One morning, toward the end of February 1848, I sat quietly in my attic chamber, working hard at my tragedy of *Ulrich von Hutten*, when suddenly a friend rushed breathlessly into the room, exclaiming: "What, you sitting here! Do you not know what has happened?"

"No; what?"

"*The French have driven away Louis Philippe and proclaimed the Republic!*"

I threw down my pen---ant that was the end of *Ulrich von Hutten*. I never touched the manuscript again. We tore down the stair, into the street, to the market square, the accustomed meeting place for all the student societies after their midday dinner. Although it was still forenoon, the market was already crowded with young men talking excitedly. There was no shouting, no noise, only agitated conversation. What did we want there? This probably no one knew. But since the French had driven away Louis Philippe and proclaimed the republic, something of course must happen here, too. Some of the students had brought their rapiers along, as if it were necessary to make an attack or to defend themselves. We were dominated by a vague feeling as if a great outbreak of elemental forces had begun, as if an earthquake was impending of which we had felt the first shock, and we instinctively crowded together. Thus we wandered about in numerous bands---to the *Kneipe*, where our restlessness, however, would not suffer us long to stay; then to other pleasure resorts, where we fell into conversation with all manner of strangers, to find in them the same confused, astonished, and expectant state of mind; then back to the market square, to see what might be going on there; then again somewhere else, without aim and end, until finally late in the night fatigue compelled us to find the way home.

The next morning there were the usual lectures to be attended. But how profitless! The voice of the professor sounded like a monotonous drone coming from far away. What he had to say did not seem to concern us. The pen that should have taken notes remained idle. At last we closed our notebooks with a sigh and went away, impelled by a feeling that now we had something more important to do---to devote ourselves to the affairs of the fatherland. And this we did by seeking again as quickly as possible the company of our friends, in order to discuss what had happened and what was to come. In these conversations, excited as they were, certain ideas and catchwords worked themselves to the surface, which expressed more or less the feelings of the people. Now had arrived in Germany the day for the establishment of "German Unity," and the founding of a great, powerful, national German empire. First in line the convocation of a national parliament. Then the demands for civil rights and liberties, free speech, free press, the right of free assembly, equality before the law, a freely elected representation of the
people with legislative power, responsibility of ministers, self-government of the
communes, the right of the people to carry arms, the formation of a civic guard
with elective officers and so on—-in short, that which was called a "Constitutional
form of government on a broad democratic basis."

Republican ideas were at first only sparingly expressed. But the word democracy
was soon on all tongues, and many, too, thought it a matter of course that if the
princes should try to withhold from the people the rights and liberties demanded,
force would take the place of mere petition. Of course the regeneration of the
country must, if possible, be accomplished by peaceable means. A few days after
the outbreak of this commotion I reached my nineteenth birthday. I remember to
have been so entirely absorbed by what was happening that I could hardly turn my
thoughts to anything else. Like many of my friends, I was dominated by the
feeling that at last the great opportunity had arrived for giving to the German
people the liberty which was their birthright and to the German fatherland its
unity and greatness, and that it was now the first duty of every German to do and
to sacrifice everything for this sacred object. We were profoundly, solemnly, in
earnest.

Great news came from Vienna! There the students of the university were the first
to assail the Emperor of Austria with the cry for liberty and citizens' rights. Blood
flowed in the streets, and the downfall of Prince Metternich was the result. The
students organized themselves as the armed guard of liberty. In the great cities of
Prussia there was a mighty commotion. Not only Cologne, Coblenz, and Trier, but
also Breslau, Königsberg, and Frankfurt-am-der-Oder, sent deputations to Berlin
to entreat the king. In the Prussian capital the masses surged upon the streets, and
everybody looked for events of great import.

While such tidings rushed in upon us from all sides like a roaring hurricane, we in
the little university town of Bonn were also busy preparing addresses to the
sovereign, to circulate them for signature, and to send them to Berlin. On the 18th
of March we too had our mass demonstration. A great multitude gathered for a
solemn procession through the streets of the town. The most respectable citizens,
not a few professors, and a great number of students and people of all grades
marched in close ranks. At the head of the procession Professor Kunkel bore the
tricolor---black, red, and gold---which so long had been prohibited as the
revolutionary flag. Arrived in the market square, he mounted the steps of the city
call and spoke to the assembled throng. He spoke with wonderful eloquence, his
voice ringing out in its most powerful tones as he depicted a resurrection of
German unity and greatness and new liberties and rights of the German people,
which now must be conceded by the princes or won by force by the people. And
when at last he waved the black-red-gold banner, and predicted to a free German
nation a magnificent future, enthusiasm without bounds broke forth. People
clapped their hands; they shouted; they embraced one another; they shed tears. In
a moment the city was covered with black, red, and gold flags, and not only the
Burschenschaft, but almost everybody wore a black-red-gold cockade on his hat.