

THE
UNSPEAKABLE
PRUSSIAN

C. SHERIDAN JONES



THE UNSPEAKABLE PRUSSIAN

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UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME.

IMPERIAL GERMANY

By

Prince von Bülow

(ex-German Imperial Chancellor)

LORD CROMER in *The Spectator* said:
"It may confidently be asserted that
no ex-Minister, save one of North
German nationality, could or would
have published such a book."

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CHAPTER I

The Worm at the Root

ENTHUSIASM for Germany's methods and institutions had mounted high in Great Britain twenty years ago. Widely respected, Germany was perhaps the most generally admired nation on the face of the earth. Publicists of the status of Charles Lowe hailed her as "the friend and ally of the English people, as the vanguard in the march of civilisation." Joseph Chamberlain, shrewd man and keen patriot, proclaimed the Anglo-German Alliance as the greatest triumph of British diplomacy, and so great was the trust of Lord Salisbury that he actually ceded to her Heligoland, the key to the North Sea. Every schoolboy was taught to revere the thoroughness, the efficiency, the assiduous and unremitting devotion to duty which characterised the sons of the great Empire, whose rise was the most remarkable

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event in European history after the French Revolution.

And now, within an incredibly brief space of time, all this is changed. It is not only her foes who spurn Germany. The most severely neutral Powers shrink from her. She is a pariah among the nations, whose very name is as a hissing and a reproach. No such dramatically startling change has ever reversed the judgment of mankind. But yesterday and Germany's very detractors gave her ungrudging respect; to-day her best friends draw back at the spectacle which she presents. From the villages of India, through the bazaars of Cairo, on across Europe, over the Atlantic, and through the packed cities of America down to the slopes of the Pacific, she has sent a shudder through the consciousness of mankind, and every race and every nation stands aghast at the monster who has dethroned herself.

“And naming her, men put out their lips,
And seeing her, shut their eyes.”

The guardian of the Holy Grail of civilisation has become a savage and deformed beast. Parsifal has turned into Caliban. The austere and genial Dr. Jekyll has shrivelled under our very eyes into the malignant Hyde!

It is very much worth while to endeavour to discover the cause of this sudden reversal. Unless

A DEBAUCHED PHILOSOPHY

we are to credit our immediate forbears with a blindness of vision that could only be considered as hardly respectful to them, and certainly not flattering to us, there must have been some reason for the faith they cherished towards Germany; a faith that can no more be restored than can the battered structure of Rheims Cathedral. How comes it that the German who but a while ago we regarded as above all things sober, restrained, responsible, with a passion for propriety and a genuine enthusiasm for everything that lifts man above the brute, has leaped into this abyss of degradation? How comes it that, with one accord, we all now fail to recognise the portrait our honest trust had visualised? Let any one of my fellow-countrymen contrast the newspapers of twenty years ago with those of to-day, and infallibly he will demand an answer.

Two suggestions have been proffered to explain the change that has come over the German people. The first is that their minds have been debauched by the works of philosophers and writers who have sought to engraft the gospel of mercilessness and of barbarity on to the national consciousness. Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardi—these are the men who have turned the gentle and peace-loving German, whom we knew and loved, into the ruthless barbarian we are fighting to-day.

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But personally, I believe that the number of Germans who are familiar with the writings of, say, Nietzsche is comparatively small, and, in any case, to credit these *littérateurs* with the stupendous power of changing the whole character, the very disposition of a people, is to attribute to literature a power it never possessed. True it is that the pen is mightier than the sword, and few men, indeed, are insensible to the written word; but that a people can be so beneath the potency of its sway as to cast from them all previous conceptions of life, all former ideals—nay, all the feelings that hitherto have been cherished—is an incredible belief that needs only to be stated to be dismissed. The cause of the decay of Germany lies deeper than this. Deeper than Nietzsche and Treitschke and Bernhardi.

To come to the second suggestion. It is the confident belief of the man in the street that the Kaiser is responsible for the present war and all the desolation following in its train, and there can be no question that, from whatever reason, his was the hand which let loose on Europe the horrors from which it will take us a generation and more to recover. But that he has the power to remould and to recast the essentials of his people at will, turning them from angels into devils, and vice versa, is far too flattering a view of the pinch-

THE CAUSE OF THE WAR

beck dictator of Potsdam, who in all his reign of excursions and alarms has actually originated nothing, nor added one single new idea to the mental stock of his subjects. The authority of the Kaiser over the Germans lies not in the fact that he has the power to change them, but rather in this: he has not the power to change himself from being anything but a typical Prussian, who in his own person crystallises the qualities and defects of the predominant section of his people, so that they, worshipping him, adore themselves in his glorified image.

William II. has their prejudices, their narrowness, their insensibility to ideas, their restless spirit of aggression, their blind reliance on force. Above all, he has that iron spirit of ruthless mutilation which enables the Prussian to inflict and suffer all things to gain his end, and which has caused him to dominate Germany in a sense that none of us have yet, I think, comprehended.

It is that domination which led directly to the present war, and unless that fact be clearly apprehended the war will have been fought in vain. The grand problem of the situation, in fact, lies in the correct understanding of Prussian as apart from the German psychology, and to master that we must consider—not the Kaiser, but a far more

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commanding figure—Frederick the Great, the man who made Prussia!

As in the lives of men, so with nations. There are times and crises when the impact of a great personality gives to their character—and so to their destiny—an impulse that never wholly leaves them. It may, under certain circumstances, be forgotten and disregarded: softened and modified by time and by other forces, it may pass unnoticed, but, assuredly, sooner or later, that impulse will make itself felt. It may be dormant, but will never die; and one day will astonish everyone by the freshness and force with which it is reasserted. Such a phenomenon we are now witnessing.

Prussia was, to all intents, founded by Frederick the Great. It became a kingdom, it is true, in 1701, twelve years before his birth. But it was not until 1740, when Frederick succeeded his father, that Europe found her a force to be reckoned with.

To-day Europe is again confronted with the mailed fist of the Prussian ruler, and it may not be unprofitable if we compare, for a moment, the strange and startling resemblances that we find alike in the personalities and the circumstances involved.

First, then, as to Frederick. Let us glance for a moment at his upbringing:—

“The history,” says Macaulay, “of his boyhood

A FEROCIOUS MONARCH

is painfully interesting. Oliver Twist in the parish workhouse, Smike at Dotheboys Hall, were petted children when compared with this wretched heir apparent of a crown. The nature of Frederick William (his father) was hard and bad, and the habit of exercising arbitrary power had made him frightfully savage. His rage constantly vented itself to right and left in curses and blows. When His Majesty took a walk, every human being fled before him, as if a tiger had broken loose from a menagerie. If he met a lady in the street, he gave her a kick, and told her to go home and mind her brats. If he saw a clergyman staring at the soldiers, he admonished the reverend gentleman to betake himself to study and prayer, and enforced this pious advice by a sound caning, administered on the spot. But it was in his own house that he was most unreasonable and ferocious. His palace was hell, and he the most execrable of fiends, a cross between Moloch and Puck. His son Frederick and his daughter Wilhelmina, afterwards Margravine of Bayreuth, were in an especial manner objects of his aversion. . . . The business of life, according to him, was to drill and to be drilled."

Such were the early associations, the early influences of the man who was destined to make Prussia a force in Europe.

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“At dinner the plates were hurled at his head: sometimes he was forced to swallow food so nauseous that he could not keep it on his stomach. Once his father knocked him down, dragged him along the floor to a window, and was with difficulty prevented from strangling him with the cord of the curtain. The Queen, for the crime of not wishing to see her son murdered, was subjected to the grossest indignities.”

It is small wonder that when Frederick himself grew to manhood he was destitute not merely of refinement but of any decency of feeling. Genius he had, in a high degree; but to compassion, pity, sympathy, and, still more, honour, he was a stranger; and if the absence of these qualities is characteristic of that superman of Nietzsche, to whom most Prussians are supposed to correspond, then, indeed, we have that phenomenon existent a hundred years or so before his coming was announced. If we forget for a moment Frederick's great military talents and his supreme administrative gifts, he will recall to us not an imaginary but a very real character in Germany to-day—the man who typifies Prussia, and contrives to impose her and her methods on the millions of peace-loving and unoffending, if inert, Germans. Witness the following:—

“Frederick was not content with being his own

SECOND-RATE STATESMEN

prime minister; he would be his own sole minister. Under him there was no room, not merely for a Richelieu or a Mazarin, but neither for a Colbert, a Louvois, or a Torcy. A love of labour for its own sake, a restless and insatiable longing to dictate, to intermeddle, to make his power felt, a profound scorn and distrust of his fellow-creatures, made him unwilling to ask counsel, to confide important secrets, to delegate ample powers. The highest functionaries under his government were mere clerks, and were not so much trusted by him as valuable clerks are often trusted by the heads of departments."

Of whom does this remind us? Whom else but of the man who jettisoned Bismarck after years of service, and dismissed von Bülow and Caprivi with ignominy; whose imperious will and arrogant nature will not suffer any minister who dares to betray the least independence of judgment, the slightest firmness of will. Because of this, German diplomacy to-day stands an admitted failure; the Kaiser is left only with second-rate men, mere creatures of his whim and pleasure, and with nothing of the dignity or authority of statesmen. We may trace the resemblance farther still. Says Macaulay of the Kaiser's great ancestor :

"His own exertions were such as were hardly

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to be expected from a human body or a human mind. At Potsdam, his ordinary residence, he rose at three in summer and four in winter. A page soon appeared with a large basket full of all the letters which had arrived for the King by the last courier—dispatches from ambassadors, reports from officers of revenue, plans of buildings, proposals for draining marshes, complaints from persons who thought themselves aggrieved, applications from persons who wanted titles, military commissions, and civil situations. He examined the seals with a keen eye; for he was never for a moment free from the suspicion that some fraud might be practised on him. Then he read the letters, divided them into several packets, and signified his pleasure, generally by a mark, often by two or three words of cutting epigram.

“By eight o’clock at latest he had finished this part of his task. The adjutant-general was then in attendance, and received instructions for the day as to all the military arrangements of the kingdom. Then the King went to review his guards, not as kings ordinarily review their guards, but with the minute attention and severity of an old drill-sergeant. In the meantime the four cabinet secretaries had been employed in answering the letters on which the King had that morning signified his will. These unhappy men were forced

A BLIND BRUTE FORCE

to work all the year round like negro slaves in the time of the sugar-crop." The resemblance will be apparent to everyone who knows the daily life of the Kaiser.

The same philosophy that made Frederick the Great deny anything and everything but force causes the Kaiser to subordinate the highest interest of his people to his mania for militarism. Macaulay vividly portrays the beginnings of this passion for a colossal army utterly disproportionate to the population: "Of the males in the vigour of life, a seventh were probably under arms; and thus a great force had, by drilling, by reviewing and by the unsparing use of cane and scourge, been taught to perform all evolutions with a rapidity and a precision which would have astonished Villars or Eugène. The elevated feelings which are necessary to the best kind of army were then wanting in the Prussian service. In those ranks were not found the religious and political enthusiasm which inspired the pikemen of Cromwell, the patriotic ardour, the thirst of glory, the devotion to a great leader which inflamed the old guard of Napoleon."

It is the lack of such "elevated feelings" which makes the German army, though well drilled and able to perform with "rapidity and precision" astonishing evolutions, nevertheless a blind, brute force.

The relentless rule of the Hohenzollerns in

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crushing out the moral factor has made the Prussian army a superb machine indeed, but has left it void of that impulse, that inspiration without which true patriotism cannot be sustained. The scourge, the emblem of the Kaiser's power, has come down to him in the line of tradition. "Military offences were punished by Frederick with several barbarous scourgings, and to be shot was considered by the Prussian soldier as a secondary punishment."

By the scourge has the Kaiser trained his battalions, and any lesson taught by such brutal and debasing means deadens the mind to those finer issues which inspire the highest heroism.

Imperial interference with matters of domestic interest is a byword in Germany, where, as we know, the Kaiser keeps a watchful eye over the actions and even the conversations of his people, lest either should savour ever so little of liberty. The same mania for absolutism has always reigned in Prussia under the rule of the Hohenzollerns.

"Most of the vices of Frederick's administration resolve themselves into one: an inbred spirit of meddling. He drilled his people as he drilled his grenadiers. The public money, of which the King was generally so sparing, was lavishly spent in ploughing bogs, in planting mulberry trees amidst the sand, in bringing sheep from Spain to improve the Saxon wool, in bestowing prizes for fine yarn,

A PASSION FOR MEDDLING

in building manufactories of textiles, and so on. Neither the experience of other rulers nor his own could ever teach him that something more than a restless mind and a grant of public money was required to create great industries."

The same passion for directing and regulating is present in both men. In Frederick's time nobody was allowed to travel without the royal permission. If the permission were granted, the pocket money of the traveller was awarded by royal ordinance; a merchant was permitted to spend less than a noble, and the manner of his disbursement was carefully observed. That Kaiser William, with his passion for meddling, desired to attain the same petty autocracy events have conclusively proved.

Perhaps the most significant point of resemblance lies in the famous confession of Frederick explaining why he went to war with Maria Theresa, of Hungary: "Ambition, interest, the desire of making the people talk about me carried the day, and I decided for war." The desire of making people talk about him is at once the mainspring and the guiding force of his descendant William, a force which has let loose his troops on a peaceful country, challenging the rights, the liberties, the very existence of Belgium.

One might go on indefinitely comparing the two men. Just as the Kaiser delights in bewilder-

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ing architects by his captious criticisms of their achievements, by conducting Wagner after a method of his own, by designing cartoons whose symbolism baffles comprehension, so, too, Frederick philandered with all the poets and poetasters that he could entice to his palace, and alternately patronised and bullied them. And neither Frederick the Great nor William the Little believed the least in poetry or philosophy, but in one thing only—force; force expressed in an army planned on a machine model, and so drilled, equipped, and instructed that it should be, to all intents and purposes, invincible, and should give them signal sovereignty over nations and peoples, rulers and ruled. To both, treaties were scraps of paper. Humanity had no rights that the cannon could not cancel. The man who founded Prussia, and the man who typifies it to-day, are, in all their essentials, identical; and if we leave out the supreme ability of the one, and the restless pomposity of the other, the resemblance is positively staggering.

We have but to turn to the history of Prussia's first campaign to detect it. The Archduchess Maria Theresa was to succeed to the throne of Austria, and, says Macaulay, "no sovereign has ever taken possession of a throne by a clearer title." Prussia, with France, England, and the rest of the

HISTORICAL PERFIDY

Great Powers, had bound themselves to maintain the treaty by virtue of which she was to ascend the throne, and the sovereigns of Europe were bound by every obligation to defend the rights of the Archduchess. But one determined to depart from that treaty, and that one was Frederick of Prussia. In the manifestoes that he published he set up a spurious claim to Silesia, but we have already learned his real object: "Ambition, interest, the desire to make people talk about me—these carried the day." We know the sequel, for in this matter history has repeated herself with microscopic fidelity.

"Many thousands of his troops were actually in Silesia before the Queen of Hungary knew that he had set up any claim to any part of her territories. At length he sent her a message which could be regarded only as an insult. If she would but let him have Silesia, he would, he said, stand by her against any power which should try to deprive her of her other dominions; as if he was not already bound to stand by her, or as if his new promise could be of more value than the old one."

What followed?

"The whole world sprang to arms! On the head of Frederick is all the blood which was shed in a war which raged during many years, and in

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every quarter of the globe; the blood of the column of Fontenoy, the blood of the mountaineers who were slaughtered at Culloden. The evils produced by his wickedness were felt in lands where the name of Prussia was unknown; and, in order that he might rob a neighbour whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coasts of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the Great Lakes of North America."

* * * * *

There is a certain theory of heredity, which has gained much ground of late among German scientists, though not of German origin; a theory that has the advantage of being based on facts that are patent to the man in the street as well as to the *savant*. It is called Mendelism, and, put shortly, the conclusions of its advocates amount to this: if, they say, you take a parent type or stock of well-defined characteristics, and cross it, and cross the resultants again and yet again, still you are bound to find, sooner or later, that there is a sharp and unmistakable return to the original. This holds good in the vegetable world, as every gardener will tell you. It holds good in the human world also. How many times has it not been observed that a child, coal-black and with all the negro characteristics, has been born to parents who had passed for pure white, and only one of whom

A REVERSION TO TYPE

was of remote negro descent? And it is true of nations, too. Many types from many races, widely different from the Prussians, have been joined, often against their will, to the parent state of the German Empire. The Bavarians, the Saxons, the Hanoverians, the Hessians, all have been forced, at one time or another, and on terms that they abhorred, into an unnatural union with the predominant partner. They brought gifts, inspirations, enthusiasms unknown to the Prussian. The passion for education, the love of music, the simplicity of character that finds rest and contentment in a quiet home-life, and which make the German peasant-folk so lovable; the business aptitude and industry that built up her commerce—all these they contributed. And the Prussian seemed for long to lie quiescent, or, at least, he was forgotten in our contemplation of the more agreeable and stimulating sides of German character.

Now, in the twinkling of an eye, all this is changed. All the culture, all the chivalry, all the wisdom of Germany has fallen from her like a garment. There has been a sudden reversion to type. The world is overcast with a horror that we thought had passed away for ever. The German eagle has turned into a vulture! The Goth, that we thought dead, was only sleeping; to-day, he is awake and at our gates!

CHAPTER II

How Bismarck Worked for War

THE late August Bebel, the veteran Socialist leader, once informed Sir Valentine Chirol—at least, so runs the legend—that nothing but the crowning mercy of a supreme military disaster would free his beloved country from the militarism which, since Frederick's day, has grown to such monstrous proportions; overshadowing first Prussia, then Germany, and at last Europe herself.

I cannot vouch for the story, but this much is certain: only when the iron grip of the Hohenzollerns has loosened on Prussia, owing to pressure from without, and because their great military machine has failed them, only then can their subjects find breathing space for those other interests, those more ennobling enthusiasms, without which a people cannot be human, much less imperial. Man does not live by drill alone; and it is scarcely surprising perhaps that, as Bismarck himself pointed out, the Prussians who had cheered Frederick's victories in his life rubbed their hands in joy at his death, seeing at last re-

HOHENZOLLERN RESTORATION

lief from his unconscionable demands and endless exactions. Nay, more; by a strange irony the very period during which the army he created was at its weakest, when it was recovering from the humiliations of Jena—was also the heroic age of Prussia; when, flushed by a fervent patriotism, she led the Continent in the revival of that national spirit which was to break Napoleon. To that age belongs the great statesman Stein; to that age belongs the famous patriot Jawn; to that age belong the beginnings of the enthusiasm for education which distinguished Germany throughout the nineteenth century.

It is not a little significant that Jawn himself, though he succeeded in escaping the rigours of Napoleonic espionage for many years, what time he continued his propaganda among his fellow-countrymen, was, at the restoration of the Hohenzollerns to full sovereign power, promptly arrested and subjected, first, to imprisonment, and then to police inspection. The fact is that though the gospel of the drill-sergeant, as initiated by the great Frederick, was repugnant to the people themselves, yet its advantages were vividly present to the dull minds of the Junkers, from whom the military caste is drawn. A people kept perpetually at attention, drilled and driven into a discipline that deprives the human being of all

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initiative, that renders the soldier a mere automaton whose only thought and instinct is to obey, cannot constitute a democracy likely to prove very dangerous, even to the most selfish and contemptible of squirearchies. In this degradation of the Prussian the purblind and narrow-minded Junker could see a most valuable method of ensuring his own status. Terrorising the rank and file of the Prussian army, he obtained an ascendancy over the men who under free conditions might have challenged his own privileged position; while the policy of aggression which Prussia introduced into Europe made any concentration of the national intelligence on domestic affairs impossible. In other words, the policy of terrorising by "Frightfulness," of which the Kaiser has just given us such supreme examples, had its origin in the fear of the Prussian aristocracy of their own people, to assuage which the bloodiest wars of the nineteenth century have been waged.

Vivid insight into this vicious circle of Prussian terrorism is afforded by a conversation which Bismarck reported in his *Reminiscences*. The speaker is King William, the future German Emperor, and his words show a dread of his own subjects that is positively startling. "I can perfectly well see," he says to his Chancellor, "how all this will end. Over there, in front of

JUNKER ABSOLUTISM

the Opera House under my windows, they will cut off your head, and mine a little while afterwards."

"They," I need hardly say, were the populace, then clamouring against the absolutism that the Junkers imposed on them, and against the militarism upon which it rested.

Now it is of the most profound importance that we should clearly understand the large part that this dread of the common people has played in the building up of Prussia, for it has, beyond question, been the determining factor in her foreign policy. We have but to turn to the life of Bismarck himself to find ample confirmation of this. When, in 1847, the first Prussian Diet assembled, the bulk of the delegates were effusively democratic. They had seen their country pass through the fire of the Napoleonic wars, and they had heard from their fathers the harrowing story of Frederick's campaigns. They had felt the iron heel of militarism and the insolence of Junker tyranny. Above all, they had lived to see Germany rent by internecine divisions and hatreds which, if they did not bring war itself, kept its hideous possibility constantly before their eyes.

They sought, therefore, for that freedom of speech and of the Press which is indispensable to the life of a free people, for a reasonable limita-

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tion of the swollen standing army, and, above all, for the federation, on equal terms, of all the North German States, whose interests were largely identical.

Had that programme been realised, the history of the nineteenth century would have been vastly different. Knit in one strong federation, the German States would have been free to develop on rational and well-ordered lines, strong enough to resist aggression, and chastened enough not to enter into it; with an army that was adequate indeed to preserve peace, but not large enough to menace it; and with a people, bent on the cultivation of their own resources, rather than on dominion over others. But there was one fatal objection to the realisation of such an ideal. It would have deprived the Prussian aristocracy of the privileges that they sought at all hazards to preserve. Their King might not, indeed, have been decapitated in front of the Opera House, but assuredly he would have been shorn of some of their power. Their own supremacy would have been jeopardised. Who knows? the very land on the ownership of which that supremacy rested might have been taken from them! Therefore they fought the new spirit that, rising in Germany, had invaded even their sacred domain, with all the bitterness, all the rancour, and all the determination of men who

A LOST OPPORTUNITY

feel that they are in the last ditch, where compromise is impossible.

But, as we have certainly discovered these last few weeks, even Prussians can be turned out of that ditch if the attacking party be sufficiently resolute. In those early days, had the offensive possessed a leader of sufficient shrewdness and capacity—a Mirabeau or a Cavour—there is no doubt that the Junkers would have gone down before a united Germany. Unfortunately, the situation produced only one great man, and he, by a tragic accident, was on the wrong side. That man was Bismarck.

Bismarck had, on his entry into political life, many disadvantages. Popular feeling was against him. He was first stormed at, then stoned by the mob. The Tadpoles and Tapers, the discreet placemen of the Prussian Court, distrusted him for his *brusquerie*, his uncompromising frankness of speech, his inveterate habit—he had not then tasted the sweets of office—of putting matters fearlessly to the proof. He was, moreover, a man of obvious limitations and of an ingrained brutality of nature. But it must be admitted that, within certain narrow limits, his was a mind of extraordinary sagacity, of utter fearlessness, and of a consistency that added enormously to the man's strength. He knew precisely what he wanted;

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he knew, or thought he did, exactly how to realise his desires. And from the first he bent all his energies and exerted all his strength to see that German Confederation was made impossible except on one condition—the paramountcy of Prussia! “I am not going,” he declared, “to see the ancient Crown of Prussia” (it dated from the year 1701!), “dissolved in the filthy ferment of South German immorality. Our task is the establishment of German national unity under the leadership of the King of Prussia.”

He spoke with extraordinary vigour, and, it must be admitted, with extraordinary cleverness against the arguments of the democrats, who were trying to force their country on a new path, against the conservative instincts of many of their duller fellow-countrymen. While, on the one hand, he reassured these by asserting that the Prussian monarchs possessed a practically absolute crown, “not by the favour of the people, but by the grace of God,” he dismayed his opponents by his extraordinarily shrewd criticism of Parliamentary government: criticism that to this day has never been wholly answered. “You talk of England,” he said, “and her Constitution of 1688! What did it mean? That for a century she lived under the tutelage of an omnipotent aristocracy of a few families” (an almost exact

BISMARCK DESTROYS A DREAM

paraphrase of Disraeli's "Venetian Oligarchy"). "How," he asked them, "are you to trust weighty decisions to 'mere lottery-drawn majorities?' The ballot-box is, after all, a dice-box."

But it was not mere debating triumphs that secured Bismarck the victory. He had a constructive policy, easily expressed in terms that everyone could understand. The democrats had not. His policy was simple. "It is not," he said, "by speechifying and majorities that the great questions of the time will have to be settled—but by blood and iron." These, he declared, were the ingredients that must cement the unity of Germany, and Prussia was to be at once the architect and the supreme authority in the new structure. Everything was to be sacrificed to secure the paramountcy of Prussia, and without that there was to be no German unity at all. So far as Prussia was concerned, the bribe thus offered to her pride was, of course, enormously helpful to Bismarck's plans. So far as the other States were concerned, Prussia offered them, to quote Bismarck's own words, "a roof to come in under," and, in the alternative, the future held nothing more definite than their probable coercion. Bismarck, in fact, by his ruthlessness, his tenacity, his insistence in the necessity of an overwhelming force, had virtually destroyed the dream of a

THE UNSPEAKABLE PRUSSIAN

German Confederation, and there remained nothing except to fall in behind Prussia. Mankind will always exchange chaos and uncertainty for an ordered plan; even for tyranny, and a free Confederation having proved impossible, Bismarck held the field.

He devoted himself to the diplomatic realisation of his scheme with a thoroughness only equalled by his complete absence of scruple. His conscience, which under any conditions would have lacked nothing in robustness, was, we may be sure, kept from troubling him by that Hegelian philosophy which lies at the root of Prussian development, and which is thus described by a particularly clear thinker of a later day :

“In his conception of the State, Hegel held to the doctrine of its omnipotence in the ancient Greek sense: that the individual realises himself completely and only in and through the institutions of the State, and that he finds in the secular order no principle of separation from the moral and religious consciousness. For this omnipotent State is needed a strong government, which will unify the varied classes into a common whole. That government can only be administered by a powerful executive, supreme and absolute in all fundamentals, lifted beyond criticism. But between the Government and the people he places a mediat-

BISMARCK'S "PIGOTT" METHODS

ing element, not as any restriction on the Government, but as showing to the people that the Government is being well administered. This mediating element is found in a hierarchy of princes and officials, the official class being open to talent, and so not partaking of the character of a *noblesse*. At the base of the political structure is a powerful military organisation. Such was in general the political conception of Hegel, and such were the *idées mères* of Bismarck."

Small wonder, then, that inspired by this philosophy Bismarck used methods that can only be described as analogous to those of Pigott, the forger, that he misrepresented facts and misled men, that he found no path too devious to take him to his goal. If the individual is nothing, and the State everything, as Hegel asserts, then indeed we ought not to be surprised. If Hegel is right, then it is right for Prussians, in order to gain their point, to tear up treaties, to disregard the laws of war, to put women and children in the firing line, to terrorise non-combatants by organised "frightfulness"; so that it be for the State, all is well, and, like Bismarck, they are justified of their conscience. Given a people who can be indoctrinated with such a gospel, and it is hardly surprising that, on the one hand, all free criticism should be suppressed: the Press censored, the plat-

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form rendered powerless, while, on the other, the drill-sergeant should be made paramount in the land, and the people taught that theirs is but to obey. The danger to such a creed is that, if the people should once stop to think, the whole structure may come toppling down like a pack of cards; small wonder, therefore, that Bismarck, with such a philosophy, worked ceaselessly to make Prussia supreme in the German Empire. They of all the German peoples looked to such a scheme with least repugnance—they, the most drilled and the most dull! Once their support had been secured, it would be easy, if not to convert, then to coerce the others, and so, by ensuring the Junker dominion over the Prussians, the Prussians could be made to ensure theirs over the rest of Germany.

Now, the chief obstacle to Bismarck's plans was Austria, whose Emperor was, it may be observed, still the titular head of Germany, and who could oppose to Prussia's constant encroachments an authority and a resistance that none of the petty German States could possibly summon. A more honest and less cynical director of policy than Bismarck would doubtless have settled conclusions with the rival dynasty by an immediate appeal to force. But the hope of the Hohenzollerns knew a trick worth two of that. There

AUSTRIA JOCKEYED INTO WAR

was a far more effective method of crushing Austria than by fighting her, and that was to enter into an alliance with her statesmen; to contrive that her forces should act in reality on behalf of Prussia, though ostensibly in the joint interests of both. In a word, to make her the catspaw which could pull the chestnuts out of the fire.

I need do no more than point out here that in this, as in other respects, history has repeated itself with unerring accuracy, since the Austrian White Paper shows conclusively that Austria-Hungary was jockeyed into the present campaign by the diplomacy of Berlin. To that very interesting phase of the embroglio which preceded hostilities I shall return later. For the moment, we are concerned with Prussian diplomacy at the time when Germany was in the making, and when Austria and Prussia were both rivals for her hegemony. The death of Frederick VII. of Denmark gave Bismarck his chance, for it raised again the vexed question of Schleswig-Holstein, those Duchies attached to the Danish kingdom, which were occupied largely by Germans, and by Germans dissatisfied with Danish rule. Here was an opportunity that the Iron Chancellor was not likely to miss.

The Germans in the Duchies were groaning under disabilities that Denmark had promised to

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redress, but which promise she had failed to keep. True, the grievances they laboured under were very analogous to those that Bismarck still imposed on the Prussians themselves, but he was not the man to stick at such a trifle, and he called on Austria to aid him in delivering these sons of the Fatherland from the yoke of the oppressor. Neither Schleswig nor Holstein was to be added to Prussia; Bismarck sought no territory, he wished no annexation. But the reforms which the late King of Denmark had promised must be insisted upon, and to that end war was declared on Denmark, both Austria and Germany agreeing that they would act together in the matter and "determine the succession of the matter by mutual consent."

It is interesting to note that, according to one of the most accurate and faithful of historians, Mr. Alison Phillips, "Bismarck's main fear was that the Danes at the last moment would refuse to fight. Had they withdrawn from Schleswig under protest," he says, "the Powers would probably have intervened, and a European Congress would have restored Schleswig to the Danish crown, while Austria and Prussia, as European Powers, would have been forced to prevent any attempt on it by the Duke of Holstein. To prevent this possibility Bismarck made the Danish Cabinet believe

PRUSSIA'S BASE DECEPTION

that England had threatened Prussia with intervention in the event of hostilities being opened; though, as a matter of fact, she had done nothing of the kind. The ruse succeeded; Denmark remained defiant, and on February 1, 1864, the Austrian and Prussian forces crossed the Eider."

In the whole of history, has there been a baser deception practised on a small nation than this; to make an arbitrary and sudden demand—though a demand admittedly with some basis of justification—to find that that nation is disposed to yield, and then actually to encourage her to fight by leading her to believe that support from a great Power would be extended to her? Could there, I ask, be a baser, a more odious subterfuge? If so, Bismarck and the Prussians were to supply it. The Allies drove the Danes out of the Duchies in a fortnight, and the object of the war—that is, the ostensible object—had been fulfilled, when their troops stood on the frontier of Jutland. Austria cried a halt; Europe was resentful; for now that the Germans in the two Duchies had been liberated, no more need be done.

Bismarck, however, continued to press on with the war, and did not fail to emphasise the fact to Austria that the whole question of predominance in the German Confederation was at stake. We all know what followed. Denmark

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was crushed, and surrendered the Duchies which, for the nonce, were jointly occupied by Prussia and Austria; by Prussia willingly, by Austria against her will. She desired, now that they were free from Danish control, to hand them over to the tutelage of their hereditary Grand Duke. Not so Bismarck. He wanted them for Prussia, and for Prussia alone; and with sublime audacity he forced that demand on the Ally, whose blood and valour had helped him to win the victory. Austria had done her due share of the fighting. Austria had helped to bear the heat and burden of the day, but of the spoils Austria was to get nothing. She was only to receive as reward the scorn and indignation of the other German States, who were roused to intense bitterness against Prussia's latest grab.

Perhaps that indignation impelled Bismarck to go even farther along the path of dishonour that he had chosen. Those other German States were, without Austria, largely powerless, and would have to succumb to the inexorable demands of Prussia. "Now, if ever," says Mr. Alison Phillips, "was the time for Austria to take the tide of opportunity at the flood, and at the head of an all but united German sentiment, to sweep Prussian ambitions for ever from her path. But Austria was in no condition to take advan-

PROVOKING ANOTHER WAR

tage of the situation. Her treasury was empty, her cavalry lacked horses, and her artillery guns." She was in no condition to fight, and she waited. And Bismarck waited also—till Austria was further weakened by the success of Garibaldi in Italy. And then war followed between the two rival German powers. Prussia's military organisation had been brought to a pitch of high efficiency; Austria's, as we have seen, was hopelessly at fault. Within two months her army had been crushed, and the South German States were virtually at the mercy of Prussia.

But Bismarck had still one obstacle to overcome before he could consummate his life's work and establish on Prussian lines the great German Empire. France had still to be dealt with: that is to say, first crushed and then, if possible, conciliated. With a hostile and powerful France in the west, it was impossible, so Bismarck reasoned, for the German Empire to rest secure, and, accordingly, yet a third war had to be projected, planned, prepared for and then, quietly and subtly, provoked; provoked in such a manner that Europe should imagine that Germany was the injured party, who had been seeking for peace, and that the dogs of war had been loosed by the reckless and irresponsible Emperor of the French, Napoleon le Petit.

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This view actually obtained for at least two decades after the campaign of 1870. For years the world hugged the delusion that it was France—light, volatile, irresponsible France—who sought the quarrel; that Germany—strong, silent, stolid Germany—had had the sword “forced into her hand!” That, roughly, was the belief current up to within a few years ago, and one does not know whether to be more amazed at the genius or the moral depravity of the man who was responsible for this distortion of history.

For what are the facts? Bismarck planned, and plotted, and worked for the war that was to be “forced” on Germany for years and years before it took place. There can be no doubt upon this head, because we have it under his own hand and seal. Writing in those “Reminiscences,”* which give so vivid an insight into the tortuous Prussian mind, Bismarck confessed:

“I did not doubt that a Franco-German war must take place before the construction of a united Germany could be realised. I was at that time pre-occupied with the idea of delaying the outbreak of this war until our fighting strength should be increased by the application of the Prussian military legislation not only to Hanover, Hesse and Holstein, but, as I could hope even at that

* Smith, Elder & Co.

BISMARCK'S SATANIC PLAN

time from the observation I had made, to the South Germans.

“I at no time,” he goes on to say, “regarded a war with France as a simple matter”; so that, as he explains, it had to be delayed until all the “country newly joined to Prussia” had been thoroughly organised, drilled and prepared. Every year added a hundred thousand trained soldiers to the army, and every year, therefore, Bismarck played with Louis Napoleon, and with France, with an ease that was at once diabolic and masterly. There is something inhuman, almost Satanic in the idea of this man, deliberately nursing war with a neighbouring Power to whom he professed, on occasions, the friendliest feelings, the most profound respect. There was actually no point at issue, no real dispute between the two countries, and granting, as we must, that Louis Napoleon was a disturbing, even an impossible factor in European politics, yet this did not justify Germany in doing more than to prepare for eventualities.

But for Bismarck and the Prussian Junker this was not enough. France must be crushed—and in such a fashion that Germany should not lose the respect of the world. France must be made to appear in the wrong!

At last the opportunity arrived: Germany had

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now been thoroughly Prussianised. She was armed *cap à pie*: all that remained was to pick the quarrel. The question, the really trifling and petty question of the Spanish Succession, gave Bismarck the opportunity, and behold him on the evening of July 13th, 1870, dining with his friends Moltke and Roon, discussing the situation.

It looked for the moment unfavourable to the war-makers. The Queen had interviewed and had besought her husband, with tears in her eyes, to ensure peace, with the result that he had actually given audience to the French ambassador for four consecutive days. So black indeed was the prospect—for war, that is—that Bismarck had decided to resign.

Bismarck relates in his "Reminiscences" how he communicated this decision to his two friends, von Moltke and Roon, one night at dinner, and their chagrin was increased by the receipt of a telegram sent to Bismarck for publication. The telegram made unequivocally for peace, and revealed a distinct score for French as against Prussian diplomacy. How did Bismarck get over the difficulty? Quite simply. He merely altered the text of the telegram.

"This action," he says, "brought out in the two generals a revulsion to a more joyous mood, the liveliness of which surprised me. They had sud-

A DESPICABLE TRICK

denly recovered their pleasure in eating and drinking, and spoke in a more cheerful vein. Roon said, 'Our God of old lives still, and will not let us perish in disgrace.' "

That, surely, is the apotheosis of the Prussian! "God lives"—because an excuse has been found whereby a supine nation can be offered up on the altar of militarism! "God lives"—because Prussia's Chancellor is able so to distort a dispatch as to produce an utterly false impression.

We all know the sequel: France was beaten; the German Empire established mighty among the nations as the paramount force in Europe. Bismarck's life's work was done.

And this much may be said for him. Odious as were his methods, and despotic as were his aims, he was a consummate statesman and a genuine patriot, who towers far above the half-demented pigmy now hurling to destruction the forces which Bismarck fused. Had Bismarck remained in power another twenty years we might have been spared the worst results of Prussianism. With all his moral limitations, he was sane enough to have dismissed the idea of world-dominion as a crazy dream, and wise enough to have refrained from that perpetual provocation which the Kaiser has inflicted on us for over two decades. The frantic boasts, the vain imaginings, the insolent threats

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that, week by week and year by year, have been poured out of Potsdam in a manner natural to the Kaiser, were alien to the servant he degraded. Well might Bismarck exclaim, after his last audience: "That man will lose us everything I won."

With the passing of the great Chancellor, slowly, imperceptibly but surely, the decadence of Germany set in!

CHAPTER III

The Eagle which became a Vulture

BISMARCK'S policy of Blood and Iron was not, as we have seen, carried through without a vast augmentation of the military forces, first of Prussia, then of Germany. Purged of its voluntary elements at a very early stage in its career, the army of the Fatherland soon became a mighty organisation—of its kind the most perfect that the world has ever seen; and it became also one of the most potent influences for the demoralisation of the people, and for their subjection to the Junker caste, that could possibly have been devised.

I say of its kind, but, as a matter of fact, nothing else like it has ever existed in the history of war. Put shortly, the German army is a slave army. It is imposed upon the people simply and solely by the sheer force that it commands. The Germans are not naturally a military people; certainly they are not a warrior race. They have none of that fierce delight in combat that characterises the Gaul, none of that love of adventure which distinguishes the Englishman. They are,

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as a race, submissive and phlegmatic to a degree, and, by a strange paradox, it is their very lack of character, which the moralist tells us means resistance, that has helped to produce those atrocities by which they have shocked the civilised world. But submissive as they are, there has always slumbered in their breasts a deep resentment against militarism and the military caste that has been the ruin of their country.

Mr. Poulteney Bigelow relates in his book on the struggle for German freedom that, early in the nineteenth century, the students demonstrating near the Wartburg "threw into the fire several emblems of what new Germany abhorred—military caste, bureaucratic tyranny, and secret political police. They were symbolised on the occasion by a pair of corsets, presumed to fit the body of a lieutenant of the Guard" (contributed, apparently, by some forerunner of Dr. Harben), "a powdered queue, which typified the *ancien régime* before the French Revolution, and, lastly, the knout, or cat-o'-nine-tails, which required no explanation."

I question if anywhere else in Europe such a demonstration as this would have been possible at any stage in its history. When did Englishmen, when did Frenchmen, in their fiercest exuberances—when did ever any European nation demonstrate against their own army, against the

A SOUL-DESTROYING REGIME

very force on whom they depend for protection? And yet, knowing what we do of the huge and tyrannical organisation that passes by the name of "army" in Germany, ought we to be surprised?

To say that its discipline is dehumanising, cruel, arbitrary, and stupid—that is but a feeble indication of its merciless rigours, its soul-destroying and paralysing regime. When the Belgians found their towns occupied by the German soldiery they viewed with amazement the strange spectacle of German officers actually "barking" at their own men, and kicking and striking them. But their surprise was only excusable on the ground that they were entirely ignorant of the conditions obtaining in the army which boasts of its resemblance to those of Rome and Sparta.

The fact is that the policy of "frightfulness" runs through its every rank. To say that the men are as dirt in the eyes of their officers—that is to utter a mere truism.

"I want it known, I want it known," screamed one poor victim of the Junker caste as he lay writhing in agony on the battlefield. "I want it known that my officer did this to me"; and he pointed to a wound of undescrivable heartlessness. The men are, in fact, terrified of their officers—so terrified that they submit with an assumed cheerfulness to injustices, insults, humiliations,

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that it is deplorable to think white men should ever permit themselves to suffer. They are to be struck in the face, and must not even protest; "they are made to stand for minutes together with knees bent"; the very exercises that they have to execute are, many of them, inhuman, and in the nature of torture.

Small wonder that in or near barracks there are always to be found inscriptions chalked on the walls relating how many days, how many hours, the victims of the hideous system must pass in their country's service before they can obtain their release. Small wonder that the educated, aye, and the patriotic German shrinks from serving in the army as from a plague, and will leave home, friends, everything to escape the insufferable indignities, the terrors that it holds for any man not utterly brutalised.

It is no exaggeration, it is the cold, literal truth to say—or as near as one can get to it—that the German soldier is treated like a dog. There is a vivid word-picture of the sort of treatment he sustains in that extraordinarily interesting novel, "Jena, or Sedan," so exactly illustrative of the abominations of the German military service that I reproduce it in full. The sergeant is inspecting the kit of some of the men who are leaving the service that day to become reservists,

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against two of whom he has a grudge. Still, he can find no complaint to make.

“Keyser muttered a surly ‘All right,’ and, turning away, threw the things over Findeisen’s arm, and put the boots into his hand. But the gunner, who was already holding four pairs by the tags, let them fall to the ground.

“Sergeant Keyser picked them up, scolding furiously. The dust from the floor had stuck in thick streaks on the greasy leather.

“Then a bright idea occurred to the sergeant. He held the boots up before Findeisen’s face and bellowed at him: ‘Lick that off, you swine!’

“It was not really meant literally, that was plain; but an ungovernable fury began to glow in his eyes.

“Findeisen had drawn back. He ground his teeth, and looked defiance straight into the sergeant’s eyes.

“This maddened Keyser. His face became purple with passion, and again he hissed out: ‘Dog, lick it at once!’

“Suddenly the resolute spirit of opposition died out of Findeisen’s eyes. The strong, broad-shouldered man bowed as if under the lash; he became pale as death, and actually touched the boot with his tongue.”

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And then his comrade strikes the sergeant in the face, and gets three years' confinement in a fortress.

"Ah! but," it may be said, "that, after all, is only fiction." Then let us turn to fact. It has been found not once, but over and over again that the captured officers actually refuse even to enter the same railway compartment in which their men—their lowly, degraded and inferior men—are sitting: those men who, on the battlefield, stand round them, offering their bodies as shields. Even as I write I find reported in the papers the case of a wounded German colonel recently brought to a large hospital near Paris. He demanded champagne, and when this was refused by the doctor, because the man's state required different treatment, the colonel became abusive, and promised that the doctor should be the first man shot when the Germans entered the town. He conducted himself so badly that the hospital authorities thought themselves perfectly justified in taking the colonel away from the ward where he had been placed and giving up his bed to a wounded French officer who had just arrived. The German was accordingly moved into another ward, which was filled with wounded privates of his own regiment. These men were so utterly terrified by the appearance of their colonel that they begged the

PATHETIC MISCONCEPTIONS

nurses to move their beds so that they should not see him. The colonel died during the night.

That case illustrates the morbid psychological condition of the over-drilled and dragooned mechanism who answers to the name of soldier in Germany, and who is inspired by the very terror that the Kaiser instructed him to put into the minds of the Belgians—especially of the Belgian women and children.

And the process of terrorisation does not end here. "What did you think would happen to you if you were captured?" asked a Press correspondent of a wounded German. "I thought I should be shot," was the simple answer. This legend is duly recited to the rank and file of the great German army. "Suffer yourself to be taken, and you will be put barbarously to death." That, in effect, is what these officers tell the men whom they are leading! There was a pathetic—a dreadfully pathetic—illustration of the state of mind to which the German soldier and sailor is reduced reported quite early in the war. Some of them had been taken prisoners, and were on board a British battleship. In the morning, when they came on deck, they held out their hands in a wistful gesture of helpless resignation, and their amazed captors learnt that they expected to be hanged. "Bind us

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quickly," they said. "We are not afraid to die—but for pity's sake be quick."

It is shocking to reflect that brave men should be reduced to so pitiable a frame of mind by the system of "frightfulness" that pervades Prussia from the Kaiser downwards. But ought we to be surprised? Let us remember the Kaiser's own words concerning his troops. A year or so ago, when Sir Ian Hamilton was attending some manœuvres as the guest of the hero of Potsdam, that brave warrior asked the English general what he thought of the attack in close formation—that attack which has cost the enemy so dearly in this war. "It seems to me," was the answer, "that it must lead to the loss of many, very many lives." "Ah, yes," replied the War Lord, "but there are plenty more to follow them." That is an answer typical of the unspeakable Prussian. What matter that brave men are shot down like droves of cattle, that their valour leads them only to suffer an unnecessary death, that they leave behind them widows to mourn their loss on eight marks per month, children who will never know how their fathers fell? That is nothing to the War Lord. There are others to follow them: tens of thousands, millions of poor, helpless victims, who can be poured out on the enemy like flies.

And as with the men, so with the officers.

OUT-OF-DATE TRAINING

They, too, are the victims of the same paralysing fear, that same numbing terrorism. "The Prussian officer," says Bismarck, "will face death fearlessly. But if it comes to asking his superior to explain his instructions—that is another matter."

It may be greatly doubted whether an army so conducted, without initiative, without imagination, without aspiration—for the poor private, be it noted, fight he ever so bravely, can never carry a commission—it may be gravely doubted whether such an army can achieve the efficiency that is the single goal of all Prussian efforts. One recalls the fact that General French has told us that "our men have obtained a personal ascendancy over the Germans," and that, by reason of their superior intelligence and *moral*, they were able to fight in open formation and to direct vastly superior fire on the enemy; while the high priest of German militarism, the great Bernhardi, himself has said that, in modern war, initiative is everything, and that in the German army it is conspicuous by its absence. As Franz Beyerlein most ably pointed out in the novel I have quoted:

"The system of the military training of the men, evolved in an age of patriarchal bureaucratic government, had remained pedantically the same, counting on an ever-present patriotism. Meanwhile, in place of the previous overwhelming pre-

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ponderance of country recruits, a fresh element had now been introduced : the strong social-democratic tendencies of the industrial workers, who, it is true, did not compose the majority of the contingents, but who, with their highly developed intelligence, always exerted a very powerful influence.

“Now, instead of turning this highly developed intelligence to good account, they bound it hand and foot on the rack of an everlasting drill, which could not have been more soullessly mechanical in the time of Frederick the Great. And they expected this purely mechanical drill to hold together men from whom all joyful spontaneity was taken by the stiff, wooden formalism of their duty, and not a few of whom cherished the very opposite of patriotism in their breasts ! Drill was to maintain discipline among them ? It held them together as an iron hoop holds together a cask, the dry staves of which would fall asunder at the first kick ! ”

But the mind of the Junker does not take kindly to initiative, and it does not conceive it possible that a soldier can be more effective if he fights as a man and not as a slave : a failure to grasp a great psychological truth that may yet lose Germany her military ascendancy. The Junker is content with the plans and the system that held good in the reign of Frederick the Great, when the people of Prussia were, many of them, serfs

MILITARY DETERIORATION

in name as well as in fact, and the only difference that he makes is to place the Red Regiments—i.e. the Socialist regiments—first, as at Liège, so that by their decimation he achieves two objects: the weakening of the enemy and the strengthening of his imposition in the inner economy of Germany! And the Junker is wise—wise in his generation. A merciless, an everlasting, soulless, mechanical drill; a drill that robs the soldiers of all pride and freshness of spirit, and that renders them merely automata in the discharge of their orders—that may not be the best military training for Germans as a whole. But from the Junker point of view—from a point of view, that is, not of men who are statesmen and patriots, but selfish, narrow-minded monopolists—the present army training in force in Germany is as excellent as could be, for it is absolutely destructive of the intelligence they dread. Routine, regimentation; the atrophy of all initiative shrewdness and self-reliance—whatever may be its effect on the German army—is undeniably excellent for the German military caste.

Letters received from German soldiers at the front, and published in the Press, point unmistakably to this deterioration of the German army. For instance, the following speaks for itself:

“The 7th, 8th, and 9th of September we were

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constantly under shell and shrapnel fire, and suffered terrible losses. I was in a house which was hit several times. The fear of death in agony which is in every man's heart, and naturally so, is a terrible feeling.

"For four days I was under artillery fire. It is like hell, but a thousand times worse. On the night of the 9th the order was given to retreat, as it would have been madness to attempt to hold our position with our few men, and we should have risked a terrible defeat the next day. The 1st and 3rd Armies had not been able to attack with us, as we had advanced too rapidly.

"Our *morale* was absolutely broken.

"In spite of unheard-of sacrifices, we had achieved nothing. I cannot understand how our army, after fighting three great battles and being terribly weakened, was sent against a position which the enemy had prepared for three weeks, but naturally I know nothing of the intentions of our chiefs. . . . They say nothing has been lost. In a word, we retired towards Cormontreuil and Rheims by forced marches by day and night. We hear that three armies are going to get into line, entrench, rest, and then start afresh our victorious march on Paris. It was not a defeat, but only a strategic retreat. I have confidence in our chiefs that everything will be successful. Our first

COWARDICE ON THE FIELD

battalion, which has fought with unparalleled bravery, is reduced from 1,200 to 194 men. These numbers speak for themselves."

Again, the ambulance arrangements are bitterly complained of by the German soldiers. One, in a letter to a comrade, writes :

"Our ambulance men covered themselves with shame and left us for two days unassisted, without food or drink. Fortunately, the French came to our assistance, and treated us with the greatest attention. I hope, therefore, that you will take equal care of the French wounded."

Other letters stigmatise the conduct of the German doctors, who, the soldiers aver, abandon the wounded in the moment of danger. One German soldier, indeed, writing to his mother at Munich, said "the cowardice of the German surgeons has been the cause of thousands of German deaths."

When we come to consider how this method of training, and its effect, reacts upon the national character we shall see how profoundly deleterious it has proved to be. We must not forget that the training in question is applied not to a small army of picked men : it is applied practically to the entire male population, and the result has been to change absolutely the ideals of the race. The people agreed, albeit reluctantly, to universal

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service, on the ground that it was necessary for their own defence; necessary for their self-preservation. "We are," said Bismarck, "between the hammer and the anvil," and every German realised instinctively the need of making a supreme effort to resist, if necessary, the combined attacks of France on the west and Russia on the east. The Fatherland must be defended at all costs, and hateful as was the discipline of the army, it must be borne.

But now all this is changed; it is no longer the mere resistance to foreign aggression that actuates the military caste. As we shall presently see, it is world-dominion that their literary spokesmen demand. Can we really wonder? Consider for a moment the homage which the caste exact day by day. Let an ordinary civilian be out with his wife, and let them fail to make way before a German officer—and the wife will be jostled from the pavement into the roadway, and if the husband protests he will be struck or sabred. Probably he will not protest. He will have been drilled and bullied and dragooned into regarding the officer and his class as superior beings, who must on no account be opposed in any matter, great or small. The division between black men and white is not so humiliating to the blacks as is the distinction which the German officer de-

WOMEN ARE "BEASTS"

mands: distinctions which, for the most part, he gets quite easily. We all read some two or three years ago of the case of the German officer who kissed a young girl at a ball. Her fiancé instantly struck him—and was as quickly put under arrest, and later sentenced to imprisonment. The English officer, we know, makes way in the street or the railway car for a lady, maybe offers her his seat or holds open the door through which she passes, and is always ready to show her courtesy. But the cultured Prussians practise none of these absurdities. Watch them in the cafés of Berlin, and you will see them shoulder women on one side, or brush past them and tread on their feet. The Prussian officer has read his Nietzsche, and has been told that "Women are birds, beasts, or cats—or, at the best, cows!" And he treats them accordingly.

And as with women, so with all things that appear weak or helpless or defenceless. Do you remember that hero of Zabern, that gallant officer who sabred a poor hunchback who had dared to laugh at him, and who was later acquitted by court-martial?

"This," said the Germans,

"This is the Happy Warrior; this is he
Whom every man at-arms should wish to be."

Think of it! Can we imagine an English

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officer drawing his sword on a civilian, and that civilian a cripple, and then spilling the man's blood? And if we can imagine that, can we not hear the storm of protest and amazed indignation that would follow? But they manage these things differently in Prussia. What wonder that in hostile countries they rape, burn, loot, and intimidate in times of war, when in their own country in times of peace their conduct is, after all, but one degree better? And what wonder that a class so accustomed to such unnatural, such grotesque homage should conceive the ludicrous, the insane idea of world-dominion?

Some of the officers are themselves the victims of a system whose rigours often drive them into sanatoria or asylums. If one of them aspires to join the General Staff, for instance, then he must make up his mind to undergo a mental strain so severe that it may cost him health, rest, peace of mind—everything. It is not merely that he has to be trained and to be examined and re-examined. The regime to which he is subjected is meant deliberately to test his hardiness. If he withstands the ordeal, the severe study, the ceaseless catechisms, the merciless drill—then, no doubt, he gets his appointment. If not, why, then he breaks down and takes to drugs, or, perhaps, retires in the pride of his youth to a sanatorium. It is all one

CIVILIAN SERVILITY

to the authorities : so long as the military machine maintains its efficiency, an officer more or less does not matter.

But let us look for a moment at the effect of all this upon the psychology of the average German. This Prussian exaltation of the officer has made the civilian servile and abject to a degree incredible to a people with any idea of freedom. The Government decide to introduce a new law—it matters not on what subject, or whether the public like it or not. An editor criticises it in a paper. The article is censored, and if pungently written the writer goes to prison. If a meeting is held in support of the writer's intentions—why, then, very probably the speakers go to jail also. And so on throughout their political life. According to one authority, sentences in all totalling to not less than three hundred years of imprisonment are imposed by the Jeffreys of Berlin on offending journalists and platform speakers. Some of them have demurred to the Kaiser's capacity as a composer, or have criticised his poetry, or, worse still, have dared to differ from him on some question of *haute politique*. In September, 1897, Fräulein Hedwig Jaede, of Stettin, described the Emperor's song "Ægir" as rubbish, and her candour brought her three months' imprisonment! Other victims have taken part in some peace propaganda, or have

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made a jesting remark about the Kaiser's person which some treacherous friend has reported. Even during the present war we have seen the *Vorwärts* suppressed because it reported that German prisoners were well treated in England; and in the past few years that strongly democratic newspaper has had its acting editor sent to prison on an average once a month. The Germans, in fact, have become Prussianised; they are a cowed people.

I do not say this is entirely due to the blight of militarism that has fallen on them, but I do say that it has been the main factor in their subjection. The sabre has been clattered in their ears too long for them to know the peace of free men. The barrack yard has spread far beyond the barracks, till it has included whole towns. Many countries, many nations have been conquered, or, at least, temporarily subdued by the armies of their enemies. But the case of Germany is unique. She has, thanks to Prussia, been conquered by her own.

Do I exaggerate? Are the conditions obtaining in her Prussianised army really so inhuman, so intolerable? Ask some of the thousands of young Germans who have come over here to escape them? Listen carefully to what they say, and allow liberally for such exaggeration

THE MAKING OF A SPY

as one would expect from a man on his defence. But they will tell enough to convince you that the army which Moltke and Roon organised achieved its whilom efficiency at the cost of the self-respect of nearly every man who served in it; and when you have listened to their stories of the treatment meted out to their friends, brothers and relations—of men who have been struck across the face with a whip because they have been too slow at the salute with their officers; of other men whom those officers have deigned to kick; and others who have been confined to a fortress for some paltry offence; and when you have listened—if you can—ask yourself a question: To what extent is this inhuman system, invented in Prussia and forced by her on Germany, to what extent is it responsible for that other army Germany has—her army of spies? As I am going to suggest, the one is the corollary of the other.

Let us consider the case of a young man who, dreading the years of service, comes to this country and obtains an appointment. Here he is free from the shadow that darkened his days in the Fatherland, and he finds life easy and pleasant. He has but one regret—he cannot return home to visit the old people, his father and mother, without risking all sorts of pains and penalties. Perhaps he writes home, and asks his father if

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he can make a suggestion as to how the difficulty can be overcome. Perhaps the old father himself intercedes with the authorities. After all, the boy is a good lad in every respect but one; it is hard that he should be banished. Cannot something be arranged? Perhaps after that the boy receives a visit from a fellow-countryman, a stranger who speaks him fair, and expresses the liveliest sympathy with the young man in the dilemma in which he is placed. And if that young man will do certain things—supply the Fatherland with certain information which he can quite easily get—why, then, it may be possible to let him come home in safety. And the young man agrees to the proposition. Perhaps the information that is required of him is not very difficult to get at first, and seems quite innocent. But by-and-by the demands made will become more and more intricate, more and more exacting, especially if the young man shows signs of any ability. To the reward of a "safe conduct" into Germany there is added an allowance for expenses—then fees. The habit of spying, not very congenial perhaps at first, grows on a man, and, like other bad habits, weakens his self-respect. And, after all, it is the Fatherland he serves, and the work, though nasty, is fairly remunerative, and secures him free access to the old country. And so there is added another unit to

METHODS OF ESPIONAGE

the army of German spies who serve the Kaiser, another by-product of those Prussian methods which, if they have stopped men of originality and talent serving the army in the field, have at least formed another avenue for their energies, and given them plenty of work to do at the keyhole.

What is the result? The whole of Great Britain has been cut into sections and in this way covered by divisions of spies, whose duty it is to become familiarised with every feature of the countryside and with every development of local interest. Their reports are voluminous, precise, exhaustive. They include matters of the most personal, the most intimate nature concerning the habits, the life, and the private interests of officers. If an officer—even a non-commissioned officer—is short of funds, the matter is known in Berlin within an incredibly short space of time. If, in the course of conversation, he has ventured some indiscreet opinion about the army, that, too, is noted down. No circumstance is too minute, too trifling; no scheme is too far-reaching, for the German spy once he has matured, and if the investigation on which he has entered requires such special training and qualifications as are beyond his powers, why, then, an expert is placed at his disposal. The German spy is, or was to be found everywhere: sometimes he is the manager of a

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leading West End hotel, and smart women help him in his odious work; sometimes he is a humble barber in a garrison town. Often he is an inquiry agent, frequently a gentleman of leisure. He has been found before now at work in our very arsenals, even serving under the colours themselves, and as Thackeray said in another connection: "Nothing is hidden from his inquisition."

But if Prussian methods have proved of advantage in recruiting spies, they have not succeeded in attracting to the German army either generals or officers who can be named in the same fortnight with the men who carried out Bismarck's behests. The equivalents of von Moltke and Roon, where are they? It is one of the paradoxes of the situation that the degeneration which Prussian militarism brought upon the German Empire has affected the army more palpably than any other department of State, excluding only the diplomatic service. A change, a mighty change has come over the whole spirit of the German army since its exaltation to heights far too dizzy and distracting for poor humanity to scale without losing its head. In the war of 1870 Archibald Forbes related how the German troops used to sing hymns at night round the camp-fire. Narrow, cruel, bigoted, they were still upborne by a stern sense of duty, an austere patriotism.

1870—1914: A CONTRAST

To-day it is not the camp-fire that they sit round; more frequently they are assembled round the glare of a burning cottage, and it is not hymns they chant.

As with the man, so with the officers. The officers who marched to victory in 1870 were men whose families had served their king for four or five generations, and they held fast to a Spartan simplicity of life, to a contempt for material comforts. Whatever their faults, they took their profession with a grim seriousness. They despised not their enemy, but resolved to beat him by exercising greater vigilance, by giving more unremitting attention to the business of war. True, they were insolent, but it was the insolence of the man who has succeeded by sparing himself neither pains nor denial. To-day all that is altered. Luxury, gross and inordinate, has spread throughout their ranks. The plain, simple uniform in which their fathers won so many victories has been discarded for gaudy trappings and feminine trimmings, which in peace are changed as often as the fashions, and with the uniform has gone the life of steady work and hard, laborious days. Frantic dissipation, unspeakable orgies, scenes of debauchery that recall Rome at its worst, these have supplanted the old regime of plain living and hard drilling. The following letter from Private

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Burton, of the Bedfords, gives one a vivid insight into the mentality of the new type of German officer :

“I am writing this on a lady’s glove-box. I picked it up here, but how it got here God only knows. These German officers are awful ‘nuts,’ and carry as many beautifiers as an actress on tour. They use their gloves for another purpose. They put a bullet or stone in the finger of a loose glove and flick the ears of their men. We found a wounded German who had been a clerk in London. His ears were extra large, and were both swollen and skinned by the flicks he had got from his officers.”

Even the rigours of war must not interfere with their pleasures, and time and again the present campaign has found the German officer “drunk and incapable” when he should have been attending to business. Let me give a case in point. M. Furneau, a French army officer, writing to a friend, describes it as follows :

“While all this was taking place, and I was collecting my men, I was knocked over, and afterwards captured. I was taken into a small château four or five miles away, upon which was chalked in big letters, ‘*gute Leute*’ (good people).

“Here were a number of German officers. Many of them were dead drunk, and the rooms

FIRE, PILLAGE AND RAPE

were strewn with broken bottles and glasses. I had to submit to many insults for over an hour.

“Suddenly there was a roar, and those officers who could leave the house went outside, but came back again in a hurry.

“Before they could get their brother officers away there was brisk firing, and it seemed the next minute there was a race for life. Irish Guards and others dashed up, and they stormed the place. They took away with them four drunken officers as prisoners.

“We examined the house, and found that every room had been ransacked, and the owner and his two children locked in a back room.”

That episode is only typical of the modern German army—the army that can raid and loot and then retire.

If Bismarck gave the world Blood and Iron, the decay that has followed the Prussianising of Germany's army has removed at least one of these factors. Its place has been taken by self-indulgence, and worse. In all their progress through Belgium and the north of France, with their hectic trail of fire, pillage, and rape, followed by a retreat that was nearly a rout, we find plenty of blood, but mighty little iron!

Another cause has contributed to the decay of the army. The immunity of its administration

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from criticism, and its domination over the entire nation, has led, as such factors inevitably must, to a decay of the personnel of the officers. The days when these were appointed, simply with an eye to their merits, have passed away long since. Political intrigues, influence at Court, social position—these are now the determining factors, and to-day the extraordinary fact remains that the army is led by men who are absolutely unversed in the art of war.

Recently our Press was at pains to examine in some detail the careers and attainments of the Kaiser's generals, and the results were startling—startling even to those who were beginning to suspect that the giant had feet of clay.

First of all, the army is led by men who have no first-hand experience of war, and who have attained their positions simply and solely by reason of their birth. They are princes of the blood—that is their sole recommendation. They are young and inexperienced—"young enough to know everything"—with a callous disregard for their soldiers' lives and a beautiful superiority to tactics. The Crown Prince of Bavaria, the Crown Prince of Germany, and the Duke of Würtemberg—those were the names that were flashed across Europe at the commencement of the campaign, and it was only when the situation imperatively

HIGH BORN BUNGLERS

demanded brains that Von Kluck was heard of. Why? Because he was not born in the purple, and because the Junker caste takes slowly to anyone who is not within its charmed circle. And so German officers of ability complain, and complain bitterly, that they are passed over and thrust aside for some princeling ignorant of the art of war and destitute of any quality of leadership. What is the result? That thousands of Prussians are slaughtered to no purpose; shot down like sheep; sacrificed on the altar of aristocratic imbecility. And more remarkable even than this preference for princelings is the really staggering fact that the only alternative to these high-born bunglers seems to be octogenarian generals, long past the prime of life. The Commander-in-chief, von Moltke, who was said to have been superseded, is over seventy, and General von Hindenburg is a white-haired veteran. Germany has had to go back to the last generation but one to find her generals, to find practical alternatives, that is, to the Grand Dukes and Crown Princes who led her legions to destruction in the early days of the war. The men who served under the great Moltke and with Roon are coming back, after years of retirement, to find that things have changed indeed!

* * * * *

So much, then, for the army whose shadow lies

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so heavily across the Fatherland—an army dangerous in peace and dubious in war. Surely we may see in its condition a terrible Nemesis for that blind, unreasoning worship of force on which it is based. Its men little better than slaves, its officers given over to debauchery, its generals largely unfamiliar with their business, it is held together only by that iron discipline, that mechanical routine which the Prussian has imposed on the Empire. Remove that, or shatter its potency, and it would fall to pieces, even as did the hypnotised dead man in the famous story of Edgar Allan Poe.

CHAPTER IV

The Gospel According to Bernhardi

THE utter subjection of the entire German Empire and of her political and commercial interests to the military caste, which has proved her moral ruin, was soon attended by results far more important than the deterioration of the army. While the efficiency of Germany's fighting force was impaired, her diplomatic service was, as we shall presently see, rendered absolutely ineffective; and, still more serious, the vast fabric of trade which her merchants and traders have built up by fifty years of the most strenuous exertions, the most assiduous attention to all the details of production, has been destroyed at one fell swoop to gratify the inordinate lust of power, the vainglorious ambition of the Prussian war party—a party that, for at least two decades, has sought by every means to poison the minds of their fellow-countrymen and to indoctrinate them with views that make peace practically impossible.

It was this party who, by constant intrigue and ceaseless pressure, eliminated all the saner

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elements of German statesmanship and left the Kaiser only with third-rate and incompetent advisers; it was this party that engineered the dismissal of Bismarck, brought about the ruin of von Bülow, and secured the fall of Caprivi. Every statesman, every official, who sought to restrain the downward path of the Empire, or who endeavoured to conserve peace and to steer into untroubled waters, all have met with the sleepless hostility of the Prussian war-makers, till the Kaiser has found himself surrounded by men after his own heart—men who sought to impose no limit on his imperiousness, his restless arrogance, his grotesque pretensions, but who were content merely to echo the bombastic and often futile pronouncements by which he contributed, first to the perplexity, then to the gaiety, of nations.

“A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind’s epitome :
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long.
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon ;

* * *

Blest madman, who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy !
Railing and praising were his usual themes,
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes.
So over violent, or over civil
That every man with him was God or Devil ! ”

GERMANS HOPELESSLY WRONG

Such a man has no room, no place for independent advisers; no wish to listen to the voice of experience bidding him pause; no desire for the honest, faithful servant, strong enough to check his master. The Belgians have an ironic saying—a saying that the present war has done much to belie—that constitutional monarchs, after all, are very like indiarubber stamps or seals—their function is merely to approve documents that their ministers have drawn up for them! Of the Kaiser's advisers we may truly say that they are far more like phonographs than men—they merely echo their master's voice. Forced on the Court by the war party, they have been warmly welcomed by the War Lord, who has at last found himself free from the restraints that abler and wiser counsellors sought to impose.

But the military caste were not satisfied with the capture of the Kaiser; he was, in truth, already converted. They had still to infect the people. The army service had done much to prepare the way, as we have seen. Constant drilling and dragooning, constant exaltation of the military profession, and of the supreme importance of force—all these things had done not a little to make the average German hopelessly wrong in his perspective, and more than ever inclined to think that man was made for the army, and not

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the army for man. So that when the war party ceased to be content merely with honeycombing the public services with their adherents, and turned to the task of converting the people, they found the ground largely prepared for them, and their literary spokesman, General von Bernhardi, was able to achieve a triumph that perhaps no other publicist in our time has ever equalled.

Within a few months, nay, within a few weeks, of the appearance of his *magnum opus*, "Germany and the Next War," public opinion had swung round to a position from which the grandfathers of the present generation would have recoiled in amazement. The frantic success of Bernhardi's book, in fact, set the seal on the conversion of the German people to a view of their future development that, without any rhetorical exaggeration or over-emphasis, is diametrically opposed to civilisation and fatal to the existence of any free nationality anywhere in the world.

What was the strange new doctrine that Bernhardi adumbrated? Merely the gospel of the pirate, the ethic of the assassin; with this difference, that while these may deplore as regrettable necessities the deaths of their victims, Bernhardi hails their work as the noblest that man could do. Mercy, sympathy, compassion, helpfulness to others—Bernhardi, spreading the devil's culture,

THE LUST OF CRUELTY

knows nothing of these. Force, and force alone, is admirable; war, and war alone, can develop man. So far from being a stern, regrettable duty that at times must be grimly gone through with, it is, in fact, the only good much worth fighting for, and though Bernhardt tries to pretend that war should subserve some political end, it is obvious that, in his heart of hearts, so great an ascendancy has the lust of cruelty obtained over him, he echoes Nietzsche's phrase: "Most people will tell you that the cause justifies the battle. But I tell you this—the battle justifies the cause."

Bloodshed, slaughter, the destruction of countless thousands of lives; who would be so obtuse, who so old-fashioned as to seek for an excuse for these things? They are, in fact, their own justification. Commerce, art, science, politics—all these are of small account! One hears as one reads the crimson pages of this apologist of slaughter the remark of those German soldiers who, destroying the exquisitely wrought treasures of Louvain, exclaimed contemptuously: "Things like these are for fools and women." The greatest triumphs of art, the most delicate apparatus of science—these do not matter. Only the implements of war are important. Only the art of killing men really counts. Thus spake Bernhardt through the mouths of his converts. Thus speaks Germania to-day.

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Surely it is no exaggeration to say that if she triumphs then civilisation goes down.

But let us listen to the voice of the oracle himself. Hear him first on the beauties of war in the abstract :

“Peace,” he says, “is poisoning the soul of the people. . . . I must try to prove that war is not merely a necessary element in the life of nations, but an indispensable factor of culture, in which a truly civilised nation finds the highest expression of strength and vitality.”*

We shall presently see what that culture includes. First let us look again at the engaging Bernhardi as he pleads plaintively for the blessings of war to descend on his beloved land.

“Give war in our time, O Lord,” he says, in effect, or to give his actual words : “War, in opposition to peace, does more to arouse national life and to expand national power than any other means known to history.”

This is the plea of the wild man, of the pirate Viking, who lived by sacking cities and taking towns, who put women and children to the sword, who lived on plunder and plunder alone. But even he was content to let others work, if only because he could despoil them ; the whole tendency of Bernhardi’s teaching is that peace, so far from

* “Germany and the Next War,” Edward Arnold.

BERNHARDI'S VISION

being the normal state of man, is (to use the ironic phrase of Charles James Fox) "a rash experiment, not to be lightly entered on." He says, in effect, with Nietzsche: "I do not call you to peace, but to battle. Our peace must be a victory—and *it must be short!*" War and warfare are to be the main business of man's life. "Self-sacrifice is a renunciation of life." "The weak nation is not to have the same right to live as the strong nation." "Might is the supreme right." "Above all"—and here speaks the exponent of the professional military caste—"our people must learn to see that the maintenance of peace never can, or may be, the goal of a policy."

It is, of course, supererogatory to comment on the moral obliquity of these utterances. They are, in fact, the writings of an unmoral man—that is to say, of a man without any moral consciousness whatever: at any rate, on that point! But, at least, it may be possible to ask: What sort of vision is it that Bernhardi opens to us? If it be true that war is blessed and peace accursed—if war, whether right or wrong, ensures the development of man as does no other factor—then quite clearly we ought to prepare for a state of perpetual hostility: war must become a permanent institution whose force must never be allowed to slacken, and, as right does not *per se* exist, then, of

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course, it will be quite easy to pick a quarrel with any nation, weak or strong, and to smash her, or be smashed.

That, and that only, is the deduction which one can draw from Bernhardi's plea, and not Don Quixote himself took a madder view of the universe. The insane pacifist, who pleads for disarmament and bids us keep our people busy in the factories and in the fields, and to disband them from the army, is not more ludicrously inept than this apostle of war who, in effect, consigns factories and fields to ruin in order that war may rage perpetually. I may be told that this is not what Bernhardi means. I can only reply that it follows inevitably on his teaching. If war be the highest state of man, then we cannot have too much of it, and commerce and industry, to say nothing of art, goes by the board. That is Bernhardi's view; and that, I repeat, is fatal to civilised life.

That so grotesque a doctrine, so insane a gospel, should have got any hold at all upon the German people shows clearly that too much drilling had made them mad. It had deprived them of that saving sense of humour which more than anything else conserves a nation's sanity. Otherwise, the vision of perpetual war, even of war in which Germany was perpetually victorious,

BISMARCK REBUKED

must surely have moved them, if not to indignation, then to scornful laughter. Bernhardi says much in his book in denunciation of Utopias and of Utopian schemes. But his own Utopia is the most futile of all. It is not only impossible, it is so incredible and amazing that one would have supposed that even the stupidest nation in Europe would have found in it food for smiles.

And it is set off with several very exquisite touches of humour. For instance, that comparatively mild and old-fashioned person, Prince Bismarck, had permitted himself the truism that "no one should ever take upon himself the immense responsibility of intentionally bringing about a war." More in sorrow than in anger does Bernhardi rebuke the ghost of the great man for having indulged in this exceedingly trite remark, and thus presumed to stand, if only for a moment, between man and his destiny.

"Prince Bismarck repeatedly declared before the German Reichstag," he complains, "that no one should ever take upon himself the immense responsibility of intentionally bringing about a war. . . . In his 'Thoughts and Reminiscences' he expresses himself to this effect: 'Even victorious wars can only be justified when they are forced upon a nation, and we cannot see the cards held by Providence so closely as to

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anticipate the historical development by personal calculation.' ”

But Bernhardi gently intimates that that is an old-fashioned view. War, he suggests, is too valuable a factor in human progress thus to be lightly dismissed.

In other words, let us have war early and often, and do not let even Bismarck himself, the greatest of the Prussians, dare say a word to the contrary!

It is a long way from Bismarck to Bernhardi—longer than from Piccadilly Circus to Tipperary. And it marks clearly and unmistakably the decadence of a people. For, as I have said, with all his faults and with all his crimes, Bismarck had the saving grace of sane statesmanship—a statesmanship that sought very carefully to preserve friendly relations with this country. If we take the trouble to dip into Bernhardi's "Germany and the Next War," we shall find that, grafted on to the astounding moral philosophy which I have outlined is a new foreign policy for Prussia—a foreign policy of violent hostility to Great Britain and as different from that carried through by the Iron Chancellor as, let us say, the military genius of Frederick the Great is from that of William the Little.

Bismarck's aim was to make Germany secure on the Continent. He sought to unite her under

A SIGN-POST TO DESTRUCTION

the hegemony of Prussia; to raise for her such a force as to make her practically immune from attack. He used methods that, no doubt, were repulsive, but his aims were at least the aims of a prudent man. But for Bernhardi they had this disadvantage: they were followed by forty-five years of peace. Wherefore we find him explaining that, while the Bismarckian policy was all very well in its way, yet it was out of date and required to be superseded.

The German wars of Unification, he explains, carried the nation up to a certain point in its development. Her military success and her political position laid the foundation of her great material prosperity. Instead of numberless petty Principalities, with innumerable claims of baffling complexity, the Germans had now one great Empire.

That was the deliberate policy of Bismarck—to weld Germany together by Blood and Iron and to make her strong enough to resist aggression. But the deliberate policy of Bernhardi—what is it? Let us read further and see!

Before doing so, however, it may be useful to show that I am right in stigmatising Bernhardi as the first sign-post on the road to destruction along which Germany has travelled since she sacrificed her freedom. This is borne out by

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the words of so shrewd an observer as Lord Rosebery, who remarked in a speech the other day that :

“ ‘ Might is right.’ When that comes to be the principle of Europe, when that comes to be the principle which overrides treaties and regards them as scraps of paper, the world has got very near to damnation.” That doctrine had been a curse to Prussia, a curse to Germany, and a curse to the surrounding nations, who had been obliged to tax the sweat and blood of their people to an incredible extent in order to maintain armaments.

Might, according to the new philosophy of Germany, meant universal domination. No voice would be raised in Europe without the approbation of Prussia, and every State would practically be the vassal of Prussia. In the time of Prince Bismarck, who was a wise and cautious statesman, the policy of Prussia was restrained, but the persons who had taken his place and discarded him were determined to put the German Empire to the hazard of a war in order to acquire a universal domination.

To return to Bernhardi. According to him it was by no means enough that Germany was a well-protected and formidable Power. She required a new national impulse ; and she could find

THE DREAM OF WORLD POWER

that only in one way—by an attempt to secure nothing less than world dominion. Just as Prussia dominates Germany, so Germany must, he says, dominate first Europe and then the world. Lest there should be any doubt upon this point, let Bernhardt speak for himself:

“We have fought in the last great wars for our national union and for our position among the Powers of *Europe*; we now must decide whether we wish to develop into and maintain a *World Empire*, and procure for German spirit and German ideas that fit recognition which has been hitherto withheld from them.”

And he goes on to say that “all our rivals are straining with desperate energy, even at the cost of our rights, to extend their power.” If by “power” is meant colonial expansion, this is entirely false. For many years—ever since the Boer War—the policy of Great Britain has been to consolidate our Empire, to develop its resources, and, as it were, to polish its efficiency rather than extend it. France has made no effort to add to her overseas possessions for many years, and, since the lesson of the Russo-Japanese War, Tsar, Duma, and the people have concentrated on the advancement of the Russia within itself.

If we exclude the inglorious adventure of Italy

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in Tripoli, the one power that has sought actively for colonial expansion is Germany herself, and it is not a little remarkable that even the egregious Bernhardi makes the grudging but important admission that "very recent events have shown that, under certain circumstances, it is possible to obtain districts in Equatorial Africa by pacific negotiations." But, strange to say, Bernhardi does nothing to develop the idea. Germany must have colonies with predominant political influences in the spheres where its markets lie—and the only other question that remains is who has to be fought for them and when? Peaceful methods are the last to be employed by the militarists, and, to quote Nietzsche again, "blood to them is the best of all possible reasons."

Indeed, it very soon becomes apparent, as we pursue our study of Bernhardi, that, after all, the additional colonies are a secondary consideration; the main point is war—war at any price! And it becomes increasingly apparent, too, that the Power aimed at above and beyond all others is the very Power that that effete statesman Bismarck invariably took pains to conciliate—namely, Great Britain. The general ground of this conclusion is stated in terms of refreshing frankness by the modern Machiavelli. Briefly, they are these: Britain is strong; Britain is flourishing. There-

ENGLAND TO BE SMASHED

fore, she must be smashed before she can get definitely in our way. Thus does the prophet commit himself to a delightfully consistent policy. Britain must be chastised because she is formidable. Other nations have already been told in the same pages of that work that they must be chastised because they are weak. One asks wearily who is to escape, and there is no answer. We see, with Bernhardi, an illimitable prospect of almost endless war, now with the weak, now with the strong.

“ Wild war, on sea and land,
War with a thousand battles
Shaking a hundred thrones.”

“Where there is no vision,” it is written, “the people perish,” and the ideal that Bernhardi has photographed on the retina of Germany is perpetual war!

But let us see what the teacher says himself about Great Britain.

“There is another danger which concerns England more closely and directly threatens her vitality. This is due to the nationalist movement in India and Egypt, to the growing power of Islam, to the agitation for independence in the great colonies, as well as to the supremacy of the Low-German element in South Africa. . . . All these circumstances constitute a grave menace to the

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stability of England's Empire, and these dangers largely influence England's attitude towards Germany."

Yes, dear Herr Bernhardi; and do they not influence Germany's attitude towards England? I think so. I think it was in the confident hope that some of these dangers might be realised that the Kaiser was drawn into the war party's net in that memorable week in August, when, like a bolt from the blue, he loosed war on Europe—to find within a few weeks, nay, a few hours, that Ireland, India, the whole Empire, had made common cause against the man who relied so confidently on their failure to agree. It was a natural supposition for the Prussian mind to make—that an Empire bound by the silken cords of freedom should tumble to pieces at the first rough jolt. It was a natural supposition to men who think that their fellows can be held together only in chains.

The Prussian, who dares not suffer a free Press, or tolerate free speech, what should he know of the patriotism of free men? that patriotism which instantly eschewed faction and forgot differences when war threatened. He knows one thing, and one thing only—force. He has one way, and only one way of governing—by force. With force he thinks he can do anything. The nations

WHAT VON BÜLOW SAID

can be made into his vassals and God into his conscript. Without force he can accomplish nothing. To a man with such a belief as this the free and ungrudging response of the Empire to the call to arms must have appeared miraculous.

It was not always, of course, that German publicists wrote with such sublime recklessness, such splendid disregard of facts, as does Bernhardi. Without going so far back as Bismarck, even in our time we find Prince von Bülow, the ex-Imperial Chancellor, using the following language on "Imperial Germany."*

"Our relations with England require particularly firm and steady handling. We desire amicable and even friendly relations with England, but we are not afraid of hostile ones. Official Germany and the nation itself must model their behaviour accordingly. A policy of running after England is as pointless as a policy of offensiveness.

"The English people, politically the maturest of the nations, would not be turned aside from any course they had once recognised as profitable by the warmest protestations of friendship; and in friendly acts that were not obviously inspired by interest they would see only a confession of

* Cassell's.

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our weakness. On the other hand, a proud and courageous nation like the English is not to be intimidated by threats, whether open or veiled. We confront England to-day, supported as we are by a navy which demands respect, in a very different manner from fifteen years ago, when it was a question of avoiding any conflict with England as long as possible, till we had built our fleet.

“At that time our foreign policy was, to a certain extent, regulated by the question of armaments; it had to be carried on under abnormal conditions. To-day the normal state of affairs is restored; our armaments are at the service of our policy. The friendship as well as the enmity of the German Empire, supported by a strong navy, are naturally matters of very much greater importance to England to-day than the friendship or enmity of Germany in the 'nineties, when she was unarmed at sea. The change in favour of Germany of the proportionate strength of the two countries has relieved our foreign policy with regard to England of a great burden.”

It is not necessary to agree with this declaration to be impressed by the marked contrast that its calm restraint and discernment offers to the wild and whirling periods of the Bernhardi war chant. Between these tempers of mind there is a

CEASELESS AGGRESSION

great gulf fixed, and the tragedy of the situation lies in the fact that von Bülow is a fallen idol, while Bernhardt is the god of Prussian idolatry. Bernhardt's programme of ceaseless aggression appeared just at the moment when the last remnant of restraint on German diplomacy had stopped short of war with ourselves and France in regard to Agadir; at a moment when the Berlin papers were accusing even the Kaiser of poltroonery; at a moment when the military caste had received the most decided set back of recent years. Bernhardt's book, "Germany and the Next War," appeared at the psychological moment of their defeat, when, to quote his words :

"A deep rift had opened between the feeling of the nation and the diplomatic action of the Government. Public opinion, which was clearly in favour of asserting ourselves, did not understand the dangers of our political position, and the sacrifices which a boldly-outlined policy would have demanded."

The Gospel according to Bernhardt, became the accepted word of the people. And what a gospel it is! Think for a moment what would happen if Germany achieved victory—if she were able to describe herself as the paramount power in the four quarters of the globe, if the German type were to predominate in all the great industrial

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centres of the globe. We should be faced with a world from which all the ennobling virtues had been banished; a world of men and women who were strangers to sympathy or chivalry, to whom pity was unknown; where the weak would be killed at birth and the old and feeble slaughtered. This is no exaggeration; this is a clear deduction from the writings of the men who have made modern Germany. Again and again Bernhardt tells us that weakness must be stamped out ruthlessly; that only the strong have the right to live; that all who are deemed weak had better perish without any further rhodomontade. To the rigours of natural selection, under the fully-developed German State, we should, I doubt not, have added a lethal chamber presided over by a committee of cultured experts, where any person deemed unfit could be safely deposited! To doubt that is merely to doubt that the Prussians are capable of drawing clear deductions from premises that they themselves lay down.

Of course, the inevitable culture of the German would remain. His wonderful scientific attainments, his great range of information, his extraordinary accuracy and capacity for painstaking research, all these would remain, but divorced from all human and from all natural emotions. And what would these count for then? They would

BARBARIC INVESTIGATIONS

become scourges, not blessings; mere instruments of torture that degrade man and do not raise him; weapons whereby the weak—the physically weak, that is—may be crushed and the strong armed cap-à-pie for the elimination of those that are deemed the less fit. There was a letter, published during the last few days, from Dr. Donelan, of Manchester Square, London, which gives us a vivid insight into the blessings that spring from this sort of culture.

Writing from the French Red Cross ambulance, Crépy-en-Valois, to the *Lancet*, he mentions an incident which throws fresh light on German methods of barbarity in conducting the war.

A German surgeon visited the ambulance—not, however, to relieve the sufferings of even those of his own nation.

He took no notice of these, but he carefully examined the wounds of the British and French, which were in nearly all cases in the lower limbs.

“An immediate sequel to this German surgeon’s visit,” says Dr. Donelan, “was an influx of British and French wounded, all hit, so to speak, above the belt—in the head and chest.

“The conclusion drawn by all the French and Americans who witnessed his conduct is that he

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came here solely to correct the elevation of the German rifles."

That is a very good sample of the boasted German education. The devil's culture has made even the healing art itself a curse and not a blessing, and has banished one of the most elementary feelings of mankind even from the sick-bed on which the tortured wretch lies writhing.

Perhaps the greatest mistake that Prussia has made, the cardinal error which has undone her, lies in this narrow, this preposterous view that she takes of culture and education—a view that is bound to dehumanise all who hold it: a view that takes everything into comprehension save man, and excludes him and his nature and his needs, so as to concentrate attention on inanimate objects. Charles Dickens once satirised this strange creed under the title of the "Hard Fact School," and the words that he applied to the High Priest of that religion, one Gradgrind, seem very applicable to-day to the Prussian view of things. Mr. Gradgrind took great account of facts—except the facts that go to the making of man—and in the end he was broken on the wheel. His philosophy was excellent so far as it went, but it did not fit human nature, and he found the world arrayed against him.

A WORLD IN ARMS

That also is the case with the Unspeakable Prussian. When man has been born again of Bernhardi, and has shed the higher parts of his nature, Prussia may triumph. Till then she will find a world in arms against her.

CHAPTER V

The Kaiser's Ego-Mania

THERE were reasons other than those I have specified for the success of the Bernhardi gospel. Germany was ripe for such an appeal, for any appeal, in fact, however insensate, that was addressed to the egregious pride, the ludicrous arrogance then sapping her character. Side by side with the growth of the military caste, and the domination of its representatives, there had gone on another process which had reacted markedly on her national life and feeling. Germany's trade had shot ahead; her industrial expansion had proceeded at a marvellously rapid pace. In a few years her exports had more than quadrupled, and the prosperity of the people advanced by leaps and bounds. There seemed to be no end to the story of Germany's commercial success. With rare skill, and seemingly exhaustless patience, she attacked trade after trade, invaded industry after industry, and was almost invariably victorious. The arrogance that the military success of her soldiers had excited was fed by the scarcely less remarkable triumphs

REAPING COLOSSAL PROFITS

that her traders achieved. The whole world rang with the praises of German efficiency, German thoroughness, German organisation—above all, of German business methods, and the pæans that were chanted to their glorification contributed, we may be sure, not a little to the insufferable pretensions, the invincible conceit of the people, who were becoming persuaded that they were chosen of God, indeed! The old phlegmatic, easy-going steadiness and stedfastness of the German vanished. A new type arose, thorough and efficient as ever, but insolent, domineering, and with the pride that betrayed Lucifer, that star of the morning whose swift descent from Heaven we may yet find paralleled in contemporary events.

And there came another, an even more insidious change over the soul of the people. With commercial prosperity Germany became rich—rich to an extent that has never yet been appreciated in this country. The fortunes of her traders exceeded even their own expectations, vast as these had been. Her men of business began to reap really colossal profits, to enjoy stipends that their fathers would never have dreamt of, and the result was that the old habits of frugality, the old austere mode of life, began to vanish until it was almost forgotten. I can remember, not so very many years ago, hearing a German social reformer

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explain that in his country manufacturers were content to lead lives of the utmost simplicity until they had placed their business on a perfectly secure foundation.

To-day such a statement would, of course, excite derision. In place of the thrift, the cheese-paring economy, the restrained and honourable simplicity of life, there has been for many years in Germany a prodigality, an extravagance, a lavishness and a costly display that has never been seen in Europe since the Second Empire of France tottered to its fall. "I will make Berlin," said the Kaiser, "the first pleasure city in the world," and in an evil hour for his people he kept his word.

I am no Puritan, thinking pleasure an evil thing. Its organisation is, and ought to be, a highly prized privilege. But the pleasures of Berlin have grown to such a pitch, and are of such a nature, that men familiar with all the other cities of Europe turn from them in disgust. No species of depravity, no excess of aberration into which passion ever led mankind but finds flaunting representation in the great city, even that which "the depraved nature of man, which of itself carrieth him to all other sin, abhorreth." It became a joke to say that the courtesans of the street found their competitors in the Officers of the

THE NIGHT LIFE OF BERLIN

Guard, and the coteries formed for the promotion of the Socratic vice began to achieve a positive ascendancy at the Court—an ascendancy which only a public exposure by a daring journalist, followed by a public trial, sufficed to end.

The night life of Berlin began to exhaust the nervous energy and to distract the minds of one of the most important sections of the nation, and it was no uncommon thing for men to repair to business morning after morning, after a night of which only two or three hours had been spent in sleep. And all the while, despite the debauchery, the dissipation, the nerve-destroying excitement, and the constant distraction, the wealth and prowess of the Empire bulked larger and larger on the horizon. The old Germany, that gave us Goethe and Schiller, Beethoven and Wagner, with its simple, equable people, with its love of folklore, and its quaint, homely joys, was passing away in a riot of vulgar extravagance and hectic excitement, whose victims sought only for some new sensation to glut their insatiable appetites.

It was in this mood that the gospel according to Bernhardi was proclaimed from the housetops, and it is not, therefore, surprising that it swept Germany from end to end.

And by none could it have been more vehemently applauded than by the man who, as I have

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said, above all others typifies the Prussian, and who alone could give its precepts validity—the man whose unconscionable egotism and illimitable pride has inflicted on mankind one of the greatest calamities that ever befell the human race. Ever since the fall of Prince von Bülow in 1909—three years before Bernhardt's book appeared—the Kaiser has been practically his own Chancellor, and for over twenty years his has been the dominant personality in the German Empire. On his head, more than that of any other man, must lie all the misery, all the untold suffering, all the cruelties of an utterly unjust, because an unnecessary, war. Let us see what manner of man it is who must answer to this indictment.

First and foremost, I believe the Kaiser to be a decadent. Unless this be clearly understood, then we shall miss the clue to the character and actions of a man of baffling complexity. He is a decadent, not in the sense of being a weakling, for to enormous natural physical strength he adds the health that comes from a Spartan discipline of life, and from those unremitting physical exercises that have become a second nature to him. Neither is he a decadent in the sense that he lacks intelligence. Clearly, while destitute of the higher faculties of statesmanship, yet his is a mind of forceful cleverness. But he is

THE KAISER'S MANIA

a decadent in the sense that the disease which has seized on Germany has him also fast in its grip.

His is that form of neurasthenia which, by making repose impossible, causes a man to assert himself, his views, and his behests with strident insistence. His mind suffers from a kind of St. Vitus's dance. It will not suffer opposition; it cannot endure passivity. An itching sense of his own supreme importance poisons the Kaiser's brain and obsesses his mind as surely as cocaine does that of a dope fiend. He has that mania, most fatal of all others to peace—ego-mania.

We all remember the inimitable Mrs. Poyser, who asserted that the cock on the dunghill thought that the sun had risen to hear him crow! That rooster was the farmyard equivalent of Germany's Emperor. We may see his ego-mania made manifest in a thousand and one details of his private life.

Fortunately for our rulers, the world has a very short memory, otherwise there is little that would surprise it in connection with "this very perfect, gentil knight." He prepared us for the manner of man he was years ago, when at San Remo he claimed precedence over his widowed mother on the very way to the village church where her husband was to be buried. If we had not forgotten that, then we should never have done Wilhelm

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der Plötzliche (i.e. William the Sudden) the compliment to be surprised at him.

We might have laughed scornfully—that, indeed, would have been inevitable; but anger—who would waste it on a man so destitute of refinement, of human feeling? We should have laughed because we could not help it, at this monarch whose life is one perpetual whirl of frenzied and pivotless activity. Think of it! The Kaiser's valets are worn out by his constant changes of dress and uniform—which he takes on and off at intervals during the day, for any reason that may enter into his head, or for none at all; just as the other servants are weary of being aroused because his "All Highest" has chosen to return at midnight, and insists that from the secretary to the sentry all must be up and doing, though there is really nothing for most of them to do. Then it may be that William the Sudden determines on a railway journey. No time, no notice is given to the company to provide a "special," and as for travelling as did his grandfather, by an ordinary train—perish the thought! But if no pretext can be found for a lightning journey out of Berlin, and if the War Lord has had the report of the military cabinet, and the report of the Chancellor, and the report of half a dozen other functionaries before him, and if there are no regiments to review, and no

“MINE! BODY AND SOUL”

photographers to be posed for, and no manifestoes issued on matters that concern him not at all, why then there may follow a fencing match with the adjutants, in which the success of the Kaiser is duly paragraphed, or it may be that he will proceed to draw plans for a battleship, or design a symbolic cartoon, or revise the menu that the best Berlin restaurants happen to be using.

There is only one thing, apparently, he cannot achieve, and that is peace. Rest is unknown to him. Some excitement, some distraction must fill every hour of the day. And with it all and through every fad and fancy the indomitable egoism of the man shines out. It is with his own household as with his army, as with the rest of the world; to differ from him is to be disgraced; and the words he used at Potsdam, when addressing the recruits to his Guard, more or less define his attitude both at the breakfast table and in the Council Chamber. Here is the speech:

“Children of my Guard, you are now my soldiers—mine, body and soul! You have sworn to obey all my commands; you must follow my rules and my advice without grumbling. It means that from this day on you durst know but one enemy, and that enemy is my enemy. And if I command you some day—and may God grant that I am never driven to this extremity!—if I com-

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mand you, I repeat, to fire upon your own relatives, your sisters and parents, perhaps, remember your oath ! ”

In a word, he is a supreme egoist, incapable of restraint, incapable even of ceasing to assert himself for a single hour.

The first reflection that occurs to one on reading a short account of a day in the life of the Kaiser is that he leaves himself with no space, however brief, in which to reflect either on mundane affairs and the principles that guide their management, or still less, on the eternal verities beloved of Carlyle.

His Imperial Majesty passes through life at the rate of an express train. Concentration, steadiness, deliberation—they are out of the question. His mind is in a perpetual jostle, a chronic fret. What hope is there of calmness, of judgment from such a man? What expectation can we have, of a deliberate policy skilfully applied? The man who is in too great a hurry to think is, depend upon it, the most mischievous person that a complex civilisation can produce. To the Kaiser, as to his own Berliners divided between furious business and frantic pleasure, mental analysis, much less contemplation, becomes out of the question. And in such a mood a resonant appeal like Bernhardt's—an appeal that apparently simplifies everything

HOHENZOLLERN MADNESS

down to the brute principle of force—is bound, with nations and with individuals, to achieve immediate success.

Perhaps in the case of the Kaiser other reasons operated in its favour. Madness has always dogged the steps of the Hohenzollerns. The great Frederick himself was tainted by an eccentricity and a cruelty so weird in their manifestations that one can hardly think of him as normal; and that his father was, if not insane, at least on the borderland, seems not to be open to doubt. Then, again, Frederick William IV., brother of William I. (the grandfather of the Kaiser), was undoubtedly mad. But the strongest presumptive evidence of insanity—if we exclude the man's own speeches—is found in his relationship with the mad king of Bavaria.

That unhappy personage, it will be remembered, was the son of Queen Marie—who suffered from melancholia all her life, and whose royal son was medically certified as a lunatic. Now, Queen Marie was the daughter of Prince William of Prussia, who was the brother of the mad king. He thus stood in close relationship to the Kaiser, and the question arises whether the insanity transmitted to Ludwig of Bavaria, which dates back to the early days of the Hohenzollern dynasty, has not reached the Kaiser.

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Who that has read his speeches has not been tempted to believe that such, inevitably, must be the case? The bombastic threats, the crude and cheap aggrandisement of himself, the assumption of almost supernatural gifts and qualities—what are these, we may well ask, but the hall-marks of insanity that can be paralleled any day in Hanwell and Colney Hatch? Between the poor wretch raving in the madhouse and the Kaiser storming at Potsdam there is, of course, one essential difference. The one is powerless; the other has the means to plunge a continent into misery. But the spirit of vainglorious bluster, brutalising threats and terrifying pronouncements, is common to both.

The lunatic would, if he could, do with the warders what the Kaiser does with his newspaper critics—put them in prison! He, too, would strut and fume and threat and rave till we were deafened with his protestations, now against one, now against another. He, like the Kaiser, would change his mind and his uniform a dozen times a day, and rush from one incomplete task to another, always ready to be photographed or flattered, and never suffering opposition or denial. His delusions might be gross, but could they be much worse than those which, in a fine frenzy, the Kaiser has called on us to bow down to and worship?

MAKING WAR INEVITABLE

And as with the man, so with his policy. Peace has been banished from Europe since the day when Bismarck was degraded and the War Lord took control, to be restrained at first by men of the calibre of Hohenlohe, von Bülow, and Caprivi, afterwards to suffer no restraint at all. Not a day has passed that the Kaiser has not added something, large or small, to the provocation which at last wore down the steady nerve of Britain and made a once unthinkable war inevitable. We have had the sabre flashed in our face and the praise of the great Prussian army shouted in our ears on every conceivable and inconceivable occasion, till the most patient man among us grew restless and prayed that, if war were to come, it should be faced at once and be done with. If the Kaiser could not have war, he saw, at least, that the peace that obtained was without goodwill or security or mutual respect—that it was, in fact, a peace that became at times almost unendurable.

And as with the man's speeches, so with his acts.

They were sudden, disruptive, startling, designed—if they were designed at all—not to support some clear line of policy aimed at a definite objective, but merely, as it seemed, to engage the attention and to jar the nerves of Europe. The part that William the Sudden has played for over

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twenty years corresponds very much to that which Napoleon III. enacted thirty or forty years previously. He was *l'enfant terrible* of Europe. No one could say of him what a day would bring forth. At one moment he would appear as the champion of Paul Kruger, defending his territory against the incursion of "unauthorised bands" of invaders. At another he would re-emerge as the champion of Abdul the Damned, who was then sending punitive expeditions to the Balkans, with instructions to burn, loot, and pillage generally. Perhaps his advocacy of the latter personage ought not to cause any lively degree of surprise. It is said, indeed, that the Kaiser, on being challenged as to his reason for supporting Abdul, replied, with a consistency that he did not often display, that the potentate in question stood, like himself, for absolutism—for the right, that is, of an autocratic ruler to dispose of the lives, the hopes, and the treasure of his people as he pleased. On another occasion—so it is alleged—His Imperial Majesty asserted that the sovereign who slaughtered half his people in order that the others might learn the lesson of obedience was a ruler after his own heart!

I cannot say whether these stories do the Kaiser an injustice or not. Certain it is that the only potentate who has ruled upon this planet of recent

THE BLIND KAISER

years at all corresponding to the War Lord is that same Sultan who was deposed a few years back amid the rejoicings of mankind. Where else may we find a parallel to the outrages that the German troops have committed in Belgium save in the bloody excesses of the Turkish soldiers against the Armenians? The burnings, the looting, the infamous outrages upon women and children, the torture of the living, the mutilation and dismemberment of the dead—no other European army has had these charges laid to its door during the nineteenth century. To parallel them we must go to the blackest days of the Turkish Empire, when pyramids of skulls were found whitening by the roadsides, when whole villages were burnt to the ground, when tens of thousands of innocent non-combatants died hideous deaths of undeserved cruelty, and when the Sultan, like the Kaiser, remained deaf and blind to all appeals, and oblivious to the fate that it was obvious would one day overtake him. Yes, perhaps it was not so surprising that the despot of Berlin should support his brother of Constantinople. They had much in common. Both for many years braved with impunity the anger of Europe, both relied on an army that they thought superior to any force that might be brought against them. Above all, both stood for that absolutist principle of government without

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which, as we shall presently see, nations cannot be plunged into war, or committed to warlike policies, without having been vouchsafed even the pretence of consultation. Hateful and despotic in their rule, their fates should not be divided.

Yet even in his support of the Sultan the Kaiser was fitful and erratic to a degree, and his subsequent interventions into European politics were even more wild and uncertain.

Had he been content to remain the guardian of the heritage which the industry of his forefathers and the genius of Moltke and Bismarck had left him, the peace of Europe might never have been disturbed in our time. He had inherited a vast and a wealthy Empire, with an army so formidable that no Power in the world dreamt of attacking his domain. The commerce of his people was going ahead by leaps and bounds, and they were making a prodigious advance in prosperity. He had seen the Kiel Canal, which gave Germany a new outlet to the sea, safely carried through. Heligoland had been secured from Britain. He had launched a vast fleet—the second in the world—and he had seen his country's rivals compelled to open admiration of the prowess of his people. True, his Empire needed more colonies; but even these he might have obtained by pacific means. A wise ruler, a sane man, would at least have been

PERPETUAL INTERFERENCE

content to refrain from "frantic speech and foolish word," and would have set himself to consolidate and improve the great trust that had come down to him. That, it is very easy to see, is what the Kaiser should have done. He might have played the part of the strong, silent man to perfection, realising that "it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but tyrannous to use it like a giant."

We all know how different was the part that he preferred. He was so conscious of the power that he possessed that he would never let the world forget it. No crisis ever arose but that he must advance into the limelight; no pie so unimportant but that his finger must be in it. A perpetual desire to assert himself, to display his strength, to advertise his resources—this was at once the despair of his advisers and the alarm of his brethren. The Chancelleries of Europe asked themselves, half in fear and half in jest, what will-o'-the-wisp the royal madcap would be chasing next. Had there been anything resembling a definite plan, a sustained direction, behind his diplomacy, they would have borne more easily with his perpetual sallings forth, his continual excursions into the realm of *la haute politique*. But, alas! there was no saying what he would be at next. His diplomacy became the most wayward, the most capricious in Europe. No man, not

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even his own familiar friends, knew what he might attempt on the morrow, or what he might not forswear before the day was out. He began to cultivate, as it seemed out of sheer *diablerie*, his own faults, and to regularise into a habit those fitful starts which began at last to get on the nerves of the steadiest statesmen of Europe.

At times disposed to friendliness to France; at others he would be bullying her. On some occasions he would be all for approaching England; then he would be issuing mandates that he must have known would have the effect of affronting not only her diplomatic representatives, but even the people themselves. The telegram to the Tsar of Russia "from the Emperor of the Atlantic" was a case in point. The message to Paul Kruger was another. There was nothing behind either dispatch. Nothing was gained, nothing could be gained by them. They foreshadowed no policy; they threw light upon no question of the day. But they did more to exacerbate British public opinion than the launching of a thousand Dreadnoughts or the "jumping" of a hundred colonial claims. Bismarck would have retired sooner than utter them. Bülow and Caprivi had, as we know, to stand down because they could not put up with the strain imposed on them by such a master.

PLUNGING INTO WAR

Not only were his actions inconsequential, they were so hastily executed as to partake almost of the nature of pantomime. The visit to Morocco, for instance, was entered on at a moment's notice, although it was for the purpose of telling the world that the Sultan of that land was an "absolutely independent sovereign." The support of Abdul in 1895 was scarcely less precipitate. Even more amazing, it is alleged that when the United States commenced hostilities against Spain, he was only prevented from intervening with the greatest difficulty. It was a favourite remark of Voltaire that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him. Of the Kaiser we may say that if a crisis did not exist, then assuredly he would precipitate one.

And it is chiefly on account of this man that Europe has been plunged into war. To gratify the morbid vanity of this mediocre neuropath thousands of lives are to be sacrificed, the blood of brave men is to be poured out like water, and all the horrors, all the thousand and one attendant evils that follow on war, are to be suffered by the Allies and their troops. The martyrdom of the trenches, the sufferings of the march, the mutilations that follow on the siege and the bombardment, ruined homes and blighted industries, the bankruptcy of traders, the mourning of widows,

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the hunger of the poor—all these are to be suffered to glut the vanity of this hysterical degenerate, this caricature of a commander, this travesty of a man, who even now, when the hour of supreme crisis has come upon his country, cannot bear himself like a soldier, still less like a king.

At this very moment Europe is laughing at the Kaiser, because, with the roar of cannon in his ear and the clash of arms around him, he must still rush hither and thither, speechifying, prophesying and protesting. Now he is in East Prussia; now at Cologne; now it is his "Royal and Imperial pleasure that the contemptible British army be destroyed," and now he demands that the Zeppelins shall "do great work"—in the way of destroying the peaceful homes of non-combatants. Anon he has called out for "frightfulness" against those same non-combatants, and but a while ago he was protesting that the sword had been "forced" into the Germans' hands.

And yet there is the clearest evidence, the strongest indication, that Germany had contemplated war not for months but for years past. The neighbourhood of Maubeuge had been actually covered with sites laid in concrete, and, as was supposed, reserved for German factories. The factories did not come; the guns did. The very railway stations in Berlin had their platforms inter-

HOW GERMANY PREPARED

sected with wooden palisades—palisades that were never used till the troops entrained for the imperial city, when they came in very handy as shelters behind which the troops had coffee. The very German banks knew of the impending crisis, and were at pains to tell their clients to realise their paper for foreign gold, and to get and keep as much of the latter as they could. Even within a few weeks of the present war the Kaiser ordered the complete mobilisation of all the regiments in and around Berlin, numbering some 50,000 men, and but a year earlier, in 1913, he had promulgated a fifty-million German war loan in the name of God!

The fact is that the Kaiser has lived, dreamt, and slept war for years past; with the most formidable army in the world at his beck and call, he has been haunted day and night by the possibility of invasion or, at all events, hostilities. The fact that upon one side was a restive France and on the other a hostile Russia was not alone, not even chiefly, responsible for this. The Kaiser himself was the cause of his own fears, as he was of the restlessness of Europe. It used to be his boast that, like the great Frederick, he was never, or seldom, out of uniform, and, like the great Frederick also, he was never so happy as when he was drilling men or making arrangements for them

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to be drilled. I have referred earlier in this book to the fact that the more military the Hohenzollerns become the more despotic they grow. The Kaiser, it is notorious, dreads and hates even such a shadow of representative government as Germany has obtained. With that openly expressed contempt for his immediate ancestry, which marks him out from the rest of reigning monarchs, he deplors the weak-kneed action of his ancestor in giving the Prussians such a shadow of constitution as they possess to-day. Naturally, therefore, hating freedom in his own land, he desires to establish despotism abroad. To say that his mind is saturated with the military spirit would be but to insult the many noble, the many admirable characters that have developed in the profession of arms. But his mind is of that order which insensibly relies upon force, upon the power of an overwhelming, an invincible army, and that cannot understand the management of men without the use of bayonets.

To such a man Bernhardt's gospel would appeal with rare force, more especially as the moment of its appearance in its most approved and popular form happened to be extremely propitious. On the one hand, the Kaiser had but recently freed himself from the restraints of Count von Bülow's Chancellorship, and was, therefore, more inclined than

THE KAISER AT AGADIR

ever to picture himself bestriding this narrow universe like a Colossus. Freed from the irksome criticism of a man of affairs who was not content merely to register his master's opinions, the Kaiser indulged his passion for histrionics to the uttermost, and lost no time, or very little, in getting himself into trouble. This time it was the famous *Panther* incident that roused the wrath of Europe. The *Panther*, hardly one of the most formidable units in the Kaiser's fleet, found herself one morning in Agadir. She was there practically to make a demonstration against the French and English interests; she was there at the risk of war.

Prussian militarism was agog. The big gun manufacturers, the men of the navy, who had drunk to "The Day" till they were tired of the toast, the officers of the Guard, who had been spoiling for a fight, all eagerly waited for the news that war had been declared. They staked everything on the Kaiser not yielding. The prospects for peace looked black, and any moment might see the first shot fired.

Then suddenly, swiftly, and quietly the Kaiser climbed down. The *Panther* left Agadir. The War Lord had received his first set-back—and his own Berlin was furious!

We know now, or at least we surmise, the reason of the Kaiser's change of front. He had

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acted, as always, violently and precipitately. His army was ready, his fleet prepared for action, and the nation was at his back. But he had omitted one factor—finance. The mere rumour of war plunged Germany into a financial panic, and peace became imperative, though for a reason that could not in the nature of things be explained to the public.

Then it was that Bernhardi's campaign opened, and a storm of denunciation burst on the Emperor's head. "Our Poltroon Hohenzollern." "The Peace Kaiser." "The Pusillanimous Emperor." These were some of the epithets with which the Press resounded, and for the first time in his reign the writers in the Berlin Press committed *lèse-majesté* with impunity.

Then was it that the Kaiser began to prepare for war in earnest.

CHAPTER VI

The "Scrap of Paper" Policy

PRINCE VON BÜLOW was by no means the only restraining influence which, up to four or five years ago, held in check the wayward irresponsibility, the chronic restlessness of Germany's War Lord.

For many years the Kaiser had a healthy respect for Russia and for her formidable military resources. Bismarck, who prior to the accession of William the Sudden had practically directed Prussian policy, laid it down as an axiom that two Powers were not to be lightly offended—ourselves and the great Empire of the Slavs. Russia with her millions of soldiers, her vast reserves of treasure, her huge population, was capable of sacrifices and of endurance that perhaps no other people in the world can command. The old Junker saw this clearly, and, like a wise pilot, he steered Germany wide of the rock ahead. When we sought Prussia's aid in the Crimean War, he took precious care to keep clear of the business, and throughout his political life he was at especial pains to see that the Russian court had no cause of offence against

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him. That wonderful personal ascendancy which he seemed to be able to establish over hardened diplomats and cynical rulers stood him in good stead. Bismarck was regarded, in fact, as a safe man both in St. Petersburg, or as I suppose we must now call it, Petrograd, and in London. That is the very last epithet that we would dream of applying to his successor. Perhaps in that fact is summed up all the difference between the old Germany and the new: the old Germany that was plodding, industrious, shrewd and capable, though often unscrupulous; as against the new Germany, which strikes one as being a huge machine, deprived of wise directors, and rushing headlong to destruction.

But however that may be, this much at least is certain: Bismarck saw the Russian peril clearly, and was at pains to avoid it. "One day," he said, pointing to the East, "they will get a statesman over there who will mobilise their millions, and then——" But it was not the statesmen of Russia who brought those millions into the field. Germany's War Lord was to succeed where they had failed! For some years the Kaiser remembered Bismarck's warning not to risk the wrath of his Eastern neighbour. Almost the one tenet of the great Chancellor that he observed was the necessity for placating Russia. Perhaps the Prince had

WEIGHING UP RUSSIA

spoken on the subject with the authority that a lifelong conviction can give. Perhaps, for all the Kaiser's openly expressed contempt for the pilot whom he dropped, there lurked still in his brain a feeling of respect for the judgment of the old man. Who knows? Even arrogance like the Kaiser's must yield something to genius. But be that as it may, it is certain that William II. respected Russia for many years of his reign. When England complained of the passage of Russian torpedo boats through the Dardanelles, Germany thought it "a local question." "Reinsurance" with Russia—Bismarck's policy—must be held to! Similarly, when the Manchurian question arose, Germany decided that "it was not her concern": a remarkable statement, indeed, coming from his most Christian and Imperial Majesty the Kaiser. Clearly Germany was not "taking on" Russia, thank you!

And then something happened, something that rejoiced the heart of the Kaiser. Russia went to war with Japan, and was very thoroughly thrashed. William the Sudden openly rejoiced. For the victory of "the plucky little Japs" at Mukden freed him, as he thought, of two tyrannies, two restraints. First Russia: she was no good; that was obvious. She was played out, done for. Secondly, another tyranny, a more personal domination, was removed from his path. "That fool Bismarck" had been

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wrong all the time. The only point in which he had deigned to listen to the apostle of Blood and Iron was on this very question of Russia. And what had events shown? Why, simply that his grandfather's Chancellor had proved to be utterly unreliable, utterly mistaken, and the sooner he, the Kaiser, freed his mind of this ludicrous regard for Russian prowess the better.

It is true that other reports reached the Kaiser's ears. He must have heard, for instance, that the Russian army was being thoroughly reorganised after the disgrace of its Eastern defeats, and he must have been told that a new spirit was at work, leavening the mass of Russia's people; that she had now a Parliament, feeble and circumscribed, no doubt, but still a living witness of the new forces that were at work in her midst. He must have been told that the great Empire of the East was sitting down in earnest to the work of political reconstruction, and that at length the pleas of men and women who had sealed their devotion to the cause of freedom with their lives were having effect; that the Little Father was indeed listening to the voice of his people, who were bent on restoring efficiency to their public services and vigour to their army.

We cannot blame the Kaiser overmuch if he turned a deaf ear to the prophets beseeching his

JUNKER DICTATORS

recognition of these facts. The renaissance of Russia has been, as it were, the surprise packet of the situation, and the victory of her arms, the radiant enthusiasm of her people, has surprised others as well as the Kaiser. The Russian army had proved a broken reed in 1904. It was but natural that he should ask why it should be any different ten years later. In any case, the Kaiser decided that Russia was a negligible quantity, and could be ignored with impunity.

It is very important that we should follow the results of this sequence of events on the Kaiser's mind, because we must remember that the choice between war and peace rests, after all, not with the unfortunate German people, but with the Dictator of Potsdam. The people are in effect powerless—as powerless as when Frederick the Great rejoiced in his ability to lead them anywhere—by the nose! "They say what they like, and I do what I like," remarked the arch-Prussian. He should have added, "with them." For the Prussians did not and do not count. Decisions do not rest with them, but with the Emperor and the Junkers. These determine whether war shall be declared, and thousands of lives and tens of millions of pounds expended. The Prussians may make slaves of others, but they are virtually slaves themselves, and the autocracy that the

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Kaiser practises is in reality of the most absolute, the most despotic description. True, his people have a Reichstag, but the Cabinet is not responsible to the members of that body. They owe their allegiance to the Chancellor, and the Chancellor to the Emperor, and the Emperor is first and last, absolutely free to make war, absolutely free to end it. The people have only one function reserved to them—they may pay for the campaign: pay for it not only in gold, and in taxation that bleeds them white, but in the ghastly toll of life and limb, in the long list of casualties and missing that have filled the Berlin papers. They pay in anguish for the dead, in dread for the living. The young wife must lie down each night not knowing whether tomorrow's paper will tell her that her days of anxiety have ended and that the years of desolation have begun. The mother must rise in the morning not knowing which of her sons she is never to see again. She will think of her daughters and know that they also even then may be walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Perhaps she will remember that remark of the Kaiser to Sir Ian Hamilton's comment on the mass formation of his men. "Yes, it did cost lives—many lives; but then, Prussia had many more lives to lose." She may recall that callous utterance and shudder; and then, when the worst news comes through at last, and

MOURNING A CRIME

husband or sweetheart or son lies dead—think of it!—she dare not pay the dead man the one small tribute of respect of wearing mourning. She must wear gay colours, for Potsdam has ordained that no mourning is to be the order of the day. The “mass formation,” it seems, can stand the deaths of many men, but not the mourning over them. Potsdam will not suffer that, and Potsdam is right.

Who knows, if the streets of Berlin were thronged with weeping women and orphaned children, who had not to smother their grief, to choke down their poignant suffering; who knows but that the people might not ask themselves in earnest whether the game was really worth the candle; whether, for the silly dream of world dominion, it was good enough to throw away the lives of thousands of the bravest and the best of their country; whether the military caste, which was to protect them against all the world, had not, after all, succeeded merely in arraying all the world against them, and, with still greater emphasis would they ask whether Prussian militarism had not become too expensive a luxury, when it had to be paid for by men and women in the lives of those they loved best. Asking these questions, the patient folk of the Fatherland might say that they would have no more of this prostitution of their men's

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valour to the empty glory of the Junkers, and to the aggrandisement of a half mad king!

Yes, they are right to prohibit mourning in Berlin just now, for a time will come when the people will rise in their grief and slay the system that brought mourning to their hearths.

I may be told that the German people wanted the war on which they entered so light-heartedly two months ago. That is true; they had been inoculated, indoctrinated with a contempt not only of Russia, but of all the nations of the earth. France was decadent, England's army contemptible; Servia did not count, Belgium—— Why, was it not through Belgium that the Kaiser said he "would pass like that——" with an insolent wave of the hand! The very efforts that those countries had made to preserve peace—they only heightened the contempt the Unspeakable Prussian felt for them. For to him, be it observed, failure to strike, to make war, to shed blood—that means and can mean one thing only: weakness!

Let me take a case in point. Eleven years ago Great Britain settled her long-standing disputes with France with regard to that country's African possessions. The terms were simple. One Power, ourselves, was given a free hand in Egypt, and France was allowed a free hand in Morocco. Germany at that time raised no objection. Prince

THE KAISER'S HYPOCRISY

von Bülow said, indeed, that the question was one of no importance to Germany. Her exports to that country were trifling—really the matter did not count. And all seemed set fair, till the Kaiser took the field. Apparently the fact that something had been settled over his head caused his itching vanity to reassert itself. Within a few weeks of the conclusion of the agreement the usual bellicose threats, speeches, and taunts poured out. He told his subjects to remember the triumphs at Sedan, Wörth, and Weissenburg.

“I hope that peace will not be disturbed,” he said, “and that events which are taking place around us will cause our eyes to see clearly and will steel our courage so that we shall be found united if it should become necessary to interfere in the policy of the world.”

When the Kaiser talks of preserving peace, then we may take it that things are getting bad, and a little later, to prove his devotion to the pacifist idea, the Emperor, opening a new bridge at Mainz, expressed his conviction that “if it should have to be used for transport of a warlike nature, it will prove perfectly adapted to its work.”

Still, matters did not get acute. And then came the Russian defeat at Mukden. Russia seemed helpless; the Kaiser put on full steam ahead; and France had to throw the treaty into the melting-pot

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and to dismiss the statesman who had engineered it, M. Delcassé—and at once the war feeling strengthened in Germany. These people were weak; why not crush them? Thus reasoned the Prussian; thus reasoned his Kaiser. “The industry of Prussia,” said Voltaire one hundred and fifty years ago, “is war.” And the Prussians asked why their chief organiser had missed this fine opening.

Bernhardi is delightfully frank on this point in his book. Having explained that it must be the duty of our diplomacy so to shuffle the cards as to compel France to attack us, so as to keep Russia neutral, he states that, should France not thus oblige the Fatherland, why, “we must initiate a political action which, without attacking France, yet will hurt her interests and those of England so severely *that both states will feel obliged to attack!*”

Take another example. On October 7th, 1908, Europe was staggered to learn that Austria had suddenly annexed the two Slavonic provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thirty years before those provinces had been entrusted to her administration by the Powers in the famous Treaty of Berlin—a treaty that specified most definitely that they should not become part of Austrian territory. To that “scrap of paper” Austria and

A STAGGERING BLOW

Germany set their seals, and then, acting in concert, deliberately tore it up. It was a staggering blow to Europe. To Russia it was worse. It was an insufferable act of oppression. These Slavs were bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh; surely they should never pass under the dominion of the Teuton, after the public law of Europe, and the signed treaty between her Powers, had expressly said otherwise? But Germany threatened war; the Kaiser appeared in "shining armour" beside his ally, Franz Josef—and Europe surrendered! For the sake of peace Russia gave way, and again the war feeling rose in Prussia.

Yet a third time did Europe surrender to Potsdam, and so help to set the seal upon the Prussian belief of the invincibility of her army. The negotiations following the victory of the Balkan States over Turkey showed obviously Germany's commanding position in the counsels of the world, and served yet once more to re-enforce the idea that the Powers would not and dare not fight her; that she had but to assert herself to gain her own ends. The Turkish troops had been trained if not led by German officers, had used German artillery, had pursued German methods—and they had been hopelessly outclassed. Their armies had been routed, their generals disgraced. And yet Austria, Germany's ally, succeeded in getting

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matters more her own way than any of the other Powers.

Three times, therefore, Europe had come to heel. Three times Germany had humiliated the Triple Entente. First, in regard to Algeciras; secondly, in regard to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by her ally Austria; and yet a third time when, following the defeat of her friend the Turk, she took the most vigorous part in the negotiations, and succeeded with Austria in taking Albania from the Serbs.

To the Prussian, who believes in force and force alone, and to the Kaiser these triumphs could mean but one thing—Europe and the Powers were afraid of Germany. Therefore the more reason for fighting them. “He is a fool,” said Frederick the Great, “and the nation is a fool, who, having the power to strike his enemy, does not strike and strike his hardest.”

So the Prussian prepared to strike! He raised his fifty million war loan “in the name of God” and in the name of Peace, he imposed a reformed system of taxation upon Germany that made peace almost impossible. Millions and yet more millions were to be raised for the army; the people were to pay through the nose for the war that the Kaiser says has been forced on him and his supporters. Not only was the crushing taxation that Prussia

INTERNAL DECEIT

imposed on the rest of the Empire so enormously increased that the small cultivator and the workman felt ground beneath its weight, but to this tax of money was added also the tax of blood, and the leviathan army was increased to stupendous proportions. And can we wonder? In this world of peace-loving and conciliatory nations, it was impossible to say at what juncture the Kaiser might find the sword "forced into his hands."

This matter of the increased taxation that the domination of Prussia imposes on the rest of Germany is especially interesting because it shows that his capacity for breaking his word is by no means confined to foreign Powers. His undertakings to his own people are also apt to become "scraps of paper." The principle propounded by Bismarck was that the unity of the Empire he created would certainly be endangered if the states felt that it had brought them additional burdens. The revenue raised by the German states was to be applied for local purposes, or as nearly so as possible. But the Kaiser changed all that. The payments from the states to the Empire began enormously to exceed the cash received in return from Berlin. And to make matters worse, those payments, the matricular contributions, as they are called, are calculated on a basis of population, not on a basis of wealth. Ten workmen earning

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the equivalent of thirty shillings per week pay as much as ten millionaires, and as there are at least a thousand workmen to one well-to-do individual, this practically means that the poor are made to pay for the rich.

But that is a detail which one can hardly expect the Junker to take into serious account. More money was needed for the army. Very well, then, inferior persons—not the Junker—must be made to provide it. The workman must drink less lager, or put up with less horseflesh. That was all; and the Junker proceeded to put on the screw so as to provide against that evil day when the guardian of peace would loose war on Europe.

In order to convince all and sundry of their pacific intention, the Reichstag imposed new taxes right and left. They taxed insurance, they taxed the formation of new companies, they imposed an Increment Property Tax, calculated to yield 65,000,000 marks for increment caused by the increase of the owner's property, and 41,000,000 marks for inheritances. The Legacy Duty was raised in some cases as high as twelve per cent. Then there was the "Extraordinary Non-Repeating Defence Contribution"—a levy on the capital value of all property which is devoted solely "to the cause of defence": that defence which has found its expression in the

THE GREAT DELUSION

reduction of Belgian towns to ashes, in the burning of her crops, and the slaughter of her people. The German paid, and paid willingly, because he knew that the gospel of Bernhardt required money, and that to establish the Kingdom of Prussia upon and over the earth was going to be a rather expensive business. And so he paid and paid again, and to whisper of peace in Berlin was regarded as an unpardonable sin. Germany had but to prepare, to be strong, resolute and ruthless, and—Pshaw! the degenerate nations of the earth would bow the knee before Prussia with her invincible army. If it took but a fortnight to drive the Danes from Schleswig-Holstein, but a month to smash Austria, four weeks only in which to trap the French in 1870, why, then, the newer combat into which they were to be forced, with France degenerate and Russia supine, was certainly not going to be a long affair. Not Macbeth himself, when told by the witches to “laugh to scorn the power of man,” was more inspired by his former crimes than were the Kaiser and his advisers as they sat plotting the murder of free nations at their witches’ suppers in the Unter den Linden.

“Fair is foul and foul is fair :
Hover through the fog and filthy air.”

A good motto this, a fair comment, surely,

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on the doctrines of the Devil's Culture. If might is right, if slaughter, rape, and international treachery are the things that make a nation great, then Shakespeare's witches had the root of the matter in them, and Macbeth should be regarded merely as a man who failed because his precautionary measures were inadequate.

It is but fair to say that the Prussians were determined not to be caught napping in this respect. They saw to it that, in so far as was humanly possible, there should be no fracture in their armour, no possibility of failure. Their new taxation was not the only timely provision that they made to equip the war they were fostering. Whenever and wherever possible they hoarded gold so as to build up a huge reserve. The Dresdner Bank sent out a circular weeks before the outbreak of hostilities advising all its clients to sell their securities. Within a fortnight of the crash no less than fourteen million sterling was withdrawn from the Union of London and Smiths Bank and sent—abroad!

Nay, on the black Monday when almost every Stock Exchange in Europe but our own had shut, the astute agents of the pious Prussian, weeping for the peace of which he was being robbed, flooded London with "fine paper," which he contrived to turn into good red gold. But that was when

PREPARING FOR "THE DAY"

the crisis was upon us. For months and, for the matter of that, for years before Germany was building up, first, a reserve of bullion, then a reserve of grain. Why? if she did not expect war!

Again, let me say that the thought of attacking Germany never entered the brain of any of the chancelleries of Europe. The praises of her army, the boastings of her navy had been shouted in our ears too loudly and insistently for anyone to think lightly, indeed to think at all of aggression against her. Her formidable army, with its millions upon millions of severely trained officers and men—the world had rung with its praises, and no one wished to test its strength save under the pressure of necessity. But Germany herself had been thinking, dreaming, talking war for years, and now she was actively preparing for it. She did more than hoard the gold; she did more than store grain. Round Maubeuge, as we have seen, she erected cement foundations on which her huge siege guns could rest, guns that were designed, mounted and made expressly for the reduction of the fortresses in Belgium, along the route that the Kaiser's generals had already planned. As she built the new siege howitzers, so she experimented, quietly, carefully and systematically with every possible form of motor transit that could be used to convey troops, till, when she had found the correct type, she built

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them by the hundred. And as with motor-buses, so with Zeppelins, so with every equipment that an army could require, or that her experts could dream she might require. For three years Germany was planning, arming, preparing on land and sea as no other nation has ever done in peace time. Everything was to be ready to the last button—and then the world should feel again the weight of the Mailed Fist.

France, Russia, Belgium, possibly Britain—it mattered not. They were all, to quote the engaging letterpress of a German cartoonist, they were all “to be thrashed in turn.” The iron heel was to be placed on the decadent peoples of the world. “*Kultur*” was to triumph. The world was to realise that even as Prussia had dominated Germany, even as Germany dominated Europe, so now the German Empire was to be the great arbiter of the fate of the races of the world, a power whose fiat must be final.

It was in a very different spirit that the Prussians had entered on their campaigns of the past. Unscrupulous and tyrannical they had always been, but fighting for security and for unity they at least had sane goals in view, and boasted not until they had taken off the shining armour of Nibelung. But the German of to-day has won the battle before it has been fought—won it, that

THE KAISER'S MAD WIRE

is, by frantic boast and foolish word. The German of to-day, I repeat, is a decadent—a decadent from whom his forbears would have shrunk.

Perhaps, after all, the clearest indication of the change that has come over the land of "*Kultur*" is to be found by contrasting the speeches of the Kaiser on the occasion of his son Adalbert's entry into the navy with the utterances made on a similar occasion by his father and grandfather. Said the Kaiser, in his usual bombastic strain: "The moment when Prince Adalbert becomes one of you is of the most eminent importance to the Fatherland."

The Kaiser's father, Emperor Frederick, said, on the contrary: "I am proud that my son is privileged to commence his studies with you . . . and I commend him to your graces, my comrades."

And the grandfather, the first Emperor, said: "Learn to understand that there is nothing trivial in doing one's duty, and that each stone in the construction of an army must be well hewn. . . . I commit thee to thy labours, which fulfil as thy superiors dictate."

Comment, surely, is unnecessary!

Again, do not let us forget that mad wire of the Kaiser telling his marshal that it was "his Royal and Imperial pleasure that their attention must be concentrated on the contemptible British Army."

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What would Moltke, the organiser of victory, have thought of that? What—its spite and malice apart—does any military commander think of it? Fight, not so much to win the campaign, not to out-flank the enemy, not to gain a tactical advantage, not to achieve a strategic result: fight to gratify my Royal and Imperial hatred of one of the allies arrayed against our forces.

Surely a more unworthy message was never issued to soldiers in the battlefield? Surely no higher compliment was ever paid to British arms!

CHAPTER VII

The Pretext for War—and its Value

DESPITE their assiduous preparations for the war that was to be "forced" on them, the Kaiser and the Prussian military caste still lacked one essential. Before they could involve Germany in the campaign that, as they fondly hoped, would end in a supreme and speedy triumph for themselves, it was necessary that they should have at least the appearance of a pretext which would appeal to the patriotism of the German, and which Europe would have to treat at any rate with outward seriousness. They must have searched the horizon with anxious eyes for many months, straining hard to find some cause for war and looking vainly for any sign of trouble, any cloud in the blue sky which might presage a storm. But the prospects seemed set fair, and the "Chosen of God," as he describes himself in his latest contribution to the gaiety of nations, must have retired many a night and oft heavy of heart in that the crowning mercy of hostilities could not yet be vouchsafed his people.

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And then, on that ill-fated 28th of June, came that mysterious and appalling crime, the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and at once the hopes of the war party in Berlin revived!

For the crime, for whatever object it was committed, was one that in the very nature of things roused the indignation of every Teuton worth his salt, as, indeed, it shocked the whole civilised world. We have only to remember the unique position in Pan-German politics that the Archduke occupied to understand the anger excited by an act rendered peculiarly dastardly by the wise and conciliatory attitude the Prince had adopted. It is very necessary that we should remember that the great problem confronting the statesmanship of Austria-Hungary—a problem that probably the war will settle over the head of that “ramshackle empire”—lies in the fact that the Slav population, the Serbs, Croats, Poles and Czechs are largely under the German-Magyar ascendancy, and are, in consequence, bitterly alienated from that empire, which, though it enforces their services in the field, treats them still as members of an inferior race. There have been of late two schools of statesmanship in regard to this problem—a problem on which obviously the very existence of the empire depends. The old school held stubbornly to the view that

SERVIAN TROUBLES

matters must remain practically unchanged, that in Hungary the Magyars, and in Austria the German element, must predominate, and this view, narrow, despotic and perverse, had, need I say, the warm support of the autocrat of all the Germans.

But the Archduke favoured more liberal aims. He leaned strongly to the idea of race reconciliation, whereby the unity of the empire could be established, and equal rights of representation extended to the Slav population, so that they could elect representatives to one Federal Parliament supreme over the whole of Austria-Hungary. The Archduke was, in fact, the leader of that party, who strove to reconcile the Slavs by giving them that freedom and equality by which alone an empire of mixed races can stand four-square to all the winds that blow, and it is very significant that, had he succeeded to the throne of Franz Joseph, he would, it was confidently predicted, have inaugurated that policy without delay. I say that is significant, because the question arises, Who organised the murder of this Prince? For organised it undoubtedly was! The general assumption which has been carefully disseminated by the egregious Wolff's Press Bureau of Berlin, is that the Archduke Francis was the victim of the extreme, the intransigent Serb party, who desired to break

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utterly away from the Austrian dominion and who realised that the Liberal policy of the Archduke was more likely to upset their plans than a policy of plain repression : much in the same way as the Fenians of Phoenix Park might have feared the olive branch of Lord Frederick Cavendish more than the buckshot of his predecessor. It is, of course, an arguable explanation of an act that, from whatever motive, is odious even in the annals of assassination.

The facts, however, admit of another interpretation. It was not only the extreme pro-Servians who were opposed to the Archduke, but the extreme pan-Germans, who loathed and hated his policy for the blow that it would deal to the ascendancy of the military caste—a blow that would be felt, remember, not only in Vienna but in Berlin, and that would probably lead to the fracture of the alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany.

Once democracy became a force in Austria, the Prussian hegemony would have to reckon with it also ; while in Vienna, the most reactionary and hidebound capital of Europe, the Archduke was regarded as little less than a traitor to his order and to his race. So bitter, so exacerbated was the feeling against him in Court circles that, so the rumour runs, the existence of the plot to

TRAGEDY AT SARAJEVO

assassinate him in Sarajevo was well known in Court circles and was tacitly connived at.

Who was the assassin? As is alleged, he was known in Vienna as an agent *provocateur*, a hireling who stirred up insurrection among the Serbs against the Austrian Government, and then betrayed his co-conspirators at a price. But, he that as it may, who would welcome his act more than the military caste in Berlin? They saw in it two things: first, a deliverance from the democratic policy they feared, even in their neighbour. Secondly, an opportunity for the war, whose coming seemed so long delayed—an opportunity that they were swift, indeed, to seize, and slow to forgo. For the facts prove conclusively that, but for their relentless determination to exploit the assassination, war need never have troubled Europe, and the fullest investigation possible into the circumstances of the crime could have been secured without a shot being fired.

Let us note carefully the sequence of events in order that there may be no shadow of doubt upon this cardinal point. The public cannot grasp too firmly the unmistakable significance of the contents of "The White Paper." For whatever caused the Grand Duke to be killed, there is at least no doubt upon one point: that his murder was used merely as a stalking horse, as a lever with which

THE UNSPEAKABLE PRUSSIAN

first Austria and then Russia and then France were forced into war. Never, in the cold precise terms of a Government Blue-book, has so foul a crime against civilisation been made plain. If Germany's policy had, up to the time of the diplomatic correspondence, been as remarkable for candour and straightforward dealings as, in fact, it was devious and unscrupulous, then the letters and telegrams of her own representatives would brand her as an infamous nation. If she did not connive at a diabolical crime, at least she used it for her own ends and to entrap her opponents into a war that, in her blind arrogance, she had won before it commenced.

Behind this correspondence one can hear the frantic, or perhaps more correctly, the complacent, boast, "Paris by August 15th." All Germany's pretended indignation at the crime covers only her haste not to avenge a prince, but to strangle a nation. Nay, more: the correspondence clearly shows that the very country, the very kinsmen of the Prince were prepared to accept, or at least to consider, the investigation offered them into his murder. The Kaiser and the Prussian military caste who dominate Germany, they and they alone are responsible for using the assassination as a platform from which war could be successfully launched on Europe.

NAILING THE LIE

I say the facts prove this, and the facts are on record, and have never been challenged even by the Press agents of the Kaiser.

The correspondence opens with a letter from Sir Edward Grey, our Foreign Secretary, to Sir H. Rumbold, Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin. It is written, it will be observed, about three weeks after the assassination had taken place, and it is of such importance, if we are to understand the correspondence aright, that I reproduce it *in extenso*.

“Foreign Office, July 20, 1914.

“SIR,—I asked the German Ambassador to-day if he had any news of what was going on in Vienna with regard to Servia.

“He said that he had not, but Austria was certainly going to take some step, and he regarded the situation as very uncomfortable.

“I said that I had not heard anything recently, except that Count Berchtold, Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, in speaking to the Italian Ambassador in Vienna, had deprecated the suggestion that the situation was grave, but had said that it should be cleared up.

“The German Ambassador said that it would be a very desirable thing if Russia could act as a mediator with regard to Servia.

“I said that I assumed that the Austrian Govern-

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ment would not do anything until they had first disclosed to the public their case against Serbia, founded presumably upon what they had discovered at the trial.

“The Ambassador said that he certainly assumed that they would act upon some case that would be known.

“I said that this would make it easier for others, such as Russia, to counsel moderation in Belgrade. In fact, the more Austria could keep her demand within reasonable limits, and the stronger the justification she could produce for making any demand, the more chance there would be of smoothing things over. I hated the idea of a war between any of the Great Powers, and that any of them should be dragged into a war by Serbia would be detestable.

“The Ambassador agreed wholeheartedly in this sentiment.”

It is imperative to note that from this letter we find that the German Ambassador himself suggests Russia as a mediator. We shall presently see the importance of this. It should be noted also that Sir Edward Grey practically invites Austria, through her ally, to show to the world the strength of her case against Serbia, and the phrase that he regards it as detestable that the Great Powers

SIR H. RUMBOLD'S TELEGRAM

should be dragged into a war by Servia cannot mean anything less than that if the complicity of the nation in the assassination was clearly proved, then she would meet with no support from Great Britain.

But see the reply that this letter excites :

"Sir H. Rumbold, British Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin, to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received July 22.) (Telegraphic.) "Berlin, July 22, 1914.

"Last night I met Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and the forthcoming Austrian *démarche* at Belgrade was alluded to by his Excellency in the conversation that ensued. His Excellency was evidently of opinion that this step on Austria's part would have been made ere this. He insisted that question at issue was one for settlement between Servia and Austria alone, and that there should be no interference from outside in the discussions between those two countries. He had therefore considered it inadvisable that the Austro-Hungarian Government should be approached by the German Government on the matter. He had, however, on several occasions, in conversation with the Servian Minister, emphasised the extreme importance that Austro-Servian relations should be put on a proper footing.

"Finally, his Excellency observed to me that for

THE UNSPEAKABLE PRUSSIAN

a long time past the attitude adopted towards Serbia by Austria had, in his opinion, been one of great forbearance."

Practically Germany, therefore, refused to interfere—when by her interference peace might have been assured!

Now mark what follows. It was known already that Austrian opinion was exacerbated against Serbia on account of the assassination. Riots had taken place both at Sarajevo and Agram. A storm of anti-Serb feeling swept the Austrian Empire, and when every allowance has been made for the natural indignation that lay behind these manifestations, it was obvious that they threatened, or at any rate might threaten, the peace of Europe. A vigilant Foreign Secretary could hardly do less than take such action as did Sir Edward Grey—action fully disclosed by the dispatches I have quoted. He asks the German Ambassador what is happening in the matter, and the German Ambassador himself suggests intervention by Russia. Then immediately follows a veto on the very suggestion by the German Foreign Secretary, and then, hot foot on this, comes the news that not only has Austria addressed a drastic ultimatum to Serbia, but she has imposed a time limit, during which Serbia must accede to her terms!

MAILED FIST DIPLOMACY

Those terms were startling indeed. They not only assumed the guilt of certain officers and functionaries of the Servian Government (not, indeed, as regards the murder, but in relation to "propaganda against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy"), but reserved the right to call on that Government to name the said officers and functionaries at a later date and to insist on dismissal.

It is not very difficult to see the "mailed fist" in this diplomacy, or rather in this outrage on every canon of justice and fairplay. Instead of the Austrian Government saying to Servia: "We accuse such and such officers on evidence in our possession of complicity in this assassination, and we demand that those officers are put on their trial under certain conditions, in which case we undertake to make good our charge": what in effect the Austrian Government said was: "We know the authors of this murder. Promise us to dismiss them—and we will tell you who they are."

Without in the least expressing any belief in the innocence of any Servian officials, it is quite obvious that this demand was impossible. To accede to that was to have surrendered to Austria-Hungary any officer or representative who was suspect on good or bad grounds at Vienna, and to degrade him in the eyes of his fellow-country-

THE UNSPEAKABLE PRUSSIAN

men. The procedure at the trial reported in "Alice in Wonderland" was not more ludicrous than that suggested to a small nation by a comparatively formidable empire. "' Shall we have the verdict first and sentence afterwards?' said the White Rabbit. ' Certainly not,' said the Queen. ' Sentence first and then the verdict.' "

That in effect is what Austria proposed. "Agree to punish the guilty persons," she said to Serbia, "*and we will tell you who they are!*" That is to say, "Pronounce sentence against certain persons whom we will name."

Well might Sir Edward Grey declare that "the murder of the Archduke and some of the circumstances respecting Serbia aroused sympathy in Austria, as was but natural, but I have never seen one state address to another a document of so formidable a character." And for the compliance of Serbia with the terms of those documents only forty-eight hours were allowed!

But the question arises whether Austria would ever have put forward so preposterous a demand had she not been inspired by the Government of the Kaiser. In this connection it is very noteworthy that according to the official account while "privately the German Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed his doubts as to the ultimatum, officially the German Government called it ' equitable and

RUSSIA RESENTS THE TERMS

moderate,' and said that they desired the localisation of the conflict."

It was, of course, glaringly obvious that the attempt to enforce these outrageous terms on Servia would be promptly resented by Russia, who would see in such an outrage yet another attack on the liberties of the Slav peoples. And as I need hardly point out after recent military events, a combat in which Austria fought Russia and Servia would be too ludicrously unequal from a military point of view for the Vienna Government to entertain for a single moment. Clearly, therefore, Austria would never have adopted this position without she could count on the support of Berlin. It is, I repeat, unmistakably apparent that the diplomacy of the "mailed fist" was forced on Austria by the Prussian war-makers.

If the facts that I have adduced leave any doubt upon this point, we have but to turn to the record of the subsequent events. Following almost immediately on this outrageous demand by Austria, a demand that cannot be justified by any precedent known to man, came Sir Edward Grey's proposal to submit the position to a conference of the Powers, and this was rejected, and rejected from Berlin. Witness the following telegram from Sir Edward Goschen, our Ambassador at Berlin, to Sir Edward Grey, who received it on July 27th :

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"Your telegram of 26th July.

"Secretary of State says that conference you suggest would practically amount to a court of arbitration and could not, in his opinion, be called together except at the request of Austria and Russia. He could not, therefore, fall in with your suggestion, desirous though he was to co-operate for the maintenance of peace. I said I was sure that your idea had nothing to do with arbitration, but meant that representatives of the four nations not directly interested should discuss and suggest means for avoiding a dangerous situation. He maintained, however, that such a conference as you proposed was not practicable."

So that the responsibility for the rejection of the second attempt of Great Britain to preserve peace must, like the first, rest upon the heads of the Kaiser and his advisers.

Meanwhile Servia had presented her reply to Austria's ultimatum. It is not putting it too high to say that she agreed to everything humanly possible in the Austrian demand. That demand had asked for the dissolution of the Narodna Obrana Society on the ground that it had conspired to criminal acts against Austria-Hungary. No proof was provided that such was the case. Still, the Servian Government agreed to cause the society to be disbanded. It went further. Any

TOO LATE FOR PEACE

contemptuous reference to Austria-Hungary in the Press was to be immediately made impossible by special enactment. And not only did the Servian Government point out that they had arrested certain individuals specifically named, as parties to the assassination of the Grand Duke, but they offered to consider any further evidence against any other person whom the Government of Austria-Hungary might name. Everything, in short, that Servia could do without surrendering every vestige of rights, every particle of dignity that could attach to a sovereign independent nation, she did—and, as we shall see, it was in vain that she did so!

The fact is that Germany, or rather the Kaiser, blocked the way to peace. On July 27th Sir Edward Grey was able to wire to our representative at Berlin that “the Servian Ambassador has informed me that the German Government accept in principle mediation between Austria and Russia by the four Powers, reserving, of course, their right as an ally to help Austria if attacked.” This, no doubt, was a great step forward. But mark the sequel. On July 29th, two days later, the Imperial Chancellor informed our Ambassador at Berlin that “events had moved too rapidly for our offer to be complied with.” It was “too late to act upon the English suggestion of mediation.”

As a matter of actual fact Austria-Hungary

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had already declared war upon Servia. That Russia would protect Servia she must have known perfectly well: that she (Austria) could hope to fight both Russia and Servia was out of the question. It was, of course, unmistakably apparent that, in declaring war upon Servia, she relied upon support from Berlin.

And now here comes a new element into the diplomacy of the situation. In London, the German Ambassador has throughout been anxious for peace. First Russia is to intervene with Servia—and this is vetoed by the Kaiser. Secondly, the suggestion of a conference is altogether excellent, and that is vetoed by the Kaiser too. The conflict must be localised, but it is, it seems, inevitable. And so Germany resigns herself to see her ally Austria attack Servia, while all the time she is, of course, stiffening the backs of the war party in Vienna and urging them to pursue a course of action that unaided they would never have dared to attempt. And then there comes the new development. Although the Kaiser and his ministers must have known, and in fact knew full well, that Russia would support Servia against Austria, yet see their pretended alarm at the news that the Empire of the Slavs is mobilising. We have it set out in black and white in the Blue-book containing the diplomatic correspondence.

GERMAN HYPOCRISY

“Sir E. Goschen, British Ambassador at Berlin, to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received July 31.) (Telegraphic.)” “Berlin, July 31, 1914.

“Chancellor informs me that his efforts to preach peace and moderation at Vienna have been seriously handicapped by the Russian mobilisation against Austria. He has done everything possible to attain his object at Vienna, perhaps even rather more than was altogether palatable at the Ballplatz. He could not, however, leave his country defenceless while time was being utilised by other Powers; and if, as he learns is the case, military measures are now being taken by Russia against Germany also, it would be impossible for him to remain quiet. He wished to tell me that it was quite possible that in a very short time, to-day perhaps, the German Government would take some very serious step; he was, in fact, just on the point of going to have an audience with the Emperor.

“His Excellency added that the news of the active preparations on the Russo-German frontier had reached him just when the Tsar had appealed to the Emperor, in the name of their old friendship, to mediate at Vienna, and when the Emperor was actually conforming to that request.”

The complete and beautiful hypocrisy of Germany here revealed entitles this telegram to be

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rescued from oblivion. The fact is, of course, that Russia would never have dreamt of mobilising but for the declaration of war by Austria against Servia : and Austria would never have entertained the idea of such a declaration had she not been confident of the support of Berlin. The Kaiser's Government, in fact, were the prime movers in the matter, and but for them and their malign activity, terms would have been adjusted long ere now between Austria and her Servian adversary. That hostilities ensued is due only to the insatiable hunger for war that has dried up the best energies of Germany and left her helpless in the hands of the Prussian militarists.

Nevertheless, although these facts must have been apparent to Sir Edward Grey, still, hoping against hope, he fought for peace. On July 29th he sent the following telegram to our Ambassador at Berlin—a telegram so important and so difficult to paraphrase that I reproduce it in full :

(Telegraphic.)

“ Foreign Office, July 29, 1914.

“The German Ambassador has been instructed by the German Chancellor to inform me that he is endeavouring to mediate between Vienna and St. Petersburg, and he hopes with good success. Austria and Russia seem to be in constant touch,

A PORTENTOUS TELEGRAM

and he is endeavouring to make Vienna explain in a satisfactory form at St. Petersburg the scope and extension of Austrian proceedings in Servia. I told the German Ambassador that an agreement arrived at direct between Austria and Russia would be the best possible solution. I would press no proposal as long as there was a prospect of that, but my information this morning was that the Austrian Government have declined the suggestion of the Russian Government that the Austrian Ambassador at St. Petersburg should be authorised to discuss directly with the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs the means of settling the Austro-Servian conflict. The press correspondents at St. Petersburg had been told that Russian Government would mobilise. The German Government had said that they were favourable in principle to mediation between Russia and Austria if necessary. They seemed to think the particular method of conference, consultation or discussion, or even conversations *à quatre* in London too formal a method. I urged that the German Government should suggest any method by which the influence of the four Powers could be used together to prevent war between Austria and Russia. France agreed, Italy agreed. The whole idea of mediation or mediating influence was ready to be put into operation by any method that Germany

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could suggest if mine was not acceptable. In fact mediation 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."

Let us see what response this earnest effort for peace elicited. Remember, we have here Sir Edward Grey offering to try any method that Germany thinks acceptable, provided that Berlin diplomacy rejects the course he advises. And what is the Kaiser's reply?

The German Chancellor fears that "should Austria be attacked by Russia a European conflagration might follow" . . . despite his "continued efforts to maintain peace"; and there follows the well-known "bid for our neutrality." Great Britain was to stand out provided that Germany undertook not to seize any French territory outside her colonies, and to respect Belgian neutrality "when the war was over . . . if she (i.e. Belgium) had not sided against Germany."

That was Germany's great effort for peace: her supreme struggle not to let the sword be forced into her hands. We know now what it was worth. Belgium was to be respected in her neutrality "if she had not sided against Germany." That is to

VALUE OF GERMAN PEACE

say if she had seen the Prussian officers violate her women and her men, and had touched her hat to them; if her people had watched the drunken Prussian soldiery burn down their farmsteads in pure wantonness and not grumbled; if they had seen the Prussian horses stabled in their churches and given to the Prussian soldiers of their best, and had smirked when those same soldiers had wrecked their homes, made their rooms filthy, broken their furniture, taken their food in exchange for worthless bonds, and drunk their wine for nothing at all. If they had borne all this and had said nothing, why then they had the Prussian word for it that their neutrality would be respected.

That we can see is what the Prussian offer really amounted to, and one wonders not so much at the unscrupulous audacity that put it forward, one marvels rather at the pathetic credulity which thought its acceptance possible. Who but a child would be deceived at such an offer? Who but a man obsessed with so overweening an idea of German importance that he could not see any other country's point of view would have been betrayed into so flagrantly cynical, so transparently dishonest a proposal? At least one would have supposed he would have covered up the guilt and compromising insolence of such a proposal; at

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least he would have done something to make it conform to the standards in use among civilised men. But the fact is that, as I have said, German diplomacy has decayed even as the nation's own standards of right and wrong have merged into a semi-Nietzschean twilight, in which success is the only justification and mendacity may be a virtue. After all, that is not surprising. There can be no successful diplomacy; there can be no real negotiations between men whose moral standards are utterly at variance. We are confronted with this salient fact again and again in the history of the European crisis. Take, for instance, Germany's pledge, her revised pledge to Great Britain. It amounts to what? that though she breaks one treaty, which enjoins her to respect Belgium neutrality, she yet enters into another, that may be as lightly broken, not to annex any of Belgium's territory.

The Prime Minister of Great Britain and Ireland has expressed great indignation at this proposal; but surely it calls rather for laughter than for tears. We should laugh at the footpad who said, "Give me your watch, and you have my word of honour that I will not take your chain." We should laugh at the fraudulent trustee who said, "I have dipped into your estate or your broker's for five thousand pounds, but, take my word, I

A BAREFACED PROPOSAL

won't help myself to any more provided you say nothing about it." The proposition would be too impudent, too thin, too barefaced to excite anything but pitying hilarity. And that is the position into which German diplomacy has rapidly got itself.

The "mailed fist," with its constant reliance upon force, and contempt for every ethic, for every canon of honour, has reduced the efforts of her diplomats to such pitiable plights that not only do they deceive no one, but we cannot imagine anyone so simple as to be deceived by them. To-day Germany faces a hostile or a contemptuous world virtually alone, her only ally an empire that even now is falling to pieces!

But before I close this chapter it will be well to refer yet once again to the Blue-book relating the correspondence of the Great Powers, for there is still the master stroke of German duplicity to be revealed. All through the negotiations, as we have seen, the German Ambassador here is telling Sir Edward Grey that despite his great, his burning passion for peace, yet he fears his efforts will be foiled owing to the anger and rage aroused by the assassination in Austria. Yet what are the facts? Actually these, that Austria had agreed, if not to peace, at least to further negotiations when the Kaiser and his Chancellor practically

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forced the war on her, and on Europe. Turn to the dispatch of Sir M. de Bunsen, our Ambassador at Vienna, and what do we find? Writing to Sir Edward Grey a summary of the negotiations, he says :

“From now onwards the tension between Russia and Germany was much greater than between Russia and Austria. As between the latter an arrangement seemed almost in sight, and on August 1st I was informed by M. Schebeko, Russian Ambassador at Vienna, that Count Szapary, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at St. Petersburg, had at last conceded the main point at issue by announcing to M. Sazonoff, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, that Austria would consent to submit to mediation the points in the note to Serbia which seemed incompatible with the maintenance of Servian independence. M. Sazonoff, M. Schebeko added, had accepted this proposal on condition that Austria would refrain from the actual invasion of Serbia. Austria, in fact, had finally yielded, and that she herself had at this point good hopes of a peaceful issue is shown by the communication made to you on August 1st by Count Mensdorff, to the effect that Austria had neither ‘banged the door’ on compromise nor cut off the conversations. M. Schebeko to the end was working hard for peace. He was holding the

SIR EDWARD GREY'S SUMMARY

most conciliatory language to Count Berchtold, and he informed me that the latter, as well as Count Forgach, had responded in the same spirit. Certainly it was too much for Russia to expect that Austria would hold back her armies, but this matter could probably have been settled by negotiation, and M. Schebeko repeatedly told me he was prepared to accept any reasonable compromise."

"Unfortunately these conversations at St. Petersburg and Vienna were cut short by the transfer of the dispute to the more dangerous ground of a direct conflict between Germany and Russia. Germany intervened on July 31st by means of her double ultimatums to St. Petersburg and Paris. The ultimatums were of a kind to which only one answer is possible, and Germany declared war on Russia on August 1st, and on France on August 3rd. A few days' delay might in all probability have saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history."

In other words, while Austria, the aggrieved party, was still prepared to negotiate, still prepared to leave an open door for peace, the war party in Berlin, determined not to be balked, had it banged, bolted and barred against any possibility of conciliation. Thus did the unspeakable Prussian, using Austria again as a catspaw, bring

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about the war for which he had fondly prayed for years, the war that was to give him France within six weeks, and to subdue Russia in another month; but which, so far from glory and success, has already seen his armies checked, his colonies seized, and his trade shattered to pieces.

CHAPTER VIII

A Crusade of Calculated Barbarism

IF any vestige of doubt were left in our minds as to the menace with which the victory of Prussia and of Prussian methods would confront civilisation, we have only to turn to the records of the present war—a war entered upon by Germany with a recklessness, an insanity deplorable even from her own point of view, and waged in such a fashion as to array against her the conscience of mankind. That she would fight with ruthlessness, with ferocity even, we all expected. Chivalry is not conspicuous in the Teuton character, and no nation engaged in a struggle for life and death with mighty foes is likely to be fastidious in her methods. But who, even among her fiercest detractors, expected that Germany would allow her arms to be sullied by the foul deeds, the wanton, purposeless offences against the law of nations, the cowardly excesses which the army of the Kaiser has not only permitted itself, but has openly rejoiced in? We can afford to be judicious and critical in this matter, for there is a wealth of

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damning evidence against our enemy; evidence that, no matter how keenly it is sifted and analysed, still leaves standing a dreadful indictment against the men who poured into defenceless Belgium three months ago and blackened and defamed for ever the honour of their country. Let us agree that much with which the Germans stand charged is due to exaggerated and incomplete accounts by excited eye-witnesses, that on occasions they acted under provocation, that individually many of them were found chivalrously tending our wounded and risking their lives to save their own men. Yet, when all is said and done, when every possible allowance has been made for wild reports and inaccurate observations, still it must be confessed that never in the whole history of war have such unspeakable acts disgraced men who answer to the proud name of soldier.

In every campaign, in every battle almost, allegations are made of atrocities, of unfair fighting, of cruelties practised on a defenceless foe. Some are well founded, some mere fiction. And we ought not to be surprised at this.

On the one hand war is too exciting a business for even the coolest men to watch the sequence of events with that detachment which a faithful account demands; on the other hand the actual combatants may be carried away by forces beyond

KAISER'S "HUN" SPEECH

their control. He would be a wise man who shut his ears to nine-tenths of the stories that gain currency under these conditions. But, so far as this campaign is concerned, the remaining tenth is at once so appalling, and is so well established, that, alas, there is no possibility of doubt left to us. Hideous as are the allegations, they are made out beyond cavil—and they are established chiefly by the Prussians themselves.

For if we want to find out in what spirit the Kaiser and his army of automata have waged the war, then we cannot do better than turn to the Kaiser's own utterances. There was one made some years ago of a very notable character, in which William II. directed the attention of his followers to one of his most eminent predecessors in history—to wit, Attila. Said his most Christian and Imperial Majesty :

“When you meet the foe (i.e. the Chinese) you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Gain a reputation like the Huns under Attila.”

This frank pronouncement, though not a little grating to English ears, was, in fact, in perfect accord with Prussian tradition. The British method of fighting, like that of the old Roman, was, and is, to hit hard and then to exercise some

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clemency, some human consideration to the broken remnant of the enemy, while protecting sternly—as did the old Iron Duke—his women and children. “*Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos*”: “to break down the proud in battle, but to spare the subject,” has ever been the keynote of the policy of the Imperial races of the world. But it has never appealed to the Germans. Right through history they have preserved the ruthlessness of the Hun. “To say truth,” says Froissart, “in many things Germans are people outside the rule of reason, and it is a wonder why any will have to do with them or suffer them to take arms beside them like Frenchmen or Englishmen, who do courtesy even as they have ever done.” Ruskin, in a famous passage, denounced the conduct of the Prussians in another campaign. They were, he said, strangers to the finer emotions of mankind.

“For blessing is only for the meek and merciful, and a German cannot be either; he does not understand even the meaning of the words. Accordingly, when the Germans get command of Lombardy, they bombard Venice, steal her pictures (which they cannot understand a single touch of), and entirely ruin the country, morally and physically, leaving behind them misery, vice, and intense hatred of themselves wherever their accursed feet have trodden. They do precisely the same thing

AN EARLIER EXAMPLE

by France—crush her, rob her, leave her in misery of rage and shame, and return home, smacking their lips and singing *Te Deums*.”

And as then, so now. In Denmark, Prussia waged war with a brutality that seemed incredible. Long after Denmark's army was routed, when she was ready to concede peace on any reasonable terms, the gentle Prussian was burning her villages and holding her towns to ransom. They used in those days to insist on the most respected man of the village leading their forces through the neighbouring countryside, so that if they were ambushed or attacked, they could promptly kill him out of hand. They adopted similar methods in France in 1870. Now, in 1914, the Prussian passion for “frightfulness” has surpassed itself.

It is very easy to prove this: we need only to take the words of the Prussians themselves. There is first of all the memorable dispatch of the Kaiser to his troops, which contained the following:

“The only means of preventing surprise attacks from the civil population has been to interfere with unrelenting severity and to create examples which by their frightfulness would be a warning to the whole country.”

After that, who can be surprised at any wanton cruelty, any wickedness that the Germans have committed? Prussia's policy is clear. It is that

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of atrocity to order, of calculated terrorism, of efficient and carefully prepared cruelty. It ceases to be a question of troops getting out of hand, of reprisals committed against non-combatants in the heat of the moment. We have only to read this dispatch to realise that the foul outrages, the burnings, the maimings, the tortures—all have been done under instructions; all have been coldly planned and deliberately carried out; all, in fact, are part of a policy!

Some of those atrocities may be, indeed they are, disputed by the Prussians, but they cannot dispute the text of their own proclamations. *Litera scripta manet*. Let us look for a moment at one that they issued through the mouth of the officer in command of their forces in the commune of Grivegnée, near Liége. Never before, perhaps, has there been issued by any civilised nation a document couched in such terms. Its brutality is its own excuse for repeating it in full.

IMPORTANT NOTICE—COMMUNE OF GRIVEGNÉE.

Major Dieckmann gives notice to the persons present that:—

1. Before 6 p.m. on the afternoon of September 6th, 1914, all arms, munitions, explosives and fireworks still in possession of the citizens shall be given in at the Château des Bruyères. Whoever does not do this will

A BRUTAL PROCLAMATION

be liable to the penalty of death. He will be shot on the spot, or executed, unless he can prove that he was not to blame.

2. All inmates of inhabited houses in the places of Beyne, Hensay, Bois de Breux and Fleron must be indoors by nightfall (to-day from 7 p.m. German time). The aforesaid houses must have lights kept burning as long as any inhabitant is still about. The doors must be shut. Anyone not obeying these orders exposes himself to severe penalties. Resistance to the orders entails the penalty of death.

3. The commandant must not meet any difficulties when domiciliary visits are made. All rooms must be thrown open on the summons. All opposition will be severely punished.

4. From 9 a.m. on September 7th I shall permit the houses of Beyne, Hensay, Grivegnée and Bois de Breux to be occupied by their former inmates, as long as no formal prohibition to stay in them has been pronounced to the aforesaid inhabitants.

5. In order that it may be certain that no abuse is made of this permission, the Burgomasters of Beyne, Hensay and Grivegnée must draw up at once a list of persons who will be kept as hostages, changed every 24 hours, in Fort Fleron. The first list to be drawn up for the hours of 6 p.m., September 6th, to 6 p.m., September 7th. The lives of these hostages are at stake if the population of the above-named communes does not keep quiet under all circumstances.

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6. During the night it is strictly forbidden to make any signals with lights. Bicycles may only be used between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. (German time).

I shall select, outside the lists given me, persons who from noon on one day to noon on the next have to stay as hostages. If the relieving hostage does not appear punctually, the first hostage will be detained for another 24 hours in the fort. After a second 24 hours he may be shot if his substitute does not appear.

7. In the first class among hostages will be placed the priests, the burgomasters, and the members of the administration of the communes.

8. I require that all civilians moving about in my sphere of command, and especially those of Beyne, Hensay, Bois de Breux and Grivegnée, shall show respect to German officers by taking off their hats and bringing their hands to their heads in a military salute. In case of doubt whether an officer is in question, any German soldier should be saluted. Anyone failing in this must expect a German soldier to exact respect from him by any method.

9. German soldiers may search carts, bundles, etc., belonging to the inhabitants of the district. All disobedience will be severely punished.

10. Anyone who knows that a greater quantity than 100 litres of petrol, benzine, benzol or similar liquors is stored in any place in the above-named communes, and fails to give notice to the military commandant, when there is no doubt about the place or the quantity,

“ ON PAIN OF DEATH ”

incurs the penalty of death. Only quantities above 100 litres are in question.

11. Any person not obeying without delay the order, “Hold up your hands,” is liable to be put to death.

12. The entry of the Château des Bruyères and its avenues is forbidden, on pain of death, from dusk to dawn (at present from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., German time) to all, save soldiers of the German army.

13. During the day the Château may only be entered by the north-west gate, where the guard is, and only by persons with tickets. All assembly in the neighbourhood of the guard house is forbidden in the interest of the population.

14. Anyone who circulates false news which might injure the *moral* of the German troops, and also anyone who in any way tries to take measures injurious to the German army is held suspect, and may be shot on the spot.

15. While by the above directions the inhabitants of the region round Fort B are menaced with severe penalties if they break these rules in any manner, these same inhabitants may, if they conduct themselves peaceably, count on benevolent protection and succour on all occasions when they may be wronged.

16. A requisition for a fixed quantity of cattle will be made daily between 10 and 12 and 2 and 3 at the Château des Bruyères at the office of the Cattle Commission.

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17. Anyone who, under the ægis of the emblem of the Swiss Convention (i.e. the Red Cross), harms or tries to harm the German army will be hanged on discovery.

(Signed) DIECKMANN,
Major-Commandant.

(Correct copy: Victor Hodeige, Burgomaster,
Grivegnée, 8-9-1914.)

I have quoted this proclamation textually because it is, first, the most irrefutable piece of evidence that the campaign has yet afforded of the appalling conditions under which Germany makes war; and, secondly, because it gives us an insight into the inner psychology of the Prussian that none of his actions afford. Take the clause, No. 8, which enjoins respect to soldiers. It gives to these the power to resent its absence practically by any means that they may choose to adopt. It practically means this—that anyone failing to salute a soldier with sufficient celerity, or in a manner that strikes the soldier as not sufficiently impressive, may be shot, or spitted, or run through the body with impunity. The barbarians of old who placed their captives in chains and led them through the streets were scarcely more cruel victors than these! And then let us regard the conditions under which hostages are to be held. “The lives of the hostages are at stake if the popu-

TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

lation does not keep quiet *under all circumstances*.” “All circumstances”—if the German soldiery are drunk or provocative or openly insolent, or if they run amock, and any of the inhabitants dare to retaliate, or to show any sign of resistance, why, then, the hostages—one and all—are to be put to death! What is to be said, what is to be thought of a man who could pen a proclamation such as this? Alva in the Netherlands, or Genghis Khan himself, never surpassed the iniquity of its provisions. “If these things are done in the green twig, what may be done in the dry?” If a German officer sitting calmly at headquarters could ordain a decree like this, what may we not expect from the German soldiers, flushed with the heat of battle and with all the elemental passions of man aroused?

I will take another instance of German cruelty that belongs to this category—the category of acts for which the excuse of passion or anger may not be pleaded. It is alleged, and, so far as I have seen, without contradiction, that at Munich the Germans exhibited their prisoners to the populace at so much per head. I am aware that this has not been absolutely established, and that the English prisoners elsewhere—at Berlin, for instance—appear to be well treated. But there seems excellent reason for believing that the report is true, and if true it be,

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then surely it does more to stamp the German as an inferior race than almost any other act that they have committed during the war—hideous as those acts have been. To exhibit your prisoners for a fixed price is one remove, and but a slight one, from the gladiatorial games of ancient Rome, when the captives were butchered to make a Roman holiday. Perhaps the Prussian is not so far out when he compares his Empire to the Roman. It is like Rome—like Rome in decay! But let us have regard to another—a less ceremonious proclamation which has been frequently published during the past weeks in Belgium and in France. It is couched in simple German words, written in chalk on the walls of cottages, that mean “Do not burn.” Those words show clearly the general tenor of the instructions given to the Kaiser’s troops. The traditional Prussian policy “to leave the conquered only their eyes to weep with” is being carried out everywhere possible to-day with the same unrelenting ruthlessness that Prussia has displayed in history over and over again. Mr. Charles Franklin, the special correspondent of the *Daily Express*, reports that he has seen certain interesting photographs which a friend of his has taken in Termonde and Louvain. One of these enables us to realise that the terrorising of innocent people and the burning of houses is an

GERMAN SAVAGERY

integral part of the German military system. It reproduces an inscription which was written in chalk on the door of a house in the Rue de Bruxelles at Termonde.

“In this house lives an eighty-year-old man. The five next houses must not be burnt.

“(S.) BREITSTEIN, Lieutenant, 1st Guard.”

I come now to the second count of the indictment against Prussia—the acts which she caused to be committed on the battlefield or after military operations. Let us take the statement issued by the Press Bureau and most carefully weighed and examined by them.

“Harrowing reports of German savagery at Aerschot have reached the Belgian Government at Antwerp from official local sources. Thus on Tuesday, August 18th, the Belgian troops occupying a position in front of Aerschot received orders to retire without engaging the enemy. A small force was left behind to cover the retreat. This force resisted valiantly overwhelming German forces, and inflicted serious losses on them. Meanwhile, practically the whole civilian population of Aerschot, terrorised by the atrocities committed by the Germans in the neighbouring villages, had fled from the town.

“Next day, Wednesday, August 19th, German troops entered Aerschot, without a shot having

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been fired from the town and without any resistance whatever having been made. The few inhabitants who remained had closed their doors and windows in compliance with the general orders issued by the Belgian Government. Nevertheless, the Germans broke into the houses and told the inhabitants to quit.

“In one single street the first six male inhabitants who crossed their thresholds were seized and shot at once, under the very eyes of their wives and children.

“The German troops then retired for the day, only to return in greater numbers on the next day, Thursday, August 20th.

“They then compelled the inhabitants to leave their houses, and marched them to a place two hundred yards from the town. There, without more ado, they shot M. Thielemans, the burgo-master, his fifteen-year-old son, the clerk of the local judicial board, and ten prominent citizens. They then set fire to the town and destroyed it.”

Unless we are to reject this account as purely mendacious, then this massacre of non-combatants was committed without the shred or the shadow of an excuse. Here there was no question of punishing non-combatants by “frightfulness.” If the account be complete, the victims had done absolutely nothing! The shooting of the men,

UNPROVOKED MURDERS

women and children at Aerschot was simply an act of revenge for the losses inflicted on the army by the Belgian regulars. The execution of the mayor was nothing less than an assassination, and if the officer in charge could ever be identified, he should be tried for murder. If the facts are as stated, he should be hanged.

But Aerschot is only one incident, horrible but comparatively trifling, in the long record of blood and pillage by which Germany distinguished her occupation of Belgium. They crowded into six short weeks more crime, more hideous debauchery, more vile cruelties, more revolting outrages on everything that nations hold sacred than have occurred in Europe for half a century. They violated young girls, they bayoneted old men. They made the gutters run with the blood of innocent people; they burnt the roofs of peasants against whom they did not even trouble to frame an allegation. They did worse. They shot their prisoners in cold blood. At Liége, the mayor, two aldermen, the rector of the University, two deans and many police inspectors were among those dealt with, and three hundred Belgian civilians, including old men and lads, were driven at the point of the bayonet to a spot near the station, where they were all put to death.

The policy of "frightfulness" did not end

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there. According to a correspondent of the Press Association :

“Removal from the face of the earth—a phrase of the German papers themselves—continues to be the invader’s idea of how best to deal with unarmed, unoffending villages, the only crime of whose people is that they have fallen in his path.

“The Germans entered Tirlemont, in the vicinity of which they have been for some days. They were in strong force, mostly cavalry and artillery. The big guns shelled the place, and the cavalry played at war by attacking the flying and panic-stricken populace, shooting and stabbing them at random.

“Never have I seen such a picture of woe as a peasant woman and five children who stood bewildered in the Place de la Gare here, all crying as if their hearts would break. It was a terrible story the woman had to tell. ‘They shot my husband before my eyes,’ she said, ‘and trampled two of my children to death.’

“A German knocked at the door of the house of the burgomaster at Venne, near the Dutch frontier, and when the burgomaster’s wife opened the door she was knocked down and killed with the butt end of a rifle.

“A solicitor who was a member of the Belgian Chamber, and who was staying in the house,

WHAT MR. REDMOND SAID

rushed to the front door, and he also was instantly knocked down and killed with a bayonet thrust. On hearing of these atrocities the population fled in terror."

That is all of a piece with the rest of the Prussian atrocities. In village after village, town after town, they have left hundreds of victims—homeless, desolate women and children, whose breadwinners have been slain, whose houses have been burnt, whose crops have been seized. Some have gone mad under the strain. Others are starving. The horde that passed through Belgium slaughtered, burnt and despoiled without regard to age, sex or station. A letter written from the niece of Mr. John Redmond, M.P., described them as "absolute barbarians, who treat the women like dogs. For the least thing the inhabitants are shot, and they all live in fear of their lives. The town's most prominent men, in relays of three, guarded by soldiers, guarantee with their lives the good behaviour of the people. My husband is one of the guarantors. On Wednesday night he spent his hours of vigil in the town hall. Imagine my feelings.

"The Germans take everything," she says; "no matter how well they are treated and received, they behave filthily and brutally, officers and men alike. Empty houses they smash from top to bottom."

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Two Oxford undergraduates who were captured by the Germans at Cartenbergh, a village near Louvain, had the opportunity of watching Prussian methods at first hand. In their letter to *The Times* they assert that they saw five civilians ruthlessly shot down by German soldiers as they left their burning houses—the very houses those soldiers had first set alight!

And the Germans themselves, how do they view these atrocities? An official communiqué issued by the Press Bureau seems to show that they revel in them. This document explains that—

“Among the non-infrequent German pamphlets seized by the Custom House authorities from aliens at ports of landing, some are printed in English (or what is expected to pass for English), others are in the original tongue. Among the latter is a little volume called ‘Kriegs-Chronik,’ consisting partly of a highly untrustworthy chronicle of the war, partly of soldiers’ letters from the front. As showing the methods of thought of the enemy, these last have considerable value. It is not the truth or falsehood of the tales in them that matters, but the applause and self-congratulations of the writers on deeds of gross treachery and cruelty claimed to have been done by the writers themselves or their comrades. The following may serve as examples :

THROUGH GERMAN EYES

(1) Bold Exploit of Two Dragoons from Duisburg. (*Page 27*) "A patrol of German dragoons entering a village incautiously were surprised to find it occupied by the French. The majority escaped, but the two leading men were surrounded by eight French infantry soldiers. They pretended to surrender (*sie ergaben sich anscheinend*), but when a French sergeant came forward to receive their carbines, one of the dragoons, purporting to hand over his weapon, shot the man through the head and then galloped off with his comrade. The other seven Frenchmen, who had grounded their rifles and were quite off their guard, failed to hit them as they rode off." This is called *ein kühnes Reiterstückchen*, and spoken of as a gallant stratagem.

(2) Extermination of a Belgian Village. Narrative of an Artillery Officer. (*Page 26*) "The countryside was full of our troops; nevertheless, the stupid peasants must needs shoot at our men as they marched by from lurking places. The day before yesterday morning Prussian troops surrounded the village at 4 A.M., put women, children, and old people aside, and shot *all* the men; the village was then burnt to the ground."

(3) Guerilla War in the Vosges. "A traitor has just been shot, a little French lad (*ein Französling*) belonging to one of those gymnastic societies

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which wear tricolour ribbons (i.e. the *Éclaireurs*, or Boy Scouts), a poor young fellow who in his infatuation wanted to be a hero. The German column was passing along a wooded defile, and he was caught and asked whether the French were about. He refused to give information. Fifty yards farther on there was fire from the cover of a wood. The prisoner was asked in French if he had known that the enemy was in the forest and did not deny it. He went with firm step to a telegraph post and stood up against it, with the green vineyard at his back, and received the volley of the firing party with a proud smile on his face. Infatuated wretch! It was a pity to see such wasted courage."

Thus do the Kaiser's soldiers view their dreadful work, and quite seriously we ought not to be surprised. If the Prussian philosophy that has been drilled into them is right, then, indeed, their viewpoint is the only one possible. If Bernhardi and Treitschke are correct in affirming that force is the only thing that matters, that might is right, then why should they repine? They have had it shouted in their ears that the whole duty of man is to be strong, ruthless, efficient; that it is folly to consider the feeble or to spare the defenceless. It is not they whom we should blame; the real criminals are those who for their own ends, and

AN IMPARTIAL VIEW

deliberately shutting their eyes to the light, infected the nation with the virus of an inhuman, a diabolic creed, well knowing that simpler men would have to carry out its repellent behests. They, the wirepullers of the military caste, would be safe from reprisals, secure against the wrath of the enemy and the anger of the nations. They could preach the gospel of "frightfulness" and remain at home at ease. Theirs was, indeed, the safer path.

"They only said 'intimidate,' and wrote and stayed away—

By God, the men who did the work were braver men than they."

It may be urged that the accounts of these horrors come from biased sources. Let us see, therefore, how they affect not our own troops, not biased or partisan observers, but those who view them from a detached and impartial standpoint. Here, for instance, is the account given to the *Daily Telegraph* by an American writer, Mr. Howard Morgan, of the scene in Louvain.

"An hour before sunset we entered Louvain," he says, "and found the city a smoking furnace. The railway station was crowded with troops, drunk with loot and liquor, and rapine as well. From house to house, acting under orders, groups of soldiers were carrying lighted straw, placing it

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in the basement, and then passing on to the next. It was not one's idea of a general conflagration, for each house burned separately—hundreds of individual bonfires—while the sparks shot up like thousands of shooting stars into the still night-air. It was exactly like a display of fireworks or Bengal lights and set-pieces at a grand display in Coney Island.

“Meanwhile through the station arch we saw German justice being administered. In a square outside, where the cabs stand, an officer stood, and the soldiers drove the citizens of Louvain into his presence, like so many unwilling cattle on a market day. Some of the men, after a few words between the officer and the escorts, were marched off under fixed bayonets behind the railway station. Then we heard volleys, and the soldiers returned. Then the train moved out, and the last we saw of the doomed city was an immense red glare in the gathering darkness.”

And German diplomacy had the supreme assurance to assert that “Just for a word—‘neutrality’—just for ‘a scrap of paper’ Great Britain was going to make war.”

Yes; but save for that “scrap of paper” the Belgians would have had to suffer those horrors—and find themselves without help, redress or relief!

“ WE TOOK EVERYTHING ”

The plea of “a scrap of paper” is a proof positive of the decadence that, like creeping paralysis, has, all unobserved, stolen over Germany, for it shows a moral obliquity, a callousness, a cynical disregard of all obligations that puts her outside the pale of nations. Once let the plea pass muster, and inevitably civilisation falls to pieces. The merchant who was given a bill can disown it with a light heart. The man who has signed a deed can plead that it is but a piece of parchment. No agreement can be binding; no undertaking worth consideration. If the written word can be ignored with impunity, so, too, can the verbal promise, and mankind is driven back to the conclusion—a conclusion fatal to civilisation—that contracts must go and that only extortion is binding!

And that that is the German view, German troops have amply proved, not only by their acts but by their letters.

That is the dominant note in their epistles. “We have no need for money; we simply take.” One in a burst of candour remarks: “Before burning the village we took away everything that was eatable or drinkable.” And another states: “The first village across the frontier was completely destroyed. It was a sight which was both sad and agreeable.” An official communiqué issued by the War Office of Paris states that:

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“According to a report dated August 10th, 1914, sent by the general commanding the army in the East,” it continues, “the German troops have finished off a large number of wounded men by shots fired into their faces at close quarters, as has been demonstrated by the dimensions of the wounds. Other wounded men were deliberately trampled upon.

“On August 10th the Bavarian Infantry systematically set fire to the villages which they went through in Barbas, Montigny, Montreux, and Paruse districts, at a time also when no artillery fire on either side could have provoked such action. In the same district they compelled the inhabitants to go in front of their scouts.”

Another report, dated August 11th, 1914, says: “The German troops are burning villages, massacring inhabitants, and making the women and children march in front of them when they come out of the villages on to the battlefields. This was done notably at Billy, in the fighting on the 10th. They are finishing off the wounded and killing prisoners.”

The realisation of Nietzsche's Superman, in fact, is complete. Well might Mr. Richard Harding Davis protest that Germany “is fighting foully. She is defying the rules of humanity.” There is

SYSTEMATIC BUTCHERING

no end to the list of horrors she has perpetrated. An official report made by M. Miram, Prefect of the Meurthe and Moselle, to the French Minister of the Interior, after a visit to the districts of Badonviller, Cirey, and Blamont in the Lunéville area contains some dreadful details. M. Miram states that it was impossible to cite all the acts of savagery and brutality on the part of the German troops which had come under his notice. He could make out a long list of women, young girls, and old men and women who had been executed without the least reason and upon the slightest pretext. Houses had been systematically burned by order of the German officers as they advanced, and again as they retreated.

At Badonviller, where one of the Kaiser's sons was with the troops, eleven of the inhabitants had been murdered, among whom was the wife of the mayor and a woman with her infant child, while seventy-eight houses were burned with petrol and specially prepared faggots. After pillaging the town and looting everything they could, they fired on and demolished the church, and took away as hostages fifteen of the inhabitants, including a magistrate.

At Bréménil the Prefect found a pitiful and shameful state of affairs. There, five inhabitants, one a little lad, were butchered, as well as an old

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man of seventy-four, who was "trussed and shot like a rabbit." The Communal building was destroyed, and nearly the whole town swept away, not during battle but by the soldiers on their arrival.

Over and over again it has been found that the Germans themselves have confirmed some of the worst stories of the atrocities. In the pocket-book of an officer of the 178th Saxon Regiment of Infantry there was found the following terrible passages :

"I visited," writes the officer, "a little château belonging to the secretary of the King of the Belgians. Our men conducted themselves like Vandals, ransacking the cellars and upsetting everything. They took away a heap of useless things. At Sovet a Belgian accused of espionage was shot.

"At Lisogne on August 23 our men said they could not advance because marksmen were shooting at them from houses. They got hold of about a dozen sharpshooters and placed them in three lines behind each other, so that the same shot would hit three men. At Bouvines our men destroyed everything. The spectacle of the murdered inhabitants defies all description. Men, women and children found in a monastery which had already been burned were shot. We burnt Villers, the population having warned the French

TERRIBLE CONFESSIONS

of the passage of our troops, and after having shot the curé and some inhabitants, we crossed the French frontier and billeted at Guz d'Ossus. A cyclist in falling off his machine let his gun off and pretended that he had been shot at. For this all the inhabitants were thrown into the flames of the village which we burnt. At Leppes two hundred people were killed."

Notebooks found on German soldiers who were made prisoners at Aerschot contain terrible confessions. Gaston Klein, belonging to the 1st Company of the Landsturm, writes, under date August 29:

"From Roosbeck we began to see something of the war—burning houses, walls riddled with bullets, the face of the church clock knocked away by shells, etc., a few isolated crosses showing the graves of the victims of the war. We arrived at Louvain, which was swarming with soldiers. The battalion of Landsturm from Halle came in, dragging after it all sorts of things, mostly wine bottles; many were drunk.

"A group of ten cyclists in search of lodgings rode through the town, which showed a picture of destruction impossible to imagine. Burning and crumbling houses on both sides of the streets—very few remaining standing. Everywhere on the road bits of broken glass, burning wood, etc. The

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electric tram wires and the telephone wires had fallen in the streets and blocked the way. The houses still standing were full of 'logées.'

"On the return to the station nobody knew what to do. First only a few troops went into the town, but then the battalion entered in close ranks and broke into the first houses in order to loot—I beg pardon—to requisition wine and some other things, too. It was like a pack of hounds let loose; everyone did what he liked. The officers led the way and gave good example.

"A night in barracks with many drunken men; that was the end of it all.

"That day has filled me with a contempt which I cannot express."

Another prisoner writes to his wife, Anna Manniget, at Magdeburg :

"We reached Louvain at seven in the evening. I was not able to write to you on account of the mournful aspect of Louvain. On all sides the town was burning. What was not burning was being destroyed. We got into the cellars and filled ourselves well."

One asks, indeed, as one reads the appalling narrative of Prussian brutality, if there is any excess, any cruelty, any form of torture that they have not exhausted. They have burnt not only houses but men, they have murdered women, they

“ LIKE WILD BEASTS ”

have placed little children in the firing line to cover their advance, they have starved, insulted and beaten non-combatants and killed them out of hand if they so much as protested. Let us take the account of eye-witnesses. Here is the statement of Mr. Henry Frenkel, a Russian resident at Antwerp, who volunteered for the Sixth Regiment of the line, and who was present at Liège during the German occupation :

“I got into Liège by Holland. I went first to Rosendael, then to Maastricht, last to Eysden, and then openly passed the frontier. I will not describe Visé, Mouland, Berneau, and other places, all burned, sacked and devastated in the most horrible fashion. Although all I have seen has hardened my nerve, I still shiver when I think of it. One cannot grasp the idea of all that has really taken place there. The Germans, mad with rage on account of the resistance which we opposed to them, have acted like wild beasts, to give it a mild name. I have seen men, women, and children hanged or horribly mutilated. I have seen heaps of corpses, of which no trace will be left in a few hours, as the inhabitants round Liège have been commanded to bury them in lots. Ah! the Prussians will have to render us a terrible account. I witnessed an incident on the Place Lambert, in Liège. A Belgian chauffeur was arguing with a

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German officer. Visibly, the Belgian chauffeur could not understand what was wanted of him. The crowd gathered, and I could not follow the rest of the scene; but I heard a revolver shot. Then German soldiers rushed out of the palace to stop the crowds, and I saw the chauffeur, with blood-covered face, carried into a house by two soldiers. Not a sign of revolt from the crowd. The rifles are loaded, ready to go off. At my side a German said, laughingly: '*Ach, das ist nichts! Eine Kleinigkeit.*' ('Oh! that's nothing. A mere trifle.')

A man shot because he could not understand his instructions is only a small thing to the Prussian, bred on Bernhardt, and taught to worship brute force. A woman bayoneted, an old man shot—these are mere episodes. One wonders, indeed, that they are not made matters for rejoicing. Again let me repeat they are the logical outcome of the philosophy, the devil worship in which the Prussian has been instructed.

One might go on adding to this appalling record of unspeakable acts almost indefinitely. But *cui bono!* The reading would be too sickening; the details too nauseous. We have here already blacker deeds, viler cruelties than can ever be atoned for: deeds that no punishment can expiate, no retribution make good. In two short months

BLACKENING HISTORY

the Prussian has added a chapter of horrors to the history of the human race that will not be forgotten for centuries. For every soldier that they killed in battle it is estimated that they have killed three non-combatants. For every non-combatant that they have killed they have wounded ten and rendered twenty homeless. Though he can never pay adequately, the Prussian must be punished heavily for the wrong that he has done, punished so that to the third and fourth generation his children feel the iniquity of his transgression. For let us remember only by exacting a punishment so severe as to be felt by every man, woman and child in Germany can we protect civilisation against another visitation of such horrors.

CHAPTER IX

When Prussia has to Pay

WHAT guarantee are the Allies, acting for Europe and for civilisation, going to exact from Germany against the repetition of horrors such as I have described? What punishment will they decide to inflict on the nation that has permitted such atrocities? What recompense will they insist upon recovering for those of the victims who remain? These are questions that cannot be answered too firmly, and upon which we should make up our minds without delay. Already we are told that it would be only statesmanlike "to let Germany down lightly"; already it is being urged on us that we should not wreak too severe a vengeance; that our old-time moderation and restraint must not desert us, and that we should practise a wise magnanimity.

But the point is that to be magnanimous to the enemy in this case is to be more than treacherous to ourselves. We cannot, if we care a button for the future of civilisation, be magnanimous; to spare Germany is to surrender Europe and to

FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM

abandon everything, or nearly everything, that we hold dear in life. It is, in fact, to prepare ourselves for suicide. If we do not use this opportunity to break into pieces the tyranny under which Europe has lived for twenty years, we shall hand down servitude to our children.

It is, therefore, of supreme importance that we should, even at the risk of counting our victory before it is won, keep clearly before us the objects for which we are fighting and the means by which those objects may be secured when the fighting is over and the terms of peace have to be settled.

I may be told that neither Great Britain nor the Allies, but the Germans may settle those terms, and, of course, that is possible; the Goths may triumph in the world's greatest war. In that event, the future of England and the future of Europe need not trouble us. They will, in fact, have no future that bears thinking of, and the last refuge of Europe will probably be found to be America.

If Germany wins then France will be crushed; Russia will be humiliated, and England, sooner or later, reduced to vassalage and made to share the fate, first of Belgium, then of Alsace and Lorraine. We should not need to worry about terms in that case. Those of us who were left, and who were not too utterly broken, would, I think, turn to the

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great Republic of the West as the only possible refuge. There, at any rate, some of the assumptions of civilisation hold good; there women are not treated and thought of as just a little better than animals; there one is not made to salute every soldier or to be kicked off the pavement; there, is still some freedom of thought and of discussion; and there most of us would go, who preferred to live as men and not as helots beneath the iron heel of Prussian dominance. In that case one would have a conviction, amounting almost to certainty, that the task which Europe had failed in would, and at no very distant date, engage the attention of the abounding American. For, as Mr. Winston Churchill pointed out quite recently, once let Germany overrun Europe, and the United States will find the Monroe Doctrine put sharply to challenge. With the Netherlands and Belgium in occupation and with Britain in check, the Kaiser will look for his place in the sun in South America, and the United States will find the Goth at her gates.

But, personally, I think the danger is not so much that the Allies will fail in the war as that they will be overreached when the time comes to make peace. Already counsels of perfection, of brotherly love for the downtrodden Prussian are being urged on us. True, these efforts have

CUTTING PRUSSIA'S CLAWS

slackened a little of late. "It is the voice of the pacifist. I heard him complain, you have called me too early; you must wake me again." For the moment the pacifist is wise indeed to sleep; but a time will come when we shall find him awake in earnest, and, if we have not then ideas as to what the settlement with and of the Unspeakable Prussian should include, why, then assuredly it is we who will be caught napping. No patchwork compromise, no mere truce between the parties ought to suffice. If this war is not to be fought over again, and probably under conditions far less favourable to ourselves, then the terms that we must impose upon the German and Austrian Empires ought to be, and must be, so drastic and crippling as to render Prussia impotent. That ought to be our inexorable resolve, and if we abandon it, then our soldiers will have fought in vain and we shall have betrayed them and their courage. There is a very delightful passage in Washington Irving's "Sketch Book," which says of John Bull that "though no one fights with more obstinacy to carry a contested point, yet, when the battle is over, and he comes to the reconciliation, he is so much taken up with the mere shaking of hands, that he is apt to let his antagonist pocket all they have been fighting about."

The failing, no doubt, is an agreeable one, but

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for once we should steel our hearts against it. What will happen if we settle with the enemy of Europe before she has been crushed and beaten, so crushed and beaten that she cannot but respect our decisions? Simply this: that she will, if not in ten then in twenty or thirty years, when she has recuperated, when her misdemeanours are forgotten, when she has formed other alliances and *ententes* than with the moribund Austrian or the decadent Turk; when, in a word, circumstances are favourable; she will renew the combat, and it may be that then she will win. To-day the forces against Germany are tremendous. She has opposed to her Britain, France, Russia, Servia, Montenegro, Belgium and last—but by no means least—Japan. She has united the whole of our Empire against her, has rallied every race, class and creed and nerved them all to a supreme effort against her. As I write I note that even Mr. Tilak, the notorious Indian agitator, just released from serving a severe sentence for sedition, has called on his followers to do their utmost to help crush Kaiserism. Never perhaps were so many nations welded together in a common object; never were the dissimilar, the utterly varied races that go to make up our Empire, so keenly enthused, so forgetful of ancient feuds and long-standing differences. Shall we let all the enthusiasm evaporate without

OUR GREAT OPPORTUNITY

crippling the enemy? Surely not! It would be criminal to let the present opportunity of crushing Germany escape us. Let us remember that the delightfully candid Bernhardt—the frankest of conspirators, who let us into the secret that we were the first of the Powers to be smashed—entitled his most important chapter “World Power or Downfall,” and he was right. Depend upon it, if we let Prussia down lightly, if we do not take precious good care to impose terms on her that will render her impotent for mischief—then we shall have the struggle over again, and the next time she will get, if not “World Power,” at any rate such a dominion over Europe as will make the lives of free men impossible. Unless we want our children to see a record rush from old England across to the States, then we must refuse to settle save on terms that are really decisive.

“Ah, but,” I may be told, “we must not, we ought not to degrade the German people.” My answer to that is that only by a compromise with Prussian militarism can we further degrade the Teuton. This is a war not only for the emancipation of Europe, but for the liberation of the German people from a morbid, irrational, almost insane and wholly inhuman militarism that has clouded their lives, darkened their spirits, and turned their best energies into scourges for their own back. Let

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us consider for a moment what is the state of mind of the average Prussian, the average German to-day. According to all the evidence that comes to hand, his view of himself and of his nation, and of the destiny that Prussians are called on to play, is not only ludicrous, but, in effect, it makes peace, civilisation, real security impossible.

According to the special representatives of the *Evening News*, who achieved the brilliant journalistic feat recently of visiting Berlin, and talking to the people there, they are one and all quite convinced as to the part they are to play in the *Welt Politik*. "We are the only race of dictators; we will have the whole world at our feet; we will impose our laws on every nation." Thus spake the average Berliner. Atrocities, they seemed to say, were very bad; but if they were necessary to ensure German dominion, why, then they should not be grieved for over much. In any case, they are the chosen people, and their dominion over mankind is absolutely requisite.

There is something exquisitely ridiculous in the idea that to establish universal dominion you must, among other things, cut off the hands of little children, as in Belgium, or outrage women and girls, as in France, or burn and loot and shoot non-combatants everywhere. The reasoning seems to run somewhat like this: (1) It is necessary that

TERMS MUST BE DRASTIC

we should dominate Europe; (2) we can only do this by organised "frightfulness"; (3) hence there is nothing to be ashamed of in all the horrors that we have perpetrated. That is the Prussian viewpoint, and it is folly to talk of degrading those who hold it. They have to be taught in the sharp school of experience that their philosophy is an insane, an intolerable one, and they will only be taught it when they learn that the powers they have abused are to be taken from them for ever. Then and then only will there be peace for Europe; then and then only will there be any hope of a return to its old sanity for Germany. To hamstring Prussia will not be to degrade Germany, but to free her.

And in an even more definite and positive way a drastic settlement of the war—drastic against the enemy—will do much to emancipate the men and women we are warned not to degrade. It seems to me that in this matter we cannot give too close an attention to those remarkable words of Treitschke in which that sinister historian gave the following really illuminative account of the past and future of the German Empire as he saw it: "That just as the greatness of Germany is to be found in the governance of Germany by Prussia," he said, "so the greatness and the good of the world is to be found in the predominance there

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of German culture, of the German mind—in a word, of German character.”

Now whatever view we may take of the latter part of this statement, whether it rouses us to hilarity or to rage, this much is certain: modern Germany is the creation of Prussia. The difference between the German of a hundred years ago, an amiable, phlegmatic and harmless dreamer, and “the magnificent blonde brute, avidly rampant for spoil and victory,” who bayonets defenceless women and fires on soldiers from beneath the white flag, who loots and pillages and burns, and who says and believes that he does all these things in order to establish the paramountcy of his race, the difference between the two types is due largely to the fact that the old-time German has become Prussianised. Let us look for a moment at a deftly painted picture of the older generation.

“One is often pained and overcome with longing [writes a modern German professor] as one thinks of the German of a hundred years ago. He was poor, he was impotent, he was despised, ridiculed and defrauded. He was the uncomplaining slave of others; his fields were their battleground, and the goods which he had inherited from his fathers were trodden underfoot and dispersed. He never troubled when the riches of the outside world were divided without regard for him. He sat in

THE WORSHIP OF FORCE

his bare little room high under the roof, in simple coat and clumsy shoes; but his heart was full of sweet dreams, and uplifted by the chords of Beethoven to a rapture which threatened to rend his breast. He wept with Werther and Jean Paul in joyous pain, he smiled with the childish innocence of his naive poets, the happiness of his longing consumed him, and as he listened to Schubert's song his soul became one with the soul of the universe. Let us think no more of it—it is useless." *

This is not an heroic figure, it is not even a very impressive one, but stands out with extraordinary sharpness from the German we know to-day, the German that we cannot think of without a shudder; the German who is untouched by idealism; unmoved by compassion, worshipping only force, and believing that, just because he can bring more of that to bear upon the world than anyone else, he must dominate its councils, frame its laws, and settle its developments.

Prussia has grafted its own special and inhuman philosophy, as well as its own special aptitude on the entire German people, and if the settlement following the war is to lead to a real peace, then it is Prussia who must be deprived of all power of mischief. We have only to remember

* "The Evolution of Modern Germany." W. H. Dawson. (Fisher Unwin.)

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the rough outline of what is at present called the German Empire to realise that the military caste, the military philosophy, the huge army machine, with its intolerable regime and its immense power—all these were forced upon the German people by the petty kingdom which the present Kaiser controls. It is suggested at the end of the war that the Kaiser should be sent to St. Helena, where no doubt he could write reminiscences rivalling Munchausen's in unveracity. Others prefer to consign him to Siberia. But wherever he is deported, or whatever happens to him, it is certain that the Prussian tradition is not centred in his person, and that the problem of Prussia will outlast him. There was some point in putting Napoleon on a little island "off the map" that he was for ever altering, for Bonaparte created at once a dynasty and a tradition that began and practically ended with himself. But the hero of Potsdam is not of that order of men. He derives his authority from the Junker class, which has dominated Prussia ever since that swampy marsh ground was made into an opera-bouffe kingdom in 1701. That kingdom was powerless standing alone, but placed at the hegemony of Germany, it has become a menace to the world, and the point is that, if we allow it to retain that position, then most assuredly the worm at the root will again assert itself. The

THINGS TO BE DONE

German may be chastened in this generation and made a sadder and a wiser man. But the Prussian dominion will ere long assert itself. The military caste will pull the strings again. The old allegiance will assert itself and the old trouble will begin anew; and if that follows, then the victory of the Allies will have been won in vain.

The neutralisation of the Kiel Canal, the surrender of the German fleet, the capture of Germany's colonies, the payment of a huge indemnity, these will avail us nothing if we leave the unspeakable Prussian paramount over Germany. Prussian autocracy must be shattered, the dominion of the military caste must be wiped out for ever, or else, I repeat, the present war will have to be fought over again. The men who have endured the agonies of this campaign will have suffered to no purpose. The lives that have been given so cheerfully to break the power of the Prussian will have been thrown away.

We know how Prussia has established her rule over Germany. Every species of craft, every extremity of brutality have been employed. We know how Bismarck tricked Austria. We know how Prussian troops rushed through Saxony, lifting the children from their cradles, spilling their brains, mocking their mothers, and then on into another cottage, there to repeat the awful deeds.

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“Frightfulness” is no invention of the Kaiser. It is bred in the bone of the Prussian, and before he vented it on other countries, he tried his prentice hand on his fellow Germans. When he was not bullying them, threatening them or fighting them, he was deceiving them.

And he is the same to-day. We had him fifty years ago entrapping Austria to fight on his behalf for the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein. Then, these secure, we found him fighting Austria herself. We have him to-day again jockeying that unhappy empire into a war that has already covered her tarnished military reputation with disgrace, and left her fate practically in the hands of the Berlin wirepullers—those creatures of the Kaiser who plot with him for the abasement of other Germans, and care only for the aggrandisement, the dominance of the ruling province; who arrange that the “red regiments” are led first against the most dangerous positions so that they may be slaughtered, and who take good care also that the easygoing, good-natured, if empty-headed Bavarian (who dislikes the Prussian nearly as much as he fears him), that he too is sent right on to the trenches, well on into the zone of fire.

The Prussian Junker is wise in his generation. While he is attacking the enemies of his empire, he will take good care to see, at the same time, that

AUSTRIA, THE WASHPOT

he kills as many of the "subject races" within that empire as possible. I say subject races advisedly. For there can be no question that the Prussian military caste is predominant to a hideous degree throughout the German Confederation. That Confederation was established to preserve peace, but the Prussian has succeeded in converting it into the most formidable instrument for fructifying war that our generation has known. And not only does the clever and astute Prussian organiser play with the other German states like pawns on a chessboard, but he has contrived it so that even Germany outside the confederation shall still do his bidding. Let us take the position of Germany's present ally.

The Prussian has made Austria his washpot: over Hungary he has cast his shoe. Says Dr. Charles Sarolea, in his wonderful work on "The Anglo-German Problem,"* "For all practical interests and purposes, Austria-Hungary has become a German dependency. She follows the political fortunes of the predominant partner. She almost forms part of the German Zollverein, in that her tariffs are systematically favourable to her northern neighbour. But above this," says the Doctor, who speaks with rare knowledge and authority, "Austria-Hungary renders to Germany the inestimable service both of civilising—that is of

* Nelson.

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Germanising—the inferior races, the Slavs, and of keeping them in check. It is a very disagreeable and difficult task which Germany infinitely prefers to leave to Austria rather than to assume herself. And it is a task for which, as Professor Lamprecht, the national historian, is compelled to admit, the Austrian German seems far more qualified than the Prussian German. And Germany can thus entirely devote herself to her world ambitions, whilst Austria is entirely absorbed by her racial conflict—for the King of Prussia ! ”

For Prussia and its King, for the Hohenzollerns and their Junkers, for the little coteries of the Unter den Linden, presided over by the Prince Eulenberg of happy memory, was there ever a tyranny like unto this? And, mind, the amazing insolence, the insatiable maw of the Hohenzollern does not stop here. The German Empire is to include not only all its present kingdoms, duchies and small republics, but is to stretch far out into the East, until it has Mesopotamia as a province, and has absorbed as mere trifles, *hors d'œuvres* as it were, those somewhat tough mouthfuls, the Balkan States; while we may take it that when the Kaiser's arms have triumphed finally in this campaign, Belgium and the Netherlands will become as much a part of his Empire as, say, Bavaria is to-day. That at least is the programme. And all these

PRUSSIA MUST GO

races and all these peoples, with their blending of races, their different aspirations, their varying modes of life—all are to be reconciled under the rule of the camarilla of the Unter den Linden. We know what the Reichstag counts for in Germany; we know that representative government has ceased to have any vitality whatever in the Empire; we know that the Kaiser and his clique of time-serving officials settle everything that they want to settle; and if their fighting machine is successful, they will settle the affairs of an immense proportion of the human race.

Monstrous! you say. Agreed! But the present position, as it affects Germany itself, is that not monstrous also? With a gagged press, with the right of public meeting abolished, with no means of organising public opinion, with the iron Prussian ascendancy crushing them everywhere, the Germans are helpless.

I postulate, therefore, that no peace that can be signed between the victorious Allies and the beaten German Empire will be satisfactory unless it removes for ever the destiny of the Germans from the unspeakable Prussian autocracy which has proved as great a curse and a menace to Europe as to Germany herself.

The Allies will be clearly within their rights in limiting Prussia and her power: they have the

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right to demand a settlement not with the Hohenzollerns but with the people; they have the right to insist on such inner reforms in the constitution of the German Confederation as will free Europe from the perpetual menace of war. Just as Bismarck insisted on the establishment of a stable representative government in France as a condition precedent to peace; just as the territory of the Sultan was recently limited; so I suggest the Allies should insist that Prussia is cut out of the German Empire and allowed to occupy only the territory that she held when Frederick the Great started his evil game of grab.

If we give her that, it does not matter very much whether the Hohenzollerns govern that portion of the world or not. Confined to their own proper territory, they cannot any longer constitute themselves a danger to Europe. Their power for evil lies in their ability to recruit from the rest of Germany.

That power should be taken from them. Whether the Kaiser or his heirs are allowed to remain on the throne of Prussia is a matter for subsequent discussion, and is, as I suggest, of quite secondary importance. Looking at the matter from the standpoint of pure justice, one has no difficulty in seeing that the Kaiser ought to exchange his throne for another, a different kind

WHAT ABOUT THE KAISER ?

of eminence altogether. None of us would have any great difficulty in framing an unanswerable indictment against the braggart and blasphemer, whose itching vanity could not be gratified save by the blood of thousands of brave men. It would be an inspiring spectacle, indeed, if this regal plotter against civilisation were compelled to answer for his crimes to some tribunal that was really representative of the civilised world. But are these practical politics? I fear not. "Nice customs court'sey to great kings." The Kaiser has too many cousins in the purple ever to be called on to answer for the infamous outrages that he has inspired and directed. And if he were, let us remember that there is always the plea of insanity open to his advisers.

Above all, there is this salient fact: that, even if he were decapitated (as in a less tolerant age he certainly would have been), we are still faced with the problem of his heir, that pretentious son of a braggart father—the Crown Prince, whose issue would appear to vex us, if we allowed them to have the power. In a word, the Hohenzollerns will survive the Kaiser, as also will Prussia, and the real problem is what power and what territory they shall be allowed to retain.

If Prussia is reduced to the proportions she occupied when, through bribery, fraud, and cor-

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ruption, she was first changed from a marquisate into a kingdom, then she, her rulers, and her people will be powerless for mischief, and her trade, which, as Voltaire remarked, is war, can be carried on only locally. She should nevermore be able to coerce Germany and bully Europe. She should nevermore be able to enforce her conscript levies on the Hessians, the Hanoverians, the Bavarians: to drill them, dominate them, and degrade them till she has in her hands the most formidable fighting machine, the most tremendous weapon that the world has ever known. If the question were put to the peoples of the other German States they would, I believe, welcome the release. In 1848 they did their utmost, as we have seen, to escape the despotism of Prussia, but circumstances were too much for them. Unity was essential, and unity was only to be purchased at the price of the surrender of their freedom, their inspirations, their traditions, their very souls even, to the unspeakable Prussian, whom all the time they distrusted and detested. But whether the other German States wish now to break away from the allegiance that their fathers loathed, or whether they prefer to lick the rod for ever, ought not to weigh with the Allies. If Germany is beaten in the struggle, if civilisation triumphs over the Goth, if Europe conquers, then, in the interests of the

GERMANY'S REDEMPTION

generations that are coming after, she should insist that, like a cancer, Prussia is cut out from the German Confederation. Till that is done there is no hope of a real, an abiding peace in Europe; till that is done there is no true security for civilisation. The Prussians have already redrawn the map of Europe. The Allies should not hesitate to redraw the map of Germany, and on that map Prussia ought to be reduced to the territory she occupied before Frederick the Great commenced to break treaties, levy tributes, make war and carry devastation through his neighbours' domains.

Europe must limit Prussia's power for evil; if she cannot do that, then she must resign herself—she and her peoples—to live in a state of vassalage. There is no other way. To leave Germany, with all her wealth, resources, and population, in the hands of the Unspeakable Prussian is to leave Europe at the mercy of the barbarian. It makes very little practical difference whether we depose the Kaiser from the throne of Prussia or not. But it makes all the difference in the world whether we suffer Prussia to remain the predominant partner in the German Confederation.

As has been well said, "Prussia and the Prussian system have drugged the mind and conscience of the entire German nation like a species of

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alcoholic poisoning."* They have inoculated the German with a desire for world-dominion that will never leave him while Prussia remains at the helm.

Professor Usher, of Washington University, who looks at the matter from the detached standpoint of one who is not geographically considered a European, has said that "The Germans aim at nothing less than the domination of Europe, and of the world, by the Germanic race. . . . No doubt only a few men know the full details of the plans for the realisation of this stupendous enterprise, but the whole nation is none the less fired by their spirit, and is working as a unit in accordance with their directions."

These men, the insane militarists who inoculated Germany with the virus of this mad idea, are, need I say, Prussians. It is they who have alternately driven and cajoled the German on his present path. All nations have their moments of delirium, of wild delight in conquest, when the dream of Empire lulls their senses, and they are for the time blind to the real interests of their peoples. But with the Prussian the idea of dominion partakes of the insanity of a fixed idea. Dominion is the one idea that the Prussian can grasp, the one thing that he aspires to. For that he will surrender everything. To

* *The Round Table*, September.

THE DANGER OF LENIENCY

accomplish it he will spare himself nothing. He will return again and yet again to the task, and so long as we allow him to draw on the numbers and resources of Germany, so long is the possibility of success within his grasp.

But cut off from the rest of Germany, Prussia will be powerless for mischief, and the German Empire will be free to develop along rational and human lines, free from the militarism that has oppressed her for decades, and has dwarfed and stunted the development of the race so that its sons to-day are something less than men.

I have known Germans themselves curse Prussian militarism with the fierceness of men who knew that it was driving their country headlong to ruin. I have known—and who has not?—Germans who have fled to other countries rather than endure the soul-debasing, harassing and cruel discipline which the Kaiser's war machine inflicts upon his people. I have heard others who have suffered those rigours declare that they loathe the militarism which is corroding the conscience of their fellow-countrymen. I do not doubt their sincerity; I do not doubt their earnestness for a moment.

Why do they suffer it? Because they cannot help themselves. The mailed fist is in their face; the iron hand is at their throat. They live under the shadow of a tyranny that is specially designed

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to cramp initiative, to deaden the soul, to weaken all power of resistance on the part of the individual; in a word, to lose the man in the machine. But once that machine is broken, once it is destroyed, who will say that tens of thousands of them will not, in their heart of hearts, rejoice? This, at least, I am certain: whether they rejoice or are sorrowful, acquiescent or resentful, not for their sakes, but for our own and for those of children yet unborn, Prussia must be put back to the position she first occupied two centuries ago. She has abused her trust and it must be taken from her, so that she may no longer vex humanity. Other geographical alterations must follow the conclusion of the war. The Slav races ought to be freed from Austrian domination and placed in a position to develop along lines of reasonable freedom. Poland should have her autonomy restored to her; and the map of Europe should be reconstructed with a due regard to the principle of nationality.

But, first and foremost Prussia, that bully of the nations, must be reduced to her proper position.

Not only does civilisation demand this, but the crimes, the long record of sordid misdeeds, the threats, the insolence, above all the overweening pride which made Prussia seek to dominate Europe; these cry out for vengeance!

WHAT GOD HATH SAID

Of old was it written :—

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations !

“For thou hast said in thine heart, . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like the most High.

“Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell. . . . They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?

“That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof ; that opened not the house of his prisoners?

“All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

“But thou are cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, to go down to the stones of the pit ; as a carcase trodden under feet.

“Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people ; the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.”

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