

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

**BISMARCK
GEDANKEN UND
ERINNERUNGEN**

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

BISMARCK
GEDANKEN UND
ERINNERUNGEN

An abbreviated and critically annotated edition

by

A. M. GIBSON

*M.A. Cantab ; Headmaster of Liverpool Collegiate School ; sometime
Foundation Scholar of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge
and Sixth Form Master at Repton School.*

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1940

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen
An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107429529

© Cambridge University Press 1940

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1940

First paperback edition 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-42952-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Introduction</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xv
I. Bis zum Ersten Vereinigten Landtage	1
II. Das Jahr 1848	11
III. Erfurt, Olmütz, Dresden, 1849–1851	27
IV. Diplomatie, 1851–1853	34
V. Wochenblattspartei. Krimkrieg, 1854–1856	41
VI. Besuche in Paris, 1855–1857	47
VII. Zwischenzustand, 1859–1862	61
VIII. Rückblick auf die preußische Politik	71
IX. Dynastien und Stämme	76
X. Der Frankfurter Fürstentag	85
XI. Schleswig-Holstein	93
XII. Nikolsburg	102
XIII. Der Norddeutsche Bund	113
XIV. Die Emscher Depesche	129
XV. Versailles	146
XVI. Kulturkampf	159
XVII. Der Dreibund	168
XVIII. Kaiser Wilhelm I.	185
XIX. Kaiser Friedrich III.	193

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen
 An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CONTENTS

XX. Prinz Wilhelm	<i>page</i> 197
XXI. Zunehmende Uneinigkeit zwischen Bismarck und dem Kaiser	208
XXII. Die Kaiserlichen Erlasse vom 4. Februar 1890	215
XXIII. Wandlungen	223
XXIV. Meine Entlassung	228
XXV. Kaiser Wilhelm II.	240
<i>Appendix I</i>	244
<i>Appendix II</i>	246
<i>Appendix III</i>	262

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

It is hoped that this abbreviated critical edition of Bismarck's *Gedanken und Erinnerungen* may be regarded as a further, if humbler, contribution to that "synthesis of disciplines" in Modern Studies of which Professor W. H. Bruford's *Germany in the Eighteenth Century* was a model. The first-hand study of such a document is essential to every student of nineteenth-century Germany, and the present edition aims at bringing an otherwise lengthy and perhaps uneconomic undertaking within manageable and profitable limits for all readers of German, whether students of history or modern languages. The text has been reduced to about one-third of its original length, but it is believed that little of interest for the present-day reader has been omitted.

The edition's ubiquitous indebtedness to Sir A. W. Ward's *Germany (1815–1890)* and to Sir Charles Grant Robertson's *Bismarck* is apparent; special thanks are due to the publishers of the latter, Messrs Constable, for permission to make specific quotations from the work. In addition, the following authorities have been most extensively used:

Egelhaaf: *Bismarck*. (Stuttgart 1922.)

Sybel: *Begründung des Deutschen Reiches*. (Munich and Berlin 1913.)

Max Lenz: *Geschichte Bismarcks*. (Munich and Leipzig 1913.)

Emil Ludwig: *Bismarck*. (Tr. E. and C. Paul, Allen and Unwin, London 1927.)

J. W. Headlam: *Bismarck*. (Putnam, New York and London 1911.)

Busch: *Tagebuchblätter*. (Leipzig 1899 and English edition, Macmillan, London 1898.)

Pahncke: *Die Parallel-Erzählungen Bismarcks zu seinen Gedanken und Erinnerungen*. (Historische Studien, ed. R. Fester, vol. III, Halle 1914.)

Erich Marcks: *Fürst Bismarcks Gedanken und Erinnerungen*. (Berlin 1899.)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE

Max Lenz: *Zur Kritik der Gedanken und Erinnerungen*. (Berlin 1899.)

Otto Kaemmel: *Kritische Studien zu Fürst Bismarcks Gedanken und Erinnerungen*. (Leipzig 1899.)

Emile Ollivier: *L'Empire Libéral*, vols. 11, 12, 13, 14. (Paris 1908.)

R. H. Lord: *Origins of the War of 1870*. (Harvard 1924.)

Lord Acton: *Historical Essays and Studies*. (Macmillan, London 1907.)

as well as the other writings and speeches of Bismarck and the chief encyclopedic works of reference (Brockhaus, Werder, Meyer, Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, etc.).

The editor is also greatly indebted to the late Professor H. V. Temperley for indicating certain works and documents for consultation, and particularly to Mr H. Gordon Ward and to Professor W. E. Collinson of Liverpool University for their generous and discerning help in the reading of the proofs.

A. M. G.

LIVERPOOL

August 1939

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

As early as 1877 Bismarck conceived the idea of recording his memories and reflections, choosing Lothar Bucher to be his *amanuensis* in the task. The work was begun immediately after his retirement in 1890, not without considerable opposition from his family and from his doctor in view of the aged Chancellor's state of health. Bucher forthwith set about the sorting and arrangement of letters and documents in the Prince's archives. The text was dictated by Bismarck, the work proceeding in spasmodic fashion owing to temperamental difficulties on both sides. Bucher complains of his master's lack of keenness and distaste for making the necessary consistent and painstaking effort, whilst Bismarck describes Bucher as a sick man, embittered and ill-humoured. There is, too, a difference in the two men's conception of the work in hand. For Bucher, the man of the pen, it was primarily a work of historical literature; for Bismarck, the man of action, the literary aspect was a secondary consideration. Nor was it in any case the Chancellor's intention to write a history but to give practical instruction to his compatriots. Hence Bucher's complaint that, in relating the past, Bismarck was too much concerned with the present.

The dictations consisted largely of fragments—often the narrative would break off at important points, and Bismarck would be loath to pick up the thread again. The fragments had to be pieced together by Bucher, ordered in sequence and built up into chapters. Thus the mere manner of composition accounts for gaps, repetitions and inconsistencies and for occasional inconsequences in the original text. At times the arrangement of the fragments is partly responsible; in this

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

abbreviated edition the compression of the text and the recasting of some of the chapters (e.g. VI, VII, X and especially XVII and XXI) tend to minimise these defects.

Bucher died in October 1892. That Bismarck's keenness was probably greater than Bucher would have us believe and that the progress of the work was impeded by the uneasy partnership is borne out by the Chancellor's handling of the work after the death of his *amanuensis*. The early drafts were corrected and amplified, and in 1893 the text was set up in print. The proof sheets served as a fresh manuscript in which passages were expanded or added, some of the personal references toned down, rearrangements and alterations incorporated. This supplementary work lasted right into the last months of Bismarck's life. If there still remain gaps and loose ends in the main body of the work, this is probably attributable to Bismarck's increasing preoccupation with the third volume dealing with events from the accession of William II. The first two volumes appeared in November 1898. The most cursory glance at the last six chapters in this edition will suffice to show why the third volume was not to be published during William II's lifetime. The issue of the 1914–18 war rendered possible its earlier publication, like that of so many other highly interesting and important documents, and it appeared in 1921.

Viewed as a piece of historical literature, the work bears all the evidences of its manner, or manners, of composition. It came into being, as Meinecke says, “wie ein natürlich gewachsener Wald, nicht wie ein wohlcomponierter Park”, but for that reason it gains in originality what it loses in artistic unity. Some sections are obviously dictations, characterised not infrequently by loose constructions and ungainly sentences. Others are all of a piece, where some great historical development, event or personality is concisely viewed in retro-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

spect. The events of 1848, the conversation with Napoleon III in March 1857, relations with Austria and Russia, the essay on “Dynastien und Stämme”, the scenes in the park at Carlsbad before the Diet of Princes or at Bismarck’s quarters in Berlin in the early days of July 1870, the heated discussions at Nikolsburg, the journey with King William in the train from Jüterbog to Berlin, Bismarck’s relations with his royal master, the characters of the two Williams and the struggle between the Chancellor and the impetuous young Emperor—such subjects are treated or such scenes portrayed with a master hand. In other respects the style is only at times in Bismarck’s best manner—the Bismarck of the letters, speeches and memoranda, where his command of language, its power and beauty have led German critics to hail him as “the greatest stylist since Goethe”. Yet even in the Memoirs the style is always of the man: the very momentum of the thought carries us along through the rugged sentences; the ideas, however involved, are rarely obscure. When Bismarck discusses these subjects and events which have been for him and for the world of the greatest importance and interest, where he reveals his innermost thoughts on matters bearing the widest and deepest implications, then, as Erich Marcks says, “Ausdruck und Klang [haben] die ganze Monumentalität seiner grössten Tage”.

The divergence of views between Bismarck and Bucher on the nature of the work has already been mentioned. As the dedication frankly announces, the book is intended as much as an admonition for the future as to help towards an understanding of the past. Thus it does not belie its title: it consists as much of “Gedanken” as of “Erinnerungen”. To read it, then, simply as a historical document or source would lead to erroneous conclusions and an imperfect appraisal. It is the work, not of a historian, but of a statesman. As a historical

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

record it is, by its nature and origin, subjective, personal; as the work of a statesman it is remarkably objective, impersonal. From the statesman's viewpoint Bismarck appreciates situations, forces, developments and personalities with detachment and complete absence of personal emotion. There are few human touches in his references to his contemporaries, even when they were his close friends; he is concerned only with their political significance, with the part they play in forwarding or thwarting his plans. There is no attempt to lay down a coherent philosophy, except the insistence that "die internationale Politik ist ein flüssiges Element". If he makes generalisations or lays down principles, these are dictated by purely empirical considerations, by statecraft, and are subject to continual variation and revision according to the flow of circumstance.

As a statesman's legacy to his people the book is a diplomatic document of the first rank: from it the critical mind could construct a manual of practical wisdom for the guidance of the nation's leaders. As "Memoirs" it constitutes the classical Bismarckian version of Bismarck's experiences. Regarded as a source, therefore, its value is only relative; as "Reflections" its value is absolute.

Foreign affairs occupy a preponderant place in the work. This is to be expected, for they were throughout Bismarck's dominant interest. As he looks back over his life and records his experiences, one can well imagine that home affairs, bound up as they were with manifold irritations and frustrations, would be a less inviting memory to resuscitate than that of foreign policy, where what had been achieved he could with justice regard as almost exclusively his own work. Moreover, writing in the '90's, he is preoccupied with the dangerous paths he considers Germany is treading, the alienation from Russia, the too close connection with Austria and encourage-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

ment of her aims in south-eastern Europe, the colonial and naval policy followed by William II and his advisers. Events were to justify his apprehensions.

The Memoirs cover practically the whole span of Bismarck's life. Already in the first two chapters, devoted to his youth, the qualities which characterise the man and the statesman are clearly discernible—the sturdy independence, the perspicacity of judgment, the self-reliance, the capacity for penetrating below the surface and appreciating the deeper implications of a problem. Had he not been born in the Prussian tradition of absolute loyalty to the throne, he might well have become a great republican leader. The youth who left school convinced that a “republic was the most reasonable form of government” and puzzled that men should blindly obey a single individual is the father of the man who had no illusions as to the mental capacity of his royal and imperial masters; who fought, at times brutally, for his own point of view and who refused point blank to admit the monarch's prerogative to interfere with his rights as a private citizen, or rather nobleman. The character which emerges from a critical study of the memoirs is one of absorbing interest for its complexity of qualities—virility, physical and moral courage, nervous tautness, open-mindedness, independence of judgment, will-power, frankness, humour, irony; prejudice, cold-bloodedness, brutality, obstinacy, subtlety, duplicity and political knavery; driving force, capacity for shrewd appraisal and biting analysis of character, for weighing psychological and emotional factors; intense conservatism in domestic and social problems, frequent misjudgment of opponents, contempt for public opinion—all these and others stand out clearly and explain both his greatness and his limitations. Within these limitations, and whether one agrees or disagrees with his conception of the character and function of the State and of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

the ethics of statecraft, one sees a mind endowed with poise and sanity, with an acute sense of the possible as distinct from the desirable. Therein lie perhaps the chief source of his greatness and the secret of his unique service to his country, service undone by the generations of less stable, less cool minds which succeeded him at the head of affairs, applied and extended his methods without his careful definition and limitation of objectives, and, by their disregard of his counsel, have proved its soundness.

Thus the most lively impression left by the book is that of the personality of Bismarck himself—a picture in many ways more vivid even than that drawn by his greatest biographers. Though there is no trace of narcissism, of self-portraiture, of vanity or of self-praise, Bismarck himself is, in the nature of the case, the focal centre from which emanate the whole material and its treatment. His bigness of stature stands out from the pages of the text in almost plastic relief and places his book among the great monuments of memoir literature. We are here admitted to the “workshop of history” and are permitted to see the designer and his loom at work.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen
An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviated references to authors and works are as follows:

Grant Robertson: Bismarck (London 1929).

Ward: Germany, 1815–1890 (Cambridge 1916).

B.B.u.G.: Bismarcks Briefe an seine Braut und Gattin (Stuttgart 1900).

Egelhaaf: Bismarck.

Sybel: Begründung des Deutschen Reiches.

Max Lenx: Geschichte Bismarcks.

Busch: Tagebuchblätter.

Emil Ludwig: Bismarck.

R. H. Lord: Origins of the War of 1870.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-42952-9 - Bismarck Gedanken und Erinnerungen

An Abbreviated and Critically Annotated Edition by A. M. Gibson

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Den Söhnen und Enkeln
zum Verständnis der Vergangenheit
und zur Lehre für die Zukunft

*Patria immoribus
consumitur.*