

GERMANY, PAST AND PRESENT.

[Correspondence of the *New-York Observer*.]

There are in the ecclesiastical constitutions of Germany a host of abuses and unjust laws. The most enlightened men have remonstrated for years on this subject. They have been seconded by the addresses of municipal councils, by the voice of the press, and the complaints of the people. But all in vain. The abuses continued. It would seem that princes and their ministers had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear. Some mercenary writers, some statesmen in love with their antiquated principles, several pastors also who find it convenient to preserve old institutions, have ever at hand arguments, or rather sophisms to oppose to the most legitimate requests. Nothing was done. No progress, or only insignificant changes, as if the world must remain stationary at the will of churchmen and of statesmen!

But all at once the scene changes. The nations tired of waiting in vain for urgent reforms, take arms. They rush into the streets, resolved to conquer or to die. Blood flows. The satellites of kings are put to flight. The people triumph. Oh! *then*,—then suddenly princes and their counsellors become enlightened. Their eyes, their ears are at once opened. They see what they had not seen, and heard what they had not heard. They abandon their sophistry. Questions present themselves in a new light. They begin at last to understand that there is something right and proper in the remonstrances of their subjects. Indeed, if the time of miracles was not past, we might maintain that tumults of the people produce miraculous effects!

It is sad, however. Why must religious or political reforms be purchased at so dear a price? Why must the children of the same country butcher one another before mankind can take a step forward? Will the rulers of nations, the guides of Christian communities, never learn that the best means, the only means to avoid bloody revolutions, is to make seasonably the changes which are demanded by public opinion?

Consider what was the religious state of Germany before the late events. No marked amendments had been made since the peace of Westphalia in 1648. Great intolerance prevailed in the Romanist countries: protestants were hardly tolerated: they had not even the political rights which catholics enjoyed, and every act of proselytism was strictly forbidden. Matters were no better in Lutheran or Reformed countries. The dangerous and false principle of *state-religions* or *Christian states* was every where maintained. Kings, in their character of heads of the church, treated dissenters with cruel severity. They undertook to rule the conscience, and regarded every effort for religious emancipation as an attempt against their own authority. Thus, Romanists and protestants, in spite of their great doctrinal differences, were put, like children during their minority, under tutelage; they could not claim without exposing themselves to legal punishments, the first of all liberties, that of worshipping God according to the dictates of their conscience.