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THE QUESTION OF  
ALSACE AND LORRAINE

Lecture given at Aeolian Hall

NEW YORK

March 14, 1917

by

WHITNEY WARREN

A. M. Hon. Harvard

Membre de L'Institut de France

16 East 47th Street

New York

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# The Question of Alsace and Lorraine

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

In December last I took a trip through Alsace, that is, through the strip which has been reconquered, going thoroughly through the country, looking into everything and talking with whomever happened to be on my path, my object being to gather further information on the Alsace-Lorraine question, which will be such a vital one when the moment comes to talk about possible Peace, and which has been so systematically distorted by the Germans, that the outside world has at best but a confused, or, better still, a most contorted view of it. For months I have been studying the subject, but have always felt that when the opportunity presented itself, I wanted to see on the spot all that was possible, to impregnate myself with the atmosphere, and to live a few days amongst the people, who, forty-six years ago, were transferred, against their will and protest, to a virtual state of slavery, and where the task-masters were the forty-five thousand functionaries imposed upon them by the conquerors.

Naturally amongst the Alsatians I saw, there was a certain reserve at first in expressing their feelings—they are, it must not be forgotten, in a most embarrassing position; the possibility of the reappearance of the Prussian helmet in their midst gives them food for thought, and the loudly heralded success of the Teuton arms in Roumania contributed, undoubtedly, to

their very natural timidity—but, once under the surface, I found them all enthusiastic and anxious to talk, to show proof of their great desire to be once again under the French flag, this to one who has studied their problem, and as they expressed it, “understands what we love, and for which we have suffered so much for forty-six years”.

My trip started from the General Headquarters up through the pass of Bussang and down the valley of the Thur to Wesserling. Everywhere on the trip the snow had fallen in great quantities from twelve to thirty inches—everywhere the communications were in splendid order, thanks to the snow ploughs and the territorial army, whose great business is to see that the roads are always in first rate condition. Only in one place did I leave the automobile, and that was on the top of the Breifoist, where, in approaching the second line, communications are assured by outfits of Canadian dogs most admirably trained and handled—Further ahead, because of the noise these animals make,—they are replaced by an army of the smallest donkeys imaginable, which, alas, while more discreet occasionally betray their presence to the enemy by a most distressing braying against which all effort to smother and silence seems hopeless. The snow spectacle everywhere was marvellous in its beauty. All through the mountains are covered with forests of pine and beech—and what wonderful forests, where every tree is numbered, curried and groomed like a thoroughbred—the snow upon them was as in fairy land, so immaculate. Everywhere one runs into encampments of greater or less importance—infantry, artillery or ambulance—all housed very much after the fashion of our lumbermen in Maine or Michigan. A sort of architecture, which is forcibly rustic, and consequently attractive, has been born, and each arm has its traditional idiosyncracies.

The Ambulance burrows deep into the soil, so that the patient may not only be safe, but even free from the sound of bursting shells—the Artillery, accustomed to the handling and destruction of heavy materials is easily distinguished by the huge trunks of trees it uses in its construction, even the doors being covered with iron plates for greater protection. The Chasseur Alpin, the great infantry of the region, is content with shelters less permanent, but with corresponding advantages as to space and ventilation, while his surroundings and approaches are of a research worthy of many a fashionable watering place. Amongst them all the greatest contentment reigns, backed by the conviction of assured eventual victory; the best of health and almost a joy, which may partially be attributed to the beauty of the surroundings and the satisfaction of being entrenched in the dreamed of liberated country. As one approaches the front, all this order is occasionally disturbed by the falling of a stray shell, the dismantling of some majestic king of the forest, and the shaking down, by the explosion, of immense quantities of snow with which the neighboring trees are cloaked. Further on, at the absolute front, nothing exists but the trenches, separated from the enemy's by only a few yards, and by the splintered stumps of the martyred forest. This is the state of Hartmannweilerkopf, where I convinced myself of the fact that the French lines are well along the crest, commanding the German, from which one could perceive, here and there, little clouds of smoke issuing, well down on the slope.

At Massevaux I was honored by an audition of probably the most famous organ,—the most perfect so the legend goes,—the world possesses, built in the early XIX Century by a constructor of the region. There, and also at Thann, well in range of the enemies shells, several public schools were visited, and at my request short impromptu examinations held. The sound of the

guns close by in no way concerned the pupils, and their enthusiasm in answering the questions based upon French history could not have been feigned. In the court yard, during the recreation, the little girls to the number of forty or more danced merrily around a hole made by an unexploded German shell, while the good Sister stood by, leading them in the mimic so curious, and the chorus of "Sur le Pont d'Avignon". Every youngster has acquired at least some part of the poilu uniform, be it an old pair of the cast off red trousers, a tunic, or "*un bonnet de police*". There is no doubt or concealment amongst the thoughtless youth, as to their enthusiasm for the liberation—it is only in their elders, bowed down by years of servitude, that a certain reserve may be imagined—but, this, once inside their houses, disappears, to be replaced by a serious and prayerful attitude, as they ask of the stranger his views on the future, and express to him their hopes and desires. With all to whom I spoke, I found no exaggeration, no excess of language, no theatrical hatred. Here I found the same reserve as amongst the refugees of Nomeny, whom I interviewed after their abominable and horrible treatment by the enemy. They seemed to be concerned with but one object, and that was, to convince me that the whole of the population of Alsace, with, of course, the exception of the fonctionnaires and the other immigrants imposed upon them by Germany, were heart and soul French. To me the Country has always seemed as if under a cloud of suppressed suffering. When younger, and a student, I made several trips through parts of Alsace studying in particular the charming half-timber work of its architects, and many are the sketches I made. The gloom and depression which invaded me at that time I experienced in a short trip made in later years, so much so that I determined never



to return until the soil was freed of the invader; and so it is that I have been permitted to place once again my foot upon the liberated district, and to there breathe the free air, on the Eastern slope of the Vosges, overlooking the Promised, if still unhappy, Valley of the Rhine. There has been as the lifting of a sort of pall from off this portion of the globe. This I have seen with my eyes, and heard in the no longer hushed voices of the inhabitants.

But a great number among us understand the question of Alsace and Lorraine, at best, very imperfectly, and it is with the hope of clearing up any doubt that I am speaking to-day, and also because this question not only interests France and Germany but it is of the greatest importance to the entire World. Fix it well in your mind, that the pretention raised by Germany to these Provinces—pretention which is purely artificial—typifies, since the robbery by her of Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark in 1864, the sort of conquest which has possessed Germany, which she has practiced ever since, and which, actually, at the present moment, is a menace to all the nations of the Earth.

It is what was prophesied with the greatest lucidity, by the Deputies of Alsace and Lorraine, who attempted on the 17th of February, 1871, at the National Assembly at Bordeaux, during the discussion concerning the terms of Peace, to prevent the abandoning of these two Provinces. I quote from their protestation:

“Europe cannot permit or ratify the abandoning of Alsace and Lorraine.

“Guardians of the Laws of Justice and of the Rights of Peoples, the Civilized Nations cannot remain any longer insensible to the lot of their neighbors, without the fear of in their turn becoming the victims of the abuses which they have tolerated. Modern Europe cannot allow a people to be disposed of as a common

herd of cattle; for the sake of her own safety she cannot remain deaf to the repeated protestations of the populations which are threatened. She must oppose herself to such an iniquitous abuse of Force.

“Moreover, she knows that the unity of France is to-day, as it has been in the past, a guarantee of the balance of power of the World, a safeguard against the spirit of conquest and invasion.

“Peace made at the price of the cession of territory can only at best be a ruinous Truce and not a lasting Peace. Such a Peace will be for all a cause of perpetual agitation, a legitimate and permanent provocation for War.”

But Europe, to whom these Deputies of Alsace and Lorraine addressed themselves remained insensible to their appeal. She sees to-day her terrible blunder. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES, WHO WITHOUT BEING BELLIGERENTS, ARE STILL MOST PROFOUNDLY INTERESTED IN THE WAR, AND MAY ONE DAY BE CALLED INTO THE COURT OF ARBITRATION, TO STUDY SERIOUSLY A PROBLEM WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN MORE OR LESS VAGUE BECAUSE OF SO MANY ERRORS, OF SO MANY PREJUDICES AND OF THE INNUMERABLE LIES WITH WHICH THE GERMANS HAVE CONTINUALLY SURROUNDED AND BEFOGGED IT.

I am going to try, with all impartiality, to analyze the problem thoroughly, but I admit that after due reflection, after study and investigation, my opinion is formed. This opinion, in which I feel it will be impossible for you not to participate, when I have explained to you upon what positive facts it is founded, is that Alsace and Lorraine, by their past, by their race, by their traditions, by their thought and by their

aspirations, are French Provinces, and that they ought, by all that is Just, to be returned to the Nation from which they were torn by Force forty-six years ago.

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To begin, if you will permit me, we will examine the principal arguments invoked by the Germans to justify their conquest: "Alsace", they say, "is a country essentially German, by its population, by its geographical situation, by the language which is spoken. It is by violence that she was torn from Germany in the seventeenth century, and the Treaty of Frankfort in 1871 only gave back to the German Fatherland what belonged to it." Note that it is only a question of Alsace. There is no question of Lorraine, because it would be too absurd to attempt to prove that this Province is not essentially French, and even the Germans do not contest it and Jeanne d'Arc is ever with us to prove it. There remains only the question of Alsace. For this Province the Germans affirm that there is no doubt. "It is", they say, "a country belonging to the Germanic Race".

I acknowledge that in obscure ethnological matters I am not a specialist. From what I have personally observed, I am indeed no match for the erudition of the German professor. I have, therefore, been obliged to call to my aid vast tomes and there I find that Alsace was Celt before it was German. "Yes, but before being Celt?" would doubtless reply the professor; however, we will not go any further in the genealogy than the first inhabitants, because where would one end? At the cave dwellers? As Ernest Renan has remarked: "With the philosophy of history, as taught by the German, the only thing that would be legal in the World, is the law practised by the orang outang, who was unjustly deposed by the perfidy of civilization".

As to the geographical situation, I must again go back to the Ancients. Caesar in his Commentaries, as you remember, has written: "All Gaul is divided into three parts, one inhabited by the Belgians, another by the Aquitanians, the third by what we call in our language the Gauls, and the Celts in theirs \* \* \* The bravest of all these peoples are the Belgians, because there is nothing between them and the Germans but the Rhine, with whom they are incessantly at war \* \* \* The territory of the Gauls commences at the Rhone and is bounded by the Garonne, the Ocean and Belgium, and extends as far as the Rhine". and Tacitus declares: "Germany is separated from Gaul by the Rhine". Therefore, it is the Rhine and not the Vosges Mountains, as is taught in German schools, which formed originally the frontier between Gaul and Germany, and the countries which were situated on the left bank of the Rhine, corresponding to Alsace of to-day, belonged to Gaul, not the Germans. This river was vastly broader then than it is to-day, when it was not confined between dikes, when no bridge traversed it, and when it was bordered by vast marshes, so constituting a barrier most difficult indeed to overcome. The Rhine separates France from Germany even as the Channel does France from England, the Pyrenees France from Spain, the Alps France from Italy and Switzerland.

Thus, Alsace in the first instances of history, of which we have record, was not a German Province. The Germans only succeeded in implanting themselves there through successive invasions. As you know, they have always practised this method of expansion, and it is interesting to note that Strasbourg, the pretended German city, was historically and in reality placed where it is in order to resist these very invasions. The Germans therefore pretend that their in-

vations have Germanized Alsace. This is true in the measure that the immigrating population mixed itself with the aborigines; but, if what they claim were actually so, Spain, where the Goths also intrenched themselves, at the time of the invasion of that country by the Barbarians, would be also a Germanic country, and so the Germans might amuse themselves in claiming all countries where the races are mixed, not forgetting our own. It is true that they do not limit themselves in their pretensions, even in the present case, and there are many of them who claim not only these Provinces of Alsace and Lorraine but two-thirds of the rest of France.

“But, there is the Language”, they say. “Even in the most ancient times the German idiom was the same as that of Alsace and Lorraine.” What a wonderful argument in favor of the German claim!

Again, one must distinguish between the two Provinces. In Lorraine it is conceded that the majority of the population still speak French. As to what is called the “Alsatian dialect”, it is not a corruption of German, but it is a distinct dialect in which, long before Alsace joined France, long before Louis XIV, there were quantities of French words and expressions—this from time immemorial. It had become very supple and had modelled itself after the temperament of the people. Far from being stilted and heavy as German, it had, and has the light character and the good fellowship of the people who speak it, to such an extent, that to-day, as far as the question of language is concerned, instead of being a bond between the two people, between the Alsatians and the Germans, it only makes greater the abyss which separates them. German is for the Alsatian a foreign language. Never do two Alsatians speak in German to each other, whereas they often do in French. It would be as absurd to

claim that the Basque Provinces were Spanish, or the South of France Italian, because their dialects resemble vaguely the language of these two people.

But, and to finish with the philologic argument, I do not hesitate to say that it is absolutely of no importance. We Americans, who speak the English language, are better able to sustain this opinion than any other nation, for if one is only to consider language, a great portion of Canada should still be French as should also much of Belgium and Switzerland should be divided between Germany, France and Italy. Our own country might be considered as a dependent of England, and so on through the South American Republics. It is, as a matter of fact, absurd, and it is useless to develop further this paradox. What is more interesting by far from our point of view is to look to the moral and material bonds existing, and, above all, to what extent Alsace and Lorraine have attached themselves to the two countries, which have successively annexed them. I am not going to subject you to a course of history, for I am too much in a hurry to discuss happenings of which we and our fathers have been the witnesses, but it appears indispensable, in order not to neglect any point of view, to rapidly look into the past of Alsace and Lorraine.

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Up to 1870 Alsace acted as a bridge between France and Germany. The Germans pretend, to legitimize their aggressive policy, that the annexation of Alsace by France under Louis XIV was the tearing away of this Province from her veritable fatherland, Germany. Nothing is further from the truth: The so-called fatherland was really not one at that time; Germany, properly speaking, did not exist, or rather there were many Germanys. She was not called Germany, but "The Germanys". One might also be able to say "The Al-

saces", because at that epoch it was simply a geographical expression. It was composed of hundreds of small feudal states, of republics, such as the Republic of Mulhouse, of free cities, such as Strasbourg. These were all renowned for their spirit of independence and love of personal freedom. This spirit was due to their Celtic origin, which also explains the great enthusiasm with which the French Republic was received later in Alsace. It was France who definitely fixed her boundaries. She made of it a French territory just as she did other provinces which became French at the same time and which have always remained so.

But France brought to Alsace other things than a simple frontier. She brought to it the Order, the Liberty and the Prosperity which have reigned there for two centuries. In incorporating herself in France Alsace acquired a unity which she had always lacked. One can also say that she acquired a soul. Could this soul be otherwise than French? One would be tempted to believe that Louis XIV, the most absolute monarch of Europe, would have imposed upon the new Province a very rigid and tyrannical domination, but it was exactly the opposite which came to pass. The French administration gave her Justice and Tolerance, even in religious matters, and left her absolutely free as to her local government. If by any chance, you have ever heard, that a flock of foreign functionaries fell upon Alsace, it was not under the reign of Louis XIV that this invasion took place, but under the reign of the Hohenzollens, when 45,000 of them encamped upon the unhappy country.

The liberalism of the French regime soon bore fruit, for in 1709 the Baron Schmettau, the Prussian Ambassador to the court of France, said in one of his despatches: "It is notorious that the inhabitants of Alsace are more French than the Parisians themselves, and the

King of France is so sure of their devotion to his service, and to his glory, that he has ordered them to furnish themselves with guns, swords, halberds and pistols—with powder and lead—every time that there is a rumor that the Germans are thinking of crossing the Rhine—and they precipitate themselves in crowds to the banks of this river to stop any such project, or at least to dispute the attempt of the German nation, this at the evident peril of their lives and as if they were going to a triumph! \* \* \* If the Alsatians were separated from the King of France, whom they adore, the only way their hearts could be torn from him would be by a chain of two hundred years.”

This good will towards the new country became only the stronger during the eighteenth century. Alsace had at last become an actual Province in becoming French and one may say that by becoming French she became Alsace. In half a century the population almost tripled. Agriculture, commerce and industry were in full prosperity, as were also the sciences, literature and the fine arts. Also a gradual development towards the principles and love for Freedom and Liberty took place. On the eve of the great Revolution in 1789 French was understood in the most remote villages and spoken by almost everybody. The popular tongue was not German, but the distinct Alsatian dialect as existing to-day. This cannot be repeated too often.

Alsace, it must not be forgotten and it is a very important point, was, and is of an instinct profoundly Democratic. Nowhere was the French Revolution received with greater joy. One must read the works of this period to understand the enthusiasm which moved all Alsatians. It was at Strassburg that was heard for the first time the wonderful hymn of the army of the Rhine and that has become immortalized in the Marseillaise. The Revolution cemented definitely the incorpo-



ration of Alsace in France, and from this moment the history of Alsace is one with that of France. I will only draw your attention in this regard to the extraordinary and glorious part which the French of Metz, of Phalsbourg, of Strasbourg and of Mulhouse took in the Napoleonic wars. Twenty-eight names of Alsatian Generals are inscribed on the Arch of Triumph in Paris: Kellerman, Kleber, Rapp, Lefevre and many others. It is important to remember that at the moment when Germany began to talk, in the second part of the last century, of a Germanic tendency as existing in Alsace and Lorraine, these two Provinces had been living for two hundred years in full prosperity and perfect communion, as regards interest and feeling, with France, and without ever once having, note this well, made a protestation against the beloved country, which they had adopted for always.

This was the state of things which existed when the Franco-German War of 1870 was declared. During this bloody campaign Alsace and Lorraine gave a splendid example of ardor and patriotism. More than one hundred thousand of their sons fought on the side of France, and, we should remark particularly the endurance and enthusiasm of the inhabitants of Strasbourg during the siege of that town, which forced even the conquerors themselves to express their admiration. However, disorganized as everything was in France at that moment by the Imperial reign, abandoned by the other nations of Europe, France had to accept the conditions imposed by Prussia: that is to say, the annexation of these two Provinces. **RIGHT WAS SACRIFICED TO FORCE.** A moment ago I cited the declaration read at the National Assembly of Bordeaux on the 17th of February, 1871, where all the Deputies of Alsace and Lorraine affirmed their ab-

solute will, and that of their electors, to remain French. This manifestation was renewed at the sitting on the first of March, immediately after the ratification of the preliminaries for Peace. Here is the text of this wonderful document:

“The representatives of Alsace and Lorraine presented, before any negotiation for Peace took place, to the National Assembly, a declaration affirming, in the most positive terms, in the name of these Provinces, their Will and their Right to remain French.

“Abandoned in spite of all Justice and by an odious abuse of Force to the domination of the foreigner, we have a last duty to fulfill.

“We declare null and void a pact which disposes of us without our consent.

“The revindication of our rights will remain always open to each and every one of us, in the form and in the measure which our conscience shall dictate to us.

“At the moment of leaving this Assembly, where our dignity no longer permits us to remain, and in spite of the bitterness of our sorrow, the supreme thought which fills our hearts is one of gratitude to those who for six months have not ceased to defend us, and to express our undying attachment to the Country from which we are torn by violence.

“OUR VOWS AND OUR HOPES WILL FOLLOW YOU, AND WE WILL WAIT WITH SUPREME CONFIDENCE THE FUTURE WHEN FRANCE REGENERATED WILL ONCE AGAIN FOLLOW THE GLORIOUS TREND OF HER DESTINY.

“YOUR BROTHERS OF ALSACE AND LORRAINE, TORN IN THIS MOMENT FROM THE COMMON FAMILY, WILL KEEP FOR FRANCE ABSENT, A FILIAL AFFECTION UNTIL THE DAY WHEN SHE WILL AGAIN RETAKE HER PLACE.”

Was this merely a formal protestation? The tone of the document and the feeling which runs through it, suffice to put aside such an objection; but this is not all, the unhappy Country soon found another occasion, and even a more solemn one to make its Voice and Will once again heard. This was in February, 1874, not in France but in the Reichstag at Berlin, through the voice of the fifteen Deputies who were sent by these Provinces to the chamber of the Empire. The Deputy of Saverne, speaking in the collective name, commenced by saying that the speech which he was about to make was A TRANSLATION OF ONE FROM FRENCH INTO GERMAN, GERMAN NOT BEING HIS MOTHER TONGUE. "It was at the end of the nineteenth century," said he, "a century of light and progress, that Germany conquered us, and the People whom she has reduced to a state of slavery, (because the annexation without our consent constituted a veritable state of moral slavery,) this People is one of the best of Europe, the one which carries highest the Belief in Right and the Love of one's Country" and the orator finished thus: "OUR REASONING FINDS ITSELF IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR HEART. OUR HEART IS IRRESISTIBLY DRAWN TOWARDS OUR COUNTRY, FRANCE! TWO CENTURIES OF LIFE AND OF THOUGHT IN COMMON HAVE CREATED BETWEEN THE MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY A BOND SO SACRED, WHICH NO ARGUMENT, AND ABOVE ALL, NO FORCE IS ABLE TO DESTROY." This courageous speech provoked only derision and laughter. The cry of distress of the oppressed awakened no echo in virtuous Germany. I forget! Two voices were raised: Two voices of Socialists! Those of Bebel and of Liebknecht, the father of the present Deputy, whose voice the actual Government is trying to

smother; and their protestation in favor of Right violated, will always remain an eternal honor to these two champions of Justice and Liberty!

Now, what should have been the duty of the citizens of Alsace so brutally torn from their country? Ought they to have fled from the domination of the despoiler, abandoning their hearthstones and their interests, thus leaving the place free to the invader; or, on the contrary, should they have remained at their post? Indeed a delicate problem to solve—agonizing—and, one must acknowledge, insoluble from a theoretical point of view. More than half a million amongst them preferred exile; the middle class, the peasants, the workmen, emigrated, many knowing no other language than the Alsatian dialect! They felt no hesitancy in abandoning their assured business or calling, and went out to search for a new and uncertain situation in their martyred mother country. Does this mean that the others surrendered, in accepting the yoke of the invader? No! and to prove it I have just read to you the protestation which they made at the end of three years of slavery. Everyone is forced to acknowledge, that those who remained, not only accomplished a duty as imperative, as meritorious, and perhaps even more painful!

Now let us study the attitude of Germany towards what we may call these “Annexed Ones”, because the treaty in itself was by no means a solution. The country, which had been torn from its mother by Force, had to be morally conquered. The conquerors at first thought that it would be an easy thing to accomplish, but they did not have to wait long to perceive that they were hated and despised, and that an abyss separated them from the BROTHERS (!) whom they pretended to have recovered. What they did not understand,

what they have not yet arrived at understanding, is that this abyss was destined to continually grow deeper. To change the nationality of a People, one must have to offer it an Ideal, which is superior to that from which it has been torn; or, to the Ideal of Liberty, of Justice and of Right, which is that of the French Republic, the Germans had to offer only the one which has been forced upon themselves by Prussia itself, the Ideal of Militarism, of a people who believe only in Force! "Prussia," said Mirabeau, "is not a People who have an Army, it is an Army who have a People."

After the first experiences of a period of installation, which lasted about ten years, and during which the Alsatians were subjected to all the terror of a foreign domination, directed by the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany, having failed to morally impose herself through terror, decided to attempt gentleness. From 1879 Field Marshal Manteuffel attempted to win it over to himself by a gentleness, to which even the conquered themselves paid tribute. However, even this attempt at Germanization, which lasted until 1885, suffered a severe check, as is witnessed by the elections, still so violently of the opposition, of 1887. A short time before, during the Boulangiste movement, two frontier incidents between France and Germany, had given birth to the hope in Alsace of a war of deliverance. Nothing more was necessary to reduce to naught the laborious and fragile work of Manteuffel. The Germans appeared more stupefied than wounded by this manifestation. They could not imagine, or else they refused to admit, that their new vassals did not feel honored at being admitted into the German family, so an explication had to be found permitting of the inauguration of a new regime. Here was the reasoning which they offered. If Alsace and Lorraine showed themselves so rebellious it was that they were

terrorized by the French across the border. The only way to better this condition was to resort to a terrorization even more violent. On that ground Prussia need fear no competition, and so began for the two Provinces an era of oppression, of continual threats, of expulsions, of suppression of journals, of dissolution of clubs and societies, of political trials, annoyances of every kind. A war without quarter was made upon everything that was French, of opinions, of traditions, going so far as to suppress words and signs. Even French sur-names were forbidden. The French colors were declared to be seditious, and finally the difficulties imposed by passports, built up a veritable wall between France and Alsace-Lorraine. All power was in the hands of the functionaries, imposed by the conquerors, despotic and arrogant, by order as well as by nature. It would seem that it was all destined to justify the word of Goethe, "The Prussian is conceived cruel. Civilization has made him ferocious." It would seem plain that it was hoped to provoke revolts, in order to suppress them in blood. This at least was the idea of Prince Hohenloe-Schillingfurst, the Governor, who wrote in his memoirs: "It would seem that Berlin wishes to push the 'Annexed Ones' to desperation and to open revolt." **ALSACE AND LORRAINE WERE NOT TREATED AS A RECOVERED PROVINCE, BUT AS A COLONY WHICH IT WAS NECESSARY TO GERMANIZE.** If one looks into the German way of going about it, and compares their methods with those of the English, for example, either in Canada or in South Africa, one must acknowledge that the Germans are the worst colonizers imaginable. "But," they say, "the gentle manner did not succeed, we had no alternative left but brutality!" **WHAT BETTER PROOF I ASK CAN ONE HAVE THAT ALSACE**

## AND LORRAINE WISHED UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES TO BE PART OF GERMANY?

Because of all this persecution, open protestation on the part of Alsace and Lorraine became impossible. To protest would have been to commit suicide, and moreover, one must not lose sight of the fact, that Alsace and Lorraine belonged, in spite of themselves, to a great economical organization, with which, in order to survive, she was forced to count, and so, for want of a better solution, she asked for Autonomy. In other words, "Alsace for the Alsations" became the only practical formula of protestation. The point to be attained appeared different, but the inspiration was the same, and it was with reason that Deroulede himself, the greatest of all French patriots, approved the tactic: what proves that it was nothing but a tactic is the acknowledgment of the Germans, or of those Alsations allied to Germany, who, like Zorn von Bulach, say that, "never was the French sentiment throughout Alsace stronger than at this moment." So, in spite of the regime of conciliation attempted by Koeller, Secretary of State in 1901, in spite of the promise in 1911 of a Constitution, which, as you know, was but the caricature of Liberty, German "Kultur" had made no progress in this so called "Land of the Empire." On the contrary, the use of the French increased daily, the relations between Alsations and Germans became more and more strained, fewer and fewer intermarriages occurred. Nothing shows clearer that the idea of Autonomy was not conducive to the bringing closer together of Alsace and Germany.

One of the most significant facts in this new state of things, or rather in this persistence in clinging to the French souvenir, is the mentality of the new generation, which manifested itself at the end of the nineteenth century. These young people had not known France.

They had made their studies in German schools, and had done their military service in the imperial uniform. One would have thought that these newcomers, who had had no personal contact with France would be more conciliatory, more disposed to accept the new status, while as a matter of fact it was all the contrary. They were more turbulent, more ardently French than the generation which went before. Besides they had not seen the war of 1870, and the prospect of another war did not fill them with the dread that it did older persons who had participated in it, and who were ready to submit to almost any amount of suffering in the hope of avoiding the cataclysm which envelops us (this same trait I have found in many Frenchmen even, of corresponding generations) the horrors of 1870 were too vivid and they preferred almost any concessions to the repetition of the terrors of those days, which, God knows, were as nothing in comparison to what the Germans are now treating us to.

What greater proof can one find for the absolute failure of the attempt at Germanization, and is it possible to imagine that German policy should have shown itself so clumsy and so odious? Resigned as Germany was to the enmity of those who were the contemporaries of the annexation, she had put all her hope in these young people, whom she had educated and fashioned after her own manner. Hardly had they arrived at the age of manhood than they turned their eyes towards FRANCE even more enthusiastically than their parents. They formed all kinds of clubs and federations to perpetuate the French souvenir, and what wonderful manifestations they displayed, at the ceremonies of inauguration of the monuments erected to the soldiers of France, who had fallen on the battlefields of Noisseville and of Wissembourg, in 1870. All this tension had worked everybody up to a state of nervousness, which



gave on one side and on the other, the greatest importance to the smallest acts. The more the Germans showed themselves inflexible and vexatious, the more Alsace turned her eyes towards France, where in turn the ever increasing menacing attitude of Germany, provoked and excited a greater national feeling. I do not exaggerate when I say, that while the aggressiveness of Germany contributed to the closer union of all parties in France, the same Pan-Germanists were also those most responsible for encouraging and keeping alive the French sentiment in Alsace and Lorraine!

This tension in the relations between the Germans and the inhabitants—this crisis, was further accentuated by two events of a very great gravity, namely: The affair of Graffenstaden and that of Saverne. Graffenstaden is a very important Alsatian manufacturing district, which furnished the locomotives of the State Railways. One day it was learned that these Railways would no longer give their orders to this manufactory, thus menacing with ruin an establishment employing thousands of workmen. The object of this was only too clear. It was to replace the native workmen by imported German labor, only too ready to take up the affair. It ended by the Parliament taking action, but the effect on public opinion was none the less deplorable.

The incident at Saverne made even more noise in the World, and the Berlin polemist, Maximilien Harden, was right when he said that: "Lieutenant Forstner was more nefarious to the cause of Germany than all the decrees and measures which had been taken." This young lieutenant had insulted the young recruits by calling them "Wackes" (rowdies), a term of insult which the German immigrants in Alsace were in the habit of using towards the inhabitants. The civil functionaries attempted to take sides, but they were violently criticized and insulted; the attitude of the Military

became more and more provocative, going as far as arrests and assaults. At a council of war the Imperial Governor, and the Emperor himself, approved the conduct of the officers. This scandal, which interested all the World, brought about a change in the policy used in governing Alsace and Lorraine; Prussia resolved to redouble her measures against this virtually rebellious country, one might even say, "enemy country," for von Jagow, Secretary of State, did not fear to say, in 1914, THAT, IN ALSACE AND LORRAINE, "THE GERMANS MUST BEHAVE AS IF THEY WERE IN 'ENEMY'S COUNTRY.'" This indeed is an extraordinary avowal. It would be impossible to acknowledge in a more startling manner the absolute failure of an attempt at Germanization, after forty-four years of effort; and this on the eve of the War!

If the German protestations were just, if the country really had become Germanized, if the inhabitants had, I do not say become happy, but simply resigned to their lot, What should have happened at the moment of the declaration or war? Undoubtedly a great feeling of satisfaction, on one side and on the other, the forgetting of all enmities and of all discords, a wave should have lifted the whole Alsatian people, a great enthusiasm for the Great German fatherland. The reality was just the opposite. The War broke the last bonds, fragile as they were, which attached the conquered ones to their detested masters. Even those who leaned most towards the other way of thinking are obliged to acknowledge it. For instance, this is the way the National Zeitung, the German newspaper of Bale, writes in its issue on the date of the 8th of February, 1915: "And so the War with all the events that compose it, events especially painful to the Alsations, has only succeeded in making more profound the

abyss which in the Empire separates the two elements. The fatal result is that every one turns more and more towards France, and this, even in those circles, which before the War, were more or less disposed to accept what had become historical facts." In condemning those who believe otherwise, and thinking thus to help the Alsatians, and to render lighter their difficult situation, the journalist adds: "IN THE PRESENCE OF THESE FACTS ONE MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO SPEAK OPENLY AND SQUARELY THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH IS, THAT THE ALSATIAN PEOPLE, TAKEN AS A MASS, FORGETTING THE EXCEPTIONS, WILL RECEIVE THE RETURN TO FRANCE AS A DELIVERANCE, PUTTING AN END TO A SITUATION WHICH HAS BECOME INTOLERABLE."

There is the disinterested opinion of a neutral, and of a neutral who cannot be suspected of antipathy towards the Germans. But let us go still further:

The Germans did not wait for the declaration of war to take repressive measures. They had compiled advance lists of the suspects, which they called "Black-lists." The last days of July, 1914, just before the declaration of war, a great number of persons were arrested and imprisoned, regardless of age, of sex or of social category. Amongst them were doctors, lawyers, priests, manufacturers, merchants and workmen. They were reproached with only one crime, of having sympathy towards France. Many of them, like Preiss and Hauth, Deputies to the German Reichstag, two old pioneers and patriots, have since died in the German prisons. Others were able to fly in time and to escape into France to carry on the fight against the common enemy. Among the most notable of these are Wetterle, Weill, Blumenthal, the Deputies; Helmer, Bucher, the Chan-

oine Collin, Jean Spinner, not forgetting Hansy and Zislin, the two great caricaturists. Almost all have volunteered in the French army. Need I say that all these patriots have been accused of high treason, have been condemned to death and all their goods confiscated?

But how much more lamentable is the situation of those who remain behind—threatened, condemned, spied upon, betrayed—nothing is lacking in their regime of terror. The number of persons who have been condemned to years and years of prison is incalculable, for having manifested their French sentiments, or having made a disobliging reflection upon an impossible and brutal authority. The councils of war content themselves on the slightest indication, and without the slightest hesitancy, to exercise their severity. An allusion to the invasion of Belgium cost the Lawyer Berger eight months of imprisonment. In July last, these courts had inflicted upon the Alsations and Lorraines, thousands and thousands of years of imprisonment, not to speak of vast sums in fines. One is struck by the great number of women that figure on the lists condemned. Always the Alsatian woman has been more aggressive than the man against the conqueror, more ironic, less respectful, and so it is a great number of women, noble and middle class fill the prisons. It was to one of these that a jailer said, seeing that she had tears in her eyes, “Do not weep, Madam, you will find yourself in excellent company. Our house is the only one in which one can speak French with impunity.”

But prison is not the only punishment that is inflicted. Sentences of death are without number. Who will ever know the number of Alsations who have been shot on the charge of espionage? The Government has forbidden the press to mention them, understanding, as it does to-day, that the route it has taken is the false

one, AND THAT THE NUMBER OF ITS VICTIMS IS THE MOST STRIKING LIE WHICH CAN BE GIVEN TO ITS PRETENDED SUBJECTION OF THE COUNTRY. The military authority has ceased to publish all accounts and all debates. Now they imprison and kill in the dark.

I regret that I have not the time to give you the details and the motives for these innumerable condemnations. They are most suggestive. IN ANY CASE I WANT TO SAY THAT I ONLY MENTION FACTS TRUE AND INDISPUTABLE, SINCE THEY WERE FURNISHED BY THE GERMANS THEMSELVES, IN THEIR ACTS OF ACCUSATION AND OTHER JUDICIAL REPORTS, REPRODUCED IN THEIR OWN JOURNALS.

It is from these same German sources that I am going to limit myself in my appreciation of the conduct of the Alsatian soldiers enrolled in the German armies. In many official communications, the German Government has pretended that the Alsatian is happy to fight on the side of Germany. To show the falseness of this allegation, it is sufficient to glance over the published lists of deserters, condemned by the councils of war. Their numbers attain tens of thousands. It is also interesting to consider the precautions taken by the Ministry of War to take away from the western front these same Alsatian subjects, and to remove them from the posts in the rear, where they would be capable of observing the organization of the army, and the military measures taken. While they pretend that the Alsatian deserters are not obeying a patriotic sentiment, but are simply deserting in order to escape military obligations, one might contend, that if their desertion does not prove their love for France, it establishes at least a lack of enthusiasm for the German cause. But we can do better than that, for two-thirds of these men who

risked their lives in desertion have enrolled themselves under the tricolor. I may even add that amongst the prisoners made by the Russians a great number of Alsations have asked to be passed over to France, where, treated as French citizens, they have immediately volunteered in the army of the Republic and have been formed into several battalions of Zouaves.

A COMPARISON IN NUMBERS AS TO THE OFFICERS, WHICH THE TWO PROVINCES HAVE GIVEN TO FRANCE AND GERMANY IN THE PRESENT WAR IS VERY IMPORTANT. ON THE FRENCH SIDE TO SPEAK ONLY OF THE GENERALS IT SUFFICES ME TO NAME THOSE WHO HAVE BECOME THE MOST POPULAR IN FRANCE SUCH AS MAUD'HUY, D'URBAL, MICHELER, DUBAIL, MANGIN, HIRSCHAUER, DE LARDEMELLE, SIBILLE, LEVI, LEBLOIS, HEYMAN, BLONDIN, SCHWARTZ AND ANDLAUER, 145 SUPERIOR OFFICERS IN ALL AND OVER 3000 OFFICERS ALTOGETHER. OPPOSITE THESE GLORIOUS NAMES WE FIND BUT SIX ALSATIAN OFFICERS IN THE GERMAN ARMY, ONE GENERAL AND FIVE OTHERS, FOUR OF WHOM ARE HYBRIDS, THAT IS HALF-ALSATIAN HALF-GERMAN.

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I now arrive at that part of this story which is most painful, that is, the conduct of the German troops in this country, which they claim is a part of the German Empire, loyal and dear to all German hearts!

When the French troops made their entry into Mulhouse on the 8th of August, 1914, they were received in a triumphal manner, which constituted an absolute de-

nial of the supposition that Alsace was Germanized. It is, therefore, to sheer brutality that one must attribute the behavior of the German troops towards the population when they re-took the city, and also the pillage, the burning, and the atrocities committed at Sun-gau, Dalhein and Sengern. During the night of the 14th-15th of August the Germans retreated, after their check before Belfort, burning up the manufactories of Bourzviler, massacring innocent civilians, (some over 70 years old), and taking to prison eighty others under the pretext that the inhabitants had fired on the troops. This is the easy and prevalent excuse: "They fired on us." It is the same that they used at Louvain and in how many other localities; but it so happened at Bourzviler, that, at an investigation held by German authorities themselves, it was proved that the civilians had made use of no arms, and that it was the Germans, who in a sort of panic, had fired on each other. The civilians were liberated but in spite of this, this false story has been circulated, and also postal cards, showing and mentioning that these ruins had been caused by the French on the 15th of August, 1914, when, as a matter of fact, they only entered on the 19th. The same procedure has been followed in many places, as for instance, in Sengern, where the Mayor refused to attest that the ruins had been caused by the French, nevertheless, an ordinance was passed, menacing with five years in prison, anyone contending that the Germans were responsible for the destructions. There are many other abominable atrocities which I might cite. Certain ones it is hard to control, and moreover for the greater number, one would risk to expose innocent inhabitants to further reprisals. This requisitory must be left to future historians. What it is possible say to-day, is simply, that the Germans conducted themselves in Alsace and Lorraine as if they were in a veritable "en-

emy's country," as they behaved in Belgium and in northern France, and which I have witnessed. Their conduct would seem to agree with the words of William II after the taking of Thann by the French troops, "If I must give back Alsace to France I will give her back as bald as an egg." This remark was repeated by a journalist to a citizen of Strasburg who replied: "Well, perish Alsace, and long live France!"

And so, after having for forty-five years vainly attempted to gain by persuasion, or after having subjected them to all manner of vexations, of injustices, and of outrages, this is the way the Germans treat to-day those whom they have wished to reclaim as their BROTHERS (!) The response to it all is too easy! IF THE ALSATIANS, IN SPITE OF THE BAD TREATMENT HAVE BECOME SUCH GOOD GERMANS, WHY DO THEY STILL CONTINUE TO MARTYRIZE THEM?

I know that a certain number of conciliating but misinformed persons, in neutral countries, propose a solution for this agonizing problem with which we are occupied. When I say, *a* solution, I should say two, because if some are partisans of Autonomy and would like to see Alsace and Lorraine form an independent state, others, perhaps more numerous still, lean towards a Plebiscite, which would permit the Alsatians and Lorraines to decide for themselves, to which country they wished to be definitely attached. These two propositions, which appear at first sight seductive, do not resist a serious examination and are objected to by the Alsatians and Lorraines themselves. A Plebiscite! Did they give one in 1871! No! The Germans were very careful not to do such a thing. They knew too well what would be the result. As a matter of fact, if one looks at it from a practical point of view, such an undertaking would find insurmountable diffi-



culties. For instance, what guarantee of impartiality would offer a vote authorized under German surveillance and menace. It would be impossible to prevent official pressure. How would it be possible to allow a vote to the innumerable Alsatians who have fled from German domination, and from whom it would be iniquitous to withhold it? And, above all, how would it be possible to exclude the hundreds of thousands of Germans who have and would immigrate, and whose vote leaves no doubt? Plebiscite under these conditions would be absolutely incomplete and false.

And, after all, is it not a fact that Alsace and Lorraine have already expressed their wish in the three instances which I have cited, and under the most solemn conditions? Twice in the National Assembly at Bordeaux, and then in the Reichstag! I have read to you these declarations. The Country then pronounced itself in all Liberty through the voice of its Deputies. Is it possible to pretend that the sentiment of the population has changed? **WHAT IS NECESSARY IS THAT RIGHT SHOULD BE REINSTATED! RIGHT, WHICH HAS BEEN WRONGED BY THE VIOLENCE DONE ALSACE AND LORRAINE IN 1870! IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH RIGHT BY A PLEBISCITE. IT IS ONLY POSSIBLE TO RESTORE IT BY THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONDITIONS WHICH EXISTED BEFORE THE VIOLATION.**

And so the only solution which is left is that of Autonomy, which would consist of the making of Alsace and Lorraine a "Buffer State." Never would this term of "Buffer State" have been applied more properly. Consider the problem solved in this way and try for yourselves to imagine the conflicts, not to say combats, which would result, and what menace would continually be the lot of the Alsatian on both his frontiers. It would

simply amount to creating a new source of envy and of conflict, which would prolong in Europe the warlike atmosphere. No! Autonomy at a certain moment appeared possible, as I have shown you, because it was the only solution, which presented itself, to those who were still protesting against their annexation, and whose voices were smothered. To-day the true patriots of Alsace and Lorraine rebel against any such idea; the Abbe Wetterle, when he was questioned on the subject said with a certain sense of humor: "If ever such a thing were to happen, Alsace and Lorraine would have nothing to do but to declare war against France and in this way annexation would be unavoidable."

No, neither Plebiscite nor Autonomy can possibly solve the problem. We must waive all solutions which are not absolutely frank! BY THE DECLARATION OF WAR GERMANY HAS TORN UP THE TREATY OF FRANKFORT. ALSACE AND LORRAINE WERE TIED TO GERMANY ONLY BY THIS TREATY, I DO NOT SAY, BY THIS "SCRAP OF PAPER." FROM NOW ON NOTHING IN THEIR TRADITIONS, OR THEIR INTERESTS, OR THEIR SYMPATHIES, HOLDS THEM ANY LONGER TO THE IMPERIALISTIC AND TYRRANIC NATION UNDER WHOSE YOKE THEY HAVE SUFFERED FOR ALMOST HALF A CENTURY. EVERYTHING ON THE CONTRARY DRAWS THEM INVINCIBLY TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC FRANCE. RETURNED TO THE BREST OF THEIR MOTHER COUNTRY, THEY WILL FIND THE NORMAL LIFE TO WHICH THEY HAVE ASPIRED SO LONG. THIS IS THE ONLY SOLUTION, THE ONLY ONE WHICH GIVES SATISFACTION, LOGICALLY AND IN ALL JUSTICE, AND WHICH IN THE FUTURE

WILL GUARANTEE THE PEACE OF THE WORLD.

BUT LET US GO FURTHER EVEN THAN THIS QUESTION OF ALSACE AND LORRAINE, AND LET US REMEMBER, THAT THE FUTURE PEACE OF THE WORLD, OF AMERICA ITSELF, WILL NOT BE ASSURED, IF THE WAR ENDS, OTHERWISE THAN BY THE RETURN TO THEIR CRADLES, OF ALL THE PEOPLES WHO HAVE BEEN ROBBED FROM THEIR MOTHER COUNTRIES, AND THE INTEGRAL RESTITUTION OF ALL THE THEFTS COMMITTED BY GERMANY AND AUSTRIA IN THE LAST CENTURY, OF POLAND, OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, OF TRIEST AND THE TARENT, OF ALSACE, OF LORRAINE, OF HERZEGOVINIA AND OF BOSNIA.

The other day, at twilight, from the trenches of the Hartmannswielkopf while gazing in the distance towards Colmar, beyond the enemy's lines, the officer with whom I was, an Alsatian of that very town, said to me in very excellent English— "Ah, the joy of being here, the privilege for which I have always prayed God. To fight for the liberation of all that is most sacred to Man, for one's Soil, one's Family, one's Ideals. To liberate! Sometimes it seems long but we have the Faith that never fails." And pointing to a wonderfully bright star in the direction of Colmar he added very simply, "At night, here in the trenches, when I feel a little discouraged with the waiting, do you know the prayer I offer the most often:

'Lead kindly light, lead Thou me on  
The way is dark and I am far from home  
Lead Thou me on.'

The verses are by Newman, you know. I am very fond of them!"

