

GERMANY

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Germany by S. Baring-Gould

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S. BARING-GOULD

GERMANY



CONZURG (from a Sketch by the late Prince Consort).

Frontispiece.

GERMANY.

BY

Sabine
S. BARING-GOULD,

AUTHOR OF "GERMANY, PRESENT AND PAST,"
"CURIOUS MYTHS OF THE MIDDLE AGES,"
ETC.

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GERMANY.

I.

THE NATURAL DIVISIONS OF THE LAND.

The importance of the physical geography of a country—The six epochs—The great Helveto-Germanic Sea disappears—The two main divisions of Germany : the Plain and the Upland—The step from Lower to Upper Germany.—The first Terrace—The second Terrace is the bed of the Helveto-Germanic Sea—The Alps—This fourfold subdivision of Germany makes its geography intelligible.

FOR the proper understanding of the physical geography of a country, it is as necessary to look back to the epochs of its formation, as it is necessary to study history for the appreciation of the social and political conditions of a nation. The geological map—a mass of paint-splashes to the uninitiated—is a hieroglyphic tablet, that only renders up its secrets when made a matter of careful study ; but then it is found to give a connected history of the past, full of interest, and explaining physical features which have proved otherwise inexplicable. If the geological map only told us that in such and such places such and such formations

came to the surface, it would be of little general interest. The real value consists in its being a record as truly historical as the Saxon Chronicle or the tables of Assyrian eponyms.

Nor is that all. Strange as it may seem when first stated, yet it will be seen on consideration to be true, that the oscillations of the earth's surface in remote periods, when life was dawning, have influenced man's history to the present time, and will do so to the end of time.

The great upheavals of the Alps and the Pyrenees gave to Italy and to Spain their natural frontiers, and determined the limits of nationalities and languages; and the long depression of the weary Uralian or Prussian plain has denied to Germany natural boundaries, and forced her to build a frontier of flesh and blood.

We are at present concerned only with a very small portion of the surface of the earth, and, indeed, of Europe, but that portion has been subjected to such close study, that its geologic history has been pretty certainly established.

The first period we need consider is that when the great Triassic ocean rolled over the major portion of the surface of Europe. The Permian age was over; and the Carboniferous beds, extending across the Rhine from the Sauerland to the vicinity of Treves, the coal-beds of Essen and Saarbrück, were dry land. At that time, Germany—in which we must include Austria—was represented by a group of islands. The Ardennes, and all that region now traversed by the Rhine, from Bonn to Speyer, and from Liege to Waldeck, formed an island—a large island, with the Vosges running south as a long peninsula. The Black Forest

range was an island also. The Harz Mountains stood above the waves. So did the whole of Bohemia, so also the Thuringian Forest.

The Alps reared a wall to the south, but not then towering into the sky, and clothed in silver.



1. The Triassic Sea.

That is to say, the Central Alps existed, but not the Dolomitic ranges of up-turned lips, through which the central crystalline ridges scrape the sky. Charles V. was wont to say that "wolves looked down out of the skies into the streets of