

# ALSACE-LORRAINE: A STUDY IN CONQUEST

BY DAVID STARR JORDAN

On changerait plutôt le cœur de place  
Que de changer la vieille Alsace.

## I

THE greatest evil in our age is war. The most menacing feature of this evil is readiness for war, which makes of peace a perennial farce, and the most widespread factor which makes for war is that form of patriotism which spends itself in distrust and hatred of other nations. It rests on the mediæval politics which found in war outside, the easiest road to national unity and the surest method of suppression of internal reforms.

Through no fault of their own it has been the fate of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, for the last forty years, to be the centre on which this type of patriotism has impinged. This has made these provinces the crux of the war problems of Europe. Around the mourning figure of Strassburg, symbolic of the distressed province of Alsace, the war-hatreds of France have rallied for forty years. The France which seemed to be menaced with dissolution in 1871 was again, in a fashion, unified by the fear and hatred which the fate of Alsace-Lorraine still inspires. The call of 'la Patrie Mutilée' has become again, since Agadir, the occasion if not the justification of that contradiction in world-politics, a 'republic in arms.'

On the other hand, the fate of Alsace-Lorraine has served Bismarck's purpose of unifying Germany through her hatred of surrounding nations.

The result of the seizure of these provinces, and of the distrust this policy has inspired, has held Germany together and made possible a scale of military expenditure which has appalled the world. It has hung as a dead weight on all German progress, internal and external. It has turned over the nation to the control of a blind militarism which rides gloriously toward a fall. The treaty of Frankfort was not a treaty of peace. It was devised to keep hatred alive. Its purpose was not to welcome back the Germanic people of Alsace, but to keep Germany unified against France. And thus the question of Alsace-Lorraine has divided Europe into two hopeless alliances, which can accomplish no worthy result, and for whose senseless antagonism there seems to be no rational remedy.

'Thus,' observes Mr. William Martin, 'amid all her griefs, it is the glorious rôle of Alsace-Lorraine to safeguard the moral unity of two great nations, concentrated on the same thought.'

Yet all this is through no fault of Alsace and Lorraine; they have given no occasion for war. Their part has been passive. Of that form of patriotism which spends itself in war talk and war accessories, these provinces are to-day in no sense the cause, they are only the excuse or the occasion. France can do nothing for them, and Germany in her present temper will do nothing.

Germany says to her province of Elsass-Lothringen, 'I will not give you freedom till I am sure of your love.'

Alsace replies, 'I cannot love you till you set me free.' Lorraine replies, 'I am not of your family, I cannot understand your ways.' Then Germany says to France, 'We cannot be friends until you forget.' And France says, 'You will not let me forget and so I cannot.'

This is the vicious circle, which most good men in Alsace-Lorraine hope some time to break.

The people of these provinces, torn suddenly from France as a result of incidents in which they had no part, held by Germany avowedly not for their own sakes but as appendages of their two strong fortresses, have naturally passed through the gamut of feelings instinctive to peoples conquered in war. And these feelings were the more bitter because it was not the people who were conquered.

Through the open door of Strassburg and Metz, Germany had been more than a dozen times invaded and many times overrun by the marauding hosts of France. It was Bismarck's plan to close these doors, to hold the key of France and Germany in his hand, so that these irruptions should forever cease. At the treaty of Frankfurt in 1871, France threw the provinces overboard to save herself from a worse fate. And ever since that time they have been a 'wound in the side' of the great Empire to which they are attached.

And naturally the emotional patriotism of France has looked forward to revenge. For forty years mourning wreaths have been placed on the symbolic statue of Strassburg in the Place de la Concorde. For forty years the Paris press has stirred up the shallow springs of national egotism or patriotism. For forty years the Boulevards have looked forward to the 'Guerre de Revanche,' the 'Guerre d'Honneur,' which should bring back to France her

abducted daughters of the Vosges. It is a better and more earnest type of man who looks forward to the War of Honor, but the two words, honor and revenge, mean the same thing. War, and the name of every war, is a lie.

And beyond the Rhine, all this serves the plans of the Pangermanists, who talk and dream of their 'War of Expansion,' which should give Germany her needed space 'under the sun,' and fill northern and central Europe with more problems of Alsace-Lorraine, all to be settled by the steady application of 'blood and iron.'

As a matter of fact no one can believe that any considerable number of rational people on either side of the Rhine desire war, or would look upon war as other than a dire calamity. Preparation for war is forced upon the common men by their acquiescence, sometimes by machinery they do not control, but never by their will. Nor can we doubt the assurance of the rulers, on both sides, that they do not want war, and that they will, on either side, in no case take the initiative in attack. The fact is, that modern Europe has no room for war, no stomach for it, no money to pay its cost. Neither France nor Germany is to-day, nor ever can be, 'prepared for war.' To be prepared for war is to have it; and gross accident or hideous crime aside, the War of Revenge and the War of Expansion are alike impossible. But neither chauvinist nor Pangermanist cares for this. They are peculiarly impatient as to ways and means. Few in number, but noisy, and on both sides largely venal, it is their business to make war and war-trade. It is not war for Alsace or for Lorraine, but war with Alsace-Lorraine as the excuse. The chauvinists of France rest their case mainly on matters of feeling. As a matter of fact, they are relatively harmless, for their influence on politics

is small and waning, though they have received a lease of noisy life since the incident at Agadir in 1911. Their colleagues in Germany, more menacing to world peace, for the moment, because they form a privileged class nearer the seats of power, back their pretensions by a sort of pseudo-science, a shallow imitation of philosophy.

It is said that in the centre of a cyclonic storm all is perfectly quiet. If Alsace-Lorraine is such a storm-centre, the same fact holds true. There is scarcely any part of Europe where the war spirit is lower or the war-maker less in evidence. The sole problem of these people is to secure equal rights within the Empire, and the chief difference of opinion hinges on whether these will be secured sooner by insistence or by patience. If Alsace-Lorraine is 'the nightmare of Europe,' the fault lies with Europe.

The provinces want no war, for they have seen war and know what it is. The last war of civilized Europe was fought on their lands, and worse than battle itself is life on a battlefield.

In the old days Alsace was a battlefield of religion. The ancient *Chronicles of Thann* tell how the land was ravaged in the Thirty Years' War. Towns destroyed have never been rebuilt. In one commune, the record tells us, there was not for twelve years a wedding, nor for fifteen years a baptism.

'So often as the Swedes gave battle to the imperialists, so often did the imperialists make war upon the Swedes. It was an endless massacre!'

Alsace still remembers vividly the awful bombardment of Strassburg and the bloody fields of Weissenburg and Wörth. Lorraine has before her waking eyes the campaign of Metz, and the hideous scenes of Victor Hugo's 'Année Terrible' of 1871. Not far away is the ravine of Gravelotte, with the war-

swept heights of St. Privat, St. Hubert, and Sainte-Marie aux Chênes. All about the scenes of the futile sorties of Bazaine—Noisseville, Colombey, and the highway that leads through Rezonville and Vionville to the French border at Mars-la-Tour—the land has been for forty years made up of graveyards rather than farms. And then, not far away, in France, but still within the boundaries of old Lorraine, were the horrors of Bazeilles, its massacre of citizens as well as soldiers, 'the obscene sea of slaughter' of Sedan. The battles of Napoleon III were fought on the soil of Alsace-Lorraine, but the provinces had no part in these wars. They were offered up in final sacrifice.

## II

In his clever account of the German enigma, M. Georges Bourdon uses these words: 'One must not speak of Alsace-Lorraine; it is better to listen while she speaks.'

In these pages the writer has tried thus to listen while Alsace-Lorraine speaks for herself. In traveling over the two provinces he has had speech with many good men and women, representing every point of view which the question permits. These have freely and frankly expressed their hopes and fears. Their opinions are summed up here, often in their own language, as nearly as may be in condensed translation.<sup>1</sup>

Chauvinists and Pangermanists alike are rare, and very rare, among the natives of Alsace and Lorraine; their contests belong to the outside world, and we may for the present pass them

<sup>1</sup> I mention no individual names, except from articles in print, because I would have no one held personally responsible, but to all I acknowledge my indebtedness; I am under special obligations to my colleague and companion, Professor Albert Léon Guérard, for his sympathetic interest and invaluable help. — THE AUTHOR.

by and disregard their exterior assertions.

There is no doubt a war-feeling which has its roots in these provinces, though its manifestations are outside. After the treaty of Frankfort, 'the optants,' 'those who chose to remain French,' were allowed to leave the provinces. The number of those who thus left in the years 1871-73, is officially stated to have been 270,000, about one fifth of the total population. These are the 'émigrés,' while the Germans who have since come in from 'Old Germany' are spoken of as 'immigrés,' 'Vieux Allemands,' or 'Alt Deutsche.'

The spirit of these men and women who chose to leave their native land for a principle represents the noblest impulses of the human heart. They abandoned their homes, not through hatred of Prussia, not because they 'would not become Germans,' not even because they wished to remain citizens of France. Their primary motive was this: they would not place themselves or their sons in a position where, as conscripts in a foreign army, they would fight their kinsmen and friends. This was no passing emotion. It was grounded deep in religion and conscience.

We who to-day are spectators should remember that these men and women of forty years ago were not actors merely in the great tragedy of Europe, a play on which the curtain is yet to be rung down. They were themselves the very soul of the tragedy.

The émigrés have naturally had a large influence on their kinsfolk at home. The population of neighboring cities of France and Switzerland, notably Nancy, Belfort, and Basle, has been greatly increased and strengthened by this movement of Alsatians who would not be German. In each of these cities the number of 'émigrés' runs into the thousands.

The University of Nancy has grown

up through the influence of these people, having been built to take the place of the University of Strassburg as the Eastern stronghold of French culture. It is said that in the German army there are but three Alsatian officers, while in the French Army thirty generals are of Alsace or Lorraine stock.

The émigrés hold to the spirit of the solemn protest of Bordeaux, spoken by M. Grosjean before the French Assembly on March 1, 1871, as the last act of the twenty-eight deputies of Alsace and Lorraine before leaving their place in the empire. The protest is in part as follows:—

'Delivered, in scorn of all justice and by an odious abuse of force, to foreign domination, we have one last duty to perform. We declare once for all null and void an agreement which disposes of us without our consent. The vindication of our rights rests for ever open to all and to each one in the form and in the degree our conscience shall dictate. In the moment we quit this hall, the supreme thought we find in the bottom of our hearts is a thought of unutterable attachment to the land from which in violence we are torn. Our brothers of Alsace and of Lorraine, separated at this moment from the common family, will preserve to France, absent from their hearthstones, an affection faithful to the day when she shall return to take again her place.'

Then on March 24, turning toward Germany, Frédéric Hartmann spoke these words, classical and historic, the key which unlocks the whole question of Alsace-Lorraine:—

'By the fact that you have conquered us, you owe us a status in law, a civil and political constitution in harmony with our traditions and with our customs.'

To all inquiries concerning Alsace-Lorraine, the German answer begins invariably with the words, 'There is

no question of Alsace-Lorraine.' Amplifying this answer, we have: —

*There is no question of Alsace-Lorraine; the land is German by tradition, by language, and by conquest. Its affairs concern Germany alone; the whole alleged question is the work of the boulevard journalists of Paris.*

Taking up the German position first from the side of law, it is claimed that Alsace and Lorraine are territories won by conquest confirmed by the treaty of Frankfort. As such, all rights have lapsed and there remain only those that the Empire in its wisdom and friendliness may grant. France has no further concern in the matter. The relations in International Law were settled once and for all by the treaty of Frankfort. As France tried for years to suppress the German language and German culture in Alsace, it becomes Germany's national duty in turn to wean these people from the French. The Franco-Prussian war was begun by Napoleon, with the avowed purpose of seizing the Rhine provinces for France. 'To guard against the repetition of such an offense,' the Pangermanists contend, 'we have taken the Rhine valley for Germany. The connection of Elsass-Lothringen with the Empire is the very last word of irrevocability. We might as well be asked to surrender Prussia as to give up the territory bought and paid for at Gravelotte, Mars-la-Tour, St. Privat and Sedan. Restoration of Elsass-Lothringen is not debatable for us in any form whatsoever. No proffer of territory in exchange anywhere on the face of the globe could induce the German government even to consider such a transaction. Why did we retake it? Because the safety of German territory demanded it. France openly coveted the left bank of the Rhine. What else was the real underlying cause of Napoleon's war? Elsass-Lothringen had to be taken if that part of our

fatherland west of the Rhine was to be permitted to develop in peace and safety as an integral part of the German nation.'

Again, in law, Elsass-Lothringen is not a state of the German Empire, not one of the twenty-eight members of the imperial confederation. It is 'Reichsland,' — imperial property, to be administered in the general interest of the imperial states. 'Its present status is almost exactly parallel with that of the territories within the United States, or perhaps still more exactly with that of the Federal District of Columbia.' The territory is allowed certain privileges, not rights, of self-government, but not to the prejudice or advantage of the actual states. As in the United States of the past and present, the people of the territories are held in tutelage until they are ready for self-government, so Elsass-Lothringen is held in training until its people are ready for autonomy within the German Empire. To this end, they must be educated in the spirit of 'Deutschthum,' and must be imbued with German traditions and with German culture.

Naturally, the business of Elsass-Lothringen must be conducted in the German language. The people must be familiar with German methods of government and modes of thinking. They must think as Germans, for the Empire is not an assemblage of states and cities and people. It is a confederation of Germans, by the Germans, and for the Germans.

All this involves no real hardship, for the same requirements exist throughout the Empire, and all residents of the Empire, Danes and Poles, Saxons, Swabians, Bavarians, and Prussians alike, must conform to it. All Germany is 'under the ferule' of training in 'Deutschthum.' Meanwhile, German rule in Alsace-Lorraine is consideration



itself compared with the methods usually found necessary in dealing with a conquered people.

To revert to the process of *Entwelschung*, — its advocates maintain that it is salutary and necessary. The continuity and efficiency of the Empire depend upon it. It has been honestly and consistently pursued in *Elsass-Lothringen* for forty years, and it is open to no question or revision. In so far as it has failed, the fault lies with hesitation or leniency in administration, not with the plan itself.

The 'Affaire de Noisseville,' in 1908,<sup>1</sup> may serve as an example of such failure. The *Statthalter* (governor) permitted the building of a monument to the French soldiers on this German battlefield. Its dedication was witnessed by 100,000 people who waved the tri-color and sang the *Marseillaise* in defiance of national proprieties. It produced a revival of French sympathy which swept *Lorraine* off her feet, and threatened to undo in an hour the loyalty resulting from years of patient German tutelage.

The German outlook for the future does not grow promising. This the officials unwillingly admit. *Lorraine* abuts on France as *Alsace* does on Switzerland. But the greatest obstinacy appears in the districts thoroughly German by blood and speech. It centres especially in *Ober-Elsass* and its two chief cities of *Colmar* and *Mühlhausen*.

But whatever the discouragements, it is certain in the minds of the German authorities that *Elsass-Lothringen* cannot be made an independent nation, nor yet a free state of the Empire. Still less can it be given back to France. *Alsace* is German at heart and belongs in the Empire. To abandon *Lorraine* would be to disgrace the fifty thousand

graves of brave Germans who gave their lives to win back the lost provinces and to gain the German Rhine. The international politics of Germany hinge on romantic sentiment.

Moreover, though forty years is a long period in the lifetime of a man, it is but a moment in the history of a race. *Alsace* lies where races meet. She has been part of Germany, of Austria, of France, of Germany again. She has resisted all changes with characteristic obstinacy. She has been reconciled, more or less, with each in turn, and she will be reconciled again. The reëstablishment of the monarchy was strenuously opposed by *Alsace*, and she voted persistently and almost alone against the overwhelming majority which established the 'Second Empire.'

### III

Just now *Elsass-Lothringen* asks for autonomy, for home rule within the Empire. No man of sagacity expects or hopes to see the region returned to France. It is argued by Germanists, on the other hand, that home rule is demanded not for the good of the people, but because home rule is the custom of the other states. But under German law *Elsass-Lothringen* is not a state, but imperial territory, 'Reichsland.' This distinction her politicians resent.

I may here, again in passing, refer to the differences now existing between the *Reichsland* and a state.

The *Reichsland* has no executive head of its own. It is governed from Berlin — by a *Statthalter*, appointed by the Emperor; the powers of the *Statthalter* and his *Ministerium* at *Strassburg* being derived from the Emperor. The constitution of the *Reichsland* was granted from Berlin (in 1911), — not framed by the people or their representatives, or voted by them, or subject to amendment by them.

<sup>1</sup> The notorious *Zabern* affair took place subsequent to Dr. Jordan's investigation. — THE EDITORS.

The Government of Germany and of its federated states is 'constitutional and not parliamentary.' The limitations on the executive are set by the constitution itself and not, as in Great Britain, by the changing will of the people, as expressed through their deputies. In theory, the Bundesrath and the Reichstag in Berlin could change this constitution at will, or withdraw it altogether.

Much of the local friction in Elsass-Lothringen centres about edicts or laws of special protection (*Abwehrgesetze*), known locally as 'laws of exception' (*lois d'exception*). These measures, it is claimed, are made necessary in Alsace-Lorraine, as similar or more rigid laws have been in the new Prussian provinces of Schleswig-Holstein and Posen, by facts in the history or geography or temperament of the provinces concerned. These districts all border on unfriendly powers, and from these emanate influences which Germany finds it necessary to combat.

There are very many of these 'laws of exception.' I may name a few which were called to my attention: —

The Germanization of the University of Strassburg.

The dissolution in Metz of 'Sport' societies with French buglers.

The dissolution of Souvenir Societies for the decoration of French graves.

The limitation (to about one in two weeks) of the rendering of French plays.

The limitation of French instruction (which is given in German, to students who use French in daily speech and in their games).

The occasional banishment or imprisonment of ardent 'nationalists,' or even of visitors from France or Switzerland.

The revival for a time of the passport system.

The requirement of German signs

and notices, and the other matters locally called '*coups d'épingle*,' and variously ignored or resented according to the temper of individuals. Street signs can be written in French only by special permission.

#### IV

Those who believe in the future of German *Entwelschung* recognize more or less clearly mistakes in the past. Some of those indicated to me by different persons are the following: —

Too great leniency: willingness to compromise in Lorraine with French sympathy, in Alsace with Swiss republicanism.

Too great severity: the attempt to teach love of Germany by showing Germany's most unlovely side.

Holding Alsace-Lorraine responsible for outbreaks of chauvinism in Paris; matters in which these provinces had no part.

'It is a mistake in these days to hold conquered territory.' To carry the theory of *Reichsland* to its logical conclusion the inhabitants should have been removed. Turkey has put the theory into practice in Armenia, but Germany is not fitted for the task, especially when dealing with people exactly like her own. To the policy of taking French territory at all it is said that Bismarck was strongly opposed, but yielded to Moltke's insistence on the necessity of retaining Strassburg and Metz, to which, in the military sense, Alsace and Lorraine are but outlying appendages.

It was a mistake not to make Alsace-Lorraine frankly part of Prussia. This was done with other conquered territory, — Schleswig-Holstein, Posen, and even the historic German state of Hanover.

It was a mistake not to make the Emperor himself *Landesherr* of Alsace-

Lorraine. This would perhaps have touched the springs of patriotic feeling.

It was a mistake to unite Lorraine with Alsace. The two districts have scarcely anything in common save their experiences in rupture from France. By uniting them we transfer to each the complaints of the other. Lorraine, largely French, chiefly rural, and altogether Catholic, is more docile than Alsace. The latter is peculiarly headstrong in her republicanism.

The Abbé Thilmont of Lorraine ascribes to his people the calmness and coolness of the German with the delicacy and exquisite sensibility of the French. They are profoundly attached to religion as the last surviving interest, but they hate extremes, clericalism as well as sectarianism.

'We in Lorraine think sometimes with our heads and sometimes with our hearts. With our heads we accept a situation we cannot change. But who can read the heart?'

As for Alsace, the dominant note is that of republicanism. As we shall see later, the clue to its character is found not in its love of France, but in its love of liberty, a survival of the old Germanic freedom, which is still alive in every province, its expression stifled by the apparent success of the Germanic militarism of to-day.

These undercurrents are not likely to appear to the casual traveler who may visit Strassburg or Metz. Since 1871 there has been a large immigration to these cities from the rest of Germany, the 'Vieux Allemands' or 'immigrés' of common speech. To-day, Metz is about three fifths German and two fifths Lorraine; while in Strassburg about two fifths are German immigrants and three fifths Alsatians.

The Germans have added greatly to the wealth and importance of these two cities. In Metz, especially, large

additions have been built up from German capital. 'Strassburg, the quaint and busy city on the Ill, with its high-pitched roofs and the huge lacy spire of its red minster, with its cheerful and apparently well-satisfied people, seems to have little in common with the tragically draped statue in Paris.' The city is prosperous, its general administration effective, and business always dreads a change. The future of Strassburg is unquestionably German. Every visible trace of French culture has been sedulously stamped out. 'But 'no solution can be imposed by force.' The question of Alsace-Lorraine underlies all this seeming peacefulness and the most stiff-necked Prussian official comes at last to realize its existence.'

A closer study shows that, even in Strassburg, the Alsatian does not change his point of view. He is a 'citizen of no mean city,' and that city must bide its time to come to its own and manage its own affairs. The most sympathetic of the immigrants slowly come to the same point of view. In so far as they do not, they constitute a class apart, without social recognition from the Alsatians. Outside of Strassburg and Metz — even in cities like Colmar and Mühlhausen — the immigrants constitute but a small fraction of the population. So far as 'expansion' is concerned, crowded Germany gains nothing by annexation, for the land of Alsace still belongs to the Alsatians. The Germans cannot get a foot of ground unless they buy it. This they could do before 1870, and this they can do in any part of the earth. The Germanization of Strassburg and Metz is scarcely more marked than the Germanization of manufacturing cities outside of Germany — let us say, of Milwaukee, or of São Paulo, in Brazil. German immigrants are crowding into Basle and Zürich, perfectly willing



to become Swiss. German merchants and manufacturers have 'expanded'<sup>1</sup> throughout the world, and this without aid or help of the Mailed Fist or the Spiked Helmet.

With the growth of German industries there has come to Metz and to Strassburg, as well as to other German factory towns, a large accession of 'cheap labor' from Poland and from Italy. But all this, while tending to make still more impossible the return of the provinces to France, contributes nothing whatever to the problem of conciliation.

Another mistake, it is alleged, lay in the earlier attempts to conciliate the old aristocracy of Alsace-Lorraine. Some of these accepted imperial favor, but the class as a whole was not affected by them. Throughout both provinces the old bourgeoisie speak French, read French, regard French culture as superior to German, and regret that such culture is in a degree denied to their children. The blending of races and race-interests comes more readily from the bottom of the social scale. It was our experience in Mühlhausen to walk into the Bourse and find three hundred men, — well-to-do Germans to all appearance, — transacting their vociferous business all in French. The use of French in common life is advancing downwards in spite of, and largely because of, official pressure in the other direction.

It was a mistake that the constitution of 1911 was not granted twenty years earlier. This might have given an earlier interest in imperial as against local politics. It is said that the government encouraged the development of a socialist party in Alsace, to give

<sup>1</sup> There are almost a third as many Germans in the United States as in Germany. These have been 'Americanized' with no effort whatever, simply because no pressure has been used for their 'Entwelschung.' — THE AUTHOR.

a new line of division as against that of 'particularism.' This constitution handed to them from above has not satisfied the people, and it has emphasized the fact that their presence is a wound in the flank of a great empire. Moreover, it is in itself contrary to German legal traditions. If Alsace-Lorraine is Reichsland pure and simple, it should not be represented in the Reichstag, and needs no constitution at all. The constitution is an admission that while the territory is 'Reichsland,' its people are not peons or feudal servitors who go with the land, but are in some degree, at least, Germans, — 'second-class Germans' in the bitter words one may hear in Alsace.

It is claimed that more appointive offices should have been filled by local selections. That there is little local participation in administration is not wholly the fault of the government. In view of the protest of Bordeaux, the 'indigènes' could hardly accept imperial appointments without the feeling of being renegades.

Another error of the Imperial government, it is claimed, was its failure to control the private schools for girls as well as those for boys. It is the women of Alsace-Lorraine who, more than the others, keep alive the traditions of France; a business man may fit his politics to his affairs, a woman never.

It is often admitted that the German civil service has not been adequate for its duties — being, on the whole, lacking in foresight, tact, and fairness. 'It was Germany's mistake to send to Elsass-Lothringen North Germans and Protestants, stiff, haughty, totally devoid of tact and sympathetic insight, who behaved like so many little Gesslers.' While the Ministerium itself has contained many men of a high order of scholarship and intelligence, 'the lower positions have been largely given

to non-commissioned officers used to the harsh discipline of the Prussian barracks.' Under the German constitution all officials can say, 'Criticize or blame as much as you please; so long as I enjoy the confidence of my superior, I shall not change my course.' 'So long as the military, pietistic, feudal, monarchical element rules in Germany, so long will there be no change in its administrative methods.'

Germany never appears at its best in directing the affairs of other people. 'It is not the nature of the Prussian in office,' writes an American observer from Strassburg, 'whether he is stadholder of Alsace-Lorraine or only a third assistant highway inspector, to be a tactful ruler.'

## v

It is claimed by many that the greatest mistake in German management has been its subordination to the military group in Berlin. To keep hatred alive is to strengthen the cause of 'armor-plate patriotism.'

The fundamental error, the Alsations claim, is the failure to grasp the spirit and purpose of Alsace. In the words of one Alt Deutscher in Strassburg, 'I do not know these people called Nationalists in Strassburg and Colmar and Mühlhausen. I have never met any of them; I don't want to meet any of them; I don't know their names; I never read their papers; I don't see where their *Journal d'Alsace-Lorraine* gets its subscribers.'

'It is as easy to make the feelings of Alsace understood at Berlin as to inject the essence of violet through the skin of a hippopotamus.'

Because Alsace was chiefly German, it was thought that she would welcome restoration to the Empire, even though in the humble relation of tenant of Imperial territory. The relief

of our 'brothers in chains' in France was part of the alleged motive for the invasion of Alsace. But the 'long-lost brothers had grown up in another family, and they resented being made pawns in a greater game; Alsace has no love for any empire. She had held out against Louis XIV as against Napoleon. She had compelled Mazarin's assurance that the sole purpose of the French arms in Alsace was to assure the independence of the free cities, with no thought whatever of taking advantage.'

The traditions of Alsace go back to the days of her free cities of the Holy Roman Empire. Strassburg was under the control of a bishop, but, otherwise, the land of Alsace was free. In 1353, at the suggestion of the Emperor, Charles IV, the league of free cities was formed, lasting unbroken for more than two hundred years. Landau entered this league in 1511, and the largest of the free cities, Mühlhausen, left it in 1523, to join the more powerful confederation of the cantons of Switzerland. In their internal affairs these cities were free from all outside control, and even after the date of 1681, when the seizure of Strassburg by Louis XIV, in time of peace, finally carried Alsace into the kingdom of France, it was a maxim in politics not to touch the affairs of Alsace.

We may note further that Alsace was seized by Louis XIV at a time when the apparent glory of France was at its highest. It was an era, not only of military splendor and reckless expenditure, but also of literary and political distinction. Even the court of Berlin spoke French in preference to German, and the German mind was profoundly influenced by French methods of expression. The superiority of French culture was taken for granted over Continental Europe, as it is still in Paris. French culture in Alsace was

not a veneer, it was an actual accomplishment.

But the theory of Germany for the last forty years is that France is decadent and corrupt, to be avoided by the honest student. Modern culture and modern science are products of German genius. But Alsace accepts only part of this assertion. She looks upon the romantic veneration of the German for ancient forms as a mild atavism, a return toward barbarism. The final evidence of the failure of the Prussian régime is its futility. It gets nowhere, not a step has been permanently taken, and if the bitterness of feeling has abated, that is the work of time, not of 'Entwelschung.' No form of vote or plebiscite could settle the relations of Alsace-Lorraine, for they would choose freedom with Germany rather than bureaucracy with France.

If one asks an Alsatian whether he would be French or German, one rarely gets a direct answer, and this reserve is not due to prudence. The question is irrelevant.

'The force of arms decides our fate for all eternity. We seem destined to be the plaything and the victim of all international hates and of all wars. Never are we sincerely consulted. Never are we asked our desires with any intention that these should be granted.'

And for these reasons there has risen in Alsace, its special seats in Colmar and Mühlhausen, a group or party called Particularist or Nationalist, loosely organized but tending in various ways to forward the freedom of the province. These people, each in his turn, — 'citizen of no mean city,' — resent the idea of political tutelage; it is as repugnant to them as the cognate idea that they are mere appendages to the fortresses of Strassburg and of Metz.

For it must be recognized that the question of Alsace-Lorraine is mainly the question of Alsace; this again is a

question of industrial Strassburg on the one hand, and of Ober-Elsass — Colmar and Mühlhausen — on the other. This fact is realized in France. The lost provinces are symbolized by the Alsatian girl with the two broad bows of black satin which adorn her head-dress. The French people mourn for Strassburg rather than for Metz. 'Metz, a provincial town, stood for nothing vital. Strassburg on the Rhine frontier stood for that half-assimilated Teutonic element, an essential part of modern French culture.' 'For Strassburg enjoyed for centuries a unique privilege that the best friends of France and Germany would be glad to see restored.'

## VI

We may now look at the situation from the other sides — the side of France and the side of Alsace.

There is a question of Alsace-Lorraine. It can be settled only by granting to its people equal rights within the Empire. The responsibility for failure rests with the Pangermanist war-faction which dominates Prussia, and which through Prussia rules Germany.

The present attitude of Alsace is concisely summed up in these three lines of current doggerel: —

Français ne peux,  
Prussien ne veux,  
Alsacien suis.

Some day, of course, there will be no other result possible: Elsass-Lothringen will be a self-governed state within the Confederation of Germany. She will cultivate the friendships which bind her to France. Her people will become increasingly bilingual and cosmopolitan in their sympathies. She will furnish her part of the cement which will bind Continental Europe into one system of good-will.

This is the dream of the future, the

hope of those who see a free Europe arising from her subservience to armored patriotism and conscript soldiers,—a Europe in which mind shall rule, not coward force and fear.

What shall we say of to-day?

The theory of the Reichsland or conquered territory of Germany may be good imperial law, but it is not good politics and it is not good policy. It is not good law, for it is brigand law—the law of force and fear, not that of right and order. France might assign her sovereignty over Alsace; she could never sign away the rights of the people. This is a question of to-day, and there is no reason why the people of Alsace, and through them the people of Germany and France, should suffer from the blunders of Napoleon or of Bismarck. The whole world is interested in Alsace-Lorraine because the whole world is injured by the rivalry in arms for which the uneasiness of the two provinces furnishes the cause in evidence.

Of going back to France there is no question. To return to France through war is a process horrible and inconceivable. In peace, it is outside the domain of possibility. 'It would be a pitiable politician and a sorry strategist who would begin putting the national house in order for the great emergency by abandoning *Die Wacht am Rhein*.' That 'the great emergency' is itself a nightmare with no real existence, does not change the problem. It is not clear even that the provinces as a whole would wish to return. The whole business of Alsace must be with Germany. Home rule and autonomy within the German Empire might be more acceptable than to return as three minor departments in highly centralized France. All political relations with France are beyond discussion. In so far, German officialism is right. The question of Alsace-Lorraine is an affair

of Germany, and for this question no direct or immediate solution is possible, for this is the heart of it. When can Germany give her conquered provinces a freedom her own people have not yet achieved for themselves?

There are some who see the answer in the neutralization of Alsace-Lorraine, forming of the provinces a buffer state, an independent, unfortified republic connecting two similar states, Belgium and Luxembourg, with the republic of Switzerland. This would separate France from Germany by a belt of neutral nations, distinct from both, protected by both, sympathetic with both; for now, as in the days of Voltaire and Frederick the Great, there is nothing mutually exclusive in French and German culture. It has been suggested that toward this end, the most ideal conceivable by any one, France might barter her Madagascar or the French Congo.

But this project is to all appearances outside the realm of practical politics. 'Only a St. Louis can restore a conquest.' To give up territory won by force would be to dishonor the graves of Wörth, of Gravelotte, and of Mars-la-Tour. To free Alsace would be to confess the fundamental wrong of the policy of 'blood and iron.'

There is little force to the suggestion of restoring Lorraine to France while holding Alsace as Reichsland. 'Alsace is dearer to the heart of France than Lorraine could ever be.' While Lorraine partakes of the spirit of Alsace, the future of Alsace determines the fate of her associate. The suggestion that the French-speaking provinces be returned to France has no merit. This again would be a species of dismemberment. The solution of the question lies entirely outside of all matters of race or language. It turns wholly on the position of Alsace within the Empire.

As to the details of home rule, public opinion divides widely. In some degree this becomes a question of religion. I have tried here to avoid all those phases of the problem which are entangled in German politics, and the 'centrist politics' of Germany hinges on Catholic alliances and demands. Both Alsace and Lorraine are essentially Catholic districts. But here Catholic opinion divides as other opinion does, according to the individual feeling and conscience. Some of the most noted of the leaders of 'Nationalism' are honored as abbés by the Church. Other church leaders are equally devoted to the cause of 'Germanism.' The attitude of clericalism has its rigorous opponents within the clergy, and with these words we may leave the questions of 'centrisme' and clericalism untouched.

But it is true as a whole, probably, that the Catholics would prefer a more conventional government to a pure republic. They look forward to a condition like that of the Grand Duchy of Baden, the state of the Empire lying parallel with Alsace on the other side of the Rhine and inhabited by much the same sort of Swabian people.

But it is not easy to supply the provinces with a grand duke or a prince, by promotion or by importation. 'We cannot make a new dynasty in the twentieth century.' The princely families which swarm in middle Germany are relics of the feudal system. If progressive Germany were free from the element of hereditary rule, it would never take it up. It can imagine an empire in which the Emperor holds authority only by dynastic right. Only as a matter of historic succession is it necessary that he should have kings and dukes and arch-dukes and bishops as his august colleagues and subordinates.

The selection of some Catholic

prince as Landesherr would be acceptable to Lorraine, but probably not to Alsace. Alsace is strong in the faith, but likewise prone to heresies; at times she displays a mysticism more profound than orthodox. From Alsace comes the suggestion, as acceptable, of the names of two Protestant princes of the North, who have studied at the University of Strassburg, and who are therefore in touch with Alsatian aspirations.

But to Alsace generally the word 'autonomy' means the organization of a republic within the Empire. The leaders point to the free cities, — Hamburg; Bremen, Lübeck — as models in this regard. But these cities were historically free, joining the Empire on their own terms. To create a new rural republic within the Empire seems to conservative Germany a dangerous experiment. Moreover, if Alsace were a monarchy even, she would make herself a republican monarchy.

The enthusiasm of Catholic Lorraine for France seems checked somewhat in the last ten years. This is due to the rise of the anti-clerical party in France, and to the seizure for public uses of property held by the Church.

The situation of Alsace-Lorraine is in the long run hopeful for the cause of freedom. Obstacles vanish as men arise to remove them. Alsace and Lorraine have the task to keep alive their local identity, their traditions of culture, their economic prosperity. They must lead in movements which tend toward the reconciliation of France and Germany. They must lend no encouragement to chauvinist or to Pan-germanist. The peace society lately formed at Mühlhausen by Jacques Schlumberger and his associates, the Franco-German League, with its many adherents in both nations, — these are all steps in this direction. Alsace-Lorraine should aid in the liberal move-



ments of Germany. Some day the presence of Alsace may turn the scale in behalf of German freedom. Some day German science will point the way forward from Bismarck and Von Moltke to Schiller and Kant. 'When this time comes, this great nation, "the second fatherland" of every cultured man, shall stand for honor and justice, the prophecy of Heine shall come true. Not only Alsace-Lorraine, but the whole world in this ideal sense shall be German.'

'War' says a leading Alsatian, 'is the worst possible solution of our problems, because war is no solution. With war there is never a solution of any question. Alsace has been part of Germany, of Austria, of France, and now of Germany again. If France should gain Alsace by war, it would be only the beginning of another war, and so on without end. Our hope is in the change of feeling in Germany, and in the rising demand for local rights and local freedom among the German people in the place of concentrated paternalism.'

'Some of us think that our purposes may be best attained by continuous local agitation as a means of educating Germany. Most of us think a quiet patience better. Agitation only makes it harder to come to mutual understanding.' 'We have grown up under a régime more democratic than Germany — especially Prussia — has ever known. We should do our best to be good citizens of Alsace, and this will have its weight in Germany, for the German people, outside the military clique, are men like ourselves.'

It is also said that 'Every solution implying war is to be rejected. No definite solution could result from a Franco-German war, by which Alsace would find herself cut into two parts, each to destroy the other. A war, whatever its result, provokes always

the desire of revenge and leads to indefinite international disorder, in which the antagonism among different elements would be greatly intensified.

'Other questions of high importance are rising to the surface (social, moral, educational questions) demanding solution; for all these questions, implying higher ideals than the cheap quarrels between nations, is demanded the collaboration of all men of good-will, who should ignore all national frontiers.

'It is inadmissible that the question of Alsace-Lorraine should indefinitely hold back the general development of Europe. A Franco-German *entente* would necessitate for Alsace-Lorraine a government according to its own will. It would thus destroy the worst obstacle to the pacification of Europe, and open to civilization new lines of progress.

'This solution which, in assuring peace to the world, would guarantee the development of Alsace and Lorraine, would nevertheless offend two powerful influences: the self-conceit of two nations, and the interest of the war system. It is for the people of these provinces to say loudly and clearly that the demand be made the friendly bridge between two civilizations, not the glacis of a fort nor yet a field of battle. This is the meaning of the meetings at Mühlhausen, and of the vote of the Landtag: *No War; Franco-German reconciliation, and Autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine!*'

'Our duties in Alsace are plainly three: —

'To avert war, first and foremost.

'To use every effort towards the liberalizing of public opinion among our compatriots in Germany.

'To cease irritating agitation for what we know we cannot get.' 'Agitation heats the blood and makes for enmity, not friendship.'

To this third proposition there are

many who do not agree, in Strassburg and Metz, as well as in Colmar and Mühlhausen. These claim that agitation also educates, and they have used the forces of eloquence of tongue and pen, of merry raillery and biting sarcasm, in the intent of the autonomous republic. The cartoons of Zislin, in the local journal *Dur's Elsass*, have often been most suggestive. Artistic and forceful is the brush work of Walz.<sup>1</sup>

The point of view of the active na-

<sup>1</sup> Jean Jacques Walz of Colmar.

tionalists may be summed up as follows: —

Whether our aim is possible or not, that is not our concern. It is our right, and so it becomes our duty as free men to speak. We look to the future, not to the compromises of to-day. 'The future belongs to the good Lord, not to the ugly fellow of the Pangermanist league.'

'The free cities of the empire have tasted freedom, freedom is in the blood.'

## A SUIT AGAINST SCIENCE

BY HERBERT RAVENEL SASS

To say that humanity owes a vast debt to science is but to repeat what a thousand others have affirmed, and what all men know. It might almost be said that science is civilization; and while there are not lacking those who maintain that the more civilized we become the worse we grow, all such are either quibblers juggling with the meaning of words, or persons, who, while they are doubtless sincere enough, have fallen victims to a malady of the mind. And yet in one respect science deserves our censure and not our praise; in one matter of great moment she is the ally of error and not of truth; in one of the most important of the many ways in which she touches and affects human life her influence is bad, not good.

In order to perceive this fact one does not have to be either wise or learned: one need only be honest and ready to believe the evidence of his

faculties. And perhaps — for there are thousands who have suffered by it — the thing is all the clearer because it is a part of personal experience. There was once a boy who reveled in the wonder of wild nature. Birds and beasts fascinated him; the sea was a fairyland because of the fishes in it; the garden was a paradise because it teemed with all sorts of life. He spent much of his time in boyish contemplation of these living things and he learned a good deal about them — not very much in the way of details, perhaps, but much of a somewhat vague and general sort that was, in spite of its vagueness, intimate and true. After a while the boy went to college. There he was introduced to a science called biology which was described to him as the science of life; and during the next four years he, in common with many of his fellow students, — some because the subject interested them, others because it