The German War

By
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THE GERMAN WAR

I

THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

This article, stating the British case, was issued as a recruiting pamphlet in Great Britain, but was used abroad as a simple explanation which would enable neutrals to understand the true facts. It was published in full by fifty leading journals in the United States, and was translated into Dutch and Danish, 25,000 copies being distributed in each country.

The causes of the war are only of moment to us, at this stage, in that we gain more strength in our arms and more iron in our souls by a knowledge that it is for all that is honourable and sacred for which we fight. What really concerns us is that we are in a fight for our national life, that we must fight through to the end, and that each and all of us must help, in his own fashion, to the last ounce of his strength, that this end may be victory. That is the essence of the

situation. It is not words and phrases that we need, but men, men—and always more men. If words can bring the men, then they are of avail. If not, they may well wait for the times to mend. But if there is a doubt in the mind of any man as to the justice of his country's quarrel, then even a writer may find work ready to his hand.

Let us cast our minds back upon the events which have led up to this conflict. They may be divided into two separate classes—those which prepared the general situation, and those which caused the special quarrel. Each of these I will treat in its turn.

It is a matter of common knowledge, one which a man must be blind and deaf not to understand, that for many years Germany, intoxicated by her success in war and by her increase of wealth, has regarded the British Empire with eyes of jealousy and hatred. It has never been alleged by those who gave expression to this almost universal national passion that Great Britain had in any way, either historically or commercially, done Germany a mischief. Even our most bitter traducers, when asked to give any definite historical reasons for their dislike, were compelled to put forward such ludicrous excuses as that the British had abandoned the Prussian King in the year 1761, quite oblivious of the fact that the same Prussian King had abandoned his own allies in the same war under far more damaging circumstances, acting up to his own motto that no promises are binding where the vital interests of a State are in question. With all their malevolence they could give no examples of any ill turn done by us until their deliberate policy had forced us into antagonism. On the other hand, a long list of occasions could very easily be compiled on which we had helped them in some common cause from the days of Marlborough to those of Blücher. Until the twentieth century had turned they had no possible cause for political hatred against us. In commerce our record was even more clear. Never in any way had we interfered with that great development of trade which has turned them from one of the poorest to one of the richest of European States. Our markets were open to them untaxed, whilst our own manufactures paid 20 per cent. in Germany. The markets of India, of Egypt, and of every portion of the Empire which had no self-appointed tariff, were as open to German goods as to British ones. Nothing could possibly have been more generous than our commercial treatment. No doubt there was some grumbling when cheap imitations of our own goods were occasionally found to oust the originals from their markets. Such a feeling was but natural and human. But in all matters of commerce, as in all matters political before the dawn of this century, they have no shadow of a grievance against us.

And yet they hated us with a most bitter hatred, a hatred which long antedates the days when we were compelled to take a definite stand against them. In all sorts of ways this hatred showed itself—in the diatribes of professors, in the

pages of books, in the columns of the Press. Usually it was a sullen, silent dislike. Sometimes it would flame up suddenly into bitter utterance, as at the time of the unseemly dispute around the deathbed of the Emperor's father, or on the occasion of the Jameson Raid. And yet this bitter antagonism was in no way reciprocated in this country. If a poll had been taken at any time up to the end of the century as to which European country was our natural ally, the vote would have gone overwhelmingly for Germany. "America first and then Germany" would have been the verdict of nine men out of ten. But then occurred two events which steadied the easy-going Briton, and made him look more intently and with a more questioning gaze at his distant cousin over the water. Those two events were the Boer War and the building of the German fleet. The first showed us, to our amazement, the bitter desire which Germany had to do us some mischief, the second made us realise that she was forging a weapon with which that desire might be fulfilled.

We are most of us old enough to remember the torrent of calumny and insult which was showered upon us in the day of our temporary distress by the nation to whom we had so often been a friend and an ally. It is true that other nations treated us little better, and yet their treatment hurt us less. The difference as it struck men at the time may be summarised in this passage from a British writer of the period.

"But it was very different with Germany," he says. "Again and again in the world's history we have been the friends and the allies of these people. It was so in the days of Marlborough, in those of the Great Frederick, and in those of Napoleon. When we could not help them with men we helped them with money. Our fleet has crushed their enemies. And now, for the first time in history, we have had a chance of seeing who were our friends in Europe, and nowhere have we met more hatred and more slander than from the German Press and the German people. Their most respectable journals have not hesitated to represent the British troops—troops every bit as humane and as highly disciplined as their own—not only as committing outrages on person and property, but even as murdering women and children.

"At first this unexpected phenomenon merely surprised the British people, then it pained them, and finally, after two years of it, it has roused a deep, enduring anger in their minds."

He goes on to say, "The continued attacks upon us have left an enduring feeling of resentment, which will not and should not die away in this generation. It is not too much to say that five years ago a complete defeat of Germany in a European war would have certainly caused British intervention. Public sentiment and racial affinity would never have allowed us to see her really go to the wall. And now it is certain that in our lifetime no British guinea and no soldier's life would under any circumstances be spent for such

an end. That is one strange result of the Boer War, and in the long run it is possible that it may prove not the least important."

Such was the prevailing mood of the nation when they perceived Germany, under the lead of her Emperor, following up her expressions of enmity by starting with restless energy to build up a formidable fleet, adding programme to programme, out of all possible proportion to the German commerce to be defended or to the German coastline exposed to attack. Already vainglorious boasts were made that Germany was the successor to Britain upon the seas. "The Admiral of the Atlantic greets the Admiral of the Pacific," said the Kaiser in a message to the Czar. What was Britain to do under this growing menace? So long as she was isolated the diplomacy of Germany might form some naval coalition against her. She took the steps which were necessary for her own safety, and without forming an alliance she composed her differences with France and Russia and drew closer the friendship which united her with her old rival across the Channel. The first-fruit of the new German fleet was the entente cordiale. We had found our enemy. It was necessary that we should find our friends. Thus we were driven into our present combination.

And now we had to justify our friendship. For the first time we were compelled to openly oppose Germany in the deep and dangerous game of world politics. They wished to see if our understanding was a reality or a sham. Could they drive a wedge between us by showing that we were a fair-weather friend whom any stress would alienate. Twice they tried it, once in 1906 when they bullied France into a conference at Algeciras, but found that Britain was firm at her side, and again in 1911 when in a time of profound peace they stirred up trouble by sending a gunboat to Agadir, and pushed matters to the very edge of war. But no threats induced Britain to be false to her mutual insurance with France. Now for the third and most fatal time they have demanded that we forswear ourselves and break our own bond lest a worse thing befall us. Blind and foolish, did they not know by past experience that we would keep our promise given? In their madness they have wrought an irremediable evil to themselves, to us, and to all Europe.

I have shown that we have in very truth never injured nor desired to injure Germany in commerce, nor have we opposed her politically until her own deliberate actions drove us into the camp of her opponents. But it may well be asked why then did they dislike us, and why did they weave hostile plots against us? It was that, as it seemed to them, and as indeed it actually may have been, we independently of our own wills stood between Germany and that world empire of which she dreamed. This was caused by circumstances over which we had no control and which we could not modify if we had wished to do so. Britain, through her maritime power and the energy of her merchants and people, had become a great world power when Germany was

still unformed. Thus, when she had grown to her full stature she found that the choice places of the world and those most fitted for the spread of a transplanted European race were already filled up. It was not a matter which we could help, nor could we alter it, since Canada, Australia, and South Africa would not, even if we could be imagined to have wished it, be transferred to German rule. And yet the Germans chafed, and if we can put ourselves in their places we may admit that it was galling that the surplus of their manhood should go to build up the strength of an alien and possibly a rival State. So far we could see their grievance, or rather their misfortune, since no one was in truth to blame in the matter. Had their needs been openly and reasonably expressed, and had the two States moved in concord in the matter, it is difficult to think that no helpful solution of any kind could have been found.

But the German method of approaching the problem has never been to ask sympathy and co-operation, but to picture us as a degenerate race from whom anything might be gained by playing upon our imagined weakness and cowardice. A nation which attends quietly to its own sober business must, according to their mediæval notions, be a nation of decadent poltroons. If we fight our battles by means of free volunteers instead of enforced conscripts, then the military spirit must be dead amongst us. Perhaps, even in this short campaign, they have added this delusion also to the dust-bin of their many errors. But such was their absurd self-deception about the most virile of European races. Did we propose disarmament, then it was not humanitarianism but cowardice that prompted us, and their answer was to enlarge their programme. Did we suggest a navy-building holiday, it was but a cloak for our weakness, and an incitement that they should redouble their efforts. Our decay had become a part of their national faith. At first the wish may have been the father to the thought, but soon under the reiterated assertions of their crazy professors the proposition became indisputable. Bernhardi in his book upon the next war cannot conceal the contempt in which he has learned to hold us. Niebuhr long ago had prophesied the coming fall of Britain, and every year was believed to bring it nearer and to make it more certain. To these jaundiced eyes all seemed yellow, when the yellowness lay only in themselves. Our army, our navy, our Colonies, all were equally rotten. “Old England, old, indeed, and corrupt, rotten through and through.” One blow and the vast sham would fly to pieces, and from those pieces the victor could choose his reward. Listen to Professor Treitschke, a man who, above all others, has been the evil genius of his country, and has done most to push it towards this abyss: “A thing that is wholly a sham,” he cried, in allusion to our Empire, “cannot, in this universe of ours, endure for ever. It may endure for a day, but its doom is certain.” Were ever words more true when applied to the narrow bureaucracy and swaggering Junkerdom of Prussia, the most artificial and ossified sham that ever our days have seen? See which will crack first, our

democracy or this, now that both have been plunged into the furnace together. The day of God's testing has come, and we shall see which can best abide it.

I have tried to show that we are in no way to blame for the hostility which has grown up between us. So far as it had any solid cause at all it has arisen from fixed factors, which could no more be changed by us than the geographical position which has laid us right across their exit to the oceans of the world. That this deeply-rooted national sentiment, which for ever regarded us as the Carthage to which they were destined to play the part of Rome, would, sooner or later, have brought about war between us, is, in my opinion, beyond all doubt. But it was planned to come at the moment which was least favourable for Britain. "Even English attempts at a rapprochement must not blind us to the real situation," says Bernhardi. "We may, at most, use them to delay the necessary and inevitable war until we may fairly imagine we have some prospect of success." A more shameless sentence was never penned, and one stands marvelling which is the more grotesque—the cynicism of the sentiment, or the folly which gave such a warning to the victim. For be it remembered that Bernhardi's words are to be taken very seriously, for they are not the ravings of some Pan-German monomaniac, but the considered views of the foremost military writer of Germany, one who is in touch with those inner circles whose opinions are the springs of national policy. "Our last and greatest reckoning is to be with Great Britain," said the bitter Treitschke. Sooner or later the shock was to come. Germany sat brooding over the chessboard of the world waiting for the opening which should assure a winning game.

It was clear that she should take her enemies separately rather than together. If Britain were attacked, it was almost certain that France and Russia would stand by her side. But if, on the contrary, the quarrel could be made with these two Powers, and especially with Russia, in the first instance, then it was by no means so certain that Great Britain would be drawn into the struggle. Public opinion has to be strongly moved before our country can fight, and public opinion under a Liberal Government might well be divided upon the subject of Russia. Therefore, if the quarrel could be so arranged as to seem to be entirely one between Teuton and Slav there was a good chance that Britain would remain undecided until the swift German sword had done its work. Then, with the grim acquiescence of our deserted Allies, the still bloody sword would be turned upon ourselves, and that great final reckoning would have come.

Such was the plan, and fortune favoured it. A brutal murder had, not for the first time, put Servia into a position where a State may be blamed for the sins of individuals. An ultimatum was launched so phrased that it was impossible for any State to accept it as it stood and yet remain an independent State. At the first sign of argument or remonstrance the Austrian army marched upon

Belgrade. Russia, which had been already humiliated in 1908 by the forcible annexation of Bosnia, could not possibly submit a second time to the Caudine Forks. She laid her hand upon her sword-hilt. Germany sprang to the side of her Ally. France ranged herself with Russia. Like a thunderclap the war of the nations had begun.

So far all had worked well for German plans. Those of the British public who were familiar with the past and could look into the future might be well aware that our interests were firmly bound with those of France, and that if our faggots were not tied together they would assuredly be snapped each in its turn. But the unsavoury assassination which had been so cleverly chosen as the starting-point of the war bulked large in the eyes of our people, and, setting self-interest to one side, the greater part of the public might well have hesitated to enter into a quarrel where the cause seemed remote and the issues ill-defined. What was it to us if a Slav or a Teuton collected the harbour dues of Salonica! So the question might have presented itself to the average man who in the long run is the ruler of this country and the autocrat of its destinies. In spite of all the wisdom of our statesmen, it is doubtful if on such a quarrel we could have gained that national momentum which might carry us to victory. But at that very moment Germany took a step which removed the last doubt from the most cautious of us and left us in a position where we must either draw our sword or stand for ever dishonoured and humiliated before the world. The action demanded of us was such a compound of cowardice and treachery that we ask ourselves in dismay what can we ever have done that could make others for one instant imagine us to be capable of so dastardly a course? Yet that it was really supposed that we could do it, and that it was not merely put forward as an excuse for drawing us into war, is shown by the anger and consternation of the Kaiser and his Chancellor when we drew back from what the British Prime Minister has described as “an infamous proposal.” One has only to read our Ambassador’s description of his interview with the German Chancellor after our decision was announced, “so evidently overcome by the news of our action,” to see that through some extraordinary mental aberration the German rulers did actually believe that a vital treaty with Britain’s signature upon it could be regarded by this country as a mere “scrap of paper.”

What was this treaty which it was proposed so lightly to set aside? It was the guarantee of the neutrality of Belgium signed in 1839 (confirmed verbally and in writing by Bismarck in 1870), by Prussia, France, and Britain, each of whom pledged their word to observe and to enforce it. On the strength of it Belgium had relied for her security amidst her formidable neighbours. On the strength of it also France had lavished all her defences upon her eastern frontier, and left her northern exposed to attack. Britain had guaranteed the treaty, and Britain could be relied upon. Now, on the first occasion of testing

the value of her word it was supposed that she would regard the treaty as a worthless scrap of paper, and stand by unmoved while the little State which had trusted her was flooded by the armies of the invader. It was unthinkable, and yet the wisest brains of Germany seem to have persuaded themselves that we had sunk to such depths of cowardly indolence that even this might go through. Surely they also have been hypnotised by those foolish dreams of Britain's degeneration, from which they will have so terrible an awakening.

As a matter of fact, the General Staff had got ahead of the diplomatists, and the German columns were already over the border while the point was being debated at Berlin. There was no retreat from the position which had been taken up. "It is to us a vital matter of strategy and is beyond argument," said the German soldier. "It is to us a vital matter of honour and is beyond argument," answered the British statesman. The die was cast. No compromise was possible. Would Britain keep her word or would she not? That was the sole question at issue. And what answer save one could any Briton give to it? "I do not believe," said our Prime Minister, "that any nation ever entered into a great controversy with a clearer conscience and stronger conviction that she is fighting, not for aggression, not for the maintenance of her own selfish interest, but in defence of principles the maintenance of which is vital to the civilisation of the world." So he spoke, and History will endorse his words, for we surely have our quarrel just.

So much for the events which have led us to war. Now for a moment let us glance at what we may have to hope for, what we may have to fear, and above all what we must each of us do that we win through to a lasting peace.

What have we to gain if we win? That we have nothing material to gain, no colonies which we covet, no possessions of any sort that we desire, is the final proof that the war has not been provoked by us. No nation would deliberately go out of its way to wage so hazardous and costly a struggle when there is no prize for victory. But one enormous indirect benefit we will gain if we can make Germany a peaceful and harmless State. We will surely break her naval power and take such steps that it shall not be a menace to us any more. It was this naval power, with its rapid increase, and the need that we should ever, as Mr. Churchill has so well expressed it, be ready at our average moment to meet an attack at their chosen moment—it was this which has piled up our war estimates during the last ten years until they have bowed us down. With such enormous sums spent upon ships and guns, great masses of capital were diverted from the ordinary channels of trade, while an even more serious result was that our programmes of social reform had to be curtailed from want of the money which could finance them. Let the menace of that lurking fleet be withdrawn—the nightmare of those thousand hammers working day and night in forging engines for our destruction, and our estimates will once again be

those of a civilised Christian country, while our vast capital will be turned from measures of self-protection to those of self-improvement. Should our victory be complete, there is little which Germany can yield to us save the removal of that shadow which has darkened us so long. But our children and our children's children will never, if we do our work well now, look across the North Sea with the sombre thoughts which have so long been ours, while their lives will be brightened and elevated by money which we, in our darker days, have had to spend upon our ships and our guns.

Consider, on the other hand, what we should suffer if we were to lose. All the troubles of the last ten years would be with us still, but in a greatly exaggerated form. A larger and stronger Germany would dominate Europe and would overshadow our lives. Her coast-line would be increased, her ports would face our own, her coaling stations would be in every sea, and her great army, greater then than ever, would be within striking distance of our shores. To avoid sinking for ever into the condition of a dependant, we should be compelled to have recourse to rigid compulsory service, and our diminished revenues would be all turned to the needs of self-defence. Such would be the miserable condition in which we should hand on to our children that free and glorious empire which we inherited in all the fulness of its richness and its splendour from those strong fathers who have built it up. What peace of mind, what self-respect could be left for us in the remainder of our lives? The weight of dishonour would lie always upon our hearts. And yet this will be surely our fate and our future if we do not nerve our souls and brace our arms for victory. No regrets will avail, no excuses will help, no after-thoughts can profit us. It is now—now—even in these weeks and months that are passing that the final reckoning is being taken, and when once the sum is made up no further effort can change it. What are our lives or our labours, our fortunes or even our families, when compared with the life or death of the great mother of us all? We are but the leaves of the tree. What matter if we flutter down to-day or to-morrow, so long as the great trunk stands and the burrowing roots are firm? Happy the man who can die with the thought that in this greatest crisis of all he has served his country to the uttermost; but who would bear the thoughts of him who lives on with the memory that he has shirked his duty and failed his country at the moment of her need?

There is a settled and assured future if we win. There is darkness and trouble if we lose. But if we take a broader sweep and trace the meanings of this contest as they affect others than ourselves, then ever greater, more glorious are the issues for which we fight. For the whole world stands at a turning-point of its history, and one or other of two opposite principles, the rule of the soldier or the rule of the citizen, must now prevail. In this sense we fight for the masses of the German people, as some day they will understand, to free them from that formidable military caste which has used and abused them, spending their

bodies in an unjust war and poisoning their minds by every device which could inflame them against those who wish nothing save to live at peace with them. We fight for the strong, deep Germany of old, the Germany of music and of philosophy, against this monstrous modern aberration the Germany of blood and of iron, the Germany from which, instead of the old things of beauty, there come to us only the rant of scolding professors with their final reckonings, their Welt-politik, and their Godless theories of the Superman who stands above morality and to whom all humanity shall be subservient. Instead of the world-inspiring phrases of a Goethe or a Schiller, what are the words in the last decade which have been quoted across the sea? Are they not always the ever-recurring words of wrath from one ill-balanced man? “Strike them with the mailed fist.” “Leave such a name behind you as Attila and his Huns.” “Turn your weapons even upon your own flesh and blood at my command.” These are the messages which have come from this perversion of a nation’s soul.

But the matter lies deep. The Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs have used their peoples as a great landowner might use the serfs upon his estate. It was, and is, their openly expressed theory that they were in their position by the grace of God, that they owed no reckoning to any man, and that kingdom and folk were committed for better or worse to their charge. Round this theory of the dark ages there gathered all the forces of the many Courts of the Empire, all the nobility who make so huge a class in Germanic countries, all the vast army to whom strict discipline and obedience were the breath of life, all the office-holders of the State, all the purveyors of warlike stores. These and their like were the natural setting to such a central idea. Court influence largely controlled the teaching at schools and universities, and so the growing twig could be bent. But all these forces together could not have upheld so dangerous and unnatural a theory had it not been for the influence of a servile Press.

How that Press was managed, how the thoughts of the people could be turned to the right or the left with the same precision as a platoon of Grenadiers, has been shown clearly enough in the Memoirs of Bismarck. Public opinion was poisoned at its very roots. The average citizen lived in a false atmosphere where everything was distorted to his vision. He saw his Kaiser, not as an essentially weak and impetuous man with a dangerous entourage who were ever at his ear, but as Germany personified, an angel with a flaming sword, beating back envious assailants from the beloved Fatherland. He saw his neighbours not as peaceful nations who had no possible desire to attack him, but, on the contrary, lived in constant fear of him, but as a band of envious and truculent conspirators who could only be kept in order by the sudden stamp of the jackboot and the menacing clatter of the sabre. He insensibly imbibed the Nietzsche doctrine that the immorality of the Superman may be as colossal as

his strength and that the slave-evangel of Christianity was superseded by a sterner law. Thus when he saw acts which his reason must have told him were indefensible, he was still narcotised by this conception of some new standard of right. He saw his Kaiser at the time of a petty humiliation to Great Britain sending a telegram of congratulation to the man who had inflicted this rebuff. Could that be approved by reason? At a time when all Europe was shuddering over the Armenian massacres he saw this same Kaiser paying a complimentary visit to the Sultan whose hands were still wet with the blood of murdered Christians. Could that be reconciled with what is right? A little later he saw the Kaiser once again pushing himself into Mediterranean politics, where no direct German interest lay, and endeavouring to tangle up the French developments in Northern Africa by provocative personal appearances at Morocco, and, later, by sending a gunboat to intrude upon a scene of action which had already by the Treaty of Algeciras been allotted to France.

How could an honest German whose mind was undebauched by a controlled Press justify such an interference as that? He is or should be aware that in annexing Bosnia, Austria was tearing up a treaty without the consent of the other signatories, and that his own country was supporting and probably inciting her ally to this public breach of faith. Could he honestly think that this was right? And, finally, he must know, for his own Chancellor has publicly proclaimed it, that the Invasion of Belgium was a breach of international right, and that Germany, or rather, Prussia, had perjured herself upon the day that the first of her soldiers passed over the frontier. How can he explain all this to himself save on a theory that might is right, that no moral law applies to the Superman, and that so long as one hews one's way through the rest can matter little? To such a point of degradation have public morals been brought by the infernal teachings of Prussian military philosophy, dating back as far as Frederick the Second, but intensified by the exhortations of Press and professors during our own times. The mind of the average kindly German citizen has been debauched and yet again debauched until it needed just such a world crisis as this to startle him at last from his obsession and show him his position and that of his country in its true relation with humanity and progress.

Thus I say that for the German who stands outside the ruling classes our victory would bring a lasting relief, and some hope that in the future his destiny should be controlled by his own judgment and not by the passions or interests of those against whom he has at present no appeal. A system which has brought disaster to Germany and chaos to all Europe can never, one would think, be resumed, and amid the debris of his Empire the German may pick up that precious jewel of personal freedom which is above the splendour of foreign conquest. A Hapsburg or a Hohenzollern may find his true place as the servant rather than the master of a nation. But apart from Germany, look at the effects which our victory must have over the whole wide world. Everywhere it

will mean the triumph of reasoned democracy, of public debate, of ordered freedom in which every man is an active unit in the system of his own government; whilst our defeat would stand for a victory to a privileged class, the thrusting down of the civilian by the arrogance and intolerance of militarism, and the subjection of all that is human and progressive to all that is cruel, narrow, and reactionary.

This is the stake for which we play, and the world will lose or gain as well as we. You may well come, you democratic over-sea men of our blood, to rally round us now, for all that you cherish, all that is bred in your very bones, is that for which we fight. And you, lovers of Freedom in every land, we claim at least your prayers and your wishes, for if our sword be broken you will be the poorer. But fear not, for our sword will not be broken, nor shall it ever drop from our hands until this matter is for ever set in order. If every ally we have upon earth were to go down in blood and ruin, still would we fight through to the appointed end. Defeat shall not daunt us. Inconclusive victory shall not turn us from our purpose. The grind of poverty and the weariness of hopes deferred shall not blunt the edge of our resolve. With God's help we shall go to the end, and when that goal is reached it is our prayer that a new era shall come as our reward, an era in which, by common action of State with State, mutual hatreds and strivings shall be appeased, land shall no longer be estranged from land, and huge armies and fleets will be nightmares of the past. Thus, as ever, the throes of evil may give birth to good. Till then our task stands clear before us—a task that will ask for all we have in strength and resolution. Have you who read this played your part to the highest? If not, do it now, or stand for ever shamed.

II

THE WORLD-WAR CONSPIRACY

It is instructive and interesting now, before fresh great events and a new situation obliterate the old impressions, to put it on record how things seemed to some of us before the blow fell. A mental position often seems incredible when looked back to from some new standpoint.

I am one of those who were obstinate in refusing to recognise Germany's intentions. I argued, I wrote, I joined the Anglo-German Friendship Society; I did everything I could for the faith that was in me. But early last year my views underwent a complete change, and I realised that I had been wrong, and that the thing which seemed too crazy and too wicked to be true actually was true. I recorded my conversion at the time in an article entitled "Great Britain and the Next War" in the Fortnightly of March, and reading over that article I

find a good deal which fits very closely to the present situation. Forecasts are dangerous, but there is not much there which I would wish to withdraw. What brought about my change of view was reading Bernhardi's book on Germany and the next war.

Up to then I had imagined that all this sabre-rattling was a sort of boyish exuberance on the part of a robust young nation which had a fancy to clank about the world in jackboots. Some of it also came, as it seemed to me, from a perfectly natural jealousy, and some as the result of the preaching of those extraordinary professors whose idiotic diatribes have done so much to poison the minds of Young Germany. This was clear enough. But I could not believe that there was a conspiracy hatching for a world-war, in which the command of the sea would be challenged as well as that of the land. No motive seemed to me to exist for so monstrous an upheaval, and no prize to await Germany, if she won, which could at all balance her enormous risks if she lost. Besides, one imagined that civilisation and Christianity did stand for something, and that it was inconceivable that a nation with pretensions to either the one or the other could at this date of the world's history lend itself to a cold-blooded, barbarous conspiracy by which it built up its strength for a number of years with the intention of falling at a fitting moment upon its neighbours, without any cause of quarrel save a general desire for aggrandisement.

All this, I say, I could not bring myself to believe. But I read Bernhardi's book, and then I could not help believing. I wrote an article in the hope that others who had been as blind as myself might also come to see the truth. For who was Bernhardi? He was one of the most noted officers in the German army. And here was a book addressed to his own fellow-countrymen, in which these sentiments were set forth. You could not set such a document aside and treat it as of no account. As I said at the time, "We should be mad if we did not take very serious notice of the warning."

But the strange thing is that there should have been a warning. There is a quaint simplicity in the German mind, which has shown itself again and again in the recent events. But this is surely the supreme example of it. One would imagine that the idea that the book could be translated and read by his intended victims had never occurred to the author. As a famous soldier, it is impossible to believe that he was not in touch with the General Staff, and he outlines a policy which has some reason, therefore, to be looked upon as an official one. It is as bright a performance as if some one on Lord Roberts's staff had written a description of the Paardeberg flank march and sent it to Cronje some weeks before it was carried out. And yet it was not an isolated example, for Von Edelsheim, who actually belongs to this amazing General Staff, published a shorter sketch, setting forth how his country would deal with the United States—an essay which is an extraordinary example of bombastic

ignorance. Such indiscretions can only be explained as manifestations of an inflated national arrogance, which has blown itself up into a conviction that Germany was so sure of winning that it mattered little whether her opponents were upon their guard or not.

But Bernhardi's programme, as outlined in his book, is actually being carried through. The whole weight of the attack was to be thrown upon France. Russia was to be held back during her slow mobilisation, and then the victorious legions from Paris were to thunder across in their countless troop trains from the western to the eastern firing-line. Britain was to be cajoled into keeping aloof until her fate was ripe. Then her fleet was to be whittled down by submarines, mines, and torpedo-boats until the numbers were more equal, when the main German fleet, coming from under the forts of Wilhelmshaven, should strike for the conquest of the sea. Such were the plans, and dire the fate of the conquered. They were in accordance with the German semi-official paper, which cried on the day before the declaration of war: "We shall win—and when we do, 'Vae victis!'" With France it was to be a final account. Our own fate would be little better. It needs a righteous anger to wage war to the full, and we can feel it when we think of the long-drawn plot against us, and of the fate which defeat would bring.

However favourable the general trend of events, we can hardly hope to escape some bad hours during this war. The Germans are a great and brave people, with a fine record in warlike history. They will not go down without leaving their mark deep upon the Allies. We must not take the opening successes too seriously, or allow ourselves to have the edge taken off our resolution by the idea that things will necessarily go well with us. On land and sea vast efforts and occasional disappointments will await us. But it will not be long. It is, as it seems to me, absolutely impossible that it should be long. The temper of the times will not brook slow measures, nor will the enormous financial strain upon Germany be tolerated indefinitely. How dangerous is prophecy, and these very words may come back to mock me; but I cannot myself see how it can be over in less than six months, or how it could extend for more than twelve.

If it should happen that the military affairs of Germany are as rotten as her diplomacy, then it certainly should not last long. That, no doubt, is too much to expect, but there are many degrees of incapacity which are short of that extreme limit. For of that, at least, there can be no dispute. What has come from all this crazy science of Real-politik and Welt-politik and the rest of it? Simply that wherever it was possible to lose the trick Germany and her partner have done so. An alliance with Italy so loose that it was useless, a Mediterranean understanding with Austria so vague that it only operated after it had become of no service to the German cruisers, the drawing of Servia, Montenegro, and, finally, of Belgium, into the field against them, the dealing

with England in the one fashion which must unite our ranks and cut the ground from under the feet of any party which might cause dissension—these are the results of the Wilhelmstrasse combinations, with Potsdam embellishments. Was there ever so colossal a muddle? Is there any one point which could have been worse handled? And then as a by-product the universal distrust and anger which such policy has aroused in the neutral countries—yes, it really is a thing complete.

But the German soldier may prove himself as good as ever. That he will be as brave as ever I have no doubt at all. That he will be as hardy as ever is less likely, as the population of the Fatherland has drifted largely from fields to factories, and as the standard of comfort, and even luxury, have greatly increased. The Westphalian artisan of William is very different material from the Brandenburg peasant of Frederick, even as the short-service soldier of 1914 is very different from the ten-year man of 1750. I should expect to see the German as good, but no better than his neighbours. But the whole issue of this campaign depends, from his point of view, upon his being better. He has to win against superior numbers. He must not only win, but win quickly. If an equilibrium were established, the strangulation from England must bring victory to the Allies. It is a great deal that the Kaiser has asked from his men.

And there is his much-vaunted military organisation. An American friend of mine, who had means of forming an opinion, remarked to me, “Yes, it is a huge and smooth-running machine, with delicate adjustments. Like all such machines, if a few cogwheels stuck the whole might racket itself to pieces.” A cogwheel stuck at Liége, another may stick before long, and it all depends on how the machine can adjust itself. The lesson of history is ominous. The Prussians of Jena and Auerstadt were men who had been swollen up by the tradition of Frederick’s prowess. Yet in a single day their defeat was so great and their power of recuperation so slight that they were utterly dispersed, and their country for seven years ceased to exist as a factor in European politics. They have always been great winners. They have not always been great in adversity. How will they now stand this test if it should come their way?

III

THE DEVIL’S DOCTRINE

I have been interesting and exasperating myself, during a most untimely illness, by working through a part of the literature of German Imperial Expansion. I know that it is only a part, and yet when I look at this array—Treitschke and Bernhardi, Schiemann and Hasse, Bley, Sybel, “Gross-Deutschland” and “Germania Triumphans”—it represents a considerable body

of thought. And it is the literature of the devil. Not one kindly sentiment, not one generous expression, is to be found within it. It is informed with passionate cupidity for the writer's country and unreasoning, indiscriminate hatred and jealousy towards everything outside it—above all, towards the British Empire. How could such a literature fail to bring about a world-coalition against the country which produced it! Were there no Germans who foresaw so obvious a result? The whole tendency of the doctrine is that Germany should, artichoke fashion, dismember the world. Not a word is said as to the world suddenly turning and dismembering her. But was not that the only protection against such monstrous teaching as these books contain?

You may object that these Imperialists were but a group of monomaniacs and did not represent the nation. But the evidence is the other way. They represented that part of the nation which counts in international politics—they represented the Kaiser and his circle, Von Tirpitz and the Navy men, Krupp, von Bohlen and the armour-plated gang, the universities where such doctrines were openly preached, the Army, the Junkers—all the noisy, aggressive elements whose voice has sounded of late years as the voice of Germany. All were infected by the same virus of madness which has compelled Europe to get them once for all into a strait-jacket.

The actual policy of State was conducted on the very lines of these teachings, where the devilish doctrine that war should be for ever lurking in a statesman's thoughts, that he should be prepared to pounce upon a neighbour should it be in a state of weakness, and that no treaty or moral consideration should stay his hand, is repeated again and again as the very basis of all state-craft. At the time of the Agadir crisis we have the German Minister of Foreign Affairs openly admitting that he took the view of the fanatical Pan-Germans. "I am as good a Pan-German as you," said Kiderlen-Waechter to the representative of the League. Each was as good or as bad as the other, for all were filled with the same heady, pernicious stuff which has brought Europe to chaos.

Where, now, is that "deep, patient Germany" of which Carlyle wrote? Was ever a nation's soul so perverted, so fallen from grace! Read this mass of bombast—learned bombast of professors, vulgar bombast of Lokal-Anzeigers and the like, but always bombast. Wade through the prophetic books with their assumption that Britain must perish and Germany succeed her; consult the scolding articles and lectures, so narrow, ungenerous, and boastful in their tone, so utterly wanting in the deeper historical knowledge or true reading of a rival's character; see the insane Pan-German maps, with their partitions of Europe for the year 1915 or thereabouts; study the lectures of the crazy professors, with their absurd assumption of accurate knowledge and their extraordinary knack of getting every fact as wrong as it could possibly be—take all this together, and then say whether any nation has ever in this world

been so foolishly and utterly misled as have the Germans.

I have alluded to their knack of getting everything wrong. It is perfectly miraculous. One would not have thought it possible that people could bealways wrong. So blinded have they been by hate that everything was distorted. Never even by accident did they stumble upon the truth. Let us take a list of their confident assertions—things so self-evident that they were taken for granted by the average journalist:

“The British Army was worthless; its presence on the Continent, even if it could come, was immaterial.

“Britain herself was absolutely decadent.

“Britain’s commerce could be ruined by the German cruisers.

“The United States would fall upon us if we were in trouble.

“Canada and Australia were longing to break away from the Empire.

“India loathed us.

“The Boers were eager to reconquer South Africa.

“The Empire was an artificial collection of States which must fly to pieces at the first shock.”

This was the nonsense which grave Berlin Professors of History ladled out to their receptive students. The sinister Treitschke, who is one of half a dozen men who have torn down Imperial Germany just as surely as Roon, Bismarck, and Moltke built it up, was the arch-priest of this cult. Like Nietzsche, whose moral teaching was the supplement to the Pan-German Material doctrine, Treitschke was not, by extraction, a German at all. Both men were of the magnetic Slav stock, dreamers of dreams and seers of visions—evil dreams and dark visions for the land in which they dwelt. With their magic flutes they have led the whole blind, foolish, conceited nation down that easy, pleasant path which ends in this abyss.

Nietzsche was, as his whole life proved, a man upon the edge of insanity, who at last went obviously mad. Treitschke was a man of great brain power, who had an idée fixe—a monomania about Britain. So long as he raved in Berlin, Englishmen took no more notice than they do of an anarchist howling in the park; for it is the British theory that a man may say and think what he will so long as he refrains from doing. But Treitschke was always dangerous. He was magnetic, eloquent, enthusiastic, flashing wondrous visions of the future before his listeners, varying in beauty, but always alike in that they were seen across our prostrate body. Those who are in a position to judge, like the late Professor Cramb, say that his influence on young Germany could only be compared with that of Carlyle and Macaulay united in Great Britain. And now, after his death, his words have all sprung to deeds to the ruin of his own

country and to the deep misfortune of ours. He used to visit England, this strange and sinister man, but as he was stone deaf his bodily presence brought him little nearer to us. With useless ears and jaundiced eyes he moved among us, returning to Berlin for the new Semester as ignorant as he had left it, to rail against us once again. He worked to harm us, and he has done so, but Lord! what is the worst that he has done to us compared with the irretrievable ruin that he has brought to his own country! He and Von Tirpitz, Count Bieberstein, Maximilian Harden and a few more, to say nothing of the head plotter of all—a fine Germany they will leave behind them! Treitschke is dead, and so is Bieberstein, but a good many of their dupes may live to see the day when Indian princes ride as conquerors down Unter den Linden and the shattered remains of the braggadocio statues of the Sieges Allée, that vulgar monument of bastard Imperialism, will expiate the honoured ashes of Louvain.

But the stupidity of it all—that is the consideration which comes in a wave to submerge every other aspect of the matter. For consider the situation: as lately as 1897 the European grouping was clear. The antagonists were already ranged. Russia had definitely taken her side with France; against them, equally definitely, were Germany and Austria, whilst Italy clearly was on an orbit by herself. War sooner or later was a certainty. Unattached, but with a distinct bias to Germany on racial, religious, and other grounds, lay Great Britain, the richest Power in the world, the ruler of the seas, and a nation which was historically tenacious and unconquerable in war. Was it not clear that the first interest of Germany was to conciliate such a Power and to make sure that if she were not an ally she would at least never be an enemy? No proposition could be clearer than that. And yet cast your minds back and remember the treatment and bearing of Germany towards Britain since that date—the floods of scorn, the libels, the bitter attacks, the unconcealed determination to do her harm. See how it has all ended, and how this atmosphere of hatred has put a driving force into Great Britain which has astonished ourselves. This is the end of all the clever Welt-Politik. Truly Quos Deus vult perdere—the gods must have willed it much, for no nation was ever madder.

Where were the sane Germans? Why was there no protest from them? Perhaps there was, but we never heard of it amid the beating of those great Pan-German drums. Did the whole nation, for example, really agree in so harebrained a scheme as the Bagdad Railway? Think of the insanity of such a project as that. Here is a railway representing very many millions of German capital which is built in the heart of Asia Minor, as far removed from any sort of German protection or effective control as if it were in the moon. The next step, vaguely thought out, was that German settlers were to be planted along the line of the railroad, but upon that being advanced the Turks, who had smiled most amiably at the actual railway construction, put down their slippers in the most emphatic manner. The net result, therefore, would seem to be that

Turkey holds a hostage of a great many millions of German capital which, so long as Germany behaves herself, may or may not return some interest; but if Germany goes against Turkish wishes could at once be confiscated. Apart from Turkey, Russia in the Caucasus, and England in North-West India regard with a good deal of interested attention this singular and helpless German railway which projects out into space.

There is one phase of their doctrines which has, perhaps, received less attention than it deserves. It will be found very fully treated in Professor Usher's book on Pan-Germanism, which, coming from an American authority who seems to have studied his subject very thoroughly, has the merit of impartiality. This proposition is that just as a treaty is only a scrap of paper, so also is a bond or debenture, and that just as the highest interest of a nation may at any moment override ordinary morality, the same vital urgency may justify anything in the nature of repudiation of debt. This is not to be done on account of inability to pay the debt; but through a deliberate, cold-blooded plot to weaken the creditor by robbing him of his property.

Modern Germany has been largely built up by foreign capital. In war, if Germany is conquered the debt necessarily holds good. But if Germany wins, part of her reward of victory is the complete repudiation of all debts. Thus the glorious or inglorious prize of success would be, that all her vast industrial plant would be freed from every debenture and start without an encumbrance, a free present from the enemy. This example, they hope, would lead other nations to do the same, and so still further ruin the finances of England and France, which are the great lending nations of the earth. They frankly admit that such a coup would make it very difficult for their nation to borrow money again, but on the other hand, they would have made such an immense profit over the transaction that they would be able to go on for many years without any need of more capital. "To secure so stupendous a result as this," said the American Professor, "is well worth the expenditure of money for building a fleet. That money, so far as the German nation is concerned, is merely invested in an enterprise from which they confidently expect returns perhaps a hundred-fold."

As to the morality of this transaction, the Professor, who has certainly no anti-German bias, expresses their views very plainly. It is the same as Frederick the Great's views as to the morality of treaties which have descended with such fatal effects upon his successor on the Prussian throne. Once admit such anti-social theories and there is no end to their application. Here it is in the domain of economics just as shameless as in that of politics. "Once more," says the Professor, "the Germans hear around them our cries against the morality of this procedure. The Germans refuse to recognise as moral anything which jeopardises their national existence." They are to be the judges of what these

are, and if repudiation of debt is considered to be one of them, then all debt may be repudiated. They will not put their views into practice this time because they will not be the victors, but when the reconstruction of Germany begins and she comes once again as a chastened borrower into the market-place of the world, it would be well to have some assurance as to how far she retains these views upon commercial morality.

But I have visions of a really chastened Germany, of a Germany which has sloughed all this wicked nonsense, which has found her better self again, and which is once more that “deep, patient Germany” with which I began this essay. She never can be now what she could so easily have been. She could have continued indefinitely to extend from Poland to the Vosges, one vast community, honoured by all for industry and for learning, with a huge commerce, a happy, peaceful, prosperous population, and a Colonial system which, if smaller than that of nations which were centuries older in the field, would at least be remarkable for so short a time. None of these things would the world have grudged her, and in the future as in the past she would have found in the British Dominions and in Great Britain herself an entry for her products as free as if she were herself part of the Empire.

All this must be changed for the worse, and it is just that she should suffer for her sins. The work of sixty years will be destroyed. But will not the spiritual Germany be the stronger and better? We cannot say. We can but hope and wait and wonder. What is sure is that the real Germany, of whom Carlyle spoke, can never be destroyed. Nor would we desire it. Our wrath is not against Germany, but against that Krupp-Kaiser-Junker combination which has brought her to such a deadly pass.

IV

THE GREAT GERMAN PLOT

It will be a fascinating task for the historian of the immediate future to work out the various strands of evidence which seem to be independent and yet when followed up converge upon the central purpose of a prearranged war for the late summer of 1914—a war in which Germany should be the prime mover and instigator and Austria the dupe and catspaw.

Of course, there are some great facts patent to all the world. There is the sudden rapid acceleration of German preparations for the last two years, the great increase of the army with the colours, and the special emergency tax which was to bring in fifty millions of money. Looking back, we can see very clearly that these things were the run before the jump. Germany at the moment

of declaring war had accumulated by processes extending over years all the money which by borrowing or taxation she could raise, and she cannot really expect the rest of the world to believe that it was a mere coincidence that a crisis came along at that particular and favourable moment. All the evidence tends to show that the long-planned outbreak—the “letting-go” as it was called in Germany—was carefully prepared for that particular date and that the Bosnian assassinations had nothing whatever to do with the matter. A pretext could very easily be found, as Bernhardi remarks, and if the Crown Prince of Austria were still alive and well we should none the less have found ourselves at death-grips with the Kaiser over the Belgian infraction.

There are a number of small indications which will have to be investigated and collated by the inquiring chronicler. There is, for example, the reception of guns for a merchant cruiser in a South American port which must have been sent off not later than July 10, three weeks before the crisis developed. There is the document of this same date, July 10, found upon a German officer, which is said to have censured him for not having answered some mobilisation form on that day. Then there is the abnormal quantity of grain ordered in Canada and America in May; and finally there is the receipt of mobilisation warnings by Austrian reservists in South Africa, advising them that they should return at a date which must place their issue from Vienna in the first week of July. All these small incidents show the absurdity of the German contention that at a moment of profound peace some sort of surprise was sprung upon them. There was, indeed, a surprise intended, but they were to be the surprisers—though, indeed, I think their machinations were too clumsy to succeed. They had retained the immorality but lost the ability for that sudden tiger pounce which Frederick, in a moment of profound peace, made upon Silesia.

I fancy that every Chancellery in Europe suspected that something was in the wind. It was surely not a mere coincidence that the grand Fleet lay ready for action at Spithead and that the First Army Corps was practising some very useful mobilisation exercises at Aldershot. After all, our British Administration is not so simple-minded as it sometimes seems. Indeed, that very simplicity may at times be its most deadly mask. At one time of my life I was much bruised in spirit over the ease with which foreigners were shown over our arsenals and yards. Happening to meet the head of the Naval Intelligence Department, I confided my trouble to him. It was at a public banquet where conversation was restricted, but he turned his head towards me, and his left eyelid flickered for an instant. Since then I have never needed any reassurance upon the subject.

But there is another matter which will insist on coming back into one’s thoughts when one reviews the events which preceded the war. I was in

Canada in June, and the country was much disturbed by the fact that a shipload of Hindus had arrived at Vancouver, and had endeavoured to land in the face of the anti-Asiatic immigration laws. It struck me at the time as a most extraordinary incident, for these Indians were not the usual Bengalee pedlars, but were Sikhs of a proud and martial race. What could be their object in endeavouring to land in Canada, when the climate of that country would make it impossible for them to settle in it? It was a most unnatural incident, and yet a most painful one, for the British Government was placed in the terrible dilemma of either supporting Canada against India or India against Canada. Could anything be better calculated to start an agitation in one country or the other? The thing was inexplicable at the time, but now one would wish to know who paid for that ship and engineered the whole undertaking. I believe it was one more move on Germany's world-wide board.

In connection with the date at which the long-expected German war was to break out, it is of interest now to remember some of the conversations to which I listened three years ago, when I was a competitor in the Anglo-German motor competition, called the Prince Henry Tour. It was a very singular experience, and was itself not without some political meaning, since it could hardly have been chance that a German gunboat should appear at Agadir at the very instant when the head of the German Navy was making himself agreeable (and he can be exceedingly agreeable) to a number of Britons, and a genial international atmosphere was being created by the nature of the contest, which sent the whole fleet of seventy or eighty cars on a tour of hospitality through both countries. I refuse to believe that it was chance, and it was a remarkable example of the detail to which the Germans can descend. By the rules of the competition a German officer had to be present in each British car and a British officer in each German one during the whole three weeks, so as to check the marks of the driver. It was certainly an interesting situation, since every car had its foreign body within it, which had to be assimilated somehow with the alternative of constant discomfort. Personally we were fortunate in having a Rittmeister of Breslau Cuirassiers, with whom we were able to form quite a friendship. Good luck to you, Count Carmer, and bad luck to your regiment! To you also, little Captain Türck, Fregattencapitän am dienst, the best of luck, and ill betide your cruiser! We found pleasant friends among the Germans, though all were not equally fortunate, and I do not think that the net result helped much towards an international entente.

However, the point of my reminiscence is that on this tour I, being at that time a champion of Anglo-German friendship, heard continual discussions, chiefly on the side of British officers, several of whom were experts on German matters, as to when the impending war would be forced upon us. The date given was always 1914 or 1915. When I asked why this particular year, the answer was that the German preparations would be ready by then, and

especially the widening of the Kiel Canal, by which the newer and larger battleships would be able to pass from the Baltic to the North Sea. It says something for the foresight of these officers that this widening was actually finished on June 24 of this year, and within six weeks the whole of Europe was at war. I am bound to admit that they saw deeper into the future than I did, and formed a truer estimate of our real relations with our fellow-voyagers. “Surely you feel more friendly to them now,” said I at the end to one distinguished officer. “All I want with them now is to fight them,” said he. We have all been forced to come round to his point of view.

Yes, it was a deep, deep plot, a plot against the liberties of Europe, extending over several years, planned out to the smallest detail in the days of peace, developed by hordes of spies, prepared for by every conceivable military, naval, and financial precaution, and finally sprung upon us on a pretext which was no more the real cause of war than any other excuse would have been which would serve their turn by having some superficial plausibility. The real cause of war was a universal national insanity infecting the whole German race, but derived originally from a Prussian caste who inoculated the others with their megalomania.

This insanity was based upon the universal supposition that the Germans were the Lord’s chosen people, that in the words of Buy, they were “the most cultured people, the best settlers, the best warriors”—the best everything. Having got that idea thoroughly infused into their very blood, the next step was clear. If they were infinitely the best people living amidst such tribes as “the barbarous Russians, the fickle French, the beastly Servians and Belgians,” to quote one of their recent papers, then why should they not have all the best things in the world? If they were really the most powerful, who could gainsay them? They need not do it all at once, but two great national efforts would give them the whole of unredeemed Germany, both shores of the Rhine down to the sea, the German cantons of Switzerland, and, in conjunction with Austria, the long road that leads to Salonica. All local causes and smaller details sink into nothing compared with this huge national ambition which was the real driving force at the back of this formidable project.

And it was a very formidable project. If such things could be settled by mere figures and time-tables without any reference to the spirit and soul of the nations, it might very well have succeeded. I think that we are not indulging too far in national complacency if we say that without the British army—that negligible factor—it would for the time at least have succeeded. Had the Germans accomplished their purpose of getting round the left wing of the French, it is difficult to see how a debacle could have been avoided, and it was our little army which stood in the pass and held it until that danger was past. It is certain now that the huge sweep of the German right had never been

allowed for, that the French troops in that quarter were second-line troops, and that it was our great honour and good fortune to have dammed that raging torrent and stopped the rush which must have swept everything before it until it went roaring into Paris. And yet how many things might have prevented our presence at the right place at the right time, and how near we were to a glorious annihilation upon that dreadful day when the artillery of five German army corps—eight hundred and thirty guns in all—were concentrated upon Smith-Dorrien's exhausted men. The success or failure of the great conspiracy hung upon the over-matched British covering batteries upon that one critical afternoon. It was the turning-point of the history of the world.

V

THE "CONTEMPTIBLE LITTLE ARMY"

Early last year, in the course of some comments which I made upon the slighting remarks about our Army by General von Bernhardi, I observed, "It may be noted that General von Bernhardi has a poor opinion of our troops. This need not trouble us. We are what we are, and words will not alter it. From very early days our soldiers have left their mark upon Continental warfare, and we have no reason to think that we have declined from the manhood of our forefathers." Since then he has returned to the attack. With that curious power of coming after deep study to the absolutely diametrically wrong conclusion which the German expert, political or military, appears to possess, he says in his War of To-day, "The English Army, trained more for purposes of show than for modern war," adding in the same sentence a sneer at our "inferior Colonial levies." He will have an opportunity of reconsidering his views presently upon the fighting value of our over-sea troops, and surely so far as our own are concerned he must already be making some interesting notes for his next edition, or rather for the learned volume upon Germany and the Last War which will no doubt come from his pen. He is a man to whom we might well raise a statue, for I am convinced that his cynical confession of German policy has been worth at least an army corps to this country. We may address to him John Davidson's lines to his enemy—

"Unwilling friend, let not your spite abate,

Spur us with scorn, and strengthen us with hate."

There is another German gentleman who must be thinking rather furiously. He is a certain Colonel Gadke, who appeared officially at Aldershot some years ago, was hospitably entreated, being shown all that he desired to see, and on his return to Berlin published a most depreciatory description of our forces. He

found no good thing in them. I have some recollection that General French alluded in a public speech to this critic's remarks, and expressed a modest hope that he and his men would some day have the opportunity of showing how far they were deserved. Well, he has had his opportunity, and Colonel Gadke, like so many other Germans, seems to have made a miscalculation.

An army which has preserved the absurd Paradeschritt, an exercise which is painful to the bystander, as he feels that it is making fools of brave men, must have a tendency to throw back to earlier types. These Germans have been trained in peace and upon the theory of books. In all that vast host there is hardly a man who has previously stood at the wrong end of a loaded gun. They live on traditions of close formations, vast cavalry charges, and other things which will not fit into modern warfare. Braver men do not exist, but it is the bravery of men who have been taught to lean upon each other, and not the cold, self-contained, resourceful bravery of the man who has learned to fight for his own hand. The British have had the teachings of two recent campaigns fought with modern weapons—that of the Tirah and of South Africa. Now that the reserves have joined the colours there are few regiments which have not a fair sprinkling of veterans from these wars in their ranks. The Pathan and the Boer have been their instructors in something more practical than those Imperial Grand Manœuvres where the all-highest played with his puppets in such a fashion that one of his generals remarked that the chief practical difficulty of a campaign so conducted would be the disposal of the dead.

Boers and Pathans have been hard masters, and have given many a slap to their admiring pupils, but the lesson has been learned. It was not show troops, General, who, with two corps, held five of your best day after day from Mons to Compiègne. It is no reproach to your valour: but you were up against men who were equally brave and knew a great deal more of the game. This must begin to break upon you, and will surely grow clearer as the days go by. We shall often in the future take the knock as well as give it, but you will not say that we have a show army if you live to chronicle this war, nor will your Imperial master be proud of the adjective which he has demeaned himself in using before his troops had learned their lesson.

The fact is that the German army, with all its great traditions, has been petrifying for many years back. They never learned the lesson of South Africa. It was not for want of having it expounded to them, for their military attaché —"'im with the spatchcock on 'is 'elmet," as I heard him described by a British orderly—missed nothing of what occurred, as is evident from their official history of the war. And yet they missed it, and with it all those ideas of individual efficiency and elastic independent formations, which are the essence of modern soldiering. Their own more liberal thinkers were aware of it. Here are the words which were put into the mouth of Güntz, the

representative of the younger school, in Beyerlein's famous novel:

"The organisation of the German army rested upon foundations which had been laid a hundred years ago. Since the great war they had never seriously been put to the proof, and during the last three decades they had only been altered in the most trifling details. In three long decades! And in one of those decades the world at large had advanced as much as in the previous century.

"Instead of turning this highly developed intelligence to good account, they bound it hand and foot on the rack of an everlasting drill which could not have been more soullessly mechanical in the days of Frederick. It held them together as an iron hoop holds together a cask the dry staves of which would fall asunder at the first kick."

Lord Roberts has said that if ten points represent the complete soldier, eight should stand for his efficiency as a shot. The German maxim has rather been that eight should stand for his efficiency as a drilled marionette. It has been reckoned that about 200 books a year appear in Germany upon military affairs, against about 20 in Britain. And yet after all this expert debate the essential point of all seems to have been missed—that in the end everything depends upon the man behind the gun, upon his hitting his opponent and upon his taking cover so as to avoid being hit himself.

After all the efforts of the General Staff the result when shown upon the field of battle has filled our men with a mixture of admiration and contempt—contempt for the absurd tactics, admiration for the poor devils who struggle on in spite of them. Listen to the voices of the men who are the real experts. Says a Lincolnshire sergeant, "They were in solid square blocks, and we couldn't help hitting them." Says Private Tait (2nd Essex), "Their rifle shooting is rotten. I don't believe they could hit a haystack at 100 yards." "They are rotten shots with their rifles," says an Oldham private. "They advance in close column, and you simply can't help hitting them," writes a Gordon Highlander. "You would have thought it was a big crowd streaming out from a Cup-tie," says Private Whitaker of the Guards. "It was like a farmer's machine cutting grass," so it seemed to Private Hawkins of the Coldstreams. "No damned good as riflemen," says a Connemara boy. "You couldn't help hitting them. As to their rifle fire, it was useless." "They shoot from the hip, and don't seem to aim at anything in particular."

These are the opinions of the practical men upon the field of battle. Surely a poor result from the 200 volumes a year, and all the weighty labours of the General Staff! "Artillery nearly as good as our own, rifle fire beneath contempt," that is the verdict. How will the well-taught Paradeschritt avail them when it comes to a stricken field?

But let it not seem as if this were meant for disparagement. We should be

sinking to the Kaiser's level if we answered his "contemptible little army" by pretending that his own troops are anything but a very formidable and big army. They are formidable in numbers, formidable, too, in their patriotic devotion, in their native courage, and in the possession of such material, such great cannon, aircraft, machine guns, and armoured cars, as none of the Allies can match. They have every advantage which a nation would be expected to have when it has known that war was a certainty, while others have only treated it as a possibility. There is a minuteness and earnestness of preparation which are only possible for an assured event. But the fact remains, and it will only be brought out more clearly by the Emperor's unchivalrous phrase, that in every arm the British have already shown themselves to be the better troops. Had he the Froissart spirit within him he would rather have said: "You have to-day a task which is worthy of you. You are faced by an army which has a high repute and a great history. There is real glory to be won to-day." Had he said this, then, win or lose, he would not have needed to be ashamed of his own words—the words of an ungenerous spirit.

It is a very strange thing how German critics have taken for granted that the British Army had deteriorated, while the opinion of all those who were in close touch with it was that it was never so good. Even some of the French experts made the same mistake, and General Bonnat counselled his countrymen not to rely upon it, since "it would take refuge amid its islands at the first reverse." One would think that the causes which make for its predominance were obvious. Apart from any question of national spirit or energy, there is the all-important fact that the men are there of their own free will, an advantage which I trust that we shall never be compelled to surrender. Again, the men are of longer service in every arm, and they have far more opportunities of actual fighting than come to any other force. Finally, they are divided into regiments, with centuries of military glory streaming from their banners, which carry on a mighty tradition. The very words the Guards, the Rifles, the Connaught Rangers, the Buffs, the Scots Greys, the Gordons, sound like bugle-calls. How could an army be anything but dangerous which had such units in its line of battle?

And yet there remains the fact that both enemies and friends are surprised at our efficiency. This is no new phenomenon. Again and again in the course of history the British Armies have had to win once more the reputation which had been forgotten. Continentals have always begun by refusing to take them seriously. Napoleon, who had never met them in battle, imagined that their unbroken success was due to some weakness in his marshals rather than to any excellence of the troops. "At last I have them, these English," he exclaimed, as he gazed at the thin red line at Waterloo. "At last they have me, these English," may have been his thought that evening as he spurred his horse out of the debacle. Foy warned him of the truth. "The British infantry is the devil,"

said he. “You think so because you were beaten by them,” cried Napoleon. Like von Kluck or von Kluck’s master, he had something to learn.

Why this continual depreciation? It may be that the world pays so much attention to our excellent right arm that it cannot give us credit for having a very serviceable left as well. Or it may be that they take seriously those jeremiads over our decay which are characteristic of our people, and very especially of many of our military thinkers. I have never been able to understand why they should be of so pessimistic a turn of mind, unless it be a sort of exaltation of that grumbling which has always been the privilege of the old soldier. Croker narrates how he met Wellington in his latter years, and how the Iron Duke told him that he was glad that he was so old, as he would not live to see the dreadful military misfortunes which were about to come to his country. Looking back we can see no reasons for such pessimism as this. Above all, the old soldier can never make any allowance for the latent powers which lie in civilian patriotism and valour. Only a year ago I had a long conversation with a well-known British General, in which he asserted with great warmth that in case of an Anglo-German war with France involved the British public would never allow a trained soldier to leave these islands. He is at the front himself and doing such good work that he has little time for reminiscence, but when he has he must admit that he underrated the nerve of his countrymen.

And yet under the pessimism of such men as he there is a curious contradictory assurance that there are no troops like our own. The late Lord Goschen used to tell a story of a letter that he had from a captain in the Navy at the time when he was First Lord. This captain’s ship was lying alongside a foreign cruiser in some port, and he compared in his report the powers of the two vessels. Lord Goschen said that his heart sank as he read the long catalogue of points in which the British ship was inferior—guns, armour, speed—until he came to the postscript, which was: “I think I could take her in twenty minutes.”

With all the grumbling of our old soldiers there is always some reservation of the sort at the end of it. Of course those who are familiar with our ways of getting things done would understand that a good deal of the croaking is a means of getting our little army increased, or at least preventing its being diminished. But whatever the cause, the result has been the impression abroad of a “contemptible little army.” Whatever surprise in the shape of 17-inch howitzers or 900-foot Zeppelins the Kaiser may have for us, it is a safe prophecy that it will be a small matter compared to that which Sir John French and his men will be to him.

But above all I look forward to the development of our mounted riflemen. This I say in no disparagement of our cavalry, who have done so magnificently. But

the mounted rifleman is a peculiarly British product—British and American—with a fresh edge upon it from South Africa. I am most curious to see what a division of these fellows will make of the Uhlans. It is good to see that already the old banners are in the wind—Lovat's Horse, Scottish Horse, King Edward's Horse, and the rest. All that cavalry can do will surely be done by our cavalry. But I have always held, and I still very strongly hold, that the mounted rifleman has it in him to alter our whole conception of warfare, as the mounted archer did in his day; and now in this very war will be his first great chance upon a large scale. Ten thousand well-mounted, well-trained riflemen, young officers to lead them, all broad Germany with its towns, its railways, and its magazines before them—there lies one more surprise for the doctrinaires of Berlin.

VI

A POLICY OF MURDER

When one writes with a hot heart upon events which are still recent one is apt to lose one's sense of proportion. At every step one should check oneself by the reflection as to how this may appear ten years hence, and how far events which seem shocking and abnormal may prove themselves to be a necessary accompaniment of every condition of war. But a time has now come when in cold blood, with every possible restraint, one is justified in saying that since the most barbarous campaigns of Alva in the Lowlands, or the excesses of the Thirty Years' War, there has been no such deliberate policy of murder as has been adopted in this struggle by the German forces. This is the more terrible since these forces are not, like those of Alva, Parma, or Tilly, bands of turbulent. and mercenary soldiers, but they are the nation itself, and their deeds are condoned or even applauded by the entire national Press. It is not on the chiefs of the army that the whole guilt of this terrible crime must rest, but it is upon the whole German nation, which for generations to come must stand condemned before the civilised world for this reversion to those barbarous practices from which Christianity, civilisation, and chivalry had gradually rescued the human race. They may, and do, plead the excuse that they are "earnest" in war, but all nations are earnest in war, which is the most desperately earnest thing of which we have any knowledge. How earnest we are will be shown when the question of endurance begins to tell. But no earnestness can condone the crime of the nation which deliberately breaks those laws which have been endorsed by the common consent of humanity.

War may have a beautiful as well as a terrible side, and be full of touches of human sympathy and restraint which mitigate its unavoidable horror. Such

have been the characteristics always of the secular wars between the British and the French. From the old glittering days of knighthood, with their high and gallant courtesy, through the eighteenth-century campaigns where the debonair guards of France and England exchanged salutations before their volleys, down to the last great Napoleonic struggle, the tradition of chivalry has always survived. We read how in the Peninsula the pickets of the two armies, each of them as earnest as any Germans, would exchange courtesies, how they would shout warnings to each other to fall back when an advance in force was taking place, and how, to prevent the destruction of an ancient bridge, the British promised not to use it on condition that the French would forgo its destruction —an agreement faithfully kept upon either side. Could one imagine Germans making war in such a spirit as this? Think of that old French bridge, and then think of the University of Louvain and the Cathedral of Rheims. What a gap between them—the gap that separates civilisation from the savage!

Let us take a few of the points which, when focussed together, show how the Germans have degraded warfare—a degradation which affects not only the Allies at present, but the whole future of the world, since if such examples were followed the entire human race would, each in turn, become the sufferers. Take the very first incident of the war, the mine-laying by the Königin Luise. Here was a vessel, which was obviously made ready with freshly charged mines some time before there was any question of a general European war, which was sent forth in time of peace, and which, on receipt of a wireless message, began to spawn its hellish cargo across the North Sea at points 50 miles from land in the track of all neutral merchant shipping. There was the keynote of German tactics struck at the first possible instant. So promiscuous was the effect that it was a mere chance which prevented the vessel which bore the German Ambassador from being destroyed by a German mine. From first to last some hundreds of people have lost their lives on this tract of sea, some of them harmless British trawlers, but the greater number sailors of Danish and Dutch vessels pursuing their commerce as they had every right to do. It was the first move in a consistent policy of murder.

Leaving the sea, let us turn to the air. Can any possible term save a policy of murder be applied to the use of aircraft by the Germans? It has always been a principle of warfare that unfortified towns should not be bombarded. So closely has it been followed by the British that one of our aviators, flying over Cologne in search of a Zeppelin shed, refrained from dropping a bomb in an uncertain light, even though Cologne is a fortress, lest the innocent should suffer. What is to be said, then, for the continual use of bombs by the Germans, which have usually been wasted in the destruction of cats or dogs, but which have occasionally torn to pieces some woman or child? If bombs were dropped on the forts of Paris as part of a scheme for reducing the place, then nothing could be said in objection, but how are we to describe the action

of men who fly over a crowded city dropping bombs promiscuously which can have no military effect whatever, and are entirely aimed at the destruction of innocent civilians? These men have been obliging enough to drop their cards as well as their bombs on several occasions. I see no reason why these should not be used in evidence against them, or why they should not be hanged as murderers when they fall into the hands of the Allies. The policy is idiotic from a military point of view; one could conceive nothing which would stimulate and harden national resistance more surely than such petty irritations. But it is a murderous innovation in the laws of war, and unless it is sternly repressed it will establish a most sinister precedent for the future.

As to the treatment of Belgium, what has it been but murder, murder all the way? From the first days at Visé, when it was officially stated that an example of "frightfulness" was desired, until the present moment, when the terrified population has rushed from the country and thrown itself upon the charity and protection of its neighbours, there has been no break in the record. Compare the story with that of the occupation of the South of France by Wellington in 1813, when no one was injured, nothing was taken without full payment, and the villagers fraternised with the troops. What a relapse of civilisation is here! From Visé to Louvain, Louvain to Aerschott, Aerschott to Malines and Termonde, the policy of murder never fails.

It is said that more civilians than soldiers have fallen in Belgium. Peruse the horrible accounts taken by the Belgian Commission, who took evidence in the most careful and conscientious fashion. Study the accounts of that dreadful night in Louvain which can only be equalled by the Spanish Fury of Antwerp. Read the account of the wife of the burgomaster of Aerschott, with its heart-rending description of how her lame son, aged sixteen, was kicked along to his death by an aide-de-camp. It is all so vile, so brutally murderous that one can hardly realise that one is reading the incidents of a modern campaign conducted by one of the leading nations in Europe.

Do you imagine that the thing has been exaggerated? Far from it—the volume of crime has not yet been appreciated. Have not many Germans unwittingly testified to what they have seen and done? Only last week we had the journal of one of them, an officer whose service had been almost entirely in France and removed from the crime centres of Belgium. Yet were ever such entries in the diary of a civilised soldier? "Our men behaved like regular Vandals." "We shot the whole lot" (these were villagers). "They were drawn up in three ranks. The same shot did for three at a time." "In the evening we set fire to the village. The priest and some of the inhabitants were shot." "The villages all round were burning." "The villages were burned and the inhabitants shot." "At Leppe apparently two hundred men were shot. There must have been some innocent men among them." "Inthe future we shall have to hold an inquiry into

their guilt instead of merely shooting them." "The Vandals themselves could not have done more damage. The place is a disgrace to our army." So the journal runs on with its tale of infamy. It is an infamy so shameless that even in the German record the story is perpetuated of how a French lad was murdered because he refused to answer certain questions. To such a depth of degradation has Prussia brought the standard of warfare.

And now, as the appetite for blood grows ever stronger—and nothing waxes more fast—we have stories of the treatment of prisoners. Here is a point where our attention should be most concentrated and our action most prompt. It is the just duty which we owe to our own brave soldiers. At present the instances are isolated, and we will hope that they do not represent any general condition. But the stories come from sure sources. There is the account of the brutality which culminated in the death of the gallant motor-cyclist Pearson, the son of Lord Cowdray. There is the horrible story in a responsible Dutch paper, told by an eye-witness, of the torture of three British wounded prisoners in Landen Station on October 9.

The story carries conviction by its detail. Finally, there are the disquieting remarks of German soldiers, repeated by this same witness, as to the British prisoners whom they had shot. The whole lesson of history is that when troops are allowed to start murder one can never say how or when it will stop. It may no longer be part of a deliberate, calculated policy of murder by the German Government. But it has undoubtedly been so in the past, and we cannot say when it will end. Such incidents will, I fear, make peace an impossibility in our generation, for whatever statesmen may write upon paper can never affect the deep and bitter resentment which a war so conducted must leave behind it.

Other German characteristics we can ignore. The consistent, systematic lying of the German Press, or the grotesque blasphemies of the Kaiser, can be met by us with contemptuous tolerance. After all, what is is, and neither falsehood nor bombast will alter it. But this policy of murder deeply affects not only ourselves but the whole framework of civilisation so slowly and painfully built upwards by the human race.

VII

MADNESS

We have all, I suppose, read and marvelled at the wonderful German "song of hate." This has been so much admired over the water that Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria (who had just stated his bitter hatred of us in a prose army order) distributed copies of the verses to his Bavarians as a stimulant in their long,

unsuccessful tussle with our troops at Ypres. In case the reader has forgotten its flavour, I append a typical verse:

”We will never forgo our hate.

We have all but a single hate.

We love as one, we hate as one,

We have one foe and one alone—

ENGLAND.”

This sort of thing is, it must be admitted, very painful and odious. It fills us with a mixture of pity and disgust, and we feel as if, instead of a man, we were really fighting with a furious, screaming woman. Germany used to be a very great nation, mentally and morally as well as in material ways, and many of us, even while we fight her, are honestly pained by the depths of degradation into which she has fallen. This shrill scream of hate and constant frenzied ranting against Great Britain may reach its highest note in this poem, but we know that it pervades the whole Press and every class of national thought. It is deliberately fed by lying journals, which publish bogus letters describing the imaginary sufferings of German prisoners, and also by the Government itself, which upon receiving a Socialist report partly favourable to Britain, excised those passages and circulated the rest as a complete document, so as to give the idea that it was wholly condemnatory. Wherever we touch Germany in its present phase, whether it be the Overlord himself with his megalomaniac messages, the princes with their looting of châteaux, the Foreign Office with its trick of stealing American passports for the use of German spies, the army with its absolute brutality, the navy with its tactics of mine-laying in neutral waters, the Press with its grotesque concoctions, the artists with their pictures, which are so base that the decent Germans have themselves at last rebelled against them, or the business men with their assertion that there is less economic disturbance in Germany than in Great Britain—wherever, I say, you touch them you come always upon what is odious and deceitful. A long century will have passed before Germany can wash her hands clean from murder, or purge from her spirit the shadow of this evil time.

If the words of one humble individual could reach across the seas, there are two things upon which I should wish to speak earnestly to a German: the one, our own character, the other, the future which he is deliberately preparing for the Fatherland which he loves. Our papers do get over there, even as theirs come over here, so one may hope it is not impossible that some German may give a thought to what I say, if he is not so bemused by the atmosphere of lies in which his Press has enveloped him that he cannot recognise cold truth when he sees it.

First as to ourselves: we have never been a nation who fought with hatred. It is

our ideal to fight in a sporting spirit. It is not that we are less in earnest, but it is that the sporting spirit itself is a thing very largely evolved by us and is a natural expression of our character. We fight as hard as we can, and we like and admire those who fight hard against us so long as they keep within the rules of the game. Let me take an obvious example. One German has done us more harm than any other in this war. He is Captain von Müller of the Emden, whose depredations represent the cost of a battleship. Yet an honest sigh of relief went up from us all when we learned that he had not perished with his ship, and if he walked down Fleet Street to-day he would be cheered by the crowd from end to end. Why? Because almost alone among Germans he has played the game as it should be played. It is true that everything that he did was illegal. He had no right to burn uncondemned prizes, and a purist could claim that he was a pirate. But we recognised the practical difficulties of his position; we felt that under the circumstances he had acted like a gentleman, and we freely forgave him any harm that he had done us. With this example before you, my German reader, you cannot say that it is national hatred when we denounce your murderers and brigands in Belgium. If they, too, had acted as gentlemen, we should have felt towards them as to von Müller.

If you look back in British history, you will find that this absence of hatred has always been characteristic of us. When Soult came to London after the Napoleonic wars, he was cheered through the City. After the Boer War, Botha, de Wet, and Delarey had a magnificent reception. We did not know that one of them was destined to prove a despicable and perjured traitor. They had been good fighters, the fight was done, we had shaken hands—and we cheered them. All British prize-fights ended with the shaking of hands. Though the men could no longer see each other, they were led up and their hands were joined. When a combatant refuses to do this, it has always been looked upon as unmanly, and we say that bad blood has been left behind. So in war we have always wished to fight to a finish and then be friends, whether we had won or lost.

Now, this is just what we should wish to do with Germany, and it is what Germany is rapidly making impossible. She has, in our opinion, fought a brave but a thoroughly foul fight. And now she uses every means to excite a bitter hatred which shall survive the war. The Briton is tolerant and easy-going in times of peace—too careless, perhaps, of the opinion of other nations. But at present he is in a most alert and receptive mood, noting and remembering very carefully every word that comes to him as to the temper of the German people and the prospects of the future. He is by no means disposed to pass over all these announcements of permanent hatred. On the contrary, he is evidently beginning, for the first time since Napoleon’s era, to show something approaching to hatred in return. He—and “he” stands for every Briton across the seas as well as for the men of the Islands—makes a practical note of it all,

and it will not be forgotten, but will certainly bear very definite fruits. The national thoughts do not come forth in wild poems of hate, but they none the less are gloomy and resentful, with the deep, steady resentment of a nation which is slow to anger.

And now, my problematical German reader, I want you to realise what this is going to mean to you after the war. Whether you win or lose—and we have our own very certain opinion as to which it will be—Germany will still remain as a great independent State. She may be a little trimmed at the edges, and she may also find herself with some awkward liabilities; but none the less she will be a great kingdom or republic—as the Fates may will. She will turn her hand to trade and try to build up her fortunes once more—for even if we suppose her to be the victor, she still cannot live for ever on plunder, and must turn herself to honest trade, while if she loses her trade will be more precious to her than ever. But what will her position be when that time has come?

It will be appalling. No other word can express it. No legislation will be needed to keep German goods out of the whole British Empire, which means more than a quarter of the globe. Anything with that mark might as well have a visible cholera bacillus upon it for the chance it will have of being handled after this war. That is already certain, and it is the direct outcome of the madness which has possessed Germany in her frantic outcry of hatred. What chance they have of business with France, Russia, or Japan they know best themselves; but the British Empire, with that wide trade toleration which has long been her policy (and for which she has had so little gratitude), would have speedily forgiven Germany and opened her markets to her. Now it is not for many a long year that this can be so—not on account of the war, but on account of the bitterness which Germany has gone out of her way to import into the contest. It is idle to say that in that case we should lose our exports to Germany. Even if it were so, it would not in the least affect the sentiments of the retail sellers and buyers in this country, whose demands regulate the wholesale trade. But as a matter of fact, what Germany buys from the British Empire is the coal, wool, etc., which are the raw materials of her industry, with which she cannot possibly dispense.

But the pity of it all! We might have had a straight, honest fight, and at the end of it we might have conceded that the German people had been innocently misled, by their military caste and their Press, into the idea that their country was being attacked, and so were themselves guiltless in the matter. They, on their side, might at last have understood that Britain had been placed in such a position by her guarantees to Belgium that it was absolutely impossible that she could stand out of the war. With these mutual concessions, some sort of friendship could possibly have been restored, for it is no one’s interest, and least of all ours, that the keystone should be knocked right out of the European

arch. But all this has been rendered impossible by these hysterical screamers of hate, and by those methods of murder on land, sea, and in air with which the war has been conducted. Hate is a very catching emotion, and when it translates itself into action it soon glows on either side of the North Sea. With neither race, to use Carlyle's simile, does it blaze like the quick-flaming stubble, but with both it will smoulder like the slow red peat. Are there not even now strong, sane men in Germany who can tell these madmen what they are sowing for the next generation and the one that comes after it? It is not that we ask them to abate the resistance of their country. It is understood that this is a fight to the end. That is what we desire. But let them stand up and fight without reviling; let them give punishment without malice and receive it without wincing; let their press cease from lying, and their prophets from preaching hatred—then, lose or win, there may still be some chance for their future. But, alas! the mischief is already, I fear, too deep. When the seeds are sown, it is hard to check the harvest. Let the impartial critic consider von Müller of the Emden, and then, having surveyed our Press and that of Germany, let him say with whom lies the blame.

VIII

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE NEXT WAR

This essay is of some interest, as it was written two years before the war, and was one of the first attempts to make the public realise the importance of Bernhardi's notorious book. The author follows it by an unpublished essay called "Afterthoughts," in which he examines how far his reading of the future has been justified by the event.

I am a member of the Anglo-German Society for the improvement of the relations between the two countries, and I have never seriously believed in the German menace. Frequently I have found myself alone in a company of educated Englishmen in my opinion that it was non-existent—or at worst greatly exaggerated. This conclusion was formed upon two grounds. The first was, that I knew it to be impossible that we could attack Germany save in the face of monstrous provocation. By the conditions of our government, even if those in high places desired to do such a thing, it was utterly impracticable, for a foreign war could not be successfully carried on by Great Britain unless the overwhelming majority of the people approved of it. Our foreign, like our home, politics are governed by the vote of the proletariat. It would be impossible to wage an aggressive war against any Power if the public were not convinced of its justice and necessity. For this reason we could not attack Germany. On the other hand, it seemed to be equally unthinkable that

Germany should attack us. One fails to see what she could possibly hope to gain by such a proceeding. She had enemies already upon her eastern and western frontiers, and it was surely unlikely that she would go out of her way to pick a quarrel with the powerful British Empire. If she made war and lost it, her commerce would be set back and her rising colonial empire destroyed. If she won it, it was difficult to see where she could hope for the spoils. We could not give her greater facilities for trade than she has already. We could not give her habitable white colonies, for she would find it impossible to take possession of them in the face of the opposition of the inhabitants. An indemnity she could never force from us. Some coaling stations and possibly some tropical colonies, of which latter she already possesses abundance, were the most that she could hope for. Would such a prize as that be worth the risk attending such a war? To me it seemed that there could be only one answer to such a question.

It still seems to me that this reasoning is sound. I still think that it would be an insane action for Germany deliberately to plan an attack upon Great Britain. But unfortunately an attack delivered from mistaken motives is as damaging as any other attack, and the mischief is done before the insanity of it is realised. If I now believe such an attack to be possible, and it may be imminent, it is because I have been studying Germany and the Next War, by General von Bernhardi.

A book written by such a man cannot be set aside as the mere ravings of a Pan-Germanic Anglophobe. So far as appears, he is not a Pan-German at all. There is no allusion to that Germania irredente which is the dream of that party. He is a man of note, and the first living authority in Germany upon some matters of military science. Does he carry the same weight when he writes of international politics and the actual use of those mighty forces which he has helped to form? We will hope not. But when a man speaks with the highest authority upon one subject, his voice cannot be entirely disregarded upon a kindred one. Besides, he continually labours, and with success, to make the reader understand that he is the direct modern disciple of that main German line of thought which traces from Frederick through Bismarck to the present day. He moves in circles which actually control the actions of their country in a manner to which we have no equivalent. For all these reasons, his views cannot be lightly set aside, and should be most carefully studied by Britons. We know that we have no wish for war, and desire only to be left alone. Unfortunately, it takes two to make peace, even as it takes two to make a quarrel. There is a very clear statement here that the quarrel is imminent, and that we must think of the means, military, naval, and financial, by which we may meet it. Since von Bernhardi’s book may not be accessible to every reader of this article, I will begin by giving some idea of the situation as it appears to him, and of the course of action which he foreshadows and recommends.

He begins his argument by the uncompromising statement that war is a good thing in itself. All advance is founded upon struggle. Each nation has a right, and indeed a duty, to use violence where its interests are concerned and there is a tolerable hope of success. As to the obvious objection that such a doctrine bears no possible relation to Christianity, he is not prepared to admit the validity of the Christian ethics in international practice. In an ingenious passage he even attempts to bring the sanction of Christianity to support his bellicose views. He says:—

"Again, from the Christian standpoint, we arrive at the same conclusion. Christian morality is based, indeed, on the law of love. 'Love God above all things, and thy neighbour as thyself.' This law can claim no significance for the relations of one country to another, since its application to politics would lead to a conflict of duties. The love which a man showed to another country as such would imply a want of love for his own countrymen. Such a system of politics must inevitably lead men astray. Christian morality is personal and social, and in its nature cannot be political. Its object is to promote morality of the individual, in order to strengthen him to work unselfishly in the interests of the community. It tells us to love our individual enemies, but does not remove the conception of enmity."

Having thus established the general thesis that a nation should not hesitate to declare war where a material advantage may be the reward, he sets out very clearly what are some of the causes for war which Germany can see before her. The following passages throw a light upon them:—

"Strong, healthy, and flourishing nations increase in numbers. From a given moment they require a continual expansion of their frontiers, they require new territory for the accommodation of their surplus population. Since almost every part of the globe is inhabited, new territory must, as a rule, be obtained at the cost of its possessors—that is to say, by conquest, which thus becomes a law of necessity."

Again:—

"Lastly, in all times the right of conquest by war has been admitted. It may be that a growing people cannot win colonies from uncivilised races, and yet the State wishes to retain the surplus population which the mother country can no longer feed. Then the only course left is to acquire the necessary territory by war. Thus the instinct of self-preservation leads inevitably to war, and the conquest of foreign soil. It is not the possessor, but the victor, who then has the right."

And he concludes:—

"Arbitration treaties must be peculiarly detrimental to an aspiring people, which has not yet reached its political and national zenith, and is bent on

expanding its power in order to play its part honourably in the civilised world."

And adds:—

"It must be borne in mind that a peaceful decision by an arbitration court can never replace in its effects and consequences a warlike decision, even as regards the State in whose favour it is pronounced."

To many of us it would seem a legitimate extension of the author's argument if we said that it would have a virile and bracing effect upon our characters if, when we had a grievance against our neighbour, we refrained from taking it into the law courts, but contented ourselves with breaking his head with a club. However, we are concerned here not so much with the validity of the German general's arguments as with their practical application so far as they affect ourselves.

Brushing aside the peace advocates, the writer continues: "To such views, the off-spring of a false humanity, the clear and definite answer must be made that, under certain circumstances, it is not only the right but the moral and political duty of the statesman to bring about a war. The acts of the State cannot be judged by the standard of individual morality." He quotes Treitschke: "The Christian duty of sacrifice for something higher does not exist for the State, for there is nothing higher than it in the world's history—consequently it cannot sacrifice itself to something higher." One would have hoped that a noble ideal and a moral purpose were something higher, but it would be vain to claim that any country, ourselves included, have ever yet lived fully up to the doctrine. And yet some conscious striving, however imperfect, is surely better than such a deliberate negation.

Having laid down these general propositions of the value of war, and of the non-existence of international moral obligations, General von Bernhardi then proceeds to consider very fully the general position of Germany and the practical application of those doctrines. Within the limits of this essay I can only give a general survey of the situation as seen by him. War is necessary for Germany. It should be waged as soon as is feasible, as certain factors in the situation tell in favour of her enemies. The chief of these factors are the reconstruction of the Russian fleet, which will be accomplished within a few years, and the preparation of a French native colonial force, which would be available for European hostilities. This also, though already undertaken, will take some years to perfect. Therefore, the immediate future is Germany's best opportunity.

In this war Germany places small confidence in Italy as an ally, since her interests are largely divergent, but she assumes complete solidarity with Austria. Austria and Germany have to reckon with France and Russia. Russia

is slow in her movements, and Germany, with her rapid mobilisation, should be able to throw herself upon France without fear of her rear. Should she win a brilliant victory at the outset, Russia might refuse to compromise herself at all, especially if the quarrel could be so arranged that it would seem as if France had been the aggressor. Before the slow Slavonic mind had quite understood the situation and set her unwieldy strength in motion, her ally might be struck down, and she face to face with the two Germanic Powers, which would be more than a match for her.

Of the German army, which is to be the instrument of this world-drama, General von Bernhardi expresses the highest opinion: “The spirit which animates the troops, the ardour of attack, the heroism, the loyalty which prevail among them, justify the highest expectations. I am certain that if they are soon to be summoned to arms their exploits will astonish the world, provided only that they are led with skill and determination.” How their “ardour of attack” has been tested it is difficult to see, but the world will probably agree that the German army is a most formidable force. When he goes on, however, to express the opinion that they would certainly overcome the French, the two armies being approximately of the same strength, it is not so easy to follow his argument. It is possible that even so high an authority as General von Bernhardi has not entirely appreciated how Germany has been the teacher of the world in military matters and how thoroughly her pupils have responded to that teaching. That attention to detail, perfection of arrangement for mobilisation, and careful preparation which have won German victories in the past may now be turned against her, and she may find that others can equal her in her own virtues.

Poor France, once conquered, is to be very harshly treated. Here is the passage which describes her fate:—

“In one way or another we must square our account with France if we wish for a free hand in our international policy. This is the first and foremost condition of a sound German policy, and since the hostility of France once for all cannot be removed by peaceful overtures, the matter must be settled by force of arms. France must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path.”

It is not said how Germany could permanently extinguish France, and it is difficult to think it out. An indemnity, however large, would eventually be paid and France recover herself. Germany has found the half-German border provinces which she annexed so indigestible that she could hardly incorporate Champagne or any other purely French district. Italy might absorb some of Savoy and the French Riviera. If the country were artificially separated the various parts would fly together again at the first opportunity. Altogether, the permanent sterilisation of France would be no easy matter to effect. It would

probably be attempted by imposing the condition that in the future no army, save for police duties, would be allowed her. The history of Prussia itself, however, shows that even so stringent a prohibition as this can be evaded by a conquered but indomitable people.

Let us now turn to General von Bernhardi's views upon ourselves; and, first of all, it is of interest to many of us to know what are those historical episodes which have caused him and many of his fellow-countrymen to take bitter exception to our national record. From our point of view we have repeatedly helped Germany in the past, and have asked for and received no other reward than the consciousness of having co-operated in some common cause. So it was in Marlborough's days. So in the days of Frederick. So also in those of Napoleon. To all these ties, which had seemed to us to be of importance, there is not a single allusion in this volume. On the other hand, there are very bitter references to some other historical events which must seem to us strangely inadequate as a cause for international hatred.

We may, indeed, congratulate ourselves as a nation, if no stronger indictment can be made against us than is contained in the book of the German general. The first episode upon which he animadverts is the ancient German grievance of the abandonment of Frederick the Great by England in the year 1761. One would have thought that there was some statute of limitations in such matters, but apparently there is none in the German mind. Let us grant that the premature cessation of a campaign is an injustice to one's associates, and let us admit also that a British Government under its party system can never be an absolutely stable ally. Having said so much, one may point out that there were several mitigating circumstances in this affair. We had fought for five years, granting considerable subsidies to Frederick during that time, and dispatching British armies into the heart of Germany. The strain was very great, in a quarrel which did not vitally affect ourselves. The British nation had taken the view, not wholly unreasonably, that the war was being waged in the interests of Hanover, and upon a German rather than a British quarrel. When we stood out France did the same, so that the balance of power between the combatants was not greatly affected. Also, it may be pointed out as a curious historical fact that this treatment which he so much resented was exactly that which Frederick had himself accorded to his allies some years before at the close of the Silesian campaign. On that occasion he made an isolated peace with Maria Theresa, and left his associates, France and Bavaria, to meet the full force of the Austrian attack.

Finally the whole episode has to be judged by the words of a modern writer: "Conditions may arise which are more powerful than the most honourable intentions. The country's own interests—considered, of course, in the highest ethical sense—must then turn the scale." These sentences are not from the

work of a British apologist, but from this very book of von Bernhardi’s which scolds England for her supposed adherence to such principles. He also quotes, with approval, Treitschke’s words: “Frederick the Great was all his life long charged with treachery because no treaty or alliance could ever induce him to renounce the right of free self-determination.”

Setting aside this ancient grievance of the Seven Years’ War, it is of interest to endeavour to find out whether there are any other solid grounds in the past for Germany’s reprobation. Two more historical incidents are held up as examples of our perfidy. The first is the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807, when the British took forcible possession in time of peace of the Danish fleet. It must be admitted that the step was an extreme one, and only to be justified upon the plea of absolute necessity for vital national reasons. The British Government of the day believed that Napoleon was about to possess himself of the Danish fleet and would use it against themselves. Fouché has admitted in his Memoirs that the right was indeed given by a secret clause in the Treaty of Tilsit. It was a desperate time, when the strongest measures were continually being used against us, and it may be urged that similar measures were necessary in self-defence. Having once embarked upon the enterprise, and our demand being refused, there was no alternative but a bombardment of the city with its attendant loss of civilian life. It is not an exploit of which we need be proud, and at the best can only be described as a most painful and unfortunate necessity; but I should be surprised if the Danes, on looking back to it, judge it more harshly than some more recent experiences which they have had at the hands of General von Bernhardi's own fellow-countrymen. That he is himself prepared to launch upon a similar enterprise in a much larger and more questionable shape is shown by his declaration that if Holland will not take sides against England in the next war it should be overrun by the German troops.

General von Bernhardi's next historical charge is the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882, which he describes as having been affected upon hypocritical pretences in a season of peace. To those who have a recollection of that event and can recall the anti-European movement of Arabi and the massacre which preceded the bombardment, the charge will appear grotesque. But it is with a patchwork quilt of this sort that this German publicist endeavours to cover the unreasoning, but none the less formidable, jealousy and prejudice which inflame him against this country. The foolish fiction that the British Government declared war against the Boers in order to gain possession of their gold mines is again brought forward, though one would have imagined that even the gutter-Press who exploited it twelve years ago had abandoned it by now. If General von Bernhardi can explain how the British Government is the richer for these mines, or whether a single foreign shareholder has been dispossessed of his stock in them, he will be the first

who has ever given a solid fact in favour of this ridiculous charge. In a previous paragraph of his book he declares that it was President Kruger who made the war and that he was praiseworthy for so doing. Both statements cannot be true. If it was President Kruger who made the war, then it was not forced on by Great Britain in order to possess herself of the goldfields.

So much for the specific allegations against Great Britain. One can hardly regard them as being so serious as to wipe out the various claims, racial, religious, and historical, which unite the two countries. However, we are only concerned with General von Bernhardi's conclusions, since he declares that his country is prepared to act upon them. There remain two general grounds upon which he considers that Germany should make war upon the British Empire. The first is to act as the champion of the human race in winning what he calls the freedom of the seas. The second is to further German expansion as a world-Power, which is cramped by our opposition.

The first of these reasons is difficult to appreciate. British maritime power has been used to ensure, not to destroy, the freedom of the seas. What smallest Power has ever been hindered in her legitimate business? It is only the pirate, the slaver, and the gun-runner who can justly utter such a reproach. If the mere fact of having predominant latent strength upon the water is an encroachment upon the freedom of the sea, then some nation must always be guilty of it. After our mild supremacy we may well say to Germany, as Charles said to James: "No one will assassinate me in order to put you on the throne.” Her mandate is unendorsed by those whom she claims to represent.

But the second indictment is more formidable. We lie athwart Germany’s world ambitions, even as, geographically, we lie across her outlets. But when closely looked at, what is it of which we deprive her, and is its attainment really a matter of such vital importance? Do we hamper her trade? On the contrary, we exhibit a generosity which meets with no acknowledgment, and which many of us have long held to be altogether excessive. Her manufactured goods are welcomed in without a tax, while ours are held out from Germany by a 20 per cent. tariff. In India, Egypt, and every colony which does not directly control its own financial policy, German goods come in upon the same footing as our own. No successful war can improve her position in this respect. There is, however, the question of colonial expansion. General von Bernhardi foresees that Germany is increasing her population at such a pace that emigration will be needed soon in order to relieve it. It is a perfectly natural national ambition that this emigration should be to some place where the settlers need not lose their flag or nationality. But if Great Britain were out of the way, where would they find such a place? Not in Canada, Australia, South Africa, or New Zealand. These States could not be conquered if the Motherland had ceased to exist. General von Bernhardi talks of the high lands

of Africa, but already Germany possesses high lands in Africa, and their colonisation has not been a success. Can any one name one single place upon the earth's surface suitable for white habitation from which Germany is excluded by the existence of Great Britain? It is true that the huge continent of South America is only sparsely inhabited, its whole population being about equal to that of Prussia. But that is an affair in which the United States, and not we, are primarily interested, and one which it is not our interest either to oppose or to support.

But, however inadequate all these reasons for war may seem to a Briton, one has still to remember that we have to reckon with the conclusions exactly as if they were drawn from the most logical premises. These conclusions appear in such sentences as follows:—

"What we now wish to attain must be fought for and won against a superior force of hostile interests and Powers."

"Since the struggle is necessary and inevitable, we must fight it out, cost what it may."

"A pacific agreement with England is a will-o'-the-wisp, which no serious German statesman would trouble to follow. We must always keep the possibility of war with England before our eyes and arrange our political and military plans accordingly. We need not concern ourselves with any pacific protestations of English politicians, publicists, and Utopians, which cannot alter the real basis of affairs."

"The situation in the world generally shows there can only be a short respite before we once more face the question whether we will draw the sword for our position in the world, or renounce such position once for all. We must not in any case wait until our opponents have completed their arming and decide that the hour of attack has come."

"Even English attempts at a rapprochement must not blind us to the real situation. We may at most use them to delay the necessary and inevitable war until we may fairly imagine we have some prospect of success."

This last sentence must come home to some of us who have worked in the past for a better feeling between the two countries. And this is the man who dares to accuse us of national perfidy.

These extracts are but a few from a long series which show beyond all manner of doubt that Germany, so far as General von Bernhardi is an exponent of her intentions, will undoubtedly attack us suddenly should she see an opportunity. The first intimation of such attack would, as he indicates, be a torpedo descent upon our Fleet, and a wireless message to German liners which would bring up their concealed guns, and turn each of them into a fast cruiser ready to prey upon our commerce. That is the situation as he depicts it. It may be that he

mistakes it. But for what it is worth, that is his opinion and advice.

He sketches out the general lines of a war between England and Germany. If France is involved, she is to be annihilated, as already described. But suppose the two rivals are left face to face. Holland and Denmark are to be bound over to the German side under pain of conquest. The German Fleet is to be held back under the protection of the land forts. Meanwhile, torpedoes, submarines, and airships are to be used for the gradual whittling down of the blockading squadrons. When they have been sufficiently weakened the Fleet is to sally out and the day has arrived. As to the chances of success, he is of opinion that in material and personnel the two fleets may be taken as being equal—when once the numbers have been equalised. In quality of guns, he considers that the Germans have the advantage. Of gunnery he does not speak, but he believes that in torpedo work his countrymen are ahead of any others. In airships, which for reconnaissance, if not for actual fighting power, will be of supreme importance, he considers also that his country will have a considerable advantage.

Such, in condensed form, is the general thesis and forecast of this famous German officer. If it be true, there are evil days coming both for his country and for ours. One may find some consolation in the discovery that wherever he attempts to fathom our feelings he makes the most lamentable blunders. He lays it down as an axiom, for example, that if we were hard-pressed the Colonies would take the opportunity of abandoning us. We know, on the other hand, that it is just such a situation which would bring about the federation of the Empire. He is under the delusion also that there is deep commercial and political jealousy of the United States in this country, and that this might very well culminate in war. We are aware that there is no such feeling, and that next to holding the trident ourselves we should wish to see it in the hands of our American cousins. One thing he says, however, which is supremely true, which all of us would endorse, and which every German should ponder: it is that the idea of a war between Germany and ourselves never entered into the thoughts of any one in this country until the year 1902. Why this particular year? Had the feeling risen from commercial jealousy upon the part of Great Britain, it must have shown itself far earlier than that—as early as the “Made in Germany” enactment. It appeared in 1902 because that was the close of the Boer War, and because the bitter hostility shown by the Germans in that war opened our eyes to the fact that they would do us a mischief if they could. When the German Navy Act of 1900 gave promise that they would soon have the means of doing so, the first thoughts of danger arose, and German policy drove us more and more into the ranks of their opponents. Here, then, General von Bernhardi is right; but in nearly every other reference to our feelings and views he is wrong; so that it is to be hoped that in those matters in which we are unable to check him, such as the course of German thought and of German

action in the future, he is equally mistaken. But I repeat that he is a man of standing and reputation, and that we should be mad if we did not take most serious notice of the opinions which he has laid down.

I have headed this article “Great Britain and the Next War,” since it looks at the arguments and problems which General von Bernhardi has raised in his Germany and the Next War from the British point of view. May it prove that the title is an absurdity and the war an imaginative hypothesis. But I should wish, before I close, to devote a few pages to my view upon the defensive measures of our country. I am well aware that I speak with no expert authority, which makes it the more embarrassing that my opinions do not coincide with those of any one whom I have encountered in this controversy. Still, it is better to be a voice, however small, than an echo.

It would simplify the argument if we began by eliminating certain factors which, in my opinion, simply darken counsel, as they are continually brought into the front of the question to the exclusion of the real issues which lie behind them. One of them is the supposed possibility of an invasion—either on a large scale or in the form of a raid. The former has been pronounced by our highest naval authorities of the time as being impossible, and I do not think any one can read the Wilson Memorandum without being convinced by its condensed logic. Von Bernhardi, in his chapter upon the possible methods of injuring Great Britain, though he treats the whole subject with the greatest frankness, dismisses the idea either of raid or invasion in a few short sentences. The raid seems to me the less tenable hypothesis of the two. An invasion would, at least, play for a final stake, though at a deadly risk. A raid would be a certain loss of a body of troops, which would necessarily be the flower of the army; it could hope to bring about no possible permanent effect upon the war, and it would upset the balance of military power between Germany and her neighbours. If Germany were an island, like ourselves, she might risk such a venture. Sandwiched in between two armed nations as strong as herself, I do not believe that there is the slightest possibility of it.

But if, as Von Bernhardi says, such plans are visionary, what is the exact object of a Territorial Army, and, even more, what would be the object of a National Service Army upon compulsory lines for home defence? Is it not a waste of money and energy which might be more profitably employed in some other form? Everyone has such an affection and esteem for Lord Roberts—especially if one has the honour of his personal acquaintance—that one shrinks from expressing a view which might be unwelcome to him. And yet he would be the first to admit that it is one’s duty to add one’s opinion to the debate, if that opinion has been conscientiously formed, and if one honestly believes that it recommends the best course of action for one’s country. So far as his argument for universal service is based upon national health and

physique, I think he is on ground which no one could attack. But I cannot bring myself to believe that a case has been made out for the substitution of an enforced soldier in the place of the volunteer who has always done so splendidly in the past. Great as is Lord Roberts's experience, he is talking here of a thing which is outside it, for he has never seen an enforced British soldier, and has, therefore, no data by which he can tell how such a man would compare with the present article. There were enforced British sailors once, and I have seen figures quoted to show that of 29,000 who were impressed 27,000 escaped from the Fleet by desertion. It is not such men as these who win our battles.

The argument for enforced service is based upon the plea that the Territorial Army is below strength in numbers and deficient in quality. But if invasion is excluded from our calculations this is of less importance. The force becomes a nursery for the Army, which has other reserves to draw upon before it reaches it. Experience has shown that under warlike excitement in a virile nation like ours, the ranks soon fill up, and as the force becomes embodied from the outbreak of hostilities, it would rapidly improve in quality. It is idle to assert that because Bulgaria can, in a day, flood her troops into Turkey, therefore we should always stand to arms. The Turko-Bulgarian frontier is a line of posts—the Anglo-German is a hundred leagues of salt water.

But am I such an optimist as to say that there is no danger in a German war? On the contrary, I consider that there is a vast danger, that it is one which we ignore, and against which we could at a small cost effect a complete insurance. Let me try to define both the danger and the remedy. In order to do this we must consider the two different forms which such a war might take. It might be a single duel, or it might be with France as our ally. If Germany attacked Great Britain alone, it may safely be prophesied that the war would be long, tedious, and possibly inconclusive, but our rôlewould be a comparatively passive one. If she attacked France, however, that rôle would be much more active, since we could not let France go down, and to give her effective help we must land an expeditionary force upon the Continent. This force has to be supplied with munitions of war and kept up to strength, and so the whole problem becomes a more complex one.

The element of danger, which is serious in either form of war, but more serious in the latter, is the existence of new forms of naval warfare which have never been tested in the hands of competent men, and which may completely revolutionise the conditions. These new factors are the submarine and the airship. The latter, save as a means of acquiring information, does not seem to be formidable—or not sufficiently formidable to alter the whole conditions of a campaign. But it is different with the submarines. No blockade, so far as I can see, can hold these vessels in harbour, and no skill or bravery can

counteract their attack when once they are within striking distance. One could imagine a state of things when it might be found impossible for the greater ships on either side to keep the seas on account of these poisonous craft. No one can say that such a contingency is impossible. Let us see, then, how it would affect us if it should come to pass.

In the first place, it would not affect us at all as regards invasion or raids. If the German submarines can dominate our own large ships, our submarines can do the same for theirs. We should still hold the seas with our small craft. Therefore, if Great Britain alone be at war with Germany, such a naval revolution would merely affect our commerce and food supply. What exact effect a swarm of submarines, lying off the mouth of the Channel and the Irish Sea, would produce upon the victualling of these islands is a problem which is beyond my conjecture. Other ships besides the British would be likely to be destroyed, and international complications would probably follow. I cannot imagine that such a fleet would entirely, or even to a very large extent, cut off our supplies. But it is certain that they would have the effect of considerably raising the price of whatever did reach us. Therefore we should suffer privation, though not necessarily such privation as would compel us to make terms. From the beginning of the war, every home source would naturally be encouraged, and it is possible that before our external supplies were seriously decreased, our internal ones might be well on the way to make up the deficiency. Both of the two great protagonists—Lord Haldane and Lord Roberts—have declared that if we lost the command of the seas we should have to make peace. Their reference, however, was to complete naval defeat, and not to such a condition of stalemate as seems to be the more possible alternative. As to complete naval defeat, our estimates, and the grand loyalty of the Overseas Dominions, seem to be amply adequate to guard against that. It is useless to try to alarm us by counting in the whole force of the Triple Alliance as our possible foes, for if they came into the war, the forces of our own allies would also be available. We need only think of Germany.

A predominance of the submarine would, then, merely involve a period of hard times in this country, if we were fighting Germany single-handed. But if we were in alliance with France, it becomes an infinitely more important matter. I presume that I need not argue the point that it is our vital interest that France be not dismembered and sterilised. Such a tragedy would turn the western half of Europe into a gigantic Germany with a few insignificant States crouching about her feet. The period of her world dominance would then indeed have arrived. Therefore, if France be wantonly attacked, we must strain every nerve to prevent her going down, and among the measures to that end will be the sending of a British expeditionary force to cover the left or Belgian wing of the French defences. Such a force would be conveyed across the Channel in perhaps a hundred troopships, and would entail a constant service

of transports afterwards to carry its requirements.

Here lies, as it seems to me, the possible material for a great national disaster. Such a fleet of transports cannot be rushed suddenly across. Its preparation and port of departure are known. A single submarine amid such a fleet would be like a fox in a poultry yard destroying victim after victim. The possibilities are appalling, for it might be not one submarine, but a squadron. The terrified transports would scatter over the ocean to find safety in any port. Their convoy could do little to help them. It would be a debacle—an inversion of the Spanish Armada.

If the crossing were direct from the eastern ports to Antwerp, the danger would become greater. It is less if it should be from Portsmouth to Havre. But this is a transit of seven hours, and the railways from Havre to the Belgian frontier would be insufficient for such a force. No doubt the Straits of Dover would be strongly patrolled by our own torpedo craft, and the crossing would, so far as possible, be made at night, when submarines have their minimum of efficiency; but, none the less, it seems to me that the risk would be a very real and pressing one. What possible patrol could make sure of heading off a squadron of submarines? I should imagine it to be as difficult as to bar the Straits to a school of whales.

But supposing such a wholesale tragedy were avoided, and that in spite of the predominance of submarines the army got safely to France or to Belgium, how are we to ensure the safe passage of the long stream of ships which, for many months, would be employed in carrying the needful supplies? We could not do it. The army might very well find itself utterly isolated, with its line of communications completely broken down, at a time when the demand upon the resources of all Continental countries was so great that there was no surplus for our use. Such a state of affairs seems to me to be a perfectly possible one, and to form, with the chance of a disaster to the transports, the greatest danger to which we should be exposed in a German war. But these dangers and the food question, which has already been treated, can all be absolutely provided against in a manner which is not only effective, but which will be of equal value in peace and in war. The Channel Tunnel is essential to Great Britain’s safety.

I will not dwell here upon the commercial or financial advantages of such a tunnel. Where the trade of two great nations concentrates upon one narrow tube, it is obvious that whatever corporation controls that tube has a valuable investment, if the costs of construction have not been prohibitive. These costs have been placed as low as five million pounds by Mr. Rose Smith, who represents a practical company engaged in such work. If it were twice, thrice, or four times that sum it should be an undertaking which should promise great profits, and for that reason should be constructed by the nation, or nations, for

their common national advantage. It is too vital a thing for any private company to control.

But consider its bearing upon a German war. All the dangers which I have depicted are eliminated. We tap (via Marseilles and the tunnel) the whole food supply of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Our expeditionary force makes its transit, and has its supplies independent of weather or naval chances. Should anything so unlikely as a raid occur, and the forces in this country seem unable to cope with it, a Franco-British reinforcement can be rushed through from the Continent. The Germans have made great works like the Kiel Canal in anticipation of war. Our answer must be the Channel Tunnel, linking us closer to our ally.

Though this scheme was discarded (under very different naval and political conditions) some twenty years ago, no time has, as a matter of fact, been lost by the delay; as I am informed that machinery for boring purposes has so enormously improved that what would have taken thirty years to accomplish can now be done in three. If this estimate be correct, there may still be time to effect this essential insurance before the war with which General von Bernhardi threatens us breaks upon us.

Let us, before leaving the subject, glance briefly at the objections which have formerly been urged against the tunnel. Such as they are, they are as valid now as ever, although the advantages have increased to such an extent as to throw the whole weight of the argument upon the side of those who favour its construction. The main (indeed, the only) objection was the fear that the tunnel would fall into wrong hands and be used for purposes of invasion. By this was meant not a direct invasion through the tunnel itself—to invade a nation of forty-five million people through a hole in the ground twenty-five miles long would stagger the boldest mind—but that the tunnel might be seized at each end by some foreign nation, which would then use it for aggressive military purposes.

At the time of the discussion our relations with France were by no means so friendly as they are now, and it was naturally to France only that we alluded, since they would already hold one end of the tunnel. We need not now discuss any other nation, since any other would have to seize both ends by surprise, and afterwards retain them, which is surely inconceivable. We are now bound in close ties of friendship and mutual interest to France. We have no right to assume that we shall always remain on as close a footing, but as our common peril seems likely to be a permanent one, it is improbable that there will be any speedy or sudden change in our relations. At the same time, in a matter so vital as our hold upon the Dover end of the tunnel, we could not be too stringent in our precautions. The tunnel should open out at a point where guns command it, the mouth of it should be within the lines of an entrenched camp, and a

considerable garrison should be kept permanently within call. The latter condition already exists in Dover, but the numbers might well be increased. As an additional precaution, a passage should be driven alongside the tunnel, from which it could, if necessary, be destroyed. This passage should have an independent opening within the circle of a separate fort, so that the capture of the end of the tunnel would not prevent its destruction. With such precautions as these, the most nervous person might feel that our insular position had not really been interfered with. The strong fortress of the Middle Ages had a passage under the moat as part of the defence. This is our passage.

Could an enemy in any way destroy it in time of war?

It would, as I conceive, be sunk to a depth of not less than two hundred feet below the bed of the ocean. This ceiling would be composed of chalk and clay. No explosive from above could drive it in. If it were designed on a large scale —and, personally, I think it should be a four-line tunnel, even if the cost were doubled thereby—no internal explosion, such as might be brought about by secreting explosive packets upon the trains, would be likely to do more than temporarily obstruct it. If the very worst happened, and it were actually destroyed, we should be no worse off than we are now. As to the expense, if we are driven into a war of this magnitude, a few millions one way or the other will not be worth considering.

Incidentally, it may be noted that General von Bernhardi has a poor opinion of our troops. This need not trouble us. We are what we are, and words will not alter it. From very early days our soldiers have left their mark upon Continental warfare, and we have no reason to think that we have declined from the manhood of our forefathers. He further calls them “mercenaries,” which is a misuse of terms. A mercenary is a man who is paid to fight in a quarrel which is not his own. As every British soldier must by law be a British citizen, the term is absurd. What he really means is that they are not conscripts in the sense of being forced to fight, but they are sufficiently well paid to enable the army as a profession to attract a sufficient number of our young men to the colours.

Our military and naval preparations are, as it seems to me, adequate for the threatened crisis. With the Channel Tunnel added our position should be secure. But there are other preparations which should be made for such a contest, should it unhappily be forced upon us. One is financial. Again, as so often before in the history of British wars, it may prove that the last guinea wins. Everything possible should be done to strengthen British credit. This crisis cannot last indefinitely. The cloud will dissolve or burst. Therefore, for a time we should husband our resources for the supreme need. At such a time all national expenditure upon objects which only mature in the future becomes unjustifiable. Such a tax as the undeveloped land tax, which may bring in a

gain some day, but at present costs ten times what it produces, is the type of expenditure I mean. I say nothing of its justice or injustice, but only of its inopportuneness at a moment when we sorely need our present resources.

Another preparation lies in our national understanding of the possibility of such a danger and the determination to face the facts. Both Unionists and Liberals have shown their appreciation of the situation, and so have two of the most famous Socialist leaders. No audible acquiescence has come from the ranks of the Labour Party. I would venture to say one word here to my Irish fellow-countrymen of all political persuasions. If they imagine that they can stand politically or economically while Britain falls, they are woefully mistaken. The British Fleet is their one shield. If it be broken, Ireland will go down. They may well throw themselves heartily into the common defence, for no sword can transfix England without the point reaching Ireland behind her.

Let me say in conclusion, most emphatically, that I do not myself accept any of those axioms of General von Bernhardi which are the foundation-stones of his argument. I do not think that war is in itself a good thing, though a dishonourable peace may be a worse one. I do not believe that an Anglo-German war is necessary. I am convinced that we should never, of our own accord, attack Germany, nor would we assist France if she made an unprovoked attack upon that Power. I do not think that as the result of such a war, Germany could in any way extend her flag so as to cover a larger white population. Every one of his propositions I dispute. But that is all beside the question. We have not to do with his argument, but with its results. Those results are that he, a man whose opinion is of weight, and a member of the ruling class in Germany, tells us frankly that Germany will attack us the moment she sees a favourable opportunity. I repeat that we should be mad if we did not take very serious notice of the warning.

IX

AFTERTHOUGHTS

So it was so after all. I write after perusing what was written two years ago. I lean back in my chair and I think of the past. “So it really was so after all,” represents the thought which comes to my mind.

It seems hardly fair to call it a conspiracy. When a certain action is formulated quite clearly in many books, when it is advocated by newspapers, preached by professors, and discussed at every restaurant, it ceases to be a conspiracy. We may take Bernhardi’s book as a text, but it is only because here between two covers we find the whole essence of the matter in an authoritative form. It has

been said a thousand times elsewhere. And now we know for all time that these countless scolding and minatory voices were not mere angry units, but that they were in. truth the collective voice of the nation. All that Bernhardi said, all that after long disbelief he made some of us vaguely realise, has now actually happened. So far as Germany is concerned it has been fulfilled to the letter. Fortunately so far as other nations have been concerned it has been very different. He knew his own, but he utterly misjudged all else, and in that misjudgment he and his spy-trusting Government have dug a pit for themselves in which they long may flounder.

Make war deliberately whenever you think that you may get profit from it. Find an excuse, but let it be an excuse which will give you a strong position before the world and help your alliances. Take advantage of your neighbour's temporary weakness in order to attack him. Pretend to be friendly in order to screen warlike preparations. Do not let contracts or treaties stand in the way of your vital interests. All of these monstrous propositions are to be found in this vade mecum of the German politician and soldier, and each of them has been put in actual practice within a very few years of the appearance of the book. Take each of them in turn.

Take first the point that they made war deliberately, and took advantage of the imagined weakness of their neighbours in order to attack them. When was it that they backed up, if they did not actually dictate, the impossible ultimatum addressed as much to Russia as to Servia? When was it that they were so determined upon war that they made peace impossible at the moment when Austria was showing signs of reconsidering her position? Why so keen at that particular moment? Was it not that for the instant each of her three antagonists seemed to be at a disadvantage? Russia was supposed not to have recovered yet from her Japanese misadventure. France was torn by politics, and had admitted in the Senate that some important branches of her armies were unprepared. Britain seemed to be on the verge of civil war. It was just such a combination as was predicated by Bernhardi. And his country responded to it exactly as he had said, choosing the point of quarrel against the Slav race so as to conciliate the more advanced or liberal nations of the world.

Then again they pretended to be friendly in order to cover hostile preparations. To the very last moment the German Minister in Brussels was assuring the Government of King Albert that nothing but the best intentions animated those whom he represented, and that Belgian neutrality was safe. The written contract was deliberately dishonoured on the false and absurd plea that if they did not dishonour it some one else would. Thus, of the five propositions which had seemed most monstrous and inhuman in Bernhardi's book in 1912, every single one had been put into actual practice by his country in 1914. Those of us who advised at the time that the book should be taken seriously have surely

been amply justified.

It is a singular thing that Bernhardi not only indicated in a general way what Germany was contemplating, but in his other book upon modern warfare he gives a very complete sketch of the strategic conception which has been followed by the Germans. He shows there how their armies might come through Belgium, how their eastern forces might mark time while the western, which were to consist of the picked troops, would travel by forced marches until they reached the neighbourhood of the coast, or at least the west of Paris, after which the whole line should swing round into France. The chance that by these movements the German right would come into the region of the British expeditionary force is dismissed lightly, since he entirely underestimated the power of such a force, while as to the Belgian army it is hardly admitted as a factor at all. A comparison of the opinions of this great military authority with the actual facts as we have recently known them, must weaken one's faith in the value of expert judgment. He is, for example, strongly of opinion that battles will not as a rule last for more than one day. He has also so high an opinion of the supreme fighting value of the German soldiers, that he declares that they will always fight in the open rather than behind entrenchments. It makes strange reading for us who have seen them disappear from sight into the ground for a month at a time.

In what I have said in the previous article of the naval and military position, I find nothing to withdraw, and little to modify. I write with the Germans at Ostend, and yet the possibility of either a raid or an invasion seems to me as remote as it did two years ago. I do not of course refer to an aerial raid, which I look upon as extremely probable, but to a landing in these islands. The submarine which has been used so skilfully against us is an all-powerful defensive weapon in our hands. As to the submarine, I think that I may claim to have foreseen the situation which has actually come upon us. "No blockade," I remarked, "can hold these vessels in harbour, and no skill or bravery can counteract their attack when once they are within striking distance. One could imagine a state of things when it might be found impossible for the greater ships on either side to keep the seas on account of these poisonous craft. No one can say that such a contingency is impossible." It is largely true at the present moment as regards the North Sea. But the submarine will not shake Great Britain as mistress of the seas. On the contrary, with her geographical position, it will, if her internal economic policy be wise, put her in a stronger position than ever.

The whole question of the Channel Tunnel and its strategic effect, which is treated of in the last essay, becomes entirely academic, since even if it had been put in hand when the German menace became clearer it could not yet have been completed. The idea of an invasion through it has always seemed

and still seems to me to be absurd, but we should have been brought face to face at the present moment with the possibility of the enemy getting hold of the farther end and destroying it, so as to wreck a great national enterprise. This is a danger which I admit that I had not foreseen. At the same time, when a tunnel is constructed, the end of it will no doubt be fortified in such a fashion that it could be held indefinitely against any power save France, which would have so large a stake in it herself that she could not destroy it. The whole operation of sending reinforcements and supplies to the scene of war at the present instant would be enormously simplified if a tunnel were in existence.

There remains the fiercely debated question of compulsory national service. Even now, with the enemy at the gate, it seems to me to be as open as ever. Would we, under our constitution and with our methods of thought, have had such a magnificent response to Lord Kitchener's appeal, or would we have had such splendid political unanimity in carrying the war to a conclusion, if a large section of the people had started by feeling sore over an Act which caused themselves or their sons to serve whether they wished or not? Personally I do not believe that we should. I believe that the new volunteer armies now under training are of really wonderful material and fired with the very best spirit, and that they will be worth more than a larger force raised by methods which are alien to our customs. I said in my previous essay, "Experience has shown that under warlike excitement in a virile nation like ours the ranks soon fill up, and as the force becomes embodied from the outbreak of hostilities it would rapidly improve in quality." Already those Territorials who were so ignorantly and ungenerously criticised in times of peace are, after nearly three months of camp-life, hardening into soldiers who may safely be trusted in the field. Behind them the greater part of a million men are formed who will also become soldiers in a record time if a desperate earnestness can make them so. It is a glorious spectacle which makes a man thankful that he has been spared to see it. One is more hopeful of our Britain, and more proud of her, now that the German guns can be heard from her eastern shore, than ever in the long monotony of her undisturbed prosperity. Our grandchildren will thrill as they read of the days that we endure.