

Bismarck's Relations With England

By FRANCIS NEILSON

STUDENTS OF HISTORY today are fairly busy collecting books and documents that may be of service in the work of attempting to solve some of the problems with which the statesmen of Europe had to deal before each of the two World Wars. Here and in England there seems to be an earnest desire to unearth information that has been either overlooked or carefully concealed from the public. Secondhand booksellers have many inquiries for works that are now hard to get. My library is fairly well stocked—better, indeed, than any I know of in private possession—but for years I have been searching for certain volumes and pamphlets that somehow have disappeared from circulation. I have now on order in London several books, well known before the first World War, which cannot be found.

The diplomatic documents published by governments reveal only part of the story of the causes of wars, and the accounts in them of the progress of negotiations among the chancelleries must be checked and rechecked with care. Even after this is done thoroughly, there is still much to be told. The task of exploring biographies, memoirs, correspondence, and particularly pamphlets is essential if the investigator would make a comprehensive job of it.

Historical Documents

THERE IS ONE WORK that should be in most of the libraries of this country, which is of great importance to the student of history who desires to know the political condition of Europe from the close of the Franco-German War down to the time of Bismarck's offer of an alliance to England, about 1890. It is called "Bismarck's Relations with England, 1871-1890," and it is the first of four volumes, entitled "German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914," selected and translated by E. T. S. Dugdale (Harper and Brothers, 1928): It purports to be a selection of diplomatic letters, notes, and dispatches taken from the secret archives of the German Foreign Office by the distinguished historians, Professors Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, and Friedrich Thimme, who published their completed work of fifty volumes in Germany in 1927.

So much has happened during the past twenty years that I was not surprised to find in England in 1949 two or three students of the wars—well-informed authors—who did not know of the existence of these documents or had forgotten about them. We live at such a pace that im-

portant news of last year passes speedily from the memory, and only a well-kept index file can save us from annoyance when we go in search of an event that would have lodged in the memory quite clearly when I was a young man. Since the close of World War II, some of our busy historians have been in haste to publish a record of European affairs; but if they had taken the trouble to survey a wider and deeper background, they would have better served the cause of historical integrity. Such a vast amount of information has been overlooked, or ignored, purposely, that hasty conclusions are now being subjected to an examination that proves them to be somewhat superficial. Many questions are also put on interpretations which the cautious mind cannot accept.

Thus, we find that much of the nonsense that has been written about Bismarck during the past ten years is not based upon the facts as revealed in these documents. The so-called man of "blood and iron" ("*Eisen und Blut*" is the correct form), had he been all that his severe critics make him appear to be, would not have been accepted in polite diplomatic society, as he undoubtedly was, during the troublesome years when he shaped and molded the separate States of Germany into a powerful confederation.

J. W. Headlam-Morley, historical adviser of the British Foreign Office, has written an introduction to these diplomatic documents. According to my information, he was never pro-German at any time. Yet, after describing the British popular view of Bismarck, he writes:

It is not too much to say that the information throws a completely new light upon the political relations of England and Germany during this period, and in particular on the attitude of Prince Bismarck to England. . . . In the serious and carefully considered documents printed in this volume, we find something very different, a constant endeavour to establish a friendly co-operation with the British Government, and even definite suggestions for an alliance between the two countries. There is no sign here that he underestimated the importance which a good understanding with England might have for his country; what we do find is the constant expression of annoyance, disappointment and chagrin that he could not persuade the leaders of British policy to take that active and responsible part in the counsels of the European states which he desired. (pp. xiii-xiv)

It will be something of a shock to those who have known Germany for the past forty years to learn from Headlam-Morley's introduction that:

Bismarck's motives for desiring an active participation by this country in European affairs are very clearly indicated and often stated with great frankness. Europe to him meant the Great Powers, England, France, Germany, Russia, Austria and Italy. The whole art of European diplomacy at the time consisted in the management of their relations to

one another. It was from them and from them alone that danger to peace could come and at this time, as he constantly asserts—and there is no ground for doubting his statement,—Bismarck was above all anxious for the preservation of peace. There was nothing which Germany wanted which she could gain by war, and a war, even a victorious war, would be disastrous. . . . (p. xvii)

Those who are influenced by war propaganda will find it difficult to conceive how it was possible for the man of "blood and iron," as he has been pictured to us, to assume the rôle of guardian of the peace. But that will be a comparatively mild surprise for those who have been fed upon newspaper gossip in recent years. And, yet, it is worth mentioning that the evil done by these questionable methods is not less notorious now than it was seventy years ago.

However, the public of today have had trenchant lessons of how these evils have been perpetrated. After the evidence given by Nicholas Raffalovitch on the witness stand in Paris at the time of the libel case against *L'Humanité*, taxpayers should have been on their guard and read with caution the screeds that appeared before and during the war. Raffalovitch, as the financial man of the Russian embassy in Paris, told the full story of the bribes that were paid to the editors and journalists of French papers. But such bribes were not unknown when Disraeli and Bismarck were at the forefront of European diplomacy. At that time, Russia played no insignificant part in cultivating opinion by a liberal use of the purse. Even Bismarck was not above suspicion in this business.

The Geographical Position of Germany

THE DEEPER I DELVE into the diplomatic quagmire of Europe, the more I wonder how it is possible for British and American students to understand the underlying causes of the catastrophic frictions that have set the Continent in a blaze since the time of the Franco-German War. Few of our historians have explained clearly the peculiar situation of Germany lying at the heart of a continent, hemmed in from time to time by potential foes, and often made "the battleground of Europe." Britain, surrounded by water, was so differently placed that a sense of security was ever present in the Englishman's mind, so long as the navy was Mistress of the Seas. Moreover, a study of foreign affairs did not seem to concern the average British taxpayer; he regarded it as something beyond his understanding and was willing to leave the conduct of the chancelleries to those who had been "bred up to it." Perhaps this was the chief reason

why the efforts of English statesmen and Bismarck to come to a clear understanding were bound to fail.

In political, diplomatic, and social outlook, not one of the great powers could be likened to a neighbor. Each had its own peculiar problems to deal with, and the men in Europe at that time who understood this could be counted on one hand. The geographical position of each was unique, and to a great extent the industrial and social conditions of the masses differed widely in the various countries. Bismarck, however, drew the line severely and knew the difference between a European problem and a national one. When Prince Gortchakoff had urged that the Eastern Question "*qu'il s'agit de résoudre n'est ni allemande, ni russe. Elle est Européenne,*" Bismarck made marginal remarks as follows: "*Elle est russe. It is incorrect to talk of 'Europe.' It is a geographical idea.*" (*Ibid.*, p. 47)

Yes, it was purely and simply a Russian question, and we know today that the policy of the Bolshevik differs little from the policy of the Czar so far as the east is concerned. Indeed, for the present, the imperial ambitions of Gortchakoff have been consummated by Stalin.

However, there was one man at Berlin—the British Ambassador, Odo Russell—who not only knew the German problem as it concerned England, he also knew those of European States. But he was an unusual diplomatist, a clearheaded one, with no ax to grind but that of the true interest of the country he served. When British ships sailed into the Sea of Marmora without a firman from the Sultan, the Czar promptly took up the challenge, and war seemed to be imminent in February, 1878. Then Bismarck became the towering center around whom gathered those who wished to avert a struggle. He wrote to Schweinitz, the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg, as follows:

Lord Odo Russell, himself naturally a peace-lover, was convinced on Saturday that war was imminent and was instructed to ask me what attitude Germany would adopt towards it. I informed d'Oubril [Russian Ambassador at Berlin] of this confidentially. On Monday telegrams arrived from London and Vienna, urging us to arrange for the Conference at an early date, England adding that an early meeting promised the last remaining chance of staving off war. Münster [German Ambassador at London] shares in this opinion, as stated by Russell. The postponement of the Conference, which according to your telegram, No. 45, is imminent, may produce far-reaching consequences. Prince Gortchakoff is quite aware what he is about and does not need our advice; but I beg that you will communicate the foregoing facts to him. (*Ibid.*, p. 65)

Lord Derby, who was Foreign Minister at the time of this crisis, suffered many distressing hours during the month of March and, receiving an adverse vote in the House of Commons, had no choice but to resign his position. Lord Salisbury took his place. Negotiations for a Congress to discuss the matters in dispute took no easy course. Reading the dispatches that passed between the statesmen and diplomatists of the various powers is a revelation in the bickerings, shuffling, and jealousies that European crises always bring to the surface. It seems that England had to shoulder the responsibility for much of the trouble. Count Münster wrote to Bülow early in April, 1878:

Lord Salisbury has chosen a dangerous moment for taking over the Foreign Office and, as far as I know him, would not have done so, if he were not prepared to go to war.

The Cabinet situation has undergone a remarkable change. Lord Beaconsfield is at the moment inclined for peace and wishes to shift the responsibility for war on to his Foreign Secretary. Lord Derby refused to shoulder it, and Lord Salisbury is prepared to do so, if he sees that no other course is possible. . . .

Into this remarkable situation England has been driven through her weak policy of conditional neutrality and the assertion of the purely selfish view of her own interests. War, if it comes, will have been entered into without any predetermined objective, but merely for the establishment of power and of what is involved by "prestige," a word existing only in the French language. (*Ibid.*, p. 90)

About the time Salisbury became Foreign Secretary, Bismarck seems to have come to the conclusion to act "the honest broker, who pushes through the business." He was accepted as mediator, and invitations were sent to the powers to attend the Congress. Count Münster wrote from London in June, saying:

Lord Beaconsfield's decision to attend the Congress causes much surprise. It is held to be a sign that he expects the Congress to be a success, and is unwilling to allow Lord Salisbury the full credit for it. Lord Salisbury is inclined to smile at this and thinks Lord Beaconsfield will play but a nominal part there and only remain a short time. . . . (*Ibid.*, p. 98)

It will be seen in many parts of these documents that statesmen and diplomatists were not devoid of humor even when they were dealing with the gravest problems.

A few days later Münster had something quite different to communicate to Bismarck. He had learned that Salisbury "was most anxious that Lord Beaconsfield should undertake the journey." And he added:

Lord Salisbury said to me: "I am very glad that Lord Beaconsfield is going to meet Prince Bismarck. He will learn a few facts about the Eastern Question, which have up till now never been told him. Prince Bismarck will gain a great influence over him, and that is my wish." (*Ibid.*, p. 99)

Imagine Beaconsfield in ignorance of a few facts about the Eastern Question! It is true the views held by one and the other might have differed considerably, but Lord Beaconsfield prided himself upon his oriental wisdom and knew perhaps more than Bismarck did of the desires of the Christians, Moslems, and Jews of the Near East.

Only a brief reference may be made here to the German efforts for a *rapprochement* with France. One learns in the chapter devoted to this matter that German interests in Africa were merely commercial. There is some information upon loans that should not be overlooked, for these are usually managed—or manipulated (a better word for the business)—by the international gentlemen who influence the conduct of banks and weave the network of the heavy industries which supply the munitions of war.

Bismarck's Proposed Alliance with England

WE COME NOW to the heart of the matter—the proposed alliance with England. The student will find much food for thought in these dispatches. In a German note it is recorded that

... Münster reported on January 12th, 1876, that Lord Derby, alluding to Prince Bismarck's overtures, had, word for word, said that "since he had been Foreign Minister, he had received no communication that had given him greater pleasure, and about which he felt greater satisfaction. He had a downright admiration for Your Highness, and considered a *rapprochement* between England and Germany to be the only right policy." These two "were the only States having, as far as he knew, no divergent interests." These pleasant expressions, repeated though they were by Lord Derby several times in the first half of 1876, were not the last word in the matter. Lord Beaconsfield admitted without question in 1879 that Bismarck's efforts towards a nearer understanding with England at that time were destroyed by England alone. "That proposal (of an alliance with Great Britain) was not only rejected by the English Secretary of State, but was only notified by him to his colleagues, accompanied by his opinion, that it could not for a moment be entertained." (*Ibid.*, pp. 144-5)

While studying these documents it would be well to understand that in the diplomatic fencing that took place there was always a button on the point of Bismarck's foil. He had to guard himself against the rapiers

used by Russia, France, and England. And this he did with consummate skill. Whether he was the first to propose the alliance with England or not may be left to the intelligent student of these pages to determine. There is a German Note, in the way of a summary, which prepares one for the history of the matter. It makes a long quotation, but its importance does not suffer it to be shortened:

Münster's and Beaconsfield's accounts differ widely in one respect; Beaconsfield described the matter, as though the German Ambassador had under Bismarck's direct instructions mentioned a defensive Alliance between Germany, Austria and England as his object, and as though he, Lord Beaconsfield, were against such an Alliance owing to the close relations existing between England and France. According to Count Münster, on the contrary, it was the British Prime Minister who opened the question of an Alliance and in the same breath approved of it. Count Münster's version is intrinsically the more probable, for he was never charged to mention the question of an Alliance. It is supported further by a private letter from the Ambassador to Radowitz [of the German Foreign Office] (September 27th) in which he wrote: "At the first word, which I spoke concerning the possibility of the cooling off of good relations with Russia, Lord Beaconsfield said to me that his constant hope and aim had been an intimate understanding and a close Alliance with Germany." Moreover, Lord Beaconsfield's letters to Lord Salisbury of October 1st and 9th prove that he fully realised the point of Bismarck's question—whether in the event of European complications England would decide "not to be neutral and non-interfering, but to act and to act with allies." In his "Memorandum for Queen Victoria" he had carefully shirked this point. His remark to Lord Salisbury, that in his conversation with Count Münster he had purposely avoided the word "treaty," is characteristic. Yet he expressly declared it to be worth considering "whether some treaty between the three Allies, not formally and avowedly for the great object, but with reference to some practical point connected with it might not be expedient." Hans Pleyn's *Bismarck's Foreign Policy after the Foundation of the Empire* contains an important reference to the use of the word "Alliance" in this connection. (*Ibid.*, pp. 145-6)

In September, 1879, Count Münster paid a visit to Lord Beaconsfield at his country house, Hughenden, and there he had the opportunity of talking to him quite alone. In the dispatch that Münster sent to Bismarck recording the conversation he had with Beaconsfield, we learn that: "He would enter with joy into an Alliance with Germany." Mark the term "alliance!" Münster, however, appreciated some of the parliamentary difficulties and raised the question of "the future position of the Crown and the Opposition."

"As far as the Crown is concerned, you may be quite easy," he [Beacons-

field] continued. "Her Majesty knows only of one enemy of England, and that is Russia. She desires nothing more earnestly than a full understanding with Germany. In that quarter also you are quite safe."

I said—what about the Prince of Wales, whose great French sympathies are known?

Lord Beaconsfield jokingly said: "You are right. The Prince has a certain amount of sympathy with the French, but even more for the French ladies. But these sympathies are less deeply rooted than his dislike, nay almost hatred, for Russia. Therefore, if it were a question of a possible war between France and Germany alone, he might perhaps side with the French, but a war against Russia and France would find the Prince on the side of Germany." (BISMARCK: "*That is a Vienna recipe.*") (*Ibid.*, p. 147)

It is amazing to learn how this suggestion affected the leading men in England. And, in a way, it is amusing when one knows that not one of them, if put to the test, would have had the courage to present the matter to Parliament. Moreover, not only France had to be taken into consideration, but Russia also. How would such an alliance affect these powers? Nevertheless, we learn from a dispatch in October, 1879, from Münster to Bismarck:

I think I may express my conviction that Lord Beaconsfield sets the greatest value upon an Alliance with Germany, (BISMARCK: "*Really!*") and that we can count firmly on the support of him and his Party.

I do not know if Lord Beaconsfield has mentioned our conversation to Lord Salisbury, but judging from the way in which the latter spoke to me, I should assume that he has done so. (*Ibid.*, p. 149)

The business of inoculating Salisbury is an example of Beaconsfield's adroitness which should not be overlooked. But was this real or simulated? Was England in need of a powerful friend in case the trouble with Russia was aggravated? Whatever the true reason for the desire of English statesmen to have an understanding with Germany, the notion spread rapidly, and even the Prince of Wales, in 1882, was imbued with the idea and wrote to the Crown Prince of Germany, "arguing in favor of a better understanding between their two countries."

When the Liberals came into power, Earl Granville became Foreign Minister, and Sir Charles Dilke assumed the rôle of Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. In a dispatch from Count Herbert Bismarck to his father, sent from London in September, 1882, we learn something of matters the British public knew little about. In this communication we get a glimpse of foreign affairs which diplomatists reveal in documents open to the taxpayers only long after crises are past:

. . . It is much easier to talk to Dilke than to Granville, for he is less nervous, and also more clear-headed and frank.

Dilke's words agreed with Granville's about the feeling of friendship for Germany, which is making headway in English public opinion. He said: "There has never been antipathy in England against Germany. The only nation that inspires antipathy and indeed bitter feelings is Russia. This formerly reacted indirectly on Germany, when it was felt that Germany was closely allied with Russia and intended to stand by her. . . ."

Turning to France, he said: "They behave like children. (English in text.) They have no idea of politics and grope in the dark. . . . I am very much anti-French, for we have so many diverging interests. The French are at present very troublesome to us in Madagascar, but we cannot yet declare war on them on that account. They are trying to squeeze us in other parts as well, e.g., on the Niger and Congo they have made treaties with native chiefs (BISMARCK: "*You might let them have a corner.*") allowing Frenchmen a monopoly of trading rights. Also in the Pacific they have done much to hamper and irritate us. I hope that Gambetta will not return to power, for I fear that he will continue in great measure the niggling policy of pinpricks against us. Gambetta is no Chauvinist himself, but he makes use of it, as it gives him his pedestal. If he comes back, he will have to do something for Chauvinism, in order to maintain himself, and since Germany is too strong for him, he will rub up against us." (*Ibid.*, p. 162)

How strange it is for us to read this history which has been hidden about the man of "blood and iron!" What he did to make things easy for England in the Russian crisis has been dealt with in other works. He not only came to the assistance of Beaconsfield and Salisbury and saved them from an unnecessary war, but he refrained from interfering in the trouble that Great Britain and France stirred up in Egypt. Even Earl Granville and Sir William Harcourt, in the Liberal Government, were beholden to him for services rendered in the Egyptian trouble. Granville thanked him for the friendly attitude shown by Germany to England throughout the whole of the Egyptian crisis. And Sir William Harcourt told Count Herbert Bismarck:

We are uncommonly grateful to Prince Bismarck, for the friendly attitude of German policy this summer was of great service to us. Our being left with a free hand in Egypt we owe, when all is said, to Germany's goodwill. We are all aware that at a particular moment Prince Bismarck could have upset the coach if he had chosen to, and we realise with much thankfulness that he refrained from doing so.

Comment by The Emperor WILLIAM I: "We did not withdraw our ships out of goodwill, but in order to avoid becoming involved in any hostile action, and in order to leave England alone to bear the consequences of her faulty policy." (*Ibid.*, p. 168)

Good will or sheer convenience—the old Emperor saw no reason to fire a bullet to aid England in occupying Egypt! Still, it must be conceded that no matter what the German reasons were for keeping out of the broils of other nations during this period, her actions made a deep impression upon statesmen in England.

Even with regard to the colonial question, after Bismarck was won over to it, Herbert Bismarck reported to his father that he had had twenty minutes' conversation with Mr. Gladstone after a dinner at Rosebery's. The Liberal leader told him:

Even if you had had no colonial aspirations, I should beseech you to go forward in this direction. I rejoice at your civilising aspirations, and at the next opportunity I shall advocate them in Parliament even more strongly than I did in Scotland last Autumn. (In Edinburgh on September 1st, 1884.) I promise you that we shall meet you in an entirely friendly spirit, provided that you do not mix other political questions with the Colonial question. (*Ibid.*, p. 192)

Lord Salisbury and Bismarck

WHEN GLADSTONE'S GOVERNMENT fell in 1885, Lord Salisbury became Prime Minister. Less than a month after he assumed power, he wrote to Bismarck:

I have so lively a recollection of the kindness which Your Highness showed me in Berlin in the years 1876 and 1878, that I venture to take advantage of Baron von Plessen's journey to send these few lines to call myself to your remembrance.

I have asked him to communicate to Your Highness my own convictions as to the future of English politics, which may aid you in forming a judgment, and which may perhaps tend to restore the good understanding between the two countries, which we value as of extreme importance, but which in recent times has been slightly clouded. I think you may reasonably count on a continuity of policy in this matter. (*Ibid.*, p. 208)

A week after the receipt of this communication, Bismarck replied:

. . . It was a great pleasure to me to see by your own words that our former personal intercourse, which I am glad to renew, has left with either of us the same sympathetic recollection.

As to politics, I have not the slightest doubt that the traditional friendly relations between the two dynasties as well as between the two nations will give sufficient security for settling every existing or arising question in a conciliatory way. . . . (*Ibid.*, pp. 208-9)

There are many pages in these documents about Egypt, the colonies, and the position of Austria which will be read with astonishment. The part played by Lord Randolph Churchill in these discordant affairs is almost

unbelievable in its jejune notions of the conditions of Europe. Bismarck had to call him to order several times, and nicknamed him a "flat-catcher [Bauerfänger]." In a memorandum written by Count Herbert Bismarck, September 1886, we find the following:

I now informed the Ambassador [Sir Edward Malet] confidentially of the contents of Count Hatzfeldt's latest private letter concerning a conversation with Lord Randolph Churchill, and added the remark that it was unfortunate for England that Churchill's views appeared to coincide so little with those of the Ambassador. When I reached the point of describing how Churchill had said to Count Hatzfeldt that England, in alliance with Austria, would be too weak to oppose Russia at any time, Sir Edward became very red and exclaimed: "I call that a policy of cowardice." (BISMARCK: "*The right expression.*") "Luckily," he added, "Lord Randolph has not the last word with us in foreign policy, and I know that Lord Salisbury's opinions are very different. Churchill is intimate with the Russophil Radicals, such as Labouchere and Chamberlain; he is much more revolutionary than Conservative and only joined the Conservatives because he saw that, owing to the absolute lack of capacity there, his best chance of success was in belonging to the Conservative Party. I have a very poor opinion of Lord Randolph and avoid him as much as I can. He has not the slightest understanding of foreign politics. . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 256)

Only the space allotted to contributors in the old quarterlies would permit the writer adequately to cover the many important crises with which these documents deal. There is not a dull page in this extraordinary volume, and most of the information differs radically from the popular views, and controverts much that is recorded in the biographies of the English statesmen of that time. It is invaluable for the student who desires to be informed upon the nature of the diplomatic background of the vast changes wrought in Europe since the turn of the century.

The letter written in French by Bismarck to Lord Salisbury, on November 22, 1887, reviewing the condition of affairs in Europe and elsewhere, is indicative of the confidence which the Chancellor instilled in Lord Salisbury's mind and heart. Indeed, the letter was inspired by him. We are told he desired "a written statement from Prince Bismarck, to serve as a 'certain reassurance' that German policy would not even in the future be in direct contradiction to that settled by the Constantinople Memorandum."

As a straightforward revelation of the complicating factors in the policies of the powers, it is unparalleled in diplomatic literature. It is far too long to be translated here, but the student who does not read French should have no difficulty in finding someone who will give him an

English version of it. Distrust, suspicion, and the difficulties of parliamentary procedure in England were obstacles far too hazardous for British statesmen to surmount. The interests of Great Britain were not those of Germany, and the position of the new powerful State at the heart of Europe and the problems raised by her were not understood in England. The one was free to consider the European question in its entirety without the complication of protecting interests scattered all over the world. With England it was totally different. Europe was only one of a hundred problems that she had to consider. Nevertheless, both Salisbury and Bismarck realized that an understanding between the two was essential for keeping the peace. But it was not to be. Salisbury had to admit that he was beaten, and according to a dispatch from Count Herbert Bismarck, August 24, 1887, the British Prime Minister said:

I am honestly grateful to Prince Bismarck for his sympathetic offer, but I am afraid that he is not aware of what our insular democracy really is. The exercise of England's sovereignty is now in the hands of the uneducated masses, which neither care for nor understand foreign politics. Our electors' chief interests is the satisfaction of every kind of unreasonable desire at home, and most of the Party leaders have just one selfish aim, which is to get into the Government as quickly and to stay there as long as possible. Lack of conviction and selfish opportunism have reached terrible proportions in our Parliament. This is why the British Empire is, to my deep regret, not able to make its voice heard in the Concert of Europe as strongly (BISMARCK: 'Correct.') as her position as a Great Power ought to make possible. I can do nothing at present to alter it. (BISMARCK: '?') (*Ibid.*, p. 320)

In 1887 Salisbury wrote to Bismarck about the prospective alignment of Italy and Austria with England and Germany. In this letter Salisbury thanks the German Chancellor for removing his apprehensions "by the great frankness with which you have exposed the true situation to me." The letter closes with this remarkable declaration:

I believe that the understanding, into which England and the other two Powers are now prepared to enter, will be in complete accordance with her declared policy and will be loyally observed by her. The grouping of States, which has been the work of the last year will be an effective barrier against any possible aggression of Russia (BISMARCK: "Especially if Turkey joins!") and the construction of it will not be among the least services which Your Serene Highness has rendered to the Cause of European peace. (*Ibid.*, p. 355)

The interjections of the German Chancellor scattered throughout the documents are amusing and illuminating. They punctuate the informa-

tion sent to him in a way that reveals his immediate opinion of it. We gather from these witty shafts that fine phrases did not butter his aims, and they show clearly the divergent views of European affairs held by the chief agents of the powers, which baffled the wit and designs of the master-players of the diplomatic game.

Arbiter in the Peace of Europe

BISMARCK, ACTING in the interests of Germany—the great power that he had welded together—was the arbiter of the fate of Europe, and he had succeeded in keeping the powers from springing at one another's throats since the new Germany had come into being. This cannot be denied. He may be condemned for sheer selfish interest, but what of that? His policy paid well for over forty years and there was not a neighboring State that did not benefit from it.

Whether Bismarck or Disraeli was the first to suggest an alliance between Germany and England is not so important as the fact that such a consummation was devoutly desired by both. What has been called "craft" (and at other times "discernment") in Disraeli would be directed through the dense rivalries of the period toward an alliance with the strongest power. Trying to keep the balance of power by making an alliance with the second strongest one has never worked for the benefit of European States. Now that the story of it is told in the ruin and desolation of a continent—to say nothing of the rest of the world—one is forced to think of an alternative that might have kept the peace.

A word should be said for Disraeli as a political psychologist; he was highly gifted with the power of placing a value upon men's personal motives. His shrewdness and keen understanding of the promptings of self-aggrandizement working in the minds of politicians fortified the barriers of skepticism behind which he maneuvered with astonishing skill. He knew the difference between a diplomatist's personal ambition and the desire to serve the interests of his country. In the race for political recognition, the personal desires of the individual are not easily separated from the pursuance of the duties with which he has been entrusted by his government. Hence, the sad story of the work done in the chancelleries. Disraeli's political sagacity in estimating the forces for peace and war is revealed clearly in these pages.

The honest, industrious student of these affairs should spend at least a month in reading books easily obtainable in large public libraries and in those of the older universities. In connection with the proper under-

standing of the documents that we are now examining, I would also list Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice's "Life of Lord Granville," Monypenny's and Buckle's "The Life of Benjamin Disraeli," Morley's "Life of Gladstone," Pulling's "Life and Speeches of the Marquis of Salisbury"; and for an intimate biographical review of the German statesman, Moritz Busch's "Our Chancellor" and "Bismarck, Some Secret Pages of His History." Dr. Busch was in close touch with Bismarck for many years.

In these volumes the reader will find as complete a picture of European affairs from the time of the fall of Napoleon to the days of Queen Victoria's jubilee as is available anywhere. This is the background that is necessary for the student if he would comprehend the political conditions of European States and the causes which contributed to the terrible disasters that have befallen them in our days. A review of the works mentioned will enable the reader to check the import of the diplomatic documents and reveal to him the various viewpoints of the leading statesmen with whom Bismarck had to deal.

Let the reflective man, as he reads this volume of documents, sigh: "What might have been!" Futile though it be to indulge such thoughts, some who have not given deep study to the bewildering currents of the historical stream of disaster may imagine there might have been no World War I, no Treaty of Versailles, no Hitler, none of the political catastrophes that have followed one another swiftly in this generation, if Disraeli and Bismarck had succeeded in uniting Great Britain and Germany in an alliance for the peace of Europe.

Today this seems like a heresy. Although it is not yet forbidden to reflect upon the past, a careful study of the documents and biographies that I have mentioned above makes one think conditions might have been better than they are.

New York