

in this helpless crowd of undecided, shortsighted, self-conceited beings, who, when the eternal noise of contradictory rumors and diplomatic notes completely stunned them, sought their only consolation and support in the everlastingly repeated assurance that they were the best, the greatest, the wisest men of the country, and that they alone could save Germany--where, we say, among these poor creatures, whom a single year of Parliamentary life had turned into complete idiots, where were the men for a prompt and decisive resolution, much less for energetic and consistent action?

At last the Austrian Government threw off the mask. In its Constitution of the 4th of March, it proclaimed Austria an indivisible monarchy, with common finances, system of customs-duties, of military establishments, thereby effacing every barrier and distinction between the German and non-German provinces. This declaration was made in the face of resolutions and articles of the intended Federal Constitution which had been already passed by the Frankfort Assembly. It was the gauntlet of war thrown down to it by Austria, and the poor Assembly had no other choice but to take it up. This it did with a deal of blustering, which Austria, in the consciousness of her power, and of the utter nothingness of the Assembly, could well afford to allow to pass. And this precious representation, as it styled itself, of the German people, in order to revenge itself for this insult on the part of Austria, saw nothing better before it than to throw itself, hands and feet tied, at the feet of the Prussian Government. Incredible as it would seem, it bent its knees before the very ministers whom it had condemned as unconstitutional and anti-popular, and whose dismissal it had in vain insisted upon. The details of this disgraceful transaction, and the tragicomical events that followed, will form the subject of our next.

LONDON, April, 1852.

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XV.

#### THE TRIUMPH OF PRUSSIA.

JULY 27th, 1852.

We now come to the last chapter in the history of the German Revolution; the conflict of the National Assembly with the Governments of the different States, especially of Prussia; the insurrection of Southern and Western Germany, and its final overthrow by Prussia.

We have already seen the Frankfort National Assembly at work. We have seen it kicked by Austria, insulted by Prussia, disobeyed by the lesser States, duped by its own impotent Central "Government," which again was the dupe of all and every prince in the country. But at last things began to look threatening for this weak, vacillating, insipid legislative body. It was forced to come to the conclusion that "the sublime idea of Germany unity was threatened in its realization," which meant neither more nor less than that the Frankfort Assembly, and all it had done, and was about to do, were very likely to end in smoke. Thus it set to work in good earnest in order to bring forth, as soon as possible, its grand production, the "Imperial Constitution." There was, however, one difficulty. What Executive Government was there to be? An Executive Council? No; that would have been, they thought in their wisdom, making Germany a Republic. A "president"? That would come to the same. Thus they must revive the old Imperial dignity. But--as, of course, a prince was to be emperor--who should it be? Certainly none of the *Dii minorum gentium*, from Reuss-Schleitz-Greiz-Lobenstein-Ebersdorf up to Bavaria; neither Austria nor Prussia would have borne that. It could only be Austria or Prussia. But which of the two? There is no doubt that, under otherwise favorable circumstances, this august Assembly would be sitting up to the present day, discussing this important dilemma without being able to come to a conclusion, if the Austrian Government had not cut the Gordian knot, and saved them the trouble.

Austria knew very well that from the moment in which she could again appear before Europe with all her provinces subdued, as a strong and great European power, the very law of political gravitation would draw the

remainder of Germany into her orbit, without the help of any authority which an Imperial crown, conferred by the Frankfort Assembly, could give her. Austria had been far stronger, far freer in her movements, since she shook off the powerless *crown* of the German Empire--a crown which clogged her own independent policy, while it added not one iota to her strength, either within or without Germany. And supposing the case that Austria could not maintain her footing in Italy and Hungary, why, then she was dissolved, annihilated in Germany too, and could never pretend to re seize a crown which had slipped from her hands while she was in the full possession of her strength. Thus Austria at once declared against all imperialist resurrections, and plainly demanded the restoration of the German Diet, the only Central Government of Germany known and recognized by the treaties of 1815; and on the 4th of March, 1849, issued that Constitution which had no other meaning than to declare Austria an indivisible, centralized, and independent monarchy, distinct even from that Germany which the Frankfort Assembly was to reorganize.

This open declaration of war left, indeed, the Frankfort wiseacres no other choice but to exclude Austria from Germany, and to create out of the remainder of that country a sort of lower empire, a "little Germany," the rather shabby Imperial mantle of which was to fall on the shoulders of His Majesty of Prussia. This, it will be recollected, was the renewal of an old project fostered already some six or eight years ago by a party of South and Middle German Liberal *doctrinaires*, who considered as a godsend the degrading circumstances by which their old crotchet was now again brought forward as the latest "new move" for the salvation of the country.

They accordingly finished, in February and March, 1849, the debate on the Imperial Constitution, together with the Declaration of Rights and the Imperial Electoral Law; not, however, without being obliged to make, in a great many points, the most contradictory concessions--now to the Conservative or rather Reactionary party--now to the more advanced factions of the Assembly. In fact, it was evident that the leadership of the Assembly, which had formerly belonged to the Right and Right Centre (the Conservatives and Reactionists), was gradually, although slowly, passing toward the Left or Democratic side of that body. The rather dubious position of the Austrian deputies in an Assembly which had excluded their country from Germany, and in which they yet were called upon to sit and vote, favored the derangement of its equipoise; and thus, as early as the end of February, the Left Centre and Left found themselves, by the help of the Austrian votes, very generally in a majority, while on other days the Conservative faction of the Austrians, all of a sudden, and for the fun of the thing, voting with the Right, threw the balance again on the other side. They intended, by these sudden *soubresauts*, to bring the Assembly into contempt, which, however, was quite unnecessary, the mass of the people being long since convinced of the utter hollowness and futility of anything coming from Frankfort. What a specimen of a Constitution, in the meantime, was framed under such jumping and counter-jumping, may easily be imagined.

The Left of the Assembly--this *élite* and pride of revolutionary Germany, as it believed itself to be--was entirely intoxicated with the few paltry successes it obtained by the good-will, or rather the ill-will, of a set of Austrian politicians, acting under the instigation and for the interest of Austrian despotism. Whenever the slightest approximation to their own not very well-defined principles had, in a homoeopathically diluted shape, obtained a sort of sanction by the Frankfort Assembly, these Democrats proclaimed that they had saved the country and the people. These poor, weak-minded men, during the course of their generally very obscure lives, had been so little accustomed to anything like success, that they actually believed their paltry amendments, passed with two or three votes majority, would change the face of Europe. They had, from the beginning of their legislative career, been more imbued than any other faction of the Assembly with that incurable malady *Parliamentary crétinism*, a disorder which penetrates its unfortunate victims with the solemn conviction that the whole world, its history and future, are governed and determined by a majority of votes in that particular representative body which has the honor to count them among its members, and that all and everything going on outside the walls of their house--wars, revolutions, railway-constructing, colonizing of whole new continents, California gold discoveries, Central American canals, Russian armies, and whatever else may have some little claim to influence upon the destinies of mankind--is nothing compared with the incommensurable events hinging upon the important question, whatever it may be, just at that moment occupying the attention of their honorable house. Thus it was the Democratic party of the Assembly, by

effectually smuggling a few of their nostrums into the "Imperial Constitution," first became bound to support it, although in every essential point it flatly contradicted their own oft-proclaimed principles, and at last, when this mongrel work was abandoned, and bequeathed to them by its main authors, accepted the inheritance, and held out for this *Monarchical* Constitution, even in opposition to everybody who *then* proclaimed their own *Republican* principles.

But it must be confessed that in this the contradiction was merely apparent. The indeterminate, self-contradictory, immature character of the Imperial Constitution was the very image of the immature, confused, conflicting political ideas of these Democratic gentlemen. And if their own sayings and writings--as far as they could write--were not sufficient proof of this, their actions would furnish such proof; for among sensible people it is a matter of course to judge of a man, not by his professions, but his actions; not by what he pretends to be, but by what he does, and what he really is; and the deeds of these heroes of German Democracy speak loud enough for themselves, as we shall learn by and by. However, the Imperial Constitution, with all its appendages and paraphernalia, was definitely passed, and on the 28th of March, the King of Prussia was, by 290 votes against 248 who abstained, and 200 who were absent, elected Emperor of Germany *minus Austria*. The historical irony was complete; the Imperial farce executed in the streets of astonished Berlin, three days after the Revolution of March 18th, 1848, by Frederick William IV., while in a state which elsewhere would come under the Maine Liquor Law--this disgusting farce, just one year afterwards, had been sanctioned by the pretended Representative Assembly of all Germany. That, then, was the result of the German Revolution!

LONDON, July, 1852.

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XVI.

THE ASSEMBLY AND THE GOVERNMENTS.

AUGUST 19th, 1852.

The National Assembly of Frankfort, after having elected the King of Prussia Emperor of Germany (*minus Austria*), sent a deputation to Berlin to offer him the crown, and then adjourned. On the 3rd of April, Frederick William received the deputies. He told them that, although he accepted the right of precedence over all the other princes of Germany, which this vote of the people's representatives had given him, yet he could not accept the Imperial crown as long as he was not sure that the remaining princes acknowledged his supremacy, and the Imperial Constitution conferring those rights upon him. It would be, he added, for the Governments of Germany to see whether this Constitution was such as could be ratified by them. At all events, Emperor or not, he always would be found ready, he concluded, to draw the sword against either the external or the internal foe. We shall see how he kept his promise in a manner rather startling for the National Assembly.

The Frankfort wiseacres, after profound diplomatic inquiry, at last came to the conclusion that this answer amounted to a refusal of the crown. They then (April 12th) resolved: That the Imperial Constitution was the law of the land, and must be maintained; and not seeing their way at all before them, elected a Committee of thirty, to make proposals as to the means how this Constitution could be carried out.

This resolution was the signal for the conflict between the Frankfort Assembly and the German Governments which now broke out. The middle classes, and especially the smaller trading class, had all at once declared for the new Frankfort Constitution. They could not wait any longer the moment which was "to close the Revolution." In Austria and Prussia the Revolution had, for the moment, been closed by the interference of the armed power. The classes in question would have preferred a less forcible mode of performing that operation, but they had not had a chance; the thing was done, and they had to make the best of it, a resolution which they at once took and carried out most heroically. In the smaller States, where things had been going on