

confirming the material—would, without question, have purchased in time the world's condonation for an abuse of victory ; and perhaps success was not impossible, though the task was far more difficult than that which the French monarchy assumed when it replaced a complicated insecurity in old Alsace by firm and equal government. It was not so easy for the Germans to attach to a system which was itself upon probation a people which had thought itself happy in its long association with the French fortunes. And for that heavier undertaking they had no similar aptitude. The attractive genius of France has easily reconciled diversities of race and speech upon her borders : it is no wonder if the Alsatians made as good Frenchmen as Basques, or Bretons, or Flemings. But among the German virtues that virtue of the imagination which we call sympathy is wanting. And it seems in this instance as if their crazy theory of race had persuaded the conquerors that no effort on their part was needed to accustom these new Germans to a change of nationality which involved a change of status.

For they had been free citizens of a homogeneous commonwealth ; and now they entered a federal system upon an exceptional footing of subordination to its five-and-twenty sovereign States. Alsace-Lorraine, the ransom of France, was in this sense a pledge of German unity, that it had been won by their joint effort under the leadership of Prussia. By the logic of conquest it became, not a new member of the federation, but the common property of all. And though since 1871 the machinery of its government has been readjusted more than once, the most plausible 'concessions' <sup>1</sup> have

<sup>1</sup> Until 1874 it was governed directly from the Imperial Chancellery through an Ober-präsident at Strasbourg ; then by a Statthalter