

course of which he made repeated protestations of his anxious desire for German freedom, he issued two proclamations, in which he openly announced his intention of putting himself at the head of the restored and united German nation."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alison, vol. iii. p. 418.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### STRUGGLES FOR LIBERTY.

**I**T is a great mistake to suppose, that, in the great conflicts which have agitated the monarchies of Europe, there has been a clearly-marked line of division between the oppressed people on the one side, and the despotic kings and courts on the other. The people have been in antagonism between themselves; and often the large majority have been in favor of the old feudal despotisms. The people in Prussia were thus divided. The Catholic party, which was quite numerous, and which embraced a large part of the peasantry, strongly opposed the liberal movement. The Poles were mostly in favor of it. As a general rule, the liberals, as they were called, were confined to the large towns. The peasantry were opposed to change.

While Prussia was in this state of agitation, the newly-appointed assembly met, on the 2d of April, to draw up a constitution. The king, in opening the assembly, said, —

“His Majesty has promised a real constitutional charter, and we are assembled to lay the foundation-stone of the edifice. We hope that the work will

proceed rapidly, and that it will perfect a constitution *for the whole German race.*" The following were the fundamental principles of the constitution, presented by the king, and adopted by the assembly :—

1. Every householder twenty-four years of age was entitled to a vote for representation in the lower house.
2. Every five hundred voters could choose an elector.
3. Every householder thirty years of age was eligible as a deputy.
4. Two deputies were to be chosen by every sixty thousand inhabitants.

The king also promised to lay before them a bill providing for freedom of the press, personal liberty, the right of meeting and petitioning, the publicity of judicial proceedings, trial by jury, and equal civil and political rights for all persons.

These regulations referred to Prussia alone, and could bind no other State of Germany. Still the agitation in Prussia extended throughout all the German States.

The legislature was to consist of two houses. The first, or senate, was composed of the princes of the blood royal, and sixty peers appointed by the king; and also of one hundred and eighty members, to be chosen by the people. The dignity of the sixty peers was hereditary. The others were chosen for eight years. No commoner could be chosen who was not in receipt of an income of two thousand five hundred dollars.

The members of the lower house were to be elected for four years, and were subject to no property qualification. This constitution, though a great advance from the absolutism of the past, did by no means satisfy the democratic leaders. During the whole summer, there

were excited gatherings of the people, and violent and inflammatory debates. There were mobs in the streets of Berlin, and many acts of violence were perpetrated.

Under these circumstances, the king resolved on very energetic repressive measures. Assuming the pretence of a general review of the royal forces, fifty thousand troops were assembled at Potsdam. Gen. von Wrangel, a very determined royalist, was appointed to command them. The review took place on the 22d of September, 1848. In an order of the day, the general thus addressed the troops :—

"The king has honored me with the highest proof of his confidence in giving me command of all the troops. I will establish order when it is disturbed. The troops are stanch, their swords are sharpened, and their muskets are loaded. It is not against you, men of Berlin, that this is done, but to protect you. Grass is growing in your streets. Your houses are empty. Your shops are full of goods, but void of purchasers. This must be changed; and it shall be changed. I swear it to you; and a Wrangel never yet failed in keeping his word."

The Burgher Guard, a body somewhat corresponding with our militia, were in sympathy with the people. Though this was the natural force to be called upon to preserve order in the city, it could not be relied upon by the king. In a discussion which took place upon the articles of the constitution, it was decided, by a vote of two hundred and seventeen to one hundred and thirty-four, that, in the title given to the king, the words, "by the grace of God," should be omitted. This was very distinctly announcing the democratic principle, that the king's sole title to the throne was the *will of the people.*

Nearly all branches of business were thrown into

confusion by these distractions and agitations. The chief manufactories were closed. Thousands were without employment and without bread. The assembly, chosen by popular suffrage, had a decided majority in favor of reform. This majority kept up a constant warfare against the king and court, confident of support, should it be needed, from the Burgher Guard and the populace at Berlin.

On the 31st of October, 1848, the assembly passed a resolution, "that all Prussians are equal before the law; that neither privileges, titles, nor rank, are to exist in the State; and that *the nobility are abolished*." In fact, the democratic clubs now governed the assembly, controlling its measures by the menaces of the mob. "Not content with the majority which they already possessed in the assembly, the mob from without, with the avowed purpose of intimidating the conservative members, broke into its hall, amply provided with ropes, nails, and nooses, as a preparation for summary hanging."<sup>1</sup>

The king speedily developed the resolute measures he had decided to adopt. He dismissed his liberal ministry, and appointed, defiantly, an administration of the most decided conservatists. It was certain that a collision would soon occur. The king, having inaugurated the new ministry, sent in a royal decree to the assembly, stating that the insubordination in the streets of Berlin was such, that he transferred the sittings to Brandenburg.

A scene of fearful violence ensued. The monarchical party, fifty in number, withdrew with the president.

<sup>1</sup> Alison, vol. viii. p. 423.

The rest, in a state of intense excitement, passed a series of indignant remonstrances, and declared themselves in permanence. Thirty of the members remained in the house all night.

The next morning, as the members began to arrive, they found the building surrounded by royal troops, who were ordered to allow any one to go out, but none to go in. The Burgher Guard warmly espoused the cause of the assembly. The majority, two hundred and twenty-five in number, which remained after the withdrawal of the monarchical members, re-assembled, at an early hour next morning, in the hall of the Schützen Gild. Before daylight, a numerous body of the Burgher Guard, well armed, had met around that hall for the protection of the assembly.

The king immediately issued a proclamation, dissolving the Burgher Guard, and ordering them to give up their arms. No attention was paid to the order. The order was reiterated more peremptorily; thirty thousand royal troops were brought into the city; and Berlin was declared in a state of siege. As there were but fifteen thousand Burgher Guards, and the royal troops were incomparably better disciplined, the Guard dispersed, and a bloody contest was avoided.

The next day, the assembly again met in the Schützen Gildhall. An officer from Gen. Wrangel ordered them to disperse as an illegal assembly. "Never, till forced by arms!" was the cry of the assembly. The vice-president was in the chair. A body of soldiers entered. Four officers quietly lifted up the chair upon which the vice-president was seated, and carried it, with its occupant, into the street. The members followed in a state of great exasperation.

The assembly made several other efforts to meet; but it was always dispersed by the soldiery, without bloodshed. The months rolled on, fraught with intrigue, agitation, peril, and distress. The people, in their blindness, were often warring against their own interests. The court was struggling to retain the despotic power which had descended to it through the dreary ages.

Throughout all the States of Germany, there had been a struggle between the democratic and monarchical party in reference to the choice of the Emperor of the German Confederacy. The democrats wished to have any man of ability eligible: the monarchists wished to confine the choice to one of royal blood.

In the diet at Frankfort, in 1849, it was voted, by 258 to 211, that the choice should be limited to one of the ruling sovereigns of Germany. It was then moved that the imperial crown should be offered to the King of Prussia. After an exciting debate of eleven days upon this subject, it was announced, by a vote of 290 out of 558, that the King of Prussia was chosen emperor.

"The time was when this flattering offer would have been joyfully accepted; but time had worked many changes. The imperial crown, as now tendered, was very different from the imperial crown as originally coveted. Being elective, it more nearly resembled the presidency of America, or the empire of imperial Rome, than the old Germanic diadem.

"Austria had openly declared against the union of all the confederacy under one head; and there could be little doubt that the acceptance of the imperial crown by Frederick William would at once bring on a

war with that power, backed by Russia, with whom she was now in closest alliance. Influenced by these considerations, the king determined to decline the proffered honor."<sup>1</sup>

The new constitution prepared by the general assembly at Frankfort was rejected by Austria, Bavaria, Hanover, and Saxony. It was, however, received by twenty-one of the lesser States of Northern Germany. These minor States concurred, by a collective vote, in an address to the King of Prussia, urging him to accept the proffered dignity.

All Germany was thrown into confusion by these discussions; and there were insurrections, which were only quelled by the sword. It was manifest that the constitution of Frankfort could not be accepted. The Kings of Prussia, Hanover, and Saxony, met, and drew up, with great precision, a constitution of a hundred and ninety articles. By this arrangement, the imperial crown was made hereditary in the Prussian monarchy. The liberals, in derision, called this the "Constitution of the Three Kings." Neither Austria nor Bavaria would accept it. Thus it failed.

While the King of Prussia was thus struggling to gain the ascendancy in Germany, the spirit of revolution continued to agitate his kingdom. A new chamber of deputies was chosen, which consisted strongly of democrats. The representatives boldly declared themselves against the government. The challenge thus thrown down was accepted by the court. On the 29th of April, 1849, a circular was addressed by the Prussian cabinet to all the States of Germany. In this it was said, —

<sup>1</sup> Alison, vol. viii. p. 481.

"Prussia engages to oppose the revolutionary agitation of the times with the utmost energy, and promises to furnish the other governments with timely assistance for the same purpose. The danger is a common one. Prussia will not betray its mission to interfere, in the hour of peril, wherever and in any manner it may deem necessary. It is convinced that a limit must be put to the revolution of Germany. This cannot be effected by mere passive resistance: it must be done by active interference."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the King of Prussia endeavored to place himself at the head of the party opposed to reform; and thus he called upon all throughout Germany, who were in sympathy with his views, to rally to his support. He wished for a united Germany, that he might consolidate the powers of absolutism, and, with the tramp of his armies, crush out the revolutionary spirit. The liberals wished for a united Germany, that republican freedom might work in unison, and that their nation might be brought more in harmony with the United States of America.

The king invited a congress of all the German princes to meet in Berlin in May, 1849. Twenty-two of the minor princes came; but Austria, Bavaria, Wurtemberg, and Saxony declined the invitation. The assembly was a failure.

An American gentleman, who was in Berlin at that time, gives the following interesting account of the scenes which he witnessed. This was in 1848, when William I. was not yet king, but only crown prince, the king's brother. We give the narrative in his words, though abbreviated:—

<sup>1</sup> Annual Register, 1849, p. 349.

"The king, in those days, was his poor Majesty Clicquot, as he was called,—a man not without literary cultivation, of a great deal of maudlin sentimentality, and a prodigious capacity for drinking champagne; but champagne and political sentimentality were his bane and ruin. It was a great pity both for him and his country; but his Majesty was not respected.

"For many days, in Berlin, there had been thunder in the air. It was evident that something impended. The reading-rooms along the pleasant street, Unter den Linden, and all the *bier lokals*, were full of attentive students of the papers, who discussed the chances of events. At length, the final news came.<sup>1</sup> The first thing that we heard in Berlin was, that the government was ready, and had plenty of soldiers. Probably it knew the necessity: for the city had an air of suppressed excitement; and the feeling was such, that troops of the cavalry of the paternal government paraded the streets at night to help everybody keep quiet.

"But the amazing and sudden success of the revolution in France put all the crowned heads of Europe in a panic; and they began to make concessions to the people. It was pitiful to see, because it implied a kind of conscious robber relation between the rulers and the nations. The kings seemed like pirates who had been overtaken, and, in mortal terror at the probable consequences of their crimes, proposed to disgorge their plunder. They professed willingness to restore large shares of the treasures of liberty that they had stolen; and were evidently much more conscious, at that moment, of the power of the people, than of their 'God-given' authority. King

<sup>1</sup> The news of the revolution in France of 1848, rumors of which had already spread through all Europe, creating intense excitement.

Clicquot went with the rest, and promised well: there should be a constitution, and all the modern improvements, added to the political edifice of Prussia. There were optimists in those startling days, who thought that Europe was to be republicanized by the mere force of reason; and that kings were about gracefully to own themselves in the wrong, and to retire.

"But suddenly, one Saturday afternoon in Berlin, the mere force of reason gave way. The writer was dining with some student friends at the old Belvidere. While we were yet dining, anxious faces appeared; and we were told that trouble was brewing. A crowd of people had been to the royal palace to demand arms, and they had been refused. The revolution was coming: the tidal wave was even now lifting us. We all arose, and went out. A huge concourse of men was swiftly swarming from the palace into the broad street. As it passed along like a dark cloud, covering every thing with shadow, doors and windows were closed; and shop-keepers hurried to make all fast. Before the palace of the Prince of Prussia, his present Majesty King William, a carriage was standing; and, the moment the crowd had passed, the Princess of Prussia, the present queen, and a beautiful woman, came out with children, and stepped quickly into the carriage, which drove off rapidly toward the king's palace. The crowd swept on; and the leaders of revolution knew that the hour had come.

"As we strolled curiously along, we saw men with clubs and iron bars, hurrying by, evidently, to a rendezvous; and officers on horseback clattered through the streets, which all carriages had deserted. The leaders knew that no time could be safely lost; and by three o'clock barricades were rising in the chief streets that

led into Unter den Linden. We turned into our room in the Friedrich Strasse, and at the same moment saw from the window that a crowd had brought the materials to build a barricade just beneath it.

"The barricade was soon built; and the sound of firing grew heavier and nearer. We heard the approach of soldiers advancing upon the barricade. At the same moment, the sloping roof of the house opposite the window began to heave, and was finally burst through by the iron bars of the insurgents, who, completely protected by the eaves from the fire of the soldiers in the street, could throw down upon them every kind of deadly missile. But the clear voice of the commanding officer ordered, loud enough for all on the neighboring houses to hear, that the troops should fire upon every person who appeared at a window; and he sent a detachment into the opposite house. The barricade was then assaulted and carried. But for hours the alarm-bells rang, and the sharp volleys of musketry rattled, and the dull heavy cannon thundered and shook the air. A great battle was going on in the city. The moon shone; the white clouds drifted through the sky; and there was no other sound than that of the bells, the muskets, and the cannon.


"The next day, the city was like a city that had been carried by assault. The soldiers had taken the barricades, and held the streets. But there was a universal feeling that the people were strong enough to bring King Clicquot to terms; and there was bitter hatred of the Prince of Prussia, who had counselled and directed the operations of the night. The king issued a sentimental proclamation to his *liebe Berliner* (his dear Berliners). But the dead were carried to the royal palace,

and brought into the court; and his poor Majesty was compelled to come to the window and look upon his subjects, whom he was plainly told that he had murdered. He wept and promised; and it was understood that his brother sharply reproached him for not maintaining his prerogative by the grace of God. But there was a kind of national guard organized and armed. There was a solemn and triumphal funeral of the dead; and Humboldt walked in the procession among the national mourners. There was a little feeble talk of Clicquot as Emperor of Germany; but, after the ludicrous and brief empire of the Archduke John, the last of poor Clicquot's wits ebbed away. Robert Blum, the popular leader, had been shot; and the Prince of Prussia, becoming king, stoutly held that he owed his crown to God, and was responsible to him, and not to the people."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harper's Magazine, November, 1870.

## CHAPTER IX.

### KING WILLIAM I.

HUS the tumult of affairs continued, ever varying, and yet ever essentially the same, until the year 1857. The king, Frederick William IV., then gave indubitable evidences of insanity: it consequently became necessary for him to withdraw from the government. As he had no children, his next brother, William, was declared regent. William was exceedingly unpopular, in consequence of his openly-avowed advocacy of absolutism, and his implacable hostility to popular reform. For four years, the Crown Prince, William, reigned as regent; then, upon the death of his brother, he was crowned king on the 2d of January, 1861.

William I., who now occupies the throne, was the second son of Frederick William III. He was born on the 22d of March, 1797. In 1829, he married the Duchess Catharine of Saxe-Weimar. He has two children. The eldest, the Crown Prince, Frederick William Nicholas Charles, was born Oct. 18, 1831. He was married to Victoria, Princess Royal of Great Britain, on the 25th of January, 1858. The younger child, the Princess Louisa Maria, was born