THESIS,

EMPEROR WILLIAM I. AND THE UNIFICATION
OF GERMANY.

FOR THE DEGREE OF

SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES.

BY

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The study of the life and character of a great monarch is in itself of special interest. But more than interesting is the study of the life of one who besides being a great monarch, stands as a representative man in the history of nations.

Such a man such a research is found in William von Hohenzollern, King of Prussia and first Emperor of the new or united Germany. He was born March 22nd, 1797. He was the second son of Frederick William III. The mother, Irmgard Louise, was one of the most noted women of Germany. She was noted for
her bravery as well as for her great beauty. Wilhelmine beth was at a time when all Europe was shaken by the tempest of that so disastrous civil strife, the French Revolution. When but a small boy after the battle of Jena, he with his mother was driven by the French dictator from Berlin to Königsberg for safety. His love for military sports was manifested in his early childhood. In fact, the principal part of his education was received in the military camp. At ten years of age he acted as lieutenant of the Garde. His first active service was in an engagement with the French when but in his seventeenth year, and he witnessed the
downfall of Napoleon in 1814. From this
time onward his military career was
steady and brilliant.
At twenty he became a colonel
in the Prussian army, but a year later
obtained the rank of major-general,
and during his father's absence in Russia
he had sole management of the
military force at home. So here in
his extreme youth was displayed that
supreme confidence and implicit trust
in which he was held throughout
his long life.
In 1817, Prince William became a
member of the Council of State and
upon his elder brother Frederick
Williams IV, coming to the throne.
in 1840, he was appointed President of the Council of Ministers. Although the errors for an instant relaxed his energy in military affairs, yet his mind was largely engrossed with the numerous and important political questions with which all Prussia at that time was concerned. The Liberal Party was rapidly increasing in number and was loudly clamoring for a Parliament of the whole people. This demand was strongly opposed by both King and Prussi, who held that an absolute government in the hands of the few was more to be desired than a government under the control of the mass of the people.
and that absolution was the only safe policy.

The Prince became the object of dislike to the people and was, during the tumult caused by the French Revolution of 1848, obliged to go to the English Court until the storm should subside, in reality he became for a time an exile from Russia. Upon the advice of the Ministry William was recalled and upon his return he addressed the Assembly in the following manner:

"The constitutional monarchy is the form of government which your King has recommended you to establish. I shall devote to it with fidelity and conscience, all my strength, as the country has a
right to expect from my character which it knows well. Thus I was brought to a close the exile of the Prince.

Frederick William II having been attacked by a severe stroke of apoplexy was rendered unfit to govern. William was called upon to exercise the rule as Regent for his brother. Upon the death of the King, which occurred January 1st, 1861, William was crowned. At the beginning of his reign, he of all modern sovereigns held the most tenaciously to the principle of the divine right of kings. He entered upon his rule with these two purposes in mind, namely — the reorganization of the army and the enforcement of the royal prerogative against
the opposition of the legislative assembly of the government. He believed the success of Russia to depend upon her army. As his military advisers he selected two skillful leaders General von Roon and General von Moltke. Under their management the organization of the army was brought almost to perfection.

At this time Prussia was divided into three distinct parties. The Liberals were demanding a more liberal form of government. The Progressists were pushing forward and were trampling upon everything which came in their path. The Conservatives were trying to uphold the old forms of government. The bitter antagonism of these parties for each other
war daily growing fiercer and fiercer. Few
men realize the treacherous situation of the
country. Finally the crisis came in the autumn of 1862.
The Liberal Ministry had resigned and left
the Conservative Government in power. King
William’s efforts to bring his people into
harmony with each other, although he
was aided by the loyalty of both the
Conservatives and the Liberals, were of
no avail. At last it became absolutely
necessary to find some Minister of sufficient
skill to guide the State through this stormy
crisis. The King, after much thought
and deliberation, appointed as President
of the Ministry Otto von Bismarck, whose
courage and determination in conducting
the internal affairs of Prussia as well as in negotiating with foreign nations never for an instant doubted. He was a member of the Conservative party and for a time his appointment to office tended to brighten the party strife. Through the entire political struggle the government was carried on according to the Principles of the constitution, while Bismarck ever kept the Sovereignty itself above the conflict.

There was one main idea which was now uppermost in the minds of both King William and his Ministers namely the Unification of Germany. This aim Teresa to give form and color to all the following proceedings. All the wars which follow tend toward the
accomplishment of German unity.

Negotiations were soon begun by Prussia with the Austrian government. The strife for
the supremacy over the German states was
then entered upon that Prussia desired
was that Austria should yield that which
was coveted by both Prussia and Germany.
During the war with Prussia an alliance
was formed between Austria and Prussia.
No such alliance could be maintained
after the close of the Danish War. As a
result of this war the two branches of
Holstein and Schleswig were given to
Austria and Prussia. Then the controversy
between these two kingdoms was renewed.
War seemed unavoidable. The time was
rapidly approaching when a decision
was to be made on to whether the German people should be led to a true position in the nations of Europe under the guidance of Prussia, or whether a third obedience to the Austrian satrapies should be continued. Everywhere preparation was being made. The Russian forces were set in motion. They entered on a campaign which was one of the shortest that the world's history records, and was one of the greatest importance for the future of Germany. After a thirty days war the Austrians were routed at Sadowa, on July 3rd, 1866, and were compelled to give up their position in the German Federation.

King William held the power in Germany instead of Francis Joseph. A great number
of the smaller German States were added to the Prussian forces.

The unparalleled success of Prussia in so short a campaign against such a power as Austria and the skillfulness of Bismarck in diplomacy with regard to the German States amazed the whole European world. The military fame of Prussia spread abroad. As for King William, he was opposed to both the Russisch and the Austrian war and desired to keep the alliance with Austria by all means.

The King, who had begun his reign a firm believer in the divine right of kings was now beginning to recognize the divine right of the people. He had also been determined to keep on good terms with Austria, and that friendship had been broken. But through
this broken friendship, he, beginning his rule as a secondary sovereign had been made one of the chief monarchs of the world.

This victory now in the Austro-Persian war, arose in Paris, a desire to snatch from Prussia some of her newly acquired glory. France felt herself overshadowed by her neighbours' success. War was to be made by the French upon any pretext whatsoever, no matter how trivial. The Emperor of France persisted in making demands for German soil on the Rhine, and continued in making charges against their treatment of the German States to no effect except to irritate the Cabinet at Berlin who went on however with their federal
and internal organization of their
different states.
At this time France was furnished an
opportunity for a renewal of her old
enmity with Prussia, where Spain was
found to be without a ruler. The Assembly
at Madrid invited Leopold, a member of
the Hohenzollern family, to become a candidate
for the throne. King William readily gave
his consent. The French were greatly incensed
when they learned of the plan. Such a
thing was not to be permitted. Leopold’s
father then refused to allow his
son to enter as a candidate for
the throne. Although this message was
communicated to Paris, no instigation was the
French Ministers upon the humiliation of
of Williams that they insisted that he should give his pledge that the candidacy should never be renewed. The king refused to say anything further in regard to the matter except that he approved of Leopold's withdrawal as a candidate.

Upon this reply and for this frivolous reason, France recklessly plunged these two nations into war. There was not even a pretense made that any human rights were involved. Then followed in rapid succession the memorable victories at Saint-Privé, Montfaucon, the fall of Metz, of Strassburg, and finally the battle of Sedan, September 2nd, 1870. Here was won the victory which took the throne from a French emperor and placed an imperial crown upon
the head of a Hohenzollern. This was a great triumph for the Prussian King, to come out victorious in a contest with a descendant of that Napoleon, who had oppressed the Prussians as only a tyrant can, and that oppression had been carried on during the early boyhood of William. Was it not his own mother, Queen Louise, who through sorrow and defeat had been brought to an early death by that very oppression? The effect of this victory upon the people the a whole, as the extreme joy felt by all, tended to unite all the different German States and to bring them into a closer relationship as the
several parts of our nation. After the close of that war into which Prussia had been led not by any desire of her own but by the necessities of the French nation, William, who had for ten years ruled as King of Prussia, was crowned the first Emperor of the New Germany. The newly-made Emperor humbly attributed his success to the skill and wisdom of General Moltke and the other able military leaders.

It is well now, during this period of peaceful relations with foreign nations, to stop to consider the military condition of Germany. The Empire had been successfully established. But a strong military force was needed to maintain it. Reorganization...
of the army was begun and in four years
the Emperor had at his disposal a militia
of two millions of men. The country was
again distracted by socialistic discussions.
The people were again calling for a free
constitution. The Parliament was demanding
a greater executive power, especially with
regard to the ministers of the crown. William
however, ever maintained his own rights,
refused to abandon his own principles,
and insisted that the ministers were
the choice of the crown and could not
be removed from office simply by the
vote of Parliament. Three times was the
attempt made to take his life. But through
all these troubles and difficulties he was
safely conducted. Never has there been any
other monarch, who has so many times thrown his own personality into the questions placed before him for consideration. The very people, who had so bitterly opposed him four coming to feel an affectionate and personal interest in all that he did. As the long life of this great king and emperor draws near to its close, the student begins to recount those changes which have been introduced into this government, to note those plans which have been wrought out in the building up of the nation, and lastly to consider those peculiar traits of character belonging to the chief actor in this long historical drama occupying nearly the entire nineteenth century.
In the early part of the 18th century, the form of government was that of an absolute monarchy. Through the efforts of the liberal party and the general movement of the middle class of society, the government came more and more to assume the character of a constitutional monarchy. The powers of the sovereign came to be more limited. The will, which in former times had been but an instrument of the King, came to wield an influence of its own in the affairs of the State. This legislative body, however, came to have the power of controlling the Ministry as did the Parliament of England. This great change from an absolute monarchy...
to that of a monarchy subordinate to a constitution was made during the lifetime of William. There were two forces employed for the carrying out of the plan for the unification of Germany. First there were the two great conquests made by the Prussian army. The victory at Waterloo added to Prussia many new states. But this was not sufficient to form a union of the different races of Germany. It is here that the second Force comes in — here that the real value of Bismarck's diplomacy is displayed. The successful war brought no rest or peace for William & Bismarck. Upon the opening of the following
kilt, an almost overwhelming amount of work presented itself. Third were treaties to be made with individual States, the conquered provinces were to be consolidated, and the formation of the German Confederation was to be perfected. The manner in which this great task was accomplished can only be regarded as skillful and admirable. It is sometimes questioned, as to just how much William was indebted to Bismarck, and if the German successes and victories were not aided more by the Minister-President than by the King. The most plausible answer seems to be, however, that the two men were necessary to each other in carrying forward the scheme for the union of all German States.
After a short illness, Emperor William came to his death, after a long life of ninety-one years and a rule of twenty-seven years. The great elements of William's character need to be seen in his relationship to the Court, the State, and especially to the soldiers of his vast army. His very appearance in court suggested the great man. William lacked none of those qualities of royal will and determination to rule, qualities belonging to his ancestor Frederick the Great, but however he never forgot the dignities and proprieties of his office. He did this predecessor. Always dignified, kind, and courteous, his presence seemed to fill all with a feeling of his royalty and superior power.
Throughout his entire reign the needs of both the state and the people were most conscientiously cared for. He placed before the people an example of industry and consecration to duty in his own life. He was ever a lover of peace and never entered upon a war unless the safety of the State demanded it. To the soldiers he always seemed to be a man in whom they might find the deepest sympathy. In many of their engagements he was present in person to cheer and comfort them. He was noted for his military ability, especially in the organization of armies.

He also possessed the ability to appreciate and to select the best men to fill his
officer, as no illustrated in his selection of military officials General von Roon and Generall von Moltke, as well as Bismarck for office of Prime Minister. There is not to be found in the annals of modern history another such man as Emperor William, a man who has by his own force of character and individual personality made the times in which he lived to mark an era not only in the history of his own country but also in the history of the World. This man shall ever stand forth in history bold and prominent, as one who was chosen to harden the landed and divided strength of the German people.
to lead them to glorious victory, and
its war that powerful structure of
the German Empire as it stands today.
His name will not only continue
to shine in history, but will ever be
deeply enshrined in the hearts of his
people. His fame will remain as
their precious possession. The influence
of his character will continue to refine
and elevate the lives of coming generations.