

The Situation of Germany.

There is, in political geography, no Germany proper to speak of. There are Kingdoms and Grand Duchies, and Duchies and Principalities, inhabited by Germans, and each separately ruled by an independent sovereign with all the machinery of State. Yet there is a natural undercurrent tending to a national feeling and toward a union of the Germans into one great nation, ruled by one common head as a national unit. This feeling dates as far back into antiquity as the days of HERMANN, when all the German tribes, or *Stämme*, united under him against the Roman invasion under VARRO. It culminated, in the Christian era, after CHARLEMAGNE, in an elective Empire, which for many centuries represented a consolidated Germany in the political world. *Schwarz, Roth and Gold*, the flag of Black, Red and Gold, became the emblem of German unity, and although often divided and distracted among themselves, and arrayed against each other on fields of battle for years, and often consecutive decades at a time, the religious feuds and private dissensions of the mighty barons and electors could not effectually break, though they did many times impair the authority of the *Kaiser* over the whole of the Holy German Roman Empire. It was the colossal strength of NAPOLEON that finally upset it. By elevating the Electors of Saxony and Bavaria into Kings, by forming the *Rhein-Bund*, the League of the Rhine, under the protectorate of France, and creating a new Kingdom of Westphalia in the heart of Germany, with his brother JEROME for its ruler, the ancient German Empire became a thing of the past. The Emperor FRANCIS and his wily and astute Minister, METTERNICH, comprehended the situation, and in response, in 1806, the Empire of Austria was proclaimed by them as a recompense, of some sort, for the lost imperial sceptre of Germany.

The fall of NAPOLEON necessitated reconstruction of the political status of Germany. However much, at the Congress of Vienna, METTERNICH strove to resuscitate the unity of Germany of old, under the Imperial hand of FRANCIS, the new Kings would not consent to abdicate their sovereign rights, and become as the electors were, vassals to a Supreme Emperor. Nor would the most powerful of them, Prussia, consent to a revival of the old state of things; the ally of Russia and of Austria could not step down from this proud position and submit to the House of Austria, as to paramount authority in Germany. But the feeling of the people as well as the traditions of centuries compelled them to adopt some measures of union, and the Confederation scheme was at last agreed to. And a sorry expedient it was, sure enough. In quiet times the existence of the Federal Diet at Frankfort was hardly known or felt; and, in fact, the Diet itself did assiduously labor to do nothing. Many were the witticisms upon the nightcaps dozing around the green table in the *Eschenheimer-Gasse* in Frankfort, and these political do-nothings became the laughing-stock of the Continent. The Paris revolution of 1830 roused them to a show of activity, but the ease with which the new citizen King, LOUIS PHILIPPE, quieted all apprehensions of the revolutionary spirit, soon put the Diet into its customary sleep. The spasmodic outbursts of popular ideas here and there in Germany in 1831 and '32 were soon repressed by the local authorities, and Austria and Prussia used their military force without waiting for the Diet. It slept soundly until THIERS, as the head of LOUIS PHILIPPE's ministry, began to rattle the spurs and sword of France as it bent upon an attempt for the Rhine. It then courageously called the contingents into the field, and Austrian and Prussian armies rushed to the defence of their poetical river. The French King, easily frightened, dismissed his spirited little minister, *mauvais sujet* of the diplomacy in those days, and the Diet went to sleep again, until, in the great uprising of '48, it finally collapsed. That is, without a formal vote of dissolution, it quietly gave way before pressing events, and during the Frankfort Parliament and the days of the Administrator of the Realm—*Reichsverweser*—in the person of Archduke JOHN of Austria, the Diet was as good as dead. But '49 and '50 came, and with them the full reinstatement of absolutist power over repressed Liberal aspirations and

the Diet. Then it was again as if suddenly awakened from a two years' mesmeric sleep. But it had no longer the sleepy heads of which it was formerly composed. It showed more activity now than it ever did before, and did the Kings and Princes excellent service. It passed resolutions regulating the Press, which the rulers of Germany were but too eager to execute to destroy all liberty of the Press. It regulated the right of the people to assemble and to associate, and the confederated Governments praised it for this opportunity to suppress all liberty of speech and opinion. Thus, for anything that coincided with the reactionary tendencies of the several Governments, it was powerful; but for all measures intended to benefit the people, and to elevate them, it was utterly useless, for the Governments cared not the value of a tenpenny nail for its resolves, and it had no means to execute them, even if it chose, without their aid. It is no wonder, then, that the German people have become not only dissatisfied, but disgusted with this kind of Confederacy—that is strong in measures against them but powerless in their favor. But they could do nothing. Their first great effort in 1848 was abortive; they had not the heart to try again. They spoke through the Press, through the representative assemblies of the several Kingdoms and Duchies, they formed national societies, they had delegate meetings at Gotha, at Erfurt, at Bamberg, at Frankfort, and other places, but it was all talk, talk, talk, and the Diet continued in the *Eschenheimer-Gasse*. It was only when the Princes themselves found a change required in their own interests that the movement toward reform began to assume shape and tangible form.

In 1860, we believe, the German rulers assembled personally at Frankfort, under the leadership of the Austrian Emperor. The haughty jealousy of the Prussians kept the present King away from that assembly. The considerate speech of the youthful Emperor as to measures of reform gave high promise, and was well received throughout Germany. But the obstinacy of Prussia, aided by the Stelitzes, the Schwerins, the Oldenburgs, the Bueckeburgs, and such like northern small fry in the interest or pay of Prussia, brought the movement to a stop, while even Bavaria and Saxony thought the intended measures of reform far too liberal, and worked for delay. Then came the Schleswig-Holstein complication, the final decree of Federal execution by the Diet, the alliance of Austria and Prussia, their disregard of the Diet and its Federal troops, their war against Denmark, the peace of Vienna, and the Gastein Convention, contemporaneous events with which our readers are, no doubt, sufficiently familiar to relieve us from a more detailed reference; and this brings us down to the present situation.

After it had become evident that Prussia was determined to annex the Elbe Duchies, for the double reason of securing maritime preponderance in the north of Europe and political preponderance in Germany, the relations of the German Powers among themselves began to be seriously discussed, by Governments as well as by the people. The latter thought the opportunity favorable for the realization of their long-wished-for political unity as a nation. It was this very traditional sentiment of common nationality that produced and sped on the difficulty with Denmark about Schleswig-Holstein, or rather Holstein. The Governments, on the other hand, began to see that some central German executive power was requisite to their own protection, and to prevent Prussia from gobbling up the smaller States, as a stork does frogs and lizzards. The attempted absorption of the Duchies by Prussia showed the small States contiguous to Prussian territory what they might expect should that attempt succeed. On looking at a map of Germany, it will at once be seen what LOUIS NAPOLEON meant by "better boundaries for Prussia." The Prussian Rhine provinces are separated from Prussia proper by other States, and the mails from Berlin to Cologne travel over foreign soil to reach their destination. Imagine that the States of Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Eastern Louisiana were foreign territory, and you have the condition of the two halves of Prussia. But most of the States between the two halves have no wish to be absorbed, and their rulers do not want to be *mediatized*. Hence they cling to Saxony, Wurtemberg, Bavaria and Baden, in their opposition to Prussian ambition, and in their desire for such a modification of the *Bund* or Confederation as would, on one side, secure the continued autonomy of the smaller States, and yet, on the other, infuse into the central authority popular strength sufficient to keep Prussia and her ambitious designs in check. Austria's proverbial regard for treaty rights seems to assure them, and they make no pretence of fear of her for their territorial integrity. Hence we find them vote persistently with Austria against Prussia in the Diet, and even to the extent of risking an open rupture, by the mobilization of the entire Federal army against the protests and even threats of Prussia.

And for once, the people of nearly all of these minor States are in full accord with their Governments. The war now begun seems to them the harbinger of a united Germany in some form or other, the distinctive features of which they can not yet foresee. But their yearning for a great German nationality seems, in their opinion, to be on the point of realization—to be crystalized in the crucible of war. But the people also seem, or at least pretend to feel, that with Prussian success Germany would be absorbed into Prussia, and there would be a Prussian instead of a German nationality consolidated in central Europe. With Austria successful, they further assume that the Germanic element would predominate, and grand old Germany would be revived as the controlling power of the continent.

We have thus endeavored to give a general faithful portraiture of the situation of Germany, and the sentiments, prejudices and expectations of its people. We have purposely abstained now to enter into a review of war-like details, since the latest news received is too meagre to form a just and correct conception.