

owners interfering very little. They receive so much on every ton of coal brought up, but they have also to incur heavy expenses in providing apparatus for labour; so that, where one butty may grow fat on his earnings, another may fail and be brought to ruin.

THE CHURCH IN THE FURNACE.

I was in that church too; but can here only allude to what might well deserve a minute and particular description. The curate who had adopted the "pit preaching," had also obtained from a neighbouring iron-master permission to hold daily morning prayers for the benefit of his workmen, while he sanctioned their attendance by his own constant presence. A room in the iron-works was allotted for this purpose, and at nine o'clock each morning Mr. Bainbridge was at his post. It should also be stated, to the honour of the employer, that the time thus occupied was *given* to the men, not deducted from their remunerated hours. I had the privilege of being present at more than one of these gatherings, and was delighted to find a voluntary attendance of from seventy to ninety men, with some few of their wives, all joining in the prayers with apparent earnestness, all listening with apparent attention to the reading and exposition. The singing was loud and hearty. I almost thought at one time the room shook under us. The testimony of master and overseers to the effect of these "services in the works" is such, that the wonder is, a greater number of other masters have not been induced to allow the adoption of a similar plan with their men. A care for the souls of those connected with them can hardly be deemed detrimental either to their honour or their interest.

THE HOUSE OF SAXE COBURG.

THERE is a shrewd observation, which makes some show of truth, but which must not be taken as literally and absolutely correct, namely, that the reign of great families is over; that, however *individuals* may by accident, or by commanding ability, take a prominent part in the affairs of mankind, yet that the rule of public opinion must inevitably put an end to the influence of one or two great families in Europe, which we read of so frequently in history. It may be so. But certainly it is a rule subject to exception, and amongst these exceptions a very striking one is the House of Saxe Coburg Gotha, commonly called Saxe Coburg.

Little could Duke Francis, who lived and reigned in the small duchy of Saxe Coburg during the early years of this century, have anticipated that, among his children and children's children, would be the sovereignty of Belgium, of Portugal, and of Great Britain, in addition to his own hereditary duchy. It is scarcely more than half a century since he died, and yet his posterity form a large fraction of the nominal rulers of Europe.

Who was this Duke Francis? The present writer knows but little of him, but knows rather more of his ancestors. He came from a noble stock, which had frittered down into small dukedoms in

the progress of ages. Three centuries ago, in the stirring Reformation times, the family of the Electors of Saxony were important and influential in history. They divided into two lines: the elder, clinging to the right side, became stripped of nearly all its possessions; the younger, adroitly turning round to the Catholic religion, obtained the family electorate as the reward of its policy, and transmitted it in its line. From this lucky younger branch come the kings of Saxony, represented by his Majesty King John of Dresden. They unwarily took the side of Napoleon in his war with the fatherland, and though they deserted him just before the battle of Leipsic, in time both to escape and to accelerate his downfall, yet they were rewarded by the allies, in 1815, with a considerable subtraction of territory, to swell the kingdom of Prussia. The late King Frederic Augustus, brother of the present king, was an accomplished naturalist, and we have a lively account of his tour through Great Britain, written by his travelling physician. So much for royal Saxony—the representative of the Albertine or younger line of this illustrious house.

But the elder, or Ernestine line, though despoiled of its electorate, still retained considerable territory as the wreck of its patrimony. This, after the manner of German princes, became divided and subdivided. It were long to tell the changes it underwent. About the reign of our Charles II it fell into two principal branches: the first of which was long represented, and still is, by the dukes of Saxe Weimar; while the younger, in Duke Francis's time, existed in four divisions—Saxe Gotha with Altenburg, Saxe Meiningen, Saxe Hildburghausen, and his own small duchy, Saxe Coburg and Saalfeld. For all that appears, these small dukes were absolute sovereigns in their little domains, and weathered the earthquake of Napoleon's wars not by their own strength, but by being jammed in between more powerful neighbours. One of their family, a prince of Coburg, was generalissimo of the allied army at the outbreak of the French Revolution, and a son of Duke Francis himself took part of the command of the German army in 1813. However excellent and paternal may have been their government of their subjects, these are all the services recorded in history. Gotha and Altenburg together formed a territory of fifty-two square German miles (geographical), inhabited, in 1846, by about 130,000 inhabitants. The other three duchies varied between fifteen and twenty square miles each, with a population amounting, a few years ago, to between 60,000 and 70,000.

To return to Duke Francis. He could not have greatly increased his patrimony by marriage, as he took for spouse a daughter of the House of Reuss; a house remarkable for the smallness of its sovereign territory, and for the very inconvenient peculiarity of naming all the males of its numerous branches, whether elder or younger, by one common name—Henry. A certain Henry XXIV, who ruled over the section Ebersdorff, of the section Lobenstein, of the county of Reuss, was father of Francis's wife. This lady brought him a numerous family, whose fortunes we will endeavour to follow.

When Francis died, at the age of fifty-six, he left four married daughters. The first to marry had been his third daughter, Juliana, who at the age of fourteen had renounced her religion, been baptized into the Greek Church by the name of Anna Feodorowna, and married to that barbaric monster, the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia: it is not surprising to hear that she was afterwards divorced. His eldest daughter had married Count Mensdorff, Governor of Mayence, and her children are now in the Austrian service. The second married a younger duke of the House of Wurtemberg; while a fourth, with whom we are afterwards to become better acquainted, who still holds an honoured place amongst us as the mother of our Queen, had become wife of the Prince of Leiningen—a mediatised territory in the south of Germany. But, besides these daughters, Francis left three sons, *Ernest* and *Ferdinand*, aged twenty-two and twenty-one, and *Leopold*, just sixteen. As he had but little property to leave them, the eldest was settled in the paternal mansion at Coburg. The two younger had to seek their fortunes on a larger field. It was a stirring time in Europe, and the allied armies afforded abundant employment for young men. Vienna accordingly was a great object of attraction, and there, perhaps, they learnt the Austrian maxim, which they so well carried out afterwards in practice—

“Bella gerant alii, tu, felix Austria, nube.”*

1816 was a lucky year for them. Their father had been just ten years dead. *Ferdinand*, who had entered the Austrian service and become a Roman Catholic, married at the beginning of this year the heiress of an Austrian noble of immense wealth, the Prince of Kohary. *Leopold*, a few months later, was united to the heiress of the British crown, the Princess Charlotte. Next year, *Ernest*, the eldest son, the head of the house, married the only daughter of the Duke of Saxe Gotha and Altenburg, the largest of this division of the little duchies; and the year after, 1818, their sister *Victoria*, Princess of Leiningen, a young widow of thirty-two, was married to King George III's fourth son, Edward, Duke of Kent.

Important as all these four marriages, occurring so near together, may have seemed at the time, who could have anticipated the events that have sprung out of them? Poor *Leopold*, having won popular esteem, left England childless and a widower; *Ferdinand* left a family which has made important alliances; while the issue of *Victoria*, though she married only a younger son, has, thanks partly to *Leopold*'s misfortune, but still more to royal marriage acts, ascended the throne of England, and found a consort in the child of the eldest brother *Ernest*, by the daughter of Saxe Gotha Altenburg. So closely have these alliances influenced the fortunes of the British crown, that they form an essential element in our current history.

The next important incident in the Coburg fortunes affected their status in Germany, rather than their position in the theatre of Europe. Duke

Ernest's father-in-law, the old Duke of Gotha Altenburg, died in 1822, and as he had no child but the daughter married to *Ernest*, he was succeeded by his only brother. Three years later, *that* brother died without issue, and his line of the family became extinct. Under these circumstances, what was to become of the duchies? According to the custom of the country, the other branches of the family met in conclave on the subject. We do not hear that the *people* were consulted; but in November, 1826, with the consent of the German Confederation, a family convention was agreed upon. The duchies of Gotha and Altenburg, so long united, were separated; *Gotha*, the larger portion, was given to *Ernest*, who already had Coburg Saalfeld; *Altenburg* was given to the Duke of Saxe Hildburghausen; but as this transaction gave a much larger share to those dukes than was held by the Duke of Meiningen, the territories of this last were increased by his receiving Saalfeld from one of his brother-dukes, and Hildburghausen from the other; *Ernest* thus became Duke of Saxe Coburg Gotha, and the arrangement then concluded is now subsisting. According to our latest information, the three duchies stand as follows.

The Duke of *Saxe Meiningen* (including Hildburghausen and Saalfeld) has a territory of forty-three German square miles, which is a little larger than Cambridgeshire. His subjects formed in 1857 a population of 165,000, or rather less than the population of Leeds. The revenue of the state amounted to £137,000, of which rather less than half arose from the seigniorial property; and the national debt was a little more than £300,000.*

The Duke of *Saxe Coburg Gotha* rules a territory of thirty-five square miles, which is just equal to Westmoreland. The population in 1855 were 150,000 souls, or about that of Edinburgh. The revenue amounted to £220,000, and was burdened by a national debt of only £163,000, of which £60,000 consisted of paper money in circulation.

The Duke of *Saxe Altenburg* governs the smallest of the three dukedoms. It contains twenty-four square miles of territory, which is a little larger than Bedfordshire, and had in 1857 a population of 133,000 souls, or about that of Sheffield. Its revenue amounted to £111,000, and its debt to £307,000.

Such are three of the sovereign states of Europe, by no means the smallest, since there are twelve smaller states in the German Confederation alone, not counting the free cities. Yet the united revenue of the three is exceeded, perhaps, by several of our English nobility. In superficial area, they are together a little larger than Lancashire, or than Norfolk, but smaller than Lincolnshire or Devon. Their united population is about equal to that of the county of Somerset.

The European troubles, consequent on the French Revolution of July, resulted in another step in the fortunes of the House of Coburg. Prince *Leopold* was highly esteemed—had formed ties of attachment among the Whig families of this country—had even been pressed to accept the vacant throne of Greece,

* “Let others wage their wars, thou, fortunate Austria, win by marriage.”

* Our late Queen Adelaide was a sister of the present Duke of Saxe Meiningen.

which perilous honour he wisely declined. When, however, in the course of 1831, it became necessary for the Belgian people, under the guidance of the other Powers, to select a sovereign capable of fitting a difficult and rather delicate position; when the Duke of Leuchtenburg, son of Eugene Beauharnois, was considered unsuitable, from his Bonapartist connections; and Louis Philippe, the new King of the Barricades, much as he might like it, was obliged to decline the crown for his son, the Duke de Nemours; they cast their eyes on the favoured son-in-law of the late English king. After some hesitation, Leopold accepted the laborious office; and history will record that he has acquitted himself well. It was obvious that in the then position of his adopted nation, the support of the liberal governments of England and France was deeply important, as a counterpoise to the influence of Russia on the side of the Dutch king, against whom they had revolted. He accordingly, in the next year, at the mature age of forty-one, made Louise, the worthy daughter of Louis Philippe, his queen. She was valued by her people, and her death, eighteen years afterwards, was felt as a national loss. He has three children, now attaining manhood, and has adopted the policy of marrying them into the Imperial family of Austria; his daughter being the wife of the young Emperor of Austria's brother; his eldest son, the Duke of Brabant, having married the Emperor's cousin. It remains to be seen how these alliances will affect the future of Belgium.

In 1837, our William IV, whose short reign of seven years will be looked upon as an epoch in history, from the remarkable constitutional and legislative changes it embraced, was removed by death. A girl of eighteen, the daughter of a lady of the House of Coburg, quietly took her place on the throne of the most powerful kingdom of the world. Her training as an accomplished princess and constitutional sovereign, reflected the utmost credit on her widowed mother, and has contributed very greatly to the esteem in which the family is held.

Duke Ernest, whom we have seen in 1826 enlarging his dominions, had only two sons. He died in 1844, and was succeeded by the elder, *Ernest II*, who now reigns over the family patrimony. This duke has distinguished himself of late by advocating a liberal policy in Europe. He married a daughter of the Grand Duke of Baden, but has no family.

Ernest's younger son, Albert, just the age of his first cousin, our sovereign, had been brought up in close intimacy with her; their union in February, 1840, still further raised the influence of the descendants of Duke Francis in the councils of modern Europe. It does not become us to speak fully of the illustrious pair, and of the vigorous and well-trained family, now springing into a third generation, that they have gathered around them. We will merely say of the Prince Consort, that it speaks admirably for his training, that the position he has held in this country has been maintained with so few mistakes. He has proved a wise adviser of the Queen, in those few instances when the sovereign of this country is really called on to act for herself,

and has done as much as any prince can do to encourage science and raise the tone of the national taste.

[To be continued.]

THE FIRE-SIDE.

COME, reader, come with me, and let us sit down by the fire-side together. The sun has gone down; the shadows of night prevail. The winds are blowing without, but the fire is sparkling within. The shutters are closed, the curtains are drawn, there is yet an hour that may be passed peacefully and pleasantly; let it be passed by the fireside.

The fire-side is a chosen spot, a chartered space, endeared by a thousand affectionate recollections. It is so in my case; may it be the same in yours! But all earthly things are given to change, and the fire-side of our infancy and youth is rarely that of our manhood and old age. Still, however, it retains an attractive charm; still it has a hold, a strong hold on our affections.

What though we are no longer children; though we no more behold those who watched over us in our by-gone days; though the friends of our youth may be looked for in vain; there are other beings thronging around us, sharing our joys and our sorrows; other interests have grown up in our hearts. The fire-side is yet the home of domestic peace; and if there are in heaven those who draw our thoughts after them, there are also on earth those who call them back again to the world.

Let us make the most of our common mercies; and if health and strength, if food and fuel, if a home and fire-side be ours, let us see how we can turn them to the best advantage. Some of the pleasantest, some of the happiest hours of my life, have been spent by the fire-side; and you, too, must have had your fire-side enjoyments.

Let us make the most of our common mercies. We paint our houses, whitewash our walls, and weed our gardens; why not, then, improve our fire-sides? Why not make them all that they should be, by banishing from them all that is unlovely, and adorning them with all that is amiable and excellent? When a family party, a fire-side circle, are all of one mind; when their love is without dissimulation; when they abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good; when they are kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another; when they look to the same Saviour unreservedly for salvation, and with one heart and voice sing his praise; they come nearer happiness than any thing on this side heaven.

What the future may be we know not; let us be grateful for the present and the past; for he that can look back to the fire-side of his infancy, his youth, and his manhood, without feeling some kindling glow of friendship and affection, must indeed have been unhappy.

If, in the mirthful sports of your childhood, when the fire has blazed cheerfully, your eye has been the brightest of the assembled throng; and if, in after years, you have found your fire-side a fire-side of happiness, when next you sit there, take up the Book of Life, that your joy may be full. If you are looking aught for a more enduring joy than earth can give, the brightest fire-side scene is as nothing compared with what is promised. And if the bitter bread and water of affliction and sorrow have been your sustenance, still take up the book of eternal life, and read what is in store for the sorrowful servants of the Lord:—"He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Again I call upon you to improve your common mercies, and among them not to neglect the improvement of your fire-side, that it may become the dwelling-place of a grateful heart, the home of hospitality, the shrine of friendship, the sanctuary of affection, and the temple of praise.

dubiously, "whether this holds good in every case. This book," laying his hand on his Bible, "tells us that 'some men's sins go before them to judgment, and some men's follow after.' But it held good in mine; and my only wonder is now, that I wore the mask so long without its falling off or slipping aside.

"I never knew who was the informant; but Ellen heard of my profligacies—of some of them, at least; and her friends heard of them too. Unsuspicious and loving as she was, she did not at first believe what she heard. She knew how censorious the world is, and she set it all down to envy and malice. Her friends, however, were more suspicious, and they would have persuaded her to renounce me at once.

"It was not in her nature to do this; but neither was it in her nature to conceal from me the rumours which, if she had fully believed them, would have stricken her with shame and horror. She frankly told me what had been said against me; and I declared that it was all slander—that an enemy had done it.

"I will not prolong this part of my story, Mr. Keenedge," continued the poor clerk; "let me only say that, though Ellen firmly believed me then, and would have defended me—as indeed she did—from the busy tongues which, when once they began, did not cease to whisper to my disadvantage, the time was not long in coming when she could no longer disbelieve or defend. And then she wept over me, prayed for me, warned and entreated me; while I, weak, besotted, and base that I was, confessing in part my faults, extenuating some, and denying others, promised to abandon evil companionships and evil practices, and escaped from her presence—to plunge deeper into vice than before.

"This could not last long, my friend. It did not. If I had been at that time earnest in my professed resolution to reform, so many chains of habit and companionship were fastened to my soul and circumstances, that escape was all but impossible. But I was not earnest. I loved sin, though I did not like its bitter fruit.

"No, it did not last long," repeated the penitent; "and I can thank God now, who permitted my sin to be its own punishment, and to bring me to deserved ruin, that he might, by his own Almighty grace, save my soul from destruction. But this part of my story must be for another night." Saying this, the poor clerk relapsed into silence, broken only when he rose to clasp the hand of his friendly companion, and to bid him farewell.

Had Mr. Keenedge, after this, softly returned, and listened at the closed door of his lodger (which, however, he would have scorned), he might have heard the poor clerk bemoaning himself thus:—"Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." And then, a livelier, happier strain might have been heard—a strain of gratitude and hope:—"O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast

angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength, and my song: He also is become my salvation."

THE HOUSE OF SAXE COBURG.

PART II.

LET us return to the fortunes of that Ferdinand, the elder brother of the Duchess of Kent and of Leopold, who married the heiress of an Austrian nobleman, and went by the name of the Count of Coburg-Kohary. He died, in 1851, at the age of sixty-six; but long before that time his children had extended the family reputation and power by creating some brilliant alliances.

Both the kingdoms of the Spanish peninsula have in this century had the very singular fortune of being subjected to the rule of infant queens. In each, the ancient law of succession was changed to keep out male heirs of absolutist tendencies; in each, the influence of other European governments was brought to bear, in order to set the female sovereign on the throne; and in each, after a protracted and sanguinary contest, the cause of the female, which was regarded as that of constitutional liberty, has ultimately triumphed. With the case of Spain we have no immediate concern. Portugal, however, which has become an appendage of the Coburg family, belongs to this history. The young queen, Donna Maria da Gloria, descendant of a line of kings of the House of Braganza, was born at Rio Janeiro, the capital of Brazil, where her family had retired to escape the troubles of the peninsula on Buonaparte's invasion. On the death of her grandfather, her father, Don Pedro, thought it wise to separate the crowns of Portugal and Brazil, and therefore abdicated the former in her favour, retaining the latter for himself. She was sent across the Atlantic to gain possession of her European kingdom as best she might—the commencement of her stormy career. This was in 1828, when she was nine years old. The writer witnessed her landing and reception at Falmouth, and her cause was warmly espoused in this country, which was then in the hey-day of enthusiasm for the extension of liberalism abroad.

It was not till 1833, after some years of struggle, in which she was supported by English arms, that her cause prevailed over that of her uncle, Don Miguel, and she was really seated on the throne. An uneasy throne it continued to be for many years. At the beginning of 1835, a husband was found for her in the Duke of Leuchtenburg, son of Eugene Beauharnais, the stepson of the first Napoleon. Within two months he died, after a very short illness, being carried off by quinsy. It was necessary, for the security of the throne, to seek a successor to him. Ferdinand, a boy of nineteen, the eldest son of the Duke of Coburg-Kohary, of the same name, was selected for the post, and in April, 1836, became the second husband of a widow of seventeen. Fortune smiled on him more than on his predecessor. He continued

King, nominally, to her death, in November, 1853; King-Regent to his son for two years longer; and now, we may suppose, enjoys the position of King-Father. Although he has not been popular with the Portuguese, yet the country has for some years been gradually tranquillizing. Liberal institutions are preserved, the nation is enjoying a striking freedom from intestine commotions, and the little we now hear of Portuguese politics may be safely accepted as an index that, under the guidance of Coburg common sense, the constitutional machinery is working with but little friction. His eldest son is Pedro v, King of Portugal, a young man of promise, now twenty-two years of age, who married, in the spring of 1858, a princess of Hohenzollern, one of those small German States which were absorbed into the Prussian dominions a few years ago. If portraits are to be trusted, he chose a bride conspicuous for her personal charms. Yet, young and lovely as was Queen Stephanie, she was carried off, in July of last year, by an affection of the throat, said to be the prevalent diphtheria. He has two sisters and four brothers, the eldest of whom, the Duke of Oporto, is not uncommonly mentioned in the columns of our "Court Journal," and, consequently, is a favourite subject of speculation with the fair sex.

But the Count of Coburg-Kohary had other children to marry besides the King-Consort of Portugal. His youngest son, Leopold, now thirty-five, is in the army of Bavaria, and still unmarried; but the two others, Augustus and Victoria, united themselves with a family at that time one of the most powerful in Europe, though now it is dwelling in the shade.

It may be that the House of Orleans is reaping the happiness of privacy after having tasted and known the hollowness of all the splendour and worship that surround royalty; however that be, for nearly eighteen years, from 1830 to 1848, no family filled a larger space in the admiring eyes of Europe. The father, with all his faults, was a man of pre-eminent ability, and few anticipated that he would suffer the crown of France to slip from his grasp. Accordingly, alliances were eagerly sought with him, and, in more than one instance, he used them for political aggrandisement. He had already given one daughter to King Leopold, and in 1840 his second son, the Duke of Nemours, who, according to some, might have saved the throne in 1848, married Victoria, daughter of the Count of Coburg-Kohary, and sister of the Portuguese King-Consort. She bore him four children, and sank, about two years ago, at the early age of thirty-five. Her eldest son, who bears the name of Count of Eu, is a lad of eighteen. He served with the Spanish army in the recent war with Morocco.

Three years after Victoria's marriage, her brother Augustus strengthened the union by marrying Clementine, Louis Philippe's youngest daughter. Four children have been the result of this marriage. We have thus seen how the Catholic branch carried out the destinies of the family in its alliances; and although, in one direction, no important results have ensued, in the other it has given them the possession of a European throne.

But there is another branch of the House of Coburg, which we have not mentioned, which claims notice from its near relationship to our gracious sovereign. When Victoria, the mother of our queen, came to this country, the bride of Edward Duke of Kent, she was the widow of a German mediatised prince. The princes of Leiningen had formerly been independent sovereigns; but, in the political changes of time, they had been reduced from that position, their lands absorbed into the neighbouring larger principalities, and themselves converted into ordinary nobility. A great many mediæval states had been treated in this way: the only wonder is, that so many of them are still surviving. The possessions of the House of Leiningen are apparently pretty extensive, existing in the Grand Duchy of Baden, in Bavaria, and in Hesse. The Duchess of Kent, by her first husband, had two children. Charles, the eldest, half-brother of our queen, was only ten years old when his father died. He succeeded him as Prince of Leiningen, and died at the latter end of 1856, at the age fifty-two. He left two sons, the younger of whom is in the Austrian service, while the elder, Ernest, who succeeded his father as Prince of Leiningen, is a commander in the British navy, and saw service in the Black Sea during our war with Russia. He married, in the autumn of last year, a princess of Baden, younger sister of the Duchess of Saxe Coburg Gotha, wife of his cousin, Duke Ernest the second; another sister has married the Grand Duke Michael of Russia. The Prince of Leiningen and his bride are resident in this country, occupying a cottage in the Isle of Wight, near the marine residence of their royal aunt.

The other child of the Duchess of Kent, who is half-sister of Queen Victoria, is still living. She is the wife of Ernest, Prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, another of the mediatised principalities of Germany. She has a family of three sons and two daughters; one daughter has married, about three years ago, the son of that Prince of Schleswig Holstein Augustenburg, who was so unfortunately mixed up with the Schleswig Holstein war. Of the sons, the official ardour is variously distributed; the eldest being in the Wurtemberg military service; the second in that of Austria, having the honour of attending his imperial master at Villafranca; while the third is that Prince Victor of Hohenlohe, who is known and esteemed as an active officer in our navy.

The living descendants of Duke Francis, who died rather more than half a century ago, amount to at least fifty in number. As we have seen, they occupy various positions in worldly rank. In high families, as in humbler ones, there will be some members rising in wealth and influence, others who scarcely maintain their position, and others who decline in the social scale. Saxe Coburg is no exception; and yet it is doubtful if any family could be pointed out, so large a proportion of whose members have in so few years risen to positions of influence in the world. Fifty years ago, they held only an unimportant German duchy; now they occupy, in addition, the thrones of Great Britain, Portugal, and of Belgium, and are intimately allied

by marriage with the Houses of Austria, Prussia, and the Orleans family of France.

What has given them this position? Is it mere accident, or do they possess any intrinsic qualities by which they have earned it? This question is not very difficult to answer. In the first place, they have the advantage of good personal appearance. Nature has endowed them, we will not say with beauty, but with handsome and pleasing persons. It is only the shallow philosopher that will laugh at this, and suppose it can have nought to do with success in Europe. Not so; it materially assists in winning the esteem of mankind, and on the esteem of our fellows all political prosperity rests.

But we must look farther: personal appearance *alone* will not command position and influence. If we cast the eye over the career of the family, we shall observe that they have been generally successful in the exercise of their parental duties. All parents know how difficult these duties are to fulfil; and in high stations, where temptations are abundant, the difficulties must be greater. Yet the Coburgs have succeeded in training their young so as to make of them worthy men and worthy women, fitted for the business of life. This redounds greatly to their credit, and has materially strengthened the position of the family.

But a third quality of the Coburgs is no less conspicuous; and that is, their strong common sense. They have not earned military distinction, they have not made scientific discoveries; neither literature nor art make any of them their slaves; they cannot be said to have exhibited brilliant genius in any department; and yet, in the business of their lives, they show a prudence and discretion which have been the prime causes of their success. Witness the able manner with which Leopold has acted the part of constitutional monarch in Belgium, reminding us of our William III, who had a similar, and hardly more difficult position, a century and a half ago. Witness the excellent sense displayed by our sovereign in her sometimes rather delicate dealings with the chiefs of political parties. Witness the sound judgment which has shown itself in the addresses of the Prince Consort, as philanthropist and as patron of science and art. Witness, too, the tranquil state of Portugal, over which Coburg influence has presided for more than twenty years. It is clear, then, that as a family they possess strong common sense—a common sense that enables them to appreciate and adapt themselves to the circumstances by which they are surrounded; still more, a common sense that enables them to do, what Louis Napoleon boasts of—to understand the character of the age. And perhaps they understand it better than his Imperial Highness. *He* has cast in his lot with universal suffrage and despotism; *they* with constitutional monarchy and representative institutions. *It remains to be seen which is the correct reading.*

The events that followed 1848 were a serious blow to the liberal cause; and one ill effect has been that the Coburgs, as if losing faith in their principles, have begun to ally themselves with absolute courts, such as Austria. The temptation is great; but to proceed far in this direction will be fatal to

the popularity, and sooner or later to the influence, of the family. They will cease to represent the liberal cause; they will no longer be allied with the principle of progress, which, however much it be retarded and thrown back, must eventually crush all resistance in its sure but gradual advance. Herein consists the danger to the House of Coburg, and it is a danger incident to all who sit long upon a throne. It is that of forgetting the people by whom the throne is supported, and for whose welfare it exists. So far, the House of Coburg has not fallen into this grave and irredeemable fault. So far, they have lent themselves to the service of mankind, and are reaping the fruit in the approbation and esteem of the civilized world. So far, they are identified with liberal policy. So far, they represent that large and moderate class of society, who struggle to preserve the blessings of freedom without its excesses, and save mankind without subjecting it to military dictatorship. Therefore it is that the family of Saxe Coburg are prospering; for these reasons they hold the prominent place they do in the councils of Europe; and whatever the future may have in store for them, they are for ever associated with our century, and history will make honourable mention of their names.

RAILWAY BRIDGES AND VIADUCTS.

The number of bridges in the country has been enormously multiplied by the railways. The South Eastern line has not less than 141; the South Western, 188; and the London and Birmingham, 270. It was ascertained in 1847, that, for every mile of railway constructed up to that time, from two to four bridges had been built, many of them hundreds of feet in length, of great height, solidity, and cost. The vast majority are, however, of the smaller class, leading the lines over canals, over or under the common roads and narrow field communications. They were at first wholly of brick or stone, according to the district; but it was soon found more economical to erect them by means of cast-iron girders, laid from one abutment to the other. It is frequently the case that railways intersect existing communications at an oblique angle, in which case, to preserve the straightness of the line, the arch of the bridge is placed obliquely to the abutments. These ingenious structures are styled "skew bridges," of which there are many beautiful examples in brick, stone, and ironwork.

Improvements in the manufacture of iron, together with increased facilities of transit, led to its use and extensive employment in building bridges. The first in the kingdom was constructed over the Severn, at Colebrook Dale, about the year 1780. It consists of five cast-iron arched ribs, nearly semicircular, with uprights of the same material, upon which the roadway is carried. Another example, on a different plan of construction, was soon afterwards carried over the river Weir at Sunderland—a single arch, bold and elegant, remarkable for its span of 200 feet, which it was then thought could not be surpassed. Vauxhall Bridge, London, is said to be the lightest of its kind in Europe; but