

Oscar II. of Sweden and Norway

THE King of Sweden bears the reputation of being one of the best and most generous monarchs, one of the most accomplished savants and gentlemen of Europe. It is unfortunate for him that he has had two kingdoms to rule, as a writer in the *Hamburger Nachrichten* thinks, his administration has been divided, even distracted. 'When he was needed in Norway at any crisis, he was always occupied in Sweden.' In the Roman circus the performer who rode two horses and leapt alternately from the saddle of one to that of another was named desultory; he was a desultory rider. Norwegians accuse Oscar II. of being a desultory ruler, with the implication that he sometimes sat longer in the one saddle than in the other. For, as the above quoted writer remarks, 'He is himself a Swede.'

Judging of the demeanor of the King of Sweden, it does not appear that he anticipated the coup d'etat which deposed him from the throne of Norway. Yet his utterances that are published in the press indicate that his character has much in common with the ideal Scandinavian monarch of Shakespeare. Oscar II. received what from a personal standpoint he must have taken as an affront 'more in sorrow than in anger.' His kingly dignity and self-restraint are evidenced in a letter which he recently addressed to the Storting, or parliament of Norway. The royal communication is published in the *Post och Inrikkestidningen*, Christiania. In this letter he says that his oath to the Norwegian Constitution obliges him to answer the charge that his veto of the Norwegian measure for a separate consular service, on May 27, was unconstitutional and con-

trary to the independence and sovereignty of Norway, and that it was moreover, null and void, because it lacked the endorsement of the Prime Minister King Oscar puts forth long and exhaustive arguments in favor of his position; he claims absolute right to exercise his judgment in acting for the best interests of the United Kingdom, and says that in making his decision on the consulate question he consulted the interests both of Norway and the union. He concludes in the following words:

'The Constitution I have sworn to respect and the good of the countries I govern made it my absolute duty to take that decision.' The resignation of the Ministers placed me in the painful position of being false to that duty or of remaining without a Cabinet. I had no choice. The Storting, in accepting the resignation of the Ministry, have violated the Constitution, and by a revolutionary act have declared that the King of Norway has ceased to reign and that the union with Sweden is dissolved. It rests with Sweden and with me, as King of the Union, to decide whether this violation of the compact of union must be followed by a legitimate and legal dissolution of the Union. My contemporaries and history must judge between me and the Norwegian people.' Such a letter as this, academic, abstract in argument, is, as the English press is unanimous in considering, thrown to the winds amid the excitement of the revolutionary tempest. Revolution aims not at the letter, but at the spirit of justice. The *Saturday Review*, in this connection, quotes Burke's 'You cannot indict a nation,' with the implication that Oscar II. by attempting