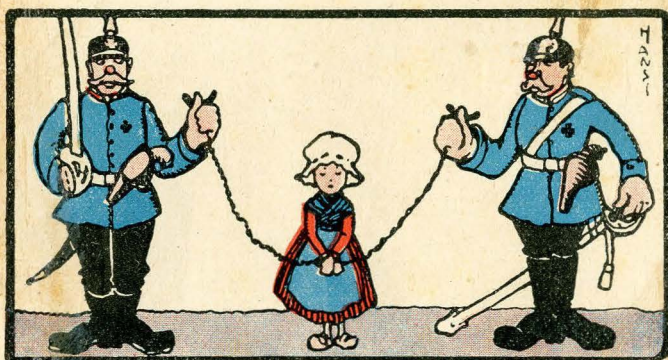


WHITNEY WARREN



# ALSACE-LORRAINE A QUESTION OF RIGHT



After the paintings by HANSI, in the album  
' Le Paradis tricolore '. — Floury, publisher at Paris.

ÉDITIONS D'ALSACE-LORRAINE

1918

PRIX : 1 FR.

# Protest of Alsace-Lorraine at the National Assembly of Bordeaux

FEBRUARY 17<sup>th</sup> 1871

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## *I. Alsace and Lorraine refuse to be ceded.*

Associated with France for more than two centuries, in good fortune as in ill, unceasingly exposed to the blows of the enemy, both provinces have constantly sacrificed themselves to the national greatness. They have sealed with their blood the indissoluble ties binding them to the unity of France.

Called in question to-day by the pretensions of a foreign power, in spite of obstacles and all dangers, under the very yoke of the invader, they swear to their steadfast loyalty.

The citizens who have remained at home and the soldiers who have joined the colours, the former by voting, the latter by fighting, unanimously signify to Germany and to the world the unswerving will of Alsace-Lorraine to remain French.

## *II. France cannot consent nor subscribe to the cession of Alsace-Lorraine.*

She cannot without endangering the continuity of her national existence, strike a mortal blow at her own unity, by giving up those who, by two hundred years of patriotic devotion have conquered the right to be defended by the whole nation against the attacks of victorious Force.

Even when the outcome of universal suffrage, an assembly could not invoke its absolute powers to defend or sanction exigencies that tend to destroy national integrity; by so doing, it would wrongfully assume a right that cannot even be assumed by a Comitium of the people.

The effect of such an abuse of power would be to mutilate the Mother-Land common to both of them, and would denounce the perpetrators of such an act before the severe judgement of History.

France may suffer the blows of force but she cannot accept its decision.

## *III. Europe cannot permit nor sanction the abandoning of Alsace-Lorraine.*

Guardians of the law of Justice and of the rights of Peoples, the civilized nations cannot remain any longer insensible to the lot of their neighbours, without the fear of becoming, in their turn, the victims of the abuses they have tolerated.

Modern Europe cannot allow a people to be disposed of as a common herd of cattle, she cannot remain deaf to the repeated protests of the threatened populations; she owes it to her own preservation to prevent such abuses.

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

Peace made at the price of a cession of territory can only be a ruinous truce at best and not a lasting peace. Such a peace would be for every one a cause for internal agitation, a legitimate and permanent provocation of war.

(Read on page 3rd of the book=cover.)

WHITNEY WARREN

# ALSACE-LORRAINE

## A QUESTION OF RIGHT



### GERMAN ARGUMENT

*Of course they belong to me : Don't you see the likeness ?*

ÉDITIONS D'ALSACE-LORRAINE

—  
1918



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## Une Lettre de M. l'Abbé Wetterlé

*Ancien député au Reichstag  
et à la Chambre d'Alsace-Lorraine.*

*Cher Monsieur Whitney Warren,*

*J'ai lu avec le plus grand intérêt votre si court et si substantiel exposé de la question d'Alsace-Lorraine. Vous avez réussi à condenser en quelques pages tout ce qui a été écrit sur ce sujet, d'une si haute et si tragique actualité. Les braves soldats d'Amérique, qui se battent pour toutes les libertés, sauront dorénavant que la délivrance des deux provinces françaises sera le symbole de la victoire totale et marquera la fin de la domination du militarisme prussien.*

*Merci d'avoir, d'une plume si alerte, esquissé notre long martyre. Merci également à ceux qui vous liront, à tous ces Yanks, merveilleux de courage et d'entrain, qui ont abandonné tout ce qu'ils aimaient pour se sacrifier, d'un geste si beau et si désintéressé, au triomphe de l'Idéal.*

*Bien vôtre,*

**E. WETTERLÉ,**  
*Ancien député au Reichstag  
et à la Chambre d'Alsace-Lorraine.*

*Paris, le 14 juillet 1918.*

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## A Letter of l'Abbé Wetterlé

*former deputy at the  
« Reichstag » and at the « Chamber of Alsace-Lorraine ».*

*Dear Mr. Whitney Warren,*

*I have read with the greatest interest your very short and yet comprehensive narrative of the question of Alsace-Lorraine. You have succeeded in condensing in a few pages all that has been written about this subject, one so highly and so intensely tragic at this time.*

*The brave American soldiers, who are fighting for Liberty, will know henceforth that the deliverance of these two French provinces will symbolise the full Victory and mark the end of the domination of Prussian militarism.*

*I thank you for having sketched our long martyrdom with so able a pen. I thank those also who will read your work, all those American soldiers, so marvellous in their courage and their spirited action, who have abandoned all they loved, willing to disinterestedly sacrifice everything in their desire, for the triumph of the Ideal.*

*Believe me yours faithfully.*

E. WETTERLÉ,

*Former deputy at the « Reichstag »  
and at the « Chamber of A.-L. »*

*Paris, July 14<sup>th</sup> 1918.*

# ALSACE-LORRAINE

## A QUESTION OF RIGHT

**I**N this short study of a vexatious problem, I have not the pretension to attempt to tell Americans why, or for what, they are fighting. The splendid courage which they have shown in their first encounter with the Germans proves that they have a clear understanding of the noble ends for which they are so willing to run any risk, be it even that of death. They all know that the Cause of which they have made themselves the Defenders is that of Justice, of Liberty, and of Honour, all threatened by an unscrupulous and unclean enemy — all this they know, but nevertheless, it is, I believe, useful, in order to stimulate even more their ardour, to underline the truth, by citing the example of Alsace and Lorraine and thus showing that Right is indeed with us.

It is with this intention that I lay before them the explanation of this question, dear to our hearts as it is to the heart of every Frenchman, woman or child, and which in many minds is 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.

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To justify their possession of Alsace and of Lorraine, the Germans invoke four principal arguments : they pretend that these provinces belong to them, first, geographically ; second, historically ; third, because of the language spoken, and fourth, because of the original race of the inhabitants.

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The answer to the geographical question is found in Julius Cæsar, who says : « Gaul extends as far as the Rhine » ; and again Tacitus declares : « Germany is separated from Gaul by the Rhine ». Therefore even in those early days it was the Rhine, and not the Vosges mountains as the Germans pretend, that constituted the frontier between Germany and Gaul as France was then called. Here therefore is a first point established : Alsace and Lorraine

were not originally German territory. The Germans only managed to install themselves there by invasion.

Historically, it is wrong to pretend that the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine by France under Louis XIV, was the tearing away of these provinces from their veritable fatherland. 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 Germanies — one spoke in those times of « the Germanies », as one might have spoken of « the Alsaces », because at that epoch, they were merely geographical expressions. They were composed of hundreds of small feudal states, republics and free cities — such as the Republic of Mulhouse and the free city of Strasbourg. It was France that definitely fixed the boundaries — she then made this territory a French province, just as she did other provinces which became French at the same time, and which have remained so ever since — she brought unity, order, liberty and prosperity, and instilled there her soul which has always remained French.

The question of the language is a simple one to dispose of. In Lorraine every one speaks French and always have, this is conceded. In Alsace is spoken the Alsatian dialect — just as the Welsh have their dialect and the Scotch theirs — they, none the less, form part of Great-Britain! Even if there is a resemblance to German in this dialect what does that signify? Are we Americans dependants of England because we speak English?

As to the question of original Race ; we find in earliest history that Celts inhabited this region. The same race that inhabited Brittany and Ireland — but before the Celts? Where is one to stop in ones researches? Before the cave dwellers? As Ernest Renan very wittily remarked « With the philosophy of History, as taught by the Germans, the only law that would stand in this world is the law as practised by the orang-outang, who was unjustly deposed by the perfidy of civilisation. »

No, the true reason that made and makes Germany covet Alsace and Lorraine is a military one. Her policy has always been to have her feet, so to speak, in her neighbours back yard — in military parlance to « hold the head of the bridge » — that is, to have a strong-hold in property which does not belong to her, and thereby keep her neighbours at her whim and mercy. God created natural boundaries for nations : England has the Channel : France is separated from Spain by the Pyrenee mountains, from Italy by the Alps, from Germany by the Rhine — one side is, and always has been, German, the other side always has been, or should have been, French, and until it becomes so once again peace on earth is impossible. Why? Because life under existing conditions is impossible. France is fighting so that she may be *at home*,

secure, and in consequence, at peace — and we Americans, are fighting beside her *so that she may be at home*. AT HOME : just as we are, on the other side of the Atlantic! I ask you, what would our feelings be, if Germany had her paw upon New-York, Boston or Baltimore?

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Now, let us compare what Alsace and Lorraine were during the period when they belonged to France, and what they have been since they have been annexed to Germany, by force, in 1871.

Even under the reign of the autocratic King Louis XIV they were treated with the greatest liberty both from the point of view of administration and of religion. In 1709, the Prussian Ambassador to the Court of France wrote in his Memoires : " It is well known that the inhabitants there are more French than the Parisians themselves. "

During the XVIII<sup>o</sup> century the good feeling increased, a complete understanding of France took possession of the country and the French language became universal, with the exception that amongst the peasant class of Alsace the Alsatian dialect always subsisted as it does to day. In 1789, having always been profoundly democratic, they accepted the French Revolution with joy, and it was at Strasbourg that the *Marseillaise* was sung for the first time. From this moment their history blends itself absolutely with the history of France ; indeed, never for over 200 years have either Alsace or Lorraine uttered the slightest protest against the country which at that epoch they adopted as their mother-country for always.

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Then, came the war of 1870 — more than one hundred thousand Alsatians and Lorrainers fought on the side of France, none on the side of Germany ! In 1871, after the treaty of Francfort, which despoiled France of Alsace and Lorraine, the congressmen of these provinces, in Assembly at Bordeaux, protested twice before the world against the so called annexation, and in the terms which you have read as published in the preface to this leaflet ; in terms which gives the lie direct to all the German pretentions. Again in 1874, before the entire Reichstag at Berlin, the fifteen congressmen from these provinces made another emphatic protest. It served no purpose. The conquerors tried vainly by every means, resorting now to violence, now to gentleness, to win over to Germany the population who were French at heart, and who always have had but one desire, to return to their chosen mother-country.

From 1871 until 1879, very rigorous methods were tried, from then on to 1885 more moderate ones were resorted to. In 1887,

the elections again proved the heart of the country to be absolutely french, and then, in fury, the period of oppression recommenced : vexations, brutalities, intimidations without number were the order of the day — all to no purpose — a ridiculous war was waged against every thing french, going so far as to suppress french surnames, signs, traditions, etc., etc... It would almost seem that it was the hope of the authorities to provoke revolts so as to suppress them in blood. This at least was the idea of Prince Hohenlohe, the Governor, who wrote : « It would seem that Berlin wishes to push the « Annexed Ones » to desperation and to open revolt ! » Alsace and Lorraine were not treated as recovered provinces, but as a foreign colony that it was necessary to germanize. « What would you have », the Germans said, « we tried the gentle method without success, we had no alternative left but brutality » ! What better proof, I ask, can one have, that under no conditions whatever, did Alsace and Lorraine desire to become or to remain a part of Germany !

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After 1871, the inhabitants had to choose — either to forsake all that was dear to them, their home, their soil, their tradition, their interests, to « pull up stakes » and go to France to live — or else, to remain and serve the Conqueror ! Over half a million took the first choice and emigrated from their homesteads, this, rather than to forsake France and to live under the yoke of the invader. The others remained — at the post of honour — as it were ! These, after having vainly struggled for a long time against brutality and force, realized that unless some compromise be arrived at, that nothing but ruin stared the provinces in the face, for, after all, they were part and parcel of a great economic organization — so, for want of some better solution they asked for autonomy, selfgovernment. « Alsace for the Alsations », became the cry.

The method resorted to was different but the aim was the same ; and it was for this reason that even many French patriots at that moment approved it, for loss of some better way of making life possible. What proves that it was nothing but a « blind » is the progress made at this moment of the French language in these provinces and the vigorous attitude of the young generation against all German « Kultur » — for, in about 1900, the youth of the country, who had not known the french regime, but who had been brought up in german schools and done their military service in the german army, became even more obstreperous than their parents had been, more ardently french, forming all sorts of societies and clubs to perpetuate french souvenir and thought. What greater proof can one have of the absolute failure to germanize this people ?

Two very grave incidents happened at this time, one at Graffenstaden, the other at Savern, which show the high tension which existed between the natives and their German masters. Just before the war broke, the state of nervousness was so intense, on one side and on the other, that the smallest act took on an aggressive character which was most alarming ; and then the war broke...

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Now, if what the Germans pretend had been true, if the country had really become germanized, if the people had even become resigned to their fate, what would have happened? The « hatchet would have been buried », all hatred and discord forgotten ! But what happened was just the contrary as is testified to by the german newspaper of Bale, *The National Zeitung*, in February 1915, from which I quote :

« And so the War with all the events that compose it, events especially painful to the Alsatians, 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.** »

Facts speak even more clearly. The Germans during the last days of July 1914, following the declaration of the danger of war, proceeded to make wholesale arrests of what were called « suspects », and all of whom were accused of but one crime, that of having sympathy for France — many died in jail, while others, like the abbé Wetterlé, the priest Collin and the congressman Weill, escaped and took up the good fight in France. In revenge those who were unfortunate enough to remain were condemned right and left — up to July 1916, over three thousand years of prison had been inflicted upon the citizens of the unhappy region. The number of women condemned is very large and it was to one of these that the turn-key of the prison said : « Do not weep, Madam, you will find yourself in excellent company here ; it is the only house where one can speak french with impunity » — I am only citing indisputable facts for they are gathered from the german papers themselves.

It is from the 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 official communications the german government pretends that the Alsatians are happy to fight on the side of Germany. To show the falseness of this allegation, it is sufficient to glance over their published lists of the thousands of deserters condemned by councils of war — and again.

**A comparison in numbers as to the officers, which the two provinces have given to France and Germany in the present war is very instructive. 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 Larde-melle, Sibille, Lévi, Leblois, Heyman, Blondin, Schwartz and Andlauer; 145 superior officers and over 3.000 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 the 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 denial 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 Sungau, Dalheim and Sengern. They pillaged and burned and committed unheard of atrocities right and left.

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 answer to it all is too simple! **If the Alsatians, in spite of the bad treatment, have become such good Germans, why do the Germans still continue to martyrize them?**

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From the fore-going, which is necessarily a very short and rapid exposé of the situation, it is obvious that the Alsatians and Lorrainers have always been, and are determined, against remain-

ning under the yoke of Germany, and that, in spite of all, they have remained absolutely French at heart.

I know that a certain number of conciliating but misinformed persons, propose a solution for this agonizing problem. When I say, *a* solution, I should say *two*, because if some are partisans of Independance and would like to see Alsace and Lorraine form an independant state, others, perhaps more numerous still, lean towards a Plebiscite which would permit the Alsatians and Lorrainers 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 Lorrainers 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 difficulties. 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 at Berlin ! The country then pronounced itself in all Liberty through the voice of its Congressmen. **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.**

The only other solution which is left is that of Independance, 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 the creating a new source of envy and of conflict, which would prolong in Europe the warlike atmosphere.

! Besides, the Independance Comittee of Alsace=Lorraine, that was created in Switzerland some months ago, by a small fraction of the Alsatians and Lorrainers, in order to study an organisation of their country on the basis of Independance, have themselves renounced to that project and loyally declared it to be a dead issue.

No ! Neither Plebiscite nor Independance 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 tyrannic 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 breast 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 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 Bohemia, of Slesvig-Holstein, of Triest and the Trent, of Alsace, of Lorraine, of Herzegovinia and Bosnia, and of the other slaves countries.

WHITNEY WARREN,  
*American Citizen.*



We Alsations and Lorrainers should be ready for our part to begin the war again, to-day or to morrow, at any hour or at any moment.

Finally, Alsace and Lorraine resolutely protest against any cession. France shall not accept it, Europe shall not sanction it.

In support whereof we take our fellow-citizens of France and the governments and peoples of the whole world to witness, that, in advance we consider as null and void any act and treaty, vote or plebiscite, accepting the cession to a foreign power of the whole or part of our provinces Alsace and Lorraine.

By this declaration, we proclaim the right of the Alsations and Lorrainers to remain members of the French nation, inviolable forever, and we swear for us, as well as for those who are fighting. for our children, and their descendants, to claim that right eternally, by every means and against all usurpers.

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## **Second Protest of Alsace-Lorraine at the National Assembly of Bordeaux**

MARCH THE 1<sup>st</sup> 1871

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« 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.

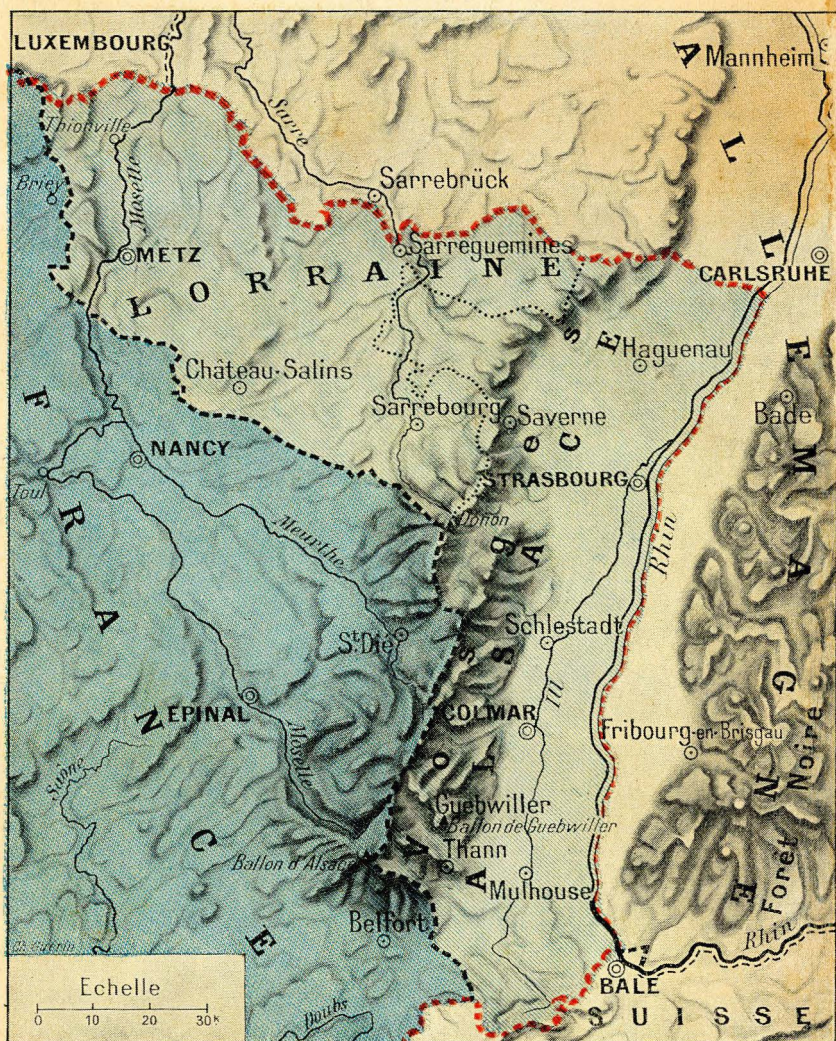
« We declare null and void a pact which disposes of us without our consent.

« 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. »



ALSACE AND LORRAINE

◦ ◦ FRENCH LANDS ◦ ◦