

So hard has been the lot of the Prussian Poles under these apostles of culture and of light—their language tabooed in the schools, their lands acquired under compulsion—that they welcome the coming of the Russian Tsar, believing that some form of autonomy under the Russian autocrat would be far preferable to their present condition. Of the temper of Alsace and Lorraine it is superfluous to speak. These provinces were once German ; and yet after more than forty years of German rule they are as French in their sympathies as when they first came, after the war of 1870, under German domination.

It is unnecessary to enlarge here upon the most recent example of German respect for the principle of nationality. It is true that the German Chancellor has more than once insisted that Germany had no quarrel with the liberty and independence of Belgium. She only demanded that German troops should be allowed a free passage through Belgian soil. As, however, the inevitable result must have been that France would have claimed the same privilege, and that, in consequence, free and independent Belgium would have become the cockpit of the contending Powers in a war which was no concern of hers, what sort of liberty or independence would such a state of things have implied ?

Upon the other hand we may, without cant or boasting, claim that the British Empire has, generally speaking, encouraged the national idea in its component members. The two exceptions that will be thrown in our teeth by no means prove the contrary. The case of Ireland is too complicated and too difficult to enter upon in a brief survey, but at least it may be asserted that, whatever may have been the sins of omission or commission in England's behaviour towards Ireland, for the last forty years, at any rate, there has been no desire, on the part of either