

would become closer. But never did a more uneasy couple go in leash than Norway and Sweden. There was trouble from the beginning. The Norwegians were then a primitive people of farmers, sailors and fishermen with an official or bureaucratic class of comparatively simple habits and manners. For 400 years Norway had had practically no history, political or literary, to speak of. With a poor soil and a hard climate the old gentry or nobility had sunk into the *storbonde* or big farmer class and their place had been taken by Danish officials. Travel was difficult and the population of the rural districts lived in a kind of isolation. The peasant farmers were a rough but hardy and independent race. Although they had lived in official subjection to the Danes they were accustomed to a good deal of local liberty under the leadership of the parish clergy. Sweden, on the other hand, was a country in which many aristocratic and military traditions had maintained themselves in vigour. It had been one of the Great Powers of Europe almost since Gustavus Vasa's time and had played a decisive part in European history under his grandson, Gustavus Adolphus. Naturally if the Scandinavian ideal of a united North was to be realized, it looked upon itself as the centre of such a movement. It should be the leading power in a federation which would make the future of the North secure. There was a time when with some patience and moderation that ideal might have been realized in spite of the centuries of wars and jealousies which had divided the Scandinavian countries. But patience and moderation are things which come to a democracy only by long political experience. And Norway was a very young democracy just beginning its career of self-government after centuries during which it could hardly be said to have any collective existence. It cannot be said to have been a very tractable partner. The union had hardly begun to exist when Norway, in spite of Karl Johan's opposition, abolished nobility within its borders, an ungracious way of warding off Swedish influences. Partly also it was the effect of the new French doctrines of liberty and equality, of the sovereignty and rights of the people, for the political gospel of Rousseau found a favourable soil in Norway. Everything in the shape of national life was new in Norway, the Parliament, the university, the national bank, the High Court. In a few years also