

SOME FRENCH BOOKS ON THE ALSACE-LORRAINE QUESTION.

BY THEODORE STANTON.

WHEN the day comes for opening up the peace negotiations, the Alsace-Lorraine question is sure to be one of the most complicated problems to solve. "It has come to the fore as never before," wrote me recently Professor Jacques Flach, of the College of France, himself an Alsatian and one of the best French authorities on the subject. At the present moment, France demands as unanimously the return of the "Lost Provinces" as does Germany their retention. In the meantime it may be interesting and instructive to get glimpses of the French points of view as presented in some of the numerous books and pamphlets concerning the matter with which the French presses have been teeming ever since the outbreak of the war. This article may be more a bibliography than a historic, political or legal examination of the subject, but may have its value nevertheless.

Eugène Rambert (Lausanne: Payot, 6 fr.), by M. Virgile Rossel, at present a federal judge at Lausanne, formerly President of Switzerland, and the author of able histories and literary works, is in itself an exceedingly interesting biography, and in several places has a direct bearing on the Alsace-Lorraine question. The subject of this biography, Eugène Rambert, who died in 1886, was a well-known Swiss miscellaneous writer of marked talent who exerted a wide influence in his own country and even beyond its borders. The volume contains a long chapter on the war of 1870-71, where of course Alsace-Lorraine is subjected to the observations of this very intelligent publicist, whose conclusions are penetrating, impartial and pronounced. At first M. Rambert assumed a rather neutral stand; but little by little he began to take sides with France, and there he finally remained firmly to the day of his death. "Alsace, German, will never be other than one of Germany's marchlands," he wrote in 1871. These words appeared in his *Le Journal d'un Neutre*, which was published during 1871 in several numbers of the Swiss periodical *La Bibliothèque Universelle*. This Journal has never come out in volume form and should be read by those who would catch the true spirit of that year so momentous in European politics. It frequently refers to the Alsace-Lorraine affair,

then a burning one, and points out several of the weaknesses of the German contention. M. Rossel takes the same view as M. Rambert and does not hesitate to declare that "the retention of Alsace by Germany would be a loss to Europe; a whole fecund work of intellectual conciliation and penetration would be suspended for centuries."

Les Grandes Heures (Paris: Perrin, 2 v., 3 fr. 50 each), by M. Henri Lavedan, of the French Academy, is a collection of newspaper articles all having to do with the war. The short one entitled "Alsace" was penned in the glow of enthusiasm occasioned at the very beginning of the conflict when the French armies penetrated into Alsace for a short distance along a narrow strip, where they have been ever since and where the schools, post offices, courts, etc., have already been organized on French lines as they were before the war of 1870. M. Lavedan's little article well expresses the intense feeling of patriotism which "this inroad into the enemy's temporary country" occasioned in August 1914 and which is still alive in every French breast. This fact that France is installed again in Alsace and has been there for over three years and a half is a factor in the present problem that cannot be overlooked.

L'Alsace Française (Paris: Perrin, 3 fr. 50) is by the distinguished French littérateur Edouard Schuré, who is Alsatian by birth. The subtitle of the book is "Dreams and Combats," and the motto is: "The soul of France is reflected in the eyes of Alsace as is the soul of Europe reflected in the eyes of France." These quotations show the spirit which pervades the book, and though these essays were written at different times, there is a unity about them, for they all relate to some aspect of Alsace, which in fact is the constant theme of most of M. Schuré's writings. The closing third of the book is described by the author as "a sketch of the psychic development of Alsace, in its relation to France, during the past centuries down to the present war." We have here well presented the French view of the whole Alsace question expressed in the fine style which characterizes all of M. Schuré's work.

I make here the following extract from a letter of his to me:

"During my long life, I have taken no part in politics. Art, poetry and philosophy have been the chief subject of my literary career. In 1871 I protested, in a pamphlet entitled *L'Alsace et les Prétensions Prussiennes*, against the annexation of Alsace to Germany. My pamphlet made some little stir at the time. Because of its irreducible attachment to France, Alsace-Lorraine has become a gage and a symbol of the highest importance. For Germany it

symbolizes the promise of security on the part of the new empire of the Hohenzollerns and its right to conquer by military force any French territory which it may wish to annex. For France it is a question of national honor and concerns at one and the same time the integrity of our people and our national conscience. For the world at large the liberation of Alsace-Lorraine, that is to say the voluntary return of these two provinces to France, like the restitution of Belgium, Italia Irredenta, Servia, and the rest of abused Europe, will mean that this Old World is at last a federation based on the recognition of the rights of free peoples and the idea of a society of nations. The generous and magnificent manner in which the New World has come to the support of this idea is a sure sign of its final acceptance everywhere."

Returning to the same subject a month later, M. Schuré again wrote me:

"If we gain a decisive victory over Germany, which seems to me certain with the aid of our allies and especially now that we have the United States with us, I think France will be satisfied with regaining her two lost provinces, which, in their immense majority have remained inflexibly and invariably faithful to her. I would oppose the annexation of other German territory whose inhabitants are attached to the Fatherland. It would be contrary to the principle of free nationalities, which is determined above all things by the wishes of the people immediately concerned. But I hold that France will have the right to demand, as guaranteeing her security for the future, that a determined zone be neutralized in the matter of things military, where Germany will not have the right to hold or send armies. The inhabitants of this region would thus continue to be a part of Germany as regards their economic and intellectual life, but Germany would not be permitted to use their territory as a camp where could be prepared an attack on France. The future international congress could regulate the details of the matter."

By the way, M. Edouard Schuré is a French writer who should be more widely known in America, as he shares many of our views on government, art, religion and philosophy, and has written with talent on all these subjects. A good acquaintance with the man and his books on ethics, history, criticism, and his novels, dramas and poetry, can be obtained from a volume entitled, *Edouard Schuré: son Œuvre et sa Pensée* (Paris: Perrin, 3 fr. 50), by M. Robert Veyssié, the poet, and Prof. Alphonse Roux, the art historian and critic, now serving as a lieutenant at the front, both

ardent followers of M. Schuré. The volume contains his portrait which represents him as a large powerful man physically as well as mentally, with a big head covered with heavy locks and having a high broad forehead.

Quelques Aspects du Vertige Mondial (Paris: Flammarion, 3 fr. 50), by Pierre Loti, of the French Academy, contains a chapter on Alsace, as he found it in August 1914, when he accompanied President Poincaré on a two days' visit to the newly conquered lands, and in July 1915 when he was there again. Written in Loti's best style, this account of these two brief sojourns in "this sacred region" offers another good example of the deep patriotic feeling which Alsace always awakens in the French breast of to-day.

L'Anéantissement de la Nationalité Alsacienne-Lorraine (Paris: Plon, 25 centimes), by V. W. Friedel, is one of the severest criticisms of the German régime in the Lost Provinces that I have seen. The preface is by M. Jules Siegfried, the well-known deputy, who is a native of Alsace and who points out a possibility—"when peace comes the German plan is that these provinces shall cease to be an Imperial Territory, *Reichsland*, and shall be simply annexed to Prussia"—which is now widely circulated in France and has done much to strengthen the demand that Alsace-Lorraine be unconditionally surrendered.

"*Annales d'Alsace*" (Paris: *Bibliothèque d'Alsace-Lorraine*, 75 centimes each) is a series of a dozen illustrated pamphlets whose aim is to awaken among the inhabitants of those regions the old love for France. The one by Baron Albert de Dietrich, "Rouget de Lisle et Frédéric de Dietrich," is especially interesting, as it is the history of the creation of the famous French national air, "La Marseillaise," first sung in the drawing-room of the mayor of Strasbourg, Frédéric de Dietrich, who, notwithstanding his noble patriotism, was beheaded during the Terror. He was the great great grandfather of the author of this pamphlet, who, by the way, is also related to Lafayette.

Le Messager de Lorraine (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1 fr.) aims to do for Lorraine what the foregoing series is to do for Alsace,—revive the slumbering, where it is slumbering, affection for France. It is an annual, and the first number, that for 1917, appeared at the beginning of last year. I have not yet seen the second number, that for the present year. It is well illustrated, contains some excellent prose and poetry, and counts among its collaborators M. Maurice Barrès, one of the most famous of Lor-

rainers and one of the most uncompromising leaders in the demand for the unconditional return of Alsace-Lorraine.

La Guerre et le Progrès (Paris: Payot, 3 fr. 50), by M. Jules Sageret, is an able presentation of the philosophy of the present conflict and like almost every serious French book on current events, finally comes round to the inevitable Alsace-Lorraine problem. This is the way he sums up the matter: "With these provinces in the power of Germany, both France and Alsace-Lorraine are dissatisfied. But with them in the possession of France, only Germany is dissatisfied. In the latter case, there will of course be a ruffling of pride and some national humiliation. Yet, however keen this feeling may be, it is much less likely to last than grievances caused by an annexation accomplished against the wishes of those annexed."

M. Sageret, by the way, is a brilliant graduate of the great Paris civil engineering school, l'École Centrale, and specialized in electrical engineering until nearly thirty, when he turned toward literature, "for which I always had a strong bent," he once said to me. Since then he has produced a half dozen novels and as many more volumes of criticism. In a letter accompanying his new book he writes me:

"The question is often asked whether the Allies should treat with the Kaiser when the time comes for peace. On this point I quite agree with President Wilson, who has brought out very clearly the real meaning of this war, and his conclusions must be accepted. It is a war of principles,—the principle of nationality based on the free consent of peoples, opposed to the principle of the sovereignty of the State; and consequently, the principle of democracy over against the principle of authority. The future peace should be no mercantile peace, for there can be no bargaining over the clauses which are to make up the document which is to bring about a stable and pacific organization of the world. The reign of the old kind of diplomacy, steeped in trickery, must be ended. But this can be secured only through the sincere co-operation of the German people who of their own accord rid themselves of the Hohenzollerns. This they will not be able to do unless our victory is complete. Therefore we must go on fighting with vigor, decision and tenacity, in which effort we feel sure the United States are bringing us a support as fresh as it is large."

This slogan that the future peace negotiators must ignore the Kaiser was perhaps first sounded, at least in France, by the well-known politician and writer M. Joseph Reinach, who repeats it

several times in the eleventh and latest volume of his remarkable series, *Les Commentaires de Polybe* (Paris: Fasquelle, 3 fr. 50 each volume). Nor does this volume or its predecessors neglect the Alsace-Lorraine problem. "Between the Vosges and the Rhine is another Poland," M. Reinach says. He even seems to advocate "the return of France to the Rhine," which M. Schuré, as we saw above, and the vast majority of Frenchmen, do not demand. None of the daily commentaries on this war by leading French writers—there are many and very brilliant ones—equal perhaps these short, crisp, vigorous *Figaro* articles of this modern Polybius; and among these terse paragraphs of M. Joseph Reinach certainly the best are those devoted to the Alsace-Lorraine question.

A most lamentable thing about this Alsace-Lorraine business is that a practically dead issue has suddenly been brought to life again in its most intense form. When August 1914 came it had, in France, entered upon its final slumber. Many of the old generation of Frenchmen of 1870, who had naturally kept alive the spirit of revenge, had passed away, and among these was that fiery ultra patriot, Paul Déroulède. The younger generations did not at all feel called upon to go to war in order to regain the Lost Provinces. In fact a growing sentiment toward a rapprochement between France and Germany was well under way. All this is admirably brought out in *L'Alsace-Lorraine* (Paris: Ollendorff, 3 fr. 50), by M. Maxime Leroy, published a few weeks before the cloud burst. M. Leroy is the author of a half dozen books on French public questions, and presents in this one a strong clear picture of the problem as it stood at the beginning of the fatal year 1914. The spirit in which he handles the subject is revealed in the sub-title of this book—"Porte de France, Porte d'Allemagne," the reference being to the two city gates of the Alsatian town of Phalsbourg, "one looking toward the east and the other toward the west, one being called the French Gate and the other the German Gate. . . . And you are led to wish that the whole *Reichsland* might become one vast city with two gates opening out onto the two civilizations so long enemies, so that the ideas of both might circulate freely from one to the other. . . . No more war!"

And if one would see how all this peaceful regulation of the Alsace-Lorraine imbroglio has been nipped in the bud, glance over a pamphlet published some two years later by this same author, *Le Statut Civil et Administratif des Alsaciens-Lorrains pendant la Guerre* (Paris: Bureaux des Lois Nouvelles, 25 centimes); and a second pamphlet, *Almanach de la Paix par le Droit* (Paris: Plon,

25 centimes), where there is an article by M. Leroy that is very significant.

Two other pamphlets should be noted,—*Pourquoi nous nous battons*, by Prof. Ernest Lavisse, of the French Academy, the well-known historian; and *La Question d'Alsace-Lorraine*, by M. Lavisse and Prof. Christian Pfister, of the Sorbonne. Both may be obtained for a few sous from the Paris publisher, Armand Colin. They offer the best brief statement of the question which I have seen.

In *Un Poète Alsacien* (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 75 centimes), M. Armbruster, of the Paris bar, gives us a sketch of one of those typical intellectual Alsatians who have always remained faithful to France,—the late Georges Spetz, who has sung in verse the praises of both lands,—

“O ma belle et noble patrie,
O mon Alsace, ô mon pays.”

And the caricaturists have also come to the support of the movement. *De l'Arrière au Front* (Paris: Fasquelle, 3 fr. 50) is by the famous artist in this line, “Henriot,”—M. Henry Naigrot, editor of *Charivari*, and the author of many volumes and stories. It is a little volume of some six or seven hundred sketches where the legend is often as witty as the drawing and which contains several amusing skits at the expense of the Germans, often with Alsace-Lorraine as the subject.

Zislin, the clever caricaturist of Mulhouse, long ago brought his sharp pencil to the aid of the Alsatian cause. Imprisoned for his bold actions, he escaped when the war broke out and joined the French army. Some sixty or more of his best sketches have been collected and the first part—there will be four—has just appeared under the title *L'Album Zislin* (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 3 fr. 50 each part). Zislin has thoroughly succeeded in catching the Teutonic foibles and characteristics, and his skits are as cutting and funny as they are artistic.

There has recently been founded in Paris a “Ligue Républicaine de Défense Nationale,” whose secretary general is the well-known writer Mme. Th. Harlor, 77 rue Blanche, who says in a recent letter to me: “Our aim is to combat the infamous propaganda of the enemy, who, underhandedly, is trying to accomplish in all the allied countries what is succeeding so well in Russia. Our membership is made up wholly of republicans because we think this will be significant, as before the war we French republicans all advocated

the noble ideas of pacifism. One of our ways of advancing the cause is the issuing of tracts, and the third on our list will be one devoted to the Alsace-Lorraine question."

I might continue this list of books and pamphlets almost indefinitely. But I think I have mentioned a sufficient number in different fields of literature and art to show what the whole must be. The lesson which they teach and which should be borne in mind when peace comes, lest the governments repeat the same mistake made by Germany in 1871, is well expressed in this sentence, the name of whose author I have forgotten: "Nations are the work of God, but States are made by men."

PARIS, FRANCE.

TWO CHINESE CITIES.

BY A. M. REESE.

AFTER a voyage (unusually calm for the China Sea) of four days from Singapore, the S. S. "Bülów" slowly steamed among the islands at the entrance and came to anchor just after sunset in the beautiful harbor of Hongkong. There is really no *city* of Hongkong, though letters so directed will reach their destination, and even the residents of the city in whose harbor we were anchored would have spoken of living in Hongkong. The name "Hongkong" belongs to the small island, ten miles long by three wide, that lies about a mile from the mainland of China. Along the north or land side of this island lies the city of Victoria, with a population of 350,000, commonly known by the name of the entire island, Hongkong.

Practically the whole island is occupied by mountains of a maximum height of about 1800 feet, so that the town has only a narrow strip of level ground along the beach and extends in scattered fashion to the very top of the ridge.

As we came to anchor the twinkling lights of the streets and houses were just beginning to appear, and in a little while, when the short tropical twilight had changed to darkness, the shore line was a mass of lights which gradually became more scattered toward the hill-tops, where often a single light marked the location of some isolated residence. Across the harbor another smaller group of lights showed the position of Kowloon, a small seaport on the mainland and the southern terminus of the Kowloon and Canton Railroad. On the water between the two towns, really one great