

TRANSCFERENCE OF ALSACE TO FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.¹

By JAMES HEYWOOD, M.A., F.R.S., F.S.A.

After the death of Gustavus Adolphus, at Lutzen, in 1632, Bernard, Duke of Weimar, commanded the Saxon army, fighting against the Imperialists in Germany. The Duke of Weimar was unsuccessful in the battle of Nordlingen, 1633, and his losses were made up in 1634, by a treaty concluded at Paris, under which France engaged to maintain 12,000 men, Germans or others, under the command of a German prince. Several towns in the Black Forest were taken by Bernard, and in 1638, with the aid of the French General Guebriant, the Duke of Weimar obtained possession of the fortress of Old Breisach, in the Brisgau.

Cardinal Richelieu, the prime minister of Louis XIII, sent special instructions on this occasion to General Guebriant to inquire in the most polite manner from Duke Bernard, if in his opinion the French, who had contributed to the conquest of Old Breisach, should have a share in the glory of preserving that important military position.

Guebriant was further requested to suggest the appointment of a French governor of Old Breisach, and to propose an arrangement by which two-thirds or at least one-half of the garrison should consist of French soldiers, the other half being Germans; and the supreme direction of both divisions was mentioned as desirable to be vested in General Guebriant.

Old Breisach at that time was a very important fortress, and the Duke of Weimar could not possibly be pleased with the practical cession of such a German stronghold to the French. The Duke dined at Pontarlier shortly afterwards with Colonel Ehm, and after the banquet was taken ill. Some months subsequently he died. General d'Erlach, a friend of the Duke, and a Swiss by birth, succeeded Duke Bernard in the command of the German army, and with him were associated Colonel Ehm, the Count of Nassau, and Colonel Rosen. M. de Gonzenbach, in his memoir of General d'Erlach, describes a fresh nego-

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tiation between General Guebriant and General d'Erlach and their respective friends. The Weimarian German army was proposed to be transferred in single regiments to the service of France. Yearly pensions were to be granted to each of the colonels in addition to their usual pay.

The governor of Old Breisach was offered £4,000 if he promised to hold the fortress under the authority of France, and either £6,000 or £8,000 if he gave up the fortress altogether to the French Monarchy. An arrangement was also proposed for the governor of Freiburg. Protracted negotiations ensued, and as the soldiers in Old Breisach were in a state of uncertainty, and restless, a mutiny was apprehended in the Weimarian army if matters were not speedily concluded.

The Duke of Longueville assisted the French generals in the settlement of terms, and ultimately the governors of Old Breisach and Freiburg, in Brisgau, who had been in office under the Duke of Weimar, were allowed to remain in command of their respective fortresses, after taking an oath of allegiance to the King of France, and of obedience to the orders of the Lieutenant-General commanding the Royal troops in Germany. France obtained supreme control over the greater part of Alsace as well as over Old Breisach and Freiburg in Brisgau.

Vienna was the capital of the German Empire, and General Mercy, who commanded the Bavarian army, on the side of the Imperialists, marched towards the Rhine. He laid siege to the fortress of Freiburg in Brisgau, and took it. Marshal Turenne and the Duke d'Enghien commanded the French forces, and General d'Erlach, with the German Weimarian troops, aided the French cause. Fierce engagements ensued, terminating in the victory of the French. General Mercy retreated into Wirtemberg.

In 1648 the peace of Westphalia was signed at Munster. Alsace, as well as Old Breisach in Brisgau, were confirmed to France, but by the treaty of Ryswick in 1697 Old Breisach was restored to Germany. Alsace remained as a province of France until the recent Franco-German war, when Alsace and Lorraine were added to the German empire. Both provinces now send representatives to the parliament meeting at Berlin.