





BUSINESS NOTICE.

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Miramichi Advance.

CHATHAM, OCTOBER 9, 1884.

The Political Condition of Germany.

[By Rev. J. F. McCurdy, Ph. D.]

It has occurred to me that possibly the readers of the ADVANCE might find some little entertainment in a few "running observations" upon the political condition of the great country in which I have had the fortune to spend the last two years.

THE STATES OF THE EMPIRE.

The German Empire consists of a federation of 25 States, with a total population of over 40 millions, according to the census of 1880. The majority of these States are individually, however, of very little importance, and several of them are scarcely known, even by name, outside of Germany. This curious circumstance, which has nothing resembling it in the New World, is due to the fact that for long ages Germany has been split up into a multitude of independent principalities and that when Prussia secured the predominance over the rest she could find no reason for incorporating them into her empire, but she has since done so.

THE FORMATION OF THE PRESENT EMPIRE.

The history of Germany means the history of all of these States, with their alliances and strifes, and of many others which have now been reduced to mere provinces. Such a history is practically interminable; but a short statement of the leading events that immediately led to the formation of the present Empire, may be given as preliminary.

THE OLD EMPIRE OF GERMAN.

The old Empire of Germany, which had lasted nearly a thousand years, whose head was chosen by the great electoral princes of the Empire, and who usually was reigning over the whole of Central Europe, lay prostrate at the feet of Napoleon. In its place was formed the German Confederation (Pond), in 1815, after a period of semi-anarchy during the reign of the Emperor. In this alliance, Austria, whose King in 1806 had taken the title of Emperor of Austria alone, assumed the headship, and maintained it till the war with Prussia in 1866, when, as the result of her defeat, she was excluded from the federation of German States. Then a new combination was formed of the North-German States, under the leadership of Prussia. After the Franco-German war was decided, the South-German States, who had joined their northern brethren against France, united with them also to join the new German Empire with King William of Prussia at the head, who was crowned Emperor of Germany, Jan. 1, 1871, in Versailles. The new Empire of Germany differed from the old essentially in this, that while the emperorial state has still a legislature of its own, the imperial authority is in all matters of importance decisive and supreme, whereas the old Empire was only nominally a unit, the several States being perpetually rent with mutual strife, without supreme central dominion, and the term "Germany" was rather a geographical and linguistic than a political expression. The fabric of Government reared by the genius of Bismarck is a solid structure, and has been pasted together, with a firm foundation of centralized authority. In fact one may say that the two factors in the making and upholding of contemporary Germany are Centralism and Bismarck.

GOVERNMENT AND LEGISLATURES.

The Imperial Government (not the several States themselves) has control over all legislation affecting taxation and trade, over weights and measures, the coinage, the issue of bank-notes as well as the establishment of banks themselves, patents, ecclesiastical property, all foreign trade, railroads (except in Bavaria) internal navigation, the post and telegraph (except in Bavaria and Wurtemberg) and the army and navy, besides the press throughout the empire. It is under imperial supervision.

THE LEGISLATURE OF THE EMPIRE.

The legislature of the empire consists of two bodies, the Imperial Council and the Imperial Diet. The former represents the several States or governments of the empire, not the people directly, but through their representatives. The latter is a representative body, though their relative size is very different. The whole number is 58, of which Prussia has 17. The President of this body is the Chancellor of the Empire. The popular body is the Diet or Parliament, which consists of 397 members which are chosen in the several States in the ratio of one to every 100,000 of the population. At this ratio Prussia has 286 deputies. Besides this, however, the members of the Council have the right to sit in the Diet and must be heard there whenever the claims or views of their respective governments are to be presented. The elections to the Diet are by ballot and take place on the

same day throughout the Empire, during which no speeches or discussions can be held. The members receive no pay, are not bound by any commissions or instructions from their constituents, are secured against search and arrest, and have full liberty of debate, having theoretically, in fact, the same privileges as English members. Their actions are also ordinarily public. I have no space to go into the functions of the two bodies in detail, but it will be sufficient to say that while the general legislation is confined to the Diet, the Council has the prerogative of deciding what measures shall be introduced into the former body and of reviewing its decisions. The functions of the Diet are nominally wide enough, and at the first glance it might seem as though Germany had, in the full sense of the phrase, a popular representative Government. This, however, is not so, and the Parliament is in fact little more than a merely deliberative body, as its votes usually give expression to the wishes of the Emperor and Bismarck.

GOVERNMENT OF THE STATES.

A few words will suffice here as to the government of the individual States. We have seen that the Empire as a whole has a constitutional government in form. The same is true of its component members. This, however, is not a matter of long standing and the German States can hardly be said to have the full heritage of constitutional liberty in the English or American sense. A constitution was to be granted to each State according to the census of 1850. The constitution of 1850, but this privilege was only gradually conceded and, in many States, fierce and bloody revolutions, as notably those of 1848, had to be gone through before the people gained their first step towards real freedom. It is also noteworthy that Prussia did not receive her present constitution till 1850, while some of the other States had preceded her by over 20 years. The several constitutions grant the same degree of liberty to the subjects, and the rights of the citizens are of course theoretically the same, under the Empire, and under their own respective governments. The powers of the several governments have been, however, seriously curtailed, and in the most, the rights of the subjects, and the rights of the citizens are of course theoretically the same, under the Empire, and under their own respective governments.

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wishes are not carried out. This has led to the effect of throwing the Empire into confusion. As his successor, like himself, must be nominated by the Emperor and the country is not yet prepared for a revolution in favor of genuine responsible Government, especially by a man who has been the main agent in making Germany united and powerful. Of course, he would not threaten to resign in connection with merely economic questions, but in giving the Government a monopoly in the manufacture of tobacco.

HOW PRUSSIA PRODOMINATES.

The Empire is at present tolerably prosperous and contented, but there appears to be a close observer a growing feeling of unrest under the peculiar system of government which seems on the one hand to practically verge on despotism, and on the other to have so many of the forms and guarantees of popular freedom. Of a revolution or even a peaceful change in the direction of republicanism, either after the English or the French or the American type, there is as yet no sign and in the near future, at least no possibility. It will be worth while to address the question of the reasons why the present state of things is so well maintained.

THE EMPIRE AS A WHOLE.

First, there is the great fact that this order of things is the result of Prussia, and in the Empire, Prussia is all powerful. It is not hard to understand how Prussia has been able to do this. Her position in the rest of the Empire and even part of her own present dominions, is feared as well as deferred to. Her rise and fall predominance form one of the great wonders of the last two centuries. Her growth from a petty principality to less marvellous, all being achieved under the auspices of the House of Hohenzollern, the family which is still at the head of the Kingdom of Prussia, and the terrible humiliation under Napoleon, her reorganization of her forces and her new devised system of military service put her again into the German States and rendered the victory of Prussia possible after the defeat of France and Austria. Since then the same military system and the same watchful policy prepared the way for the career of Prussia, and the German unification. In 1864 the time became ripe for action. Schleswig-Holstein was taken by force for the German Confederation, from the little Denmark, and in 1866 was picked up Austria in due time for the possession of it. In 1866 war was declared against Austria and the states which sided with her, comprising most of the rest of the Empire. In six weeks the whole campaign was over. Austria was prostrated at a blow and thereupon excluded from Germany altogether. However, Prussia had to make peace with the old ally of England—was made a Prussian Province, and her aged king, a near relative of the King of Prussia, dethroned and banished, and his possessions confiscated. A similar fate befell Baden, Saxony and the free city of Frankfurt—all became Prussian. Saxony was about to share the same fate, and was only saved through the protest of France, which, combined with that of Austria, Prussia was afraid to disregard. All of these were then forced, through this combined military and moral predominance, to form the North German Confederation, under the leadership of Prussia. The events of 1870-71 with the consequent absorption of the South German States, and the establishment of the Empire, with the Prussian king as Chancellor, is too fresh in memory to need recapitulation. It is no wonder that Prussia has her own way.

THE PEOPLE ONLY APPARENTLY SATISFIED.

But it must not be supposed from the tone of the press and the acclamations that greet the Emperor and Bismarck that the people are satisfied with Prussia and Prussianism are popular in the Empire, or even in all Prussia. At least, it is not so. Between the good old stage coach days and the present, however, there is a wide difference—a difference affecting many of the most important conditions on which the well-being of the people depends.

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Review, the leading magazine of the Empire, contained, not long ago, a laudatory article on Bismarck's career, in which the successive intrigues and other devices by which one bloody war after another for Germany's unity was provoked, were recited and extolled.

OFFICIAL SUPERVISION OVER EVERYTHING.

One other cause of the compactness of the Empire and the stability of the order of things is the paternal character of the Government and the thoroughness of administrative organization. Germany is the paradise of statistics, maps and policemen. Everything is brought under official supervision and control; everything about everybody is registered, from birth through baptism, vaccination, confirmation and so on. A young American submits to the same ordeal and if he is not blessed with some statistics as the average German they will get all his hair, and his landings, does not report him in 24 hours after arrival he is fined or imprisoned. He is surrounded by policemen and inspectors and one is continually surprised to find how much the law gives them to do. A young American might be cited of the care taken of the poor people by the Government—for their money sometimes. Strangers, however, under their history, and reports in most other lands, though the nation often wish to get out of this mighty net of innumerable laws. That is one reason why so many of them come to America.

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