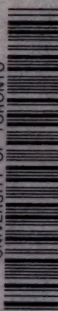


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BRITAIN'S CASE  
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RAMSAY MUIR




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## Britain's Case Against Germany



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# Britain's Case Against Germany

An Examination of the Historical Background  
of the German Action in 1914

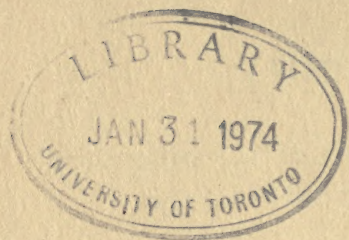
BY

RAMSAY MUIR,

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NEW YORK  
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1914



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## PREFACE

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**D**ESPITE the difficulty of maintaining an attitude of aloofness and impartiality during a great war, I have honestly tried in this little book to see the facts plainly, and never to tamper with them. My main purpose is to show that the great issue for which we are now fighting is no new thing, and has not emerged suddenly out of diplomatic difficulties in the Balkans. It is the result of a poison which has been working in the European system for more than two centuries, and the chief source of that poison is Prussia. Accordingly, I have tried to show (1) that the action of Germany in 1914 is due to a theory of international politics which has taken possession of the minds of the German people since the middle of the nineteenth century; (2) that this theory is the outcome of the traditional policy of the Prussian state during the last two hundred and fifty years; (3) that it had to fight against a far nobler and more inspiring ideal, the ideal of the Germany of Goethe, of Stein and of Dahlmann, and only the dazzling success of the Prussian policy as pursued by Bismarck made possible its victory; (4) that the German Empire of to-day is so organised as to ensure the dominion of the Prussian military monarchy and of Prussian ideas and methods over the rest of Germany; and

(5) that the policy of this Empire during the last quarter of a century has been the natural sequel of earlier Prussian action, and has found its inevitable culmination in the monstrous war of 1914.

But over against the Prussianised German State, with its poisonous belief in brute force, I have tried to show that there has been growing up in the rest of the civilised world a far nobler and saner view of the way in which international relations should be conducted. This view, increasing steadily in strength, has expressed itself in the development of the Concert of Europe, in the establishment of treaties for the protection of small states, in the growth of international arbitration, and in the whole remarkable movement which culminated in the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907. Germany has been throughout the most determined opponent of this whole movement; Britain has been throughout its strongest and most strenuous supporter.

In the British Empire, indeed, and in all that it increasingly stands for, we may reasonably claim to see the absolute antithesis of the German ideal, its belief in self-government, in freedom, in variety over against the German belief in military monarchy, rigid discipline and uniformity; its belief in peace over against the German praise of war; its belief that Freedom and Justice, and not mere physical Power, are the supreme ends and justification of the state. Perhaps this sharp conflict of ideals may provide part of the explanation for the



extraordinary hatred which Germans express for everything British.

It is not for Power that we are fighting; it is not even for national existence, though that would be imperilled by a German victory. It is a conflict of national ideals, a struggle for all the deepest and highest things for which the best Englishmen have laboured in the past: for freedom, for the rights of small nationalities, for international honour, for the possibility of peaceful and friendly relationships between equal and mutually respecting states.

I cannot understand how, on such an issue, any Briton of military age can hesitate for a moment to offer himself for the combat. In a struggle where all that we hold dear is at stake, we should need no urging to throw all our strength into the scale. If we lose, then all is lost. If we win, but the victory is won by our allies alone or mainly, and we have not taken at least an equal part in the strife, the honour of Britain will be tarnished.

The index has been compiled by Miss J. M. Potter, M.A. I have to thank Professor Tout for reading the proofs, but the book has been produced so rapidly that it is possible some errors may have escaped even him.

R. M.

Manchester,  
*November, 1914.*





# Britain's Case Against Germany

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## CHAPTER I

### THE SUMMER OF 1914

THE colossal war of 1914 has already meant the killing or maiming of hundreds of thousands of the best manhood in the most highly civilised communities of the world, and it is only beginning. It has brought unspeakable miseries, murder, torture, outrage, robbery, starvation, despair, to millions of innocent old men, women, and children in the areas of fighting. It has so desolated some of the most prosperous and smiling regions of the world that it will take years, perhaps generations, to restore them to a condition as happy as they enjoyed in the early summer of 1914. It has ruthlessly destroyed many of the most ancient and venerated monuments of civilisation, sanctuaries of the human spirit, which had stood undisturbed through all the storms of centuries. It has caused the destruction of innumerable valuable things slowly created by human labour, the sinking of ships, the burning of homes, the ruin of factories and mines. It has dislocated the commerce and industry of the world, and

inflicted upon labouring men everywhere, even in the non-combatant countries, a huge volume of unnecessary hardship. It has imposed upon all the states engaged in it, and upon many which are not engaged, an intolerable burden of debt incurred for entirely unproductive expenditure, and this crushing load will for generations make the lot of poor folk harder, and render more difficult and more slow the task of improving their conditions of life. In short, this war has already set back, perhaps for generations, the progress of European civilisation. And, whatever the ultimate results of the struggle may be, it must leave behind it a poison of mutual hatred between nations which will go on rankling, it may be for generations, and make it almost impossible to establish those relations of mutual respect and confidence between nations upon which, alone a reasonable and stable European system can arise.

And all this—for what?

According to the present belief of nearly every Englishman, Frenchman, Belgian and Russian, of most Italians and Americans, of some Germans and many Austrians, in short, of the greater part of the human race capable of forming a judgment upon such a subject, the responsibility for all this fruitless waste of human blood and tears rests primarily upon the rulers of Germany and (in a less degree) those of Austria; and secondarily upon the intellectual leaders of the German public, the journalists, the politicians, the professors—perhaps especially the professors—who

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created the public opinion which enabled their government to act as it has acted. That belief has been reached unwillingly, and there are many who have resisted it, incredulously, till the logic of facts convinced them; because they have found it difficult to believe that any government of a civilised state could so act, and still more difficult to believe that the leaders of a great nation, which has led the world in philosophy, in music, and in many branches of learning, could have allowed its very soul to be so poisoned as to support such a course of action, and to gloze over the crimes by which it has been accompanied.

The conviction which most of the world now holds in regard to the guilt of Germany in this war may be summarised in a few sentences, which, taken together, form a very grave indictment.

(1) The original cause out of which this war sprang, the Austro-Serbian question, not only could have been settled if all the great powers had desired its settlement, but was in a fair way of being settled, when Germany, though not directly concerned, intervened with an act which made a general conflagration inevitable. Germany therefore is responsible for the war.

(2) Germany had meant to fight a war of pure aggression, if not on the Austro-Serbian issue, then on some other; she meant to fight this war either this year or next, and all her policy was leading up to it. She had prepared for it beforehand in the most elaborate detail, under cover of a pretended desire for peace. She meant to fight, and



either to cripple or to ruin, all the powers now opposed to her; and although she would have preferred to deal with them separately, and hoped to do so, she had made her arrangements for dealing with them in conjunction.

(3) From the beginning of the war she has, on her side, so conducted the struggle as to show that, under her present rulers, she is a state without honour, a state which regards her most solemnly assumed obligations as of no avail when they stand in the way of her immediate convenience; a state therefore with which it is impossible to have any treaty relations until her system and principles of government are radically changed. She has also conducted the war with a deliberate and calculated brutality to which modern warfare presents no parallel, which violates many solemn international rules formally ratified by Germany herself, and which makes of no avail the progress that has been made in the humanising of war.

This is an indictment so grave that it ought to be fully substantiated. We shall therefore begin by resuming, as briefly as possible, the evidence for these three assertions, even though, in doing so, we may have to cover some well-trodden ground. That done, we shall next be able to enquire how far the ideas that make this kind of action possible are prevalent among the ruling classes, and among the mass of the people, in the German nation; how far these ideas are rooted in German history; how they have shown them-

selves in recent German policy; and what are the rival ideas, the rival conceptions of national honour, of progress and of "culture" with which they are now engaged in deadly strife.

i.—*Germany deliberately precipitated the War.*

When the heir to the Austrian throne was assassinated by a Serbian on June 23, it was natural that Austria should be indignant against the Serbians, and ready to jump to the conclusion that they had encouraged the crime. It would have been right and proper that Austria should require Serbia not only to disown the crime but to do her best to track and punish those who had a hand in it; and if Serbia had failed to do this nobody would have thought it unreasonable that Austria should punish her.

The Austrian government did not adopt this course. During a month they held an enquiry into the crime behind closed doors. They gave no indication to any of the powers except Germany, not even to their ally, Italy,<sup>1</sup> as to the course of action they proposed to adopt. They waited until a moment when many of the ambassadors were away on holiday, as they would not have been if it had been known that a crisis was approaching, so as to make it difficult for the diplomatists to interfere. Then, on July 23, they suddenly delivered

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, Nos. 1, 161. I quote throughout from the popular edition, "Great Britain and the European Crisis."

July 23

an ultimatum to Serbia<sup>1</sup> of such a kind that Sir Edward Grey, who at this stage had much sympathy with Austria, said that he "had never before seen one state address to another independent state a document of such a formidable character" and that at least one of its demands was "hardly consistent with the maintenance of Serbia's independent sovereignty."<sup>2</sup> These monstrous demands, which throughout implied that the Serbian government was responsible for the murder, were not accompanied by any proofs.<sup>3</sup> And Serbia was required to accept them all within forty-eight hours on pain of war. The diplomatists of all the powers *except Germany* urged upon Austria that more time ought to be allowed,<sup>4</sup> if the danger of European war was to be avoided. Austria declined to give more time, and moreover made it clear that she would not discuss the Serbian question with anybody. In spite of this, England, France and Russia did their best to persuade Serbia to yield as far as possible<sup>5</sup>—a difficult thing for Russia

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* No. 5.

<sup>3</sup> The document purporting to give the Austrian *dossier* which appears in the German White Book (p. 28) is merely a general statement, unsupported by evidence, and is seemingly only an extract from a German newspaper. It ought not to be forgotten that in 1909 Austria projected a declaration of War against Serbia, and that in the celebrated Friedjung trial it was shown that the allegations on which this declaration was to be based were founded on documents forged in the Austrian legation at Belgrade. See "The Southern Slav Question," by Scotus Viator.

<sup>4</sup> British Blue Book, Nos. 18, 13, 25; Russian Orange Book, Nos. 6, 12, 14.

<sup>5</sup> British Blue Book, Nos. 12, 15, 25.



to do. Before the time fixed by the ultimatum Serbia sent an extremely humble and conciliatory reply,<sup>1</sup> in which she gave way upon every point but two, and offered to submit these to arbitration. No independent state has perhaps ever submitted itself to greater humiliation before another. The Serbian reply gave to Austria all, and more than all, that she could reasonably expect.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless Austria declined to accept it. She would not even agree to take the Serbian note as a basis of discussion.<sup>3</sup> She declared war, and began to bombard Belgrade.

It is quite obvious that Austria did not want peaceful satisfaction from Serbia. She wanted war. It was the opinion of most of the diplomats concerned, perhaps of all, that the note to Serbia had been intentionally drafted in such a way as to ensure its rejection.<sup>4</sup> Why did Austria take this line, and run the risk of a European conflagration? Obviously because the murder presented a good excuse for crushing Serbia once for all, and Serbia (as we shall see<sup>5</sup>) had long been an obstacle in the way of the Austro-German scheme for obtaining control over the Balkan peninsula. Once before, in pursuance of this great scheme, Austria had taken the risk of war, when she committed the high-handed act of annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908. That was the

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, No. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Edward Grey's opinion, *Ib.* No. 46.

<sup>3</sup> British Blue Book, No. 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* Nos. 20, 161.

<sup>5</sup> See below, Chap. V.

occasion on which Germany declared that "she stood beside her ally in shining armour." The bluff had succeeded on that occasion. It seems clear that Germany had persuaded Austria that it would succeed on this occasion also, and that none of the opposing powers was in a position to fight. Certainly Austria had been convinced that Russia, the power chiefly concerned, would not fight.<sup>1</sup> In 1908 the two Germanic powers had played a two-handed game. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that they were doing the same thing now. True, the German officials insisted that they did not know the contents of the Austrian ultimatum.<sup>2</sup> That may have been literally true, because it was a useful thing to be able to say, especially as the other ally in the Triple Alliance, Italy, had been kept in the dark. But it should be noted (1) that the German Kaiser and Chancellor had an opportunity of discussion with the Austrian statesmen between the murder and the ultimatum, when they attended the funeral of the Archduke, and it is incredible that the opportunity was not used to discuss their future course of action; (2) that the German ambassador at Vienna (one of the few diplomatists not off duty at the crisis) *did* know the contents of the note beforehand;<sup>3</sup> (3) that if the German government did *not* know what the ultimatum contained, it was a monstrous thing to pledge German support

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, Nos. 32, 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* No. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* No. 161.

beforehand to Austria in carrying it out;<sup>1</sup> and (4) that it is incredible that Austria should never have consulted her closest ally and sole supporter in regard to an act that was likely to bring on a European war. The full truth will be known one day; but in the meanwhile no reasonable student of the documents can avoid the conclusion that Austria was encouraged by Germany, probably in the belief that a bold bluff would succeed, into a monstrously high-handed act which was likely to cause a general war, and into committing that act in such a way as to make the avoidance of war extremely difficult.

So ended the first stage of the crisis: the war between Austria and Serbia had been precipitated. The diplomatists now devoted themselves to the almost hopeless task of preventing it from spreading, and in particular of reaching some sort of agreement between Austria and Russia, the traditional protector of Serbia. It is needless to follow the course of the fevered negotiations which were crowded into the days between July 24 and August 2, when the die was cast. But certain broad facts come out very clearly. ~~England was desperately anxious for peace, and Sir Edward Grey and the British ambassadors at the various courts took the lead in urging every conceivable argument, and trying every device that could be thought of.~~ France, the ally of Russia, and Italy, the ally

<sup>1</sup> "We therefore permitted Austria a completely free hand in her action towards Serbia, but have not participated in her preparations. Austria chose the method of presenting . . . a note." German White Book, p. 5.



of Germany and Austria, were equally zealous, and the representatives of these three powers worked hand in hand in the most intimate way throughout the crisis. Russia also was eager for peace, as she had already shown by urging Serbia to give way, and as she showed at every stage of the negotiations; but she was resolved that she would not again submit to such a humiliation, or be forced to such a desertion of a small power which looked to her as a protector, as she had had to endure in 1908; and even if her ministers had been willing, public feeling in Russia had been stirred to such a pitch that it would have been impossible for them to submit without raising a positive revolution.

What of the attitude of Austria? During the first few days she maintained her stiff-necked attitude, and refused to discuss the Serbian question in any form. She was evidently still hoping that the bluff would succeed. But after a few days she realised that the danger was serious, and that whatever the German officials might say, Russia would fight unless some settlement was reached. That conviction brought her to a more reasonable attitude. On July 31 Sir Edward Grey proposed that Austria should stop the advance of her troops in Serbia, that Russia on her side should take no military steps, and that the other powers should consider what satisfaction Serbia ought to give to Austria.<sup>1</sup> To this Russia agreed at once;<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, No. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Russian Orange Book, No. 67.

on the following day Austria also accepted the proposal, thus for the first time permitting the powers to discuss the questions between herself and Serbia.<sup>1</sup> On this basis, it seems safe to assume that a peaceful settlement would have been reached.<sup>2</sup> The obstacle was no longer in the obstinacy of Austria. Where was it?

Throughout the negotiations the German government never tired of asserting that it was eagerly and assiduously working for peace, and using its influence with Austria in that direction. This is stated over and over again, but the only definite German step of which there is any proof was the forwarding of English suggestions to the Austrian government *without comment*. In the German White Book issued after the war began there is not a single document showing that Germany used any influence upon Austria in a peaceful direction; indeed, the only despatches between Berlin and Vienna contained in this book are an empty note about the Serbian ultimatum on July 24, and a telegram from the German ambassador at Vienna on July 28 saying that Sir Edward Grey's mediation "appears belated," "after the opening of hostilities by Serbia!" It is difficult to believe that if Germany had really been using pressure upon Austria she would not have included some evidence to this effect in the official statement of her case. As for Germany's zeal for peace, the one clear

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, Nos. 131, 135, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Russian Orange Book, Nos. 69, 71.

and definite fact is, that every proposal and suggestion made by Sir Edward Grey was rejected (with polite expressions) as "inadmissible"; Sir Edward Grey even begged the German government, if they objected to his suggestions, to suggest *any* way out that seemed suitable: "mediation," he said, "was ready to come into operation by any method that Germany thought possible if only Germany would 'press the button' in the interests of peace."<sup>1</sup> Two days later Sir Edward Grey went so far as to say that if Germany would propose any reasonable scheme, and if Russia and France did not accept it, he would have nothing to do with Russia and France.<sup>2</sup> To these appeals the German government, so zealous for peace, made no reply whatever: on the contrary, on the very evening on which Sir Edward Grey sent the first of these two messages, the German Chancellor was proposing to the British ambassador that England should remain neutral while Germany attacked France and violated Belgium.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, on the very day on which Austria agreed to let the powers discuss the Serbian question, the German government sent an ultimatum to Russia involving war within twelve hours.<sup>4</sup> Is it possible, in face of these facts, to deny that Germany first urged

German proposal  
to Britain  
to remain  
neutral  
while  
Germany  
attacks  
Belgium

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, No. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* No. 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* No. 85.

<sup>4</sup> Russian Orange Book, No. 70. The despatch announcing the ultimatum immediately follows a telegram from the Russian ambassador congratulating Sir E. Grey upon the prospect of securing peace!



*Mark Peace impossible*

Austria into a line of action which made war likely, then placed every difficulty in the way of a peaceful solution while pretending to strive for peace, and finally, when peace seemed likely to be secured in spite of all difficulties, suddenly precipitated war by its own act?

The German defence of the ultimatum to Russia, as given in the German White Paper, is that Russia was threatening Germany by mobilising.<sup>1</sup> There is some obscurity about the actual dates and facts concerning the mobilisation.<sup>2</sup> But it seems to be clear that Germany herself had been actually mobilising in secret for some days before she sent her ultimatum demanding that Russia should demobilise.<sup>3</sup> In any case, it is well known that Russian mobilisation is a much slower thing than German, taking weeks instead of days; and under these circumstances a power which was zealous for peace might reasonably be expected to risk a delay of a day or two at a moment when peace seemed to be in sight. And there is another significant fact. It was primarily against Austria that Russia was mobilising: the armies opposite the Austrian frontier had begun to assemble two days before the armies opposite the German frontier. Yet Austria sent no ultimatum; Austria was ready to discuss

<sup>1</sup> German White Paper, pp. 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> Russia seems to have issued orders for the mobilisations of the regions near Austria on 29 July, the day on which Austria attacked Serbia (British Blue Book, No. 78). The general Russian mobilisation was ordered on 31 July, after the general Austrian mobilisation.

<sup>3</sup> British Blue Book, Nos. 105, 113.

and to make terms; Austria actually did not declare war against Russia until five days after Germany! Why, then, need Germany take action? There is only one imaginable reason. *It was because she was afraid that peace was going to be assured, and she meant to have war.*

ii.—*The War had been long intended and prepared.*

It is, in the nature of things, not easy to obtain documentary proof of Germany's far-reaching and detailed preparations for war, the evidences of which have accumulated since the war began, and have, in the mass, convinced most men that every detail of the German attack on Belgium and France had been arranged beforehand. It is, for example, remarkable that when German armies appeared before fortresses in Belgium and France they should find it possible to bring into action immediately big guns requiring concrete platforms which, according to artillery experts, require three weeks to settle; it cannot be *proved*, as yet, that these platforms had been secretly constructed beforehand by agents of the German government; but it is certainly an extraordinary coincidence that there should be platforms ready, at the right spots. It is suggestive to learn that orders from Germany for the chartering of coalships to sail to points in the Atlantic Ocean reached Cape Town a week before the murder of the Archduke: but it cannot be *proved* that these ships were destined to provide supply for commerce-raiders. We

may well wonder why, long before there was any alarm of war, there was a sudden and inexplicable rush of orders from Germany to sell Canadian Pacific shares on the London Stock Exchange. It is not without significance that the army manœuvres to be held last August in Central Germany were to be on so much larger a scale than ever before that many of the reserves were to be called out; the visitor to Germany, who was told of this in May and thought nothing of it then, cannot now fail to realise how convenient a cloak these unprecedented manœuvres afforded for the accumulation of supplies and equipment in the direction of the French frontier. A hundred details of this sort, each perhaps capable of explanation by itself, have combined to produce a widespread moral certainty that all the arrangements for a war that was to be waged this summer had been completed in Germany long before the Archduke's murder.

But there is no need to rely upon scattered details of this sort. Evidence of a far more definite kind as to Germany's warlike intentions is abundant.

In the first place, there is the enormous and rapidly increasing German expenditure on armaments during the last few years. The expenditure on the navy has naturally attracted most attention in this country, where the strain of keeping abreast of it has been sharply felt. The beginning of the modern German navy really dates from the



Navy Bill of 1897. The conviction that the object of its creators was to challenge British sea-power first took root in 1900, when, in the middle of the South African War, Germany suddenly revised the scale of expenditure established in 1897, and practically doubled its navy. From that time onward England has found herself forced to build against Germany. She tried, from 1906 to 1908, the experiment of retarding the rate of construction, in the hope that Germany would follow suit: the German reply was to raise their naval estimates by 33 per cent. She opened negotiations for a limitation of armaments on both sides, only to be told that this was impracticable. As late as 1913, England suggested a "naval holiday," or suspension of new construction by mutual consent, but the reply was equally unfavourable. Germany increased her vote for the navy by £1,000,000 per annum in 1912, and by half a million in 1913, and then we had to follow suit in proportion. *When the war began Germany had a navy more powerful and more costly than England had found necessary ten years before*, though the very existence of England depends upon command of the sea. The rapid construction of this vast force was not meant for show only: it was meant to be used. And alongside of the programme of naval construction had gone forward an elaborate fortification of Heligoland and of the highly defensible German North-sea coast, such as to provide an impenetrable fortress where the main fleet could rest in safety while submarines and other modern devices

were employed to wear down the English numerical superiority. This quite practicable scheme of operations has been openly discussed and described for years past in German publications of many types. At the same time the Kiel Canal was being widened and deepened, to permit of the free passage of warships back and forward between the North Sea and the Baltic. Many people have prophesied that a war between England and Germany would come when the enlargement of the Canal was completed. It was completed in the early summer of 1914.

Still more striking than the naval activities of Germany during these years have been the increases in her land army. In 1911 an Army Act was passed by the Reichstag which provided for a very large increase to the peace-footing of the army, involving, of course, a proportionately larger increase of the number of trained reserves; the act also provided for a huge expenditure on guns, air-craft, motor-transport and other munitions of war. This enlargement of 1911 was defended on the ground that it has always been a rule in Germany that the army on a peace-footing ought to be kept in a steady ratio to the population of 1:100, and that there had therefore been at intervals of a few years a long series of Army Acts providing for increases in the army proportionate to the growth of population. The explanation is perhaps not unreasonable, though the German army, before 1911, was already the most formidable in Europe. But this explanation was

quite insufficient to account for the passing of a second Army Act in 1912, and a third in 1913, each providing for more sensational increases than the last, and each devoting also huge sums of money for the increase of those mechanical means of destruction upon which, during this war, Germany has relied even more than upon the wonderful valour of her soldiers.

What was the reason for all these amazing increases? Germany was threatened by no power in the world; on the contrary she was herself loudly proclaiming that her relations with other powers, and notably with England, had markedly improved, especially since their co-operation in the settlement of the issues raised by the Balkan War. The other European powers inevitably felt themselves threatened, and had to take measures to defend themselves. France, always nervous about Germany, had already forced the whole of her manhood to undergo military training: but as the population of Germany is half as large again as that of France, this left her still markedly inferior in strength, and she could only respond by her Three-Years' Law, increasing the length of military service. Russia, the power which had tried to persuade the other nations of Europe to agree to disarmament, only to meet with a rebuff from Germany, also found it necessary to increase her forces. Most significant of all, little Belgium, though protected by the guarantee of her neutrality, thought it necessary for the first time to establish compulsory military service. Her new system had



not been brought into working order, when she found how well-grounded her suspicions had been. Over all Europe, in 1913, brooded the horror of the coming world-war. And the source of this dread was Germany. This was apparent to the whole world.

There is yet another significant thing about these ominous German preparations. Germany could not raise the money for the vast expenditure which she had undertaken, by the ordinary methods of taxation; or at any rate, her rulers could not persuade the Reichstag to agree on the taxes to be imposed. She therefore had recourse to an unheard-of mode of raising money—a war levy of £50,000,000, to be raised by assessments on capital. Such a method could not conceivably be made a regular mode of raising money for annual expenditure. It could only be justified as an emergency measure—as a means of meeting a particular strain not likely to recur. It appeared therefore that the unparalleled military measures of 1912 and 1913 were meant as a special effort for an immediate purpose. That immediate purpose could only be a war, and a war to be promptly undertaken.

Such were the public and notorious events which preceded the war alarms of this summer. On the head of these preparations we find Germany deliberately forcing on war on an issue which need not have caused war at all, and which would have been settled but for Germany's intervention. Is it, in face of these facts, possible to deny that Germany had for some years been preparing to engage

in war, and that even if the Archduke had never been murdered, war would have come this summer?

But what were the motives of this appalling and deliberate crime? Why was Germany coolly and methodically preparing for war during these last three years, when every power in Europe has been striving to attain friendly relations with her?

Since the war began Germany has done her best, especially in neutral countries, to maintain the attitude of an innocent victim, beset by a combination of malignant and unscrupulous foes. She has put forward two distinct explanations of the war, which she employs alternately or concurrently.

According to the first explanation she is defending her "culture," her very existence, from the vast semi-barbarous power of Russia. The subtitle of her very disingenuous and incomplete official statement or White Paper is "Germany's Reasons for War with Russia," and the aim of this document is to suggest that the war was forced on by Russia, and was essentially defensive in character. The infinitely fuller and franker collections of papers published by the British and Russian governments show that this pretext is entirely baseless, as we have already seen. But the very strategy of the war shows that it was in no sense a war of defence against Russia. If it had been true that the very existence of Germany and Austria was threatened by a great Pan-Slavist movement led by Russia, the natural course of action for Germany would have been to concentrate the bulk of her forces in the East, for the

defence of herself and her ally. Even if France had been drawn into the war by her alliance with Russia, a much smaller force than Germany has actually employed in the West would have served to guard the short French frontier from Luxemburg to Belfort. In a defensive war Germany would have had the assistance of her ally Italy, which has been withheld on the express ground that the war is one of aggression, and which would have kept much of the French army engaged. In a war limited to the actual Franco-German frontier she would not have been troubled by the resistance of Belgium, which has turned out to be much more formidable than she ever anticipated. In such a war also she could certainly have counted upon the neutrality of Britain. Her military position would have been immensely stronger than it is. In short the whole plan and conduct of her campaign shows that she was not thinking primarily of Russia; but primarily of overrunning and conquering Belgium, which she has now declared to be a province annexed to her Empire, secondly of ruining France and robbing her of her colonies, as the Imperial Chancellor practically announced beforehand in his negotiations with Britain,<sup>1</sup> and thirdly of striking a blow at the naval and colonial supremacy of Britain, though if possible (as her eagerness for British neutrality shows) she would have preferred to postpone that part of her programme to a later date. The Russian bogey has been very useful as a means of

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, Nos. 29, 85, 101.



making the war popular among the German people, and of winning sympathy among the neutrals who distrust the recent record of the Russian government. But the course of events shows that it was in no sense the real motive of the war.

The second explanation of the war, put forward with great vigour since the intervention of England, is that it is an attack upon Germany by a combination cunningly prepared by treacherous England, which was jealous of the growing prosperity of Germany, and wished to destroy it.

This explanation, which brushes aside the violation of Belgian neutrality as a matter of no importance, a mere hypocritical pretext put forward by England, seems to be widely accepted by the German people. It is entirely inconsistent with the whole course of the negotiations preceding the war, during which England, by Germany's own admission, strained every nerve to preserve peace.<sup>1</sup> But it can also be dismissed on other grounds. In 1912, when the German preparations for war were at their height, England, feeling that her friendship and co-operation with France might have created a not wholly unnatural but dangerous nervousness in the minds of German statesmen, did her very best to remove any apprehensions that might exist: at this time relations between England and Germany were thought to be greatly improving, the German press had begun to congratulate itself upon the improvement, and English statesmen were anxious to encourage the growth

<sup>1</sup> German White Book, p. 11.

of good feeling. The English ambassador placed in the hands of the German government a formal statement drawn up by the Cabinet, which stated that England had not entered into any engagements with any other power which involved aggressive action against Germany, and that she bound herself not to enter into any such engagements in the future.<sup>1</sup> That ought to have been enough to remove any German fears of English attack, if they existed. The German answer was instructive. It proposed that England should bind herself to unconditional neutrality in any war in which Germany should engage! This extraordinary demand was tantamount to an announcement that Germany proposed to engage in war at an early date, especially as it was soon followed by a further increase in the German fleet and in the German army. In effect, indeed, as we can now see, it was a covert anticipation of the extraordinary proposal made on July 29, that England should give Germany a free hand to violate the neutrality of Belgium and to rob France of all her colonies.

The German government, if it was convinced that England was preparing a treacherous attack, might perhaps (especially in view of its own diplomatic methods) believe that the English assurance of 1912 was a deliberate lie, meant to put them off their guard. But there is another and still stronger reason for asserting that they did not really think that England was going to attack

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Asquith's Speech at Cardiff, Sept. 1914.

them. German publicists have long delighted to declare that England is a decadent and cowardly power, so much afraid of war that she would cling to peace on even the most dishonourable terms. The German Chancellor and Foreign Secretary seem to have adopted this view. They appear to have been quite convinced that they could persuade England to remain neutral. In the famous interview with the British ambassador the Chancellor made a "strong bid for British neutrality" by promising, "provided that the neutrality of Great Britain were certain," not to take anything from France except her colonies, and to respect the integrity of Belgium after the violation of her neutrality had served its purpose—provided that Belgium did not resist.<sup>1</sup> Even when Sir Edward Grey peremptorily refused to consider this "infamous proposal," as Mr. Asquith justly called it, the Chancellor still seems to have clung to the belief that England was a power which would not trouble about infamy, if only she was able to escape from the perils of war. When on August 4 the British ambassador delivered the ultimatum demanding that the neutrality of Belgium should be respected, he had a "painful interview" with the excited Chancellor,<sup>2</sup> who delivered a harangue of twenty minutes, saying that it was "terrible to a degree" that Great Britain should make war "just for a scrap of paper." "His excellency," adds the ambassador, "was so excited, so evidently

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, No. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* No. 160.



overcome by the news of our action, and so little disposed to hear reason, that I refrained from adding fuel to the flame by further argument." What can be more plain than that the Chancellor really believed that England would maintain neutrality, or in other words that she was too cowardly to fulfil her obligations of honour? But he could not both believe that, and also believe that England had organised a deliberate attack on Germany.

No, the pretence that England is responsible for the war is a very unreal and insincere pretence, invented only for public consumption. But there is more to be said for the view that hatred of England by Germany is, at any rate in part, responsible for the war. The bitterness of German feeling against England which has been displayed during the last generation, and especially during the last few years, is indeed quite extraordinary, and quite inexplicable on any but one ground. It was already at full height in the time of Treitschke, the bitter, eloquent Berlin Professor, at whose feet all German society sat till his death in 1896, the great exponent of the doctrine of force, with whom hatred of England was a passion, and who preached unceasingly that Germany must make herself the equal of England on the sea, and bring about the downfall of this overgrown, decadent, tyrannical, hypocritical power. Treitschke is the most popular, as he is the most readable, of German historians, and he has exercised a profound influence on German political

ideas—an influence whose extent and tendency Englishmen are only now beginning to realise, for his books have never been translated into English.

But the expression of hatred for England is by no means limited to Treitschke and his disciple Bernhardt. It spreads through most of the leaders of German opinion. In 1912 an eminent French journalist, M. Georges Bourdon, went to Germany to interview leading men of every type for the *Figaro*, in the amiable hope of proving that friendship between France and Germany is possible. Most of them, as was perhaps natural, told him that all Germans wished to be on good terms with France. But most of them added that England was the inevitable enemy. He talks with the Foreign Secretary, Kiderlen-Waechter; who, defending the Army Act, says: "If we are threatened, as we appear to be, ought we not to show that we are capable of defending ourselves? Who, then, is threatening Germany? England." He talks to a leading Liberal member of the Reichstag, who says that "we have grievances against England, with regard to whom German public opinion constantly has its teeth set on edge." He talks to the great pundits, Professor Schmöller and Professor Adolf Wagner; the one tells him that "a proof of France's hostile attitude was that she allied herself with England, the enemy of Germany"; the other says that "our real adversary is England: she has not forgiven us for having invaded her industrial and commercial supremacy

. . . she is our enemy now, as she was once yours." He talks to Prince Lichnowsky, who was till August 4 the popular German ambassador in London: "undoubtedly," says this eminent diplomatist, "it is England more than France that engages attention, and it is her plots and armaments that excite uneasiness." He talks to the great landowner, Prince Hatzfeldt, who says "it is England towards whom our attitude is becoming more and more severe." "In the mind of every German," M. Bourdon concludes, "whether he thinks with passion or restraint, is harboured rancour against England." Finally he talks with an eminent critic and publicist, Herr Alfred Kerr, who uses neither phrases nor concealments, but with extraordinary frankness goes straight to the heart of the matter. "It is not a personal quarrel that we seek with you (France). Nothing of the kind. But it is interest, profit, do you see? The whole of Germany is hypnotised by the golden calf of profit. . . . You are rich. Therefore your possessions are coveted. . . . The world's peace? For Germany it means the possession of colonies. Yours are desirable. . . . But I must say we gaze more towards England than towards you. . . . The reality is the permanent threatening of war. . . . War is not out of fashion, it's a thing of to-morrow.' He drew himself up on his low seat, and with his animated forefinger pointed to solid phalanxes on the wall waving flags and firing thunder: 'The Return of the Huns.'" This is indeed frank: too frank to be accepted by most Germans, who (like every-



body else) like to cover up their passions in fine words. But it is probably true. For what reason have the Germans for hating England, which throws open every port that she controls as freely to German vessels as to her own? What reason, save that she owns many things that they would like to possess; and is (for the great Treitschke has said it) a decadent, hypocritical and tyrannical power, which has no right to stand in the way of the great nation, the nation of *Kultur*.

Another remarkable fact which emerges from M. Bourdon's enquiries is that according to most of his interlocutors there is no such thing as an independent public opinion in Germany. "Opinion with us," says one of them, "is the chorus of antiquity; it accompanies the actors, but does not participate in the play." "Opinion," says another, "is an orchestra, which answers only to the baton of the government." "We don't pretend," says another, a great banker, "to have opinions upon what does not directly concern us. Politics are the affair of the government. That is their business." No doubt there is some exaggeration in all this, but it contains a substantial element of truth. The Germans are undoubtedly far more ready to leave their national destinies in the hands of their Emperor and the ministers whom he chooses than the people of England and France are to leave their affairs even in the hands of their elected representatives. And the organisation of public opinion by means of a skilfully influenced press has been

one of the supreme arts of government in the eyes of German statesmen ever since the days of Bismarck, the inventor of the art. Each of Bismarck's wars was preceded by a marvellous "mobilisation of public opinion" through the press. And the unanimity with which the whole orchestra has been playing on the two themes of "England the Enemy" and "The Russian Bogey" during the last few years may certainly be regarded as part of the preparation for this war.

Our second conclusion therefore is that the war which Germany deliberately precipitated on the Austro-Serbian question had been foreseen and prepared down to the minutest detail, especially during the last three years, just as each of Bismarck's wars was foreseen and prepared; that it was a war of aggression for European and colonial territory; and that it would certainly have taken place even if the fatal shot had never been fired in Serajevo.

iii.—*Germany has conducted the War dishonourably and barbarously.*

The war began by the deliberate violation by Germany of the neutrality of two small powers, Belgium and Luxemburg, both of which Germany had formally guaranteed. In the case of Luxemburg the neutrality of the little state was established in 1867, at a congress of the powers held in London; and it was actually on the proposal of Prussia herself that this arrangement was con-

cluded. In the case of Belgium the treaty dates from 1839. The only other treaty of this kind is that by which the neutrality of Switzerland was guaranteed in 1815. None of these treaties has ever been infringed by any power until this year; they formed a sign of the good faith and honour of Europe, a means of safeguarding the rights of small nationalities, a first step, as many believed, towards a system of mutual protection of rights, which would give Europe secure peace. The power which has violated these treaties has struck a deadly blow at the system of international law and international honour. It has also dishonoured itself, and made it impossible for other powers to have treaty relations with it, since its word cannot be trusted.

In the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 Belgium had ground to fear that her neutrality might be violated by one or other of the combatants. England therefore approached both the French and the Prussian governments with a demand for an assurance that the neutrality of Belgium should be respected, making it clear that she would throw her whole strength into the scale against whichever power should be guilty of this act. She did this because, in the words of Mr. Gladstone, then Prime Minister, she could not "quietly stand by and witness the perpetration of the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history, and thus become participators in the sin." Both powers gave the required assurance, Prussia adding that the enquiry was superfluous, in view of the pledged



word of Prussia. These undertakings were strictly observed. Germany even abstained from sending her wounded across Belgian territory; and when the main French army was penned up against the Belgian frontier at Sedan, it regarded that frontier as an impassable barrier, and laid down its arms, thus giving Germany the decisive victory in the war.

In the present crisis England followed exactly the precedent of 1870. On July 31 the British ambassadors at Paris and Berlin were instructed to ask for formal assurances that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected if war broke out.<sup>1</sup> The question was obviously not, on this occasion, "superfluous in view of Germany's pledged word," since it was only two days before, on July 29, that the German Chancellor had made his "infamous proposal" that England should remain neutral while Germany attacked France through Belgium, on the understanding that *if Belgium did not resist* her integrity should be restored. The answers of the French and German governments were strikingly different. The French government immediately gave the most complete and satisfactory assurances.<sup>2</sup> The German Foreign Secretary said that he could not reply without consulting the Emperor and the Chancellor, but that he was "doubtful whether they would return any answer at all," as "any reply they might give could not but dis-

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, No. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* No. 125.

close a certain amount of their plan of campaign." <sup>1</sup>

On the same day, July 31, the question was also being discussed in Brussels, where the German minister was asked whether Belgium might consider herself secure against an attack from Germany. He was reminded of two formal declarations made by the German Chancellor and Foreign Secretary in 1911 and 1913, in which they had asserted that Germany had no intention of violating the neutrality of Belgium. His reply was that these assurances still held good.<sup>2</sup> Both of these statements of 1911 and 1913, made while Germany was in the midst of her warlike preparations, were no doubt intended to prevent Belgium from preparing to defend herself. The assurances of the minister on July 31 were clearly meant to lull Belgium into a false security up to the last moment. On August 1 the German government informed Luxemburg that she proposed to occupy her territory, and on August 2 her troops entered the capital, and the Luxemburg government sent its protest to the powers. On the same day, August 2, the same German minister at Brussels who had three days earlier assured Belgium that she was safe from attack, presented an ultimatum from his government<sup>3</sup> demanding free passage for German armies, and threatening to treat Belgium as an enemy if she refused. One wonders if the min-

<sup>1</sup> British Blue Book, No. 122.

<sup>2</sup> Belgian Grey Paper, No. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* No. 20.

ister blushed on presenting this note. Two days later German troops entered Belgian territory; and the British government presented an ultimatum to Germany. At midnight on August 4, England and Germany were at war.

Thus was perpetrated, with every refinement of treachery, what Mr. Gladstone in anticipation described as "the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history." It is not easy to find a parallel in modern history to the cynical effrontery of the two messages of the German minister at Brussels. One parallel only occurs readily to the mind. It is drawn from the history of Prussia. It is that episode in the history of the great hero of Prussian history, the Great King, as Germans proudly call him, when he lulled his intended victim, Queen Maria Theresa, into security by messages of friendship until he was ready to attack her territories which he was bound in honour to protect.<sup>1</sup> But the Great King waited for three months. He has been outdone by the latest pupils in his school.

The German government has, since the event, tried to manufacture excuses for its act. It asserted, in the first place, that the French were the first to take action, by sending dirigibles across the frontier.<sup>2</sup> But when the Belgian minister, on being told of this, asked where it had happened, the answer was: "In Germany;" to which the natural reply of the Belgian was that in that case he failed to understand the object of the com-

<sup>1</sup> See below, Chap. III.

<sup>2</sup> Belgian Grey Paper, No. 21.



munication! Yet this was the only justification offered to Belgium for the violation of her neutrality. Again, it has been stated that the German government had certain proof that the French *intended* to attack Germany through Belgium, and that therefore Germany had to act in self-defence; but the proof has not been produced, and all we have to go upon is the declarations of the French and German governments on July 31. Finally, it has been pretended that Belgium had formed a secret league with France and England against Germany, and in support of this we have been told of a document, supposed to have been discovered in Brussels, wherein arrangements for the despatch of a British expeditionary force to Belgium were discussed. But this only shows that both Belgium and England believed before the war that there was a danger of a German attack, and had considered what should be done if such an attack took place.

In reality Germany was not influenced by any of these considerations. Her true mind on the matter was expressed by her own chief minister, the Chancellor, in the Reichstag, on the outbreak of war. He acknowledged that Germany had committed a crime against Belgium, but defended it on the plea of necessity, because Germany must "hack a way through," and promised that in the end Belgium should be compensated for the crime. The compensation has taken the form of the burning of churches, towns and villages, the shooting of thousands of innocent non-combatants, the driv-

ing out of thousands more to starvation in the woods or to exile in dependence on the charity of strangers: and finally it has taken the form of the annexation of the whole Belgian kingdom as a province of the German Empire. That may seem a boon to Germans: to other people incorporation in a dishonoured nation seems the deepest insult of all. As for the "necessity" of "hacking a way through," we have already seen that the attack on Belgium did not lighten, but greatly increased, the military difficulties which Germany undertook. It increased the number of her enemies by drawing in England; it alienated honourable men all over the world; it made it plain that the word of the German government as it is at present constituted can never again be trusted.

It has been said, by some palliators of Germany's act, that after all the attack on Belgium was no worse than England's attack on neutral Denmark in 1807, when the Danes were ordered to surrender their whole fleet, and compelled by force to do so. Even if the parallel were exact, two black do not make a white. But the parallel is not exact. It is a not unimportant difference that England had never pledged her honour to maintain the neutrality of Denmark. The English government had proofs, which history has accepted, that Napoleon (who was at this date, in alliance with Russia, master of the whole of Europe) intended to seize the Danish fleet for an attack on England. And there is a further and most significant difference. In the Danish case all parties

in England who had not access to the secret information of government united in condemning and deploring the deed. They could not, any more than the Germans can to-day, undo an act about which they were not consulted beforehand. But they could, and did, raise their protest.<sup>1</sup> Sidmouth, the High Tory, said bitterly that he began to despair of his country when he saw it "fighting Bonaparte with his own weapons—those of mere strength without right, and of temporary convenience without regard to justice." Sheridan, the Whig, declared that Bonaparte would be delighted at seeing "our character blended with his own;" and many other leaders of all shades of opinion, in parliament, in correspondence, and in the press, expressed the same sense of shame and indignation. So far as is known not a single note of protest has been raised in Germany against the much more iniquitous violation of Belgium. It is indeed a piece of treachery without parallel in modern history.

The war thus begun has been continued in the same spirit of shameless violation of treaty undertakings in regard to the rules of war. Germany has been a party to the acts of the Hague Conferences, whose object was so far as possible to mitigate the horrors of war, especially as they affect non-combatants. She has accepted these restrictions. And she has from the first deliberately and continuously violated them whenever

<sup>1</sup> On this, see MacCunn, *Contemporary English View of Napoleon*, 115-16.



it seemed to suit her convenience. We need not lay any emphasis upon the kind of charges that seem to recur in all modern wars, and to be made equally by both sides: the charges of using dum-dum bullets, firing on the Red Cross, treacherously misusing the white flag, and driving non-combatants before the firing line. It is easy to see how these things might happen accidentally, though the evidence for the charge that women and children have been driven before the firing line has been strong and cumulative. But we may content ourselves with those deliberate offences against the Hague laws of war about which there is no dispute, and which Germany herself in many cases admits and even glories in.

(1) It is among the provisions of the Hague Convention that in no case shall undefended "ports, towns, villages, habitations or buildings" be bombarded, and that a defended town shall only be bombarded as part of regular siege operations, and after due notice given. The *Goeben* and the *Breslau* bombarded the open towns of Bona and Philippeville and the *Emden* Madras, without notice. The German army in Belgium bombarded the undefended towns of Louvain, Malines, Termonde, Dinant and other places, until they had reduced them to ruins. No notice was given before Zeppelins were sent under cover of the night to drop bombs, not on the forts, but in the civil quarters of Antwerp, in the hope of murdering a queen and her children, and with the result of killing a few helpless non-combatants.

Aeroplanes have repeatedly sailed over Paris when the German army was sixty miles distant, and dropped bombs without notice—killing such useless victims as an old solicitor and his granddaughter on their way to church.

(2) The first article of the Convention provides that the ordinary rules of war apply to all militia or volunteers if they wear a "fixed distinctive emblem"; and the second article adds that the whole population of an invaded country may take up arms, and whether they wear uniforms or not, must be recognised as belligerents and treated accordingly. Germany has repudiated the first article by declining to recognise the Garde Civique of Brussels and other towns (who wear a uniform), and threatening to wreak vengeance for any resistance offered by them on the non-combatants of the community to which they belong. For the sake of the non-combatants these bodies had to be disbanded. She has repudiated the second article throughout the campaign in Belgium.

(3) A further provision is that no community shall be made responsible for the acts of individuals whom it is not in a position to control. The object of this provision seems to be primarily to deal with the difficulty created when unorganised civilians fire on an invading army—a case that will always arise whenever a country is invaded, and citizens, with black despair at their hearts, see their homes and their fields occupied by a conquering enemy. The invading enemy must of course take measures for the protection of his

soldiers. It seems to be agreed that, hard as the measure may seem, he may properly burn any house from which shots are fired, and shoot out of hand any civilian caught in the act of firing, or even in the possession of arms; though some nations, like the Americans during the Mexican trouble, have abstained even from these retaliations. But the Germans have gone far beyond this, and have continually, and evidently as a matter of fixed policy, disregarded the rule. In every village and town they have taken mayors, priests and others as hostages for the behaviour of their fellow-townsmen, whom they were quite unable to control, especially when locked up in gaol. They have shot these hostages as soon as a single shot was fired. They have shot also whole masses of townspeople, and forcibly and without enquiry deported masses more into slavery in Germany, on the ground that shots have been fired. They have burned down, not merely the houses from which shots were fired, but whole streets, and even whole towns. In the supreme case of Louvain they first disarmed the whole population, collecting even museum specimens of old weapons. Some German soldiers were shot after this—according to the weight of evidence, by their own comrades during a panic. Whether this was so or not, the subsequent action of the German authorities was such as to stain the name of Germany for ever. Hundreds of innocent people were killed. Women and children were driven out in the night to wander where they would, many of them becoming the victims



of the lust of a brutal soldiery. The men who were allowed to survive were taken away to unknown destinations, and kept for days without food or drink. The town, an ancient centre of culture, was first looted and then burnt; and finally its buildings, including a great university library, were destroyed by a deliberate bombardment. Not even in the history of Prussia is there a parallel to this unspeakable crime. Tilly's sack of Magdeburg is nothing to it; Alaric's sack of Rome fades into insignificance beside it. It was reserved for the nation of "culture" in the twentieth century to surpass the worst records of barbarity of which history tells. And, a few years since, Germany pledged her honour that no community should be made responsible as a whole for acts committed by individual members of it!

(4) Two articles provide that the private property of non-combatants, and indeed all property other than that of the state, shall be respected, and that the only cash, funds and property which may be seized are those belonging strictly to the state save in case of military necessity. Another article prohibits the pillaging of "a town or place, even when taken by assault." The Germans, in every town which they have entered, have made straight for the banks and seized all the available cash, which is of course nearly all private property. Even in the places which they have treated best they have systematically given over to pillage all houses which had been deserted by their owners, and in many cases looting has been carried out on

a wholesale scale. At the Chateau of La Baye the Crown Prince himself condescended to loot the pictures and other valuables of the absent baroness. In every big town which they have occupied they have also demanded enormous ransoms, like the £8,000,000 claimed from Brussels: apparently as indemnities for the non-performance of deeds of horror which Germany had pledged her honour not to commit. These ransoms are themselves a direct infraction of the Hague provisions; since they must necessarily be paid by private persons, they are only an indirect and convenient way of seizing private property.

(5) A further article, while permitting requisitions in kind and services from the inhabitants of an occupied region, provides (*a*) that they shall be paid for, (*b*) that the requisitions shall be "in proportion to the resources of the country," and (*c*) that the services shall not be such as to compel the population to "take part in military operations against their country." German requisitions have been so extortionate as to reduce the country to starvation; they have commonly either not been paid for at all, or in mock orders on French banks; and the services demanded have included the digging of trenches to be used against the labourers' fellow-countrymen.

(6) Finally, Article 56 provides that all buildings and properties devoted to religious, charitable or educational purposes shall be respected, even if they be government property; and all destruction or damage done to such institutions, to historical

monuments, and to works of art and science, is strictly prohibited. It is needless to labour the assertion that Germany has broken this article. Louvain, Malines and Rheims supply the answer, which might be multiplied a hundredfold.

In all these ways, and in others as well, Germany has treated the Articles of the Hague, equally with the Belgian Neutrality Treaty, as so many scraps of paper. She has thus not only dishonoured her own signature, and made it impossible to regard any treaties to which she may be a party as having any validity; she has undone all the advance that humanity has made in regulating and moderating the brutalities of war. For, try as they will, it is almost impossible for the Allies to resist the temptation of following the German example in some, though not in the worst, respects. It may well seem to them that the best way of checking German aërial raids on Belgian, French or English towns is to carry out raids against German towns: hitherto these raids have been limited to the destruction of Zeppelin sheds. Money being the sinews of war, if Germany is to be allowed to carry off £25,000,000 of ransom from the lands she has violated, the Allies may well feel that if the opportunity comes to them they will not be justified in not inflicting the same measures upon German towns. And what then becomes of the Hague articles?

There is only one way in which the validity of these provisions, made by the common consent of the civilised world, can be maintained. It is



that the neutral countries should undertake an enquiry into all charges of breaches of these agreements; should require not only a cessation of such breaches, where they are proved, but a compensation for them wherever possible; and should, on refusal, make themselves the avengers of understandings to which they are themselves parties. But apparently no such action will be taken, and the work of the Hague Conferences will be allowed to go by the board.

There is, of course, no doubt as to the reason for Germany's action in these respects. It is not dictated by passion, by sheer wicked delight in destruction and tyranny, though these passions must by this time have been effectually unchained among the worse of her soldiery. But, for her leaders, it is a matter of deliberate and calculated policy—as calculated as the tearing up of the original, the Belgian, scrap of paper. The object is to inspire terror, in the spirit of the Kaiser's famous allocution to his troops when they went out to China. The country through which the German armies pass is to be so cowed that its citizens, however deep the loathing and contempt they may feel for their conquerors, will not dare to raise a hand against them. This policy has its military convenience. It enables the conquered country to be held by a smaller body of troops. It makes the lines of communication safer. A patriotic Belgian, burning with rage and sorrow for his suffering country, might be tempted to blow up a railway tunnel, or block a line. If he knows that

the result will be the burning of every house in the nearest village, the murder of his male relatives, and the driving of his wife and children out into starvation on the roads, he will hesitate. The policy has another use. It is an inspiring example for other little nations, such as Holland, which might be tempted to be guilty of the insolence of resisting the occupation of their countries when that seemed useful for the cause of culture: they know what to expect. Oh, it is a useful policy.

But it is the policy of Hell. And since a God of Justice rules the Universe, it will not go unpunished.

These, then, are the three counts in the indictment against Germany: (1) This war, the most horrible in human history, was forced on by Germany. (2) She has planned and prepared it for years, and it is for her a war of scarcely disguised greed and aggression. (3) It has been carried out in a way that forever dishonours the German state, and displays it as the foe of all that is noblest in human civilisation. It is for the reader to consider whether these three points have been established.

## CHAPTER II

### GERMAN POLITICAL THEORIES

THE series of events described in the last chapter, and the extraordinary revelations they have brought as to the aims and methods of one of the great European powers, have come upon us so suddenly that many people have a dazed and bewildered feeling. They can scarcely grasp, and they cannot credit, the full horror of this revelation. Men who have known and loved Germany and the Germans, who have studied under the great masters of learning in the German universities, whose souls have been uplifted by the harmonies of Beethoven and of Wagner, who have recognised in Kant and Hegel the deepest minds of modern philosophy, who have revered the serene humanity of Goethe—such men, and they are many, and among the best, in all countries, find it incredible that such actions and such a policy as we have described should have come from Germany; and that the spirit which inspires these actions and that policy should have taken possession of the minds of the German people, or even of their rulers. Yet it cannot be doubted that in some degree this tragedy has happened. How is it to be explained?

In part, perhaps, it is the outcome of the ex-



traordinary self-satisfaction and self-assertiveness which has so much grown upon the Germans during the last generation. Most people who have had much to do with Germans have found this temper of theirs very hard to put up with—this assumption, always implicit and sometimes explicit in their conversation, that there is only one great nation in the world, and that the German nation; and that whatever is German is altogether wonderful and perfect, whatever comes from other nations unimportant and doomed to disappear. It is an irritating habit of mind, but perhaps the Englishman and the American have less reason than most people for being actively annoyed with it, since they are not wholly free from it themselves. And this rather arrogant self-complacency of the German has some justification, for the achievements of Germany in the last half-century have been really marvellous.

Fifty years ago Germany was a much-divided nation. Her scholars were the greatest in the world, but she played an unimportant part in the world's politics as compared with France, England or Russia; she was still a poor country, and counted for little in commerce and industry. A single half-century has brought about an amazing transformation.

Germany, or rather her chief state, Prussia, fought three great wars, two of them against the then leading powers of the continent, Austria and France. In each case she beat her foes to their knees in a few weeks, and Europe had sud-

denly to adjust herself to the conception that this hitherto almost negligible nation had become the most formidable military power in the world. The ease with which these wars were won naturally persuaded the German that he was unconquerable, and unapproachable as a soldier; he is scarcely to be blamed for not giving weight to the special circumstances which made these victories so easy. The enormous gains they brought to him naturally persuaded him that his national welfare depended wholly upon his army and its captains.

For these victories brought the unity of Germany. And, once united, Germany proceeded with extraordinary rapidity to assert for herself successfully a first place in every aspect of life. Her scholars (to whom, as she recognised, her triumph was due almost as much as to her soldiers) were still the leaders of European learning; and if in recent years they have hardly held so unapproachable an ascendancy as formerly—if German learning, like other aspects of German life, has been somewhat materialised by success, and thinks too much of results, and not so much as it once did of pure truth—yet no one will deny their eminence in many branches of learning. The perfection of her organisation and administration attracted the admiration of the world. No other country's towns were so well laid out, so well equipped with the means of a civilised life; no other nation managed its forests, its rivers, its railways so scientifically; no other nation had such a logical and efficient system of education; no other nation had made

such elaborate and scientific provision against the distresses of the poor. Finally her commerce and industry advanced with unparalleled rapidity. Negligible fifty years ago, she now leads the world in several industries, and holds her own in nearly all. Her ships, some of the finest in existence, are to be seen in every sea. Her wealth has attained colossal dimensions.

Is it wonderful that the German citizen is complacent about the greatness and destinies of his country, that he thinks of her as the rightful mistress of the world? But self-complacency is a dangerous state of mind: it lays its subject open to many pernicious moral germs. Again, is it wonderful that the average German citizen should feel a real loyalty to the system of government which has brought about these astonishing results, and that he should accept with docility and without much criticism the ideas on which that government has been conducted? Though he has a representative parliament, or *Reichstag*, the German has been quite content to leave effective power out of the hands of the Reichstag, and in the hands of the forces which have wielded it so brilliantly in the past—the Hohenzollern monarchy, with its two pillars, the military Junker nobility on the right hand, and the strict industrious, unsympathetic Prussian bureaucracy on the left. “The German,” says Prince Bülow, “has always accomplished his greatest works under strong, steady and firm guidance. . . . No nation submits so willingly to discipline.” For that reason, perhaps, it



is that he is ready even to leave his political conscience in the hands of his traditional rulers; and that his public opinion is "an orchestra which answers only to the baton of the government." For that reason, no doubt, it is that his government has found it so easy to "mobilise" this opinion; to control and direct it, without open or tyrannical interference; through the press, and above all through the universities.

The universities have long been in Germany a department of the state; and in a subtle and imperceptible way, they have been almost an organ of government. Professors get their appointments from the state; and one sure way for a professor to recommend himself to public notice and to win promotion is (without neglecting his scholarly labours) to make himself a trumpet for the glorification of modern Germany and an exponent of its wider political aims. The political professor has an influence in Germany which is quite without parallel in any other country. Even in the days of her weakness, he was the great preacher of the German national idea, of German pride and hopes. To-day, and for a long time past, he has been perhaps the most effective implement in that "mobilisation of public opinion" of which we have already spoken as being an essential part of the German system of government.

But the German's self-complacency, his certitude of the rightness of all things German, his general docility to his government, and his readiness to let his opinions be "mobilised," are

not sufficient to explain the products we have analysed in the last chapter. They only help to explain why he falls an easy prey to the ideas accepted by his government.

What poison has been at work in the German mind to produce these results? What is the body of ideas that has found its terrible expression in the events of the last few months? Whence do these ideas spring? How far are they, consciously or unconsciously, accepted by the mass of the German people, or by its ruling classes and its intellectual leaders? These are questions of no mere academic interest. They are of vital importance to the future of Europe and of civilisation, in which this nation has played, and must always play, so great a part.

During the last few weeks all England has been reading a remarkable book, which appears to give some answer to our questions. The author is an officer of high rank in the Prussian army, General von Bernhardi, and his book<sup>1</sup> claims to set out not only the military problems of Germany, but her political programme, and the fundamental ideas by which these are governed. When the book was first published, in 1911, not much notice was taken of it in England. Its underlying conceptions were so repellent to the English mind, the political programme which it suggested seemed so cynical, that those who read it were inclined to dismiss it as an irresponsible and ex-

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War." By F. von Bernhardi, (Longmans, Green & Co.).

tremist publication, like many that appear in all countries; it seemed absurd and unjust to take it as representing in any degree the considered judgment and policy of Germany or her rulers. Even now many people think that the emphasis which has been laid on Bernhardi's book is unjust to the German people.

Yet one cannot but feel that a General in the most strictly disciplined army of the world is not likely to issue with impunity a work which professes to describe the principles and policy of his country, but vilely slanders them. And when we learn that the Crown Prince of Prussia has recommended the book as one which every good German should read and study; and when we find that in the most uncanny way almost everything that Bernhardi says finds direct confirmation and illustration in the diplomacy and in the warfare of this summer, it becomes more and more difficult to treat the book lightly. Moreover the date of its publication is very significant. It appeared in 1911, just at the beginning of that three years' strenuous preparation for war which we have already described. The German people had to be persuaded to accept the extraordinary series of Army Acts and Navy Votes which have marked these years, and to assume the burden of the vast expenditure which these acts involved. Is it not possible, and even likely, that this book is part of that process of mobilising public opinion which the German government knows so well how to conduct, and which Bismarck never neglected on



the eve of his carefully planned wars? If that is so, Bernhardi becomes a document of the first importance, and demands respectful treatment.

Though Bernhardi's style is involved and verbose, and his thinking often confused, there is no mistaking his aim and his main contentions. In his preface (dated October, 1911, after the first Army Act had been passed) he speaks contemptuously of the Reichstag's fondness for "haggling about war contributions," and adds "these conditions have induced me now to publish the following pages." His book is in the main an argument for an immense and immediate increase of the military forces of Germany, in preparation for a great war which is certain to come soon. "We must strive," he says, "to call up the entire force of the nation";<sup>1</sup> and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that his book was designed to prepare the way for the second and third Army Acts, which were so soon to follow the first. For this purpose it was necessary to combat the dangerous love of peace which was "undermining the warlike spirit of the people";<sup>2</sup> and the book is an argument designed to this end.

He begins by singing the praises of War. It is not merely a painful and sometimes unavoidable necessity; it is in itself a good thing, and "the basis of all healthy development";<sup>3</sup> it is "a moral necessity"<sup>4</sup> demanded by "political idealism" and

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War" (English trans.), 154.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 26.

prescribed by Nature herself, who has ordained that by war alone shall the fit be sorted out from the unfit, and progress be made possible. For that reason it is not merely the right, but the duty, of every state to make war<sup>1</sup> because "it cannot attain its great moral ends unless its political power increases."<sup>2</sup> Strong states have a right, because of their strength, to overcome weak states, which *ought* to go to the wall. "Might is the supreme right, and war gives a biologically just decision."<sup>3</sup> Do you say that this is an overriding of right? But who is to say *what* is right? Only the state: there is no power above the state, no right inconsistent with its interests.<sup>4</sup> Do you say this is a contradiction of Christianity, which is based on the law of love? The law of love has nothing to do with the relations between one state and another, but is limited to the relations between the citizens of an individual state: if you apply Christianity to politics you will have "a conflict of duties." Since Christ Himself said "I am not come to send peace on earth but a sword" we ought to approve of war;<sup>5</sup> and "efforts directed towards the abolition of war must be termed not only foolish but absolutely immoral, and unworthy of the human race."<sup>6</sup> We must realise that "the maintenance of peace never can or may be the goal of a policy."<sup>7</sup>

Now "the acts of the state cannot be judged

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War," Chap. II, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* 29.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* 37.

by the standard of individual morality": the "morality of the state must be judged by its own nature and purpose; and the be-all and end-all of a state is Power."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore its right and duty to make war whenever it sees a chance of increasing its power. Of course it should choose a favourable moment. A state should always make war (1) when it finds that its rivals seem likely to become stronger than itself in military resources, or (2) when its rivals are "weakened or hampered by affairs at home or abroad."<sup>2</sup> It is a crime in a statesman not to seize such opportunities. The importance of deliberately and aggressively making war for the purpose of increasing the state's power is illustrated by a survey of German history; and this survey shows that all Germany's greatness has been created by war.

Bernhardi next sets himself to show that Germany needs war at the present time. She needs it to complete her unity, because many Germans, such as the Dutch and Swiss, are outside of the limits of her Empire, while the source and mouth of the great German river, the Rhine, are outside of German territory.<sup>3</sup> She needs it because she is the leader of the world in Culture, and her "historical mission" impels her to impose her culture on the world;<sup>4</sup> "the dominion of German thought can only be extended under the ægis of political power, and unless we act in conformity with this idea, we shall be untrue to our great duties to the human

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War," 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 52, 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 76.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* Chap. IV.



race.”<sup>1</sup> It appears therefore that Germany’s exalted “historical mission” involves the subjugation of the world, in order that German culture may be forced upon it. Finally Germany needs war (and this seems to be the most important reason, since it is constantly returned to)<sup>2</sup> because she needs colonies to supply her with raw materials, markets, and homes for her surplus population where they will not lose their nationality. Germany did not enter the circle of the great powers until late, “when the partition of the globe was concluded.” Therefore “what we now wish to attain must be *fought for* and won, against a superior force of hostile interests and powers.”<sup>3</sup> For Germany the moment is at hand. It is for her an alternative between world-power and downfall.<sup>4</sup> “We *now* must decide whether we wish to develop into and maintain a World Empire . . . Are we prepared to make the sacrifices which such an effort will cost? . . . To be, or not to be, is the question which is put to us *to-day*.”<sup>5</sup> “We cannot under any circumstances avoid fighting for our position in the world, and the all-important point is, not to postpone that war as long as possible, but to bring it on under the most favourable conditions possible.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Germany and the Next War,” 77.

<sup>2</sup> e.g., *Ib.* 103, 107, 108.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 84.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* Chap. V.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* 104. It is worth noting that this same quotation was used by the Kaiser in one of his first speeches after the outbreak of war.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* 112.

But who are the enemies against whom this righteous and necessary war is to be so soon waged, for world-power and the ascendancy of German culture? Bernhardt has no doubts on this point. Germany will have to fight the Triple Entente, all the members of which are for various reasons natural enemies. Russia represents the Slav Peril,<sup>1</sup> the danger of advancing barbarism, but about this Bernhardt does not trouble much. As for France "our political condition would be considerably consolidated if we could finally get rid of the standing danger that France will attack us on a favourable occasion."<sup>2</sup> Therefore "France must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path."<sup>3</sup> But that is to be only a means to an end—a means of getting "a free hand in our international policy." The supreme object of German attack, in Bernhardt's opinion, is England, with her scattered and highly desirable colonies. "A pacific agreement with England is, after all, a will-o'-the-wisp which no serious German statesman would trouble to follow. We must always keep the possibility of war with England before our eyes, and arrange our political and military plans accordingly."<sup>4</sup> "Even English attempts at a *rapprochement* must not blind us to the real situation. We may at most use them to delay the necessary and inevitable war until we may fairly imagine we have some prospect of success."<sup>5</sup> In this connexion it is significant to remember that

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War," 92.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 105.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 106.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* 287.

during the last two years the German Chancellor and the German press have been proclaiming the increasing friendliness of England and Germany.

Bernhardi believes that the British Empire is collapsing,<sup>1</sup> that her greater colonies are looking forward to separation,<sup>2</sup> and that she is gravely threatened by the nationalist movements in India and Egypt,<sup>3</sup> while her commercial prosperity is being undermined by America and Germany.<sup>4</sup> England made, he thinks, an "unpardonable blunder" in not seizing the chance presented by the American Civil War to ruin the United States by supporting the Southern States<sup>5</sup>; and he suggests the moral that other countries should not be guilty of the same kind of mistake. Nevertheless he recognises that England is not an easy country to attack, since she "indisputably rules the sea."<sup>6</sup> He devotes a chapter to "The Next Naval War"; it is a war between Germany and England, and he outlines the plan which has actually been adopted of keeping the main fleet behind forts and mines while trying to wear down English preponderance by means of submarines and airships.<sup>7</sup> But he obviously does not think this plan presents much chance of success. He prefers to pin his faith, in the first place, to political intrigues. Turkey might be very useful in stirring up an anti-English Mohammedan movement in Egypt and India.<sup>8</sup> The friendship of

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War," 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 95.      <sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 94.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* 94.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* 102.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* Chap. VIII.

<sup>8</sup> *Ib.* 148.



America should be cultivated, for she is obviously England's commercial rival, and all the talk of peace and arbitration between these two powers is obviously only hypocritical nonsense.<sup>1</sup> Italy (though Bernhardi feels that she has practically withdrawn from the Triple Alliance,<sup>2</sup> and would probably remain neutral) might be influenced by playing on her fears of British supremacy in the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> Even Russia might be separated from her by a skilful use of the divergent interests of these two powers in Persia.<sup>4</sup> But when all is said, "we cannot count on an ultimate victory at sea unless we are victorious on land."<sup>5</sup> Therefore the first step to the overthrow of England must be a continental victory; and that is what makes the strengthening of the German armies so important.

Bernhardi accordingly surveys with great care the forces with which Germany will have to deal. He calculates that the French can produce about 2,300,000 good fighting men, and perhaps 1,250,000 second grade troops.<sup>6</sup> She can also bring across 120,000 Turcos from Algeria. In time she may be able greatly to increase the number of her African troops:<sup>7</sup> that is obviously a reason for attacking her before she has time to do so. Russia has vast numbers of men, but cannot possibly bring into the western field of war more than about 2,000,000.<sup>8</sup> England can send an expeditionary force of 130,000 men to the Continent,

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War," 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 168.    <sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 89.    <sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 94, 282, 288.    <sup>5</sup> *Ib.* 167.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* 131.    <sup>7</sup> *Ib.* 132.    <sup>8</sup> *Ib.* 135.

but no more.<sup>1</sup> Her Territorials cannot be used abroad. Her Indian army will have its hands full in keeping down Indian revolt. As for the British colonies, they have nothing but militia, and for the purposes of European warfare may be "completely ignored."<sup>2</sup> Such are the land forces with which Germany will have to deal. As to the forces she will have at her disposal, Bernhardt gives some vague statements, showing that he counts upon the active alliance of Austria and Turkey, but holds it "undesirable to state" how many men Germany and her allies can put into the field.<sup>3</sup> But he assumes that Germany will be outnumbered, and therefore that it is necessary for her to arm and train her whole manhood.<sup>4</sup> But that will not be enough. "We must devise other means of gaining the upper hand of our enemies. These means can only be found in the spiritual domain."<sup>5</sup> Bernhardt does not explain exactly what he means by these "spiritual" factors, which seem curiously out of keeping with the war of undisguised aggression he is advocating. He only says that the Germans must "win superiority in the factors upon which the ultimate decision turns. . . . This must secure for us the spiritual and so the material advantage over our enemies."<sup>6</sup> From this it would appear that these "spiritual" factors may be 17-inch Krupp guns, Zeppelin airships, and the policy of terrorism.

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War," 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 137.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* 154.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.* 170.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.* 171.

Bernhardi does not discuss the plans of the coming land campaign with the same frankness with which he discusses the plans of sea warfare. But he gives one significant indication. Although he lays it down that Germany must strike the first blow, so as to have the advantage of the initiative, and although he admits in one place that England is never likely to initiate an attack on Germany through fear of disturbing her trade, he chooses to assume during the greater part of his argument that the enemies of Germany will be the aggressors—no doubt as a concession to traders and pacifists. And, speaking from this point of view, he lays it down as obvious that England and France will attack Germany through Holland and Belgium, not hesitating to violate the neutrality of these two states.<sup>1</sup> From this it is safe to conclude that a violation of the neutrality of one or both of these states would be in his judgment the natural mode of opening the campaign. And, as if preparing in advance for the attack on Belgium, he raises the question “whether all the treaties which were concluded at the beginning of the last century under quite other conditions . . . . can, or ought to be permanently observed. When Belgium was proclaimed neutral no one contemplated that she would lay claim to a large and valuable region of Africa. It may well be asked whether the acquisition of such territory is not *ipso facto* a breach of neutrality!”<sup>2</sup> It would be hard to imagine a weaker,

<sup>1</sup> “Germany and the Next War,” 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 110.



or a more cynical, ground for repudiating a formally assumed obligation. Bernhardi does not say why Germany, when she consented to the establishment of the Congo Free State, failed to raise this point. But its only interest is the significant anxiety which it shows to find beforehand an excuse for disregarding the neutrality treaty. The German Chancellor did not condescend to use this argument. He was content to say that Germany must "hack a way through."

But whatever her means, and whatever her plan of campaign, the essential thing according to Bernhardi is that Germany should realise, in 1911, that she must strike soon and with all her power for World-might. "The period which destiny has allotted to us for concentrating our forces and preparing for the deadly struggle may soon be passed. We must use it . . . This is the point of view from which we must carry out our preparations for war by sea and land."<sup>1</sup> And the Army Acts and Navy Votes of 1912 and 1913 followed.

Such, in outline, is the essence of Bernhardi's book. A more frankly cynical programme of national aggression has seldom or never been openly set forth; and if (as we are inclined to conclude from the date and circumstances of its publication, from the high imprimatur which it received, and from the closeness with which it reflects the subsequent course of events alike in warlike preparation, in diplomacy and in actual warfare) it is to be regarded as a semi-official presentation of the

<sup>1</sup> "Germany and the Next War," 168.

programme of the German government, the book, poor as it is in quality, deserves the attention we have given it.

If Bernhardt's book stood alone, or if it had been in any way repudiated by the German government or press, no doubt we should scarcely be justified in taking it as an indication of the temper of the German people or their government. But it does not stand alone. Indeed, the only new and significant things in Bernhardt are his careful calculation of the forces with which Germany had to deal, his assertion that in 1911 the moment was at hand when she must either take a bold attitude of aggression or fall into the second rank of powers, and his demand that she must at once enter upon just such a period of active concentration of her whole strength upon military preparations as filled the years between the publication of the book and the outbreak of the war. The ideas, the fundamental political theory and the view of the nature of Germany's real interests, upon which these conclusions are based and from which they are merely corollaries, have been the commonplaces of a large school of political thought in Germany for years past. Indeed, Bernhardt's statements and proposals are moderate in comparison with the publications of the group of Leagues and Unions whose activity has been one of the main features of German politics for a number of years past.

The most important of these is the Navy League, with an enormous membership which includes thousands of school teachers. The Navy

League has been under the direct patronage of Admiral von Tirpitz, who has long been, as Secretary of the Navy, perhaps the most powerful member of the German government. He sees Chancellors and Foreign Secretaries come and go, but himself remains unshakeable. The creator (with the Kaiser) of the modern German navy, he may also be fairly regarded as the steadiest advocate of the policy for which the navy has been built up. But the Navy League does not stand alone. There has also been an Army League, whose duty was to create a public opinion favourable to the increase of the army. Above all, there has been a Pan-Germanist League, whose objects have been, firstly by means of schools and other methods to organise the bodies of Germans settled in other countries (especially in South America) as distinct communities conscious of their nationality; secondly, to keep alive the demand that the so-called dis-united fragments of "Greater Germany"—Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and the Baltic provinces of Russia—should be reunited to the "parent" state; and in general to awaken Imperialist sentiment. Now and again, when its clamours were too loud, as during the various stages of the Morocco controversy, the Pan-Germanist League has been checked by the government. But it has played its part in that "orchestra of public opinion" which government is generally so well able to control: over-emphasis of the drums in the *Deutschland über alles* symphony might spoil the progressive development of the theme, but that



is not to say that there is not a place for drums in the orchestra. All these Leagues have, in their various ways, been preaching for years the doctrines of which Bernhardi gives the latest exposition.

What is more important, the fundamental ideas of Bernhardi are really implicit, and sometimes tolerably explicit, in the work of that remarkable group of historians known as the Prussian School, who played so great a part in the history not only of German learning but of German political thought during the last half of the nineteenth century. Droysen, Sybel and the rest quite consciously devoted their great learning and powers of presentment, not only in numerous pamphlets, but in their most ambitious historical works, to the propagation of a political cause: the glorification of the Prussian state as the destined means for winning first German unity and then German supremacy. As Germany is a country which (unlike England) reads and is influenced by big books, and venerates the dicta of men of learning, the Prussian school of historians unquestionably contributed in a large measure to the triumph of Bismarck's work; and since most of them placed patriotism above learning (*amica veritas sed magis amica Germania*), most of them would probably be consoled by that fact for the rapid disenthronement of their work—the disenthronement which inevitably comes to all who work at history to prove a case, or to serve a cause, or for any reason other than the love of truth. In the process of justifying every action of

the conquering Hohenzollern princes which their theory thrust upon them, they were forced to exalt as justifiable and even virtuous actions many deeds (for example of Frederick the Great) which the stern judgment of history unhesitatingly condemns; and since the greatness of Prussia had been built up essentially by brute force and the frequent disregard of treaty obligations, they laid the foundations of that political philosophy which has found its most recent exposition in Bernhardi.

Incomparably the greatest of the Prussian school of historians was Heinrich von Treitschke. This irritable, eloquent, leonine man, whose sympathies were always with strong and downright action, would have been a soldier if deafness had not driven him to be a Professor. He fought for Germany as single-heartedly in the Professorial chair as ever he could have done in the trenches; Ranke, the apostle of unbiassed history, regretted the appointment of so vehement a partisan at Berlin. But during the twenty-two years for which he held his Berlin professorship (1874—1896) he exercised an astonishing ascendancy. His lecture theatre was crowded not only by students, but by princes, soldiers, diplomats and administrators. He was the teacher and inspirer of the ruling classes of Germany, in the headquarters of Prussia. The influence which was exercised by his books has been compared to the combined influence of Carlyle and Macaulay in England, but in the magnetic power which he wielded by the spoken as well as the written word, not only in the lecture-room but

in the Reichstag, there was something which neither Carlyle nor even Macaulay fully shared. His work has never been well known out of Germany; even his greatest work, the "History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century," which by reason of its vivid eloquence ranks among the greatest historical works of the age, has never been translated into English. The reason is obvious. He writes not primarily as a historian, but as the hymner and prophet of Germany—of Germany united, disciplined and controlled by Prussia, and setting forth under this leadership to the conquest of the world. Over against Prussia and Germany all other nations seem to him hateful or contemptible: and the most hateful, the most contemptible of them all was treacherous, greedy, hypocritical England, whose name he could scarcely allow to pass without a scornful epithet. For England, in the days of German weakness, had got for herself, by tricks and cunning, that lordship of the outer world which of right belonged to Germany's strong sword. As much a poet as a historian, Treitschke filled the mind of modern Germany with pride in her past, but also with a fierce pride in her greater future; and in the history of the Prussian state he pointed out to her the weapons she would have to wield in order to conquer this future.

Treitschke did not only lecture, or write, on historical subjects: he lectured and wrote on political theory, and the doctrines which he expounded were essentially a translation into theory of the practice of the Prussian state, as it had been exemplified



by the Great Elector, by Frederick the Great, and by Bismarck. This political theory is embodied in two volumes of lectures on *Die Politik*; and this book is the direct source of Bernhardi's theories. Treitschke is one of the half-dozen writers whom Bernhardi quotes; another is Clausewitz, the classical exponent of Prussian theories of war. But where Clausewitz is quoted once, Treitschke is quoted twenty times. A citation from him clinches every argument; he is referred to as "our national historian"; he is appealed to as a final authority, as if *Die Politik* was the very Bible of German political doctrine.

It is needless to analyse in detail the teaching of this remarkable book, because we have already reviewed it in the cruder form which it takes in the hands of Bernhardi. The supreme fact in the history of man, according to Treitschke, is the existence of the state; there is nothing in the world higher than the state, and therefore no vague claims of "humanity" or "civilisation" at large can be ranked above it. The highest moral obligation of the state is its own preservation, and the maintenance and extension of its power. For the state *is* power; power, and not justice or freedom, is its *raison d'être*. What justifies and ennobles the power of the state is that its existence renders possible the existence, and its growth the growth, of culture. But the culture which the state ought to extend is not culture in general, but the special and peculiar culture developed within its own limits. The natural means by which the state pursues

power and the extension of its culture is war, which is the highest function of the state. War is the great healer, because it keeps alive the corporate spirit of the citizen and his readiness to sacrifice himself for the greatness of his state: the living God will see to it that war will always recur as a terrible medicine for humanity. It is the law of nature, a biological necessity, the sure means of securing progress; for the state which proves its virility by victory in war is the state whose culture deserves to survive. It follows that only great and strong states, able to protect themselves and their culture by their own force, are of any value. Little states are mischievous, because they must live in a state of fear, and therefore cannot develop a virile culture; the law of progress in history is that little states should be swallowed up by big states. Although the state itself is the only source of any law that has really binding force, there is room for a kind of international law, a set of rules constructed on the principle of give-and-take among great states of equal strength. But the validity of this international law is only relative. It cannot stand in the way of the self-preservation of the state, or of its power, because these are its highest moral duties. A state cannot bind its own will for the future. Treaties, therefore, into which the state has entered are only valid *rebus sic stantibus*, when the conditions remain unchanged, that is, while the treaties form no impediment to the self-preservation, power, or culture of the state. And as there is no power higher than the state, the state itself is the

sole judge as to whether its earlier treaties do or do not form impediments to its self-preservation, power and culture. The one unpardonable sin in a state, the political sin against the Holy Spirit, is feebleness: feebleness in pursuing power, the pursuit of which is the highest moral duty; feebleness in allowing itself to be tied by treaties which, whatever may have been the case at the time they were made, are no longer favourable to the state's power. Such, in brief paraphrase, is the essential doctrine of Treitschke. It will be obvious how directly it is echoed, not only in Bernhardi, but in the action of the German state during the summer of 1914.

The kind of doctrines which we have been analysing are often spoken of by modern Germans as *Realpolitik*—the politics that faces facts as they are, that deals in realities and does not allow itself to be cozened by untrue sentimentalisms. Treitschke somewhere lauds Frederick the Great, his hero, as above all a man of truth. The phrase seems startling as applied to the most cynical breaker of treaties in modern history; but what it means is that the Great King was not taken in by shams, and made no hypocritical pretences: he pursued power and his own exclusive interests by all means available, like everybody else; but he made no pretence to conceal the fact. And one of the reasons why Treitschke hated England was that while she pursued power (according to his view) more greedily and more successfully than any other state, she was always pretending, and trying to



persuade herself, that she was governed only by the most exalted motives, by the love of liberty, by sympathy for oppressed nationalities, by respect for treaties. That is, for Treitschke, mere falsity, mere intellectual cowardice: far better the frank recognition of the Great King, that the highest moral aim is the pursuit of power by the use of force, and that states as naturally and inevitably pursue these ends by means of war as do the beasts of the jungle.

What are we to say to such doctrines? It is not enough merely to dismiss them as brutal, immoral, repulsive. They might be all that, and yet be true. May we not say that to attempt to apply the Darwinian doctrine of the struggle for existence as if it was a rule of life for human societies is not only false, but is an absolute repudiation of the most essential thing that separates man from the beasts, and that forms the essence of civilisation? Man is resolved that whatever may be the practice of nature he will not allow the weak to be driven to the wall, if he can help it; and one main reason why he organises himself into states is just that he not only feels that the weak are often better worth preserving than the strong, but that he desires that the weak shall survive *because they are weak*. If you want to see how deeply that resolve is rooted, not in saints and heroes, but in ordinary commonplace men, think of the *Titanic* sinking beside its iceberg in the waste of seas. Among all that crowd of men, suddenly facing an appalling death, there is scarcely a thought of the survival of the strong

and the rule of brute force: it is the survival of the weak that they proudly assure, and their dying act is to hand the women and children to the boats. And if it be answered that this is the morality of individuals, and has no validity for the state, the answer is that the state is composed of individuals, and directed by individuals, who cannot but be influenced in their action by their fundamental instincts. These instincts include greed, and fear, and lust, and many other bad passions, but they include also a sense of honour and a hatred of injustice; and it is as impossible for an honourable man to look on at the bullying of Belgium without an angry desire to punish the bully, as it is to look on at the bullying of a child. The best that is in man does not believe that it is right that the strong should wreak his power on the weak, but that the weak should be protected.

It is simply not true that power is the one supreme aim and purpose of the state. If it is to be defined in a single phrase (which is impossible) the supreme end of the state is justice, a part of which is freedom. It is but slowly and painfully that human societies limp towards this end, but they do advance, and perhaps the truest element in the definition of progress is that it involves a steadily deepening sense of what justice and freedom mean. The states which have played the greatest part in history, and maintained their greatness long, have been able to do so because their power, upon the whole, meant an increase of justice upon the earth, like the empire of Rome; the states that have aimed

only at power have usually been short-lived, like the empire of Attila and his Huns. And if it be true that fair and equal justice as between states has been even more difficult to secure than justice between individuals in a state, nevertheless it is true that here also there has been progress; here also the noble human instinct which demands that the weak shall survive because they are weak grows daily stronger. The mere spectacle of a strong state attacking a weak arouses the indignation of the civilised world, and alienates everyone from the stronger state. Why was it that Germany, and most of the world with her, raged furiously against England during the Boer War? It was because Germany believed that England was using her power pitilessly to wipe out one of those small states that Treitschke says ought not to survive, and because in their innermost hearts her people simply did not accept the doctrine of their prophet. If they had believed it, they should have approved and admired the English action, even on their own misinterpretation of its reasons. And we were already, during the nineteenth century, rising beyond this rather vague and helpless sentiment in favour of weak states. Europe was gradually working out a system of international law for the protection of all from each, and a very important part of this law was the group of treaties by which the neutrality of Belgium and other small states was guaranteed.

The doctrine of power, as practised by the disciples of Treitschke, has for the time destroyed



all that advance. But only for the time. Humanity will still pursue justice rather than the rule of force; and the state that acts on Treitschke's doctrines will in the end suffer for it.

It is true, as our realists say, that the actions of states are governed by self-interest, just as, according to some philosophers, the actions of individuals are governed by the desire for happiness. But there are some views of what constitutes happiness which will make the man who holds them a danger to his neighbours and force them to lock him up in prison or the lunatic asylum. And there are some views of what constitutes the real interest of a state which must make it the enemy of civilisation and of progress, and band the world against it. There are wide variations possible in the view of what constitutes the true interest of a state; and it is those views which are ultimately to the advantage of civilisation which will triumph in the long run. One state may hold that peace is its highest interest, next to honour and self-preservation; another that war is desirable in itself. Which of these views makes for the good of the world? One state may believe that the widest possible diffusion of liberty, the encouragement of the life-giving variety of free nations, is in its interest; another that its interest lies in the forcible imposition of its own power and its own culture upon unwilling recipients. One state may persuade itself that treaties have no validity when they stand in the way of the extension of its power; another may hold that the sanctity of treaties is essential to its own

interests, as being the only basis upon which mutual confidence between nations can exist. One state may believe that the laws of morality and of private honour do not apply to international relations; another may feel that at the very lowest "honesty is the best policy," between states as between individuals, and that at the highest the maintenance of its honour is a dearer interest even than life. These are widely different views of self-interest which nations may take, and have taken. Is there much room for doubt which are best for the progress of the world?

What we have written does not pretend to be a systematic logical answer to the doctrine of Treitschke. It is rather an attempt to express what the ordinary Englishman dimly feels about these matters; and to set out a national ideal of conduct, to which England has often, as she knows, been sadly false, but which she has really entertained. Sometimes she has played the hypocrite. But hypocrisy is the tribute paid to virtue, and except when it is the lie in the soul, it is preferable to the kind of Truth which the Great King cultivated; for at least it recognises the claims of a standard of conduct higher than that of the jungle.

Fortunately for the world the kind of doctrine which Treitschke preached defeats itself, by blinding those who hold it. The masters of *Realpolitik* pride themselves upon shutting out sentimentalism and looking only at the brutal facts. But honour is a fact, though it is not brutal; the unconquerable soul of man is a fact, though it cannot be measured

in centimetres like a Krupp gun ; and it is a fact that the passion of patriotism for a small and ruined country may burn as strong, and stronger, than the pride of a citizen in a state of Power and Culture.

It is a fact, too, which the career of that Man of Power, Napoleon, might have taught, that the spirit of nationality, once aroused, is all but untameable: every time it is beaten to its Mother Earth, like the giant Antaeus, it redoubles its strength. All these are facts which the Treitschkean realist forgets; and forgetting them, he is led into strange miscalculations. Believing in war, he will be too quick to assume that a nation which is willing to make great sacrifices for peace must have fallen a victim to Treitschke's supreme sin of Feebleness, and will at any price avoid the masculine arbitrament of war. Believing that treaties have no validity when they are no longer advantageous, he will find it impossible to believe that there are states which would rather fall than be false to their obligations. Believing in power as the be-all and end-all of states, he will be unable to understand why a state should give complete freedom to her daughter-nations, and even to her foes of yesterday, for any other reason than that she was too weak to enforce her yoke, and it will puzzle him to see them leap to arms in her defence; and puzzle him still more that a distant people whom he looked to see in revolt can forget their grievances of yesterday, because they recognise the gift of justice. Believing in brute force, he will think it an easy



matter to trample down a little people that trusted in his honour, and be bewildered that even the worst brutalities cannot reconcile them to their lot. Thank Heaven, the doctrine of power destroys itself, sooner or later; the poison is its own antidote.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TWO GERMANIES

WE have seen that the conduct of Germany, both in diplomacy and in war, during the summer of 1914 has been a translation into action of the principles expounded by Treitschke; and that these principles were in their turn inspired by an admiring study of Prussian history and the methods of Prussian kings. If we are to arrive at the roots, therefore, of modern German policy, it must be by an examination of the history of Prussia and in particular of the methods by which her ascendancy over the rest of Germany was established.

There has always been a sharp contrast between Prussia and the rest of Germany, and although it has greatly diminished during the last half-century, under influences which we shall have to examine, the contrast still survives. Until comparatively recently Prussia played but a small part in that remarkable intellectual activity which has been the greatest glory of the German people. The strength of Prussia lay not in thought but in action—in the strength and organisation of her army, and in the efficiency of her administrative system. Every German is conscious of this contrast. It has recently been expressed in a striking way by Prince

von Bülow, ex-Chancellor of the German Empire, and himself a Prussian of the Prussians. "German intellect," he says, "had already (at the beginning of the nineteenth century) reached its zenith without the help of Prussia. German intellectual life, which the whole world has learnt to admire . . . was developed in the south and west, the German state in Prussia<sup>1</sup> . . . Prussian state-life and German intellectual life must become reconciled . . . This reconciliation has not yet been achieved."<sup>2</sup> If we would understand the mind and action of modern Germany, we must follow these two strains in German life back to their origins; and observe, so far as is possible in a superficial sketch, the strength and weakness of each, and the way in which they have acted and reacted upon one another.

We may most easily begin our enquiry two hundred and fifty years ago, when Germany had just emerged from the greatest catastrophe in her history, the Thirty Years' War, devastated, impoverished, politically disorganised, and at the mercy of the more consolidated states which lay on her borders. The unhappy nation was divided into more than three hundred practically independent states, most of which were entirely contemptible in resources and influence; even the greatest of them were, with one exception, too small to exercise any influence upon the affairs of Europe. The exception was Austria; but Austria derived her influence

<sup>1</sup> "Imperial Germany" (English trans.), 270-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* 272.



from the possession of a huge territory which was outside of Germany and was inhabited by a medley of non-German peoples. Austria held the primacy of the loose German confederacy called the Holy Roman Empire; but this relic of a dead mediæval idea was entirely useless as a bond of unity, and as most of the main interests of Austria lay outside Germany, it followed that German interests had no effective guardian or mouthpiece in European affairs. Most of the three hundred petty princes regarded their subjects merely as tax-payers, despised their own race, language and customs, and devoted themselves to a contemptible mimicry of the ceremonies and graces of the French court. This state of things, which was at its worst in the second half of the seventeenth century, represents the very nadir of the fortunes of the German people. The shame of it has made an indelible impression on the memory of the nation. They have drunk the cup of disunion and impotence to the very dregs, and cannot forget it. The forces which have raised them from this humiliation to the front rank among the nations of the world have a claim upon the nation's gratitude which it is impossible to exaggerate; and this profound and sincere sentiment explains their readiness to accept and justify the methods by which these results were attained.

Amidst all the poverty and humiliation which followed the Thirty Years' War there slowly emerged, between 1648 and the French Revolution, two factors which contained the promise of better things, and which increasingly gave to the

German people reasons for holding up their heads among other nations. One of these was the steadily growing strength and fame of German learning; the other was the rise of the virile and masterful Prussian state.

Even in the dismal second half of the seventeenth century, there were two Germans who earned the respect and gratitude of all Europe. Both were men of learning, Leibnitz the philosopher, and Puffendorf, one of the founders of the science of international law. The work which they began was carried on by the German universities. Germany was fortunate in the possession of numerous universities, and between 1648 and 1789 she added two of the most famous to the number—Halle and Göttingen. The groups of scholars who laboured in these places had not yet achieved any European fame, but during the eighteenth century they were already establishing new methods of patient, accurate and fearless enquiry, which were to make possible the marvellous achievements of a later day. Even in the eighteenth century the profound philosophic genius of Kant had given to Germany the supremacy in the realm of philosophy. And out of the intellectual atmosphere created by the universities there presently arose a great literature. The supreme age of German literature, which has had no comparable successor, was already almost at its height before the outbreak of the French Revolution, and long before any serious movement for the political unification of Germany had been thought of; Lessing and Herder, Goethe and

Schiller, had either finished their work, or were in the pride of their power, in 1789. In the same period Germany had also given her supreme gift to the world—the gift of music. Bach, Gluck, Mozart, Haydn and Händel all belong to the eighteenth century, and Beethoven was just entering into his kingdom when the Revolution began. Great as have been the achievements of German intellect in the nineteenth century, they do not surpass in originality and value the achievements of the age of political ineffectiveness, when even the dream of political unity had not yet been born. The greatest victories of German culture were won altogether without the aid and protection of Power, which Treitschke says culture needs for its advancement.

In this wonderful intellectual renaissance the state of Prussia had but a small part; the main centres of German learning, thought and art lay outside her limits. Indeed many of the leaders of this revival felt and expressed a deep distaste for the spirit and the methods of Prussia; for its concentration on material dominion, for its rigid discipline, which aspired to control the minds as well as the bodies of its subjects. To such spirits as Lessing or Goethe the dominion of the sword was something vulgar; their concern was with the kingdom of the mind, which is not confined by the boundaries of any state. They were cosmopolitans, not nationalists, because thought is cosmopolitan; and Lessing went so far as to speak of patriotism as a vice, because it narrowed the limits of men's sympathies. This cosmopolitan spirit was widely



diffused among the universities, not only in the eighteenth century, but far into the nineteenth, and it stands in marked contrast with the spirit of the modern German universities, which seem increasingly to claim the whole realm of thought as if it were a purely German province.

For all their cosmopolitanism, however, the German universities in this age were in a real sense the centres and strongholds of the German spirit; they were the proudest possession of the German people, and the most characteristic. They made the German feel that among the nations of the world he counted for something, and for something far loftier than mere physical power. There is one result, however, of the remarkable and dominating position occupied by the universities during this period in German life which deserves to be noted. They impressed upon the mind of the nation a certain academic character: a curious fondness for explaining or justifying action by theories and formulæ, and a tendency to press these formulæ to extreme conclusions. This tendency left the German people very open to become the captives of ideas or policies that could be supported upon theoretical or pseudo-scientific grounds. That was the consequence of the general divorce of intellectual life from practical concerns, and it was to have its effects in the future.

In piquant contrast with this fine and inspiring world of idealists, scholars, poets and musicians, who were conquering for Germany the empire of the mind, stood the Prussian state, whose growing

strength is the most important fact in the political history of the period. Its advancement from the level of a petty German principality to the rank of a great European power was the work of a remarkable series of princes of the Hohenzollern family, notably the Great Elector (1640-1688), Frederick William I (1713-1740), and, above all, the supreme hero of the Prussian state, and the supreme exponent of its spirit and methods, Frederick the Great (1740-1788), to whom modern German writers habitually refer as simply The Great King. These men invented the methods and established the tradition of Prussian policy, which Bismarck was to carry to its triumph in the establishment of the German Empire, and which Treitschke was to transform into a body of political principles.

If we would understand the character of the Prussian state it is important to realise that the greater part of the territory of the state during this, its formative, period lay east of the river Elbe, in lands which were not originally German, but had been won from their Slavonic inhabitants in a long series of obscure wars, extending over centuries. The Prussian state had therefore been from the first military in character; it was a "Mark" or border province, a sort of permanent armed camp thrown out by the Germans into the realm of the Slavs; and its feudal nobility, the ancestors of the modern Junkers, were traditionally a fighting race, who owed their lands to the sword, and had never forgotten it.

When the Great Elector in 1648 took in hand the task of transforming his impoverished state into an effective power, he found it divided into two main blocks, lying at some distance from one another. One of these was the Mark of Brandenburg, from which he took his title. Most of it lay east of the Elbe, with its centre at Berlin, in an unfertile, rather desolate and very thinly populated region. The other was the duchy of Prussia—the East Prussia of modern maps—from which his son was to take his royal title. Though German it was not in Germany at all, but a fief part of Poland. It had been created by the order of fighting monks known as the Teutonic Knights, who had preached Christianity with the sword to the heathen Prussians, and reducing to subjection the population, had made a realm for themselves which they filled with German colonists. At the time of the Reformation the Master of the Order was a Hohenzollern, who, conveniently announcing his conversion to Protestantism, turned the lands of the Order into a principality for himself; and from him it had descended to the main Hohenzollern line. Thus both sections of the little state had been won by force, and one of them had come to the Hohenzollerns by a sort of fraud. Force and fraud, as the means of building a state, lie at the root of Prussian history. Force and fraud indeed seemed to be the only means by which a small, poor and divided state, surrounded by powerful enemies, could develop into greatness.

In this divided realm there could, of course, be



no national feeling or patriotism. Its place was taken by the loyalty of tenants to their landlord and of soldiers to their commander. The latter was the real tie which held the Hohenzollern realm together. But this kind of loyalty postulates continued military organisation, and continual readiness for war. Not only the external conditions, therefore, but also the internal relations of the Hohenzollern realm dictated the fostering of a militarist spirit.

The methods of the three great Hohenzollern princes of the formative period show a singular uniformity. In the first place, and above all, they concentrated their resources upon the maintenance of an army, large and efficient out of all proportion to the wealth and population of their state. The Great Elector, though his lands had been beggared and depopulated by the Thirty Years' War, founded the standing army of Prussia, and raised its number to the surprising figure of 30,000. In the officering of this force the widely diffused and warlike nobility of Prussia found a congenial task; and its efficiency was shown when in the battle of Fehrbellin, to the astonishment of Europe, the hitherto invincible Swedes were defeated. Even the Great Elector's successor, the first King of Prussia, who was the least vigorous of the princes of this race, raised the strength of his army till it attained the surprising figure of nearly 50,000. For Frederick William I, most cheeseparing of monarchs, the army was the one thing upon which money was never stinted; though he never used it in the

field, it occupied all his thoughts. He improved the discipline and armament of his troops, and brought them under a much stricter and centralised control. Above all, he yet further increased their numbers; and at his death the little Prussian state possessed an army of 84,000 men, unequalled in quality by the troops of any other European state; and this with a population of scarcely two millions. This army was the implement with which Frederick the Great conquered Silesia, and maintained it against a world in arms; it was this which enabled him to hold his own among the great powers, though his lands, even with Silesia added, were incomparably smaller and poorer than those of the rivals whom he forced to treat him as an equal; it was the formidable military power of Prussia which enabled him, without the loss of a man or the expenditure of a thaler, to gain possession of the Polish lands to which he had no shadow of a legal or moral claim. Frederick the Great saw as clearly as any man that all the greatness of the Prussian state rested upon the army: he gave as much pains to its improvement as his predecessors, and left it at the height of its fame, as the most perfect military implement in the world.

To eighteenth century Europe it seemed little short of a miracle that a state so small and poor as Prussia should be able to maintain a force so large. The miracle was made possible only by an assiduous attention to economy, and the eager employment of every possible means of increasing both the population and the prosperity of the country. All

the great Hohenzollerns gave anxious thought to these needs; perhaps most of all the rough, hard-headed, laborious Frederick William I. They all did everything possible to attract desirable immigrants by grants of land, to create new industries, to improve agriculture, to develop communications. In no European country was the material development of the resources of the state more anxiously considered by its rulers than in Prussia, and in this respect they were the model kings of their age. They were intelligent enough also to see that the prosperity of a country depends largely upon competent and honest administration, and the just enforcement of laws. For these purposes they brought gradually into existence an extremely efficient, and also an extremely economical, bureaucracy. If the army was the right-hand pillar of their throne, the bureaucracy was the left-hand pillar. The creation of the wonderful Prussian bureaucracy, and the establishment of its tradition of intelligent if rather high-handed efficiency, belongs to this period, and especially to Frederick William. Prussia in the eighteenth century was the most intelligently governed state in Europe, and it was this which enabled her to stand the strain of maintaining her disproportionate army. But the increase of population and the growth of wealth and prosperity did not form the supreme end of these remarkable princes; they were only a means. The main purpose of all these admirable activities was to provide the foundation upon which a supreme army could alone rest. The country existed for the



sake of the army; and the army existed as a means to the extension of Power. Power was the supreme end of the state, for Frederick the Great as for his pupil and admirer Treitschke. Already we see the source of Treitschke's doctrines. And we see also their partial justification:—that Power, when pursued by men of great intelligence, brings prosperity as a condition of its own existence.

And in the pursuit of Power—this is the third outstanding feature of these Hohenzollern methods—no means were regarded as unlawful. A king, Frederick the Great repeatedly asserted, in one form or another, must never allow his own interests to be sacrificed by any alliance which he enters into; he should regard an alliance as invalid from the moment when it ceases to serve his interests; and he commits a crime if he permits himself to be hampered by a treaty which no longer serves for him any useful purpose. Here is the doctrine of Treitschke, a century before Treitschke's time. And on this doctrine the Great King and his predecessors, but especially the Great King, consistently acted.

The Great Elector secured independent control over Prussia (for which at first he was a vassal of Poland) by playing fast and loose alternately with his two great neighbours, Sweden and Poland; and in complicated intrigues with and against Louis XIV of France he earned the reputation of being the most untrustworthy ruler in Europe, taking from each side in turn subsidies which he did noth-

ing to earn, and devoting them always to the advance of his own immediate ends.

But Frederick the Great surpassed all the records of his great-grandfather. Five months after he succeeded to the throne and to the command of his superb army, in May, 1740, the lands of the House of Austria also passed to a new ruler, the young Princess Maria Theresa. Frederick's father had signed the famous Pragmatic Sanction, whereby he guaranteed the succession of Maria Theresa to the undivided dominions of her house. Frederick spontaneously wrote to the new ruler renewing these pledges, and offering the aid of his army if she should be attacked. Having thus put her off her guard, within three months he led that same army to seize one of her most fertile provinces. That was the mode in which Silesia was added to the Prussian realm—by force and fraud; and not all the heroism with which it was subsequently defended in the Seven Years' War can obliterate the memory of the treachery. Indeed the great combination of powers which attacked Frederick in that war was largely brought together by the profound suspicion which his conduct had created, and by the conviction (not wholly unfounded) that he meant to try the same methods again. And when the Seven Years' War was over, and Silesia was secure, it was the cunning and perfectly unscrupulous diplomacy of Frederick which brought about the most cynical crime of modern history, the first partition of Poland in 1772, whereby Prussia acquired yet more territory, and raised to a still

higher point her position among the powers of Europe. Unquestionably the Great King enormously increased the status and influence of his kingdom, and in doing so gave to Germany a nucleus round which could gather the dawning hopes of unity. Unquestionably he did it by force and by fraud, by the concentration of the whole resources of the state upon military force, and by a cynical disregard of the obligations of honour in international relations. This was the moral of the formative period of Prussian history: that the supreme object of the state is Power; that the great means to Power is military force; that the whole resources of the state, organised in the most scientific and intelligent way possible, must be conceived of as existing for the maintenance of military force, that in the pursuit of Power all means are permissible, and no treaties are sacred; that, in short, crime ceases to be crime if it is successful.

A policy of this character must be carried out at once with audacity and circumspection if it is to be successful. During the period of the French Revolution these qualities seemed to disappear from Prussian policy; but the features of single-minded concern for the territorial interests of the state, and indifference to other considerations, continued to mark it. The Prussian government pledged itself to join in the attack on revolutionary France; but when it found, as it soon did, that there were no direct gains to be made, it quickly withdrew its forces and left its allies in the lurch, in order to share with Russia in the second and third partitions



of Poland. Then it made peace with France in 1795, frankly abandoning all the German lands on the west of the Rhine, where its own interests were insignificant, and thus committing treason to the German national idea, in order to seize the opportunity of extending its influence in northern Germany and to digest its recent Polish acquisitions. The Prussian army thus looked on idly during all the fierce fighting from 1795 to 1806, a course which Frederick the Great would never have pursued. When Napoleon threatened to make himself master of Europe in 1805, Prussia, instead of joining with Austria and Russia in resisting him, thought the chance a good one for annexing Hanover, and negotiated with Napoleon for that end. But the conqueror soon let it be seen, when he had defeated his earlier foes, that he had no intention of strengthening this untrustworthy power; and Prussia, defeated at her own game of fraud, fell back confidently upon her other weapon of force, feeling quite certain that the Corsican upstart would be powerless against the legions of the Great King. The result was the crushing defeat at Jena, and the sudden and complete fall of Prussia from her high estate. She was stripped of more than half of her territory, saw her soil occupied by French garrisons, had to give up her recently-acquired Polish lands to form a new independent state under French influence on her flank; and, worst blow of all, was forbidden to maintain an army of more than 42,000 men. The fabric of Power which the Hohenzollerns had built seemed

to have collapsed. The moral might have been drawn from these events that the consistent pursuit of a policy which leads to universal distrust is not in the long run to the interest of a state, whatever immediate advantage it may bring. The moral which Prussian historians have drawn is quite different: it is Treitschke's moral, that the one unpardonable offence in a state is feebleness. Jena was not the punishment of dishonour; it was the punishment of a lack of boldness in dishonour.

After 1806 Prussia had to start afresh to rebuild the very foundations of her strength. And now comes an extremely interesting period in her development. The Prussian Junker and the Prussian bureaucrat, faced by the collapse of their traditional methods, were at sea; and the men who were to build a new Prussia had to be called in from other parts of Germany. The marvellous work of reform and reorganisation which filled the years 1807-1813, and made possible the heroic days of the national rising against Napoleon, was carried out by men who represented a revolt from the Prussian tradition, who gave their services to the Prussian state mainly because they hoped it might be turned into the nucleus of a united Germany, and who, for that end, laboured to transform the whole character of the state. Hardenberg, who gave a new direction to Prussian foreign policy, making it stand for the cause of Germany and no longer merely for a narrow and selfish aim of territorial aggrandisement, was a Hanoverian. So was Scharnhorst, the reorganiser of Frederick's army,

whose inspiration was the idea of transforming the army from the host of a conquering king into the civic force of a free nation, in arms against foreign dominion. The greatest of the group, Stein, was a Rhinelander, and of him, still more than of the rest, it is true that he only cared for Prussia in so far as he could hope to use her as the means to a free and self-governing German nation. His passion was the love of freedom, an emotion alien to all the traditions of the Prussian state; and the drastic reforms which he carried out—reforms which were deeply disliked by the traditional ruling classes, and were only rendered possible by the general conviction of the desperate situation of the state—were all inspired by the belief that the strongest state is the state whose citizens are not the mere servants and implements of a master, but are partners in the promotion of the common welfare. To the immense indignation of the Prussian nobles, he carried out by a stroke of the pen the emancipation of the serfs on their domains. A student and admirer of the English system, he introduced into Prussia local self-government on a considerable scale, and was a strong believer in the value of a parliamentary system for the state as a whole, which the king was led to promise in the excitement of 1813. Above all Stein felt that, if Prussia was to become the leader of a united Germany, she must get into harmonious relations with that wonderful intellectual movement, now in its full splendour, which constituted the real glory of the German nation. The foundation of the new



University of Berlin was meant to identify Prussia with intellectual Germany, and largely succeeded in doing so. All these reforms represent a great departure from the traditional methods and aims of Prussia. Thanks to them, Prussia became the centre of the hopes of all the most generous minds of Germany; they looked to her to lead them not only to national unity, but to national liberty and self-government; and it was the enthusiasm thus created which explains the part played by Prussia in the thrilling war of liberation in 1813 and 1814. It appeared that this state had cut herself off from her old and bad traditions; that she aimed now at something nobler than mere Power, at Freedom and Justice; and that the long cleavage between the two Germanies, the Germany which rejoiced in the free partnership of all peoples in the kingdom of the mind, and that other Germany which had dreamt only of the kingdom of the sword, was coming to an end.

But these fine hopes, which so exalt the years of Liberation, were doomed to disappointment. The traditions of Prussia were too deeply rooted to be so easily overthrown. Junker and bureaucrat had only accepted with profound distaste these new methods and ideas, so inconsistent with those upon which the greatness of Prussia had been built. The reformers quickly disappeared from the scene. Stein, driven out at the demand of Napoleon in 1808, was not restored to favour when Napoleon fell; in a few years he was under police supervision as a dangerous Radical, and there were de-

mands for his ruin. Hardenberg, though he clung to office for some years, did so only at the price of abandoning all that he had fought for. The Junker and the bureaucrat resumed their sway, though they resumed it over a rejuvenated Prussia; the promise of parliamentary institutions were shelved; and in the first years after 1815 the confidence in Prussia as the hope of Germany gradually turned into disappointment and bitter anger. The cleavage between the two Germanies, from 1815 onwards, grew steadily deeper again.

We have observed that in the period before the Revolution the intellectual world of Germany had on the whole taken comparatively little interest in political questions; it was content to pursue its studies placidly under whatever form of government might exist, and, far from resenting the disunity of Germany, was inclined to congratulate itself upon the existence of little courts like that of Weimar, whose princes often afforded a place of refuge for the Muses. The Revolution, with all the eager discussion which it provoked, changed all this, and politics became a main preoccupation of the universities during the first half of the nineteenth century.

There were two principal currents in German political thought in this period, as in the thought of all countries. There was a school which, under the influence of one aspect of the Romantic Revival, looked back with reverence to the ages of faith in the past, and advocated the doctrine of authority in Church and State against the ignorant

tumults of the mob. But this school formed a small minority. On the whole the German university world and the intellectual classes whom it influenced found their inspiration in the rival doctrines of Liberalism. So far did this go that in 1819 the governments of Austria and Prussia agreed that the ferment of "Jacobinical" ideas in nearly all the universities formed a danger to society, and combined to take active measures of suppression, suspending professors wholesale and forbidding the *Burschenschaften* or "Fellowships" of democratically minded students which had sprung up everywhere, and had entered into affiliations with one another.

For half a century the universities of Germany became centres of a political propaganda. Always liable to be the captives of formulæ, professors and students swore allegiance to the twin formulæ of Nationalism and Liberalism, and made themselves the most strenuous advocates of these causes. They preached the unity of Germany, a unity in which all particular states should be wholly merged, Prussia among the rest. They preached with even greater fervour the doctrines of political liberty, and parliamentary institutions. Their dream was of a single German state, governed under the forms of a democratic republic or a limited monarchy. But they thought of themselves as citizens not of Germany only but of Europe. They respected and admired the institutions of England, and lauded her friendship for the cause of liberty. They followed with deep sympathy the political



struggles in France. They rejoiced in the successes and sorrowed over the failures of movements towards national freedom in other countries, in Greece, in Spain, in Italy, in Belgium, in Poland. Like their predecessors they were cosmopolitan, but their cosmopolitanism was political as well as intellectual. The reunited Germany of which they dreamed was not to be a state of Power, aiming at the subjugation of its neighbours; it was to be a free member in a family of free European nations, living in peace and mutual respect, and striving against one another only in an honourable rivalry in the extension of the dominion of the mind. They thought not of Power, but of Justice and Freedom as the ends for which the state exists; and regarded war not as a thing good in itself, but as a necessary evil that humanity, governed by reason and justice, would one day find a means to abolish. The men of this generation are habitually treated with scorn by modern German historians of the Prussian school, as unpractical dreamers and sentimentalists, and (worst crime of all) as cosmopolitans. But among them were many of the greatest names of German culture; the state of Power, which has scornfully abandoned their ideals, has not surpassed or equalled their intellectual achievements.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the Germany of dreams and ideals strove unceasingly for national unity and political liberty. They attained some success in some of the minor states, especially of the south, which set up parliamentary systems. But complete victory seemed to be in

their grasp when in 1848 the example of France, falling on a soil prepared by these long labours, brought about a simultaneous revolutionary outbreak in every part of Germany. This outbreak came so suddenly, and its success was at first so complete, that all the governments were driven to agree to the election of a parliament for all Germany, which was to sit at Frankfurt and to draw up a constitution for the united German realm. Amid great enthusiasm the parliament met, and the dreams of the academic theorists seemed about to be realised. But almost from the first it became clear that there would be little result. The parliament was trying to do too much, and to do it too quickly. The academic theorists, when they came to face practical problems, developed wide differences; and in the end the parliament of Frankfurt was a complete fiasco. The Germany of dreams and ideals had had its chance, and had failed. It remained to be seen whether the other Germany, the Germany of blood and iron, would have greater success. That was the situation in the middle of the century: Germany had been disillusioned very roughly, and was waiting for guidance.

It goes without saying that the ideas of the academic Liberals made no appeal to the governing elements in the Prussian state, for everything that they advocated was in direct conflict with the Prussian tradition. The Junker and the bureaucrat cared nothing for the unity of Germany, unless it was to be brought about under the dominion of Prussia: against a united Germany in which Prus-

sia was to lose its identity they would have fought to the last breath. Still less did they believe in the value of political liberty and self-government: this was in their eyes only dangerous and pestilent nonsense. They believed in discipline, not liberty; in the firm rule of a military chief backed by trained officials, not in the settlement of great issues by the ballot-papers of the ignorant. Least of all did they believe in sentimentalities about the brotherhood of nations and the reign of peace. They believed in war as the rule of life, in the sword as the final arbiter.

But clear as was the view of the Prussian ruling classes on the issues raised by the Liberals, Prussian policy during this period was far from showing its old single-minded vigour and decision. A little of the poison of the "Radical" Stein survived in the bureaucracy itself. The large territories in Western Germany which Prussia had acquired at the fall of Napoleon had been deeply influenced by French ideas, and introduced an element into the state which was quite out of harmony with the true old Prussia east of the Elbe. And even here, in the big towns, the poison of Liberalism was at work: the revolution of 1848 when it came was more violent in Berlin, the sanctuary of the Prussian tradition, than anywhere else. Moreover, though Junker and bureaucrat disliked the ideas of Liberalism, even they were not wholly free from the temptation to flirt with the popular party, with a view to serving Prussian interests. In 1848 the king, half-heartedly and with many contradict-



tions, allowed himself to negotiate with the Frankfurt parliament, in the hope of becoming king of the new united Germany. Worse still, under the pressure of the revolution in Berlin, he was forced to accept a parliamentary system, and in 1850 a constitution was definitely established. Although the parliament thus set up was very cleverly constituted so as to secure the ascendancy of the upper class, and checked by a strong second chamber, and although its powers of interfering in the conduct of government were sharply limited, still the noxious thing was there, not to be got rid of: an elected parliament lodged in the body of the autocratic Prussian state. All this meant a breach with Prussian tradition, and caused a good deal of vacillation in policy. Worst of all, the kings of this period were far from showing the Great King's single-minded concentration upon the material interests of his state. They allowed themselves to be influenced by considerations which Frederick would never have permitted to deflect his policy. Frederick William III was in turn the creature of the Russian Tsar and of the Austrian Chancellor. Frederick William IV, to the exasperation of his servants, was often governed by such un-Prussian sentiments as loyalty to Austria because she was the traditional head of the Germanic Confederation, as consideration for the rights of the minor princes, or as the conviction that the maintenance of order and the defeat of the revolution in Europe should be his highest aim, instead of the aggrandisement of Prussia. Conse-

quently Prussia during these years is scarcely herself, and many good Junkers were sadly persuaded that her great days were over, and that the iron tradition of the Great King was dead for ever.

But already there was rising into prominence the greatest of all exponents of Prussian methods, greater than the Great King himself—Otto von Bismarck. From the day when he assumed control in 1862 the old strength and clearness of Prussia came alive again, in more than its old vigour, only revised and modified to meet the condition of a new age. Within ten years Bismarck had fought three wars whose dazzlingly rapid success put the Great King into the shade; and he had not only conquered for Prussia the mastery of the rest of Germany, but he had tamed the intellectuals of Germany, and bound them to the chariot-wheels of Prussia. It is one of the most amazing achievements in modern history; and it was done by the use of the old Prussian methods: force and fraud, blood and iron.

Bismarck was a man of genius, but he was also a Junker of the Junkers, belonging to a pure-blooded Prussian house whose traditions, through centuries, had been utterly Prussian. In beliefs, and in attitude of mind, he was pure Junker; and he had had no patience with the un-Prussian vacillations and half-hearted advances towards Liberalism during the generation preceding his advent to power.

Like all the Junkers, his loyalty was all for Prussia, and he cared nothing for the union of Ger-

many, unless it was to be under Prussian dominion. But he was clever enough to see that the sentiment of nationalism in the rest of Germany was a powerful force, which might be very useful; and once he had demonstrated, in the Danish and Austrian wars, that Prussia was the master, and had ensured her supremacy, he was ready to talk German patriotism with the best of them, in preparation for the coming French war by which he designed to rivet the control of Prussia on the lesser states.

Like all the Junkers, he had no belief at all in parliamentary government, and, as he showed at the beginning of his period of office, he was perfectly ready to defy parliament and to ride roughshod over it if he could not otherwise get his way. This episode, by which Bismarck's dictatorship was established, is so instructive, and so important in its bearings on the development of the German system of government, that it deserves some description. For it represents the real and permanent victory of the Prussian military monarchy over the principles of Liberalism.

When Bismarck became First Minister of Prussia in 1862, an acute conflict had been raging for three years between the king (William I) and the large Liberal majority in the Prussian Landtag or parliament. The king, acting as the hereditary chief of the army, had carried out a great scheme of reorganisation which involved a large increase in the size and cost of the army. The representative chamber in the Landtag was opposed to this scheme,



and had for three years only voted the necessary funds "provisionally," and under protest, from year to year; in 1862 they took the extreme measure of rejecting the Budget altogether, by the remarkable majority of 308 to 10. There has never been a moment in German history when parliamentary supremacy was so nearly attained. The renewed and increasing majority which the Liberals obtained at each dissolution showed that public opinion was overwhelmingly on their side. If they had won in this struggle, their victory would have meant the downfall of the Prussian monarchy and of Prussian militarism, and the establishment of a system of government like that of England or France. They very nearly did win. The king was on the point of abdicating when, as a last resort, he called in Bismarck, who was notorious as an extreme anti-Liberal.

Bismarck treated the question with a high hand. He snapped his fingers at the claim of parliament to control taxation under the terms of the constitution. He took up the position that the king was absolute head of the army, and that parliament had no right to refuse the money necessary for the maintenance of the army on the footing that the king considered necessary. During four successive years he governed in defiance of parliament, raising the taxes in spite of the annual rejection of the Budget. He had force on his side, since he controlled both the army and the bureaucracy which collected the taxes; and, in the phrase in which his opponents summed up his principles, "force beats

law." A parliament in the Prussian state was, indeed, powerless against these methods.

It was with the army thus maintained in defiance of parliament that he fought both the Danish and the Austrian wars. Both of these wars were unpopular; the majority in parliament opposed the cold-blooded diplomacy by which they were prepared as vigorously as it opposed the unconstitutional methods by which the army was raised. But their opposition here was as boldly disregarded as their claim to control taxation. In the end the brilliant results of the two wars brought victory also in the parliamentary sphere. Bismarck had established the greatness of Prussia not only without the aid of the Liberals, but in the teeth of their opposition; and after his victory, resistance died out. By 1866 he had not only made Prussia the dominant state in Germany; he had also turned the forms of popular government in Prussia into a nullity, and in both respects his success so hypnotised the public mind that the results were received with enthusiasm.

But Bismarck was too clever a man to press his victories too far. Just as he refused to annex any territory from Austria because he looked forward to making use of her in the future, so in the constitutional sphere, having once shown that parliament could be successfully overridden if it formed a real obstacle to his policy, and having reduced its powers to conveniently humble proportions, he was careful to deal with it gently, because the power of public opinion which it influenced could be very

useful. He cultivated the arts of parliamentary management. And, since the public sentiment in favour of parliamentary institutions, especially outside of Prussia, was still strong, he was ready to pander to it on the surface. When the Prussian Empire over the rest of Germany was established in 1871, this despiser of representative institutions actually set up, as part of the imperial constitution, a Reichstag elected from all parts of Germany on the most democratic franchise, thus taking the wind out of the sails of the Liberals. But, as we shall see, he skilfully ensured that it should have no power of interference in the actual conduct of government and in the appointment of ministers and little real power even over legislation and taxation. He also checked it, with extreme cleverness, by using the federal principle as the basis of a second chamber with far greater powers than the Reichstag was permitted to enjoy. So long as the German constitution remains what it is—and its stability is secured by the fact that it forms a sort of treaty between the various states which have been united in the Empire—the Reichstag may place obstacles in the way of the government, but it cannot control it; the real power in Germany rests in the hands of the Emperor and the Chancellor whom he nominates.

Finally, Bismarck had as little sympathy as other Junkers with the demands of the Liberals for freedom of the press, free discussion, free criticism of the government. During the great conflict of 1862—66, and occasionally in later years, he did



not hesitate to suppress newspapers which took an inconveniently independent line. But he was much too astute not to see that suppressions and prosecutions of newspapers could not wisely be too freely employed, and that in the nineteenth century the stifling of public opinion was impossible. He knew a better way. From the beginning of his political career he studied the art of influencing the press, and by that means making or controlling public opinion. Nobody has ever been his equal in this art, or in the unobtrusive subtlety with which it was practised. Nor was it the press only that he influenced; especially in the later part of his career, he courted and influenced the professors, who exercise so much weight upon German opinion. He was the inventor of the art of "mobilising public opinion" which has become one of the principal branches of Prussian statecraft. The way in which the right atmosphere was prepared through the press before each of his great wars is almost diabolical in its cleverness. He it was who turned German opinion (previously so various and so obstinate) into "an orchestra which obeys only the baton of government," at any rate in regard to foreign relations. And he did it all the more skilfully by not attempting to suppress differences of opinion or of method.

Bismarck's great work was the establishment of the German Empire under Prussian control. He achieved it by means of three wars, fought within eight years; and when he had finished his task, fought no more wars, but devoted himself to the

organisation of the great state he had created, in readiness for its next enterprise. The first war, against Denmark (1864), gave him the opportunity of annexing Schleswig and Holstein, and (more important) the grounds for a quarrel with Austria. The second war, against Austria (1866), enabled him to drive that state out of German affairs, and to annex to Prussia the chief states of Northern Germany which still remained independent; so that Prussia now possessed two-thirds of the territory of the future empire, and was sure of supremacy. The third war, against France (1870-1871) showed Prussia as the champion of Germany against the traditional foe that had once profited by her disunion, and led to the conferment of the imperial crown on the Prussian king, on the proposal of the King of Bavaria, the chief among those south-German states which had hitherto been deeply jealous of Prussia. Each of these wars was quite deliberately prepared and provoked in cold blood, in order to lead to exactly the consequences that resulted. In each case the intended victim was skilfully isolated from all possible allies before he was struck down; Bismarck never entered on a war without knowing that he would win.

The methods of this extraordinary man are exactly the methods of the Prussia of the eighteenth century: the cold-blooded use of military force, based on the most scientific organisation, and accompanied by a complete disregard of moral restraints. But Bismarck showed an immense

superiority over all his Prussian predecessors not only in the diplomatic skill with which he prepared the way, but above all by his realisation of the value of what he called "the imponderables." He saw the importance of having public opinion on his side, not only in his own country but elsewhere; he knew that the sense of justice, sympathy for the weak, indignation at the spectacle of brute force brutally used, and a prejudice in favour of honourable dealing, are widely diffused among men, and although for him these things had no bearing upon international relations, he knew it was an immense source of strength to have them on your side. He managed to do so to a remarkable degree, considering how calculated his wars were.

The methods by which he alienated sympathy from France on the eve of his last great war form an admirable illustration of his mode of procedure. The preparation began long beforehand, as soon as the war with Austria was over. Napoleon III, thinking his dignity impaired by the growth of Prussian power which followed that war, talked about the necessity of "compensations," and Bismarck had conversations on this subject with Benedetti, the French ambassador. The talk turned, among other subjects, upon the possibility of a French annexation of Belgium, which would, of course, have been a monstrous violation of the treaty of 1839. At one stage in the discussions certain suggestions on this head were put down on paper, in Benedetti's handwriting. Whether Benedetti had himself composed these notes, or



whether, as has been confidently asserted, Bismarck himself raised the subject and actually dictated these notes to Benedetti to form the basis of discussion, will probably never be known. What is known, is that the discussion was entirely confidential, that the subject was dropped, and that the notes were thrown into the waste-paper basket. Later Benedetti asked about them, and was told they had been destroyed. In reality they had been carefully put away. Three years later they were produced and published, on the eve of the war, in order to alienate public opinion from France, and especially in order to arouse the indignation of England. These are the methods of the card-sharper; yet they were employed, and not on one occasion only, by a great statesman. They were his method of recognising the value of "imponderables," such as the sense of honour.

It was, then, by using the traditional methods of Prussia that Bismarck created the German Empire. As in the days when Prussia was being raised from a petty state into a great power, force and fraud were exhibited as the means by which the greatness of states is established. By following the traditions of Prussia Bismarck had succeeded in doing what the idealists had utterly failed to do, even when they seemed to have all the cards in their hands; he had given unity to the German people, and had established a parliament which, however incomplete its authority, was at least representative of the whole of Germany. Is it wonderful that these events produced a revolution in German

opinion, and that the Prussian tradition began to permeate the whole of German life?

The Prussian mode of military organisation, the methods of the Prussian bureaucracy, were extended to the other states. Above all, the Prussian spirit, the Prussian way of regarding political questions, began to conquer the German mind. The Prussian school of historians had already, before Bismarck's triumph was complete, begun to glorify the achievements and to justify the methods of the great Prussian kings. Now the popular veneration for Bismarck, the popular gratitude for the dazzling gifts which he had given to Germany, completed the demonstration. The eloquence of the chair drew the moral from the achievements of the statesman: Treitschke and his doctrine were the final product of the Prussian idea, and the methods of a Frederick and a Bismarck were exalted into the inevitable rules of government for a sound and well-organised state. Thus the gospel of Power was the product of two centuries of history.

It is the greatest, but it is also the most terrible, of the achievements of the Iron Chancellor—that he Prussianised the soul of the countrymen of Kant and of Goethe.

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW PRUSSIA RULES GERMANY

**B**ISMARCK'S triumph brought not only the victory of the Prussian theory of government, the doctrine of Power, over the mind of the German people; it brought also the effective dominion of Prussia and Prussian methods over the rest of Germany. This supremacy was secured by the Constitution of the German Empire, which was set up in 1871; and the way in which it works, under pseudo-democratic forms, can only be made clear by some analysis of the German system of government.

The German Empire is a federation of twenty-five states, most of which are very small, while Prussia, the greatest of them, has three-fifths of the total population of the Empire. Each of these states has a government of its own, including (in all but two cases) a representative parliament or Landtag. The powers of the Landtag vary from state to state, but in every case except the three Free Cities the effective centre of government is to be found in a monarch (whether he be called a King or a Duke) and in the permanent body of officials which he controls; and this monarchical system everywhere enjoys a far higher degree of independence than is usual in other coun-



tries. In no case are the ministers of state, who carry on the actual government, under the control of parliament, or capable of being dismissed by it, as in France or England.

But the government's independence of parliament reaches its highest point in Prussia. Here the parliament consists of two houses; a House of Lords, partly hereditary and partly nominated by the King, and far more dependent upon the King than the English House of Lords has ever been; and an elected house, in choosing which the electors are divided into three classes in such a way that the few rich electors have twice as much weight in the election as the numerous poor. The ministers do not sit as ordinary members in either house, but have a right to appear and to make statements in both; in doing so they have a privileged position. They are all appointed by the King, and there is no means by which either house of parliament can compel the resignation of any of them. All new laws require the assent of parliament. But new laws are nearly always proposed by the government; and when any legislative proposals are independently put forward by the elected house, if they are in any way objectionable to the government, they are sure to be thrown out by the House of Lords. The chief work of parliament in the legislative sphere consists of the discussion and amendment of measures proposed by the government; parliament in effect has no real control over the making of laws, and no control at all over the way in which they are carried

out. Votes of money also require the approval of parliament, but it is the accepted doctrine that as the elected house cannot by itself repeal a law, it has no power to refuse the money necessary to carry it out and therefore cannot withhold the supplies necessary for the conduct of government. As Bismarck acted on this principle and successfully defied parliament during a series of years,<sup>1</sup> it may be said to be established.

The Prussian system therefore briefly is, that the King carries on the whole government, appoints all the officers of state without any control from parliament, can collect all the taxes necessary for this purpose whether parliament wishes or no, though he must get its approval for new taxes to meet new expenditure; and practically proposes all new laws for parliament's approval, while parliament is unable to force any law upon him that he dislikes. This is not what we mean by self-government; it is government by a king working through a highly trained body of officials who are completely under his control, and only very slightly checked by a parliament one of whose two Houses is largely nominated by himself.

Over all the twenty-five governments and legislatures of the various states, including Prussia, are placed the government and legislature of the Empire. The Imperial Government consists of the Emperor, with his chief minister the Chancellor; the Bundesrat, or Federal Council; and the

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 103-4.

Reichstag, or Imperial Chamber. This government has the right of making laws for the whole Empire, which override the legislation of the separate states, but are generally speaking carried into effect not by imperial officials, but by the officials of the states. Thus the number of imperial officials is small; but the fact that the carrying out of imperial laws is entrusted to state officials really means that the imperial government has wide powers of supervision over the officers of the various states. The small number of imperial officials thus means not a restriction but actually an increase of the power of the imperial government.

The Reichstag is elected on a very democratic franchise. Its approval is necessary for all new laws, but these also require the approval of the Bundesrat and the Emperor; and in practice new laws of importance are always proposed by the government, which usually gets them through by making bargains with some of the numerous party-groups into which the Reichstag is divided. If it fails to do this, the government can at any time dissolve the Reichstag and get a new one elected, which has nearly always proved to be more amenable—especially if the electoral press campaign has been managed with the skill usually displayed by the German government. The Reichstag also has in theory control over taxation. But as most of the revenue laws are permanent, and cannot be altered without the consent of the Emperor, and as most of the items of expenditure (above all that of



the army) are practically fixed and must be met, the control of the Reichstag over finance is really very ineffective. It is rather a debating society than a ruling parliament.

Much more important than the Reichstag is the Bundesrat, or Federal Council, which is unlike any other body in the world. It consists of fifty-eight members; Prussia has seventeen members, the other states a smaller number varying from six in the case of Bavaria to one in the case of most of the smaller states. The members of the Bundesrat are not popularly elected, but are nominated by the governments of the various states. They have no freedom in discussion or voting, but must vote according to the instructions of their governments, and all the votes of any one state must always be cast on the same side. The government of any state may give to one man, and even to a representative of another state, the right of casting all its votes.

Prussia really controls twenty votes, seventeen for herself and three for two of the smaller states which have passed under her control. All these twenty representatives are nominated by the King of Prussia (*i.e.*, by the Emperor), and *must* vote according to his instructions. If Prussia can secure ten votes from the other states—and she nearly always can—she is certain of having her own way in the Bundesrat. The President of the Bundesrat is the Chancellor, who is always a Prussian and is the nominee and representative of the Emperor as well as the head of the imperial

government; he is usually also the head of the Prussian ministry; and in all these capacities he is practically the controller of the Bundesrat. The Bundesrat has various standing committees. The chairman of each of these with one exception must by law be one of the Prussian representatives, who are of course the nominees of the Emperor.

Prussia has still another and very remarkable privilege. Its seventeen members (that is, the Emperor) have the right of vetoing any proposed change in laws or taxation even if there is an overwhelming majority in its favour in the Reichstag, and a majority also in the Bundesrat. Thus it is plain that the Bundesrat, while nominally a means for maintaining the rights of the separate states, is really a very ingenious device for securing the control of the King of Prussia and his government over the whole of Germany.

This remarkable body sits in secret, so that it is remarkably free from the influence of public opinion; and its powers are enormously wider than those of the Reichstag. It draws up the Budget and most of the laws submitted to the Reichstag; and they return for its approval when the Reichstag has discussed them. It issues ordinances to give effect to laws. It appoints the judges. It has considerable powers of supervision over administration in all parts of the Empire. It decides disputes between imperial and state officials. In short, it is in some ways the pivot on which the imperial government turns. It has been described as the most important body in the

Empire, and that is true. It has also been described as a mere nullity; that too is true, because it acts almost entirely at the dictation of the Prussian government.

Lastly we must consider the position of the Emperor, who is always, by the provision of the constitution, the King of Prussia for the time being. We have seen that as King of Prussia he nominates the non-hereditary members of the Prussian House of Lords, and appoints and dismisses at his pleasure, without any control by parliament, all the Prussian ministers, and through them all the officials of the Prussian state. We have seen that as Emperor he dictates the votes of the twenty members of the Bundesrat whom Prussia nominates, and, by his influence over grand dukes and other minor princes, is nearly always able to secure that most of the non-Prussian members of the Bundesrat shall receive instructions in accordance with his will. He also appoints and dismisses at his pleasure the Imperial Chancellor, who is President of the Bundesrat, and is responsible for the whole sphere of imperial government, home and foreign, all imperial ministers and officers being under his control.

The powers of the Chancellor are so immense under the system as Bismarck devised it, that he may easily, in favourable circumstances, make himself the dictator of the Empire, as Bismarck did. But he cannot do so unless by the Emperor's will. Bismarck, for all his enormous prestige, lost all his power at a stroke in 1890 when the



young Emperor William II decided that he was going to rule as well as reign. Once since then a Chancellor has shown some independence, when Prince Bülow publicly rebuked the Emperor for his indiscreet utterances. But Prince Bülow's power did not survive this daring; and there is no doubt that the Emperor himself has really ruled Germany since 1890, the Chancellor being merely his mouthpiece. Under the terms of the constitution the Emperor is responsible for the foreign policy of the Empire, and has the power of declaring war with the assent of the Bundesrat. The Reichstag may discuss foreign policy and war, but has no power to interfere.

So far the German system is not unlike that which existed in England in the time of the Tudors, and which we are accustomed to describe as "the Tudor despotism."

But the greatest power of the Emperor is his control of the army, and this has no parallel in Tudor England, which had no regular army. In regard to the army neither the Chancellor, nor the Bundesrat, and least of all the Reichstag, have anything to say. When we remember how vital a place the army has always taken in the Prussian state, it becomes clear that in the Emperor's absolute mastery of the army we shall find the real centre of gravity of the German Empire.

According to the constitution every male German is liable to military service, though not all need be called up; and when the citizen undertakes his service he must take an oath of absolute

obedience and loyalty to the Emperor. He remains a member of the army till he reaches the age of 39, and in that capacity continues to be subject to the Emperor's special and personal authority, in which no other organ of the state has any share. The constitution provides that the army in all the states shall be organised on the Prussian model, and shall be, in war and peace, under the Emperor's absolute control. He appoints all the higher officers, except in Bavaria, and in nearly all the states he appoints the lower officers as well. Even over the army of Bavaria, which retains some independence, the Emperor has the right of inspection in peace; and as soon as war is declared it passes under his absolute command.

The headship of the army is indeed the mainspring of the Emperor's power, as much as it was the mainspring of the power of Napoleon or Cæsar. For in the Prussian view, which is now the accepted view of all Germany, the army is not merely the heart and soul of the nation, it *is* the nation, in its most vital aspect. To-day, almost as fully as in the time of Frederick the Great, it is true that according to the Prussian view, the state almost exists for the sake of the army, and the army exists for the extension of Power.

Thus, in spite of its superficially democratic form, in spite of its actively debating Reichstag and its numerous Socialist representatives, the German Empire is fundamentally a monarchical and a militarist state, a reproduction, on an enlarged and modernised scale, of the older Prussia.

Its government is dominated by the Prussian royal house, with its long and unchanging traditions of power pursued by force and fraud, and the main instruments of this authority are the members of the old Prussian nobility and the old Prussian bureaucracy, reinforced by corresponding classes from the rest of Germany whose members have been trained for half a century in the Prussianized army and civil service.

A government so constituted is not likely to be transformed in its spirit and methods merely by the fact that by means of these methods it has achieved a great success. On the contrary, from the moment when Bismarck succeeded in imposing the dominion of Prussia upon the rest of Germany, and in impregnating the German people with Prussian ideals, it might be taken for certain that the pursuit of Power by Force and Fraud would continue on a greater scale, as soon as the process of assimilation was completed.

That is the immediate conclusion which follows from our survey of the German system of government. Another conclusion is that this system is by its very nature fundamentally hostile to the ideals of liberty and self-government towards which we have hoped that the civilised world was progressing. The war into which that government has plunged the world is very certainly as much a war for the ideal of self-government as it is a war for national freedom, for honour, and for the sanctity of treaties.



## CHAPTER V

### RECENT GERMAN POLICY

WE have discussed the Prussian theory as to what constitutes the true greatness and the main purpose of a state. We have seen this theory very fully exemplified in the history of Prussia; we have seen it engaged in a conflict with the opposite ideals of intellectual Germany, achieving a victory and culminating in the establishment of the German Empire. We have seen that this empire is effectively controlled by Prussia, and is now permeated by the Prussian spirit. A government with such guiding principles, such a tradition, and such a background was inevitably bound to pursue a policy in keeping with its past. With these things in mind, and with the further illumination provided by the events of 1914, we are now in a position to analyse German policy during the last generation.

During the last twenty years of Bismarck's Chancellorship (1871—1890) he maintained an unbroken peace. He often said that Germany would henceforth be the best friend of peace, because she was a "satiated power," having got all that she needed. Perhaps he meant this. For although he projected a cynical attack on France

in 1875, merely because she seemed to be recovering too fast and had better be "bled white" before she became strong enough to be threatening, he would have defended this as a safeguard of future peace. Possibly the old Titan was becoming weary; possibly his mind had always been so concentrated on the question of European power that wider issues had no interest for him; possibly he felt that Germany must give all her attention for a time to internal organisation, which certainly presented many difficult problems during these years. But whatever the reason, his weight in this period was always thrown on the side of peace.

For the maintenance of peace Bismarck pinned his faith to a remarkable system of European alliances which he created. In 1879 he made a defensive alliance with Austria, whereby each power was to help the other if attacked by Russia. This was developed into the Triple Alliance by the addition of Italy in 1883; but Italy's undertaking was also purely defensive, and was meant to guard against France. That Bismarck had, at any rate in Eastern Europe, no aggressive intentions, was shown by the "Reinsurance" treaty with Russia in 1884, whereby Germany and Russia undertook to come to one another's aid if attacked by Austria. The making of this treaty shows that the Austro-German relations were as yet far from intimate; and although the "Reinsurance" was soon allowed to lapse, Bismarck always attached great importance to maintaining friendly relations

with Russia. He certainly hated the idea of a war about Balkan questions, which, he said, were not worth the life of a single Grenadier. With England also he kept on good terms. He would not annex South-West Africa, for example, until he was sure that England did not want it.

Nor did Bismarck take much interest in colonial questions. Though most of the existing German colonies were acquired under his régime, during the eighties, he only took them under the rising pressure of German opinion, and to the end of his life insisted that he was "no colony man." In this attitude he was in fact out of touch with the rising tide. The new direction which German policy was to take was already shaping itself, and it was for this reason that Bismarck's fall in 1890 was, on the whole, so easily accepted by his countrymen. He did not share in the growing, glowing dream of Germany as a world-power.

The forces which were making for this new development were already at work in Bismarck's time. The population of Germany was increasing at an extraordinarily rapid rate, and thousands of emigrants were every year pouring out of the country. The states whom Germany regarded as her equals—Russia, the United States, England, even France—all possessed lands where their surplus population could find room without losing their citizenship: but the German emigrant almost always found his way to America or the British colonies, where he learnt a new language, and



where his descendants were for ever lost to their fatherland. That was a grievance which was felt with increasing bitterness, especially among a people who believed that the greatness of their state depended upon military force, and that the effectiveness of military force was ultimately in proportion to the available manhood of the state. It naturally led Germans to demand colonies of their own, to which their sons could go and still remain Germans.

They got some colonies in the eighties, but the German emigrant firmly declined to go near them; for nearly all the most desirable fields for colonisation were already in the possession of other states, and especially of Britain. Clearly, if the German race was to have a free chance for expansion, it must obtain command of some of these colonisable territories. The demand for colonies on this ground was already strong in Bismarck's time, and it has grown steadily stronger ever since. Yet the reason for it was already passing away. German emigration has almost ceased in recent years, partly because of the immense development of industry, partly because the rate of increase of the population has steadily declined, in accordance with the beneficent rule that the more prosperous a people is the more slowly its numbers increase. But if this argument for the acquisition of colonies is disappearing, the irritation which it caused still exists, and it forms to-day one of the reasons most often advanced for the necessity of an aggressive colonial policy.

This motive for world-power was reinforced by another during the same period. German shipping has risen since 1871 from a very humble condition to be the nearest rival to the shipping of Britain. Before the outbreak of war in 1914 there were German ships in all the seas of the world, but wherever they went they had to trade in foreign harbours, and an exasperatingly large proportion of these harbours was British. German industry has thriven even more remarkably than German shipping. It wants raw materials; it wants markets. It has to depend for both upon foreign states, and in a large degree upon the far-flung British dominions. It seemed but a small consolation that all the ports and markets under the control of the British government were thrown as freely open to German as to British traders: the German, having adopted a protective system, longed to have control of markets and of sources of raw material where he could establish a monopoly. He was also convinced that in indirect ways the political connexions between the British Empire and the mother country gave a great advantage to British trade.

The only way to rectify this was to establish a German Colonial Empire like the British. But the attempt to do this by occupying the disengaged regions of the world had come to nothing: even to-day none of the German colonies can so much as pay its own way, except the small but rich district of Togoland. That is, no doubt, largely due to the fact that the rigid and elaborate system

of the Prussian bureaucracy, with its swarm of officials and its inelastic regulations, is singularly ill-suited to the needs of raw and backward regions. But perhaps the German can scarcely be blamed for not realising this, and for attributing the failure of his colonies to the undoubted fact that the regions in which they had been established were unfavourable. How, then, could the deficiency be rectified? Clearly by the application of the doctrine of Power, in the good old Prussian way to which all the advances hitherto made were due. And the obvious object of attack was England. Already in Bismarck's time the hatred of England as the inevitable foe of Germany was being preached, by Treitschke among others. England, indeed, was a Teutonic power (though that is a very debatable point) and therefore akin to Germany. For that reason, we have been recently told, it is "treacherous" of England to oppose Germany. But the doctrine of treachery is one-sided. It does not apply to Germany, and the necessity of an attack on England has been preached for thirty years.

The Germans, as we have seen, are a very academically-minded people, much under the influence of professors, and fond of reading big books. For that reason their political ideas have always been greatly affected by the study of history, especially as interpreted in the light of the fashionable formulæ and theories of the moment. During the last half-century they have been entranced by a view of their own history, drawn



largely from the work of passionately patriotic students of mediæval Germany like Giesebrecht, which has become the basis of a sort of prophetic vision of the future. We have heard a great deal in recent years about "Germany's Historic Mission": General Bernhardt himself has a chapter on it. What it means is briefly this. Once upon a time the Romans were the rulers of the world, and the masters and guides of culture and civilisation. They fell from their high estate because they lost their virility, their fighting force. The people who were destined to overthrow them were the Germans; and the heroic age of German history shows this people as lords of western civilisation, with their kings enthroned over all the west as Holy Roman Emperors. But the German power fell asunder for various reasons, and in part because the Germans themselves were not yet ready to be the masters of civilisation, having not yet fully developed their culture. God, who had chosen them for this great work, therefore gave them a discipline of six hundred years, during which, though politically disunited, they re-created Christianity through the preaching of Luther, and later created the new culture of the modern world, its philosophy, its music, its natural science. Then, being ready for their task, they regained their political unity under the strong leadership of Prussia; and now they are ready to fulfil their "historic mission"—that of taking the place which the Romans once held, as the masters, organisers and guides of the whole civilised

world.<sup>1</sup> That is Germany's historic mission as it is expressed by many quite sincere fanatics.

Such preposterous megalomania, based upon such grotesque misinterpretation of history, would not have any influence in any other country. It has a real influence among the bookish, theory-loving Germans, already more than a little intoxicated by the easy victories of the mid-nineteenth century and by the very remarkable material prosperity which has followed them. Nearly all Germans already believe that they are irresistible as soldiers, that they are the best organisers in the world, that they are unsurpassable as traders, that their Culture marks the very highest point ever reached by the human race, that, in short, they have nothing to learn from any other people and everything to teach other peoples. And a nation so believing is a ready prey even for such nonsense as the talk about the "historic mission." But when such beliefs are coincident with a belief in the gospel of force, they become extremely dangerous to the world.

The Germans do not only study their own history; they have long done us the honour of paying a great deal of attention to the history of Britain.

Time was (especially in the first half of the nineteenth century) when it was mainly the his-

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the Kaiser is reported as having told his troops, in a speech since the beginning of the war, that a German victory would lead to a German-Roman empire of the civilised world, to the great advantage of humanity.

tory of British institutions which attracted their attention. In those days England was an object of respect, even of veneration, as the inventor of the methods of self-government, as the mother of liberty. But (as we have seen) the admirers of British methods failed entirely to achieve either unity or liberty for Germany; and when the task in which they had failed was triumphantly achieved by Bismarck on quite other lines, and by purely Prussian methods, the respect for British ideas and institutions was rapidly destroyed, and even turned into contempt. Power, not liberty, became the object of veneration.

But now another aspect of British history began to attract their attention: the steps by which Britain acquired her extraordinary empire, and her trading supremacy. The puzzling thing here was, that the doctrine of Power seemed to be falsified, for here was the most remarkable Empire in the world in the possession of a state which had always been quite contemptible in a military sense, and had never devoted her whole resources to the organisation of military force. The doctrine of Power being, of course, indisputably true, how was this paradox to be explained? Obviously the explanation was that the British Empire had been built up not by honest Force, but by low cunning, by constantly intriguing to keep the really virile Powers of Europe at war with one another, and by seizing all the eligible quarters of the globe while their backs were turned. Modern British history was ingeniously interpreted in the light of this



theory, and Britain came to seem a very hateful and contemptible power.

Again, the scientific German student of government, accustomed to and proud of the rigid order and system of Prussian rule, could not but be struck by the total absence of symmetry and system in the organisation of the British Empire, the extraordinary variety in the conditions existing in its various parts, and the remarkable laxity and indefiniteness of the bonds by which it was held together. This seemed (to the believer in the doctrine of power) a proof of the weakness of the fabric: it seemed to be a slipshod and ramshackle structure, which would fall to pieces at a touch. How could a Prussian believe that the almost complete independence enjoyed by the great self-governing colonies was due to any other cause than the inability of a nerveless and decadent mother country to enforce her sway?

The true secret both of the creation and the organisation of the British Empire inevitably escaped the German, for that secret is to be found in something alien to German civilisation. It is because a training of a thousand years has bred into the very bones of the British peoples the habit and instinct of self-government that bodies of Britons at great distances from home have found it easy to work together in cordial co-operation, either in the building up of new settlements or in the government and reorganisation of old and peopled realms, without having to call constantly for the aid and instructions of the home govern-

ment, and without having to be guided by fixed rules and regulations. It is the same reason which has made it seem natural to Britons at home that their daughter-nations should as early as possible take control of their own destinies, and which has persuaded them that variety of method and diversities of institutions are desirable in themselves, while rigid uniformity is deadening. And it is this common belief of a whole race in liberty, in self-government, in life-giving diversity, which forms the real bond between these communities, a bond as strong as it is seemingly slight.

But to the German mind, accustomed to universal system and order imposed from above, all this could only appear as evidence of slackness, inefficiency and weakness. The believers in *Realpolitik* concluded that the British Empire was an unreal thing, because it was not based on Force, and because it lacked System. Convinced that the possession of colonies was a great source of wealth and power, they also felt sure that they could, by the same methods which had welded the Prussian State and the German Empire, build a far firmer, more systematic, more *real* fabric, if only the opportunity were open to them. And increasingly they began to long for the opportunity, and to resolve to make it.

It was in the last decade of the nineteenth century that these ambitions definitely became the dominating factor in German foreign policy; and the man who has above all represented and expressed them is the Emperor William II. This

prince, though he has been the most loquacious and the most self-assertive public man of his time, has remained something of an enigma. He has always proclaimed himself the friend of peace, and this claim has been accepted by most of his subjects, and perhaps by the general opinion of the non-German world. Yet it has been during the years when he has controlled German policy that the constant increase of German armaments by land and sea has turned all Europe into an armed camp. And if he has helped to surmount the successive European crises which have kept our nerves on edge during the whole of his reign, the frequency of these crises has been indisputably due to the blustering and bullying methods of German diplomacy under his direction—the methods of the “mailed fist,” and the “shining armour,” and the *Panther* making its sudden appearance at Agadir. William II perhaps believes that he has loved peace and ensued it, sacrificing to it everything but the right of Germany to “a place in the sun”: but if so his view of what that place should be has not been so reasonable as to make the relations of other states with Germany easy or pleasant. It is indeed impossible to forget that for twenty years past the behaviour of Germany under her peace-loving Emperor has been such as to reduce Europe to a state of tension very dangerous to peace, and that its issue has been the war of 1914.

William II has for five and twenty years succeeded in holding the attention of the world by



his recklessness, his restlessness, his shallow versatility, his colossal egoism; but beneath all this there has always been perceptible a very clear purpose, a very assured belief: the belief that he has been chosen by the tribal God of Prussia to lead Germany in the next step of her irresistible career—the step from the position of the greatest power in Europe to the position of a dominating world-power. The policy of Germany during his reign, in its daring, its brusqueness, its domineering methods, its sudden tacks and veers, its underlying fixity of purpose, has manifestly been the policy of William II. It reflects his character; but in its aims, if not always in its methods, it has been in accord with the vaulting dreams and ambitions of the German people.

The creation of a fleet was the necessary condition of the formation of a world-empire, and the making of the German fleet has undoubtedly been mainly the work of William II. "He devoted all the power of the throne and all the strength of his own personality," says his Chancellor, Prince Bülow, "to the attainment of this end . . . He . . . championed the building of the German fleet at the very moment when the German people had to come to a decision about their future, and when . . . Germany had the last chance of forging the sea-weapons that she needed."<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly the first great Navy Act of 1897-98 which began the modern German navy was carried mainly by his advocacy; and the

<sup>1</sup> "Imperial Germany," 18.

diminishing opposition in the Reichstag to the rapidly increasing expenditure demanded by its successors shows that he anticipated the trend of German opinion. It was he who proclaimed that the future of Germany lay upon the water; he who laid claim to the Admiralty of the Atlantic.

But the fleet was only a means; and the end for which it was designed, the replacement of British by German supremacy upon the seas, was a rather remote one. Meantime, while the "sea-weapon that Germany needed" was being forged, her ruler was eagerly looking for opportunities to extend German influence in the ends of the earth, and if possible to acquire desirable colonies when opportunity offered.

The most obviously desirable region of the earth uncontrolled by any of the great powers was South America, many of whose smiling lands were misruled by very inefficient governments. Here there were thousands of German settlers; they were encouraged to keep together and not to merge in the surrounding population by means of schools and other equipments subsidised by Germany. Undoubtedly the German government has hoped, and perhaps still hopes, to establish a claim to South American dominion. But the Monroe doctrine of the United States stood in the way, and when Germany tried to intervene in Venezuela her government was reminded that the United States still clung to this doctrine. William II has made no secret of his distaste for the

Monroe doctrine. But the time for attacking it had not yet come: the United States, though a negligible power in a military sense, is not an easy power to attack from a European base, especially while the British fleet is unimpaired; and South American ambitions have been reluctantly abandoned by the German government for the time being. The Spanish-American War showed indeed how little love for the American state is felt in Germany, and for a time relations were "clouded," as Prince Bülow puts it, "by the way in which part of the English and American press interpreted certain incidents which had occurred between our squadrons and the American fleet off Manila." But these "incidents" were things to forget; and a laborious friendliness has ever since striven to wipe them out.

More promising seemed the chance of making some profit in South Africa, where a semi-independent "Teutonic" people, who would naturally fall within the German orbit, were in a state of very strained relations with Britain. The notorious Kruger telegram, which congratulated the old President upon repelling the Jameson raid "without the aid of friendly powers," and the steady importation of German armaments into the Transvaal, showed how ready Germany would be to obtain a footing in this eminently desirable region, so well suited for European settlers. Only the opening of the archives in the distant future will reveal how near a war between Britain and Germany was in 1899. The Emperor has claimed



that he was the preserver of the peace in this juncture. If the claim is true, it was because he realised, and seized the opportunity to make Germany realise, that there was no prospect of a successful attack on Britain until the German fleet had been vastly increased. The German Navy Act of 1900, which doubled the fleet at a blow, was the outcome of the South African War.

Meanwhile Germany had been turning her attention to the Far East, where prospects not only of trade expansion but of territorial acquisition seemed to be opening. The defeat of China by Japan in 1894 had forced Europe to realise the existence of a new power which might be able to prevent expansion in this region. Germany accordingly joined Russia and France in forbidding the Japanese annexation of Port Arthur and the peninsula behind it, and the Emperor began to furbish up his rhetoric to make Europe realise the Yellow Peril.

A twofold advantage could be reaped for Germany in this field. Russia could be encouraged to turn her attention to the Far East, thus leaving the field clear in the Near East; the astonishing result of the Russo-Japanese War was probably never anticipated, but it had its compensation in making it safe to disregard Russia for some years. And Germany also hoped to make her own direct profit in this region. In 1897 the murder of two German missionaries afforded her a pretext for a characteristically high-handed act, the seizure of Kiao-Chau by the "mailed fist."

Three years later the Boxer rising and the siege of the legations in Peking seemed to afford another chance of brandishing the mailed fist before the eyes of the wondering East. Germany delayed the common action of the powers for the relief of the legations in order to press her claim to the supreme command of the expedition; the other powers—all much more vitally concerned, but anxious to save valuable lives—shrugged their shoulders and smiled and yielded; and Field-Marshal von Waldersee was appointed as generalissimo of the forces of the civilised world against the Yellow Peril. The troops which were to exhibit Germany as the leader of the civilised world were theatrically told by the Emperor to make the German name as terrible as the name of Attila and his Huns. Their commander arrived too late to take part in the relief; but there was still time to play the part of Attila, and it was thoroughly done. No practical results of value, however, apart from the seizure of Kiao-Chau, had been gained by Germany in the Far East: she had only made her drum-and-trumpet entrance on the arena of the world-powers in the rôle of *Bombastes Furioso*, turned Japan into a bitter enemy, and shown the world that the only limits to her aggression were the limits to her physical power. But nearer home she had realised and was beginning to pursue a more promising line of action.

The main field of German activity and ambition during the last twenty years has been the decaying

Turkish Empire, whose problems had seemed to Bismarck not important enough to deserve the life of a Pomeranian grenadier. Here at least was a field not yet fully occupied by other powers: a field which had been fortunately kept partly free for German occupation by the mutual jealousies of the powers themselves.

Russia had fought many Turkish wars, but made small profit out of them, only creating a group of small states—Rumania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece—which she liked to regard as her vassals, but which showed a tendency to play an independent part. Austria, the ancient rival of Russia in this region, had, without fighting, done better; for in 1878, largely by German support, she had been allowed to undertake the task of governing the restless Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. But she seemed no nearer to her ancient ambition of controlling the Balkans and reaching the Aegean and the fine port of Salonika: the thorny little nationalities stood in her path, especially Serbia, which distrusted her as the ruler of the Bosnian Serbs. Britain, always lucky or cunning, had drifted into the control of Egypt and occupied Cyprus, but her position in Egypt was rendered difficult by the rights possessed by all the other powers and by the jealousy of France. France herself had long since occupied Algeria and Tunis, which indeed were no longer even nominally part of the Turkish Empire; she had been even encouraged by Bismarck since 1881 to occupy herself in African expansion. Finally



Italy, jealous of French ascendancy in the Mediterranean, was looking longingly at the coast of Tripoli.

Was Germany alone to have no share in the inheritance of the sick man? There remained much valuable territory at his disposal: the remnants of the Balkans, Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine, and all the rich valley of the Euphrates. Here was a fine field for German activity: a field in which she could easily co-operate with her ally Austria, a field in which a continuous Germanic sphere of influence might be built up, reaching from the Danube to the Persian Gulf, and coming within range of the fascinating realm of India. If the Turk could be brought into the German orbit, his alliance might be of incalculable value: not only had he much to give, but being at the head of the Mohammedan religion, he might be used as a means of creating trouble for the "jealous rivals" of Germany who ruled over Mohammedan subjects—England in Egypt and India, France in Northern Africa. The grandiose projects thus adumbrated have unquestionably played the major part in determining German foreign policy under William II. They have been the cause of the increasing intimacy of the alliance between Germany and Austria. They have led to the break-up of the long-standing friendship between Germany and Russia. And they have played a very large part in bringing about the war of 1914.

The great scheme involved four things. First,

the extension to the utmost possible degree of the direct power and the indirect influence of Austria in the Balkan peninsula. Second, the extrusion of Russian influence in this region. Third, the establishment of a dominant Germanic influence among the Turks, such as to ensure that the military strength of the Turkish Empire might be counted on as an addition to the resources of the Triple Alliance. And, fourth, the securing of German predominance in the commercial exploitation of Turkey in Asia, and especially of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia.

The first aim, the extension of Austrian influence in the Balkans, mainly turned on the relations between Austria and Serbia, for this little state lay directly between the Austrian territories and the desired port of Salonika; and through Serbia ran the great railway from Vienna to Constantinople, with its important branch to Salonika, which was controlled by Austro-German capital. It was vital, therefore, to the great scheme that Serbian policy should be under Austrian control; that Serbia should be, if possible, reduced to a vassal state of Austria.

This seemed not difficult to secure, since the Austrian lands dominated Serbia on two sides, the west and the north, while on the east lay the hostile state of Bulgaria, by which Serbia had recently been defeated in war. Moreover Austria formed the chief outlet for the trade of Serbia. On the other hand, the Serbian Radical or Nationalist party was strongly anti-Austrian, because

by her control of Bosnia with its purely Serbian population Austria was the obvious obstacle to the dream of a greater Serbia which they entertained. The Radicals looked to Russia to help them in this cause, and meanwhile feared nothing so much as the subordination of their country to Austrian interests. Hence Belgrade was for a long period the scene of constant intrigues between Russia and Austria.

On the whole Austrian policy was for a long time successful. Austria had been able to pose as the protector of Serbia when her intervention in 1885 saved her from the consequences of her humiliating defeat by Bulgaria. During the following twenty years, down to 1903, the dominant court party in Serbia was as definitely pro-Austrian as the Radicals were anti-Austrian; and the last two worthless kings of the Obrenovitch family, Milan and Alexander, under whom Serbia lost all the advance that she had earlier made, were practically Austrian creatures. This is what lies behind the disgusting murder of Alexander and his wife in 1903. Though it was the work of a very contemptible clique, it could be represented as a patriotic and nationalist act; and the new king whom it brought to the throne, Peter Karageorgevitch, seemed to stand for the nationalist cause, being descended from Kara-George, the hero of the successful Serbian rising against the Turks in 1804.

The murder of 1903 was therefore a defeat for Austrian policy. In the following years the tide



of nationalist sentiment steadily rose in Serbia, and spread over the borders among the Serbs of the administered territory of Bosnia, and even into the ancient Austrian province of Slavonia. After a few years it was possible for a deputation of leading men in these regions to assure the Austrian government that now only a few of the older men were loyal; all the younger men being Serbian in feeling and eager for the union of these Serb-provinces of Austria under the Serbian crown. So that, from 1903 onwards, Austria found herself drawn into increasingly difficult relations with Serbia; her earlier ascendancy was replaced by a definite hostility; and it became important, not only for the success of the great scheme, but also for the very security of the Austrian dominions themselves, that Serbia should somehow be reduced to subjection.

This Austrian victory seemed to be as necessary for the success of German aims as for Austria herself, and therefore Germany and Austria were absolutely at one in striving for it. Yet here they found ranged against them a powerful national sentiment; and that, as Austria has repeatedly learnt, is a force not easy to subdue. In the years following 1903 Austria endeavoured to bring Serbia to heel by means of a fierce tariff war, from which Serbian trade suffered acutely; but it was quite unsuccessful in its main aims, and only added to the bitterness of anti-Austrian feeling among the Serbs.

The second aim, that of the extrusion of

Russian influence in the Balkans, was not easy to secure, since all the Balkan states owed their independent existence to Russia, while Austria had always been the foe of national movements in the Balkans as elsewhere, and as recently as 1878 the two Germanic powers had appeared as the chief obstacle to the greater freedom of the Balkan states. Moreover the German programme of friendship with the Turk could not but be regarded with suspicion by the little states which had but recently and with difficulty escaped from the Turkish yoke.

Yet circumstances were not altogether unfavourable. The increasing preoccupation of Russia with Far-Eastern and Chinese questions was very skilfully used. Germany joined Russia in forbidding the annexation of Port Arthur by Japan after the Japanese victory over China, and later encouraged Russia herself to seize this port, and to enter upon a programme of territorial expansion in Manchuria; and when this led to the Russo-Japanese War, and the collapse of Russian military prestige, and the outbreak of internal revolution in Russia, the influence of Russia in Balkan affairs, and her power to intervene effectively in this region, greatly declined. From 1905 onwards the Germanic powers seemed to have almost a free field in the Balkans.

Another favourable factor was the existence of German princes as rulers of Balkan states. Serbia and Montenegro are the only Balkan states ruled by native dynasties. Rumania, the strongest and

most prosperous of these states, actually had a Hohenzollern king, whose services to his adopted country had been so great that he was able to exercise a very real personal influence. Penetrated by the feeling of loyalty to the Hohenzollern house, King Charles of Rumania had promised Bismarck, when he set out to rule his new realm in 1866, that his policy would always be governed by friendship for Germany, and since his death it has been made clear that he regarded himself as bound in honour to the German alliance. The natural policy of Rumania is anti-Austrian, since a large proportion of the Rumanian people are Austrian subjects, and pro-Russian, since the state owes its independent existence to Russia. But the influence of the Rumanian king was strong enough to counterbalance this; and when Germany entered upon an active intervention in Balkan affairs, it was a real advantage to be able to count at the least upon the friendly neutrality of the state which lies between Russia and the Danube.

Again, the ruler of Bulgaria, Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, belonged to one of the minor German princely houses, and had been an officer in the Austrian army at the moment when he was selected for the Bulgarian throne. For that reason Russia long refused to recognise him; and though he later made friends with her, he has never been cordially pro-Russian. The bulk of the Bulgarian people regard Russia as their natural protector and ally, but there has always



been an anti-Russian party, and with this Ferdinand has on the whole been identified. Here also was a factor favourable to the German aims. Germany and Austria have accordingly steadily aimed at keeping Bulgaria alienated from Serbia, and at bringing about friendly relations between her and the Turks. It was under German influence that in 1904 a Turko-Bulgarian convention was signed, and the same policy has since been consistently followed. It seemed by no means hopeless, therefore, that Serbia should be reduced to the condition of a vassal state of Austria, and that Rumania and Bulgaria should be, together with Turkey, drawn into the orbit of the Triple Alliance. And this would mean the total exclusion of Russian influence from the Balkan peninsula.

The third aim, the establishment of German influence over the Turks, was the keystone of the arch in the great scheme, and German opinion has always attached the highest value to it. "Turkey," says Prince Bülow, who was Chancellor of the Empire while this programme was being put into operation, "was a useful and important link in the chain of our political relations . . . We have carefully cultivated good relations with Turkey and Islam . . . These relations are not of a sentimental nature." A Turkish alliance was indeed held to be indispensable not only as a means to the control of the Balkans, but as a preparation for the great struggle for world-predominance to which the

German government was already looking forward. Prince Bülow, as becomes a Chancellor, speaks guardedly on this point; but General Bernhardi is more frank. "Turkey," he says, "is of paramount importance to us. She is our natural ally; it is emphatically our interest to keep in close touch with her . . . Turkey is the only power which can threaten England's position in Egypt, and thus menace the short sea-route to India. We ought to spare no sacrifices to secure this country as an ally . . . Turkey's interests are ours."

The beginning of this vitally important policy dates from 1889, when the Emperor paid a state visit to Constantinople. It was the first time that one of the great rulers of Christendom had been the guest of the Sultan, and from this moment German influence became increasingly predominant at Constantinople, and the German ambassador there, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, became one of the most powerful influences in German foreign policy. Still more striking was the action of Germany in 1897, when the Cretans were clamouring for union with Greece, and the powers were trying to find a way out of the difficulty. Germany and Austria formally withdrew from the Concert of Europe when Prince George of Greece was appointed Governor of Crete, and the action was meant to intimate to Turkey that these powers were her true friends. Next year, when all Europe was horrified by the Armenian massacres, and Lord Salisbury was striving to

bring about a joint European intervention, it was Germany that blocked the way. The Emperor chose this amazing moment to pay another visit to Constantinople, and to lavish evidences of friendship upon Abdul Hamid. From Constantinople he went on to Palestine, and thence to Damascus, where he made a remarkable speech calling upon Mohammedans in all parts of the world to recognise that Germany was at all times their friend and protector. The majority of the Mohammedans in the world are subjects of England, Russia and France.

From the close friendship thus struck up with Turkey Germany was able to reap great commercial advantages, and to make a long step towards her ambition of dominating the commercial exploitation of the Turkish Empire. During the '90's German syndicates obtained many concessions for building Turkish railways, in several instances ousting British enterprises which were already at work; and in 1902-03 the great Bagdad railway scheme was launched, which was to ensure German commercial predominance throughout Asia Minor and the Euphrates valley. By 1908 Germany definitely controlled nearly 1,000 miles of Turkish railways, and the main lines of the Oriental Railway Company (800 miles more) were under joint Austro-German control. Putting apart certain French concessions in Syria, and the long line in Arabia, Germany and Austria between them practically controlled the whole of the Turkish, and indeed of the Balkan, railway



system. The Turkish Empire had become both politically and economically dependent upon the Germanic powers. To this must be added military tutelage, for the Turkish army had been under the training of German officers, headed by von der Goltz, since 1883, and the numbers and influence of these officers increased steadily after the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, in which their tuition showed such happy results. At the opening of the new century Germany might well feel that she had established her hegemony over the Balkans, and secured a useful support for the world-war to which she was looking forward.

But the Balkan programme did not meet with uninterrupted success. In 1908 took place the Young Turkish movement, which involved the fall of the Kaiser's friend Abdul Hamid, and for a moment made the reforming Turks friendly to the liberal powers of the west. This, perhaps, was not serious. Most of the Young Turk leaders were soldiers, trained under von der Goltz, and very favourable to Germany: this was especially the case with the most vigorous among them, Enver Bey, and German influence soon reasserted its leadership. But more serious was the fact that two members of the Triple Alliance, Austria and Italy, seized the opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the Turk—Austria by the annexation of Bosnia, which she had administered since 1878, Italy by the seizure of Tripoli, followed by a Turco-Italian war in which the

Italian fleet appeared in the Aegean and annexed various islands.

The Austrian annexation of Bosnia caused little trouble with the Turks, who had no prospect of ever regaining this territory. They accepted the situation so readily (in exchange for £2,000,000) that there is room for suspicion that the step was arranged beforehand. But it raised a storm of indignation in Serbia, which saw the last chance of a union between the two main groups of Serbs removed, and it led to that activity in anti-Austrian conspiracy which ended in the murder of the Archduke in June, 1914. And as the annexation was a flagrant violation of the Treaty of Berlin, it nearly brought about a European war. But the occasion had been well chosen. Russia, not yet recovered from her defeat at the hands of Japan three years before, had to accept humiliation. Britain, though she protested vigorously, made it clear that she would not go to war over a Balkan question. And Germany, with the chivalrous gesture of a knight of romance, declared that she "stood beside her ally in shining armour," to make sure that she reaped the full profit from her dishonour. The bluff paid; and it was no doubt the memory of its success which encouraged Austria to take an equally high-handed line of action in 1914. Perhaps the Bosnian annexation weakened the relations with Turkey for the moment, but it was only for the moment. And on the other hand it represented a great advance in the direct power of the Germanic

powers in the Balkans, a serious threat to Serbia, and a marked defeat for Russia. Well might Prince Bülow claim that it represented the supreme triumph of German policy up to date. This "supreme triumph of German policy" was the successful repudiation of a treaty obligation.

The seizure of Tripoli, however, was a very different matter. It was certainly not encouraged by Germany and Austria, who, indeed, had never made Italy a party to their Balkan schemes, and it went very near to ruining their policy. For the Turk might well feel aggrieved that a member of the Triple Alliance should have thus attacked him, and hesitate in his belief in its friendship. Bernhardi thinks that Turkey should have been made a full member of the Triple Alliance in order to prevent such unfortunate episodes. Moreover the episode very much weakened the Triple Alliance itself. Italy had already shown signs of a readiness to withdraw from this combination during the Morocco crisis of 1905. After the Tripolitan war the bonds that still held her were extremely slight, and Bernhardi, writing in 1911, considers that she must no longer be regarded as an effective member of the group.

Still more serious for German projects was the situation created by the alliance of the three Balkan states, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, and by their complete and unexpected success over the carefully-trained Turkish army, on which Germany had placed so much reliance. This combination, which to the rest of Europe seemed a



noble and promising event, was a real defeat for German policy; and the worst feature of it, from the German point of view (next to the collapse of the Turks), was the strengthening of Serbia which inevitably resulted from it. German and Austrian diplomacy at once set to work to diminish the evil as much as possible. (In the Conference of London, where the terms of peace were settled, they used all their power to prevent Serbia from obtaining a foothold on the Adriatic, since that would reduce her economic dependence on Austria.) As Serbia could not reap the natural result of her efforts by bringing other Serbs under her rule, since these were now all subjects of Austria, she had to be compensated elsewhere. She was compensated at the expense of Bulgaria.

This had the happy effect from the German point of view, the tragic effect from the point of view of European peace, of introducing a cleavage into the Balkan League, and bringing on the miserable second Balkan War, which gave the Turk the chance of regaining Adrianople, and undid much of the benefit which the League had brought about. But Germany had the advantage of having once more troubled the waters in which she loved to fish. She had succeeded in breaking up a combination which might have been dangerous when the Great Day came; and the situation in the Balkans was left in a sufficiently confused state to cause her no alarm.)

Of course these events only increased the hatred

of the Serbs for their Austrian neighbours.) But that must in any case be counted upon; an opportunity for dealing with Serbia would be sure to come. It came with the murder of the Archduke in June, 1914, and the chance of reducing this vexatious little state once and for all was too good to be lost. If it could be done without a European war so much the better; and no doubt Austria was encouraged to violent action by the assurance that a bold bluff would succeed now, as it had succeeded in 1908. (If, on the other hand, a European war resulted, Germany was ready: her preparations during the three previous years had been carried out on so vast a scale and with such minuteness of prevision that, as we have already seen, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that war would have been precipitated on some other excuse, even if the Archduke had not been shot. Indeed, so appositely did the murder happen that some have thought it was arranged, the Archduke having many enemies in Austria. This suspicion is too horrible to be accepted without overwhelming evidence, but there are facts which give colour to it. The Archduke was left unguarded. Several of the conspirators were Austrian subjects. The Austrian government had been warned against one of them by the Serbian government. And the actual murderer, Princip, has not been sentenced to death, but only to imprisonment.

Such is the nature of the policy which Germany has been following in the Balkans during the last twenty years. We have dealt with it at length,

not only because it supplies a remarkable illustration of German methods, for which the interests of peace and order in the most troubled part of Europe, and the abuses of power by the Unspeakable Turk, are only pawns to be used in the pursuit of world-empire; not only because it exhibits Germany as a constant source of unrest, a power with which reasonable relations are all but impossible, a power which simply declines to play a straightforward part in the Concert of Europe; but also because these events have directly led up to the war.

If German policy had aimed only at what is called the "peaceful penetration" and the commercial development of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia none but extreme Chauvinists could have taken any objection; and there would have been no combination of the other powers to resist her, since all the other powers are pursuing similar objects. Indeed, in these respects Germany has fully achieved her ends, as we have already shown. What made her Balkan policy alarming, and led the other powers to unite to resist it, was its manifest and openly declared political object.

Germany, for her own purposes, strove to prevent the settlement of the Balkan question: she strove to rehabilitate the noxious power of the Turk, to crush one of the small Christian states, and to reduce the others to vassalage. And her aim in doing so was to strengthen her resources for a coming world-war. The reorganisation of the Turkish army was a part of the



same preparations as the huge expenditure on army and navy at home. The protectorate over all Mohammedans, which she claimed to assume as the ally of Turkey, was openly aimed at the three great Mohammedan powers, Britain, France and Russia. There was no mistaking these aims, which were quite different in kind from mere commercial or colonial expansion. They were openly declared. They were part of her preparation for the great bid for world-domination. And for that reason they inevitably led to a *rapprochement* among the threatened powers.

During the whole of the nineteenth century Russia had been generally on friendly terms with Germany, and Bismarck to the end of his life did his best to maintain this friendship. From the moment when the new policy of William II became apparent Russia drew away from Germany; the secret Russo-German treaty was terminated in 1890, the year of Bismarck's fall; and the Franco-Russian offensive and defensive alliance was concluded in 1892, though it was not made public till later. Even Britain, always averse from diplomatic entanglements, was driven by the German attitude during the South African War, and by the successive German naval programmes, to suspect the character and aims of the German policy, and to recognise that she would do well to get rid of causes of controversy with other states in view of the possibility of German attack. The settlement of all outstanding controversies with France which is known as the Entente

Cordiale was completed in 1904, and was followed by a similar settlement with Russia in 1907.

Thus was formed the Triple Entente, which has been loudly proclaimed in Germany as an attempt to isolate that state. But it was in no sense, and at no date, a formal alliance, until war broke out in 1914. It meant at the most the formation of what Sir Edward Grey has called a "diplomatic group," whose aim was to watch the restless and disturbing activities of Germany. So far as Britain was concerned, its development coincided with an honest attempt to establish friendly relations with Germany, and to remove outstanding causes of difference as had already been done with other countries. Britain did her best to assure Germany, as in the formal Cabinet message of 1912, that she had no hostile intentions. But the German government did nothing to meet these advances. It seemed to share the view of Bernhardt that an understanding with Britain was not to be desired, and that British attempts at *rapprochement* should at most be used to postpone war till the most favourable moment.

It was the Morocco question which, even more than the Balkan question, brought home to British statesmen the real character of German policy, and forced them unwillingly to recognise that Germany meant in all probability to make war at her own time.

The origin of the Morocco question is simple enough. The colonising activity of France in Northern Africa, which had been recognised and

encouraged by Bismarck himself, had brought under her control all the lands surrounding the disorderly kingdom of Morocco, which commands the entrance to the Mediterranean. The anarchy reigning in this region being a source of unrest to all the surrounding territory, and a danger to European traders at Tangier and other ports, France, to whom the task naturally fell, proposed to the powers that she should, without annexing any territory, or interfering with the trading rights of other states, undertake the restoration of order by sending in troops to help the Sultan, who in 1901 had asked for her aid. Italy, Spain, Russia all assented; and part of the agreement made with Britain in 1904 was that France should have a free hand in this country, subject to the maintenance of the open door for trade.

Germany made no objection when the policy was announced, nor did she suggest any alternative means for restoring order. But as soon as the work was undertaken, the Kaiser made one of his dramatic interpositions. Landing at Tangier, he declared that he would maintain the integrity of Morocco (which was not threatened) and renewed his promise to protect all the Mohammedans of the world. The German government followed up this action by practically threatening war against France, and insisting upon the resignation of M. Delcassé, the minister who was responsible for the Morocco policy, as the price of peace.

The Algeiras conference of the powers (1905) followed. This laid down a number of rules for



the settlement of the country, and recognised the special position of France. But wild tribesmen do not pay much attention to the regulations of the European powers. The disorder continued to grow worse. The lives of Europeans were not safe, and it was only by the military intervention of France that the European residents were saved from destruction. French military intervention, once begun, inevitably extended; and Germany began to fear that she would lose the chance, which she hoped she had gained at Algeciras, of turning Morocco, or some part of it, into a German sphere. Hence—with a characteristically German diplomatic move—the gunboat *Panther* was sent to the port of Agadir in 1911, to assert German claims with the mailed fist, though no step had been taken by France which was inconsistent with the Algeciras decisions.

For a month Europe was on the verge of war. Britain, having definitely agreed that France should be responsible for the policing of Morocco, made it clear that she would support her. In the event Germany climbed down, securing a part of the French Congo as a "compensation" for foregoing her non-existent claims on Morocco, and peace was secured. But the German intervention had been so high-handed and so unreasonable that the other powers were forced to conclude that she was only looking for an excuse to attack France, and would have done so but for the action of Britain. It is said that she did not do so only because Admiral von Tirpitz assured his master

that the navy was not ready for the British war, the enlargement of the Kiel Canal not being completed. It has been said also that the episode was meant chiefly as a test of the strength of the Triple Entente.<sup>1</sup> But whatever its motives, this episode forced the powers to anticipate the possibility of a future attack, when the Kiel Canal should be ready. Without committing Britain to any decision as to her future action, Sir Edward Grey agreed that the naval and military experts of England and France might advisably take counsel as to the way in which they should cooperate in the unhappy event of a war being forced upon them by Germany. Thus the powers which were to be the victims of the German attack were not taken wholly by surprise when the moment came in 1914.

The whole policy of Germany during the last five and twenty years is of one piece. Its enormous and constantly increasing military and naval preparations; its far-reaching schemes of aggression in the Balkans; its attempts to stir up discontent in South Africa, and to assert a general protectorate over the Mohammedan subjects of the three powers with which it is now at war; its blustering and bullying methods of diplomacy; its refusal to play a fair and honest part in the discussions of the nations; its eagerness to sow discord among the small and sorely

<sup>1</sup> Mr. *Punch* has expressed this view in a cartoon which shows a Prussian officer agonisingly embracing his toe after kicking a big stone marked Triple Entente, and exclaiming: "It's a rock, and I thought it only a scrap of paper."

tried nations of the south-east; its readiness to disregard agreements, such as that of Algeciras, into which it had entered:—all this points to the same conclusion which is enforced by nearly all the political literature of these years, that the policy of the last quarter of a century has been one long and not over-skilful preparation for the great bid for world power which was made in 1914 on so slight a pretext.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE DOCTRINE OF POWER

**D**URING the nineteenth century two conflicting views in regard to international relations, neither of them wholly new, have been developed with a clearness never before known, and applied with a measure of success equally unprecedented. The one is the doctrine of Prussia which, with its applications in practice, we have been examining: the doctrine that brute force is ultimately the sole mode of determining controversies between nations, and the sole test of the relative value of civilisations; that the clash of brute force in war is a good and desirable thing in itself; and that treaty obligations between nations neither can nor ought to outweigh the right of a nation to seek the extension of its power by brute force. This doctrine has, as practised by Prussia, achieved so great a measure of success that it has captured the mind of the German nation, and induced it, trusting in brute force alone, to attempt the supremacy of the world. It is no new doctrine, for it has been practised by many conquerors from Attila downwards; it is the primæval doctrine of the jungle. But it has never before been expounded as a gospel, and has seldom before been so boldly put into operation.

But over against it, and not deterred by its successes, there has been rising during the nineteenth century a rival doctrine, not quite so ancient, since it is only as old as civilisation; and this doctrine also has never before been so fully expounded, and has never before achieved so great a measure of success. It is the doctrine that war is in itself a bad thing, which though it calls forth many great qualities, also destroys many fine and noble things; that it ought to be avoided as far as possible; that though it may be Utopian to hope to banish it wholly from the world, societies of rational men ought to be able to make it more and more rare, until the time comes when it will have vanished altogether; and that in spite of the fact that it is difficult to enforce obedience upon nations in the way in which the courts enforce obedience upon individuals, nevertheless the observance of treaties and other contracts is as real an obligation for nations as for men, and the enlightenment of a nation as of an individual may be measured by the value which it attached to its plighted word. This doctrine, which the adherents of its rival stigmatise as sentimentalism or hypocrisy, has made far more progress than most people realise. It is the doctrine of practically the whole civilised world outside of Germany; and, considerable as its successes have already been, they would have been far greater but that one power, and that power Germany, has consistently ridiculed, resisted and impeded it.

We do not here propose to say anything about the development of the principles of international law, to which many of the noblest minds of modern Europe, including many Germans, have devoted themselves; still less shall we expatiate upon the many fine aspirations after the reign of peace which are to be found in the literature and philosophy of all countries and ages, and which show that the best men at all times have repudiated the Prussian creed as an insult to humanity. We shall confine ourselves to a bald outline of the definite and practical steps which have been successfully taken towards the end of substituting, among civilised societies, some more reasonable practice than that of the tiger and the shark for settling international controversies. These steps will fall under five categories: the idea of the Concert of Powers striving for the maintenance of peace by means of reasonable compromise; the establishment of a group of small states under the general protection of Europe; the growth of international arbitration; the attempt to secure a restriction of armaments among the leading states; and the development of a code for reducing the evil effects of war to a minimum when it cannot be avoided. In all these respects real progress has been made. In all much greater progress would have been made but for the infatuation of Germany with its doctrine of Power.

i.—*The Concert of Europe.*

Congresses of representatives of the principal European states have taken place with great frequency since the end of the fifteenth century, when that international rivalry which has been the main political feature of modern European history took its rise; and time and again, as in 1648 or 1713, these congresses have hoped that they had arrived at a settlement of European affairs which would be permanent, and might be regarded as part of "the public law of Europe." But until the nineteenth century these congresses have almost always been concerned with the settlement rendered necessary by the conclusion of some great war. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the idea of the Concert of Europe as a semi-permanent institution, existing for the purpose not merely of deciding the issues of war, but of preventing its occurrence, became a practicable idea.

When Napoleon had been defeated in 1814, the whole world was so weary of war after two and twenty years of it, and so convinced of the futility and impermanence of most of its decisions, that there was a universal hope that the governments of the great states would take steps to guard against unnecessary future outbreaks of it. So the Congress of Vienna, which re-drew the map of Europe, was followed by the establishment of a sort of permanent league of the great powers to



maintain the system thus established, and it was agreed that their representatives should meet from time to time, in order to prevent outbreaks by a reasonable discussion of the issues among themselves.

The drawback of this arrangement was that it included only the five great powers (England, France, Austria, Russia and Prussia), and at first (1814-18) only the four of them which had combined to overthrow Napoleon: the lesser powers were all excluded from these deliberations. Nevertheless the institution of this Concert of Europe was, or might have been, a very real advance upon anything that Europe had known before; and it was regarded with a genuine hope and enthusiasm by sane and practical men, and not merely by dreamers.

One of the great princes of Europe, the Tsar Alexander I of Russia, looked forward to the new era with such sincere emotion that he invited all his brother princes to sign a strange document whereby they proclaimed that alike in the government of their own dominions and in their relations with other states, their conduct would henceforth be regulated by the sacred principles of the Christian religion. This was the so-called Holy Alliance, and though it came to have a very unsavoury reputation, the sincerity of the hopes by which it was inspired, at least in the mind of its author, cannot be denied. At their first general congress, in 1818, the five powers in a formal declaration expressed the hope that they were now

entering upon "a permanent state of peace," and asserted their "unchangeable resolution never to depart, either amongst themselves or in their relations with other states, from the strictest observance of the principles of the law of nations," by which they meant the general doctrines of international law as they had been developed by a series of great scholars from Grotius onwards. And in making this declaration they plainly asserted their conviction that a sort of European federation for the permanent maintenance of peace was a possible and practicable device.

Unhappily the time was not yet ripe for the realisation of these noble aspirations, and the Concert of Europe in this, its first, stage was not only a failure but turned out to be a danger to European freedom. It held a series of congresses for the solution of successive difficulties as they arose; and it probably helped to avoid war for several years. But its members were mostly absolute sovereigns and their ministers, not the representatives of free peoples. They were so obsessed with the dread of revolution, and so much afraid of their own subjects, that they increasingly tended to use the Concert as a means of stamping out all movements inspired by the "revolutionary" ideas of nationalism and liberalism, and showed a growing and dangerous readiness to interfere in the domestic affairs of individual states, and to dictate forms of government, instead of confining themselves to the settlement of international controversies. For that reason Britain

and France, the two powers in the group which possessed and believed in representative institutions, gradually became colder in their attitude to the Concert, and after a few years Britain definitely withdrew from it and defied it on the express ground that it was being used for oppressive purposes, and was unduly interfering in the internal affairs of individual states.

In fact, the Concert was premature at the beginning of the nineteenth century, partly because it did not represent the wishes of peoples but only those of kings, and still more because the state-system of Europe had not yet been accommodated to the natural divisions of nations: the claims of Italy or of Germany to be free and united were claims of a character far too fundamental to be readily settled by any such body. A Concert of Europe can only become a fully effective organ when the lines of division between states, and the modes of organisation within the states, are such as in the main to reflect the real wishes and feelings of the peoples concerned.

Nevertheless the purposes which the Concert could serve were so obvious and useful that in spite of its first failure it was bound to be revived. The representatives of the great powers, and on several occasions (as after the Crimean War) some of those of the lesser powers also, continued to meet from time to time, and often succeeded in finding solutions to questions that might easily have led to general war. Thus in 1839 the vexed questions raised by the Belgian Revolution of 1830

were peaceably settled by an agreed delimitation of the frontiers of Belgium, and a general guarantee, signed by all the great powers, that Belgium should be a neutral country. This solution lasted for seventy-five years, and was only broken by Germany. Thus, again, in 1852 the very complicated question of Schleswig-Holstein was settled, and though the settlement was short-lived, it was Prussia which broke it.

After 1871, when the great nations of Western Europe had reached their natural limits, the idea of Concert again became more living. It was able to give at least a temporary settlement to the Balkan question in 1878; more remarkable, it could in 1884 agree upon the partition of Africa among the colonising powers. During the last generation the Concert has been time and again the safeguard of peace. It is worth noting that England has been its most earnest advocate, and Germany its most frequent troubler. If Sir Edward Grey has in recent years earned the title of the peacemaker of Europe, it has been by the use of the Concert. By this means general European war was avoided in 1905 on the Morocco question, in 1908 on the Bosnian question, in 1911 on the Morocco question again, in 1912 on the Balkan question. And, if Germany would have permitted it, the Concert of Europe would once more have saved the peace of Europe in the summer of 1914: it had almost done so, in face of unprecedented difficulties, when Germany burst in with her ultimatum to Russia.



Throughout these last troublous years, indeed, Germany has been constantly the disturbing factor. Not only has her action produced all the difficulties with which the Concert has had to deal, but her methods of discussion have been such as to make fair discussion and compromise all but impossible. A machine like the Concert of Powers can only work efficiently if the statesmen who take part in it are honestly desirous of peace, sincerely anxious to understand each other's point of view, and ready to compromise. But Germany has during these years never frankly reconciled herself to this part. She has come to the council-table of the nations clad in "shining armour," hammering the table with her "mailed fist," and shouting that she must have "her place in the sun," and that "her will must be respected." Under such circumstances the delicate business of diplomatic adjustment becomes extraordinarily difficult.

The Concert of Europe has done useful work; but it will be able to play the part of guarantor of peace only when its members respect one another's claims, recognise that its aim is to avoid war by reasonable discussion, and abstain from the constant threat of using force. And this will not happen till the adherents of the doctrine of brute force have been compelled to reconsider their point of view, and have accepted the fundamental position that war is a bad thing, not a good thing, and that the object of wise statesmanship is to avoid war, not to seek favourable opportunities

for waging it. In the meanwhile the Concert of Europe is dead, and it has been killed by Germany, its persistent foe. It will revive and grow in effectiveness; but not until Germany has abandoned the doctrine of force, and not until the comity of European nations has been reorganised upon the basis of mutual respect for one another's rights.

ii.—*The Security of Small States.*

On the surface the nineteenth century has witnessed a considerable diminution in the number of small independent states within the European comity. The thirty-nine states of Germany in 1815 have given place to the single German empire; the eight small states into which Italy was divided in 1815 have been merged in the single kingdom of Italy. But this does not mean (as Treitschke and his disciples always assume) that the trend of events has been hostile to the existence of small states as such. In both of these cases the distinctions between the states were arbitrary and undesired by their inhabitants; in both cases their union in larger wholes has been welcomed by the citizens of these states, because it was the larger and not the smaller unit which represented the national principle.

There has been no case, during the nineteenth century, in which a small state has been subjugated by a large state of a different nationality. On the contrary, there have been several cases in

which new small states have succeeded in establishing and maintaining their independence just because they represented the national principle. Greece threw off the yoke of Turkey; Belgium separated herself from Holland; Serbia, Rumania and Bulgaria secured their independence; Norway broke away from Sweden. And in all these cases independence, once established, has never been impaired, and where the boundaries of these small states have been changed, it has always been by an enlargement which made the limits of the state correspond more nearly with the limits of nationality.

And not only these new states, created by the nineteenth century, but the older small states, have remained during the century in secure possession of their independence. Switzerland, Holland, Portugal and Denmark have retained their national limits unimpaired. It is true that Denmark had to submit to a Prussian attack in 1864, which cut away from her the provinces of Schleswig and Holstein, long associated with the Danish monarchy. But neither of these provinces had ever been incorporated in Denmark proper, and one of them, Holstein, had always been technically part of Germany. Denmark was very hardly used by Prussia in 1864, but her national independence was not threatened, and the actual limits of the kingdom were not cut down.

It is true therefore to say that small states, where their limits coincided with real national dis-

tinctions, have been generally secure during the nineteenth century. They have had reason to feel that their independence was protected not merely by the jealousies of the greater powers (though that perhaps has formed their chief safeguard), but also by the conscience of Europe. There has been, during the nineteenth century, no instance of an attack by a great power upon a small state, with the exceptions of Prussia's attacks upon Denmark in 1864 and Belgium in 1914 and Austria's repeated attacks upon Serbia; there has been no single instance of an attempt by a great power to subjugate and annex a small national state until the annexation of Belgium by Germany and the Austrian onslaught on Serbia.

Even if it be true that the main source of the safety of the small states has been the mutual jealousy of their greater neighbours, there has nevertheless arisen a real feeling that the little states form a valuable element in the European system, and have a claim to the protection of Europe as a whole, so that the public conscience in all countries would be shocked by a violation of their independence. There are only three cases in which the independence and neutrality of small states have been guaranteed by the powers as a whole: the cases of Switzerland (1815), Belgium (1839) and Luxemburg (1867); but the other small states, almost equally with these, have been felt to be under the guardianship of Europe. They have been, as it were, pledges of European honour, and evidences that the doctrine of the jungle in all



its brutality was not accepted by the most civilised communities of the world.

And as they have been the evidences of the existence of international honour and fairness, these little states have naturally been the chief fields of the development of more advanced conceptions of international law. Switzerland presided over the birth of the international Red Cross system, and the international law of literary copyright. Holland (to which Europe owes the birth of International Law) has become the centre of the system of international arbitration.

Moreover Europe has come to recognise that these small states, quite apart from the fact that their existence gives a just expression to national feeling, have been of real value because they have been the field of highly instructive experiments in the art of government and in the solution of the economic difficulties created by the industrial revolution. In some degree they have been the political laboratories of Europe. They have made also distinctive contributions to the thought and art of Europe. In short, their existence has added to the variety of national type and temperament which form the main secret of the vitality and progressive character of European civilisation. Europe as a whole has learnt to value the small nations. And the security which they have enjoyed for a hundred years amid great neighbours armed to the teeth has been a proof of the development of a sort of European citizenship, and

a great step towards the better organisation of international relationships.

Let it be repeated: no great European state has during the last hundred years attempted to subjugate one of the smaller members of the European family until Austria made her bullying onslaught on Serbia, and Germany her entirely unprovoked attack upon Belgium. If the protection of small states is to continue to be one of the principles of European politics, these attacks must be resisted and punished. Otherwise the doctrine of Power, which is held by Germany, and which asserts that great powers not only have a right to subjugate small states, but ought to do so, will triumph; and the conception of Europe as a family of states, in which the weaker members may count upon the protection of the strong, will perish. The establishment of that conception, now imperilled, has been one of the most interesting achievements of the nineteenth century.

### iii.—*The Progress of International Arbitration.*

Until the eve of the nineteenth century no two nations in modern times ever thought of submitting a subject of controversy between them to impartial arbitration. During this century arbitration between nations has become a common practice. It has grown up quietly, and few have realised how substantial and how steady the progress of the idea has been. Many still think of international arbitration as a Utopian idea; yet

it has already become so much a part of the ordinary practice of most of the civilised states, other than Germany, that it is justifiable to look forward to a rapid enlargement of its sphere. And it is certain that it would have attained an even greater measure of success, if there had not existed in the heart of Europe a state which regarded war as a good thing, and the extension of its power by the use or the threat of brute force as the sum of statesmanship.

The first stage in the development of arbitration is reached when two states agree to submit a particular question to the decision either of a third state or to a joint commission of their own subjects. The first modern agreement of this sort was made in 1794, when England and America referred the determination of the boundary of Canada to a joint commission. These two states have ever since taken the lead in the use and development of arbitration. The most remarkable arbitration cases, those in which there was real risk of wounding the *amour propre* of the two parties, have been cases in which England and America have been involved: the notorious *Alabama* case, and the Venezuela question. It may be said that the relations between these two states is of so peculiar a kind as to make such solutions easier for them than for other states, and no doubt that is so. But both states have shown a real willingness to extend the method to other states, and the progress of the idea has been mainly due to them. How steady this

progress has been may be indicated by a few figures. Between 1820 and 1840 eight international disputes were settled by arbitration; between 1840 and 1860 thirty; between 1860 and 1880 forty-four; between 1880 and 1900 no less than ninety.

Thus when the permanent court of international arbitration was set up at the Hague in 1899, its institution was no empty bit of idealism; it was already clear that there would be plenty of work for the court to do. No doubt the majority of the questions decided in these cases were trifling matters, which would not in any case have led to war. But that was certainly not the case with all of them. And at least the nations were acquiring the habit of resorting to peaceful rather than violent means of settling their differences.

In the arbitration cases of the nineteenth century Britain leads; America makes a good second; France comes third. Germany is nowhere in the list: the only arbitration case known to the writer to which she was a party was one in which, on the proposal of Britain, a question affecting the ownership of some guano deposits on the coast of South-West Africa was settled in this way. Germany does not believe in arbitration, but in the mailed fist.

A far greater step is taken when two nations agree to submit to arbitration not only a particular existing controversy, but all future controversies not of the gravest character. The first



nations to make such an agreement were Britain and France in 1904. These two nations had just succeeded in disposing of the many little outstanding differences which, by causing a constant sense of friction, had for long made cordial relations difficult between them. They completed their agreement by undertaking not to let such petty irritations remain unsettled in future, but to refer them to the Hague tribunal and stand by its decision.

Questions vital to national interests or honour were indeed reserved; and it may be said that this made the treaty of no avail, since either nation might insist upon regarding any question of importance as vital to its interests or honour, and thus leave for settlement by arbitration only the minor questions which would in any case be too insignificant to lead to war. But that is a superficial view. The way in which this clause would be interpreted must depend upon the spirit in which the states concerned entered into the undertaking, and upon the degree of friendliness which they felt for one another at the moment when vexed questions arose. If they sincerely and honestly desired to maintain peace, and if they entertained friendly feelings towards one another when difficulties arose, they might be expected not to raise unnecessary difficulties. That Britain and France desired peace was shown by their entering into such an agreement at all. And as for their attitude towards one another, what creates a spirit of unfriendliness between nations is the

existence of many petty causes of friction, each insignificant in itself, but all combining to produce a smouldering irritation, ready to burst into flame upon the emergence of a difference of greater importance. The agreement to refer all such petty causes of friction, as they arose, to arbitration was the best possible way to maintain an atmosphere of good feeling, favourable to the settlement of more serious issues when they arise. For that reason the exclusion of matters vitally affecting national interests or honour from arbitration is far less important than it seems at first sight, and the treaty of 1904 marks the beginning of a new era in the relations of peoples.

How ready the civilised world was to welcome this new advance was shown by the extraordinary series of arbitration treaties which followed it and were modelled upon it. The most remarkable, because the strongest and most unqualified, of the series was the treaty between Britain and America concluded in 1908. But nearly all the nations of the civilised world hastened to adopt the new system. Between 1904 and 1910 over one hundred arbitration treaties were concluded between various nations. All the civilised nations of the world were represented, with one exception. The exception was Germany. Germany regarded the whole of this movement as mere mawkish sentimentalism, or worse. "Pacific motives," says General Bernhardt, "are seldom the real motives" of the nations which make treaties of this kind. "They usually employ the need of

peace as a cloak under which to promote their own political aims." In his view therefore the whole of the arbitration movement is simply the product of nauseous hypocrisy; and if it is anywhere sincere it is due to "a decay of spirit and courage" which "has rendered most civilised nations anæmic."

Regular arbitrations, in which both sides agree beforehand to accept the decision of an impartial umpire, have not been the only evidences of the desire of the civilised world to avoid war so far as possible. There have also been during the nineteenth century numerous instances of "mediation," when one state, without attempting to play the part of arbitrator, acts as go-between in the negotiations of two other states whose relations are strained. This kind of intervention, either to prevent war or to bring it to a close, has been far more freely used, and far more readily welcomed, during the nineteenth century than ever before. It availed to prevent war on at least five occasions during the century, and on at least one occasion it succeeded in preserving peace when the powers concerned had refused to go to arbitration. Europe at large has regarded this development as a good thing, because Europe at large has learnt to consider war as an evil. In 1856 the powers assembled in Congress at Paris went so far as to draw up a formal protocol, expressing the common sentiment of Europe, to the effect that "states between which any misunderstanding might arise should, before appealing to

arms, have recourse so far as circumstances might allow to the good offices of a friendly power." This protocol was put forward by the British representative, Lord Clarendon. It received the cordial assent of France, Austria, Russia, Sardinia and Turkey. The only power which refused to accept it was Prussia, which on this occasion, as so often again, stood forth as the one civilised state unwilling to forward the cause of peace upon earth.

iv.—*Projects of Disarmament.*

All the civilised nations of the world, except Germany, have long regarded with dismay and exasperation the steadily increasing burden of unproductive expenditure on armaments, and have realised that the mad competition of the nations in this regard must in the long run lead to almost universal bankruptcy, while it brings no imaginable benefit to anybody but the armament firms, and leaves the rivals, after they have wasted their substance, in the same relative position as at the beginning. Germany alone holds that it is a fine and worthy thing that the whole resources of a nation should be concentrated upon military preparations, for this is part of the doctrine of Power. She has been the cause of the fantastic increase of military expenditure which has marked the last five-and-twenty years. And the derision with which she regards every proposal to diminish this expenditure by mutual agreement has pre-



vented any effective step being taken. The nation which suggests that money might be more wisely spent stands self-condemned in the eyes of modern Germany as decadent, anæmic, effeminate.

In 1898 the Tsar of Russia, a power which is widely held to be even more dangerously militarist than Germany, sent an invitation to all the leading civilised states to confer on this question, and to consider whether by frank discussion some scheme of general disarmament, or rather of general limitation of armaments, might not be attainable. The rescript in which this invitation was conveyed contained a weighty and statesman-like exposition of the evils which the civilised world was bringing upon itself by this reckless competition. This statement, coming from the autocrat of the great Eastern Empire which many sentimental pacifists regard with a sort of hypnotised dread, is so striking that it deserves quotation.

“The financial charges consequent on increasing armaments strike at public prosperity in its very source. The intellectual and physical strength of the nations, labour and capital, are for the major part diverted from their natural application and unproductively expended. Hundreds of millions are devoted to acquiring terrible engines of destruction which, though to-day regarded as the last word of science, are destined to-morrow to lose all value, in consequence of some fresh discovery in the same field. National culture, economic progress, and the production of wealth

are either paralysed or checked in their development. Moreover, in proportion as the armaments of each power increase, so do they less and less fulfil their object. The economic crises due in great part to the system of excessive armaments, and the continual danger which lies in this massing of war material, are transforming the armed peace of our days into a crushing burden which the peoples have more and more difficulty in bearing. It appears evident, then, that if this state of things were prolonged, it would lead inevitably to the very cataclysm which it is desired to avert, the very horrors of which make every thinking being shudder in advance."

Many people thought, when the Tsar's invitation was issued, that it was a piece of unpractical Utopianism which could lead to no useful results; just as many people have thought that international arbitration was a baseless dream. But this was not the view of responsible statesmen; and when the representatives of twenty-six powers met at the Hague in 1899 there was among them a very genuine hope that if all the great powers sincerely meant business, real and practical results might be attained. Unfortunately there was one power which regarded the whole movement with undisguised contempt, and which believed that increase of armaments was a sign of virility; one nation whose "thinking beings" were far from "shuddering in advance" at the "horrors" of the cataclysm of universal war, but rather looked forward to them with glee. That power was

Germany; and the attitude of Germany made it impossible for the Conference to arrive at any definite results. It had to content itself with a vague expression of opinion, and a pious hope that individual powers would enter into negotiations with a view to proportionate reductions.

One power at least has done its utmost in this respect. Britain is the only one of the great powers whose military preparations are obviously and unmistakably designed solely for the purposes of defence. Her small army, organised primarily for imperial service, is quite incapable of attacking the colossal hosts of the European states, and, now that she finds herself plunged into a continental war, she is compelled to improvise new armies after the declaration of war in order to take her fair share in the struggle. Her great navy is not too great to secure the safety of her own shores and to keep open trade routes on which her very existence depends. Yet Britain has done her best to act in the spirit of the Hague Conference. Between 1906 and 1908 she honestly tried to come to an agreement with the one power which seemed to threaten her—Germany. She proposed a mutual limitation of expenditure on naval construction; and as an evidence of good faith, without waiting for the conclusion of any agreement, she retarded her own naval construction to such a degree during these two years that in the opinion of many she imperilled her own safety. The reply of Germany was to increase her own programme of naval construction. Even

this did not deter the British government. By one suggestion after another she has tried to bring Germany to a more reasonable attitude. The only result has been to convince Germany that Britain is a decadent and anæmic power, and to encourage her to proceed with her preparations for the Day.

v.—*The Creation of a Humane Code of War.*

If Europe has found it impossible to get rid of war altogether, it has at least during the nineteenth century succeeded in making great advances in the direction of reducing its evils to a minimum.

Long before any serious attempt had been made to lay down clear definitions and to obtain their acceptance by governments, the nations had learnt, from a mere sense of decency, to exempt non-combatants as far as possible from the hardships of war; and Vattel, the eighteenth century international jurist, could say that "this practice has grown into a custom with the nations of Europe. . . . The troops alone carry on war, while the rest of the nation remains at peace."

Modern armies have in general prided themselves on doing as little damage as possible to the country through which they passed; and a hundred years ago Wellington noted with disgust that the Prussian armies, alone among the armies of Europe, left a trail of desolation wherever they passed. Prussia alone, indeed, among the nations has clung to the savage rules of the jungle in the conduct of war: it was the Prussian Bismarck who said that



it was the duty of a conqueror to leave the conquered people nothing but their eyes to weep with; and a Prussian Emperor, William II, who in the twentieth century conjured his soldiers to create a memory of terror among the people they were sent to punish, and to emulate the reputation of Attila and his Huns.

Yet the strength and sincerity of the civilised world's demand for humanity in war have been such that these outbursts have been taken as mere rhetoric. Until the outbreak of the war of 1914 it was believed that even Germany had yielded to the prevailing current; for she has assented to and formally accepted the remarkable series of conventions in regard to the conduct of war which have during the last hundred years not only given concrete and exact form to the "customs" of which Vattel spoke, but have very largely extended them.

There has been, during the last century, a long series of conventions and agreements among the powers regulating the conduct of war. At Paris, in 1856, privateering was forbidden and a series of regulations for the protection of neutral commerce was adopted. At Geneva in 1864 a code was adopted for the protection of the wounded and those in attendance upon them. At St. Petersburg in 1868 the first steps were taken towards the prohibition of needlessly horrible weapons of war. But all this culminated in the remarkable work of the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, whereby a whole systematic code covering every aspect of

warfare was adopted by all the civilised states of the world.

The regulations of this code have been honourably observed in every war which has been fought since it was adopted; even semi-barbarous states have prided themselves upon their observance. It was reserved for Germany to disregard every one of these regulations which seemed to stand in the way of her immediate convenience, and to return to the naked barbarism of waging a war of deliberate terrorism against non-combatants. How unflinching this repudiation of conventions which Germany herself had accepted has been, we have already seen.<sup>1</sup> That she has gone behind the "custom" which was honoured even in the eighteenth century, of leaving the rest of the nation at peace while the troops fight, one fact alone is enough to show: hundreds of thousands of Belgians prefer to live on charity in Holland and England rather than trust themselves in the neighbourhood of the soldiers of culture. There has been no parallel to the Belgian exodus in modern history, because there has been no parallel to the German method of conducting war.

The Hague Conventions of 1907 were drawn up and accepted by the representatives of no less than thirty-three states. It is disheartening that not one of these states, not actually engaged in the war, has taken the slightest notice of the German infractions of the Conventions. If the neutral states, or one among them, such as America, had formally pro-

<sup>1</sup> Above, Chap. I, § iii.

tested after the first Belgian outrages, and demanded the observance of the Conventions, it is more than probable that Germany would have given way: she would certainly have given way if the neutral powers had made it clear that they meant their protest to be taken seriously. It would appear, therefore, that for the later miseries of Belgium the neutrals must in some degree share the responsibility with Germany.

What has been written above is but a slight and cursory survey of a remarkable and many-sided development, but it ought to be enough to show that the civilised world as a whole has accepted ideals very different from those embodied in the German Doctrine of Power, and has already made genuine progress towards realising them. The Concert of the Powers, though it has not yet fulfilled the glowing hopes of its projectors of a hundred years ago, has become a real and operative fact, and has repeatedly availed to prevent war when it seemed almost inevitable. A group of little states have been enabled to live in perfect security, under the common protection of Europe, and the world has learnt to value them. The practice of settling international disputes by arbitration has quietly grown to great dimensions, and nearly all the nations are pledged to get rid of causes of friction between them, whenever possible, by a resort to this means; the world has welcomed the

institution of a permanent court of international arbitration, drawing its sanction from the assent and support of all the great states; and even where arbitration has been found impracticable, nations have learnt to welcome instead of resenting the mediation of disinterested states in their quarrels. All the great states but one have agreed that exaggerated armaments are a danger to civilisation, and desire to see them diminish. Finally, the common sense of the civilised world is agreed that if war cannot be avoided, it ought to be waged in such a way as to inflict the minimum of suffering. These are remarkable advances, representing, when taken together, perhaps the greatest moral progress made by civilisation in the modern age; for they bring in sight the time when the actions of nations, equally with those of individuals, will recognise the obligation upon them of a moral law.

The whole of this advance rests upon a series of treaties to which almost all the civilised communities of the world have been parties. It has been made possible by a growing confidence, justified by the behaviour of nearly all states, that civilised communities will regard their treaty obligations as sacred. A belief in the sanctity of treaties is certainly a part of the morality of the civilised world, and is the only possible basis of progress; it is so widespread that nations go on confidently making treaties with one another, and are willing to stake their dearest interests upon the inviolability of these scraps of paper. Indeed, it has been laid down by a congress of the nations (1871) that "no power



can liberate itself from the engagements of a treaty, nor modify the stipulations thereof, unless with the consent of the contracting powers by means of an amicable arrangement";<sup>1</sup> and it may be noted that Germany herself was a party to this declaration.

Here, therefore, is a clear body of doctrine in regard to international relations, which may fairly be said to be accepted by the whole civilised world outside of Germany.

The non-German world believes that justice between nations ought to override the desire of any single nation to extend its own material dominion; Germany believes that the extension of a state's power is its highest moral duty, overriding all the claims of other states.

The non-German world believes that in the absence of a police-force able to compel nations to obey a common law, a group of great states not only should be, but is, able to maintain common rights by reasonable discussion and compromise; Germany believes that any such system is an effeminate and cowardly device.

The non-German world desires to see small states upheld and protected; Germany believes that they ought to be devoured by their greater neighbours.

The non-German world hates war, wishes to diminish it by all practicable means, and thinks that with the progress of civilisation it must as certainly come to an end as the blood-feud between primitive clans; Germany regards war as the high-

<sup>1</sup> Treaty of London, 1871 (on the Black Sea).

est form of statesmanship, and all attempts to avoid it as due to cowardice or hypocrisy.

The non-German world holds, and has held for centuries, that so long as war continues to exist, it should be waged by methods as little inhumane and barbarous as possible; Germany believes in the methods of terrorism, and considers the Huns as the best models to imitate.

The non-German world regards treaties as sacred, and is convinced that respect for treaties is the very foundation of international morality, just as observance of contracts is the foundation of individual morality; Germany holds that there is no international morality, and that treaties are only valid so long as it is convenient to observe them.

Here is a conflict of beliefs which is more fundamental than any that has ever been brought to an issue in the history of the world. This conflict is the real issue of the war of 1914. The defence of the doctrine which we have described as being held by the non-German world is being left to a comparatively small group of states. Other states, proud to claim a share in the advancement of these non-German ideas, are yet ready to forego any share in the honour of defending them. Yet for them, equally with the Allies, it is an issue of life and death; for it is a struggle between honour and dishonour, between freedom supported by law and the tyranny of brute force, between the morality of civilisation and the morality of the jungle. That is an issue to which no man, and no state, can be indifferent.



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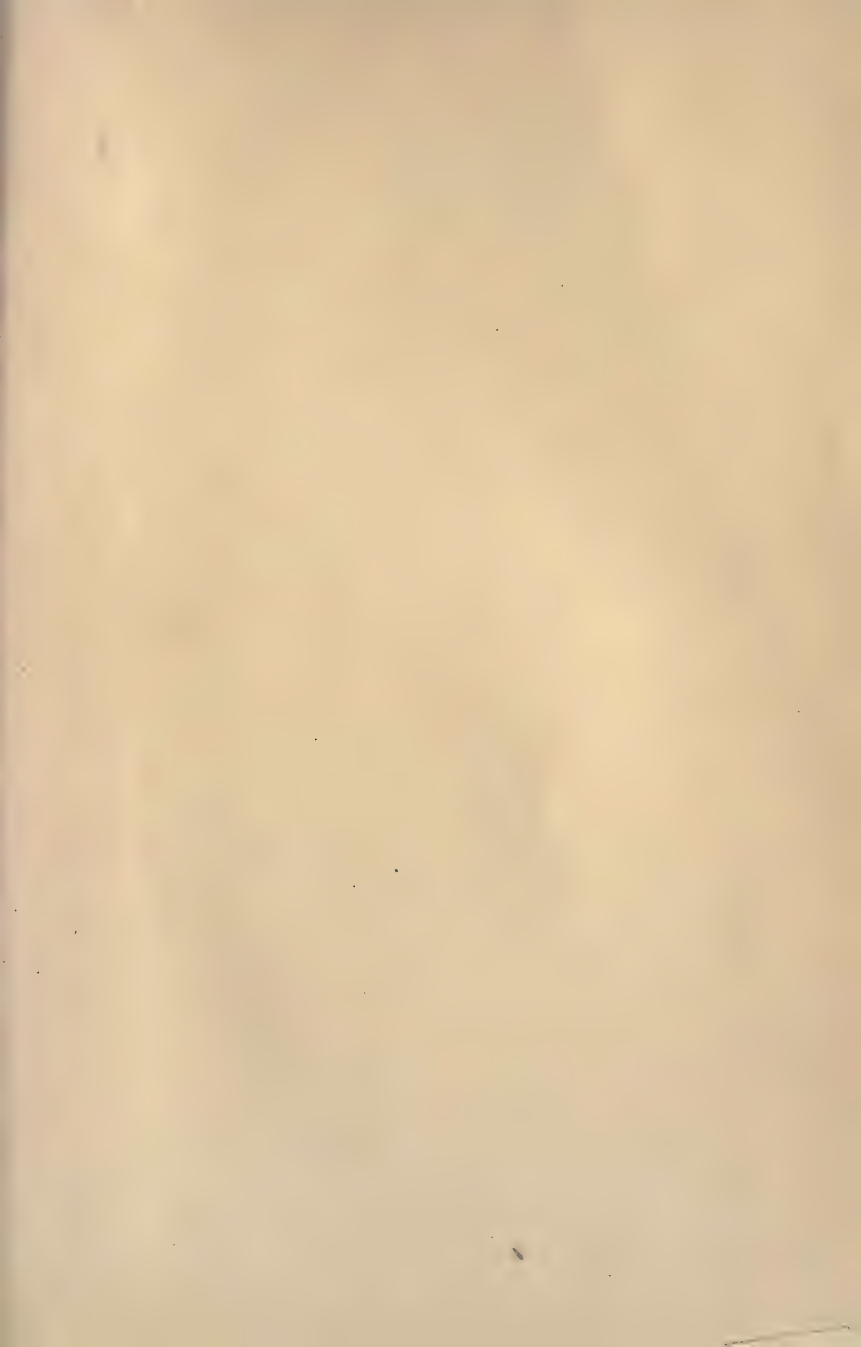
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