

[From English papers to the 18th Nov.]

## HISTORY OF THE WEEK.

The example of Vienna has not been lost either on the King or the people of Prussia. Frederick William, without waiting for an outbreak, has prorogued the National Assembly, appointed a new place of meeting, declared Berlin in a state of siege, filled the city with troops, and sojourns himself at Potsdam, waiting the result. Unlike his royal brother of Austria, he declines to receive deputies or deputations, and very properly shifts any odium that may arise from himself to his cabinet, by referring all complainants and advisers to his prime minister.

The people of Berlin, on the other hand, have also profited by experience. Instead of rushing, unprepared, into an unequal contest, they offer only a sullen and passive resistance: they are ominously orderly; commit, so far, no breach of the peace; and rely, apparently, on the expression of public opinion. The National Assembly are equally obstinate and unwarlike. The King, by proclamation, dissolved them, and fixed another place for their subsequent meeting. They refused to obey the royal mandate, denied the power assumed by the King, and therefore refused to submit to an unconstitutional order. In vain the minister of the crown pronounced their conduct illegal and treasonable; they continued to meet; the door of the parliament house was shut against them,—they assembled elsewhere. Driven out of their new abode, they adjourned to another building, and their last act was to declare themselves in *permanence*. WRANGLER has again ejected them from their last locality.

The burgher guard of Berlin is composed of tradesmen; the guard mobile of mechanics. These also presented a passive resistance; but when the city was declared in a state of siege, these bodies were called upon to deliver up their arms in forty eight hours. If they obeyed, the struggle would be constitutional; if not, an insurrection was probable.

The sense of order which prevails so universally in this country, predisposes the people to condemn, as illegal, every act of popular resistance to authority apparently properly constituted; hence there is no sympathy here with either the people of Vienna or Berlin. The National Assemblies in both places are much condemned, and in the latter city the Prussian Parliament are regarded as having assumed privileges, or powers, utterly incompatible with the existence of monarchy. They have, apparently, ceased to be a legislature, and have presumed to undertake the office of the executive. Their refusal to admit the authority of the King to prorogue them looks, certainly, very like an act of open rebellion, and it is possible they intend it as such. Like the English parliament of CHARLES I., they may deem the time come for a struggle with despotism and the unconstitutional pretensions of the crown. A few days will show whether they are right or wrong in their views and calculations; for if the people of Prussia approve of their conduct, we may reasonably suspect that they had a better notion of the sovereign's designs than foreigners have; but if Prussia condemns their conduct, or refuses to back them in the struggle, the conclusion is irresistible that they are not only indiscreet, but wicked men.

So far, however, appearances are in their favour. The inhabitants of Berlin and the burgher guard, representing the middle classes, are with them; the public wish is on their side; but we must wait for the demonstration of the country. If the country approve, the King must submit to the popular will. On a Prussian army the monarch, if unpopular, can place no reliance. It is composed almost exclusively of young men aged from 18 to 23—not selected by a recruiting serjeant, but constituting the entire youth of the nation. Every man in the kingdom has, at their age, to serve three years; and, therefore, every man in Prussia is a soldier, disciplined, confident, and alert in the use of arms. They are themselves all soldiers, and they are the fathers or brothers of the soldiers called upon, in the event of a revolt, to resist them. A contest, under such circumstances, can have only one result.

When the King called the Constituent Assembly together, every person of reflection saw that nothing short of the privileges enjoyed by the British House of Commons would ultimately satisfy the Prussian Parliament. National representatives freely chosen were not likely to play at puppets for royalty; and the Sovereign soon made this discovery. While the Crown of Germany, like the dagger in "Macbeth," lured him on, liberality was a pleasant duty; but balked in his design, the pretensions of his House of Commons irritated him. He sat down sullen at a distance, surrounded himself with troops, and waited the opportunity to punish the refractory representatives. The assertion, that the Assembly was coerced by the mob, does not appear to be borne out by events; for when relieved from all external control, the Parliament refused to accept the proffer of liberation.

At this distance we labour under the disadvantage of not knowing all the facts; and enough has transpired to make us doubt the accuracy of many things reported. Part of the British press is obviously biassed on German politics; and it is sufficiently plain, from the general tone of newspapers, that the disturbed state of the Continent has produced in this country a reaction against popular movements—at home and abroad.

In another part of to-day's *Journal* will be found some authentic and revolting particulars of the siege of Vienna. At present that city enjoys the repose conferred by military possession, if daily executions, and hourly arrests can be considered compatible with

repose. A Frankfort Deputy has been shot. Will the Central Parliament consider this act a breach of privilege? The fate of Hungary has next to be accomplished; but the Austrian empire is, nevertheless, in imminent peril. The elements of greatness or disorder are abroad, and the alternative rests in the hands called upon to direct them. A great man is wanted. Is he forthcoming?

In France, they have the man required by the occasion; but the people, it is said, with extraordinary perversity, seem disposed to prefer the individual least suited. General Cavaignac, it is agreed on all hands, is a sincere Republican, the friend of peace and order, and a lover of his country. An honest man—he would not betray his trust; a soldier—he has proved himself capable of enforcing the law. His competitor for the Presidency is a—nobody, with an immortal name. Every body admits his unfitness for the office; and yet, strange to say, the men who have most at stake are his supporters. The nephew of Napoleon finds in the multitude an active sympathy, but that the Legitimists should vote for him is only another proof of the madness of faction. The apparent policy of the moderate party probably misleads. M. Thiers, and those who vote with him, after coyish hesitation and bashful coquetry, have at length given in their adhesion to Louis Napoleon. They dislike him, but they like him better than Cavaignac. The one is a Republican, the other a fool, and in skilful hands, may become a tool. His election would bestow office on the Thiers Barrot party, and it is inferred that they would use power for the purpose of gradually restoring monarchy, the Duke of Bordeaux being the King in expectancy. Some of the Legitimists are weak enough to think so; but they are, we suspect, in the condition of the hunter, who sold the skin before the bear was caught. Thiers, probably, has very little love for royalty, and knows by experience, how foolish it is to calculate on princes' gratitude. Obtaining place, he would, in all likelihood, endeavour to keep it; and for that purpose sustain the Republic, or find a Sovereign in the family of the late Emperor. M. Thiers is a plausible, prating, not a profound or thinking man; and his past life gives no security that he will not again fall into miscalculations. The indications at the fete on Sunday were eminently in favour of Cavaignac; and the latest accounts from France throw great doubts on the election of Louis Napoleon. The good sense of the country may save the Republic, and defeat the intrigue of men who would again involve the nation in convulsions. The National Assembly have again testified their confidence in the present government by electing their President. If France cannot establish a Republic, it is clear that no other European nation can, or ought to attempt that form of government.

At home, we are without political incident of any kind, and the only agitation now in Ireland is among the landlords and farmers against the poor-law. Agrarian outrages, we are sorry to see, are now numerous and of a brutal character, which degrades the whole population.

**THE FLEET IN SERVICE ORDER.**—The following is the number and force of the ships at present in commission in the British navy: 19 first-rates of 120 to 100 guns each, mounting 2,216 guns; 76 second and third-rates of from 104 to 70 guns each, mounting 6,196 guns; 126 fourth, fifth, and sixth-rates, of from 65 to 18 guns each, mounting 1,873 guns; 79 sloops, of from 18 to 8 guns each, mounting 986 guns; 16 brigs, of from 6 to 3 guns each, mounting 78 guns. Steamers: 22 ships and frigates, with an aggregate power of 12,222 horses, and mounting 281 guns; 42 sloops of an aggregate power of 13,300 horses, and mounting 251 guns; 38 gun vessels of an aggregate power of 6,748 horses, and mounting 125 guns; 2 screw schooners, whose joint power is 120 horses, and mounting 20 guns; steam guardships, classed as fourth rates, 3,800 horse power. Grand total 420 vessels, mounting 15,026 guns. Of this force 104 are steam-vessels, propelled by engines of an aggregate power of 36,180 horses. This return does not include the mail flotilla of Dover, Holyhead, Liverpool, and other stations, &c.

**ANNIHILATION OF THE SEA SERPENT.**—Mr. Owen, of the College of Surgeons, the greatest living anatomist, has effectually destroyed the sea serpent, by demonstrating that such an animal could not exist. In reply to a nobleman, (query, Lord Northampton?) after quoting the description given by Captain M'Quhae, he says:—"All these are the characters of the head of a warm-blooded mammel; none of them those of a cold-blooded reptile or fish. The animal was not a cetaceous mammel, but rather a great seal. But what seal of large size, or indeed of any size, would be encountered in latitude 24 44 south, and longitude 9 22 east—namely, about 300 miles from the western shore of the southern end of Africa? The most likely species to be there met with are the largest of the seal tribe, e.g. Anson's sea lion, or that known to the southern whalers by the name of the "Sea Elephant"—the *phoca proboscidea*, which attains the length of from 20 to 30 feet. These great seals abound in certain of the islands of the southern and antarctic seas, from which an individual is occasionally floated off upon an iceberg. When a large individual of the *phoca proboscidea* or *phoca leonina* is thus borne off to a distance from its native shore, it is compelled to return for rest to its floating abode after it has made its daily excursion in quest of the fishes or squids that constitute its food. It is thus brought by the iceberg into the latitudes of the Cape, and perhaps further north, before the berg has melted away. Then the poor seal is compelled to swim as long as strength endures; and in such a predicament I imagine the creature was that Mr. Sartoris saw rapidly approaching the *Dædalus* from before the