

BRITAIN AND ARMAGEDDON

By VEDETTE




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AND ARMAGEDDON

WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

BY
VEDETTE

LONDON
HUGH REES, LTD.
5 REGENT STREET, PALL MALL, S.W.

1914

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QUOTATIONS FROM THE GOSPEL OF WAR AS EXPOUNDED BY GENERAL
VON BERNHARDI, GERMANY'S FOREMOST MILITARY WRITER.

"Might is at once the supreme right, and the dispute as to what is right is decided by the arbitrament of war. War gives a biologically just (*sic*) decision, since its decisions rest on the very nature of things."

"Love God above all things—thy neighbour as thyself. This Law can claim no significance for the relations of one country with another, since its application to politics would lead to a conflict of duties."

"The efforts directed towards the abolition of war must not only be termed foolish, but absolutely immoral, and must be stigmatized as unworthy of the human race."

"We can, fortunately, assert the impossibility of these efforts after peace ever attaining their ultimate object in a world bristling with arms, where a healthy egotism still directs the policy of most countries."

"Our people must learn to see that *the maintenance of peace never can or may be the goal of national policy.*"

QUOTATIONS FROM THE GOSPEL OF PACIFISM, SELECTED AT RANDOM
FROM THE PAGES OF ONE OF OUR LEADING REVIEWS.

"The Government that would reduce spontaneously its naval and military armaments would be exposed to fewer dangers than the Government which impoverishes a country by imposing upon it excessive sacrifices. It would have a loyal, healthy, intelligent population, an enthusiastic patriotism, and, if it were attacked, the support of universal opinion (*sic*)."

"If the French cannot beat the Germans without the aid of our three inadequately equipped Army Corps, they cannot do it with that aid."

"If France and Russia should engage in a conflict with the Triple Alliance, we must deplore so colossal a calamity and offer our good offices to prevent it; but, great as the misfortune might be to humanity at large, it need not specially affect British interests."

INTRODUCTION

THE dialogue recorded in the first chapter of this work was written last spring, during the author's residence abroad. The purpose of his writing was to try to bring home to the ordinary reader at home, the dangerous condition of the international situation in Europe as it then appeared to him, and to make clear the vital necessity of our intervention, *military as well as naval*, in any war with the Central Powers, in which our *Entente* friends might become involved.

The ignorance and apathy of the British people concerning the military situation on the Continent, and their apparent indifference in respect of the military preparations necessary for rendering our intervention effective, seemed to him to amount to nothing less than a national danger. The object of this modest work was to contribute in some small degree to the enlightenment of British public opinion on matters so closely touching their national existence and welfare.

With the exception of the opening paragraphs, subsequently added, the writer has left the first chapter untouched, as it was written in the spring of this year. If the forecasts hazarded therein have

for the most part been borne out by recent events, he takes no credit for their accuracy. There is little he has foretold in these pages which has not already been prophesied by seers gifted with greater knowledge and keener vision than he can lay claim to.

When the present war broke out with such suddenness, he had not yet taken measures for the publication of his MS. When he saw, with relief, that England was following the course advocated in its pages, it seemed to him at first sight superfluous to move further in the matter. However, on further consideration, he decided to let it be printed for the benefit of those who might not even now clearly comprehend the issues involved in the great conflict into which we have been drawn.

A second chapter has been added, briefly summarizing the events which led up to the outbreak of the present war, and exposing the true character of the nation whose overweening ambition has forced our Allies and ourselves to draw the sword in self-defence.

Confident in the final issue of the struggle, the writer believes that England's mission will ultimately be to re-arrange, in concert with her Allies, the map of Europe in a manner which shall conduce to a lasting peace. If she succeeds in this, all the sacrifices made by her will not have been offered in vain.

BRITAIN AND ARMAGEDDON

CHAPTER I

SHORTLY before the storm burst which is now devastating Europe I happened to be travelling Londonwards from the North. At that time no outward sign was apparent that in a few short months Europe was to be plunged in a war, the greatest which the world has ever seen. Not yet had appeared that little cloud, "like a man's hand" (or, as modern political soothsayers might say, "like a mailed fist"), on the troubled horizon of South-Eastern Europe. The world had apparently settled down uneasily into a state of comparative tranquillity after the recent alarms and excursions of the Balkan wars. Confidence in peace seemed re-established.

Yet it may well be that those minds which control the mechanism of German policy, those secret evil genii whose work is now bare and manifest, were even then nearing their dread decision that Germany must strike—and soon—to make good her claims to supremacy and world-empire.

Meanwhile, we in England, to whom the mere conception of such a war was but a disagreeable shadow lurking in the background of our lives, to whom a world-struggle appeared rather as a fit subject for academic

debate than as a grim reality pressing at our very doors, were all of us going our various ways, absorbed in the petty occupations of the moment, serenely unconscious of the coming conflict which was to decide the destinies of future generations of our race.

As I surveyed my fellow-traveller sitting opposite to me, I might well have selected him as a type of the shrewd but unimaginative John Bull, proud of his bluff common sense, obstinate in his opinions, but lamentably ignorant, and, indeed, indifferent as to the world outside England, our own Empire included.

He was a stout, middle-aged gentleman, with a red face, a Manchester business man of some substance, as I gathered from a few desultory remarks I exchanged with him. He no doubt held ill-digested opinions to the effect that, as war "does not pay," therefore no nation, least of all a highly organized State like Germany, would wish to make it. He had probably talked sloppily in his time of bloated armaments, militarism, and universal peace, and grumbled about national expenditure on defence. Men of his mentality are difficult to argue with, and must be battered with "hard facts"—appeals to their imagination are useless.

In the far corner was seated a distinguished, soldierly looking man of foreign appearance, absorbed in the study of some maps and correspondence.

As the train slowed and halted beside the main platform at Crewe I became aware of a line of khaki-clad figures drawn up alongside us. They were a squad of recruits belonging to a certain famous line regiment. Not one of them looked over nineteen. They were in full marching kit, and looked hot, dusty, and tired as they

hitched at their packs, whose straps seemed slipping from their shoulders. In the eyes of the stalwart N.C.O. in charge, whose beribboned chest denoted the seasoned soldier, I thought I detected a look of sternly repressed pain. He was not, I felt sure, proud of that squad, and I sympathized.

The stout gentleman opposite me looked over the top of his *Manchester Guardian*, adjusted his glasses, stared at them, and finally said "Humph." Catching my eye he remarked, "What a lot of children!" "Yes," I replied, "they certainly are. But I'm afraid there are thousands more like them in our Army." He pondered a while, and then remarked, "I wonder why that is?"

"Well," I said, "the Army has to take what it can get—mostly half-grown lads out of a job. Men who have got regular employment don't as a rule enlist. Why should they? No one's going to guarantee them work when they're turned loose on the world seven years hence. But the boy who is hungry doesn't worry about that. Hunger is our best recruiting sergeant. But you won't know those boys after two years. Our seasoned men are mostly abroad, or in the reserve. You musn't judge the Army by the youngsters one sees at home."

"Yes," he replied, "I suppose that's it. But, after all, I imagine, it doesn't much matter. So long as the Navy's all right we can rub along with what we've got in the way of an army. The regulars and territorials together I'm sure ought to be enough to stop a German invasion. Don't you think so?"

I nodded. "By the way," I said, "are you in favour of the *Entente Cordiale*?"

“The *Entente Cordiale*?” he replied, a little vaguely. “Oh, yes, of course, in principle I consider it an excellent thing. It’s put an end to our bickering with the French, and brings them into line with us against Germany. I fancy most people are pretty well agreed about that.”

“Well,” I said, “I’m quite of your opinion. But you remarked just now that we were to depend on the regular army to assist in repelling a German invasion. In that case, how are we to assist the French with our expeditionary force?”

“Oh, well, no doubt we should have to wait a bit first to see what the Germans were doing. We might send them a few troops at the start, of course, but I don’t think it would be safe to let our regular army go abroad until we had disposed of the German fleet and settled the question of invasion.”

“But that might take time,” I observed, “and you apparently do not realize that if our help is to do the French any good it must come during the first two or three weeks of the war.”

“I don’t know anything about that,” he said. “It seems to me that the assistance of our Navy is all they have a right to expect, and very glad they ought to be to get it.”

“I’m afraid you wouldn’t find the French very enthusiastic about the *Entente* if they thought that that was all we meant by it,” I replied. “What consolation would a British sea victory be to them if the Germans defeated them on land and invaded France?”

The stout gentleman snorted and looked unconvinced. “After all, what could our wretched little Army do against millions of Germans?” he asked.

“We must leave that sort of thing to the great conscript armies of Europe.”

The military-looking gentleman in the far corner here interposed. Lifting his hat politely he said in perfect English, but with a slight foreign accent, “Excuse me, gentlemen, but as a Frenchman your conversation has for me a certain interest. May I be permitted to join in the discussion?”

We both readily assented and waited for him to begin.

Speaking in measured tones, and with a rare lucidity, he then proceeded to explain the origin of the *Entente*, and showed how our two nations had gradually been drawn closer together by the growing menace of a common foe. How the Morocco crisis arose and left Germany baffled for the moment before our united front, and how she has laboured ever since to strengthen herself by land and sea to prepare for the great struggle she firmly believes to be inevitable. He spoke well, and we could not fail to be impressed, as men generally are when they listen to one who knows thoroughly what he is talking about.

“Believe me, gentlemen,” he said, “the position is one full of danger, though perhaps you in your fortunate isle” (“fool’s paradise,” is perhaps what he meant) “realize it less fully than we do, who are always *en vedette* upon a threatened frontier. But after Agadir, three years ago, it was a close thing—you can hardly have forgotten that?”

Then, addressing himself to my travelling companion, he said: “If I do not mistake, sir, your opinion is that England must take no risks on land, even though France calls for the aid of her army. You think per-

haps that, provided that you eventually defeat the Germans at sea and prevent a German raid, the triumph of Germany over France, though a catastrophe regrettable enough in itself, need not necessarily damage to any great extent England's position in the world."

The stout gentleman hesitated. "Well—er—to tell the truth, I don't quite see why it should."

"If you will permit me," replied the Frenchman, "I will endeavour to explain why France's ruin must inevitably lead to the ultimate downfall of England. Imagine, if you can, such a situation as I shall describe.

"The French field-armies have been defeated and overwhelmed in the first month of war. God forbid that such a thing should happen, but it is a possibility which cannot be ignored. Germany, leaving mainly second-line troops to deal with us, withdraws the bulk of her army corps to her eastern frontiers, and Russia, slow to move, finds herself menaced by the united forces of Germany and Austria, in superior numbers. Would she then continue the struggle unaided? Who can say? She might well find the task beyond her strength. It is more probable that the three Emperors would come to terms, and a new Holy Alliance might be formed which would change the face of the world. Russia would be given a free hand in the East; Austria would gain access to the *Ægean*; and Germany, after reducing France to impotence and seizing her Navy, would gain control of the Low Countries and acquire Antwerp and such other naval bases as she might desire on the north coast of Europe. Italy would be allowed to extend her possessions in the Mediterranean. What would then be the position of England, standing alone and without a friend in Europe? Russia would soon

begin to threaten her Asiatic possessions. Germany, supreme in Europe, and no longer threatened by hostile land Powers, would devote all her energies to building up her fleet, and would compel her allies to do likewise. How long would it be, do you think, before the mastery of the seas would pass from you? And then—what of the British Empire?”

He paused and waited for the stout gentleman to reply.

The latter seemed nonplussed. “Well,” he said, “I never thought of it in that way. But do you really consider that such a succession of events is possible?”

“I do, indeed,” said the Frenchman. “Once my country has ceased to count as a factor in Europe, the balance of power is completely upset, and there must be an entire re-grouping of the Powers, with Germany supreme and unchallenged in Europe. You have fought France and Spain in the past to prevent just such a situation as this, but now at last you would have to witness its accomplishment, and face it—alone. Do not count on Russia. Deprived of French gold and military aid, she would reconsider her position; and why indeed should she risk a doubtful struggle with the Triple Alliance when offered the outlet to the sea for which she has struggled for years—and perhaps the rich plains of India. Germany could afford to be generous and sate her appetite for a generation. Her understanding with you? Gone, like a puff of smoke, my dear sir. For what do even solemn treaties count nowadays?”

My companion, however, was not yet quite disposed of. “Of course,” he said, “if you assume all that, we should indeed be in a bad way. But I was supposing

that we were helping France with our Navy, and your victorious Germany might emerge without a fleet, so she would have to start a fresh naval race for armaments at rather a disadvantage.”

“Believe me,” said the Frenchman, “Germany has thought all that out beforehand, and much else besides. Germany never takes risks without reasonable prospect of success. Her squadrons would challenge yours if, by surprise, or some fortunate chance, she could meet them on anything like equal terms. After its first blow, and the losses would doubtless be heavy on both sides, her fleet would withdraw to its ports or to the Baltic and remain in safety until the end of the war. You might blockade her coasts and prey upon her commerce for a time, it is true; but Germany, as dictator of Europe, would array the fleets of the Powers against you, and peace would impose itself before long. And from that day would date the beginning of your doom.”

My companion was silent. Such arguments were new to him, but he realized their force.

“And supposing France and Russia were victorious?” I ventured.

The Frenchman regarded me with a curious smile. “I think it would be felt in France that you had hardly carried out your part of the bargain, unwritten though it be. You would have left us exposed to grave and unnecessary risks on land, whereas at sea you would have taken Germany at a disadvantage, thanks to us. I cannot say how our new friendship would stand the shock. But Russia, I feel sure, would no longer feel herself bound by any obligation to you, and I think your old rivalry would soon break out again in the East. From France, in that case, you could expect

small sympathy in your difficulties with Russia. But if Englishmen and Frenchmen had once fought and bled side by side in a new Waterloo, as allies instead of as enemies this time, I am convinced, for I know my countrymen, that the blood shed on that field would cement a lasting friendship between our two peoples more solid and sincere than any paper alliance. And Russia would find us behind you should she ever seek a quarrel with England."

The stout gentleman now returned to the charge. "But I asked before," said he, "what would be the use of our wretched little Army with millions fighting on both sides?"

"More than you think," said the Frenchman; "but if I am to make you understand the value of its assistance, I should have to explain at some length the military situation on the Continent, and I fear that might weary you."

"On the contrary," I said, "I should be most grateful if you would be so good as to enlighten us on a subject which is all too little known in England."

My companion also added his request to mine. "The few arguments I have heard about our sending troops to France have come from politicians or cranks," said he. "They only confuse me. But, as a business man, I can appreciate facts when they are clearly put, as you put them."

The Frenchman bowed politely and proceeded to light a cigarette. After a pause he began.

"I need not tell you that the balance of power is maintained by the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente groups, which, being approximately of equal strength, keep up a comparative equilibrium in international

relations. It is noticeable, however, that whenever the latter group is weakened in any way, the Triple Alliance, owing to Germany's aggressive disposition, is apt to adopt a threatening attitude, and European crises of a more or less acute character then ensue. I need not remind you of Germany's attempt to bully France over the Morocco question, concerning which she had previously declared her complete disinterestedness, immediately after Russia's defeat at the battle of Mukden. Later on, at the time of the Bosnian crisis in 1909, the German Emperor took his stand 'in shining armour' beside his Austrian ally and presented what was practically an ultimatum to the Czar's Government which Russia, being still weakened from the effects of the war in Manchuria, was obliged to swallow. The Casablanca and Agadir incidents were other signs of Germany's restlessness; but England's firm support of France caused her to withdraw before things had gone too far. Now these international crises, which periodically recur, are extremely dangerous to the peace of Europe. Also, being deliberately provoked, they are very significant of the spirit of Germany's rulers, who seek thereby to shake the solidity of the Entente. When they fail, as they often do, bitter complaints are made that Germany is being 'hemmed in' by her enemies, and public sentiment is excited and irritated with a view to obtaining consent to increased armaments.

"In my opinion, which is shared by many who know, we are now approaching a period of great danger in the international situation. Hitherto one of the great deterrents to German aggressiveness against France had been the knowledge that her fleet was still in a state of

marked inferiority to yours and that the possibility of British military aid being forthcoming had created a new and uncertain factor in the strategic situation. She therefore set to work in her methodical way to add enormously to her land and sea forces. I need not tell you how her fleet has increased during the last few years both in numbers and readiness for war. Everything is being prepared for instantaneous action. By adding greatly to the personnel she is able to maintain in commission three sea-going battle squadrons of twenty-five ships, a more powerful force than even you possessed some years ago. You are already feeling the pressure, and have had to withdraw your squadrons from the far seas and even the Mediterranean, where Austria and Italy will soon possess eight Dreadnoughts between them. In that sea, as you know, you have practically confided the protection of your maritime interests to France. The Triple Alliance will be running you close in a few years.

“Still more vast has been Germany’s increase of her army during the last two years. In 1912 she raised her peace strength by some 50,000 to over 700,000 men. Since then a further enormous increase has been voted, so that in the not distant future she will possess a peace strength of upwards of 860,000 men, which means, after inclusion of the first-line reserves, a war strength of upwards of 2,000,000 men. Behind this colossal force she will dispose of 1,700,000 second-line troops. France, with her falling birth-rate, has been hard put to it to meet this sudden challenge of her formidable adversary. She cannot increase her annual contingent of recruits, for all her available manhood is already called upon for service. She has,

therefore, by a supreme and patriotic effort increased service with the colours from two to three years, and hopes thereby to raise her peace strength from 540,000 to about 750,000 men. But this is France's last sacrifice. Germany still has a large reservoir of men untapped, and there is nothing except the question of finance to prevent her raising her peace strength to a million men. Our war strength should, as soon as the new law takes effect, amount to 1,340,000 men as against Germany's future 2,000,000—not a bad effort for a people of 38,000,000 against a rival of 67,000,000. But I must not weary you with figures. Let it be sufficient to say that all the other Great Powers are adding enormously to their armaments. Austria-Hungary's first-line war strength, which now amounts to 1,220,000, is to be increased gradually to a total of 1,800,000 men. Austria's growth in armaments is no doubt due to the gigantic increase of Russia's forces. Russia's peace strength now amounts to 1,400,000, and as for her war strength, I cannot say quite what it would be—anything between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000, I suppose.

“Observe that I am only counting the troops and reservists of the first line, as they represent the decisive factor in modern war. Totals of armed strength including second-line and territorial troops are misleading as criterions of effective military power.”

My companion here broke in. “Excuse me, but these figures make me giddy,” said he. “Surely it all goes to prove what I said before. Our toy Army would be swamped by these floods of men. Much better keep out of it all, I say.”

The Frenchman smiled with patient good humour.

“Just wait a little,” he said; “I hope to prove my point later on.

“I have forgotten to mention Italy,” he continued. “Italy is an uncertain member of the Triple Alliance, and I do not anticipate any great danger from her, at any rate at the commencement of a war. However, she must be reckoned as a possible enemy, and she has a war strength of about 1,000,000. I ask your pardon for so many figures, which I can understand your finding fatiguing.

“We now come to the general strategic situation in Europe, which I hope you will find more interesting. Germany, with her central position, finds herself exposed to a war on two fronts. The Russo-German frontier is 843 miles long, and at the outset of a European war Germany would be confined to a defensive rôle in this quarter. All her available strength would be hurled against France, whom she is bound to defeat before Russia, whose concentration is slow, is able to assume the offensive in the eastern theatre of operations. Her ally Austria would hardly venture to attack Russia *au fond* before she was assured that the mass of the German army was free to come to her assistance. She would, moreover, have certain other preoccupations on her southern frontier. You will understand, then, that all turns upon the issue on the Franco-German frontier. The conflict here would be decided by the first-line troops, supported by a certain number of reserve, or second-line Divisions or Army Corps. Of first-line Army Corps—and these, as I have said, are the decisive factors in continental warfare—Germany now possesses 25.¹ Of these at least three or four would have to be

¹ Supernumerary Divisions form the equivalent of a 26th Army Corps.

left on the eastern frontier to guard against an attack of the Russian covering troops, leaving 22 or 23 Army Corps to deal with the French, who at the outset would have 19 Army Corps, with two Divisions of Colonial Infantry. Later on the XIXth Army Corps from Algeria might be reckoned on. An uncertain number of French troops would have to be left on the Italian frontier, 'in case of accidents.' Owing to recent increases in the German army, her Army Corps might individually possess a certain numerical superiority over ours, and they would be supported by a greater number of second-line Divisions than we possess, some of which would be incorporated in the first line, whilst others would act as independent units. To sum up, the mass of troops which the Germans could hurl against the French field armies would be distinctly superior to the available numbers we could put against them. Now the French frontier bordering Alsace-Lorraine is but 242 miles long, or 150 miles in a straight line. It has been very strongly fortified by a strong line of fortresses of great strength, extending from Verdun to Epinal. In the event of our being forced back, we could re-form upon four successive defensive positions pivoting upon the powerful fortress of Toul. On the southern section of the frontier the broken country of the Vosges to the east of the line Epinal-Belfort is unsuitable for the movement of large masses of troops, and no decisive result could be sought in this region. The main theatre of operations is thus restricted to the zone east of the line Verdun-Epinal, a distance of some 75 miles.

“ On such a short front it would be impossible for Germany to deploy the vast masses at her disposal. On a line of a given length not more than a certain number

of troops can be usefully employed. After 'saturation point' has been reached, to pile up more Army Corps and Divisions behind the fighting line means merely to clog manœuvring, and would certainly not be thought of by Germany. The problem, then, presents itself as to how the German surplus masses are to be employed. No one doubts now, and the Germans make little concealment of the fact, that a vast turning movement will be made through Belgium and Luxemburg. To hold the enemy in front by a vigorous offensive, and then roll up one of his flanks by an attack in overwhelming force, is, and always has been, the German practice both in war and manœuvres. That it will be followed in this case is certain. Moreover, the disposition of German troops on the Belgian frontier, the construction of purely strategic railways at enormous cost, enabling the Germans to pour troops into Belgium and Luxemburg at short notice, and the openly expressed opinions of German military writers, cannot fail to open our eyes to their intentions.

"On their eastern frontier the Germans are faced by a situation of less urgency. Formerly the Russian line of strategic deployment was fixed along the Vistula with Warsaw as its main base."

The stout gentleman here interposed. "I'm afraid I don't always follow you. What do you mean by a line of strategic deployment?"

The Frenchman proceeded to explain. "Excuse me if I am sometimes technical in my language. You must understand that, before an army is ready to advance to the attack, it must go through several successive stages of preparation. The first is mobilization, when all reservists are ordered to proceed to their

various mobilization centres to join their respective battalions, squadrons, or batteries. Thence these units are despatched by rail to the zone of concentration, where they are incorporated in their Brigades and Divisions, and the Army Corps are gradually built up. When concentration is complete the Army Corps are distributed along a line, generally covered at intervals by fortresses, which is called the line of strategic deployment. In this order they will advance to the attack. Covering troops, consisting of units maintained at a high strength in time of peace, are posted between the main armies and the enemy's frontier to guard against any surprise attack which might hinder and confuse the latter whilst they are assembling. Do I make myself plain?"

"Quite," said my companion.

"Well, as I was saying, the Russian line of deployment was formerly fixed along the Vistula, in what is called the Polish salient, a piece of Russian territory jutting out into German territory like a promontory, bounded on the south by Austria. Armies assembling here were exposed to surprise attacks both from Germany and Austria, and it was thought safer to withdraw the line of deployment some hundred miles east of the Vistula, along the line of fortresses Kovno, Grodno, Bielostock, Brest-Litovski, where concentration could be carried out in comparative safety.

"Now, partly owing to the distance of mobilization centres from this line (some being as much as a thousand kilometres away) and partly owing to the insufficiency of strategic railways, the process of concentration must needs be a lengthy one. It would probably be a month or five weeks before all preparations could be made for

a general advance into Germany. Critics of Russian organization for war may say it would take longer, and indeed in spring, when the snows are melting and the rivers overflowing their banks, it is feared that this would be true. It is certain, however, that the four Vilna Corps would be capable of advancing by the twentieth day, which mass, together with covering troops and cavalry, would prevent the Germans from neglecting this frontier, and force them to detach some three or four Army Corps from the western scene of operations. Eventually some thirteen Russian Army Corps should be available to invade East Prussia and German Poland.

“As regards the situation on the Austro-Russian frontier, perhaps seven Russian Army Corps would be concentrated along the line Ivangorod, Brest-Litovski, Kobrin, to guard the left flank of the main Russian advance against an Austrian attack. South-east of this line extends the vast marshy region of the Pripet, impassable for armies, which effectually separates the main theatre from the secondary theatre along Austria's Galician frontier, where five more Russian Army Corps would probably be disposed.

“Russia has, at the present moment, thirty-seven Army Corps, of which, however, twenty-seven alone are available for operations in Europe. The addition of two more is projected, and later on still more will probably be added. Her resources of men and money are inexhaustible. Austria-Hungary at present has sixteen Army Corps, and rumour says that four more are to be added, as the new law for increasing the numbers of the army takes effect.

“A survey of the situation in South-East Europe must

now claim our attention for a moment. Since the second Balkan War a regrouping of the Balkan States has taken place. We now see Bulgaria and Turkey opposed to Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro, whilst Roumania holds the balance. In the case of a general European war it is hard as yet to say how these minor Powers would range themselves. Serbia and Montenegro would in all probability attack Austria and endeavour to raise the Slavs of Hungary against the Monarchy. Roumania at present appears to be inclining to the side of Russia, and would certainly be strongly tempted to try and absorb the three million Roumanians now subject to Hungary. With Roumania as an ally, Russia could divert the two Army Corps now stationed on the Roumanian frontier, to attack Austria. Bulgaria, eager for revenge, would demand a surrender of the territory which she considers as filched from her by Serbia, Greece, and Roumania, and, if immediate restitution were refused, would almost certainly attack these three Powers in the rear. Turkey would no doubt try to recapture the Islands from Greece, and might form an alliance with Bulgaria; but Russia might possibly keep her quiet by threatening an invasion of her Asiatic dominions. (Russia has five Army Corps in Transcaucasia and Turkestan.) On the whole, even assuming that all the Balkan States are engaged on one side or the other, the threat of an invasion of her southern frontiers would force Austria-Hungary to maintain two or three Army Corps on her southern frontiers, whilst, assuming that Serbia, Montenegro, and Roumania come to terms with Bulgaria and attack her in concert, she would have to leave nearly half her forces to deal with this formidable diversion. As for the part to be played

by Italy in this world conflict, I, personally, regard it as doubtful whether she would be willing to join with the Triple Alliance in an attack on France. Italy is bound to this combination chiefly owing to the fact that her relations with Austria are so bad owing to Austria's retention of Trieste, and to rival ambitions in Albania, etc., that the only possible means of preventing the two countries from drifting into war is for them both to become members of the same alliance.

“On the outbreak of war, therefore, it is probable that Italy would delay, as far as possible, any decisive action against France until the issue of the first battle indicated how the Franco-German conflict was tending. She would very likely make a show of joining with her partners by dilatory military movements, but her advance through the mountainous region on the French south-east frontier would be unlikely seriously to pre-occupy us in the opening stages of the campaign. Were the Germans unsuccessful she would halt at once, and in the event of French and Russian successes she would almost certainly fall upon Austria, with the enthusiastic support of the whole nation. Were we beaten—well, it little matters what she would do then. Probably we should not even offer her resistance.

“Everything, therefore, turns on the result of the first great struggle between ourselves and Germany. If Germany triumphs here, as I have shown, Russia would be tempted to stay her advance and come to terms. To go on would lead to an uncertain conflict—probably to defeat. Even victory would bring no adequate reward, for it would be dearly bought, and Japan would be waiting her opportunity in the East. But an understanding with Germany might bring rich

profits—perhaps even at the expense of Germany's ally. Germany would be ready to give almost anything to gain Russia's benevolent neutrality. She would then have only England to deal with, and need fear no interference from third parties. A victorious Germany will bring all waverers over to her side. Italy and Roumania will at once fall into line. I will go further. I will say that if it is once even *believed* in Europe that Germany and Austria are more than a match for France and Russia, and that to be found in the enemy's camp would mean later on dire retribution at the hands of an incensed Germany, the waverers will be far less inclined to hang back on the outbreak of war. By throwing in your lot with us, therefore, and adding to the forces of the Dual Alliance your powerful Navy and the vast resources of your Empire, you encourage Italy to delay her action. Also you put heart into the Belgians, the Dutch, and the Danes to resist German aggression, for the two latter Powers, which possess useful naval bases, might also find their neutrality threatened.

“I am quite in accord with you, sir,” said he, addressing my companion, “in saying that the aid of the British Navy would be of the greatest value to us. As to whether it is all we have a right to expect—well, I will not discuss the question from that point of view. I will put it to you as a plain matter of business, however. What you call a ‘business proposition’ I believe. Why do you propose to help us against Germany? Because you are afraid that, if she crushes us, you, later, will have to fight her and her allies alone. Therefore you must make every effort within your power to prevent her from beating us.

If, then, it can be proved that your naval aid alone is not sufficient, and that, in spite of your naval victories, Germany may still outnumber and defeat us on land, *but* that with the assistance of your Army the balance may be redressed and our chances of success greatly increased—will you admit that under such circumstances a British army should be sent to our aid?”

“Well, my dear sir, if you can prove all that, I suppose I agree,” replied my companion. “But, once again, I must ask you, what on earth would be the use of our wretched little——”

“Come, come, sir,” I said, “I have no doubt he knows as much as we do about the size and limitations of the British Army. He has offered to prove his point. Let us give him a fair hearing.”

The Frenchman continued, politely ignoring the interruption. “At last,” he said with a smile, “I am really coming to the point. I have shown that Germany will have a superiority of first- and second-line troops to oppose to ours, let us say of two or three Army Corps and an unknown number of reserve Divisions. She intends to envelop our left flank by advancing through Belgium and Luxemburg. She will then have to detach a force to mask the Belgian fortresses of Liège and Namur, and keep in check the Belgian Field Army, supposed to consist of four Divisions and a cavalry Division. Two Landwehr Army Corps would be sufficient for this purpose. There would still be a distinct preponderance on the side of Germany. You must remember, too, that we cannot leave our Italian frontier altogether unprotected.

“Now the German Army has the reputation of being

the best in Europe. It is marvellously organized for war. The remembrance of past victories gives it confidence. It is permeated with the doctrine of the offensive, and taught to despise losses. Even in peace manœuvres the troops are not allowed to retreat. Its attack will be as swift and sudden as previous preparation can make it. Can we resist the devastating onslaught of this enormous mass of men? Nothing can shake my confidence in the superiority of the Frenchman as a fighting man. Our organization, too, is excellent. We also, encouraged by the great improvement of our Army in recent years, have exchanged our former doctrine of the 'offensive-defensive' for that of the vigorous offensive, and we shall not wait to be attacked, I can assure you. Still, who can say but that superior genius in the higher command of our enemies, or the balance of fortune against us, may not give Germany the upper hand in the opening stages of the campaign, which goes so far to secure ultimate victory?"

He paused, and then added gravely, "It is a dark thought which haunts the mind of every Frenchman who remembers *l'année terrible*.

"Just think, then, what the assurance that 160,000 British troops were to be sent to our assistance would mean to our leaders. The moral effect would be enormous. They would compensate for our inferiority in numbers. They would put heart into the Belgians, whose Army, which is not up to the European standard of training and organization, and which is traversing a critical period of reformation, might be discouraged and paralysed by the sudden and swift invasion of its territory.

“I can assure you that we in France have the greatest respect for your soldiers. The infantry is probably the most scientifically trained in the world. Your Army has traditions and possesses the true military spirit. It seems to be well organized for war. If it were somewhat more numerous, and the men were not quite so young, we should have no fault to find with it,” he said with a smile.

“Well, I am glad to hear you say that,” said my companion. “I have seen it so often crabbed in the Press that I thought it possessed every defect possible.”

“I am afraid a certain class of critics prefer discussing its shortcomings to its virtues,” I said. “But it has made wonderful progress during the last ten years.”

“But you must understand,” went on the Frenchman, “that we must have its help in the first stage of the war. One hundred thousand men within a fortnight would be of far greater value than twice their number after a month. Formerly it was considered that on the Franco-German frontier both armies would deploy for the attack on the tenth day, though of course the cavalry and covering troops would come into contact almost immediately. Now, however, owing to the recent vast increase of the Germans’ peace effectives, the bulk of which are stationed on her western frontiers, we may have to expect an *attaque brusquée* of some 300,000 men who would pour into France and Belgium at the first trumpet blast of war. This is a new situation, and we are taking steps to meet it; but it adds greatly to the difficulties of our task. But I fear that the dash of a German raiding force through Luxemburg and Belgium south of the Meuse would meet with scant

resistance while the Belgian Field Army was being tardily assembled north of that area.¹ It is, of course, the growing menace on her eastern frontier that makes Germany so desperately anxious to overwhelm us in the shortest possible time, so as to come to the help of Austria in time to check the Russian advance. This I think I have already made clear, and on this vital issue the whole strategic situation turns. If we have you on our northern flank *in time* we shall feel easy, for Germany's task will be thereby rendered far more difficult. Would we could count upon it." He paused and continued :

"Those who follow closely the international situation believe that the next two years will be fraught with great peril to the peace of Europe. This can best be understood by putting one's self in the position of Germany. Her recent sudden effort was an attempt to gain a decisive lead in the race for numbers, but our reply, by reverting to three years' service, will bring us up to within much the same distance of her as before. This, no doubt, has been an unlooked-for set-back to her. Russia, meanwhile, is increasing her long lead with a magnificent contempt for expenditure, for no popular control exists to check the outlay which her military rulers may choose to impose. But far more dangerous to Germany is the rapid growth of Russia's strategic railways—and indeed it is no secret that France has lent her millions to be devoted solely to this special purpose. New lines are being laid and old lines double-tracked up to Russia's western frontiers, which means, as you must understand, increased rapidity of

¹ The author tenders his apologies to Belgium. Her noble resistance has surpassed all expectation.

concentration and swiftness in attack. It is this above all that causes Germany anxiety, for every day whereby Russia's preliminary movements are shortened means one day less for her to settle accounts with France.

“Now, to those who direct Germany's military policy, the situation is already one of latent war. Europe, to them, is but the field of a vast ‘Kriegspiel’ in which the moves and counter-moves are those of so-called ‘peace preparation.’ Here a new line is constructed to link up a point of assembly with the frontier. There a new fort is built to close some gap or serve as a *point d'appui* for manœuvre. An increase of the enemy's covering troops at some particular point must be met by a similar move. The distribution of the enemy's troops must be carefully studied, and the time required to bring up any particular unit to the frontier must be calculated and noted. Only thus can the time required for his concentration and readiness to attack be computed. When, therefore, Germany's players of this vast and fascinating war-game observe such threatening moves on the part of their eastern adversary as I have mentioned, the desire to counter these movements by open war before the odds grow too heavy against them becomes very strong. Remember that the German players regard the ultimate coming of war as inevitable. I will not say they desire it—though some undoubtedly do—but they all firmly believe that Germany is fighting for her existence, for her ‘place in the sun,’ against those who are ‘hemming her in,’ and that the day when the balance of power definitely sinks against her will mean an end to all German aspirations and ambitions, and the paralysing of her sword, which now has such a salutary influence in the councils of Europe.

A Germany reduced to impotence, even though immune from attack, is for them an unthinkable calamity.¹

“Such being their state of mind, it is natural that the idea of a ‘preventive war,’ of a war, that is, deliberately provoked in order to forestall an unfavourable situation foreseen in the future, suggests itself to them with an irresistible attraction. Surveying the international situation from their peculiar point of view, they see other signs of the times pointing in this direction. Austria-Hungary, their ally, can be relied on so long as the old Emperor lives, but some foresee that disintegrating forces within the monarchy may begin to weaken its consistency once the guiding hand of its beloved sovereign is withdrawn. Insidious influences are at work in her Slav Provinces, and the rising sun of Servia draws regards from Bosnia and Croatia. Roumania seems to be veering more and more towards Russia, though here again, whilst King Charles, himself a Hohenzollern, remains upon the throne, her allegiance to the Triple Alliance may still be retained. Bulgaria and Turkey are both in a sour humour, and for the present may very reasonably be regarded as potential allies. In short, the general situation in South-Eastern Europe may be considered as more favourable for the chances of the Triple Alliance to-day than it will be a few years hence. Italy, of course, is always an unreliable partner, but at present she at any rate shows an ostensible allegiance to the Central Powers. Finally, Belgium, whose Army, as I have said, is in process of reorganization, and is thus suffering the disadvantages of a transition stage, will in a few years’ time be capable

¹ The situation is summed up in Bernhardt’s expression, “World Power or Downfall.”

of opposing and delaying the great German turning movement with more prospects of success than at present. You can understand, then, something of what must now be passing in the minds of Germany's military rulers."

My companion here interposed. "But I have often heard it said that the German people are peaceful at heart. They do not want war. After all, they are a democratic nation, and if they put their foot down and say they will not have it, how can a group of aggressive militarists get their way against the majority of the people? Besides, their relations with us have greatly improved of late, and both nations, I am sure, desire nothing better than a thorough understanding, which will make the Germans realize that we have no aggressive designs against them. The vast commercial interests at stake on both sides are dead against war. We have often enough made peaceful overtures to them and proposed a limitation of armaments, and in time they *must* end by believing we are sincere. Having once gained their confidence, why shouldn't England act as a peacemaker and draw Germany and France and Russia together? It would be a glorious mission, and I, for one, see no reason why it should not succeed. There are many others I know who think the same as I do."

The Frenchman smiled a queer smile.

"Do you recollect the Saverne incident?" said he, "and the outcry that was raised about the bullying of the civil population by the military authorities there? There was furious indignation at the imprisonment of harmless townsfolk, including even civil functionaries, and the ill-treatment of a number of civilians by truculent officers. Well, how did it all end? After the vast

majority of the Reichstag had protested against these arbitrary proceedings, and the press had added its condemnation, the military rulers of Germany took up the challenge, held a court-martial, and practically exonerated all the officers implicated in the affair. Whereupon the German people, awed by the harsh voice of military authority, tamely submitted and the agitation died down as quickly as it had arisen. You see, then, for how much 'public opinion' counts in Germany. In matters of foreign policy it is the Chancellor, acting as the mouthpiece of the Emperor, who controls the destinies of the Empire. And in moments of national crisis it is not the voice of the people, but that of the military party, the Prussian Junkers, the retired generals and admirals, and the Pan-German Professors, which carries weight in the Imperial council-chamber. At the call of the Fatherland all dissensions will be forgotten and the people will obey the summons to arms with enthusiasm. In time of war pacifism disappears.

"As for the *détente* in Anglo-German relations to which you allude, there are times, of course, when, in the absence of any acute question at issue between the two countries, various well-meaning persons have an opportunity of saying, 'Why should not we be friends?' Such friendly feelings are generally encouraged by the German Government, for they do not wish altogether to estrange you, in the hope that you may some day be weaned from your understanding with us and your neutrality secured. But these periods of friendliness do not last long. The friendly reception of the Emperor and Crown Prince in England, for instance, which excited favourable comment in Germany, pre-

ceded by only a few months the violent press campaign which broke out over the Agadir crisis. No, the true friend of France can never be the friend of Germany."

My companion then observed: "If it is so essential that we should send armed help to France, how is it that we are not better prepared?"

"The chief reason," I replied, "is that the public has never seriously thought about these questions. The possibility of a European war in which we should be involved seems so remote. From time to time events take place in the world which point to the inevitable conflict looming in the future, but we do not heed the writing on the wall. Incidents of threatening import, which raise for the moment the dread spectre of war on the Continent, may cause a brief sensation amongst us; but they are quickly forgotten, like the pictures of a cinematograph show. They do not really touch our sense of security. Politics, golf, theatres, and a hundred other petty affairs have a more abiding interest for us and play a greater part in our lives than do those vast forces in the world which are ever silently at work, weaving the destinies of nations.

"And this popular indifference to international affairs inevitably reacts upon the Government in power. We have, it is true, woken up to the necessity of a supreme Navy, thanks to the untiring efforts of a number of devoted men. To be strong enough at sea to defeat Germany at our average moment and at her selected moment is a formula which is now accepted as the basis of our naval policy. But has the public ever demanded any such formula upon which to base our military policy? Far from it.

“Our Government, be it Liberal or Unionist, consequently reflects this popular apathy and ignorance concerning military defence, and has elaborated no definite policy in forming an army suited to our needs. They are compelled to work within certain limits of expenditure, and compulsory service is taboo. Even now we have a shortage of some 10,000 in the Regulars and 60,000 in the Territorials. In spite of repeated changes and ‘reforms,’ we are always short of establishment, and that establishment itself is always insufficient.¹ Criticism is met by skilful evasion, for our War Minister is always an adept at ‘artful dodging.’ It is one of his chief qualifications nowadays. And the layman cannot follow the usual sterile Army Debate into its labyrinth of tables and statistics. So he prefers to leave the whole question severely alone, trusting that the army authorities are acting for the best. All Governments prefer to leave the expense of setting our military house in order to their successors, trusting that they will have the luck never to be faced themselves by the grim reality of war. ‘Not in our time, O Lord,’ is their motto.

“Hence the many defects which are allowed to continue in our military organization. We have neither the best rifle nor the best gun in Europe, as we undoubtedly should have, for our Army is small and we are rich. Our shortage of horse-transport may seriously affect the numbers we can put into the field. Sixty per cent. of reservists will be required to complete the war establishment of our battalions, after deducting immature boys, as compared with 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. in

¹ A few years ago our Regular Army was reduced by over 30,000 men, and recently reductions were made in our artillery.

Germany, and nearly as small a percentage in France. This is a serious weakness, for the more reservists one has to include in the ranks, the less efficient is the unit at the opening—and most important—stage of the campaign. German reservists completing establishment are younger than ours, and perform an annual training, whilst ours practically never touch a rifle after they leave the ranks. We suffer from a lamentable shortage of officers, regular, special reserve, and territorial. Our manœuvres are cramped by various restrictions, and our generals have not the opportunity of handling the masses they will have to command in war. In aviation we lagged for precious years behind the others, ‘waiting to see what they would do.’ To-day, what air-ships have we?

“A supple Secretary of State could no doubt find various excellent reasons for the existence of all these defects. But how would his excuses read in the cold light of history were a future chronicler to have to record the grievous story of our defeats. He—and his predecessors—would stand thrice condemned! If only army efficiency meant votes, what a different story there would be to tell!”

The stout gentleman here interposed. “But supposing we were as efficient as you could wish. Don’t you think that France and Russia, if they were sure of our support, might be encouraged to make a wanton attack upon Germany?”

The Frenchman smiled. “You need have no fear of that,” said he, “so far as we are concerned. It is true that Germany might deliberately provoke us to a war, and then try and represent us as the aggressors. But I think that the common sense of the British

people would see through the ruse. However, personally, I believe that the next great war is more likely to arise over some trivial affair in the Near East where Austria and Russia find themselves in constant opposition. Twice in the past, the Bosnian annexation or the question of the Serbo-Albanian frontier might well have started a conflagration. The situation in the Balkans is as charged with future trouble as ever. The Austrians say openly that, the next time they are compelled to mobilize against Russia, it must be war. They cannot again endure the enormous expenditure and economic strain for nothing. I believe their last mobilization cost £20,000,000. Germany *volens volens* must stand by her ally, for the latter's defeat must mean her own future isolation. You see, then, upon what a slender thread hangs the peace of Europe."

"What you say is quite true," I said. "Would that our people could realize the danger ahead. When the crisis does come upon them, one can only trust that they will keep their heads and do their duty."

The Frenchman nodded. "And we too do earnestly hope for that. Germany, of course, can never spare the troops to invade you whilst they have to reckon with us and the Russians. They would want at least two Army Corps, complete with staff, guns, and cavalry, for this purpose, and they are far too sagacious to waste their strength on a side-issue, instead of massing it on the decisive spot. No, sir, the thing is impossible. But I can well believe that before the outbreak of war they may endeavour to create a panic by spreading rumours of a prospective raid in your Press, and sending airships to spread alarm amongst your population, in the hope that public opinion may tie your regular army to your

shores. I have, however, sufficient respect for the *sang froid* of the British people to believe that they will not be affected by stupid scares of this kind."

"There are, of course," I said, "a number of weak-kneed pacifists and hysterical people in England—one of the unfortunate results of hyper-civilization—who, in a national crisis of the kind are bound to raise loud opposition to any measures which may appear to them to produce a momentary risk. But I am convinced that, once the mass of the people have grasped the needs of the situation, they will undertake all the risks and sacrifices necessary. What is so lamentable, however, is that the Government will not take the people into its confidence now, explain to them frankly the present situation and state the measures necessary to put our military house in order."

"Alas," said the Frenchman, "our Government once made that fatal mistake, shut its eyes to the rottenness of our army and asserted that all was in perfect condition. The inevitable result you know. Thank God, such a state of things is not possible with us now."

The train had now arrived at its destination, and we prepared to take leave of each other. We cordially grasped the Frenchman's hand and thanked him for the trouble he had taken in enlightening our ignorance.

"I hope I have made a convert," he said with a pleasant smile, as he shook hands with the gentleman from Manchester.

"You have, sir," he replied with a hearty laugh, "and no one that I have ever met except yourself could have done it. Would you be good enough to tell us your name?"

The Frenchman pulled out his card-case and offered us each a card upon which was written :

LE COMTE HENRI DE S——
Colonel d'État Major.

It was the name, as I afterwards ascertained, of one of the most brilliant of the new school of French officers, who had been sent on a special mission to study our military organization and confer with our Staff on measures of eventual co-operation between our two Armies.

May his mission bear fruit—some day.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF ARMAGEDDON

WAR AT LAST

SINCE the conversation recorded in the foregoing chapter took place, events have marched rapidly, and the inevitable conflagration has broken out and spread through the length and breadth of Europe. As I write, the Kaiser's legions, after sweeping through Belgium in overwhelming force, are surging forward with the inevitable flow of a tide, up to the very gates of Paris. Our troops, fighting with a stubborn courage never surpassed in the annals of the British army, have retired step by step, keeping touch with their French comrades, whose spirit has never wavered in spite of the discouraging nature of the task they have been called on to perform. Nowhere have the Germans been able to pierce the lines of the Allies, whose cohesion remains intact in the face of the desperate efforts made to overwhelm their left wing by sheer weight of numbers.

There is no need to recapitulate the events of the past month: the heroic resistance of Liège: the gallant stand of the Belgian army which so unexpectedly delayed the German advance: the timely retirement of the Allies from the dangerous Namur salient and the stubborn battles which ensued: the Russian advance so much more speedy than was expected, and the

crushing defeats inflicted on the Germans and Austrians in East Prussia and Galicia ; all these are events which have been watched with breathless interest by every man and woman in the British Isles, forming as they do the opening chapter of the greatest drama that the world has ever known—a drama the end of which is not yet in sight, whose issue lies in the hands of Providence.

ENGLAND'S FIRST DANGER

Thankful we may be that the first great danger to England has been overcome—the danger, that is, that the pacifist and Germanophil sentimentalists would paralyse the hand of the Government at the supreme moment of the crisis which we were called upon so suddenly and unexpectedly to face. Few of us will forget the anguished anxiety of those few days when the Great Powers of Europe were plainly to be seen rushing to inevitable war, whilst our Government made no sign, and no man knew whether we were to remain in disgraceful isolation whilst our friends were left to battle unaided against their foe—and our foe. What efforts were made to hold back the Cabinet from active intervention we can well guess. A certain section of the press has given us a fair indication of the line taken by various supporters of the Government to tie their hands. We were, it seems, to play the part of a disinterested friend of both parties, to bleat of peace and mediation whilst German and Slav and Frenchman were locked in a life-and-death struggle.

The relief of the country was intense when it became known that the opposition of the peace party had been overborne and that the Government had decided to

stand by our friends. The announcement that a British army had landed in France completed the satisfaction of those who knew in what desperate need the French would soon find themselves of any help we could send them to meet the impending onslaught of the German hordes.

Thanks to the foresight of the Admiralty, the command of the sea passed into our hands at the outset and enabled us to transport in safety our expeditionary force, whilst the German fleet was kept closely penned in its harbours through dread of our vastly superior power.

GERMANY'S RESPONSIBILITY

In order fully to realize why the peace of Europe has been broken, and to fix the responsibility for the outbreak of this war, it is necessary to trace Germany's action through the brief crisis which preceded the catastrophe. In the previous chapter attention was drawn to the desire known to exist in the minds of Germany's military leaders to provoke a "Preventive War," whenever the balance of military power should threaten to pass to the side of the Triple Entente. Reasons were given to show that even last spring the Germans might have been expected to regard the future as being against them, and that therefore the peace of Europe was already in danger. Then came the crime of Seraievo, when, on June 28, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his Consort were struck down by the hand of a Servian assassin. Here then was the pretext ready to hand, if Germany and her ally chose to select the moment as suitable for challenging the Powers of the Entente.

GERMANY'S HOUR

Then followed a month of silence. Germany, no doubt, was taking a last survey of the European situation. At that time a formidable political strike was in progress in Russia, which might seriously interfere with her military action. In addition, of course, the Finns and Poles might be expected to give trouble. In France the Three Years' Service Law had not yet had time to take full effect. Recent disclosures in the Senate seemed to show that the French army and its fortresses were not thoroughly equipped for war. In Ireland the Ulster crisis had become acute. Civil war seemed imminent. The army was said to be disaffected. England appeared to be paralysed for the moment, and her intervention in a foreign war was thought to be most improbable. Lastly, the deepening of the Kiel Canal for the passage of Dreadnoughts had just been completed, thus largely increasing the strategic power of the German fleet. On the whole, the moment may well have seemed favourable to strike. If Germany were to wait, would she be likely to find a more favourable opportunity in the future? Probably not.

The Seraievo murders, moreover, had excited the reprobation of Europe, and public opinion was for the time being alienated from "Regicide Servia."

GERMAN INTRIGUES AND THE CRISIS

The Austrian ultimatum was then concocted and flung at Servia's head, with a time limit of forty-eight hours in which to make up her mind. Germany professed ignorance of Austria's intentions. The German

Emperor, to show his entire detachment from all that was impending, was ostentatiously absenting himself on a cruise. There can be little doubt but that he had known and approved of the Austrian Note to Servia. He was certainly privy to Austria's intentions. On July 23 Europe was all at once roused to the consciousness that Austria had suddenly and without warning provoked the most dangerous crisis of modern times.

Austria's action could have but one of two results. Either Russia would back down and a second and severer blow would have been dealt to her prestige and to the solidity of the Triple Entente than that of 1909, or else, as was more probable, she would take up the challenge and Armageddon would result. In the first eventuality the Central Powers would have affirmed before all the world their dominating position in Europe, with all the diplomatic advantage resulting from so successful a coup, and Austria would have bound Servia to her chariot wheel, dealt a staggering blow to Slavdom, and advanced one step nearer to Salonica. In the second case, if it were to be war, the Germanic Powers hoped to settle once and for all their quarrels with France and Russia, and see the realization of all their hopes of European hegemony.

GERMANY THE REAL AGGRESSOR

Germany's aim was now to represent Russia, in case war should supervene, in the light of the aggressor. "This war," said she, "is a private quarrel between Austria and Servia, who have a long account to settle. Servia must be punished for her official complicity in

the Seraievo murders." (Austria's bare assertion was considered as sufficient proof of Serbia's guilt.) "There is no ground for any one else to interfere." Russia, however, knew very well that the ultimatum was in reality directed against herself. Serbia was her especial *protégé* who had always been accustomed to look to her in time of trouble. A more deliberate attempt to "tread on Russia's corns" than Austria's action could hardly be imagined. In spite of this gross provocation, the Czar's Government, in its sincere desire to preserve peace, counselled Serbia to swallow whole what Sir E. Grey has characterized as the most formidable document he had ever seen one State address to another independent State. Article 5 alone, which constituted a gross infringement of Serbia's independence, was to be submitted to international arbitration. Austria refused to regard this answer as satisfactory, and withdrew her representative. On July 26 war with Serbia began. Germany continued to disclaim all warlike intentions, and complained of the military preparations which Russia, by the force of circumstances, felt herself bound to initiate. She did nothing, however, to alleviate the tension of the situation, though pretending to welcome our offers of mediation. By representing Russia as the aggressor she hoped, no doubt, to obtain the support of Italy, which was due conditionally on either of her partners being attacked by another Power. She expected also to secure the neutrality of England, who would not, it was believed, feel impelled to assist Russia, or even France, if it were shown that it was they who had provoked the conflict.

GERMANY FORCING ON THE WAR

These clumsy tactics, however, deceived no one. The Government White Papers have laid bare Germany's disingenuous attempt to pose as the victim of Russian aggression. She refused to agree to Sir E. Grey's proposal to refer the Austro-Servian dispute to a conference of the Powers in London. She declined in any way to influence the action of her Austrian ally, who would, of course, never have dared to stir a finger without Germany's support. Russia, foreseeing what was coming, was bound to order a general mobilization, which the German Emperor chose to regard as a *casus belli*. On August 1 Germany declared war on Russia.

In the meanwhile, France, seeing her ally threatened, had begun hastily, if tardily, to mobilize. Germany protested against this procedure, though her own troops had already passed the frontier, and on August 3 she violated the neutrality of Luxemburg. Nevertheless, Germany had the impudence to attribute her action to the provocativeness of France.

OUR NEUTRALITY COUNTED ON

As was to be expected, it was Belgium's turn next. Her Government was requested to permit the passage of German troops through Belgian territory, in return for a promise (Germany's promise!) that her independence should subsequently be restored to her. Even then it was believed, so low had we sunk in Germany's estimation, that our neutrality was to be secured. "What mattered our guarantee of Belgian independence?" said the Chancellor. Surely we were

not going to war over a "scrap of paper." H.M.'s Ambassador at Berlin returned the only suitable reply to this insulting proposal, namely, that if Germany chose to dishonour her signature, we did not.

This was a grievous blow to Germany. It is more than probable that, if she had foreseen that we were going to be added to the number of her enemies, she would not have provoked the conflict. This, at any rate, was the opinion both of M. Sazonov and M. Poincaré. The former stated that Germany's attitude depended on ours. "If we took our stand firmly with France and Russia, there would be no war. If we failed them now, rivers of blood would flow and we would in the end be dragged into war." The latter was equally emphatic. "If there were a general war on the Continent, it would inevitably draw England into it for the protection of her vital interests. A declaration now of her intention to support France . . . would almost certainly prevent Germany from going to war."

Austria, not unfriendly to England, must have suffered a severe shock, when she realized that she was involved in a war with us. Moreover, our intervention could but confirm Italy, an old friend of ours, in her neutrality. German rage against Britain shows how little our hostility was expected, and how bitterly it is resented. We had come in too soon. We had not waited for our turn, and this was most upsetting to Germany's elaborate schemes of world power.

"DELEND A EST BRITANNIA"

Those who control German public opinion have made no secret of the fact that the overthrow of the British

Empire was to be the ultimate aim of German policy. They realized, however, that their final reckoning with us must needs be postponed until accounts had been settled with France and Russia, and the German hegemony of Europe had been firmly established. Our adhesion to the Triple Entente they regarded as an obstacle to the realization of their ambitions, it being most inconvenient for them to face a naval war with us whilst engaged with France and Russia on land. Hence the active propaganda carried on in England both in the press and in certain political and social circles, to create a body of opinion favourable to Germany and hostile to the idea of British intervention in a Continental struggle. The extent of this propaganda, recent events have shown. How the German intriguers were able to reconcile their bid for British friendship, or at any rate neutrality, with the virulent and systematic anti-British campaign carried on for years past in Germany, it is difficult to understand. They found, it is true, fruitful soil for sowing their insidious doctrines in the minds of the pacifists, anti-militarists, Germanophiles, and other sentimental and humanitarian cranks who flourish in this astonishing country of ours. The perverted mentality of such individuals welcomes any factor which may contribute towards preventing our preparation for war, the "un-thinkable." Anti-Russian feeling in Jewish circles was also found to provide a useful lever for working the pro-German campaign in England.

Yet Germany's designs against Britain were plain enough to all who chose to study the lucubrations of her press, the speeches and writings of her politicians and professors, and the officially supported anti-British

campaign of her Navy League. The trident was some day to be wrested from Britannia's hands and placed in the Mailed Fist. Germany, like Rome, was to overthrow the modern Carthage by defeating her on her own element, etc. Meanwhile the "Day" was solemnly toasted in every wardroom of her fleet, the day of reckoning with Britannia, when Germania should come to her own.

THE GERMAN PRESS CAMPAIGN

To an extent scarcely conceivable in this country, the press was used by the German Government as a means of educating the nation in the ambitious path assigned to it by its rulers. The press bureau, an important section of the Foreign Office, collated or manufactured the intelligence which it was desired should be published in the press. The Wolff Telegraphic Agency, working in close co-operation with the Wilhelmstrasse, also disseminated news, strongly tinged with official views. The German public, docile and accustomed to superior control in all things, are not averse to having their thinking done for them, and are content to lap up the specially prepared pabulum served up by a spoon-fed press. Few papers can afford the luxury of maintaining a staff of correspondents abroad, and are glad to avail themselves of the facilities thus offered them by a Government which is prepared to spend money lavishly on influencing public opinion both at home and abroad for its own ends.

The German people were thus taught to regard themselves as the salt of the earth, God's chosen people, enjoying a culture superior to that of all other nations. They were made to realize their undoubted strength,

and the seeds of a "divine" discontent were implanted in their breasts at the restricted outlet afforded for their energies. Thus it was easy to lead them on to regard England as the barrier to German expansion, and jealousy of England became the most powerful obsession of the German mind. England, the old robber state, which by good luck had managed to seize nearly all the desirable places of the earth, was now enjoying an unmerited prosperity, whilst Germany the young and vigorous was left empty-handed out in the cold.

"SICK ENGLAND"

In contra-distinction to the virile energy and general superiority of Germany, every effort has been made of late years to represent England as a decadent nation, whose tenure of her vast possessions is not justified by the strength of her arm and the virility of her people. "Sick England" we are contemptuously called. A sordid commercial nation, accustomed to making other States fight its battles for it, by supplying them with "English gold." Lacking in patriotism, we can with difficulty maintain our small army of mercenaries. England, the Germans say hopefully, is rotten to the core. Her power is a hollow sham. India and Egypt are honeycombed with sedition and discontent. Our Colonies are sullenly disloyal and will fall away when the Mother Country is resolutely attacked. We are a degenerate, slothful, pleasure-loving people. The day when Germany can challenge our fleet on equal terms will see the vast fabric of our Empire crumble away in hopeless ruin. Such is the pleasing picture which the

Germans have been taught to draw of Britain during the last twenty or thirty years.

GERMAN "SWELLED HEAD"

In striking contrast with our lamentable condition, the praises of German might and culture have been continually sung, until the Germans, who are naturally lacking in any sense of proportion, have become imbued with a most colossal self-conceit. From the humbleness and poverty of spirit of an earlier age, their cumbrous minds have swung round to the opposite extreme of arrogance and overweening pride. A haunting sense of inferiority, inherited from an unfortunate past, has produced in them an irritable touchiness, a petty anxiety lest others should not sufficiently appreciate their boasted progress and power.

Such a state of mind has filled them with an ambition to employ their undoubted strength for the realization of their dreams of "World Power." The traditions of the ancient German Empire were to be revived under the Hohenzollerns, whose glory should outshine that of Charlemagne and the Hohenstaufens.

GERMANY A PUBLIC DANGER

The crude doctrine of "Might is right" having once been firmly established in the minds of the people, Germany became nothing less than a public danger to the peace of Europe. The gospel of force was extolled by all the leaders of national thought until the nation became familiarized with the idea of war as a means of seizing by violence that place in the sun which a

benevolent Providence was assumed to have reserved them. First France and Russia were to be cleared from her path, and then England was to be humbled to the dust and the rich spoil of her possessions enjoyed as a compensation for all the blood and treasure expended in her efforts.

If the naked doctrine of force as a means to attaining to her desires should appear lacking in ethical justification, the national conscience was salved by the cool assumption that the inestimable boon of German "culture," so far in advance of the foremost level of civilization, conferred upon a grateful world, should far outweigh, in the sight of God and man, any deviation from the strict path of moral rectitude.

WILLIAM THE FATAL

The ideals and aspirations of the German people necessarily centred in the German Emperor, who controls with autocratic power the destinies of the nation. He it is who, fervently believing in the divine inspiration of his Imperial mind, has risked all on a gambler's throw to impose the will of Germany upon a prostrate Europe, to the eternal glory of the God-sent House of Hohenzollern.¹ Germany's hour has struck, but it shall prove the death-knell of his ambitions.

¹ The message given to the troops on their departure to the front is stated to have been approximately as follows: "Remember that the German people are the chosen of God. On me, as German Emperor, the spirit of God has descended. I am His weapon, His sword, and His vice-regent. Woe to the disobedient, death to cowards and unbelievers!"

The day of Armageddon, for which Germany has been tirelessly preparing, finds her battling alone with her Austrian ally against France, Russia, England, Belgium, Servia, and Japan. How little did she foresee that her brutal aggressiveness would bring such an array of Powers against her. The miscalculations of German policy are now becoming manifest. Austria and Germany, counting on the probable assistance of Italy, were to be opposed by France and Russia alone. England, torn by intestinal strife, was to be cozened by specious arguments into a tame neutrality. The German legions were to pour through Belgium, brushing aside any resistance that that little State might offer, and enter Paris in triumph, it is said, on August 16. Russia, attacked by Turkey, and possibly Japan, was to be held in check by Austria until Germany could withdraw her Army Corps from France and complete her discomfiture. Such appears to have been William's fatal dream.

The Emperor was certainly grievously misled by his Representatives abroad. They appear to have reported that which they considered would be most acceptable to their Imperial Master. To support their case they doubtless sought out every factor which might point to the weakness of their enemies, but overlooked the fact that Germany is not the only public-spirited nation in Europe, and that most peoples are likely to forget their internal quarrels and combine to resist aggression when threatened from without. The Germans, however, are singularly lacking in human insight, and are incapable of seeing things from the point of view of others, a failing peculiar to those deficient in imagination and the saving sense of proportion.

GERMAN "CULTURE"

Since the revelation of German aims and German character which recent events have evoked, there can be few amongst us who now regret our decision to draw the sword on behalf of our Allies. We understand now the nature of that "Culture" which Germany would impose upon Europe at the bayonet's point—and upon us too, if she had the opportunity. The old culture of the dreamy German philosopher and poet is dead. "Realpolitik" and a brutal creed of violence have taken the place of the old idealism. In time of war the true character of a people is revealed. The Germans from the start have displayed an underbred insolence and a callous and cynical brutality beyond even what might have been expected of them—but not one spark of chivalry. The nation is represented by its manhood in arms, and by their acts we must judge them.

WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

Prussian militarism has threatened the existence of France, and through it our own. We are fighting to protect the weaker States from absorption, and to safeguard the liberties of Europe against Teutonic domination. We hope by curbing the aggressive tendencies of the Teutonic Powers to establish the peace of Europe upon a secure and durable basis, and to put an end to the ruinous competition in armaments which is the curse of modern civilization.

We may repeat again to-day the words of Metternich, spoken one hundred years ago, "Roll up the Map of

Europe." It shall be unfolded again on the day when terms of peace are dictated at Berlin and Vienna, as we mean to see they shall be. New frontiers shall then be drawn, and the Allies must see to it that no racial entity is left groaning under an alien yoke which it detests. There must be no more Alsace-Lorraines or Schleswig-Holsteins. The Austrian Empire must be resolved into its component parts, and Slav and Italian and Roumanian aspirations must achieve their fulfilment. Only thus can the peace of Europe be secured for a generation and the seeds of future conflicts destroyed.

To consummate this great work of final pacification we may have to put forth a desperate effort, but the nation is now alive to the greatness of the task before it, and the Empire has nobly responded to the call of the Mother Country. We must see this thing through to the bitter end. And we may encourage ourselves with this reflection.

THE COLOSSUS WITH FEET OF CLAY

The Colossus of Blood and Iron which for forty years has weighed like an incubus upon the free nations of Europe stands upon feet of clay. The mighty war-machine created by the Prussian military caste is not inspired with the spirit of a free people, fighting for liberty. The hosts which it sets in motion are the slaves of a military autocracy, drilled automatons, obeying masters drugged with the lust of world-conquest, who have deftly deluded their followers into the belief that they are in reality defending the Fatherland against envious foes.

When this people feels the bitterness of defeat, and ruin and starvation face them at home, then the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will begin to understand why they have been led into this adventure, and how grossly they have been deceived. And in that day the Image of the Prussian War-God shall fall headlong and be broken in pieces amid the execrations of a despairing people. This may sound a fanciful picture to draw whilst the German nation is still unbeaten. But the Allies cannot sheathe the sword, as they value their future existence, until this Monster has been destroyed and the liberties of Europe freed from its perpetual menace.

OUR ARMY TOO SMALL FOR ITS TASK

The struggle may be long and bitter. We have begun it with an army far too small for its task. Though it has displayed an unsurpassed heroism, it represents but a tiny fraction of the massed forces of the Allies. Both Servia and Belgium have put into the field greater numbers than we have been able to land on the shores of France. With an army of 300,000 men we might have been able to put a different complexion upon the opening phase of the campaign.¹

¹ The *Novoe Vremya* makes the following pertinent remarks on our military weakness :

“ France, with a bare forty millions of population, has put in the field two millions of trained fighting men. England, with fifty millions of population, ought to have in the field the same proportion, namely two and a half millions of soldiers. Actually England has put only about 6 per cent. of that proportion which should have been hers in this life and death struggle, for England is not so much helping France as fighting for her own

All that has happened was to be foreseen. The great German turning movement through Belgium had been openly discussed and prepared for years. Our intervention, involving our national honour, was thus inevitable sooner or later. Strategic considerations pointed to our place being on the left wing of the French line. Here the weight of the German blow was to fall. And fall it did. Nothing but sheer weight of numbers forced us back on Paris with such grievous loss. With five British Army Corps to oppose to the German five, who can doubt that we should have gained a glorious victory at Mons?

Future generations may well ask why our numbers were so weak on the decisive spot at the decisive

future existence. If France goes down England must follow. With the seaboard of the North Sea or German Ocean in the hands of Germany its second name will become an actual fact to the exclusion of England. France, Belgium, and in due course Holland, Denmark, and Norway will become vassal States, subservient to the will of Germany.

“IMPORTANCE OF NUMBERS.

“Now, as ever, *les gros bataillons ont toujours raison.* England’s forces are assembling from all quarters of the globe. They are volunteer soldiers, and prove the splendid patriotism of Englishmen. Nevertheless they do not give at the decisive moment that million or million and a half needed now in the plains of Champagne to deal Germany the knock-out blow that will finish the Berliners’ sanguinary venture. These patriot soldiers may come too late—when the French armies are already broken. As an auxiliary to the French Army, England’s contingents represent a real strength. If they have to stand alone they will make but a mouthful for the trained millions of Germany. This war is for life and death, and we must hope that England will throw every regiment, every battery, and every man she has into the field now—at once.”

moment. We should have been preparing for this very contingency for years past. The reason is that our Governments would never honestly face what was before them, and tell the people how many men were wanted, and why. It would have been so expensive, and it would have made them unpopular—or so they thought. The people, indeed, were equally to blame, for they did not want to know the truth, but preferred to trust to luck that “all would be right on the day.”

A LESSON FOR THE FUTURE

But that is all a dream of yesterday, when the voice of Lord Roberts was as of one crying in the wilderness. Let us rather think of to-day and to-morrow. The British people are wide awake enough now, and armies are growing out of the earth as if by magic. We mean to “make a good job of it” this time, and we face the future with calm confidence.

Let us not forget our lesson, but rather draw inspiration from it for the days to come. For many years, let us trust, we shall enjoy the benefits of peace and prosperity untroubled by wars and rumours of wars. But an Empire of our vast extent cannot remain for ever without rivals, and it may be that some day, in the far distant future perhaps, we shall again find ourselves threatened by the grim spectre of war believed to have been for ever laid. We must measure it, then, with fearless eye, and adjust our strength, both by land and sea, so that our arm may be the stronger and our sword the sharper.

It is a hundred years since this country has felt its existence threatened. It was the sense of security re-

sulting from a century of untroubled peace which had produced most of the unhealthy humours which were poisoning our body politic. The keen, cold blast of war shall brace and invigorate the nation, strengthen its sinews, and dissipate the noxious vapours which were clouding its brain.

And so future historians shall date the regeneration of the British nation, grown somewhat slack through ease, from the year 1914, the year of Armageddon, when men from the Mother Country and from the Dominions Overseas freely gave their blood to preserve our lands and liberties from the most dangerous foe our Empire had ever known.

