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THE TOPIC.

N^o. IV.
P O L A N D.

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OZASOP

1846

P O L A N D.

FOR three quarters of a century the name of Poland has been constantly forcing itself upon the attention of the world, coupled with all that is heroic and noble, and all that is base and appalling, in human nature; yet the last events in the history of that devoted nation finds us as ignorant of its true nature, of its social position and historic development, as we were when first we began to sympathise with sufferings the causes of which we but imperfectly understood, and to censure faults the sources of which were perfectly unknown to us. For the true comprehension of both, some knowledge of the history of the formation of the Polish state, and of the development of its constitution, is necessary; these, however, are but little known in England.

The Polish empire was finally consolidated by its union with Lithuania through the marriage of Hedvige of Anjou,* queen of Poland, 1386, with Jaghellon, Grand Duke of Lithuania and Russia, who being a Pagan, was baptized on that occasion, and elected king,† and thus became the founder of the Jaghellonian dynasty, whose reign, 1386—1572, was the most brilliant era of Polish history. The country, prosperous in the interior, and respected abroad, acquired during that period the important maritime provinces of Prussia with Dantzic‡ (1464), which in order to escape the oppression of the German knights, tendered voluntary submission to the Polish crown, and of Livonia (1561), which did the same in order to save itself from

coming under the dominion of the Tzar of Muscovy. The frontiers of the united empire extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and the Carpathian Mountains, and from Silesia to Smolensk. The Jaghellonian era is also the Augustan age of Polish literature, which was particularly promoted by the perfect religious liberty established in Poland, and which rendered that country a safe asylum for many Protestants persecuted in their native land. During the reign of that family, Poland, though an elective monarchy, had been, in point of fact, an hereditary one, but circumstances which occurred at the first election which took place after the extinction of this dynasty, proved that the nation was fully alive to its rights and to the conditional tenure upon which its monarchs held their crown. Henry of Valois (afterwards Henry III. of France) was elected on condition, not only of securing to the Polish Protestants, a perfect equality of rights with their Roman Catholic fellow-citizens, but that his brother Charles IX. should secure similar advantages to the Protestants of France. Yet, when he was crowned at Cracow, he hesitated to pronounce the oath confirmatory of the above-mentioned promise, but Firley, Grand Marshal of Poland, and leader of the Protestant party, taking hold of the crown declared, *Si non jurabis, non regnabis*. Henry took the required oath, but after a reign of a few months, he secretly retired from the country in order to take possession of the throne of France after the death of his brother Charles IX.

Stephen Batory, who from a Hungarian gentleman had risen to the dignity of a prince of Transylvania, was elected in the place of Henry. Stephen, the greatest monarch that Poland ever had, maintained, by his vigorous rule, peace amongst the religious parties who at that time divided Poland, and made the country respected abroad by his victories over Moscow. Batory died, after a reign of ten years, in 1585, just at the moment when he was on the point of carrying into execution the great schemes which his genius had conceived for the internal and external welfare of his kingdom. He was succeeded by Sigismund III.§ Vasa, hereditary prince of Sweden, who was elected by the interest of John Zamoyski,|| who then entirely governed

§ Sigismund was son of John, king of Sweden, and grandson of Gustavus Vasa. His mother, a sister of the last Jaghellonian king of Poland, Sigismund Augustus, educated him in the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church.

|| John Zamoyski, Chancellor and General-in-chief of the Army, was one of the greatest men that Poland ever produced. He was a great general, a great statesman, an eminent lawyer, and a distinguished writer. He soon perceived his mistake, and laboured all his life to counterbalance by his exertions

* She was the daughter of Louis, King of Hungary and Poland, 1384, who was descended from Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, and brother of Louis IX., King of France.

† The Power of Lithuania was founded by Ghedimin, 1315-1340, who conquered almost without opposition the western principalities of Russia, which since the invasion of the Mongols, about the middle of the 13th century, were in a state of great disorder, and continually exposed to the depredations of the above-mentioned barbarians. He secured to the inhabitants of those principalities who were Christians of the Greek Church, the free exercise of their religion, their property, and their local customs. He appointed as governors of the same principalities, only such princes of his house as had embraced the religion of the inhabitants, who enjoying under the new rule advantages of which they had been deprived for a long time, became loyal subjects of their Pagan masters, and fought with the greatest fidelity under their banners, not only against the Latin Christians, Poles, and Germans, but even against the followers of their own church of Muscovy. Ghedimin assumed the title of Grand Duke of Lithuania and Russia; he was succeeded by his son Olgherd 1381, who following the same line of policy as Ghedimin, extended his dominions by new conquests. Olgherd was father of Jaghellon, who, after his baptism converted Lithuania, the inhabitants of which were at that time still idolaters, and where the last Pagan fane and sacred grove were destroyed only in 1420.

‡ Dantzic and the adjacent country had been an integral part of Poland since the earliest times of its history, but was torn from it about the beginning of the 14th century by the German or Teutonic order.

Poland by his personal influence. Sigismund's reign, which lasted forty-five years, was a series of errors. Being under the influence of the Jesuits, he sacrificed the interests of the country to the object which exclusively occupied his mind, *viz.* the conversion of his Protestant and Greek subjects. In a great measure he attained his ends, inasmuch as Protestantism, which was very strong in Poland at his accession, was almost entirely broken down at his death. This was effected not by open persecution, which was prevented by the laws of the country, but by an artful system of proselytism and underhand persecution. Several bishops of the Greek church of Poland having subscribed to a union with Rome, in 1598, the opponents of this measure, which was supported by the king and his partisans, were exposed to much persecution, and the seeds of future rebellion were sown amongst the population of the south-eastern provinces of Poland.* The consequences of this unfortunate policy were, the loss of his hereditary kingdom of Sweden, which was wrested from him by his uncle, Charles IX., the exhaustion of the country by unnecessary wars, a deeply-rooted discontent amongst a great number of its inhabitants, and a retrograde movement of the national intellect, caused by the influence of the Jesuits, who, supported by the constant favour of the king, had spread their schools and colleges over the whole country: the misrule of Sigismund III. may therefore justly be considered as the principal cause, and the beginning of the decline of the Polish empire.†

Sigismund was succeeded by his son Vladislav IV., a prince of enlightened mind and benevolent disposition. His reign was prosperous, but the already too limited authority of the king did not permit him effectively to restrain the illegal religious persecutions which frequently occurred, chiefly by the instrumentality of the Jesuits, and he had scarcely closed his eyes when a terrible revolt of the Cossacks

the mischievous tendencies of the monarch whom he had placed on the throne, from a feeling of attachment to the Jaghellonian family; but after the death of Zamoyski, things went on from bad to worse.

* The eminent Polish statesman, Leon Sapieha, chancellor of Lithuania, who himself had been converted by the same king Sigismund, from the Protestant to the Roman Catholic church, declared that it would have been much better if this union had never taken place.

† The incapacity of Sigismund III. was particularly manifested in his affairs with Muscovy. The Polish General Zolkiewski having defeated the Muscovites, marched on their capital. The Boyars deposed their recently elected Tzar Basilus Shoooski, and offered the throne to Vladislav, eldest son of Sigismund, making no other stipulation than a security for their church. Zolkiewski accepted this proposition, but added the condition, that the Polish prince should reign at Moscow with limited power. Thus he imposed upon the vanquished nation the benefits of a free constitution without demanding from it the sacrifice of a single inch of its territory. Zolkiewski was received after this treaty at Moscow, not as a conqueror, but as the saviour of the country, and he left it amidst the blessings of the population in order to accelerate the execution of his treaty. This was, however, violated by Sigismund, who, being jealous of his son, tried to conquer Muscovy

broke out in the Ukraine.‡ This event, which shook the Polish state to its very foundation, and which marks the downward career of Poland, deserves especial notice.

The Cossacks were a militia organized by King Stephen Batory from the inhabitants of the Ukraine, who, being involved in constant warfare with the Tahtars, had acquired warlike and predatory habits. Besides a regular pay, he assigned them lands for their sustenance, and he divided them into regiments and companies, granting them several privileges.

Besides this organized militia, there was another kind of Cossacks, called the *Zaporogues*, forming a most extraordinary community, from which all females were excluded, and composed of adventurers assembled together chiefly from the Ukraine, but also from other parts of Poland, and even from foreign countries: they were admitted only after undeniable proofs of the most daring courage and endurance of the greatest hardships. This population, inhabiting the islands of the Dnieper, situate below the cataracts of that river, [hence the name *Zaporogues*, *i. e.* behind the cataracts,] were excellent horsemen, and no less bold and skilful sailors. They successfully attacked in their small boats large Turkish vessels in the Black Sea, and also made piratical expeditions to the shores of that sea, pillaged the environs of Constantinople, and in one of these expeditions burnt the town of Trebisond. They were governed by a hetman or chief, who was elected by themselves but confirmed in his dignity by the king of Poland. These Cossacks with their brethren of the Ukraine rendered excellent services to the Polish monarchs, in their wars against the Turks, Tahtars, and Muscovites, but their constant depredations in the Turkish territory rendered the maintenance of peace with the Ottoman Porte very insecure.§ The punishments with which the Polish government was obliged to restrain their violations of the territory of a friendly power, created much discontent amongst these savage warriors, but a more just cause of irritation was given to the whole body of the Cossacks by the union with Rome, in 1598, to which they were strongly opposed, and which led to consequences very serious to them,

for himself, in order to subject its church to the supremacy of Rome. This conduct lost all the advantages which would have been derived from the generous line of policy pursued by the Polish general, which would have united Muscovy and Poland under one sceptre, in the same manner as Lithuania had been joined to it by the accession of Jaghellon.

‡ Ukraina signifies in Polish and Russian, border country.

§ The settlements of the *Zaporogues* were destroyed by Empress Catherine II., and a part of them were transplanted to the banks of the Caspian, where their descendants, known under the name of the Cossacks of the Black Sea, are engaged in a constant warfare with the Circassians. A considerable part of them escaped into the Turkish dominions, and settled on the shores of the Black Sea near Varna. They loyally served the Ottoman Porte in its wars with Russia, but they submitted to the Emperor Nicholas at the beginning of the campaign of 1828.

particularly as those among the landowners of the Greek persuasion, who had subscribed to the union sought to compel their dependents to do the same, and made attempts to reduce the free Cossacks to a state of predial servitude. A terrible revolt of the Cossacks, who were joined by multitudes of peasantry professing their creed, was the consequence of these circumstances. The Cossacks being defeated, with their Allies the Tahtars of Crimea, by king John Casimir, brother of Vladislav, (elected 1648), in 1654 offered their submission to Alexis, Tzar of Muscovy, acknowledging him as their suzerain, on condition that they should elect their own chiefs, and themselves administer the affairs of their country, where no Russian troops or civil officers were to be introduced. Alexis, having accepted these conditions, attacked Poland with an immense army, it being on the other side invaded by Charles Gustavus, king of Sweden, who was joined by many malcontents in the country. John Casimir fled to Silesia, and the military talents and conciliatory policy of Charles Gustavus having gained for him great popularity amongst the Poles, they were on the point of electing him their king, believing that the country would regain its prosperity under the rule of such a vigorous and talented sovereign, but the haughty answer given by Charles Gustavus to the deputation which proposed to convoke a diet for his election, that he was already master of the country by the right of conquest, turned the tables, and rallied the Poles round their legitimate monarch, who succeeded in expelling the Swedes, with whom peace was concluded at Oliva, 1660, by the mediation and with the guarantee of England, France, and Holland.

The Cossacks having perceived that their liberties were exposed, under the protection of Moscow, to much greater dangers than under their lawful sovereign, returned to their duty, and with the assistance of the Poles, expelled the Muscovites from their country. Their temporary success was, however, destroyed by many unfortunate circumstances, and a truce for 13 years was concluded at Andrushov, in 1667, by which Smolensk and the Ukraine, on the left bank of the Dnieper, were ceded to Moscow. John Casimir abdicated the throne in 1668, after a reign of twenty years, which may be considered one of the most disastrous in the annals of Poland, and which led to no less disastrous consequences. Besides the loss of important provinces, the country was depopulated by war, pestilence, and emigration.

At the election which took place after the abdication of John Casimir, the minor nobles, jealous of the overgrown influence of the magnates, but prevented by their incapacity from making more than an idle demonstration of their intentions, proclaimed Prince Michael Wisniowitzki, a young man who had no pretensions to the crown, and no capacity to

wield the sceptre. During his inefficient reign the Turks, taking advantage of the disturbed state of the country, invaded Poland, which in consequence lost, by the treaty concluded with them in 1672, a part of the Ukraine and the fortress of Kaminietz.

Michael's successor was John Sobieski, so celebrated for the rescue of Vienna in 1683, which glorious achievement, though highly beneficial to Austria, whose capital was saved, was very ill-advised for the interests of Poland. Had Vienna fallen, the whole of Europe would have been in arms against the Turks, instead of leaving Poland to bear the heaviest brunt of the forces of this formidable power, with whom her interests required that she should be at peace. Favourable conditions might at that time have been obtained from Turkey through the mediation of France; and the forces of Poland, which were wasted on the Danube for the benefit of Austria, ought to have been employed on the banks of the Dnieper, with a view to recover the provinces left by the truce of Andrushov in the hands of Muscovy. But, unfortunately, the interests of Poland were sacrificed to other considerations, and the cessions made to Muscovy were confirmed by the peace of 1686, while, notwithstanding her brilliant victories over the Turks, Poland could not even recover the fortress of Kaminietz, which was restored to her only under the subsequent reign, by the treaty of Carlowitz.

Sobieski was succeeded in 1696 by Augustus, Elector of Saxony, who, a few years afterwards, having declared war against Charles XII. of Sweden, without the consent of the States, was in consequence expelled from the throne, and replaced by Stanislaus Leszczyński (1705). After the downfall of Charles XII., Augustus resumed the crown of Poland, with the assistance of Peter the Great of Russia, whose mediation was also accepted in a subsequent broil between the King and the States (1717), and a precedent was thus given for that constant interference of Russia with the internal affairs of Poland, which has led to such disastrous consequences for that country. After the death of Augustus, the country was divided between his son Augustus III. and the former king, Stanislaus Leszczyński; the latter was ultimately obliged to give way to his competitor, who was supported by a Russian army and his own Saxon troops.

The reign of Augustus III., though apparently tranquil, as the nation, exhausted by a long series of disasters, had sunk into a kind of torpor, was nevertheless fraught with the most eventful consequences. Exclusively occupied with his pleasures, the king fell entirely under the influence of the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, which did its utmost to prevent any innovation or reform in the existing constitution of Poland, as this constitution, by keeping the country in a state of permanent disorganisa-

tion, was most favourable for the ambitious schemes of a foreign power.

The condition of Poland was indeed most wretched at this period. The gradually increasing power of the equestrian or privileged order, rendered subordination impossible, as the law was braved with impunity by such among its members, who, though enjoying no legal advantages over the poorest of their class, had nevertheless by their riches and connexions obtained an influence equal to that of independent sovereigns. At the same time a preposterous system of education, which was entirely in the hands of the Jesuits, had so benighted the nation, that it remained satisfied with its degraded position, and fancied itself free, when, in fact, it was entirely governed by foreign influences. In the midst of the degradation that surrounded them, some few patriots, however, remained alive to the wants of their country, and began earnestly to think of reforming the constitution, which was the root of all the evil. The two brothers, Michael and Augustus, Princes Czartoryski, descended from a collateral branch of the Jaghellonian dynasty, were particularly active in the cause of their country. Possessing immense wealth and great influence, and being, moreover, men of considerable talent and information, they conceived the plan of converting the republican constitution of Poland into a well organised monarchy, which, as they justly thought, would be the best means of raising the country from the humiliating position into which it had fallen in consequence of its weak government. For the attainment of this object, they had, however, to struggle against the prejudices of the nation, and against strong parties in their own order, who, as well as the court itself, were opposed to their scheme. But in spite of all obstacles, the Czartoryskis pursued their grand object, using indirect means when there was no room for direct ones. They encouraged science and literature; sought out and patronized men of superior talents, and particularly such as by their writings exercised influence over public opinion, and thus powerfully contributed to the restoration of the national literature. They also elevated to a certain degree of consideration families of little note, and raised others who had been reduced by adverse circumstances, augmenting in this manner the number of the adherents to their views and projects. But though in this way preparing public opinion for a change in the constitution, the Czartoryskis felt that the application of some physical force would be necessary, and to obtain this, they courted the favour of the Court of St. Petersburg, believing that the venal and incompetent ministry which then governed Russia, might easily be induced to adopt measures which would be beneficial for Poland. In these views they were much encouraged by the English minister in Poland, Sir Hanbury Williams, who was anxious to counter-

balance the influence of France, which supported the republican party, and who promised the Czartoryskis the assistance of England and Russia. Had the same spirit which presided over the councils of Russia during the reign of the Empress Elizabeth, continued to govern that country, the object of the Czartoryskis might have been accomplished; the accession of Catherine II., however, gave a different turn to the state of affairs.

At the death of Augustus III., a Russian force entered Poland to obtain the election of Stanislaus Poniatowski, the lover of Catherine and the nephew of the Czartoryskis, who availed themselves of the presence of this force to compel the diet of convocation to pass several laws, by which the power of dissolving the diet by the *veto* of a single member was considerably limited, the executive authority of the crown extended, and the excessive privileges of the nobles restricted.

Their project of abolishing the *veto* altogether was prevented by the interference of the ambassadors of those foreign powers that were eagerly watching the advantages to be derived for themselves from the internal dissensions of Poland, and the proposition of electing the king by deputies chosen for the purpose, instead of by the direct votes of the whole equestrian body, was also defeated, but the confederation was declared in force, and as long as this was maintained, the power of dissolving the diets by the *veto* was suspended according to the constitution. The Czartoryskis had thus accomplished, though by violent and illegal means, a most salutary revolution. The same preponderance which effected these reforms, brought about the election of Poniatowski in 1764, and the diet of his coronation confirmed all the above-mentioned measures, and introduced other improvements, particularly in the financial department. But Russia, who soon perceived how dangerous to her influence in Poland was this strengthening of the government, which was the result of the measures she had helped to promote, now began to support the opponents of the Czartoryskis, and the ancient force of the *veto* was, in consequence, restored, with very few modifications, at the diet of 1766.

Russia, who under pretence of supporting the claims of the Anti-Roman-Catholic confessions of Poland, was exciting divisions throughout the country, also obtained the restoration of those confessions to an equality of civil and political rights with the Roman Catholics; but the same diet which passed this equitable law passed others of a character tending to weaken the government, and in addition to this accepted the guarantee of Russia for the maintenance of the existing constitution, the most suicidal measure ever passed by a national legislature.

It must be remarked that the demands of Russia

in favour of the non-Catholic confessions, were supported on that occasion by England, who, as a party to the treaty of Oliva in 1660, which guaranteed the rights of those confessions, considered herself justified in thus interfering in the internal affairs of Poland. Yet when, only four years afterwards, the integrity of the Polish territory, solemnly guaranteed by that same treaty, was so grossly violated by the dismemberment of 1772, England remained silent.

While foreign powers were thus making Poland the scene of their destructive intrigues, some patriots, fully alive to the dangers that threatened the country, organized a confederation at Bar, a small town of Podolia, to counteract the foreign influences which were leading the nation on to destruction. At the head of this movement was the Bishop of Caminietz, Adam Krasinski, a zealous and enlightened patriot, whose brother Michael was elected Marshal of the confederation. Ill supported, and without regular troops, this confederation, nevertheless, kept up for several years a struggle against the Russian forces, but at last fell to the ground from perfect exhaustion. At the same time, the Turks, who had taken up arms in defence of Poland, and who had in vain represented to the cabinets of Europe the dangers that threatened them from the predominance of Russia in that country, were defeated, and Poland was left, exhausted and unsupported, in the hands of her enemies.

Our space precludes us from entering into the details of the diplomatic intrigues which led to the first dismemberment of Poland. It is well known that the first idea of this nefarious transaction was suggested by Prussia, and was for a long time strenuously opposed by the Russian Cabinet, whose policy it was to screen itself from every danger on its western frontier, by maintaining the existing inefficient form of government in Poland. At last, however, the base plans of each were brought into accordance with those of the other; and in the midst of peace and in the face of quiescent Europe, the kingdom was dismembered.

Poland lost by this first dismemberment 3928 square geographical miles (15 to a degree) of her territory which were unequally divided between Austria, Russia, and Prussia. The pretensions by which these powers tried to give a colouring of justice to their spoliation, are of the most absurd description. The Empress of Austria, as Queen of Hungary, rested her claim on the circumstance that a Hungarian prince had, in the 13th century, for a short time occupied the throne of Halich, a principality which had subsequently been incorporated (1340) with Poland, not by conquest but by the right of inheritance; in addition to which, the empress took possession of a great extent of territory, which, from the earliest times, had formed an integral part of Poland. Frederick II. main-

tained that the provinces which he had seized had originally belonged to the Dukes of Pomerania, from whom they had been wrested by the German knights in the 13th century, from whose dominion they had again passed under that of Poland; and that, as after the extinction of the reigning family in Pomerania in 1637, the house of Brandenburg had succeeded to its rights, in taking these provinces he was only entering into possession of his lawful heritage. Russia rested her claims on a compensation due to her for the expenses she had incurred in serving the Poles on various occasions, *i. e.* in maintaining the country in a state of permanent disorder.

The spoliating parties having concluded their bargain, caused a diet to be convoked to sanction their iniquitous proceedings, and finally imposed on the country a permanent council, which still further reduced the already too limited power of the king.

The great calamity which thus fell upon Poland roused the spirit of the nation, which now strove to compensate its heavy losses by internal improvements. An excellent system of public instruction was introduced; literature was encouraged, and acquired in a very short time a high degree of development; industry was reanimated, and every kind of improvement rapidly advanced, through the exertions of many distinguished individuals, and of the king himself, who earnestly endeavoured to ameliorate the condition of the country. The Chancellor, Andrew Zamoyski, an enlightened and patriotic nobleman, prepared a new code of laws, which removed many ancient abuses; but public opinion was not then sufficiently ripe for these reforms, which were rejected by the diet of 1780. A few years later, however, public opinion was so much improved as to make a reform in the constitution universally desired, and in consequence the diet of 1788-1791, proclaimed, on the 3rd May of this last year, a new constitution, abolishing the *veto* rendering the decisions of the future diets dependent on the votes of the majority instead of on the unanimity of votes, and declaring the throne hereditary in the Saxon dynasty, which was to succeed after the death of Stanislaus Poniatowski. This constitution further extended the rights of the plebeian classes, and introduced several other useful regulations, acknowledging at the same time the necessity of further reforms, by enacting that there should be a revision of the constitution after the lapse of 20 years. A fatal error was, however, committed: no sufficient national force was organized to protect the new order of things, and Russia, who, as it will be remembered, had in 1768 guaranteed the then existing order, got up an opposition to the reforms, which, by establishing a firm government, threatened to destroy her power in Poland. Assisted by her troops, a few factious nobles formed a confederation at Targovitza (a small town in the

Ukraine) to overthrow the new constitution; and the king, instead of ordering a levy *en masse*, and marching to oppose the enemies, offered the singular spectacle of a monarch betraying from weakness his own country to a foreign power. His treacherous orders paralyzed every measure of defence; while the King of Prussia, who had encouraged the Poles to amend their constitution, now joined the assailants of the new constitution, and invaded Poland. The reform of the constitution of the country, undertaken in concert by the monarch and his people, and with a view to establish permanent order and a strong government, was then looked on as a revolutionary proceeding, and under a pretence of putting a stop to it, the second dismemberment of Poland was effected in 1793 by Russia and Prussia.

Prussia gained by this second partition 1061 square geographical miles; Russia, 4553; and the remaining part of Poland, comprising 4016 square miles, was subjected to every kind of vexation from the confederates of Targovitz, who, encouraged by the presence of the Russian troops, persecuted the patriots, of whom the most eminent were obliged to seek refuge in foreign countries. The spirit of patriotism was not, however, quelled by these circumstances. An extensive conspiracy—as it is the fashion to term every combination of the Poles against the most unjust foreign oppression and usurpation—was organized, and insurrections broke out in different parts of Poland in 1794. Kosciuszko arrived at Cracow from abroad, and having assembled a number of peasants, armed with scythes, he defeated a superior force of Russian regular troops. The inhabitants of Warsaw (which was occupied by a Russian force) then rose against their oppressors, and expelled them, after a bloody contest. Vilna followed the example of Warsaw. Several individuals were convicted of high treason and executed, but the king was treated with the respect due to his position. All these efforts, however, proved unavailing against the overwhelming numbers of Russia and Prussia. Kosciuszko was defeated, wounded, and taken prisoner at the battle of Maciejowice. Praga, the suburb of Warsaw, was carried by storm, and all its inhabitants put to the sword. Warsaw capitulated, and the remainder of Poland was divided among its former spoliators.

Thus was Poland erased from the list of independent states; but before we enter on the history of the Polish nation since this last dismemberment of the country, it is necessary to give a sketch of the constitution by which it was governed.

During the early period of Polish history, the monarchs were hereditary and absolute. The royal title was assumed by Boleslav I. in 1025, without any sanction of either Pope or Emperor. It remained in abeyance during the time that Poland was divided into minor principalities, but was renewed after its reconsolidation in the beginning of the 14th century.

The commencement of the elective system may be considered as dating from the time when Louis king of Hungary was, during the lifetime of his uncle Casimir the Great, elected his successor, to the exclusion of the collateral branches of the ancient Polish dynasty of the Piasts. This custom received confirmation from the agreement which the same Louis made with the Polish states to elect one of his daughters for their sovereign, but during the whole reign of the descendants of Jaghellon, the natural heir of the deceased monarch, invariably succeeded him on the throne. It was thus only after the extinction of the Jaghellonian dynasty that the crown of Poland became really elective.

The election of the monarch was performed in the following manner. As soon as the king died, the supreme authority was assumed by the primate (Archbishop of Gnezno), who on that account was called *Interrex*, and who issued circulars announcing the vacancy of the throne and summoning the diet of convocation. This diet issued all the regulations for the maintenance of public order, and fixed the day for the election of the new monarch, which was effected at *Vola*, a place in the vicinity of Warsaw, and was decided by the majority of the votes, not of deputies, but of all the nobles who were assembled for that purpose, and arrayed under the colours of their respective provinces. Immediately after his election, the king took the oath upon the *Pacta conventa*, or constitutional guarantees. He was the head of the state, and in him was vested the supreme executive power. He also constituted an estate in the legislative body, which was composed of the king, the senate, and the Chamber of *Nuncios*. All public proceedings were carried on in his name, and he had the power of pardon and the nomination to all dignities and offices, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, with the exception of those that were elective;* he had the disposal of the *starosties*, or crown estates, which he could grant to whom he pleased, but not retain for his own use. He could not, without the consent of the diet, make laws, impose taxes, declare war, conclude peace, or form any treaty, contract matrimonial alliances, or leave the country; and as he had not the power of removing the occupants from the offices which he had once conferred, the officers of state were as independent of the crown as are the judges of England. This preposterous arrangement paralyzed the functions of the executive, and it was particularly pernicious in the case of the *hetmans* or commanders of the army, over whom the monarch had not the least control.

The ordinary diet met every two years; but in case of need extraordinary diets could be convened. Each diet was preceded by meetings of electors or nobles (called in Polish *Seymiki*, i. e. little diets,

* As for instance the judges of the different tribunals and the members of local administration.

and in Latin *comitiola*), convoked by royal letters patent, which contained the propositions to be debated in the next diet. These assemblies returned the members, and gave them instructions with regard to the royal propositions, as well as other subjects. The members were obliged strictly to adhere to these instructions, unless they were especially empowered to act according to their own views. The Polish constitution was, therefore, not *representative* but *delegative*.

The *nuncios* were obliged to render an official account of their parliamentary conduct to their electors, for which special meetings were convened.

The *veto* of a single *nuncio* not only threw out the bill under discussion, but broke up the diet—a preposterous custom, the mischievous effects of which may be easily conceived. During the reign of Augustus III., 1732-63, ten diets were convened, and each of them was broken up by the *veto*, without having passed a single bill. This could, however, be obviated by confederating the diet, *i. e.* by uniting the two Chambers, in which case matters were decided by majority, and not by unanimity of votes, and the diet could not be dissolved by the *veto*. The diet of convocation which assembled immediately after the demise of the king was always confederated.

The senate,* which was presided over by the king, formed rather a Council of State than a House of Peers, and as no royal propositions could be made without its consent, these propositions had merely, before passing into law, to be submitted to the approval of the Chamber of Nuncios; and a royal proposition, which was amended in that chamber, was submitted to the king and the senate for approbation; but the power of the Chamber of Nuncios became at last so great, that the acquiescence of the king and the senate was never refused.

The nobles, or the equestrian order, were the ruling class in Poland. All legislative power was in their hands, and none who were not born of noble parents could be invested with any civil or military office, or promoted to the higher preferments in the church. No noble could be imprisoned before he was convicted, unless taken *in flagrante delicto*; if, however, he did not appear before the tribunal when cited, he was declared infamous and outlawed. The nobles were exempted from all taxes, and their houses, as well as those of the clergy, were an asylum. A noble enjoyed his full political rights when he was possessed of landed property, or was, according to the legal expression, "*natus et possessionatus*;" the amount of this property might, however, be very small, and even this

slight qualification was abolished by the diet of 1768, acting entirely under the influence of Russia, and which established universal suffrage in that class. A noble lost his privileges by carrying on a retail trade, but recovered them on abandoning the occupation. He also forfeited his privileges by the commission of certain crimes. In return for these privileges the nobles were bound to defend the country. Each noble was obliged to join, armed and on horseback, the *Paspolite Ruszenie*, or arrier ban, with a certain number of followers, fixed for each occasion by the king and his council, and proportionate to the extent of his lands; those who held crown or ecclesiastical lands in lease were obliged to do the same. A noble who was condemned to imprisonment was released from prison during the campaign, but returned to it for the remainder of his term of imprisonment when his services were no longer required. A noble, who did not appear at the time and place appointed, was liable to have his property confiscated, and to lose his rights. Martial law, which was in force during the campaign, was extremely severe. The Palatines commanded the forces of their palatinates or provinces, and the Castellans those of the districts. The nobles of every district were obliged periodically to meet in military array, in order to be mustered by officers appointed for this purpose. As long as these regulations were strictly adhered to, Poland had always, in case of need, an efficient force, which was computed, in the 16th and 17th centuries, to number between 150 and 200,000 horsemen. This army did excellent service in a defensive war, but it was not of much avail for a foreign expedition, as it was very difficult to bring together, and impossible to keep a long time in the field, any considerable number of this militia. Had this military organization of the Polish nobles been maintained in its full vigour, Poland would never have become the prey of her neighbours, and it was owing to this organisation that the country was saved from the dominion of foreigners under the reign of John Casimir. But, unfortunately, it fell into disuse, particularly during the long peace which Poland enjoyed under the reign of the Saxon dynasty, which lulled to sleep the martial spirit of the Polish nobles.

Poland had, besides this militia, an army composed of regular troops, cavalry, infantry, and artillery, which was maintained by a permanent tax of one-fourth of the income of all the starosties or crown lands. Under the reign of Augustus II., in 1717, the numerical force of this army was reduced to 24,000 men.†

† The reduction of the Polish regular force was effected at the diet of 1717, by the influence of Szaniawski, bishop of Cracow, a creature and agent of Peter the Great, to whom Augustus II. owed the restoration of his throne. The bishop was permitted for this service to the enemies of his country to pass surreptitiously an enactment, restricting the religious liberty of the Anti-Roman Catholic confession in Poland.

* The senate was composed of the two archbishops, the bishops, palatines, and castellans. Each province had its palatine, and each district its castellan.

The nobles of Poland cannot be compared to those of western Europe, but rather to the military caste of the Kshatrias in India. They were formerly divided into a kind of clans, *gentes*, each distinguished by a peculiar badge, whence they derive their respective names. These clans became, in time, subdivided into many separate families, who assumed different names, generally taken from their estates,* but preserving the same badge as their coat of arms. There was also a great number of families who were ennobled for their services to the country, and many foreign families were, at different periods, received into the body of the nobility by naturalization. A perfect equality was established amongst the nobles, so that one who himself tilled the land he occupied, had the same rights as the grandee, whose possessions were more extensive than an English county; but this equality was merely nominal, for several families having acquired great wealth and immense influence over their poorer fellow citizens, and disposing of their votes, governed the country, thus forming, *de facto*, a most powerful aristocracy, though the constitution of Poland was democratic *de jure*. This aristocracy, which could with impunity brave the king, soon gained exclusive possession of all the most important charges and offices of the state, and maintained its wealth by the revenues of the starosties or crown lands, of which there were a great number in Poland, and which, as we have seen, the king was obliged to grant for life to members of the nobility. These grants were originally intended to be conferred as rewards for services rendered to the state, but they were more often obtained by what, in England, would be termed parliamentary influence. The titles of princes, counts, barons, &c., by which the members of many Polish families are now designated, are not of Polish origin, there having never been in Poland any distinction of rank between noblemen; but when the legislative union of Poland and Lithuania was finally effected in 1569, the Lithuanian families, descended either from the collateral branches of the Jaghellon dynasty, as, for instance, the Czartoryski, or from the Russian petty princes of the dynasty of Rurik, obtained the privilege of assuming these titles. Several other families, as the Radziwill, Sapieha, and Lubomirski, were created princes of the Roman empire, while other houses obtained from the same quarter the title of counts without there being in any of these cases any political privileges attached to the title. When the Austrian government took possession of Galicia, it conferred the title of count upon almost all the families whose members had sat in the Polish senate. Under Louis XIV. it was a rule of etiquette in France to address the Polish senators and their sons, who visited the French court, as *Monsieur le*

* This is the reason why the Polish names generally end in *ski*, which termination is a possessive. Thus, for instance, Laski signifies of Lask, and is rendered in Latin by *A Lasco*; Tarnowski, of Tarnow, &c.

Comte, a custom which has probably given rise to the habit so prevalent out of Poland of addressing Polish gentlemen by the title of count.

The confederations, which are so often mentioned in Polish history, were associations formed by the nobles, for the attainment of some political purpose. A confederation was generally commenced by a few individuals who met together, and who after having composed the act of confederation which expressed the object they had in view, issued circulars inviting all the nobles to join them, and then elected a marshal or chief, and councillors or members of the government, which they pretended to have a right to exercise, and really did exercise when their strength was efficient. Such confederations generally added to the disorders of the country, but sometimes they proved the means of its salvation, as was the case with the confederation of Tyzowce in 1656, which freed Poland from foreign invasion, and restored John Casimir to his throne.

The *Rokosh* was a general meeting of the armed nobles to represent their grievances and to obtain redress. Such a meeting was legal, when the king, disregarding the admonitions of the senate, persisted in violating the *pacta conventa*, or the compact between the monarch and the nation, and when all constitutional means had been employed in vain to bring him back to his duty: otherwise it was treason.

The towns were governed by the German municipal law, or as it was usually called, the code of Magdeburg, and had a separate court of appeal. They were for a long time represented at the diets, but were gradually excluded by the nobles, who usurped the whole legislative power of the country. The peasants, originally free labourers, became by degrees, reduced to prædial servitude and had no rights.

It is almost needless to observe how defective was this constitution, and that it would have destroyed the political existence of any nation whatever. There cannot, therefore, be any doubt that the nation which could withstand the ruinous tendencies of such a policy must have possessed an uncommon degree of vitality and patriotism.

After the final dismemberment of Poland, many patriots retired to France, where Polish legions were organized by General Dombrowski.† This force fought under their national colours in the wars of the French republic, hoping that their services would be rewarded by the assistance of that power in restoring the national independence of their country; but treaty after treaty was concluded with the partitioning powers without any regard to the interests of Poland. The state of the dismembered

† These legions were considered in Poland as an independent representation of the country, whence large sums of money were sent for their support. A great number of the Polish soldiers were sent to St. Domingo, whence few returned; others returned to their homes after the peace of Luneville, but many continued in the French service.

provinces varied according to the government under which they fell. Those that fell to the lot of Prussia were treated with great mildness, and many improvements were introduced, but these advantages were counterbalanced by a decided tendency to establish Germanism on the ruins of everything that was national. The Austrian government was not more favourable to the nationality of its Polish provinces; it introduced some few improvements, but on the other hand, it exhausted their resources by heavy taxes and levies of recruits for its wars with France. The provinces under the dominion of Russia may be considered as having been, in many respects, the most favoured of all. No material improvements, it is true, were introduced, but the national language was preserved in all public transactions, the ancient civil laws were maintained, and an excellent system of public education was organized by Prince Adam Czartoryski, supported by the friendship of the Emperor Alexander, whose minister he had become, and who seems for some time sincerely to have entertained the idea of restoring the ancient kingdom of Poland and of becoming its constitutional king.

By the treaty of Tilsit, in 1807, that part of the Polish territory which had been taken by Prussia (with the exception of the provinces of Bialystok given to Russia, and the provinces seized by Prussia in 1772, and retained by her,) was erected into a separate state, under the name of the duchy of Warsaw. This new state, the sovereignty of which was vested in the reigning house of Saxony, received a representative constitution and the French code of laws. By virtue of the treaty of Vienna, in 1807, its territory was extended by the accession of a part of Austrian Poland, but it was at the same time weakened by the contribution of troops which it was obliged to furnish to the French armies, and which, during the campaign of 1812, amounted to no less than 80,000 men. It is now generally acknowledged that the disasters of that campaign were in a great measure owing to Napoleon's not having commenced it by the restoration of Poland.

At the congress of Vienna, 1815, the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and France, Castlereagh and Talleyrand, were in favour of the restoration of Poland, and Austria was not averse to it; but the return of Napoleon from Elba created interests of a more pressing nature, and the affairs of Poland were finally arranged as follows: a part of the duchy of Warsaw was given to Prussia under the title of the duchy of Posen; Cracow, with a territory of about 440 English square miles and 120,000 inhabitants, was erected into a republic under the joint protection of Austria, Russia, and Prussia, and the remainder was entitled the kingdom of Poland, and was united with Russia, under the same sovereign but with a separate administration. The new kingdom received a representative constitution,

which guaranteed the liberty of the press, the responsibility of ministers, the independence of the judges, the use of the national language, and the maintenance of a national force.* At the same time all the ancient Polish provinces which remained incorporated with the three dismembering powers, were, by the same congress of Vienna, promised national institutions conformable to the nature of the several governments under which they were placed.

The liberal constitution granted to the kingdom of Poland, numbering about 4,000,000 inhabitants, and whose sovereign was absolute monarch over more than 50,000,000 subjects, was a perfect anomaly; it therefore could not be, and was not faithfully maintained. The country, it is true, began to make rapid progress in agriculture and industry; but the despotic power given to the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of the Emperor Alexander, and which manifested itself in the most wanton acts of oppression, irritated the inhabitants as well as the army, while notwithstanding the pledge given at the Congress of Vienna, to maintain the Polish nationality in the provinces incorporated with Russia, the acts of the government began to assume a tendency diametrically opposed to it. Novolsiltzoff, to whom the government of those provinces was intrusted, established a most vexatious system of espionage over the university of Vilna, and the schools dependent upon it; and the most puerile offences of young men and boys were construed into crimes, and punished accordingly.† Similar persecutions of the students took place at Warsaw, and the system of public instruction was continually rendered less efficient, by the substitution of absurd modes of teaching for sound methods, and by the limitation of the subjects of instruction. A severe censorship prevented the printing of works which had any liberal tendency, and the introduction of similar works from abroad.

A general discontent was the natural result of such proceedings, and the government, being aware of this, and being in dread of its consequences, increased its severity, and infested the country with spies, which rendered even the most private family circles insecure.

The Emperor Nicholas did indeed, after his accession, make a show of liberal tendencies, as well as some manifestations of his regard for the Poles.‡

* The representative body was composed of two chambers, senators and deputies; the former were nominated by the king, and their number was never to exceed that of the deputies, which was 138.

† Thus the son of the Rev. — Moleson, rector of the Protestant college at Kieydany, in Lithuania, a lad of 17, was, with another boy, condemned to perpetual labour in the mines of Siberia, for having placarded a silly libel, menacing the Grand Duke Constantine. The college was abolished, and all its pupils prohibited from being admitted into any public school.

‡ After the capture of Varna, in 1828, he sent several Turkish cannons and standards as trophies to Warsaw, addressing, at the same time, a proclamation to the Poles, that he had avenged

He swore to maintain the Polish constitution, and directed that several Poles, who were implicated in the conspiracy of 1826, should be tried according to the constitution, by the senate, and not by a special commission, as it was required by Constantine. But though the senate condemned the misguided persons only to a temporary imprisonment, instead of capital punishment, they were transported to Siberia,* and Poland was entirely abandoned to the tyrannical whims of the half-mad Constantine.

The French revolution of July, 1830, produced a strong sensation in Poland, and an insurrection was meditated, which probably would never have taken place had the plan not been discovered by the government, and the conspirators been forced, in self-defence, to put their plans into execution. It was effected on the 29th of November, 1830, by the military school, composed of about 200 young men, who were joined by several students of the University, and some troops. Constantine, who had a sufficient force to crush it in its beginning, nevertheless remained passive, thinking that it would end in an insignificant riot, which would afford an excellent pretence for abolishing the constitutional order which nominally existed in Poland.

A provisional government, acting in the name of the Emperor Nicholas was established, and was composed of the ministers of state, with the addition of several influential persons. General Chlopicki, a veteran officer of high military repute, was appointed commander-in-chief of the army, though he, as well as the principal persons of the country were averse to stake the existing order of things against such fearful odds as a war with Russia.† Having accepted the appointment, Chlopicki declared himself Dictator, a measure which was generally applauded as most likely to secure order. It must be remarked, that the experience of history has taught the Polish patriots to dread disorder as the greatest evil. A deputation was sent to the Emperor, demanding the preservation of the Constitution, as well as the fulfilment of the pledges given at the Congress of Vienna, and Constantine

the death of his heroic predecessor, Vladislus III., King of Poland, who perished at Varna in 1444, on his expedition to rescue Constantinople from the Turks. The Grand Duke Constantine, however, ordered that these trophies should enter Warsaw at night, and be thrown amongst some old lumber.

* They had been kept before the trial two years in the closest confinement.

† There is a prevalent notion in this country, that the insurrection of 1830 was chiefly caused by the aristocracy of Poland. This is perfectly erroneous, because the aristocracy had much less to suffer from the tyrannical freaks of Constantine, as well as from the vexations of the Russian employés, than the middle classes of Warsaw, the army, and the youths in the educational establishments; the aristocracy, having more to lose than other individuals, was also naturally more cautious, and therefore opposed to every movement, believing its success impossible. Only a few of its members were in the secret of the projected insurrection, and it was joined by them only when it became national.

was permitted to depart with his Russian guards.‡ This last step was most fatal to the insurrection, because, had the Grand Duke been retained, it would have facilitated a negotiation with the Emperor; and had the Poles marched at once into Lithuania, they would have been joined by the native troops stationed there, natives, besides the population of that province. Thus while the Poles were losing the most precious time, the Russian troops were being concentrated, and the deputation sent to the Emperor obtained no other conditions, than absolute submission. In consequence of this answer, the diet which had been assembled at Warsaw, declared the throne vacant, organised a national government *ad interim*, under the presidency of Prince Adam Czartoryski, and declared that the government of Poland should be after its emancipation a constitutional hereditary monarchy.

Want of space renders it impossible to give here the details of that memorable struggle which, notwithstanding the disproportionate inequality between the Polish and Russian forces, was protracted by the valour of the former from February to October. Notwithstanding their numerical inferiority, the Poles had several chances of success, but their leaders knew not how to take advantage of them. The principal error of the Polish commander-in-chief, Skrzynecki, was his aversion to a decisive action, caused by the delusive hope that the affairs of Poland would be settled by the diplomacy of Europe. His vacillating conduct, which destroyed the confidence of the army and of the nation in the general as well as in the government which had appointed him, was particularly unwise, because the Polish resources were continually decreasing, as Prussia would not permit any assistance intended for the Poles to cross her frontiers, whilst the Russians could freely draw from that quarter every kind of supply. France proposed to England to make a joint representation to Russia about Poland; but as this proposition was declined, she took no further steps in behalf of that country, and this new struggle of the Poles for national independence only served to rivet their chains more firmly.

The Emperor Nicholas, instead of adopting a system of clemency as was generally expected, proceeded, on the contrary, with the utmost severity. The constitution of the kingdom of Poland was formally abrogated, and another form of government, called the organic statute, introduced. The Universities of Warsaw and Vilna, as well as many minor schools, were abolished, and the public libraries and museums were carried away to St. Peters-

‡ The Grand Duke Constantine obtained the permission to depart by making an appeal to the generosity of the Polish nation. Being Commander-in-Chief of the Polish army, he transferred, by an order of the day, his authority over it to the national government. The army could not, therefore, without a breach of subordination, disobey that government, and it fought against the Emperor in obedience to an authority which had originally emanated from himself.

burgh and other places in Russia. An amnesty was proclaimed, but with numerous exceptions, and many soldiers who availed themselves of it, were compelled to serve in the Russian ranks. In the Polish provinces, incorporated with Russia in 1772 and 1795, where the reactionary measures were particularly severe, the Russian language was substituted for the Polish in all the public schools and in the courts of law; and the statutes of Lithuania, according to which these provinces had hitherto been governed, were replaced by the laws of Russia. The greatest infliction was, however, the religious persecutions commenced against the followers of the Greek United Church.

It has been mentioned in the course of this essay, that a union of the Greek Church of Poland with the Church of Rome, having been effected in 1598, the opponents of that union were exposed to much persecution, in violation of the laws of the country; but however reprehensible had been the measures employed to induce the followers of the Greek Church to embrace the above-mentioned union, it became eventually the religious persuasion of several millions, who became as sincerely attached to it as their ancestors had been opposed to it, and could not, therefore, with justice be compelled to abjure the tenets which they actually professed, any more than a Protestant population could be required to become Roman Catholics, because their ancestors had belonged to that Church. The Russian government, however, knowing the great advantages which it derives at home from the fact of the Emperor being also the spiritual chief and governor of his subjects, has always been anxious to impose upon its other subjects the orthodox Russian Greek Church, which teaches this for him so advantageous and all important point;* and having, in this instance, induced several bishops of the Greek United Church to submit to a union with the Russian, all the inhabitants of their dioceses were compelled to do the same, and these who resisted were subjected to severe persecutions. About one hundred members of the clergy were transported to Siberia, because they refused to conform.

All the violent measures taken with a view to amalgamate the populations of the Polish provinces with those of ancient Russia have, however, hitherto, proved ineffectual, and have only served to engender the bitterest hatred against the Russian government, and have in many respects greatly retarded the objects which that government has in view.

The peasants in the Polish provinces of Russia are serfs, like those of the rest of the empire. The nobles enjoy equal rights with those of Russia

Proper, who, constituting the privileged class, fill all the civil and military offices of the state. In the kingdom of Poland the peasants are free; in Prussia they are not only free but owners of the soil which they occupy. Prussian Poland is certainly the most fortunate of all the parts which originally constituted that country. The inhabitants have more freedom than the rest of their brethren, and they enjoy the advantage of a superior system of public education; but nevertheless their nationality is exposed to great dangers.

The existence of the Polish language and literature is justly considered by the natives the question of most vital importance to them. By its exclusion from the general system of administration, which in Prussia embraces every object of national interest, the language is obliged to develop itself independently of this system, and is thus made to form an element of opposition to it; the Poles of Prussia are hereby placed in an anomalous position between their allegiance to their king and their attachment to their language. Were the national language and literature promoted or at least patronized by the Prussian government, instead of being merely tolerated, the attachment of the Poles would be more effectually secured to it, than by all the material benefits it may bestow.

The peasants of Austria are free, and possess a kind of copyhold property of the land which they occupy.* The landlords are obliged to collect the taxes from the peasants, which places them in an invidious position between the government and the peasants, and often exposes them to the unmerited hatred of the latter. Public education is much inferior to that of Prussia, and several Jesuits' colleges have been lately established in different parts of Austrian Poland. Cracow, which bears the title of a free, independent, and strictly neutral republic, is governed by a senate and an elective president, completely under the control of the presidents of the three protecting powers.

It is impossible to form at present any just opinion of the events which have recently disturbed different parts of ancient Poland, the reports which have been circulated on this subject being very contradictory and exaggerated, and no official

* The relations between the peasants and the landowners were defined, in 1776, by the *urbarium* (from *urban*, arable in German) a rural code of Austria. This code emancipated the peasants from serfdom, and fixed the dues which they were to pay their landlords, according to the extent of the land they held. These dues consist of a certain amount of labour, performed for the benefit of the landlord, instead of paying a rent in money. As long as the peasant fulfils the conditions upon which he holds his land, he remains in its hereditary possession, and he may dispose of it to others. The holdings of the peasants cannot be divided below a certain *quantum*, and when one of them leaves several children, his land is either sold, and the proceeds divided amongst the co-heirs, or it is taken by the eldest son, who subjects himself to adequate pecuniary liabilities towards his co-heirs. The law fixes a price at which the labour may be commuted for money, but this arrangement is left to the free choice of parties.

* This is the reason of the regular system of proselytism, which is now carried on amongst the Protestant peasantry of the Baltic provinces, many of whom have already been induced to desert their faith for that of the Russian church.

accounts having as yet been published on the conspiracies which are now the subjects of judicial investigations in Austria, Russia and Cracow. The following facts may however be considered as certain.

About two years since the wild doctrines of the French *communisme* (socialism) were circulated amongst the lower classes in different parts of Poland and Silesia. The Russian government last year adopted the severest measures to repress these doctrines, which were also the subject of judicial inquiry in Prussia. The Austrian government, on the contrary, took no notice of the matter, and it is said that the representations which were made on this subject to the civil governor of Galicia, were completely disregarded. At the same time a conspiracy for the restoration of the independence of Poland was organized chiefly in Prussian and Austrian Poland. It was discovered by the Russian government, and its participators arrested; amongst others, Mr. Miroslawski, a man of extraordinary talent, and an emissary from the Democratic Society of Paris. The plan of insurrection found upon his person is said to be a masterpiece of its kind.

The accounts of the insurrectionary movement at Cracow, which lasted 10 days, are of such a contradictory character, that it is quite impossible to form a correct judgment of the causes and the real nature of that deplorable event.* The most remarkable and the most melancholy circumstance was the rising of the peasantry in several parts of Galicia against the landowners, a great number of whom, with their families, were murdered, whilst their homes were pillaged and burnt. It has been ascribed by many to the Austrian government, who had excited the peasants, by offering a reward for each noble taken, dead or alive. The Austrian government indignantly protested against such an accusation, which is, indeed, of too atrocious a character to be believed, without the most incontrovertible evidence. It is, however, impossible to deny that the best refutation the government could give to such an accusation, would be to visit the perpetrators of these enormities with condign punishment, particularly as the greater part of the victims were innocent of any revolutionary scheme against the government. The Austrian government has only published a manifesto, thanking the peasants for the loyalty which they had evinced on this occasion. On the other side it is remarkable, that the peasants, who have committed all these excesses, have not laid down their arms, but

are demanding from the government the abolition of all dues and taxes, and the division of the landed property, belonging to its present owners, amongst themselves. This is evidently the result of the doctrine of *communism* to which we have alluded: and this may be productive of much greater danger to Austria and its neighbours, than all the attempts which the Poles may make to regain their national independence, because the latter will be always confined to the ancient provinces of Poland, whilst an attempt to establish community of goods, however wild and impracticable, will find sympathy amongst the lower classes of other provinces of Austria and Prussia, but particularly amongst the serfs of Russia.

It may be concluded, from what has been said in this essay, that the peace of Europe cannot be considered as safe, until the Polish question is settled in a satisfactory manner to all parties. Experience proves, that time, instead of consolidating the rule of the partitioning powers, has rather weakened it, as is evident from the state of Austrian Poland, which had remained perfectly quiet for seventy-four years, *i. e.* since the dismemberment of Poland in 1772. Public opinion in Europe is every day more alive to the necessity of such a measure, but it is divided as to the most proper means of attaining this desideratum. The most natural solution of this all-important question would be the restoration of Poland as an independent kingdom, which would at once re-establish the political balance destroyed by the delimitation of that state from the map of Europe. The opponents of this measure urge as a principal objection that the fall of Poland is a proof of her incapacity to stand as an independent power. It may be, however, answered to this objection, that the evidence of history proves that the symptoms of decay and inevitable dissolution of every state are the internal commotions which agitate its repose, and which proceed from a want of natural cohesion in its component parts. Now we see nothing of that kind in the history of Poland, which, in spite of a most inefficient system of government, remained in the most profound peace and tranquillity for more than half a century before this state of things was disturbed by the violent interference of foreign powers. It has also been shown, in the course of this essay, that the efforts which the Poles made to amend their ruinous system of government were entirely marred by foreign interference, and that when left to themselves, they were rapidly advancing in the career of social and political improvement, of which the reforms effected by the Czartoryskis in 1764, and the constitution of the 3rd of May, 1791 afford ample proof.

* The absurd accusation that the Poles intended to murder all the Germans is completely disproved by the manner in which they were treated at Cracow, during the whole time of the insurrection.

THE TOPIC, N^O. V.

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