

**STRASBOURG: AN  
EPISODE OF THE  
FRANCO-GERMAN WAR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649155934

Strasbourg: an episode of the Franco-German War by Paul Margueritte & V. Margueritte

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**PAUL MARGUERITTE & V. MARGUERITTE**

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# STRASBOURG

*AN EPISODE OF THE  
FRANCO-GERMAN WAR*

BY  
PAUL AND VICTOR MARGUERITTE

TRANSLATED BY

S. G. TALLENTYRE

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF VOLTAIRE,"  
"THE FRIENDS OF VOLTAIRE," "LIFE OF MIRABEAU," ETC.



LONDON  
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE  
1915

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## PREFACE

"STRASBOURG," which is one of the most dramatic of the four Episodes of the Franco-Prussian War which form the volume entitled "Les Braves Gens," by MM. Paul and Victor Margueritte, is, as is all their work, good wine which needs no bush. But, familiar and glorious as their name is in France—which they have served by noble deeds as well as noble words, for their father, General Margueritte, fell in the service of his country at Sedan—this particular book is less known here than it deserves to be ; and less known now than when it originally appeared in France, at a date when the greed and extortion of the Prussian conqueror was first sapping the British faith in what Carlyle still called "noble, patient, deep, pious, and solid Germany" : and revealing that German power might be a German menace.

The suggestion that this translation should be made—as being particularly applicable to the present times—is due to Mr. Stanley Weyman.



Lord Byron used to say that works of fiction live only by the amount of truth which they contain. To-day, "Strasbourg" should certainly live, and have a peculiar interest for the British reader, not alone from its faithful portraiture of the homely and comfortable human nature of the old Strasbourgers before the ruthless severance of Alsace from the Motherland, but also for its portrayal—the more effective from its scrupulous justice and restraint—of the nature of the German conqueror. It should finally dispel that illusion, so carefully and cleverly fostered here by Germany, that the Germans in 1870 behaved well; and should prove, what the Briton was so slow to believe, that, though the Prussians were not the first to draw the sword, the war was theirs. Theirs, was the scheme of ruthless ambition—theirs, many a deed whose sole "right" was "might."

If the German of 1870 was not so besotted in his self-conceit as to believe and proclaim that he could do no wrong; if he had not yet brought himself coldly to command and methodically to perpetrate atrocities "at which drunken savages would shudder": yet "Strasbourg" proves

that, in nations as in individuals, the child is the father of the man, and time does not change, but only develops character.

Who will not see that the enemy who systematically directed his fire, not on the ramparts and army of Strasbourg, but on the town and its innocent population—who, of set purpose, destroyed “its churches, its ancient and historical monuments,” and its splendid library—is of the same breed as the hordes who, forty years later, destroyed Louvain, committed on the helpless abominations which would be unbelievable if they were not proved up to the hilt, and left Belgium “only the eyes to weep with” ?

When the “pitiless Werder”—the General of the hosts besieging Strasbourg—“one of those iron tools which Prussian discipline forges”—replied to the prayer to let the women and children leave the city, that “the weak point of the fortifications of strong places is the suffering of the inhabitants, who are exposed without protection to the bullets of the enemy,” and added “those lying words of sham humanity,” “Painful as the refusal may be to myself, I cannot accede to your request, as in the interests of humanity I should wish to

do"; who will not see a forecast of the august Heart which "bled" over Louvain, and the august Hand which carefully abstained from the stroke of the pen that might have spared it?

When Werder did at last yield to the demand of Switzerland to let the women, the children, and the aged pass to her protection, and when, out of eighty thousand, some three or four thousand only had escaped, and he "repented of his tardy humanity" and went back from his word, we have, surely, the firstfruits of that political morality which holds that a promise, or a treaty—that is, a German promise or a German treaty—may be broken with moral impunity the moment it becomes inconvenient.

The "idyllic romancer" who gloated over the splendour of Strasbourg in flames, the learned professors who "exulted aloud" and justified that shameful destruction, were but the spiritual fathers of the men who to-day have made their "Kultur" a byword among the nations. History is repeating the story of the army always claiming God as their Ally, and proclaiming their determination "to respect, and make respected . . . religion,