

**THE TRUE STORY OF
ALSACE-LORRAINE;
WITH A MAP**

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The True Story of Alsace-Lorraine; With a Map by Ernest Alfred Vizetelly

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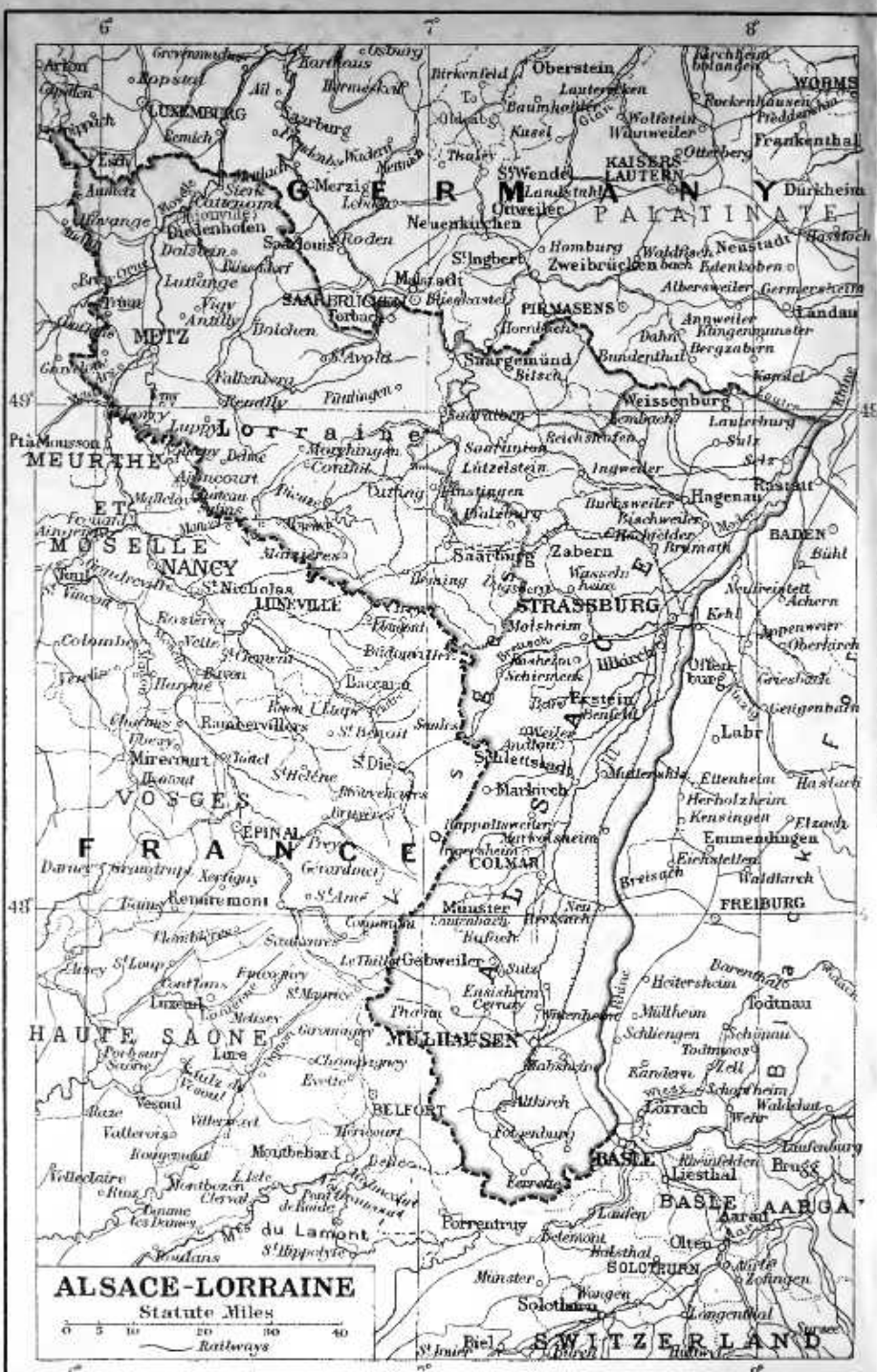
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THE TRUE STORY OF ALSACE - LORRAINE

BY

ERNEST ALFRED VIZETELLY

(LE PETIT HOMME ROUGE)

France
V

WITH A MAP

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

1918

À MES AMIS DE FRANCE
1870-1918

POST TENEBRAS SPERO LUCEM

E. A. V.

TWENTY CENTURIES AGO

"Right and wrong being confounded, many are the wars and many the instances of wickedness throughout the world. Unpaid is the honour due to the plough, forsaken lie the fields, their husbandmen have been taken away, and the curved sickle is forged into the unbending sword. Strife is roused on one side by Euphrates, on the other by Germany. Neighbouring communities, having broken their treaties, bear arms one against the other, and Mars, to whom nothing is sacred, rages over all the world."

VIRGIL, *Georgics*, Bk. I

PREFACE

THE idea of writing this book occurred to me when I found, both by conversing with friends and acquaintances and by listening at odd moments to remarks passed by "men in the street," how very little is known about Alsace-Lorraine in Great Britain. The general ignorance appeared to me to be the more regrettable as my acquaintance with all the more important German utterances and writings on this subject since 1871 convinced me, already at the outset of the Great War, that whatever conditions the Allies might resolve to exact of Germany, the one which, more than any other, she would resist to her utmost would be the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine to France. Nevertheless, it was absurd for Baron von Kühlmann to assert, as he did shortly after his appointment as German Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the sole obstacle to peace was the question of Alsace-Lorraine. As our Foreign Secretary, Mr. Balfour, replied—virtually repeating the utterances of our successive Prime Ministers, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George—we undoubtedly desire to see Alsace-Lorraine restored to France; but it is ridiculous to imagine that this one question "stands out solitary, pre-eminent, unconnected with any other of the objects of the war." "We are fighting," as Mr. Balfour said, "in order, in the first place, that Europe may be freed from the perpetual menace of the military party in Germany"; and, assuredly, if that object is to be attained, questions affecting quite a number of countries will require solution.

It is true that at one moment certain doubts arose in France as to how far her Allies might be with her in her legitimate desire to recover the territory lost in 1871; but, assuredly, those doubts have been dispelled by the important pronouncements which have emanated from Mr. Lloyd George

and President Wilson of the United States whilst this volume has been passing through the press. France, it may be pointed out, claims the unconditional restoration of the lands wrenched from her by Germany; but in Great Britain and elsewhere there has been considerable talk of consulting the present inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine by means of a plebiscitum. Quitting, for a moment, the lofty standpoint of our French friends, and taking an independent and, I trust, practical view of the matter, I have discussed this question of a plebiscitum in the concluding chapter of the present volume. As the reader will find, the conclusion at which I have arrived is that, owing to the changes which have occurred since 1871, a genuine plebiscitum is impossible. Thus, even from a lower standpoint than that of the French government, unconditional restoration seems to me to be imperative.

In the course of my work I have sketched the history of Alsace and Lorraine down to the time of the Great War. Some readers may think that I have given too much space to ancient history, but I have dealt with it at some length precisely because it is largely on ancient history that the Germans have based their claims to the territory annexed by them. For a similar reason I have touched on racial and linguistic questions, on which, indeed, I might have said a great deal more had I wished to produce a scientific treatise. What I have written respecting these matters will, I think, suffice to give the reader an adequate idea of the rival contentions of the Germans and the French.

In the historical part of my narrative I have made no attempt to conceal the fact that at the time of the Old Régime in France the government of Alsace and Lorraine was often very bad. But the reader must remember that bad government then prevailed throughout the kingdom, and was in no wise peculiar to the eastern provinces. That widespread misrule was, indeed, the *raison d'être* of the Great Revolution. But whatever occurred during the last century of the old monarchy's existence, the attachment of the Alsations and the Lorrainers to France itself remained as steadfast as that of the folk of Picardy, Burgundy, Gascony or any other part of the country, and was exemplified in the

most striking manner throughout the wars both of the Revolution and of the First and also the Second Empire. I may add that at an early stage in the present gigantic struggle, though more than forty years had elapsed since the severance of 1871, it was officially estimated that 30,000 Alsatians were already serving with the French colours and that a score of French general officers were connected by parentage with the lost territory.

With respect to the union of Strasburg with France at the time of Louis XIV, I would direct the reader's attention to the historic document of which I give a verbatim translation in the Appendices to this volume. This document shows how the magistrates of the Alsatian capital, before accepting French sovereignty, laid down a number of specific conditions, nearly all of which were immediately accepted by the Marquis de Louvois on behalf of Louis XIV. The convention which was entered into thoroughly disproves the often-repeated German assertions respecting the "forcible seizure" of Strasburg in 1681. Elsewhere in my pages, I also relate how the little Republic of Mulhouse elected to become a part of the Republic of France. Further, I have touched on the appropriation of parts of the Sarre valley by Prussia and Bavaria in 1815, the districts in question having previously pertained to Alsace and Lorraine. Certain French aspirations with respect to those districts have been construed by some ignorant British politicians as signifying on the part of France a resolve to annex a great stretch of absolutely German territory. I can in no wise claim to speak for France on such a matter, but I take it that, even if some slight rectification of frontier in the Sarre valley should for security's sake appear advisable, the Republic's one essential claim is the restoration of the territory torn from her by Bismarck at the end of the Franco-German War.

In the map serving as a frontispiece to this volume the names of localities are given in the German forms which have been current during the last forty-seven years. Many localities never had German names before 1871. Throughout my narrative I have generally used the French ones, which are more familiar to me, and I have therefore appended to my work two alphabetical lists, which, in cases of doubt, will