In 1897 the Riksdag had received among its members the first socialistic representative in the person of R. H. Brauting, the leader of the Swedish Social Democrats. The Socialists, who had formerly confined their activity to questions affecting the working classes and their wages, took, however, in 1902 an active part in the agitation for the extension of the franchise. Processions of many thousands of workmen were organized, in Stockholm and in other towns of the kingdom, just before the Riksdag began the discussion on the above-mentioned bill of the government, and when the bill was introduced in the chambers a general and well- organized strike took place and continued during the three days the debate on the bill lasted. As this strike was of an exclu­sively political kind, and was intended to put pressure on the chambers, it was generally disapproved, and failed in its object. The prime minister, Admiral von Otter, resigned shortly after thc end of the session, and was succeeded by Boström, the ex­premier, who at the request of the king again assumed office.

The relations with Norway during King Oscar’s reign had great influence on political life in Sweden, and more than once it seemed as if the union between the two countries was on the point of being wrecked. The dissensions chiefly had their origin in the demand by Norway for separate consuls and foreign ministers, to which reference is made under Norway. At last, after vain negotiations and discussions, the Swedish government in 1895 gave notice to Norway that the commercial treaty which till then had existed between the two countries and would lapse in July 1897 would, according to a decision in the Riksdag, cease, and as Norway at the time had raised the customs duties, a considcrable diminution in the exports of Sweden to Norway took place. The Swedish minister of foreign affairs, Count Lewenhaupt, who was considered as too friendly disposed towards the Norwegians, resigned, and was replaced by Count Ludvig Douglas, who represented the opinion of the majority in the First Chamber. When, however, the Norwegian Storthing, for the third time, passed a bill for a national or “ pure ” flag, which King Oscar eventually sanctioned, Count Douglas resigned in his turn and was succeeded by the Swedish minister at Berlin, Lagerheim, who managed to pilot the questions of the union into more quiet waters. He succeeded all the better as the new elections to the Riksdag of r900 showed clearly that the Swedish people was not inclined to follow the ultra­conservative or so-called “ patriotic ” party, which resulted in the resignation of the two leaders of that party, Professor Oscar Alin and Count Marschal Patrick Reutersvard as members of the First Chamber. On the other hand, ex-Professor E. Carlson, of the High School of Gothenburg, succeeded in forming a party of Liberals and Radicals to the number of about 90 members, who, besides being in favour of the extension of the franchise, advocated the full equality of Norway with Sweden in the management of foreign affairs. (O. H. D.)

The state of quietude which for some time prevailed with regard to the relations with Norway was not, however, to be of long duration. The question of separate consuls for Norway soon came up again. In 1902 the Swedish government proposed that negotiations in this matter should be opened with the Norwegian government, and that a joint committee, consisting of repre­sentatives from both countries, should be appointed to consider the question of a separate consular service without in any way interfering with the existing administration of the diplomatic affairs of the two countries. The result of the negotiations was published in a so-called “ communiqué,” dated the 24th of March 1903, in which, among other things, it was proposed that the relations of the separate consuls to the joint ministry of foreign affairs and the embassies should be arranged by identical laws, which could not be altered or repealed without the consent of the governments of the two countries. The proposal for these identical laws, which the Norwegian government in May 1904 submitted, did not meet with the approval of the Swedish government. The latter in their reply proposed that the Swedish foreign minister should have such control over the Norwegian consuls as to prevent the latter from exceeding their authority.@@1 This proposal, however, the Norwegian government found unacceptable, and explained that, if such control were insisted upon, all further negotiations would be purposeless. They maintained that the Swedish demands were incompatible with the sovereignty of Norway, as the foreign minister was a Swede and the proposed Norwegian consular service, as a Nor­wegian institution, could not be placed under a foreign authority. A new proposal by the Swedish government was likewise rejected, and in February 1905 the Norwegians broke off the negotiations. Notwithstanding this an agreement did not appear to be out of the question. All efforts to solve the consular question by itself had failed, but it was considered that an attempt might be made to establish separate consuls in combination with a joint admini­stration of diplomatic affairs on a full unionistic basis. Crown Prince Gustaf, who during the illness of King Oscar was appointed regent, took the initiative of renewing the negotiations between the two countries, and on the 5th of April in a combined Swedish and Norwegian council of state made a proposal for a reform both of the administration of diplomatic affairs and of the consular service on the basis of full equality between the two kingdoms, with the express reservation, however, of a joint foreign minister —Swedish or Norwegian—as a condition for the existence of the union. This proposal was approved of by the Swedish Riksdag on the 3rd of May 1905. In order that no obstacles should be placed in the way for renewed negotiations, Mr Boström, the prime minister, resigned and was succeeded by Mr Ramstedt. The proposed negotiations were not, however, renewed.

On the 23rd of May the Norwegian Storthing passed the government’s proposal for the establishment of separate Nor­wegian consuls, and as King Oscar, who again had resumed the reins of government, made use of his constitutional right to veto the bill, the Norwegian ministry tendered their resignation. The king, however, declared he could not now accept their resignation, whereupon the ministry at a sitting of the Norwegian Storthing on the 7th of June placed their resignation in its hands. The Storthing thereupon unanimously adopted a resolution stating that, as the king had declared himself unable to form a govern­ment, the constitutional royal power “ ceased to be operative,” whereupon the ministers were requested, until further instruc­tions, to exercise the power vested in the king, and as King Oscar thus had ceased to act as “ the king of Norway,” the union with Sweden was in consequence dissolved.

In Sweden, where they were least of all prepared for the turn things had taken, the action of the Storthing created the greatest surprise and resentment. The king solemnly pro­tested against what had taken place and summoned an extraordinary session of the Riksdag for the 20th of June to consider what measures should be taken with regard to the question of the union, which had arisen suddenly through the revolt of the Norwegians on the 7th of June. The Riksdag declared that it was not opposed to negotiations being entered upon regarding the conditions for the dissolution of the union if the Norwegian Storthing, after a new' election, made a proposal for the repeal of the Act of Union between the two countries, or, if a proposal to this effect was made by Norway after the Norwegian people, through a plebiscite, had declared in favour of the dissolution of the union. The Riksdag further resolved that 100 million kroner (about £555,000) should be held in readiness and be avail­able as the Riksdag might decide. On the resignation of the Ramstedt ministry Mr Lundeberg formed a coalition ministry consisting of members of the various parties in the Riksdag, after which the Riksdag was prorogued on the 3rd of August.

After the plebiscite in Norway on the 13th of August had decided in favour of the dissolution of the union and after the Storthing had requested the Swedish government to co-operate with it for the repeal of the Act of Union, a conference of delegates from both countries was convened at Karlstad on the 31st of August. On the 23rd

@@@1 For further details see Norway: *History.*