’s house; leave it on the table before you. When staying on a visit, however, a serviette will be allotted to you for ordinary occasions, then the serviette would be folded and placed in the ring.”

We must not be taken as endorsing in every particular the laws of etiquette laid down by this authority any more than we endorse her abominable use of the word “etiquette.” For, if etiquette is a substitute for life, we can imagine how some learned author three centuries hence, writing a huge book on the manners and customs of the English in the huge century, would deduce from works such as that from which we have quoted that English conduct during this period was an affair of innumerable iron rules. And, from a social point of view, etiquette, he will find a similar host of little rules ordering the lives of soldiers and doctors and barristers. Perhaps even three centuries hence there will still be remnants of etiquette surviving, but it will hardly be the same etiquette that perplexes the outsider to-day. Etiquette in the medical profession is already less rigid than it was a quarter of a century ago. The patient is now permitted to consult a specialist without a word to his family doctor, and yet without offence. The physician is not yet allowed to advertise, but the definition of advertisement is scarcely as strict as it was to be. In Germany, we are told, it is not etiquette for the family doctor to send in a bill for his services—the patient has to decide the rate at which a man with his income can afford to pay for medical attendance. England is by comparison a free country for doctors. The etiquette of soldiers is, of course, infinitely more stiff and ordered than that of any of the civil professions. This is necessarily so, as with soldiers it is essential to be trained in habits which ensure instant obedience and subordination of self to one’s commanded duty. Every now and then people begin to discuss the question how far all the salutations and pipeplay of soldiers do really make for discipline, and at what point discipline ceases to make for efficiency. Obviously the etiquette of the German Army is much more rigid than the etiquette of the British Army, and the etiquette of the British home Army is much more rigid than the etiquette of British Colonial troops. Which degree of etiquette produces the finest military results? Each of us will probably answer less according to the evidence than according to his prejudices. It is quite clear that the German etiquette has done nothing to prevent the creation of a wonderful military machine. But was it the etiquette that made the machine, or was it not rather the quasi-mystical patriotism which has for a long time been instilled—or ought we to say drilled?—into the German people? Even, however, if we admit that the German military machine is the result of German military etiquette and discipline, the further question remains whether the German military machine is worth it. It may make Germany strong in a military sense and yet have left her deficient in certain important humane and social qualities. Even the most perfect machine is not worth having at the expense of the life of a people. That, incidentally, is the difficulty of etiquette. It tends to invade not merely the sphere of manners and discipline, where it is necessary, but to substitute formalities for life—which is fatal. We see this especially in the case of religion. When we say that in religion men are inclined to live according to the letter rather than the spirit, we mean that, instead of worshipping God with their hearts, they are intent upon observing every little rule of etiquette towards God. It is not many years since children were forbidden to run on Sunday, even when on their way to church—to do so would have been a breach of the heavenly etiquette. Sabbath observance and a host of other ceremonies—do they not gradually cease to have any relation to life and to degenerate into mere etiquette? And with how many people is church-going itself just an affair of etiquette—a kind of paying a formal call upon Heaven? Manifestly, when the life of etiquette takes the place of the life of the spirit, it is time for men to go law-breaking. Etiquette in its extreme form is an omen of death.

The ideal, then, we fancy, is to have a minimum rather than a maximum of etiquette. We need no more etiquette than enough to ensure good manners and discipline. Or, if we need a little more, it is only the amount necessary to guard ourselves against familiarity when familiarity is not desirable. Hence the etiquette of officer and soldier, of schoolmaster and pupil, of mistress and servant. In a perfect world, no doubt, every adult would be able to do his or her work without a great many formalities that we have to observe in these days. But, at the present stage of social development, to be familiar is with at least fifty percent of people to take advantage of one’s familiarity. It is easier to work smoothly both with one’s superiors and with one’s subordinates if one’s relations with them are ordered by rule instead of caprice. There is many an officer in the Army who would have no influence over his men at all if it were not for military etiquette. Whether it is a proper justification of etiquette that it makes things easier for us—especially that it makes things easier for the incompetent, as it does—is another question.

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I n the reading-room of Herr Hofrat’s sanatorium, throneing above the blotting-pads advertising Midler’s Patent Coffers and the ash-trays, was what at first sight looked like a child’s money-box (and, indeed, it had a slot for pennies), but on closer view revealed somewhat of Cecilia Metella’s tower, or of Theodoric the Ostrogoth’s tomb in that orchard at Ravenna. It was, in fact, the model for a “Bismark Tower,” and Gothic letters begged you to insert between its expectant lips a contribution towards the erection of its multi-magnified copy on a hill above that watering place. What site more suitable for such a patriotic edifice than these Franconian forests, which, at the bidding of Bismarck, saw Prussians and Bavarians draw the first fraternal blood cementing German unity in 1866, there being, as the wisdom of ancient sorcerers averred and sundry modern statesmen hold, no mortar comparable to that slaked with such liquid.

It happens that I am old enough to remember the
terror of the Prussian victories in Paris, and the jubilation also of the withdrawal of the French garrison from Civita Vecchia in 1870—old enough, therefore, to understand why Germany should erect Bismarck Towers as suitable adjutants to the beer-and-coffee Wirtschafts romance of its adorable woodlands. As one of the members of the present French Government of Defence, M. Marcel Sembat, has written in his oddly enlightening Faites un Roi, sinon fais la Paix: “When I try to get inside a German’s skin and to think a German’s thoughts, the first thing I am aware of is a feeling of satisfaction streaked with anxiety. I feel as if my life had begun in 1870, but with the remembrance of a long and painful embryonic condition preceding it. I am aware of existing completely only since the victory of Germany and her unification; since then I am secure, and I count for something in the world.”

What the delicate, sympathetic perception of this French Socialist has thus expressed is apt to be overlooked by our too-too solid Anglo-Saxon self-righteousness, since Anglo-Saxons are but solid self-righteous Teutons Teutonically incapable of imaginative sympathy. We have forgotten that before 1870 a German did not feel secure in the world, and was very, very far indeed from counting for anything in it. Do not let us be retrospectively deluded by the prestige of Goethe and Kant and Hegel and Bach and Beethoven; nor take for granted that the German man in the street was halo’d by the admiration of Carlyle and Renan before 1870. Germany might have been full of music, of philosophy and poetry, but the rest of Europe, as distinguished from a handful of musicians, philosophers and poets, themselves far less important than they imagined—the non-musical, non-philosophic, non-poetical rest of Europe would not have thought of the better of Germany for that. From the Thirty Years War onward, through the wars of Marlborough, of Frederick and of Napoleon, and for the fifty-five years succeeding Waterloo, that vast country was a poor place enough in the esteem of other nations, who imported from it “wee German lairdies” for kings and royal German brides scrupulously virgin of religious beliefs for the Catholic, Protestant or Russian Orthodox marriage market; likewise mercenary regiments, “Royale Allemande” and “Salms” for France, and those convenient Hessians sold to fight Washington at so much per thousand by the Elector in Schiller’s Cabal and Love—indeed, all the cheap foreign cannon-flesh allowing the free-born Briton to starve peacefully in the earlier cotton mills. Except for Frederick the Great, a prince obviously out of place in his barbarous and comic country, enlightened eighteenth-century Europe thought very little of Germany for that vast but unassuming country of watering places and picnic robber castles and princelings calling themselves “Transparencies,” in which Thackeray’s Amelias and Dobbins, at best Meredith’s Harry Richmonds, condescendingly took their case. Ten years of my own childhood were spent in that Germany of before Sadowa; and I can vouch for the vague benevolent amusement with which my elders would compare that vast but unassuming country with England, or France, or even Russia—or rather, did not think of making such a comparison at all! As to political kudos, the defeat of Napoleon was set down entirely to the British and the burning of Moscow, Blücher playing (in the talks I can remember) the rather comic-opera part of an old military party who had just not come up too late.

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and added with Parisian politeness:

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In fact, before 1866 Germany counted as little as Italy did, without having Italy’s sempiternal self-gratulation as the heir to Greece and Rome, and the possessor and victim, as Ficicia had sonneted and Byron translated, of a particularly fatal beauty. There was no fallen dignity, no fatal beauty, none of the romance attaching to Greeks, Sicilians, Poles and Hungarians, about that pre-Sadowa Germany. “S’il est à vous, votre Rhin allemand, lavez-y done votre livrée”—such graceful banter was quoted with approval by the great nations which came to drink Racocky’s water or play at roulette under M. Benazet at Baden Baden.

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nation.

Such surgery horrifies the rest of us. It is, I take it,
what we call Bismarckism, decreeing that, since for two
centuries the poor, weak Germany of earlier days had
been invaded and raided, girls dishonoured and lads taken
for foreign service, down the valley of the Moselle and
across the Rhine at Strasbourg, this frontier region must
become a German fortress, its people become Germans,
fight for Germany, or leave their homes and businesses
and parents' graves, within a year.

Devil's surgery. But not invented by Bismarck,
indeed not invented by anyone, a practice as universal
in the past, and esteemed as efficacious, as the more
picturesque forms of human sacrifice, that of Jephthah's
dughter, or Iphigenia, by which kings and commanders
of old settled their international difficulties. Bismarck
had been practised by Nebuchadnezzar, Louis XIV.
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whether one was tailable and cortéable in the Holy
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and iron and all, long afterwards.

So that English folk as take no pleasure in Bismarck
Towers in German beechwoods see to it that no
Bismarck Towers, under whatsoever other name, be
set up metaphorically in any country whatsoever,
to commemorate this war against Bismarck's country.

Vernon Lee.

Correspondence

GERMANY AND MOROCCO

To the Editor of The New Statesman.

Sir,—I agree so closely with Mr. Morel on the main questions
affecting the development of Africa that if I did not differ from
him on some points our relations would become insipid. But I
have ever since 1910 differed from him on the point of German
interest in North Africa. Germany did, I know, affect to be
fighting the battle of Free Trade in Morocco, and thus to be
working with and not against Britain; but as circumstances
turned out in 1911 it appeared to be freedom for Germany
to secure all possible concessions of value in Morocco, rather
than to open for the world a large and unrestricted commerce in Maure­
tania. But while I have sympathised as far as any non-German
could do with legitimate colonial and industrial aspirations on
the part of Germany, I have resolutely opposed her obtaining
any territory whatever in Morocco, knowing that the inevitable
result would be the ousting of France from that region and a
German control over the ocean route to the Cape of Good Hope
and the western access to the Mediterranean—a control we
could not afford to put into the hands of a Power that was our
greatest and our only implacable rival.

Perhaps I may be allowed to take advantage of this opportunity
of reply to explain my rather harsh sentences in regard to
American neutrality—at least, they read harshly now. As you
are aware, the article was written early in January, though
circumstances prevented its immediate publication. I wrote it
was settled at the reports of the New Year speeches of the
American Executive, which seemed to be framed on the line of
"six of one and half a dozen of the other"—the words,
attributing impartially the blame for this devastating war to all
the principal parties alike. As I valued greatly the setting
right of my own country in the eyes of intelligent America,
I animadverted somewhat bitterly on this " intolerable neutrality ";
because whatever may have been the shortcomings or even the
blunders of our diplomacy at any time within the last fifteen
years, this lamentable war is nothing but a war of sheer self­
defence on the part of Britain and France, and perhaps also
Russia. The avowed determination on the part of Germany to
strip France of her colonies (namely, Morocco, amongst other things),
coupled with the invasion of Belgium, not only rendered
war unavoidable on our part, but made it at once a war in which
Britain and France are fighting for their very existence against
an utterly unjustifiable attack. Yours, etc.,

H. H. Johnston.

To the Editor of The New Statesman.

Sir,—I had associated the words the "moment their Govern­
ment (the German) avowed its intention of wresting Morocco
from France", with the intention attributed to the German
Government at the time of the Morocco crisis, not with
anything that occurred last July. Reading the passage again
in the light of your comment, I see that I was mistaken. The
issue is thus much simplified. Germany's "intention of wresting
Morocco from France" was, it would seem, avowed last summer,
and the proof of it is to be found in the British White Book, in
No. 85.

There is not a word about Morocco in No. 85. No. 85 records
a conversation between the British Ambassador and the German
Chancellor, in which the latter declares that, since for two
months the French dependency. The statement is a statement in general
terms, and, as recorded, does no more than postulate that in the
future Germany will not, if victorious, annex any French territory, but is not prepared to give a similar under­
taking as regards the French colonies of Morocco and Egypt.

The Chancellor, in this recorded conversation, that the Chancellors had Morocco in his mind. He might just as well have been thinking of Algeria, or Tunis, or Senegal, or Dahomey, or French Congo. Indeed, there is not a syllable in the conversation, as recorded, which
suggests that the Chancellor was visualising any particular
French dependency. The statement is a statement in general
terms and, as recorded, does no more than postulate that the
event of victory Germany was not prepared to forgo all the
fruits thereof.

I adhere wholly to my assertion that the " recollections of
Morocco remained a festering sore in the relations between the
two countries." I find nothing incompatible between this assertion
and the fact that, when the acute period of the crisis had passed,
the diplomatists on either side, having been brought to the very
edge of the precipice, drew back with a shudder and endeavoured
to impart a little more common sense into their proceedings.
But the incidents of July 20th and 21st, 1911, had psychological
effects transcending the effects of an ordinary diplomatic
squabble. They did much to poison the general atmosphere,
and a far more serious effort was required to purify it than a
belated Bagdad accommodation and the paper demarcation of
potential economic spheres of influence in Angola.—Yours, etc.,

E. D. Morel.

February 13th.

[On the first point Mr. Morel is, we suppose, entitled to believe
that when the German Chancellor discussed the prospective
seizure of French colonies he was thinking of Senegal and the
French Congo, but not of that old bone of Franco-German
contention, Morocco; though we should have thought it
hardly worth while to put forward such a hypothesis even for
the sake of argument. But the second point is far more important.
We believe it is entirely wrong and misleading to suggest that
Anglo-German relations were specially embittered, or that there
was a specially "poisoned atmosphere" between the two coun­
tries, during the three years preceding the war. Any effects
of this kind that may have been temporarily produced by the 1911
crisis were far more than we were embittered, or that there
we have been on more cordial terms with Germany than at any
time since the foundation of the Entente; and this increased