

SIX OF ONE AND HALF - A - DOZEN OF THE OTHER

A LETTER TO MR. L. SIMONS
OF THE HAGUE

BY WILLIAM ARCHER

T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
1, Adelphi Terrace, London.

1917.

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A Letter to Mr. L. Simons.

DEAR Sir,

The open letter which you have addressed to me in answer to my paper entitled "To Neutral Peace Lovers—a Plea for Patience," begins with the expression of a doubt "whether this letter . . . will ever have a chance of entering your censor-ridden England." My present reply is sufficient proof that in one respect, at any rate, your vision of England is mistaken. It would be a dull censorship indeed that would dream of excluding a document which, to the vast majority of Englishmen, carries its refutation on its face. There is, of course, a small minority who may rejoice to find in you a spiritual ally, but I assure you no one grudges them so mild a satisfaction. Their motto is "My country, always in the wrong," and no censorship debars them from revelling in that amiable opinion. This you must surely know, for do you not refer me in a foot-note to Mr. E. D. Morel's "Truth and the War"?

While on the subject of censorship, I should like to call your attention to this passage from a pamphlet on *Great Britain's Sea Policy*, by Professor Gilbert Murray :

Everybody knows that in war censorship is necessary ; every nation employs it, Great Britain rather more leniently than the rest. It is a pure myth to suppose that in England we are kept in the dark about important sides of the war which are well known to

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

neutrals. I have been in four different neutral countries since the war began, and have read their newspapers; so I speak with confidence.

Of course you will not dismiss the myth from your mind merely on the evidence of an Englishman, however high his character. But some of your countrymen may perhaps be more willing to listen to reason.

Your letter to me forms a brief preface to a reprint of an article which you contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly* of November, 1916. My friend Mr. J. M. Robertson, has dealt with that article according to its deserts, in a pamphlet entitled *Neutrals and the War*. I shall not go over the same ground, but shall confine myself to the arguments, or rather assertions, which you address to me personally.

Your whole contention may be summed up in the phrase "Six of one and half-a-dozen of the other." You reject my "naive" metaphor of the maniac and his keeper, the burglar and the policeman, saying, "What if the keepers themselves should be tainted with the same mania . . . What if the policeman were only a dressed-up burglar himself, just trying to get hold of the prey of the man whom he wants to take into custody?" It is true, of course, that the policeman is trying to get hold of the "prey"—namely Belgium, Serbia, etc., etc.—which has been seized by the burglar. I presume that in this passage you have not quite succeeded in saying what you mean; your otherwise admirable command of English has not been equal to the occasion. In using the word "prey" you have stumbled into unintentional accuracy. For "prey" we should probably read "property"; but if you meant that the Allies were "trying to get hold" of anything that is the legitimate

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

property of Germany or Austria, you meant what is not true.

In the next paragraph you give a little more precision to your indictment of the Allies; and it is here that I definitely join issue with you. You say—

Has the world ever heard anything more ridiculous than the cant with which each party (whose Chauvinists, Extensionists, Protectionists, Jingoists, Imperialists have together brought upon us this terrible ordeal of war) poses as the innocent victim of the other parties' wiles. Poses as the sole defender of international law through which each of them, whenever they saw their chance, has been driving a coach and four or, to be more modern, "a tank." Poses as the champion of "nationalities," and of old national Rights, for which neither nation has ever cared a straw, whenever its drift of expansion found a smaller nation or tribe in its way. Robbers, and burglars, and murderers all. England as well as Germany; Russia as well as Turkey; France and Italy as well as Bulgaria and Austria. Before either group bases a claim on us, neutrals, let it have the moral courage to see itself in the mirror, held up by its enemy. Until this is done, *risum teneatis amici*.

To the phrase "England as well as Germany" you append a footnote—"Think of *Transvaal*, the *Orange Free State*, *Egypt*, *Cyprus*. Read again the article re *British Empire* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*." Well, I have read this article, and it has proved to me—what, indeed, was too patent to need proof—that you have given no thought to the many different meanings of the word "expansion," as we read it in history. You ignore the most obvious diversities of circumstance and method, and apply the same moral condemnation to actions

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

so far apart in moral quality as (say) the colonization of Australia and the treacherous bludgeoning of Belgium. It is because this obtuseness is characteristic of a good deal of so-called "neutral" comment on the war that I have thought it worth while to reply to your letter.

You will scarcely deny that civilization was by the very nature of things predestined to spread over the planet. The relation of the savage and the barbarian to the civilized man raises many and painful problems, and the solution they have found in history has often been a brutal, and, if you like, a criminal, one. There are many grim and blood-stained pages in the annals of Spanish, British, and (as you frankly admit) of Dutch colonization. I join with you in deploring them, just as I deplore all the cruelties of "Nature red in tooth and claw"; and I grant that it is much to the discredit of Christianity that the European peoples did not carry out more humanely the inevitable process of taming the wild places and wild races of the world. But that this process *was* inevitable you will surely not dispute. You will not tell me, I presume, that Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Cabot, Magellan and Cook ought to have stayed at home; that the red man ought still to be roaming the primeval forests of America, and that the cannibal blackfellow ought to have been left in undisturbed possession of Australia. We may regret the necessity for the expropriation and practical extinction of these and many other savage races; but, will you or any one go the length of wishing it undone? I think not; and unless you are prepared to go that length, it is meaningless, and even hypocritical, to raise a moral outcry and denounce as "robbers, burglars and murderers" the great colonizing nations. Many individual incidents of the

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

process were, as we all admit, deplorable; but remember that the races which have died out were not "exterminated" in any active sense of the word, but dwindled away owing to their congenital incapacity for civilisation, and inability to resist the poisons which it unhappily brings in its train.

Well now, if you will turn to that article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to which you yourself refer me, you will see that (putting India aside) by far the greater part of the British Empire was acquired by means of "settlement," which signifies I take it, the occupation of tracts of country very thinly peopled by aboriginal savage tribes. If you hold "settlement" immoral, you must, of course, extend your condemnation to the United States, which owe their existence to that process and no other. But I do not believe that you really regard either the Anglo-Saxon race or your own countrymen as "robbers, burglars and murderers" because of the regions which they now possess in virtue of "settlement." If you seem—as you do—to imply this accusation, I believe it is because you have not clearly thought out your own meaning. It is so much easier to cry "Rogues all" than to reflect, to discriminate, to see things in perspective and proportion.*

*You say in a foot-note: "Mind, I don't pretend that we, Dutch, are any better as a colonizing nation. But then we don't pose as defenders of the smaller nationalities but [? than] our own." This remark shows clearly the confusion of thought above alluded to. "Colonizing" means occupying country hitherto in the possession of savage or barbarous tribes, unorganized, generally nomadic, sparsely inhabiting regions whose natural resources they are entirely unable to develop. It is the height of absurdity to call these tribes "small nations," or to compare them in any way with the highly-organized historic communities which the Allies are striving to protect: such, for instance, as Belgium.

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

Referring again to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, we note that almost all the portions of the British Empire not acquired by "settlement" are said to have accrued in one or other of three ways—by "conquest," by "capitulation," or by "cession." It is a pity that these terms are left undefined. I fancy the distinction between them is not very important, or very consistently maintained. The word "conquest" indicates, I presume, that there was more or less fighting actually on the spot; while "capitulation" and "cession" probably imply that the territory or island in question was handed over to Britain in the general re-arrangement effected at the end of a European war. The question where the fighting took place does not affect the principle of the thing. I am willing, if you like, to ignore all nice distinctions, and agree, for the argument's sake, that those parts of the British Empire which are not attributable to "settlement" were acquired by "conquest," direct or indirect.

Very well—but if we look a little into the word "conquest" we find that it covers many varieties of military and political action. It may mean the forcible subversion of a long-established, efficient and humane system of rule, the enslavement of a people, the confiscation of its property, the overthrow of institutions to which it was attached, and the suppression of its national self-consciousness, its patriotism, its very existence as a political entity. Or, again, it may mean the expulsion of a corrupt tyranny and introduction of a just and humane rule, welcomed by the people of the country, and involving a great increase in their well-being, with no detriment to their self-respect. Or, yet again, it may mean only the transference from one flag to another of some newly-

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

formed and thinly settled dependency, the inhabitants of which either rejoice in the change or accept it without a murmur. In other words, conquest may be either good, bad or indifferent. It is good if it improves the condition of a people without humiliating them or outraging their legitimate preferences and sentiments. It is bad if it involves massacre, spoliation and enslavement. It is indifferent if it leaves the political status of a people practically unchanged, or changed in a way which causes no serious resentment. The test lies in the manner in which the change of government affects, not only the material interests, but the moral susceptibilities of the people concerned.

Now, sir, if you will look into the history of those British possessions which have been acquired by what we have agreed to call "conquest," I think you will find that in an overwhelming majority of cases the change has been either welcome or indifferent to the populations affected by it. It has never involved anything that could be called enslavement, it has scarcely ever run counter to strong national feeling. I know of only two outstanding exceptions to the latter rule; the case of the French colonies in Canada, and that of the Boer Republics. Is it not a significant comment on the nature of British "conquest" that, a few years after Canada came under British rule, she alone remained loyal, while the rest of the American colonies rebelled, and that, a few years after the annexation of the Transvaal, when Britain was plunged into the greatest war in history, the Boer soldiers who had so recently been in arms against her, not only suppressed an attempted insurrection in their own midst, but carried the imperial flag into the enemy's country and rendered the most faithful and effi-

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

cient service to the cause of the Allies?

The case of South Africa, however, demands a little closer consideration. If Britain can anywhere be accused of undertaking a war of conquest in the bad sense, it was undoubtedly here. A very large section of the British nation was, as you know, bitterly opposed to the war, and I am far from maintaining that impartial history, on analysing the motives that led us into it, will not find some admixture of base alloy. But if you will put racial prejudice aside, and study the course of events in South Africa, I think you will admit that all the responsibility for an unhappy conjunction of affairs did not rest on Britain's shoulders. Our earlier policy, and our conduct after Majuba, was weak and vacillating rather than overbearing. We made many mistakes, but they were not of the aggressive order. Our Government, or rather our Governments, had for years tried patiently to arrive at a good understanding with the Boer Republics, and the temper on their side which made such an understanding impossible was certainly short-sighted and impracticable. There was an irreconcilable conflict of ideals, and what was at stake was not, as is superficially represented, the possession of certain goldfields, but the whole future of South Africa. We made no sudden and treacherous rush at a small nation. We negotiated and negotiated while the Transvaal was arming to the teeth; and, at the last, it was not we who declared war, but the Boers who invaded and overran Natal. I do not lay much stress on this technical point; but however clear it may be that war is imminent, he who actually draws the sword takes upon himself a grave responsibility.

And what made Mr. Kruger's Government so obstinate and intransigent? What bred in it the vision-

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

ary hope of "driving the rooineks into the sea"? What but the no less illusory expectation of support from Germany, begotten of the Kaiser's irresponsible meddling in matters in which he had no legitimate interest? I say advisedly "no *legitimate* interest." There is no desirable plot of ground in the world in which German cupidity does not conceive itself to have an interest; and if you will read Count Reventlow, an acknowledged authority on German foreign politics, you will find that in her private mind Germany had marked down South Africa for her own. Reventlow emphasizes the fact that if the Boer Republics had gained their point in the diplomatic struggle which preceded the war, they would have come into close relations with Germany, and so furthered her colonial ambitions. And on a later page he speaks still more frankly. Mr. Chamberlain in October, 1901, made a speech in which he was thought to have insulted the German army; and, this speech, says Reventlow, aroused all the more furious resentment because Chamberlain "was regarded as the oppressor of the Boers, and was felt—not openly but with all the greater intensity—to be the representative of a policy *which had put an end to the hopes and dreams of a great part of the German people.*" If this does not mean that a great part of the German people had fixed its eyes upon South Africa as a region from which the British were to be ousted in order that the Germans might take their place, I should be glad to know how it is to be interpreted.*

And what, now, of India? There, at any rate, you may perhaps say, British rule rests on conquest in the evil sense of the word. Again I must ask you to read history with a little discrimination. The British

*Reventlow: *Deutschlands auswärtige Politik*, pp. 139 and 171.

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

went to India with no thought of conquest, but only of trading; and, had they found there a stable and ordered polity, a nation or a group of nations in the European sense of the word, they would have been traders to this day, as they are in China and Japan. But in the chaotic dissolution of the Mogul Empire, it was inevitable that some civilized power should step in and save the country from internecine war and the tyranny of hordes of freebooters. If it had not been Britain, it would have been France. It was Britain, and not France, because she held the command of the sea. I do not say that there are not black pages in the history of British India. I do not deny that some of the founders of the Empire were moved by ambition and cupidity, as well as by nobler motives. But I assert without fear of reasonable contradiction that the story of our rule in India is one which we can regard, on the whole, with an emotion the very reverse of shame. We did not wantonly attack and trample down "small nations." We found a mass of heterogeneous tribes and peoples, ruled for the most part, by the semi-independent deputies of a dynasty of foreign conquerors. When the misrule of these petty tyrants became intolerable, we stepped in and substituted order and justice for despotic caprice. We put down marauding bands which sometimes attained the dimensions of organised armies. Again and again we tried, quite sincerely, to set a limit to territorial expansion; but circumstances were always too strong for us. Civilised rule and barbaric misrule cannot permanently endure side by side. Our "conquests" did not outrage national sentiment, because none existed. For the enormous mass of the people, caste and religion supplied the place of patriotism. Now that a certain amount of national feeling

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

has been begotten by our rule, a word for "patriotism" has had to be invented. Where any region, large or small, gave willing allegiance to an established and moderately enlightened dynasty, we have made it our policy to respect and preserve that "nationality," if so it can be called. The result is the splendid loyalty of the Indian Princes, which all the world has witnessed. If we are, as you politely assure us, "robbers, burglars and murderers," does it not strike you, Sir, as a little strange that the victims of our crimes, in three continents, should all stand by us to the death, at a time when it would be very easy to vent their rankling exasperation, if not in open rebellion, at any rate in sullen indifference to our struggle and to our fate?

You mention Cyprus and Egypt. You have surely overlooked the fact that Cyprus was voluntarily placed under our administration by Turkey, in order to enable us to carry out an undertaking to guarantee her Asiatic possessions against Russia. The policy we were then pursuing seems ridiculous enough in the light of present events; but there was certainly neither robbery, burglary nor murder in the convention which transferred Cyprus to our rule. In the case of Egypt, it was again the break-up of an effete oriental tyranny which forced us to undertake the administration of a country which we did not dream of coveting for its own sake. As it lay directly on our route to India, we could not let it lapse into mere anarchy, nor could we willingly see it pass under the rule of another European Power. We invited France to share with us the responsibility of restoring and maintaining order. France declined, and we assumed

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

the burden alone. Where in all this was the "robbery, burglary and murder"? Was it murder to save Upper Egypt from invasion by a horde of fanatical savages, under the Mahdi? Is it the part of the robber or the burglar to stand sentinel at the outposts of civilisation?

You do not, oddly enough, mention Ireland; but, as it is a favourite topic with adherents of your "six of one and half-a-dozen of the other" theory, I should like to say a word or two about it. The history of the relations between England and Ireland is undoubtedly one long record of tragic error, misunderstanding, stupidity, blindness, and, in ancient days, of barbarism. I think no reasonable Irishman would assert that the faults have all been on one side; but certainly no reasonable Englishman would seek to extenuate the guilt that lies at the doors of his country. I, for my part, if it were of any avail, would willingly do penance in sackcloth and ashes for many an "old, unhappy, far-off thing" that stains the record of the English in Ireland. But it is mere nonsense to talk as though the England of to-day were the enemy and oppressor of the sister kingdom. For fifty years past, England has been striving hard to do justice in Ireland, and has succeeded in remedying many wrongs, and creating a large measure of material prosperity. It is not England, but Ireland herself, that stands in the way of the political emancipation which the majority of her people demand. If Ireland spoke with one voice, or could control her irreconcilable minority, she would have had Home Rule years ago. She is not one, and she will not consent to be two—in the face of that insoluble conflict of obstinacies, what is poor England to do? "Government with the consent of the

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

governed" is an excellent principle to which we all yield willing allegiance. But there are two conditions which must be fulfilled before it begins to be possible. In the first place a people must have a sufficiently developed political self-consciousness to be capable of giving rational consent; in the second place, its will must be a unit, or so nearly a unit that it can be expressed without leading to civil war. The second of these conditions appears, at present writing, to be unattainable in Ireland.

We have now briefly reviewed the genesis of the British Empire, and have found that the greater part of it was the result of "settlement"—that is to say of the inevitable and world-wide substitution of civilisation for savagery. In some cases, however, we found that the original "settlement" had been followed by redistribution, mainly as the result of European wars; and territories acquired in such redistributions, I agreed to classify as "conquests." But I pointed out—and trust I carried you with me—that conquest is not always an evil. The sort of conquest which is abhorred by all good men we saw to be that which involves "*the forcible subversion of a long-established, efficient and humane system of rule, the enslavement of a people, the confiscation of its property, the overthrow of institutions to which it was attached, and the suppression of its national self-consciousness, its patriotism, its very existence as a political entity.*" Such conquest as this we found to be practically unrepresented in the history of the British Empire. In the one or two cases where we discovered some approach to it, the evil was so promptly and completely remedied that the Empire had secured the unswerving loyalty of the very people who might seem to

have suffered by it.

But now let us turn to Germany. What is the form of conquest understood, defended and exemplified by Germany—especially by Prussia? If you will be good enough to re-read the last paragraph, you will find in the definition there italicised—the definition of conquest as practised by “robbers, burglars, and murderers”—an exact description of the conquests which Prussia has achieved since the reign of Frederick II, and which Germany has planned to continue on an immeasurably larger scale. We all know the history of Prussian Poland, North Slesvig, Alsace and Lorraine—annexations carried out against the will of the people, and maintained by such measures of tyranny as to keep popular resentment alive and undiminished. But these are mere trifles compared with the career of robbery and extermination which Germany has been openly planning for more than a generation past, and towards which this war was only to be the first step. Let us take a very brief glance at some of the evidence in the case.

If you want to find the ingrained and instinctive spirit of Germany clearly expressed in concentrated form, let me refer you to a bright little lyric by the famous historian, poet and romance-writer, Felix Dahn. It is called;—

THORS HAMMERWURF.*

Thor stand am Mitternacht-Ende der Welt,
Die Streitaxt warf er, die schwere;
“So weit der sausende Hammer fällt,
Sind mein das Land und die Meere.”

*Felix Dahns Gedichte : Auswahl des Verfassers, 1900, p. 156.

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

Und es flog der Hammer aus seiner Hand,
Flog über die ganze Erde,
Fiel nieder an fernsten Südens Rand,
Dass alles sein eigen werde.
Seitdem ist's freudig Germanen-Recht
Mit dem Hammer Land zu erwerben;
Wir sind von des Hammer-Gottes Geschlecht
Und wollen sein Weltreich erben.*

This poem is very well known in Germany. It is reprinted in a volume of historical lyrics for educational use, and it supplies the motto for O. Tannenberg's *Gross-Deutschland*. I find the last quatrain quoted in a pamphlet published shortly before the war by an ex-diplomatist, Baron Kurt von Strantz—quoted not only with warm approval, but as though the sentiment expressed were a mere matter of course, and could not possibly be open to the slightest moral objection. You may have heard the familiar English saying, "Let me make the songs of a people, and who will may make the laws." At all events, you will scarcely deny that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the verses of a popular poet may be taken as representing pretty faithfully the ideas current among the mass of his countrymen. In this case there is abundance of incontrovertible evidence to show that Felix Dahn rightly interpreted the spirit—or at any rate *a* spirit—

*THOR'S HAMMERCAST.

Thor stood at the midnight end of the world and threw his heavy battle-axe. "So far as my hammer goes whizzing through the air shall the land and the sea be mine." And the hammer flew from his hand, flew over the whole earth; it fell at the furthest edge of the South, so that all should become his own. Since then 'tis the joyous German right with the hammer to win land. We are of the race of the Hammer-God and mean to inherit his world-empire.

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

widely prevalent in Germany, ever since the war of 1870.

While German soldiers have been rattling the sabre, German writers have been busily brandishing the hammer of Thor over the devoted heads of all surrounding peoples. The right of the strong people to conquer, exploit and enslave its weaker neighbours is a commonplace of German political philosophy. Here are a few apposite quotations ;

Before seeking to found a Greater Germany in other continents, we must create a Greater Germany in Central Europe . . . In seeking to colonize the countries immediately contiguous to our present patrimony, we are continuing the millenary work of our ancestors. There is nothing in this contrary to nature. (Prof. E. Hasse, *Deutsche Grenzpolitik*, p. 168).

When one wishes a thing, one must effectually will it. Our sense of justice may in future lead us not to desire what does not belong to us, but *when* we take we must also *hold fast*. In other words, hitherto foreign territory is not incorporated into Germany until German proprietorship is rooted in the soil.* (F. Lange, *Reines Deutschtum*, p. 206).

For this evil [the emigration of the surplus population] we see only one remedy; *the extension of our frontiers in Europe* . . . We must make room for an Empire of Germanic race which will number 100,000,000 inhabitants, in order that we may hold our own against masses such as those of Russia and the United States. (*Deutschland bei Beginn des 20sten Jahrhunderts, von einem Deutschen*, p. 115).

[In the Great-German Confederation which will comprise most of Europe] the Germans, being alone

*That is, until the original landowners are forcibly expropriated.

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

entitled to exercise political rights, to serve in the Army and Navy, and to acquire landed property, will recover the feeling they had in the Middle Ages of being a people of masters. They will gladly tolerate the foreigners living among them, to whom inferior manual services will be entrusted. (*Grossdeutschland und Mitteleuropa um das Jahr 1950*, von einem Alldeutschen, p. 47).

Every great people needs new territory; it must expand over foreign soil; it must expel the foreigners by the power of the sword. (Klaus Wagner, *Krieg*, p. 80).

One thing alone can really profit the German people; the acquisition of new territory. That is the only solid and durable gain . . . that alone can really promote the diffusion, the growth and the deepening of Germanism. (A. Wirth, *Orient und Weltpolitik*, p. 56).

Let us bravely organize great forced migrations of the inferior peoples. Posterity will be grateful to us. We must coerce them. This is one of the tasks of war; the means must be superiority of armed force. Superficially such forced migrations, and the penning up of inconvenient peoples in narrow "reserves," may appear hard; but it is the only solution of the race-question that is worthy of humanity . . . Thus alone can the over-population of the earth be controlled; the efficient peoples must secure themselves elbow-room by means of war, and the inefficient must be hemmed in, and at last driven into "reserves" where they have no room to grow . . . and where, discouraged and rendered indifferent to the future by the spectacle of the superior energy of their conquerors, they may crawl slowly towards the peaceful death of weary and hopeless senility. (Klaus Wagner, *Krieg*, p. 170).

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

The idea of the enslavement and eventual annihilation of conquered peoples runs through all this literature. One writer (I have unfortunately lost the reference, but I vouch for the fact) expresses frank regret that violent extermination of a whole people is no longer possible,* but adds that measures can be taken which amount practically to the same thing. Klaus Wagner puts the same idea a little less bluntly;—

It is no longer our purpose to hew down with the murderer's sword (*Mordschwert*) the people whom we overcome in the selective struggle (*Auslesekampf*) in those regions which the Kultur-loving victors require for their activities. Such inhuman methods are now rightly condemned, *because they are no longer necessary.* (*Krieg*, p. 167).

He then goes on to expound the plan of gradual extinction in "reserves" alluded to in a former extract. Some of the subject races, indeed, are to be permitted to live, in order to serve as hewers of wood and drawers of water (*Handlanger zweiter Ordnung*) to the master-folk, "very much as the animals now do."

You, however, my dear Sir, may be of good cheer, even in face of this program of cold-blooded spoliation and slow murder. If, as I assume, you are of the great Teutonic stock, you are not to become a *Handlanger zweiter Ordnung*. You are, of course, to lose your nationality and your language—for that you are doubtless prepared. But, unless you very grossly misbehave yourself by offering opposition to the absorption of your

*He wrote before Germany's esteemed allies the Turks had proved that there was nothing impossible about it, *Wilhelmo duce et auspice Wilhelmo.*

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

country (in which case you know what to expect), there is every chance that you may find yourself a "free" German burgher, possibly even with a vote for the Reichstag—whatever that may be worth. But your country's independent existence is past praying for. That you may be under no illusion on this point, let me call your attention to the following candid utterances:—

The Rhine . . . is a priceless natural possession, although by our own fault we have allowed its most material value to fall into alien hands; and, it must be the unceasing endeavour of German policy to win back the mouths of the river. (Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. i. p. 125, English edition).

The territory open to future German expansion . . . must extend from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Persian Gulf, absorbing *the Netherlands* and Luxembourg, Switzerland, the whole basin of the Danube, the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor. (Prof. E. Hasse, *Weltpolitik, Imperialismus und Kolonialpolitik*, p. 65).

We desire, and must desire . . . a world-empire of Teutonic (*germanisch*) stock, under the hegemony of the German people. In order to secure this we must:—

- (a) Gradually Germanize the Scandinavian *and Dutch* Teutonic States, denationalising them in the weaker significance of the term;
- (b) Break up the predominantly un-Teutonic peoples into their component parts, in order to take to ourselves the Teutonic element and Germanize it, while we reject the un-Teutonic element.

(J. L. Reimer, *Ein Pangermanisches Deutschland*, p. 137).

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

The author has previously defined the two grades of "denationalization" to which he proposes to subject surrounding peoples. The second or lesser grade, which is reserved for you, Sir, includes the substitution of German for the national language. I don't know whether you care about your language, or, like Treitschke, consider it an essentially ridiculous sailor-dialect. But there are certainly a good many people, even of Teutonic stock, who would not enjoy the suppression of their own "dialect" in favour of German.

The selections I have ventured to present to you are taken from a vast mass of similar matter. If you wish to pursue the enquiry further, let me recommend to you one specially significant book: Nippold's *Der deutsche Chauvinismus*. It throws a flood of light on German mentality and morality.

Perhaps you will say that the writers I have quoted are manifestly insane—that misinterpreted Darwinism, and too literally interpreted Nietzscheism, have transformed them into criminal lunatics, who cannot be fairly representative of the German nation. I myself should have held that view very strongly—any time before August, 1914. But how is one to maintain it when every action of Germany and her Allies proves that the statecraft of her rulers and the temper of her people are alike bent towards the very worst forms of conquest known to history?

Austria has a small neighbour inconveniently placed, and doubly annoying since Austria has, by a flagrant breach of faith, subjected to her yoke large numbers of people of that neighbour's speech and race. What does she do? She first proposes to her Allies an entirely unprovoked onslaught upon the little country; but one

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

of her Allies declines complicity, and the plot falls through. Then she seizes upon a flimsy pretext and, repudiating all investigation, negotiation, or mediation, hurls herself, at 48 hours' notice, upon her gallant little foe. Compare this with Britain's action towards the Boer Republics, which I think you will admit to be the most questionable case in all the British record. The relations of the respective Powers were not entirely dissimilar; but how utterly unlike were the methods of procedure! Instead of launching an ultimatum with a 48 hours' time-limit at the head of the Boers, the British Government, as we saw, went on negotiating month after month, while the Boers were openly arming; and even then it was not the British Government which actually broke the peace. Can you pretend that in this case—the case most unfavourable to Britain—the verdict of “six of one and half-a-dozen of the other” applies? Austria's designs upon Serbia were, and are, designs of ruthless, ravenous conquest. The Serbs are a nation, not highly civilized, indeed, but organized, progressive, intensely patriotic, and basing their patriotism on the traditions of centuries. Had they yielded to Austria from the outset, she would have reduced them to absolute vassalage. As they did not yield, but ventured to resist—aye, and to send their mighty assailant to the right-about—they are, if the Central Empires have their way, to find their country wiped off the map of Europe. Yet you say that the countries who are striving to prevent this crime, are not protectors of small nations; and you justify this contradiction of the plainest facts by a reference to the Transvaal, which has not been wiped off the map, but is the leading State in a united South Africa.

And if the treatment of Serbia is an outrage upon

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

justice and humanity, what are we to say of the case of Belgium? Where in British history can you find any parallel to this gigantic crime? Let me recapitulate in a few words the only too well-known and too incontrovertible facts. Germany pledged her honour never to attack Belgium, and to protect her from attack by others. She secretly made up her mind to break that pledge, but in public she continued officially to asseverate her intention of keeping it. In other words, her statesmen and the mouthpieces of her Emperor shamelessly lied, with the knowledge and connivance of their master. When the moment came, she broke her pledge at twelve hours' notice, hurled her giant strength upon a country less than one-tenth of her size, trampled down its resistance, burned, pillaged and massacred with a ferocity unparalleled in modern history, and finally sent off the civilian population by tens of thousands into slavery. That is, in brief, the history of Germany's treatment of Belgium—I challenge you to point to anything in British history that resembles it in the remotest degree. The Germans and their henchmen eagerly assert that Greece affords a parallel case. What matchless effrontery! Belgium suffers for having heroically kept her word; Greece suffers (in so far as she suffers at all) for having basely broken her word. The Allies were under no pledge to respect the neutrality of Greece; had they declared war upon her, in view of her breach of faith to Serbia and of her many hostile acts, they would have been absolutely within their rights; and note that she lay at their mercy no less than Belgium lay at the mercy of Germany. But what did they do? They treated her with the most long-suffering, and possibly unwise, forbearance. Acting on the invitation of her

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

leading statesman, they claimed passage for their troops through a narrow strip of her territory; but, otherwise they did no more than take the absolutely necessary steps to ensure that the Greek army should not attack them in the rear. Where are the Greek cities ruined, ravaged, and subjected to crushing "war contributions"? Where are the Greek "hostages" massacred in cold blood? Where are the Greek civilians "deported" to do slave-labour for their country's enemies? I am not aware that you, Sir, have cited the case of Greece as a parallel to that of Belgium. I cannot find that you have mentioned it at all. But had you been really fair-minded you would have seen in it a shining contrast to German methods, which would have put your six-of-one-and-half-a-dozen-of-the-other theory conclusively out of court.

What remains, now, of that theory? The appeal to history is not at best a very sound one; for if Britain and her Allies are, here and now, fighting the fight of justice, democracy, the small nations and world peace, it would not greatly matter though their past record had been inconsistent with their present ideals. But since you have appealed to history and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, I have taken up your challenge, and have shown that the "settlement" and conquest by which the British Empire was built up is far as the poles apart from that process of conquest by which Germany proposes, and is now endeavouring, to make herself mistress of Europe and eventually of the world. By far the greater part of the British Empire consists of regions entirely undeveloped and sparsely populated by savages at the time when European settlers took possession of them; and those portions to which this description does not apply

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

consist of territories which have fallen under British guardianship through the disruption from within of oriental empires, and in which Britain, sedulously respecting the creeds and traditions of the inhabitants, has substituted stable, just and humane government for the capricious tyrannies of bygone ages. German conquest, on the other hand, finds, and proposes to find, its victims in states as highly organized and civilized as Germany itself, and deliberately designs, by methods of brutal violence and oppression, to effect the gradual extinction of unas-similable races, and to root out the nationality and language of those which it may graciously suffer to survive. Where in this can you find any justification for your unthinking cry of "Six of one and half a dozen of the other"? Perhaps you will tell me that that phrase is mine, not yours. True; you prefer to put it a little more forcibly; "Robbers, and burglars, and murderers all."

And this is how Holland—or at any rate one of her sons—rewards us for pouring forth our blood and treasure in order to keep the hungry jaws and dripping fangs of Germany from closing round her! I do not say that we either deserve or expect any particular gratitude; for we are in the first instance fighting our own battle, and the preservation of Holland is only one among many incidental consequences. But it gives us pleasure to think that one consequence of our struggle will be (as we trust) the preservation of the independence and integrity of a little country with a great and heroic past—of the land of the two Williams of Orange, of Rembrandt and Franz Hals, of Erasmus and Spinoza, of Grotius and Boerhaave. And that being so, we cannot but feel some mild surprise on finding ourselves treated with blank incomprehension and gross incivility by a Dutch publicist who

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

takes upon himself to speak in the name of his countrymen and of neutrals in general.

You go on to say that "your eyes are open to a change for the worst [? worse] produced by the war in the mentality of England and France," and to cite as a proof of this change the reply of the Allies to President Wilson's Note, in which you perceive "a claim for paramountcy" and "utterance of the same lust of power which we pretend to keep at bay in the other group." I do not propose to examine at length this strange indictment. Let me only say that beyond restitution of actually stolen territory, and the reunion of certain subject populations to the nationalities to which, by race, language, tradition and sentiment, they rightly belong, the peace terms stated by the Allies contain only one item which implies any sort of expropriation—the expulsion of Turkish rule from Europe. Is that a proposal which seems to you iniquitous? Has not civilization been sighing for it any time the last century? If you want to find a real reproach to level against Britain, I commend to your attention the policy which led us, for many years, to bolster up the corrupt Asiatic despotism on the Bosphorus. As for the "claim to paramountcy," it is true, of course, that the Allies desire that the treaty of peace should leave them stronger than their enemies—for what other end can you conceive them to be fighting? If they do not attain this end, then militarism is triumphant, European democracy is doomed, and (among other things) the days of Dutch independence are numbered. But "paramountcy," in the German sense of the term, they neither do nor can aim at. The reason is obvious—they are four widely separated and self-sufficient Great Powers, none of which dreams of setting up a claim to "para-

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

mountcy." which the others would certainly reject and resent. Their watchword is "equal rights for all"—for the small nations, and *a fortiori* for the great. Germany, on the other hand, not only claims but exercises "paramountcy" over her Allies, and has announced with a hundred voices that it is her right and her duty to assume the hegemony of Europe and of the world. Unless you agree with her, and look forward with complacency to living for the future under the intellectual, spiritual, and in due time the political domination of Prussia, I cannot understand the motive for your endeavours to alienate the sympathy of your fellow neutrals from the nations who are fighting for your freedom no less than for their own.

I cordially agree with you that some of the changes which take place during the conversion of a nation organized for peace into a nation of soldiers are changes for the worse. Militarism is in many ways an evil thing, even when it is forced upon a people by outside violence, and reluctantly undergone as a means to an indispensable end. But on whom does the ultimate responsibility for these undesirable changes rest? Clearly upon the nation, or rather the Government, which made the war; and that was neither the British nation nor the British Government. If you doubt this—as I daresay you do, for it seems hard to set a limit to your power of ignoring the plainest facts—I can only recommend you to examine, as regards the immediate origin of the war, the diplomatic documents published in full by all the belligerent nations except Germany, and, as regards its remoter causes, to study the history of Europe since the accession of William II, with special attention to such German writers

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

as Paul de Lagarde, Reventlow, Bernhardi, Haase, Sombart, and Harden.

Finally, may I call your attention to a passage from another neutral writer, who, besides being a literary critic of the first order, is deeply read in science and history? Professor Christian Collin, of Christiania, writes as follows;—

Four times in the course of a little more than 300 years has a single European state become so powerful and so ambitious that it has attempted to win supremacy over Europe and thus to attain to world-dominion; Spain under Philip II, France under Louis XIV, France under the first Napoleon, and finally, present-day Germany. Four times have states of inferior military power joined together in a great alliance to protect the world from a new Roman Empire, founded on conquest . . . The vision of Universal Monarchy, inherited from Roman times, has on three separate occasions met with shipwreck, and is now probably being shattered for the fourth time.

Each of these mighty wars . . . is divided by about a century from its predecessor. When the war that now devastates the continent broke out in the beginning of August, 1914, it was a little over a hundred years since Napoleon was sent to Elba, and a little short of a hundred years since the Peace of Paris in 1815. A little more than a century before that, the peace of Utrecht, in 1713, had erected a barrier against the ambitions of Louis XIV. Rather more than a hundred years before that again, Spain had been compelled to concede an honourable peace to England, in 1604, and later, in 1609, to Holland.

In these wars, which have marked eras in the history of Europe once in each century, most of the belligerents have played varying parts; England alone

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

has been a constant factor, always on the side of the defensive alliance . . . At this moment the English, for the fourth time, are putting forth all their strength to help in preventing a single state from becoming all-powerful.

England has, on each occasion, acted in accordance with her own clearly-understood interests. But at the same time, whether intentionally or not, she has acted in the interests of the whole European family of nations. The British have, to their own advantage and to that of all, kept the way open to a far higher form of world state than any universal monarchy.

So far Professor Collin. He might have added, had it occurred to him, that in each of these great wars—in this war no less than in its predecessors—the fate of Holland was one of the issues. In the earlier struggles the Dutch took an active part—in the earliest of all, a heroic part. But no one blames them for their present neutrality—so long as it does not lead them to forget what is at stake and vilify their defenders.

Just as surely as England saved Holland by routing the Armada, so have France and England fought the battle of Holland on the Marne, at Ypres and Loos, at Verdun, on the Somme, aye, and on the banks of Jutland. We claim no gratitude, because we are primarily fighting for our own existence; but, we think it a little hard that a Dutchman should denounce us as robbers, burglars and murderers.

You appealed, Sir, to history—by history I think you have been answered.

Yours, etc.,

WILLIAM ARCHER.

London, 20th March, 1917.

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

P.S.—I learn that some of your countrymen who have seen this letter in proof protest against the assertion that England saved Holland when she defeated the Spanish Armada. Though I see nothing derogatory to Holland in a plain statement of fact, I am quite willing to put it in another way, and say that in that momentous crisis England and Holland saved each other. The share which Holland took in the matter was a passive one; she was not called upon for any positive action beyond that of seizing two disabled Spanish ships; but it was the fear of her fleet which upset the whole scheme of invasion by preventing Parma from even attempting to effect a junction with Medina Sidonia.

Must I yet again insist that, in reciting these plain matters of history, I am neither claiming any merit for England nor casting any slur upon Holland? Both countries were faced with a great danger at the hands of a huge, ambitious and fanatical Power. If Spain had conquered England, where would the United Provinces have been? If Spain had subdued the United Provinces, England's position would have been, if not hopeless, at any rate very critical. In these circumstances, they naturally gave each other what help they could. There was no chivalry, no self-sacrifice about it. Down to 1588, what England had done for Holland was little enough, and even of questionable value; but in defeating the Armada she struck a blow at Spain which unquestionably paved the way for the final triumph of Dutch liberty.

On the 6th of August, 1588, the Armada lay in Calais Roads. "It was a pompous spectacle" says Motley, "that midsummer night upon the narrow seas. The moon, which was at the full, was rising calmly upon

Six of One and Half-a-Dozen of the Other.

a scene of anxious expectation. Would she not be looking, by the morrow's night, upon a subjugated England and a re-enslaved Holland—upon the downfall of civil and religious liberty?" That was the issue, as the American historian saw it. What happened we know: "The safety of the two free commonwealths," says Motley again, "was achieved by the people and the mariners of the two states combined." That is a quite fair way to put it; but in the particular incident in question—the defeat of the Armada—the actual fighting was done by the English.

Once more the actual fighting is being done by the English and their Allies. There are entirely valid reasons why the Dutch should in this case leave the fighting to others; but their vital interests are just as clearly at stake to-day as they were in August, 1588.

W.A.

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