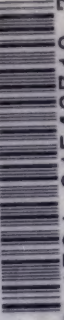


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# THE ATTITUDE OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE PRESENT WAR

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# THE ATTITUDE OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE PRESENT WAR.

WE in Britain who respect and value the opinion of the free neutral peoples of Europe and America cannot but desire that those peoples should be duly informed of the way in which we regard the circumstances and possible results of the present conflict. I have written what follows in compliance with a request from the Editor of a leading journal in one of those free countries, Switzerland, but what has been set down to be read by its people may equally well be addressed to other neutrals. I speak in these pages with no more authority than is possessed by any private citizen of my country who has had a long experience of public affairs, and I desire only to express what I believe to be its general sentiments. Other writers would doubtless convey those sentiments in somewhat different language, but I think they would do so to much the same general effect, for the British Nation is at this crisis united in its views and purposes to an extent almost unprecedented in our history.

I shall not enter into the circumstances which brought about the war, for these have been often

stated officially and can be readily understood from documents already published. The evidence contained in those documents appears to me to be quite convincing to any impartial mind. All that need be said here is that the British nation did most assuredly neither desire nor contemplate war. There was no hostility to Germany except among a very few persons who thought she was already planning to attack us. The notion which has been assiduously propagated by the German Government, that England desired to bring about war because she feared the commercial competition of Germany and hoped to destroy German productive industry and mercantile prosperity, is absolutely untrue and without the slightest foundation. It is indeed an absurd suggestion, for every man of sense knew that German trade had brought more advantage to our trading classes than any damage German competition had been doing to them. England had far more to lose than to gain by war. Germany was her best foreign customer, taking more goods from her than did any other foreign country. It was evident that a war would involve England in pecuniary losses which must far exceed, and have already far exceeded, any pecuniary gain her traders could possibly have made by the crippling of German trade for many a year to come. One of the reasons why many English-



men thought that there was no likelihood of a war between the two countries was because they believed that both countries knew what frightful losses to each the war would bring. Moreover, the fact that England had not prepared herself for a land war shows how little she expected it. She had an army very small in comparison with those of the Continental powers, and no store of guns or shell comparable to theirs; so, when the war broke out, she found herself suddenly obliged to raise a large force by voluntary enlistment at short notice. Few supposed that the response of the people would have been so general and so hearty. The response came because the nation was united as it had never been united before in support of any war. That which united it was the invasion of Belgium; and that which has done most to keep it united and to stimulate it to exertions hitherto undreamt of has been popular indignation at the methods by which the German Government has conducted hostilities by land and by sea.

The German Government has alleged that the British Fleet had been mobilised with a view to war. That is absolutely untrue. What happened was this. The Fleet had been going through its usual summer manœuvres. Just as these manœuvres were coming to an end, a threatening war cloud unexpectedly arose out of a blue sky. Most naturally, the ships which

would in the usual course have been dispersed to their accustomed peace stations were commanded not to disperse until further orders were received. There was in this no evidence of any purpose to embark in war, for to keep the Fleet together was in the circumstances the obvious course.

Now let me try to state what are the principles which animate the British people, making them believe they have a righteous cause, and inducing them, because they so believe, to prosecute the war with their utmost energy.

There is a familiar expression which we use in England to sum up the position and aims of a nation. It is "What does the nation 'stand for'?" What are the principles and the interests which prescribe its course? What are the ends, over and above its own welfare, which it seeks to promote? What is the nature of the mission with which it feels itself charged? What are the ideals which it would like to see prevailing throughout the world?

There are five of these principles or aims or ideals which I will here set forth, because they stand out conspicuously in the present crisis, though they are all more or less parts of the settled policy of Britain.

I. The first of these five is Liberty.

England and Switzerland have been the two modern countries in which Liberty first took tangible form in laws and institutions. Holland

followed, and the three peoples of the Scandinavian North, kindred to us in blood, have followed likewise.

In England Liberty appeared from early days in a recognition of the right of the citizen to be protected against arbitrary power and to bear his share in the work of governing his own community. It is from Great Britain that other European countries whose political condition had, from the end of the middle ages down to the end of the eighteenth century, been unfavourable to freedom, drew, in that and the following century, their examples of a Government which could be united and efficient and yet popular, strong to defend itself against attack, and yet respectful of the rights of its own members. The British Constitution has been the model whence most of the countries that have within recent times adopted constitutional Government have drawn their institutions. Britain has herself during the last eighty years made her constitution more and more truly popular. It is now as democratic as that of any other European country, and in their dealings with other countries, the British people have shown a constant sympathy with freedom. They showed it early in the nineteenth century to Spanish constitutional reformers and to Greek insurgents against Turkish tyranny. They showed it to Switzerland when they foiled

(in 1847) the attempt of Metternich to interfere with her independence. They have shown it markedly within recent years. Britain has given free Governments to all those of her Colonies in which there is a population of European origin capable of using them, and this has confirmed the attachment to herself of those Colonies. Only seven years ago, after a war with the two Dutch Republics of South Africa which ended by a treaty making them parts of the British dominions, she restored self-government to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and they soon afterwards became members of the new autonomous Confederation called the Union of South Africa, side by side with the old British Colonies of the Cape and Natal. The first Prime Minister of that Union was General Louis Botha, who had been Commander-in-Chief of the Boer Forces in their war with Britain. What has been the result? When the present war broke out, the German Government, which had long been planning to induce the Transvaal and the Orange Free State to break away from Britain, found to their astonishment that the vast majority of the South African Boers stood heartily by her. General Botha took command of the Union armies, and defeated the German forces in the German Colony of South West Africa without any assistance from British troops.

There had long been troubles and controversies connected with the state of Ireland, for although she was fully represented in the British Parliament, the majority of the population expressed a desire, which excited much opposition, to have autonomous institutions granted to them. It had been found hard to find an acceptable solution of this question, chiefly because a considerable element in the Irish population did not wish for those institutions. But the question was settled in 1914 by the passing of an Act giving to Ireland (subject to certain safeguards and provisions not yet settled in detail) a local Parliament as a satisfaction to national sentiment and to the desire of a majority for that kind of autonomy which they had asked for through their representatives in Parliament. There, again, what has been the result? Ireland, on whose disaffection to the United Kingdom the German Government had been counting, has shown herself when the war broke out to be thoroughly loyal. Protestants and Roman Catholics have vied with one another in volunteering into the new armies which have been raised during the last twelve months. Some of the most powerful speeches made in defence of the war have come from the leaders of the Irish Nationalists. Some of the finest deeds of valour have been done by Irish regiments. These are

the fruits of Liberty as Britain has understood it and practised it.

II. Britain stands for the principle of Nationality. She has always given her sympathy to the efforts of a people restless under a foreign dominion to deliver themselves from the stranger and to be ruled by a Government of their own. The efforts of Greece from 1820 till her liberation from the Turks, the efforts of Italy to shake off the hated yoke of Austria and attain national unity under an Italian King, found their warmest support in England. English Liberals gave their sympathy to national movements in Hungary and Poland. They gave that sympathy also to the German movement for national unity from 1848 to 1870, for in those days that movement was led by German Liberals of lofty aims who did not desire, as the recent rulers of Germany have desired, to make their national strength a menace to the peace and security of their neighbours. In India, England has long ceased to absorb into her dominions the native States, and has been seeking only to guide the rulers of those States into the paths of just and humane administration, while leaving their internal affairs to their own native Governments. Representative institutions like those of England herself cannot be extended to the numerous races that compose the Indian population, because they are

not yet fit for such institutions. A firm and impartial hand is indeed needed to keep the peace among them. But the British Government in India regards, and has long regarded, its power as a trust to be used for the benefit of the people, and in recent years efforts have been made to associate the people more and more with the work of the higher branches of administration and legislation. Native judges sit beside European judges in the highest Courts, while the vast mass of local administration is conducted by native officials and native judges. No tribute or revenue of any kind is drawn by England from India or from any of those Colonies which the Home Government controls. The happy results of this policy have been seen in the steady increase of the confidence and goodwill of the native rulers and aristocracy of India to the British Government, so that when the present war broke out all those rulers at once offered military aid. Large Indian forces gladly came to fight, and fought most gallantly, beside the British forces in France.

I do not claim that these successes attained by British ideas and methods are due to any innate and peculiar merits of British character. They may be largely ascribed to the fact that the insular position and the political and social conditions of England enabled her, earlier than most other peoples, both to attain constitutional liberty and to learn to love it and trust it. She

has had long experience and has profited by experience. She has had cause to see how much better it is to govern by justice and in a fair and generous spirit than to rely entirely on brute force. Once in her history, 140 years ago, she lost the North American Colonies because, in days when British freedom was less firmly established than it is now, a narrow-minded and obstinate King induced his Government to treat those Colonies with unwise harshness. She has never forgotten that lesson, and has more and more come to see that freedom and nationality are a surer basis for contentment and loyalty than is the application of force. Compare with the happy results that have followed the instances I have mentioned of respect for liberty and national sentiment in the cases of South Africa and Ireland and India, as well as in the self-governing Colonies, the results in North Sleswig, in Posen, in Alsace-Lorraine, of the opposite policy of force sternly applied by Prussian statesmen and soldiers.

III. England stands for the maintenance of treaty obligations and of those rights of the smaller nations which rest upon such obligations. The circumstances of the present war, which saw Belgium suddenly attacked by a Power that had itself solemnly guaranteed the neutrality of Belgian territory, summoned England to stand up for the defence of those rights



and obligations. Her people feel that the good faith of treaties is the only foundation on which peace between nations can rest, and, especially, is the only guarantee for the security of those which do not maintain large armies. We recognise the value of the smaller States, knowing what they have done for the progress of mankind, grateful for the examples set by many of them of national heroism and of achievements in science, literature and art. So far from desiring to see the smaller peoples absorbed into the larger, as German theorists appear to wish, we believe that the world would profit if there were in it a greater number of small peoples, each developing its own type of character and its own forms of thought and art.

Both these principles—the observance of treaties and the rights of the smaller neutral States—have been raised in the sharpest form by the unprovoked invasion of Belgium only two days after the German Minister at Brussels had lulled the uneasiness of the Belgian Government by his pacific assurances. Such conduct was a threat to every neutral nation. That which befell Belgium might have befallen Switzerland or Holland had Germany decided that it was to her interests to attack either of them for the sake of securing a passage for her armies. England was obliged to come to Belgium's support and fulfil the obligation she

had herself contracted to defend the neutrality of the country unrighteously attacked. It would be superfluous to say, if the German Government had not endeavoured to deceive its own subjects and other nations by a gross misrepresentation of the facts, that England never had the least intention of entering Belgium, except to protect it should its territory be violated. The conversations which took place between British officers and Belgian authorities some time beforehand, referred, as the published text clearly proves, only to the case of an invasion of Belgium by Germany, and were intended merely to provide for that contingency, which was deemed possible, though we hoped that it never would arise. The charge made by the German Government that England had planned with Belgian Ministers to attack Germany through Belgium is therefore absolutely baseless. When the German armies suddenly crossed the Belgian frontier, carrying slaughter and destruction in their train, an issue of transcendent importance was raised. Can treaties be violated with impunity? Is a nation which, trusting to the protection of international justice and treaty obligations, has not so armed itself as to be able to repel invasion, obliged helplessly to submit to see its territory overrun and its towns destroyed? If such violence prevails, what sense of security can any small nation enjoy? Will it

not be the helpless prey of some stronger Power, whenever that Power finds an interest in pouncing upon it? What becomes of the whole fabric of international law and international justice? This issue was plainly stated by the Chancellor of the German Empire when he said in the Reichstag that the entrance of German troops upon Belgian soil was "contrary to the rules of international law," and spoke of "the wrong that we are committing." Belgium was bound by honour to resist invasion, because she had solemnly pledged herself to the other Powers to maintain neutrality. It was the condition of her creation and her existence. And England, obliged by honour to succour Belgium, has thus become the champion of international right and of the security of the smaller nations. There is nothing she more earnestly desires to obtain as a result of this war than that the smaller States should be placed for the future in a position of safety, in which the guarantees for their independence and peace shall be stronger than before, because the sanction of the law of nations will have been made more effective.

IV. England stands for the regulation of the methods of warfare in the interests of humanity, and especially for the exemption of non-combatants from the sufferings and horrors which war brings. Here is another issue raised by the present crisis, another conflict of opposing

principles. In the ancient world, and among semi-civilised peoples in more recent times, non-combatant civilians as well as the fighting forces had to bear those sufferings. The men were killed, combatants and non-combatants alike; the women and children, if spared, were reduced to slavery. That is what the Turkish Government—I say “the Government” because some good Muslims disapprove—have been doing during the last few months in Asia Minor and Armenia, on a far larger scale than even the massacres perpetrated by Abdul Hamid in 1895-6. They are doing it systematically. They are slaughtering the men, they are enslaving some of the women by selling them in open market or seizing them for the harem, and driving the rest, with the children, out into deserts to perish from hunger. In Trebizond, a few months ago, they seized most of the Armenian population of the city, of both sexes, put them into sailing vessels, carried them out to sea, and drowned them all. They are deliberately exterminating the whole Christian population, and avow this to be their policy, although the Christians had not risen against them or given any offence. The Turkish Government is, of course, a thoroughly barbarous Government. But in civilised Europe Christian nations have during the last few centuries softened the conduct of war by agreeing

to respect the lives and property of innocent non-combatants, and thus, although the scale of modern wars has been greater, less misery has been inflicted on inhabitants of invaded territories. Their sufferings were less in the 18th century than in the 17th, and less in the 19th than in the 18th. In the war of 1870-71 the German troops behaved better in France than an invading force had usually behaved in similar circumstances. Now, however, in this present war, the German military and naval commanders have taken a long step backwards towards barbarism. Innocent non-combatants have been slaughtered by thousands in Belgium and in France, and the only excuse offered (for the facts of the slaughter are practically admitted) is that German troops have sometimes been fired at by civilians. Now it is true that any civilian who takes up arms without observing the rules prescribed for civilian resistance is liable to be shot. The rules of war permit that. But it is contrary to the rules of war, as well as to common justice and humanity, to kill a civilian who has not himself sought to harm an invading force. The fact that some other civilian belonging to the same town may have fired on the invaders does not justify the killing of an innocent person. To seize innocent inhabitants, call them "hostages" for the good behaviour of their town,

and shoot them if the invaders are molested by persons whose actions these so-called "host-ages" cannot control, is murder and nothing else. Yet this is what the German commanders have done upon a great scale.

German air-war has been conducted with equal inhumanity. Bombs are being dropped upon undefended towns and quiet country villages, in places where there are no troops, no war factories, no stores of ammunition. Hardly a combatant has suffered, and the women and children killed have been far more numerous than the male non-combatants. No military advantage has been gained by these crimes. They have not even frightened the people generally. They have only aroused indignation at their purposeless cruelty, and this indignation has in England stimulated recruiting and strengthened the determination to pursue the war to the end. The killing of non-combatants by this sort of warfare has been a blunder as well as a crime.

The same retrogression towards barbarism is seen in the German conduct of war at sea. It had long been the rule and practice of civilised nations that when a merchant vessel is destroyed by a ship of war because it is impossible to carry the merchant vessel into the port of the captor, the crew and the passengers of the vessel should be taken off and their lives saved, before the

vessel is sunk. Common humanity prescribes this, but the German submarines have been sinking unarmed merchant vessels and drowning their passengers and crews without giving them even the opportunity to surrender. They did this in the case of the *Lusitania*, drowning 1,100 innocent non-combatants, many of them citizens of neutral States, and they have since repeatedly perpetrated the same crime. The same thing was done quite recently (apparently by Austria) in the case of the Italian passenger ship *Ancona*. This is not war, but murder.

These facts raise an issue in which the interests of all mankind are involved. The German Government claims the right to kill the innocent because it suits their military interests. England denies this right, as all countries ought to deny it. She is contending in this war for humanity against cruelty, and she appeals to the conscience of all the neutral peoples to give her their moral support in this contention. Peoples that are now neutral may suffer in future, just as those innocent persons I have referred to are suffering now, by these acts of unprecedented barbarity.

V. England stands for a Pacific as opposed to a Military type of civilisation. Her regular army had always been small in proportion to her population, and very small in comparison with the armies of great Continental nations.

Although she recognises that there are some countries in which universal service may be necessary, and times at which it may be necessary in any country, she has preferred to leave her people free to follow their civil pursuits, and had raised her army by voluntary enlistment. Military and naval officers have never, as in Germany, formed a class by themselves, have never been a political power, or exercised political influence. The Cabinet Ministers placed in charge of these two services have always been civilian statesmen—not Generals or Admirals—until the outbreak of the present war, when, for the first time, under the stress of a new emergency, a professional soldier of long experience was placed at the head of the War Department. England has repeatedly sought at European Conferences to bring about a reduction of war armaments, as well as to secure improved rules mitigating the usages of war; but has found her efforts baffled by the opposition of Germany. In none of the larger countries, except perhaps in the United States, are the people so generally and sincerely attached to peace.

It may be asked why, if this is so, does England maintain so large a navy. The question deserves an answer. Her navy is maintained for three reasons. The first is, that as her army has been very small she is obliged to protect



herself by a strong home fleet from any risk of invasion. She has never forgotten the lesson of the Napoleonic wars, when it was the navy that saved her from the fate which befell so many European countries at Napoleon's hands. Were she not to keep up this first line of defence at sea, a huge army and a huge military expenditure in time of peace would be inevitable. The second reason is that as England does not produce nearly enough food to support her population, she must draw supplies from other countries, and would be in danger of starvation if in war-time she lost the command of the sea. It is, therefore, vital to her existence that she should be able to secure the unimpeded import of articles of food. And the third reason is that England is responsible for the defence of the coasts and the commerce of her colonies and other foreign possessions, such as India. These do not maintain a naval force sufficient for their defence, and the Mother Country is therefore compelled to have a fleet sufficient to guarantee their safety and protect their shipping. No other great State has such far-reaching liabilities, and, therefore, no other needs a navy so large as Britain must maintain. In this policy there is no warlike or aggressive spirit, no menace to other countries. It is a measure purely of defence, costly and burdensome, but borne

because her own safety and that of her colonies absolutely require it. Neither has Britain used her naval strength to inflict harm on any other countries. In time of peace she has not tried to use it to injure the commerce of her chief industrial competitors. It did nothing to retard the rapid growth of the mercantile marines of Germany and Norway, both of which have been immensely developed in recent years. The freedom of the seas has, in time of peace, never been infringed by her. In time of war she doubtless exercises those rights of maritime blockade, search and capture which her naval strength enables her to exert. But rights of blockade and capture have always been exerted by every naval power in war time. They are a recognised method of war and were exerted in the American Civil War fifty years ago, in the war of France with China, in the war of Chile with Peru, and in the more recent war between Japan and Russia. They are not rights newly claimed by Britain, and they have been exercised with a constant respect for the lives of non-combatants.

So far from using her sea-power to the prejudice of other countries in peace time, and trying by its aid to promote her own commercial interests, Britain is the only great country which has opened her doors freely to the commerce of every other country. Sixty years ago

she adopted, and has ever since consistently practised, the policy of free trade. She imposes upon imports no duties intended to protect her own agriculture or her own manufactures. She gives no advantages to her own shipping in her own ports, she pays no bounties to her own shipping, she allows even coasting trade between her own ports to be open on equal terms to the ships of all nations. A Dutch or Swedish or Norwegian vessel may trade from Newcastle to London as freely as a British vessel. And this free trade policy has been carried out consistently in all the British colonial possessions. Neither in India, nor in those British colonies whose tariffs are controlled by the Mother Country, are duties imposed upon foreign imports, except for the purpose of raising revenue. Such self-governing Dominions as Canada and Australia have control of their own tariffs and impose what duties they please—even against the Mother Country; but that is a part of the self-government which these Dominions have long enjoyed.

The policy of free trade has been supported, and is valued, in Britain not only on economic grounds, but also because it is deemed to tend towards international peace. Richard Cobden, the first and most powerful champion of that policy, saw in that its highest value. He thought that it would so link the nations

together, helping them to know one another, enriching them all, and making each interested in the prosperity of the other (each being both a producer and a consumer, each supplying the other's needs and profiting by the exchange), that all would be reluctant to break the peace with one another. This idea—although Cobden's hopes have proved to be too sanguine—has always had great weight in British commercial policy, which has sought for no exclusive advantages, but aimed solely at a field open to all competitors.

As an industrial people the English desire peace. They have never made military glory their ideal. They have regarded war, not like Treitschke and his school, as wholesome and necessary, but as an evil, an evil which, although it gives an opportunity (as Europe sees to-day) for splendid displays of patriotism and heroic valour, is the cause of infinite suffering and misery and ought, if possible, to be got rid of from the world. The killing of workers and the destruction of property are a hideous waste of human effort. War has done more than anything else to retard the progress of mankind.

Our English ideal for the future is of a world in which every people shall have within its own borders a free national government resting on, and conforming to, the general will of its

citizens, a government able to devote its efforts to improving the condition of the people without encroaching on its neighbours, or being disturbed by the fear of an attack from enemies abroad. Legislators and administrators have already tasks sufficiently difficult in reconciling the claims of different classes, in adjusting the interests of capital and labour, in promoting health and diffusing education and enlightenment, without the addition of those tasks and dangers which arise from the terror of foreign war.

There is, of course, a certain chauvinistic element in England, as in all countries, which finds some expression in newspapers and books. There are some persons with a deficient respect for the rights of other nations—persons who indulge in sentiments of hatred, persons who believe in force, persons who, in fact, have what is now known as the “Prussian view of the world,” and the Prussian preference of Might to Right. But such persons are in England comparatively few; they are a diminishing quantity and they command little influence. The great bulk of the nation does not cherish hatreds, is satisfied with what it possesses, does not intend to aggress on its neighbours, does not seek to impose its own type of civilisation on the world. Our English phrase “Live and let live” expresses this feeling. Though we prefer our own

way of living for ourselves, we do not think it therefore the best for other peoples also, and no more wish to see the world all English than we wish to see it all Prussian. The British people did not enter the war for the sake of gaining anything for themselves. They have not now fixed their mind on gaining (so far as concerns objects specially dear to themselves\*) anything except a vindication of the sanctity of treaties, a fuller security for the rights of neutral nations, compensation to Belgium for the injuries inflicted on her, and adequate guarantees of future peace for themselves and their colonies. To this one must now add—measures that will make impossible in the future cruelties and oppressions such as the Turks have practised upon the Eastern Christians.

In the foregoing pages I have sought to describe what I believe to be the principles and feelings and aims of the British people as a whole. Let me add a few words of a more personal kind to explain the sentiments of those Englishmen who have in time past known and admired the achievements of the German people in literature, learning and science, who had desired peace with them, who had been the constant advocates of friendship between the two nations. Such Englishmen, who do not cease to be lovers of peace because this war, felt to be righteous, commands

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\* I speak of course only of what regards Britain's own aims, not of what primarily concerns her Allies.

their hearty support, are now just as determined as any others to carry on the war to victory. Why? Because to them this war presents itself as a conflict of principles. On the one side there is the doctrine that the end of the State is Power, that Might makes Right, that the State is above morality, that war is necessary and even desirable as a factor in progress, that the rights of small States must give way to the interests of great States, that the State may disregard all obligations whether undertaken by treaties or prescribed by the common sentiment of mankind, and that what is called military necessity justifies every kind of harshness and cruelty in war. This is an old doctrine—as old as the sophists whom Socrates encountered in Athens. It has in every age been held by some ambitious and unscrupulous statesmen. Many a Greek tyrant of antiquity, many an Italian tyrant in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, put it in practice. Cæsar Borgia is the most striking instance in the 15th century, Frederick the Great in the 18th, Napoleon Bonaparte in the 19th.

On the other side there is the doctrine that the end of the State is Justice, the doctrine that the State is, like the individual, subject to a moral law and bound in honour to observe its promises, that nations owe duties to one another and to mankind at large, that they have all

more to gain by peace than by strife, that national hatreds are deadly things, condemned by philosophy and by Christianity. In the victory of one or the other of these principles the future of mankind seems to us to be at stake.

I do not attribute to the German people an adherence to the former set of doctrines, for I do not know how far these doctrines are held outside the military and naval caste which has now unhappily gained control of German policy, and I cannot believe that the German people, as I have hitherto known them, ever since I studied at a German University more than fifty years ago, could possibly approve of the action of their Government if their Government suffered them to know the facts relating to the origin and conduct of the war as those facts are known to the rest of the world. We have had no hatred of the German people. We did not grudge them their prosperity. Neither have we any wish to break up Germany, destroying her national unity, or to interfere in any way with her internal politics. Our quarrel is with the German Government. We think it a danger to every peaceful country and believe that in fighting against its doctrines, its ambitions, its methods of warfare, we and our Allies are virtually fighting the battle of all peace-loving neutral nations as well as our own. We must fight on till victory is won, for a Government



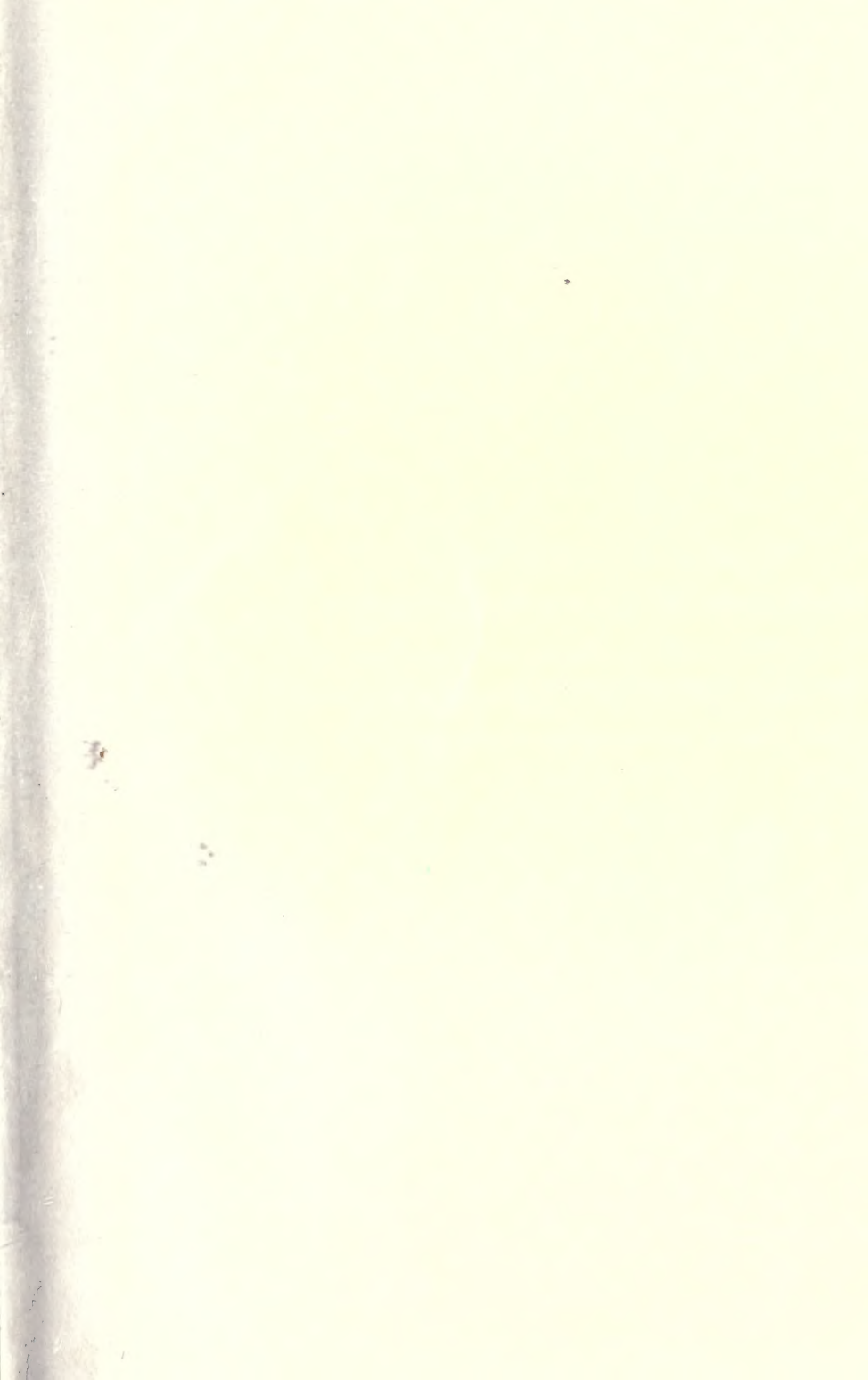
which scorns treaties and wages an inhuman warfare against innocent non-combatants cannot be suffered to prevail by such methods. A triumphant and aggressive Germany, mistress of the seas as well as of the land, would be a menace to every nation, even to those of the western hemisphere. Be this as it may, the facts show that the present rulers of Germany have acted upon the former set of doctrines as consistently as ever did Frederick or Napoleon. They seem to us to be smitten with a kind of mental disease which has sapped honour, extinguished pity, and destroyed their sense of right and wrong. They invaded Belgium without provocation and slaughtered thousands of innocent non-combatants. They have persisted, against the protests of America, in drowning innocent non-combatants at sea. They look calmly on while the Turkish allies whom they have dragged into the war, and whose action they could restrain if they cared to do so, are exterminating, with every cruelty Turkish ferocity can devise, a whole Christian nation. These things are a reversion to the ancient methods of savagery which marked the warfare of bygone ages. They are a challenge to civilised mankind—to neutrals, as well as to the now belligerent States. Neutral nations would do well to recognise this, for they are themselves concerned. The same

methods may be hereafter used against them as are being used now. They also ought to desire the defeat of any and every Government which adopts such principles and practises such methods, for its victory would be a blow to morality and human progress which it would take centuries to retrieve.

Those Englishmen whose views I am seeking to express, recognising the allegiance we all owe to humanity at large, and believing that progress is achieved more by co-operation than by strife, are, however, hoping for something more than the victory of their own country. They desire to see the world relieved from the burden of armaments and from that constant terror of war which has been darkening its sky for so many generations. They ask whether it may not be possible, after the war has come to an end, to form among the nations an effective League of Peace, embracing smaller as well as larger peoples—under whose ægis disputes might be amicably settled, and the power of the League invoked to prevent any one State from disturbing the general tranquillity. The obstacles in the way of creating such a League are many and obvious, but whatever else may come out of the war, we in England hope that one result of it will be the creation of some machinery calculated to avert the recurrence of so awful a calamity as that from which mankind is now suffering.









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