

came in the autumn of 1857, when Frederick William IV. became insane and necessarily abandoned the task of government. It passed for a time to the Queen and the old reactionary camarilla, though the King's brother, William, Prince of Prussia, was named Lieutenant-General of the realm. This condition of things lasted for nearly a year, but speedily became intolerable. In a largely autocratic state like Prussia the absence of a responsible head threw the administration out of gear; the political horizon was becoming increasingly stormy, and in October 1859 Prince William became Regent, an office which he continued to fill till his accession to the throne after the King's death in 1861. Some ministerial changes, of no particular importance, followed his assumption of power.

William was in most respects a typical Prussian squire. Personally honest, his intellect was but mediocre. He lacked his brother's high-flown romanticism and also his moral instability. He believed vaguely in Germany's destiny, but this was subordinated in his mind to the greatness of Prussia and of the Prussian ruling house. In the God-appointed mission of the Hohenzollerns he believed implicitly. While far from accepting Bismarck's clear-cut views as to the necessity of war for the hegemony of Germany, he spoke to his ministers "of the moral conquests that Prussia ought to make in Germany by wise legislation, the development of moral elements and the use of such means of union as the Zollverein." The Liberalism with which popular opinion credited him did not exist. "I make a great distinction," he wrote at the moment of his accession, "between parliamentary legislation and parliamentary government; I admit the first, not the second." Frederick William IV. would have said the same. His advent to power was soon followed by a renaissance of