

The
ERNESTINES

Adventures of a Great Family



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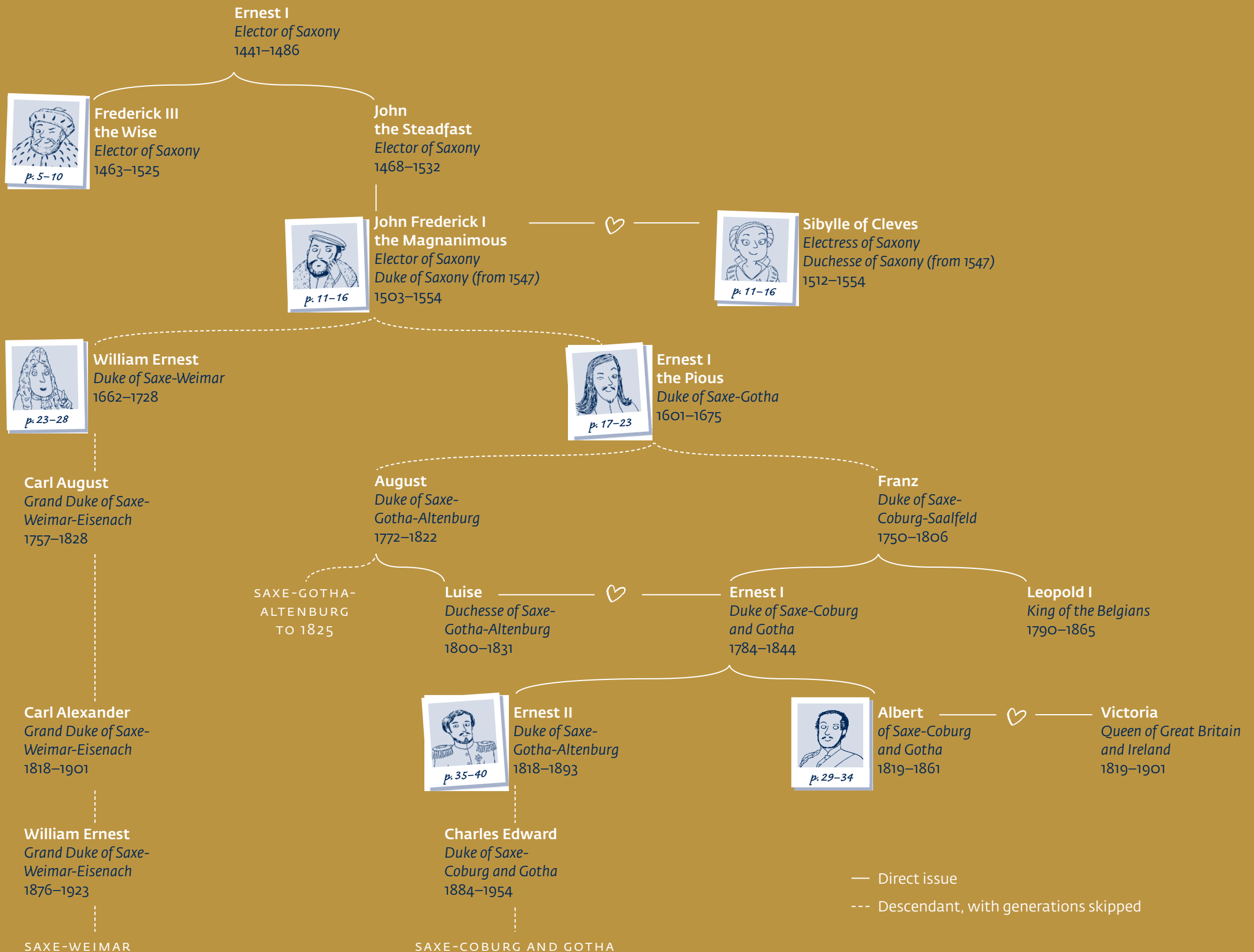


THE ERNESTINES A DYNASTY SHAPES EUROPE

Thuringian State Exhibition
Gotha | Weimar 24. Apr–28. Aug 2016

The comic book *The Ernestines: Adventures of a Great Family* is a part of the the Thuringian State Exhibition *The Ernestines: A Dynasty Shapes Europe*. The ways in which this dynasty influenced culture, science, the economy, and politics even beyond Thuringia's borders is brought to life in six episodes.





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Adventures of a Great Family

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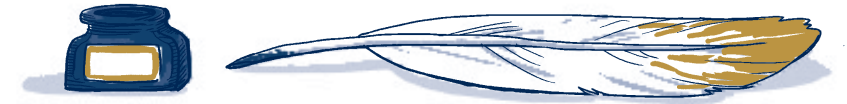
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Foreword



Their names were Frederick, John and Ernest. William or Albert. They were powerful rulers. Cunning politicians. Brave warriors and noble in defeat. They were the founders of famous universities. Pious men and defenders of their faith. They built great museums and grand castles. They lived across many centuries in various places.

However these men all had one thing in common. They all belong to one great family: they are THE ERNESTINES!

Never heard of the Ernestines? Don't worry. With this noble family it's a bit like a pop song: you've heard it once on the radio, you can even hum along to bits of the tune. But what's the band called again? The Ernestines are the same. You've probably heard their story once before somewhere, or visited one of their castles. All without knowing that an Ernestine was behind it!

It was an Ernestine who hid Martin Luther at the Wartburg. Elector Frederick III of Saxony, to be precise. How would the Reformation have turned out if Frederick hadn't done that? Would Luther's ideas still have been able to spread? Would there be a Protestant and a Catholic church today? Would the world today look different without the Ernestines? In the end the Ernestines paid a heavy price for Luther, but one thing at a time ...

The story of the Ernestines begins more than 500 years ago: on exactly the 11th of November 1485 in Leipzig, where the State Diet was in session. Two brothers were present there: Ernest and Albrecht. Both belonged to the Wettin dynasty, one of the oldest dynasties of all.

Ernest was Elector of Saxony, and Albrecht ruled their large territories together with him for twenty years. They had an important position and a lot of power in the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Therefore they might have become dangerous to another significant family: the Habsburgs. In those days the Habsburgs had the final word in the Empire and they were the ones who appointed the Emperor. At some point the brothers fell out and Ernest decided to divide their territory:

then Albrecht would see how he could manage alone ... Such a division was not uncommon. These things had happened in the past. At the Diet in Leipzig the two brothers sealed the agreement with a contract.

This "Partition of Leipzig" did not just concern the Wettin dynasty's territories but also the family itself. Two lines sprung up, which from then on went along their own paths: the Ernestines, who were the descendants of Elector Ernest; and the Albertines, who were the successors of Albrecht.

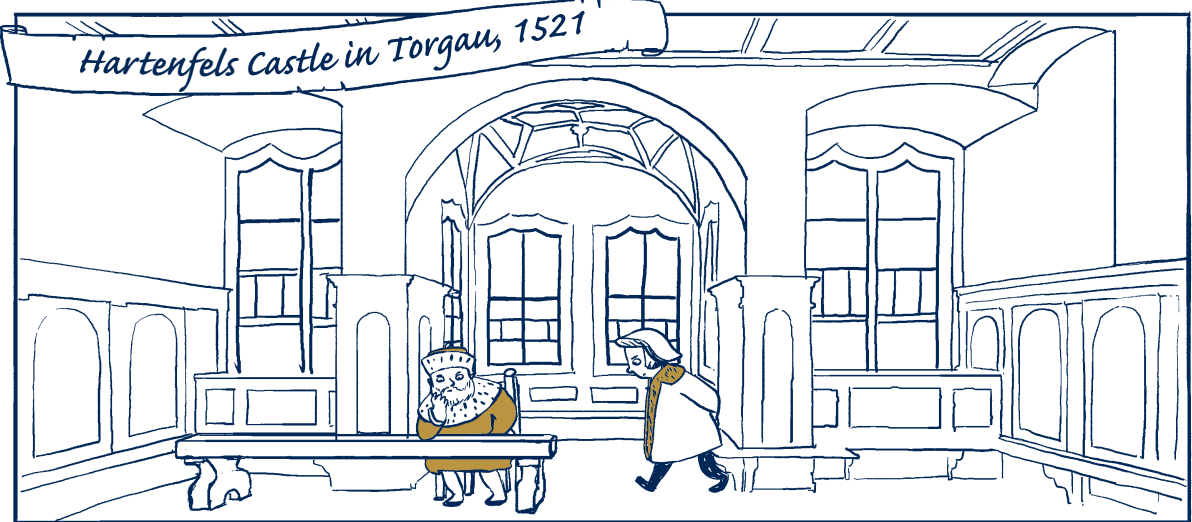
The Ernestines often pursued other policies from the Albertines. This was the case when the Ernestine Elector John Frederick decided not only to defend the new faith but to fight for it. The Albertines stood on the side of the Emperor Charles V, whom John Frederick and his allies waged war against. This was a very risky undertaking, as John Frederick found to his cost: he lost the final battle and the Emperor took away not only a large part of his lands but also his electorship! And who got them? The Albertines!

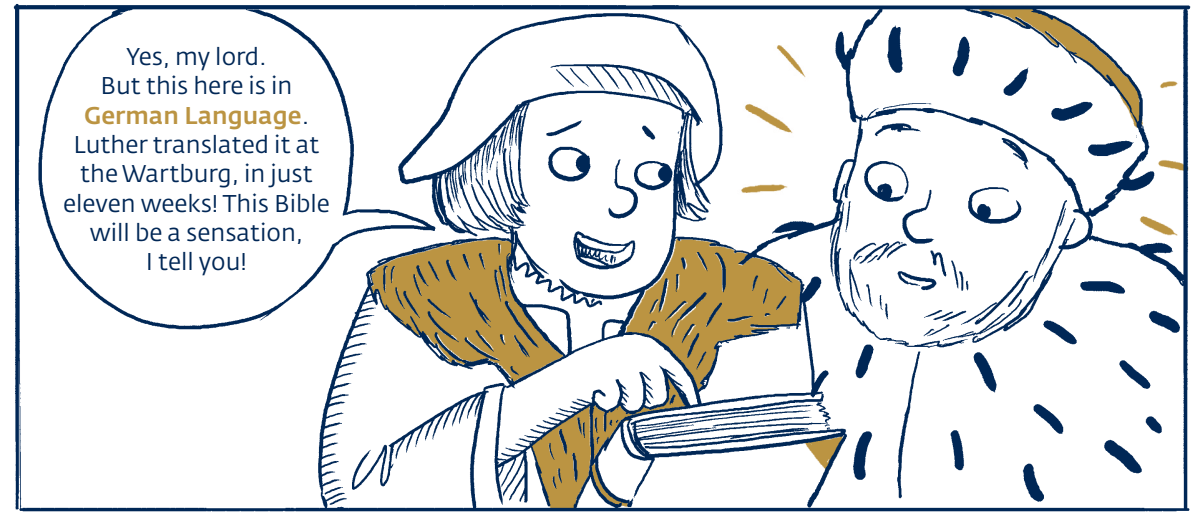
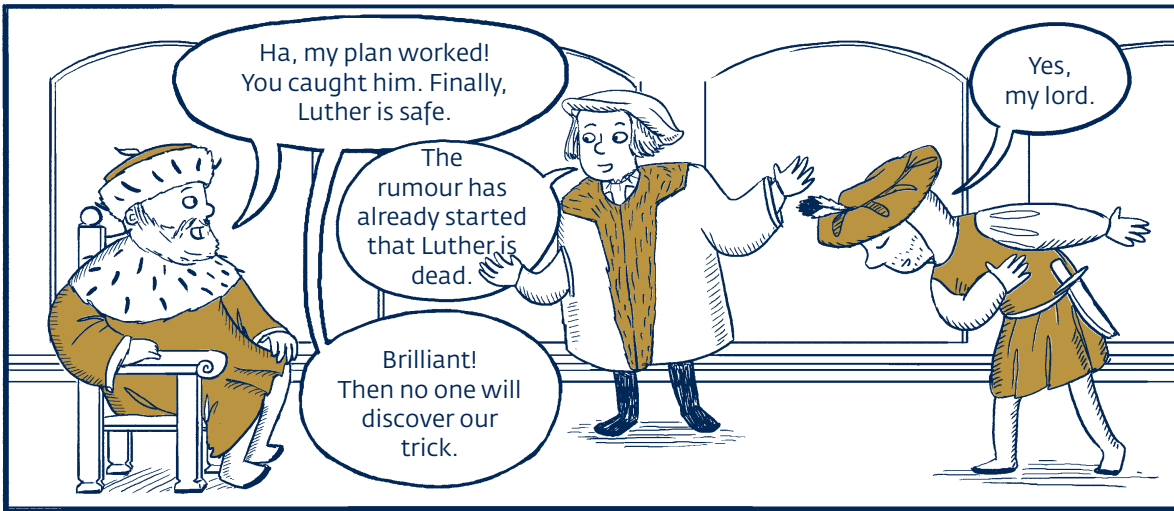
This was a catastrophe for the Ernestines. Until this point they had been one of the most significant families in the Holy Roman Empire. But now that was all over! From powerful Electors they now became simple dukes again, and none of John Frederick's descendants could change anything about this.

But even if the Ernestines now had to make do with less power, they left behind many traces of themselves which live on to this day.



For some people it was about power and money. For one person it suddenly became about life and death! Martin Luther had made some powerful enemies – the Emperor for example, and the Pope! Luther wanted to change the church. He had a lot of ideas how it could be improved. For example he wanted to abolish the sale of indulgences. These were supposed to let people buy their way out of their sins, but Luther believed God's forgiveness should have nothing to do with money. Luther's ideas were not popular everywhere, particularly not with the Pope. He excommunicated Luther in 1521. That meant he was thrown out of the church, the worst punishment for a Christian. The Emperor issued him with an **imperial ban** too, making him an outlaw. But Luther held on to his ideas. Now he was in grave danger! Luckily he had a brave protector in **Hartenfels Castle**: Elector Frederick III of Saxony.





Got it?!

Top secret!

In his hiding place at the Wartburg Martin Luther didn't use his real name. Instead he used a code-name: he called himself **Junker Jörg**.

Did you know that ...

... Luther's Bible was something completely new? He translated the New Testament from Greek into **German Language**. And he did it in just eleven weeks! In record time as it were. But the most important thing about this was that Luther translated the text into the New High German Language. That is in principle the language which is spoken in Germany today. Back then there were many different dialects and no single language. Luther translated the New Testament for the first time into a language that everyone could understand, whichever dialect they spoke.



True or false?

It was painted, touched, and chipped away to make souvenirs: the blue stain in the room, next to the oven! Luther is supposed to have met the Devil at the Wartburg. Because he felt the Devil breathing down his neck Luther threw an **inkpot** at the wall. So the legend says! Nothing can be seen of the stain nowadays. Whether it was made by Luther at all is questionable.

I see!

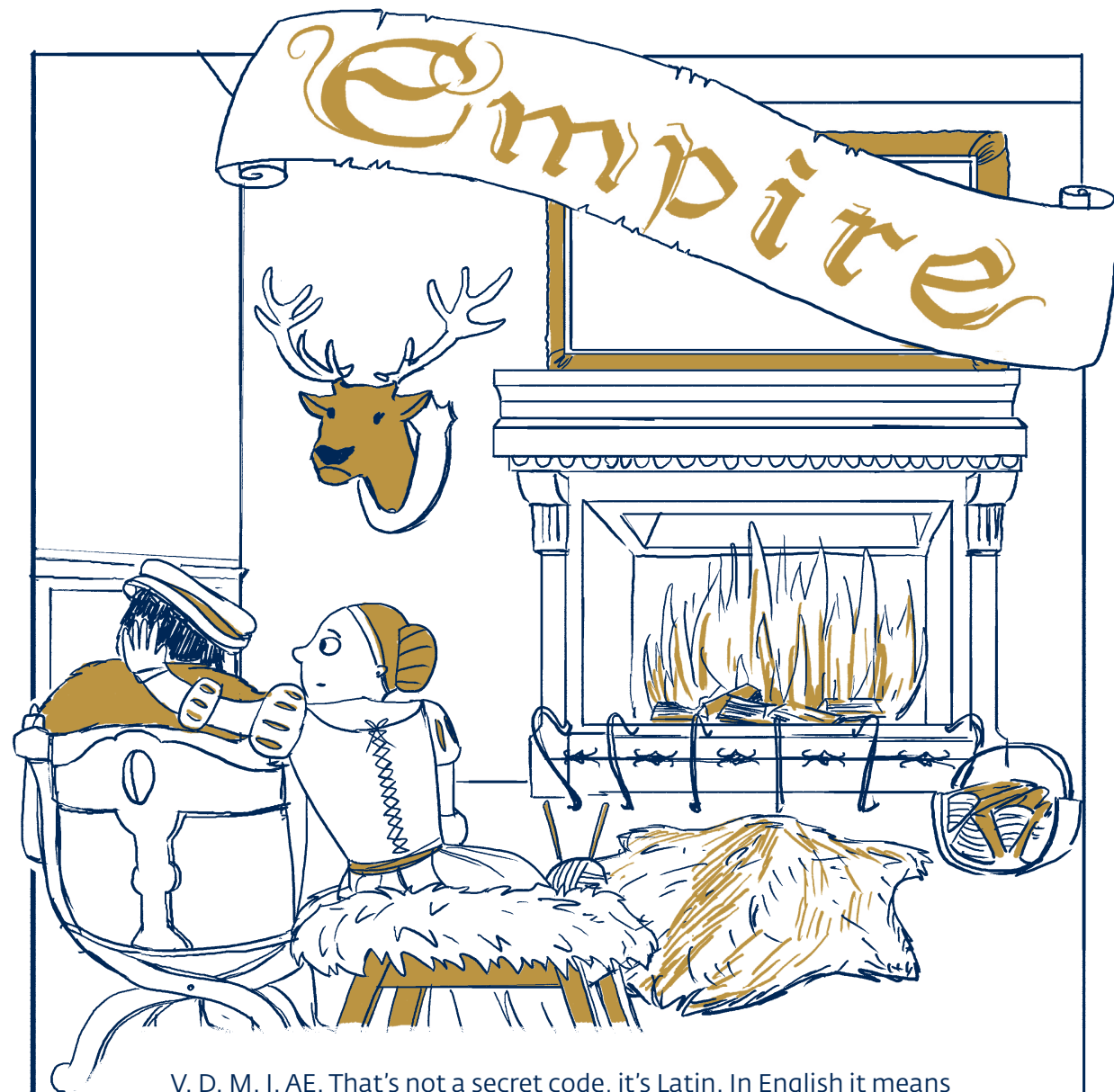
For many years **Hartenfels Castle** in Torgau was clearly the centre of power. At the Partition of Leipzig in 1485 it went to the Ernestines. The founder of the Ernestine dynasty – Elector Ernest of Saxony – made Hartenfels his centre of government. But that didn't last for long! Why? That's in the chapter "Empire".

I is for ... imperial ban!

In the Middle Ages people could be given harsh punishments: the King or the Emperor could issue a so-called "imperial ban". This took away all somebody's rights, including the protection of the law! For example you could kill them without being punished for it. Criminals were often given these bans. So were the Emperor's political or religious enemies. Martin Luther received one from Emperor Charles V, for example.

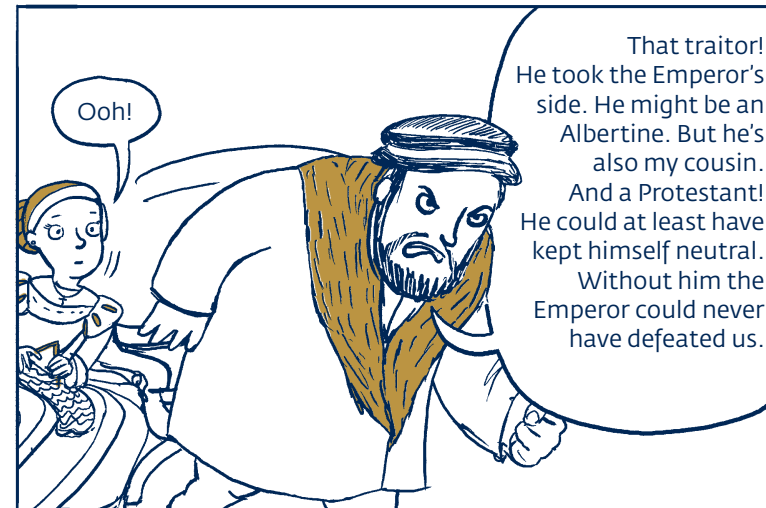
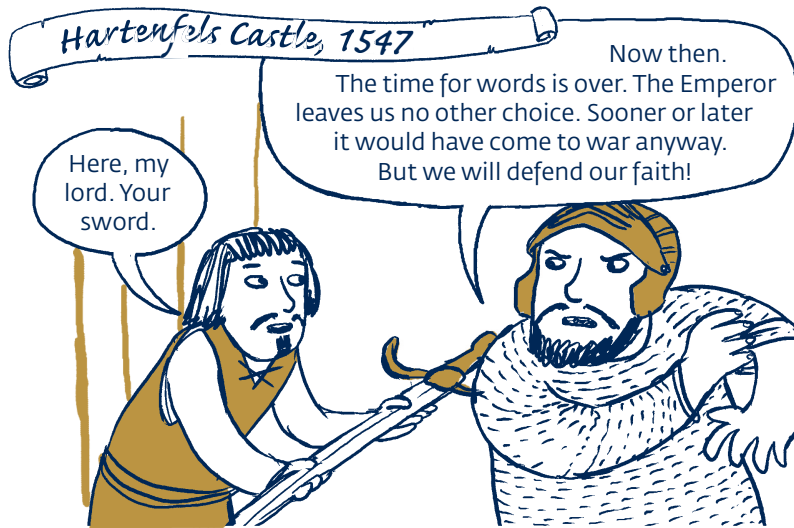
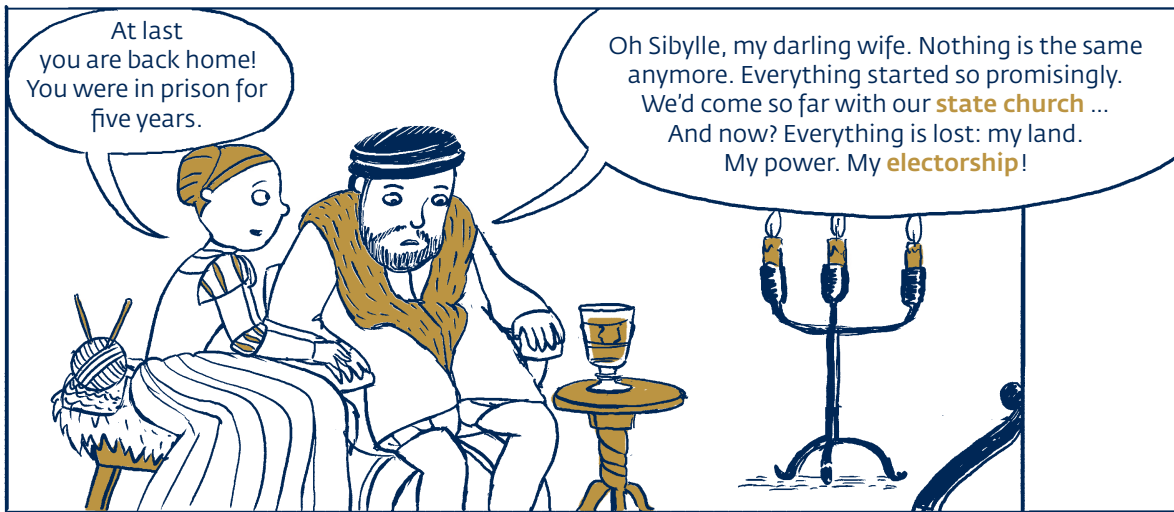
O is for ... Outlaw!

This is what people were called who the Emperor had issued an imperial ban against.



V. D. M. I. AE. That's not a secret code, it's Latin. In English it means "the word of the Lord endures forever". That was the motto of the Ernestines, as it were, an expression of their Protestant faith. Like his father John and uncle Frederick before him, the new ruler was also a significant promoter of the faith.

His name was John Frederick I of Saxony. He led the **Schmalkaldic League**. This was a union of Protestant princes, lords, and cities. To defend their faith they waged a war against the Emperor. But John Frederick was betrayed – by his own cousin! As a result, John Frederick was defeated and taken prisoner, at the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547. But the worst thing was that he lost his electorship and a large portion of his lands!



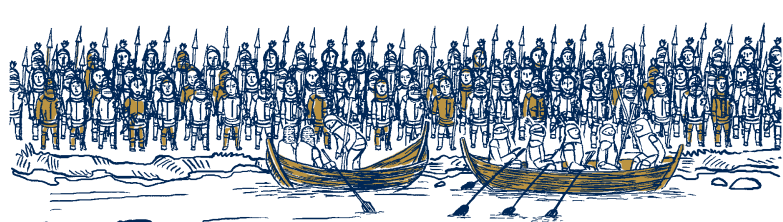
Here: Mühlberg. We'll cross the River Elbe there ... and attack. It will be a surprise!



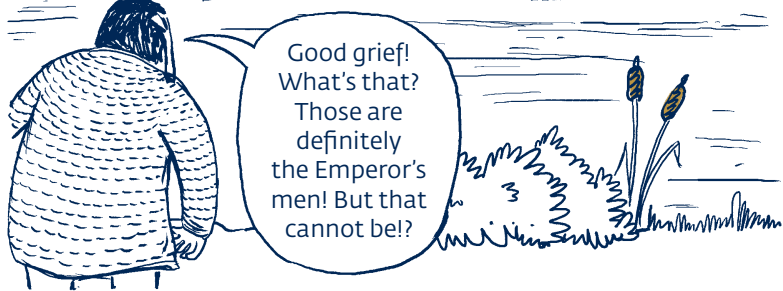
We're under attack!



John Frederick, Elector of Saxony. The Emperor has pronounced his judgement. You are an outlaw – and therefore you are sentenced to death!



Good grief! What's that? Those are definitely the Emperor's men! But that cannot be!



ATTACK!



Ah, but luckily it didn't come to that!



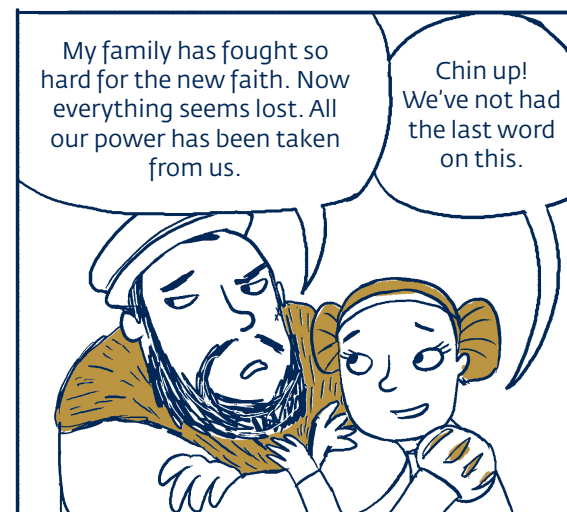
Yes, but at what cost!? The Emperor forced me to surrender. What a **humiliation!** I was in prison for years. I had to give territories to Maurice. I had to sacrifice our university in Wittenberg and my electorship!

But you're still alive.



My family has fought so hard for the new faith. Now everything seems lost. All our power has been taken from us.

Chin up! We've not had the last word on this.



We have our children. And our grandchildren. Our family lives on! They will continue the legacy of the Ernestines – and fight for the electorship.

Father, I had a bad dream!



Got it?!

Smarty-pants facts

On the 27th of February 1531 an important meeting took place in the small town of Schmalkalden in Germany. Several Protestant princes, lords and cities joined together in a league. This is where the name "**The Schmalkaldic League**" comes from. The members wanted to defend their new Protestant faith against the Emperor and his supporters. These people belonged to the Catholic faith, which of course they also tried to defend. Tensions between the Protestant union and the Catholic alliance rose more and more – until it finally came to war.



Did you know that ...

... the **electors** had a specific role in the Empire? They were called "electors" because only they had the right to choose the King of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Whoever had the title of King was normally also elected Emperor later. The electors therefore had a very big influence.

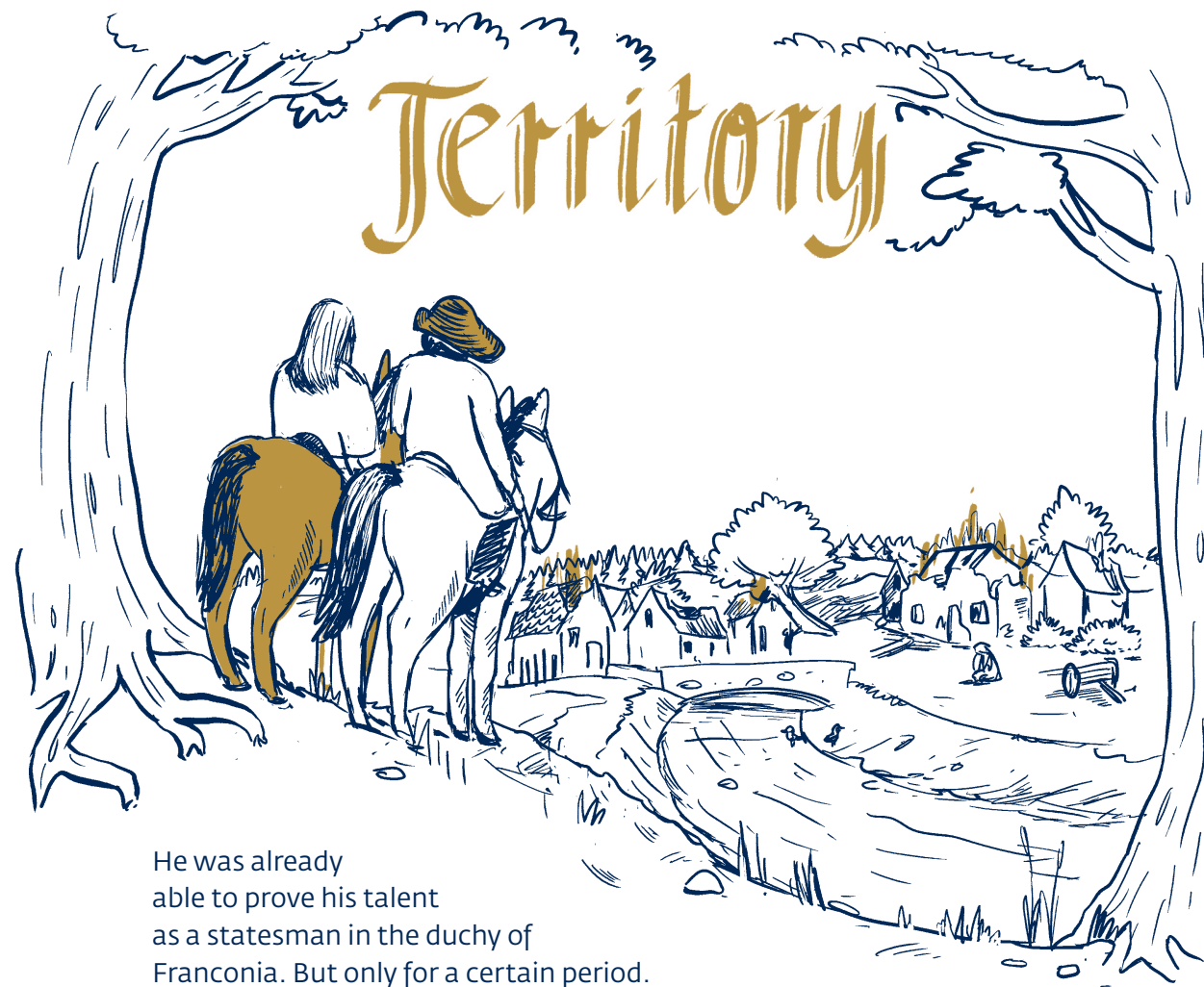
I see!

For the Ernestines it was not simply a defeat. It was a **humiliation**! After the Battle of Mühlberg they lost their electorship to none other than their relatives – the Albertines. But not just that. They also lost the greater part of their lands, including Hartenfels Castle in Torgau. And the university they had founded in Wittenberg. The Ernestines were down but not out: they moved to Weimar, founded a new university in Jena, and continued to fight for the new faith.

S is for ... state church!

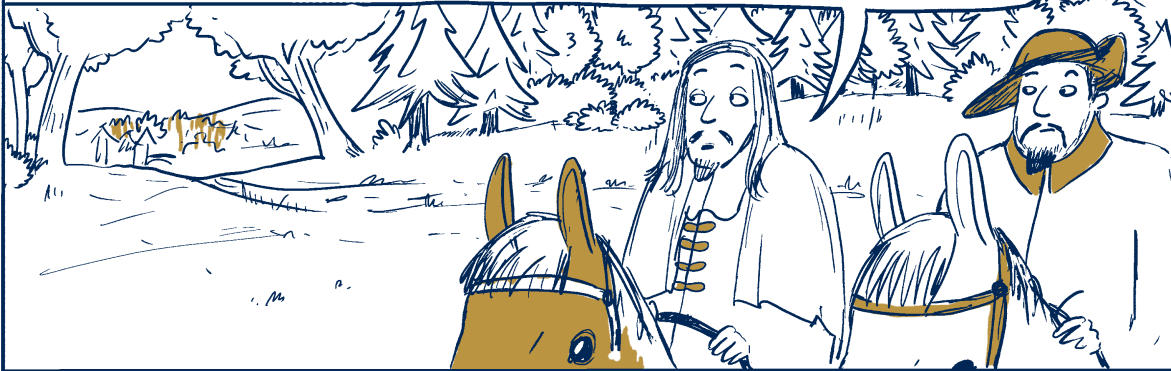
These sprung up during the time of the Reformation, almost 500 years ago. The new faith had made rulers leave the Catholic Church and all its structures. They had to establish a new church and therefore so-called "state churches" were set up. A state church's territory normally covered the lands of the ruler who had converted to the new faith.

Territory



He was already able to prove his talent as a statesman in the duchy of Franconia. But only for a certain period. Then in 1640 the time was right: he received his own duchy! This was Duke Ernest I of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg. Later he would be known as Ernest the Pious. The Duchy of Saxe-Gotha had come into being through a **division of the estate** between him and his brothers. This was like a dream come true for Ernest. He finally had his own territory to rule. Territory which he could model on his own ideas. But there was one problem: the **Thirty Years' War** had left the country in ruins. Therefore the Duke arranged a so-called general visitation of his lands after his accession. This inspection was supposed to last four years. He initially wanted the churches and schools brought up to date before anything else. For Ernest wanted his subjects to not only be religious but also educated. Bit by bit he built a **model state** – with a streamlined administration and well educated officials.

This dreadful war ... God has truly passed judgement on us. See the villages! They are empty. Thousands have lost their lives. This war is a disaster. It has already lasted more than 20 years. Let us pray that it soon comes to an end.



They say that the roads are too dangerous. They fear bandits. And they are afraid of the Emperor's troops.

Then you must go to the villages!!!

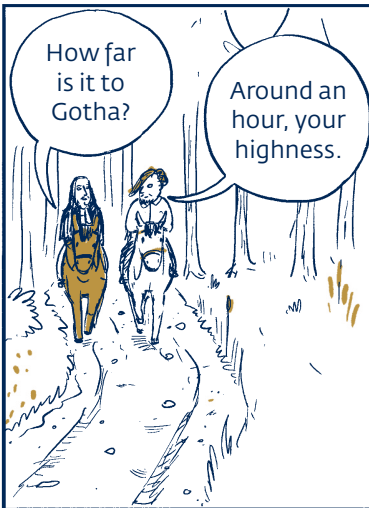


It should be perfectly clear how important these inspections are. Our new state will be based upon them!



How far is it to Gotha?

Around an hour, your highness.

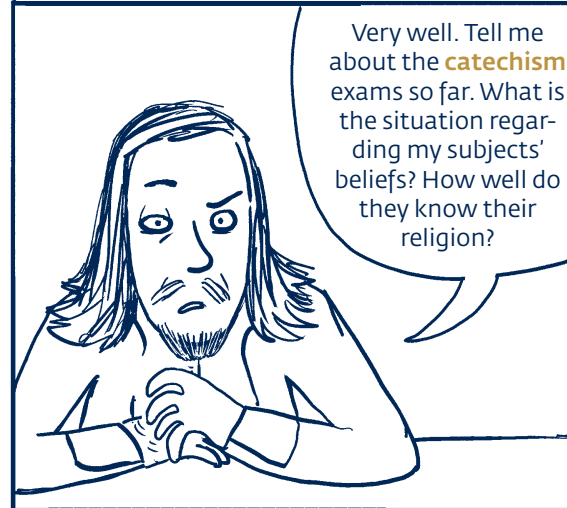


The Residence of Ernest I, Gotha

The land may be in ruins. But it is still my land. My Duchy of Saxe-Gotha! At last I can enact my ideas for an ideal state. And I already know what I will start with.



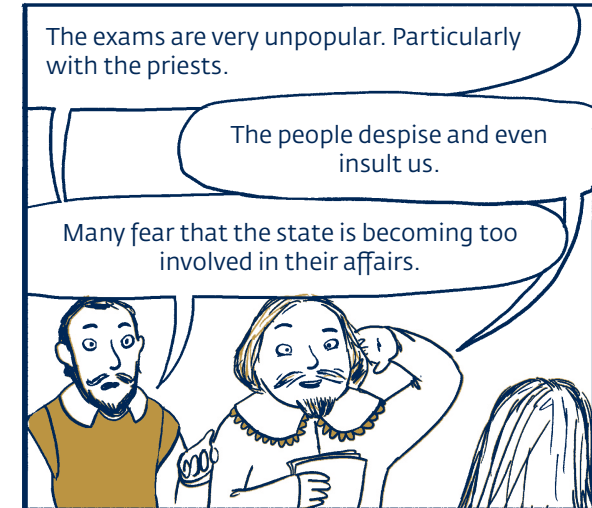
Very well. Tell me about the **catechism** exams so far. What is the situation regarding my subjects' beliefs? How well do they know their religion?



The exams are very unpopular. Particularly with the priests.

The people despise and even insult us.

Many fear that the state is becoming too involved in their affairs.



We are here, your highness.

Send my visitors in.

Report! What is the situation in my land?



The citizens of Mechterstädt send their apologies. Likewise the people of Österberingen.

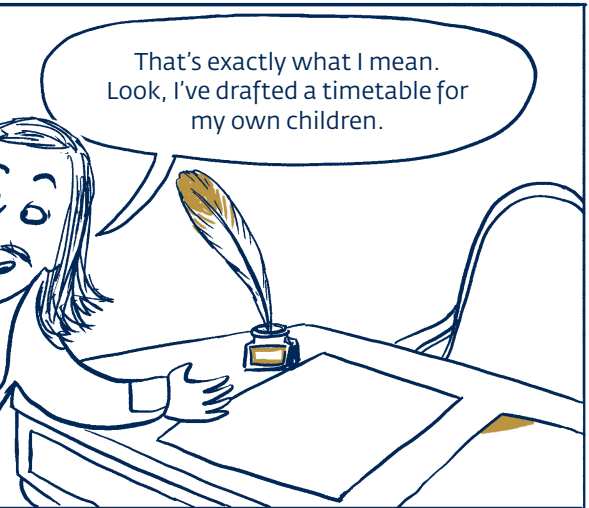
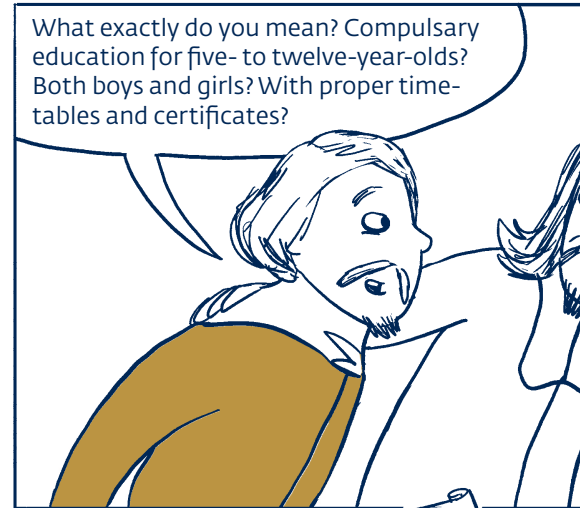
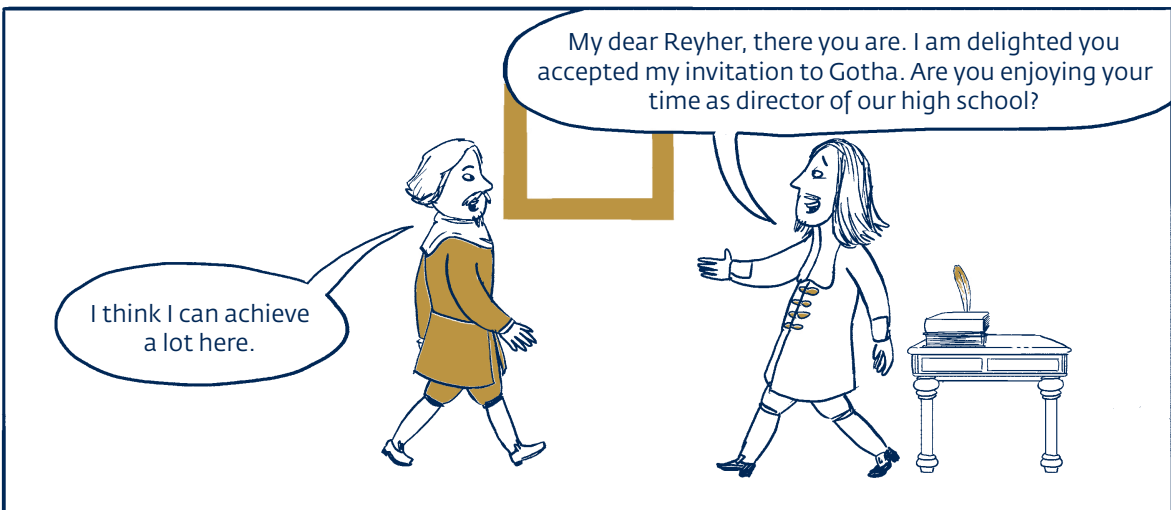
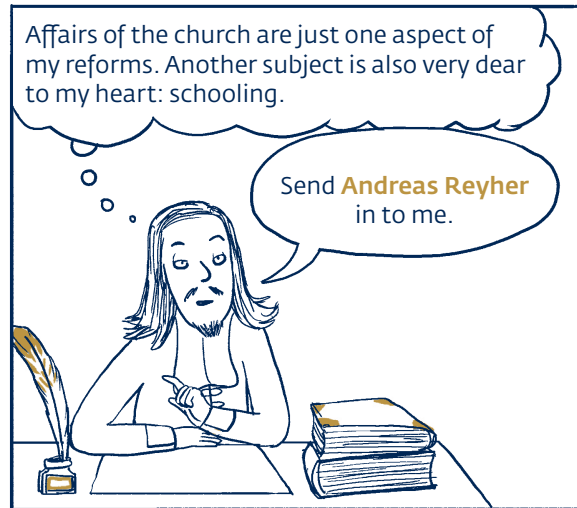
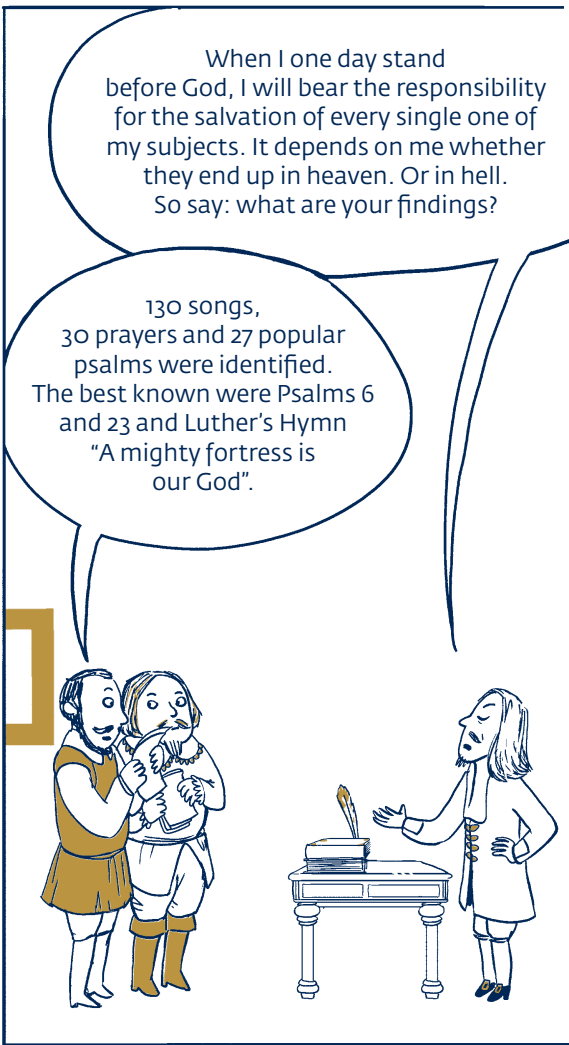
And the citizens of Gamstädt refuse to come to a visitation in Gotha.



However we have visited church services in several communities, as you requested. We noted which songs were sung ...

... we had them recite the prayers and psalms for us ... paid attention as to whether the words were truly understood. Many just mumble incomprehensible nonsense.





Got it?!

D is for ... division of the estate

The Ernestines did not have a single large and unified empire. Rather it consisted of many small duchies. There is a reason for that: the Ernestines constantly shared their lands out amongst themselves. It came down to **divisions of the estate**: the firstborn did not simply inherit the whole territory, rather every son inherited a section. When the firstborn inherits the land it is called "primogeniture". "Primus" means "first" and "genitus" means "born".

Smarty-pants facts

On the 23rd of May 1618, three men were thrown out of a window in Prague. They were the king's governors and a secretary. They were thrown by Protestant noblemen, who felt oppressed by the Catholic rulers. The fall from the window was the cause of a terrible war: **The Thirty Years' War** (1618 – 1648). Peace seemingly ruled throughout the Holy Roman Empire. But under the surface tensions simmered: Spain wanted to recover the Netherlands, which France felt threatened by. Denmark saw itself as threatened by Sweden. Above all the Catholics and Protestants viewed each other with hostility. All that was missing was a little spark ...

Did you know that ...

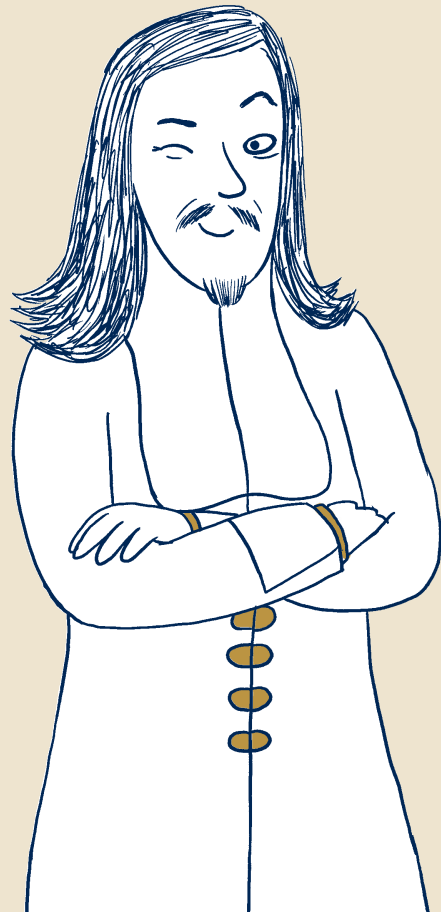
... Duke Ernest I founded a so-called **model state**? Rulers from other lands travelled to Gotha to observe the ideal Duchy for themselves. The Duke set up an efficient bureaucracy with authorities and officials. And he issued a state code of laws, with rules and regulations. Because Ernest was a pious man, God played an important role in everything that he did.

I see!

Ernest I wanted to modernise his territory as quickly as possible. For this he needed experts, such as **Andreas Reyher**. He was to help with the establishment of the new school system. The expert had his own ideas of how schooling should be: lessons should be in German. And not in Latin! On top of these he also introduced subjects such as biology. Andreas Reyher wrote an important book on the topic: *The School Method* (*Der Schulmethodus* in German). That was one of the first school **curricula** put together independently from the church.

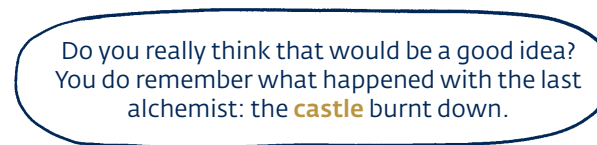
C is for ... Catechism

That is like a textbook for the church. It contains a record of religious regulations.



It's a mystery. Oh OK, it's the greatest mystery of all. At least for alchemists. How can you transform metal into pure **gold**? That was exactly what alchemists tried to find out. One thing was clear for them: to do it they needed the philosopher's stone. Alchemists believed that this stone promised not only gold but also eternal life! Therefore they did everything they could to find it – and researched nature and mankind. They made a lot of important discoveries along the way. But they didn't find gold or eternal life.

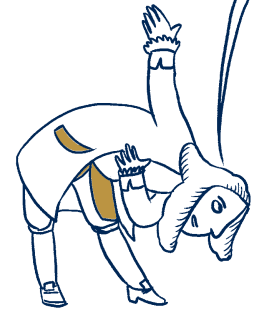
Many rulers were fascinated by this **science**. They kept an alchemist at their court because they hoped for immense wealth and endless gold. But frauds were lurking amongst the alchemists too. And William Ernest of Saxe-Weimar met one of them in 1713.



shortly thereafter

May I introduce myself: Baron von Wildeck.

Von Wildeck? Never heard of you. What brings you to me?



I have a proposal for you. Surely you have heard of alchemy and the secret of creating gold.

Don't tell me you know it???



Several weeks later at the Duke's private estate in Upper Weimar

Hey, what are you doing there?

I need my peace. These are complicated procedures. Leave me alone!



Wait, what are those things floating about? Have you secretly added silver to the sample?

What? Those are just some salts.



No, no. I cannot create gold. I admit that freely. But I have developed this secret potion.



With it you can uncover gold and silver that lie buried deep in the mountain. But only I can do that, with my secret potion.



Say Baron, what do you need from me?



Fraud! Fraud! I've seen it with my own eyes – a **fraud** is at work!



Now Baron, where is all the gold and silver which you promised me? Was it all a scam? You'll pay heavily for this. I should tell my hangman to behead you. Guards! Throw him in the dungeon!



Oh, to begin with **200 thalers** will do.

You will have them! Buy whatever you need for your experiments. In a few weeks we will check your method.



What do I have to lose? I can cope with the 200 thalers, if it means all my **money problems** disappear. This baron and his potion are a stroke of luck.



It's working!



Phew, that went well. Let's get out of here!



Got it?!

I see!

One thing the alchemists couldn't know: **gold** is extremely difficult to produce artificially. All the same, the work of the alchemists was very important, as they practiced an early form of science. They made many important discoveries with their experiments, for example medicines, and the so-called "white gold" – porcelain. Through their work they laid the foundations for the science of chemistry. However, in modern research everything comes down to exactness. And to reaching the same results again and again. With the alchemists that wasn't the case.

C is for ... Castle!

That is what burnt down in Weimar in 1618. It was an alchemist who caused the fire. During an experiment he set not only his laboratory but also the entire castle on fire.



Smarty-pants facts

For rulers, doing business with alchemists was like a big game of chance. The rulers hoped for wealth, fame, and respect. Instead, they normally lost a lot of money and made fools of themselves, because there were a lot of frauds amongst the alchemists. They normally demanded a massive advance payment – and then ran off with the **thalers!**

Did you know that ...

... the Ernestines had **money problems**? One of the reasons for this lies in the year 1547. At that time the Ernestines lost many important territories. Amongst them were the most profitable mines, where silver was extracted. This ruined an important source of income. Despite their money problems the Ernestines carried out many important plans: they built the Yellow Castle in Weimar and the court chapel. They collected art and supported the university in Jena.

Codename Wildeck!

Baron von Wildeck's real name was Johann Hector von Klettenberg. He was a **fraud** who went from court to court. Many rulers fell for his tricks, even the Albertine Elector Frederick Augustus I of Saxony. Frederick Augustus hoped that Klettenberg could help him with his money problems. Instead, he was exposed as a fraud, taken prisoner, and taken into custody at Königstein Fortress. After two attempted escapes and after it became known that fraud was not his only crime, Klettenberg was finally beheaded.

family



When someone gets married nowadays they mostly do it for one reason: love. Princes and princesses from the past could only dream of such romance. Marrying for love? That only happened very rarely. Completely different things decided marriages between the nobility. It was often a matter of gaining more power and influence. Or forging a political alliance. When one king's daughter married another king, it was a great deal harder for the two to start a war against each other. A marriage could also be a way of securing a family's property, or even expanding it.

The Ernestines married for reasons, too. The smartest move concerning marriage was definitely the one between Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha and the British Queen Victoria in the year 1840. The match had been arranged by the uncle of them both, Leopold I, King of the Belgians. It allowed a small German duchy to give its name to the British Royal **Dynasty**. And who would have thought: in the end love also played a part!

Laeken Palace, Belgium, 1836

Pst, Baron Stockmar! I have a plan. And as the chamberlain of Coburg, you must help me.

What is it, your highness?

The wedding of my niece, Victoria. I want to marry her off to my nephew.

Albert? That timid loner? He is only the second son. And of all people, he should marry the future Queen of Great Britain and Ireland?

That's the plan! Victoria will soon celebrate her 17th birthday. And make a guess who finds himself on a ship heading to England.



Welcome to London, dear cousin.

Your royal highness, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

He has a lovely nose and a very handsome mouth and beautiful teeth. I must thank my uncle for this chance at a great happiness. *Albert* has all the qualities necessary to make me happy.

She is quite nice. Rather egoistical. She laughs too much. And is in general too loud.

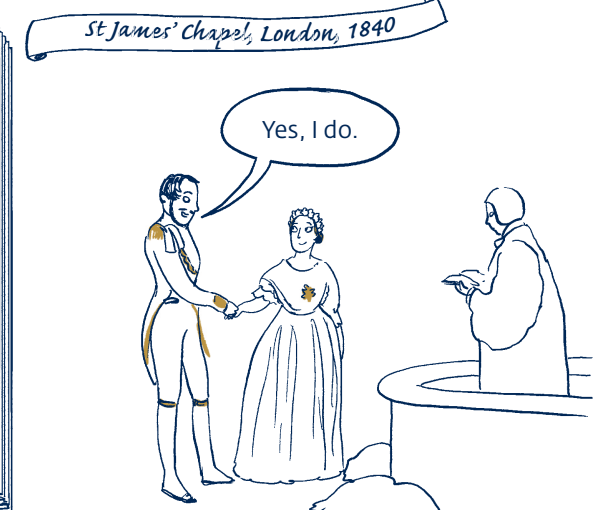
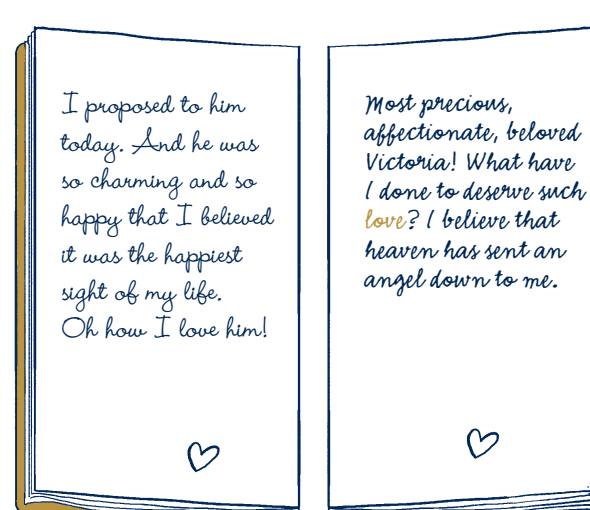
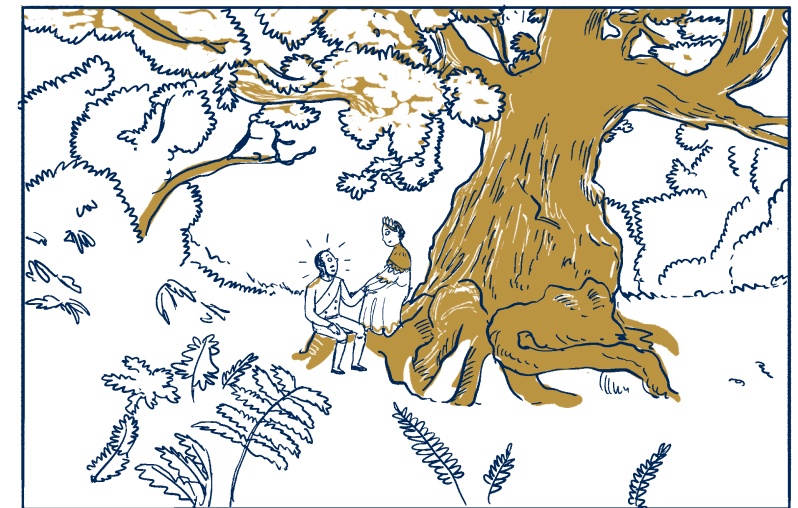
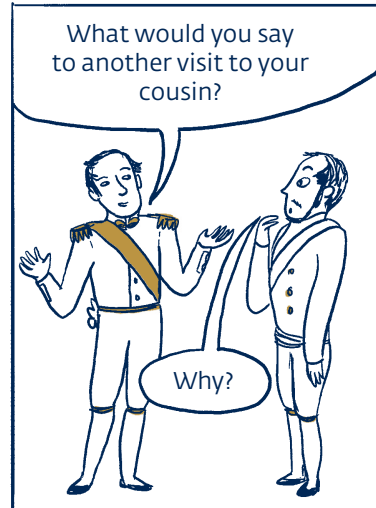
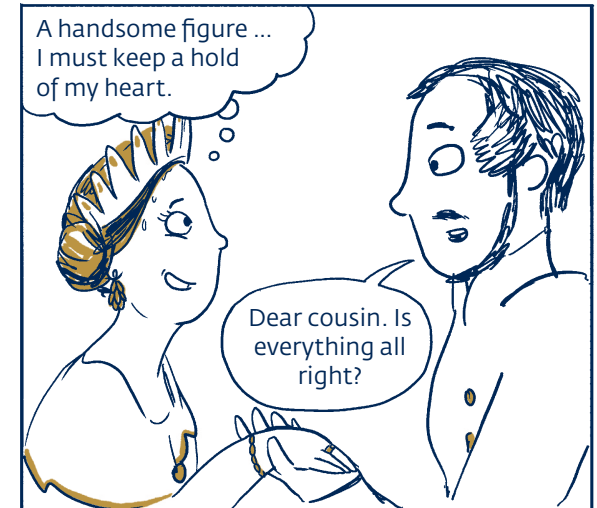
Oh God, I feel sick!



He has a lovely nose and a very handsome mouth and beautiful teeth. I must thank my uncle for this chance at a great happiness. *Albert* has all the qualities necessary to make me happy.

She is quite nice. Rather egoistical. She laughs too much. And is in general too loud.

2 Years later at Laeken Palace



St James' Chapel, London, 1840

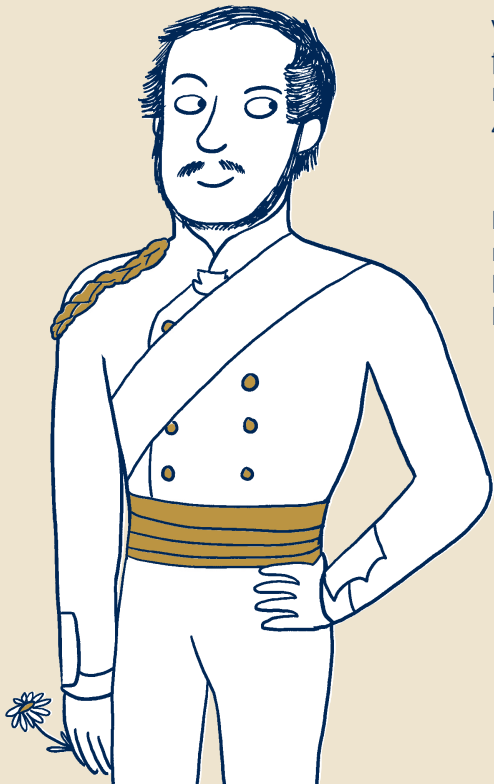
Got it?!

Smarty-pants facts

Queen Victoria is often referred to as the “Grandmother of Europe”. She and Albert had nine children. And they were cleverly married off – into all the important **dynasties** of Europe. Her daughter was Queen of Prussia, for example. And the son of this daughter later became the German Emperor William.

Did you know that ...

... **Albert** was very unpopular with the British to begin with? For example, they did not consider him worthy of his position. He came from a small duchy, whilst Victoria was Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and ruled over a worldwide empire. Over the course of time Albert became Victoria's most important advisor. He organised the first World Exposition, the Great Exhibition of London in 1851. He was a member of the Leopoldina Academy of Sciences and developed the first plans for workers' houses – including indoor plumbing and toilets.



P is for ... proposal

In this case it was the woman who proposed, Victoria, since she was a queen and Albert only a prince. If Albert had made the proposal he would have been breaching courtly etiquette.

I see!

By far the most famous member of the Ernestine family alive today lives in **London**, normally wears a hat and always has a handbag with her: Queen Elizabeth II. She is the great-great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Through Victoria's marriage to Albert, the British Royal Family acquired the surname Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. However during the First World War the family changed their surname to Windsor. The original name sounded too German for them. No surprise, since Great Britain and Germany were at war with one another at the time.

L is for ... love

When Albert died at just 42 years old, Queen Victoria was devastated. She had been married for 22 years. After his death, the Queen wore only mourning clothes for the rest of her life – another 40 years. Victoria had the Albert Memorial built in London to honour her husband. The Royal Albert Hall also bears his name. And Albert is supposed to have left another legacy to the British: the Christmas tree. The German prince is supposed to have brought this tradition with him from his homeland.

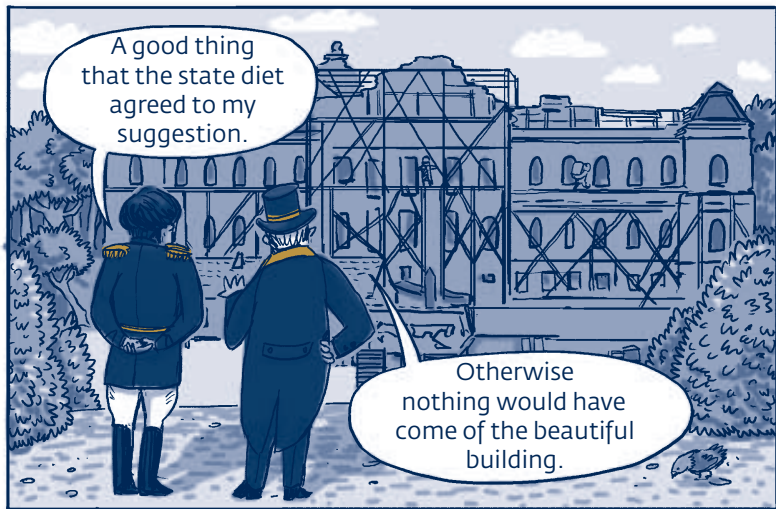


Ivory goblets, porcelain, coins or paintings – since the 15th century many rulers have developed a marked passion for collecting. The objects involved could not be unusual or expensive enough! One such collector was Duke Ernest I of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, also called “the Pious”. From 1640 he ruled the Duchy of Saxe-Gotha. This was created through a so-called division of the estate. After the division Ernest moved from Weimar to Gotha – along with his art collection. There he established his new residence: **Friedenstein Castle**. In the castle Ernest built a **cabinet of art and curiosities**: a collection of rarities, unusual objects, or expensive paintings. His descendants continued the collection. But by the year 1863 there was no more space in Friedenstein Castle. Then Ernest's great-great-great-grandson Duke Ernest II had an idea: he would build a proper, large museum!



It's becoming a splendid museum, Neumann!

It was high time. Your castle was bursting at the seams!



A good thing that the state diet agreed to my suggestion.

Otherwise nothing would have come of the beautiful building.

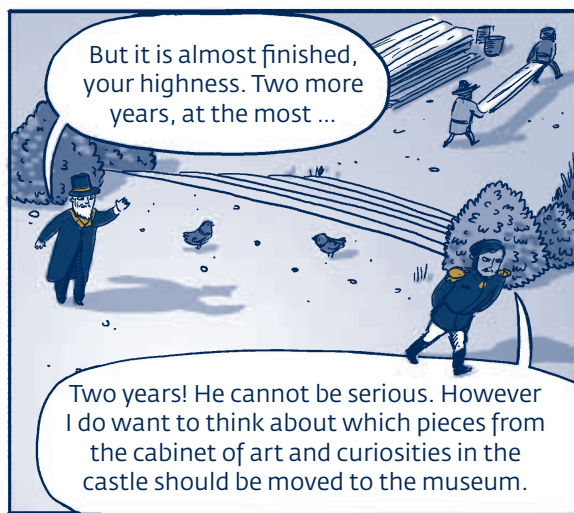


That's well and good for you to say! The costs have exploded. The museum will cost 400 000 thalers! And there are always problems and delays.



Yes, but ...

13 years we've been building now. I've had enough. For good! You are fired, Neumann.



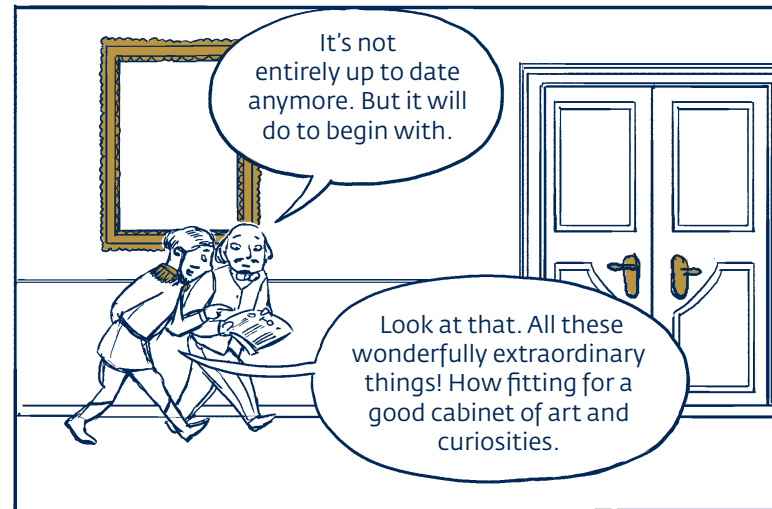
But it is almost finished, your highness. Two more years, at the most ...

Two years! He cannot be serious. However I do want to think about which pieces from the cabinet of art and curiosities in the castle should be moved to the museum.



I have brought an inventory list with me, your highness.

There you are, Aldenhoven, my future museum director.



It's not entirely up to date anymore. But it will do to begin with.

Look at that. All these wonderfully extraordinary things! How fitting for a good cabinet of art and curiosities.



And nevertheless everything has its proper place.

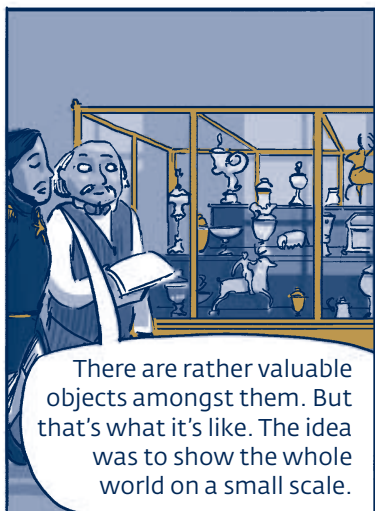


Everything is there, something from each **category**: *naturalia, artificialia, exotica, scientifica ...*



Do you know what that is?
The famous **astrolabe**,
a rotating map of the heavens.
Is it not marvellous? It belonged
to Ernest the Pious.

Just like the many
clocks in the cabinet,
the ivory carvings,
and paintings.



There are rather valuable
objects amongst them. But
that's what it's like. The idea
was to show the whole
world on a small scale.



There it is! A fine specimen
of a **boot**. John Frederick
risked everything ...

... and practically lost
everything, too. They
didn't just take his
jewellery and arms,
but his boots too!



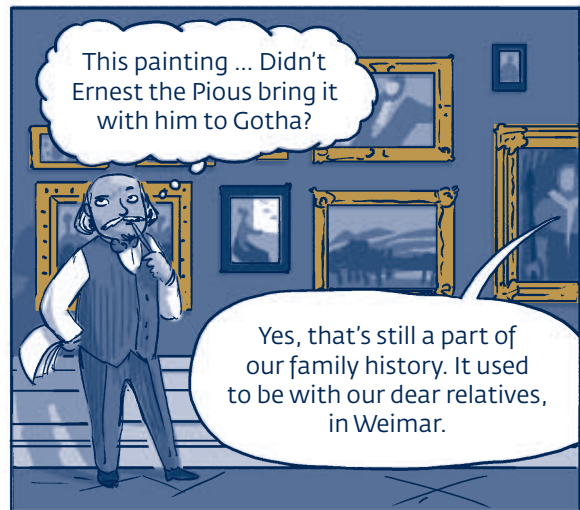
The defeat at Mühlberg and
the loss of the electorship –
that hurts to this day!

But your family showed
bravery and courage. And
that is exactly what the
boot shows.



There you have it!
We Ernestines have
never let ourselves be
beaten!

Oh this painting could be some-
thing for the new museum: John
Frederick has his death sentence
read to him – and calmly plays chess
all the time. Nerves of steel!



This painting ... Didn't
Ernest the Pious bring it
with him to Gotha?

Yes, that's still a part of
our family history. It used
to be with our dear relatives,
in Weimar.



And I thought it used
to hang in the **historic
storehouse** ...

Oh yes, he's definitely going into
the new museum. Sensational, but a bit
gruesome too! He will attract a lot of
looks, no doubt.



The
muscle man
by Jean-Antoine
Houdon. I've
made a note.



Come along,
Aldenhoven! We want to
see what else we can
discover.

Whew!

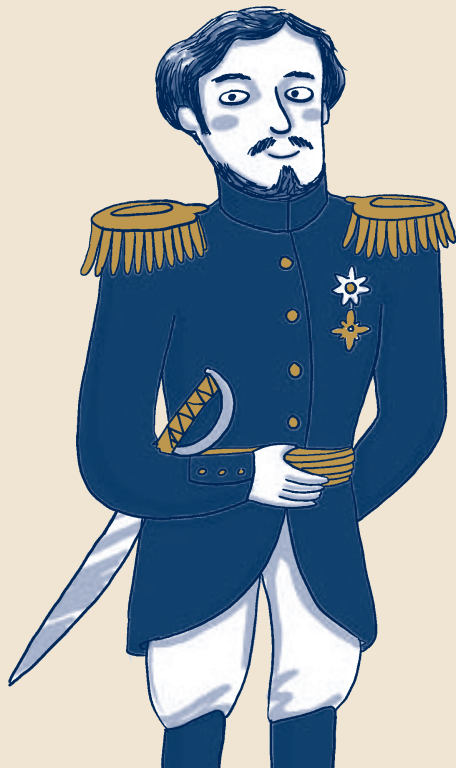
Got it?!

F is for ... Friedenstein

Ernest wanted this name to make it clear that his land was a land of peace (Friedenstein means "Rock of Peace" in German). A few years earlier, the Thirty Years' War had come to an end and the Duke was desperate for peace. That is also shown by an image at the northern entrance, where two figures are kissing one another. They depict *Pax* (peace) and *Justitia* (justice). Above it says: "Peace nourishes, discord consumes" ("*Friede ernähret, Unfriede verzehret*" in German).

C is for ... cabinet of art and curiosities

They were especially popular in the 15th century and constitute the forerunners of our modern museums. The goal was to depict the whole world on a small scale. Therefore there were strict rules: something from every **category** had to be on display. For example, something from the artificilia, which were unusual art objects. Or from the *natu-ralia*, which could be strange shells, for example.



Smarty-pants facts

In a museum in the USA, researchers from Gotha made a surprising discovery: they discovered an **astrolabe** belonging to Duke Ernest I. But how did it get to the USA? That has to do with the Second World War. After the end of the war, Germany was occupied by the victorious powers. The USA was one of these. Many objects were stolen during this time, or secretly sold and taken out of the country. The collection in Gotha was particularly badly affected. To this day, many objects are missing or to be found in museums in other countries. But the astrolabe is back after many years.

I see!

For the Ernestines, the **boot** of Elector John Frederick I is almost a sacred object. After the Battle of Mühlberg, both of his boots were taken away from him. One ended up in the cabinet of art and curiosities in Munich. Many years later, the cabinet was plundered by Swedish soldiers. Amongst them was an Ernestine, who was able to get hold of the boot and bring it back to Gotha. The second boot is in the possession of the King of Spain.

Did you know that ...

... Ernest I lived in the **historic storehouse** at one point? When the Duke came to Gotha, there was no castle in which he could live. Grimmenstein Castle was destroyed, and Friedenstein Castle still had to be built. Therefore Ernest moved into the so-called historic storehouse on Gotha's market square. He lived there for three years. Today, there is the town hall.

Epilogue

So have you seen an Ernestine today? No? I bet you have! You might not meet them on the tram or at the baker. But still you can encounter them every day: you stumble upon members of this great family in newspapers and magazines, on the internet or on the television.

Every time there is a report on the British Royal Family, for example, since Queen Elizabeth, Prince William and co. all have Ernestine roots. Ever since 1840, when Victoria, the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, married the German Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. The King of Sweden is related to the Ernestines, too. Just like the King of the Belgians, the Queen of Denmark, and the Prince of Monaco.

Through their clever marriage policy over the past centuries, the Ernestines established familial ties with important dynasties throughout the whole of Europe. Such a network was very important in the past. In this way they forged political alliances and secured power.

So is that all that is left of the Ernestines nowadays? An occasional mention in the gossip columns? What became of Frederick, John Frederick, Ernest, and Albert – did they not leave any traces behind? Indeed they did. A great number, in fact.

We can follow their trail in Thuringia first and foremost, since the federal state is largely made up of the former territories of the Ernestines. Today you can also see that they supported Luther and the Reformation movement: Thuringia is still a state shaped by Protestantism. Many people who live there are evangelical. Whilst the fight between followers of the "old" and "new" faith raged, a decision was finally reached after the long struggle and it was resolved: "cuius regio, eius religio". That is Latin, and means "whose realm, his religion". When a ruler converted to the new Protestant faith, his subjects who lived in his kingdom automatically converted with him. Thus the ruler determined the direction of the faith in his territory.

Places which played an important role in the history of the Reformation still remember it today. The Wartburg in Eisenach, for example, where Luther hid for several months.

Thus the Ernestines' legacy is far greater: in many places in Thuringia they laid the foundations for something which still has meaning for us today. Ernest the Pious, for example, introduced compulsory education, and John Frederick tried to make the best out of a difficult situation after his unsuccessful struggle with the Emperor:

After the defeat at Mühlberg cost the Ernestines the University at Wittenberg along with its libraries, they founded a University – the “High School” – in Jena. They also brought their collection of books there, the “bibliotheca electoralis” which forms the core of the Thuringian State Library in Jena. They preserved contracts, certificates, and important documents from across the centuries in cities such as Weimar and Gotha. The Thuringian State Archives grew out of these and continues to this day.

The Ernestines also supported very famous artists: everyone knows the musician Johann Sebastian Bach, the painter Lucas Cranach, or the poets Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Friedrich Schiller. Into the 20th century the Ernestine family sought to allow art and culture to flourish in their lands. But one thing the Ernestines never managed across the centuries was to win back their electorship. That stayed with their relatives, the Albertines. There were a number of attempts to recover it, but they never came to anything. At some point the Ernestines gave up on it, since they had found other ways to be successful: they were leading statesmen, and patrons of the arts and sciences. They had recognised that it was not simply a matter of titles and power, but rather of what one did with them.

The history of Ernestine rule in Thuringia came to an end around 100 years ago. More exactly, it ended in the year 1918. The First World War was raging in Europe at the time. The bitter conflict had already been going on for four years and millions had lost their lives during this time. The people were tired of the war, suffering from hunger, and desperate for peace. But there was one problem: the German Emperor did not want to give up the war but instead continue the fighting. Thus, the German Empire came to revolution. In the end, not only the Emperor was forced to abdicate but also all the other monarchs in the Empire, including the Ernestines in their duchies. The people had enough of monarchy. They wanted to take part in government and not allow themselves to be ruled over anymore. They demanded a new form of government and the Weimar Republic came into being. That was the first attempt at democracy in Germany. A single state was founded out of the many small Ernestine duchies: Thuringia. Even if the descendants of the Ernestines are no longer significant statesmen who control the fate of politics: The family of the Ernestines has left behind a flourishing cultural landscape in Thuringia.



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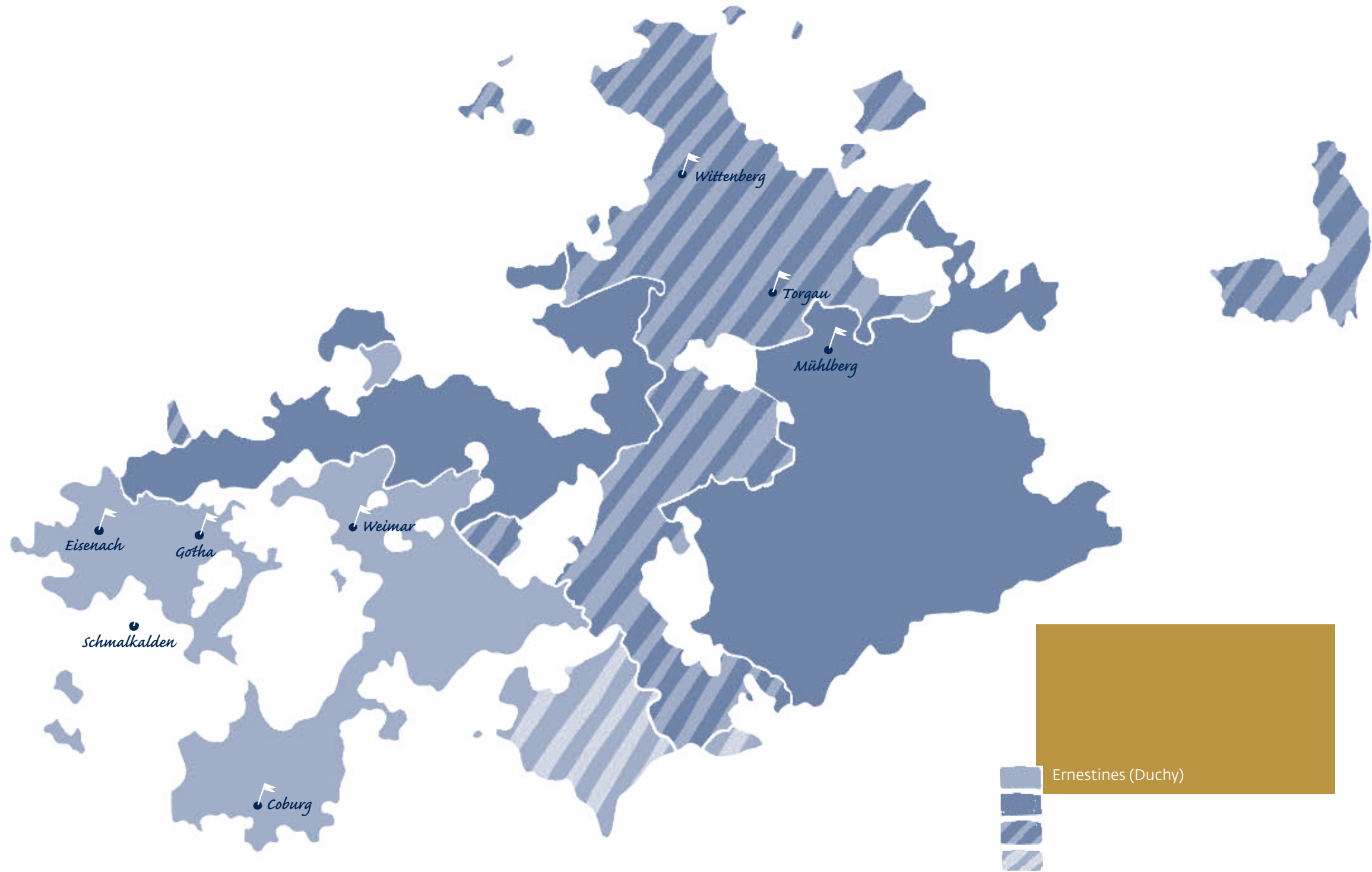
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Six exciting, moving, and funny episodes offer an insight into the colourful history of the great and remarkable Ernestine family – across more than 400 years. A page of background and supplementary information to read can be found at the end of each chapter. You would be mad to believe that Frederick the Wise, Ernest the Pious, or Queen Victoria belong to the past! Once you have learnt who the Ernestines are and what they achieved over the centuries, you will always think about them, and realise that Thuringia – and the whole of Europe – would look rather different without them.

