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Author: baron Beyens

Translator: Paul V. Cohn

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GERMANY BEFORE THE WAR

BY

BARON BEYENS

LATE BELGIAN MINISTER AT THE COURT OF BERLIN

TRANSLATED BY PAUL V. COHN, B.A.

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INTRODUCTION.

At the close of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth, several efforts were made, both in Europe and America, towards the prevention of future wars, by substituting legal methods for brute force in the settlement of international disputes. It is worth while to recall the preliminary steps that some high-minded rulers took in this direction. Tsar Nicholas invited foreign governments to the first of those peace conferences which met at the Hague. Successive presidents of the United States, for their part, strove to obtain an immediate practical result by means of treaties concluded with various nations. The object of these treaties was to submit to a court of arbitration any disputes that might arise among the signatories. The two Hague Conferences failed, indeed, to realize the ideal aims which their promoters had in view. They were unable to establish compulsory arbitration. On the other hand, they organized procedure, and set up machinery, such as the permanent court of arbitration, to facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes. They succeeded, to some extent, in regulating the employment and checking the abuse of certain weapons and methods of warfare, and in drawing up a sort of legal code for belligerents. The international Hague Conventions have justly been called a charter of rights for the nations in war time. Unfortunately, the observance of these rules cannot be enforced by any court of justice, and depends entirely upon the honesty or good will of the Powers that have accepted them.

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Apart from all this State action, several valiant efforts were made by private individuals, inspired with the noblest ideals. Politicians who had grown gray in the public service, such as M. Beernaert, a Belgian Minister of State, devoted all their remaining vigour of body and mind to the task of spreading the influence of peace conferences and leagues, by making them more numerous. In meetings at which many eloquent speeches were delivered they tried to discover means of superseding the *ultima ratio* of a resort to arms by the permanent use of arbitral tribunals. Baron D'Estournelles de Constant and Lord Weardale—to mention only the most energetic apostles of their creed—preached with unflagging zeal the gospel of pacifism, which, by smoothing over international differences, was to lead mankind towards the Golden Age of universal peace.

In all countries except Germany, the Socialists, Collectivists, Labour Party, or whatever they might style themselves, could not stand aloof from a movement which aimed at the abolition of war. The pacifist movement, though indeed striving towards a different goal, was quite in harmony with the teachings of Socialists, and would have helped them to secure one of the main planks in their platform—that is, to remove national barriers and frontiers by creating an international solidarity among the workers, in place of the old particularist notions of country and fatherland behind which the capitalists and the middle classes remain entrenched. Inspired by pacifist ideas, some of the leaders of French Socialism, notably Jaurès, even made overtures to the Social Democrats of Germany, with a view to bringing about an understanding between the two countries. Two congresses, held at Berne in 1912 and 1913 respectively, were attended by a large number of French parliamentary deputies; but the group of delegates from the Reichstag, Socialists for the most part, was insignificant. Their good intentions were frustrated by the problem of Alsace-Lorraine, which barred all further progress. Neither side could find a means of removing this obstacle without wounding the sensitive patriotism of the two nations.

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The thunder of the guns in the Balkan War, while revealing to pacifists the grim realities of the battlefield, did not awake them from their dreams. On the contrary, the pacifists persisted all the more in their illusions. After all, they urged, this war was not a European conflict, but an episode in the eternal Eastern question. Throughout the crisis, the Great Powers, by the conferences of their ambassadors and the utterances of their statesmen, had shown their earnest desire for peace. The Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, those two good-natured giants, both showed the same conciliatory disposition. The balance of power between these two groups compelled them, even had they wished otherwise, to maintain a pacific attitude, while the Balkan conflagration, being thus localized, was dying out at their feet. After so searching a test, the prospect for the future seemed bright indeed.

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Life in the clouds of pacifism was not conducive to the realization of the ever-growing danger. It was enough to live in Berlin, amid such circles as were in touch with the Imperial Government and the foreign embassies. The heart of the German capital was indeed the meeting-place for the principal wires of world-politics. During the last few years, the air that one breathed there was strangely oppressive; the ground quaked beneath one's feet, as in the neighbourhood of a volcanic eruption. One never ceased gazing anxiously at the horizon, now towards the Vosges, now towards the Balkans, wherever the storm-clouds, charged with electricity, were gathering at the moment. A gust of fresh wind would scatter these clouds, but they would gather again after the briefest interval. As one felt only too clearly, the peace was so fragile that the slightest incident might serve to break it. Should Greece and Turkey wrangle over the possession of a few barren rocks in the Ægean, should a Zeppelin once more come to earth in some town of Lorraine, or should a party of Teuton tourists be again molested by some discourteous French students, the artificial security that reigned in Central Europe would be at an end.

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These recurring attacks of fever were bound to result in a fatal crisis. War has at last broken out, sooner than the most gloomy pessimists anticipated, and in a more terrible form than they dared to imagine—a war that has set three-fourths of Europe ablaze, and has spread like wildfire to other continents and other seas. What was the immediate cause of this general outbreak? "A political murder of unexampled brutality, and the need for severely punishing a little nation of conspirators," say the two Germanic empires with one voice. "Mere prettexts," is the convincing reply of the Entente Powers. The origins of the war, of course, go much further back, and the causes lie deeper and are less obvious to the eye. The German intellectuals, now that they have

cast aside their official servility and are discoursing freely on the lot that awaits their nation, have the honesty to admit as much themselves.

In the present work I have endeavoured, as others have done before me, to trace these causes and to assign the responsibility for the disastrous events that we are witnessing. My conclusions are based mainly on the personal observations that I made during a stay of two years in Berlin immediately before the war. At the same time, I have attempted to sketch the psychology of the principal German actors in the tragedy of 1914. I can sincerely say that I have taken every care to remain strictly impartial, to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to make due allowance for the policy imposed upon Germany during the last fifteen years, and for external events that have had their influence since the beginning of the century.

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Moreover, these pages, which have been written during the melancholy leisure forced upon me by the calamities of Belgium, have a further object in view. I have desired to do a service to my beloved country, the first victim—and an innocent victim—of a ruthless design. I have desired to contribute something towards requiting her for those monstrous charges with which her torturers have sought to belittle her stainless loyalty and to tarnish her unparalleled heroism.

May my labours bring some small light to those who search for truth! May they furnish a document of some service to future writers, to those who, with an authority that the passage of time alone can give, will describe a period of the world's history which Christian civilization will some day shudder to recall!

GERMANY BEFORE THE WAR.

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CHAPTER I.

THE EMPEROR WILLIAM.

I.

NO one who has not had the opportunity in recent years of approaching the Emperor William and of conversing with him can realize the favourable impression that he at first creates. To have a conversation with him means to play the part of a listener, to allow him to unfold his ideas in lively fashion, while from time to time one ventures upon a remark on which his quick mind, flitting readily from one subject to another, seizes with avidity. While he is talking, he looks one squarely in the face, his left hand resting on his sword-hilt in an attitude that has become a habit with him. His voice, very guttural in tone, and almost hoarse, is disagreeable; but he has a mobile, expressive face, with magnificent eyes that keep it always bright and animated. At a first meeting, it is these eyes that impress one more than his words: eyes of light blue, now merry and smiling, now hard and stern, with sudden gleams that flash like steel. Yet when we come away from an interview of this kind, we begin to feel doubts as to the sincerity of this dangerous talker. We ask ourselves, with a touch of anxiety, whether the man whom we have just seen is really convinced of what he says, or whether he is the most striking actor that has appeared on the political stage of our day.

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In his mother-tongue, William II. has a natural eloquence, with a pompous style, full of metaphors and similes. Hardly had he been seated on the throne before his love of speaking had revealed itself in oratorical displays of all kinds—after-dinner speeches, answers to addresses, and soldierly harangues to military and naval recruits. All these have been delivered during the continual journeys in which he delights, whether rushing to and fro about his own empire, or navigating all the seas of Europe in his yacht, or paying visits to his fellow-monarchs. Some of his orations are models of the Imperial style, but his self-assurance has led him more than once to utter, in the heat of improvisation, some tactless or inopportune phrase which has aroused a feeling of uneasiness or disgust in Germany no less than in foreign countries: bold ideas, presented in an original form, but the unripe products of an over-impulsive temperament, and entirely at variance with public feeling. With advancing years, he has become slightly more discreet in his language. Moreover, the text of his speeches is nowadays revised and expurgated by his civil Cabinet before being issued to the public. Together with this impulse to trumpet forth his ideas, he has a decided propensity for striking a theatrical pose, whenever he knows that he is the cynosure of every eye—that is to say, whenever he appears in public; whereas, in the privacy of his home, he is by no means lacking in geniality or even in simplicity.

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Undoubtedly the Emperor is a man of many gifts, intelligent and well-informed. For all that, one gets an impression, when talking to him, that he has but a superficial acquaintance with certain subjects on which he loves to dilate.

This is not surprising. In spite of his uncommon capacity for assimilating knowledge, William II. is not a man of universal mind, able to discourse with equal aptness upon politics, industry, commerce, agriculture, music, painting, architecture—one may as well say, upon every branch of human knowledge, for he does not even shrink from venturing on the steep path of the exact sciences. Perhaps he would have acted more wisely if, instead of spreading his mental activities over so many different fields, he had centred them in the study of foreign politics, and had endeavoured to find out for himself, at first hand, the real state of public opinion in the countries surrounding Germany. Had he adopted this course, those who conversed with him would not have had to record the disquieting fact that he accepted, as articles of faith, many prejudiced and utterly wrong-headed notions that were current in the German Press and among the German public.

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His confidence in himself has always made it impossible for him to endure, in the governance of the Empire, the co-operation of a superior mind or an independent will. When he had been on the throne two years, he impatiently shook himself free from the leading-strings—irksome, no doubt, but still necessary—held by the man to whom he owed his Imperial crown. In order to enjoy a long spell of service, his ministers must either adopt his ideas or possess the art of presenting theirs as if he had inspired them. After the dismissal of Bismarck, his chancellors were nothing but executors, more or less skilful, of his divine will, and heads of an army of bureaucrats. For an Imperial chancellor, to govern means not to foresee, but to obey a headstrong and unstable master.

In other aspects of his character the Emperor is a very modern ruler. He has always had a fondness for the society of noted scholars and scientific men. Having some artistic pretensions himself, he likes to surround himself with artists who follow his advice and carry out his suggestions. In Prussia, building has always been a noble pastime for princes, a pastime that Frederick the Great pursued, with admirable results, in the intervals between his wars. William II. is a great builder: in the course of twenty-five years his architects have erected more monuments and palaces in Berlin than their fellow-craftsmen in other capitals have produced throughout a whole century. Too often, however, these constructions bear the imprint of his taste for the massive, the colossal, and the overloaded. Under his inspiration, German artists are making laborious efforts to create a style that may deserve to be called the "William II. Style." In spite of this, the most pleasing monuments of the Imperial residence are still those which were raised under the earlier kings, and to which Herr von Ihne, an artist who is an ardent admirer of eighteenth-century French art, has made some fine additions. One observes with some surprise, by the way, that the old palace of the first King of Prussia is still large enough to contain the first

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German Emperors. May we imagine that the haughty son of the Great Elector, with the limitless ambition of the Hohenzollerns, foresaw the remote future destiny of his house?

From the sculptors, William II., faithful to the same æsthetic principles, has ordered statues, gigantic in size or cast into stiff, formal attitudes, representing the heroes of his line and the great men who served his ancestors. Surely they do not deserve such barbarous treatment! His infatuation for official painting has prevented him from appreciating artists of original talent, such leaders of schools as Max Liebermann, whom he looks upon as revolutionaries. The same remark applies to men of letters. The most noted living novelists and playwrights of Germany, a Hauptmann or a Sudermann, are nowhere less understood than at the Court of Berlin.

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For a long time past the Emperor has delighted in the society of agreeable dilettante, poets, and musicians—for he adores music and poetry—the companions of the famous “Round Table.” The scandalous Eulenburg case brought these intimacies to an abrupt close. Evil has been whispered, quite without justification, of his friendship with that attractive but unhappy figure, Prince Philip von Eulenburg. It would be more to the point to note his weakness for rich men, for the founders of vast fortunes. In this respect he has shown, like some other crowned heads, that he has a sense for present-day realities—that he appreciates the services rendered to modern society by wealth. Americans visiting Berlin are assured of a warm welcome at the Imperial Court, provided they bear names to conjure with in the money-market of the United States. It is only fair to add that, in paying these flattering attentions to opulent Yankees, William II. is partly actuated by what has been called his “American policy”—that is to say, his desire for a close understanding with the Great Republic. His admiration for the power conferred by money has been similarly displayed in his method of bestowing honours on his loyal nobility. In creating an exalted aristocracy of princes and dukes, who before his time were very few and far between in Prussia, he has sometimes shown less regard for ancient lineage and services claiming the gratitude of the State than for the territorial possessions of those concerned. Nobles who have remained poor have not been much favoured, even when they inherit the most honoured names in the military history of the kingdom.

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Brought up by a father whose “liberal” ideas have been overpraised (such is the view of those who knew him best), the Emperor, at the outset of his reign, felt an impatient eagerness to improve the lot of the labouring classes and—as he announced at the opening of the Reichstag in 1888—to continue, in accordance with the principles of Christian morality, the legislative work of social protection inaugurated by his grandfather. In 1890 an international conference held by his orders in Berlin, for the purpose of studying industrial legislation. On the other hand, he came to the throne with a youthful hatred of Socialists and freethinkers—a hatred that grew in intensity as the years went by, and as the advance of Social Democracy became more menacing at each election to the Reichstag. Nothing has occupied his mind more than the fear of Socialism, the struggle with this elusive Proteus. In a speech delivered at Königsberg in 1894, he denounced the enemy in no measured terms: “Let us arise, and fight for religion, morality, and order, against the partisans of anarchy!” In 1907 he even entered the lists against the foe, to such good purpose that on the balcony of his palace in Berlin he was hailed with cheers from the *bien pensants* after the electoral verdict which for the time being thinned the ranks of the Social-Democratic delegates. As ruler of a great empire containing some millions of Socialists, would he not have acted more wisely by holding aloof from the feuds of classes and of parties, and by dwelling serenely above the turmoil?

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William II., without sharing all the reactionary ideas of the Prussian Conservatives, has anything but a liberal turn of mind. He is a monarch by divine right—one who considers himself, like his predecessors, entrusted with the mission of governing his States and of moulding the happiness of his subjects, even though it be against their own immediate wishes, in accordance with the principles of religion and the monarchical tradition; an unbending champion of the sacred privileges of kingship, limited solely by the barriers of modern constitutionalism.

It is not within the scope of the present study to enter into a more detailed analysis of so complex a character, one that has already furnished material for numerous portraits, and, with all its twists and turns, will severely test the powers of future biographers. I will merely endeavour, at the end of this chapter, to summarize the most striking features of the Imperial temperament, and to indicate the aspect under which he must appear to us hereafter in the light of an appalling war. After all, in the man who sways the destinies of Germany, it is the statesman who claims our chief interest, because of his attempt to give a new direction to the destinies of Europe. From this standpoint, it is impossible to overlook the part that religion plays in his life. He has always been an ardent Protestant. For him, as for Treitschke, the historian of modern Prussia, Protestantism is not only the true faith, but the corner-stone of German unity, the strong rampart behind which the language and customs of the German race have been kept intact from the shores of the Baltic to the borders of Transylvania. William II.’s creed, however, though sincere, is decidedly too garrulous and too nationalistic. It is paraded before the world with an intolerable lack of reticence. It is revealed in his speeches by startling invocations to the Deity, a Deity who is exclusively German, who confines his love to the Germans and rejoices in their exploits. At the threshold of the twentieth century, this defender of the faith, modelling himself upon the Biblical heroes and the champions of the Reformation had come to regard himself as the right hand and sword of the Almighty, as the predestined being on whom the Spirit from on high had descended. How can we be astonished if, under the sway of such a creed, he has embarked upon a war that recalls the merciless struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a sort of crusade against the enemies of God’s chosen people, embodied to-day in the Germanic race? This theory and practice of religion will explain why the head of the pious German nation, after solemnly invoking upon his arms the blessing of the Christian God—a God of peace and good will!—has ordered, without any qualms of conscience, the bombardment of defenceless cities and the

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II.

During the decade preceding the war, too much confidence was placed abroad in the pacifism and sincerity of William II. It was forgotten that, after all, he is a descendant of Frederick the Great, and that, where politics are concerned, he must have studied the lessons taught by his unscrupulous ancestor. He claims for himself, not altogether without justice—for in his early years he might well have fallen a victim to the glamour of military laurels—the merit of having maintained the peace of Europe, in spite of unwearied efforts to perfect the organization of the German army, or rather by virtue of those accessions of strength which made an attack upon it almost impossible. This claim was accepted in all good faith by a world which failed to realize that the competition in armaments must inevitably lead to war, just as every fever that becomes acute results in a violent crisis. Apart from the peaceful intentions of the Emperor, it was felt that the Triple Alliance, formed by Bismarck and renewed from time to time after his day, might well calm the fears of the smaller nationalities. The old Chancellor and his successors always represented the Triplice as an insurance policy against the danger of a widespread conflagration. Safely ensconced in this impregnable fortress, the forces of the three allies could defy any coalition; hence other Powers were careful not to challenge them, not to do anything that might disturb the ordered state of Europe. But from the day that the Cabinet of Berlin, in order to support the claims of the Cabinet of Vienna, forced the Slav nations and the other Powers, taken off their guard, to recognize the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Triple Alliance wore a new aspect. The policeman of Europe, impelled by a restless greed, was beginning to fail in his duties as guardian. The confidence hitherto placed in the honesty of his intentions grew sensibly weaker.

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It is true that for twenty-five years—*longum aevi spatium*—William II. kept the promise he had made to the German people, at Bismarck's advice, in his first speech from the throne—the promise that he would have a peaceful reign. Throughout that period his one idea was to make Germany the first country in the world through the development of her commerce and industry, to enrich every class in the community, to dethrone Paris and London in favour of Berlin. "Our future lies on the water!" he said to his subjects, with a clear view of the goal towards which he was to direct their energies—the creation of a powerful navy, which would ensure in all the markets of the world a predominant place for the products of German labour. During this quarter of a century Germany indeed made remarkable strides, and her progress filled other nations with amazement. William II. consorted chiefly with the great bankers, manufacturers, and armament-makers of the Empire, and constantly took their advice. He was on intimate terms with Herr Krupp, whose private life scarcely entitled him to this honour. He did all he could to encourage Herr Ballin, the clever and enterprising director of the Hamburg-Amerika line. He presided in person at the launching of the transatlantic giants of this powerful company. In the speech delivered by him when the last of these leviathans left the dock—a vessel of fifty thousand tons, christened by him "Bismarck," as a tardy act of homage to the genius of the Iron Chancellor—he gave vent to an extraordinary outburst of patriotic pride. It was a pæan of triumph in honour of the German shipyards, which had built the largest liner in the world, far surpassing anything that the maritime art of England had so far attempted.

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The long spell of peace imposed by this ruler of a military nation had no doubt other causes than the desire to ensure the economic prosperity of Germany. Although William II. from his early youth has taken a keen interest in his army, he does not possess the martial spirit inherent in several princes of his house. Like Frederick William I., he is fond of the barracks, without having a taste for the battlefield. Since the age of twenty-nine, when he became the supreme commander of the army, the "War Lord," he has performed with scrupulous care all the military ritual prescribed for a King of Prussia; he has regularly been seen taking part in his officers' mess, appearing from daybreak in the midst of his cavalry regiments on the drill-ground at Döberitz, inspecting every army corps in turn, and presiding at the "Imperial" autumn manœuvres, where his criticism of the operations raised a smile among professional soldiers. All along the streets of Berlin the shop windows are filled with photographs of the Emperor in every naval and military uniform of his forces, in every character of his repertory; his moustaches fiercely turned up, his glance firm and threatening, his field-marshal's baton in his hand. These portraits do their utmost to give us an impression of an exceedingly warlike sovereign. But is he really a soldier?

At the opening of hostilities, the German newspapers announced that His Imperial Majesty, in visiting the theatres of war, would be followed by a special train, carrying a collapsible wooden house, including materials for a floor, in order that the Emperor should not be exposed to the damp. We know, indeed, that this need of ease and comfort is partly due to a fear of colds and throat maladies, for William II. can take no liberties with his health. Still, precautions of this kind are hardly what we expect from a true soldier.

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The true royal soldier of this war is not to be found among the crowned Germans who only follow it at a safe distance; he stands at the head of the little Belgian army that is making a desperate struggle to defend its homes. The true soldier is he who has faced danger in the firing-line and the trenches, in order to inspire his youthful troops with his own coolness and heroism, the heroism of a soul that no terror can daunt. The true soldier is he who has shown his mettle on the battlefields of Louvain, Antwerp, and the Yser as a great general and a great king—His Majesty King Albert.

Perhaps, too, William II. remained pacific for so long because he lacked confidence as to the

result of a fresh struggle, although in his speeches he extolled the prowess of his forbears, and often recommended his soldiers to keep their powder dry. Perhaps he dreaded the uncertain fortune of battle, remembering the words of Bismarck on the subject of preventive wars, of wars inspired solely by the aim of crushing an opponent before he is ready: "We cannot get a glimpse of the cards that Providence holds." Perhaps, again, he feared the unknown factors that may wreck the best-laid political schemes, those *imponderabilia* or incalculable elements which the same statesman regarded as so important. That a young sovereign, such as the Emperor in the first few years of his reign, should not wish to imperil the heritage of glory and conquest bequeathed by his grandfather is perfectly natural and intelligible. He liked to rattle his sabre, always at the wrong moment, but not to draw it from its sheath, for he had no inborn love of war. Yet these peaceful sentiments—or shall we rather say this unwillingness to face the hazards of fortune?—disappeared in course of time, and gave place in that restless mind to feelings of quite another order. The transformation, however, was not a sudden one; it was a gradual conversion, keeping pace with the changes that supervened in Germany herself, with the increase in her population, her needs and her appetites. The influence of Bismarck, a satisfied, sobered, and prudent Bismarck, not to be confused with the bold gambler of the war period, had long outlasted his retirement. For ten years more, ten years of internal conflict, during which the German people seemed to be angry with the Emperor for having broken its idol, the Bismarckian policy of consolidation and defence had been kept up by the mediocre successors of the irascible recluse of Varzin. After this, other ambitions came into play, and the counsels of the ex-Chancellor were gradually forgotten by the new generation of politicians, diplomats, professors, writers, and soldiers who aspired to lead Germany towards loftier goals. Their successful influence upon the mind of the Sovereign became perfectly apparent at the moment when he reached the zenith of his career.

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This moment coincides with the end of the first twenty-five years of his reign, which had dowered the German people with an unexampled prosperity. The Imperial Jubilee of 1913 was an epoch-making date. Germany, in fact, was not content with celebrating that year the peaceful conquests achieved since the accession of her third Emperor; she commemorated, at the same time, the centenary of the wars of liberation, while the members of the Reichstag patriotically voted for a military law more burdensome and more crushing than any previous measure of the kind. Thus Germany associated the superb results of her national energy for the past quarter of a century, which no real menace of war had ever threatened to wreck, with the glowing memories of her emancipation from the Napoleonic yoke, and with feverish preparation for a fresh struggle, which the condition of Europe by no means appeared to warrant. This triple coincidence aroused serious misgivings in the minds of foreign observers. The patriotic memories of 1813 seemed like low rumblings of thunder, the harbingers of an approaching storm. As if the passions of his subjects were not heated enough already, the Emperor in his public speeches did not cease from fanning their flame. He must have said to himself then that the first part of his task was over, and that the second was about to begin. He had launched his people upon a career of prosperity and progress in which it could no longer cry halt, and a new war, far from checking this marvellous economic advance, would only act as a fresh stimulus. Germany, having trebled her commerce and almost doubled her population, with millions of workers who no longer left their country to seek a living elsewhere, needed new fields for expansion, and thirsted for an unquestioned supremacy in every sphere. It would be the glory of William, while still in the full vigour of his years, to realize these splendid ambitions.

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With implicit faith in the historians of his house, he had already come under the spell of dreams that took their rise in a remote past. Although heir to a modern empire, entirely different from the Germanic empire of Otto and Barbarossa, he had sedulously set himself to link up the creation of Bismarck and Moltke with that of the Middle Ages, to re-forge the chain of historic tradition, to proclaim himself the heir of the old elected Cæsars. It is obviously with this intention that the Siegesallee was laid out through the Thiergarten in Berlin, with its double row of marble statues, symmetrical and funereal, more suited to a royal family vault than to a public park. There, almost shoulder to shoulder, stand Emperors of Germany, ancient and modern, Electors of Brandenburg and Kings of Prussia—a significant Pantheon! At Vienna, the princes of the Hapsburg house avenged the defeats of 1866 by treating the Hohenzollerns as upstarts. At Berlin, however, the descendant of these upstarts aimed at nothing less than reviving the monarchy of Charlemagne. He set up in his capital a monument to the mythical Roland, as a symbol of the bond between past and present, and dreamed of re-establishing a Carolingian hegemony over the Continent of Europe.

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III.

I will deal later with those European events and those features of the internal situation in Germany which reacted upon the mind of William II. and helped to bring about his moral transformation. The point that must be emphasized here is that he fancied at first that he would only have to fight France, the old, implacable enemy. The coming war seemed to him nothing but a mere duel between the Empire and the Republic.

For a long time he hoped to sow dissensions between his opponents, and to secure the inaction of Russia. At the Court of Berlin the Franco-Russian alliance was not regarded as a rock that nothing could shatter. The Potsdam agreement, concluded by M. Kokovtsov, and restricted in its scope (so far as we can tell) to Western Asia, seemed to open up a promising vista. Repeated advances were made to Tsar Nicholas; interviews took place, such as the one at Baltic Port, where William II. exercised all the seductive wiles at his command to cajole the Russian

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sovereign and win the confidence of his ministers. The Emperor himself remarked to me, only a few months before the war, that false ideas were current in France regarding the stability of the Dual Alliance; he was well informed as to the true feeling of the Tsar's Court, for some exalted Russian personages, in passing through Berlin, had not scrupled to indicate the side on which their sympathies lay.

One of the main axioms of Bismarck's policy was that Germany must always strive to maintain friendly relations with her great northern neighbour. This sound advice, which the Chancellor himself had not acted upon at the Congress of Berlin, was neglected by his successors. In March 1909, William II., in full accord with the views of Prince von Bülow, did not hesitate to inform St. Petersburg that he would give unswerving support to Austria, if the diplomatic debate on the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina should culminate in a war. The threatening front that Count de Portalès was ordered to show rankled in the hearts of Russian patriots, who were compelled to retreat before this menace. But at the Court of Berlin the memory of it soon faded, for it is characteristic of the Emperor to forget any ill-feeling of which he is the cause. He is always ready to pardon those whom he has insulted.

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Even the Balkan War did not entirely dispel his illusions, although it showed clearly that France and Russia were firmly united, and determined to face the same risks hand in hand. The expert fingers of M. Delcassé, who was sent as ambassador to St. Petersburg during the events of 1912, tied the knot of the alliance more tightly than ever. After this, it is true, the Emperor paid great attention to Russian military activity on his eastern frontier; but it must have cost him much to abandon his dream of a neutral or inactive Russia in the event of a war with France. On March 2, 1914, the semi-official *Kölnische Zeitung*,¹ under the guise of a letter from its St. Petersburg correspondent, issued a final warning to the Tsar! This document denounced the increase of armaments and the ingratitude with which Russia was repaying the services that Germany had rendered to her at the time of the Macedonian war. The Russian newspapers replied in an acrimonious tone, hinting that the commercial treaty with Germany would not be renewed. Herr von Jagow, in a statement on foreign affairs read to the Reichstag some weeks later, confined himself to a general censure of these Press campaigns, the responsibility for which he assigned to the Pan-Slavic journals.

33

IV.

In William II.'s eyes France has always been the chief enemy. In spite of this, the idea of a reconciliation with her has repeatedly flitted across his romantic brain. Not for one moment, however, has he thought of restoring Alsace-Lorraine to her or of making it neutral territory. He regarded these questions as settled for good and all by the victories of 1870 and the Treaty of Frankfurt, and would not even humour France to the extent of granting a more liberal constitution to the conquered provinces. Some Frenchmen, anxious to promote a better understanding between France and Germany, wished to see Alsace-Lorraine enjoy a complete autonomy, after the pattern of a federal State like Bavaria or Saxony. This suggestion, impressed Berlin as an unwarrantable interference in the internal affairs of the Empire.

Nevertheless, the Emperor has often believed in all sincerity that he might improve the relations between the two countries, ease the tension between Paris and Berlin, and even pave the way for an eventual friendship, by paying flattering attentions to Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, celebrities in politics, art, and society, who visited Germany. He considered that in paying these attentions to individuals and in supplementing them by smiles and compliments addressed to the Republican Government and to prominent people he was making real advances. His conversations with Coquelin and Mlle. Granier amused the Parisians, who thanked him with neatly turned paragraphs in the newspapers, and held themselves free of all further obligations. Those who thought that these displays of Imperial graciousness might be followed by a more favourable trend in Germany's policy towards France were doomed to disappointment. Offers of association in commercial enterprises between subjects of the two countries in Morocco were made (without any success, by the way) after the agreement of 1909, but they must not be taken as instances of William II.'s good will towards a neighbour whom in reality he detested. He fancied that he could conquer the French by his winning ways, and in this his vanity deceived him, although at certain times, partly owing to his reputation as a pacifist, he was a not unpopular figure in Paris.

34

For some time previous to the war he had been cured of these fits of benevolence, after discovering that they were practically useless. In fact, during the last few months before the cataclysm he went to the other extreme, and when any French visitor was presented to him, his manner was unusually brusque and haughty. At a Court ball one evening in February 1914, while conversing with my friend and fellow-countryman Baron Lambert, he gave vent in my presence to the following epigram, more picturesque than true (it was one that he loved to repeat, for he had already uttered it to other diplomats): "I have often held out my hand to France; she has only answered me with kicks!" He followed this up with a diatribe against the Parisian Press, which, he said, attacked Germany day after day with unreasoning violence. He ended in a grave tone, exclaiming with those expressive gestures that added so much weight to his words: "They had better take care in Paris—I shall not live for ever!" While he was holding forth in this style, his mind, as will be seen later on, was already made up for war. Was he playing a part? Or should we rather see in all this a desire to heap up grievances, in order to justify his later acts?

35

Since he procured a regular supply of cuttings from the French nationalist organs, in which his Government was pilloried, why did he not read their German counterpart—the daily attacks of the Pan-Germanic Press upon France in general and President Poincaré in particular?

Undoubtedly this warfare of pens was not merely regrettable, but dangerous in the interests of peace; still, it was carried on by each side in the tone and style characteristic of the two races. In order to form a conception of the haughtiness, insolence, and bad faith of certain German publicists, it would be enough to wade through some of the articles with which Dr. Schiemann, who had his little hour of favour and popularity at the Court of Berlin, regaled the Gallophobe and Russophobe readers of the *Kreuzzeitung* in his political notes of the week every Wednesday morning.

36

After Agadir, William II. came to regard a war with France as inexorably decreed by Fate. On the 5th and 6th of November 1913, the King of the Belgians was his guest at Potsdam, after returning from Lüneburg, where he had paid his usual courtesy visit to the regiment of dragoons of which he was honorary colonel. On this occasion the Emperor told King Albert that he looked upon war with France as "inevitable and close at hand." What reason did he give for this pessimistic statement, which impressed his royal visitor all the more strongly since the belief in the peaceful sentiments of the Emperor had not yet been shaken in Belgium? He pointed out that France herself wanted war, and that she was arming rapidly with that end in view, as was proved by the vote on the law enacting a three years' term of military service. At the same time he declared that he felt certain of victory. The Belgian monarch, who was better informed as to the real inclinations of the French Government and people, tried in vain to enlighten him, and to dispel from his mind the false picture that he drew from the language of a handful of fanatical patriots, the picture of a France thirsting for war.

37

On the 6th of November General von Moltke, Chief of the General Staff, after a dinner to which the Emperor, in honour of his guest, had invited the leading officials present in Berlin, had a conversation with King Albert. He expressed himself in the same terms as his Sovereign on the subject of war with France, asserted that it was bound to come soon, and insisted still more emphatically on the certain prospect of success, in view of the enthusiasm with which the whole German nation would gird up its loins to beat back the traditional foe. General von Moltke used the same blustering language that evening to the Belgian military attaché, who sat next to him at table. I have been told that later in the evening he showed a similar lack of reserve towards other military attachés in whom he was pleased to confide, or whom he wished to impress.

The real object of these confidential outbursts is not hard to discover. They were an invitation to our country, face to face with the danger that threatened Western Europe, to throw herself into the arms of the stronger, arms ready to open, to clasp Belgium—yes, and to crush her. When we think of the ultimatum issued to Belgium on the following 2nd of August, we realize to what an act of servility and cowardice William II., through this Potsdam interview, would fain have driven King Albert.

38

The conversation between the two sovereigns was reported to the French ambassador, as is shown by a dispatch from M. Cambon, inserted in the French Yellow Book of 1914. This was done solely from a hope that the disaster of a Franco-German war might still be averted. In the higher interests of humanity, it was essential for France to learn that the Emperor had ceased to be an advocate of peace, and was calmly facing the prospect of a new war as something inevitable. The French Government, who, whatever William II. might think, were still anxious for peace, had now to guard carefully against the occurrence of incidents that might prove difficult to smooth over, because they would be regarded as provocations at Berlin.

May we suppose that the mental condition of the Emperor, who had become very nervous and irritable, had made him blind to evidence and deaf to persuasion? William II. would not admit the truth that is as clear as daylight to all impartial observers: that France, with a neighbour whose overwhelming military strength was a perpetual menace to her security, had armed with the main purpose of not being left at the mercy of unexpected events or ruthless designs. He had no doubt whatever that the desire for a war of revenge haunted the brain of every Frenchman. The recovery of Alsace-Lorraine, an achievement which most sons of France had banished to the limbo of their patriotic dreams, and only saw now and then as a distant mirage, seemed to him, in his obstinate self-deception, the secret aim towards which most French statesmen were striving. The sanguine and gullible pacifism of the French Radicals and Socialists, which had come so plainly to the fore in their opposition to the three years' term of military service, was entirely left out of his calculations.

39

When a man persists in a view that is so palpably opposed to the truth, one is inclined to doubt his sincerity. Was the Kaiser misinformed as to the real intentions of France, or, in crediting her with these hostile schemes, was he only looking for a pretext that might seem to justify an attack on his part? This is a question that we have a right to ask to-day.

V.

Up to the last moment the Emperor counted on the neutrality of England, whatever might be the cause of the struggle between the Triple and the Dual Alliance. He had too readily forgotten all the grievances that the United Kingdom had against him, although they had not vanished from the memories or the hearts of Britons: the famous telegram to President Kruger in 1896, in connection with the Jameson Raid, an ill-timed manifesto, which completely deceived the old patriot of Johannesburg as to the likelihood of support from the Kaiser; the campaign of slander against England carried on in Germany from the outset of the Boer War, three years later; and, last but not least, the tremendous expansion of the German navy, heralded by Prince von Bülow and Admiral von Tirpitz immediately after the first British reverses at the hands of the Boers.

40

Had William II. also forgotten the resolutely hostile front shown by the British Cabinet during the Algeciras Conference, and, more recently, during the Franco-German negotiations after the

Agadir affair? No doubt he fancied, like many Germans, that the support given by England to France would not go beyond certain moral and geographical limits. He felt that it would be enough to pave the way for a solution of the Moroccan problem (since it had been decided in London to help in setting up a French protectorate in Morocco), and of certain Mediterranean questions in which the two countries held similar views. It was generally believed in Germany that the Cabinet of St. James's, realizing the frankly pacific outlook of its Liberal majority in Parliament, would remain a patient spectator in a Continental war that did not involve any vital British interests. How often did the Berlin Press dwell on this theme, and, during the brief Austro-Serbian crisis preceding the war, embroider it with fulsome flatteries of Great Britain! There was high financial authority to support this conviction among the German public. These potentates of the purse carried on their intrigues in London up to the very end, not only in the business world but even in political circles. In the parliamentary lobbies at Westminster, financiers of German origin took steps with a view to preventing any participation by England in a Continental struggle. Shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, Herr Ballin, the Kaiser's confidential servant, came to London with orders from his master to make all his arrangements for war and to hoodwink his English friends into the belief that Germany's intentions were peaceful, when in point of fact all was ready for hurling the thunderbolt.

41

William II.'s political blunders have often proceeded from his trusting too much to his own adroitness and powers of judgment. After 1911, he was exceedingly anxious to promote a better understanding between the Anglo-Saxon and the Germanic nations, linked together as they were by ties of blood and by common historical memories. In the following year the tension was somewhat relaxed, but William II. overrated this increase of warmth in the relations between the two Governments and peoples. Confident that he held the winning cards, he showed his hand too soon, with the result that the British Cabinet decided to abandon the game.

At a meeting held in Cardiff on the 2nd of October 1914, the Prime Minister made a most interesting disclosure regarding the 1912 attempt to arrive at an understanding.² "We said, and we communicated this to the Berlin Government: 'Britain declares that she will neither make nor join in any unprovoked attack upon Germany. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject and forms no part of any treaty, understanding or combination to which Britain is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object.'" But that, Mr. Asquith went on to say, was not enough for German statesmanship. "They wanted us to go further. They asked us to pledge ourselves absolutely to neutrality in the event of Germany's being engaged in war, and this, mind you, at a time when Germany was enormously increasing both her aggressive and defensive resources, and especially upon the sea. They asked us, to put it quite plainly, for a free hand, so far as we were concerned, when they selected the opportunity to overbear and dominate the European world. To such a demand but one answer was possible, and we gave that answer."

42

Thus the arrogant demands of William II.'s diplomacy lost him an excellent opportunity of banishing the suspicions of the British Cabinet, and of re-establishing cordial relations with the Island Kingdom. In spite of this set-back, he did not abandon hope, and when the situation arising out of the Balkan War brought the two nations together, he again imagined that he could rely implicitly upon British neutrality.

43

Once more appearances deceived him. He ascribed too much value to the dexterity of his new ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, who was a *persona grata* in London society, and to the influence of the friends whom Germany had even in the Asquith Cabinet, men like Haldane, Burns, and Harcourt. The language of the Germanophile organs of the English Press also did something to mislead him as to the true feelings of the English people towards its chief maritime and commercial rival; but these journals were not, as the Emperor thought, the real voice of England.

In his conversations with foreigners he was fond of ridiculing the French for their belief in the reality of the Triple Entente, and for their fruitless efforts to turn it into an effective alliance. The visit of King George and Queen Mary to Paris can have caused him no anxiety on this score. But his most serious blunder, it would seem, was to imagine, on the strength of reports which can only have come from his Ambassador, that in the early summer of 1914 England was hopelessly distracted by the Irish quarrel, trembling on the verge of civil war, and therefore totally incapable of armed intervention on the Continent.

It appeared to him the moment for the great throw of the dice. Had the Emperor not felt so certain on this point, would he have exposed the thriving trade of Germany and her unfinished fleet, the very apple of his eye, to the terrible ordeal of a naval war with England? Would he have been ready to endanger the economic prosperity of his Empire, a prosperity in which the mercantile marine was an indispensable factor?

44

Cruel was his awakening, and savagely did he resent the blow. We have a proof of this in the message conveyed by one of his aides-de-camp to Sir Edward Goschen, after the scandalous demonstration of the Berlin mob against the British Embassy, on the arrival of the news that England had declared war.³

"The Emperor," said the aide-de-camp, "has charged me to express to your Excellency his regret for the occurrences of last night, but to tell you at the same time that you will gather from these occurrences an idea of the feelings of his people respecting the action of Great Britain in joining with other nations against her old allies of Waterloo."

William II. added that he was divesting himself of his titles of British Field-Marshal and British Admiral, of which he had formerly been so proud. To any one who knows the value and importance attached in Germany to these honorary distinctions—which we should be inclined to regard as mere trivialities—this act of the Emperor's will convey more than any words of anger and indignation.

45

VI.

Astonishment has been expressed at his having gone so far astray in his judgment of public opinion and of the real intentions of the Governments of the countries of the Triple Entente. He was no better acquainted with the outlook of Italian statesmen, for the Quirinal's decision to hold aloof from the conflict, instead of taking part as a member of the Triplice, undoubtedly caused him no little surprise and irritation. This ignorance proceeds from his bad selection of men to represent him abroad, and from his claim to be his own Foreign Minister, just as he is his own Chancellor. The ambassadors are appointed by the Emperor himself, often on the strength of a mere fancy that he has taken to some particular person. Positions of the highest importance have accordingly been given to men of very little experience. His ambassadors, since their tenure depends on his will and pleasure, make it their chief object to find favour in his sight, to chime in with all his theories, and to send him reports that are in harmony with his own opinions. With such scanty information from diplomatic sources, the Imperial Government could not form a precise idea as to what Russia, France, England, Japan, and Italy would do in the event of a war between Austria and Servia, a war which was fated not to remain localized. The same uncertainty, the same illusions prevailed as regards the loyalty of the British dominions, the devotion of the Indian princes, the acquiescence of Egypt, and the fidelity of the Moslems in the French colonies. We cannot suppose, moreover, that the German military attachés, official spies accredited at the headquarters of foreign Governments, were any more clear-sighted than their chiefs. The inferiority of the German diplomatic staff was nowhere more glaringly shown up than by their own countrymen in Berlin, whether in the debates on the Foreign Office estimates, or in the columns of the Liberal Press, to say nothing of Socialist organs. Liberal journalists were fond of contrasting the failures of German diplomats with the successes of their French and English colleagues; but these writers were wrong in ascribing the shortcomings of their compatriots to their status as nobles of ancient lineage or men of the middle classes who had recently been ennobled. The fault lay in the Emperor's capricious methods of selection.

46

William II. directed the foreign policy of Germany in person. From the first, he liked to chat with ambassadors and Foreign Secretaries, and to utter his thoughts freely upon the most delicate questions, knowing well that none of his words would be wasted. His formidable jokes, like his unexpected fits of frankness—whether they have been thought out beforehand, or come as sudden flashes of his impatient temper—have more than once disconcerted his hearers. Nor did he rest content with talking; he took up the pen as well, to express his ideas to foreign correspondents, such as Lord Tweedmouth—inspirations that were nearly always unlucky! A notorious affair was that of the interview with the Emperor published by the *Daily Telegraph* in November 1908, after being submitted to Prince von Bülow, who did not take the trouble to inspect it personally. It brought about a crisis that must have had the salutary effect of teaching the Sovereign to tread more warily and with less self-confidence upon the shifting sands of foreign politics. The German public simmered with indignation, and the Reichstag refused to keep quiet. In the end the Chancellor had to intervene, and a promise was exacted from the Emperor that he would be more discreet in future. "The profound sensation and the painful impression created by these disclosures," said the Chancellor in the Reichstag, "will lead His Majesty to maintain henceforth, in his private conversations, that reserve which is no less essential for a continuous policy than for the authority of the Crown."

47

William II. accordingly promised to be more reticent, and for several years he kept his word, but he never forgave Prince von Bülow for not having defended him at the bar of the Reichstag and of public opinion. Until the death of Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, at the end of 1912, he refrained from any open interference in foreign affairs. No more sensational speeches were made, no more long conversations on questions of the day were held with ambassadors. It is true that Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, the strongest personality that has appeared at the Wilhelmstrasse since the departure of Prince von Bülow—less clever than the latter in the art of concealing his thoughts, but more inclined to stand on his dignity, so much so that he could not tolerate any interference by the Emperor in his domain—would rather have resigned his post than be led about on a leash by his master, like some submissive bulldog. Rightly or wrongly he was regarded as the only man who could put into practice the treaty that he had concluded with France. That treaty had been made with pacific intentions; for, brutal as he was, this statesman was no lover of war. Had he lived, his peculiar knowledge of the Near East would probably have ensured his being kept in office throughout the period of the Balkan conflict, if not longer. When Kiderlen-Wächter vanished from the scene, the Emperor began once more to direct foreign policy, and resumed his freedom of language with the diplomats of other countries. The Turkish ambassador, Osman Nizami Pasha, who had previously been in high favour, was marked out as a special victim; he was told some cruel home-truths by the great friend of Turkey, after the first disasters of the Thracian campaign.

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VII.

It often happens that a monarch or a statesman is made up of several distinct personalities, which come to the fore in turn at the various stages of his career. Few are those who remain unchanged from early youth to the grave, as if hewn from a block of granite. In rulers who are conscious of their responsibilities, the years as they roll by assuage or curb the passions of their springtime. Maturity and experience lead them to take a less confident view of enterprises to which they would like to apply their energies and their resources. In William II., a contrary process has taken place. Such relative wisdom as he can boast has been shown in his middle age, not in his youth.

I have heard it suggested that the state of his health may have had something to do with his moral deterioration. In spite of his taking constant exercise in the open air, or perhaps because of his excessive travelling and of the exhaustion that it involved, his overstrained nerves became considerably weaker as time went on. In the end, the daily rest that he forced himself to take, lying down on his bed for at least an hour every afternoon, was not enough to restore his physical balance. His drawn face and ashen complexion were tell-tale signs of wear and tear. His subjects, who did not often get a chance of seeing him, were shocked to discover how their Sovereign was growing old before his time. Who knows, it has been asked, whether the decline in his powers of resistance has not reacted upon his mental condition? Physiologists and doctors, accustomed to trace connections between physical and moral states, would be inclined to confirm this theory. Personally, I do not believe that fatigue and exhaustion have played their part in determining William II.'s actions. That his nervousness has increased of late, that his growing irritability has made him more trying to his personal attendants, more liable to insist upon unquestioning obedience—these facts are supported by so many independent witnesses, that we cannot question their truth. But his schemes have been drawn up with perfect mental calm, and not in that state of morbid over-excitement which the world has been too ready to regard as his normal mood.

50

What manner of a man, then, is William II.? An ambitious ruler of the stamp of Charles V., Louis XIV., or Napoleon—that Napoleon who is popular to-day in Berlin, where his portrait is exhibited in the shop windows more often than those of the Prussian kings, with the exception of “Old Fritz”? A great prince who has studied the lessons of his professors in history, and has striven to realize the ancient aspirations of his people? “The Hohenzollerns,” his teachers tell him, “after centuries of waiting, are destined to build up that great Empire of the West for which the heirs of Otto laid out the plans and the Hohenstaufen reared the scaffolding. Germany, united at last under the Hohenzollern sway, in vigour, in population, in intelligence, in power of production and expansion, superior to the decadent nations that surround her, must go forth resolutely to conquer Europe, and after that to dominate the world.” Such, I think, will be the flattering verdict that future German historians will pass on William II. In the world outside Germany, the Belgians, at any rate, will hold a different view. They will not subscribe to the accuracy of this idealized portrait, which omits those hitherto unsuspected features that the war has brought to their notice. In one who had motives for watching him during the last years before the catastrophe, the Emperor aroused a sense of perplexity and fear, like some momentous riddle that no man may read. To-day we cannot study his character without reference to the actions that have displayed it in a ghastly light. His dramatic figure is lit up for his victims by the flames of Louvain and other ill-starred cities, and in that same lurid glare they behold their country writhing beneath the blows that his insensate rage has dealt it.

51

We must picture to ourselves, the Belgians will say, a monarch mighty in rank and power, effusively cordial to strangers whom he wished to charm and dazzle, but liable to disappoint those who were rash enough to trust in his kindness of heart; always able to give the impression of complete frankness, and using this as a means of seduction; really admiring nothing but strength, and ready to abuse his own; looking with utter contempt on small States and petty princes, yet never loath to flatter them when occasion demanded; a wooer of public opinion, especially that of other countries, but resolved to defy it in order to attain his ambitions; a ruler who enjoyed a false reputation for chivalry, while he has shown himself relentless in his malice; of a faith that was sincere, if superficial, yet did not prevent him from setting his interests above his most solemn engagements, and ruthlessly tearing up any treaty that had become inconvenient; always careful to play his part, and clever in staging his effects; accustomed, unfortunately, to seeing everything bow to his will; such a spoilt child of fortune that he came to the point of thinking himself infallible; one whom Nietzsche might have called a superman, and the Romans a demigod.

52

It has been asserted that this “demigod” was merely an exalted type of the ill-balanced or decadent man. What a mistake! He was in full possession of all his faculties when he ordered that hasty mobilization which made the cataclysm inevitable. Some have maintained that he was, beyond all question, the tool of a caste and a party for whom war was the sole means of consolidating their power. He did indeed listen to their advice, but only because their views were in harmony with his own. Without any hesitation, the verdict of history will make him answerable for the disasters that have overwhelmed Europe. If we carefully read and compare the documents relating to the brief negotiations carried on during the Austro-Serbian crisis, we find ample proof that it was within William II.'s power, up to the last moment, to say the word that would have prevented war. So far from doing this, he sent his ultimatum to Russia, and thus let loose the deluge at the moment which he had chosen.

53

One would like to believe that he hesitated a long time before venturing upon a path beset with so many terrors. One would fain imagine that his conscience revolted at the thought of the streams of blood and the heartrending misery which the coming struggle would involve, but that he was swept along, in spite of himself, by an irresistible fate. Idle speculations! The blow had been planned several months in advance, the scheme had been prepared down to its minutest details, and the Emperor deliberately hastened on the signal for attack, cutting short in his impatience the discussions which the Entente Powers were desperately anxious to continue. The projects that he was carrying out had matured at leisure. Posterity will regard this point as settled, and will brush aside the charge of provocation trumped up against his opponents by himself, by his Chancellor, and by his Press, in order to gain the suffrages of public opinion at home and abroad.

54

When all is said and done, history will not forgive William of Hohenzollern for having initiated an appalling war, carried on in his name. Why these frightful devastations, this systematic

destruction of towns, villages, and country-houses, this methodical vandalism directed against secular and religious monuments, these wholesale executions of innocent civilians, these unpardonable murders of priests, women, and children, this raping and looting, all this useless cruelty that recalls the native barbarism of the primitive Germanic tribes? For such methods of warfare posterity, like the present generation, will find no excuse. It will say that the campaign of 1914 in Belgium and in Northern France, where these harrowing scenes occurred over and over again, brought dishonour both to the German army and to its Emperor.

CHAPTER II.

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY, COURT, AND GOVERNMENT.

I.

IT is generally admitted that the family and personal associates of a sovereign, either by their counsels and intrigues, or merely by the fact of living together with him and constantly exchanging ideas, often exercise an influence, for good or evil, on his political decisions. To this rule, however, there are notable exceptions; among recent rulers, Leopold II. is a case in point. The old Belgian monarch, with his haughty and unsocial spirit, his scorn of advice and his consciousness of superiority, loved to work out his boldest African designs in the seclusion of his palace, without any help from civil or military officials. But the difference between the founder of the Congo Free State and the German Emperor is the difference between a great man and one who is merely talented, and they cannot be said to resemble each other in any particular. Did the family of the Kaiser, the old dignitaries of his Court, the chosen companions of his travels and his shooting parties, wield any influence upon his decisions before the war, and can they be made to some extent answerable for its origin? An interesting question, which to-day we are at Liberty to discuss.

56

Women, with the sole exception of the Empress, play no part in the Emperor's life. His marriage was due to reasons of State, having been suggested by Bismarck as an act that would soothe the feelings of the bride's family. It will be remembered that in 1864, with a view to supporting the claims of her father, the Duke of Augustenburg, to the Schleswig-Holstein succession, the Diet of the Germanic Confederation declared war on Christian IX. of Denmark. By the final settlement of the Treaty of Prague, Prussia acquired the two Duchies for herself. Later on, the Duchess of Augustenburg had the barren honour of seeing her daughter invited to share the Hohenzollern throne. This political match has proved a well-assorted one, in the middle-class sense of the term. Its happiness seems to have been assured by the usual law of contrasts, by temperamental differences: the one partner being entirely lacking in reserve, passionately fond of noise and publicity; the other, quiet, modest, and well-balanced.

Neither in her physical nor in her mental attributes does the Empress bear any resemblance to the celebrated Louisa, the wife of Frederick William III. of Prussia, that vain and commonplace ruler, of whom Napoleon, always contemptuous of the Hohenzollerns, said that he looked like a tailor in the midst of kings. The two queens are alike only in the large number of princes with whom they have enriched a stock that is nowhere near extinction. Madame de Staël, while staying in Berlin, described Queen Louisa in a letter to her father as the most beautiful woman of her Court. Yet some years later this beauty, more appealing than ever through the unkind strokes of fate, was unable to soften the marble heart of the victor of Jena. No figure is more popular in modern Germany, more glorified by her admirers, historians and poets, painters and sculptors. Will the same fortune befall the Empress Augusta Victoria? We may be pardoned for doubting this. At the utmost, she will attract only the official brush or chisel. But should dark days come for the Imperial house, should Germanic Cæsarism, after a premature blaze of glory, suffer a "Twilight of the Gods" and a stormy downfall, the Empress, with her steadfast devotion, will no doubt, like Queen Louisa, find words of comfort for her disconsolate husband; she will help him to endure the misfortunes that he will have deserved only too well.

57

It is in the vast white ball-room of the palace, when a Court ball is being given, that the "august lady" (as the Berlin newspapers reverently call her) shows up to the best advantage. The function is drawing to a close. The couples, officers of the Guards and high-born damsels, who have been performing the intricate old-world dances with military precision, assemble for a last figure, before dispersing merrily into the supper-rooms. At the sound of the royal march they bow several times respectfully, each time drawing closer together in their semi-circular rows, in front of the platform on which stands the solitary figure of the Empress. She gives no little impression of majesty as she receives the homage and thanks of her youthful guests—still erect in bearing and well-proportioned, with her white hair set off by a diamond tiara, a rope of priceless pearls around her neck, the yellow ribbon of the Black Eagle athwart her bosom, and a kindly smile playing on her lips.

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At the same time she is an excellent mother and a good German housewife, carefully looking after her husband's health, and more absorbed in her children than in her subjects. As mistress of the house she has a great deal to do. Her task it is to allay the petty storms that arise at Court, to reconcile the Crown Prince with his father after each fresh escapade of that unruly heir, or to secure the Emperor's consent to the morganatic marriage of another son, who has fallen madly in love with a mere maid-of-honour. Every December it is her chief delight to prepare the Christmas tree in the *Muschelsaal*, the grotto in the rococo palace at Potsdam. Her great aim is to make the family life in the royal residences as cosy and homely (*gemütlich*) as that of a humble Prussian squire. Like other royalties, she looks upon works of patronage and Christian benevolence as a formal duty, and this duty she carries out to the full. She even presides at charity bazaars, where her presence adds a spur to the generosity of the more laggard purchasers. But it is no use to expect from her any of those charming acts of impulse or of delicate sympathy that distinguish such a sovereign as the Queen of the Belgians, when some misfortune or some talent has attracted her notice. The Empress's artistic tastes are faithfully modelled on those of her husband; she sees only through his eyes, and cannot sincerely admire anything unless he deigns to signify his approval.

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The distinctive feature of her character is a rigid, uncompromising Protestantism, which will

not tolerate the presence of any Catholic, either among her ladies-in-waiting or among the household servants of the palace. As a staunch defender of a creed that is steadily losing ground even in the country of Luther, she has set herself to stem the rising tide of atheism, to combat the free thought that wraps itself like a winding-sheet about the expiring faith of the great cities. The uprooting of the religious sense is partly due to Social Democracy, which pursues the work with great success among the labouring classes, while at the same time it undermines monarchical institutions. The Empress endeavours to beat back this relentless foe of the old German beliefs by building a large number of churches. One sees them rising in the principal squares of the new quarters of Berlin, red brick temples of a vague or distorted Gothic, hopelessly void of architectural distinction. In no single instance does the architect succeed in giving a faithful reproduction of the beautiful Christian models. The finest modern church in Berlin, the "Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church" (this edifice, for once in a way, is built entirely of stone), is nothing but a rather unwieldy mixture of Roman and Byzantine. Nor can it be said that, with all this wealth of new sanctuaries, religion has gained what art has lost. In the manufacturing towns, to the great grief of the Empress, the march of atheism and of indifference in matters of faith keeps pace with that of Socialism.

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It would be a mistake to suppose that this admirable wife and mother, this incarnation of Protestant Germany on the Imperial throne, is in any way a pacifist. When the Emperor, after twenty-five years of his reign had passed, abruptly left the straight and tranquil path that he had marked out for the happiness of his subjects, his consort, we may be quite sure, made no effort to hold him back. In spite of her placid femininity, German patriotism, with its dreams of domination, continually haunts her brain. The horrors of war, that bane to mothers—*bella matribus detestata*—do not dismay the wife of William II. During the crisis of Agadir, when the Court of Berlin was chafing with impatience to measure its strength with France on another field than that of diplomacy, the Empress shared the impulse which she felt throbbing in the air around her. In a tone of reproach she said to Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, whom she disliked: "Are we always going to retreat before the French and put up with their insolence?"

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II.

For some years past the Crown Prince has been talked about a great deal, a fact which has certainly not been displeasing to him. He has been credited with a decisive influence on the course of events at the moment when the threatenings of war became critical. It was alleged that this young man of thirty-two, acting behind the scenes, was the real *deus ex machina* of the whole drama; that he, the idol of the army, had imposed his will and that of the officers' corps on his father, while the latter's mind was not yet made up. The Crown Prince deserves

"Nor such wild honour nor such brand of shame."⁴

In physique, he is an officer of light infantry: slender of waist and narrow of chest, he cuts a smart figure, especially on horseback. He does not in any way resemble the usual Hohenzollern type, with its broad shoulders and regular features. His face is extremely youthful, with a certain vagueness in its outlines; his forehead recedes; his eyes show no sign of a lively intelligence, and his body has a look of suppleness rather than of strength and fitness for war. Appearances in this case are deceptive. The Prince is a tough soldier and an ardent sportsman. Polo, tennis, football, hockey, golf, yachting—there is no sport that he does not practise. Before the war, he liked to imitate the English, and posed as a German Anglomaniac. His father had to forbid him to ride in steeplechases, because an heir-apparent must on no account run the risk of a dangerous fall, but was unable to prevent him from going in for aviation. Of all William II.'s sons, the Crown Prince seems to be the most soldierly; but this does not mean that he will ever make a capable army leader.

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At a first glance he does not seem to bear any resemblance to the Emperor, but after a time one finds out several parallel traits in their characters. Less well-informed, less cultured, less versatile, but just as self-willed, the son has inherited his father's impetuous spirit and incurable propensity for freely uttering his thoughts. A line of impulsive rulers is what the modern Hohenzollerns, very different from their ancestors, have given to Germany.

The Crown Prince has the soul of a fighter, or at any rate he prides himself on that quality. At an official dinner, where he sat next to the wife of an ambassador from one of the Entente Powers, he could not think of anything more clever and gallant to say than that it was his cherished dream to make war and to lead a charge at the head of his regiment. His militarism, however, does not prevent him from venturing into certain intellectual and even literary fields. A diary of his hunting-tour in India, published in his name, has given us a detailed account of his feats as a Nimrod. Less commonplace and more personal is a brief passage, eagerly reproduced in the German Press, in which, on leaving Danzig, he bade farewell to his regiment of Death's Head Hussars. His spirit reveals itself here in a certain vein of martial poetry. If any German pacifists—of whom there is a very large number, whatever the world may think—read this rhapsody in honour of Bellona, they must have felt considerable misgivings.

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The relations between the Emperor and his son ceased to be very cordial from the day when the young Prince, brimming over with ambition and desire for popularity, tried to get himself talked about by dabbling in politics. His first open interference in State affairs is worth recalling, because it is a striking testimony to his feelings with regard to France. It took place in 1911, at that meeting of the Reichstag where Herr von Heydebrand, the spokesman of the Prussian Junkers, delivered a trenchant criticism of German policy in Morocco, of the treaty of 4th November, and of the way in which the Chancellor had defended the interests of the Empire. During this philippic, the Crown Prince, sitting by himself in the Imperial box, made repeated

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signs of approval. Since then he has become the hope of the reactionary party and of the military caste. Encouraged by this success, he has never omitted, on any important occasion, to express his ideas or to convey them by some mouthpiece, even when these ideas were in conflict with those of his father, as represented by the Chancellor. It would be superfluous to quote these various demonstrations. A congratulatory telegram to the hero of the Zabern affair finally won for the Prince the hearts of those who in Prussia wear the "King's garb"—in other words, the officers of the army.

If only he had always remained on the neutral ground that lies between politics and the army! His want of tact and good feeling in this respect is shown by the way in which he tried to baulk the efforts of the Imperial Government in the settlement of the Brunswick succession. The oath of loyalty to the Emperor tendered by Duke Ernest of Cumberland, heir to the Duchy and son-in-law to His Majesty, on entering the army, did not seem to the Crown Prince (or, for the matter of that, to a good many typical Prussians) sufficient reason for admitting his brother-in-law to the last Guelph inheritance, to which he was the legitimate successor. The Crown Prince held that Duke Ernest should further be required to make a formal renunciation of his claims to the Hanoverian throne. The Emperor proved more shrewd and more politic, and the young ducal couple was enabled to enter Brunswick amid general acclamation. A section of the German Press, disgusted at the Crown Prince's perpetual meddling with affairs that did not concern him, drily reminded him that he had no special status under the Prussian or Imperial constitution, and that he could only claim the right, enjoyed by every citizen, of stating his opinion as a mere private individual.

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This endless hunting after personal popularity led to family scenes which the palace walls in Berlin and Potsdam, impenetrable though they are as a rule, could not altogether keep secret from an inquisitive public. The banishment of the Crown Prince to Danzig was solely due to his intemperate language in speech and writing. The Emperor sent him, for his sins, to a remote corner of Prussia, under the pretext of making him learn his duties as a regimental commander. After a time it became evident that in his distant fortress he was more embarrassing and less easy to watch than in Berlin. He was therefore recalled and put upon the General Staff, nominally that he might be initiated into the mysteries of Prussian strategy and tactics, really that he might remain under his father's eye. In point of fact, we must not make too much of his escapades, which are traditional among heirs to the Hohenzollern throne. Frederick the Great, famous before his accession for his quarrels with his brutal sire, was not the first Prussian heir-apparent who rebelled against paternal authority. Later on, in the last century, the Emperor William I., when he was next in the line of succession to his brother, Frederick William IV., held, during the latter's reign, a little princely Court that was a hotbed of criticism and opposition. And the present Emperor? Who will believe that in his passionate self-assertiveness he would not have caused just as much vexation and embarrassment to his father, if the Emperor Frederick had reigned for more than a few months?

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We should misjudge William II. if we attributed to him any jealousy of his son's growing popularity. He has too exalted an idea of his own worth for that, and he cannot cherish any illusions as to the real capacity of his heir. To insinuate that the Emperor took time by the forelock owing to his fear of this popularity, which threatened to eclipse his own, would be tantamount to saying that the Crown Prince was the *causa causans*, the prime mover of the appeal to arms; and this would be assigning to him an importance and an influence which he has never at any time possessed. His incitements to war and his martial ardour would never have succeeded in making any impression on the Emperor, if the latter had not himself resolved to forge ahead, and to risk the great gamble in which the fate of Germany and of Europe was at stake.

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The German Empire as Bismarck conceived it, with a single minister bearing on his own shoulders, like some Atlas, the whole weight of the vast governmental machine, was cut to the measure of its founder. If this system is to last, the nation must always have at its head either a great Chancellor, or a great monarch under whom the Chancellor merely acts as his deputy. So long as Bismarck was at the helm, he steered the ship of Empire with an unfaltering hand through all the reefs of internal politics—*Kulturkampf*, anti-Socialist legislation, party divisions, unstable majorities in the Reichstag. After the dismissal of the great man, and under the powerful impetus that he had given her, the vessel kept on her course for some time, having for her pilot the Sovereign himself, who made up for his lack of genius by his ample self-confidence. In this way she safely passed many rocks, borne along by the swelling tide of national prosperity, but occasionally threatened with disaster for want of a submissive majority to vote credits in the Imperial Parliament.

It is not difficult to imagine what would become of the Empire under the Crown Prince's rule. He too, like his father, but with less intelligence, will wish to be at the helm, and, by the sheer force of his will as monarch by divine right, to stem the rising tide of popular demands, growing ever hungrier and stormier under the sweeping blast of Socialism. The conception of liberty that Treitschke shadowed forth for his countrymen about 1870—a liberty having its roots in the idea of duty, that is to say, where politics are concerned, in obedience to the powers that be—will not prevail in the Germany of the future. In my opinion, it is not even accepted by the majority of Germans to-day. Their conception is that of a liberty based on the idea of justice rather than of duty: in other words, on the nation's right to share, through its representatives, in the government of the Empire. Thus there is a prospect of bitter struggles between a ruler of the Crown Prince's type and a Reichstag that is half or three-fourths Socialist, assuming indeed that these struggles do not begin long before he comes to the throne.

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III.

The five remaining sons of the Emperor give little food for public discussion. Like happy nations, they have no history. Political ambitions and the chase for popularity they leave to their eldest brother. Their lives are passed in a pleasant round of military service (less arduous for princes than for ordinary officers), social amusements, and sport. Only one of them has entered the navy, where work is certainly harder than in the army. Three others, as officers of the Guards, used to do garrison duty at Potsdam, spending the season of festivities in Berlin. One, on leaving the University of Strassburg, was sent off to a provincial station.

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From time to time, in winter, one or more of the young princely couples were to be seen in diplomatic drawing-rooms. It must not be imagined, however, that they were anxious to consort with ambassadors and foreign ministers. They have no particular respect for those who represent the countries of the Old World or the New, and in general, like Alfred de Musset's hero, they profess

"A high disdain for peoples and for kings."

Their horizon is bounded by Germany, nay it is even restricted to the frontiers of Prussia. The idea of gaining enlightenment, from good sources, as to the political institutions, the internal situation, or the state of public opinion in other countries, leaves them entirely cold, just as it fails to attract the Crown Prince. As a rule, a quick hand-shake, without words, was all that they accorded to the heads of foreign legations. But as soon as one of our confraternity got together a small band of musicians for a ball or an informal dance, the princes were glad to do him the honour of letting themselves be invited. The diplomatic drawing-rooms were in their eyes nothing but rendezvous for dancing and flirtation.

Their stiffness showed itself most plainly of all in their relations with the other German princes. Any one who watched them at official functions, weddings, funerals, the unveiling of monuments or the laying of foundation-stones, when members of the royal or princely families of the Empire were present, must have been struck with their attitude. They did not mix with the others, but formed a group apart, as if to impress the public with the fact that they were the dominant race, and the rest mere vassals or creatures of the herd. This lofty opinion that they had of themselves and of the greatness of their house did not indeed prevent them from sometimes behaving quite humanly towards the scions of certain families that enjoyed the inestimable privilege of being connected by blood with the Hohenzollerns.

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The foreigner who is interested in the future of Germany is naturally inclined to raise the question: Is it an advantage or merely a burden for the Prussian State to possess so large a royal family? He need only ask any honest German who is not afraid to say what he thinks, whether princes who live a life apart, cut off from modern ideas and interests, and antagonistic to every Liberal tendency, are a blessing or a curse to their dynasty and their country. There can be little doubt as to the answer he will receive.

A more interesting personality is that of Prince Henry, the Emperor's brother. One can say of this capable second fiddle to the Kaiser, that he is a model of fraternal devotion. In appearance he exhibits a striking contrast with his brother, and in mental qualities the difference between them is still more marked. Taller, slimmer, and stronger, with a complexion tanned by the Baltic breezes, he is simple and frank in intercourse. He has a natural affability, and shows no trace of haughtiness or affectation. He never stayed long at Court; hardly had he been announced there before he was off again to resume, at Kiel, his duties as Grand Admiral and Inspector-General of the Fleet, since the sedentary life of the capital has no charm for his active spirit.

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Sailor, diplomat, and sportsman—these are the three phases in which he has appeared before the world. As squadron commander, he devoted himself chiefly to training the infant German navy, to making the "High Sea Fleet" of Dreadnoughts, torpedo-boats, and submarines a formidable arm in the power of its ships, the efficiency of its officers, and the discipline of its crews. His connection with the royal family of Great Britain afforded him a pretext for frequent visits to the neighbour island; there he learnt something of the strong and the weak points of that British navy which he was preparing to fight one day. He liked to call himself the comrade and admirer of English sailors—until he had a chance of torpedoing their vessels and of attempting to destroy their maritime supremacy.

In sending Prince Henry on a special mission to the United States, under delicate circumstances—a coolness had arisen between the two countries, owing to an incident in the Philippines during the Hispano-American War—William II. entrusted him with the task of inaugurating his American policy of conciliation and friendship. No other Prussian royalty would have been so skilful as Prince Henry in winning the sympathies of the journalists of New York and Chicago by his democratic simplicity and frankness of manner. He acquitted himself with equal success in his difficult missions to Russia and Japan. Quite recently the Emperor sent him to the South American Republics, this time to prepare the way for flooding the markets of Brazil, Argentina, and Chili with the innumerable products of German industry.

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The Prince has also become a zealous propagandist of the sports which aim at training the German youth for war. A motorist from the earliest days of motoring, he has applied himself to spreading the use of this rapid means of transport. His alert brain was one of the first to grasp the military value of aviation. While he has had no obvious place among the Emperor's advisers, all his efforts have been directed towards equipping the nation for a struggle which he himself regarded as imminent. In this way he has borne his share in making it inevitable.

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IV.

When a ruler, like some conspicuous star, rivets the attention of the civilized world, his satellites, careful not to shed any light that may dim the radiance of their lord, are content to remain in modest obscurity. This principle holds good at the Court of Berlin. The high executive posts are filled by competent men of suave manners. None of them enjoys any special prominence, although they all are or have been members of the army, and belong to the landed gentry. They have always espoused the doctrines of the Prussian military caste and Conservative party, and share the hatred of these reactionaries for France and for the Powers that have thrown in their lot with the Republic. In their conversation with their master, it was inevitable that *Delenda est Gallia* should be the perpetual refrain. This harmony of feeling among those around him would have impressed the mind of William II., even if he had not been so ready to assimilate their views. The Court functionary who, before the war, was said to possess most credit with the Kaiser was the Mistress of the Empress's Household, a stern guardian of Prussian etiquette and tradition. There is no likelihood that she used her power to counteract the baneful influence of her fellow-courtiers of the other sex.

The same truth applies to a high-born aristocrat of Austrian origin, Prince Max Egon von Fürstenberg, who to-day, in the Emperor's circle of friends, holds the place formerly occupied by the fascinating but depraved Philip von Eulenburg. He is the obvious favourite, the Kaiser's indispensable confidant, addressed by his master with the "thou" of intimacy. He was given one of the great ornamental Court posts, that of Grand Marshal, as a prelude, it was whispered, to a far more important position in the Government. But how could this newcomer, half German and half Austrian, who migrated to Berlin after inheriting vast estates from Karl Egon, his cousin of the elder branch, ever have undertaken anything but a sinecure, since he was unable to manage his own property? Instead of quietly enjoying the princely income derived from his patrimony, Prince Egon took it into his head that he had a genius for business, like Herr von Gwinner, the director of the Deutsche Bank, or Herr Ballin, the king of Germany's mercantile marine. With another moneyed grandee of equal inexperience, Prince von Hohenlohe-Oeringen, he founded the famous Princes' Trust, a unique example, I believe, of an aristocratic ring boldly competing with the lords of finance, industry, and commerce. In a few years this trust piled one enterprise upon another, beginning with magnificent hotels in Berlin and Hamburg. The crash was not long in coming; to-day, Prince von Hohenlohe is ruined, and his associate has been compelled to mortgage his ancestral estates to the tune of over £1,000,000.

Like many of his peers—laughter being an attribute of kings as of other mortals—William II. requires to be amused. Prince Egon is a sparkling companion, with a happy knack in telling good stories; he has all the untiring fluency of the Viennese. This, obviously, is enough to explain his success. In certain circles, however, people persist in crediting him with a mysterious sway over his Imperial master, and in regarding him as the power behind the throne who whispers advice into the Sovereign's ear. That he may have served now and then as a link between Vienna and Berlin, between the Archduke Ferdinand and William II., is not unlikely. At the close of the Balkan War, the Kaiser seemed to have abandoned his ally during the latter's vain efforts to secure the revision of the Treaty of Bucharest. Fürstenberg may have been used immediately afterwards to set the connection upon its former footing of intimacy and confidence; before the murder of the Archduke, he may have acted as a go-between for the two cronies, when they drew up the plan of a war of revenge which, while compensating Austria for her disappointments, was to set up the supremacy of Germany in Continental Europe. To assign Prince Egon a more important rôle would be overrating his mental capacity. We may safely acquit him of any share in the direct responsibility for the war.

V.

By the terms of the 1871 Constitution, the Empire is a congeries of federated States. The Emperor, at the head of the other reigning princes, should properly be nothing but the *primus inter pares*, the first among his peers, invested with very wide prerogatives and powers. At a banquet given by the German Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of Tsar Nicholas's coronation, the present King of Bavaria (Prince Ludwig as he then was) made a vigorous attack upon a speaker who had alluded to the royalties attending this function as being in the retinue of Prince Henry of Prussia, representing his august brother. In emphatic terms, Prince Ludwig reminded his hearers that the German princes were not the vassals, but the federal partners of the Emperor. The incident has not yet been forgotten in Berlin, and this spirited protest won great popularity for its author in South Germany. But was he justified in what he said?

In sober truth, the King of Bavaria, who under a homely exterior hides a most keen and subtle mind; the King of Saxony, with his loud voice, sonorous laugh, and martial gait; the King of Würtemberg, that model of a polished gentleman; the amiable Grand Duke of Baden, and the other lesser gods of the modern German Valhalla—all these rulers are the very humble servants of the Kaiser. In vain do they assume a tone of equality when exchanging with him telegrams in which the affectionate "thou" is part of the official style; in vain do they flit like busy bees about their dominions, make a vast quantity of speeches to their subjects, and honour public ceremonies with their presence; in the eyes of German statesmanship, they are mere instruments of the will of their master who lives in Berlin. Similarly, in the Federal Council, their delegates receive the word of command from the Chancellor and the Imperial Ministers, and on every important occasion vote submissively with their Prussian colleagues. The shadow of the Emperor lies over all Germany; the work of unification proceeds, gradually draining the life-blood from the moribund body of separatism, while the Reichstag, by its encroachments on the powers and privileges of the local Diets, strives to become the sole deliberative assembly that can boast any

real authority.

Must we infer from this that the reigning houses are useless, and that the first Emperor would have done well to suppress them, if such had been his will and pleasure, after the victories of 1870? I do not think so. When Bismarck, setting his face against the plea for centralization put forward by the Prussian heir-apparent, succeeded in inducing old King William to adopt his plan of a federal Empire such as exists to-day, he did not foresee, perhaps, that these potentates, although retaining but a shadow of their sovereignty, would be the solid pillars of the monarchical principle in the new Germany. If they had been entirely dispossessed, the Socialist and republican propaganda would have made giant strides wherever the Prussian régime was detested. The peoples of the different States, having been governed in paternal fashion for some centuries by these local dynasties, have for the most part maintained their loyalty to the ruling houses. The Hohenzollerns, in their capacity as Emperors, have not yet struck their roots deep into the country; they are loved only as Kings of Prussia, in their ancestral provinces to the east of the Elbe.

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It is difficult to believe that the news of the declaration of war was received with delight by all these pseudo-sovereigns, who had not been consulted as to its necessity. For form's sake, the rulers of Bavaria, Saxony, Würtemberg, and Baden were apprised throughout of the hurried march of events. For some, the war interfered with old, comfortable habits; so long as it lasted, there was no possibility of travels abroad, of visits to watering-places, or even of hunting parties. Almost all were faced with the prospect of family losses. Yet each of them, from discipline or from a thrill of genuine patriotism, thought it his duty to hail the news with enthusiasm. The Kings of Bavaria and Saxony delivered speeches no less warlike than those of the Emperor. All hastened to swim with the stream. It is worth while pointing out, indeed, since some have wrongly held the contrary view, that the war was greeted with no less acclamation in the rest of Germany than in Prussia itself. The earliest demonstrations in Munich were as noisy as those in Berlin. In Dresden, the mob, with at least as much frenzy as the good folk of the Prussian capital, broke the windows of the British legation. This state of feeling shows, in the first place, that in southern Germany, with its placid inhabitants, a section of public opinion (the section that made itself so prominent) had been quite as much perverted, quite as deeply tainted with the pan-Germanic virus, as the corresponding class in northern Germany, who had long been infatuated with the notion of their own military superiority; and, in the second place, that German unity is now considered by all Germans to be an essential condition of their national existence.

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It was Bismarck who, in order to win popular approval for that German unity which he had forged, conceived the masterly idea of tempering it in a war with a foreign enemy. An attempt to break the chain would, in my opinion, be unwise; the links, if snapped asunder for the moment by an external force, would become welded again of their own accord. In a conquered Germany, however, the federal rulers, who yesterday bowed down low before the Emperor, would tomorrow perhaps be the first to raise their heads, and to deny their humbled Cæsar that pre-eminence which he had used so ill.

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VI.

The rise of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg to the position of Chancellor of the Empire has been a triumph for the bureaucracy. In looking for shoulders strong enough to bear the massive heritage of Bismarck, the Emperor, after applying in turn to the army, to the higher aristocracy, and to diplomacy, was bound to fall back upon the Prussian official caste. The fifth Chancellor has passed his whole career in the Civil Service, beginning as assessor, and advancing through the grades of district president, Prussian Minister of the Interior, and Imperial Secretary of State for Home Affairs, a post that carries with it the duties of Chancellor's deputy. In less than twenty-five years he has thus managed to climb every rung of the administrative ladder, and to become the greatest man in the State after the Emperor. The fact that he was a fellow-student of William II.'s at Bonn University has presumably done nothing to retard this rapid promotion. Just as in France every conscript carries a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack, so in Prussia, if the example of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg is anything to go by, every official at the outset of his career will be able to say that he carries with him his nomination to the post of Chancellor.

What are the striking qualities that determined the Emperor's choice and gained for this favoured mandarin the honour of succeeding the brilliant Prince von Bülow? So far as his mind is concerned, when we have praised his honesty, his application to work, his intellectual culture and his strict religious principles, there is nothing more to say. If we add to this a frank, open face, a gigantic frame, and a genial manner, the portrait will be complete. Friend and foe alike declare that his private life is irreproachable, and all were sincerely sorry for the Chancellor when his wedded bliss was cut short by death. It must be admitted, however, that for a statesman who has to play the leading part among his colleagues in Europe, all the above qualities are of secondary importance. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg is certainly not without his personal views on politics, although they are far from easy to discover. They might perhaps be defined as follows: for home affairs, a Conservatism tempered with doctrinaire leanings, or, if you prefer, a Conservative system that does not exclude some very moderate Liberal tendencies; and as regards foreign policy, an extensive development of German influence, culture, and language, in rivalry with the French and the English, who—as he stated in an "inspired" letter published by the Berlin newspapers—know better than the Germans how to spread their national civilization beyond their own borders. The Chancellor lacks two gifts that would seem to be essential to his functions: a native eloquence and a firm will.

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He is first and foremost the Emperor's right-hand man, or rather the Emperor's proxy; for the

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real Chancellor, although the fact is disguised by constitutional fictions, is the Sovereign himself. Caprivi, with his independent nature, and Bülow, with his keen desire to maintain his personal prestige, had disappointed William II. From Bethmann-Hollweg, it would seem, there is nothing of the sort to fear. He will always attempt to shield the Emperor's actions with his own constitutional responsibility. He would cheerfully go to the stake and become a burnt-offering to public opinion, if such a sacrifice were needed for the saving of his master's reputation. In Berlin he is known as the philosopher of Hohen-Finow, this being the name of his estate. A philosopher, if you will, in the equanimity with which he bears the failures of his administration, and with which he will arm himself in his retirement, when the hour of disgrace has struck; but above all a philosopher in his indifference or want of resolution where ethics and politics are concerned. His readiness to bow to the fiat of the Imperial will might more properly earn him the name of courtier-philosopher. For the matter of that, they are all courtiers in Berlin—all, that is to say, who on any rung of the ladder seek to be honoured with the favour or the confidence of the Sovereign.

In his position with regard to the Reichstag and his influence on that heterogeneous assembly, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg cannot be compared with his predecessor. He has lived and still lives as a being apart, amid the indifference or hostility of the middle-class (otherwise known as monarchical) parties. The Liberals expected him to carry out a promised reform of the Prussian electoral law; but, finding the measure indefinitely postponed, they view him with suspicion, in the Landtag (or Prussian Diet) no less than in the Imperial Parliament. The Catholic Centre cannot forgive this unbending Protestant for his refusal to restore the right to teach to the Jesuit Order, and on the other hand he is not reactionary enough to please the Conservatives. The latter reproached him most bitterly of all, three years ago, for the weakness with which he abandoned his scheme for the financial working of the recent military law and supported the Radical counter-scheme put forward by the Reichstag Committee. In fact, at the beginning of 1914, it seemed that Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg's days as a minister were numbered, when suddenly the war came to interrupt all party strife, and the roar of the guns drowned the voice of criticism both in Press and in Parliament.

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Officially, the Chancellor is Foreign Minister for the Empire. But the domain of world-politics as conceived by Prince von Bülow is so vast that his successor, better versed in the handling of home affairs, would have lost himself in it, had he not let himself be guided by an expert professional diplomat invested with the title of Secretary of State. The first of these guides was Baron von Schoen, followed by Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, and the present Foreign Secretary is Herr von Jagow. On certain occasions, however, the Chancellor was compelled to make a statement on the foreign situation in the Reichstag. He painted his pictures with a broad brush, and presented the leading events of the day in a carefully thought out chiaroscuro well distributed over the canvas. His speeches, which he had learnt by heart, seemed tame and colourless, as is no doubt inevitably the case with this type of literary effort. They were entirely lacking in that singular clearness and note of sincerity that marked the kindred utterances of Sir Edward Grey in the House of Commons.

84

Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg is a man of conciliatory temper, and a large blend of pacifism certainly enters into his nature. The need of a long spell of peace, to complete the splendid commercial and industrial expansion of Germany, could not have escaped his clear vision. This explains why he was the object of frequent appeals, outside the formal discussions, from the eminent diplomat who opposed Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter in the dangerous game that was being played in connection with Morocco. The French Yellow Book for 1911 contains a report of some conversations that M. Jules Cambon had with the Chancellor, and the impression they give is that the latter really wished to arrive at a final understanding. It was to the Chancellor, again, that the Ambassador turned when the time came for settling other thorny questions, such as the delimitation of railway concessions and spheres of influence in Asia Minor, and when the German negotiators proved too refractory. In other quarters, a genuine improvement in his country's relations with Great Britain was Bethmann-Hollweg's most cherished dream, without any latent thought (such as would perhaps have occurred to Prince von Bülow) of afterwards giving the death-blow, at the favourable moment, to England's naval supremacy. There is no reason to believe that Herr von Jagow was not speaking the language of sincerity, when he expressed to Sir Edward Goschen,⁵ in the course of their last, painful interview, "his poignant regret at the crumbling of his entire policy and that of the Chancellor, which had been to make friends with Great Britain, and through Great Britain to get closer to France."

85

Is this regret compatible with Bethmann-Hollweg's wavering attitude in the Austro-Serbian crisis? I think so. His personal preferences made him lean towards a peaceful solution, but this weak man let his hand be forced by the war party, and bowed, as usual, to the will of the Emperor. He was all the more ready to take this course in that he was nothing but a tool, and probably unaware of the real designs at the back of the Imperial brain. When he saw where this reckless policy was leading Germany, he should have stood out and protested; instead of this, his wrath turned against England, who had shattered the fond illusions of Berlin by refusing to look on quietly while the neutrality of Belgium was violated. The philosopher of Hohen-Finow was transformed into an irascible Teuton; all the Prussian violence that ran in his veins, mingled with his Frankfort blood, suddenly came to the surface, and the professional calm of the statesman, accustomed to control his nerves, gave place to a dramatic outburst of anger.

86

From the spirited account given by Sir Edward Goschen in his dispatch to Sir Edward Grey, we can readily picture to ourselves the historic scene that took place in the Chancellor's room at the German Foreign Office on the 4th of August 1914, after England had declared war. We can call up the attitude of the two actors: the Chancellor, his gray-bearded face purple with rage, his tall form leaning towards the British Ambassador, while the latter's pale features maintain the

habitual coolness of his race. In voicing his indignation, the German hit upon phrases more vivid and picturesque than would have been expected from him.

"Belgian neutrality, a scrap of paper!" These unlucky words will stick for ever to the memory of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg. This man of wide culture, with a more exalted sense of justice than many of his countrymen, has shown us that respect for treaties no longer existed for him, so long as strategic considerations demanded that they should be broken. The inviolability of small States, their independence and their right to live, had no more value in his eyes than the international agreements that sanction these principles. On the same day, in the Reichstag, the Chancellor admitted, without any subterfuges—a frankness which he regrets to-day—that the Imperial Government, by the invasion of Belgium, had transgressed the law of nations. But, he pointed out, necessity knows no law, and he tried to excuse himself by attributing, without any probability or material proof, a similar design to the French. Belgium should quietly have let herself be invaded; she would have been indemnified later on!

87

It was a sad disillusion for those who, thinking that they knew Bethmann-Hollweg, would never have regarded him as an unscrupulous politician. If he could not be a great minister, he might at least have endorsed Prussia's signature and guarded the honour of the young German Empire. A mere nod from the Emperor was enough to make him the zealous vindicator of a crime. His language in this tragic crisis was that of a court sycophant without courage or conscience, not that of a statesman. In spite of his philosophy, he resigned himself to an act that disgraced Germany, and thus played the part, not of a patriotic and independent thinker, but of a courtier-philosopher.

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VII.

To leave Rome for Berlin; to exchange the fine Caffarelli Palace on the Capitol for the modest residence that houses the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; to pass from the cloudless skies and bright sunshine of the Roman Campagna to the chill mists of the Spree; and, worst of all, to lose an almost independent position, and become the hard-working servant of the Kaiser and the recognized mentor of the Chancellor—all this is a severe test of self-denial for a German diplomat who, while still in the prime of life, has reached the height of his ambitions and the zenith of his career. We can realize, therefore, that Herr von Jagow did not accept ministerial honours without a struggle, and that he only assumed the mantle of Kiderlen-Wächter in obedience to repeated orders from his master.

The new Secretary of State appears to have been the spoilt child of Roman society. One may question, however, whether he possessed the difficult art of reading the souls of Italian statesmen and fathoming their secrets. The expedition to Tripoli was planned without the knowledge of the ambassador from the most important member of the Triplice. Like his colleagues, he did not learn of the scheme until it was beyond the range of discussion, so greatly did the Consulta dread that the Imperial Government would place its veto upon this first step towards the dismemberment of Turkey, the client and protégée of Germany. In spite of this, after Herr von Jagow's return to Berlin, the credit of Italy there seemed on a firmer basis than ever. She now possessed, it was said, two representatives in Berlin instead of one: the ambassador of His Majesty King Victor Emmanuel, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who adhered faithfully to his Italian sympathies.

89

This great friendship between Rome and Berlin did not prevent the Cabinet of the Quirinal from remaining neutral at first in the world-war, before resolutely opposing the Central Empires. It is true that Herr von Jagow had paid the Italians in their own coin, by not informing them of the plot hatched against Serbia, a plot that was certain to endanger their interests in the Balkan Peninsula, and to disturb the balance between Austrian ambitions and their own aspirations. Vienna and Rome were bound by a clause in the alliance to come to an understanding beforehand with regard to any alteration of the *status quo* in the Balkans. Italy protested against this neglect of treaty obligations, while at the same time pleading that the defensive character of the Triplice justified her in holding aloof from a struggle in which the aggressors were indubitably her allies.

90

At the Wilhelmstrasse, Herr von Jagow at first appeared to be slightly out of his element. His manner towards the foreign diplomatic corps was reserved; he almost stood on the defensive, as if fearing indiscreet questions. In point of fact, the European situation was full of uncertainty and danger. The Balkan War was at its height. The Imperial Government, in response to German public opinion, seemed anxious to maintain harmony between the Great Powers, which were acting as uneasy spectators of Turkey's collapse. The Foreign Secretary's wits were set vigorously to work, first of all in restraining and reprimanding Austria, and then in helping her, in concert with Italy, to obtain compensations that would look like diplomatic triumphs: the exclusion of Serbia from the Adriatic, the abandonment of Scutari by Montenegro, and the setting-up of an independent Albania. He did not part company with Austria until the moment when she tried in vain to raise trouble once more in the Balkans, after the treaty of peace had been definitively signed at Bucharest.

In relation to France Herr von Jagow, presumably in compliance with orders from above, showed himself far from cordial. When a question was asked in the Reichstag about the Nancy incident, his reply went beyond the legitimate tone of official displeasure. In his hasty and uncharitable judgment of facts that were not yet established, we may perhaps trace a secret desire to humour the hostile feelings towards France entertained by the majority in the Reichstag, and to win the favour of that majority. The maiden speech of the new Secretary of State fell rather flat. He himself openly confessed his nervousness at having to speak in public. Like most of his colleagues in the diplomatic profession, he lacks the gift of eloquence, and is

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reader with his pen than with his tongue.

This sagacious little man, with his strikingly youthful appearance (although he is now well on in the fifties), his carefully groomed person, his marked politeness of manner, and his artistic tastes, is the antithesis of Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter. The latter, a broad-shouldered Suabian, very deficient in breeding, but thoroughly good-natured, had a disconcerting abruptness that was sometimes redeemed by a flash of genial humour. In one aspect of their characters, however, these two Germans, the Prussian and the Würtemberger, were alike: in their disregard of small nationalities and their profound contempt for second-rate Powers. Punctually every Thursday, there used to arrive at each legation a letter written by the Secretary of State's own hand, expressing his deep regret that he could not receive the minister on the Friday, which was the day set apart for the reception of envoys extraordinary. In other countries, no distinction is made between ambassadors and ministers plenipotentiary; the latter have the same access as their great colleagues to the head of the Foreign Office, whose time is quite as precious as that of the Foreign Secretary for the German Empire. "What is the use," Herr von Jagow no doubt said to himself, as Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter had said before him, "of receiving this small fry of the diplomatic world? If they have any urgent business to transact, let them telephone to ask for an audience. But when it comes to discussing the condition of Europe with them every week, having to listen to their questions and to make replies—what a waste of time! How can the broader aspects of politics interest these gentry? As for asking them about what is going on in their paltry capitals, there is no need for me to do that; I get all I want from the excellent reports sent me by our agents at the inferior Courts."

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"No, sir," one of those diplomats might object, "you were wrong in relying solely on those agents of yours. If you had been better acquainted with the state of feeling in Belgium, with the passionate devotion of the Belgians to their free institutions, with their unflinching resolve to resist all external pressure, from whatever source it might come, and to fight to the death for their neutrality and their independence, as precious in their eyes as national unity in those of the Germans—if you had known all this, you would perhaps have put your Emperor on his guard against miscalculations, against the danger of hastily invading a friendly little neighbour-country. You, personally, are not supposed to be of a pugnacious turn. On the other hand, you have too much insight and experience not to have seen, better than the professional soldiers of the General Staff, to what developments in the European crisis their policy would lead. You will say, perhaps, that you were not summoned to Berlin in order that you might give advice. Your function was to carry out the instructions of your Sovereign. It is just because you consented to play so self-effacing a rôle in the world-wide upheaval set in motion by the Emperor's statesmanship, that you will be severely blamed, when the responsibility of each actor in the drama is finally settled."

93

There is one matter on which Herr von Jagow could never see eye to eye with the representative of Belgium—to wit, the colonial question, which gave the German Foreign Office much food for anxious thought. One day, some months before the war, the Secretary of State, in the course of an informal conversation, expressed the opinion that King Leopold had been treated too indulgently over the partition of Central Africa at the Berlin Conference. Bismarck had been too generous; Belgium was not rich enough properly to develop the vast empire bequeathed her by her great king; it was an enterprise beyond her powers of expansion and her financial means, and she would find herself compelled to give it up. Germany, on the other hand, in view of her capacity for colonizing, her boundless resources, and her commercial requirements, had obtained far too small a share of African territory, and a fresh partition therefore seemed to be necessary. Herr von Jagow, in dilating upon this theme, tried to imbue his visitor with his own contempt for the title-deeds of small States. According to him, only the great Powers had the right and the ability to colonize. He even revealed what lay at the back of his mind—that in the changes which were passing over Europe to the advantage of the stronger nationalities, the small States could no longer enjoy the independent existence that they had hitherto been allowed to lead; they were doomed to disappear, or to gravitate towards the orbit of the Great Powers.

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These disquieting suggestions were not made, of course, to the Belgian minister, but to the ambassador of another country. At the back of the diplomatic stage in a great capital, however, everything leaks out sooner or later; the personal views of the man who nominally directs foreign policy cannot be kept secret from interested parties. This was especially the case in Berlin, where, among the heads of legations, a certain number held more or less closely together, according as their countries were more or less exposed to the menace of the German colossus, whose growth and appetites they watched with a very natural vigilance.

If we append these remarks of Herr von Jagow to those made at his final interview with Sir Edward Goschen, in which he lamented the bankruptcy of his plans for friendship with England and reconciliation with France, we can readily guess what terms he and Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, those two pacifists, would have demanded for the formation of such an agreement. The two Western Powers would have been forced cheerfully to abandon to Germany the little States which obstruct her development along the North Sea coast and prevent her from breathing freely. They would have been compelled to allow Germany eventually to make these States, willing or unwilling, enter the Germanic federation, which would thus have become the great Empire, the heir of its remote mediæval prototype, ever present in the dreams of the German intellectuals.

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VIII.

As you walk along the Wilhelmstrasse, coming from Unter den Linden, you see, to the right, a

long building of only one story, in the obsolete style of the early nineteenth century. It looks very bare and unpretentious by the side of the eighteenth century mansions that flank it right and left and the palatial Government offices, of more recent construction, that lie opposite. This venerable edifice is no other than the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the *Auswärtiges Amt*, of the Empire. Here, fifty years ago, were planned the changes that the Hohenzollerns wrought with their swords in the map of Europe; here is the real starting-point of their Imperial power. As you enter and go up the marble staircase, you catch the musty smell that comes from masses of papers and documents in an old and ill-ventilated building. Follow the main corridor which cuts it in half, and a polite attendant will escort you to a room that is scarcely any larger than a monastic cell. You go in, and find yourself face to face with the Under-Secretary of State.

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Herr Zimmermann is a blond Teuton, with a military moustache and a pleasant smile that gives promise of a cordial welcome. This high official is a self-made man in the full sense of the term. He won such distinction by his services as consul in the Far East that the authorities recalled him and gave him an appointment at Foreign Office headquarters. Here, by sheer merit, he has risen to the exalted post in which his capacity for work and his sound judgment have won him the confidence of the Chancellor and of two successive Foreign Secretaries, as well as the good graces of the Emperor. Every one in Berlin thinks that Herr Zimmermann, who has gone so far, is likely to go still further.

He might reasonably be called a godsend to diplomats. Heads of legations and *chargés d'affaires*, looking for news or short of information, apply to him, in order to be able to apprise their Government of matters in which they are interested. The Under-Secretary of State merely says what has to be said, without betraying any secrets of the Imperial Chancellery; but this is enough to put his hearers on the right track, for his communications are always accurate.

97

Is it possible for us to divine his personal feelings with regard to the war? Would it be impugning his patriotism to doubt whether he was firmly convinced of its necessity? These questions are not easy to answer, for on this topic no German capable of frankness, unless he is hopelessly saturated with Pan-Germanism, will speak out nowadays before a stranger. What I can say, without fear of contradiction, is this: that the Under-Secretary of State was not a wholehearted supporter of the policy of alliances bequeathed by Bismarck, since he realized all the entanglements and dangers that they involved. How often, during the Balkan crisis, was he seen to express his impatience with the Cabinet of Vienna, when the latter turned a deaf ear to the good advice telegraphed from Berlin! When I took leave of him, before returning to my unhappy country, which had already been invaded by the advance-guard of the German army, he said to me, in a tone of unfeigned regret: "Ah, this war means the end of the policy of alliances!" What a world of sorrow and disappointment lay in this avowal!

His constant relations with the directors of great companies, with commercial and industrial magnates, who were invited to his bachelor table together with foreign diplomats, led the latter to suppose that their host shared the pacific ideas of their fellow-guests. A prolonged era of peace was required, if the vigorous development of the national resources was to continue. This is an incontestable truth, which cannot be repeated too often. Moreover, a prolonged era of peace would have enabled the Germans, by virtue of their genius for organizing, their methodical ways, and their capacity for hard work, to become the leading nation in almost every sphere of international competition, owning the main sources of industrial production, and holding the unquestioned economic supremacy of Europe. Yet they have been mad enough to make a bid for this supremacy by a war that is utterly at variance with the progress of civilization! It is difficult to see how so enlightened a man as Herr Zimmermann, one so closely in touch with the needs of industrial Germany, could have been anything but a pacifist.

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The principal task of those who direct foreign affairs is the same in all great capitals. One must be a Bismarck to plan one war after another a long time in advance, while conducting the foreign policy of the State. Bismarck's excuse lies in the fact that these wars were essential for German unity. Once his end was gained, the all-powerful minister put Prussia's sword back in its sheath, and devoted himself to consolidating the glory and the conquests that had been won. The Berlin Foreign Office cannot really be suspected of having worked in the dark against the maintenance of a peace policy, such as was pursued during the last twenty years of the Iron Chancellor. To avoid needless conflicts, to scatter the clouds as soon as they gathered at any point on the horizon, to ward off the frightful perils of a European conflagration—this has been the noble duty and the thankless task of diplomats throughout the last few years, in the positions of watchmen or pilots which they have held in foreign countries or at the head of the home department. At the Wilhelmstrasse, as elsewhere, the officials were faced with the duty of trying to fulfil these lofty moral obligations; they did so with a mixture of civility and gruffness, and their changes of mood were too obvious, but they undoubtedly meant well.

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Here arises a difficult question. In view of the definite aspirations of a large element in the German nation, with their manifest desire for expansion, how did the Foreign Office propose to satisfy them? Was it merely aiming at a vague peace policy, or had it any tangible schemes in view?

A book and a pamphlet published in 1913, when a festival was held to celebrate the twenty-fifth year of William II.'s reign, gives us the key to the riddle. They throw a discreet but sufficient light upon the policy of expansion recommended at the Wilhelmstrasse.

The book—*Imperial Germany*—is by Prince von Bülow, who thus broke the silence he had observed since the day of his retirement. He reviews the political history of the Empire for the past quarter of a century, and points to the path which it ought to follow in the future both at home and abroad.

100

According to the ex-Chancellor, the Germany of to-day can no longer cling to Bismarck's

Continental policy or obey the precepts handed down by him to his successors. She must open out for herself new and broader tracks, corresponding to the progress achieved in the last thirty years. During this period, the population has increased by twenty million souls, and her industry, fostered by an enormous growth in labour-power, has crossed the seas in order to distribute over the entire globe those products which the home markets were no longer capable of absorbing. This vast industrial output has made it necessary to build a mercantile marine, to which more and more units are added every year, and this commercial fleet has brought in its train the construction of an imposing navy. The last-named enterprise was fraught with difficulties; for we could not avoid exciting the jealousy of England, and in order to succeed it was essential to beware of arousing her hostility. England looks with no friendly eye on the rise of a foreign naval power, which might seek one day to contend with her the mastery of the seas. Germany has no intention of issuing such a challenge to England, as the France of Louis XIV. and the United Provinces did in days gone by. Although the German navy has become, in the course of a few years, the second in the world, its sole mission is to watch over German trade and German interests, to see that they are not obstructed in any way. Just as German industry, after being exclusively domestic and national not long since, has become world-wide, so German statesmanship, which was exclusively European in the days of Bismarck—for it then had no other object than to secure for Germany her rightful place in the first rank of Continental Powers—has likewise been raised to a world-wide plane. Prince von Bülow is careful to insist upon the purely defensive rôle that the Imperial fleet has marked out for itself, and, in order to reassure us as to the peaceful aims of the new statesmanship, he quotes the following passage from a speech made by him in the Reichstag on 6th November 1906: "It is the duty of our generation to uphold our position on the Continent, which is the basis of our international position; to protect our interests abroad; and to pursue a sober, judicious, and far-sighted international policy, limited in such a way that the safety of the German people shall incur no risks and the future of the nation shall not be jeopardized."

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Sage counsels these! But to our Latin mind, with its passion for clearness, the phrases "international policy," "transmarine policy," "world policy," which are so plentifully sprinkled about the ex-Chancellor's pages, convey no very precise meaning. Was it world-policy that involved, for instance, the sending of a few cruisers to the Mexican coast to protect German trade and German residents during the war between Huerta and Carranza? Was it the same policy that brought about the dispatch of a squadron to the China Seas, in order to seize Kiauchau and Tsingtau, and to obtain by main force from the Chinese Government the concession of a naval station and a rich mining territory, with the right of erecting formidable defence-works? Prince von Bülow has himself felt the need of throwing a little light for his readers upon the dark recesses of his thought. He gives us to understand that Germany now possesses the means, not only of safeguarding her interests, of resisting any attack, but also of extending her influence everywhere, especially in Asia Minor and Africa.

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The pamphlet entitled *Die Weltpolitik und kein Krieg* ("A World-policy without War") is more explicit. It bears no signature, but according to the view generally accepted in the best-informed political circles in Berlin, it was issued under the auspices of the Foreign Office. The latter has not denied its paternity.

The nameless author first of all sets forth the reasons why a Continental war is apparently no longer to be feared. The Balkan League has dissolved in blood, and, no less than Turkey, those allies of yesterday who are implacable foes to-day will need time for healing their wounds and recruiting their strength. France has her hands so full with the pacification of Morocco that she does not wish to cause any complications in Europe. Russia is turning her eyes more and more towards Central Asia. Anglo-German relations are improving every day. Germany is devoting herself to the expansion of her commercial and industrial power; she has invested large sums of capital in her railway enterprises in Asia Minor, but she must not extend these enterprises indefinitely, since it might not be feasible for her to protect them in the event of war. Germany is not yet a Mediterranean power; to defend the concessions granted to her subjects in Syria and Asia Minor, her fleet would have to pass under the guns of Gibraltar, Malta, and Bizerta.

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There remains Africa. Sir Edward Grey has stated in Parliament that Britain will not oppose the advance of German colonization, for she herself has no thought of acquiring fresh colonies. Portugal and Belgium are not in a position to colonize their African territories: the former, because of her financial weakness and her internal dissensions; the latter, because she does not wish to spend the sums needed for developing the Congo, which she annexed in the delusive hope that it would cost her no sacrifices. German capital and the aptitude of the German race for colonizing, its commercial ability, and its spirit of enterprise, are the only factors capable of spreading civilization in the heart of the Dark Continent and exploiting its wealth. The co-operation of Germany, therefore, is essential both for the Belgians and for the Portuguese. She might occupy a position in their colonies similar to that of France in Tunis and Morocco, or to that of Russia in Persia. It would be a peaceful penetration and development, in which the Belgians, with their keen business instinct, would be willing to take part, even if the Portuguese did not clearly understand its necessity.

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This is something definite to go upon. The international or world policy, as conceived by the Wilhelmstrasse in 1913, was a colonial expansion, proceeding on peaceful lines.

In the ensuing winter the Imperial Government opened negotiations with the London Cabinet for the demarcation of British and German spheres of influence in the African colonies of Portugal; the former was to have comprised Mozambique, the latter Angola. Without waiting for the conclusion of these negotiations, a committee of research was formed in Hamburg, for the purpose of investigating the agricultural and mineral wealth of Angola, and great German banks tried to obtain control of the Lobito Bay railway, which runs from the coast of the Portuguese

colony to Katanga in the Belgian Congo.

In the foregoing pages, while sketching the portraits of those who direct Germany's foreign policy, I have tried to summarize the views of each, as they appear to me in the light of their acts, their private statements, and their occasional public declarations. We have seen how the Chancellor nursed the hope of maintaining friendly relations with England, come what might; how Herr von Jagow set little store by the national life of small States; and how the more practical minds of the Under-Secretary and the Foreign Office staff contented themselves with immediate colonial expansion and the opening up of new fields for the activities of the German race. All these individual aspirations, however, were overshadowed by the will, as yet inscrutable, of the Emperor. When that will was revealed in the tragic last days of July, these men all hastened to obey its bidding with equal alacrity.

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CHAPTER III.

THE ARMY AND NAVY—THE WAR PARTY.

I.

PRUSSIA is before all else a military State, and since 1871 Prussian militarism has laid its heavy hand upon Southern Germany, the inhabitants of which were formerly noted for their peaceful ways. The warlike spirit of the Prussians is the fruit of the statesmanship pursued by their rulers, those Electors of Brandenburg who afterwards became Kings of Prussia. The Elector of the Thirty Years' War period, George William, had played but a humble part in that struggle. His sole desire was to keep his States independent, free from the grasp of the Swedes and of the Imperial troops, and he trimmed ingloriously between Gustavus Adolphus and Ferdinand II. The Great Elector, Frederick William, was the first to embody the territorial ambitions of his house. In order to realize them, he saw the necessity of a powerful standing army, out of all proportion to the size and status of his Electorate. These troops enabled him to figure among the adversaries of Louis XIV., and, at the Battle of Fehrbellin, to strike a deadly blow at the power and reputation of the Swedes in Germany. The Prussian army had now vindicated itself as an effective fighting force. It was the means by which this martial prince extended his territory and made it large enough to be converted into a kingdom under his successor, Frederick I., who obtained a royal crown from the Emperor Leopold as the price of his military and financial support. 107

The second King of Prussia, Frederick William I., although not of an enterprising nature, applied himself to enlarging and perfecting the instrument which, in the hands of his son Frederick II. (the Great), was destined to become the finest army in Europe and the model that other nations did their best to copy. After fighting victoriously, however, under the command of a great leader, against a coalition of three powerful monarchies, and showing itself more than a match for the best troops that Russia, Austria, and France could muster, the Prussian army suddenly lost its pre-eminent position. The eclipse was so complete that it seemed at first to be final.

The Prussians were repulsed at Valmy, and afterwards proved helpless against the conscripts of the Republic. In spite of this, their military prestige was not yet seriously impaired. Thanks to the genius of Napoleon and the wonderful efficiency of his soldiers, it was entirely shattered in the campaign of 1806. It was not only the battle of Jena, but another humiliating defeat, inflicted the same day by one of Napoleon's subordinates on the King of Prussia's troops, that proved the decadence of the latter and the incapacity of their generals, trained in the school of Frederick the Great. The disaster of Jena is readily acknowledged in Berlin, but the German historians have little to say about the day of Auerstädt, the true Nemesis for Rossbach. 108

Prussian militarism raised its head once more during the war of liberation. It was the life and soul of the resistance to Napoleon, and contributed its share towards the final deliverance. Still, we must beware of overrating the part played by Blücher, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Yorck, Bülow, and the other generals of Frederick William III. in 1813 and 1814. The Corsican was vanquished by his own blunders—the exhausting war in the Peninsula, where the best blood of France was spilt to no purpose, and the ill-fated Russian campaign. During the early summer of 1813, the Russians and the Prussians, in several hard-fought battles, met with nothing but defeat. The emancipation of Germany would have been far from assured, if Austria, who had completed her preparations, had not joined hands with Russia and Prussia to overwhelm Napoleon. During the wars of the French Empire, it is the Archduke Charles and the Austrian troops, not the Prussian armies, that can claim the honour of having offered the most stubborn resistance to the great conqueror. In the same way, during the Hundred Days, old Blücher—"Marshal Forward," as the Germans call him—is not entitled to the first place among the heroes of Waterloo. The chief glory may fairly be assigned to Wellington and to the bulldog tenacity of the British. 109

A long second period of decadence set in for Prussian militarism after 1815, under the peaceful reigns of Frederick William III. and William IV. Its decline was particularly apparent at the time of the inglorious Convention of Olmütz. To William I. fell the task of re-forging the chain of great Hohenzollern warrior-princes, broken at the death of Frederick the Great. Not that he himself was endowed with the talents of a commander-in-chief; when it came to actual fighting he was merely a soldier. But he had a faculty more precious in a king than the art of leading an army: he was an excellent judge of men, and could choose the most suitable tools for carrying out the plans he had sanctioned. William I. made Bismarck head of the Prussian ministry, leaving him a free hand for conducting the bold policy that was to establish the greatness of the Prussian royal house on the basis of German unity, and then gave him two indispensable fellow-workers—Roon, the reorganizer of the army, and Moltke, the Chief of the General Staff. Strictly speaking, the future Field-Marshal did not evolve any new system of strategy, but he had absorbed the teachings of Frederick the Great and the object lessons of Napoleon so thoroughly that he became in his turn a master in the art of war.

As for Prussian militarism, or, in other words, the military caste, the victories of 1866 and 1870 completely turned its head. It came to regard itself as the very embodiment of the nation. Never had it been more powerful or more domineering than in the generation preceding the present war. Woe to the civilian who ventured to criticise the army, or got in an officer's way on the pavement, or did not cringe before the fiat of a corps commander! The recent Zabern affair showed us that the German military can allow themselves anything. On this occasion, public opinion finally gave its verdict in their favour, notwithstanding the protests (speedily silenced!) of 110

II.

In striving to maintain the whole German army at the high level attained by the Prussian, William II. has followed in the footsteps of his grandfather. He has not, however, been so happy in his choice of men; Moltkes and Roons are hard to find at any time. During his reign, as during that of William I., the Great General Staff and the War Office have worked in close unison. The former, to which officers are appointed after a careful sifting, has to make elaborate plans for strategical operations against whatever enemy the German army may have to face; the latter's task is to organize and improve the forces, and to introduce and defend in the Reichstag the war budget and any military measures that may be required. To these two bodies we must add a third, more secret in its workings, less easy to trace, but in certain cases a decisive factor—the Emperor's war Cabinet. The promotion and retirement of officers is one of its most formidable functions. After the annual manœuvres, it carries out the sentences passed by the sovereign upon those who have failed through incapacity, illness, or bad luck. In the Emperor's name it may intervene in any question that concerns the service. Its influence is even extended to foreign affairs, if the army is called upon to play a part in their shaping.

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Soon after the opening of the twentieth century there began to appear, chiefly in Prussia, a steady drift of opinion in favour of fresh European conflicts. The adherents of this creed were known abroad under the comprehensive name of "war party." They were drawn, in the first place, from the field-m Marshals and "colonel-generals" (*Generalobersten*), the generals on the active list, the aides-de-camp of the Emperor, the hotheads of the Staff, and the more ambitious officers of all grades. To these must be added the retired army men, reactionary squireens who lived on their estates, and saw the ever-growing taxation accompanied by a rise in the national wealth, in the standard of comfort and luxury, while their own incomes could not show a corresponding advance. These malcontents held that a little blood-letting would be of great service in purifying and strengthening the social body, and in restoring to the patrician caste that preponderance which was its due, and which seemed likely to be usurped by the self-made plutocrats of industry and commerce.

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Apart from the military element, which naturally carried most weight, the war party included a large number of civilians—the majority of the high Prussian officials; the true-blue Conservatives in the Reichstag and the "Conservative Imperialists," together with the members of other middle-class groups; and the patriotic writers, the journalists, the intellectual cream of the universities and schools. All these were obsessed with the vision of a Germany subjugating the world by her arms, as she thought to have already conquered it by her superior culture and her incomparable science. Their unhealthy ambitions were encouraged by a cantankerous Press, jealous of the races that embody the civilization of the past, and choosing to regard them as decadent rivals of the noble Germanic stock, which was destined to give an enslaved world the opportunity of enjoying the civilization of the future.

The war party was faithfully supported by the *Wehrverein* (Union of Defence), a military league which in the space of a few years spread its powerful roots over the whole of Germany. The *Wehrverein* did not confine itself to the task of defending the lawful interests of the army. The proposals put forward at its periodical meetings dealt not only with reforms that seemed desirable in the supply of munitions, in the organization of troops, and in the technical departments, but also with the political designs that the army would be called upon to carry out. Finally, the warlike spirit was kept alive among the lower classes by numerous associations of veterans, the *Kriegsvereine* (War Leagues). Their ominous name is enough to show that they strove their hardest to counteract the growing force of pacific tendencies among a nation in which the amazing development of its industry and commerce had bred a feverish desire to amass wealth.

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The demands of the war party found expression in a literature that was half political, half military. The writers openly advocated a European conflict as the only means of completing the work of Bismarck—that is to say, of giving Germany her rightful place at the head of the nations. A typical product of this school is the now celebrated book by the retired cavalry general, Friedrich von Bernhardi, entitled *Germany and the Next War*. In spite of the lofty moral and philosophical tone that he often adopts, the author is more daring and outspoken than any of his fellow-scribes. Among all that has been published in the last few years regarding the crucial question of Germany's future, this book of Bernhardi's has proved the most prophetic, for war has been declared for the very reasons to which he drew attention and for the very objects which he advocated. The foreign public was unwise in not paying more attention at the time to these danger-signals. The work of the military philosopher has become a text-book for German patriots; his sophisms have poisoned the mind of the present generation.

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The hothouse atmosphere in which politics were carried on for three years before the war was calculated to force the growth of the war party, and these fanatics never ceased egging on the Imperial Government towards the goal of their multifarious efforts. There is no doubt, moreover, as to their sway over the mind of a monarch who lends a willing ear to advice that chimes in with his own ambitions. Although the party has no regular organization, although it has worked in the dark, trying to disclaim all responsibility, it must be regarded, after the Emperor, as one of the chief agents in the present catastrophe.

III.

Before the war, the Chief of the General Staff, after the retirement of Count von Schlieffen, was General von Moltke, nephew of the great Field-Marshal. Was it merely his professional merits that determined the Emperor's choice, or had he partly to thank the famous name that he bears? Those who know him lean towards the latter view. Defects and vices, however, are more often inherited than talents, and a name is not a fetish that brings victory. Physically, General von Moltke does not resemble his uncle, the spare old man of the most familiar portraits. He is tall, massive, and powerfully built, with a haughty face and a disdainful expression. Notwithstanding his chilly politeness, the scorn that every typical Teuton feels for foreigners can be read in his eyes.

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As to the moral outlook of this leading figure in the military world, a passage from a report by M. Jules Cambon, dated 6th May 1913, will suffice to give an idea: "We must throw overboard," said General von Moltke before some of his countrymen, 'all the stock commonplaces about the responsibility of the aggressor. As soon as there is a ten-to-one chance in favour of war, we must forestall our opponent, commence hostilities without more ado, and mercilessly crush all resistance.'" It was not merely a rapid assault that the General recommended, but a surprise attack before the declaration of war, as if, in a duel, one were to strike one's opponent before he had had time to assume a posture of defence. The sudden violation of Belgian neutrality, after our Government had been allowed one night to think matters over, was one of these murderous blows approved by the Chief of the General Staff.

In the summer of 1913 General von Heeringen, who was far from popular in Parliament, gave up his post as head of the War Office. His successor, General von Falkenhayn, is exceptionally young for his rank and position. Who would have foretold such a rapid rise for this officer at the time when, heavily in debt and threatened with dismissal from the army, he had the good fortune to become attached to the China expeditionary force of 1900? His luck being backed by intelligence, he came under the favourable notice of Marshal von Walderssee, the leader of the expedition. Falkenhayn's debts were paid, and he recovered his place in the good books of the Emperor. A finely chiselled face, brilliant but disconcerting eyes, great fluency of speech (as he showed by getting a hearing in the Reichstag for his defence of the outrages committed by officers at Zabern)—these are the most salient features of this newcomer in the political world of Berlin. His restless ambition and his rivalry with General von Moltke, who was apt to lord it over him in his early days at the War Office, have only come to light since the outbreak of the war.

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On the evening of November 6, 1913, at a dinner given to King Albert at Potsdam, the Chief of the General Staff said to the Belgian military attaché: "War with France at an early date is inevitable, and the victory of the German army is certain, even if it is purchased by tremendous sacrifices and by a few preliminary set-backs. Nothing can stop the *furor teutonicus* once it has been let loose. The German nation will rise as one man to take up the gauntlet which the French people will have the insane foolhardiness to throw down." The General omitted to add—the remark was, from his point of view, too trite a one to make—that the war of 1870, with its relatively small armies, would be mere child's play in comparison with the struggle which Germany was preparing. He also forbore to speak of the ferocious methods which the German generals would be ordered to employ.

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It was not unknown abroad, however, at any rate among jurists familiar with the work of the Hague Conferences, that there existed in Germany a "Code for War on Land" (*Kriegsgebrauch im Landeskrieg*), published in Berlin by the Staff in 1902. The handbook, it was realized, had been written in quite a different spirit from that which animated the labours of the two Conferences. This special war-code for the use of German officers openly condemned all humanitarian ideas, all tender regard for persons or property, as incompatible with the nature and object of war; it authorized every means of attaining that object, and it left the choice and practice of those means to the entire discretion of the corps commanders. Still, however uneasy the exponents of international law may have felt as to the spread of such theories in Germany, they were reassured by the Imperial Government's solemn acceptance of the 1907 Hague Convention and of the moral principles laid down therein. Accordingly it is with feelings of surprise and horror, shared by the whole civilized world, that they look on at the war waged in the Emperor's name.

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The conduct of this war has indeed been ruthless in the extreme. Almost from the very outset the invader has worked as much havoc as possible, in order to terrorize the inhabitants and to reduce them more quickly to submission. The Germans of 1870 had shown too much tenderness towards the civilian, too much respect for historic monuments, too much consideration for private property. Murder, arson, and pillage have followed in the wake of their descendants. We have learnt how detachments of soldiers, specially drafted for this purpose from the engineers' corps, used various incendiary appliances to destroy unoffending little towns and villages—Louvain, Tamines, Rethy, and other places in Belgium, and Orchies in France. Belgium was the first victim of this *furor teutonicus* of which General von Moltke boasted—Belgium, who, after putting up a heroic fight against her violators, expected to be treated as a conquered country, but not to be flung as a prey to the disciplined brutes of the invading army. This is one of the processes on which the General relied for winning an early victory, that victory of which he spoke with the faith of a zealot. It has turned out, however, that these abominable methods, instead of forcing the Belgians to confess themselves beaten, have only steeled them to a more vigorous resistance.

Were there not other secret processes, other revelations of frightfulness, that the German General Staff had up its sleeve? Among the hidden weapons that it has wielded with the greatest effect is its vast network of spies, established among Germany's neighbours, among all her supposed enemies, at every point where it could be of any service. The foresight displayed in this system, the perfection to which it was brought, were marvellous. Even the level-headed English were almost thrown off their balance, when they found out how well these emissaries had done

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their work, not only round the coast of Britain, but even at the uttermost ends of the Pacific, on the distant shores of Chile.

IV.

But the advantages which, according to our opponents, were destined to ensure their triumph, were the superiority of their strategy and tactics, and the careful preparation of their army down to the last detail, far beyond anything that their rivals had achieved.

"The idea is prevalent abroad," said General von Moltke in 1910 to General Jungbluth, the commander of King Albert's household troops, "that our General Staff is constantly preparing plans of campaign, with an eye to all the possibilities of a European war. This is a mistake. We occupy ourselves with the question of the transport, concentration, and provisioning of our troops, and the employment of the new means of communication. You would be astonished if you saw the offices of our General Staff. They look like the head offices of a railway." The only conclusion to be drawn from these words is that the plan of the 1914 campaign, the plan for an invasion of France and a rapid onslaught, had long since been worked out, and was reposing in a secret drawer somewhere in the Königsplatz building. We may even surmise that the march on Paris, pursued across the central plains of Belgium and the valley of the Meuse in order to turn the defences of the French frontier, had been traced by the aging, but still steady, hand of Marshal von Moltke. It is characterized by those wide-sweeping movements that he loved; in fact, the whole scheme bears the impress of his personality. Nevertheless, the methods by which it was carried out and the idea of an ultimatum to an unsuspecting neutral country must be ascribed to his nephew. I have good grounds for believing this, in view of Herr Zimmermann's last words to me on the 5th of August: "Since the mobilization, all the power has been in the hands of the military authorities; all the decisions issue from them." By this statement he implied that the responsibility for the invasion of Belgium lay with the General Staff and with its chief.

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The General Staff and the War College for the training of officers had clung faithfully to the strategy which had led to the victories of the past—that of bringing up superior forces with all speed to a given point, and in this way breaking the enemy's line of defence; or that of outflanking and surrounding one of his wings, and thus overcoming his resistance by a flank attack. This method of going to work presupposes an offensive. Moltke, like Napoleon, held that merely by taking the offensive one has gone halfway towards winning the battle. These maxims were in harmony with the old Prussian traditions, as well as with the qualities instilled into the Prussian or Prussianized soldier, and, finally, with the speedy mobilization of the Imperial army. The decisive victories which in the space of a fortnight had brought the Bulgarians almost to the gates of Constantinople, once more bore witness, so the Germans asserted, to the value of this strategy. Had not the King of Greece, it was added, publicly paid a tribute to the instruction received by him at the Berlin Staff College, on the day when, like a good pupil at a prize-giving, he had been presented with a field-marshal's baton by the Emperor in person?

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The Manchurian campaign, it is true, had warned the world—as was noted at the time by military writers—that a revolution was taking place in the art of war. It revealed a new system of strategy and tactics, applied by the Russians and Japanese on a front of enormous length—long parallel lines of trenches, where both sides burrowed themselves in for weeks, before there was any possibility of striking a decisive blow. The experts of Berlin, however, would not hear of this war of moles. They were confident, even now, of making an attack on France with a rapidity that nothing could withstand. They went on dreaming only of whirlwind offensives, of whole armies forced to capitulate, of fresh Sadowas and Sedans.

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While the German strategy was still looked upon with general admiration, the case was different as regards the tactics, particularly the use of infantry, which was much discussed by foreign officers resident in Berlin. One of them, on returning from the great manoeuvres of 1913, confessed to me his astonishment at the fighting methods to which the infantry were trained. "They still go in for the assault in close formation," he said, "the *Sturmangriff*, which used to be successful. But nowadays, on a battlefield swept by artillery and machine-guns, these close formations would give the other side as good a target as they could wish for. If an attack were led in this way against an enemy who is under cover or is himself determined not to give ground, there would soon be nothing left of it but a heap of dead bodies."

To judge by opinions that I heard on all sides in Berlin, German strategy and tactics have made no advance since 1870; it would seem that in the eyes of the General Staff they reached their acme at that date. In the equipment and technical preparation of units, on the other hand, Germany can point to a continuous record of progress.

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V.

During the first years of William II.'s reign, the work of maintaining Germany's military superiority bore a twofold aspect—to preserve for Germany her place in the front rank of European Powers, the place she had won at the price of two great wars; and to ward off attack, to keep all possible foes at bay. The army, apparently, was not looked upon as an instrument of conquest. It did not seem in any real sense to threaten the Empire's neighbours, although, with its arrogant demeanour, it had an air of openly defying them to make any aggressive move. Has it been the same for the last ten years or so? A mere study of the most recent military laws will dispel any such notion. The army has been enlarged, equipped, and trained with a view to making war at no distant date.

In 1871, it had a peace establishment of eighteen corps or 401,000 men, excluding commissioned and non-commissioned officers. This force remained unchanged until 1880. Five army bills, passed between 1880 and 1889, aimed at increasing and perfecting its equipment, but the advance in its numbers, slow at the outset, cannot be said to have kept pace with the very rapid growth in the population. Before 1913, a portion of the available contingent had received no military training. Financial motives and the difficulty of raising new taxes prevented the successive War Ministers—so the Government declared—from calling up as many men as they would have liked, and from enlarging the cadres to a greater extent. These motives suddenly disappeared, as soon as William II.'s warlike designs took definite shape. Acting under the Emperor's orders, the Chancellor did not hesitate to resort to extraordinary financial measures, such as no other country has ever adopted in time of peace.

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In 1905, the two years' term of service, which had already been tried experimentally, was made a permanent institution for the infantry, and the establishment rose to 505,000 men. In 1911, the bill for the military quinquennium anticipated only the small increase of 10,000 men even by 1915, but it introduced important technical improvements in machine-guns, artillery, supply and transport, and so forth. In 1912, when the 1911 act had scarcely begun to take effect, a fresh army bill was proposed. Public opinion was still in a ferment over the events of the past summer and the aftermath of the Agadir episode. The new act, taking advantage of this wave of patriotism, at once embodied, for working purposes, the measures anticipated by the bill of 1911. It created two new army corps, one for the western frontier, the other for the eastern, and raised the peace establishment to 544,000 men.

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The character of the 1911 and 1912 acts is different from that of the preceding measures. Their primary object was to improve the quality of the army. They both tended to make it a more effective instrument for fighting, and one more ready for immediate use at the outbreak of hostilities.

One might have supposed that after such marked progress the War Office would have rested on its laurels. It did nothing of the kind. Towards the end of 1912, when the Balkan League was winning its first victories, there set in a current of opinion, strongly encouraged by the Imperial Government, in favour of demanding reinforcements to fill up the gaps that still existed. The *Wehrverein* distinguished itself by its frantic propaganda on behalf of new armaments. A Press campaign was organized. The Emperor gave his sanction to the movement, and in a speech at Königsberg declared that the principle of compulsory service should be applied on a uniform basis. The Chancellor, following in his master's footsteps, announced in February, at the annual meeting of landed proprietors, that the country must be prepared for fresh military burdens.

After this official flourish of trumpets, the bill was laid on the table of the Reichstag on March 18, 1913. It fixed the peace establishment, officers and non-commissioned included, at 815,000; the additions were estimated at 4,000 officers, 15,000 N.C.O.'s, and 117,000 men. The increase applied to every arm—infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, and supply and transport corps. It was a mighty leap! The measures anticipated by the law of 1912 were to come into force by the end of 1913. Finally, the bill contained a clause trebling the war treasure kept in reserve for the first requirements of a mobilization: it was raised from 150,000,000 to 300,000,000 marks (£15,000,000) in gold, besides 150,000,000 (£7,500,000) in silver.

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Was the danger really so pressing? Was the storm already brewing on the frontiers of the Empire? If not, it was hard to justify these hasty measures, especially the financial part of the scheme, the forced levy, to cover the enormous expenses, £50,000,000, which these measures would entail. The explanatory statement, indeed, was far from convincing. It confined itself to remarking that passing events in the Balkans had altered the balance of power in Europe. In the war that she might be compelled to wage, Germany would have only herself to rely upon, and would have to guard, perhaps against several opponents, frontiers of great length and largely unprovided with natural defences. Hence the vital need of employing and organizing all the forces at her disposal.

The main ideas of the bill were: to introduce a uniform system of military service, with numbers increasing at the same rate as the population; to improve the quality of the first-line troops—in other words, the younger section of the army; to arrange for a more speedy mobilization; and—an object that had always been kept in view—to perfect the technical equipment. In round numbers, an increase of 63,000 men each year was expected. The 1913 act is full of suggestive references to telegraphs, telephones, balloons, aeroplanes, and motor-cars; but it volunteers no information regarding the heavy artillery and the siege-guns which were destined to startle the world in 1914. This formidable addition to the destructive power of the German army was carefully kept secret. The military authorities had for a long time firmly believed that their army was invincible, and the possession of such irresistible weapons must have served to strengthen their confidence.

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The Chancellor, in supporting the bill, dwelt more fully on the ideas set forth in the explanatory statement. In vague phrases, he hinted that peace was far from secure, raising up bogeys to frighten his audience—the French jingoes, now more heated than ever, and the Russian Pan-Slavists, with their ceaseless intrigues. The War Minister maintained in all seriousness that the new law had no aggressive aim, that it must be construed, not as a threat to other nations, but as a guarantee of peace. General von Heeringen was asking us to swallow a good deal!

As soon as the debate opened at the Budget Committee, it was evident that the bill was certain to pass. A month later, the committee approved it, without examining the financial side, and the Government had to abandon all hope of seeing both parts of the bill, the military and the financial, passed by the same majority. In the Reichstag, only the Poles, the Socialists, and the Alsace-Lorrainers ventured to vote against the military proposals.

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The *Wehrverein*, however, was not satisfied. In a meeting held at Leipzig on May 18, it

suggested that two new army corps should be formed, and recommended, "in order that no enemy should ever again set his foot on the soil of the Fatherland," that every care should be taken to foster the martial and patriotic spirit of the community, the spirit of the army being that of the nation.

However much we may wish to shut our eyes to the fact, we can hardly fail to see in the 1913 act a preparation for making war at no distant date. Its call to arms is as clear as the note of a bugle that summons men to the fight. Yet Europe, with her eyes riveted on other visions—the second Balkan War was imminent—paid far too little attention to the Reichstag debates. Perhaps she was still misled by the spurious pacifism of the Kaiser. The Triple Entente continued to harbour the most peaceful intentions, as is attested by impartial observers who were well-informed as to the state of public opinion in the three countries and as to the ideals of their statesmen. The desire to provoke a war, therefore, can only be imputed to that Government and that nation which were arming to the teeth for battle and for conquest.

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VI.

When one met Grand Admiral von Tirpitz in some official drawing-room in Berlin, and had a talk with him, one felt oneself in the presence of an interesting personality—what in England is known as "a strong man." Among all the advisers of William II., there was no one who gave such an impression of strength and authority. With his fan-shaped beard, his broad forehead and thinning hair above it, his eyes, hard and piercing even behind double eye-glasses, his imposing figure, that showed a tendency to stoutness, he would have looked like a great manufacturer or financial magnate rather than a sailor, but for the numerous decorations pinned all over his chest. As a matter of fact, he is an office man, an organizer who had never held any high command at sea before he attracted the Emperor's discerning eye and was appointed head of the Admiralty. He was at the time director of the naval station at Kiel, the first military port of the Empire. This station he had entirely transformed, in the teeth of criticism and jobbery, dominating all with his iron will, and making a clean sweep of disorder and red tape. The German fleet owes to him the organization of its torpedo-boat section—which has not revealed its prowess during the war, although its creator cannot be blamed for that—and of the quite recently formed flotilla of submarines.

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Tirpitz has been head of the Admiralty for eighteen years, a ministerial length of life that no Chancellor or Secretary of State has yet reached under William II. In order to remain so long in the Imperial favour, he has had to show an unusual degree of tact and intelligence. The Emperor was intensely eager to possess a most powerful fleet. He had put his own lips to the foghorn; by his speeches and by an incessant personal propaganda, he had made the public interested in the development of the navy, in the idea of acquiring the mastery of the seas. ("Our future lies on the water.") But the man who had to carry out the Sovereign's will was doomed to encounter several obstacles. The first difficulty for an Admiralty chief was to put his schemes before the Sovereign in such a way that the latter should regard himself as their author. In this respect, Tirpitz displayed more skill than any of his civilian or military colleagues. In the second place, he had to overcome the opposition that the Reichstag, always anxious to save the public money, had hitherto raised against any increase in the naval estimates. With singular adroitness Admiral von Tirpitz, profiting by various incidents abroad and by the wave of patriotic feeling they produced in the nation, worked upon public opinion, and won over many restive or wavering minds in Parliament. Nor was this all. The bills that he introduced would not have emerged safe and sound, without any mutilations, from the clutches of the Budget Committee, had not their framer been gifted with eloquence, with a power of clear and persuasive speech, which found a responsive audience in the middle-class parties. No minister has ever been so successful in winning the ear of the Reichstag, while managing to retain the confidence of the Emperor.

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But why did Germany need so large a navy? Prince von Bülow says in his book, *Imperial Germany*: "The sea has become a more important factor in our national life than at any previous period, not excepting the great days of the Hanseatic League; it has become a vital nerve, which we must never lose, if the young German nation, which is still growing vigorously, is to be kept from suddenly lapsing into a decrepit old age. We should have been exposed to this danger as long as our foreign trade and our mercantile marine had no State protection at sea against the stronger fleets of other nations." True, but it would seem that this end might have been attained by building a few divisions of cruisers, strong enough to protect German shipping and at the same time to threaten the commerce of the enemy.

From the earliest years of his reign, as is well known, William II.'s first thought has been for his fleet. The navy is his own creation, his favourite child. Nevertheless, the tremendous growth of Germany's naval power coincides, in point of fact, with the entry of Bülow and Tirpitz on the scene, and with the inauguration of that "world-policy" for which the former of these two men—according to his own confession, at any rate—must be regarded as primarily responsible. I have already pointed out how elastic is the sense of this term "world-policy." For the most peacefully inclined of Germans it meant a policy of colonial expansion. But the formation of a great navy gave the phrase a more sinister force: it now meant intervention in every part of the globe, acquisitions and settlements in distant regions, without recoiling from bloody encounters, such as could not be avoided in European waters. It is from the year 1897, when both Prince von Bülow and Admiral von Tirpitz took up office, that we may date these first ambitious schemes of conquest, which were embodied in the rapid construction of a formidable naval force, and reached their inevitable climax in the war of 1914.

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Fifteen years were enough for Tirpitz to make the German navy the second in the world. He

advanced by several stages, by successive leaps and bounds. The bill that was brought in on November 27, 1897, demanded that seven new ships of the line, two first-class and seven second- and third-class cruisers should be put on the stocks, and fixed the end of the financial year as the date by which these units should be completed. While limiting the period for which ships should be kept on the effective list, and determining the number and strength of the squadrons that were to remain on permanent service, the bill ensured the construction, within a given time-limit, of units to replace the vessels that were scrapped. In the autumn of 1899, during the South African War, the seizure of a German mail-boat by a British warship, and the resentment that this action aroused in Germany, were exploited in masterly fashion by Tirpitz in order to introduce a new navy bill. The patriotic furore of the nation enabled this bill to triumph over all financial obstacles. The explanatory statement called for the creation of a fleet so strong that the greatest naval Power of the world might feel uncertain as to the outcome of a struggle with Germany. This was a palpable thrust at Great Britain. In 1906, after Germany had met with such disappointment at the Algeciras Conference, the Reichstag, cleverly manipulated by the Admiral, and with the pressure of national sentiment behind it, passed the supplementary navy bill, raising the number of cruisers and providing for the construction of vessels of the Dreadnought type. The two first German Dreadnoughts, the *Nassau* and the *Westphalen*, were laid down in July 1907, launched in 1908, and completed within three and a half years. Their three successors were built with still greater speed, being finished within two years. The naval estimates, which in 1898 amounted to £6,250,000, in 1913 reached the sum of £23,350,000. The honours and decorations showered upon the fortunate Admiral after each of his parliamentary triumphs bore striking witness to the gratitude of his Sovereign.

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Prince von Bülow indicates in his book the difficulty of carrying out such a programme and at the same time avoiding a rupture with England. The most critical moment came in 1908. It had been shown in the House of Commons, with figures to support the statement, that Germany, by virtue of her last navy bill, would by the end of 1916 have thirty-six vessels of the Dreadnought type. This, it was remarked, would compel England to build forty-four Dreadnoughts within that period. In 1911, Germany would have thirteen and England only twelve. The German menace to England's naval supremacy excited serious alarm in the Island Kingdom. The Emperor thought he was making a very skilful move in writing a letter to Lord Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty, a personal letter, half private, half open in character, in which he insisted on the purely defensive nature of the German programme, and tried to remove British apprehensions in regard to the development of the Imperial navy. But the shot missed its mark. By taking part in the discussion, by endeavouring to banish from the minds of English sailors the spectre of the German danger, William II., as soon as his unconventional step came to light through its disclosure in the *Times*, only added fuel to the fire of public feeling, and drove the British Parliament to get ships built all the faster, in reply to the German challenge.

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The members of the Asquith Cabinet, seeing the approach of the Dreadnought era, which would involve an enormous maritime outlay at the very moment when they wished to devote all their available surplus to social reform, made an ineffectual attempt to check this frenzied competition. Their public speeches and their private efforts did not induce Admiral von Tirpitz to deviate for a single instant from the steady course he had marked out for the execution of his programme. If for a brief interval in 1913 he seemed to look with favour on the "two to three standard" (*i.e.*, two German to three British Dreadnoughts) proposed by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill, he turned a deaf ear to the suggestion that the two countries should suspend the construction of ships ("a naval holiday") for the space of a year. The haughty spirit of the German Admiral would make no concessions, and those who pleaded for a limitation of armaments, that vanished dream of the British taxpayer, found that they were dashing themselves against a wall of granite.

No one in Germany was louder in his praises of the English sailors. He declared that they were his masters and his models. But, like the good German he was, he concealed, under the mask of admiration, a stubborn resolve to conquer them, to strip them of their insufferable superiority. The fleet that he was mustering was beyond all doubt an offensive weapon, an instrument fashioned with elaborate care for inflicting a deadly wound. Hostilities, however, have broken out sooner than he had foreseen or desired, and before he was ready for the attack.

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A few years more, and Tirpitz would assuredly have surprised his opponent with a war quite different from anything that the latter expected—a treacherous war of aeroplanes and submarines, which would have made up for his inferiority in numbers. The blockade of England, which he has tried to carry out to-day with inadequate means, enables us to gauge his audacity, as well as his utter lack of humanitarian scruples. What would have been the result of such a struggle under the sea, if the German effort had been backed by a patient and methodical preparation?

Still, even if England had been vanquished, Germany would have been drawn into other naval wars. In the process of establishing her world-power, she would have had to force other rivals to lower their flag. It would have been essential for her to destroy the United States navy, in order to confine the Americans to the northern half of their continent, and to keep the markets of South America open exclusively to her own trade. After this, would she have been content to leave to the Japanese the mastery of the Pacific, and to be thwarted or driven out by them in the Far East? What a vista of conflicts for the organizer of the German navy, what a task for his own tireless energies and for those of his successors! Such are the inevitable results of the first step on the endless track of *Weltpolitik*.

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Admiral von Tirpitz has been helped in his labours by a host of nameless fellow-workers, grouped together under the title of "German Navy League" (*Deutscher Flottenverein*). This society of 1,250,000 members, with branches all over Germany, forms a loyal and well-trained

army, acting under the orders of Admiral von Koester, a former Commander-in-Chief of the fleet. By its manifold propaganda, its public meetings, its periodicals, its pamphlets, its cinematograph films, its arrangements for pleasure-trips to naval ports, the League has spread among the people, in great towns and tiny villages alike, from the sandy plains of Brandenburg to the picturesque valleys of the Hartz Mountains, a knowledge and appreciation of the work that William II. and Admiral von Tirpitz have achieved. During the darkest hours of the Moroccan crisis, the League's overflowing patriotism expressed itself in scurrilous pamphlets and shameless lies, scattered broadcast, at the expense of England and France. It is therefore among the elements that have served to kindle a wrath and foment a hatred for which war alone could provide an outlet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REICHSTAG AND POLITICAL PARTIES.

I.

IT is difficult for a foreigner to form any proper notion of the political groups represented in the Reichstag, if he yields to the temptation of looking for parallels with the party-system of his own country, and if he confuses the political institutions of Germany with those of a nation possessing a parliamentary government.

In the first place, perhaps, it will be desirable briefly to sketch the mechanism of the 1871 constitution, which, apart from slight changes needed for the Imperial framework, is merely a replica of the constitution drawn up by Bismarck for the North German Confederation.

The Empire is a federal and constitutional State, with a sovereign who not merely reigns, but governs, his status being a modern evolution from the old absolute monarchy of Prussia. The Emperor is the war-lord, he commands the army and regulates its organization; he has the supreme direction of foreign affairs, both diplomatic and commercial, and, at home, appoints the Imperial functionaries; he sanctions the bills approved by the Bundesrat (or Federal Council) and passed by the Reichstag. He dispenses the executive power, and imposes his sovereign will, through the medium of a Chancellor.

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This ministerial figure represents the Emperor in the Reichstag and assumes the responsibility for the acts of the Government. This nominal responsibility is entirely unlike that of a minister in a parliamentary country; for it does not bind him at all in relation to Parliament, but only in relation to his master, and also, in a certain measure (whatever some may allege), to public opinion. The Chancellor, however, holds a plurality of dignities and functions. He is Jack-of-all-trades to the monarchy: President of the Prussian Ministry, President of the Bundesrat, and Imperial Minister for Foreign Affairs. These complex duties might well prove too exacting for a genuine statesman; how much more so for a mere politician! Owing to the difference of spirit between the Prussian Chamber of Deputies and the Reichstag, he has to appear before the former in the stern guise of a rigid Conservative, while in the latter his face wears a more attractive mask, being set off with a tinge of Liberalism. The Chancellor is thus compelled, by the very nature of his functions, to be an opportunist in internal politics.

The Bundesrat, composed of representatives sent to it by the individual States, is a pliable tool in the hands of the Emperor and the other German rulers, who themselves obey the Imperial will. It shares the legislative power with the head of the Empire and with the Reichstag.

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Bismarck held that the best way of uprooting the particularism of the small States and clearing the ground for final unification was to invite all citizens of twenty-five years and upwards to elect representatives for the central Parliament. The Reichstag, chosen by universal suffrage, is the popular assembly, the real mouthpiece of public opinion. Its powers are limited to voting upon the budget and upon laws for the Empire, which must be taken as meaning laws of national interest.⁶ This democratic Parliament, however, controls, so far as it can, the administration of public affairs. Its best weapon of defence against the arbitrary power of the Crown is the opposition it can raise to any Government proposals for expenditure or taxation. It has often used this weapon; but if it presses its opposition too far, it runs the risk of being dissolved by a mere decree of the Emperor's, to make room for an assembly that will prove more open to compromise.

By the side of the Empire are the federal States and the three free cities, which possess local executives and Diets. In order to furnish these States with the means of a separate existence, Bismarck, while instituting a special budget for the Empire, left to them the revenue obtained from direct taxes. The Imperial budget draws its nutriment from the customs, the excise, and the postal service. The amount derived from these sources being insufficient, it also receives the "matricular contributions" (*Matrikularbeiträge*), paid by each State on a scale that keeps the balance of the budget properly adjusted.

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II.

Prince von Bülow, in his *Imperial Germany*, asserts that the German race, although richly endowed with great qualities, has no talent for politics. This charge is quite unfair, the real motive for it being the dread with which a Prussian statesman views the prospect of a parliamentary system. The Germans are late-comers in the field of political life. Those of the South entered it much earlier than the Prussians; Bavaria received a written constitution from its ruler in 1818, Baden in the same year, Würtemberg in 1819, and Hesse-Darmstadt in 1820. It was not till 1850 that Frederick William IV., impelled by the sanguinary riots in Berlin two years earlier, granted his people the constitution promised by his father a few weeks before Waterloo. Even to-day, popular representation as it exists among the Germans is in many ways incomplete. In this respect they are a backward people—they, who pride themselves on marching in the forefront of civilization. They look from afar at the little nations, which they despise, boldly advancing on the road of parliamentarism, of progress in the sphere of political institutions, the road that England, as pioneer, has opened up for other countries. Yet there is nothing to prove that, if they were given the chance, they would not shake off their political torpor and set out upon that road with admirable results.

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Under the present constitution, the political parties in the Reichstag have no hope of ever securing the reins of power. The Chancellor and his underlings, the Secretaries of State, are

functionaries who cannot be removed, so long as it pleases the Emperor to keep them in office. When the popular assembly formally records its lack of confidence in them, the vote is like a harmless shower of rain, from which they can shelter themselves under the cloak of the constitution. If these hostile downpours came very often, indeed, the Emperor would have to take notice of them and to effect a change in the high executive staff, but he would not on that account draw his ministers from the parliamentary majority. The party chiefs, never having the responsibility of power, are far less keen for the interests of the State than for those of their party. In a theoretical, doctrinaire fashion, they defend the political programme comprising all the demands which they and their predecessors have artistically put together, a nosegay with whose delusive fragrance they charm their electors from time to time; but they know perfectly well that this ideal programme can never be carried out. Some, as skilled tacticians and leaders of men, like Windthorst and Bebel, have displayed talents of the first order. Why should it be impossible to find, among the various party leaders, the stuff of which good parliamentary ministers are made? We have never seen them put to the test, but we can very well imagine Herr Bassermann at the head of a Liberal Ministry or Herr Spahn in a coalition Conservative Cabinet, a "blue and black"⁷ Cabinet, such as has been tried in Holland.

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A remark one cannot help making is that the Imperial Parliament does not contain a Prussian majority, a fact which increases the difficulties of the Government's task in no small degree. Prussia achieved German unity by the sword; it is by far the most populous of the German States, for in 1913 its inhabitants numbered 40,000,000 out of a total of 67,000,000. Nevertheless, Prussia proper is confined to the right bank of the Elbe. The rest of the mighty Hohenzollern kingdom is merely Prussianized, a group of provinces incorporated by conquest, and in each province the old particularist spirit still survives. A great national Prussian party will probably never come into being. It has been said with justice that in the Reichstag the parties, generally speaking, have remained separatist, in so far as they are identified with separate regions. The Conservatives embody the reactionary tendencies inherent in the Protestant population of the eastern marches; the deputies of the Centre represent the Catholic masses of the west, the Liberals the commercial and manufacturing towns. The Socialists alone succeed in spreading, like a sheet of oil, all over the domains of the older parties.

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Other reflections occur to the mind of one who is confronted with this motley Diet of federal partners. First of all, this: that the Government, in its relations with the Reichstag, would gain in prestige, in influence, and in freedom of action, if it were not so liable to confuse the Imperial Diet with that of Prussia, if the Prussian minister were not constantly peeping out behind the mask of the Imperial Chancellor. Secondly, that the Reichstag seems inevitably destined to play a more important part on a stage that is really parliamentary. The structure reared by Bismarck, although it has been in existence for forty-four years, still has a look of incompleteness. It seems to need finishing touches from the hand of a workman more Liberal than the Iron Chancellor, one who can adapt himself better to modern requirements.

As regards the responsibility for the events of 1914, the Reichstag must be saddled with its share. The spirit of Prussian militarism, with its ideas of European domination, had made unmistakable headway in that body during recent years. Whether this was primarily due to the dispute with France over Morocco, or to colonial aspirations, or to the world-policy inaugurated by Prince von Bülow, is of little consequence. Up to 1907 the increases in the army had met with so stubborn a resistance in Parliament that, in order to secure a majority for each fresh army bill, the Imperial Government had to make prolonged strategical efforts, like a general who tries to capture a fortress with ill-disciplined troops under his command. But the opposition to the army bill of 1913 was of a negligible character; it consisted only of the nationalist malcontents and the Socialists, the former being anti-German, the latter anti-militarist.

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The Reichstag includes not less than ten parties and groups, each having a special designation. The most sharply defined political conceptions are to be found among the Conservatives, to whom we must add—while regarding it as distinct, in view of its religious character—the Catholic Centre; the Liberals; and the Socialists. Thus we have three great monarchical or middle-class parties, and a Social-Democratic party of apparently republican tendencies.

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III.

I will not linger over the Conservative Imperialists, a group of great manufacturers, landowners, and officials, all being, by their very nature, supporters of the Government.

The Conservative party proper, consisting of only forty-three members in the present Reichstag, is drawn almost entirely from the agricultural population of the provinces to the east of the Elbe; it is under the iron rule of the landed gentry. This is the genuinely national Prussian party, indissolubly attached to the principles inscribed on its flag: loyalty to the throne, to the Protestant faith, and to monarchical institutions, the chief of which is the army. To this we may add a rooted aversion for nations which Prussia and Germany regarded with distrust, above all for France. I am speaking here of the feelings prevalent among the Conservatives before the war; to-day the first place in their hatred is presumably filled by England or by Italy.

The Prussian aristocrats who direct this party have behind them a long past history of glory and devotion. Their ancestors played their part, no less than Frederick the Great, in building up the greatness of the monarchy. In no European country have the nobles rendered such splendid services to the reigning dynasty or shed more blood to cement the fabric of its power.

In the Prussian Diet, from 1862 to 1866, the Conservative party stood alone in supporting the adventurous and unconstitutional policy of Bismarck. It has never ceased supplying the

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Government with officers and civil servants in such large numbers that it constitutes one of the great driving forces of the German army and administration. Its leaders, although inveterate foes of Socialism, have realized the timeliness of the social legislation begun under William I. and completed under William II. Accordingly they have voted for these laws in docile fashion, though without enthusiasm. The weak joint in the otherwise flawless armour of their patriotism is that they are apt to put the interests of the agrarian section before those of the country as a whole. The protection of agriculture, one of the vital sources of a nation's prosperity, ought to be, according to the Conservative doctrines, the first duty of the Imperial Government.

The loyalty to the throne displayed by the Prussian squires, those Junkers who are the real nobles in a kingdom where the feudal aristocracy is almost extinct save in Silesia and on the banks of the Rhine, shows no trace of servility. More royalist than the King, they think fit to dictate to him the policy that he ought to pursue. A satirical version of the Prussian national anthem "for the use of Conservatives" contains the following distich:

"Unser König absolut,
Wenn er unseren Willen tut!"

"Let our King be absolute, if only he does what we want!"

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The leader of the Conservative party, both in the Prussian Diet and in the Reichstag, is Herr von Heydebrand, often called "the uncrowned King of Prussia." He is no Teuton giant, like some of the rough and boorish gentleman-farmers of the eastern provinces, but a little old man, very simple and retiring, whose usual posture is one of silent attention. The Conservative chief does not speak very often: when he does, his incisive eloquence and his terse, logical way of putting things produce a sensational effect. His speech against the Convention of 4th November 1911 and the policy of an accommodation with France, is still fresh in the memory of every German. In the caustic questions he addressed to the Chancellor—asking what was the use of the colossal land and sea armaments of the Empire, if Germany was forced to beat a retreat at the critical moment, and why the German sword had been flourished at Agadir, only to be ignominiously put back in its sheath from fear of perfidious Albion—Herr von Heydebrand revealed to us the swelling chorus that the war-song of his party had reached. After this speech the Conservative party clamoured incessantly, both with tongue and with pen, for revenge on France and her accomplices.

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IV.

The Centre has almost as much claim as the Conservative party to be ranged with the Right. It was formed in the Rhine provinces, where many prince-bishops once held their court, in Bavaria, in Baden, and in Silesia, with the object of counteracting, in the name of the Catholic minority, the intolerant spirit of the Protestant majority, and of securing for the Church the liberty that is her due. Although some official party-writers have tried hard to make us believe the contrary, the Centre is a religious party. It regards the interests of the Church as paramount. Still, like the rest, it has been won over to the nationalist idea, and it works towards maintaining the federal character of the Empire.

The deputies of the Centre number eighty-nine. This figure is low, if we consider that in 1911 Germany contained about 24,000,000 Catholics as against 40,000,000 Lutherans and Evangelicals. The way in which the electoral districts have been parcelled out is no doubt the reason why this party has fewer representatives than it might fairly expect. For all that, it seems to have reached its zenith, and while for the time being it does not lose its principal seats at the battles of the polls, on the other hand it no longer gains any from its rivals. Among the working-classes its great enemy is Socialism. Hence, in order to retain its adherents in the manufacturing centres, the Catholic Right has considerably broadened its Conservative programme. It is feeling the influence of that Christian Democracy which reigns supreme in the southern States. As the Protestant journals have taken good care to point out, it is quite obvious to-day that the party contains two opposite currents, and that a certain antagonism exists between the controlling bodies in Cologne and in Breslau, the latter being more conservative and more amenable to the dictates of Rome, while the former tries to shake off the Vatican leading-strings in internal politics. This cleavage came to light in the discussion that arose among German Catholics over the setting-up of mixed labour syndicates, composed of Catholic and Protestant workmen.

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For seventeen years, from 1890 to 1907, the Centre in the Reichstag laid down its conditions and even issued its commands, as the price of letting those bills pass which the Government considered of vital importance. Defeated by Prince von Bülow's *bloc*,⁸ it took its revenge two years later, by wrecking the Chancellor's scheme for financial reform. If after this the Centre did not hold undisputed sway in divisions, it remained a doubtful ally for the Government, and in momentous conflicts its desertion could still affect the issue.

No one can deny that the German Centre and the Belgian Catholic party have many points in common. Both acknowledge the same ideal, and fight with the same energy to protect the consciences of the faithful from the inroads of advanced teachings and the ravages of free thought. The electoral successes of the Belgian Clericals were greeted by the Catholic Press of Germany with no less enthusiasm than their own. The Belgians, who for the most part cling to the same beliefs as the German Catholics, might have expected some sympathy from their brethren in the faith, when their country was outraged in such dastardly fashion. Yet no cry of Christian pity went up from the deputies of the Centre when their Protestant Emperor pounced upon his victim; no plea for mercy was uttered by them on behalf of our stricken people; no protest against the murder of our priests or against the destruction of our old churches, where many of them had knelt in pious reverence when they came to visit our land. If they spoke of Belgium at all, it was

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only to propose annexation as was done by the deputy Erzberger, one of their leading men in the Reichstag, in a manifesto that was eagerly recorded by the whole German Press. In vindicating his hateful suggestion, this good Catholic appealed to no right but the brutal right of the conqueror, to no interest but the interest which the German Empire has in possessing the seaboard of Flanders with its splendid port on the Scheldt. He thought to cover the nakedness of his greed by means of those lying charges with which, like his Protestant colleagues, he tried to sully the heroic resistance of the Belgians.

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V.

As in most countries, the Liberal party falls into two divisions: the moderate or "national" Liberals, and the progressive or "ultra" Liberals. Their forces are of about equal strength in the Reichstag. The former section stands for the manufacturing interests, the latter for the commercial, and both for the monarchist middle class, which is opposed to any interference by a religious authority, whatever creed it may represent.

The National Liberals can point to a glorious past, for during the first years of the Empire they formed the solid kernel of the majority which faithfully voted for all the bills brought in by Bismarck. Notwithstanding some passing fits of ill-humour and sulkiness, they have continued to register their votes for laws of national interest and for world-policy, for the increase of armaments and for colonial expenditure. One might have imagined that a certain affinity of thought, a similar leaning towards a secular régime which would entirely prevent the clergy from directing moral education, a like distaste for aristocratic influences, would have made them look with a less unfriendly eye upon a foreign Liberal Government such as that of the French Republic. One might have been tempted to believe that they would make some effort, now and then, to bridge the gulf of hatred that kept the two countries apart. As a matter of fact, they have bent their energies towards widening that gulf. The German suspicions as to the revengeful designs of the French Republic were never more strongly encouraged than by the speeches of the National Liberal leader, Herr Bassermann, on foreign affairs, a subject on which he was one of the most popular speakers in the Reichstag. These utterances were a series of indictments, no less unjust than spiteful, against a nation which he had never taken the trouble to study, or which he had only seen through the spectacles of an aggravated Germanism. Thus the war must have satisfied the heartfelt desires of Herr Bassermann and his followers.

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For a long time the Progressive Democrats, who opposed the spread of militarism, voted against any increase of military burdens. It was the triumph of Prince von Bülow's tactical skill that he induced these extremist representatives of the middle classes to change front and to swell the ranks of the Conservatives and National Liberals, so as to form a Governmental and militarist majority. Henceforth the Progressives were always meek supporters of any increase in the Imperial forces. That they adopted this course at first in the interests of national defence is fairly obvious; but they cannot have been blind to the aggressive character of the 1913 army bill. They accepted in advance all the consequences of this measure, because they too had rallied to the cause of world-policy and colonial expansion. These ideas were floating in the atmosphere of the Reichstag, as well as in the air that all who were concerned with statecraft breathed in Berlin.

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VI.

In 1884 the Socialist party comprised, in round numbers, 550,000 electors; in 1912 it had 4,250,000 out of a total of nearly 12,000,000 for the whole country. In 1884 the party was represented in the Reichstag by 24 deputies, in 1912 by 110 out of 397. These figures tell their own tale as to the progress made by Socialism in Germany.

Every German statesman looked upon the Socialists as a great danger, and, taking his cue from the Emperor, expressed his fears somewhat too loudly in speech and writing. What was the use of sounding the fire-alarm, as if the house were already in flames, when as a matter of fact it was not even threatened? Why all this scare, which seems to us rather absurd to-day? German political science had tried every remedy against the Socialist taint and found it wanting, from the repressive system of Bismarck to the social reform policy of Posadowsky. In reality, however, the microbe of Social Democracy was perfectly harmless. Prince von Bülow, in his book, comes to the conclusion that the danger would become serious if Socialism, after making havoc among the proletariat, wormed its way into the middle classes, those steadfast bulwarks against all change. In point of fact it had already made considerable advance in this direction, and it drew its leaders from the intellectuals of the struggling bourgeoisie. I have heard it prophesied in Berlin that the Empire would be lost on the day that the Socialist propaganda pierced the chain-armour of Prussian discipline and found its way into the army. But some fifty per cent. of the young soldiers were adherents of Socialism; have they fought any the less sturdily on that account? This exaggerated fear, or rather this annoyance, felt by the Emperor was surely due to the unceremonious behaviour of Socialist deputies in the Reichstag and their refusal to shout the traditional "Hoch!" in his honour—a mere piece of schoolboy impertinence.

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It needed no profound study of the movement to realize that Social Democracy was becoming transformed from day to day. It had passed through several phases since those heroic times when, in spite of the threat of imprisonment, it had boldly declared war upon capitalist society and the imperialist system. The generation of veteran revolutionaries, of Liebknecht, Bebel, and Engels, had passed away. Those who took their place, men like Franck, Bernstein, Heine, and

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Sudekum, became opportunists or "revisionists."⁹ The change grew more perceptible than ever when Bebel, the last apostle of the Marxian gospel, was snatched away by a heart-attack from the benches of the Reichstag and the leadership of the party. It was he who had been its patient organizer, finding an invaluable ally in that spirit of discipline for which the Germans are peculiarly noted. The heirs of this great speaker and great fighter ostensibly retained the teachings of Karl Marx: the class struggle, the acquisition of political power in order to bring about a social revolution and establish a collective ownership of the means of production. But their actual programme aimed at more practical reforms, especially in the way of guarantees for the worker against the employer, and of rates and taxes.

Social Democracy had become a wealthy middle-class institution, with funds amounting to £5,000,000, several powerful unions, and 4,216 local committees, paying subsidies, not merely to its numerous children, but even to foreigners, on condition that they accepted its edicts. With such resources, the battle against the rich employer class was far from unequal, and the propaganda went on apace. No revolutionary step was taken, no general strike was declared, no attack was made on the sacrosanct person of the Emperor. The Socialist tactics consisted in penetrating further and further into parliamentary life, not in order to raise a futile opposition to the Government, but in order to use the effective sounding-board of the Reichstag as a means of obtaining a wider audience for the Socialist message. The uninterrupted climb of Social Democracy, its remarkable gains at each general election, gave its leaders every right to anticipate a glorious future. They saw themselves, at no distant date, heading a parliamentary majority and forcing the Imperial Government to come to terms.

Their conduct at the declaration of war, which they had done nothing to prevent, was a source of profound amazement to the world outside Germany. Not the least indignant were those foreign Socialists who had been accustomed to revere their German colleagues as unflinching oracles. Had not the latter held undisputed sway at all the international congresses, imposing their theories and their decrees with that masterful and uncompromising spirit that they showed in no less degree than the capitalist classes whom they were fighting? As a matter of fact, there was no reason to feel surprise or indignation. The Reichstag deputies, like their electors, are Germans first and Socialists afterwards. Before leaving school, they are fully convinced that theirs is a superior race. Moreover, for the labouring masses of Germany the war—a brief and triumphant war, such as they confidently expected—was a good stroke of business, just as it was for their masters. It would enable the products of German industry to flow more abundantly into the conquered countries, it would win rich colonies for the Empire, it would ensure the final supremacy of the German Labour party in the sphere of international Socialism. It might have been remembered that the disciples and successors of Marx had always turned a deaf ear to the proposal of foreign comrades, that a declaration of war should be answered by a general strike; and that when charged by their opponents in the Reichstag with lack of patriotism, they had replied that, if Germany were attacked, every German Socialist would put a rifle to his shoulder as readily as his middle-class countryman.

It was quite in the nature of things, then, that the body of Socialist deputies, instead of raising an outcry against the war, should have voted as one man for the military credits demanded by the Chancellor on the 4th of August, and that it should have accepted without a murmur the Government's statements as to an attack by Russia and by France. In spite of some individual protests, it will continue to grant the necessary milliards of marks, just as its electors, enrolled under the Imperial banner, will continue to shed their proletarian blood like water, in order to secure the triumph of imperialism and aristocracy. Still, we have a right to be astonished when we read the pronouncements made at Stuttgart last winter by one of the prominent Socialist members of the Reichstag, Herr Wolfgang Heine. They reveal a new trend in the party, a rallying to the Empire and to those great centralizing forces, the clamps of the mighty German framework—the army and the monarchy. Conservative writers had given us to understand that a yawning chasm had always existed and always would exist between kingship and social democracy. The Imperial Government would not disarm until its enemy surrendered and swore allegiance to the monarchy and to the order of things for which the monarchy stands. And now, through the agency of war, the miracle has come to pass! Social democracy will no longer sap the dynastic and military foundations of the State; it has declared itself imperialistic.

Will the miracle last long? Will the old revolutionary demon never again seize the soul of the new convert? When peace returns—we shall see. There is every reason to think that the truce between the two inveterate foes rests on an uncertain basis. As the price of its assistance in the European conflict, Socialism will exact concessions in the shape of political reforms, involving a change in the Imperial constitution and in that of the Prussian State. The grant of universal suffrage to Prussia is the least that it can ask for. Then will come the day of reckoning for the Hohenzollern autocrat. Let us suppose that William II., his position weakened by a disappointing war, should find no strength to resist the clamours of the German proletariat. The power would pass from his enfeebled hands to those of a Reichstag brimming over with enthusiasm and consumed with ambition. And if, in spite of the failure of his bold enterprises, he should reject the popular demands, what a struggle we can foresee between a shrunken Cæsar and a party swollen in numbers through all the mistakes, all the suffering, all the ruin that the war has accumulated! Victory alone (and even that for how long, and by what compromises?) could seal the reconciliation between two such rivals as autocracy and Socialism. Defeat, or merely a profitless peace, would have prolonged effects upon the internal situation in Germany.

Since the creation of the Empire, the Chancellors have had to govern the Reichstag with coalition majorities. This system has great advantages, but still greater drawbacks. On the one hand, the Government does not commit itself to the policy of any one party; on the other hand, to carry the bills which it regards as important, it is compelled to be eternally bargaining with parties and groups.

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Bismarck at first relied upon the National Liberals, who were the most numerous in the earlier assemblies of his ministry; they were his allies in his campaign against Rome. After a time he became dissatisfied with the Liberals, who were considerably reduced in numbers at the general election following upon the attempts to assassinate William I., and made overtures to the Conservatives, both Protestant and Catholic. The latter having been defeated, together with the Progressives, over the so-called "act for the military septennium," the Chancellor, with an eye to the 1887 elections, formed the famous *Kartell*,¹⁰ composed of Conservatives and National Liberals. This was the first attempt to arrange a marriage of convenience between the two opposite principles of government, immobility and progress. The experiment was as quickly dropped in Germany as elsewhere.

Twenty years later Prince von Bülow, faced with the same difficulties, and always compelled to reckon with the Centre, came to grief through the latter's stubborn refusal to grant the necessary credits for additions to the colonial forces. He thought it a master-stroke to confront the Centre and the Socialists with a majority composed this time of Conservatives, National Liberals, and Progressives. This combination was invested with the French name of "*bloc*." The 1907 elections gave him a short-lived triumph over the Socialists alone, for the Centre came out unscathed from the ordeal of the polls. But the team of three which the Chancellor hoped to drive with a sure hand was too ill-assorted to keep together for very long. The horse on the right, summoned by the neigh of his stable-companion, the Centre, on the Opposition meadows, was the first to kick over the traces and escape. Protestant and Catholic Conservatives then formed a new *bloc*, "blue" and "black," against the financial reforms of the Government. It was essential for Prince von Bülow to carry his bill in the Reichstag, for this was the only way in which he could make himself appear indispensable to the Emperor, whose feelings towards him were anything but friendly after the affair of the *Daily Telegraph* interview. Accordingly, he treated the matter as a test case, as if he had been a mere parliamentary minister, threatening to resign if his bill were thrown out. The result of the voting made this threat a reality. He handed in his resignation to the Emperor, who was graciously pleased to accept it.

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If the Centre, in accordance with its conventions, has so far been the factor most capable of shifting the balance in the Reichstag, the party which has had most influence on the trend of the Government's home policy is the Conservative party. A study of German history since Bismarck's dismissal teaches us that a Chancellor cannot retain his power very long in the teeth of the agrarians, although they are less numerous than the other parliamentary groups. Caprivi and Bülow, each in his turn, attempted the impossible. The former injured the interests of the eastern landowners by his concessions to foreign States, in that he lowered the import duties on cereals, with a view to concluding with them commercial treaties that would favour the development of national industries. The latter tried to saddle the agrarians with a proportional share of the burdens involved in his financial reforms—a perfectly equitable scheme, supported by all the Liberal elements.

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On the other hand, as we have seen, a Chancellor who is backed by the Conservatives can defy public opinion and parliamentary opposition. Such was the experience of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg in the debate over the Zabern affair, in which he championed (not very eloquently, by the way) the inalienable right of the army to take the law into its own hands. He received an overwhelming vote of censure with philosophic calm, telling the majority that its vote did not affect him, because he was responsible for his acts, not to Parliament, but to the Emperor. What really made him feel proof against their attacks was the similarity of his views to those of the Junkers and of all those Prussian reactionaries who resisted tooth and nail whenever any one dared to assail the privileges of the army.

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This ambition on the part of the Conservative chiefs to act as the power behind the political throne received a severe set-back two years ago. The blow was all the more effective in that it wounded them in their tenderest spot. Hitherto, they had managed to keep real estate, above all when it passed to an heir, exempt from the new taxes. The financial covering for the 1913 army bill, however, was passed by a coalition of the Centre, the Socialists, and the Liberal groups, not in accordance with the Government proposal, but with amendments which brought landed property within the scope of the new taxation. The fact that this vote had an influence on recent events compels me to enter into some detail, in order to explain the mechanism of the financial section of this important bill.

VIII.

"We must conduct affairs in such a way," says the official German secret report, published in the 1914 Yellow Book and dated March 19, 1913, the day after the army bill of that year was passed, "that, under the weighty pressure of powerful armaments, enormous sacrifices, and a strained political situation, an outbreak of hostilities would be looked upon as a deliverance, because, like the war of 1870, it would be followed by several decades of peace and prosperity."

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The new financial burdens were indeed heavy, even for a nation which, like the German, was visibly growing richer and richer. The expenditure involved in the new army bill was of two kinds. The one, amounting to some £50,000,000, graduated over a period of three years, would not be renewed; the other represented a permanent annual disbursement, estimated at £24,510,000

until 1915, and £11,600,000 after that date.

Where were these vast sums to be found in a country already overburdened with taxation? The Imperial Treasury had no more than £5,000,000 left over from the receipts of preceding years. The Chancellor could not resort to fresh taxes on food and drink. Moreover his hands were tied by a motion, put forward by Herr Bassermann and Herr Erzberger in the previous year, and passed by the Reichstag. This motion bound the Government to frame, before March 31, 1913, a scheme of taxation on property, in other words on wealth. "But a general Imperial tax on property," the Finance Minister, Herr Kühn, had declared in the course of the debate, "would have been an encroachment upon the financial sovereign rights of the federated States, and the Imperial Government could not enter upon this path without injuring the federal character of the Empire." It must not be forgotten that Prussia, being the most important of the federated States, would have been the first to suffer from a blow directed at her fiscal independence.

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An internal loan of £50,000,000 was not feasible, in view of the state of the market, in which even the most promising loans of German municipalities found great difficulty in getting placed. It was out of the question, on the other hand, to appeal to the foreign investor. He would not have lent a penny for the increase of German armaments, which were already causing a great deal of anxiety abroad.

The Finance Minister thought he had solved the problem by submitting to the approval of the Reichstag a large batch of finance measures of the most varied type.

First of all he proposed certain devices for the covering of permanent expenditure. Then he moved an increase in the assessment of matricular contributions paid by the federated States, on whose shoulders a fresh share of the burden was thus thrown. Finally, to redeem the promise made to the Reichstag in 1912 with regard to a property-tax, Herr Kühn suggested imposing a tax on increments of wealth and capital in those federated States which should not themselves have introduced such a tax by 1916, and whose resources were not enough to pay the higher rate of matricular contributions that was now demanded.

In order to meet the non-recurring expenses, the Government bill—this is its truly original feature—proposed an extraordinary tax on property and income, to be paid for the next two years. This *Wehrbeitrag* (Defence Contribution) was really a special war levy, imposed on capitalists in the midst of peace, when the political sky of Germany was not in any way overcast. It was a tax on the patriotism of the well-to-do classes, an urgent appeal to national sentiment. That the response would be enthusiastic the Government did not doubt for a moment. The assessment of property began at the very low minimum of £500, that of income at the very high minimum of £2,500.

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In the debate on the first reading the Finance Minister's scheme was coldly received by the Liberal elements. It soon became clear that the vote for financial cover, which the Chancellor wished to obtain by the beginning of July at the latest, would not be passed unless he resigned himself to accepting drastic amendments. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, anxious to push the matter through as quickly as possible, acknowledged that the Government proposals might be modified.

The Budget Committee went to work with a vengeance. For the *Wehrbeitrag*, it raised the minimum of taxable property to £2,500 with an income of over £100, and, making the tax progressive, it taxed incomes of over £250, provided they exceeded by £50 a sum representing five per cent. of the taxpayer's capital. For the valuation of real estate it adhered to the principle of fictitious capitalization, multiplying the incomes by 25 instead of 20, a co-efficient proposed by the Government and considered too favourable to the landed proprietors. The Princes were subjected to the extraordinary tax in the same way as private citizens; the assurance given by princely families, that they would contribute of their own free will, was not regarded as sufficient. On the other hand, against the advice of the Liberals, estates held in mortmain were exempted. The tax was to be collected in three instalments: the first, one month after the preliminary assessment, *i.e.* on December 31, 1913, the second in 1915, and the third on February 15, 1916.

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A large number of the taxpayers were called upon to contribute to this "Defence Levy," within two years, a third or more of their income. For manufacturers, bankers, commercial companies, and others who had capital in reserve, this sacrifice was not very hard to make. A landed proprietor, however, who lived on the income derived from his estate, would be compelled either to cut down expenses or to raise money on a mortgage. In the same way, a person who depended on the modest proceeds of his investments would have to sell or mortgage a portion of his holdings.

For permanent expenditure, the Committee rejected the increase in matricular assessments proposed by the Government, on the pretext that the Empire ought not to beg for alms from the federated States. On the other hand, it accepted, with some modifications of detail, the principle of taxing increments of wealth and capital. It exempted princely families, but not limited companies.

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At the second and third readings, the Reichstag adopted the resolutions of its committee. On 30th June, the date recommended by the Government, the bill for financial cover was passed, as I have said above, by a notable majority, composed of the Liberal and Socialist groups, with which the Centre had combined, the Conservatives forming the bulk of the opposition.

It was a great victory for the more advanced elements, Progressive and Socialist. The Centre and the National Liberals rallied to their standard, being convinced that it was impossible to revive the Bassermann-Erzberger proposal. In point of fact, the bill passed by the Reichstag proceeded, to a great extent, upon the same lines as the measure proposed by these two deputies. A series of direct taxes, on an enormous scale, now swelled the resources of the Empire, while their yield, in accordance with the Bismarckian policy, was almost entirely

reserved for the individual States. The Socialists would have liked to go further and throw the whole weight of this burden upon the shoulders of the privileged classes.

After all, the Reichstag vote was, in a way, a breach of the federal compact, and an invasion by the Imperial Parliament of the rights of individual States. It marked a stage in the journey towards complete unification of the Empire by means of fiscal processes. This encroachment by the central power was not accepted without a murmur by Saxony and the southern States. Their deputies in the Reichstag were forced to bow to the higher necessities pleaded by the Government, and to ratify a measure which claimed to be in the interests of the nation as a whole. It may be said that from this time onward the fiscal independence of the federated States ceased to exist.

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The anger of the Conservatives found vent in the columns of their newspapers and the speeches of their leaders. Their representatives in the Reichstag, clinging to the Government scheme, had voted in sheer desperation against the new tax on increments of wealth and capital, nominally because it infringed the autonomy of the individual States, really because, in striking at increments in wealth due either to a rise in site-values or to inheritance in direct line, it assailed their position, privileged till then, as landed proprietors.

IX.

It was not to be expected that the Conservatives would accept this defeat without any thought of seeking revenge. The aristocracy who direct the party had supported all the costly proposals for augmenting the military forces, in order to ensure Germany's triumph in the next war. Their sins now recoiled upon their own heads. From this time forth, the landowners would suffer the common lot of taxpayers, and in the grim struggle that they wage with such amazing vigour against an ungenerous soil, would no longer be able to devote the entire surplus of their income to the improvement of their farms. Their rout was due to the growth of the Socialist vote, to the place won in the Reichstag by Social Democracy, whose magnetic force was attracting both the Christian Democrats of the Centre and the more advanced Liberals. The problem now before them was this: should they submit to the domination of the Left, or should they counteract it, and endeavour to build a dam, once for all, against those Socialist floods that threatened to sap the very foundations of the monarchy?

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If we bear in mind the views that the Conservative party has in common with the military aristocracy, making the two bodies scarcely distinguishable; its ascendancy over the Imperial Government, whose Chancellors, like Bülow, have called themselves Conservatives by blood and tradition; its influence at Court; the dictatorial spirit of its chiefs, actuated by the most diverse motives, Prussian patriotism, class cohesion, material interests; and finally, the short space of time that elapsed between the passing of the 1913 finance bill and the declaration of war on Russia—if we bear all this in mind, we shall come to the conclusion that the squirearchy took every advantage of that narrow interval, brought great pressure to bear upon the Sovereign, and decided him to precipitate the course of events.

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The somewhat forced enthusiasm with which the introduction of the Defence Levy was hailed in Berlin drawing-rooms was speedily quenched after the Reichstag vote, and black looks appeared on all sides as the first term for payment drew near. The growing burdens exacted by the army and navy now made their weight felt everywhere, and caused a general demand for some limit to the constant advance of armaments and taxation. Yet the people saw no chance of relief except as the result of a war. "... That the outbreak of hostilities may be looked upon as a deliverance," says the secret report already quoted. This was the idea that was gradually making its way into the German mind. On the day after mobilization, while having a talk with the Bavarian minister, I expressed my surprise at the fact that the war-demonstrations of the previous evening had been noisier in Munich than in Berlin. "Isn't it perfectly natural?" he replied. "We are crushed by a weight of taxation, ordinary and extraordinary. The moment seems favourable. France and Russia are not ready. The Bavarians think it better that war should come than that the present intolerable state of things should continue."

Not only did the military clique make capital of this discontent for the furtherance of their ends, but, we may surmise, the Conservatives exploited it for a political purpose which is not hard to guess. A successful war was the only way of stopping the downward rush of the Empire along the democratic slope, and of regaining the mastery of the Reichstag for the moderate parties. A victorious monarch, invested with a halo of dazzling glory by his subjects throughout all Germany, could allow himself anything. Was it not after a series of military triumphs that Bismarck had overcome the last resistance of the separatists? But the great man had made the mistake—a mistake for which his successors paid dear—of introducing universal suffrage for the elections to the Reichstag. Little by little, the popular vote was threatening to bring forth a hideous monster, a Parliament in which the majority would be led by the advocates of a social revolution. The Conservatives, in spite of a promise made by the Emperor, had managed to prevent an electoral reform for the Prussian Chamber of Deputies. We shall hardly overrate the daring of their leaders, if we credit them with the design of inducing William II., after the victory, to modify the 1871 constitution in a reactionary spirit.

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A certain country, not strong enough to earn the respect of the Imperial Government, had shown that it is possible to mitigate the evils attendant on universal suffrage by means of minority representation, compulsory polling, and plural voting. In Germany, a reform involving one of these methods, or applying some other powerful brake to the electoral car, would have been easy to introduce at an auspicious moment. Even under a constitutional government, the bulk of the German nation, with many of its cravings satisfied, and with a long vista of world-wide

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supremacy and economic affluence before its eyes, would have offered no resistance to the Hohenzollern who returned from abroad with the laurels of a conqueror.

This, I admit, is a mere hypothesis, but there is nothing improbable in it for one who knows the pugnacious bent of Prussian Conservatism.

Yet every medal has its reverse, even the one stamped in advance with the effigy of William II., Emperor of Europe. If Germany emerges humbled and weakened for many a long year from a conflict in which the best-laid plans of victory will have been wrecked by unforeseen elements, the scaffolding of her ambitions will come down with a crash. When its rulers are called to account for their overweening confidence, the German people—if we exclude the chance of a revolution, an idea for which this country of innate discipline has little taste—will probably demand a limitation of the Emperor's power in the form of a parliamentary system of real political liberty. In 1913, Count von Schwerin-Lowitz, President of the Prussian Chamber of Deputies, said, in a Conservative meeting at some rural centre, that the Prussians, having been accustomed for centuries to feel themselves ruled by the iron hand of their kings, and being quite satisfied with their admirable officials, would never adapt themselves to the unstable guidance of a full parliamentary system. That may be: but Prussia proper—the Prussia that has known this "iron hand" for centuries—is not such a very large part of Germany. Of course, Parliamentarism, like every human institution, has its faults, great or small according to the temperament of the race concerned. Yet these faults, even in their worst form, seem trifling in comparison with the disasters of a European war, caused by the whim, the ambition, or the bad statesmanship of an autocrat. Few men will have done more harm to the monarchical principle than William II., who poses as its champion and knight-errant. Fortunately, the King of the Belgians, face to face with this Cæsar born out of his time, has shown how a really modern king may typify the soul of his people, a people resolved to fight to the death in order to preserve its independence.

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In countries with parliamentary institutions, the sovereign has to reckon first and foremost with the feelings of the great mass, and with a more active, more potent, and more enlightened public opinion. With all due deference to German scribes, we may say that a world-war of conquest and pillage would have been so unpopular in France and in England, that in neither of those lands of freedom would the Government have set such a war in motion. I feel convinced that the Germans, delivered from the shackles of their present constitution, and governed no longer by officials, but by responsible ministers owing their position to popular suffrage, would return to their better nature, to an ideal of progress on peaceful lines.

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CHAPTER V.

PUBLIC OPINION: ECONOMIC CAUSES OF THE WAR.

I.

I ARRIVED in Berlin some time after the unravelling of the Morocco tangle. I knew already that the Convention of November 4, 1911, had aroused grievous disappointment in Germany. But what was the state of public opinion? Was it still overexcited, overheated through the incidents of the past summer? Or was it beginning to cool down again and revert to its normal temperature of ill-humour towards the western neighbour-country and of that general bitterness which had marked Franco-German relations for the last eight years? I decided to investigate this matter, and the study proved rather a long one.

My first thought was to seek information from the commercial world, since it is regarded, rightly or wrongly, as a barometer very sensitive to the ups and downs of public feeling. I had recommendations to several big bankers in Berlin. Moreover, our Consul-General, Herr F. von Mendelssohn, joint-director of one of the oldest and most respected banking firms in the German capital, proved exceedingly helpful, inviting me several times to his house to meet various interesting figures in the highest circles of commerce and finance. All these gentlemen seemed to me strongly in favour of peace. The same pacific note rang through all their conversation. According to them, the calm of Europe had at no time been seriously threatened during the Agadir crisis. Whatever may have been the verdict afterwards passed on Kiderlen-Wächter's diplomatic work, it was too soon then to form a fair estimate of its gains and losses. Industrious Germany wished to live on good terms with France. Peace was essential to business, and German financiers, in particular, had every interest in keeping up their profitable connection with their French colleagues.

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After a few months in Berlin, I came to the conclusion that these pacifists represented at that time (1912) the most widespread but least noisy opinions, the opinions of the majority. By this I mean, not the majority of the governing classes, but the majority of the nation as a whole. The bulk of the population, in fact, the rank and file of industrial workers attached to Socialist or Christian-Democratic unions, the little democratic artisans of the towns, the peasants of the country districts, clung, by instinct as much as by reason, to the peace that allowed them to live and prosper. They dreaded war, because it meant loss of work and wages, and was at best an unknown quantity. No one in Germany feared the other miseries that war brings in its train— invasion, devastation, or famine; for no one, either among the proletariat or among the middle classes, had any doubts of victory. For all that, in this nation of workers, the general desire was not to make conquests, but to go on earning money and getting rich. The statements that I heard from some of the humblest contributors to the nation's wealth all agreed on this point.

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Going up the social ladder, we should also reckon among the advocates of peace, I think, most of the manufacturers, great and small, and of the traders, wholesale as well as retail. The industrial employers who depend on borrowed capital—their name is legion in Germany—needed credit, and therefore an unbroken calm. Any external crisis, leading to a stoppage of business, would have made it difficult for them to meet their bills, and if it lasted for some time, would have faced them with the prospect of ruin. Heads of great undertakings who acted as their own bankers foresaw in war a temporary shrinkage in their profits, and the likelihood of being cut off from countries beyond the seas. We should not be doing justice to their insight if we believed that they shared all the illusions of the Imperial Government as to England's indifference and her complete aloofness from European conflicts. Very different ideas must have flitted across the minds of the great shipowners of Hamburg and Bremen and the directors of the Deutsche Bank and Disconto-Gesellschaft, those enterprising men who were always busily working out fresh projects. The care that they took to reassure their London friends as to the pacific aims of German statesmanship proves to us the value they attached, if not to the peace of Europe, at any rate to the peace of the seas.

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At the top of the scale, in Berlin society—a very exclusive set, in spite of the constant efforts of the newly rich to gain admittance—I met some sincere pacifists. The old German nobility, which figures in that Golden Book the Almanac de Gotha, is naturally more cosmopolitan than the country squires, and it gladly keeps up family connections with the foreign aristocracy. This class did not appear to have any hatred for the French or for the English. Such hatred was rather to be found among the middle classes: it was the envy that mushroom opulence feels for old-established wealth. The personal feelings of a few Serene Highnesses, however, counted for very little, and the same may be said of those great lords, courtiers, but not counsellors, to His Imperial Majesty, who applauded everything that he did, and offered him nothing but flattery and obeisance.

II.

The bellicose minority, more active and strenuous, included, in the first place, the war party of which I have spoken in Chapter III. But by the side of the violently aggressive Germans there were more lukewarm spirits; by the side of the Pan-Germans and the disciples of Von der Goltz and Bernhardt there were men of a philosophic cast, who saw war coming as an inevitable necessity, a crisis decreed by fate, essential to the well-being and development of the Empire. The shades of difference among them were as varied as the colours in a prism.

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Among the nobles of South Germany, for instance, the military traditions of their families were tinged with regret for the old days of independence and with a certain ill-feeling towards Prussia. It was the same with the aristocracy of Hanover, an impoverished caste (apart from a few great landowners), devoted to the profession of arms, and still loyal to the memory of their generous treatment by the English dynasty, which they liked to contrast with the stinginess of the Hohenzollerns. In the Rhine provinces, the former contact with France had left unmistakable traces upon the upper classes, among whom French culture did not arouse the same scorn and detestation as in the north and east of the Empire. For all these patricians a fresh war—in other words fresh victories—meant an even more complete triumph for Prussian supremacy, and an end of all autonomy for the smaller States. If the heart of the soldier in them beat faster at the thought of Germany's latter-day glory, the eyes of the provincial grew sombre as they saw the shadows threaten to engulf all that was left to them of a still cherished past.

The great Liberal middle class has always prided itself on a patriotism no less watchful than that of the landed gentry. Its representatives in the Reichstag, as I have pointed out, voted for all the army bills as unflinchingly as the Conservatives. This was not the quarter from which any aid could be expected, especially after Agadir, in an attempt to draw closer to France. Yet it seems to me that not a few middle-class millionaires must have been led, by their personal share in financial and industrial concerns, to wish for a continued spell of peace. In such matters it is impossible to dogmatize; but can we believe that these cool heads, these astute calculators, inclined to the view that, under the whip-lash of victory, German wealth would take a tremendous leap forward, and that the products of the national labour would swamp the markets of the globe? For my part, I think that they were too shrewd to have any hope of stifling English and American competition otherwise than by unremitting efforts in their own sphere.

On the other hand, those who supplied the Empire with its guns and its rifles, with the armour-plates of its navy and the equipment of its soldiers, must have rubbed their hands with glee when they saw the signs that heralded a fresh war, since its first effect would be to increase tenfold the output of their workshops. Other manufacturers persisted in looking on all Frenchmen as revolutionaries, dangerous models for the German labourer to copy. Their hatred of the republican system was enhanced by the fear of strikes, for which these undesirable neighbours set the example. In spite of the formidable barriers raised by the most monarchical State in the world, they still dreaded the wind of emancipation and liberty that might in the long run cross the Vosges and bring unrest to the disciplined spirit of the German toilers.

It would be a gross overstatement to say that the followers of the liberal vocations were for the most part in favour of a new European conflict. Many of them were by nature men of peace; many, again, were far too much immersed in professional duties and research work to trouble their heads about politics. Yet all the highly-educated element in Germany, all those whose minds had been trained by intensive methods, issued from the same mould, that of the public schools and universities, where the fire of a white-hot patriotism was kept alive. Almost all of the younger generation, from one end of the Empire to another, had been faced, while still at their lessons, with the dilemma which Bernhardt summed up for his readers in the words: "*Weltmacht oder Niedergang!*" ("World Power or Downfall!") Among university students and even the pupils of the *Gymnasien* (highest-grade schools), knotty problems were hotly discussed. Had the era of great wars vanished for ever? Had not Germany, girt, like the Siegfried of her legends, with an invincible sword, come too late into the lists, at a time when the struggle to carve the world had reached its end? Was Germany therefore to rest content, in cowardly fashion, with her humble lot, or should she throw down the gauntlet to those who held these rich spoils in fee? As time went on, these questions grew more and more pressing, while no change took place in the relative position of the great Powers.

German literature, drawing inspiration from Tolstoi, the Scandinavian masters, and the French writers, was extremely fond of painting social distress. Although much given to criticism, often severe, of the privileged classes, it never, so far as I know, inveighed against war and the abuse of might. Vivid sketches of officers, scathing satires on their vices and on the brutalities of Prussian discipline—of these there was enough and to spare. They were often very well written; some have been translated into French and produced with success on the Parisian stage. No eminent playwright or novelist of the day in Germany, however, spoke out boldly on behalf of peace and disarmament. Their pens pricked individual types, and often drew blood; but they always respected, nay, even glorified the army, as a sacred institution, the solid pillar of the Germanic union, the instrument of its greatness to come.

The university professors, taken as a whole, were one of the most fiery elements of the nation. Not only did they inflame with their teachings the youthful minds entrusted to their care, and stamp them with an indelible imprint of nationalism, but they did not shrink from criticising the policy, too timid for their liking, pursued by the Imperial Government. I have in my possession letters from provincial savants, in which the Convention of November 4, 1911, is branded as a disgrace, and the name of Kiderlen-Wächter held up to the scorn of every German. One of them wrote: "Such a scandal will not occur again. Germany, conscious of herself and realizing her strength, will no longer tolerate a peaceful settlement of such affairs."

When all is said and done, the resolute champions of war—the only war in question being one with France, the opponent whose name was constantly cropping up in the patriotic books and journals—formed, so far as I could see, a rather small minority of the nation. This impression, which I gathered from my stay in Berlin and my travels about the provinces, both rich and poor, remains firmly fixed in my mind. When I call up the picture of this tranquil people, going steadily about its business every week-day, or comfortably seated every Sunday at the café tables and drinking the national glass of beer, I can remember nothing but those placid faces, on which violent passions, antipathy to the foreigner, and even the feverish stress of the battle for

III.

How is it that this same nation responded as one man to the call of its Emperor and hurled itself with enthusiasm at its enemies? Because it thought it had been challenged, and that the frontiers, the welfare, the very existence of the Empire were in danger. Middle-class citizens, Socialist workmen or peasants, all were convinced that they were defending their country against the attack of Tsarism combined with warlike France and perfidious Albion; that the war had been desired, prepared, planned by the Powers of the Triple Entente, impelled by an ignoble envy or a traditional hatred.

The Imperial Government's master-stroke lay in showing the Austro-Serbian crisis in this light to German credulity, and in appearing itself as the blameless guardian of peace. We possess an official document which supplies the proof of this clever presentment of the facts—the White Book, laid by the Chancellor upon the table of the Reichstag on the 3rd of August.

This date should be carefully noted. Two days after the expiry of the ultimatum to Russia, the White Book was already finished. With its carefully selected reports and telegrams, and its long prefatory memorandum in which the facts were skilfully doctored, it was printed, handed out to members of the Reichstag, and issued to the public, all within twenty-four hours. To accomplish this long and detailed work in so short a space of time seems an incredible feat. There is no reason, however, to marvel at the miracle, if, as we may well believe, the official explanation was drawn up in advance, while the discussions were still going on and the Imperial Government, anticipating that Russia would not comply with the summons to demobilize, had already decided to declare war on that Power. From this it will be seen that, however much the Chancellor and Herr von Jagow may have been personally inclined towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute, they were none the less ready to obey orders from above, and to prepare everything at their offices, with a view to putting the public off the scent in Germany and in neutral countries.

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On every page the White Book is at pains to throw the blame for the catastrophe on Russia. Such is the monotonous burden of this diplomatic chant. No clear light is thrown on the various conciliatory efforts and devices of the Entente Cabinets. The pacific rôle played by Germany is carefully put in the foreground, and the right of calling a whole people to account for an isolated crime is claimed on behalf of Austria-Hungary as if it were the most natural thing in the world. The military measures of precaution taken by Russia and France are antedated, and denounced as preparations for a war with Germany. Nevertheless, the White Book contains a telegram of 29th July which does not fit in with its line of argument. In this telegram it looks very much as if William II. were trifling with his brother, the Tsar; he advises Russia, with regard to the Austro-Serbian War, to go on playing the part of a spectator, and says that if she does so a direct understanding between Vienna and St. Petersburg will afterwards be not only feasible but desirable. An understanding about what, one may ask, when Serbia has become a mere prey, delivered up to the fury of the Austro-Hungarian soldiery? The German public, never liable to murmur at anything that the authorities may say, accepted as gospel truth the most reckless assertions of the Wilhelmstrasse.

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It would be going too far to say that the people were surprised at the outbreak of hostilities. The vociferous appeal to their patriotism in the previous year, when memories of the war of liberation were evoked, had not been made in vain. Their crushing military burdens had not been imposed with the idea of persuading them that peace would be maintained. Finally, it was not for nothing that William II., since his accession, had adopted in his speeches a very warlike manner of declaring that the harmony of Europe must be preserved. When he spoke of peace, his hand seemed ready to draw the sword, and he solemnly told his subjects that, with a view to answering any attack or insult—which no one in Europe was contemplating—they should keep their bayonets sharp and their guns in good trim. Rhetorical metaphors, some may argue. At any rate, it is a bad way of keeping up friendly relations with neighbour-countries to picture the latter, time after time, as meditating an assault on Germanism, and as held back only by a wholesome fear of its armed strength.

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We are assured by many admirable writers that the war was inevitable, because the old murderous passions were not yet quenched in the German breast. A religion of valour, a love of war, a zest in the combat—these manly virtues, it is said, are still inherent in a race of warriors, scions of Arminius, descendants of the Goths, the Vandals, and the Burgundians. Some, in order to find an explanation of the present fighting, have even gone back to Odin. However this may be, Germany, during the past two or three hundred years, has waged fewer wars than France, as Prince Bülow remarks in his book; the Frenchman has shown himself more combative than the German. Too little account is taken of the long period of weakness and depression that preceded and followed the religious struggles and the wars of Frederick the Great. Madame de Staël, no doubt, read the German soul of her day accurately enough, when she discovered in it an ample fund of dreaminess, sentimentality, and idealism, whereas France at that time was throbbing with revolutionary ardour. After 1813, this sentimentalism seemed out of date; as the new Germany awoke, it gradually faded away like a dream. But it was above all as a result of the Prussian victories that a warlike enthusiasm, carefully fostered by a whole school of professors of heroism, flowed into the veins of a certain element in the German nation. When the struggle began, the youths moulded by this teaching set the example to their comrades in the field. In France and in Belgium, young soldiers have been seen to advance at the head of furious charges, singing under the very fire of machine-guns, their arms linked together, their eyes lost in a dream

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of glory and sacrifice....

Beside this scene, which is not without its grandeur, we must set others of a very different type. In many German souls, those of officers and men alike, the war has aroused the predatory instincts of their ancestors. Rifling the invaded country, ransacking houses, great and small, from cellar to loft, organizing convoys of booty to be sent to Germany—this is the seamy side of the fighting of to-day. This atavism, as persistent as original sin, is certainly not a thing to be proud of.

And if only the war had done nothing worse than inflame these ugly greeds! Alas! it has stirred up the ancestral cruelty that still lurked in the human slime of the hostile armies. The high command at Berlin knew its men, when it enjoined the corps commanders to show no mercy, and these officers were fully aware, for their part, that their orders would be obeyed to the letter. Twelve centuries of Christianity, long years of peace, educational progress, and the blessings of civilization—all this has not succeeded in curing the German soldier of that thirst for blood which has reappeared, time and again, like some ineradicable taint.

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IV.

The war-philosophy of the university professors and the influence it has had on generations of students would deserve a volume to itself. Whence comes this implacable hatred of France among those who lived through the war of 1870 and among their pupils? We could understand it more easily if we found it in a conquered nation. And why have these intellectuals such a loathing for England? It is not enough to say that France, forty-five years ago, was not weakened enough to satisfy them, and that in the English they detest the rulers of a colonial empire which they covet for themselves. The origin of these hatreds may be traced, and their lastingness may be ascribed, to the teaching of history as it is practised in the universities, under the impulse of the Prussian school of historians, from Niebuhr, Ranke, Mommsen, and Siebel, down to Treitschke, Giesebrecht, Häuser, Droysen, Lamprecht, and Delbrück. If mere teachers in secondary schools and *Gymnasien* train their boys to hate foreign races, which they depict as enemies or rivals, the fact is highly deplorable; but has not the same excess of blind patriotism, unfortunately, been observed in other countries as well? What is peculiar to German universities is the way in which their experts in historical criticism have directed their teaching of the history of their country to a definite object.

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The Prussian school writes German history as if it were the development of a single idea, the evolution of a movement which, beginning in the Middle Ages, goes on down to the unification of Germany achieved by Bismarck, and, starting from the first German Emperor, Charlemagne, comes to a head in the Kings of Prussia, the present emperors. According to this theory, the Hohenzollern Empire is not a new creation, but a new phase of a primeval sovereignty. After the division of Charlemagne's heritage, the first reconstruction of his empire was the work of the Ottonian dynasty—a work carried on by the Henries and brought to its zenith by the Hohenstaufen. For three and a half centuries of almost ceaseless fighting, Germany was supreme in Europe, and ruled almost a third of the ancient Roman Empire. Frederick Barbarossa, the most popular of these old Cæsars, reigned over Germany, Italy, and the Kingdom of Arles, before perishing in an attempt to add to his titles that of King of Jerusalem. The Germany of the past, say the Prussian historians, is to be revived in the Germany of the future.

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They are compelled to explain, however, the long decline that, like an arctic night, followed this brilliant epoch. Nothing could be easier. They show us the Germans absorbed from the Middle Ages in the pursuit of a spiritual and religious ideal, solely engaged in rescuing freedom of thought and freedom to interpret the Scriptures from the tyranny of the Church. The noble aim pursued by the Lutheran Reformation could not be realized without internal struggles that drained Germany of her sap for many a long year, while the Imperial sceptre came near to falling from the enfeebled grasp of the Hapsburgs. The fact that the first nation of Europe was devoting all its efforts to solving the religious problem and to establishing its spiritual control on the ruins of Roman superstition, enabled other nations—Spain, France, and England—to fight during that period for the temporal mastery of the world. The Prussian school would have us believe that in this way the Germans were cheated of their destiny. They could not at the same time follow the noblest of all ideals and fulfil their duty as a civilizing force. Without the Reformation, which nevertheless gives them an inestimable claim to the gratitude of the human race, their dominion would now extend from the Straits of Dover to the Bosphorus and from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. It would also include vast colonies, for the German mariners would not have let themselves be forestalled by others in the exploration and conquest of the New World.

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At last, however, the God-given mission of carrying on the work of Charlemagne and the first elective Cæsars has been entrusted to a new line of rulers marked out by fate. Successive princes of the great Hohenzollern house have patiently built up again the edifice that time had destroyed. In reuniting the scattered limbs of the Germanic body, in making it once more alive and whole, they have restored all its ancient vigour. Once more it is master of its destiny, free to pursue its irresistible onward march.

It would not be difficult to pick holes in these scientific arguments, which are used, among other things, as a warrant for regaining territories that once were fiefs of the Imperial Crown, but have been severed from Germany for hundreds of years. The Hohenstaufen Empire included races that it was impossible to amalgamate or unify. A colossus with feet of clay, it soon lost its solidity and was shattered into fragments. The power of the emperors dwindled away in Germany itself, choked by the parasitic growth of feudal principedoms and free cities, while around it in Europe strong and cohesive nations were being formed. With malice aforethought, the Prussian

theory ignores the fact that countries once attached to the Holy Roman Empire managed to secure and lead a separate existence long before the Reformation, and, like the Netherlands for instance, have since then preserved their own language and customs, which were not the language or the customs of Germany. Others, like the two Burgundies or the Kingdom of Arles, retain no trace of their short-lived reincorporation in the Germanic scrap-heap.

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After all, the most striking feature in this wilful distortion of events and processes is not its fantastic character, but the goal that its authors sought to attain. That goal was not so much to produce work of scientific value, as, by throwing an artificial light upon the past, the light of an exaggerated patriotism, to equip their countrymen for the coming struggles. The plan that they followed was to arouse the nationalist sentiment—never far below the surface—of the academic youth, by foretelling the resurrection of a great age that had vanished, by making the conquests of recent years seem paltry in comparison with those yet to be won—in short, by showing that the triumphal march of the past century was not yet ended, and that it must lead to yet more fruitful victories. The Prussian school could only succeed in their task by inspiring their pupils with a hatred of those rival nations which it was essential to crush, before the Germany of their dreams could come into her own.

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V.

The most notable representative of this school was Heinrich von Treitschke, compiler-in-chief of the Hohenzollern saints' calendar. Since the beginning of the war, much attention has been paid to him in England and in France; people have even begun to read him. From his books on history and politics we try to gain an insight into those glowing ideas which have played their part in bringing on the present conflict. In reading them we are struck with their literary merit; we are amazed at their wealth of document, their profound study of the original sources; we cannot help admiring the infinite care with which this true artist paints a historical portrait in all its details. His influence on German thought, however, and on all classes of German society, is mainly due to his overpowering eloquence, which may probably be set down to his Slavonic blood. During the last twenty years of his life he made a great name for himself as professor at Berlin University, and saw one of his dearest wishes fulfilled—that of becoming the real educator of the younger generation.

Entering upon his professorship and his political work during the Schleswig-Holstein crisis, at the time when Germany was in the throes of her national unification, he was from the first an ardent admirer of the Hohenzollerns and of Bismarck. He scornfully compared the wisdom and resolution of William I. and his minister with the hopeless mediocrity of the minor German sovereigns, who, he maintained, showed an alarming family likeness in this respect. The greatness of Prussia, the glory of a nation that was also an army, the Heaven-sent mission of that peerless dynasty, the Hohenzollerns—these were the articles of the faith preached to his countrymen by this apostle of the Bismarckian policy. The history of Germany, as traced by his pen, culminated in her union under Prussian sway. After extolling this achievement of the Hohenzollern sword, the prophetic writer passes on to the vision of a Germany that will become the first Power in the world, once her flag has crossed all the seas in triumph. What limit shall be set to her dominion? Treitschke, in offering these dazzling vistas to the imagination of his hearers and readers, was probably the true father of that world-policy for which William II. and Prince von Bülow are generally held responsible.

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One finds in his works all the stock commonplaces, beloved of German military writers, regarding the necessity and moral value of war. He glorifies war as the foster-mother of heroic ideas, and for him the issue of battles is the judgment of God. But among all the historians who have bowed down before the Prussian Baal, he stands out from the ruck by virtue, not only of his superior talents, but also of his extraordinary aversion for England. The pride and envy of this Saxon who became a Prussian heart and soul could not endure that England should own a fifth of the habitable globe. It seemed to him that so vast an empire was out of all proportion to the real strength of the British nation—a nation of shop-keepers, which had won its territories, not by any remarkable genius or courage, but through fraud and hypocrisy, aided by the stupidity of other peoples. It is hardly surprising that he is accused in England of having undermined the friendly relations that formerly subsisted between the Anglo-Saxons and the Germans, and of having brought about that explosion of hatred which drove them apart three years after his death, at the beginning of the Boer War.

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VI.

Side by side with Treitschke and his pupils (of whom the most conspicuous, at the moment, is Bernhardi) discerning critics are apt to place, as furnishing inspiration for the war, the German philosophers of the nineteenth century, even the poets and musicians, whose posthumous influence is still strongly felt in Germany. They attempt to prove that these representatives of the Teutonic genius are the prime agents, whether consciously or no, in the calamities from which Europe in general, and the Latin race in particular, are suffering to-day. The idolatrous worship paid to these artists by their countrymen is reckoned among the chief causes of that insensate pride and ambition which have entered so deeply into the national soul.

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The German people, believing that it possesses in Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche the greatest thinkers, in Goethe and Schiller the greatest poets, in Beethoven, Schubert, Bach, and Wagner the greatest musicians, and convinced that it holds the foremost place in every branch of science and learning, looks upon itself as a superior race, destined to a

material sway over the entire world, just as it reigns supreme at present, through the glory of its men of genius, in the intellectual sphere. "Nation of thinkers, poets, and heroes," such is the refrain dinned into its ears by its writers and acolytes—"nation whose supremacy none can question, thou shalt fill the world with the inexhaustible treasures of thy culture!" In plain language, this means that material power must go hand in hand with spiritual rule; the strength and intelligence of Germany shall dominate all other nations, and stamp them with the ineffaceable imprint of German *Kultur*.

Other inquirers have deciphered the apocalyptic book of Nietzsche, and have found, to their amazement, Sibylline oracles that apply with wonderful force to the campaign carried on by the Kaiser's troops and the feelings that these troops seem to harbour in their pitiless souls. The opening of the era of great wars, the appearance of the superb blond beast of prey, the glorifying of evil, the contempt for pity, all that we are now witnessing with horror, is already implied in the prophecies of Zarathustra. From this they infer, not only that Nietzsche was a great seer, but that the cruel philosophy of this visionary, for whom madness lay in wait, has intoxicated Germany and inspired her actions.

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All these critics, I venture to say, have been too liable to make the facts fit in with a cast-iron system. It cannot be disputed, indeed, that the teachings of historians and philosophers, poets and musicians, have helped to inflame German pride, to create a blind faith in the civilizing mission of the German race, to induce that unbalanced, dangerous state of soul which already existed before the war, and has since then revealed itself to the world at large. It is probable, also, that this state of soul will have no little weight in determining the duration of the war. If it retains its ascendancy, it will keep the intellectuals arrayed in a solid phalanx round the Emperor, until all the best blood of the nation has ebbed away, until the final victory or defeat. Nevertheless, we must beware of building up a theory, of extending to a whole community the wild dreams of a certain class, and of exaggerating their influence upon the events of yesterday and to-day.

Although some two-thirds of the Empire's inhabitants live in urban centres, the number of those who have been educated at universities and higher schools is only a small minority in a total of sixtyseven millions. I admit that this small minority directs the mass, in the same way as the brain directs the whole human machine; I recognize, too, that when the fatal hour struck, it had no difficulty in winning over those Socialist leaders who, tainted though they are with imperialist ideas, would never of themselves have declared war on their brethren, the working-men in other countries. Moreover, one must assume that the warlike passions, stimulated by a peculiar teaching of history and by scientific vanity, met with approval and encouragement from high quarters, from the political authority embodied in one individual. If the Imperial Government and its supreme head had sincerely wanted peace, the aggressive movement that went forth from the schools and universities might have been checked in time, or turned off into peaceful paths by the same disciplinary methods that obtain in the Prussian army. William II. was not the man to let himself be forced into a foreign war by civilian Pan-Germans, after the manner in which Alexander had yielded to Pan-Slavic pressure in 1877. By resisting, it may be argued, William II. would have lost all popularity. This would be true if the voice of the mob—the only voice that could make any impression on so self-willed a monarch—had at any time been raised for war; but the masses were peacefully inclined, or else indifferent. The Emperor has always been the autocrat, with a full sense of his rights, as may be seen from the proud motto that he wrote in the "golden book" of the Munich town-hall: "*Suprema lex regis voluntas esto!*" ("May the King's will be the supreme law!") He expects his wishes to be taken as commands. At a word from him, the dreams of world-dominion, born in the brains of scholars and men of science, would have been scattered to the four winds, or buried in a vast heap of unreadable books and articles.

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In my opinion, therefore, it is far more accurate to say, generally speaking, that the writers, the artists, and the savants who signed the famous manifesto of the "Ninety-three"—we honour them too much by still speaking of it to-day—all those who exploited the historical and intellectual glories and the great scientific renown of Germany for purposes of political ambition, were only the auxiliaries and catspaws of the Imperial policy.

VII.

The incessant growth in the Empire's population demanded a widening of its territory. Cooped up within a narrow space, the Germans could not breathe freely; they needed new lands that could be peopled, new outlets to drain off some of this superabundant vitality. This, it is claimed by certain economists, is a biological law, and at the same time one of the causes that made the war inevitable. It was in the nature of things that Germany, sooner or later, should overflow her borders. Another legend! Let us examine the facts.

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The population, it is true, was growing by more than 800,000 every year. But emigration, the usual remedy for overcrowded countries, had for the past fifteen years been constantly decreasing. The average number of German emigrants, in the period 1908-1913, was 23,312 a year, three-fourths going to the United States. During these same five years, the annual average of foreign emigrants passing through German ports rose to 215,314! The extraordinary progress of industry, requiring a larger and larger complement of hands every year, explains why emigration dwindled almost to vanishing-point. The German, finding it easy to earn his bread and even live in comfort at home, had no longer any reason for seeking occupation elsewhere.

The spread of industrialism in Germany has had another result besides that of drying up the sources of emigration. It has tended to deplete the countryside. In 1912 no more than 28.6 per cent. of the population were engaged in agriculture. On this account the farmer now has recourse

to cheap foreign labour in large quantities. Had it not been for the annual influx of six or seven hundred thousand farm-labourers from Poland, Lithuania, and Russia, the fields of Brandenburg and of East and West Prussia would have lain fallow, and the squires of the eastern marches would have been unable to harvest their crops. This hardly accords with the picture of an over-populous, famished race, compelled to hurl itself upon the more fertile lands of its neighbours, just as the Teutonic hordes of old grasped at the tempting prize of the Roman world.

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The enormous development of industry has been accompanied everywhere by a feature more or less marked, according as the country has attained wealth or a modest competence—a falling off in the birth-rate. Germany believed that she would remain free from this scourge. She was mistaken; nowadays, as a rule, it is only the poor nations that go on multiplying. German medical science and hygiene have succeeded, for the time being, in making up for the decrease in births by a reduction of the death-rate, especially of infant mortality. But the proportion of children born, more particularly in the towns (as is shown by statistics from 1906 onwards), is steadily declining, and this will end by having serious effects on the growth of population, bringing it down, in all probability, to the normal level maintained by other industrial nations.

Despite these evils, there was no cause for any real alarm as to the future of Germany. Yet the powers that be looked askance at her industrialism, which is the prime agent in this weakening of the fertility of the race. From motives of a military nature, they are anxious that the males should be healthy and the females prolific. The cities and manufacturing centres supply the army with a lower average of men fit for service than the country districts; all the more reason for encouraging agriculture. In the calculations of German statesmen, the needs of war take precedence of all others.

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As for the Imperial Government, its most obvious concern has been, not to look for territories that may be peopled with emigrants, but to see that the mother-country shall not lose hold of her children in foreign lands. Among those who had long since left their native soil, and had become more or less merged in other races, it tried to revive the national sentiment. To reunite the scattered forces of Germanism and bind them to the Empire by hidden cables stretched across the sea, like the unseen waves of an electric current, was the unmistakable purpose of the legislative work achieved by the Reichstag in 1913, and such also has been the task imposed upon diplomatic and consular agents abroad.

The Nationality Act of 1st June 1870 had laid down that German citizenship would be lost by any one who lived for a continuous period of ten years in another country. The bill of 22nd July 1913, based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood), and not of *jus loci* (right of domicile), abolished this forfeiture of civic rights. Furthermore, it allowed a German to become naturalized in another country without losing his original nationality. There are cases where a change of nationality is prompted solely by pecuniary motives. In such cases, naturalization is regarded by the new law as fictitious; it does not bind one who remains a German at heart and obtains permission to retain his German citizenship. This permission is granted by the authorities in the State of his origin, provided he is vouched for by the nearest German consul (art. 25). Finally, Imperial citizenship may be conferred upon former Germans and on their descendants, even if they are not settled on German soil (art. 33).

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In thus consolidating the centres of German influence wherever they existed—in the United States and in South America, in the Far East and in Turkey—the Government was not thinking only of gaining for the national products an easier access to the local markets. Its aim was no less political than commercial. By establishing these colonies of a new type in the heart of foreign countries, it endeavoured to set up a sort of Germanic Empire across the seas, as a counterpoise to that British Empire which was the object of its unceasing envy. Henceforth the Imperial eagle wished to have German eaglets hatched from all the eggs it had laid in alien nests.

VIII.

I come, finally, to the economic causes of the war. I must reluctantly confess that I do not share the opinion of some eminent writers, who regard these causes as the most prominent and the most decisive. Germany, according to them, determined to make war—on Russia and France, be it noted, for prior to the invasion of Belgium there was no thought of other opponents—in order to secure indispensable markets for her goods and to avert an imminent economic crisis.

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It would be superfluous here to give the figures recorded in all the tables of statistics, proving the enormous development of German industry throughout the forty-four years of peace that have elapsed since the Treaty of Frankfort. Like all growths that are too speedy, this development had its weak points, its alarming symptoms; it did not bear the look of perfect health. In an organism that was shooting up so rapidly, a sudden crisis, a violent illness, was likely to produce fatal complications. Too many enterprises were being founded on advances from banks. The great financial and industrial companies were inflating their share and debenture capital to such an extent that any slackening in production would have threatened to suspend the payment of dividends. Two-thirds of the population lived on the wages earned in workshops and factories. A stoppage in the activity of the latter, involving prolonged loss of work, would have meant a dearth of bread in countless homes and a great outcry of distress from countless throats. It was therefore the imperative duty of the Government, not only to see that the existing outlets for the national industry were kept open, but to provide for the acquisition of new ones. Already some ominous bankruptcies had warned the authorities of what might happen. Over-production would inevitably lead to extreme measures, in order that there might be no congestion. Among these measures, the only infallible one was war, with its invasion of foreign markets by force, its wiping out of those competitors who would not let German labour enjoy the monopoly that it

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needed. Such, in a crude outline, are the arguments adduced to show the overwhelming importance of economic causes.

If from industry we pass to farming on a large scale, which is organized in Prussia on industrial lines, we observe a specious prosperity, depending in no small degree on the renewal of the commercial treaty with Russia. This treaty, concluded at a critical moment, after the Russo-Japanese war, empowered the great Prussian landowners, thanks to surreptitious export bounties, to send their wheat and their rye even to Finland, whereas Russian agricultural produce could only enter Germany after the sale of the German crops.

Well, in my opinion, it would have been a very bad stroke of policy to begin the capture of the French markets by ruining France—this being the most likely result of a successful war. Before leaving Berlin, I already heard some talk of an indemnity of £1,200,000,000 to be extorted from the vanquished Republic. Bismarck had bitterly repented having asked for no more than £200,000,000 in 1871, and there was to be no repetition of that blunder. To this enormous ransom must be added the vast sums that the war would have cost France, the ruin of the departments invaded, the havoc wrought by the victors, all the appalling balance-sheet of a national disaster. How would the sufferers have been able to pay for the goods with which German industry proposed to flood their country? The purchasing power of France after the restoration of peace would have been reduced to the barest minimum. New markets would have been of little use to Germany, if they had lost much of their vitality and absorbing power, as would certainly have been the case in a country that she had bled almost to death. One can hardly see the necessity of capturing the French home trade on such terms as these.

Another plan that I have heard ascribed to the great German manufacturers was that of industrializing France after her defeat, setting up workshops and factories under the control of German engineers and overseers, introducing the methods of work, the technical improvements and the organization that had made Germany the wonder of the world, and developing by intensive culture the wealth of that admirable French soil. Why, by so doing they would have breathed fresh life into an ancient rivalry which they had almost succeeded in sweeping from their path! At the moment when German industry was suffering from over-production and plethora, they would have aroused a competition favoured in many respects with peculiar natural advantages. I really cannot hold them capable of so signal a miscalculation. I will readily admit, however, that they might have hoped to oust a ravaged and ruined France from those foreign markets in which she still held a strong position. Still, this project would have been difficult to carry out as regards the special articles for which the French are noted.

Russia, if beaten, would probably have been forced to sign a new commercial treaty, even more profitable to German agriculture and industry than the previous compact. Yet I am inclined to doubt whether, with the great Empire of the Tsars impoverished, the Germans would have done better business there than before the war, or have found the new openings that they required. Moreover, can we feel convinced that the Slav farm-labourers would have flocked in such great numbers as of old to the land of their conquerors, in order to offer them their indispensable labour-power? We must not underrate the force of the hatred and rancour that a devastating war will leave behind it, a war carried on after the methods of the Berlin Staff. Furthermore, I cannot believe that economic causes had the slightest influence on the attack prepared by that Staff against Russia.

There remains the question of colonies. For twenty-five years Germany had been obsessed with the desire to own a wide domain outside Europe. The fairly extensive territories that she ruled in Africa, so far from satisfying her, had only served to whet her appetite. A huge Continental empire, without adequate oversea possessions, did not fit in with the plan that the architects of her future greatness were drawing up. The idea of an empire provided with vast colonies was suggested to them, above all, by the example of England; but as there was no longer any unoccupied space worth mentioning in Africa, they dreamed of stripping France, Portugal, and Belgium of their African dominions, and establishing a black Germany which should become the handmaid and slave of their own blond Germany.

As regards the colonies, I grant that economic motives have counted for something in the ambitions of the Imperial Government. The influence of these motives is not hard to trace. The manufacturers wished to possess in Africa the raw materials that they could not obtain at home, such as phosphates, ores, rubber, and the like, instead of having recourse to foreign ports. They could not shut their eyes to the splendid vision of French Africa, Algeria, and Tunis (to say nothing of Morocco), whence France annually imported goods to the value of twenty to twenty-four million pounds sterling. This magnificent region was already fully colonized, and the only way of supplanting her trade there was to wrest the colonies from her by force. Indo-China did not seem to tempt German greed, perhaps on account of the Yellow Peril, which William II. had slightly on the brain, and which he was peculiarly fond of discussing.

On the other hand, the position of German industry, hazardous though it appeared to more expert eyes than mine, by no means demanded the use of so heroic a remedy as a European war. What would the United States do, we may ask—they who have been the educators of Germany in industrial matters—in the event of a glut in the products of their foundries and steelworks, and a partial choking up of the vital outlets? They would let their trusts readjust the market, drain off the excess of output, close the superfluous workshops, relieve the situation generally, but they would not declare war on any foreign nation. Economic competition, in all its stages, is a war not fought with the soldier's weapons. It brings ruin in its train, too, but the ruin is not beyond repair. A series of costly victories in battle would not deliver German industry from the constant nightmare of the struggle for existence, any more than they would make Germany the serene and unquestioned mistress of the entire globe. The commercial and industrial welfare of a nation is

always menaced by the progress of others, by the relaxation of its own efforts, and by various incalculable factors.

The merciless war waged against us by the Kaiser's troops is above all, in my humble opinion, a political campaign. Economic causes have been grafted upon the primary cause, but the part they have played is a subordinate one. The schemes framed in Berlin are no longer wrapped in the haze that once surrounded them, but reveal themselves to us in clear outline. What was the object of hurling two million men at France, while the Russian armies were held in check and the Austrians were sent to annihilate Serbia? To crush once for all the military Power that stood in the way of German imperialism; to deprive Russia of all concern in European affairs; to seize for Germany the whole coast-line of the North Sea; to make her a Mediterranean Power by annexing French Africa; to dissolve the Balkan alliances and deal the death-blow to Slav hopes; to give Austria the suzerainty of the Balkan peninsula; finally, to hold undisputed sway at Constantinople and in Asiatic Turkey as far as the Persian Gulf. The exploitation of Central Africa, requiring as it did vast capital, was an economic task that could not be carried out in a day, and was therefore reserved for an early future date. The same remark applies to the completion and utilization of the Bagdad Railway. A few decisive battles, it was thought, would be enough to enslave Continental Europe, and to build up, on the basis of that "Mid-European Confederation" of which the German intellectuals speak quite openly to-day, the political supremacy of Germany, while England would be left isolated, an easy prey to her rival in a later campaign.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE MOROCCAN QUESTION.

I.

THE German Government had not taken advantage of the Boer War, which broke out only a year after the Fashoda incident, to draw closer to France. The bitter animosity towards England which found noisy expression at that time in Germany enabled it to obtain from the Reichstag the credits required for building a powerful navy. Suddenly, however, it awoke to the necessity of discouraging these tirades by itself adopting towards the British Government a more correct attitude than the Imperial telegram sent to President Kruger had seemed to promise. As all the world knows, it wished to have a free hand for launching its warships, that main object of William II. during the early years of his reign, without the risk of a naval conflict.

After the South African question had been settled, there occurred from year to year a series of events which had no small share in bringing on the present conflagration, and certainly made it come all the sooner. These events are connected by an unbroken, though scarcely visible, thread. They developed in two widely different theatres—Morocco and the Near East.

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The English and the French are at one to-day in applauding Edward VII.'s generous and far-sighted notion of holding out his hand to France, so soon as peace was restored in South Africa. This noble action, so consonant with the feelings he had entertained towards France since early youth, and with the respectful but sympathetic welcome he had always received in French society, paved the way for the Entente Cordiale. The first visit that he paid to Paris as King, after an interval that must have seemed unduly long to this old Parisian, took place in the spring of 1903, after his return from a cruise in the Mediterranean. A high-placed member of the Foreign Office in His Majesty's retinue had written to me from Malta some weeks earlier: "I don't quite know what sort of reception the people of Paris intend to give our King." The reception, as it turned out, was in the right key, both deferential and friendly. One year later, on April 8, 1904, were signed those agreements which laid the foundations of the Entente Cordiale, and at the same time ushered in the Moroccan question.

I do not pretend to give here a complete history of this question: to study it under its successive aspects, French, Spanish, Mediterranean, European; to unfold it in all its different phases, from the Convention of Madrid to that of Berlin. A volume at least would be needed for that; the Morocco affair is a sea in which I should drown both my reader and myself. All that I propose doing is to show its effects upon Franco-German relations, since I was able, from personal observation, to gauge the width of the irreparable breach that it made between the two countries.

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The treaties or agreements of April 8, 1904, are a general settlement of all the matters that caused friction between England and France in various parts of the globe. These compacts put an end to their long and barren African antagonism, and thus removed the chief bar to an understanding between the two great Western Powers—an understanding that had become vital, now that the balance of Europe was endangered by the preponderant might of Germany. The *de facto* authority held by England in Egypt since the suppression of Arabi Pasha's revolt was formally recognized; and, as an offset, the rights of France in Morocco, as regards political influence and financial and commercial development, were acknowledged. In signing these diplomatic contracts, M. Delcassé signed the charter for the future French protectorate in the richest section of North-West Africa, and rounded off, with a stroke of the pen, that magnificent colonial domain of which Algeria had formed the nucleus. An *entente*, which required more delicate handling, assigned to Spain her time-honoured rights and claims in the portion of Morocco opposite her shores. A convention had already settled that Italy should forgo her interests in this region; in return, she had obtained recognition for her sphere of influence on another strip of the Mediterranean littoral. In this way, the adhesion of the Western Mediterranean Powers was assured. The other great Powers were apprised of the covenants between England and France, and of the arrangements made by the latter with the Makhzen, in keeping with these covenants.

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II.

Germany was not satisfied with being informed of the Moroccan agreements by diplomatic channels. She "considered that her interests had entitled her to be consulted in a more direct manner."¹¹ The signatories to the treaty of 8th April might well have sent a simple notification beforehand, to prevent the Imperial Government from throwing any obstacles in the way of their proceedings. This was the view held in Berlin, where on several occasions I heard it expanded, not without bitterness, in such terms as these:—

"Germany is not a Mediterranean Power; but she was a party to the Madrid Convention of 1880, which regulated the status of protected Europeans in the Shereefian Empire, and in 1890 she concluded by herself a commercial treaty with the Makhzen. Her trade in this region, it is true, is still much less in bulk than that of England and France, but in the movement for the extension of German commerce—a movement that has been developing on a grand scale for the past twenty-five years—Morocco is not regarded by manufacturers and traders as a negligible quantity. On the contrary, they not only aim at enlarging their business transactions with that country, but they have their eye upon its mineral wealth. It is accordingly to their advantage that

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Morocco should remain an entirely unrestricted field for European competition. That the country is in a state of anarchy is a matter of indifference to them; this, after all, is its normal condition, its endemic disease, and must inevitably last for a long time to come. From a political point of view, the Imperial Government cannot help regarding the negotiations carried on with other States, for the purpose of inducing them to recognize the validity of the Anglo-French treaties, as a slur on its prestige. The Emperor clearly stated, in a speech delivered on July 3, 1900, that he would not allow the German nation to be ignored when any important step was to be taken in the realm of international affairs. The decision as to the future of Morocco certainly comes under this head. Most questions can be settled by a compromise or a bargain. Germany's consent would have been obtained if a reasonable price had been offered—*e.g.*, territorial compensations in some other part of Africa, since she is burning with an irrepressible desire to colonize, a desire that, through Bismarck's lack of foresight, she was unable to gratify while there was still time."

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Would the war of 1914 have been averted if, ten years earlier, the Moroccan question had been settled, almost as soon as it was raised, by an agreement with the Imperial Government? There is no reason to think so. Quite apart from the secret designs of the Imperial Government, which have since come to light, several of the factors contributing towards the 1914 crisis were non-existent in 1904 and had nothing to do with Morocco. The Balkan conflicts, the Austro-Serbian disputes, were in themselves quite enough to ignite the powder-magazine. But we may fairly assume that, but for Morocco, the dangerous tensions of 1905 and 1911 would not have arisen; that Europe would have enjoyed a more restful life than during those two years; and that the hostile feeling reawakened on both sides of the Vosges would not have reached the same degree of acuteness. The Moroccan imbroglios led many Germans, peacefully minded till then, to look upon a new war as a necessary evil.

Only those who fail to realize the pride and malice of the German temperament, and who are utterly ignorant as to the sinister aspects of William II.'s pacifism, can imagine that this Sovereign and his people were ever capable of pardoning the intentional slight that had been put upon them. France and England would therefore have been wise in augmenting their military forces from this time onward, in order not to fall a prey, later on, to the resentment of a greedy rival whom they had deliberately excluded from the Shereefian Empire.

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As regards territorial compensations in Africa, it was forgotten at Berlin that Germany, through her own fault, was scarcely entitled to ask for them or even decently to accept an offer. During his tour in Syria in the autumn of 1898, William II. had been guilty of an indiscretion. He had invited the three hundred million Moslems scattered all over the world to count at all times upon the friendship of the German Emperor. It was quite unnecessary for him to declare himself the protector of Islam, with the risk of causing anxiety to States with Mohammedan subjects. Instead of assuming this pose of guardian angel, William II. need only have proclaimed himself the friend of the Turks and Syrians, since the main object of his journey was to pave the way for the invasion of Turkey by German industry and finance. As it was, the Emperor, after this solemn promise, would have laid himself open to the indignation or the ridicule of all Islam, if he had suggested to France that he should cede to her Germany's claims on Morocco and the suzerainty over the Moroccans (those peculiarly bigoted Moslems) in exchange for an African mess of pottage.

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III.

For nearly a year after the Anglo-French agreement, the Imperial Government refused to show its hand. It gave itself time for thinking matters over, before taking a definite stand against France in Morocco. French publicists have not omitted to point out that this period of reflection ended with the Battle of Mukden. From that moment, Germany's mind was set at rest as to the support that Russia could give, in the event of a conflict, to her Western ally.

Prince von Bülow plumes himself on having suggested to his master, in the spring of 1905, the dramatic coup of Tangier. William II., despite his love for spectacular effects, hesitated up to the last moment before taking so hazardous a step. In the end, he landed on 31st March, with a large retinue, at the old Maghrib city, where he made a promise to the Sultan's envoys that he would defend the latter's sovereignty and the independence of his States. He was not destined to keep this promise, and its only result was to prolong the illusions of the sheikhs and their resistance to France. It was a repetition, in a more clumsy form, of the blunder he had committed in sending his telegram to Kruger; for in the eyes of the Christian and Mohammedan world it compromised the Emperor personally far more than any telegraphic message could have done.

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The die was cast. The attitude of the Imperial Government towards French activities became menacing; it took up a determined attitude as champion of Morocco's integrity and of the Sultan's rights, while the whole German Press, waxing indignant to order, raised an outcry against the attempt to make another Tunis of the Maghrib Empire. The stubborn policy of the Emperor and the Chancellor at first met with success, forcing M. Delcassé to resign and the Paris and London Cabinets to call a conference at Algeciras. For his share in this triumph, Herr von Bülow was rewarded with the title of Prince. But the Conference itself frustrated German hopes.

The Berlin Cabinet, in commenting before the Reichstag and through the medium of its official editors on the results obtained at Algeciras, claimed the merit of having upheld the sovereignty of the Sultan and freedom of trade with its natural concomitant, the principle that all concessions should be put up to public tender without distinction of nationality. This was merely breaking through a door which was already open, and which the Conference would not have consented to shut at any one's bidding. Germany did, indeed, succeed in getting the police and the State Bank put under international control. France, for her part, managed to secure an undisputed title to

her rights in the frontier region and a predominant share in the organization of the State Bank. Her most signal success lay in the arrangement that no third Power should be allowed to occupy, in any part of Morocco, a position similar to that which she and Spain held by virtue of their geographical situation and their political interests. The Shereefian police in the ports remained under the direction of French and Spanish officers.

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Did Prince von Bülow seriously believe at the time that Edward VII. and M. Delcassé had devised the Machiavellian scheme of isolating Germany and encircling her with a network of alliances, in order to crush her one day under the weight of a European coalition? At all events, he succeeded in making the German public adopt this theory, and it still prevails to-day in Berlin. A very different impression is conveyed to those who have carefully followed the tortuous path of Imperial statesmanship. William II. was furious at the Anglo-French understanding, which he must have previously regarded as a hopeless prospect so far as Africa, the field of their old rivalries, was concerned; and at Algeciras he tried to shatter it in brutal fashion, by proving to the two Western Powers the futility of their diplomatic work—a mere house of cards that would fall to the ground at the slightest breath from Germany. He wished to see them leave the Conference at daggers drawn, dissatisfied with each other and convinced that their efforts were vain, at the very moment when the Franco-Russian alliance was showing itself incapable of bearing fruit.

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The visit to Tangier was the first outward sign of that moral transformation in the Emperor of which I have already spoken. The weight assigned in Europe to Germanism, with its growing resources, its constant increase in wealth and population, did not seem to him commensurate with its power. And now, just when his ambitious dreams were beginning to take shape, he saw Germany cleverly thrust aside from Morocco, instead of acquiring the foremost place in that refuge of Moslem barbarism which civilization was trying to invade. The Emperor, together with his people, had hoped by means of the Conference to gain a foothold in Morocco. The disappointment left behind it in his soul an unhappy leaven of spite and anger.

It is not surprising, therefore, that before the meeting of the Conference, on which he set such great store, and in order to carry the day against the two Western Powers, William II. for the first time openly behaved in a high-handed manner towards his neighbours. His threats were still in a rather subdued key, but in the language of his envoys, at the informal diplomatic discussions, there loomed up the vision of a Germany clad in all her panoply of war, helmet on head and sword in hand, ready for use at any moment. Later on, we had other opportunities of seeing this vision, before it became a pitiless reality.

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The Conference produced upon the European stage the striking scene that was destined to be repeated in 1914—the German Empire isolated, save for its “brilliant second,” Austria-Hungary; and France, Russia, and England grouped together, as if with a presage of the coming danger, to form a barrier against the rising tide of Germanism. Such was the first rough outline of the Triple Entente, though not yet invested with that name. Finally, the Conference revealed to us, then as now, a deserter who went over from the Triplice into the opposite camp. Prince von Bülow alluded to this startling defection on Italy’s part as a “waltz turn,”¹² but it did not deserve to be so airily dismissed. After her first breach of the Triple Alliance contract, Italy did not scruple to resume her freedom of action, whenever her personal interest appeared to warrant such a course.

IV.

Yet the infant brought into the world by the Conference with such painful effort seemed to have little chance of surviving. To instil a respect for law and order into the Moorish and Kabyle tribes, savage from time immemorial, to repress anarchy, to establish a security hitherto unknown, to build harbours, roads, and railways—all these tasks called for a European Power that possessed the requisite military strength, and had received a mandate to act entirely as it pleased in the zone set apart for its operations. Above all, it was essential that the Power in question should not encounter the ever-wakeful hostility of the German consuls, nor be thwarted at every turn by the intrigues of German subjects and protégés, of whom the brothers Mannesmann were the most consummate type. For nearly two years after Algeciras, eighteen months of countless difficulties and explanations with the Berlin Cabinet, which would fain have adhered strictly to the letter of the Conference treaty, France, having been driven to set up military stations at various points of the Maghrib Empire, was forced to disperse with her guns the attacks of the rebellious tribes. But for Germany’s policy of pin-pricks and the instigations of her agents, would there have been an occupation of Chaouia after the Casablanca ambushade, and would the incident of the German desertions from the Foreign Legion, which nearly led to a conflict, have taken place? The Republic, having put its hand to the plough in Morocco, was evidently obliged to go on until the end, whatever might be the cost in men and money, on pain of losing her prestige and jeopardizing her authority among the Mussulmans of French Africa.

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Towards the end of 1908, a more sober and rational policy began to prevail at the Wilhelmstrasse. The idea of French paramountcy in Morocco, which had seemed intolerable three years before, had gained some ground among the authorities at the Imperial Foreign Office. They were coming round to the view that it was an unavoidable sacrifice. In an exchange of communications between Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, interim chief of the department, and M. Jules Cambon, the French ambassador, on February 9, 1909, the Imperial Government declared that the only aims it pursued in Morocco were economic, and recognized that the special political interests of France in Morocco were closely bound up with the establishment of law and order. Determined not to hamper these interests, it undertook to join hands with the Republican

Government in an attempt to associate their respective subjects in enterprises of which the French might obtain the management.

In this way Berlin, seeing that there was no hope of exercising a political influence in the Shereefian Empire, fell back upon the scheme of an economic exploitation, to be carried out in company with France. After the incidents of the preceding years, complicated by the unsettled state of Europe, no improvement was to be noted in Franco-German relations. Opinion in Paris, among the public no less than in Parliament, was largely adverse to any system of co-operation that would have looked like giving way to Germany. Moreover, the German Press had not retired from the fray; it continued to denounce, as violations of the Algeciras Act, every forward step taken by the French troops in Morocco. Under these circumstances, the French ministers did not consider it wise or opportune, at the moment, to encourage the proposals for associating the subjects of the two countries in the joint handling of economic enterprises.

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V.

The second Moroccan crisis came in 1911, towards the close of spring, after the march of General Brulard's column on Fez and its entry into that city. The German Government always denied that this expedition was necessary: it claimed that the safety of foreigners settled in the Shereefian capital was in no way threatened. The version put forward by the French authorities was totally different: they affirmed—and we must perforce believe them—that the lives of the Europeans were seriously in danger. Notwithstanding the frantic excitement of public opinion in Germany and the violent language of the newspapers, the diplomatic conversations opened in Paris and Berlin on the morrow of this military episode took a fairly reassuring turn. It is difficult, therefore, to grasp why Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter should have struck his sudden blow at the unsuspecting French Government—the dispatch of the *Panther* to Agadir. A little patience on his part would have enabled him to reach a satisfactory result. He knew that the time had come for a final settlement of the Moroccan question. The redoubtable word “protectorate,” as a term for France's political action in Morocco, was no longer one that he could not bring himself to pronounce. In return, however, he demanded territorial compensations for Germany. “If one wants to eat peaches in January,” he remarked, “one must pay for them.” And it was at the moment when the Foreign Secretary had thrown down his cards and shown his hand, and after he had said to M. Cambon, in taking leave of him at Kissingen, “Bring us back something from Paris!” that he issued a brutal challenge, which might well have proved fatal to the peace of Europe.

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For more than eight years I had been a colleague of Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter at Bucharest, before meeting him again in Berlin. Our cordial relations of those days gave me the right to ply him with questions that I should not have put to any other Foreign Secretary so soon after entering upon a diplomatic post. I asked why he had ventured on the Agadir coup. On leaving him, I was careful to make a written report of his explanation. It ran as follows:—

“When I first came to the Wilhelmstrasse I witnessed, without being able to raise any protests, the successive encroachments of France in Morocco, which assuredly were breaches of the Algeciras Act, a basic covenant for the relations of the great Powers with the Shereefian Empire. If the Republican Government had continued to show prudence and to advance at a leisurely pace, we should have been compelled to put up with its pretensions and to champ our bit in silence. At one time it would have pleaded the hostility of a village which formed an important strategical point as an excuse for a military occupation; at another time it would have alleged the vagueness of the geographical boundaries marked out on the map as a pretext for going beyond them. The invasion would have crept on slowly, like a sheet of oil. I thanked Heaven” (here he gave his malicious little smile) “when I learnt of the march on Fez, a flagrant violation of the Algeciras Act.

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“This drastic proceeding, which the position of Europeans in the Moroccan capital did not justify, restored to us our freedom of action. Still, we were unwilling to move without making a last effort to arrive at an understanding. To the dispatch notifying the Imperial Government I replied with a simple acknowledgment of receipt. A little later on, however, at Kissingen, where M. Cambon had come to pay me a visit, I spoke for the first time of Germany's claim to a compensation. We admitted that it was out of the question to make France draw back and conform to the Algeciras treaty. We consented to give up Morocco to her, on certain conditions, but we demanded in return a cession of territory in Africa.

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“Since this friendly conversation led to no result, just as our proposals, in accordance with the 1909 agreement, for a joint working of economic enterprises in Morocco by our respective nationals met with no direct answer from Paris, we decided to send the *Panther* to Agadir.

“By this action we made it clear to France that we regarded the Algeciras compact—which she had been the first to evade—as no longer binding. Germany, having protégés in the south of Morocco, wished henceforth to assume the right of protecting them. Still, she was perfectly willing, in the meantime, to converse with France and to settle, once for all, the terms on which the French suzerainty over the Shereefian Empire should be recognized.

“All this was fully realized by M. Cambon,” Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter went on, adding a high tribute of praise to the Republican envoy. “Unfortunately, the various projects for an agreement, after being drawn up in Berlin, were always recast at the Quai d’Orsay. That is why the diplomatic conversations, instead of lasting a fortnight, dragged on for four months—a delay that unsettled the public mind and gave rise to a dangerous Press campaign in both countries.”

Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter did not know the French, otherwise he would have foreseen the inevitable sequel of such an outrage to the national sentiment—a truce to the feuds of political

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parties, a single wave of patriotism sweeping from one end of France to the other, and a determination, which the most moderate would share with the most hot-headed, to face a war, no matter how terrible it might be, rather than continue to be goaded beyond endurance by German insults. Personally, he was not inclined for war. The Emperor, who at that time also seemed anxious to keep the peace, had markedly been held aloof from the negotiations. The German army, although greatly strengthened by the 1911 bill, had not yet reached its highest pitch of readiness for fighting. The French army had no little advantage over its rival in the development of machine-guns and of aviation. Moreover, Germany would once more have found England, as at Algeciras, ranged on the side of France; the speeches of English ministers, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd-George, which caused no less surprise than irritation in Berlin, left no room for doubt on that score. To the German commercial world the prospect of a naval war was more distasteful than ever. For all these reasons, it was necessary to come to an agreement, and in the end peace was signed, in the shape of the Convention of 4th November.

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VI.

The guarantees obtained by Germany for her subjects and protégés consisted mainly in freedom of trade and economic liberty, and consequently in being on an equal footing with the French in the matter of concessions. She was assured, furthermore, that her manufacturers could draw on Morocco for iron ore (in which the subsoil there is very abundant), since no export duty would be imposed on this product. On her side, she promised not to fetter the action of France as regards aiding the Sultan to introduce administrative, judicial, economic, financial, and military reforms. The expository letters interchanged on the same day between the ambassador and the Secretary of State were still more definite. "Should the French Government," wrote Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, "think it advisable to assume the protectorate of Morocco, the Imperial Government would do nothing to impede such action." An inevitable result of this promise was the disappearance of consular jurisdiction. "The German Government," said Kiderlen-Wächter's dispatch, "from the day that the new judicial system comes into force, after due arrangement with the Powers, will consent at the same time as the other Powers to the abolition of its consular courts."

The territorial concessions in Africa demanded by Germany seemed at first sight rather trifling: a stretch of country with two projecting arms, which shot out from the Atlantic coast, the one reaching to the right bank of the Lower Congo, up to the mouth of the Sanga, with a breadth (to be fixed later) of some four to eight miles; the other, with a corresponding breadth, to Lobay, where the Congo is met by its great tributary, the Oubanghi. Yet these antennæ or "tentacles," as they were called later, were strong enough to rivet the Germans on to the Congo basin, whence they had till then been excluded. This is what made the acquisition an important one, with the prospect of serious consequences in the future. In the course of the negotiations, Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter had declared that his Government regarded access to the Congo as a condition *sine qua non* of the agreement.

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At the last moment, he even demanded the cession to Germany of the preferential or preemptive right possessed by France over the territories of the old Congo Free State. This right she had retained when the territories passed into the hands of Belgium. The latter could not acquiesce in the ceding of such a privilege to a third Power without her assent, without her being even consulted. A preferential right is not a bill of exchange or a mortgage, transferable at pleasure to a third party. The prerogative had been granted to France alone by King Leopold, under special circumstances, with a view to ultimate advantages and as a return for waiving the right of first settlement in certain districts of the Lower Congo valley, over which Stanley and Brazza had had a dispute as to priority of occupation. Still less would Belgium have understood why the renunciation of so personal a privilege, and one connected with a Belgian colony, should be among the clauses of a treaty relating to Morocco. The Republican Government, foreseeing Belgium's opposition and appreciating the reasons for it, would not allow this preferential right to be mentioned in the expository letters. At M. Cambon's advice, the following Article XVI., which, in his opinion, should prove a guarantee to Belgium against any expropriation, was inserted in the text of the Convention: "Should the territorial statute for the Congo Basin as defined by the Berlin treaty of 26th February 1884 come to be modified by one or other of the high contracting parties, the latter must confer on the subject among themselves, as well as with the other Powers that have signed the instrument." In point of fact, on the strength of this article, the exercise of preferential right was subjected to German control.

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The Belgian public learnt with painful surprise of the German designs on the Congo State, and the Press gave free utterance to its anger and its dismay. Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter was exceedingly vexed, not only at Belgian comment on his demands, but at the fact that they had been made known to us at all. He did not hide his annoyance from my predecessor, but vented it with a good deal of bluster, and consciously exaggerated his fears, after our display of feeling, for the future good relations between the two countries.

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It was thus that Belgium, while quietly pursuing her work of colonial development, became involved in the dispute arising out of the Agadir affair. The effect of the German claims on Morocco was felt, like the shock from some distant explosion, in the Congo basin, where we were to be faced at two points with a neighbour whose cupidity and daring gave us good cause to be uneasy. That our apprehensions were well grounded is, I think, fairly clear from my account, in another chapter, of the African policy approved by official circles in Berlin.

"You are the masters in Morocco," the Chancellor had said to the French ambassador, after the signing of the Convention.¹³ Was this really true? Would the German public endorse the statement? It had expected something very different from a recognition of French suzerainty. It had anticipated a partition of Morocco between France and Germany; the latter would have obtained the fertile southern regions washed by the Atlantic. The more the discussions were drawn out, breeding an excitement which the most trivial episode might have changed into war-fever, the stronger grew the hope of a partition. To dream of a colony, rich in natural resources of every kind, and to wake up amid the swamps of the Sanga and the Oubanghi—what a disillusion! And Germany, on her side, was ceding some territories in the region of Lake Tchad! Public opinion, now that its eyes were opened, turned its wrath against the unwilling author of this "sell." No one was more unpopular in Germany, during the autumn of 1911, than the ill-starred Kiderlen-Wächter. After the Agadir coup, which had a faint Bismarckian touch about it, too much reliance had been placed on his shrewdness and energy; and now came the reaction. Not only was German diplomacy pilloried by the whole bourgeois Press and scornfully compared with that of France, but even in the Reichstag the galling Convention of November 4th was spoken of in terms that suggested a national humiliation.

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It is quite certain that, apart from the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary, no German who took an interest in politics considered this diplomatic instrument as a final treaty. As a provisional armistice, allowing for a breathing-space before Germany plunged into Africa, it might pass; but no more than that. When it came to putting the Convention into practice, nothing was done beyond a few initial measures. The Wilhelmstrasse proclaimed its sincere wish to carry out the compact, but refused to specify when, if ever, the minister at Tangier would be superseded by a consul-general, and when (a point that was taken for granted) the consular jurisdiction would be abolished. Morocco was far from being pacified; in the interests even of the Republican Government, it was asserted, no hasty conclusions must be drawn as to the achievement of progress or reform.

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In Germany the peaceful settlement of the 1911 crisis gave a mighty impetus to the war party, to the propaganda of the Union of Defence and the Navy League, and added considerable weight to their demands. Their visions of supremacy and domination were now blended with a fierce desire for revenge on France. A diplomatic success, won in a clandestine struggle, meant nothing. In the eyes of this rancorous tribe, only a war, a fight in the open, could solve the Moroccan problem for good and all, by incorporating Morocco and all French Africa in that colonial empire which they hoped to build up on the shores of the Mediterranean and in the heart of the Dark Continent.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE EASTERN QUESTION.

I.

THE revolution of 1908 had set up in Turkey a constitutional system or, more properly speaking, a travesty of one, by unearthing the 1876 constitution from the dust in which it lay buried. Count von Aehrenthal, who in Vienna aimed at politics on the grand scale—a personal policy, modelled on that of the statesmen of Berlin—took advantage of the internal troubles arising from the overthrow of the Hamidian despotism to convert into a formal annexation (7th October 1908) the right of occupying Bosnia-Herzegovina granted to the Dual Monarchy by the Congress of Berlin. The pretext was ready to hand: Francis Joseph could not allow the inhabitants of provinces under his control to send deputies to a Parliament assembling at Constantinople. The Austrian minister thought to disarm the opposition of the Young Turks by withdrawing the Austro-Hungarian garrisons from the Sandjak of Novibazar. All he did, in reality, was to weaken the position of his Government in the ensuing conflict.

This conflict lasted through the winter of 1908-1909, and came near to provoking a European war. On the one side was Austria-Hungary, supported by Germany; on the other, not only Turkey, but also Serbia, with Russia at her back.

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The Belgrade Cabinet had sent to the Powers a protest against the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, describing it as "a serious injury to the feelings, the interests, and the rights of the Serbian people." Serbia's concern in the Austro-Turkish quarrel, which was marked by a Turkish boycott of Austrian and Hungarian goods, is easily explained. The arbitrary act of the Vienna Cabinet threatened to cut off the Bosnian people forever from that of Serbia, to which it was attached by a common origin. The Serbians could not calmly endure the severing of these blood-ties, since it boded the ruin of their dearest national aspirations and the end of their dreams of a wider empire to come.

As regards the Cabinet of Berlin, we do not know whether it was consulted by Count von Aehrenthal as to the advisability of annexation, or merely informed that the step was about to be taken. We must entirely dismiss the view that Berlin itself suggested the playing of this shabby trick on Turkey. But did it more or less approve of what had been done? Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, who was then interim chief at the Wilhelmstrasse, and who had not the art of concealing his dislikes, always spoke of the Austrian minister in a sarcastic tone. He was certainly no supporter of Aehrenthal's adventurous policy, nor can the Imperial Government have looked upon it with favour. The fall of absolutism at Constantinople was in itself a serious blow to German influence there, which was based upon Abdul Hamid's friendship. This critical moment in William II.'s diplomacy was chosen by the minister of his most loyal ally for tearing up the Treaty of Berlin, for annulling with a stroke of the pen the Sultan's shadowy rule over two ancient Ottoman provinces, and for thus lowering his religious prestige as Caliph in the eyes of Mussulmans and kindling the wrath of the Young Turks against Germanism. At the same time, the Prince of Bulgaria, acting in agreement with the Cabinet of Vienna, declared himself independent.

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When Germany, however, saw Austria-Hungary at loggerheads with Russia, who had flown to the rescue of Serbia, she did not hesitate to stand firmly by her ally, and Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter was the first to suggest that the German ambassador in St. Petersburg should show a menacing front, in order to end the dispute as soon as possible. Doubtless the Foreign Secretary was not loath to show the presumptuous Aehrenthal that he could not get out of the scrape by his own unaided efforts. The successful result of his counsels, the retreat of Russia, followed by Belgrade's resolve to drop its protest against the annexation, made Kiderlen-Wächter very popular in Court circles, and caused him to be looked upon as the coming man. From now onward, those best qualified to judge expected great things of this former welcome guest at Bismarck's house and favourite pupil of the old professor of Teuton diplomacy, the celebrated Holstein.

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The motives for Germany's interference are well-known. She could not allow the solidity of the Triple to be shaken. She owed a debt of gratitude to her ally, who had not withheld her support at the Algeciras Conference. Finally, since she fancied that England, Russia, and France were attempting to encircle her, she was anxious to prove that the mere gesture of putting her hand to her sword would be enough to dispel the illusions of her foes. The machinations of Paris and London would break down, she thought, at the touch of reality, at the collision with German military power. The risk of war, whatever may have been said at the time, was not very great. Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, who, as I have already said, was not at heart a fighter, though he humoured the Emperor's newly-acquired taste for warlike phrases in diplomatic conversations, had seen this clearly enough. Russia had not yet recovered from the wounds inflicted on her by the struggle with Japan and by the revolutionary outbreaks to which that struggle gave rise. In France, the national sentiment, which had scarcely yet rallied from the shocks of the Moroccan disputes, was not likely to be roused by the call of Serbian aspirations. In London, it is true, the Government and public opinion had roundly condemned the infringement of the Treaty of Berlin by Austrian diplomacy. But it is a long way from an academic reproof to an effective intervention.

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Yet the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the pressure brought to bear by the Count de Pourtalès at St. Petersburg had far more serious results than had been anticipated at Berlin. These moves exercised a far-reaching influence on all the later conduct of the Tsar's Government, and their rebound could be clearly traced in the rigid attitude shown by that

Government when a new Austro-Serbian conflict came to trouble the peace of Europe. The crisis of 1909 enabled Russia to realize the full value of M. Isvolsky's skill and foresight, in that he had managed, since 1907, to draw her close both to her recent enemy in the Far East and to her age-long rival in Central Asia. But for the agreements formed by this statesman with Japan and England, the alliances of to-day would have been impossible. Another outcome of the 1909 crisis was that of revealing to the Slav Empire the need for being armed to the teeth against its arrogant neighbour, and thus of hastening on its military reorganization. If the Emperor William and his advisers had not had such short memories, they would have been less astonished than they seemed to be afterwards at the rapid progress of Russia's armaments.

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The annexation policy of Count von Aehrenthal, which may well be regarded as one of the indirect causes of the present war, had other unfortunate effects on the Dual Monarchy. The ease with which the triumph had been won led the bullies of Vienna and Buda-Pesth to imagine that high-handed methods would always be successful. They fancied that the Tsar's Government, from fear of seeing the two Germanic Empires ranged against it, would not dare to cross Austria-Hungary's path, if the latter set herself one day to chastise Serbia.

The clash of the Habsburg monarchy with the valiant people of Kara George over the Bosnian question was only the first lunge in a duel where the weaker of the two adversaries, compelled to be wary, became all the more dangerous in that he shifted his ground. A subterranean movement carried on by Pan-Serb societies which had long been at work with alternating fits of activity and quiescence began from this time forth to excite, without respite, the separatist feeling of the Bosnian and Croat communities. This was the most definite result of Aehrenthal's rash policy, but he did not live to see it come to pass. He had tried to pour fresh blood into the veins of that great emaciated body, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to make this dotard, racked with incurable diseases, play an active part on the European stage. All that he did was to embitter the mutual hatred of Austria and Serbia, and, by laying rash hands upon the work of Bismarck, Beaconsfield, and Andrassy, to revive the Eastern question—that fiery furnace, dreaded by several generations of diplomats, which still smouldered beneath the ashes of the Treaty of Berlin.

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II.

Two years passed. Germany spent them in recovering, bit by bit, the ground she had lost at Constantinople after the dethronement of Abdul Hamid. Her dexterous ambassador succeeded in winning the elusive confidence of the Committee of Union and Progress, just as he had won that of the despot. The enterprises of German finance and industry were spreading their tentacles further and further in Asiatic Turkey. The Turkish army acquired the obvious stamp of Prussian discipline, although the corps of officers, in losing the old Ottoman spirit handed down by its forbears, was somewhat shorn of its martial qualities; it concerned itself too much with politics, and not enough with the men under its command. During the Agadir crisis the Near East remained outwardly quiet, except in Crete, where the people's eagerness to be reunited with the Hellenic mother-country became more and more difficult to curb.

The first Power that broke in upon this deceptive calm was again an ally of Germany—Italy. She knew that at Constantinople the sham constitutional system had done nothing more than substitute the tyranny of a faction for that of an individual. It was only the Young Turks, with their blatant ineptitude, that had any illusions as to the real weakness of their country, the rottenness at its core. After Agadir and the Franco-German Convention, Italy hastened to seize the portion that had been allotted to her in her agreements with France. The fear of seeing German traders securely planted at Tripoli and Bengazi perhaps made her decide all the more quickly. The Libyan expedition was prepared in secret, in order to baffle both the vigilance of Turkey and the suspicions of Germany, who learnt, when it was too late to demur, of the proposed assault on the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. That empire was still a trump card for Germany in the game to be played later against the Dual Alliance—a steadfast auxiliary, whose task it would be to divert a large part of the enemy's forces.

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Such was the mutual confidence prevailing in 1911 among the members of the Triple Alliance! But the Libyan campaign, contrary to the hopes entertained in Rome at the outset, degenerated into a weary round of guerrilla warfare. It seemed impossible for the two sides to come to grips, and for one or the other to strike decisive blows. Turkey was in a position to continue the struggle, outside Africa, without fatigue or vital losses, up to the moment when Italy transferred the theatre of her operations to the Ægean sea, and occupied Rhodes and the islands of the Dodecanese. She thus obtained a hostage of which she would not let go, and an excellent naval base in the Eastern Mediterranean. The capture of the Greek islands had certain effects upon the peace of Europe: it aroused the patriotic jealousy of Greece, and helped to bring about the formation of the Balkan League. When the latter came down in full array from the Balkan heights, Turkey and Italy, at the instance of Germany, resolved to sign the Peace of Ouchy.

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If the Vienna Cabinet resuscitated the Eastern question in 1909, the Quirinal Cabinet in 1911 certainly contributed towards keeping it alive. Moreover, it was the inventor of a process for making war inevitable—the ultimatum sent when all is at peace, couched in such imperious terms, and with such a brief interval for reply, that the only possible answer is a resort to arms. The Balkan States, and above all Austria-Hungary, were careful to study this model.

III.

Was the formation of the Balkan League or Confederacy, covertly patronized by Russian

diplomacy, known to the Cabinets of Berlin and Vienna? I am inclined to think that they were not informed of it until the moment when the Confederates were ready to give battle; otherwise, they would have tried to hold them back or to sow dissensions among them. Germany and Austria-Hungary alike were greatly concerned to keep Turkey intact, that they might draw freely, not only upon her military strength, but also upon her financial resources. Things were quite bad enough when she became involved in the struggle with Italy, which had threatened to drag on for ever. But when the Montenegrins, venturing on a forlorn hope, began hostilities, the German Government at once saw its chance in this new complication. It had no doubts as to the ultimate success of the Turks. The retired officers who wrote for Berlin newspapers trotted out a host of figures and technical details to prove the overwhelming superiority of the Ottoman army. The Serbs and the Greeks, who were no better now than when they were beaten at Slivnitsa and Domokos respectively, would be swallowed at a single gulp. The Bulgarian army would offer a more stubborn resistance, but it was deficient both in numbers and in training. Accordingly Berlin laughed at the proposal of the Paris Cabinet that no change should be permitted in the frontiers of the Balkan States. The Wilhelmstrasse made a show of accepting it, with the mental reservation that later on, when the triumph of the Crescent was assured, it would adopt the views of the Vienna Cabinet, which had little inclination for showing mercy to the Confederates.

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If ever a war, before its opening stages, appeared to be a futile shedding of blood, it was this one. For the matter of that, the illusion only lasted a few days. I dined at Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter's on the evening when news was brought him of the Turkish defeat at Kirk Kilisse. No words of mine can paint his amazement. He almost refused to believe that a fortified position, held by excellent troops, should have been carried in a few hours by an army of peasants. After the brilliant victory of the Serbians at Kumanovo, however, and the entry of the Greeks into Salonika, he was forced to admit the overthrow of the Ottoman power. But the most cruel shock to German self-esteem was to hear the French artillery, with which the Allies were supplied, praised at the expense of the Krupp guns used by the vanquished army, and strictures passed upon the German tactics, which Marshal Von der Goltz had hammered so thoroughly into the heads of the Turkish officers. Thus the first stones were cast at two reputations hitherto unchallenged, and defended with might and main at Berlin.

The disasters of the Turks before the armistice had an extraordinary moral effect in Germany. The new principle laid down by the friends of the victors, "The Balkans for the Balkan nations," seemed to be accepted without much cavil by the Imperial Government and the Press. A scornful indifference towards Turkey and her misfortunes suddenly took the place of their former cordial friendliness. The Emperor, always ready to turn aside from the weak and to make advances to the strong, was one of the first to perform this interesting change of front. The Wilhelmstrasse exerted itself above all to soothe the anger of the Ballplatz and to stifle its faint cries for intervention, preaching the doctrine that Turkey should be left to her fate. I learned on good authority that when William II. took leave of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who, under colour of taking part in an Imperial shooting party, had come to Berlin to discuss the situation with him, he exclaimed, just as the train was starting: "Now remember—no silly adventures!"

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The confining of the Ottoman Empire to its Asiatic possessions, with Constantinople as a bridgehead in Europe, was a solution regarded at Berlin during the whole winter, after and even before the capture of Adrianople, as eminently acceptable. The abandonment of her European provinces, which had become a serious burden on the Ottoman Treasury, would leave Turkey free to devote all her resources to exploiting her neglected domains in Anatolia and Syria, where her real wealth lay. The Crescent would shine with more dazzling radiance in the sky of Asia. The Berlin Press threw out hints of this kind to its Constantinople friends by way of consolation. Since German finance and industry had locked up vast sums of capital in the Asiatic vilayets for the building of railways and the irrigation of the adjoining land concessions, the most urgent business of the Imperial Government seemed to consist henceforth in ensuring the success of these undertakings. The directors of the Deutsche Bank, concessionaires for the Bagdad Railway, made every effort to discover means of saving the flotsam and jetsam of the Turkish wreck, and of settling the financial problems on which it was already decided a conference was to sit in Paris.

IV.

During the winter the conference of ambassadors, meeting in London and presided over by Sir Edward Grey, had revealed among the Powers a desire (universal, if varying in degree) to join hands in warding off European complications, and to put an end, as early as possible, to the Balkan struggle, by persuading the Ottoman Government to acquiesce in the sacrifices that it must make sooner or later. Their harmony set public opinion at rest. The final peace, for which the ambassadors were working so hard, seemed nearer and nearer, despite the breaking-off of the armistice and the renewal of hostilities by the Young Turks, whom a military plot had restored to power. When Dr. Daneff, the Bulgarian delegate in London, tactlessly vetoed Roumania's demand for a rectification of frontier—the proposed Greater Bulgaria gave Roumania fears, not only for her own security, but for the Balkan balance of power—some regret was felt, but the possibility of a fresh struggle did not occur to any one. Before the end of March, however, the whole aspect of affairs had changed. A rift began to appear between the Dual Alliance and the Triplice, and the worst days of the 1911 summer seemed likely to repeat themselves. This was due, in the first place, to the sinister awakening of the Vienna Cabinet—its rage at seeing the steady advance of the Serbians and their approach to the Adriatic shores; and, secondly, to the dawn of strained relations between France and Germany after the news that their bills for

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military increases had already been framed.

The expulsion of the Serbians from the Adriatic and the raising of a barrier against the encroachments of Slavism and Hellenism on that seaboard was a programme by which the Berlin Cabinet hoped to reconcile the interests, almost always conflicting, of its allies. Italy, well disposed towards the Balkan States, but above all desirous of maintaining the Austro-Italian balance in the Adriatic (this had been one of the reasons for her entry into the Triple Alliance), was not inclined to let Greece, by occupying the excellent Adriatic port of Valona, extend her maritime power along the eastern coast of that sea. Nor was she minded to help in establishing there a focus of Slav propaganda, to which the Slavonic elements of Dalmatia and Istria would have converged. The Triple Alliance craftily reasserted the principle used before as a weapon against Turkey, "The Balkans for the Balkan nations," in order to create an independent Albania, a motley assemblage of tribes professing three distinct religions and sundered by immemorial hatreds. The new State, in conformity with an agreement between the Consulta and the Ballplatz, was to live under the twofold protection of Austria-Hungary and Italy, who would thus exercise a sort of *condominium*. Like other experiments of the kind, but after an even briefer interval, this joint control developed into an open rivalry.

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The Vienna Cabinet, burning to avenge its diplomatic failures, and feeling assured of Berlin's support, decided on 20th March to send a threatening note to the Montenegrins, who were on the point of capturing Scutari through the connivance of Essad Pasha, its defender. The note was followed by the appearance of an Austrian squadron off the coasts of Albania and Montenegro. It will be remembered with what a stormy display of public feeling on behalf of the Serbians and Montenegrins the news of this step was received in France and in Russia. Yet the storm was merely on the surface; neither nation was stirred to its depths. If the Paris and St. Petersburg Cabinets had been guided by a certain section of their Press, they would have found themselves on the threshold of a war at a very unfavourable juncture; for the Cabinet of St. James's, which was then indifferent to Serbia, would not have come to their aid, and, on the other hand, they would have been confronted with the solid and formidable mass of the Triple Alliance. At Berlin, the outbreak of war seemed so likely to the Imperial Government that officers and men of the reserve were ordered to keep themselves in readiness for the call to mobilize.

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Fortunately, those who conducted the policy of the Dual Alliance saw the danger ahead before it was too late. They clung to the compromise suggested at the London Conference, leaving the two Serb States nothing but the districts of Ipek, Djakovo, and Prizrend, and reserving Scutari for the future principality of Albania. In accordance with the unanimous will of the great Powers, and despite the indignant protests of some French and Russian newspapers, the King of Montenegro, at the beginning of May, consented to evacuate Scutari, where detachments of troops from the Powers were then garrisoned. On the 30th of the same month a Turko-Balkan treaty was signed in London. Europe thought she could breathe again. She was in error: the peace was merely a makeshift.

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V.

In order to prove to the Reichstag the necessity for the new army bill submitted to it on 18th March, the explanatory statement alleged the early victories of the Balkan League as the primary motive. Austria-Hungary, crippled by this new coalition, which probably had Russia at its back, could no longer give Germany sufficient aid; and the latter, with only her own strength to rely upon, would have to face her enemies on two opposite fronts.

It was not true to say that the idea of enlarging German armaments had been prompted by the Balkan campaigns. The train had been laid for some time; the heavy war material for which credits were now demanded had already been ordered at Krupp's, and there were other expenses to which the Government was committed. But the Balkan conflict set a bad example to the Berlin Staff. It served as a stimulus, a flick of the whip to drive the nations into a universal war. Nevertheless, the Staff wished to give the army its finishing touches before Germany came to blows with her eastern and western adversaries, and perhaps some of these finishing touches were suggested by the experience of recent military events.

Curiously enough, the Chancellor, in his expository speech of 7th April on the bill, made no allusion to Italy or to the help that she might furnish. Was this omission due to a mistaken contempt for her fighting strength? This is unthinkable; he would have taken good care not to offend an ally who was naturally sensitive. The most likely assumption is that, in showing to his hearers Austria-Hungary at grips with the new Confederates in the Balkan danger-zone, where a victory of the Dual Monarchy would inevitably have affected that Austro-Italian balance which was one of the fundamentals of the Triple Alliance, he judged it more prudent to avoid all mention of Italy. We know to-day, from the publication of the Italian Green Book, that by Article 7 of the treaty Austria-Hungary was required to come to a previous understanding with Italy, if the *status quo* in the Balkans should be altered through her agency, by a temporary or permanent occupation of territory; the same obligation being, of course, imposed upon Italy. We can now form a better idea of the difficulties that would have beset the entry of Italy into a general war, destined, according to the anticipations or the wishes of the Central Empires, to include the interior of the Balkans in its scope. It was wiser, therefore, to say nothing about her co-operation. Strange though it may seem, the Chancellor's silence regarding the Latin ally aroused no comment either in the Reichstag or in the Press.

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As a matter of fact, the spectre of the Balkan League, at the time when the Chancellor raised it, was anything but formidable. The danger was about to vanish in smoke, and the Confederates, instead of sharing their booty like brothers, were already bent on settling its ownership by the

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sword. The Chancellor must have known this, however bad his information from diplomatic sources may have been. The army bill of 1913 was the climax of a plan worked out with elaborate care; the events of the autumn of 1913 merely supplied the pretext and the staging necessary for bringing it before the world.

Yet in the spring of 1913 William II., although he had stood by his allies in the Scutari affair, did not seem to desire an immediate war. Military and family reasons combined to stay his hand. The new bill, with its financial cover, had not yet been passed in the Reichstag, and the Emperor wished to celebrate peacefully in his capital both the twenty-fifth year of his reign and his daughter's wedding with Duke Ernest of Cumberland. Among those invited to the wedding ceremony, besides the families of the bride and bridegroom, were the sovereigns of Russia and Great Britain, owing to their ties of kinship. It was an occasion, chosen no doubt by design, for a final attempt to isolate Republican France from the monarchies of the Triple Entente. On the gala night at the opera, William II. beamed from the Imperial box, accompanied by the Empress and the bride, and with Tsar Nicholas, King George, and Queen Mary in his immediate neighbourhood. Following these came the young heir to the Guelph dynasty, whom adroit diplomacy, as well as certain leanings on his own part, had reconciled with the Hohenzollerns, although they had dethroned his grandfather. What a triumph for the German monarch, on whom Fortune seemed to have lavished all her smiles! The unforgettable picture of this almost insolent happiness brings back to our minds a close historical parallel—the famous command performances at Erfurt. There, too, a Cæsar, but a Cæsar with the conqueror's laurels on his brow, had a throng of royalties behind him, and talked affably with an Emperor of Russia before a resplendent audience. But after Erfurt Napoleon waited four years before quarrelling with Alexander. Only a year elapsed before William II. changed the open-hearted friendliness of his guests into implacable enmity, through their resolve to champion the cause of two little peoples, the victims of a wanton aggression.

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VI.

The law reviving the three years' term of military service was the immediate answer of the Republican Government to the bill demanding such great sacrifices from the German taxpayer, in order that the crushing superiority of the Imperial armies might be assured. When all doubts as to the passing of the French bill were removed, Germany's first thrill of surprise at this counterblast was turned to genuine indignation—an indignation that would have been comical if the issues at stake had not been so serious. To read the Berlin papers, one would have thought that only the German Empire had the right to arm in self-defence, and that France could claim no such privilege. In certain drawing-rooms, the revival of the three years' service was spoken of as a challenge to Germanism! A password went the round of the newspapers: dates were to be confused, and the French bill was to be represented as earlier than the German. This flagrant lie was blazoned abroad by the whole Press, with the exception of the Socialist organs, as a damning accusation against France. Dr. T. Schiemann, in the *Kreuzzeitung*, went so far as to maintain that the three years' term had been forced upon M. Poincaré by the Tsar, during the visit of the President (then Foreign Minister) to St. Petersburg in the previous year. It was the price exacted by Russia for her military aid and for the upkeep of the alliance.

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Whether this conscious incitement of Teuton jingoism would lead to grave results was a question that, in the eyes of a foreign observer, depended on the length of the simultaneous Parliamentary debates over the bills in Paris and Berlin. The journalistic attacks of the Germans were answered in a tone of equal asperity by the French Press. Should any regrettable incidents arise in the course of the debates, would the Republican Cabinet have enough control over French public opinion, would the Imperial Government have enough mastery over the Pan-Germans, to be able to find a prompt and friendly solution? No one has forgotten the stir caused in France, the distrust that seized hold of the public mind, when in the preceding April a Zeppelin, after flying some way over the frontier, unexpectedly came down at Lunéville. The brawl between French students and German tourists at Nancy had proved more difficult to smooth over. Fortunately, the Barthou Cabinet had not lost its head, but had managed, by rapid action, to forestall the demand for explanations and apologies which a very rabid journal, the semi-official *Kölnische Zeitung*, advised Herr von Jagow to demand from the Republican Government. Despite the perils of the situation, the summer supervened without bringing a catastrophe. The French and German bills were passed in a sultry political atmosphere, which already gave promise of a storm.

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The malignity of William II.'s Government towards France, and its indulgence towards those who sowed bad feeling in the country, as if to reap a harvest of hate, were nowhere more strikingly exhibited than in the persistent legend regarding the cruel treatment of German soldiers in the French Foreign Legion. Nothing would have been easier than officially to deny these alleged barbarities, as well as the reports of press-gang methods employed by agents of that famous corps in Germany—in short, to silence the canting protests to which its existence gave rise. Not only did the Government omit to do this, but it even tolerated, until a formal complaint was laid, the production in a Berlin theatre of a play in which the French uniform of the legionaries was held up to ridicule. One might have compared the Foreign Legion to a poisoned lancet, kept by the authorities for the purpose of envenoming, when it pleased them, their intercourse with France.

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VII.

While these dangerous frictions were the chief cause of anxiety to all who, like myself, felt that the peace of Europe hung upon Franco-German relations, it seems that at this period the attention of the European public was drawn rather to the grave events enacted in the Balkan theatre soon after the Treaty of London signed on 30th May. A new conflict was brewing in that quarter. As in previous cases, the efforts to localize it were successful, but it left behind it a leaven of spite and hatred that went on fermenting silently throughout the winter, until in the following summer it helped to produce a universal war.

A very heavy share of the responsibility for the second Balkan struggle falls to Austrian diplomacy. Austria could not resign herself to the inevitable and put up with the neighbourhood of a Serbia enhanced in power and prestige. The wrangles of the Confederates over the partition of Macedonia gave her the chance for which she had been waiting since the Ottoman disasters. It was she—there is no longer any doubt on this point—that instigated Bulgaria to attack her recent allies, promising to secure the inaction of Roumania. It never occurred to her that she was thus sacrificing a staunch ally who occupied an outpost on the Lower Danube, an island of Western culture in the sea of Slavdom; that the future of Roumania would be seriously jeopardized if Bulgaria became too strong. We have since learnt from M. Take Jonsescu that her mouthpiece at Bucharest, Prince Karl von Fürstenberg, even went so far as to bluster, in order to ensure that Roumanian troops should not intervene. It was all lost labour. The Austrian calculations were entirely thrown out of gear by the victories of the Greeks and Serbians and by their alliance with Roumania.

For forty-seven years King Carol had guided the destinies of his young kingdom with a wisdom that deserved its success. But his usual insight forsook him at the outbreak of hostilities in the Balkans. Like the Germans, he believed that the Turks would win; and Fortune, who is erroneously supposed to have no love for old men, seemed to deny him throughout the winter the means of correcting his mistake. His attitude even lost him some of his popularity with his subjects. Yet before the ensuing spring drew to its close, Fortune changed, and offered him an unlooked-for compensation. This time the aged monarch, seizing the opportunity provided by the overweening ambition of his rival in political cunning, the Tsar of Bulgaria, decided to strike while the iron was hot. Though it meant breaking the secret convention that bound him to Austria, and dealing a cruel blow to his great friendship with Francis Joseph, he forged ahead, and thus, without its costing him a single drop of Roumanian blood, enjoyed the proud privilege of dictating the Treaty of Bucharest to the Bulgars, who had been rendered utterly helpless by the entry of his troops into the field. When the Cabinet of Vienna urged that this treaty should be submitted to the Powers for revision, the King haughtily opposed its claim. No doubt he was privately assured of support from Germany, who was determined to humour Roumania in order to keep her under her own thumb; for he telegraphed his gratitude to the Emperor William in a phrase that needs no comment: "Thanks to you, the peace is a conclusive one."

We may gather, therefore, that the Berlin Cabinet had not followed that of Vienna in its crooked, intriguing policy at Sofia and Bucharest. As Herr von Zimmermann remarked to me at the time, the Imperial Government was content to observe neutrality towards the Balkan States, interposing only with advice that might cool the frenzy of their strife. There is no reason to question the truth of this statement. The line of conduct adopted by Germany was all the more skilful in that it furthered the military renaissance of Turkey. The success of the plot that secured the dictatorship for Enver Bey and the Young Turks had been hailed with delight at Berlin. When Tsar Ferdinand committed the blunder of withdrawing the Bulgarian garrison from Adrianople in order to cope with his enemies in Macedonia, the second city of the Ottoman Empire fell without a blow into the hands of its former masters. After this easy triumph, the German Government, under threat of coercive measures (very difficult, by the way, to carry out), refused to join the Triple Entente Powers for the purpose of forcing the Turks to disgorge their prize and restrict themselves to the frontier fixed at the London Conference. Thus the Treaty of London, with the ink upon it scarcely dry, could be torn up with impunity. Turkey's gratitude for this moral support was destined to efface the memory of her abandonment by her former protectress at the time of her early reverses. Finally, under the auspices of German diplomacy, more influential than ever at the Porte, peace was signed in a treaty which deprived the Bulgarians of the greater part of their conquests in Thrace.

How far did the Cabinet of Berlin, on the morrow of the Peace of Bucharest, which it approved, associate itself with the step that has been revealed to us by the remarkable disclosures of Signor Giolitti to the Italian Parliament? Austria-Hungary, eager for action, would fain have crushed Serbia in the full tide of her victory. From the 9th of August 1913 Vienna made overtures with this object to the Quirinal, but the latter would not listen to its suggestions. If Germany had considered the moment favourable for reopening the Balkan question and satisfying at the same time her European ambitions, she would have ignored Italy's scruples; she would have drawn the sword in company with her impatient ally, as she did a year later. But, in the Emperor's opinion, the hour had not yet struck for the execution of his far-reaching designs.

VIII.

In the course of the following winter, a characteristic action showed to the more clear-sighted how important Turkey and her military reorganization had once more become in the eyes of the Berlin Staff. One of the ablest German generals, Liman von Sanders, was sent with a large mission to Constantinople, in order to take over the command of the First Army Corps, revive the German system of training for the Turkish soldier, and re-establish the auxiliary services. To meet the objections raised by the Russian ambassador, the authorities changed his title to that of

Inspector-General with the rank of Marshal. At the same time, Enver Bey, whose devotion to Germany was notorious, was appointed War Minister, and at once began a process of ruthless weeding-out among the higher grade officers. What did this appointment of a German to the head of the army and this radical clearance in the cadre of generals betoken, if not a desire to make the military forces of Turkey fitted, as soon as possible, and under the most trustworthy leaders, to play the part assigned to them in the next war?

To make up for this activity, William II. displayed an utter indifference to the fate of Albania, although he had done so much towards bringing the new State into the world. More enlightened, no doubt, than his allies as to the chances of life possessed by this sickly offspring of their diplomacy, he had not thought it advisable that a German prince should plot for the Albanian crown, and had left it to the Court of Vienna to patronize the claimant. After the first tragi-comic episodes of the Durazzo siege, the Imperial Government, ashamed of the ridicule that this foolish business brought upon the German name, calmly washed its hands of the luckless Prince von Wied.

During the last months before the cataclysm, relations became still closer, and the interchange of views still more frequent, between the Courts of Berlin and Vienna. William II. and the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the real guiding spirit of Austro-Hungarian statecraft, missed no opportunity of seeing each other and conversing at length. They were like two conspirators, furtively laying their heads together for some momentous deed. In April the Kaiser paid a visit to the Austrian Crown Prince at Miramar, and in June at Konopischt, in Bohemia, where he was accompanied by the Secretary of State for the Navy. Both the curiosity of the public and the professional interest of diplomats were aroused by these marks of a friendship that was too intimate not to give cause for anxiety. On the occasion of the Konopischt meeting, the German ambassador in London was instructed to reassure the British Foreign Secretary as to the presence of Admiral von Tirpitz in the Emperor's retinue. The visit, it was stated, had no military object. The Ambassador did protest too much! The Admiral, we may be sure, did not leave home in order to enjoy the fragrance of the Bohemian roses. It is more than doubtful, however, whether we shall ever know the purport of these conversations; one of those who took part in them is already in the grave. Did they, at Konopischt, remodel the map of Europe, assign the mastery of the Mediterranean to the Austro-German squadrons, fix the moment for the great upheaval? The Archduke, so far as one can read into the soul of this inscrutable prince, seemed to be the most eager for war. Yet, by a decree of fate, he did not live to see the accomplishment of the plans that he drew up in cold blood with his guests amid the exquisite gardens of his lordly mansion.

In the spring of 1914 Germany and Austria-Hungary, who both had old scores to pay off in connection with Morocco and the Balkans respectively, reached the zenith of their military preparations. The German army was ready at all points, and the Austro-Hungarian army was as ready as it can ever be. The airships and aeroplanes were only waiting for the signal to leave their sheds; the heavy guns, an array of monsters, were already marshalled in the artillery parks. All that was wanted was a pretext. As Dr. Schiemann had pointed out in the *Kreuzzeitung*, however, Germany could have a war with France merely by letting Austria fly at Serbia's throat. Prophetic words, which a political crime was to bear out, while at the same time it was to give William II. the pretext he required for appearing before Europe as an instrument of justice and vengeance!

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE WEEK OF TRAGEDY.

I.

THE Archduke Francis Ferdinand will go down to posterity without having yielded up his secret. Great political designs have been ascribed to him, mainly on the strength of his friendship with William II. What do we really know about him? That he was strong-willed and obstinate, very Clerical, very Austrian, disliking the Hungarians to such an extent that he kept their statesmen at arm's length, and having no love for Italy. He has been credited with sympathies towards the Slav elements of the Empire; it has been asserted that he dreamt of setting up, in place of the dual monarchy, a "triune" State, in which the third factor would have been made up for the most part of Slav provinces carved out of the Kingdom of St. Stephen. Immediately after he had been murdered, the *Vossische Zeitung* refuted this theory with arguments which seemed to me thoroughly sound. The Archduke, said the Berlin newspaper, was too keen-witted not to see that he would thus be creating two rivals for Austria instead of one, and that the Serb populations would come within the orbit of Belgrade rather than of Vienna. Serbia would become the Piedmont of the Balkans; she would draw to herself the Slavs of the Danube valley by a process of crystallization similar to that which brought about Italian unity.

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From year to year, the Archduke had acquired more and more weight in the governance of the Empire, in proportion as his uncle's will grew weaker beneath the burden of advancing age. Thus he had succeeded in his efforts to provide Austria-Hungary with a new navy, the counterpart, on a more modest scale, of the German fleet, and to reorganize the effective army, here again taking Germany for his model. Among certain cliques, he was accused of not keeping enough in the background, of showing little tact or consideration in his manner of thrusting aside the phantom Emperor, who was gently gliding into the winter of his years at Schönbrunn, amid the veneration of his subjects of every race. Another charge was that he appointed too many of his creatures to important civil and military posts.

We may well believe that this prince, observing the gradual decay of the monarchy, tried to restore its vigour, and that his first thought was to hold with a firm grasp, even before assuming the Imperial crown, the cluster of nationalities, mutually hostile and always discontented, that go to make up the Dual Empire. So far as foreign relations are concerned, we may assume that he was bent on winning her a place in the first rank of Powers; that he wished, above all, to see her predominant all along the Danube and in the Balkans; that he even aimed at giving her the road to Salonika and the Levant, though it were at the price of a collision with Russia. This antagonism between the two neighbour Empires must have often been among the topics of his conversations with William II.

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The Archduke needed military glory, prestige won on the battlefield, in order to seat his consort firmly on the throne and make his children heirs to the Cæsars. He had been suspected, both in Austria and abroad, of not wishing to observe the family compact which he had signed at the time of his marriage with Countess Sophie Chotek. It was thought that he perhaps reserved the right to declare it null and void, in view of the constraint that had been put upon him. The successive honours that had drawn the Duchess of Hohenberg from the obscurity in which themorganatic wife of a German prince is usually wrapped, and had brought her near to the steps of the throne, showed clearly that her rise would not stop halfway. The Archduke, like William II. himself, was reputed to be an exemplary father and husband. He was one of those princes who adore their own children, but, under the spur of political ambition, are very prone to send the children of others to the shambles. A fine theme for Socialist and Republican preachers to enlarge upon!

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I often met the heir to the Imperial crown, especially at Vienna in 1910, where I had the honour of accompanying my Sovereign, and two years later at Munich, at the Prince Regent's funeral. On each occasion this Hapsburg, with his heavy features, his scowling expression, and his rather corpulent figure (quite different from the slim build characteristic of his line), struck me as a singular type. His face was certainly not sympathetic, nor was his manner engaging. The Duchess of Hohenberg, whom, after having known her as a little girl when her father was Austrian Minister at Brussels, I found gracefully doing the honours in the Belvedere Palace, had retained in her high station the genial simplicity of the Chotek family. This probably did not prevent her from cherishing the loftiest ambitions for herself, and above all for her eldest son, and from coveting the glory of the double crown.

II.

The news that an assassin's hand had struck down the Archduke and his wife, inseparable even in death, burst upon Berlin on the afternoon of Sunday, 28th June, like an unexpected thunderclap in the midst of a calm summer's day. I went over at once to the Austro-Hungarian Embassy, in order to express all the horror that I felt at this savage drama. Count Szögyeny, the senior member of the diplomatic corps, was on the eve of resigning the post that he had held for twenty years, honoured by all his colleagues. It was whispered that his removal had been asked for by the Archduke, who was anxious to introduce young blood into the diplomatic service. I found the Ambassador quite overcome by the terrible news. He seemed stricken with grief at the thought of his aged Sovereign, who had already lost so many of his nearest and dearest, and of

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the Dual Empire, robbed of its most skilful pilot, and with no one to steer it now but an octogenarian leaning on a youth of twenty-six. M. Cambon had come to the Embassy at the same time, and we left together, discussing the results, still impossible to foresee clearly, that this fatality might have for European affairs.

From the very next day the tone of the Berlin Press, in commenting on the Serajevo tragedy, was full of menace. It expected the Vienna Cabinet to send to Belgrade an immediate request for satisfaction, if Serbian subjects, as it was believed, were among those who had devised and carried out the plot. But how far would this satisfaction go, and in what form would it be demanded? There was the rub. The report, issued by the semi-official *Lokalanzeiger*, of a pressure exerted by the Austro-Hungarian minister, with a view to making the Serbian Government institute proceedings against the anarchist societies of which the Archduke and his wife had been the victims, surprised no one, but was not confirmed. On the other hand, a softer breeze soon blew from Vienna and Buda-Pesth, and under its influence the excitement of the Berlin newspapers suddenly abated. An order seemed to have been issued: the rage and fluster of the public were to be allowed to cool down. The Austro-Hungarian Government, so we were informed by the news agencies, were quietly taking steps to prosecute the murderers. Count Berchtold, in speaking to the diplomatic corps at Vienna, and Count Tisza, in addressing Parliament at Buda-Pesth, used reassuring language, which raised hopes of a peaceful solution.

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The Wilhelmstrasse also expressed itself in very measured terms on the guarantees that would be demanded from Serbia. Herr Zimmermann, without knowing (so he said to me) what decision had been arrived at in Vienna, thought that no action would be taken in Belgrade until the Austro-Hungarian Government had collected the proofs of the complicity of Serbian subjects or societies in the planning of the Serajevo crime. He had made a similar statement to the Russian ambassador, who had hastened to impart to him his fears for the peace of Europe, in the event of any attempt to coerce Serbia into proceeding against the secret societies, if they were accused of intrigues against the Austrian Government in Bosnia and Croatia. Herr Zimmermann declared to M. Sverbeeff that, in his opinion, no better advice could be given to the Serbian Government than this: that it should put a stop to the nefarious work of these societies and punish the accomplices of the Archduke's assassins. The moderation of this remark fairly reflected the general state of public opinion in Berlin.

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But what of the Emperor, the Archduke's personal friend? Would not his grief and anger find voice in ringing tones? All eyes were turned towards Kiel, where the fatal news reached William II. while he was taking part in a yacht race on board his own clipper. He turned pale, and was heard to murmur: "So my work of the past twenty-five years will have to be started all over again!" Enigmatic words, which may be interpreted in various ways! To the British ambassador, who was also at Kiel, with the British squadron returning from the Baltic, he unburdened himself in more explicit fashion: "*Es ist ein Verbrechen gegen das Deutschtum*" ("It is a crime against Germanity"). By this he probably meant that Germany, feeling her own interests assailed by the Sarajevo crime, would make common cause with Austria to exact a full retribution. With more self-control than usual, however, he abstained from all further public utterances on the subject.

It had been announced that he would go to Vienna to attend the Archduke's funeral. What were the motives that prevented him from offering to the dead man this last token of a friendship which, at first merely political, had become genuine and even tender, with a touch of patronage characteristic of the Emperor? He excused himself on the ground of some slight ailment. The truth is, no doubt, that he was disgusted with the wretched stickling for etiquette shown by the Grand Chamberlain of the Viennese Court, the Prince di Montenuovo, who refused to celebrate with fitting splendour the obsequies of the late heir-apparent and hismorganatic wife. Under these circumstances, Vienna could have no desire either for the presence of William II. or for his criticisms.

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At the beginning of July, the Emperor left for his accustomed cruise along the Norwegian coast, and in Berlin we breathed more freely. If he could withdraw so easily from the centre of things, it was a sign that the storm-clouds that had nearly burst over Serbia were also passing off from the Danube valley. Such, I fancy, was the view taken by the British Government, for its ambassador, who was already away on leave, was not sent back to Berlin. Other diplomats, among them the Russian ambassador, took their annual holiday as usual. But the Emperor, in the remote fiords of Norway, was all the time posted up in the secret designs of the Vienna Cabinet. The approaching ultimatum to Serbia was telegraphed to him direct by his ambassador in Vienna, Herr von Tschirsky, a very active worker, who strenuously advocated a policy of hostility towards Russia, and from the first moment had wanted war.¹⁴ We may assume that the Emperor, if his mind was not already made up at Kiel, came to a decision during his Norwegian cruise. His departure for the North had been merely a snare, a device for throwing Europe and the Triple Entente off the scent, and for lulling them into a false security. While the world imagined that he was merely seeking to soothe his nerves and recruit his strength with the salt sea breezes, he was biding his time for a dramatic reappearance on the stage of events, allowing the introductory scenes to be played in his absence.

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III.

During the first half of July, my colleagues and I at Berlin did not live in a fool's paradise. As the deceptive calm caused by Vienna's silence was prolonged, a latent, ill-defined uneasiness took hold of us more and more. Yet we were far from anticipating that in the space of a few days we should be driven into the midst of a diplomatic maelstrom, in which, after a week of intense anguish, we should look on, mute and helpless, at the shipwreck of European peace and of all our

hopes.

The ultimatum, sent in the form of a Note by Baron von Giesl to the Serbian Cabinet on 23rd July, was not disclosed by the Berlin newspapers until the following day, in their morning editions. This bolt from the blue proved more alarming than anything we had dared to imagine. The shock was so unexpected, that certain journals, losing their composure, seemed to regard the Vienna Cabinet's arraignment as having overshot the mark. "Austria-Hungary," said the *Vossische Zeitung*, "will have to justify the grave charges that she makes against the Serbian Government and people by publishing the results of the preliminary investigations at Serajevo."

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My own conviction, shared by several of my colleagues, was that the Austrian and Hungarian statesmen could not have brought themselves to risk such a blow at the Balkan kingdom, without having consulted their colleagues at Berlin and ascertained that the Emperor William would sanction the step. His horror of regicides and his keen sense of dynastic brotherhood might explain why he left his ally a free hand, in spite of the danger of provoking a European conflict. That danger was only too real. Not for one moment did I suppose that Russia would prove so careless of Serbia's fate as to put up with this daring assault on the latter's sovereignty and independence; that the St. Petersburg Cabinet would renounce the principle of "The Balkans for the Balkan nations," proclaimed to the Duma two months before by M. Sazonoff; in short, that the Russian people would disown the ancient ties of blood that united it with the Slav communities of the Balkan peninsula.

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The pessimistic feeling of the diplomatic corps was increased on the following day, the 25th, by the language addressed to it at the Wilhelmstrasse. Herren von Jagow and Zimmermann said that they had not known beforehand the contents of the Austrian Note. This was a mere quibble: they had not known its actual wording, I grant, but they had certainly been apprised of its tenor. They hastened to add, by the way, that the Imperial Government approved of its ally's conduct, and did not consider the tone of its communication unduly harsh. The Berlin Press, still with the exception of the Socialist organs, had recovered from its astonishment of the day before; it joined in the chorus of the Vienna and Buda-Pesth newspapers, from which it gave extracts, and faced the prospect of a war with perfect calm, while expressing the hope that it would remain localized.

In comparison with the attitude of the German Government and Press, the signs pointing to a peaceful settlement seemed faint indeed. They all came from outside Germany, from the impressions recorded in foreign telegrams. Public opinion in Europe could not grasp the need for such hectoring methods of obtaining satisfaction, when there was no case for refusing discussion on the normal diplomatic lines. It seemed impossible that Count Berchtold should ignore the general movement of reproof which appeared spontaneously everywhere but in Berlin against his ultimatum. A moderate claim would have seemed just; but Serbia could not be asked to accept a demand for so heavy an atonement, couched in a form of such unexampled brutality.

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The more I reflected on the ghastly situation created by the collusion of German and Austro-Hungarian diplomacy, the more certain did I feel that the key to that situation (as M. Sazonoff said later) lay in Berlin, and that there was no need to look further for the solution of the problem. If, however, the choice between peace and war was left to the discretion of the Emperor William, whose influence over his ally in Vienna had always overruled that of others, then, considering what I knew as to His Majesty's personal inclinations and the plans of the General Staff, the upshot of it all was no longer in doubt, and no hope of a peaceful arrangement could any longer be entertained. I communicated this dismal forecast to the French ambassador, whom I went to see on the evening of the 25th. Like myself, M. Cambon laboured under no illusions. That very night, I wrote to my Government, in order to acquaint it with my fears and urge it to be on its guard. This report, dated the 26th, I entrusted, as a measure of precaution, to one of my secretaries, who at once left for Brussels. Early next morning, my dispatch was in the hands of the Belgian Foreign Minister.

"The ultimatum to Serbia," it ran, "is a blow contrived by Vienna and Berlin, or rather contrived here and carried out at Vienna. Requital for the assassination of the Austrian heir-apparent and the Pan-Serb propaganda serves as a stalking-horse. The real aim, apart from the crushing of Serbia and the stifling of Jugo-Slav aspirations, is to deal a deadly thrust at Russia and France, with the hope that England will stand aside from the struggle. In order to vindicate this theory, I beg to remind you of the view prevailing in the German General Staff, namely, that a war with France and Russia is unavoidable and close at hand—a view which the Emperor has been induced to share. This war, eagerly desired by the military and Pan-German party, might be undertaken to-day under conditions extremely favourable for Germany, conditions that are not likely to arise again for some time to come."

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After a summary of the situation and of the problems that it raised, my report concluded as follows:

"We, too, have to ask ourselves these harassing questions, and keep ourselves ready for the worst; for the European conflict that has always been talked about, with the hope that it would never break out, is to-day becoming a grim reality."

The worst contingencies that occurred to me, as a Belgian, were the violation of a part of our territory and the duty that might fall upon our soldiers of barring the way to the belligerents. In view of the vast area over which a war between France and Germany would be fought, dared we hope that Belgium would be safe from any attack by the German army, from any attempt to use her strategic routes for offensive purposes? I could not bring myself to believe that she would be so fortunate. But between such tentatives and a thoroughgoing invasion of my country, plotted a long time in advance and carried out before the real operations of the war had begun, there was a wide gulf, a gulf that I never thought the Imperial Government capable of leaping over with a light heart, because of the European complications which so reckless a disdain for treaties would

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IV.

Until the end of the crisis, the idea of a preventive war continually recurred to my mind. Other heads of legations, however, while sharing my anxieties on this point, did not agree with me as to the premeditation of which I accused the Emperor and the military chiefs. I was not content with putting my questions to the French ambassador, whose unerring judgment always carried great weight with me. I also visited his Italian colleague, an astute diplomat, thoroughly versed in German statecraft. He had always put me in mind of those dexterous agents employed by the sixteenth-century Italian republics.

According to Signor Bollati, the German Government, agreeing in principle with the Vienna Cabinet as to the necessity for chastising Serbia, had not known beforehand the terms of the Austrian Note, the violence of which was unprecedented in the language of Chancelleries. Vienna, as well as Berlin, was convinced that Russia, in spite of the official assurances that had recently passed between the Tsar and M. Poincaré regarding the complete readiness of the French and Russian armies, was not in a position to enter on a European war, and that she would not dare to embark upon so hazardous an adventure. Internal troubles, revolutionary intrigues, incomplete armaments, inadequate means of communication—all these reasons would compel the Russian Government to be an impotent spectator of Serbia's undoing. The same confidence reigned in the German and Austrian capitals as regards, not the French army, but the spirit prevailing among Government circles in Paris.

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"At present," added the Ambassador, "feeling runs so high in Vienna that all calm reflection goes by the board. Moreover, in seeking to annihilate Serbia's military power, the Austro-Hungarian Cabinet is pursuing a policy of personal revenge. It cannot realize the mistakes that it made during the Balkan War, or remain satisfied with the partial successes then gained with our aid—successes that, whatever judgment may be passed upon them, were certainly diplomatic victories. All that Count Berchtold sees to-day is Serbia's insolence and the criticism he has had to endure even in Austria. By this bold stroke, very unexpected from a man of his stamp, he hopes to turn the criticism into applause."

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The Ambassador held that Berlin had false ideas as to the course that the Tsar's Government would adopt. The latter would find itself forced into drawing the sword, in order to maintain its prestige in the Slav world. Its inaction, in face of Austria's entry into the field, would be equivalent to suicide. Signor Bollati also gave me to understand that a widespread conflict would not be popular in Italy. The Italian people had no concern with the overthrow of the Russian power, which was Austria's enemy; it wished to devote all its attention to other problems, more absorbing from its own point of view.

The blindness of the Austrian Cabinet with regard to Russian intervention has been proved by the correspondence, since published, of the French and British representatives at Vienna. The Viennese populace was beside itself with joy at the announcement of an expedition against Serbia, which, it felt sure, would be a mere military parade. Not for a single night were Count Berchtold's slumbers disturbed by the vision of the Russian peril. He is, indeed, at all times a buoyant soul, who can happily mingle the distractions of a life of pleasure with the heavy responsibilities of power. His unvarying confidence was shared by the German ambassador, his most trusted mentor. We can hardly suppose that the Austrian minister shut his eyes altogether to the possibility of a struggle with the Slav world. Having Germany as his partner, however, he determined, with the self-possession of a fearless gambler, to proceed with the game.

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At Berlin, the theory that Russia was incapable of facing a conflict reigned supreme, not only in the official world and in society, but among all the manufacturers who made a speciality of war material. Herr Krupp von Bohlen, who was more entitled to give an opinion than any other of this class, declared on 28th July, at a table near mine in the Hôtel Bristol, that the Russian artillery was neither efficient nor complete, while that of the German army had never before been so superior to all its rivals. It would be madness on Russia's part, he inferred, to take the field against Germany and Austria under these conditions.

V.

The foreign diplomatic corps was kept in more or less profound ignorance as to the *pourparlers* carried on since the 24th by the Imperial Foreign Office with the Triple Entente Cabinets. Nevertheless, to the diplomats who were continually going over to the Wilhelmstrasse for news, the crisis was set forth in a light very favourable to Austria and Germany, in order to influence the views of the Governments which they represented. Herr von Stumm, the departmental head of the political branch, in a brief interview that I had with him on the 26th, summed up his exposition in these words: "Everything depends on Russia." I should rather have thought that everything depended on Austria, and on the way in which she would carry out her threats against Serbia.

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On the following day I was received by Herr Zimmermann, who adopted the same line of argument, following it in all its bearings from the origin of the dispute.

"It was not at our prompting," he said, "or in accordance with our advice, that Austria took the action that you know of towards the Belgrade Cabinet. The answer was unsatisfactory, and to-day Austria is mobilizing. She can no longer draw back without risking a collapse at home as well as a loss of influence abroad. It is now a question of life and death to her. She must put a stop to the

unscrupulous propaganda which, by raising revolt among the Slav provinces of the Danube valley, is leading towards her internal disintegration. Finally, she must exact a signal revenge for the assassination of the Archduke. For all these reasons Serbia is to receive, by means of a military expedition, a stern and salutary lesson. An Austro-Serbian War is therefore impossible to avoid.

“England has asked us to join with her, France, and Italy, in order to prevent the conflict from spreading and a war from breaking out between Austria and Russia. Our answer was that we should be only too glad to help in limiting the area of the conflagration, by speaking in a pacific sense to Vienna and St. Petersburg; but that we could not use our influence with Austria to restrain her from inflicting an exemplary punishment on Serbia. We have promised to help and support our Austrian allies, if any other nation should try to hamper them in this task. We shall keep that promise. If Russia mobilizes her army, we shall at once mobilize ours, and then there will be a general war, a war that will set ablaze all Central Europe and even the Balkan peninsula, for the Roumanians, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Turks will not be able to resist the temptation to come in.

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“As I remarked yesterday to M. Boghitchevitch” (the former Serbian *chargé d'affaires*, who was on a flying visit to Berlin, where he had been greatly appreciated during the Balkan War), “the best advice I can give Serbia is that she should make no more than a show of resistance to Austria, and should come to terms as soon as possible, by accepting all the conditions of the Vienna Cabinet. I added, in speaking to him, that if a universal war broke out and went in favour of the Triplice, Serbia would probably cease to exist as a nation; she would be wiped off the map of Europe. I still hope, though, that such a widespread conflict may be avoided, and that we shall succeed in inducing Russia not to intervene on Serbia’s behalf. Remember that Austria is determined to respect Serbia’s integrity, once she has obtained satisfaction.”

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I pointed out to the Under-Secretary that the Belgrade Cabinet’s reply, according to some of my colleagues who had read it, was, apart from a few unimportant restrictions, an unqualified surrender to Austria’s demands. Herr Zimmermann said that he had no knowledge of this reply (it had been handed in two days before to the Austrian minister at Belgrade!), and that, in any case, there was no longer any possibility of preventing an Austro-Hungarian military demonstration.

The Serbian document was not published by the Berlin newspapers until the 29th. On the previous day they had all reproduced a telegram from Vienna, stating that this apparent submission was altogether inadequate. The prompt concessions made by the Pasitch Cabinet, concessions that had not been anticipated abroad, failed to impress Germany. She persisted in seeing only with Austria’s eyes.

Herr Zimmermann’s arguments held good solely on the hypothesis that, in the action brought by Austria against Serbia, no Power had the right to come forward as counsel for the defendant, or to interfere in the trial at all. This claim amounted to depriving Russia of her historic rôle in the Balkans. Carried to its logical conclusion, the theory meant condemning unheard every small State that should be unfortunate enough to have a dispute with a great Power. According to the principles of the Berlin Cabinet, the great Power should be allowed, without let or hindrance, to proceed to the execution of its weak opponent. England, therefore, would have had no right to succour Belgium when the latter was invaded by Germany, any more than Russia had a right to protect Serbia from the Austrian menace.

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Russia, it was asserted at the Wilhelmstrasse, ought to be satisfied with the assurance that Austria would not impair the territorial integrity of Serbia or mar her future existence as an independent State. What a hollow mockery such a promise would seem, when the whole country had been ravaged by fire and sword! Surely it was decreed that, after this “exemplary punishment,” Serbia should become the lowly vassal of her redoubtable neighbour, living a life that was no life, cowed by the jealous eye of the Austrian minister—really the Austrian Viceroy—at Belgrade. Had not Count Mensdorff declared to Sir Edward Grey that before the Balkan War Serbia was regarded as gravitating towards the Dual Monarchy’s sphere of influence? A return to the past, to the tame deference of King Milan, was the least that Austria would exact.

The version given out by the Imperial Chancellery, besides being intended to enlighten foreign Governments, had a further end in view. Repeated *ad nauseam* by the Press, it aimed at misleading German public opinion. From the very opening of the crisis, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg and his colleagues strove, with all the ingenuity at their command, to hoodwink their countrymen, to shuffle the cards, to throw beforehand on Russia, in case the situation should grow worse, the odium of provocation and the blame for the disaster, to represent that Power as meddling with a police inquiry that did not concern her in the least. This cunning manoeuvre resulted in making all Germany, without distinction of class or party, respond to her Emperor’s call at the desired moment, since she was persuaded (as I have explained in a previous chapter) that she was the object of a premeditated attack by Tsarism.

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VI.

The game of German diplomacy during these first days of the crisis, 24th to 28th July, has already been revealed. At first inclined to bludgeon, it soon came to take things easily, even affecting a certain optimism, and by its passive resistance bringing to nought all the efforts and all the proposals of the London, Paris, and St. Petersburg Cabinets. To gain time, to lengthen out negotiations, seems to have been the task imposed upon Austria-Hungary’s accomplice, in order to promote rapid action by the Dual Monarchy, and to face the Triple Entente with irrevocable deeds—namely, the occupation of Belgrade and the surrender of the Serbians. But things did not

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go as Berlin and Vienna had hoped, and the determined front shown by Russia, who in answer to the partial mobilization of Austria mobilized her army in four southern districts, gave food for reflection to the tacticians of the Wilhelmstrasse. Their language and their frame of mind grew gentler to a singular degree on the fifth day, 28th July. It may be recalled, in passing, that in 1913, during the Balkan hostilities, Austria and Russia had likewise proceeded to partial mobilizations; yet these steps had not made them come to blows or even brought them to the verge of hostilities.

On the evening of the 26th the Emperor's return was announced in Berlin. Why did he come back so suddenly? I think I am justified in saying that, at this news, the general feeling among the actors and spectators of the drama was one of grave anxiety. Our hearts were heavy within us; we had a foreboding that the decisive moment was drawing near. It was the same at the Wilhelmstrasse. To the British *chargé d'affaires* Herr von Zimmermann frankly confessed his regret at this move, on which William II. had decided without consulting any one.

Nevertheless, our fears at first seemed to be unwarranted. The 28th was marked by a notable loosening of Germany's stiff-necked attitude. The British ambassador, who had returned to Berlin on the previous day, was summoned in the evening by the Chancellor. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, while rejecting the conference proposed by Sir Edward Grey, promised to use his good offices to induce Russia and Austria to discuss the position in an amicable fashion. "A war between the great Powers must be averted," were his closing words. It is highly probable that the Chancellor at that time sincerely wanted to keep the peace, and that his first efforts, when he saw the danger coming nearer and nearer, succeeded in curbing the Emperor's impatience for forty-eight hours. The telegram sent by William II. to the Tsar on the evening of the 28th is friendly, almost reassuring: "Bearing in mind the cordial friendship that has united us two closely for a long time past, I am using all my influence to make Austria arrive at a genuine and satisfactory understanding with Russia."

How are we to explain, then, the abrupt change of tack that occurred the following day at Berlin, or rather at Potsdam, and the peculiar language addressed by the Chancellor to Sir Edward Goschen on the evening of the 29th? In that nocturnal scene there was no longer any question of Austria's demands on Serbia, or even of the possibility of an Austro-Russian war. The centre of gravity was suddenly shifted, and at a single stride the danger passed from the South-East of Europe to the North-West. What is it that Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg wants to know at once, as he comes straight from a council held at Potsdam under the presidency of the Emperor? Whether Great Britain would consent to remain neutral in a European war, provided that Germany agreed to respect the territorial integrity of France. "And what of the French colonies?" asks the Ambassador, with great presence of mind. The Chancellor can make no promise on this point, but he unhesitatingly declares that Germany will respect the integrity and neutrality of Holland. As for Belgium, France's action will determine what operations Germany may be forced to enter upon in that country; but when the war is over, Belgium will lose no territory, unless she ranges herself on the side of Germany's foes.

Such was the shameful bargain proposed to England, at a time when none of the negotiators had dared to speak in plain terms of a European war or even to offer a glimpse of that terrifying vision. This interview was the immediate result of the decisive step taken by German diplomacy on the same day at St. Petersburg. The step in question has been made known to us through the diplomatic documents which have been printed by the orders of the belligerent Governments, and all of which concur in their account of this painful episode. Twice on that day did M. Sazonoff receive a visit from the German ambassador, who came to make a demand wrapped up in threats. Count de Pourtalès insisted on Russia contenting herself with the promise, guaranteed by Germany, that Austria-Hungary would not impair the integrity of Serbia. M. Sazonoff refused to countenance the war on this condition. Serbia, he felt, would become a vassal of Austria, and a revolution would break out in Russia. Count de Pourtalès then backed his request with the warning that, unless Russia desisted from her military preparations, Germany would mobilize. A German mobilization, he said, would mean war. The results of the second interview, which took place at two o'clock in the morning, were as negative as those of the first, notwithstanding a last effort, a final suggestion by M. Sazonoff to stave off the crisis. His giving in to Germany's brutal dictation would have been an avowal that Russia was impotent.

To the Emperor William, who had resumed the conduct of affairs since the morning of the 27th—the Emperor William, itching to cut the knot, driven on by his Staff and his generals—to him and no other must we trace the responsibility for this insolent move, which made war inevitable. "The heads of the army insisted," was all that Herr von Jagow would vouchsafe a little later to M. Cambon by way of explanation. The Chancellor, and with him the Foreign Secretary and Under-Secretary, associated themselves with these hazardous tactics, from sheer inability to secure the adoption of less hasty and violent methods. If they believed that this summary breaking off of negotiations would meet with success, they were as grievously mistaken as Count de Pourtalès, whose reports utterly misled them as to the sacrifices that Russia was prepared to make for Serbia. At all events this upright man, when he realized the appalling effects of his blunder, gave free play to his emotion. Such sensitiveness is rare indeed in a German, and redounds entirely to his credit.

But the Emperor and his council of generals—what was their state of soul at this critical moment? Perhaps this riddle will never be wholly solved. From the military point of view, which in their eyes claimed first attention, they must have rejoiced at M. Sazonoff's answer, for never again would they find such a golden opportunity for vanquishing Russia and making an end of her rivalry. In 1917 the reorganization of her army would have been complete, her artillery would have been at full strength, and a new network of strategic railways would have enabled her to let loose upon the two Germanic empires a vast flood of fighting-men drawn from the inexhaustible

reservoir of her population. The struggle with the colossus of the North, despite the vaunted technical superiority of the German army, would in all likelihood have ended in the triumph of overwhelming might. In the France of 1917, again, the three years' term of service would have begun to produce its full results, and her first-line troops would have been both more numerous and better trained than at present.

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On the other hand, William II. could cherish no false hopes as to the consequences of this second pressure that he was bringing to bear on St. Petersburg. Had it succeeded in 1914 as in 1909, the encounter between Germany and the great Slav Empire would only have been put off to a later day, instead of being finally shelved. How could the Tsar or the Russian people have forgiven the Kaiser for humbling them once more? If they had pocketed the affront in silence, it would only have been in order to bide their time for revenge, and they would have chosen the moment when Russia, in possession of all her resources, could have entered upon the struggle with every chance of winning.

Here an objection may be raised. The German Emperor, some may hold, fancying that the weight of his sword in the scale would induce the Tsar to shrink from action, had foreseen the anger of the Slav nation at its sovereign's timorous scruples, and looked forward to revolutionary outbreaks which would cripple the Government for years to come and make it unable to think of war, if indeed they did not sweep the Romanoffs from the throne. I would answer that this Machiavellian scheme could never have entered the head of such a ruler as William II., with his deep sense of monarchical solidarity, and his instinctive horror of anarchist outrages and of revolution.

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No: the Emperor, together with the military authorities whose advice he took, wished to profit by a juncture which he had awaited with longing, and which fickle Fortune might never again offer to his ambition. Everything proves it, down to his feverish haste, as soon as M. Sazonoff's reply was conveyed to him, to learn the intentions of England, and to suggest, on that very day, a bargain that might purchase her neutrality. This is why Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg received orders to summon the British ambassador on the night of the 29th. The Emperor could not wait until the following morning, so eager was he to act. Is this impatience the mark of one who was the victim of a concerted surprise? If he had not wanted war, would he not have tried to resume negotiations with Russia on a basis more in keeping with her dignity as a great Power, however heavy a blow it was to his own pride that he had failed to intimidate her?

VII.

The abortive efforts to overawe St. Petersburg and the offers made to the British ambassador, as if Great Britain's inaction could be sold to the highest bidder, brought results that were not hard to foresee.

In London, Sir Edward Grey's indignation found immediate vent in the following passage of his telegram of 30th July to Sir Edward Goschen: "It would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France—a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover. The Chancellor also in effect asks us to bargain away whatever obligation or interest we have as regards the neutrality of Belgium. We could not entertain that bargain either."

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Through the brazen overtures of Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, however, the British Cabinet henceforth came to occupy itself, before all things, with the fate allotted to our country by the Imperial Government in the war that it was preparing. In order to tear off the mask from German statesmanship, the surest method was to ask it a straightforward question. On 31st July Sir Edward Grey, following the example of the Gladstone Ministry of 1870, inquired both of Germany and France whether they would respect the neutrality of Belgium. At the same time he gave Belgium to understand that Britain counted on her doing her utmost to maintain her neutrality.

The answer of the Republican Government was frank and unhesitating. It was resolved to respect Belgian neutrality, and would only act otherwise if the violation of that neutrality by some other Power forced it to do so in self-defence. The Belgian Government, for its part, hastened to assure the British minister at Brussels of its determination to resist with might and main should its territory be invaded.

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At Berlin, however, the Foreign Secretary eluded Sir Edward Goschen's questions. He said that he must consult the Emperor and the Chancellor. In his opinion, any answer would entail the risk, in the event of war, of partly divulging the plan of campaign. It seemed doubtful to him, therefore, whether he would be able to give a reply. This way of speaking was perfectly clear in its ambiguity. It did not puzzle Sir Edward Grey for a moment. On the following day he declared to the German ambassador that the reply of the German Government was a matter of very great regret. Belgian neutrality, he pointed out, was highly important in British eyes, and if Belgium was attacked, it would be difficult to restrain public feeling in his country.

On the same day, the 1st of August, in accordance with instructions from my Government, I read to the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (at the same time giving him a copy) a dispatch drafted beforehand and addressed to the Belgian ministers attached to the Powers that had guaranteed our neutrality. This dispatch affirmed that Belgium, having observed, with scrupulous fidelity, the duties imposed on her as a neutral State by the treaties of 19th April 1839, would manifest an unshaken purpose in fulfilling them; and that she had every hope, since the friendly intentions of the Powers towards her had been so often professed, of seeing her territory secure from all assault, if hostilities should arise near her frontiers. The Belgian Government added that it had nevertheless taken all the necessary steps for maintaining its neutrality, but that, in so doing, it had not been actuated by a desire to take part in an armed struggle among the Powers,

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or by a feeling of distrust towards any one of them.¹⁵

Herr Zimmermann listened without a word of comment to my reading of this dispatch, which expressed the loyal confidence of my Government in Germany's good will. He merely took note of my communication. His silence did not surprise me, for I had just learnt of Herr von Jagow's evasive reply to the British Government concerning Belgium; but it bore out all my misgivings. His constrained smile, by the way, told me quite as much as his refusal to speak.

From the 30th, Russia and Germany—as an inevitable sequel to the conversations of the 29th—went forward actively with their military preparations. What was the exact nature of these preludes to the German mobilization? It was impossible to gain any precise notion at Berlin. The capital was rife with various rumours that augured ill for the future. We heard tell of regiments moving from the northern provinces towards the Rhine. We learnt that reservists had been instructed to keep themselves in readiness for marching orders. At the same time, postal communication with Belgium and France had been cut off. At the Wilhelmstrasse, the position was described to me as follows: "Austria will reply to Russia's partial mobilization with a general mobilization of her army. It is to be feared that Russia will then mobilize her entire forces, which will compel Germany to do the same." As it turned out, a general mobilization was indeed proclaimed in Austria on the night of the 30th.

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Nevertheless, the peace *pourparlers* went on between Vienna and St. Petersburg on the 30th and 31st, although on the latter date Russia, as Berlin expected, in answer both to the Austrian and the German preparations, had mobilized her entire forces. Even on the 31st these discussions seemed to have some chance of attaining their object. Austria was now more accurately gauging the peril into which her own blind self-confidence and the counsels of her ally were leading her, and was pausing on the brink of the abyss. The Vienna Cabinet even consented to talk over the gist of its Note to Serbia, and M. Sazonoff at once sent an encouraging reply. It was desirable, he stated, that representatives of all the great Powers should confer in London under the direction of the British Government.¹⁶

Was a faint glimmer of peace, after all, dawning above the horizon? Would an understanding be reached, at the eleventh hour, among the only States really concerned with the Serbian question? We had reckoned without our host. The German Emperor willed otherwise. Suddenly, at the instance of the General Staff, and after a meeting of the Federal Council, as prescribed by the constitution, he issued the decree of *Kriegsgefahrzustand* (Imminence-of-War). This is the first phase of a general mobilization—a sort of martial law, substituting the military for the civil authorities as regards the public services (means of communication, post, telegraphs, and telephones).

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This momentous decision was revealed to us on the 31st by a special edition of the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*, distributed at every street corner. The announcement ran as follows:—

"Russia wants war!

"From official sources we have just received (at 2 p.m.) the following report, pregnant with consequences:

"The German ambassador at St. Petersburg sends us word to-day that a general mobilization of the Russian army and navy had previously been ordered. That is why His Majesty the Emperor William has decreed an Imminence-of-War. His Majesty will take up his residence in Berlin to-day.'

"Imminence-of-War is the immediate prelude to a general mobilization, in answer to the menace that already hangs over Germany to-day, owing to the step taken by the Tsar."

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As a drowning man catches at a straw, those who in Berlin saw themselves, with horror, faced by an impending catastrophe, clutched at a final hope. The German general mobilization had not yet been ordered. Who knew whether, at the last moment, some happy inspiration from the British Cabinet, that most stalwart champion of peace, might cause the weapons to drop from the hands that were about to wield them? Once more, however, the Emperor, by his swift moves, shattered this fond illusion. On the 31st, at seven o'clock in the evening, he dispatched to the Russian Government a summons to demobilize both on its Austrian and on its German frontiers. An interval of twelve hours was given for a reply.

It was obvious that Russia, who had refused two days before to cease from her military preparations, would not accept the German ultimatum, worded as it was in so dictatorial a form and rendered still more insulting by the briefness of the interval granted. As, however, no answer had come from St. Petersburg by the afternoon of 1st August, Herren Von Jagow and Zimmermann (so the latter informed me) rushed to the Chancellor and the Emperor, in order to request that the decree for a general mobilization might at least be held over until the following day. They supported their plea by urging that the telegraphic communication with St. Petersburg had presumably been cut, and that this would explain the silence of the Tsar. Perhaps they still hoped against hope for a conciliatory proposal from Russia. This was the last flicker of their dying pacifism, or the last awakening of their conscience. Their efforts could make no headway against the stubborn opposition of the War Minister and the army chiefs, who represented to the Emperor the dangers of a twenty-four hours' delay. The order for a mobilization of the army and navy was signed at five o'clock in the afternoon, and was at once given out to the public by a special edition of the *Lokalanzeiger*. The mobilization was to begin on 2nd August. On the 1st, at ten minutes past seven in the evening, Germany's declaration of war was forwarded to Russia.

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As all the world knows, the Berlin Cabinet had to resort to wild pretexts, such as the committing of acts of hostility (so the military authorities alleged) by French aviators on Imperial soil, in order to find motives, two days later, for its declaration of war on France. Although Germany tried to lay the blame for the catastrophe at Russia's door, it was in reality her western

neighbour that she wished to attack and annihilate first. On this point there can be no possible doubt to-day. "Poor France!" said the Berlin newspapers, with feigned compassion. They acknowledged that the conduct of the French Government throughout the crisis had been irreproachable, and that it had worked without respite for the maintenance of peace. While her leaders fulfilled this noble duty to mankind, France was offering the world an impressive sight—the sight of a nation looking calmly and without fear at a growing peril that she had done nothing to conjure up, and, regarding her word as her bond, determined in cold blood to follow the destiny of her ally on the field of battle. At the same time she offered to Germany, who had foolishly counted on her being torn by internal troubles and political feuds, the vision of her children closely linked together in an unconquerable resolve—the resolve to beat back an iniquitous assault upon their country. Nor was this the only surprise that she held in store. With the stone wall of her resistance, she was soon to change the whole character of the struggle, and to wreck the calculations of German strategy.

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No one had laboured with more energy and skill to quench the flames lit by Austria and her ally than the representative of the Republic at Berlin. "Don't you think M. Cambon's attitude has been admirable?" remarked the British ambassador to me, in the train that was whirling us far away from the German capital on 6th August. "Throughout these terrible days, nothing has been able to affect his coolness, his presence of mind, and his insight." I cannot express my own admiration better than by repeating this verdict of so capable a diplomat as Sir Edward Goschen, who himself took a most active part in the vain attempt of the Triple Entente to save Europe from calamity.

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VIII.

The Berlin population had followed the various phases of the crisis with tremendous interest, but with no outward show of patriotic fervour. Those fine summer days passed as tranquilly as usual. Only in the evenings did some hundreds of youths march along the highways of the central districts, soberly singing national anthems, and dispersing after a few cries of "Hoch!" outside the Austro-Hungarian and Italian Embassies and the Chancellor's mansion. On the 2nd of August I watched the animation of the Sunday crowd that thronged the broad avenue of the Kurfürstendamm. It read attentively the special editions of the newspapers, and then each went off to enjoy his or her favourite pastime—games of tennis for the young men and maidens, long bouts of drinking in the beer-gardens for the more sedate citizens with their families. When the Imperial motor car flashed like a streak of lightning down Unter den Linden, it was hailed with loud, but by no means frantic, cheers. It needed the outcries of the Press against Russia as the instigator of the war, the misleading speeches of the Emperor and the Chancellor, and the wily publications of the Government, to kindle a patriotism rather slow to take fire. Towards the close of my stay, feeling displayed itself chiefly by jeers at the unfortunate Russians who were returning post-haste to their native country, and blackguardly behaviour towards the staff of the Tsar's ambassador as he was leaving Berlin.

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That the mass of the German people, unaware of Russia's peaceful intentions, should have been easily deluded, is no matter for astonishment. The upper classes, however, those of more enlightened intellect, cannot have been duped by the official falsehoods. They knew as well as we do that it was greatly to the advantage of the Tsar's Government not to provoke a conflict. In fact, this question is hardly worth discussing. Once more we must repeat that, in the plans of William II. and his generals, the Serbian affair was a snare spread for the Northern Empire before the growth of its military power should have made it an invincible foe.

There is no gainsaying that uncertainty as to Britain's intervention was one of the factors that encouraged Germany. We often asked ourselves anxiously at Berlin whether Germany's hand would not have been stayed altogether, if the British Government had formally declared that it would not hold aloof from the war. We even hoped, for a brief moment, that Sir Edward Grey would destroy the illusions on which the German people loved to batten. The British Foreign Secretary did indeed observe to Prince Lichnowsky on 29th July that the Austro-Serbian issue might become so great as to involve all European interests, and that he did not wish the Ambassador to be misled by the friendly tone of their conversations into thinking that Britain would stand aside. If at the beginning she had openly taken her stand by the side of her allies, she might, to be sure, have checked the fatal march of events. This, at any rate, is the most widespread view, for a maritime war certainly did not enter into the calculations of the Emperor and Admiral von Tirpitz, while it was the nightmare of the German commercial world. In my opinion, however, an outspoken threat from England on the 29th, a sudden roar of the British lion, would not have made William II. draw back. The memory of Agadir still rankled in the proud Germanic soul. The Emperor would have risked losing all prestige in the eyes of a certain element among his subjects, if at the bidding of the Anglo-Saxon he had refused to go further, and had thus played into the hands of those who charged him with conducting a policy of mere bluff and intimidation. "Germany barks, but does not bite" was a current saying abroad, and this naturally tended to exasperate her. An ominous warning from the lips of Sir Edward Grey would only have served to precipitate the onslaught of the Kaiser's armies, in order that the intervention of the British fleet might have no influence on the result of the campaign, the rapid and decisive campaign planned at Berlin.

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We know, moreover, from the telegrams and speeches of the British Foreign Minister, how carefully he had to reckon with public feeling among his countrymen in general and among the majority in Parliament. A war in the Balkans did not concern the British nation, and the strife between Teuton and Slav left it cold. It did not begin to be properly roused until it grasped the

reality of the danger to France's very existence, and it did not respond warmly to the eloquent appeals of Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey until the day when it knew that the Germans were at the gates of Liège, where they threatened both Paris and Antwerp—Antwerp, "that pistol pointed at the heart of England."

Looking at the matter from a purely moral point of view, we must recognize that the majority of the British have a deeply religious spirit, but a Christian ideal that is utterly at variance with the warlike pietism of the Kaiser and his subjects. Their unsophisticated ideas and their Puritan principles lead them to condemn all statecraft that lets loose the scourge of war. Their reluctance to take part in a Continental war was only overcome through the dastardly attack of Germany upon a little free people, too weak to parry the blow. Then followed an irresistible impulse to punish and avenge, when news was brought of the atrocities committed by the German soldiery in Belgium.

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It is this nation, dowered with a true moral greatness, that enemy speakers and pamphleteers accuse to-day of having formed the coalition that bars the way to their ambitious schemes. It is England that they denounce as having woven a web of intrigue to enmesh their country. They know the British nation no better than Treitschke and his followers knew it, when they proclaimed that it was a mere rabble of shop-keepers, greedy of pelf and destitute of warrior virtues. They misjudged it as hopelessly as Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, who was indignant at its setting so much store by an antiquated treaty. The events leading up to the present war have revealed to us the honesty and scrupulousness of British diplomacy, side by side with the bad faith of German diplomacy; and they have thrown ample light upon the loyalty of Great Britain and her ministers, as contrasted with the double-dealing of Germany and her Imperial functionaries.

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CHAPTER IX.

BELGIAN NEUTRALITY AND THE INVASION OF BELGIUM.

I.

THE violation of Belgian neutrality has brought forth a luxuriant crop of books, pamphlets, and articles in newspapers and reviews. Some indignantly denounce, others impudently defend the action of the German Government. The commentaries published on the treaties of 19th April 1839 have taught many Belgians who were ill-informed on the point what the permanent neutrality of their country really means. It was not a Heaven-sent blessing graciously poured out on the new State that had built itself up after the rising of the Flemish and Walloon provinces against the House of Orange. In recognizing it as an independent kingdom and granting it the privilege of permanent neutrality, the five Powers who at that time laid down the law to Europe invested it with a special character, as if it had been a creation of their diplomacy. The neutrality of Belgium was indeed to shield her from the grasping designs of her neighbours, but it was also destined to serve the interests of the great Powers by helping to maintain the balance of Europe. Thus the treaties of 1839 repaired the injury that had been done to the work of the Congress of Vienna, when that artificial fabric, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was destroyed through Belgian efforts. 313

The assurance that we should enjoy the blessings of peace for an indefinite period carried with it no small obligations towards the guarantors of our neutrality. We could not let ourselves be induced to favour any one of them in particular, either through personal bias or through political considerations. The Belgian signatories to the pacts of 1839 fully realized the duties incumbent upon a perpetually neutral State, and their adhesion made it certain that their successors would always fulfil these duties. All Belgians are convinced that none of their ministers since then has failed to keep the engagements to which his loyal predecessors set their hand.¹⁷

More than twenty-five years ago, King Leopold, on the strength of some documents produced by two forgers, Mondion and Nieter, was repeatedly accused by sundry Parisian publicists, whose words carried a certain weight, of having entered into a secret convention with Germany against France. How little these writers knew of our King, and of his real sentiments towards our disconcerting eastern neighbours! Few rulers had a clearer insight than he into the ambitions that they had not yet laid bare. With his marvellous knowledge of men, he had read, as in open book, the erratic and overbearing character of William II. On one of the last occasions that he honoured me with his advice, he warned me to beware, when I went to Germany, of German civilities. As soon as the second King of the Belgians began once more, after a long interval, to visit Paris, the Parisians learnt to know him better; and the charges against his political good faith died down like an untended fire. 314

Was it impracticable for a Belgian sovereign to conclude a secret military convention? We learnt at the beginning of the present war that such a treaty existed between the King of Roumania and the Emperor of Austria, a treaty directed against Russia, and approved, whenever the time came for its renewal, by the Roumanian Prime Minister, whether Liberal or Conservative. When I was acting as representative of the Belgian Government at Bucharest, the existence of this pact was strenuously confirmed or as strenuously denied by several of my colleagues. The Russian minister, M. de Fonton, refused to believe in it; this was the only point on which he disagreed with his friend and ally, M. Arsène Henry, the French envoy. The convention was none the less real for all that, although it did not survive the ordeal of being dragged out from its hiding-place. In signing this futile agreement, King Carol had not overstepped his constitutional rights, as was proved by the counter-signature of the responsible minister. If such freedom of action was allowed to Roumania, why was it denied to Belgium? 315

The answer is not far to seek. Roumania is not, like Belgium, a neutral State. King Carol could pick and choose his secret allies, according to his political plans or his hereditary instincts; a King of the Belgians cannot. The diplomatic instruments sanctioned by our rulers have always been drawn up in the full light of day. Supposing (although the supposition is an insult to his memory) King Leopold had not wished to observe the 1839 treaties, or King Albert, who is the soul of honour, had been guilty of the same base intention. Neither would have found a minister to countersign a secret convention with France, England, or Germany. It is formally laid down by article 64 of our constitution, that without the signature of a responsible minister, no royal document can be valid. A treaty furnished merely with the royal seal would have been, in Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg's immortal phrase, nothing more than a scrap of paper.

An underhand compact, when our Government takes counsel, debates, and acts in broad daylight, under the alert control of the Parliamentary opposition and of public opinion! A military convention, framed for the defence of the country, not transgressing indeed (according to the doctrine in vogue) the rights of a neutralized State, but wholly running counter to our deep-rooted belief in the sovereign virtue of our neutrality! A hidden pledge, out of all keeping with the friendly and trustful spirit that guided our relations with each of the guaranteeing Powers! I feel certain that not one of the statesmen who had the honour of succeeding Frère-Orban, Malou, Beernaert, our great ministers of the past, would have consented to sign such a covenant. 316

II.

On two separate occasions during the last two years, British military attachés at Brussels have

spontaneously approached Belgian officers of the higher ranks, with a view to learning whether we had considered, in the event of a European war, the possibility of an attempt by an advancing German army to force its way through Belgium, and whether our means of resistance were adequate.

In 1906, Lieut.-Colonel Barnardiston had several interviews with General Ducarne, our Chief of Staff, on the subject of co-operation by British troops in the defence of our territory. This was soon after the first alarm, caused by Germany's browbeating policy over the Moroccan question. The Belgian general had no reason for refusing to enter into these conversations. They were private, strictly confidential, and of great interest from a military point of view; but he had not received a mandate to pursue them in the name of the Royal Government. After they had ended, he wrote out a report and handed it in to his chief, the War Minister. The report contains in the margin a note of cardinal importance, purposely omitted by the German authorities in the text of the document, when they issued a translation last autumn: "The entry of the British into Belgium would take place only after a violation of our neutrality by Germany."

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The Belgian Government was greatly astonished at the initiative taken by the British military attaché. It had, however, no power to prevent a foreign officer from expressing his personal views as to the hostile aims of a neighbouring nation whose relations with Belgium were at that time friendly. Still relying on the pledges given in 1839 by the Powers, among them Prussia—which to-day means Germany, the offspring of the Prussian State and heir to its obligations—it determined not to act upon the confidential statements of Lieut.-Colonel Barnardiston. The latter had simply communicated the ideas of the British Staff; his conversations, as he himself realized, could not be deemed binding upon his Government. It will be noticed, by the way, that even at this date the British officers had a very clear conception of Germany's schemes. The invasion of Belgium was an act of war foreseen in London ten years before the event.

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Some years later, in April 1912, another British military attaché in Brussels, Lieut.-Colonel Bridges, had an interview on the same topic with General Jungbluth, who was then Chief of our Staff. This step would prove, if proof were needed, that no secret engagement previously existed between Britain and our country. The Englishman, in the course of his informal chat, remarked that during the crisis of 1911 his Government would have landed troops in Belgium even if their aid had not been invoked. This is perfectly in accordance with international law, by virtue of which the guaranteeing State, if it considers intervention to be necessary, must intervene of its own accord, even in the teeth of opposition from the neutral State concerned. This claim, however, was forthwith countered by General Jungbluth with the view that has always been upheld by the Belgian authorities—that the preliminary consent of Belgium is essential. Lieut.-Colonel Bridges did not press the point, and there the matter rested.

The Belgian Government, to whom the Chief of Staff sent a report, did not enjoin him to proceed with the conversations. In 1912, as in 1906, no convention was framed between Belgium and Great Britain nor between Belgium and France, who had not offered us military support for the defence of our neutrality. On the other hand, there was no need for the Belgian Government to inform the Berlin Cabinet of these private interviews. Our two neighbours had quite enough grounds already for picking a quarrel. We preferred not to throw into their midst a fresh element of distrust, a new apple of discord, in the shape of these utterances by foreign military attachés, no doubt very anxious to do their duty.

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I will add, in passing, a detail that has not yet been made known to the world. In that same year 1912, General Jungbluth was invited to attend the British army manœuvres, at which, owing to seniority, he would have taken precedence of all the other foreign officers. He thought proper to decline this invitation. He feared that his presence in England would perhaps be interpreted abroad as a sign, slender though it might appear, of an understanding between the Staffs of the two countries. How over-scrupulous such conduct seems to-day!

In the November of 1911 the Belgian Government had forwarded to its minister in Berlin, Count Greindl, particulars of the measures to be taken in the event of a Franco-German war. My predecessor expressed the opinion that one of the prospects to be considered was the entry of British or French troops into Belgium. This was a very natural answer, as coming from an old diplomat who, after fifty years of exceptionally useful service to his country, had acquired not only a wide experience but a certain scepticism as regards the great Powers. He held that they were all equally to be dreaded, whenever their conflicting interests threatened the free existence of the smaller States.

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Such are the grievances, sifted and re-sifted a hundred times over, which the German Government has flaunted, in order to vindicate itself, and to make the civilized world believe that Belgium, by her secret agreements with England, had failed in her obligations as a neutral State. The cry of indignation that went up from Europe, and above all from the United States, over the invasion of our country, had aroused certain qualms in the Chancellor and his associates. How could this brutal aggression be justified, especially when the excesses of a frenzied soldiery made the crime still more heinous? Laborious researches into the archives of the Belgian Government offices led to the discovery, among the Staff's papers, of the Ducarne and Jungbluth reports, besides a copy of Count Greindl's. An unhoped-for treasure trove! The *Norddeutsche Zeitung* hastened to acquaint the public with this find, complaining at the same time that Belgium had made a military convention with England without informing Germany, and without proposing a similar pact to the latter Power, as a safeguard against a French or British attack. The organ of the Wilhelmstrasse, unable to supply any evidence of the convention—for the very good reason that it did not exist—took the liberty of garbling the Ducarne report by a mistranslation of one important word. In the phrase "Our conversation is confidential (*Notre conversation est confidentielle*)," "conversation" is rendered *Abkommen*, which signifies "agreement." Thanks to

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this fraud, the credulous German public, always ready to accept blindly anything that bears the Government hall-mark, had no further doubts as to Belgium's treachery. Teutonic legal experts proceeded to draw up ponderous indictments of our unhappy country. It was not enough to plunder and destroy her; she had to be dishonoured as well.

Worst of all, the Chancellor actually declared to the Reichstag some months later that on the 4th of August he already possessed proofs of our Government's treason against Germany, before any written evidence came into his hands. Is it credible that, in his speech of 4th August, when any means of lightening his remorse must have been welcome, he should have said no word of his suspicions? Is it conceivable that Herr von Jagow, when I went to ask him for an explanation of the outrage done to Belgium, should not have cast in my teeth the famous proofs of our misdeeds, instead of admitting that our conduct had been unblemished? Once Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg had entered boldly on the track of falsehood, in order to salvage the shipwrecked honour of his country, he soon made remarkable progress. He had the audacity to tell some American pressmen, who had come to Berlin in order to find out the truth about the horrors of this war, that after the first encounters Belgian girls amused themselves by gouging out the eyes of wounded German soldiers.¹⁸ Did he fully grasp the infamy of these unsupported charges? All the private honesty of the Hohen-Finow philosopher will not atone for his public calumnies.

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There is no need to add that the British Government never intended to violate Belgian neutrality by sending troops to our country, so long as this neutrality was respected by others. This point is brought out clearly in a dispatch, since published, which Sir Edward Grey wrote to the British Minister at Brussels for the information of our Foreign Office.

III.

From the accession of King Albert to the invasion of our territory, Germany's attitude towards Belgium always seemed friendly. Nevertheless, in the various pronouncements that it had occasion to make concerning its respect for our neutrality, the Imperial Government set itself to lull our suspicions whenever we began to feel uneasy in spite of ourselves, without committing itself to assurances of a very formal nature.

Germany had been one of the first to recognize the annexation of the Congo by Belgium. "What better testimony of her good will could she give?" some may ask. It remains to be seen whether this alacrity was not part of a very deliberate purpose. The Congo, annexed to a weak State, would be a prey far easier to capture later on than if it had been added to the French empire in Africa, on the strength of the pre-emptive right which King Leopold allowed France to retain. Furthermore, should there be a partition of the Free State (a very likely contingency), it was quite on the cards that Belgium, and even France, would be unwilling to saddle themselves with so heavy a burden. In that case Germany might step in, and manage to secure the choicest morsels. It was a clever stroke, therefore, to encourage the colonizing ardour of the Belgian people at the outset, until the time came for damping it and for ending their activities in this direction.

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But Leopold II. had left us, together with his African domain, a whole skein of difficulties to unravel in connection with the frontiers of the new colony. When the negotiations skilfully conducted at the opening of the new reign for the fixing of the boundary between the Congo and German East Africa were nearing their end, our young Sovereign wished to give the Emperor a token of his personal feelings and of his sincere wish to keep up good relations with Germany in Africa as well as in Europe. Together with the Queen, he paid him an official visit at the close of 1910. I was in Their Majesties' suite. Their reception at Potsdam was very cordial and of an almost intimate character, apart from the two customary spring parades, which our Sovereigns attended, and the military banquets that followed. Unfortunately, a slight illness of the Emperor's robbed this visit of its chief attraction for spectators who, like myself, were eager to note the expression of the Imperial mask.

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At the Court dinner the Crown Prince read the speech prepared by his father, and bade the Royal pair welcome. The most salient passages were those alluding to the wedded bliss that a princess of a German house had brought to our King, and recalling the ties of blood between the two families, besides the historical memories that linked the two countries. King Albert, in his reply, above all praised the Emperor as a man of peace, who had devoted his life to securing the welfare of his subjects and the economic advance of Germany. It was thus, under the aspect of a Solomon or a Titus, that he then appeared to the unsuspecting Belgians, and the compliment (of which he must have been weary) was not, we thought, calculated to displease him.

The German Sovereigns did not wait until the following year before returning the visit. They came to Brussels at the end of October, accompanied by their youngest daughter. The presence of the young princess bore further witness to their genuine friendship with King Albert and Queen Elizabeth. William II., both in his official after-dinner speeches and his private conversations, declared himself deeply touched by the welcome that he had received. His heart warmed to the Belgian people, and he was delighted at their successes in the sphere of industry and commerce, as revealed in striking fashion at the Brussels International Exhibition. Jovial, affable, enthusiastic in turn, and constantly breaking into his guttural laugh, he ran up and down the whole gamut of his nature. His hearers were spellbound. How could they have failed to be convinced that the great Emperor in their midst was a benevolent Titan?

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Obvious attempts to gain for Germany the favour of the Belgian Court and society, amazement at our prosperity—such were the impressions left upon us by the mobile face and winning smile of our august visitor. Brussels, unused to receiving royal personages, had spared no effort in

order to rise to the occasion. When the Emperor, from the balcony of the Town-hall, had feasted his eyes on the incomparable scene of the market-place, he exclaimed to the Empress: "We did not expect anything so beautiful!" While on his way back from a drive to Tervueren on the magnificent road constructed by the late King, he expressed his astonishment at the number of sumptuous villas along the way, and estimated the incomes of their owners. It is rash to parade one's wealth before a stranger, especially if that stranger happens to be a neighbouring monarch, the head of an army of five million men. Belgium, which William II. had not seen for thirty-two years, must have seemed to him a fair jewel, worthy to be added to his crown.

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The Grey Book published by the Belgian Government contains a message from the Chancellor transmitted to our Foreign Office by the German minister in 1911. The Foreign Office had suggested, in the course of the controversy over the Dutch Government's scheme for fortifying Flushing, a public pronouncement by the German Government on the subject of Belgian neutrality. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg stated that Germany had no intention of violating it, but that a public pronouncement would weaken her military position as regards France, who, if enlightened on this point, would concentrate all her forces on her eastern frontier. Thus in 1911 the Chancellor, in order to avoid binding himself by a solemn promise, already sheltered himself behind the plea that it would be dangerous to divulge the plan of campaign. On the eve of the war, it will be remembered, Herr von Jagow gave a similar answer to Sir Edward Goschen, when the latter sought to obtain from him a guarantee that our neutrality would be respected by the German troops.

Very vague, too, was the language used by Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter in 1912. Scarcely had I taken up my post in Berlin before he complained to me about the excitement shown in Belgium during the Agadir crisis. As a mere measure of precaution, we had put our fortresses into a state of defence. "There was no reason," the Foreign Secretary observed to me, "to fear that Germany would violate your neutrality or that of your Dutch neighbours." Fine words, but nothing more!

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A year later, on April 29, 1913, Herr von Jagow, urged by a Socialist, at a Reichstag Committee, to explain himself on the subject of Belgian neutrality, curtly replied that this question was determined by international agreements, and that Germany would respect those agreements. He obstinately refused to say any more to another Socialist member, who was not satisfied with this summary answer.

It is true that up to the last moment before the dispatch of the ultimatum the German minister and military attaché at Brussels endeavoured to tighten the bandage that they had been ordered to place round the eyes of the Belgian authorities. Even on the second of August, both vouched for the friendly intentions of the Imperial Government—that Government which now charges Belgium with duplicity and betrayal.

German military writers, on the other hand, showed no such reticence. That irrepressible spokesman of the war party, General von Bernhardi, in his book which the world loves to quote, since it faithfully confesses the rapacious instincts of the officer caste, scornfully treats the lawyer's conception of permanent neutrality as a political heresy, and the protection that it affords as a bulwark of paper. With regard to Belgium, he hints that she might well be deemed to have already forfeited her neutral rights by her own act. How so, pray? Through clandestine treaties with Germany's foes? No. Through becoming a colonial Power. "It may well be asked," says this Jesuitical soldier, "whether the acquisition of the Congo was not *ipso facto* a breach of Belgian neutrality; for a neutral State which, at any rate in theory, is secure from all risk of war has no right to enter into political competition with other States." Bernhardi deliberately ignores the fact that these other States, Germany first of all, recognized the Belgian annexation of the Congo, without any attempt to repudiate the treaties guaranteeing Belgian neutrality. Under the sway of these sophistries, however, the idea of a violation was gaining ground in the German intellectual world. When the Imperial Government passed from theory to practice, it met in Germany with a universal chorus of applause.

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IV.

The geographical position of Belgium, devoid as she is of natural frontiers, in itself compelled her to adopt measures of defence: to build fortresses and to maintain an efficient army. The chequered history of the past served to the Belgian people as a warning for the future. Her plains had been the favourite cockpit for the struggles between Bourbon and Hapsburg, the theatre of the first victories of the French Republic, and the grave of the Napoleonic Empire. By a miracle, our country was saved from all peril in 1870, through the sacrifice of a French army, which chose to surrender at Sedan rather than seek refuge in neutral territory. The prospect of another war, which loomed large before us even during the most quiet hours of the last few decades, made it an imperative duty for our rulers to take far-reaching military precautions.

A no less cogent reason was the upholding of our neutrality. A neutral State, if attacked, is bound to defend itself. It owes this to its guarantors, in order to preserve that balance of interests which in their eyes is the motive that justifies its existence. In other words, a neutrality that cannot defend itself is nothing but a diplomatic fiction.

Our various ministries, Catholic or Liberal, have had this obligation impressed upon them, each in its turn. The progress of armaments (if the word "progress" can be applied to the monstrous development of these engines of destruction) has loaded the Belgians, in the same way as their neighbours, with an ever-growing mass of military burdens. A defensive system that seemed adequate in 1870 was no longer adequate ten years later, owing to the increase in the number of combatants and the power and range of artillery, both in France and Germany. To Antwerp, a fortress and an entrenched camp—our only real stronghold, called by us "the keep of our

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castle"—must be added the forts of Liège and Namur, intended to block up the valley of the Meuse. Experts agreed in pointing to this as the natural route for an army seeking to pierce into France from Germany, or *vice versa*, without coming into collision with the defensive works erected on both sides of the Vosges. The forts with steel cupolas at Liège and Namur, devised by our great military engineer Brialmont, were for a time considered the most finished product of the art of fortification. After exhaustive debates lasting for two years, the Belgian Parliament resolved in 1906 to devote a sum of £2,520,000 to reconstructing the defences of Antwerp, which were of an obsolete type. Fifteen new forts were built on both banks of the Scheldt, besides twelve redoubts, and the expenditure did not stop at the above estimate.

The Belgian army remained until 1909 on a peace footing of 100,000 men. It was recruited both by voluntary methods and by a system of conscription which allowed the providing of substitutes, an antiquated and undemocratic principle. This figure was obviously too low for a serviceable field army and garrison force, two indispensable factors in our defence. Among the bulk of the population, however, feeling was opposed to the introduction of compulsory service. This was not due to a distaste for the profession of arms—the Belgian has always been a first-rate soldier—but from an aversion to barrack life and a dread of the promiscuities that it entails. Moreover, among many of our people, the belief in the inviolability granted to us by the 1839 treaties was still as firmly rooted as though it had been an article of faith. Their attention, as enterprising traders and manufacturers, did not go beyond the restricted area of their business. The political entanglements that succeeded each other from year to year could not shake their robust optimism, which looked upon military sacrifices as useless.

Happily, the perils with which Belgium was beset did not escape the vigilant eye of our Sovereigns. Leopold II. was not only the brilliant creator of the Congo State, the prime mover in Belgium's economic expansion, an expansion that, relatively speaking, is no less noteworthy than that of the German nation; he was also a great patriot. As such, he never let slip any single opportunity in public life of admonishing the Belgians to do all that was needed for the strengthening, first of their defensive resources, and then of their field army. Fortunately, his appeals did not go unheard, and a considerable advance was made on the day that the Schollaert Cabinet passed the measure enacting that one son in every family must undergo military training, the first step towards a general system of compulsory service. When the Prime Minister brought the act to be signed, the old King was on his deathbed. With a failing hand he wrote his name, then sank back into his last sleep, conscious of having fulfilled his duty to his country.

His successor applied himself with the same patriotic zeal to carrying out the same task. He had already vowed to bring it to completion. There is no topic on which the native eloquence of King Albert was heard to better advantage than that of making the army fit to meet the responsibilities that it would one day incur. The events of 1911 and 1912 showed, even to those who had tried the hardest to shut their eyes, how unerring was the insight of our Sovereign. Many statesmen whose brains had been clouded by the visions of a too lofty idealism now saw the error of their ways, and realized that the abolition of war was as yet an idle dream. The bill introducing universal service was passed in May 1913. M. de Broqueville, who had supported it with consummate skill before the Chamber, had the notable honour of inscribing his name underneath the King's own on one of the most striking pages of Belgium's internal history.

It was thus fifteen months before the German invasion that this much-needed law secured a majority of votes in the Belgian Parliament. It stands to reason that, if we had wanted to sign a secret pact with England and France some years earlier, their Governments would have insisted, before all things, on the strengthening of our inadequate army. The new bill was to furnish an annual contingent of from 33,000 to 35,000 men, and we could look forward to a total of 340,000 combatants, excluding a variable number of volunteers, as soon as the system was in full working order. The anticipated effectives, however, would not be obtained until 1925. In 1914, at the moment of taking the field, the Belgian army had some 226,000 men, together with 4,500 officers and 4,170 military police, wherewith to stem the tide of invasion.

The introduction of universal service in Belgium was not looked upon with favour in Germany. As a matter of fact, the Emperor ought to have been delighted. During his visit to Switzerland in the previous autumn, he had complained of the exposed state of his north-western frontier, as contrasted with the solid rampart provided in the south by the excellent troops of the Swiss Confederation. The German newspapers spoke of our military reforms without any malicious comments, but the same cannot be said of the German officer class. I was able to gather this from the remarks made to me by Baron von Zedlitz, colonel of a dragoon regiment of the Guards, and grandson, on his mother's side, of a former Belgian minister at Berlin. No doubt the Belgian sympathies that he had inherited from his mother moved him to unbosom himself to me one day. "What is the good," he said, "of enlarging the number of your troops? With the small number that you had before, you surely never dreamt of barring the way to us in a Franco-German war. The increase of your effectives might inspire you with the idea of resisting us. If a single shot were fired on us, Heaven knows what would become of Belgium!" This was the language of a friend, but not of a soldier. I answered the colonel that we should be rated still lower than at present, if we were craven enough not to defend ourselves, and that our guns would be ready to meet the invader, whoever he might be. I had occasion to repeat this phrase several times to other Germans. They listened with smiles, but they did not believe me.

V.

The passage of the belligerents through Belgium was a favourite theme with all writers, French, German, English, Dutch, and Belgian, who handled, more or less competently, the

problem of the coming war. Some of Germany's preparations for invading her neighbours could not be hidden, and these naturally gave a fillip to the discussion of various moot points. As early as 1911, ten railway lines, both single and double, ran from the Eifel region to the Belgian frontier or the Duchy of Luxemburg. Four others were under construction, and yet another four were projected. Most of these lines were quite needless for purposes of traffic, and their aim was purely strategic. Stations with full plant and special platforms for the arrival and departure of troops had been built with that methodical thoroughness for which the Germans are famous. An enormous concentration camp, with a range for artillery practice, had been established at Elsenborn, near Malmédy, a stone's throw from our frontier. Which route would be chosen by the oncoming host?

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Some critics pronounced for the passage by the gap of the Meuse, along both banks of that river. As the German army had the advantage of a more speedy mobilization, it was generally credited with the design of taking the offensive in this region of Belgian territory. So far, we had no cause for doubting that our fortresses were impregnable, still less that they were capable of resisting. The progress of ballistics in Germany and Austria, the terrible results gained by unremitting toil in the workshops of Krupp and Skoda, were still unknown to the outside world. No one suspected the existence of German 17-inch and Austrian 12-inch mortars, which would shatter a fort of concrete and steel in a few hours under a fire of projectiles weighing nearly a ton.

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Other writers limited the German march to the right bank of the Meuse, across Belgian Luxemburg, despite the scarcity of roads and the obstacles that the broken nature of the country would offer to a rapid onset. Luxemburg, an outlying spur of our territory in the Ardennes district, seemed impossible for a Belgian force to defend. The force in question would have been too far distant from the base of operations.

Some military prophets, such as General Déjardin in Belgium and General Maitrot in France, made a very shrewd conjecture. They held that the enemy would operate mainly in great masses on the left bank of the Meuse, where he would have ample room for deploying.

In point of fact, however, the plan of the German Staff had not been fathomed in all its bearings. Among those who could speak with authority, the greater number imagined that only a part—the right wing—of the army directed against France would pass through Belgium. They had not guessed the bold manœuvre, the tremendous developments, that we have seen carried out: to leave a "curtain"¹⁹ of troops along the Vosges line, and with three-fourths of the army to cross the Meuse at several points, from Visé right down to Dinant; to take Liège and Namur by storm, if necessary; to march on Brussels, sweeping aside the Belgian army if it should try to withstand the advance; and from there to turn off southwards by the various routes that lead to Paris. The whole north-western section of France was unprovided with defences, excepting the fortress of Maubeuge. Once the plains of Belgium had been traversed, the road to Paris would be open.

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The reader must picture to himself, not a stream or a torrent, but a veritable sea of men, inundating our country from Holland to Luxemburg, a million and a half to two million soldiers! The defensive plans of Germany's opponents had not allowed for the inrush of such an avalanche through Belgium. At the outset of the war, according to an official Note issued by the Republican Government, the whole of the French forces were disposed over against the German border, from Belfort to the Belgian frontier.

The first condition of success for so daring an offensive was secrecy. The secret was well kept. The high German command did all it could to throw foreign military attachés off the trail and to encourage them in false notions. Among their various methods of hoodwinking the stranger, we may probably include the way in which the permanent stations of the twenty-five army corps were distributed. The map showed us ten of them massed together in Alsace-Lorraine, the Palatinate, and the Grand Duchy of Baden, as if ready to hurl themselves on France from that quarter. Along the Belgian and Dutch frontiers only one corps was stationed, and its command lived a long way off, at Coblenz. With so meagre a contingent, the chances of an attempt to enter Belgium seemed remote indeed. Yet the corps of Westphalia, of Hanover, of Holstein even, could be brought up to the western frontier in a very short time by the numerous railway lines. It was the two former, with that of Coblenz, that crossed the Meuse and attacked Liège, under General von Emmich, Commandant at Hanover, a leader of high repute. Assuredly the Staff did not await the order for a general mobilization before concentrating this vanguard at Cologne and Aix-la-Chapelle.

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VI.

From the first days of the Austro-Serbian dispute, the Belgian Government was on the watch. It did not shrink from taking the precautionary steps required in a country that Nature has left unsheltered. On 29th July, the Belgian army was put on the maximum peace footing. Two days later there was a general mobilization, and 180,000 men were called to the colours. Thanks to these prompt measures, the storm did not take us off our guard, although it came at such short notice.

The Brussels Cabinet, however, did not know, any more than I did, of the bargaining which the German Government had attempted during the last days of the crisis in order to wrest from England a promise that she would remain neutral. First it was France's turn to be chattered over; then came Belgium. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, in his interview of 29th July with Sir Edward Goschen, had confined himself to stating that our country would suffer no loss of territory, provided it did not take sides against Germany. He gave no guarantee as to our independence.

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This engagement would be enough, he fancied, to make the English, who were reluctant to face the hazards of a Continental war, maintain the rôle of impartial onlookers, since they would not have to fear either the dismemberment of France or the disappearance of the little Belgian kingdom. Nevertheless, on the morning of 4th August, when the Chancellor learnt that Belgium was girding herself for a vigorous resistance, he grasped the necessity for calming London's excitement by a notable advance on his former bid. He telegraphed to the German ambassador, ordering him to tell Sir Edward Grey as soon as possible that under no pretence whatever would Germany annex Belgian territory. On the afternoon of the same day, growing uneasy at England's silence, he repeated to the Reichstag, with an addition, the guarantee he had proffered to Sir Edward Grey: "So long as Great Britain remains neutral, we shall respect the integrity and *independence* of Belgium."

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It was too late. An irretrievable blunder had been committed on the evening of 2nd August: namely, the dispatch of a highly confidential Note, the most brutal of ultimatums, to the Belgian Foreign Minister. Not a word was said in this document of the 1839 treaties or of Belgian neutrality, beyond a vague hint that France was about to make use of Belgian territory in her advance against Germany, a proceeding that compelled the latter to come to our aid. Then various baits are held out to Belgium, if she will desert her trust as a neutral. By a diplomatic euphemism, the cowardly act demanded of her is cloaked under the name of "benevolent neutrality." The integrity and independence of the kingdom will be respected to the full (nothing is said explicitly about the Congo), her territory will be evacuated after the conclusion of peace, the German troops will pay cash down for all that they require, and an indemnity will be granted for any damage that they may cause. The sting is in the tail; the threats are reserved for the end. If any armed resistance is offered, if any obstacles are placed in the way of the German march, if any roads, railways, or works of art are destroyed, Belgium will be treated as an enemy. This one word is enough to reveal the doom that will be meted out to her.

These offers and menaces, following on the shock of the ultimatum, were cunningly devised to tame our spirit still further. All had been thought out: the suddenness of the blow, after the plausible assurances of the German minister at Brussels had quieted all tremors; the interval of only twelve hours for a reply; nay, the very moment chosen for sending the Note, seven o'clock in the evening. Night that brings reflection, night with its unnerving darkness, would no doubt work upon the minds of the hapless victims, forced to choose between suicide and dishonour. Yet the German calculations were foiled. At the King's Council, hastily summoned to the royal palace, there was no sign of giving way. The ministers present, from within and without the Cabinet, had shown all due regard for our eastern neighbour, and till then had firmly believed in the honesty of his intentions. The more cruel their disillusion, the more bitter their wrath must have been against the trickster who could lightly break the most solemn pledges. The King, with an unflinching resolve to do his full duty, first called upon the military members to set forth all the possibilities of defence. They were to speak the plain truth, without minimizing the fearful odds that our army had to face. When the Staff had told its tale, the same thrill of heroism swept the whole Council off its feet, even as on the next day it was to seize the whole Parliament and nation. Before the meeting dispersed, the reply to the German Note, of which a rough draft had already been made out by the Foreign Office, was drawn up and approved. On the following day, before the interval had expired, it was handed to the German minister. That was all. The absorbing drama, played within the space of a few brief hours, was over.

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The style of the Royal Government's answer, which no Belgian can read without tears of patriotic pride, is as noble and dignified—I cannot think that any one will refute this—as that of the German document is false and constrained. In a few words it brushes aside the pretexts fabricated by the Berlin Cabinet. It scorns to utter any useless complaint. It tries no subterfuge, no diplomatic shift that may leave it a loophole for revoking its words. It goes straight to the point. After declaring Belgium's unswerving loyalty to her international obligations in the past, it proudly announces that her Government has chosen, without faltering for a moment, the path of duty and honour. "The Belgian Government, by accepting the proposals put before it, would not only sacrifice its own honour, but would betray its duty towards Europe. It is determined to repel any assault upon its rights by every means in its power."

What will King Albert do? He knows Germany too well not to feel certain that the rejection of her demands will be followed by an instant swoop of her formidable army. Three days before, our Sovereign had written a personal letter to William II. Since the Emperor had professed to be his friend, he took the liberty of asserting Belgium's right to see her neutrality respected. This appeal failed to move the stony heart of the Kaiser. On 3rd August, King Albert turned to the King of England. He telegraphed to him, not to utter an urgent call for his military support—as might have been expected, with the storm drawing nearer every moment—but to ask for his diplomatic intervention. Is not this a conclusive proof that Belgium had not sought by any secret alliance to screen herself in England's arms from the attacks of the German colossus?

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The envoy of the French Republic, who was fully posted up in the course of events, hastened of his own accord to offer French aid. Our Foreign Minister answered with thanks, but refused all succour for the time being: the Belgian Government, he said, would consider later on what should be done in the matter. Not till the evening of the next day, when every fleeting hour was of crucial importance, and after he had learnt of the invader's entry into Belgium that morning—not till the deed was done, did he apply, with admirable coolness, to England, France, and Russia for help in the defence of our territory. Such scrupulous adherence to the hard-and-fast rules laid down in treaties, such faithfulness to a plighted oath when in the very jaws of death, would surely be hard to parallel.

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VII.

I learnt on 2nd August, from our military attaché (who had the news from an officer of the Emperor's household), that the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg had been occupied. The route followed by the German army left me no doubt as to the coming invasion of Belgian Luxemburg, and I telegraphed this pessimistic forecast to my Government. Yet I had not gauged the full measure of the disaster that was about to overtake my country. It was on the evening of Monday, 3rd August, that I received the official telegram informing me of the German ultimatum and of our reply. At first I was dumbfounded; then came a fierce glow of indignation. I tried my utmost to betray no sign of this to my young secretaries, in order that their sorrow and their anger might not be needlessly increased. After urging them to be calm and collected, I spent a part of the night in reflecting on the questions that I would put to the Foreign Secretary at the earliest opportunity. I felt it my bounden duty to go to him and insist upon a downright explanation of the nameless act perpetrated by the German Government.

The readiness with which Herr von Jagow let me know that he hoped to see me at the Foreign Office on Tuesday morning proved that he was no less impatient than I to have this decisive interview. When I arrived, at nine o'clock, the old building was still almost empty, but the Foreign Secretary was already at work in his room. I will not give here a full report of our conversation; it has already been published in that crushing indictment of Germany by my fellow-countryman, M. Waxweiler: *La Belgique neutre et loyale*.

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Before many words had passed between us, I saw that we were speaking two different languages, and that neither could understand the other's tongue. I invoked Belgium's honour, the honour that is no less sacred to a nation than to an individual; her obligations as a neutral, her past conduct, always thoroughly loyal towards Germany (this the Secretary of State ungrudgingly admitted), and her inability to answer the Imperial Government's proposal in any other way than she had answered it already. He could not help acknowledging this, but he did so with an effort for the most part, and merely in his private capacity, refusing, by a subtle distinction, to compromise himself as an official.

He replied with cynical arguments, which seemed to him unimpeachable: that it was a question of life and death to Germany; that she was compelled to advance through Belgium in order to overpower France as speedily as possible; that the French frontier south of Belgium, with its chain of strong fortresses, was difficult to pierce. He repeated the Chancellor's guarantee that my country's independence would be respected and that an indemnity would be paid her. I fancy that he was reciting, word for word, a lesson drilled into him by the Chief of Staff. To these strategic reasons and these alluring promises he added an expression of regret on behalf of himself, his Emperor, and his Government, that they should have been driven to this extremity. When I announced my intention of leaving Berlin and of demanding my passports, he remonstrated: he did not want to break off relations with me! What had he expected from this interview, and what did he expect now?

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As I withdrew, I shot the Parthian arrow that I had kept in reserve: the violation of Belgian neutrality would mean for Germany a war with England. Herr von Jagow had been speaking with emotion, in an earnest tone, which he tried to make persuasive; but at this he merely shrugged his shoulders. My shaft—*telum imbelles, sine ictu*—was blunted by my opponent's armour of resolution or indifference.

During the afternoon the Emperor's speech in the Reichstag exhorted the nation's delegates to help in carrying to a triumphant issue this war that had been forced upon Germany! William II. said nothing about the violation of Belgium, but called down upon his arms the blessing of the Most High, his wonted confidant. The next speaker was the Chancellor. More honest than he has been since then, he unhesitatingly confessed the wrong that had been done to Belgium, and promised to make amends so soon as the military aim should have been attained.

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I had not been at fault, however, in predicting to Herr von Jagow a war with England, one of the guarantors of our neutrality. That same evening I dined alone at the Kaiserhof, a prey, as may be imagined, to the gloomiest forebodings. As I left the restaurant, a handful of papers was flung to me from a *Berliner Tageblatt* motor car. Marvelling at the swift fulfilment of my prophecy, I read that Great Britain had declared war on Germany, and that her Ambassador, a few hours earlier, had handed in an ultimatum to the Imperial Government. I at once bethought myself of rushing to the British Embassy, in order to obtain some further details of this wonderful news. Was it thus that Heaven answered the appeals of her favourite?

Round about that part of the Wilhelmstrasse in which the British Embassy is situated a large crowd had forgathered. Respectably dressed citizens of both sexes were bellowing out, with frantic enthusiasm, their best-loved hymn, *Deutschland über alles*. The national anthem was succeeded by a volley of catcalls, after which came a shower of missiles—brickbats and lumps of coal, for no stones are to be found in the asphalt roadways of Berlin. The ground-floor windows of the Embassy were shattered to atoms, the two policemen posted on either side of the door making no attempt to interfere. I had seen and heard enough. As I was wending my way homewards, a gleam of hope stole into my heart amid all its grief and anguish. I saw a terrible face rising above the blood-red horizon—the face of the British Nemesis.

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VIII.

The invasion of Belgium was a blunder, both political and military. Political, because England—who no doubt would inevitably have come to take her stand by France, but not at the very opening of hostilities—was moved forthwith to intervene; military, because the heroic and

unexpected resistance of the Belgian army frustrated the rapid march on Paris—in other words, wrecked the initial plan of the German Staff.

The Imperial Government did not anticipate that we should show fight. Our hearts would fail us, they thought, at the mere approach of that redoubtable monster, the gigantic German army. A proof of this is the first attack on Liège. It was made by three corps without a siege-train for reducing the forts. They imagined that every gate would open before them; that they would enter with banners flying and drums beating, and be received as conquering heroes, almost as friends.

As soon as this illusion was dispelled the Germans hastened to attack the forts. They tried to take them by storm, and left 36,000 dead on the field. When Liège was at last captured, they lost ten days in getting into proper trim again, before they resumed their forward march, this time fully provided with artillery. This forced respite affected the first issue of the campaign. The Staff, without taking the Belgian army into account, had mapped out beforehand all the opening stages—Liège, Namur, Mons, Charleroi, and so on, down to the Kaiser's entry into Paris.

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If our opponents went so far astray in their estimate of our fighting spirit, they must lay the blame on their diplomats and their military attachés, their journalists and their spies. The last German ministers at Brussels had certainly been of the same school as Herr von Jagow. They took no interest in the psychology of the Belgian people, and their contempt for the little country where they were received with open arms was only equalled, I should say, by their eagerness to leave its capital as soon as possible, since in their ambition they looked upon it as the mere stepping-stone to an Embassy. But what of their military attachés? Could they see in our soldiers nothing but marionettes of the parade-ground, and in our officers nothing but champion riders at army competitions? Stranger still was the lack of insight shown by the correspondents of German newspapers. They carefully noted the most trivial details of our public life, but their judgment of us was blinded by prejudice, and by the arrogance of a great nation which itself has only achieved unity at a recent date. They regarded Belgium as a mere geographical expression—the home of two hostile races, yoked together in spite of themselves, and determined never to fuse. The quarrels of Flemings and Walloons were depicted in their articles as the outcome of an implacable hatred, and the conflict of political parties as a war to the knife, for they only wished to see how far Germany could make capital out of this cleavage. But the love that all Belgians have for their freedom escaped the notice of these observers settled in our midst. They carefully dissected our national body, without discovering the national soul. Never had the Belgians seemed more divided than in the period preceding the war. Never were they in reality more united in a like devotion to their common country.

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What should we have gained by yielding to the German threats? What confidence could we have in the promises of a Government that shamelessly tore up a solemn treaty in order to gain easier access to the country of its foe?

Had the Germans come into Belgium as friends and won the war, they would never have left our land after their victory. If any one is inclined to question this, let him consider the outburst of greed aroused in Germany by the invasion of Belgium. Intellectuals equipped with sham historical claims, manufacturers envious of our industrial successes, traders lusting to capture our markets, join hands to-day with the Socialists (who are no less infatuated than they with the ideal of a Greater Germany) in order to demand our annexation. The Berlin Cabinet would have resolved to break its word once more, and pretexts would not have been wanting—the need of seizing the whole North Sea coast, as a naval base against England; the strategical and commercial importance of Antwerp; perhaps, too, the inevitable wrangles between the Belgian authorities and the German officials who would have presided over the occupation of a part of the country. To what lengths, by the way, would this occupation not have gone? On what nook or corner of our soil should we still have been allowed to plant our national flag?

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Perhaps (this is the best we could have hoped for) the Germans would have asked us, in a wheedling tone, yet leaving no room for refusal, to become members of the Germanic Confederation. At first a customs union, a Zollverein, before complete incorporation—the right of admission to the Holy Empire—had been decreed by our future Cæsar, on the advice of the Federal Council and in accordance with the progress of our Germanization. They would not have waited for this glorious day in order to control and regulate the output of our factories and our coal-mines, affiliating the workers to the German trade unions; to organize the activities of Antwerp, without injuring those of the German ports, and to restrict its commercial *hinterland*; to watch over our daily life, prohibit all displays of national feeling, instil German discipline into our army, and make our statesmen and our diplomats their submissive thralls. We should have been at once relieved of the Congo, too heavy a burden for our shoulders. We should have been compelled to learn German as a third language, soon to become the official tongue. Many a time, while reading in our newspapers the wretched controversies caused by the rivalry between our two languages, I have had occasion to say to the young men on my staff: "They don't seem to realize in Belgium the danger of our seeing German one day become the language of instruction at Ghent university."

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If we had become attached to their Empire in this way—a process that every German would have regarded as an honour for us, the reward of our friendly neutrality—the outward form of our Government would have run little risk of being changed. William II., following the example of Bismarck, is not the man to overturn a throne without good reason. He will always prefer to bind other princes to himself by the strong chains of vassalage.

The same doom awaited Holland, although Herr von Jagow, shortly before the German ultimatum was sent to Brussels, had taken care to assure the Dutch minister that the neutrality of his country would be respected. Was not Holland in the Middle Ages one of the jewels of the Germanic Imperial crown? With her shores washed by the North Sea, and the estuary of the

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Rhine flowing through her midst, did she not command the course of Germany's greatest river? According to the view of the Chancellor, as set forth in his telegram of 4th August to Prince Lichnowsky, would not an annexation of Belgium by force or guile involve similar treatment of the Orange Kingdom? The conversation in which Herr Zimmermann clumsily dangled before the eyes of the Dutch Socialist Troelstra an invitation to Holland to enter the Zollverein after the war gave our Dutch friends a glimpse of Germany's designs on their country. The King of Bavaria took it upon himself to give them another glimpse, when he declared, with the blunt frankness of a peasant from his own highlands, that the Germans needed the whole course of the Rhine down to the sea. This would imply occupying the mouth of the Meuse and the estuary of the Scheldt. Denmark, again, possesses one of the keys to the Baltic; can she forget, after the bitter experience she has had, the voracious appetite of her dread neighbour?

This picture, by no means overdrawn, of the blessings in store for us after a German triumph, must prove to my fellow-citizens that, in order to escape them, our King and Government took the only path open to them in an agonizing Calvary—the path of honour. There was nothing for it but to defend our freedom, sword in hand, at the price of the nation's best blood—a freedom that the Germans, after defeating France, would have withheld from us all the more scornfully if we had been weak enough to listen to them and cowardly enough to obey them.

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CONCLUSION.

A SOVEREIGN, coming at an early age to the most conspicuous throne in Europe, already too sure of his own talents, fretting with impatience to rule without restraint or guardianship, pacific both by instinct and by reason, but of a helmeted and mail-clad pacifism, which loved to vent itself in needless threats. The same prince, twenty-five years later, puffed up with pride over the marvellous expansion of his country (in which he had certainly borne his share by keeping the peace), but gradually won over to the schemes of conquest and of domination whispered into his ear; ill-informed, for want of accurate reports and of personal discernment, as to the state of public feeling among his neighbours, and as to their capacity for resistance; ready, without any qualms, to seize the first opportunity of starting a war in which victory seemed to him certain and the risks hardly worth counting; the responsible author, since he wields a despotic sway, of all the horrors and disasters around us, bred by the relentless militarism and the boundless ambition of a dynasty that deems itself called upon to govern the world.

A royal family, void of prestige or distinction, obscured by the shadow that the dazzling personality of the Emperor cast behind it, although one figure strove hard to emerge from the darkness—the restless, carping, bellicose Crown Prince. Federal rulers enjoying a mere puppet sovereignty, and acquiescing in their subaltern rôle, from fear of vanishing altogether from the German stage, a stage now too narrow to let them stand by the side of their Cæsar. Statesmen as powerless to make their counsels prevail as to defend the Imperial policy, over which, perhaps, their conscience smote them at times. A Reichstag split up into too many groups and parties, and divided on all questions save that of the timeliness of this war, the Conservatives hoping thereby to strengthen their influence and the Socialists expecting to gain, as the price of their zealous support, those political liberties that they were unable to win by main force.

A disciplined, credulous, and hard-working nation, concerned above all with earning its daily bread, pacific for the most part, or rather indifferent to foreign affairs, until the day when, on the strength of official assurances, it believed itself to be attacked, and in peril of losing its work, its national honour, its very existence. A lying vision, yet hard to banish from its gaze; an erroneous belief, which will drive it, until the bitter end, to face the most dire suffering and to endure the most cruel sacrifices. The future will teach us whether it will not demand later on a heavy reckoning from those who have played it false.

A minority drawn from the intellectual and governing castes, dreaming of victory and aggrandisement, with a passionate desire to see the colossal fabric of German supremacy towering to the heavens, steeped in a limitless hatred or disdain for those who have not the honour to be Germans. From the very opening of hostilities, the morbid conceit of the scholars and men of science was unveiled in clear outlines through those amazing manifestoes on the rights that the superior science, organization, strength, and culture of Germany empower her to claim. In my opinion, however, it would be a mistake to look upon this select band as typical of the nation, just as it would be wrong to make all Germany answerable for the misdeeds of her brutal soldiery, and for the frightful war waged by the military and naval chiefs.

Disheartening rebuffs to German and Austro-Hungarian diplomacy both in Morocco and the Near East, where, despite all the efforts of Berlin and Vienna, there arose a state of things inimical to the spread, nay even to the prestige, of Germanism. As a result of these checks, a vast increase of military preparations, while at the same time the war parties in Germany (and in Austria-Hungary too) raged and clamoured more than ever—warning symptoms, to which public opinion abroad, misled by the peaceful solution of the previous crisis, paid but a half-hearted attention.

All these causes, individual or collective, whirling us abruptly—on the morrow of a murder that a little police precaution would have averted—to the brink of an abyss in which the freedom of Europe has come near to being engulfed for ever....

Such is the complicated picture that I have tried to sketch, with as a background the crimes committed against Belgium and Serbia. I hope that I may be pardoned for closing this book with a few words on the subject of my gallant country.

Civilization is not a unique, exotic plant, the product of *Kultur*, of a chosen people, but a cluster of varied flowers, grown on varied soils, and the most modest of them are not the least hardy nor the least beautiful. From the standpoint of human progress, the existence of small States, contributing to that progress, has justified itself as essential to the needs of mankind. Some have been fruitful fields for experiment in the introducing or the improving of various social or political systems. Others have outstripped nations far larger than themselves in the universal realm of literature and the fine arts; others on the broad path of industrial competition. In these and other domains, how many deathless glories can one of them show on the long and illustrious scroll of its history!

The political necessity for the existence of small States, as factors of peace, is no less imperative. It has sometimes been their lot, by virtue of their situation at the mouths of rivers, on the shores of seas, or at the intersection of mountain-ranges, to restrain the clashing and the jarring of the quarrelsome great Powers. They have thus served as watertight compartments or solid buffers, if these technical terms are worthy to express the services rendered by them in maintaining the harmony of Europe.

The war party and the Prussian military writers, with their imperialist doctrines, will not hear to-day of the European balance. To them it is an outworn shibboleth, a mere historical relic. Yet one of the great lessons to be learnt from a study of the past is that this balance remains permanent and indestructible in a continent peopled by rival races. In the end, it has always come to be restored on the ruins of mighty empires, after the shocks and oscillations that it has

suffered from the ambitions of conquerors. At the beginning of the last two centuries, the map of Europe, a shifting mosaic, was fixed anew by a sort of historical process, and the small States were not the least useful materials that went to the working of this transformation.

As a matter of fact, Belgium is one of the oldest among these States, for she may fairly trace her career back to the days of the Duke of Burgundy, to the reign of Philip the Good, who succeeded in reuniting the Belgian provinces of the Netherlands. For four centuries—apart from an interval of twenty years, during which these provinces were attached to France and received from her their laws and their administrative divisions—their Walloon and Flemish inhabitants lived side by side under the same foreign rulers. They did not blend, it is true; each element was careful to retain its distinctive language and character. But they professed the same creed, kept up brotherly relations, and enjoyed similar liberties, more happy and more free in their thriving cities and mediæval communes than many a more ambitious nation. From the time that Belgium acquired a dynasty of her own and took her seat among the nations, wrapped in her neutrality as in a robe of spotless white, she made remarkable headway in almost every branch of human activity. The little people of a few million souls occupied before the war the fifth place in the list of commercial and industrial countries, standing above Austria-Hungary with its fifty million inhabitants! King Leopold did not overrate either the energy or the spirit of enterprise inherent in his subjects, when he opened up and finally handed over to them the vast basin of his great African river. What a splendid prospect of work and endeavour was offered to them in Africa as in Europe! What a noble future for an industrious life, deserving the respect of the whole civilized world!

Yet there was one thing lacking to Belgium: she had not been purified by sorrow or hallowed by suffering. This crown of thorns was at last thrust upon her head by the cruelty of the Germans. Then the little nation was seen to stiffen under its martyrdom, without abandoning the struggle to live and to resist. The shining example of heroism came to it from above, from its young royal pair, to whom it was devoted, and in whom it centred its fondest hopes. Ten months have passed, and King Albert still remains planted, firmly as an oak, in the last shred of territory, facing the enemy, whose strength is powerless to bend or to break him. Around him is his young army, sadly thinned by unequal struggles, but galvanized into new life, having repaired its losses by an accession of fresh blood, certain of victory, for it knows that the very heart of its country is throbbing beneath the folds of its flag. Not far off is the Government, which would not yield up the honour of Belgium at the German bidding, and which labours busily in its exile, in order to relieve our refugees, to maintain the public services, and to act as intermediary for the generous and sympathetic aid tendered from foreign sources.

If Europe turns aside from the sight of this indomitable resistance, and looks at our country, what does she see there? The head of the Belgian clergy, the very incarnation of civic patriotism and priestly virtues, stimulating his flock to courage and endurance, caring nought for coercion or threats, and awaiting with full trust in the Divine Judge the day when in his church (not spared, alas! by the invader) he shall celebrate the *Te Deum* of our deliverance. Everywhere she sees devotion to the fatherland and to Christian solidarity: she sees the burgomaster of Brussels, whose brave voice could only be silenced by imprisonment, although even now his memory and his example still hover, as an ever-present encouragement, above his fellow-citizens and his city; she sees men who yesterday were rich, heads of banks that to-day are closed and of workshops that to-day are empty, joining with the intellectual flower of Brussels citizens to provide for the poor, to ensure that the people shall not die of hunger and privation; she sees women of all sorts and conditions turned into Sisters of Charity; she sees fathers and mothers, stricken to the heart by the death of their sons or anxious as to their fate, living often in homes that the enemy has rifled, yet with calm, tearless eyes and faces ennobled by sacrifice; and last of all she sees, behind the classes that once were privileged, the admirable crowd, the army of humble toilers, stoically enduring their forced loss of work or their inability to help their country, watching in grim silence the countless dead and wounded brought in from the enemy regiments, who do not cease to dye with their blood that Belgian soil where they thought they had only to appear in order to conquer!

No, such a people cannot die. The Belgian soul, whose existence some dared to deny, has gained a new temper from the flame of battle, and it still lives to-day, more vigorous than ever, to realize our national motto—"Union makes Strength." But Belgium is not yet at the end of her long ordeal, at the limit of her travail, or on the eve of drying her tears. The iron monster of German militarism cannot be battered down in a day. I have seen him at too close quarters preparing and arming for the fray to have any delusions on that score. The league of his adversaries has swollen in number and grown in power; but at present this only whets his rage, and thus for the time being his might, like that of a man who suddenly goes mad, is redoubled. Germany is not yet near to waking up, with a start, from her tragic dream of triumph and domination. The day of liberation is slow to dawn for us, and we still have a long agony to go through. But let no Belgian, whether he has been forced to take the road of exile, or is suffering, with no word of complaint, the well-nigh intolerable contact with the oppressor—let no Belgian become for a single instant a prey to discouragement or despair! The hour will strike without fail from the belfries of our town-halls and the steeples of our churches—the hour when our country, reconquered and ten times more dear, will press to her lacerated bosom all her sons, once more united in an equal love for their common mother; the hour when Belgium will recover her place among the nations, a loftier place than ever, owing to her valour in the combat and her steadfastness in adversity.

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APPENDIX.

WITH regard to the view expressed in Chapter V. concerning the subordinate part played by the economic causes of the war, it has been pointed out to me that during the Agadir crisis the employers of labour in the various German metal industries, grouped under the name of "Steel Syndicate," addressed a petition to the Chancellor asking that war should be declared on France. Other industrial and economic leagues suggested to him, in special memorials, annexations in Belgium, France, and Russia.

Because the German iron-masters, egged on perhaps by Krupp and the army contractors, and suffering on the other hand from a spell of reckless over-production, were hunting for fresh markets, even at the price of a costly and bloody struggle, and because other manufacturers embraced similar schemes of conquest, it does not follow, first, that the majority of employers, great and small, who wanted to work in peace, became advocates of war; secondly—this point I have tried to prove in the aforesaid chapter—that such a war would have obtained for Germany the new markets that she hankered after.

Nor does it follow that the Imperial Government let itself be led or dragged into the war by the manufacturers. Its opinions, I am ready to admit, coincided with those of many among this class, as also with those of the agrarian section. But in declaring war on France and Russia it pursued above all a political aim. It did not take up arms with the main object of securing for Germany an economic monopoly or hegemony in Europe. To-day, for instance, when we see the Germans endeavouring to change into an annexation their occupation of Belgium and north-western France, we see that it is the possession of the North Sea coast and the Strait of Dover that they mainly have in view, in order from there to be able to strike a deadly blow at the British power. The results of a German victory were admirably defined by M. Poincaré, in his fine speech of 14th July; "We should fall for ever into a political, moral, and economic thralldom." The economic vassalage would only be a consequence of the political thralldom.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 [The following are the German newspapers mentioned in this book:—*Kölnische Zeitung* (Cologne Gazette); *Kreuzzeitung* (Cross Gazette); *Vossische Zeitung* (Voss's Gazette); *Norddeutsche Zeitung* (North German Gazette); *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* (Berlin Local Advertiser); and *Berliner Tageblatt* (Berlin Daysheet).—*Translator's Note.*]
- 2 [Quoted from the *Times* report, 3rd October 1914.—*Translator's Note.*]
- 3 [Quoted from the British Blue Book.—*Translator's Note.*]
- 4 [In Racine's *Britannicus*, Nero, although his wife Octavia has done no wrong, proposes to divorce her and marry Junia. Junia replies:
"J'ai mérité
Ni cet excès d'honneur, ni cette indignité."
—*Translator's Note.*]
- 5 Report of Sir E. Goschen to Sir E. Grey, 8th August 1914, published by the British Government (*Great Britain and the European Crisis*).
- 6 These laws deal with the military and naval forces of the Empire, finance, commerce, questions of domicile, means of communication, and justice.
- 7 [In Continental politics, blue is the colour of the Conservatives proper, black that of the Clericals.—*Translator's Note.*]
- 8 [The term applied in Continental politics to the temporary combination of several parties or groups for some particular purpose.—*Translator's Note.*]
- 9 [This term arose out of the Social Democrats' Congress at Baden in 1912. The "revisionists," headed by Eduard Bernstein, proposed to abandon the old intransigent attitude, and to compromise with the Government in certain matters, especially taxation.—*Translator's Note.*]
- 10 [This word bears the same meaning, for political purposes, as "*bloc*." It is the German form of "cartel," a term used by modern economists to denote a manufacturers' union to keep up prices.—*Translator's Note.*]
- 11 Yellow Book concerning Morocco, 1905.
- 12 [French *tour de valse*, German *Walzertour*—*i.e.*, a step taken without regard to the consequences, a light-hearted escapade. We may, perhaps, trace here a flavour of Teutonic contempt for Southern airs and graces.—*Translator's Note.*]
- 13 Dispatch from M. Cambon, dated 5th November, Yellow Book for 1911.
- 14 See especially reports 141 and 161 from Sir Maurice de Bunsen to Sir Edward Grey (*Great Britain and the European Crisis*).
- 15 Belgian Grey Book, annexe to No. 2.
- 16 Yellow Book, No. 120.
- 17 See M. Waxweiler's *La Belgique neutre et loyale* (Lausanne: Payot et Cie.), and the pamphlet by M. van den Heuvel, Minister of State, *De la violation de la neutralité belge* (Paris: Louis de Soye).
- 18 Statement made by the Chancellor on 6th November 1914 to the representatives of the great American agencies, United Press and Amalgamated Press.
- 19 [It would have been a pity to drop this happy metaphor, although it is not used, so far as I am aware, by English military writers. A curtain, in fortification, is a plain wall connecting two bastions.—*Translator's Note.*]

THE END.

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