

The Growth of Prussia

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The Growth of Prussia.

The great conqueror had fallen. Napoleon had paid his penalty. The man who for twenty years had filled the world with his glory, who, not satisfied with the illustrious crown of France, had stretched out his hands to govern the whole continent now was condemned to meditate in the seclusion of a solitary island over the change of fortune and the fickleness of fate. Europe again breathed freely. Oppressed and weak Germany, so much in need of grace, hoped that at last the day of freedom had come and that out of the shattered ruins of their country would spring up a nation as free and great as their ancient ancestors.

Just as desirous for peace and freedom as the people were also the rulers. One might believe, says Müller, "that the sovereigns had no less an aim in mind, than to give to the world a new Golden Age. For on Sept 20th 1815 Alexander Czar of Russia Francis Emperor of Austria and Frederick William the King of Prussia issued a proclamation, wherein they announced their firm resolve, from that time forth, to adopt the Christian religion alone as their standard, to rule wholly in accordance with Christian love and peace, as well

within their respective states as in their intercourse with foreign governments. to afford one another assistance in all cases and to regard themselves merely as the plenipotentiaries of Providence appointed to rule three branches of one and the same family." How encouraging these charitable words sounded, how enthusiastic they were received by the sorrowful people, readily they believed them especially when in the next few years all European sovereigns with the exception of the King of England the Pope and the Sultan entered the so-called holy alliance.

Soon after the war of liberty had been brought to such a happy conclusion all powers of Europe had met at the congress of Vienna. There Germany received back all the provinces of which she had been deprived during that and the subsequent time. They were now divided among the members of that newly formed "Confederation of Germany" in such a manner that the majority either received the same territories they had possessed previously or such as they had owned at the period of the Rhenish league. Out of several hundred independent states a league of thirty nine sovereign states had been founded and the great idea of a Germany consisting of a union of all the nations speaking the

German language was attached to this transformation.

The first thought now was how to govern the separate states and everywhere ^{from} ~~came~~ the call for a constitution, limiting the powers of the monarch and giving to the people the privileges which naturally belong to them. Mention of this had been made in the articles of the confederation, the 13th article reads as follows: In all countries of the Confederation there will be originally shall be a constitution with representation. Nothing had indeed been said of the manner how and the time when these contents of this great article should be fulfilled, but the always trustful Germans had faith in their rulers happy to have been promised that much. There was only one leader in the Northern states liberal enough to side with the people, the rest hid themselves aloof.

Charles Augustus Grand Duke of Saxony Weimar with the consent of the Estates of his country gave in 1816 a constitution allowing the representation of all citizens, right of voting, taxes, freedom of the Press. The South seemed more ready to act in accordance with the above mentioned article. King Maximilian of Bavaria granted a constitution in the year 1818. In August of the same year Grand Duke Charles of Baden gave a still more liberal one and the potentates of

Württemberg, Hesse Darmstadt and Nassau had also to yield to the pressure of their natives.

King Frederick William III of Prussia had in his decree of May 22^d 1815 promised a constitution and set the limits in which certain delegates should have accomplished the work of drawing it up. But the limits elapsed and the King having by that time changed his advisers obstinately postponed and at last gave up what he had promised. Bishop Eylert gives us in a few words the character of this monarch, who ~~although~~ although a good father of a family and educated man was hardly fit to govern a rising state. Bishop Eylert says: "The King has acted like a wise father, who touched by the devoted love of his children upon his birthday or his recovery from illness is in a kindly humor and consents to their wishes, but afterwards upon consideration, he modifies his assent and asserts his natural authority."

William von Humboldt was busy drawing up a constitution, when suddenly the news reached Berlin that Kotzebue the author of a despotic history of Germany had been assassinated by a liberal fanatic and that the Burschenschaften at a meeting in Jena had publicly burnt the writings of men who depicted royalty as a power without restraint.

This was the death blow to liberty, for now could Metternich by painting a ~~soon~~ revolution in the darkest colours, not only change the King's mind and make him opposed to all liberal movements but also to make Prussia the leader in the persecution of the so-called demagogues.

Severe measures were taken at once. All places for gymnastic exercises were closed, Bahr their leader was sent to Spandau, later to Küstrin; the three Bonn professors - Struth and the brothers Welker - were imprisoned and their papers seized. Many other arrests of teachers and students took place. But the greatest despotism was shown in the Karlsruher decrees which among others embraced the following points: The freedom of the Press was restricted by censorship; a central commission was established at Mayence for the investigation of demagogical intrigues, the Burschenschaft together with its gymnastic constitutions was forbidden, the universities were placed under the inspection of the government deputies and all German governments must submit to the conclusions of the Diet. A number of liberal men still hoped that the King of Prussia would not give his consent to these articles but when he agreed to them, William von Humboldt von Buzen the minister of war and von Bismarck

chancellor felt themselves compelled to resign, and even the Prussian government adopted all measures necessary to suppress liberal thought of democracy. De Witte professor of theology had only written a consolatory letter to Baud's mother for this he was at once deprived of his position and had to leave Berlin. Red-black-gold paper-heads, barrels and ribbons were forbidden, the forms of students caps and coats were examined and in a cabinet order of the year 1821 the name Protestant and Protestantism were forbidden. Instead of ^{a gathering or representation} ~~a representation~~ of provincial parliaments was instituted by a royal patent of June 5th 1823. There had only an advisory voice and could only advise when the ministers asked their advice.

Metternich had reached his aims and Prussia was now entirely in his hands. The feelings of the people at that period were manifested in the literature and a whole school among whom were the most illustrious Gutz + Adolphsen defended arbitrary and the theory of a monarchy by the grace of God to their hearts delight.

Now loyal and how slow to change the German nation is can not better be proved than by their long endurance. Yet the sparks had taken fire and this could not be smothered, but would take fire at its limit.

June 7th 1840 Friedrich William III died and

Fredrick William II ascended the throne of Prussia. He was a man of learning and great hopes were connected with his government. His first acts showed indeed the intention to better and heal. Amnesty was declared for all political offences, ~~Schubert~~ was recalled from his confinement the professors, who had been driven from Berlin were recalled and everything seemed to look favourable. The great stone in the ~~crossway~~ ^{path} between people and King was the ~~institution~~. Yet when a petition was sent by the Landtag of Prussia asking the King for representative government the King answered that the provincial parliaments would be retained, but a parliament of the whole Kingdom would not be introduced. In spite of this and perhaps caused by two pamphlets who had been issued ~~by~~ ^{the} over-president of Prussia's and by Jacobi a physician in Königsberg, the first representative the granting of a constitution as a political necessity, the second calling it simply a right of the people, provincial committees were summoned to Berlin in order to "supplement the provincial institutions by an element of unity and to consult regarding the common interest of the state."

Very soon a second step toward a parliament was taken. February 3^d 1847 appeared a royal patent by which the United Landtag was created on the basis of provincial parliament.

Although this had not very great power still its consent was requisite to the levying and increase of taxes and for new loans. It consisted of two orders. The *Herrmannische* was composed of the princes of the blood, foreign princes holding fiefs from the crown, *Landesherrn* and the representatives of certain corporations and corporations, the second the *Dreiständische* consisted of the *Ritterschaft*, the cities, and the country parishes. But all the good feelings with which these measures had been greeted by the people were destroyed by the speech with which the king on April 11th 1847 addressed the United Landtag and in which he seemed to have put his whole creed. "No power on earth," he said "shall ever succeed in persuading me to exchange the natural relation between King and people for a conventional constitutional one and neither now nor ever will I permit a written sheet, like a second providence to thrust itself in between our God in Heaven and this land to displace the old sacred faculty. The Crown can and must rule only according to the laws of God and the country and according to its own free decision and not according to the will of majorities. Prussia cannot endure such a condition. Throw a glance upon the map of Europe, on the situation of our land, above all cast a mental glance over our

history." The Landtag was closed on June 26th without any other result than the endeavour to gain more.

Thus ~~was~~ heaped up more and more dislike and dissatisfaction and the fire burning secretly was nearly ready to break out. It only needed a cause to stir it up. The King of Prussia considered the Landtag the only concession which could be made in the way of popular government, an opinion which the people were unwilling to accept.

Gatherings of the people were commenced on the 6th of March 1848 and petitions and deputations were sent to the King. Collisions with the troops took place and the soldiers began to rise arms. About this time news reached the capital of the proceedings in other states. The Vienna revolution of March 13th was made known, deputations of the Rhemish provinces announced a threatening attitude there. The news of these different things caused the people to send a delegation to the King on March 18th demanding among other things the adoption of a liberal constitution. The delegates were well received and at two o'clock that afternoon it was announced that two royal patents were in preparation granting to the wishes of the people and abolishing censorship, improving the Prussian constitution and

proposing changes in the German confederation
 to be carried out in harmony with the other
 German governments. The people were
 satisfied and surrounding the palace received
 the king with loud applause. Yet the entrances
 of the palace were held by soldiers and the
 people noticing this became at once
 suspicious and their indignation was aroused.
 Soon the cry, "Away with the troops!" was
 heard. The infantry advanced to scatter the
 crowd and ~~rather~~ by accident or intentionally
 two shots were fired and the people thinking
 that they had been deceived and had been
 tricked by false promises in order to be
 slaughtered broke out in the universal cry,
 "We are betrayed", "Murder!", "To arms!",
 They scatter in great excitement in a few
 hours barricades were erected and black,
 red & gold banners floated in the air. The
 troops began their attack at 3 o'clock and
 by seven they had closed the greater part of
 the Königstrasse by the use of grape shot. The
 fighting was continued during the whole night
 and the next morning the soldiers were so
 exhausted that it seemed doubtful whether
 they would be able to subdue the populace. The
 King had to yield, he commanded the troops
 to leave Berlin, consented to the formation
 of a citizen guard for the protection of the city and

+ palace and summoned a new ministry with Count Arnim of Bismarck at its head. The King and queen standing on the balcony of the palace were compelled to view the corpses of 216 men, who fell behind the barricades and were brought on litters and open wagons in the court yard, their heads covered with flowers and green boughs. An amnesty was declared for all political offenders, the Poles, who were imprisoned in Berlin, in consequence of this were freed and on the 20th March Mikolowski and his fellow sufferers held a kind of a kind of triumphal procession through Berlin. Thus had the proud Hohenzollern changed and had at last recognized that the people when too long played with, might at last show their force and demand their natural rights. Frederick William issued a proclamation on the 21st of March "to the German nation" in which he declared that he set himself "at the head of the collective fatherland" and in the afternoon he rode accompanied with the princes, ministers and generals through the streets of Berlin wearing black, red and gold favors. Walking in front of the university he addressed the people in warm words, spoke of German freedom and unity and of his intentions to do all he

could for the weal of the German nation.
The burial of the fallen, whom the King again
viewed with bare head was the close of
revolutionary days. Prince William who
was accused of having given the troops order
to march went to England by express
command of the King in order that his
presence might not be an obstacle to a
reconciliation. The united Landtag
met once more on the 2^d of April and
was in session 8 days to examine and
accept the law for a constitutional con-
vention laid before it by the Camphausen
Ministry, which had succeeded that of Arnim
on the 29th of March.

But the most credit gained Prussia
with the German people by the fact that in
the Landtag which had assembled at Berlin
in accordance with the electoral law published
by the King a constitution had been adopted,
to which the King had sworn on the 6th of
February 1850.

The war which in the mean time had
commenced about Schleswig-Holstein,
the struggles between Prussia & Austria
for the supremacy, fill some of the most
interesting pages of German & Prussian
history. The King however had not yet
won for Prussia. It was not ordained

by fate to ~~Prussian~~ Frederick William IV to give greatness to Prussia, a greater man than he, was now ready to ascend the throne and advised by great and glorious men to cause the so long desired union.

William I ascended the throne of Prussia in 1860 and at once directed his chief attention to a military administration. It was his ^{first} intention to submit weakly to French domination, but on the contrary as a soldier through & through he saw well that honor and glory of Prussia lay in a well disciplined and well equipped army. Of course such aims could not be accomplished without great expenses and the House of Representatives not seeing the indirect value at once refused the appropriation. For this reason William dismissed on the 18th of March 1862 the liberal ministry and on the 23rd of September the conservative Steinbock ministry resigned and on the same day von Bismarck Schönaichen assumed the presidency of the cabinet. On the 8th of October he became minister president with the special department of foreign affairs. Could Prussia ever forget this man's name, could she ever forget gratitude and devotion to him? To give her greatness and unite Germany were his aims and in one perhaps under such difficulties with so much

oppositions could have so fearlessly carried out ~~German~~^{Pruss} ~~German~~.

Three great and bloody wars were yet to disturb Germany before the final work could be accomplished. To follow them, criticisms and investigations the causes & effects as ~~the~~ ~~right~~ - wrong ~~it~~ would be a very difficult task and especially unpleasant for a German. The facts are clearly seen. The war of 1864 decided the question of Schleswig-Holstein by gaining it for Austria & Prussia. And when Prussia's great statesman desirous to give Prussia's supremacy by any means whatever, strove to absorb these states and prove Austria's not to war, the arms decided again in favor of Prussia and by a patent of January 12th 1867 Schleswig-Holstein with the exception of a small district ceded to Oldenburg was annexed together with Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Nassau and Frankfurt. This territory gave Prussia an increase of 28,034 square miles containing a population of 4,815,700 making her total area 137,000 square miles with a population of 23,390,000 souls. But in addition to this acquisition of territory which was purely German and for the most part Protestant she gained the farther great advantage that

her possessions, no longer divided into two parts, formed now one united well rounded whole. The Prussian Landtag approved of the annexations and also at the instigation of the government voted donations to Count Bismarck and Generals Roon, Moltke, Bittenfeld-Kernowicz & Vogel von Falckenau. Shortly after the North German Confederation was founded and the proposed constitution was adopted in the next Reichstag with only a few changes. Universal suffrage and secret ballot were adopted and some of the most important measures as control of finances and framing of the legislation were conferred upon the people. What Frederick the Great tried to accomplish by his confederation of princes in 1785, the unification of Germany, had now at last been achieved by William I and his great advisers.

The once weak and despised Prussia had now become one of the great powers of Europe, but the great successes could not fail to arouse the envy of her haughty neighbours. Not satisfied with ^{the} contemptuous and spiteful rôle which Napoleon had played in the former wars, not convinced by the fate of his great uncle of the ^{infirmity} ~~weakness~~ of fortune, he dared to insult the ^{people's} ~~heart~~ of the Prussian nation in order to arouse.

war. And he too the insolent nephew of
his great uncle paid the penalty, a penalty
~~not~~ ~~least~~ shameful & disgraceful ~~than~~
as that of the great Napoleon. Despised by
his own nation, he had to subject himself
to Prussia's great King and in the great
palace of Versailles, the palace of all the
illustrious French monarchs, accepted the
King of Prussia, the ~~crown of~~ imperial
crown of United Germany.

And if we now meditate over the 18
years which have passed since that memorable
war, years full of internal excitement and
struggles and think over the future of
this mighty state, whose great King has
just left to his nation to his mighty son
who also seems ~~about~~ to leave her without
assistance, we might well fear that hard
times are threatening Prussia, ~~but~~ our
wish fills our hearts and that is, might
Prussia never forget that in ruin alone
there is strength and might she never
by internal struggles lay herself open
to the violence of her mighty neighbours.

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