

4 MY YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

it could amply a little more than a century ago in the Napoleonic struggle. In a sense, then, it is a physical parasite on the rest of the world; a parasite which, however, has given its intellectual energy in return for food for its body.

This war had for its object the delivery of no people from bondage, except the Belgians after the war had begun; it had no religious purpose such as the Crusades; it was not the uprising of democracy like the French Revolution. Those who charged the machine guns and the wives and mothers who urged them on were unconscious of the real force disguised by their patriotic fervour. Ask a man to die for money and he refuses. Ask him to die in order that he may have more butter on his bread and he refuses. This is putting the cause of war too bluntly. It is insulting to courage and to self-sacrifice, assessing them as something set on a counter for sale. For nations do not know why they fight, as a rule. Processes of evolution and chains of events arouse their patriotic ardour and their martial instinct till the climax comes in blows.

The cause of the European war is economic; and, by the same token, Europe kept the peace for forty years for economic reasons. She was busy skimming the cream of the resources of other countries. Hers was the capital, the skill, the energy, the *morale*, the culture, for exploiting the others. All modern invention originated with her or with the offspring of her races beyond seas. Steamers brought her raw material, which she sent back in manufactures; they took forth, in place of the buccaneers of former days seeking gold, her financiers, engineers, salesmen, and teachers, who returned with tribute or sent back the interest on the capital they had applied to enterprise. She looked