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PRUSSIA
AND THE POLES.

BY

OTTO WENKSTERN.

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PRUSSIA AND THE POLES.

I.

EVENTS too recent to require more than a passing allusion, have again mooted the question of the independence of Poland. The liberals in all countries are told, for the twentieth time at least, that this is the proper opportunity to redress the wrongs of the past, and that a nation which has been unjustly enslaved, should not in vain appeal to the generosity, the justice and the equity of Europe. Those who make this appeal cannot, must not, or will not understand that the wrongs they denounce may, in their time, have had the excuse of a paramount political necessity; that measures which at this moment are represented as wanton acts of aggression, were really measures of self-defence; that the causes which made the partition of Poland necessary, oppose its reconstitution; that a nation which, with all the

chances in its favour, forfeited its independence, and lost its possessions piecemeal through internal corruption and natural decay, is not likely to stand by its own strength, after it has been set up and propped up by the hands of united Europe, and that the task of resuscitating a defunct body politic is more impracticable even than that of preventing the decease of a moribund state. A lesson might have been learnt from the regeneration of Greece, which, in spite of the solicitude of the Great Powers, has not yet led, and is not, in all human probability, likely to lead, to those beneficial results, which were anticipated by the champions and advocates of Hellenic independence. The experiment has not proved successful enough to encourage the extension of its doubtful benefits, either to the Greek provinces which still belong to Turkey, or to the islands which denounce our protectorate. That the Hellenes should be subject to the harshness, the violence, and the caprices of the old Turkish rule was justly considered a hardship; but the disorder, the lawlessness, the moral and material degradation and corruption of the Greek kingdom, have made it an open question whether the latter evil is not worse than the first. The Great Powers cannot undo their own handiwork, nor can they allow any one else to undo it for them; but if the War of Independence had to be fought over again, it would certainly not be terminated by an intervention in favour of the Greeks.

To expatiate on the wrongs and to lament the

sufferings of Poland is a cheap display of political virtue. To enlarge in glowing terms on the wickedness of princes who conspired to invade and divide the territories of an unoffending neighbour and staunch ally, is a healthy exercise of the non-reasoning faculties; and the feat becomes the easier, in proportion to the degree of ignorance which the speaker or essayist may possess or assume for the occasion. The history of the decline and fall of the Polish kingdom remains yet to be written; but, even now, the truth of the matter is neither remote nor is it unapproachable. "There is no use in blinking the fact," says a late writer on the subject, "that the present bondage of Poland is the historical penalty for the evil deeds of its independent days. Had it possessed a decent government of any kind, so large a country and so valiant a people could not possibly have been cut into slices by its neighbours."

This matter-of-fact view of the partition of Poland is strengthened at every point by historical parallels. A nation which is fit to live an independent life, is not to be extinguished by a combination among its neighbours. Such combinations have attempted their worst in several cases. Sweden, Prussia, and England have in their day been marked out for conquest and partition; but in each case the hostile coalition was foiled by a determined, a persevering, and successful resistance. Poland dropped her provinces one by one, from sheer inability to hold them. Her vicious constitution, her divided councils,

the factious spirit of the ruling caste, the selfish intrigues of her leaders, and the domestic treasons which in all her internal dissensions invited foreign interference, brought her to that pass that her existence as an independent country could no longer be thought of. Her absorption into the Russian empire, was a mere question of time, and her partition among Austria, Prussia, and Russia, became a necessary measure of precaution on the part of the two first-named countries.

It was not a vain alarm which impelled two of the parties to the partition to burden themselves with barren, impoverished and devastated tracts of land, with a peasantry brutalised by the oppression of centuries, and with a gentry of proverbial fickleness and turbulence. The disruption of the body politic of Poland was steadily progressing, and all the parts that fell off, fell to the share of Russia. With the most friendly feelings to that power, Austria could not wish to see the Russians established in Gallicia. Nor could Prussia look forward with equanimity to the time when her allies and rivals—who had but recently been her foes—should shelter their navy in the port of Dantzic, establish their strongholds in Posen, and overawe Breslau on the one hand and Berlin on the other. The relations of friendly powers are necessarily based on a certain degree of equality. When all the strength is on the one side and all the weakness on the other, a good understanding may still exist, but it is the good understanding of a chief and his retainer; it is

based on the forbearance of the one, and the obedience of the other. Such a vassalage was distasteful to Prussia and to Austria. It is easy to blame them; it is still more easy to call the partition of Poland “the greatest political crime that ever was committed,” but those who judge of these matters in so off-hand a manner ought to consider the terrible dilemma in which the statesmen of 1772 were placed. Should they make war upon a powerful neighbour for the protection of another neighbour who had long ceased to protect himself? Or were they to stand by and allow a friendly and formidable country to advance to within a few days’ march from Berlin and Vienna? Wearied and worn with the protracted struggle for Silesia, they were in bad condition to engage in a fresh war. If they stood by and let Poland fulfil what manifestly appeared to be her destiny, their inaction would make them mere satellites to the greatest power on the continent. They elected to connive at what they could not prevent, and, by claiming their share of a dying kingdom, to mitigate the evil consequences which were sure to follow on the extinction of Poland.

II.

NOTHING short of a paramount political necessity could excuse the partition of Poland—such a necessity only could prompt that measure. Poland—such as the partitioning powers found it—was not a desirable prize; the factious gentry who had wrought the ruin of their country, were not desirable subjects. The towns—few and far between—were almost void of inhabitants; only a small portion of the land was cultivated in a savage and barbarous manner. Two-thirds of the country were swamp, moor, scrub, and bush, the haunt of wolves and robbers, whose numbers were only checked by the scanty flocks and the poverty of the villages on which they preyed. The land was without roads; the rivers without bridges and ferries. The rural population, serfs to a man, were ground to the dust by the exactions, the ill treatment and the systematic debasement of many generations of masters. The gentry—it is enough to say, that by them, and through them, had the country been turned into a wilderness.

“The majority of the towns,” says Dr. Freytag,*
 “were in ruins; so were by far the greater number of
 “farms in the plains. Bromberg, originally a German

* *Neue Bilder aus dem Leben des deutschen Volkes*, pp. 400-402.

“colony, was a mere heap of rubbish; to this day
 “it is impossible to ascertain how that town
 “was so reduced. The details of the hardships
 “suffered by the whole of the Netze district,
 “within the ten years previous to the Prussian occu-
 “pation, are altogether unknown; no historian, no
 “document, not even a memorandum, reports on
 “the destruction and the butcheries which have
 “taken place. The presumption is, that this district
 “was the battle-ground of the Polish factions, and
 “that famine and distempers consummated the work
 “of the fire and the sword of the patriots. The city
 “of Kulm preserved its strong walls and stately
 “churches; but, of the houses, the cellars alone
 “gaped amidst the broken rooftrees and crumbling
 “masonry of ruined buildings. Whole streets con-
 “sisted of nothing but such cellars, which sheltered
 “a few famine and fever-stricken wretches. Of the
 “forty houses which surrounded the Market Square,
 “twenty-eight had neither doors, nor roofs, nor
 “windows. No one owned them; no one claimed
 “them. Many other towns were in a similar
 “condition.

“The majority of the rural population, too, were
 “in a most miserable plight, more especially near
 “the Pomeranian frontier. On his approach to a
 “village, the wayfarer beheld hovels covered with
 “musty straw, mere molehills on a treeless and
 “gardenless plain. The hovel, made of wattled clay,
 “had but one room and no chimney; stoves and
 “candles were unknown; a piece of resinous wood

“ dispelled the darkness of the winter’s night. The
 “ principal article of furniture was a tin crucifix, with
 “ its appendant basin of holy water. The dirty and
 “ half savage people fed on gruel of rye-flour, and in
 “ many instances on herbs only, stewed into soup,
 “ on herrings and spirits. Drink was the only luxury
 “ indulged in by men and women. Bread was almost
 “ unknown; many had never tasted it, and few villages
 “ could boast of a baking-oven. If they kept bees—
 “ a rare case—they sold the honey in the towns;
 “ they also carved wooden spoons for sale at
 “ the fairs, where they bought long coats of coarse
 “ blue cloth, black fur caps and the bright red
 “ kerchiefs of the women. The loom was rare; the
 “ spinning-wheel still rarer. No song, no music was
 “ heard—no dancing seen. They took their drink in
 “ silence and fought in silence; they fell and slept
 “ where they lay. The rural gentry were hardly
 “ to be distinguished from the peasant; they followed
 “ the plough and trod the mud floor of their hovels in
 “ wooden shoes. The Prussian King found it a diffi-
 “ cult task to improve these people and do them
 “ good. The cultivation of the potato was intro-
 “ duced and spread rapidly; but for many years
 “ the plantations of fruit trees, which were made
 “ by Government order, were wantonly destroyed
 “ and an obstinate resistance was opposed to other
 “ attempts at the extension of cultivation.

“ As poor and reduced were the frontier districts
 “ inhabited by Poles; yet the Polish peasant,
 “ amid all his misery and thriftlessness, retained, at

“ least, the fitful energy of his tribe. Even on the
 “ estates of the nobility, of the Starosts, and the
 “ Crown, all the farm-buildings were dilapidated and
 “ past service. Letters had to be sent by special
 “ messengers, for the country was innocent of postal
 “ communications—a want which was not too
 “ severely felt in the country districts, where a large
 “ proportion of the gentry was as ignorant of
 “ reading and writing as the peasantry. The sick
 “ had to take their chance with the nostrums of
 “ some village-crone, for apothecaries were not to
 “ be found throughout the land. Any one ambitious
 “ of building a house had to import his masons and
 “ carpenters from Prussia. The country population
 “ carried on a losing fight with large packs of
 “ wolves; few were the villages which had not,
 “ every winter, to suffer severe losses of men, women,
 “ children and sheep. The small-pox or any other
 “ infectious disease ravaged whole parishes. There
 “ was no administration of justice; some of the
 “ larger towns had courts whose decisions there
 “ was no means of enforcing. The gentry dealt
 “ with the common people according to the pleasure
 “ or whim of the moment; they lacerated the backs
 “ or immured in their filthy dungeons, the persons,
 “ not only of the peasants, but also of the citizens
 “ of the smaller towns. In their quarrels among
 “ themselves, the contest was carried on by bribing
 “ the few courts which had jurisdiction over them;
 “ but in the period next preceding the Prussian
 “ occupation, they had resort to club-law only.”

This quotation gives a faithful sketch of a state of things, which is altogether incomprehensible to men reared among the comforts and traditions of an old established civilization. It is here reproduced, not in scorn of the Poles, but as a matter-of-fact statement, which shows that, irrespective of reasons of State, the outlying provinces of the former Polish kingdom were not a desirable acquisition; that the Poles who became subjects of Prussia were not the men to add to the strength or to the wealth of the country which adopted them, and that nothing but the imminent danger of the whole of Poland being swallowed up by Russia could have reconciled any statesman to an increase of territory, whose value was so small, and whose future productiveness so doubtful. The great King of Prussia, consulting the safety and the independence of the country committed to his care, claimed his share of the Polish inheritance; but of all men he was most fully alive to the sacrifices and responsibilities which his new possessions entailed upon him and his successors. Though reasons of state and strategy exacted the acquisition, Frederick the Great could not treat his new possessions merely as a ground for the erection of fortresses and the establishment of entrenched camps; he could not have one policy for the Prussians and another for the Poles. While he re-modelled and re-created his old provinces, he could not connive at the savage state and the abomination of desolation of the new. The most

trusty officers of his civil service were detached into Poland; the provinces he divided into districts; the country was surveyed, valued, and taxed; each district was placed under a *Landrath*, and had its court of justice, its postal communication, and its sanitary police. Churches were built and endowed, and parishes apportioned to them, and whole troops of schoolmasters were introduced. Detachments of mechanics, from the engineer down to the brickmaker, were hired for the King's service in Poland. The cities were rebuilt—the Starosties converted into Crown lands—new settlements established, and the settlers bound to till their lands according to the most approved practices. Within the first year after the occupation, the Exchequer supplied the funds for the canal which connects the Weichsel and Netze with the Oder and Elbe, which drains an enormous tract of land, and which has converted a fever-breeding swamp into a fertile plain. The spirit in which the greatest of Prussian kings set about reclaiming his new possessions, has ever since pervaded the policy of his successors. Though political complications in other countries led to the repartition of Poland, the same civilising and humanising influences were brought to bear upon those portions which remained under Prussian supremacy. Whatever flaw there might be in the first title was amply compensated by the benefits conferred on the Polish subjects of Prussia. At one time the Poles chose to make common cause with a prince who had conquered Prussia, and who attempted to reduce

Russia likewise. They offered him their allegiance; they joined his army and fought under his eagles. Their country was reconquered when the tide of invasion rolled back, and thenceforward the various parts of Poland have been held by the same title by which France holds Alsace, Corsica and Algiers, and England governs Ireland, Corfu, the Cape, Trinidad and the Mauritius.

III.

THE possession, by Russia, Austria, and Prussia, of various parts of what was once the Kingdom of Poland, dates from 1772; the legal title of the three powers was made out by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In that re-settlement of the empires and kingdoms of Europe, the partition of Poland was considered—not as a praiseworthy act—not as one calling for imitation, nor as establishing a precedent, but as an anomaly, called for and justified by dire necessity—as an extraordinary means of dealing with an extraordinary danger. For an instant, perhaps, the question of a possible restoration of Poland presented itself to the minds of some of the plenipotentiaries: it was even mooted by Russia. But the mere mention of the project displayed its impracticability. It was felt that the causes which exacted the partition were still in existence; that an act of the Congress might declare the independence and define the limits of Poland, but that no joint declaration on the part of the Powers could make that nation really free, really independent, really a middle state between the east and west, and that no solemn reinstatement could prevent her becoming an advanced post of the most powerful among her neighbours. It was the object

of the statesmen assembled at Vienna, to provide whatever guarantees can be provided for the maintenance of the peace of Europe, by preventing the preponderance of France on the one hand and of Russia on the other. They would but ill have served this purpose, had they, by reconstituting Poland, revived the dissensions and renewed the dangers of 1772. Thus the scheme, though artfully propounded, was condemned through the energetic protests of Lord Castlereagh and Talleyrand—of England and France. They agreed, that the restoration of Poland as an independent kingdom was as desirable as impossible, but that the establishment of a Polish kingdom under Russian auspices and protectorate would be a mere imposition, and one which could not possibly be countenanced by the Powers. And, after mature deliberation, they enacted that the territorial arrangements and modifications which were then and there agreed on respecting the Polish countries, should so remain in perpetuity and that the three powers should possess the incorporated Polish provinces “*en toute souveraineté et propriété.*”*

* “The grand-duchy of Warsaw, always excepting the provinces and districts which are otherwise disposed of in other articles, shall be united to the Empire of Russia, and shall by its constitution be *irrevocably* connected with the same, that it may for *all time* be possessed by H.M. the Emperor, his heirs and successors.”—*Vienna Congress, Art. I.* “H. M. the King of Prussia having, in consequence of the last war, retaken various provinces and territories, which had been given up by the peace of Tilsit, these presents are to acknowledge and declare, that His Majesty, his heirs and suc-

While thus consulting the peace and safety of Europe, the powers assembled in Congress felt and expressed an earnest solicitude for the inhabitants of the country which was thus “irrevocably” and “for all time” deprived of separate existence. Sensible of the practical impossibility of controlling the manner in which Austria, Prussia, or Russia were to deal with their subjects, the plenipotentiaries wished it, nevertheless, to be understood, that the partitioning powers ought to consider the solemn sanction of their possession as a sacred trust; that they should treat their Polish subjects neither as aliens nor as conquered enemies; that full indemnity should be granted for the past; that no social or political revenge should be wreaked on those who fought under Napoleon at Borodino and Smolensk, at Kulm, Leipzig and Ligny. France, though governed by a Bourbon, owed thus much to her Polish legions. The object and the difficulty were to introduce into the acts of the Congress some stipulation which should protect the Poles, without encroaching on that “*full sovereignty and property*” which formed the basis of the grant.

In this dilemma, a form of words was adopted which has since suffered arbitrary interpretations,

cessors, shall, *again as before, in full sovereignty and property*, possess the following countries, viz. :—1. That portion of his former Polish possessions described in Art. II. 2. The city and territory of Dantzic, as marked by the treaty of Tilsit. 3. The district of Cottbus, &c. &c.—*Vienna Congress, Art. XXIII.*”



and which has thereby been a source of misunderstandings. "The Poles," it is written in the treaty, "subjects respectively of Russia, Austria and Prussia, shall obtain a representation and national institutions, regulated according to the mode of political existence, which each of the Governments to which they belong, shall hold it useful and convenient to accord to them."* The first half of this clause is neutralized by the latter half, and its entirety expresses a wish rather than a command—a recommendation rather than a condition. This has always been felt by the politicians of all countries of Europe. None of the many state-papers to which Polish complications have given rise, have ever appealed to this article or complained of its non-observance. Yet, if the signers of the treaty of Vienna had really meant to reserve for the Poles a separate representation and national institutions, they would have ample grounds for complaint, since not one of those powers to whom the treaty gave "full sovereignty and property" of certain provinces, did ever give their Polish subjects *as such* a "representation and national institutions." The feat would have been the more arduous from the difficulty of ascertaining the meaning of the vague term "representation," while the

* "Les Polonais, sujets respectifs de la Russie, de l'Autriche et de la Prusse, obtiendront une représentation et des institutions nationales, réglés d'après la mode d'existence politique, que chacun des Gouvernements auxquelles ils appartiennent, jugera utile et convenable de leur accorder."

only *national institutions** of which history tells us in connection with the Poles, are to be found in that old Polish constitution of which it has been justly said, that "no other so ingeniously brought together the bad features of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, without the redeeming points of any of them."†

If the great powers had thought it either expedient or feasible to stipulate for a separate government, a separate representation and a separate code of laws for the Polish inhabitants of Austria, Russia and Prussia, they would most assuredly have couched that condition in intelligible terms, and the three countries most concerned would probably have preferred retaining their Polish provinces by right of conquest and possession, instead of accepting a title bound up with so onerous and vexatious a stipulation. If the Polish provinces had been intended to form a state within the state, nothing was easier than to word that impracticable proposition, and leave to the recipients of the fatal gift the difficulties and dangers of its execution. The clause, that the representa-

* "Des institutions nationales, quand on s'adresse à des Polonais, ne sauraient être que des institutions polonaises, c'est-à-dire, établies par les Polonais et pour les Polonais, spéciales aux Polonais."
—ALEXANDRE PEÏ.

† "Despots, oligarchs and mobs have all a good deal to answer for. Still it is possible to find a good side for any of the three. But the cleverest counsel for the defence would hardly hit upon a good side for a hereditary caste, which, looked at from the outside, was a narrow oligarchy, and, looked at from within, was a turbulent democracy."—*Saturday Review*, Dec. 14, 1861.

tion and the national institutions to be obtained by the various portions of Poland, shall be "regulated according to the mode of political existence, which each of the governments to which they belong shall hold it useful and convenient to accord to them," leaves the treatment of the Poles pretty much at the option of the powers to whose "full sovereignty" they were committed. They were to be dealt with at pleasure; but the Congress hoped that it would be found "useful and convenient" to admit them to the representation, and to let them share in the institutions, of the countries to which they belonged.

A claim to a separate representation and to distinct privileges, has been founded upon this vacillating clause. Those who preferred that claim have thought proper to quote the first half of the clause, and omit the latter half. By so doing they confess, that the part omitted is obnoxious to their pretensions. To produce a mutilated sentence in allegation of a breach of treaty-engagements, denotes not only a want of good faith, but it shows also, that those who resort to such practices do not rely on the justice of the cause they defend.

IV.

FOR various reasons, Prussia is obnoxious to the champions of Polish independence. A King of Prussia, it is alleged, was the first to insist on the partition of Poland; for Austria took but a languid interest in the matter, and Russia was, on principle, averse to dividing a country which she was in a fair way of obtaining altogether.* Prussia opposed the restoration of Poland when that measure was proposed to the Congress of Vienna, where the Emperor Alexander professed his desire to make restitution by uniting the whole of Poland under his own sceptre. And it is Prussia, which, ever since the days of Frederick the Great, has denationalised the portions of Poland that were annexed to her.

The former chapters have dealt with the two first complaints; but the charge of a systematic denationalisation is not without its grain of truth. Martin Chuzzlewit was accused of a morbid hatred of Yankee institutions, because he objected to the

* "Catherine, dont l'ambition était tournée surtout vers Constantinople, et qui gagnait peu à s'approprier une partie d'un royaume qu'elle possédait indirectement tout entier, hésitait et ne voulait rien entreprendre avant de connaître les intentions de Marie Thérèse."—

filthy conduct of a guest at table. If violence, disorder, lawlessness, ignorance, filth, poverty, and pestilence, are the component elements of the Polish nationality, then has Prussia shown herself a most uncompromising antagonist of that nationality; and it must be admitted, that she has, to a considerable extent, succeeded in denationalising the Poles. She has washed, and swept, and drained the country; she has made canals, bridges, roads and railways; she has extended and improved cultivation, cleared the Polish moors and forests of vagrants, robbers, and wolves; built churches and schools, and deprived the Poles of the privilege of ignorance. She has made it possible for travellers to pass through the country without burdening themselves with bedding, provisions, and weapons of defence. So successful has been the work of denationalisation, that the lower classes are fast losing even the recollection of the privileges they enjoyed under a national government, which left them free to be despoiled and beaten by their betters. It is symptomatic of an alarming decline of national feeling, that the peasantry have repeatedly refused to join the insurrections organised by the turbulent portion of the gentry, and there is reason to fear that Posen will, after a few more years, be wholly lost to the cause of Polish independence.

The only chance of improving the condition of that part of Poland which is subject to Prussia, was the steady and systematic introduction of Prussian laws, order, administration, and finance. No govern-

ment, however enamoured of Polish nationality, could have infused a healthy life into the disjointed and festering members of the old commonwealth. The most national of all the Poles,—the members of what is called “the Emigration,”—adopt the civilisation and form themselves after the image of the country in which they live. They are for the most part intensely and almost outrageously French, less from a sincere appreciation of the good qualities of the French people, than from an instinctive conviction of the lamentable fact, that to take his place in a civilised community, the Pole must paint out many salient features of his national character. To make the Poles useful, creditable, and prosperous members of society, it was absolutely necessary to Prussianise or Germanise them. The leading idea of the Prussian Administration is most clearly embodied in the words of Herr Flottwell, who, from 1830 to 1841, filled the office of Chief President of the Grand Duchy of Posen.* “I felt it my duty,” says that statesman, “to promote and consolidate the union of the province with the Monarchy, by gradually removing the tendencies, the habits and the peculiar leanings of the Polish inhabitants, which militated against such a union; while, on the other hand, I diffused the elements of German life in its material and moral relations, so that, by the decisive action of German cultivation, I might attain the

* See Appendix.—*The Flottwell Report.*

“ final object of my mission, viz., *the complete fusion of the two nationalities.*”

The success which has attended the measures taken for this object is, perhaps, the chief reason why Prussia is a thorn in the flesh of the ultra-national malcontents. They were prepared to look leniently on the harshest measures of compulsion and repression, because such measures would have pressed all classes into a compact mass of victims and avengers. They might even have pardoned the more subtle policy of hounding class on class, so long as the hostile classes of Poles were kept separate from the bulk of the nation which ruled over them. But the Prussian system of treating the Poles neither as serfs nor as enemies, but strictly on an equality with all other subjects of the empire, is an unpardonable offence. “ The only
“ one of the three partitioning powers that has at
“ all succeeded in denationalising the Poles is
“ Prussia; but the treatment of the Pole by Prussia
“ has been much more liberal than that of his
“ brothers of Warsaw and Gallicia by the two other
“ powers. Perhaps, after all, its powers of assi-
“ milating nationalities to itself, by gaining their
“ heart and will, may be the measure of the sound-
“ ness of the principles on which a government is
“ conducted.”*

Those principles, no matter how sound, must be extremely unpalatable to men who, nursing the ambition of restoring the old kingdom of Poland,

* *The Times* (Warsaw letter), April 29, 1861.

have repeatedly seen their efforts foiled by the contented and peaceful disposition of the Poles of Prussia. When, in 1830, the Russian part of Poland rose in violent, and, for a time, in successful insurrection against the Emperor Nicholas, the Poles of Warsaw were not aided by corresponding efforts on the part of their former countrymen in Posen. A number of so-called patriots crossed the frontier into Russia and joined the national army; but they took this desperate step only when they found that the bulk of the Poles of Posen declined taking part in any attempt to supplant the Government which had made them free men and prosperous citizens. Again, in 1846, the long brooded-over and deeply laid schemes of the Polish Propaganda, were foiled from the want of active interest evinced by the masses, and Mieroslowski and his associates were captured and put on their trial. In 1848, the patriot chiefs proceeded, partly by false representations and partly by compulsion, to collect a number of insurgent bands, and to seriously disturb the peace of the country; but public opinion pronounced against them, and they found no aid except what they could extort at the point of the sword. And lastly, in 1861, the Poles of Posen, though sorely tried by their old tempters of 1846 and 1848, refused to join in attempts to embarrass or distress Prussia. They will not be the tools of those among their countrymen who choose to live abroad, and hatch revolutions. The peasantry and the inhabitants of the towns know that under Prussia they

are more free, independent and prosperous, than they ever were under a Polish Government. They look with suspicion, not wholly free from fear, upon agitators who bid them sacrifice substantial benefits, and snatch at the shadow of nationality.

By promoting the interests and conciliating the goodwill of the majority of her Polish subjects, Prussia has deprived the would-be restorers of the old kingdom, of all chances of success in those revolutionary undertakings which have been so repeatedly attempted. She has compelled that Propaganda to change its tactics and to appeal from the Poles to the nations of Europe. Though the Poles of Posen have proved insensible to their own wrongs, it is hoped that France and England will listen to complaints made on behalf of those who have no wish to complain, and that public opinion in Europe will condemn an oppression, which is most painful to those who are least within its reach. Since it is impossible to get up an insurrection something may, perhaps, be done by a Congress.

V.

IT is worth while to consider the elements of what is commonly known as the Polish Propaganda, and to inquire what right those who compose it, have to speak in the name of the Poles in general, and of the Poles of Posen in particular. The nucleus of the Polish Association both in England and France is formed by a number of men from Gallicia, Warsaw and Posen, who, having taken part in the insurrection of 1830, were proscribed by the Russian Government, and who fled for safety to the two countries, which fortunately were sufficiently free and strong to offer an asylum to the victims of a generous though mistaken impulse. Exiles from their native country and for the most part deprived of their possessions, these men were justly considered as objects of charity, and the Governments whom political necessity compelled to proscribe them, were secretly pleased with the compassion which alleviated the distress and improved the condition of these fugitives. As far as the deserters from Posen were concerned, their compulsory expatriation was of the shortest possible duration. When the courtesy due to a friendly and powerful neighbour allowed it, Prussia granted a free pardon to the majority of those among her subjects, who had taken part in the insurrection

against Russia, and restored their property, which had been sequestered, but never confiscated.* It is not, perhaps, astonishing, that the small number of those whose pardon was conditional on their undergoing short terms of imprisonment, should have preferred remaining abroad; but it certainly is as strange as suggestive a fact, that by far the greater number of those who were free to return, came back only for the purpose of complying with the terms of the amnesty and re-entering into possession of their estates. This feat accomplished, they returned to the old places of refuge; where, if they did not continue to accept that assistance which charity offered to them, they certainly claimed, and obtained not a small share of sympathy and social support, on the plea of compulsory expatriation and hopeless exile. The gentlemen of Poland, covering their absenteeism by the specious pretence of patriotic sorrow, preferred the diversions and dissipations of Paris and London, to the somewhat dreary residence on their estates and to the modest gaieties of their provincial capital. Those

* About 1,400 Prussian Poles were mixed up in the Warsaw war. Of these, 1,200 received a free pardon; 180 who were sentenced to loss of property and various terms of imprisonment, had their property restored, and their periods of confinement shortened. The land-owners had the sequestration of their estates commuted to a fine equal to one-fifth of the value of their property, and a large portion of this fine, too, was subsequently remitted. The total of fines levied amounted to about £9,000, which sum was devoted to the improvement of the schools in the province of Posen.

who never had any money, and those who had spent what they possessed, were alike eloquent on the unjust spoliation of a tyrannical Government, which had robbed them of their patrimony and which thirsted for their blood. They railed at the bitter bread of charity, but they ate it with a good appetite; and so resigned were they to this sort of food, that while charity continued its supplies, they, for the most part, were content to abstain from independent exertions. But as life cannot be utterly idle and objectless, they laboured, each in his degree, for the restoration of Poland. The prize was worthy of some exertion, for a re-distribution of property promised a brilliant reward even to the humblest followers of the Emigration. A voluntary political labour of the kind mentioned, has the further recommendation of making no unreasonable claims on the strength and time of those engaged in it. An occasional draft of a future Constitution, the framing of instructions which others are to carry out, a weekly or fortnightly letter to patriotic committees: these are about the most arduous tasks that fell to the lot of the leaders and their secretaries; while the rank and file of the Emigration had to hold mysterious conferences and whispered conversations in the most noted places of public resort. Theirs was the duty of bruiting about the news of a grand Polish conspiracy which would astonish the world at some indefinite period. They had further to appeal to public sympathy, descant on the wrongs and sufferings of Poland,

gain the good-will of all classes and political parties, and, be all things to all men. Gifted, and most able to turn their gifts to advantage, versatile and fluent of speech, amply endowed with social tact, and with that convenient shallowness which has so soothing an influence on the majority of mankind, the Poles were admirably suited to this social mission. With no definite opinions on matters religious or political, they had no difficulty in adopting the opinions of those with whom they chanced to associate. Colourless, they readily reflected the colours that were nearest to them. Hence, in Paris—for they never felt at home in English society—they are legitimists and unbending aristocrats in the Quartier St. Germain, and republicans and democrats in the Faubourg St. Antoine. They are greatly respected by philosophical free-thinkers, but they are still dearer to the hearts of the ultramontane clergy. If not sharers in, they are at least not strangers to, every movement planned by any party against the actual occupant of the throne of France; but they profess their belief that the Restoration of Poland is at once the duty and the desire of the Emperor Napoleon. Their anxiety to rouse public opinion on behalf of Polish independence, is in exact proportion to their conviction that every year lessens the doubtful hold which they still have on some portion of the Grand Duchy of Posen.

The Polish peasant proprietors of Posen, who by

a series of measures extending over a number of years, have been finally released from all traces of serfdom and territorial servitude, are, thanks to Prussia, the independent owners of the land, of which, in the vaunted days of Polish freedom they were the cattle. That land, which, on the assumption of the province by Prussia, was considered as of no value whatever, is now, at a moderate valuation, estimated at £1,000,000. These peasant proprietors, genuine Poles, were at one time the poorest, the most miserable and most ignorant part of the nation. By the judicious administration of Prussia, they have been freed, instructed and settled on their own acres; they are a thriving and respectable, and will soon become an influential, portion of the community. In spite of adverse influences and hostile insinuations, they cling to the fact that their lot was formerly most unenviable; that they are better off now, and that Prussian authority alone stands between them and their former oppressors. Intensely national like the peasantry of all countries, and blindly devoted to the observances of the Roman Church, they may now and then feel it a hardship, that they should be governed from Berlin and that the law which protects them, should likewise protect their Protestant neighbours. But these grievances are as nothing compared to the ills of the past. So long as the Polish peasantry remember the cruelties and exactions which they suffered at the hands of their own countrymen, so long will they close their ears to the voice of

the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Unfortunately for the Propaganda, the peasant's memory is very retentive, and village traditions descend through many generations.

The classes which still answer to the appeals of the Propaganda are a portion of the landed gentry, almost the whole of the Romanist clergy, and a large proportion of the schoolmasters. The schoolmasters, not only in Posen, but throughout all the Prussian provinces, are too highly trained; they are too well educated and taught for the humble position which they occupy. In the course of their education, they are made familiar with modes of life and thought which, in after-life, tend to isolate them. Their salaries, which have not kept pace with the diffusion of wealth and the decrease in the value of money, give them only the barest necessaries of life, and while their position and rank, even in the humble sphere assigned to them, exact some sort of representation—some distinction in dress and furniture,—they are poorer than the majority of the villagers among whom their lot is cast. It is natural that many of these men should be discontented and anxious for a change of some sort. Hunger makes brutal men fierce, and educated men ambitious; and a fondness for the past is not unusual with people who are uncomfortable in the present. Many of the village schoolmasters throughout Posen are active members of the ultra-national opposition.

The Catholic clergy are, on principle, opposed

to the Government, less because that Government is Prussian, than because it endeavours to hold an even balance between Romanists and Protestants. The Posen opposition is but the remnant of that old hostility which the ultramontane party manifested in every province of the Empire. It was violent in the Rhineland, pertinacious in the most loyal province of Westphalia, and intensely bitter in Silesia, where the clergy longed for the fleshpots of Austrian Concordats. It still survives in Posen, where the priests are a few years behind their brethren in Köln, Münster, and Breslau. The Posen priests have not yet been blunted against grievances, to which the reverend gentlemen in other provinces have long been inured. They find it hard that they should be salaried by the State instead of living on fees and tithes, and pious gifts of eggs, fowls, bacon and calves. They quarrel with the system of public instruction which makes the peasant as wise as his betters. They lament the loss of that paramount influence, which made them more powerful than the Lord of the Manor, for all that he wielded the whip; and the demand, which is strictly enforced, that they shall live on terms of amity and forbearance with the Protestants around them, is felt as the most galling of restraints. They devoutly believe that they are persecuted, because they are prevented from persecuting others, and they do all in their power to distress and annoy a Government which educates and pays them, and which has the same laws for the Protestant and for

the Catholic. They join the ranks of the ultra-national party with the same zeal and with the same motives with which they would preach and conspire in favour of the Sultan, or the Emperor of China, or the Sovereign of Japan, or any other potentate who promised to use the strong hand for the supremacy of the Roman Church.

The sectarian leanings of the clergy exert a marked influence on the gentlewomen of the Polish nation. It may be want of nerve,—or a lively consciousness of sin,—for some reason or other, ladies are prone to be terrified by the thought of our future existence, and, with that superstition which distinguishes the frail and the wicked, they persuade themselves into a belief that the clergy have some special knowledge of the great mystery of the grave, and that their influence is not confined to this world. The Roman Catholic religion elevates those vague notions to a creed, and places the power of dispensing eternal bliss or sorrow into the priests' hands. The granting or withholding of what are called the last benefits of the church, decides the future destiny of a departing soul, and even after death, the anointed hand of the priest may be stretched forth into illimitable space, and snatch some luckless and writhing spirit from the torments of purgatory. The Polish ladies,—devout Catholics—are vastly open to priestly influence. They instil into their children the principles of Christian charity and the duty of hating a heretical government, and they keep their husbands

in the path of uncompromising opposition. The queens of society, they issue and enforce their edicts; they insist on due payment of the patriotic tax, which is levied to defray the expenses of conspiracy and agitation; they keep up the “national police,” which is so terrible to the moderate portion of the Poles; and they visit with excommunication, insults and various acts of contumely, the unpatriotic conduct of any Pole who neglects the duty of treating his fellow-citizens of German origin with proper rudeness and becoming arrogance. Committees, acting under clerical and female influence, correspond with the leaders of the Propaganda in Paris, and receive in return, with exemplary meekness, the stereotyped assurance that the cause of Poland is prospering and that the measure of Prussian iniquities is full to overflowing. They supply, when called upon, a number of charges to prove the oppression of which that iniquitous government is guilty; and these charges are published and circulated, for the most part in France, and now and then in England. On the whole, England is not a favourable ground for Polish agitators. They object, with proper modesty, to that broad glare of publicity, which, at any moment, may be thrown on grievances which demand the most tender and considerate treatment, and which timidly shrink from anything like a want of politeness and forbearance.

VI.

THE grievances of the Poles may be summed up as follows :—They complain of Prussian encroachments on their language, their social existence, and their territorial possessions. They are in so far justified in these complaints, as their language has always been placed on a footing of equality with, and as it has never been allowed any supremacy over, the German language, which is spoken not only throughout the other provinces of the empire, but also in many towns and districts of the province of Posen. In the like manner, the Government has never recognised the social and political privileges and immunities which the gentry enjoyed in the time of the old kingdom. The members of the great county families, have not, in the military and civil service, been credited with the merit of their birth. And, finally, it is an undeniable and lamentable fact, that for many years past, a number of estates have slipped out of Polish hands ; that such estates, owing to heavy incumbrances upon them and to the inability of the owners to pay their legal debts, have been sold for the benefit of the creditors, and bought in many cases by Germans.

A more detailed investigation will show how far the Poles are justified in complaining of the German-

ising policy of the Prussian Government. They allege that Polish birth excludes a candidate from an official career, that few Poles are trusted with public offices in other provinces, and that by far the majority of the official situations in the Grand Duchy of Posen are filled by Germans. Those who make this complaint are at least candid enough to furnish some clue to this remarkable exclusion. “ In Prussia,” they admit, “ there is in every possible career what is called a state examination,” and it is this test of efficiency to which the young gentlemen of Poland cannot be brought to submit. Though naturally gifted above the average of other nations, few Poles are sufficiently industrious and persevering to pass the state examination, and the want of Poles qualified for public appointments has compelled the Government to draft into the civil service of Posen a large number of natives of other provinces. This is the admission, but it is also the explanation of one of the principal grievances of the Poles.

As early as 1815, the King of Prussia of those days instructed Prince Radziwill, the Lord Lieutenant of Posen, to give the Poles, when equally qualified, the preference in “ all appointments to be made in the Grand Duchy ”; and for many years past, a sum of 2,000 thalers per annum has been set apart for Polish candidates for judicial and administrative appointments. Portions of this sum were awarded to young men on their leaving the university, conditionally on their promising to serve for a term of

years in their native province. It is a lamentable fact that one-fourth only of the candidates passed the dreaded ordeal of the state examination, while the other three-fourths, when the proper time came, acknowledged that they were not qualified, and so resigned.

Because the Polish subjects of Prussia declined to undergo those studies, and submit to those tests which alone open the door to public employment in that land of examinations, for that and no other reason, has "a famished bureaucracy" been unleashed on the Grand Duchy." The meaning of this sneer is, that young men, in the first years of their public career, are badly paid. Still it is not without its grain of truth. Many of the young men who are appointed to official situations in Posen are very poor. They belong to the class of pauper students who work hard to qualify for, and live on, *stipends* and exhibitions and similar aids. For many years past, and until the Grand Duchy had been civilized and humanised by the strenuous efforts of the Prussian Government, an appointment in Posen was not considered as one of the greatest blessings that can fall to the share of an official man. Polish situations were deprecated and petitioned against, very much as if the Grand Duchy were some place of banishment, and the Government was driven to the expedient of supporting poor youths at the universities, on condition of their serving in Posen. To this fact, add another. The few Poles who pass the state

examination are urgent in their petitions for appointments in other provinces. The champions of Polish rights are familiar with these facts, but to acknowledge them would be awkward. They demand that all public offices throughout Posen shall be reserved for the Poles, and if fit and proper men cannot be found, then unfit and improper men ought to be taken.

The question of language is treated much in the same manner. There are men who declare themselves oppressed whenever they are not allowed to oppress others, and the ultra-national faction in Paris and Posen clamour that their language is in danger, because they are prevented from forcing that language on those who have no wish to learn it. No other explanation can be found for a complaint which is made in the presence and with the knowledge of the fact, that the Polish language is taught in all the national schools, in the training schools for schoolmasters, and in all the grammar schools in the Grand Duchy; while at St. Mary's school in Posen city, at the schools in Trzemeszno and Ostrowo, at the Seminary for Catholic Schoolmasters at Paradis, and in above 600 national schools in towns and villages, Polish is used as the vehicle of instruction. Since 1815, the number of grammar schools and of Roman Catholic training schools has been trebled; the number of national schools, in villages and towns has been doubled, and the number of pupils has increased sevenfold. At this time, the Grand Duchy has six grammar schools, of which three are Polish

in teaching and Roman in religion, and 1,200 national schools with 200,000 pupils. In 600 of these national schools, as I said before, the language of instruction is Polish, and as the province is almost equally divided between Poles and Germans, the complaint of a systematic suppression of the Polish language, admits of one interpretation only. Those who make it, lament that the German children are not compelled to learn all their lessons in Polish, and that Polish is not the vehicle of instruction in the German schools throughout the Grand Duchy.

Again, to pursue this vexed question of language, it should be stated that German is used as the language of business by all the superior administrative and judicial courts, but the laws, decrees, proclamations, etc., are published in German and in Polish. The two languages are equally used at the district and provincial assemblies. The regulations made by the Government provide that a Pole who addresses a communication in the Polish language to any of the authorities, is entitled to a reply in the same language, no matter how notorious the fact of his acquaintance with German may be. The clergy in their political functions, for instance in the case of clergymen acting as inspectors of schools, are instructed to make their reports and keep their registers in German. But the proper functions of the clergy, such as public prayer and sermons, are to be held in Polish, whenever and wherever the congregation is not exclusively German.

To resume: The rule which the Prussian Government has laid down in matters of language, appears simple, intelligible and equitable. It respects the Polish language where it finds it, but does not strive to extend it. It does not make Polish the vehicle of instruction in *all* the Posen schools, for by so doing, it would either Polonise all German children, or deprive them of the benefits of public instruction; but the lessons are taught in Polish in all schools which draft their pupils from essentially Polish districts. In those schools, German forms one of the *topics* of instruction; for, to leave the Polish children ignorant of that language, would be tantamount to excluding them from all communication with the mass of their fellow subjects, and would close to them all modes of life—all trades and professions which might carry them beyond the limits of their native province. A young Pole may, if he so pleases, complete all his preliminary studies in Polish grammar schools and under the auspices of Polish masters, and may proceed to a university, with nothing but a modest knowledge of German to taint the purity of his national character. And such a knowledge is indispensable if he would profit from the lectures at the universities.

That there is no Polish university in Posen is, indeed, a hardship; but those who complain of it are sadly puzzled whenever their lamentations call forth anything like an inquiry into details. Supposing the Exchequer were to provide the buildings, scientific collections and professorial salaries, what

would be the return for so large an outlay? How many young men, capable of receiving academical instruction, could be supplied by the Prussian Poles, nine-tenths of whom belong to the class of small peasant proprietors? Where are the Polish historians, philosophers, divines, philologists and physicians capable of filling the chairs of a university? The men of science throughout Europe are well known, and if there are a sufficient number of eminently scientific Poles, there can be no difficulty in pointing them out. The want of a Polish university is the more loudly complained of, since the scheme is so utterly impracticable.

The mention of impracticable schemes reminds me of another grievance: the want of a Polish theatre in the city of Posen. That town is inhabited by 30,000 Germans, and 16,000 Poles; * and while a German theatre is just able to pay its expenses, no manager has as yet risked his funds in establishing a theatre for the Poles only. The existence or non-existence of a Polish theatre in Posen is a mere money question, as is shown by the fact that in the height of the season—(after Christmas, when those among the Polish gentry, who cannot afford to go to Paris, leave their estates for the gaieties of their provincial capital)—plays and operas in Polish are performed by a company of thoroughly national actors, who, unable to get a living in one place, go

* I quote published returns, but give round numbers only, here and elsewhere.

the circuit of Cracow, Posen, and other towns. The fact that the absence of a permanent Polish theatre is laid to the charge of the tyrannical prohibitions of the Prussian police, gives a gauge of the good faith which distinguishes the stereotyped complaints of the Propaganda.

Another of these complaints—and if true by far the most serious of them,—deserves to be quoted in the form of words in which it is ordinarily expressed. No other *redaction* can do it justice. It is to the effect that:—“Since Prussia could not denationalise “the Poles, she has sought to, and succeeded in, “denationalising their land.” This peculiar process, it appears, is effected “by almost irresistible administrative measures, which tear the landed property piecemeal out of the hands of the Poles, “and consign it to the hands of Germans.”*

It is a bold manœuvre to mix up the question of landed property with the other complaints which are brought forward against Prussia. These latter may be refuted, but their defeat admits of some sort of explanation from an ultra-Polish point of view. If, for instance, the complaint that few Poles are appointed to public offices in their province, be met with the reply that few Poles have the steadiness and application to qualify for such offices: a professional patriot may in his turn rejoin, that a noble Pole does not, after all, desire to serve the enslavers of his country. But in the matter of terri-

* *La Prusse et les Traités de Vienne.*

torial possession there is no room for this supreme disdain. A careless and wasteful farmer would try the politeness of his audience, were he to assure them that his fields are overgrown with weeds, and that his cattle die of the murrain because Poland bears the yoke of the stranger. There are realities which silence declamation, sentimentalism and cant. It is one of these realities which the Poles unfortunately touch, when they complain that the land—their own, their native land—is from year to year passing into the hands of the stranger.

A history of agriculture in Posen would be manifestly out of place. But I may mention the fact as noteworthy, that when the province was annexed to Prussia the price of land averaged about 4s. per acre, and that at the present day the average price is £4. This increase in value has been caused partly by the civilising influences of the Government; by due encouragement given to enterprise; by public safety; by the prosperity of trade; by the progress of commerce, and by the increased means of communication; but also by the magnificent results obtained by German farmers in their management of Posen properties. Investments in the Grand Duchy were soon known to be eminently good, and hence capital was attracted to it. From year to year, as money kept flowing in, the competition for any property that might be in the market became more eager and higher prices were paid. While a large acreage, formerly in the hands of Poles, has passed into German hands by the most

legitimate of all means, by fair purchase in the open market: the result has been that every acre remaining in Polish hands has risen from 800 to 1,000 per cent. in value. That the German should be anxious to buy what the Pole was equally anxious to sell, may be astonishing and even sad; but surely it is a matter with which the Government had no concern whatever.

In the revolution of 1830 a large number of gentlemen from the Grand Duchy crossed the frontier and joined the insurrectionary army against the Russians. If it be considered that Prussia was at peace with Russia, and that the strictest neutrality was enjoined, not only by justice but also by prudence, it will at once be understood, that this levying war on the part of her subjects placed Prussia in a critical, and, it may be, dangerous position. That position was analogous to that in which this country would be, if large numbers of British subjects from Canada and Jamaica were to join the Confederate States of America against the Federation of the North. To avoid the accusation of connivance, it was necessary to mark by some stringent measures, the displeasure of the Government with a course of action which, had it been passed over in silence, must have been considered a gross breach of neutrality. A sentence of sequestration of property was pronounced against a few of the fugitives, and a fine of about £9,000 was levied from twenty-two of the deserters, each of whom, on paying his portion of the fine, was permitted to return, when the

disastrous result of the insurrection made that return desirable. The £9,000 were credited, not to the Royal but to the provincial Exchequer, and expended on educational establishments within the Grand Duchy. The sequestered estates were not sold, but handed over to managers appointed by the Government, and after some years — when diplomatic negotiations with the Emperor of Russia enabled the King and his Government to act without fear of misunderstanding or offence—the estates, thus sequestered and administered, were restored to their former owners.*

However loud the complaints of confiscations and German encroachments, it would be difficult for the most national of Poles to name one Polish estate that has been wrested from its owner, either by open or covert means on the part of the Prussian Government, or to point out any sphere of Polish activity that has been encroached upon by the Germans. It is true, that the Germans in the Grand Duchy own about one-third of the landed property; but they have not “leased or bought it from the Government.”† The only instance of Government intervention is mentioned in Herr Flottwell’s

* Here is the account of this affair, as cooked by the Propaganda:—

“*Enormous fines*” (viz., £9,000 from twenty-two of the ring-leaders) “were levied on *all* the families of the Grand Duchy, and “these fines, extorted on the spot, led fatally to expropriation, or “to confiscation.”—*La Prusse, et les Traités de Vienne*.

† “The numerous estates confiscated by Frederick William, Grand

Report,* viz., the purchase, in the open market, of estates, and their division and sale to eligible settlers. But, as a general rule, it may be asserted, that the Germans purchased their land from the former proprietors, all Polish gentlemen whom private or financial reasons induced or compelled to part with it. What those reasons were, is candidly stated, by an ultra-Polish newspaper, which, after asserting that “all Government measures tend to the ruin of “the estates and the gentry,” proceeds to inform its readers that:—

“Our ruin is caused, not only by the evil “intentions of Government, but *far more by our “bad management and extravagance; by our “speculations, and our passion for gambling.* Many “a man who was well off last year, is now insolvent. If things go on at this rate, the whole of “our gentry will be penniless and landless, before “thirty years are over.”† Extravagance, speculation and gambling—these are the irresistible administrative measures, by which the Prussian Government tears landed property out of Polish hands!

A large portion of the German population is settled in the towns as manufacturers, merchants, shopkeepers, and mechanics. They have not supplanted the Poles in those occupations, for the old

Duke of Posen, were exclusively leased or sold for a mere song to the subjects of Frederick William, King of Prussia.”—*La Prusse, et les Traités de Vienne*.

* See Appendix.

† *Wiadomosci Polskie*, October, 1859.

Polish kingdom was innocent of commerce, trade, and handicrafts. Who should have practised them? The serf was too brutified for anything beyond the rudest manual labour, and the Polish gentleman, though he owned but a hovel and paddock, could not stoop to a useful occupation. At this day, the German *bourgeoisie* forms the largest and wealthiest portion of the Posen towns; but it has merely occupied a vacant space, and its wealth has not been gathered at the expense of the Poles, who, on the whole, are less poor now than they were eighty years since. The aggregate wealth of the province has increased a thousand fold, and the Germans, who created that wealth have taken their share of it.

VII.

THAT the population of the Grand Duchy of is Posen almost exclusively of Polish origin, ranks among the most specious and unfounded assertions of the Propaganda. That a number of Germans are settled in that province cannot be denied even by the most unscrupulous agitators, but it is pretended that the settlers form an unimportant fraction of the population; that they are, for the most part, needy adventurers; that their introduction into the province is of recent date and has mainly been effected by the Germanising policy of the Prussian Government. "There are in the "Grand Duchy of Posen," says an injudicious champion of the Propaganda, "a considerable number of "Germans, who settled there at various times, "partly in order to escape religious persecu- "tions, partly because they wished to live under "milder and more liberal laws, and partly to follow "industrial and commercial pursuits, for which their "own country did not hold out sufficient induce- "ments."* It is further suggested, that the number of Poles throughout Prussia, which is quoted at two millions, justifies the demand for a separate and national government, for the Grand Duchy of Posen.

* ALEXANDRE PEÏ. *Revue Contemporaine*, Nov. 15, 1861.

A short statement of facts will correct these misrepresentations. There are among the eighteen millions of Prussians, near two millions of Polish origin, but these two millions are not to be found in the Grand Duchy of Posen, whose whole population of Poles, Germans, and Jews, is not much over one million, but in East and West Prussia, Silesia, and Posen. Instead of being a compact population, occupying one province, these two millions of Poles are spread over four provinces. In Posen, indeed, the Poles show a slight numerical superiority; in the other three provinces their numbers are far inferior to those of the German Prussians. These four provinces, with their mixed population of Poles and Germans, were the old borderland between the German and the Slavonic races; they were debatable ground, and never exclusively or predominantly occupied by either. Since the middle ages, the towns were chiefly German; the country districts were partly Polish. Neither of the two nations could be considered as the guest of the other. In the last hundred years which preceded the partition, the Poles had the greater power, and how they used it, is shown by the miserable condition of their kingdom at the time when its impending dissolution compelled the two neighbouring States to claim a portion of what otherwise would have been swallowed up by Russia. The provinces which Prussia annexed had to be supplied with population; and that population was drawn from the other parts of the empire. From that time to

this, the German subjects of Prussia have immigrated into Posen, by that natural law which impels the inhabitants of densely crowded districts to flow into countries where acres abound, and men are scarce. This home-colonisation has not deprived the Polish subjects of Prussia of anything; it has created the industry and increased the cultivation and production of the Grand Duchy of Posen; it has turned villages into towns, moors into fields and swamps into meadows. It has not wrested a single acre out of the hands of a solvent Polish proprietor, and it has enormously increased the price at which encumbered estates would otherwise have sold. Since 1772 the total of the population of the Grand Duchy has been doubled, and the respective numbers of Poles and Germans are rapidly approaching equality. There are in Posen 783,600 Poles, to 619,900 Germans. It is not easy to hold an even balance between the two nations, mixed up as they are in towns, districts, and villages, and that this difficult task has been carried out faithfully, perseveringly, and conscientiously, ought to be the proudest boast of the Prussian Administration.

The Germans in Posen are not in the habit of complaining. The better class make allowance for the difficulties which beset their government in the task, to be just to either nationality and to uphold the rights of each, without trenching on those of the other. But there have been, and, for all I know, there are at this moment, German grievances in Posen as well as those which are invented or

magnified by the Propaganda. The Poseners of German origin have a right to demand that the circumstance of their being natives of a province which at one time belonged to Poland, shall not deprive them of, nor shall it impair, their nationality; they have a right to German schools for their children, to German preachings from the clergy, and to German courts for the settlement of their disputes. Large numbers of them settled in Posen because the Grand Duchy was a Prussian province. It would not only be bad policy, but bad faith, so to administer the affairs of the Grand Duchy, as to make these people feel that they had expatriated themselves. The Poles, not only in Posen, but throughout Prussia, are treated on a footing of perfect equality with their German fellow-subjects. It is the most they can demand; it is more than most conquered nations could ever obtain from the dominant power. To do more would be to place a premium on the Polish nationality. To reserve for the Poles a monopoly of all official situations in their native province, and leave them free to compete for office in other provinces, would be an act of unjustifiable partiality. To relax the stringency of examinations in favour of Polish students would be equally impolitic and unfair. To consider every Posener as a Pole — to recognise none but Poles in that province—would be a most effectual means of propagating the Polish nationality, but it remains to be shewn that it is the duty of any state to propagate nationalities in this

manner. An argument to that effect may possibly have attractions for Messrs. John Mitchell, Smith O'Brien and the O'Donoghue, but it had better be confined to the Rotunda.

In quoting the totals of the Germans and Poles in Posen, I have mentioned the number of heads only; but it should not be forgotten that the Germans in Posen are the most industrious, the wealthiest and the most cultivated portion of the population. They supply by far the largest number of pupils to the upper classes of the schools, and of students to the universities. It is mainly owing to their presence in the province, that Government is able to officer its courts and colleges with, at least, a portion of judges and teachers who understand Polish. By far the larger portion of the income-tax is paid by the Germans — in Bromberg for instance, where the Germans pay 19,700 thalers, against 1,300 thalers paid by the Poles. In the city of Posen, the tax is paid by 537 Germans, and 89 Poles, and the same proportions obtain throughout the Grand Duchy. The Germans, though slightly inferior in numbers, are, in all other respects, at least as important a portion of the population as the Poles; and that equality of rights, which the Prussian Government has wisely granted them, they can claim as a right. I do not believe they demand more; but they certainly cannot be content with less.

VIII.

WHAT would the Poles do, if the Prussian Government were to reverse the policy it has hitherto followed? That question may be speculative; it is not unprofitable. Let it be supposed, that, impelled by fatality, a King of Prussia were to redress all the grievances complained of by the Propaganda. Suppose the Grand Duchy of Posen were considered a separate state, with a Viceroy and Parliament of its own, and governed exclusively by and for the Poles. Suppose, irrespective of the rights of nearly one-half the population, the other half were invested with all the prerogatives of a dominant caste? Would all these concessions conciliate the Polish Propaganda and its tools, the disaffected portions of the clergy and gentry? The question has been answered over and over again by the Propaganda itself. That association is not a Polish Protection Society; its object is to restore the Polish kingdom, and all minor measures are of value only as subsidiary to this aim. It is not denied that Prussia is obnoxious, not for any ill-treatment of the Poles that she has been guilty of, but because her conciliatory policy is the main obstacle to a general insurrection of all the Poles. It is admitted, that the imaginary obligations foisted on the treaty of Vienna are appealed to only

for the purpose of destroying that treaty altogether. The demand, that the Poles of Posen shall in that province be more independent and national, is made, not for its own sake, but as a means to a further end.* If the power possessed by Prussia were delegated to the extreme party of Poles, that power would soon be used against Prussia for the re-establishment of a Polish kingdom, and that kingdom once established would renew the dangers which exacted the partition of 1772.

To consign above 600,000 Germans in Posen alone to the doubtful mercies of a Polish Government, would in itself be a crime equal in magnitude to that committed by this country, if, in 1848, the English and Scotch inhabitants of Ireland had been handed over to the sovereignty of the United Irishmen. The Polish Propaganda has frequently and aptly compared itself to, and adopted the tactics of, the ultra-Irish party. The cry of "Ireland for the Irish," corresponds to that of "Poland for the Poles." The wrongs of Erin are as famous and substantial as the wrongs of Posen. In either country it is demanded, that the possession of nationality shall make up for the want of other less doubtful virtues. In Posen, as well as in

* "La concession immédiate aux Posnaniens d'une Constitution réellement indépendante, d'une véritable autonomie qui oblige par la contagion de l'exemple l'Autriche et la Russie à affranchir à leur tour leurs sujets polonais, et qui amène ainsi dans un avenir peu éloigné, sans secousses, sans insurrections, le rétablissement de l'ancien royaume de Pologne."—ALEXANDRE PEÏ.

Ireland, a priestly faction chafes at the tolerance of a heretical Government. A clique of noisy agitators, presuming to speak in the name of either country, has, on more than one occasion, appealed to the nations of Europe. And the cause of either country, being that of intolerance, spoliation, and bigotry, is equally dear to the revolutionary and to the ultramontane party throughout Europe.

However galling may be the yoke which restrains the ethnographical, linguistic, and sectarian zeal of Irishmen, it has long been decided that the Scotch and English population of Ireland shall not be sacrificed to the clamours of Conciliation Hall or the Rotunda. The Repeal movement, which corresponds exactly to the Polish claims, had to spend its small amount of vitality in impotent convulsions. It would have gone hard with property, humanity and civilization in Ireland, if the affairs of that country had been managed by a national committee presided over by Messrs. O'Brien, Mitchell, and Meagher of the Sword.

The Irish are dealt with in a manner in which they would hardly deal with others. Justice and humanity, irrespective of reasons of State, demand that Ireland should remain in the position in which she stands to the rest of the United Kingdom. Irrespective, too, of political and strategical considerations, justice and humanity make it imperative for Prussia to persevere in the task of governing her semi-Polish province of Posen. Prussia can answer for the good treatment of her Poles; the treatment

which the Germans of Posen would receive at Polish hands, if those hands were free, would be beyond her control. What that treatment would be, is of course a speculative question. The Propaganda asserts, that any asperity shown by the Poles in their intercourse with their German fellow-subjects, is chargeable to the social and political equality of the two races; and that the generosity and tenderness of the Polish character would shine forth resplendent as day, if the Germans were placed at the mercy of the Poles.* That the leaders of the Propaganda in Posen and abroad detest the Germans is not only not denied, but it is actually boasted of. Count Gurowski, who frequently had the misfortune of mistaking the feelings of his coterie for those of his nation, lays stress on the "inveterate hatred of the Polish people against Germany."† There is no doubt that such a hatred existed among an ignorant and priest-ridden populace, and that it required many years of the equitable and just rule of Prussia to reconcile the Polish peasant to his German fellow-subjects, and confine the passions and prejudices of the middle ages to the faction of gentry and priests, of which Count Gurowski, in his day, was a fitting

* "Les haines allumées entre les deux peuples par une lutte séculaire s'étiendraient faut d'aliment; et les Allemands, redevenus les hôtes de la Pologne, n'auraient pas à regretter de n'en être plus les tyrans."—ALEXANDRE PEÏ.

† GUROWSKI: *Impressions et Souvenirs*. 1846.

representative. The class of men who boast of that inward grace of nationality which betokens itself by hatred and persecution, lament, in accents which would be touching if they were not slightly ridiculous, the hardness of heart which prompts the Germans to refuse submission, and thus chokes up the waters of benevolence, which should freely stream forth to soften the rugged nature of the Teuton. But those who know what the ultra-Polish faction means, when it talks of its nationality and the rights of its language, must doubt the unqualified blessing of subjection to men who are so enamoured of liberty, that they want it all for themselves. It is not two hundred years ago that the clergy of Warsaw published a proclamation in three languages, imploring all good Christians to set upon and kill all Germans on a certain day.* Of course it will be said that this is a hash of old horrors, and that ferocity and intolerance were the order of the day in 1698.† I have no objection to go eighty or ninety years nearer to our own time and admire the mildness and tolerance of the ruling faction in Poland in the year of grace, 1768, four years before the sad and sorrowful union with Prussia :—

* PARTHENAI. *Geschichte August. II.* Mietau 1771. Vol. i. p. 233.

† “ Il (viz., the Prussian Government) évoque les actes d'intolérance et de ferocité commis jadis par les Polonais, dans un temps où les neuf dixièmes de l'Europe étaient encore en proie à la barbarie.—ALEXANDRE PEÏ.

“ In that philosophical century, the persecution
 “ of the Germans was prompted by fanaticism; now
 “ here, now there, protestant churches were either
 “ burnt or otherwise destroyed; and the destruction
 “ of the churches was followed by the sequestration
 “ of the Church property. German preachers and
 “ schoolmasters were either driven away or shock-
 “ ingly ill-treated. ‘*Vexa Lutheranism dabit thalerum*’
 “ was a common saying among the Poles. One of
 “ the largest landed proprietors of the country, one
 “ Unruh of the Birnbaum family, Starost of Gnesen,
 “ had his tongue cut out and his hand cut off,
 “ and after that lost his head likewise, because
 “ he had read German books on the Jesuits, and
 “ copied some caustic remarks in his common-
 “ place book. The national party of the Polish
 “ gentry leagued with the clergy, hunted down all
 “ Protestants and Germans. All vagrants rallied
 “ round the patriots, who went about sacking and
 “ burning small towns and German villages. From
 “ year to year, the persecutions of the Germans in-
 “ creased, not simply from fanaticism, but from love
 “ of plunder also. A Polish gentleman named Ros-
 “ kowski became notorious for his boots: one boot
 “ was black and the other red, symbolical of death
 “ and fire. He carried desolation through whole
 “ districts. At Jastow he seized upon Willich, a
 “ Protestant preacher, and had his hands, his feet,
 “ and lastly his head, cut off.”*

* FREYTAG. *Neue Bilder aus dem Leben des deutschen Volke.*

Still floating down on the stream of time, and coming very near to these latter days, I am struck with some remarkable features in the Polish conspiracy of 1846, and in the insurrection of 1848. The conspiracy was organised by the Propaganda; its supporters in Posen represented the national or disaffected faction in that province. The question how the Germans were to be treated, was discussed at the meetings of their chiefs; and while some of them voted for the extermination of *all* the Germans in the province, the majority, more mercifully disposed, resolved upon killing none but the natural antagonists of the revolution. In the instructions framed for the guidance of the communes, the first measure recommended was that of "murdering the oppressors," leaving it to the discretion of individual leaders to whom to apply that elastic term. In another portion of the "instructions," all who refused to actively assist in the insurrection were doomed to death.* All attacks were to be sudden, "*in the manner of the Sicilian vespers.*" In one word, the Propaganda wished to revive the most atrocious acts of the most barbarous

* "*Every inhabitant of the country is bound, under penalty of death: as soon as the breaking out of the insurrection is notified to him, to come at the day and hour named, with weapons and ammunition, to the place assigned to him; and every man capable of carrying arms who fails, within twenty-four hours after the proclamation of the insurrection, to report himself to the authorities at his place of residence, shall be considered a spy, and tried by court martial. The punishment for spies is death.*"

ages. As a matter of course, murder was to be followed by spoliation, and the priests were instructed to tell the peasantry, that the "expulsion of the "foreigners would be the making of their fortunes;" and, "after the expulsion of the Germans, five acres of land should be given to every one who had "joined the national army."* Thus, to quote M. Peÿ's captivating phrase, "would the Germans, "once again the guests of Poland, have no reason to "regret that they were no longer her tyrants."

The leaders of the unsuccessful conspiracy were liberated in 1848, and commenced at once to restore the old Polish kingdom, by levying war against the Prussian authorities and the German towns. It would be needless to write the history of that insurrection. Enough, that, from the first neither persuasions nor terrorism could induce the great mass of the Poles to rally round its banners. My present object is to show, how the leaders of the insurrection would have treated the Germans, after the expulsion of the Prussian troops. They instructed their subordinates "not to alarm the "Germans to prevent reaction, but to keep them "under; to treat them in a friendly manner, and "assure them of affection and fraternal sentiments, "but also *secretly to arm the people, inflame its zeal, "and show it in a threatening attitude.*"† In the course of a guerilla warfare, which was mainly

* JAN TISSOWSKI's *Instructions for the Priests.*

† *Instructions*, dated March 28, 1848.

caused by the vacillation of the Prussian General Willisen, the town of Trzemeszno "became the scene of the most revolting acts of murder and rapine on Germans and Jews."* Still worse was the conduct of the "patriots," at Wreschen, where the female population were subjected to unheard-of atrocities. At Miloslaw the Jews were ill-treated, and their houses sacked and burnt. At Kosmin, the patriots set upon and murdered two men of the 7th regiment. The Germans and Jews of Xions were expelled from that town and had to hide in the forests. Wiesener, an engineer, was put to prison, taken out again and hunted across the Market Square by a body of insurgents, who shot him when they got tired of the sport.† The priests enjoined the extermination of "the heretics, who intended burning all Catholic churches, and killing all true believers."‡

These are matters which ought not to be too frequently remembered, but they ought not to be forgotten. Even the best among us can judge of the future only by the present and the past. The Past of the Polish chiefs—looking only at 1846 and 1848—is not such as to encourage any hopes of justice, fair dealing, or even common humanity, for any class, rank or sect that may be subject to them. And if the resignation of Posen on the part of Prussia

* VOIGT-REHTZ. *Darstellung der polnischen Insurrection von 1848.*

† VOIGT-REHTZ. *Passim.*

‡ *Zur Geschichte des Aufstandes in der Provinz Posen.*

could ever be a question, that question would resolve itself to this:—Shall 700,000 and odd Poles be subject to a Government, which, let its faults be what they may, has erred on the side of mercy, or shall 600,000 and odd Germans be handed over to a Government, which, to judge from the past, would be guilty of acts of Spanish intolerance and Hellenic ferocity?

Hostility to everything Polish and an inordinate love of untruth, are among the mildest of the charges habitually brought against those who lift the veil of sorrow which shrouds some of the most repulsive features of "A Nation in Mourning." A general contradiction is but a sorry rejoinder to a detailed statement of facts; and a sweeping accusation of mendacity, unless supported by definite evidence on definite points, amounts almost to a confession. The fact that those who least know the Poles favour them most, is as significant as it is damaging. In their case, as in that of the Irish and Greeks, "distance lends enchantment to the view." The Germans, who at one time knew little, beyond what they learnt from poets and novelists, were for many years enthusiastic in the cause of Greek, Irish and Polish independence. That degree of political information which enabled them to make a hero of Ypsilanti, and a statesman of O'Connell, created a loving and impartial admiration for Klephts, Whiteboys and Kossyniers. Large numbers of very respectable people in England form, to this day, their opinion on Polish

affairs from a traditional knowledge of Miss Porter's "Thaddeus of Warsaw," and a considerable portion of the German public, even in Prussia, settled the Polish question on the strength of Rellstab's "Polish Lancer." The plot of 1846, with its Sicilian Vespers, undermined the enthusiastic admiration which the Germans thought proper to affect for the Poles. The insurrection of 1848 — the attempt to murder liberty in the name of liberty, and to inaugurate independence by shedding the blood of defenceless, and despoiling the property of peaceful, citizens—caused the Germans to shrink with horror from the Polish national party. They felt, that to atone for the partition of Poland by the partition of Prussia, would be a round of wrong, and that at least as much consideration was due to the Germans as to the Poles of Posen. The Parliamentary Government, too, which, since 1848, has brought together the representatives of all Prussian provinces, has made hundreds of educated men acquainted with their Polish colleagues. The delegates of the ultra-national party have not, as a rule, gained the affection and the esteem of the Prussian public. At starting, they had popular prejudice in their favour. If they lost ground, they need not lay that humiliating fact at the door of the Prussian Government. That Government has not officially inculcated a love of the Poles, but much less has it made them objects of suspicion or hatred. To accuse a government of so powerful an influence on public opinion, betrays an exaggerated and morbid idea of

the sphere and power of an administration. The Prussians, as far as my observation goes, do not hate the Poles. The Rhinelanders and Westphalians, ashamed of their former enthusiasm, avoid the subject altogether; and the Germans in Posen speak of the ultra-national, among their Polish neighbours, with a compassionate indulgence, equally removed from complaint and animosity. This tone may not be flattering to the Poles, but it is certainly more than they can in reason expect from people whom they are in the habit of denouncing in unmeasured terms, and whom they have, on more than one occasion, conspired to subdue and despoil. The Polish Propaganda has done its utmost to exasperate, not only the Germans, but also a considerable proportion of the Poles of Posen. A secret police, an extensive system of *espionage*, social terrorism and forced contributions levied for the benefit of the so-called national cause, have gone far to make that cause anything but pleasant to the matter-of-fact portion of the community. Proprietors of estates object to pay two sets of taxes: one to the Government and the other to the National Committee. The Prussian policy of conciliation and assimilation is, to a considerable degree, aided by the despotic and destructive tendencies of the Propaganda.

IX

WITHOUT dwelling on so unlikely an event as a war between Prussia and Russia, and with even less intention of discussing in detail the state of the Prussian frontier and the strategical importance of the Grand Duchy of Posen, it is nevertheless necessary to devote a few lines to the consideration of either. The adage that we should treat our friends as if they were one day to become our enemies, applies to nations even more than to individuals. That there is not, and that there never can be, any real cause of dispute between the two countries—that a war would be equally hurtful to either—that there are no wrongs to redress, no injuries to resent—all these are reasons which make the continuance of amicable relations between Russia and Prussia a subject of extreme probability and almost of absolute certainty. That certainty will be rather improved than impaired by the circumstance that neither of the two is favoured by the ground. The configuration and condition of the Polish countries, is unfavourable to an assailant. Suppose—I am, on purpose, launching into the wildest improbabilities—Prussia were to invade her gigantic neighbour, she would have to move her armies across easily defended rivers, maintain them in a sparsely peopled country

and lay siege to a number of strong fortresses. Russia advancing against Prussia, would equally be at a disadvantage. The Grand Duchy of Posen, extending almost over the whole breadth between the Weichsel and the Oder, presents a slightly undulating surface, broken by numerous rivers, and long stretches of low moory ground; thus confining the march of armies to a few well-known passes, bridges, and ferries. Posen, commanding the principal roads and railways, and some of the most important *trajets*, is an entrenched camp rather than a fortress. The position of the four principal forts on either bank of the Warthe, and on an island in that river—the intricate system of dams and dykes which enables the garrison to flood the country surrounding the forts—the facility of operating on either bank of the principal river: enable even a small force to hold this important position against a large army, which would have to operate on very difficult ground, and whose basis of operations would be at Warsaw. But if Posen were in the hands of Russia, her armies would command the whole of the Grand Duchy, and the first line of defence for Prussia would be on the Oder, about fifty miles from Berlin. In the most improbable event of a war between the two countries, Prussia would be compelled to invade the Grand Duchy, in order to obtain possession of Posen, as the only means of preventing the advance on her own capital. Besides the considerations which I have shadowed forth, it must be remembered, that the deep curve made by the Russian frontier

line interferes with the direct communication between Prussia and Silesia, and forces that communication into a corresponding curve through Posen city. If that fortress were no longer in Prussian hands, the line of communication would be put back to Frankfort on the Oder, and the whole line from Breslau to Dantzig would be lengthened by 130 miles. If the whole of the Grand Duchy were in Russian hands, or if it formed part of some resuscitated kingdom under Russian protection, the Marches and Silesia, surrounded by Poland, Bohemia and Moravia; Pomerania and West Prussia, and East Prussia between Poland and the sea, would be mere isolated spots, devoid of connection, and the empire which is meant to be the kernel and the heart of Germany, would be an aggregate of detached provinces, all equally open to attack and incapable of defence. Prussia, the sword of Germany, would be the most disjointed and the weakest among the parts of that disjointed country. Instead of protecting others, he would, first and most, stand in need of protections and defence. The restoration of Poland would be the extinction of Prussia.

Nor should it be forgotten, that Posen is not the only portion of Prussia which is claimed by the Polish propaganda. The kingdom of Poland asserts its right to all provinces and countries in which the Poles once ruled; it hopes to regain all the Poles ever lost. Without stopping to inquire how these pretensions affect Austria, or how far Russia can be expected to favour a policy which would take away

with one hand and bestow with the other, it is enough for my purpose to say, that of Prussian provinces, the Poles claim, besides Posen, the whole of western Prussia, with the mouths of the Weichsel and the fortress of Dantzig, a large portion of Silesia, and a considerable slice of Eastern Prussia, to within gunshot, almost, of Königsberg. It is true, that in these provinces, the Polish nationality and language are represented by a small minority only, which minority, as a rule, is deficient in wealth, industry, and intelligence. But the ultra-national Poles take a sweeping view of human affairs, and disdain all petty distinctions. All the lands that at any one time were overshadowed by the White Eagle are still, and will ever remain, the property of that noble animal; and though the Poles claim the rights of conquest for themselves, they steadfastly decline admitting similar claims on behalf of others. The inhabitants of Silesia and Western and Eastern Prussia, are, according to the orthodox national view, mere guests, wayfarers and sojourners on Polish ground, and, as such, are bound by sacred obligations to submit to the dominion of the rightful owners of the soil. That these views are entertained by the Propaganda is placed beyond all doubt, by the speeches and writings of its representative men. The apostles of liberty and nationality, who hawk their sorrows, and those of their country, all over Europe, are at no trouble to conceal their intention of forcing their

own mode of liberty on reluctant populations, and sacrificing the best portion of Silesia and the two Prussias to the phantom of their nationality.

Of all countries Germany has lost many and most valuable provinces, by internal weakness and the stress of time and war. Such losses are naturally a source of regret. German patriots still look with an uneasy feeling on Kurland, Flanders, Lorraine, and Alsace. Men of fervid imagination and weak reason there may have been, who, at times of popular commotion, have claimed for Germany the restoration of her ancient frontiers. Without going back to Charles the Great, and claiming Paris as a subject-town to Worms and Aachen, the re-conquest of Strasburg, Metz, Thionville, Nancy and Lille, may for a moment have occupied the minds of the least responsible of German agitators. But no politician, no statesman, no man of any weight or standing, has ever countenanced this misinformed zeal. Countries which once were German have, in the course of years, been welded into foreign countries; they are bound up with foreign interests; they are, to a large extent, inhabited by the foreigners to whose territories they are annexed. A German party might be formed in each, but to the great mass of the people, an invading army of Germans would not appear as an army of liberators. The men of Lorraine would be to the full as opposed to a German dominion as the men of Champagne or Normandy. The conquest, or liberation, or re-acquisition, or what-

ever else it may be called, of Lorraine or Alsace, would be quite as absurd and impracticable as the restoration to Poland of Posen, Silesia, or Western Prussia. The lovers of poetical justice, who coolly talk of dismembering Prussia for the sake of Poland, ought to temper their madness with some method, and call for the dismembering of France for the sake of the old German Empire. If Lorraine were to fall to Prussia, or Alsace to Baden or Bavaria, the French settlers in those old German provinces might possibly fear for their nationality and language; but they would enjoy an absolute certainty as to the safety of their lives and properties. What the fate of the German population of the old Polish provinces would be, under a national Polish Government, is, as I have shown, matter of great doubt and ominous speculation. The Propaganda are, indeed, imbued with the most philanthropic sentiments, but experience shows, that there is but one step from philanthropy to persecution. The conspiracy of 1846 was intended to inaugurate scenes of bloodshed and spoliation, for which the conspirators themselves found the suitable name of *Sicilian Vespers*, and the patriot chiefs, who ravaged some districts of Posen in 1848, showed plainly that the Poles, whose exquisite susceptibility denounces the cruelty of Prussia, would rule any subject nation with a rod of iron. The licence of partisan warfare might be pleaded in extenuation of the crime of shooting and

stabbing prisoners, even when non-combatants : but the excuse, though specious, will scarcely cover the violation of young girls, the murder of infants, and the mutilation of old men, for no other reason than the one, that they were helpless and defenceless, and that they had not the merit of Polish parentage.

X.

WHENEVER vague rumours and unfounded assertions have been brought to bear on a political situation, with the intent of beclouding it, a counter-statement becomes necessary. The best cause is not proof against the efforts of calumny, and the most unobjectionable actions may be successfully misrepresented. Nations, like individuals, may live down evil report, but the process is neither agreeable nor profitable. Without presuming to defend Prussia, I have endeavoured, to the best of my knowledge, to do justice to the complaints which the Polish Propaganda makes on behalf of its co-nationals in Posen. This question is unremittingly forced on the attention of the public in the representative countries of Europe, and it is good, not only for Prussia, but also for her neighbours and allies, that the whole truth should be known. The cause of liberty, order, good government, and peace, can only gain by such an exposition ; it can only lose by a contemptuous disregard of statements, which, no matter how unfounded, find their way into respectable publications, form the basis of important argument, and help to form, or at least to colour, public opinion.

The Polish question, if entertained at all, should

be reviewed in a painstaking and practical spirit. It is a mistake to suppose that vague traditions, and sentimental aspirations qualify a man to consider and judge it. It is bad policy to ignore facts, for in the end facts will take their revenge on the ignorant and the blind. The "friends of Poland" of every degree have to consider that, in the existing state of Europe, the putting together of Poland is the breaking up of Prussia; that the extinction of Prussia deprives Germany not only of a common protection, but also of all chances of future strength, and that after the loss of Prussia, the division of Germany among her nearest neighbours is a mere question of time and circumstances. They have to reflect on the serious political complications to which so important a change would give rise, and to satisfy themselves, from the history of Poland, that at least a reasonable compensation for all sacrifices and dangers can be expected from the wisdom, the statesmanship, the humanity, the independence, the industrial energy, and the peaceful disposition of the Poles. If, as might be the case, the result of this inquiry were rather curious than satisfactory, it would then become the duty of the friends of Poland to consider the restoration of their pet kingdom under Russian protection. The question would naturally arise, how far the additional strength thus given to Russia would make up for the weakness of Prussia, and whether, as compared with the former expedient, the latter evil would not be worse than the first. It might, indeed, be urged,

that the possession of Posen, Silesia, and Eastern and Western Prussia, would more than satisfy the ambition of the most ambitious Emperor who, at any future time, may rule in St. Petersburg and Warsaw, and that the extreme portion of the Roman Catholic world would derive signal comfort from the extinction of the greatest Protestant power on the continent. Nor should it be forgotten, that the Polish gentlemen who form the Propaganda, would gladly submit to Russia, so that they could wreak their vengeance on Prussia, to them the most detestable of the partitioning powers.

Even at this point, the arduous task of inquiry is not over for the friend of Poland. He has to account for the peculiar twist in the Polish mind, which induces the preference of nationality to liberty, and he must further ascertain the reason why Prussia, of the three partitioning powers, is the most detestable to the ultra-national Pole. In the course of this inquiry, he will be struck by the circumstance, that by far the majority of the Propaganda have never been Prussian subjects, and that of the Prussian Poles who form part of that notable corporation, one half are free to come and go in and out of Prussia, while the other half consists of men who twice were taken in flagrant rebellion with arms in their hands; who twice were arraigned and sentenced to death, and who twice owed their lives and their liberty to the Government whose cruelty they denounce. Startled by this preferential animosity, the inquirer asks whether, of the three powers, Prussia is

the one which has dealt most harshly with her Polish subjects, and he is astounded to find that her treatment has been the mildest. He finds that Poles, who usurp and disgrace the title of patriots, detest Prussia, mainly because the Poles, their co-nationals, have by her been rescued from barbarism and indigence; that of all others they vilify and calumniate Prussia, because she treats her Poles as citizens and not as slaves; and that Prussia is the object of their rancorous animosity, because she has gained the affection of the majority of her Polish subjects. To his dismay he will discover, that the lovers of the Polish nation desire the oppression of the Poles, and that men who unceasingly bewail the sufferings of Poland, are roused to implacable enmity against the Government which, of all others, seeks to alleviate those sufferings. And distressed by these conflicting considerations, it may possibly occur to him, that his energies have been misdirected and his sympathies misapplied, and that the wiser plan would be, to weigh the case of the Propaganda, examine its motives and inquire into its projects. That method, if adopted, would considerably reduce the number of the Friends of Poland.

A P P E N D I X.

REPORT

Of the Chief President HERR FLOTTWELL, respecting the Administration of the Grand Duchy of Posen, from December, 1830, to March, 1841.

“While presiding over the Administration of the Grand-Duchy of Posen, I felt it my duty to promote and consolidate the union of that province with the Monarchy, by gradually removing the tendencies, the habits, and the peculiar leanings of the Polish inhabitants which militate against such a union; while, on the other hand, I diffused the elements of German life in its material and moral relations, so that, by the decisive action of German cultivation, I might obtain the final object of my mission, viz., *the complete fusion of the two nationalities.*”

“The welfare of the State makes the attainment of this object an imperative necessity. Though it may trench upon the reminiscences and feelings of a portion of the Polish inhabitants, there is comfort in the conviction that on the whole, the province profits by the course thus adopted, and that in the historical developement of all nations the barriers of former or of existing divisions, are removed by similar changes and novel formations.

“Prudence enjoins the most tender regard for all the peculiarities of the Polish tribe, but more especially for those which are essentially respectable, and which will assert their value with the progress of cultivation. That regard is

not less enjoined by the consideration of our own history and of that of Poland.

“The most efficient and the most acceptable means of promoting the object of the State will be found in the care for the material interests of the province, or at least, for those interests which the majority consider as material.

“The enfranchisement of the peasantry and of the boroughs from the power of the lords of the manor, the free development of industrial pursuits, and the promotion and increase of trade—these gifts of the Prussian Government are gratefully acknowledged by all classes. Not less do they prize that feeling of complete security, which the impartiality of the courts and the conscientiousness of the administration impart even to the lowest and the poorest.

“The increase of the means of public instruction struck even the dull understandings of the peasantry as a kindly measure on the part of Government. As his comfort increases and his free activity expands, the boor begins to realise the necessity of schools; and thus many openings are made for German cultivation to impregnate the ideas and sentiments of the population. This cultivation, and generally a German mode of life, had long been vainly desired by the numerous German inhabitants of the province. It is now awarded as a right; and the German element, pervading the whole province, fills up the gulf which a few years since caused the majority of Prussians to look upon the Grand-Duchy as a place of exile.

“Any measures but those absolutely necessary and practicable are objectionable, but any wavering in the principles of administration is dangerous. Such wavering causes the Poles to suspect our concessions, which they consider as bids for their favour. Anything like a return to the past makes the German population distrustful of the future, and paralyzes energetic action which, unchecked and fully developed, is most useful to the State. The events in this province during the revolution in the kingdom of Poland have shewn the results of granting a preferential position to the Polish inhabi-

tants. We know now that no concessions or favours can satisfy the disaffected, because what they desire is a complete, an unlimited, national and political independence of the Poles.

“In my opinion, we ought to proclaim and adhere to the principle, that the province is not closed to the German element, which forms the life of the State and of above a third of the Grand-Duchy itself, and that its amalgamation with the Polish element must be left to the natural progress of history. This candid declaration on the part of Government is indeed not likely to conciliate the opposition; but for the present, at least, there are no means of conciliating that party, and any measures tending to that object are clearly out of season. Those steps and measures which command the respect of the public are most proper to serve the interests of Government; but that respect is not to be gained by measures favouring the suspicion that Government dares not avow the objects it has in view.

“The majority of the Romanist Clergy and of the Polish gentry are decidedly hostile to the Government.

“A large number of priests were, on two occasions, inclined to join the secular authorities. It was when Theiner published his book on the position of the Roman Catholic Church. They have since pretty generally taken the other side, partly from fanaticism, and partly swayed by the public opinion of their caste.

“There are, among the Catholic Clergy, men of high character and of truly Christian principles. But they form the exception, and their influence is limited. The mass of the priests are neither men of the world nor are they scholars. Though some portion of the younger generation submit reluctantly to the influence of progressive tendencies, they—and, indeed, almost all their colleagues—are hostile to popular education, because it threatens to impair their *prestige*. Yet that *prestige*—more especially among the lower classes—is extremely limited. Mentally indolent—removed from all incitements to thought, and for the most part prone to

sensual indulgences which cannot remain concealed from the people, they rarely manage to gain the respect of the laity by a faithful discharge of their duties as pastors and inspectors of schools. But, devoid of higher interests, they incline to intrigue and give full play to their aversion to a Government which promotes popular education and which insists on the proper training of the clergy. And this aversion to the secular authority and mental progress they establish on the broad and convenient basis of *nationality*, and while they pretend to champion the popular cause, they contend in reality for their own sordid interests and for the priestly prerogatives of the middle ages.

“To counteract the leanings and sentiments of the Clergy, I have endeavoured to promote the scientific cultivation of the candidates for the ministry. My first measure was a Report, dated Sept. 17, 1831, containing a detailed account of the shocking and almost incredible condition of the Catholic Seminaries, with propositions for a radical reform of the same. Owing to this report, His late Majesty* was pleased, by an Order in Council, dated March 31, 1833, to authorise the secularization of all the convents left in the province, and the appropriation of their revenues to the improvement of the schools and seminaries for the Catholic Clergy. An Exchequer Grant—provisionally for 10 years—of 21,000 thalers annually was made by the same Order in Council.

“These grants and appropriations provided funds for :—

“1. An additional Grammar School (Gymnasium) in Posen. 2. A Gymnasium in Trszemeszno. 3. A seminary for Romanist Schoolmasters in Paradis. 4. An *Alumnat* for 60 Romanist students of theology in connexion with the Gymnasium in Posen. 5. A similar *Alumnat* for 30 pupils in connexion with the Gymnasium in Trszemeszno. Besides a number of village and town schools to be mentioned hereafter. Nor should it be forgotten that the Archiepiscopal seminaries in Posen and Gnesen have been thoroughly reformed, and that of Posen more especially has been provided with

* Frederick William III.

competent professors from other provinces. His Majesty had also granted an annual fund of 16,000 thalers for a *convictorium* in the University of Breslau, to be presided over by a *Regens* and sundry *Repetents*, and destined to provide academical instruction for the Romanist students of theology in this province. This arrangement received in 1833 the sanction of the Archbishop of Dunin, who also assented to the purchase of the building ground at Breslau. But he has since thought proper to revoke his consent, and, rejecting the Prussian Universities, he has demanded that the students of Divinity from this province shall be permitted to complete their education at Wien, Prag, München, or Rome.* It has not, consequently, been possible to apply the above-mentioned grant.

“The majority of these institutions has proved satisfactory from an educational point of view; it remains to be seen in how far they will promote the amalgamation of the province with the remainder of the Prussian State. The presumption is that a genuine and extensive mental cultivation must awaken a grateful recognition of the confidence which the King shows in the Catholic clergy. But there is no blinking the fact, that the influence of the older generation of priests will for a long time tell upon the schoolmasters and upon the younger clergy. Regardless of the improvements effected in their character and in their own position, these older priests have repeatedly displayed the most hostile feelings to the Government and the most revolting intolerance of their protestant fellow-Christians.

“These sentiments of the clergy have had a powerful effect upon the wives of the Polish gentry, who are but too prone

* No special permission is required for a Prussian subject to reside or study anywhere. But to be admitted to an examination, candidates must prove an academical residence of a certain number of terms at a Prussian University. What the Archbishop demanded was that an academical residence at an Austrian, Bavarian or Papal University should be held a valid qualification for examination.—*O. W.*

to religious fanaticism, and upon the domestic education of their families. To prove the extravagant absurdities provoked thereby, I need but refer to the fact, that immediately after the removal of the Archbishop of Dunin, large numbers of Polish ladies—more especially in Posen—went into mourning. They wore their sable habiliments up to the decease of his late Majesty, when they appeared in lively colours, so that no one should mistake their real sentiments. The sons of the Polish gentry, besides their notorious aversion to the service of the State, display likewise the most objectionable tendencies.

“The gentry, owing to the history of their race and likewise to their extreme versatility, assume a variety of attitudes. Bold and self-possessed, and with proper education, of amiable manners, they have the power of pleasing if they exert it. But their exerting it depends upon circumstances; and it is necessary to know these circumstances, and consider them from the standing point of these men, in order to know how they are likely to act in any given case.

“The great mass of Polish landowners and gentlemen may be roughly subdivided as follows:—

“1. Old men of large property. They are, for the most part, aware that their condition as Prussian subjects is preferable to that of their countrymen under Russia and Austria; they are grateful for their privileges, and they would show their gratitude by their conduct, if they had the courage to brave the outrageous hostility of their compatriots or the more insidious influence of their wives.

“2. The majority of those landed proprietors who took part in the Polish Revolution. From a mistaken patriotism and from vanity also, they consider themselves the leaders of the Polish nationality, which they are at all seasons ready to represent and champion. There are among them several respectable, intelligent and moderate men, but they, too, dare not affront the extreme party.

“3. The sons of landed proprietors, young men who have no property of their own, and who generally pass their days

in idleness. To these must be added the farmers or owners of small estates, and owners whose estates are heavily mortgaged. This class is respectable only in numbers; they lead a roving life, and haunt the wineshops and the casinos of Posen, Gnesen, Samter, Gostyn, Raskow, etc. They affect the reading of revolutionary books and pamphlets, their chief supply of which is drawn from France. They pretend to democratic principles, and, by their cant phraseology and unequalled impudence they impose on their more reasonable and moderate acquaintances. They are members of a confederation which is presided over by a few men, and which exerts a close surveillance over the conduct of the better class of Poles. Any approximation on the part of the latter to the Germans or the higher functionaries, is immediately made known and severely censured. The leaders of this association, assuming a variety of names, propagate complaints of the conduct of the Government, on account of the pretended encroachments on their nationality, and in general promote a vexatious opposition. It would be an idle delusion to believe that the most of these complaints are approved of by the majority of those landed proprietors, who mainly can be considered as authorities in such matters. Nor would these people be satisfied with any concession; for their main object is to foster discontent and opposition against the Government. They wage a war to the knife against the existing state of things, and desire to upset all institutions and arrangements conducive to a due preservation of order and law. Hence every concession on the part of Government and every change in the administration, extorted by their demands, will only encourage them to agitate for fresh concessions. The influence of these people on the county elections is very great, and the late returns show that irrespective of all other qualifications, the persons returned are such as have either supported the revolution or taken a conspicuous part in the ultra-national opposition.

It is impossible to place much confidence in a gentry composed of such elements. When the province was

re-annexed to the Prussian State (1815) the administration of the rural police and petty justice was no longer in the hands of the gentry. The French law, grafted on the old Polish institutions, had appointed *Bürgermeisters* for the towns and *Woyts* for the rural parishes. According to a Home Office minute, dated July 23, 1809, the holders of large properties had to assume the functions of a *Woyt* either personally or by a substitute. This arrangement has been temporarily confirmed by an order in Council, dated April 16, 1823. But this delegated power, not the less a power because delegated, was not likely to work well in the long run, and it more especially failed in the course of the revolution of 1830-31. Hence, by an order in Council, dated December 10, 1836, the provincial Government was authorised to appoint *District Commissioners*. This arrangement, likewise, is open to several objections. It increases the number of paid functionaries; it paralyzes the independence and activity of the parishes and local authorities, and it threatens to increase the despotism of Bureaucracy. But the reasons which prompted the appointment of these Commissioners are still in force, and our object should be to promote direct communication of the *Landrätthe* with the local and parochial authorities, and to employ the District Commissioners only in case of the glaring incapacity or contumacy of these authorities. By this means the autonomy of the local authorities would be supported and stimulated, instead of being cramped or suppressed.

“By an Order in Council, dated February 3, 1833, the election in this province of the *Landrätthe* by the ordinary constituency has been suspended, and the various governments are authorised to nominate the candidates, who, however, if possible, are to be selected from among the landed proprietors of the province. The continuance of this measure is most advisable, for, in the case of elections, in the majority of cases Government would not be able to approve of the candidates, and these refusals would give the opposition a most welcome opportunity for fresh attacks upon the Government. The party which takes the lead among the

Polish landed proprietors imitates, as its members themselves told me, the tactics of O'Connell, and hence Government does well in making extensive use of its veto in the appointment of these functionaries.

“The unfavourable influence caused by the exercise and the extortions of manorial rights over boroughs, called for the law of May 15, 1833, which provided for the abolition of dues levied from individuals, or trades and professions. The full amount of the indemnification has, from the public funds, been paid to the Lords of the Manor, to be repaid in easy instalments, by the various towns.

“To increase the number of intelligent and politically reliable proprietors, an order in council, dated March 13, 1838, decreed that the most eligible estates offered to public auction shall be purchased on account of the Exchequer, and that after the necessary regulation and improvement of those estates, the same shall be sold to intelligent and well-conditioned purchasers of German extraction.

“This prudent measure has gained for the province above thirty important German proprietors, and further results are to be obtained from the domains of Karge and Parzynowo, which yet remain to be sold. This plan of buying and re-selling has not hitherto caused any loss to the Exchequer; on the contrary, a large percentage of profit has been obtained on the working capital destined for the purpose.

“The abolition of rural servitude, and the regulation of the peasants' holdings, have been most influential and beneficent measures. They have created a class of inhabitants which previously was wanting in this province, whose comfortable existence guarantees the safety of the State in peace and war, and which contributes, in a great measure, to the extension of agriculture and the increase of the national wealth. Nor should it be forgotten, that these measures have been considerably promoted by many lords of manors, whose frank disinterestedness and reasonable foresight reconciled them to an arrangement which was as profitable to the country as, in the end, it must prove remunerative to themselves,

although they most painfully feel the decrease of their influence on the cottiers on their estates.

“The inhabitants of the numerous boroughs of this province, are—with the exception of the larger towns—remarkable for their ignorance, their poverty, and their drunken habits, and they are almost wholly without that respectable class of tradesmen, which, in the German provinces, forms the nucleus of the respectable *Middle Class*. Almost all the small *boroughs* have, from reasons of private interest, been created by Polish estate-holders. Hence the governments of the time gave them numerous privileges, in return for which the estate-holders had valuable monopolies, more especially the monopoly of selling wine and spirits, with the additional advantage of several annual fairs, for the increased consumption of the same. Besides the abolition (in consideration of indemnities) of these monopolies, I have endeavoured, by means of proper schools, to foster the growth of a respectable Middle Class, and by the introduction of the *Städteordnung*, to awaken among the burghers public feeling and a lively interest in their municipal affairs.

“Most worthy of remark, among the upper schools thus founded or reformed, are those at Meseritz, Krotoszyn, Pleschen, Wollstein, Rawicz, Lissa, Fraustadt, Gnesen, and Inowraclaw. The city of Posen, too, has resolved to found an upper school. His Majesty has granted a special fund for the improvement and enlargement of schools in the principal towns in the districts. The most favourable results are to be expected from these schools in connection with an orderly and independent administration of the Communes.

“To revive the industrial activity of those towns, whose staple manufacture, that of cloth, has been ruined by the prohibitive tariff of the Russian Government, we have, after many abortive attempts, succeeded in founding an association of manufacturers in Rawicz, for the purpose of establishing, on the new system and with all the aid of modern inventions, a spinning and weaving factory in that town. The Exchequer has made a contribution of 2,000 thalers to the building fund, besides defraying the expenses for machinery, to the



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